



# FIFTH MICHIGAN VOLUNTEER INFANTRY REGIMENT



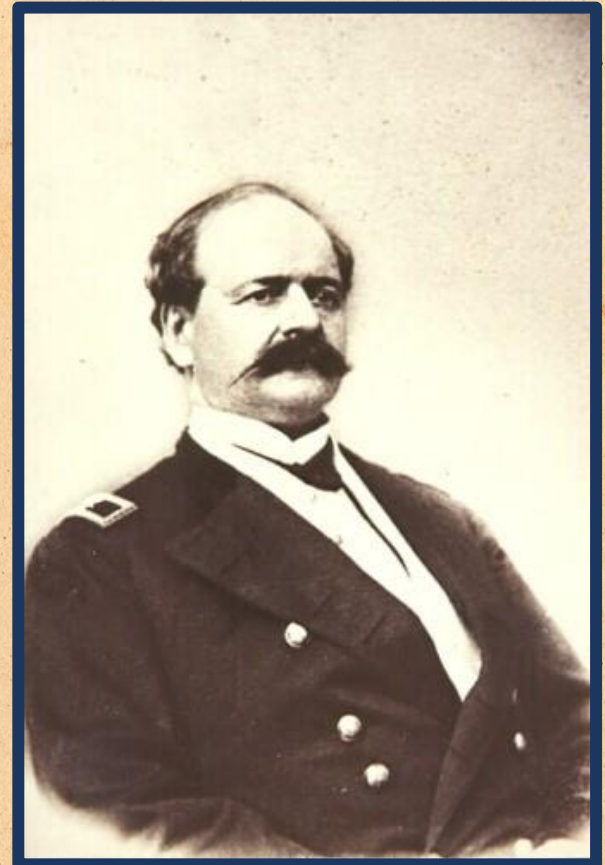
## Everything that is Necessary

*I desire to return thanks for these chaste and glorious colors. They are everything that is necessary, and all that the regiment desire – the Stars and Stripes of the national Union.<sup>1</sup>*

*Colonel Henry D. Terry  
Flag Presentation Ceremony September 1861*

The Fifth Michigan Infantry was mustered into service on August 28, 1861. Like other regiments organized early in the war, the regiment was composed of companies of local militia units. At its organization, the men of the Fifth Michigan belonged to the Sherlock Guard, Mt. Clemens Guard, East Saginaw Volunteers, Ingersoll Rifles, Governor's Guard, Saginaw City Light Infantry, Livingston Volunteers, Washington Guard, Pontiac Volunteers, and the Huron Rangers.<sup>2</sup> Initially, it was thought that George Meade who was a captain in the U.S. Engineer Corps and stationed in Detroit would be commissioned colonel of the regiment, but when he was appointed brigadier in the U.S. Army, Henry D. Terry from Detroit was appointed colonel.<sup>3</sup>

The Fifth was presented with a national flag in a ceremony in early September during a parade, review, and inspection before Brigadier General Alpheus Williams. At four o'clock, the regiment gathered in a hollow square on the parade grounds at Fort Wayne for the ceremony which was attended by a large crowd including Governor Blair, General Williams, and Adjutant General Robertson. The National colors were donated by the F. Buhl, Newland, and Company.<sup>4</sup> A Detroit Free Press article from September



Colonel Henry D. Terry





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12, 1861 describes them as, “the stars and stripes, surrounded by heavy gold fringe, and are elegantly gotten up, reflecting the highest credit upon the taste of Mr. F. Buhl, the donor.”<sup>5</sup>

At the ceremony, Henry T. Backus, Michigan’s Lieutenant Governor, presented the colors to the regiment while addressing them on the behalf of those assembled. About the flag, Backus said, “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 it implies that you would never strike it to foes and will never surrender it to traitors.”<sup>6</sup>

Colonel Terry replied:

Through you, in behalf of the regiment, I desire to return thanks for these chaste and glorious colors. They are everything that is necessary, and all that the regiment desire – the Stars and Stripes of the national Union. This is emphatically a time for deeds not words, and I will only offer,



Lt. Governor Henry T. Backus

in addition to our thanks, the assurance that the lives of the whole regiment are all devoted to the defence [sic] of these colors, and to their preservation, and the hope that the regiment, under its folds, may add to the national glory in the name of the State of Michigan to whose people we offer thanks and farewell. God grant it may never trail in the dust.<sup>7</sup>

After these words were spoken, the flag was handed to Amos A. Rouse of Company C, who had been chosen as the color sergeant of the regiment. The regiment saluted the flag and marched in review and they prepared to head to Virginia. The following day, the Fifth Michigan departed on two steamers the *May Queen* and the *Ocean*.<sup>8</sup>

While stationed near Alexandria, the regiment participated in minor skirmishing, but their first major battle experience came during the Peninsula Campaign at the battles of Yorktown and Williamsburg in May of 1862. During the battle of Williamsburg, Company C was the color company (the company that was located at the center of the line; the color guard to the left of them).<sup>9</sup> As the Fifth was preparing to charge, Lieutenant Gunning (commander of company C) encouraged the men. “Company C, you are responsible for the safety of those colors. Never let the enemy possess them.”<sup>10</sup> Colonel Terry also encouraged his troops. In a letter sent after the battle, he explained:

I made a short – very short – address to the command, not to forget the promise we had made when we received the national





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flag at Fort Wayne – that it should never trail in the dust. There was no response, but there was a silence more emphatic than any response a tongue can make – a silence that spoke a determination to defend the old flag or die.<sup>11</sup>

The men of the Fifth followed these orders and were commended for their actions after the battle, the regiment having been involved with capturing Confederate rifle pits. Lieutenant Gunning, however, did not survive the battle.<sup>12</sup>

Shortly after the Battle of Williamsburg, a change came to the color company. The Fifth Michigan, following one of the military standards of the day, designated the color company based on which company had the most senior captain. Company C's captain, Henry Trowbridge, died of typhoid on May 9, which meant that Company C was no longer the most senior company.<sup>13</sup> A private in Company C, Elbridge Franklin, explained the situation in a letter:

Originally we stood A, F, D, I C, H, E, K, G, B. Now we are as follows: A, H, F, D, E, K, G, C, I, B. It came very hard on us indeed to resign the colors to Co. E but it could not be avoided & we have the consolation of knowing that it was through no fault of ours that they were taken from us & that we safely brought them through a severe battle . . . Before the battle we could have resigned them without half the bitter feelings we now do. Having brought them safely through the action we felt proud of them. The more so as "Williamsburg" is to be inscribed on them . . . Alas! poor Co. C, she had no officers to

assert her rights & use their efforts to have her retain her place as color guard [Franklin probably means color company].<sup>14</sup>

These types of changes would have taken place throughout the war. While the color company changed, no existing documents indicate whether there was resulting changes in who carried the flag or if the color guard was a separate group that stayed consistent throughout. [See table for a list of how the color company designation rotated through the Fifth Michigan Infantry.]

Date	Engagements	Company
8/28/61 – 5/9/62	Williamsburg	C
5/9/62 – 6/22/62	Fair Oaks	E
6/22/62 – 7/18/62	Seven Days	F
7/18/62 – 9/16/62	Second Bull Run	K
9/16/62 – 1/25/63	Fredericksburg	D
1/25/63 – 5/5/63	Chancellorsville	H
5/5/63 – 10/1/63	Gettysburg	E
10/1/63 -6/10/64	Mine Run Wilderness Spotsylvania	F
6/10/64 – 9/19/64	Petersburg Deep Bottom	G
9/19/64 – 11/7/64	Hatcher's Run	I*
11/7/64 – 12/21/64		C
12/21/64 – 5/8/65	Appomattox	F*
5/8/65 -	Grand Review	A*

\*Old Third Companies redesignated and assigned to the Fifth





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Over the next several months, the Fifth Michigan participated in numerous other battles, including Malvern Hill, The Second Battle of Bull Run, and Chantilly.<sup>15</sup> After the Battle of Malvern Hill, Colonel Terry was promoted to Brigadier General and the regiment was commanded by several officers of lesser rank.<sup>16</sup>

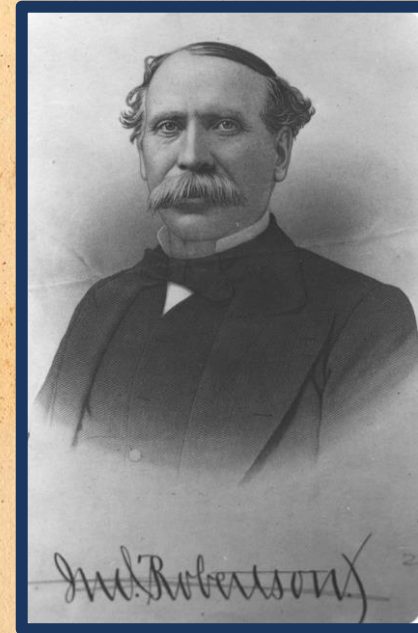
During the Battle of Fredericksburg, Lieutenant Colonel John Gilluly was in command of the regiment. The official after action report of the regiment reported that, "this was decidedly the most severe action in which the regiment had ever participated, considering its short duration."<sup>17</sup> Lieutenant Gilluly believed that some of the superior officer thought him a coward so, in an attempt to prove his bravery he rode into battle. This made him a sure target and he was killed leading the regiment. Gilluly had made a pact with a fellow soldier Lieutenant Hudson B. Blackman quartermaster of the regiment that if either were to fall the other would do all within his power to return his body to Michigan. Following the battle, under the cover of darkness, Blackman and several other men returned to the battlefield and retrieved Gilluly's body and ensured its return to Michigan. In addition to Gilluly, nine other men were killed and seventy-three were wounded at the Battle of Fredericksburg.<sup>18</sup> Two of the men killed were color bearers.<sup>19</sup>

By February of 1863, the Fifth's original flag was tattered and they returned it to Michigan. An article in the Detroit Advertiser and Tribune announced that the Flag was to be displayed in Detroit

before being sent to Lansing:

An interesting relic belonging to the gallant 5th Michigan Infantry, may be seen at F. Buhl & Co.'s store for a few days. It is the tattered ensign of the regiment. Its torn and defaced appearance tells its glorious history more eloquently than anything we can write. Although it has been replaced by a new stand of colors from the War Department, its honored folds can never be forgotten by the brave soldiers over whom it fluttered in hours of trial and danger in the Peninsula campaign, in which that gallant regiment bore such a distinguished part. The colors will be sent to Lansing in a few days, when it is proposed to place them in the State Department as choice mementos of an honorable history.<sup>20</sup>

While the article indicates that the flag was to be turned over to the state, John Robertson, in his *The Flags of Michigan*, which was published in 1877 says that the flag was turned over to the "regimental association".<sup>21</sup> In addition, Robertson recorded that five flags were turned over to the state during the flag ceremony in



Adjutant General  
John Robertson



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1866.<sup>22</sup> These five flags are currently in the collection, so unless Robertson is mistaken, the state's flag collection does not contain the original flag of the Fifth Michigan. The fact that none of the flags contain any battle honors (as Private Franklin stated the flag was to receive after Williamsburg) also supports this conclusion. Finally, several newspaper articles about regimental reunions held after the war state that the flags were carried during the reunion. While initially the state occasionally allowed flags to travel to reunions, this was uncommon, and it is unlikely that this would have taken place frequently.

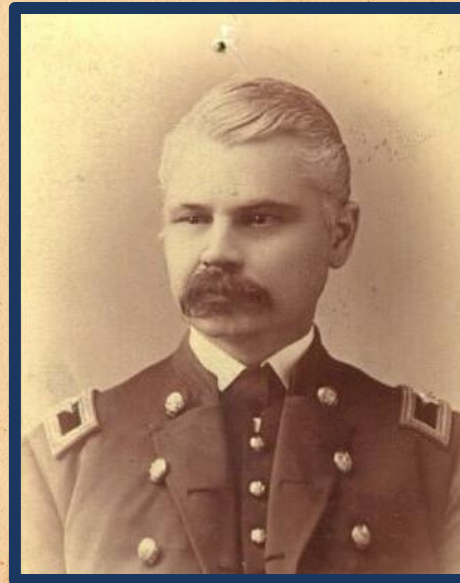
If the regimental association had retained the flag, it is much more likely that the flag would make an appearance at reunions. The article about the 1886 reunion is particularly telling. The article records that Otto Bergin carried the same flag he carried during the war.<sup>23</sup> By looking at Bergin's military record listed in the Record of Service of Michigan Volunteers During the Civil War, it appears that Bergin was a color bearer at the beginning of the war when the first flag was carried. In addition, Albertus Berry, a member of Company I, writing under the pen name of Cui Bono in 1887, states that the flag had been in the care of Otto Berger [Bergin] for several years. He also mentions the condition of the flag and states that eight color bearers were killed carrying the first flag of the regiment.<sup>24</sup>

The second flag of the Fifth Michigan Infantry was drawn from government stores at the War Department to replace the tattered flag that was returned to Michigan.<sup>25</sup> While the exact date the

regiment received the flag is unknown they certainly would have received it before their engagement in the Battle of Chancellorsville where their commander, Lieutenant Colonel Edward Sherlock, was killed in action. After this, command of the regiment was given to John Pulford.

The next major engagement that the Fifth Michigan was involved in was the Battle of Gettysburg.

Throughout the month of June, the regiment had made several long marches, sometimes covering more than twenty miles in one day. On July 2, 1863, they marched ten miles in three hours before entering the battle around 4:00 pm.<sup>26</sup> The regiment was engaged in furious fighting near the Wheatfield. Colonel Régis de Trobriand who was commanding the First Division, Third Brigade (which the Fifth was a part of), described an incident that happened during this battle:



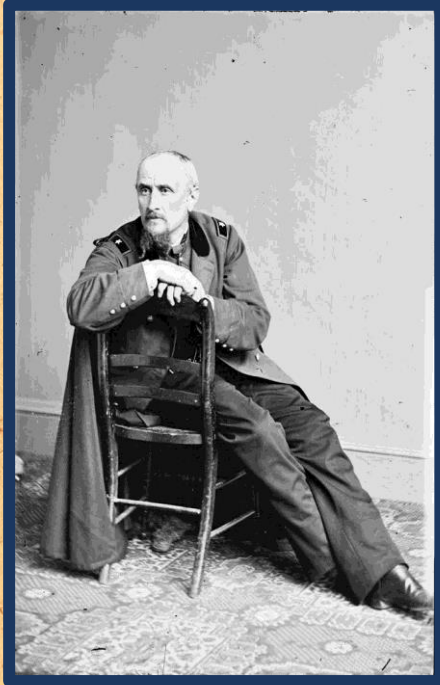
John Pulford  
(Postwar regular army photo c.  
late 1870's.)

I returned immediately to my





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Major General (formerly Colonel) Philippe Régis Denis de Keredern de Trobriand

men, advancing to the line of the Fifth Michigan . . . As I arrived near the colors, the color-bearer staggered, and fell back several paces. I called out "Steady!" "I am wounded," he said, with a choking voice. – "Where?" – "In the throat." I leaned over my horse and put my hand on his shoulder: "It is nothing," said I, "I see no blood." He immediately retook his place, raising up the flag. The ball, which had really struck him in the neck, had bounded off his leather collar, and the shock had choked him for a moment.<sup>27</sup>

While in this instance, the color bearer de Trobriand encountered was not wounded, this was not the case for many other men of the Fifth. In a report to Captain Fitzhugh Birney, assistant Adjutant General of the First Division, de Trobriand wrote, "The unflinching bravery of the 5<sup>th</sup> Michigan, which sustained a loss of more than

one-half of its numbers without yielding a foot of ground, deserves to be especially mentioned . . . with due commendation."<sup>28</sup> One of the men lost was color bearer William Harlan. He was wounded at the battle and died twelve days later. His obituary published in the Grand Rapids Daily Eagle mentions that of the six color bearers on the field that day, two were killed and two more were wounded.<sup>29</sup> Overall, during the battle, nineteen men were killed and ninety were wounded.<sup>30</sup>

Throughout the rest of 1863, the Fifth Michigan participated in several other, smaller campaigns including a skirmish at Auburn Heights and at Locust Grove. The regiment also spent three weeks stationed near New York following the New York draft riots in case they were needed to quell additional violence. At the end of December, the men who had reenlisted were granted a furlough to return to Michigan.<sup>31</sup> They arrived in Detroit on January 4, 1864. A crowd cheered them as they marched through the streets of Detroit. Speeches were made and Lieutenant Colonel Pulford implored the citizens of Michigan to consider enlisting as the Fifth Michigan had been reduced to a strength of 168 men.<sup>32</sup>

On February 10, 1864, the regiment's furlough was over and they began their journey back to the front. During the furlough, the regiment was successful in recruiting additional men.<sup>33</sup> In May, the men participated in the Battle of the Wilderness, by this point they may have received yet another new flag. The Detroit Advertiser and Tribune on May 9, 1864 had an article that was labeled as



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Correspondence from the First Michigan Infantry; however, nearly every name mentioned in the article as a casualty was a member of the Fifth Michigan Infantry. In the article, G. W. W.<sup>34</sup> reports that the regiment, “forwarded our old regimental colors to Philadelphia, by request of Mrs. Gen. Meade and Mrs. Gen. Birney, on the part of the committee on arms and trophies, for the great Sanitary Fair soon to be held in that city.”<sup>35</sup> The article further mentions that the flag that was forwarded was the flag that was carried at Gettysburg. It is not likely that the regiment would have forwarded their colors without having a replacement available in the field; however, there is no existing record of the origin of this replacement flag. It is possible that the regiment acquired a new flag during their time on furlough as that was a fairly common practice, but there is no evidence to prove this assumption in relation to the Fifth Michigan Infantry.

The correspondent also explains that, “At the close of the fair these colors are to be forwarded to Michigan and placed in the State Department by the side of the old original flag brought out by the regiment when it first left the State.”<sup>36</sup> This statement adds further complications to determining the fate of the regiment’s first flag. It’s possible that the original flag was going to be sent the state but was kept by someone else until it was handed over to the regimental association. Unless more original sources are found that clear up this confusion, we may never know the answer.

The flag mentioned as being sent to the Sanitary Commission Fair



SC-22-90 (left) and SC-23-90 (right)

was described as having been pierced twenty-six times. The article also mentions that the eagle on the flagstaff was carried away by musket balls.<sup>37</sup> Given this description, it is possible that the regiment’s second flag was SC-23-90 or SC-22-90. Both flags have sustained substantial loss and have the top of the staff shot off, but there are some significant differences. SC-23-90 is a national stars and stripes and SC-22-90 features the federal coat-of-arms. The article does not indicate what type of flag was sent.





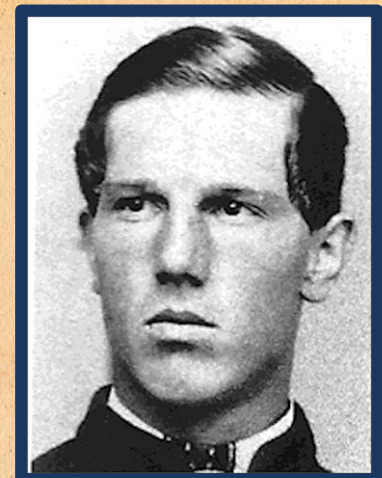
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During the Battle of the Wilderness and the Battle of Spottsylvania in May of 1864, the Fifth Michigan again sustained casualties including Lieutenant Colonel Pulford and several other officers. By May 7th the highest-ranking man in the regiment fit for duty was a lieutenant whose name has not been recorded. On May 11, the remaining members of the Fifth Michigan were consolidated with members of the Third Michigan Infantry who had similarly sustained heavy casualties. The combined regiment continued fighting and was engaged at Spottsylvania Court House where they again sustained heavy casualties.<sup>38</sup> A report Colonel Pulford (he was promoted in June 1864) wrote in September of 1864 details a breakdown of casualties in the brigade for these battles. Before the Wilderness, the Fifth Michigan had 365 men. At the Wilderness, thirty-eight men were killed, 167 were wounded, and sixteen were noted as missing for a total of 221 men. During the Battle of Spottsylvania Courthouse an additional six men were killed, sixty were wounded, and nine went missing for a total of seventy-five men. The Fifth Michigan lost 291 men and the Third Michigan suffered likewise, losing 162 men over the two battles.<sup>39</sup>

Through the horrendous fighting of these battles, the men of the Third and Fifth Michigan fought valiantly. The two regiments were credited with seizing at least three Confederate battle flags. Joseph Kemp, of the Fifth Michigan is credited with having seized a flag of the Thirty-first North Carolina Infantry at the Wilderness. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for this action.<sup>40</sup> William Renwick and Benjamin Morse of the Third Michigan were each credited with seizing a Confederate flag at Spottsylvania.<sup>41</sup> A newspaper article published in 1891 also credits John Braden of the Fifth with assisting in the capture of Confederate colors.<sup>42</sup> Whether he assisted Morse and Renwick or if this was yet another flag is unknown. Benjamin Morse was awarded the Medal of Honor for his action at Spottsylvania. His commendation records that the flag he seized was from the Fourth Georgia Battery.<sup>43</sup>

The Third and Fifth Michigan continued to fight alongside each other participating in several other engagements through May of 1864 including North Anna River. By early June they were at Cold Harbor. During a break in the fighting, the enlistment terms for the original enlistees of the Third Michigan expired. Men who enlisted later than their comrades and the men who had reenlisted were transferred permanently to the Fifth Michigan Infantry.<sup>44</sup> When they were consolidated, the Fifth Michigan was reorganized into



Joseph Kemp







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six companies and the Third Michigan was organized into four companies.<sup>45</sup> The consolidated regiment retained the Fifth Michigan designation, probably because there were already plans to form a Reorganized Third Michigan Infantry.

This reorganization lent itself to a creative story appearing in the Detroit Free Press in October of 1864. The Free Press article cites the Waverly Magazine as publishing an article about the Fifth Michigan being asked to turn over their flag due to the consolidation:

One of the Michigan Regiments, known as "The Fighting Fifth," while passing through Washington, after they had participated in many a sanguinary conflict, from the appearance of their decimated ranks, it was considered best to consolidate them with another regiment. This they were willing should be done. They were then asked to surrender the powder-smoked and bullet torn banner which they so bravely carried over many a hard contested battlefield. But to this they demurred, and, before doing so, their gallant Col. P. ordered a review. He then rode up to the front of his regiment and asked his brave command if they should surrender to friend or foe the banner they loved so well. Never was there a more hearty response than came from this little band of patriots true. Their answer was, 'No, never! Never! Never!'

The General in command then, and who stood to receive the

banner, said that he would oblige them to give it up. He then ordered out six frowning pieces of artillery and had them placed on an elevation commanding the regiment. He then ordered them loaded and his men stood waiting for the command to fire. He then repeated his request, which was again refused. The men of the 5th were not the men to flinch even at the cannon's mouth. They were already well schooled in this they had been there before.

Their worthy Colonel, then, (who shares alike the perils of war with his men) again rode to the front, and ordered his men to load, a task soon accomplished by their veteran ranks. He then ordered them to dip their colors three times, which they did, adding such cheers as only the soldiers know how to give. Then came the deep toned soldiers words, 'Forward! Double quick! March!'; and they were on their charge many perhaps expecting it to be their last charge. But little did they think of this. They were charging to uphold the banner by them held as dear as life itself.

They were, however, soon met with a truce by the General in command, and were halted. The General then rode up to Col. P, and, with moistened eyes, he grasped him by the hand, saying

'I cannot find utterance to command my men to fire on such soldiers as now stand before me. The flag is yours, keep it; it





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shall never be taken from you. None are more worthy of it.'

Then was the air fairly rent with cheer after cheer, by the artillery men, and all who witnessed the dauntless courage of the gallant Fighting 5th.[46](#)

Besides this newspaper article, there is no other record that this incident ever took place. Additionally, the regiment was not near Washington at any point during the time this event was supposed to have taken place. Instead, they were in the field taking part in even more fighting. In June they participated in the first assault on Petersburg.[47](#)

After this assault failed, they participated in picket duty around Petersburg and fought in skirmishes near the Jerusalem Plank Road and fighting at Deep Bottom in July. Daniel Crotty, originally one of the color bearers in the Third Michigan mentioned the use of the colors at Deep Bottom, "The place for the colors at such a time is in the rear, far enough from the skirmish line to keep in sight."[48](#) Crotty continues to explain that as the men advanced the Confederate troops were reinforced and that, "Anna has remained with the colors, but this time we are too close to the front line, and unless we get back they may be captured."[49](#) From this description, it appears that the regiment's colors were left behind, but within sight of the men and that Anna Etheridge, who served as a nurse for the regiment, was also in this area which was initially thought of as a safe location. Crotty and the other men hurried back toward the flag and were able to prevent the feared capture. Crotty



Anna Etheridge

that the regiment was repulsed several times and ended up in the same location despite a the loss of many men.[50](#)

Throughout the rest of 1864, the regiment continued to serve around Petersburg participating in engagements at Strawberry Plains and Boydton Plank Road. They took additional casualties in these engagements and in December of 1864, yet another regiment was consolidated with the Fifth. The First U. S. Sharpshooters

was composed of men from Michigan. They were permanently transferred to the Fifth on December 23, 1864.[51](#)

The early months of 1865 were relatively quiet for the Fifth Michigan as they had picket duty around Petersburg and occupied winter quarters near the city.[52](#) On March 14, 1865, the regiment received a new stand of colors drawn from government supplies. On March 23, the Detroit Advertiser and Tribune published a letter from H. F. L.[53](#) describing the ceremony around these flags, "Last evening at dress-parade a beautiful set of new colors, consisting of



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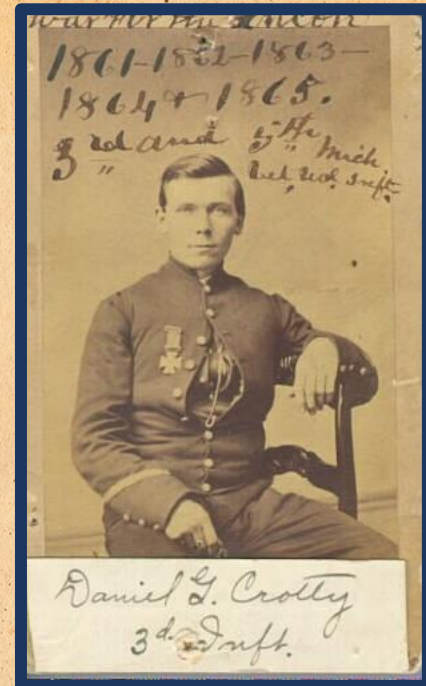
a regimental banner and a national flag, were formally presented to the regiment by Col. Pulford in a short and appropriate address."<sup>54</sup> The Detroit Free Press also ran an article about the Fifth's new flag from a correspondent known as S. He repeats much of what H. F. L. stated, but also comments that the flag is the third stand of colors the regiment has, "borne honorably and triumphantly through the terrible ordeal of battle since the commencement of this rebellion."<sup>55</sup> If these flags are indeed only the third set of colors the regiment had, identifying the flags becomes even more difficult and the identity of the flag sent to the Sanitary Fair is unknown. It is also possible that S. was only talking about flags that were received as a stand of colors (both national and regimental) or that S. was mistaken about the number of flags the regiment had.

Only a few days later, this new flag was carried into battle by Daniel Crotty at the Battle of Hatcher's Run. In carrying the flag for the Fifth, he became a flag bearer for a second time. In his memoirs he recalled what happened on March 25:

The fire along the line is deafening, and the remnant of the Old Third, with the gallant "Fighting Fifth," never fought better during the whole war. The foe gets away from our front and make an onslaught on the regiment to our right, and they have to give way against fearful odds. The enemy now pour an enfilading fire on us, and get reinforced in our front. For a while we hold them, and pour the bullets from our breach-loading guns among them, but they are too many for us, and charge

right into our midst. Of course I must get away with my colors, and a number around me are taken prisoners. Looking behind me, I see a large corn field to be crossed, and with several of the boys start to run the gauntlet. The rebels open on us, and the balls spat around us like hail. Some of our comrades fall dead, but we must keep on and get out of the way. Of course, it would not be gallant to say that anybody run, but if there was any tall walking done during the war, we did it crossing that field. All is now utter confusion. The rebels turn our guns on us. They have captured a large number of prisoners, and unless something is done we shall all be captured, for the rebels are advancing in large force.<sup>56</sup>

Crotty kept the flag from being captured at Hatcher's run, and it was this flag that was carried into Petersburg after the city fell. Robertson reports that the Fifth's flag was the first flag to fly over the Confederate works at Petersburg.<sup>57</sup> However, the honor for flying the first flag over Petersburg really belongs to another Michigan





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regiment, the First Michigan Sharpshooters.[58](#)

The Fall of Petersburg was a significant milestone towards ending the war. The Fifth Michigan participated in pursuing the retreating Confederate troops. On April 6th they engaged the Confederates and captured 173 wagons and 145 prisoners at Sailor's Creek.[59](#) In addition they captured a stand of Confederate colors. For this Sergeant John W. Menter and Corporal Walter L. Mundell received the Medal of Honor.[60](#)

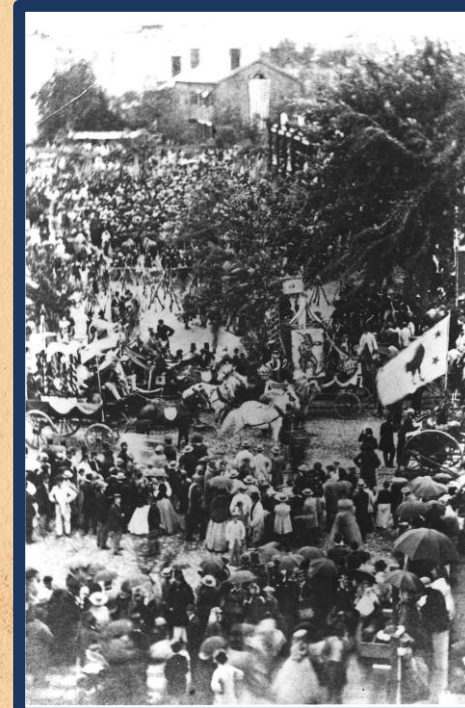
Three days after Sailor's Creek, the Fifth Michigan was present at Lee's surrender at Appomattox. From there, they began to march north back towards Washington D.C. by way of Richmond.[61](#) Daniel Crotty mentions the colors one more time in his account of the war. He describes marching through Richmond:

We unfurl our tattered flags and carry them in triumph through the city that caused their war-worn looks. We are all proud of our old flags and it is hoped that they will be cherished with the greatest veneration not only by those that have caused to love every star and stripe that hangs together, but all who love and honor the beautiful emblem of our Free Government.[62](#)

The Fifth Michigan participated in the Grand Review in Washington D.C. and proceeded home to Michigan traveling through Louisville, Kentucky and Jeffersonville, Indiana. They arrived in Detroit on July 8th and were disbanded on July 17th.[63](#) The Fifth Michigan had seen some severe fighting during the war. Many sources argue that

this regiment had the fourth highest number of men killed in action or died of wounds among Union infantry regiments during the war.[64](#)

Almost a year after returning to Michigan, the Fifth Michigan Infantry joined all the other Michigan Regiments in Detroit for a flag return ceremony. The regiments reformed and marched through



1866 Flag Return Ceremony

the streets of Detroit where they surrendered their regimental colors to the care of the state.[65](#) During the ceremony, the Fifth Michigan Infantry returned five flags. These five flags (SC-22-90, SC-23-90, SC-27-90, SC-39-90, and SC-40-90) are still in the state's flag collection. Unlike some of the other flags in the collection, there are few markings to help distinguish when each flag was used in the war. In addition, based on descriptions of the flags that appeared in newspapers and soldier's accounts, there are certainly some flags that were never handed over to the state.



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SC-23-90 (left), SC-39-90 (center), and SC-40-90 (right)

Three of the flags in the collection (SC-23-90, SC-39-90, and SC-40-90) are national flags. Of the three national flags, SC-39-90 has the most distinctive markings on it. This flag has a leather tag sewn on it that reads "5th Infantry Rec. A.G.O. Feb. 3, 1865." This tag appears to indicate that the flag was sent back to Michigan and was received by the Adjutant General's Office. Assuming that the tag is correct, this flag was likely carried sometime after the second flag of the regiment was sent to the Sanitary Fair, but before the flag drawn from government stores was presented to the regiment in March of 1865. It is possible, then, that this flag was carried at Gettysburg, the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, and/or Cold Harbor.

SC-40-90 is a thirty-four star flag, which usually indicate that the flag would have been carried early in the war (before West Virginia became a state and added a thirty-fifth star to the flag). However, since no flags from the Fifth Michigan Infantry in the collection have thirty-five stars and we know that the regiment had multiple flags after West Virginia became a state, the regiment may not have followed



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this tradition. SC-40-90 has some unusual features including a homemade staff and peekaboo stars (where star shapes are cut out of the blue material of the canton, so the stars show through on the reverse rather than sewing another layer of material on the reverse). This flag also has gold bullion fringe. Taken together these features would typically indicate a presentation flag, but it does not fit the description of the regiment's first flag. It is possible that this flag was given to the Fifth when they were on furlough or that they had it made for the Grand Review. However, no description matching this flag has been found, so it is difficult to determine when this flag may have been used.

Two flags appear to be consistent with the type of flag that would have been drawn from government stores. SC-23-90 is a national flag with thirty-four stars and SC-22-90 is flag that featured the federal coat of arms. This flag suffered severe loss. Both flags have sustained loss, but the loss in SC-22-90 is much more severe.

The final flag in the collection is a small, swallow tail flag that would have been used as a flank marker. A flank marker would have been used to mark the end of the regiment's line. These flags did not have the same sentimental value or use that the standards of the regiment had and thus, were not commented on very often. We have no record of this flag from historic sources other than that it was given to the state by the regiment during the flag ceremony. After the war, the Fifth Michigan had frequent reunions where the men would get together to discover what had become of their



SC-27-90

carried their flags in a Grand Army of the Republic parade in 1891.<sup>66</sup>

One final mention of the flags of the Fifth Michigan was made in 1924. In Michigan History Magazine, M. Ferrey, curator of the Pioneer and Historical Collections, mentions that during discussions about where to hang a portrait of Charles Carroll in 1871, Senator Isaac M. Cravath, a veteran of the Twelfth Michigan Volunteer Infantry, suggested that the portrait be hung next to the portrait of the Marquis de Lafayette, "and above both we will spread the torn battle flag of the Fifth Michigan Infantry."<sup>67</sup> If this plan was carried out, the flag of the Fifth Michigan would have hung in the Senate of the second capitol. Unfortunately, no known sources can verify that this plan was executed.

comrades and reminisce about the war. Newspaper articles covering these reunions occasionally mention the colors of the regiment. In addition, in 1886 when Otto Bergin carried the flag in a parade, the Fifth also



# COLOR COMPANY THE FLAG BEARERS



By regulation, every infantry regiment was to be issued a stand of colors, consisting of two flags: a national (the familiar “Stars and Stripes”) and a regimental (similar to the Michigan state flag, except that Michigan’s coat-of-arms was usually replaced by the federal coat-of-arms, its outstretched eagle a powerful symbol of the Union the regiment was fighting to preserve). Measuring six and one half feet by six feet and borne on ten foot staffs, bearing the regiment’s name emblazoned in gold, and made of brilliant silk fringed and tasseled, these huge banners were designed to be easily seen and instantly recognized by every man of the regiment.

One company (approximately 100 men) was designated as the color company and was charged with the primary responsibility of guarding and carrying the flags into battle. From within the color company, the color bearers (who were most often noncommissioned officers) were selected for their military bearing, their exemplary moral character—and their bravery. The color company was placed in the center of the battle line and set the pace and direction of the regiment, with hundreds of men “guiding on the colors.” During the noise, confusion and smoke of battle, the flags were in the thick of the action. Men caught up in the melee looked to their colors to maintain their position and to prevent becoming separated from their regiment. Thus, the size and brilliance of the flags is easily understood: they had to be highly visible and instantly identifiable. Held aloft where all could see them, flags rallied the regiment in moments of confusion and despair and infused them with renewed determination.

Both Union and Confederate flags became instant targets of fierce enemy fire as each side realized that the simplest way to demoralize and disorient an opposing regiment was to shoot down its flag—or the person carrying it. The greatest casualties of the war both north and south—were suffered by those who carried the flags in battle. It was not unusual for a flag to be shot to tatters in a single engagement, its staff struck and shattered, and bearer after bearer killed or wounded. Every member of the color company—and, indeed, every member of the regiment— was expected to sacrifice his life, if necessary, to prevent the loss of the regiment’s flags in battle. Unimaginable acts of heroism were associated with their defense. The loss of a flag to the enemy meant humiliation and disgrace for the regiment. Conversely, capturing an enemy flag brought honor and fame. The Medal of Honor was instituted during the Civil War to honor Union troops for acts of extreme bravery. Sixty-nine Michigan men eventually received the medal—most through petition long after the war was over—for a variety of heroic actions. Only thirteen received it during the war, all for the capture of an enemy flag.



# COLOR COMPANY THE FLAG BEARERS



The following individuals can be documented as having served in the regiment's color guard. Their names appear in the Civil War Service Records Collection at the Archives of Michigan and on the Michiganology website <https://michiganology.org/civil-war/>

**Otto A. Berger.** "(Veteran), Franklin. Enlisted in Company D, Fifth Infantry, as Corporal, June 19, 1861, at Fort Wayne, for 3 years, age 22. Mustered Aug. 28, 1861. Sergeant Aug. 15, 1862. Color Sergeant. Re-enlisted Dec. 15, 1863, at Brandy Station, Va. Mustered Dec. 27, 1863. Wounded in action May 20, 1864. Commissioned Second Lieutenant Aug. 28, 1864. Mustered Nov. 2, 1864. Commissioned First Lieutenant, May 8, 1865. Mustered May 17, 1865. Mustered out at Jeffersonville, Ind., July 5, 1865. Was engaged in the following battles: Yorktown, Williamsburg, Fair Oaks, seven days before Richmond, Manassas, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Wapping Heights, Locust Grove, Mine Run, Wilderness and Spottsylvania [sic]." [68](#)

**Daniel G. Crotty.** "(Veteran). Enlisted in Company F, Third Infantry, May 13, 1861, at Grand Rapids, for 3 years, age 21. Mustered June 10, 1861. Re-enlisted Dec. 24, 1863, at Brandy Station, Va. Mustered Dec. 24, 1863. Transferred to Company F, Fifth Infantry, June 10, 1864. Sergeant. Commissioned Second Lieutenant, Company A, May 8, 1865. Mustered out at Jeffersonville, Ind., July 5, 1865." [69](#)

**William C. Harlan (Harland).** "Cascade. Enlisted in Company F, Fifth Infantry, Sept. 8, 1861, at Fort Wayne, for 3 years, age 20. Mustered Sept. 10, 1861. Wounded in action at Fair Oaks, Va., May 31, 1862. Died July 12, 1863, of wounds received in action at Gettysburg, Pa., July 2, 1863. Buried in National Cemetery at Gettysburg, Pa. Grave No. 10. Section I." [70](#)

**Amos A. Rouse.** "Port Huron. Enlisted in Company E, Fifth Infantry, as Sergeant, June 19, 1861, at Fort Wayne, for 3 years, age 28. Mustered Aug. 28, 1861. Commissioned Second Lieutenant July 17, 1862. Mustered Jan 17, 1863. Commissioned First Lieutenant Nov. 28, 1862. Mustered Dec. 10, 1862. Wounded in action at Gettysburg, Pa., July 2, 1863. Commissioned Captain, company B, July 6, 1863. Mustered Nov. 3, 1863. Dismissed by sentence of General Court Martial Sept. 25, 1864. In battles of Yorktown, Williamsburg, Fair Oaks, Peach Orchard, Charles City Cross Roads, Malvern Hill, Manassas, Chantilly, Fredericksburg, Cedars, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Auburn, Kelly's Ford, Locust Grove, Mine Run and Glendale." [71](#)



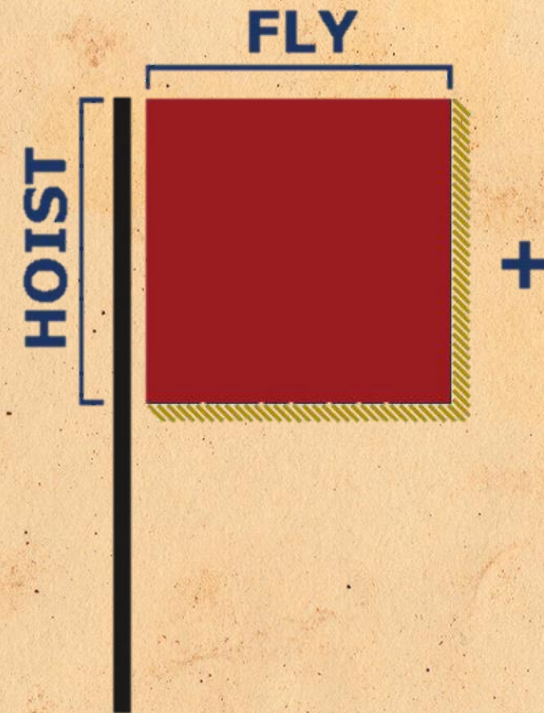


# THE FLAGS



**Note on Measurements:** All dimensions give the height of the flag (called the “hoist” and measured along the staff side of the flag) first, followed by the width (called the “fly” and measured from the outside edge of the sleeve to the flag’s free edge). Measurements exclude the fringe, which is measured separately. All measurements are in inches. A plus symbol (+) following a measurement means the flag is fragmentary and once extended further in that direction.

**Note on Catalogue Numbers:** “**SC**” refers to the State Capitol (the flags are State Capitol artifacts). The two-digit number at the end refers to the year the flags were catalogued and accessioned by the Michigan Historical Museum.





# THE FLAGS



**SC-22-90:** *Silk national coat-of-arms.* ▪ *Dimensions: 28"x6"+* ▪ *Cotton Fringe: 2.25"*

The remains of what appears to be a blue silk flag that initially bore the national coat of arms. The flag was painted and what appears to be the wing of an eagle is visible on the right edge of the remaining fragment. The fabric on the hoist end was fashioned into a sleeve for attachment to the flagstaff. Remnants of gold colored fringe remain on the top and bottom of the flag. The fly end is completely gone.

The staff measures 8'2" by 1 ¼" in diameter and is topped by the base of a finial. The finial is missing. The remaining portion of the base measures 3 1/8" by 1/16". The staff of flags returned to the state in the 1866 Detroit ceremony marking the end of the war all bear identical brass plaques. The plaque reads in Spencerian script, "5th Mich. Infantry".

The flag has a 9'10" blue and white cord with a blue and white tassel. The tassel was built over a wooden core and is 2" in diameter.

The flag was netted (sewn between layers of dyed net) in the 1960s in an early attempt at conservation.



# THE FLAGS



**SC-23-90:** *Silk national.* ▪ *Dimensions: 73"74"x* ▪ *Cotton Fringe: 2.5"*

National flag appearing to have 34 stars arranged in two concentric ovals with twenty stars in the outer oval, nine stars in the inner oval, one star in the center, and one in each corner. The stars on the outer oval, top right, and top left of the canton are missing. There is also loss on the fly end of the flag. The hoist end of the flag was fashioned into a sleeve for attachment to the staff. Remnants of gold colored cotton fringe run along the top and bottom of the flag.

The staff measures 8½" by 1¼" in diameter and is topped by the base of a finial. The finial is missing. The remaining portion of the base measures 3 1/8" by 1 1/16". The staff of flags returned to the state in the 1866 Detroit ceremony marking the end of the war all bear identical brass plaques. The plaque reads in Spencerian script, "5th Mich. Infantry".

The flag has a 6' gold bullion cord with a gold bullion tassel. The tassel measures 7" in length.

The flag was netted (sewn between layers of dyed net) in the 1960s in an early attempt at conservation.



# THE FLAGS



**SC-27-90:** *Silk national guidon. ▪ Dimensions: 25.5"33.25+"*



A swallowtail national guidon with thirty visible stars. The stars are painted in two concentric circles with stars in each corner. Due to loss in the canton, it is impossible to determine the number of stars the flag had originally. The flag has a sleeve, but ties were added at some point, most likely for display purposes.

The staff measures 7'7½" by 1 ¼" in diameter. There is no finial. The staff of flags returned to the state in the 1866 Detroit ceremony marking the end of the war all bear identical brass plaques. The plaque reads in Spencerian script, "5th Mich. Infantry".

The flag was netted (sewn between layers of nylon net) in the 1960s in an early attempt at conservation.



# THE FLAGS



**SC-39-90:** *Silk national.* ▪ *Dimensions: 70.5"61+"* ▪ *Cotton Fringe: 2.5"*

National flag with painted stars. Due to loss, it is impossible to determine the original number of stars on the flag, but remaining stars suggest the stars on the flag were arranged in two concentric circles with stars in each corner of the canton. There is a significant amount of loss on the fly end of the flag. The hoist end of the flag was fashioned into a sleeve for attachment to the staff. Remnants of gold colored cotton fringe remain attached to the top and bottom of the flag.

The staff measures 7' 6" by 1 1/8" in diameter and is topped by a finial. The finial is a wooden spear shaped finial carved into the staff and painted gold. It measures 7 1/16" by 1" at the widest point. The staff has three holes running vertically near the top of the staff. These are most likely from nails used to attach the flag to the staff. The staff of flags returned to the state in the 1866 Detroit ceremony marking the end of the war all bear identical brass plaques. The plaque reads in Spencerian script, "5th Mich. Infantry".

The flag has a 5' 1" gold bullion cord with a gold bullion tassel. The tassel measures 7" in length. The flag was netted (sewn between layers of dyed net) in the 1960s in an early attempt at conservation.





# THE FLAGS



**SC-40-90:** *Silk national.* ▪ *Dimensions: 73"77"* ▪ *Gold Bullion Fringe: 3"*

A national flag with thirty-four peek-a-boo stars. Peek-a-boo stars are stars that are sewed onto one side of the flag and the canton is cut away on the reverse, so the star is visible on both sides. Since the flag has thirty-four stars it is most likely an early war flag created before West Virginia became a state in 1863. The flag is mostly intact, though there is some loss along the fly end. Gold bullion is attached on three sides. There is some question to the method used to attach this flag to the staff as there is no visible sleeve. Ties were added sometime after the war, most likely to facilitate the display of the flag.

The staff measures 8' by 1 ¼" in diameter and appears to be hand whittled, not machine cut. The top of the staff was whittled into a peg to allow for a finial, however the finial is missing. The base of the staff was whittled to a point. The staff is slightly discolored where the flag would have been attached. It appears the discoloration may be from the blue dye of the canton. Also in this area is written, "Front of Flag – Sand down". The letters HSV are carved into the staff approximately 41 inches from the top. The staff of flags returned to the state in the 1866 Detroit ceremony marking the end of the war all bear identical brass plaques. The plaque reads in Spencerian script, "5th Mich. Infantry".

The flag has a 5' 6" gold bullion cord with a gold bullion tassels. The tassels measures 7" in length.

The flag was netted (sewn between layers of dyed net) in the 1960s in an early attempt at conservation.





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- (2) John Robertson, *Michigan In the War* (Lansing: W. S. George and Co. State Printers and Binders, 1882), 236.
- (3) *Ibid*, 237
- (4) "The War The Fifth Regiment Presentation of Colors" *Detroit Free Press*, September 12, 1861.
- (5) *Ibid*.
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- (7) *Ibid*.
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- (9) John Braden "The Color Company" Save the Flags Fifth Michigan Files
- (10) Elbridge Franklin, unpublished letter (typed transcript in Save the Flags Fifth Michigan Files), May 24, 1862.
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- (12) Robertson, *Michigan in the War*, 237.
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- (14) Elbridge Franklin, unpublished letter, May 8, 1862, Qtd. in Braden
- (15) Robertson, *Michigan in the War*, 241.
- (16) Robertson, *Michigan in the War*, 945.
- (17) Robertson, *Michigan in the War*, 241.
- (18) *Ibid*.





# END NOTES



- [\(19\)](#) “Another Brave Boy Gone” *Grand Rapids Daily Eagle*, August 15, 1863.
- [\(20\)](#) “An Honored Flag” *Detroit Advertiser and Tribune*, February 18, 1863.
- [\(21\)](#) John Robertson, *Flags of Michigan* (Lansing: W.S. George and Co., State Printers and Binders, 1877), 35.
- [\(22\)](#) Robertson, *Michigan in the War*, 90.
- [\(23\)](#) “The Fighting Fifth” *Detroit Free Press*, August 26, 1886.
- [\(24\)](#) Cui Bono “Recollections of a Private in the Army of the Potomac” *National Tribune*, June 23, 1887.
- [\(25\)](#) “An Honored Flag” *Detroit Advertiser and Tribune*, February 18, 1863.
- [\(26\)](#) Robertson, *Michigan in the War*, 242.
- [\(27\)](#) Regis de Trobriand, *Four Years with the Army of the Potomac* (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1889), 498.
- [\(28\)](#) Robertson, *Michigan in the War*, 242.
- [\(29\)](#) “Another Brave Boy Gone” *Grand Rapids Daily Eagle*, August 15, 1863.
- [\(30\)](#) Robertson, *Michigan in the War*, 243.
- [\(31\)](#) Ibid.
- [\(32\)](#) “Local Intelligence” *Detroit Free Press*, January 5, 1864.
- [\(33\)](#) Robertson, *Michigan in the War*, 243.
- [\(34\)](#) Six men of the regiment have the initials of G.W.W. or G. W. and could have been with the regiment at this time. The most likely candidate is George W. Waldron who was First Lieutenant and Adjutant of the regiment at the time the correspondence was written.
- [\(35\)](#) “Our Army Correspondence” *Detroit Advisor and Tribune*, May 9, 1864.



# END NOTES



[\(36\)](#) “Our Army Correspondence” *Detroit Advisor and Tribune*, May 9, 1864.

[\(37\)](#) Ibid.

[\(38\)](#) Robertson, *Michigan in the War*, 244.

[\(39\)](#) “Report of the Second Brigade, Third Division, Second Army Corp” qtd in Robertson, *Michigan in the War*, 245-248.

[\(40\)](#) Michigan Civil War Centennial Observance Commission, *A Study in Valor: Michigan Medal of Honor Winners in the Civil War* (Lansing, 1966) 13.

[\(41\)](#) Robertson, *Michigan in the War*, 244.

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[\(43\)](#) Michigan Civil War Centennial Observance Commission, *A Study in Valor: Michigan Medal of Honor Winners in the Civil War* (Lansing, 1966) 32-33.

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[\(47\)](#) Robertson, *Michigan in the War*, 244.

[\(48\)](#) Daniel Crotty, *Four Years Campaigning in the Army of the Potomac* (Grand Rapids, MI: Dygert Bros. & Co., 1874) 148.

[\(49\)](#) Ibid.

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[\(51\)](#) Robertson, *Michigan in the War*, 256.

[\(52\)](#) Ibid.



# END NOTES



- [\[53\]](#) This is probably Henry F. Lyster who served as a surgeon with the Fifth.
- [\[54\]](#) "Our Army Correspondence" *Detroit Advertiser and Tribune*, March 23, 1865.
- [\[55\]](#) "From Meade's Army" *Detroit Free Press*, March 25, 1865.
- [\[56\]](#) Crotty, 160-161.
- [\[57\]](#) Robertson, *Michigan in the War*, 256.
- [\[58\]](#) Raymond Herek, *These Men Have Seen Hard Service: The First Michigan Sharpshooters in the Civil War* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998) 325.
- [\[59\]](#) Robertson, *Michigan in the War*, 256.
- [\[60\]](#) Michigan Civil War Centennial Observance Commission, 26-27.
- [\[61\]](#) Robertson, *Michigan in the War*, 257.
- [\[62\]](#) Crotty, 188.
- [\[63\]](#) Robertson, *Michigan in the War*, 257.
- [\[64\]](#) Claude S. Larzelre, *The Story of Michigan: Michigan in the Civil War* (Lansing: The Michigan Education Company, 1924) 12.
- [\[65\]](#) Robertson, *Michigan in the War*, 90.
- [\[66\]](#) *Detroit Free Press*, August 5, 1891.
- [\[67\]](#) "Historical Notes" *Michigan History Magazine* Vol 8. (1924): 409.
- [\[68\]](#) Michigan, Adjutant-General's Dept., Record of Service of Michigan Volunteers in the Civil War, 1861-1865. Vol. 5 of 46 (Kalamazoo: Ihling bros. and Everard, 190-), 13.
- [\[69\]](#) Michigan, Adjutant-General's Dept., Record of Service of Michigan Volunteers in the Civil War, 1861-1865. Vol. 3 of 46 (Kalamazoo: Ihling bros. and Everard, 190-), 30.



# END NOTES



[\[70\]](#) Michigan, Adjutant-General's Dept., Record of Service of Michigan Volunteers in the Civil War, 1861-1865. Vol. 5 of 46 (Kalamazoo: Ihling bros. and Everard, 190-), 55-6.

[\[71\]](#) Michigan, Adjutant-General's Dept., Record of Service of Michigan Volunteers in the Civil War, 1861-1865. Vol. 3 of 46 (Kalamazoo: Ihling bros. and Everard, 190-), 107.