

A HISTORY OF THE EIGHTH KANSAS VOLUNTEER INFANTRY, 1861-1866,
WITH EMPHASIS ON ITS PARTICIPATION IN THE CAMPAIGNS
BEFORE CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE, SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER, 1863

A Thesis
Presented to
the Division of Social Sciences
Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

by
Lawrence Dale Forsythe Jr.
January 1970

William H. Seiler
Approved for the Major Department

James B. Boyler
Approved for the Graduate Council

297890^v .

DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this thesis to the memory of Charles Winfield Thompson, my grandfather and a fine historian in his own right. To him I owe my lifelong interest in the Civil War.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank Dr. William H. Seiler for his direction and help in compiling this work.

I also wish to thank the staff of the Kansas State Historical Society for the courtesy, encouragement and help rendered during the research and writing of this thesis.

My deep appreciation goes to my wife, Linda, who was steadfast in her support and encouragement while this work was in progress.

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CHAPTER I

ORGANIZATION OF THE EIGHTH KANSAS VOLUNTEER INFANTRY

AUGUST, 1861-JULY, 1862

The organization of the Eighth Kansas Volunteer Infantry was begun in August, 1861. Company A, the first company to be mustered into the Union service, entered United States Army rolls on August 28, 1861. The original intention of the army was that the Eighth Kansas would see service in defense of the Kansas borders.¹

In the summer of 1861, Kansas was a state with hostile Indians on its southern and western borders, and there were many Confederates in Missouri on the eastern border. Under these circumstances "an invasion of Kansas was supposed to be inevitable."²

As was most of the other Kansas Volunteer regiments, the Eighth Kansas was a mixed organization. The intention was to have it consist of eight companies of infantry and two companies of cavalry. The purpose of this type of

¹Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Kansas, 1861-1865 (Topeka: The Kansas State Printing Company, 1896), p. 98; hereafter referred to as Report, 1861-1865.

²Ibid.

organization was to better adapt the regiment for service against Confederate raiders and especially for the defense of the Missouri border.³

Charles Robinson, Governor of Kansas, appointed Major Henry W. Wessels of the Sixth United States Infantry to the command of the newly formed Eighth Kansas Infantry. Wessels was an experienced soldier and a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. In October of 1861, the headquarters of the Eighth Kansas was formed at Lawrence. During this period only companies A, D, H, and G were located there; the other companies were on duty in other parts of the state. On November 30, 1861, the Eighth Kansas Volunteer Infantry boasted 678 officers and men.⁴

In December of 1861, a new company commanded by Lieutenant John Conover joined the regiment. In addition to the formation of a new company within the regiment, the other companies were also strengthened by recruitment. By December 13, 1861, the regiment had a total strength of

³Ibid.

⁴John A. Martin, History of the Eighth Kansas Veteran Volunteer Infantry (Leavenworth: The Daily Bulletin Steam Book and Job Printing House, 1869), p. 2; hereafter referred to as Martin, Volunteer Infantry.

740 soldiers in its service. During 1861, seven men died and one was discharged because of disability; all were victims of disease.⁵

The first regimental officers to command the Eighth Kansas were Colonel Henry W. Wessels commanding, United States Army; Lieutenant Colonel John A. Martin, second in command; Major Edward F. Schneider, executive officer; Adjutant S. C. Russell; Quartermaster E. P. Bancroft.⁶

As 1861 came to a close the first chapter of one of the greatest fighting units in Kansas history had begun to unfold. True, Kansas has furnished several famous soldiers to the archives of history, but it is doubtful that the heroic service rendered by the Eighth Kansas Volunteer Infantry in the Civil War can be equaled by any other Kansas military organizations. These men and boys from the farms and towns of a prairie state were destined to play leading roles in several of the greatest battles of the Civil War. In the tumult and fury of Chickamauga, the battle flags of the Eighth Kansas waved undaunted. In the dash for Orchard Knob, and again up Missionary Ridge, the two charges which cut the heart out of the Confederate

⁵Report, 1861-1865, p. 100.

⁶Topeka Capital, August 28, 1928, p. 2.

siege of Chattanooga, Tennessee, the Eighth Kansas was outstanding in the fight.

The molding of a great fighting machine was not complete as 1861 closed, but if one believes that an army is no better than its officers, then a glance at the record of commanders of the Eighth Kansas gives the reader justification for the steady performance and excellent morale of that regiment through the darkest days of the Civil War. The Eighth was more fortunate than most of the volunteer regiments of its day. From the time of its existence, this regiment was not destined to suffer from lack of competent leadership. In Colonel Wessels, the men of the Eighth Kansas began their careers under the guidance of an officer of the "old army." When Colonel Wessels was transferred back to his old Sixth Regiment of the regular army, the command of the Eighth Kansas was assumed by a young man by the name of John Alexander Martin.⁷

Lieutenant Colonel Martin had not reached the age of twenty-two when he succeeded to the command of the regiment. In Viet Nam there are some fine young officers leading platoons and companies, but John Martin was commander

⁷Martha B. Caldwell (ed.), "Some Notes on the Eighth Kansas Infantry and the Battle of Chickamauga," Kansas Historical Quarterly, Vol. 13, May 1944 (Topeka: The Kansas State Historical Society, 1945), p. 139; hereafter referred to as Caldwell, Notes.



Figure 1. John A. Martin as he appeared in 1861 while serving as Lieutenant Colonel of the Eighth Kansas Volunteer Infantry.

of a regiment and just old enough to vote. There is no doubt that the gravity of a situation in which a country found herself embroiled in a civil war, and with a large manpower contingent to be trained, caused the role of leadership to fall very often on the shoulders of ordinary younger men. However, John Martin was not an ordinary young man.

John Alexander Martin spent his boyhood at Brownsville, Pennsylvania, and as a young man served as an apprentice to a printer in that city. In 1857 he was working for a newspaper called the Commercial Journal when he decided to move to Kansas. Martin settled in Atchison and purchased a newspaper named the Squatter Sovereign which he subsequently renamed the Freedom's Champion.⁸ As a teenager, Martin had served as secretary of the Kansas Constitutional Convention held at Wyandotte, Kansas, in 1859, a remarkable position for one so young.

By the summer of 1861, Martin's abilities had already caused people to think highly of him, and he helped to organize a volunteer infantry regiment, the Eighth Kansas. He was appointed Lieutenant Colonel. Starting in June of 1862,

⁸The Kansas Knight and Soldier, Topeka, Kansas, October 1, 1886, p. 1.

⁹Ibid.



Figure 2. John A. Martin as he appeared in 1863 while serving as Colonel and Commander of the Eighth Kansas Volunteer Infantry.



Figure 3. John A. Martin as he appeared in 1886 while serving as Governor of Kansas.

Martin commanded this regiment until severance from the army in 1864.¹⁰

When John Martin was mustered out of the Union service at Pulaski, Tennessee, in November of 1864, he was to return home to his native Kansas and to his newspaper, Freedom's Champion. A greater job was thrust upon Martin, however, when he became governor of his state, 1885-1889. In addition to the highest office in his home state, Martin served several times as a delegate to the Republican National Convention.¹¹ He died October 2, 1889, shortly after completing his second term as governor.

It was on the eighth day of February, 1862, that Martin assumed command of the Eighth Kansas. On the 15th of February, companies A, F, and G were moved to Fort Kearney in Nebraska. On the 22nd of the same month Osawatomie, Kansas, became the headquarters of the regiment.¹² The winter of 1862 found the Eighth Kansas doing border patrol work out of Osawatomie:

The winter spent upon the border was a very trying one. The cold was intense, and although the duties were light, the men, unused to the exposure incident to camp life, suffered severely from the inclement weather. A number of scouts were sent into Missouri, but no engagements occurred, and the monotony of the camp, unbroken by a single incident of exciting interest, became exceedingly irksome.¹³

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Report, 1861-1865, p. 2.

¹³Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 3.

During the early months of 1862, the Eighth was attached to the "Army of the Frontier."¹⁴ During the course of its service the regiment served in four of the great armies fighting for the Union. These four armies, in order as the Eighth Kansas served in them, were the Army of the Frontier, Army of the Mississippi, Army of the Ohio, and finally, the Army of the Cumberland.¹⁵

On February 28, 1862, Companies I and K of the Eighth Kansas Infantry were consolidated as Company I by order of General Hunter, Commander of the Department of Kansas, Army of the Frontier. Lieutenant John Conover was promoted to Captain and given command of this new company. As a result of this consolidation, two officers, Captain Brown and Lieutenant Larrimer, were mustered out of the Federal service.¹⁶

Also an order was sent from General Hunter on February 28, 1862, calling for a reorganization of several Kansas regiments. Under this new order the men of the Eighth Kansas Infantry learned that they had been assigned to an army being

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Col. John A. Martin, Reunion Proceedings of The Eighth Kansas Veteran Volunteer Infantry at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, October 10th, 11th, and 12th, 1883 (Atchison: Haskell and Son Book Printers, 1883), p. 4; hereafter referred to as Martin, Reunion Proceedings.

¹⁶Report, 1861-1865, p. 100.

raised to serve in Indian Territory, namely New Mexico. This order was not received at the Osawatomie headquarters of the regiment until March 11, 1862. Upon receiving the order of transfer from General Hunter, the companies of the Eighth, stationed at Osawatomie, departed for Leavenworth.¹⁷

This order of February 28, 1862, brought about some significant changes in the military structure of the Eighth Kansas. The two companies of cavalry within the regiment, namely Companies D and H, were transferred to the Ninth Kansas Volunteer Cavalry. This important change transformed the regiment from a mixed organization to an infantry group throughout. In addition to the changes just mentioned, three new companies were added to the Eighth Kansas. This was done by transferring three companies from Colonel Graham's battalion. These companies were afterward referred to as Companies H, I, and K.¹⁸ It is significant to note that the leader of Company H was a young man by the name of Edgar P. Trego. Trego, a popular young officer, was destined to die at Chickamauga, Georgia. Trego County, Kansas, is named after this gallant young officer of the Eighth Kansas.¹⁹

¹⁷Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 3.

¹⁸Report, 1861-1865, p. 98.

¹⁹Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 4.

As March, 1862, drew to a close, Companies A, D, and G were on duty at Fort Kearney, Nebraska. Two other companies of the Eighth Kansas, Companies B and F, were stationed at Fort Leavenworth. Companies E and K were located at Aubrey, Kansas. Companies H and I were doing provost duty within the city limits of Leavenworth, with Lieutenant Colonel Martin serving as Provost Marshal of that city.²⁰

In the latter part of April, 1862, Company B relieved Company H which was ordered to Fort Riley near Junction City to relieve Company C. Meanwhile, Company C received orders to proceed to Fort Leavenworth.²¹

Late in May a very significant order was received to the effect that all troops which could be spared should proceed at once to Corinth, Mississippi, where the armies of Union General Henry W. Halleck were operating. As some troops had been earlier ordered to New Mexico, this new set of orders was somewhat unexpected.²² The army group under the command of General Robert B. Mitchell, which had already departed for New Mexico, suddenly found its orders

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., p. 5.

²²Report, 1861-1865, p. 101.

countermanded, with most of the regiments in this expedition ordered southward.²³

On the 25th of May, 1862, orders were received from General Blunt, who had recently taken over as Commander, Department of Kansas, directing the Eighth Kansas Volunteer Infantry to depart for Corinth, Mississippi. Companies of the Eighth that were fairly close to Leavenworth (E, H, and K) were ordered to proceed toward Corinth at once, with the rest of the companies to join with them as quickly as was feasible. By undergoing forced marches, these companies were able to enter Leavenworth on May 27, 1862. On May 28th the troops, including the Eighth, marched in review before boarding the steamer Emma, which at daylight on the 29th started down the Missouri, bound for Corinth.²⁴ The only incident of note which occurred on this leg of the journey down the Missouri was that Private Kech of Company B, and Private Wrigley, Company I, fell overboard and were assumed to have drowned.²⁵

At dawn of May 31, 1862, the Emma moored at St. Louis. It was expected that upon arrival the Eighth and other regiments

²³Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 4.

²⁴Report, 1861-1865, pp. 101-102.

²⁵Ibid., p. 102.

would be sent via the Tennessee River to Corinth, but it was learned that Corinth had been evacuated. Therefore, the troops continued down the Mississippi to Cairo where orders were received directing the regiments to Columbus, Kentucky. From Columbus the troops were ordered to board a train on the Mobile and Ohio Railroad and proceed to Corinth.²⁶

Just before the Eighth received orders to proceed to St. Louis, the Eighth Kansas Volunteer Infantry and the Tenth Kansas Volunteer Infantry were merged. The reason for this merger was that both of these regiments were not up to full strength. Colonel Graham of the Tenth was appointed Commander of the combined regiments.²⁷ On the journey to St. Louis, Colonel Graham became ill and Colonel Martin who had been second in command took the leadership of the regiment.²⁸ Never regaining his health, Colonel Graham died in October of 1862.

By June 8, 1862, most of the troops assigned to General Mitchell's command had been concentrated in the Columbus, Kentucky, area. On this day the Eighth Kansas and other regiments began a three-day march which brought

²⁶Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 5.

²⁷Freedom's Champion, October 11, 1862.

²⁸Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 6.

them to Union City, Tennessee, passing enroute through Clinton and Moscow, Kentucky.²⁹ The troops remained in Union City until the 16th of June when word arrived that the Union Garrison at Trenton, Tennessee, was expecting an attack by the Confederate forces. The Kansas regiment, with Colonel Martin in command, proceeded to Trenton as quickly as possible. On this march the Eighth was accompanied by the Second Battery, Kansas Artillery, which had been attached to the Eighth as a supporting arm.³⁰

After the arrival of the Kansas troops in Trenton, the expected attack failed to materialize. However, the small garrison of Union cavalry that had been assigned to the defense of that city was quite grateful for reinforcements.³¹ The Eighth remained at Trenton, Tennessee, until June 26, 1862, when it marched to Humboldt, another small Tennessee town. Humboldt was located on the railroad, and the regiment remained there until July 2nd, when it boarded the train and proceeded to Corinth, Mississippi. Arriving there on July 3rd, Colonel Martin reported to General Halleck who assigned the Eighth Kansas Volunteer Infantry to the division of General Jefferson C. Davis,

²⁹Ibid., p. 7.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

Army of the Mississippi. Colonel Martin was directed to see General Rosecrans for further orders. General Rosecrans, in turn, temporarily attached the Eighth to the brigade of Colonel Fuller until the arrival of the rest of General Mitchell's troops. On the evening of July 3, 1862, the Eighth Kansas camped for the first time as an arm of one of the great Union Armies.³²

An incident of some interest took place shortly after the Kansas regiment had joined the Army of the Mississippi at Corinth. During the marches through Tennessee and Kentucky, the men of the Eighth Kansas had "stolen and harbored slaves."³³ As a result of this behavior, a General Quinby reported the Eighth to be a "mutinous, undisciplined and demoralized regiment."³⁴ Quinby had threatened to muster the Kansas regiment out of the Union service. The conduct of the Eighth Kansas was reported to General Rosecrans who ordered an investigation by his Inspector General, Colonel Kenneth. Colonel Kenneth's report of the inspection cleared the Eighth of all charges of misconduct. This was the first and last of

³²Report, 1861-1865, p. 104.

³³Ibid., p. 105.

³⁴Ibid.

any such incidents involving the Kansas regiment throughout the duration of the conflict.³⁵

³⁵Ibid., p. 106

CHAPTER II

ACTIVITIES OF THE EIGHTH KANSAS VOLUNTEER INFANTRY JULY, 1862-SEPTEMBER, 1863, INCLUDING THE TULLAHOMA OR MIDDLE TENNESSEE CAMPAIGN, JUNE 23, 1863-JULY 7, 1863

July of 1862 found the Eighth Kansas in Corinth, Mississippi, deployed as a striking force with the Army of the Mississippi.¹ The Eighth was to remain in Corinth until July 22; on that date orders were received to move the Kansas troops to Jacinto, Mississippi, where they remained two weeks. On August 2, 1862, the regiment was ordered to Eastport, Mississippi. The purpose of this transfer was, once again, to protect an area menaced by Confederate guerrillas. After two weeks spent in the Eastport vicinity, orders were received directing the several brigades to cross the Tennessee River into Alabama. On August 18, 1862, this crossing was effected and the Eighth camped at Waterloo on its first night on Alabama soil.²

It is interesting to note that except for slight brushes with small groups of the foe, August of the year 1862 still found the Eighth Kansas looking toward its first general

¹Report, 1861-1865, p. 104.

²Ibid.

engagement with the enemy. The Eighth found its stay in Alabama a brief one. On August 23rd, orders were received directing the Kansas troops to Nashville, Tennessee, where they were to remain until September 4th.³

The purpose of the rather abrupt transfer to Nashville was soon quite clear to the Kansas men. General Braxton Bragg and his Confederate Army had begun an invasion of Kentucky. The Eighth Kansas was one of several regiments to be sent to intercept and halt it.⁴

The campaign against Bragg in Kentucky proved to be one of the most physically taxing of those in which Martin was involved during the war. Colonel Martin commented:

At two o'clock on the morning of August 26th this terrible campaign commenced. It is impossible, in the space allotted . . . to give any adequate description of the events that crowded it with interest, or of the hardships, toils, and sufferings that attended it. The fiery southern sun beat upon the marching column like the heat of a furnace; the dust was almost insufferable, at times arising in such clouds that it was difficult to see three feet ahead; water was very scarce, the only reliance, except at long intervals, being ponds digged by the farmers of the country for catching the rain that fell during the wet season. These ponds had become stagnant during the long drouth, and their surface was, in nearly all cases, covered with a foul green scum which had to be pushed aside to get at the water. We were never supplied with more than half rations; oftentimes less than that.

³Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 6.

⁴Wesley P. Kremer, 100 Great Battles of the Rebellion (Hoboken, New Jersey: W. P. Kremer, 1906), p. 47; hereafter referred to as Kremer, 100 Great Battles.

During the latter part of the march the hard bread gave out, and flour was issued in its stead. This the men had neither the time nor the implements to bake properly; it could only be used by making of it a dough and frying it, or by pasting it upon their ramrods and baking it over the fire. As we abandoned all large cooking utensils at Florence, Alabama, and none others were issued, each man was thrown upon his own resources to provide vessels with which to cook his food. Canteens were made to supply nearly every want. Split in two, one side formed a frying pan, and the other, perforated with small holes, upon which they rasped what corn they could pick for making mealcake or mush. Tin cups or old fruit cans supplied the place of coffee pot and boiler, but only once a day was coffee to be had. So the commissary department was conducted on the march.⁵

Upon arrival in Nashville, Tennessee, the troops were allowed respite from the terrible ordeals of the march from Alabama through Tennessee. Colonel Martin stated that on the march to Nashville, the Eighth Kansas distinguished itself by its discipline and resolve to complete the trek.⁶ Martin stated that many of the regiments had only about fifty men in their columns when they arrived in Nashville; the rest were stragglers. While the Eighth Kansas at roll call had approximately only thirty men absent from muster, Martin commented that the men of the Eighth acquired the nickname the "greyhounds" on this march.⁷

⁵Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 7.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

The Eighth remained in Nashville until the afternoon of September 11, 1862, when it began its pursuit of General Bragg's force. This march took the Kansas troops to involvement in their first full-scale battles.⁸ Although the Kansas troops experienced their first baptism under fire in the battles of Perryville and Lancaster, Kentucky, their casualties were slight.⁹

Between September 11 and September 26, 1862, the Eighth Kansas and other regiments were on the move to engage Bragg's army. During this period the men of the Eighth were to march two hundred eight miles before reaching Louisville, Kentucky.¹⁰ Colonel Martin was extremely critical of the handling of this march by the superior officers in command. He said:

There was no regularity in our movements; sometimes we rested by day and marched by night; at others, rested when we should have halted, or halted when we should have advanced; and throughout the conduct of the march exhibited shameful mismanagement, or an utter disregard of either the health or comfort of the troops.¹¹

⁸Report, 1861-1865, p. 108.

⁹Ibid., p. 119.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 14.

When Louisville was reached on September 26, 1862, the troops were given a four-day rest. During this period large numbers of men joined the army, most of whom were raw recruits and had not even undergone enough training to make them familiar with basic army procedures.¹² Also during this short respite in Louisville, the Army of the Ohio, to which the Eighth Kansas at this time had been attached, underwent a complete reorganization. The division to which the Eighth belonged was formed into three brigades. Into each of these three brigades went two new regiments. Each division of the Army of the Ohio was attached to one of three major corps. These three corps were designated as the Right, Left, and Center. The Eighth Kansas' division was attached to the Center Corps.¹³

With reorganization complete, the army rested. When additional manpower had been obtained, the troops under the command of Don Carlos Buell set out on October 1, 1862, in pursuit of General Bragg.¹⁴ Throughout the next few days, advance elements of the Army of the Ohio were continually in contact with the enemy rear guard as the Confederates retreated. The Eighth Kansas was not involved in any of

¹²Report, 1861-1865, p. 109.

¹³Kremer, 100 Great Battles, p. 50.

¹⁴Report, 1861-1865, p. 109.

these skirmishes. On October 7th, however, the crash of artillery gave warning of a general engagement. Bragg's army had turned to face its pursuers.¹⁵

Bragg had chosen a line of hills overlooking Perryville, Kentucky, as a defensive line of fortifications. Upon its arrival on the battlefield, the Eighth was moved to a range of hills opposite the left of the Confederate positions. During the rest of the day, the Eighth Kansas saw little activity of any importance. An artillery burst or two in the general vicinity was, for the most part, the extent of exposure to action.¹⁶

At dawn on the morning of October 8, 1862, the fighting began in earnest. Colonel Martin received orders that his regiment along with other troops in the area should do nothing which could bring on a general engagement in the sector occupied by the Eighth.¹⁷ During the morning hours the sounds of battle were still distant to the ears of the men of the Eighth Kansas. Early in the afternoon the Eighth, along with other regiments of their brigade, was moved into position on the main road running into Perryville.¹⁸ A portion of the

¹⁵Ibid., p. 110.

¹⁶Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 14.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁸Ibid.

Union line in the vicinity of the Eighth Kansas was assaulted by the Confederates during the early part of the afternoon. This charge was abortive and the Union forces were able to advance toward Perryville.¹⁹ Again the Eighth Kansas had emerged from battle without serious contact with the enemy.

The Eighth, along with most of General Buell's army, camped on the battlefield the night after the second day of fighting at Perryville.²⁰ On the morning of October 9, 1862, the Kansas regiment along with others once again began to advance upon the town.²¹ The advancing troops soon discovered that the Confederates were in retreat. Colonel Martin described the scene: "Their dead and wounded were left uncared for, and the ground was covered with guns, blankets, and knapsacks, indicating the confusion in which they had fled."²² The retreat of the Confederate forces from Perryville marked the end of the first engagement,

¹⁹Kremer, 100 Great Battles, p. 54.

²⁰Lloyd's Battle History of the Great Rebellion (New York: H. H. Lloyd and Co., 1865), p. 720; hereafter referred to as Lloyd's Battle History.

²¹Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 16.

²²Ibid.

which could be called a battle, in which the Eighth participated.²³

Throughout the remainder of October and November the Eighth Kansas was among those regiments which stayed in pursuit of the elusive General Bragg.²⁴ Several sharp skirmishes resulted during this chase. One such skirmish occurred at Lancaster, Kentucky. The advancing Union columns spotted a Confederate supply train moving through Lancaster as they approached the town. Colonel Martin believed that an assault could have resulted in the capture of the train. Orders were not forthcoming, however, and the train was allowed to slip away, protected only by a small rear guard of Confederate Cavalry.²⁵

After the engagement at Lancaster, the Eighth was transferred to Bowling Green, Kentucky. While camped at Bowling Green, Colonel Martin received a commission from Governor Robinson. The promotion made Martin a full colonel. At the same time, Captain James L. Abernathy received a commission which made him Lieutenant Colonel of the regiment.²⁶

On the morning of November 4, 1862, the Eighth left Bowling Green and proceeded to Edgefield, which was near

²³Report, 1861-1865, p. 110.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 110-111.

²⁵Kremer, 100 Great Battles, p. 59.

²⁶Report, 1861-1865, p. 113.

Nashville, Tennessee. The regiment remained at Edgefield until December 4, 1862, when it moved through Nashville and camped just outside the city on the Franklin Pike.²⁷ During the encampment at Edgefield and Franklin, the Eighth and other regiments of the brigade spent a good deal of time in drill at the company, battalion, and brigade levels. Supplies which had been depleted were replenished. And the Eighth, along with other regiments, acquired a new degree of competency.²⁸

On the morning of December 19, 1862, the Eighth received orders to advance to Nashville, Tennessee, and begin provost duty in that city. The same orders appointed Colonel Martin Provost Marshal of Nashville, relieving Colonel Gillem who was an officer of the First Middle Tennessee Infantry.²⁹ The period at Nashville, and the fulfillment of the provost duties to which it had been assigned, must certainly be one of the most important and significant periods in the history of the Eighth Kansas. In December of 1862, the city of Nashville was a town with divided loyalties. A great number of people with Confederate sympathies were living within the city.³⁰

²⁷Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 14.

²⁸Report, 1861-1865, p. 113.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Lloyd's Battle History, p. 732.



Figure 4. From left to right, Captain John Conover commanding Co. F and Captain James F. Graham commanding Co. C of the Eighth Kansas Volunteer Infantry as they appeared in 1863 while their regiment was serving provost duty in Nashville, Tennessee.

The Adjutant General's report for Kansas gives the following account of the situation facing the Eighth as it took up provost duty in the city of Nashville:

The new duties to which the Eighth was assigned in Nashville were delicate and important, requiring in their performance sound judgment, untiring zeal, unceasing vigilance, and the strictest discipline. The whole army was then encamped around the city, and although the greater portion of it soon moved to the front, a garrison of several brigades remained. But in addition to the troops stationed at the post, there was an army of civilians employed in the quartermaster's commissary and ordnance departments, Nashville being the main depot of supplies for the army; dozens of hospitals and camps for convalescents were located here; troops were constantly arriving and departing; the city was swarming with rebel spies; fully three-fourths of the whole population sympathized with the rebellion, and thousands of desperate and degraded characters, following in the wake of the army, made this city their temporary home. Rows were an every day occurrence, and hardly a night passed that was not stained by murder or blackened by outrage.³¹

The Eighth Kansas divided the city of Nashville into districts. Provost headquarters were located in the State House. Patrols were sent out every two hours to visit potential trouble spots in their respective districts. The patrols could remain out until they were relieved by another patrol coming on duty.³²

³¹Report, 1861-1865, p. 114.

³²Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 15.

Colonel Martin as Provost Marshal of the city had charge of all the military prisons within the city limits. The Capitol, military headquarters, the penitentiary, and the jail were all used to house prisoners of war and other military criminals such as thieves and deserters belonging to the Union Army.³³ While on provost duty in Nashville, the men of the Eighth were greatly distressed when informed of Confederate Colonel William Clark Quantrill's raid on Lawrence, Kansas.³⁴

Provost duty in Nashville, Tennessee, during December of 1862, presented challenges of serious proportions. The battle of Murfreesboro began on December 28, 1862. During this battle Confederate cavalry operated devastatingly in the Union rear.³⁵ As a result of the cavalry activity, several Union divisions were driven back in confusion and disorder. Several hundred Union stragglers sought refuge in the city.³⁶ In the space of three days, the patrols of the Eighth arrested most of these men and sent them back to the front to rejoin their regiments.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Freedom's Champion, September 10, 1863, p. 2.

³⁵Lloyd's Battle History, p. 737.

³⁶Ibid., p. 738.

Several days after the battle, two thousand five hundred Confederate prisoners were consigned to the Eighth.³⁷ After about a week, these prisoners were sent to military prisons farther North.³⁸ During the six months that the Eighth served provost duty in Nashville, Confederate prisoners were arriving almost daily; these men had to be watched, supplied, and then sent North.³⁹ Reports on these prisoners had to be filled out, and a prison hospital for the receiving of the sick and wounded prisoners had to be established.⁴⁰

On February 22, 1863, Companies A, C, D, and F under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Abernathy arrived, coming from Kansas. On the 29th of March, 1863, Company G also joined the regiment. This junction of troops marked the first time since its organization that all of the companies of the regiment were encamped together.⁴¹

The high esteem which the men of the Eighth held for their commanding officer, Colonel Martin, can be noted

³⁷Freedom's Champion, April 25, 1863, p. 2.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Frederick Dyer (Comp.), A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion (Des Moines, Iowa: The Dyer Publishing Company, 1908), p. 118; hereafter referred to as Dyer, Compendium.

⁴⁰Report, 1861-1865, p. 115.

⁴¹Ibid.

from an incident which took place while the Eighth was on provost duty in Nashville. The men of the regiment, through voluntary contributions, raised money to purchase two swords for Colonel Martin and Major E. R. Schneider. These swords were presented in a special assembly of the Eighth. Orderly Sergeant William Richardson made the presentation of the beautiful side arms.⁴²

The Eighth Kansas remained at Nashville, Tennessee, until June 9, 1863, when orders were received transferring the regiment to Murfreesboro, Tennessee. On June 23, 1863, to July 7, 1863, the Eighth Kansas participated in what is known as the Middle Tennessee or Tullahoma Campaign.⁴³

On the morning of June 24, 1863, the Army of the Mississippi began a drive toward Tullahoma and Shelbyville, Alabama.⁴⁴ The Eighth received orders to protect a supply train which would move toward the front behind the advancing troops.⁴⁵ One delay after another beset the supply train; as a result, the convoy did not get under way until the morning of June 26.⁴⁶ The supply train began to move in

⁴²Freedom's Champion, May 23, 1863, p. 2.

⁴³Kremer, 100 Great Battles, p. 65.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 67.

⁴⁵Report, 1861-1865, p. 117.

⁴⁶Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 19.

the midst of a heavy rain, and the march, in the words of Colonel Martin, was "disagreeable and exhausting."⁴⁷

The rain continued to fall throughout the remainder of June 26, and by nightfall was still descending in torrents. Despite the continuing rain, the men of the Eighth slept the sleep of the exhausted.⁴⁸ When the morning of June 27 dawned, the men of the Eighth learned that they were to remain in camp for a few days until the weather was more conducive to military operations.⁴⁹ These orders were readily welcomed by the men even though the camp was a highly undesirable one.⁵⁰

The ability of the men of the Eighth Kansas to maintain a sense of humor despite a very miserable situation is best illustrated by a happening in camp during the almost never-ceasing rain of the Middle Tennessee Campaign. An officer of the Eighth Kansas, after finishing the muster roll of his company, endorsed the final copy with the following notation:

I make this roll lying flat on my belly on the ground with a rubber blanket for a desk. If I was

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 20.

⁴⁸Report, 1861-1865, p. 118.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 119.

⁵⁰Ibid.

in Washington in a comfortable room supplied with a hundred dollar desk, a gold pen, black, blue, red, and purple inks, the latest and best patent rulers and plenty of "red tape" I could make a more artistic copy. But I have been constantly soaked with rain for seven days and nights; there isn't a bone in my body that doesn't ache; my fingers are as numb as tho they were frozen; and my clothes are so stiff with Tennessee mud as my fingers are with chill. Under the circumstances this is the best I can do. If any first-class clerk in the department thinks he could do better, let him duck himself in the Potomac every five minutes and wade through mud knee deep for six days, and then try it on. If he succeeds, I will change places with him with great pleasure.⁵¹

This officer's roll was a mass of mistakes caused by blotches and ink smears. In spite of this, it was never returned for correction.⁵²

On July 1, 1863, the Eighth once again was on the march toward the Confederate stronghold of Tullahoma. The Army of General Bragg, not desiring to meet the Army of the Mississippi in a general engagement, retreated from the fortifications at Tullahoma, burning great quantities of supplies behind them.⁵³ The Eighth along with many other regiments of the army entered Tullahoma uncontested.⁵⁴

After the capture of Tullahoma, the Eighth Kansas marched to Winchester, Alabama, where it remained in

⁵¹Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 19.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Lloyd's Battle History, p. 782.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 783.

encampment until August 17, 1863.⁵⁵ The camp at Winchester proved to be a pleasant respite for the Kansas troops after the privations of the Middle Tennessee Campaign. At Winchester there was plenty of water and generally pleasant camping conditions.⁵⁶

One of the more humorous events in the history of the Eighth took place during the enjoyable encampment at Winchester. Robert Fredirich, a soldier in the Eighth Kansas Infantry, stated that the camp of the Twentieth Corps of the Army of the Mississippi, of which the Eighth was a part, was near a fine grove of trees containing a clear, cold spring. Soldiers not on duty gathered at this place to pass the time of day. Gambling was common at this shady place and the favorite game was Chuck-a-luck, or, as the game is sometimes known, Under Seven and Over Seven. The author commented that amounts running into thousands of dollars were won or lost at this outdoor casino. General Jefferson C. Davis, Commander of the Army of the Mississippi, was determined to put an end to this form of amusement. General Davis ordered the grove surrounded with almost a brigade of soldiers and arrested all of those found in the

⁵⁵Kansas Knight and Soldier, July 15, 1886, p. 1.

⁵⁶Ibid.

vicinity. The author further stated that along with the guilty gamblers, a group of soldiers holding a prayer meeting were rounded up. The soldiers who had been involved in prayer were quite indignant and protested with great vehemence, but to no avail. There were so many soldiers involved that it would have been impossible to discipline them all, consequently everyone was released with a strong reprimand.⁵⁷

Another interesting event of the encampment at Winchester occurred when the Army of the Mississippi learned of the surrender of General Pemberton and his Confederate Army at Vicksburg, Mississippi. Fredirich reported:

An order was issued by Colonel Martin for the regiment to parade in front of his quarters: after we were in line, the Colonel came forth and read the telegrams; after the boisterous shouts with which the news was received had subsided somewhat, he proposed three cheers and a tiger, for General Grant and his gallant army. It is needless to say they were given with a hearty good will.⁵⁸

The writer further indicated that almost all of the soldiers thought that with the capture of Vicksburg the war would be over in a few weeks. Fredirich went on to say that the day the joyous news arrived, almost all of the men of the Eighth were drunk by nightfall.⁵⁹

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid.

It is interesting to note that although the Battle of Gettysburg was fought on July 1-3, 1863, there is no evidence that this battle, which is today generally considered as one of the turning points of the Civil War, caused any excitement or recognition of its importance by the men of the Eighth Kansas.

On the 17th of August 1863, the Eighth abandoned their camp at Winchester, Alabama, and crossed the Cumberland Mountains reaching Stevenson, Alabama, on the 20th of August 1863.⁶⁰ The purpose of this march, a crossing of the Tennessee River by General Rosecrans' army, of which the Eighth was a part, would open one of the most perilous chapters in the history of the Kansas regiment.⁶¹

⁶⁰Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 23.

⁶¹Ibid.

CHAPTER III

THE CAMPAIGNS BEFORE CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE, SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER, 1863

From the 20th until the 28th of August, 1863, the Eighth and other elements of General Rosecrans' army were encamped at Stevenson, Alabama, in preparation for a crossing of the Tennessee River and an advance on the important railway center at Chattanooga, Tennessee.¹ On the morning of the 29th of August the dangerous crossing was made to the Confederate-held side. The transfer of Rosecrans' army was done without opposition and the surprise of the southern defenders was evident from their abandoned campfires which were still burning when discovered by the Union troops.²

After the crossing of the Tennessee River, the Eighth and other regiments were advancing slowly on the southern positions around Chattanooga. This steady advance was continual through early mid-September of 1863.³ By the 18th the advance of Union forces had reached a point only several miles from the Confederate-held town.⁴

¹Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 22.

²Ibid., pp. 22-23.

³Report, 1861-1865, pp. 121-122.

⁴Ibid., p. 122.



Figure 5. A group of officers serving with the Eighth Kansas Volunteer Infantry at Stevenson, Alabama, in late August of 1863. (left to right) Major Edward F. Schneider, Captain Edward P. Trego, Colonel John A. Martin, Captain James M. Graham, and Captain John Conover.

On the evening of the 18th the men of the Eighth Kansas were each issued one hundred rounds of ammunition. Around the campfires of the Eighth, the talk of the pending battle was a main topic of conversation.⁵ Colonel Martin commented that often men who had been exposed to the horrors of combat choose to believe that battle is still far away when the signs show that a clash of arms is nearing; so it was with the men of the Eighth on the eve of the battle of Chickamauga.⁶

On the morning of September 19th the Eighth moved with other groups of the Third Brigade, First Division, Twentieth Corps of the Army of the Cumberland, toward the dull rumble of distant artillery.⁷ The Eighth, being a part of General Jefferson C. Davis's division, moved with it to a farm called Widow Glenn's where General Rosecrans had established headquarters. From Widow Glenn's the division was ordered to the east of headquarters and went into battle about 2 p.m. It was engaged in that area until about 5 p.m.⁸

⁵Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 24.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park Commission, Battle of Chickamauga, Ga., September 19-20, 1863 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1893), p. 2; hereafter referred to as Park Commission, Battle of Chickamauga.

⁸Ibid., pp. 3-4.

Colonel Martin commented on the placing of the Eighth in the line of battle on September 19:

We were moving rapidly nearly two miles to the left and front of Widow Glenn's, about a mile of that distance on the doublequick, and after forming line of battle, advanced through the dense woods, "going in," as General Rosecrans after expressed it, "where the fight was hottest."⁹

As General Davis's division went into action on the east side of the road near a farm called Viniard's, a gap occurred in the Union line. The gap, nearly a half mile in length, was between Colonel Dick's brigade on the right and Colonel Heg's brigade on the left.¹⁰ The gap in the Union line was directly across from Confederate troops commanded by General John Bell Hood of Texas. Hood and his army corps struck the gap in an attack about 2:30 p.m. on the afternoon of September 19.¹¹

The Eighth, attached to Heg's brigade, had moved into the line of battle to the left of Widow Glenn's. It now received the full fury of the Confederate charge under General Hood. Heg's entire brigade was involved in fierce

⁹Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 25.

¹⁰Henry V. Boynton, The National Military Park, Chickamauga-Chattanooga (Chattanooga, Tenn.: T. H. Payne and Co., 1895), p. 6; hereafter referred to as Boynton, Chickamauga.

¹¹Ibid.

fighting. Charging, retreating, and then attacking once again exemplified the bitterness of the struggle involving the men of the Eighth.¹²

Colonel Martin, leading the Eighth, ordered the men to advance through the woods to the left of Widow Glenn's, where they were met by a tremendous outburst of musketry. The Eighth and other elements of Colonel Heg's brigade hit the enemy head on without the benefit of skirmishers in front. The battle line of the Eighth moved slowly forward until it reached the crest of a small hill. At this point great masses of Confederate troops, wave after wave, assaulted the positions of the Eighth Kansas and its sister regiments.¹³ Colonel Martin, recalling the fighting around Widow Glenn's, stated:

The carnage on both sides was dreadful. In this brief time over a third of our brigade was killed and wounded, and still the frightfull carnival of slaughter raged unabated.¹⁴

Colonel Heg was mortally wounded at some time during mid-afternoon, and the command of the brigade devolved on Colonel Martin of the Eighth.¹⁵ Lieutenant Colonel Abernathy

¹²Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park Commission, The Campaign for Chattanooga (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902), p. 30; hereafter referred to as Park Commission, The Campaign for Chattanooga.

¹³Report, 1861-1865, p. 123.

¹⁴Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 25.

¹⁵Report, 1861-1865, p. 124.

elevated to the command of the Eighth on the battlefield at Chickamauga when Colonel Martin was made brigade commander by the death of Colonel Heg, described the terrific fighting in which the regiment was involved during the battle:

On the morning of the 19th, after marching nearly eight miles, part of the way on the double-quick, we were suddenly turned to the right and marched nearly one mile into the timber, where we were formed into line of battle, facing east. Soon after being formed in line we were ordered forward, but had scarcely advanced fifty yards, when the enemy poured a terrible fire upon us from behind a ledge of rocks, where they lay concealed.

Many of the men fell at the first fire, but the others, promptly returning the fire, pressed forward vigorously, and not only maintained their ground, but had nearly penetrated the lines of the enemy, when our brigade commander, seeing the terrible fire to which the line was exposed, gave the order to fall back.¹⁶

After facing the crushing weight of the Confederate attacks, and heavily outnumbered, the Eighth was compelled to withdraw with other elements of their now shattered division to a timbered area well to the rear of their original line of battle.¹⁷ At this point General Wood's Division, of which the Eighth was a part, turned to meet their pursuers. After more ammunition was issued and a more effective defensive line of battle established, the

¹⁶Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 124.



Figure 6. A group of enlisted men serving with the Eighth Kansas Volunteer Infantry just prior to the Battle of Chickamauga, Georgia, fought September 19-20, 1863.

Union troops were able to resist the Confederate attacks on their sector in the remaining hours of the afternoon. By evening the Eighth and her sister regiments of General Wood's Division still held fast to their timbered fortifications.¹⁸

Colonel Martin had several close calls during the drastic fighting in which the Eighth participated during the first day at Chickamauga. On one occasion during the battle he had lost his horse, shot from under him by a Confederate gunner.¹⁹ This narrow escape with death was only superseded by the fact that he also received several bullet holes in his shirt.²⁰

The first day of the Battle of Chickamauga came to a close for the Eighth as sundown brought respite from the struggles of battle. The men of the Kansas regiment had been involved in some of the roughest combat.²¹ Colonel Heg's brigade, which was at that time under the command of Colonel Martin, had lost over one-third of its manpower.²²

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Freedom's Champion, Atchison, Kansas (October 8, 1962), p. 2.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Report, 1861-1865, p. 123.

²²Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 25.



Figure 7. Captain Edgar P. Trego as he appeared prior to his death on September 19, 1863, during the Battle of Chickamauga. Captain Trego was killed by a sniper while searching for wounded. Trego County, Kansas, is named for this young officer of the Eighth.

As inventory was taken on the night of September 19, 1863, it was found that the Eighth had lost five captains, three lieutenants, and one hundred and fifty enlisted men.²³

The chief cause for these frightening losses was probably due to a movement of General Wood of the Union army. Wood, who was located immediately to the right of General Davis's division, of which the Eighth was a part, was compelled under heavy Confederate attack to withdraw his line of battle.²⁴ When Wood fell back, the southern soldiers swarmed into the breach in the Union line and the divisions of Davis and McCook were assaulted front and flank in a terrible cross fire.²⁵

As September 20th dawned, the men of the Eighth were on the march. The Kansas regiment and the rest of General Davis's division were ordered to move to a new position in front of a farm called Brotherton's, at the left of their position on the 19th. During the night of the 19th, Confederate General James Longstreet had arrived from Virginia

²³Ibid.

²⁴G. P. Thurston, "The Southern Bivouac," Chickamauga (June 1886-May 1887, Louisville, Ky.: B. F. Avery and Sons, 1887), Vol. II, p. 411; hereafter referred to as Thurston, Chickamauga.

²⁵Ibid.

with nearly 11,000 soldiers of General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia.²⁶ With Longstreet and his fresh troops from the east combining with the troops of the Texan, General John B. Hood, the southerners felt that they would be able to hit the Union right with a charge that would be physically impossible to contain.²⁷

The already decimated division of General Davis was to receive the brunt of the Confederate attack. By 11:00 a.m. the Eighth and its sister regiments were in place after marching from their positions of the previous evening.²⁸

Having arrived at its destination, the Eighth and the other regiments of Davis's division built a rather flimsy barricade of logs and stones.²⁹ Once the barricade was completed, the soldiers awaited the expected assault by the southern forces.³⁰

General Longstreet put his plans into motion shortly after 11:00 a.m. Three Confederate divisions under Generals Johnson, Law, and Kershaw made the attack on the Union right, near Brotherton's farm. The main charge of the Confederate

²⁶Park Commission, The Campaign for Chattanooga, pp. 34-35.

²⁷Thurston, Chickamauga, p. 411.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Boynton, Chickamauga, p. 14.

³⁰Ibid.

forces was bolstered by a reserve force of five brigades.³¹ Meanwhile, a mix-up in orders had occurred among the Union generals. Due to a misunderstanding, several regiments on the flanks of Davis's division had withdrawn from the defensive line creating several dangerous gaps in the Union line of battle.³² Into one of these gaps went the full fury of the combined attack of Longstreet and Hood. The Eighth and all of the other regiments of Davis's two brigades were hit from the center and on both flanks.³³ Reeling from the crushing weight of this massed charge, the men of Davis's division were thrown back in disorder. At this moment an already dangerous situation became one of the greatest Union disasters of the Civil War. As the Eighth and her sister regiments were reeling under the Confederate onslaught, Union General Phil Sheridan was on the move with his troops to support General George H. Thomas in the Union center. Sheridan's line of march behind the Union lines was being conducted on the doublequick as General Thomas was urgent in his desire for support.³⁴ The movement of Sheridan toward the Union center brought about a collision of the

³¹Ibid.

³²Park Commission, The Campaign for Chattanooga, p. 34.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

highly disorganized brigades of General Davis and the men of Sheridan's command.³⁵ The combined forces of Davis and Sheridan were carried back by the Confederate torrent. In fact they were driven so far to the rear that they were compelled to abandon the fight and retreat into Chattanooga.³⁶

The collapse of these two divisions under Wood and Sheridan created a huge hole on the Union right. As a result, the divisions of Union generals Rosecrans, McCook, and Crittenden were compelled to retreat into Chattanooga.³⁷ These three divisions with those of Sheridan and Davis represented, for all practical purposes, the entire right wing of General Rosecrans' army.³⁸

The men of the Eighth had participated in one of the great battles of the Civil War. They had fought well, even when subjected to a terrible mauling, particularly in the second day of fighting when their division had received the brunt of the great Confederate attack under Longstreet and Hood.³⁹ General G. P. Thurston commented on this attack

³⁵Boynton, Chickamauga, p. 35.

³⁶Ibid., p. 35.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

against the Eighth and the other regiments:

Probably never in the history of the war, up to this time, had an attacking force been so heavily massed. Longstreet has said since (speaking of Chickamauga) that it was a physical impossibility for any troops, unprotected by breastworks, to withstand such a column. In his report he stated that his force consisted of about twenty-three thousand men, nearly one-half of them fresh from Virginia.⁴⁰

The valor of the men of the Eighth during the Battle of Chickamauga received the following comment from Michael Hendrick Fitch:

Jefferson C. Davis was a fine and brave officer. He had only two brigades, Carlin's and Heg's; the latter was commanded by Martin, for Colonel Heg had been mortally wounded the day before. These brigades had done some wonderful fighting on the day before when they were greatly reduced. After the break they could not stand against the Confederate charge, wherefore they drifted towards Rossville.⁴¹

Nightfall of September 20, 1863, brought a close to the battle of Chickamauga. To this time in the history of the Civil War, Chickamauga was one of its bloodiest battles. The Union forces under the command of General Rosecrans had about 48,000 men engaged. Of this number 1,644 were killed. The North had 9,262 wounded and another 4,945

⁴⁰Thurston, Chickamauga, p. 411.

⁴¹Michael Hendrick Fitch, The Chattanooga Campaign (Wisconsin History Commission, 1911), p. 108; hereafter referred to as Fitch, Chattanooga Campaign.

men missing in action. In addition nearly 500 Union cavalry were lost, making a total of 16,351 men killed, wounded, or missing. The Confederate army under General Braxton Bragg put about 94,000 men in the field. Of this number around 17,000 were killed, wounded, or missing.⁴²

Later in the Civil War, men such as General Grant and General Sherman would see that victory over the South would come only when the southern armies were destroyed in the field. It is interesting that in his vexation over the slaughter and waste at the Battle of Chickamauga, Colonel Martin would advocate this theory of operation as he wrote to a friend in Atchison following the battle. Martin stated:

The d----d silly expeditions the government seems to be constantly getting up to occupy territory, should be denounced by the press of this country in the strongest terms. Annihilate the rebel army, and the territory will need no army of occupation---it will come back to itself. Destroy Bragg's and Lee's armies and the war is practically ended---there will be nothing more but guerilla warfare, which only cavalry can put down.⁴³

Colonel Martin's bitterness can be understood when it is realized that the men of the Eighth had suffered severe

⁴²Lloyd's Battle History, p. 218.

⁴³Caldwell, Notes, p. 144.

casualties during the Battle of Chickamauga. Colonel Martin, like so many soldiers on both sides, must have felt the irony of the translation of the Indian word, Chickamauga, meaning "dead men's run."⁴⁴

The Kansas regiment had gone into battle at Chickamauga with 406 men. Of this number 30 were killed, 165 wounded, and 25 were missing in action. In all, of the 406 Kansans who fought with the Eighth at Chickamauga, 220 were killed, wounded, or captured.⁴⁵

Following the Battle of Chickamauga the Union army General Rosecrans retreated into Chattanooga on September 22, 1863.⁴⁶ The Union army began to fortify the town for defensive purposes. In the meantime the southern army under General Braxton Bragg began to deploy around the city until they had it almost completely surrounded.⁴⁷

An attack on the Union-held city of Chattanooga was expected at any time. Union soldiers in the city were kept busy night and day building fortifications and trenches. The men of the Eighth were no exception. Shifts were organized with half of the men working while the others slept. Under this system a formidable system of breastworks had

⁴⁴Kremer, 100 Great Battles, p. 66.

⁴⁵Lloyd's Battle History, p. 217.

⁴⁶Report, 1861-1865, p. 131.

⁴⁷Ibid.

been completed by October 3rd.⁴⁸ Although the Confederate army kept up an almost continual bombardment of the Union lines, the expected attack failed to materialize.⁴⁹

Even though the southern army did not mount an offensive against Chattanooga, things went badly for the Union army occupying the city. As the town was almost surrounded by the Confederates, the only supplies available to the Union garrison were by the mule train from Stevenson, Alabama, the nearest northern supply base.⁵⁰ Colonel Martin of the Eighth described the desperate state in which the Union army found itself during the siege of Chattanooga:

The depot was nearly bare, and the sturdy mules of the army were dying by scores from want of food and the overtasking work of drawing loads of commissary goods from Stevenson--our nearest base of supplies--sixty miles away, and over two ranges of the Cumberland mountains. Gen. Rosecrans issued an order cutting down the rations to one-third the usual amount, and prohibiting the sale to officers, no matter what their rank, of more than was issued to the private soldier.⁵¹

Adding to the privations of the siege of Chattanooga was the fact that the Confederate army during the month of October 1863, threatened to cut the slim supply line which

⁴⁸Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 34.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Report, 1861-1865, p. 133.

fed and clothed the Union army.⁵² By early October the situation had begun to look desperate for the northern army in Chattanooga. Colonel Martin, writing to his paper in Atchison, had this to say about lack of food:

We have nothing to eat but hard-bread and "sowbelly" with half rations of sugar and coffee and no amount of money will purchase anything else, because the market contains no more.⁵³

In this same letter to the editor of Freedom's Champion, Colonel Martin again commented on what he believed should be the course the Union should follow in defeating the rebellion:

I wonder how long it will take the Government to find out that occupation of territory means nothing--that the rebellion is not Louisiana, or Virginia, or Tennessee, or Mississippi, or Texas, or the Indian territory but the armies of Bragg, Lee and Beauregard. Crush these and what will small hordes of guerillas and bushwackers scattered in other places amount to?⁵⁴

On the 23rd of October General George H. Thomas, "the Rock of Chickamauga," was given the command of the Army of the Cumberland located at Chattanooga. Thomas replaced General Rosecrans. At the same time, General U. S. Grant arrived in Chattanooga to assume overall command of all Union forces in the area.⁵⁵ After this change of command

⁵²Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 35.

⁵³Freedom's Champion, Nov. 5, 1863, p. 2.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Catton, This Hallowed Ground, p. 288.

the situation for the Union troops began to improve. One of the most important improvements was in the area of supply.

Colonel Martin commented:

On the night of the 26th (October) General Hazen's Brigade, of our Division, floated down the Tennessee in pontoon boats and effected a landing at Brown's ferry, just below the spur of Lookout Mountain, holding the point until assistance came to them, and Hooker's forces were established in the Wauhatchie Valley. The opening of a new route via Brown's ferry so improved the facilities for supplying the army that on the 12th of November the rations were increased from one-third to two-thirds. This increase was a gratifying one, as the men were gradually but surely failing strength and health for want of adequate food. Thereafter, though supplies were not abundant, they were sufficient.⁵⁶

On November 23rd the men of the Eighth were ordered into the rifle pits near the Atlantic and Western Railroad running north and south on the outskirts of Chattanooga.⁵⁷ The men of the Eighth were occupying a section of the defensive line assigned to the 4th Army Corps, Army of the Cumberland.⁵⁸

The men of the Eighth had been placed in the 4th Army Corps following the battle of Chickamauga. The new corps was formed by joining the Twentieth and Twenty-first and adding some reserve troops to the newly-formed army

⁵⁶Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 35.

⁵⁷Boynton, Chickamauga, p. 18.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 18-19.

group in order to bring it to full strength. The newly-formed 4th was composed of three divisions commanded by Generals Sheridan, Cruft, and Wood. The men of the Eighth were still attached to General Wood's division in the newly-formed corps.⁵⁹

At dawn on the 23rd, the men of the Eighth were moved to the very front of the forward positions and were placed on picket duty in order to serve as a spearhead for the advance of the rest of their division. On November 23, 1863, Grant and Thomas had decided to attempt to break the siege of Chattanooga by attacking the positions of General Bragg's encircling army.⁶⁰ Accordingly, the attack would be for the dual purpose of probing for the weakness of the enemy and also for the purpose of testing the morale of the Army of the Cumberland.⁶¹ It was feared by General Grant and other Union generals that the men who comprised the Army of the Cumberland might break when exposed once again to battle action. This fear of lost morale was based upon the tremendous casualties that the army had suffered in

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰William Frank Zornow, Kansas: A History of the Jayhawk State (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), p. 113; hereafter referred to as Zornow, Kansas.

⁶¹Ibid.

the Battle of Chickamauga. Michael Hendrick Fitch commented on Grant's fears concerning his army at Chattanooga:

The original Army of the Cumberland referred to---were the troops General Grant thought would not fight, because they had been so roughly handled at Chickamauga. It was quite a natural conclusion.⁶²

About noon on the 23rd a staff officer from headquarters informed General Wood that his division had been given the responsibility of capturing Orchard Knob, a small hill not quite a mile in advance of the Union position at that moment.⁶³ The men of the Eighth, having been placed on picket duty at the very head of the division, would lead the charge. Colonel Martin described the heroic charge of the Kansas regiment on the Confederate position:

Over the embankment and across an open field our brave boys poured with irresistible enthusiasm. The rebel rifles rang out clear and sharp, and the "ping" of their leaden messengers greeted the blue-coated column with their defiance and defence. They answered with a cheer and a volley as our men rushed on. The field was crossed, the woods beyond reached, and a deafening crash and roar followed, as the rebels strove to check this impetuous charge. But Kansas led the van that day, and the fighting blood of the old Eighth was at fever heat. The rebel horde could no more stem the torrent that struck them than they could check a bursting billow with a feather. Our men dashed forward right on to their line so fiercely and rapidly that one-half of them were captured and the rest broke in wild confusion to the rear. A quick race through

⁶²Fitch, Chattanooga Campaign, p. 207.

⁶³Report, 1861-1865, p. 134.

the woods ensued, and meantime the heavy guns of Fort Wood let loose their thunders; the ugly whizz of their shells as they sped on towards Mission Ridge crashing through the forest overhead and around. But the fleeing rebels never stopped until they reached their reserves behind the line of entrenchments running over Orchard Knob. Here another struggle came: fierce volleys poured out, and a louder and denser crash and roar rose up, but with a ringing cheer our boys rushed on like a furious flood; again the rebel line faltered, broke, and fled, and Orchard Knob was ours.⁶⁴

Michael Hendrick Fitch and Colonel Martin disagree on the time of the attack. Martin said that the advance on Orchard Knob occurred about noon on November 23rd. However, Fitch states the attack began about 2:00 p.m. on that day.⁶⁵ The only assumption to be made is that the actual attack occurred between noon and 2:00 p.m. on the 23rd. The importance of the capture of Orchard Knob can not be underestimated. The knob was so situated that observation of nearly all Confederate positions around Chattanooga were observable by field glasses from its summit.⁶⁶ On the morning of the 24th Generals Grant and Thomas established headquarters on this important mound. During the remaining period of the battle for Chattanooga they conducted strategic operations against Bragg's army from the vantage point of Orchard Knob.⁶⁷

⁶⁴Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 36.

⁶⁵Fitch, Chattanooga Campaign, p. 190.

⁶⁶Report, 1861-1865, p. 135.

⁶⁷Ibid.

After the successful charge on Orchard Knob, the men of the Eighth and other elements of the 4th Army Corps took shelter anywhere they could find it on their newly acquired position. Shelter was necessary as the Confederate army began to shell the knob with a good deal of fervor.⁶⁸

During the night of the 23rd of November, 1863, the men of General Wood's division, the Eighth among them, worked until about one o'clock in the morning building a strong fortification of rifle pits and breastworks.⁶⁹ This activity was done in fear that morning would bring a Confederate counter-attack on the Union-held mound.⁷⁰ When sleep was finally accomplished it proved to be a short respite. One-half hour before dawn of the 24th, all of the Union soldiers were aroused and ordered to battle positions fearing that an attack of the Confederate army would come with the sun.⁷¹

November 24th brought little battle action for the men of the Eighth and the rest of General Wood's division, because on that day the Battle of Lookout Mountain was fought. Colonel Martin of the Kansas regiment was one of the many interested Union onlookers on Orchard Knob who observed the efforts of General Joe Hooker's forces to capture the mountain for the Union.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 37.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.



Figure 8. A group of officers of the Eighth Kansas Volunteer Infantry taken on Lookout Mountain following the Battle of Chattanooga, Tennessee, in November of 1863.

In the afternoon Hooker, with the Twelfth Corps, a Division of the Sixteenth, and another of the Fourth Corps, assaulted and carried the enemy's position on Lookout Mountain. The conflict was plainly seen from Orchard Knob, and was watched with most intense interest until clouds that enveloped the summit of the mountain swept down and hid the combatants from sight.⁷²

The night of November 24th found the men of the Eighth cold and shivering. It was feared that campfires would draw shot from the Confederate batteries.⁷³ The capture of Orchard Knob had been a very important victory for the Union forces. In addition, the Battle of Lookout Mountain had been a decided triumph of Union arms. Still, by far the most important positions that the Confederate forces occupied were the seemingly impregnable ones along Missionary Ridge, an area that must be captured by the men in blue if they were to break the siege of Chattanooga.⁷⁴

The defensive positions of the Confederate army along the ridge were formidable indeed. Bradford R. Wood Jr. of the army signal corps described Missionary Ridge:

Missionary Ridge rises to a height of between 400 and 500 feet. The trees had been cut down and the slope was rough and uneven, in places rocky and covered with trunks and stumps of trees. There were rifle-pits half way up and just below the crest a line of intrenchments.⁷⁵

⁷²Report, 1861-1865, p. 135.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Bradford R. Wood Jr., Chattanooga or Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge (Washington: The U.S. Veteran Signal Corps Association, November, 1907), pp. 14-15; hereafter referred to as Wood, Chattanooga or Lookout Mountain.

General Grant was doubtful as to the possibility of a successful, head-on charge up Missionary Ridge. Hoping to find a weakness where a frontal assault might be accomplished, his plan of the 25th of November was to launch an attack that would act as a probe along the ridge.⁷⁶

On the morning of the 25th, the men of the Eighth and the rest of General Wood's division formed in battle line along Orchard Knob awaiting the signal to advance on the Confederate positions at the foot of Missionary Ridge.⁷⁷ The morning wore on as the army waited for the orders to begin the advance. Colonel Martin commented on the initial Union movement toward the Confederate-held positions at the foot of the ridge:

At about 2 o'clock General Grant ordered Thomas to advance his lines, and the troops were immediately formed in front of the breastworks. Our Division was directly before Orchard Knob, and our Brigade occupied the centre of the Division, which was formed in two lines.

The definite instructions were that the six pieces of artillery on Pilot Knob would be fired in quick, regular succession, and at the sound of the sixth gun the whole army was to advance. At last the expected signal came. Simultaneous and clear followed the orders of the regimental commanders--"Forward, guide centre, march!" and the lines moved off.⁷⁸

The attack on Missionary Ridge was underway. The men of the Eighth serving as the center of their division moved across

⁷⁶St. Joseph [Missouri] Herald, September 22, 1886, p. 3.

⁷⁷Report, 1861-1865, p. 136.

⁷⁸Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 38.

an open field in good order. Rebel gunners along the entire height on the enemy-held position began to bombard the approaching Union columns with shot and shell. Once the men reached a wooded area beyond the field they began to advance on the double-quick. The wooded area was tangled with undergrowth, but the Union forces continued to advance. The men of the Eighth and sister regiments on their left and right fought their way out of the forest, and with a cheer going up along the entire column charged the rebel-held rifle pits at the foot of Missionary Ridge.⁷⁹

Colonel Martin described the charge on the Confederates at the foot of the ridge:

There was a break in the grey lines behind the rebel works; a few rushed to the rear, and with frantic eagerness began to climb the slope: but nearly all, throwing down their muskets, and holding up their hands in token of surrender, leaped to our side of the entrenchments and cowered behind them, for the hail of bullets now rained down from the hill was as deadly to them as to us.⁸⁰

Once the Confederate-held positions at the foot of Missionary Ridge had been taken, there was a pause in the attack. None of the regiments had orders to proceed beyond this point.

⁷⁹Report, 1861-1865, p. 136.

⁸⁰Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 38.

The Union soldiers recognized that the positions now occupied were impossible to hold. The blue-clad troops were being raked from nearly every direction by terrible artillery fire.⁸¹

One of the great wonders of the Civil War was the Union charge up Missionary Ridge on November 25, 1863. The charge was one that was not planned, there is even doubt that it was ordered from any higher authority than regimental commanders.⁸² Thus the charge on Missionary Ridge was one of necessity rather than of executed military planning. The Union soldiers were, while located in the rifle pits at the foot of the incline, exposed to a tremendous concentration of firepower from the southern forces.

Brigadier General August Willich later related that he had orders to capture the rifle pits at the foot of the ridge. Willich was the commander of the brigade to which the Eighth was attached. General Willich said that after capturing the rifle pits, the fire from the enemy was so great that he felt that he had but two choices, fall back and give up the limited objective that had been gained, or to push the attack on the ridge proper.⁸³

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 38-39.

⁸²Fitch, Chattanooga Campaign, p. 220.

⁸³St. Joseph [Missouri] Herald, September 22, 1886, p. 3.

General Willich stated that with a member of his staff, he rode to the position held by the Eighth Kansas. After a short conference with Colonel Martin, Willich ordered the regiment to attack the ridge.⁸⁴ In his writings Colonel Martin concurred with the statement of General Willich that after a short conference he ordered the regiment to attack.⁸⁵

Possibly the most amazing thing about the attack on Missionary Ridge was the spontaneity of the charge by many elements of the Union army.⁸⁶ Michael Hendrick Fitch commented on the charge:

The Union troops did not advance up the ridge as if on parade; but conformed more or less to the contour of the ground; the line appeared to an onlooker as a zigzag one; but the standards were always where they ought to be, and there were no stragglers. They did not fire their muskets to any extent while advancing, although they received a constant wild fire from the enemy. It was an assault by the musket bearers, and it is not likely they received many orders from their officers.⁸⁷

Colonel Martin also noted that the Union forces advanced on the ridge almost as if that had been their intention from the first:

He (Willich) gave me directions to move ahead, and I at once ordered my regiment forward. By that time, or about that time, it seemed to me that there was a simultaneous advance of many of the

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 39.

⁸⁶Fitch, Chattanooga Campaign, p. 220.

⁸⁷Ibid.

regiments in different parts of the line, and I got the impression that possibly orders had been communicated for an advance on the ridge, which I had not received; hence I hurried my regiment forward as rapidly as possible.⁸⁸

The part that the Eighth played in the charge up Missionary Ridge was a great chapter in the history of the Kansas regiment. Colonel Martin believed that the Eighth was the first Union regiment to plant its battle flag on the crest of the ridge.⁸⁹

Another idea, I remember distinctly, which impressed me, was that the different regiments had assumed the form of a triangle or wedge--the advance point in nearly every case being the regimental battle flag. I have always believed that my own regiment made the first break in the enemy's lines on the summit of Missionary Ridge; but the difference between the break thus made by the 8th Kansas and the progress made by one or two regiments of Hazen's brigade on our right and the 25th Illinois of our own brigade was exceedingly brief.⁹⁰

The belief that the Eighth was the first or one of the first regiments to reach the summit of Missionary Ridge was substantiated by General Thomas Wood who commanded the center of the Union assault on the Confederate-held position.⁹¹

⁸⁸Robert Johnson and Clarence Buel (eds.), Battles and Leaders of the Civil War (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, Inc., 1956), p. 726; hereafter referred to as Battles and Leaders.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹The New York Times, July 15, 1876, p. 3.

General Wood in a newspaper story some years after the war had this to say about the Eighth and her commander, Colonel Martin:

Willich's brigade, in the centre, had with it the heroic, accomplished Martin, Colonel of the Eighth Kansas. What that regiment could not take, it was not worth while to send any other regiment to look for. Martin was among the foremost to set the example of upward movement and among the first to reach the crest.⁹²

Confederate reports also lent credibility to the claim of Colonel Martin that the Eighth was the first or one of the first regiments to reach the crest. General Braxton Bragg, the commander of the Confederate forces, made the statement that General Thomas J. Wood's division was the first Union division to breach the southern defenses. The Eighth was a part of this division.⁹³

The Union assault on Missionary Ridge carried the crest of the ridge and the Confederate forces fell back in disorder all along the line of battle. The successful attack on this bulwark of the southern positions coupled with the also successful battle of Lookout Mountain on November 24th broke the Confederate siege of Chattanooga.⁹⁴

Later, after the war was over, one of the best Confederate Generals, D. H. Hill, would say that the failure

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Wood, Chattanooga or Lookout Mountain, pp. 14-15.

⁹⁴Report, 1861-1865, p. 137.

of the Confederacy to hold Chattanooga sealed the fate of the southern cause.⁹⁵ The Union armies used Chattanooga as a base of operation for the drive into Tennessee and Georgia under the command of General Sherman.⁹⁶

The Battle of Chattanooga brought the Chattanooga campaign to a close. Throughout the bloody battles of this campaign the Eighth had played a significant role; particularly its assaults on Orchard Knob and Missionary Ridge must be recognized. Men and officers of the Eighth were commemorated for their gallantry and courage in many of the official reports of battle by officers of the army as well as the accounts by war reporters in several newspapers. Perhaps the greatest tribute to the officers and men of the Eighth, after the Battle of Chattanooga, came appropriately from their commander, Colonel Martin, who noted especially the contribution of his adjutant, Lieutenant Sol R. Washer:

Wounded at Chickamauga, and not yet recovered from the effect of the wound, suffering from a severe sprain of the leg, which prevented his walking, he mounted his horse and rode through the whole battle, always foremost in danger. Maj. Edward F. Schneider also left a sick-bed to go to the battlefield.⁹⁷

⁹⁵Fitch, Chattanooga Campaign, p. 210.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Scott, Rebellion, pp. 273-274.

The Battle of Chattanooga was over. In terms of casualties, it had not compared with such engagements as Chickamauga or Gettysburg. However, the holding of Chattanooga and the breaking of the Confederate siege there had a strong influence on the outcome of the rebellion.⁹⁸ The Union had suffered 5,286 killed and wounded; 330 men were unaccounted for, missing in action.⁹⁹ In the battles for Orchard Knob and Missionary Ridge, the Eighth Kansas had three men killed, 24 wounded, out of a total of 219 men engaged in the combat.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸Fitch, Chattanooga Campaign, pp. 224-225.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Kremer, 100 Great Battles, p. 176.

CHAPTER IV

A RESUME OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE EIGHTH FROM DECEMBER 1863 UNTIL THE REGIMENT WAS MUSTERED OUT OF UNION SERVICE JANUARY 9, 1866

After the Battle of Missionary Ridge which broke the siege of Chattanooga, the men of the Eighth received a short rest. Throughout the month of December the Kansas regiment remained relatively inactive.¹

In January of 1864 a governmental proclamation invited the men of volunteer regiments to sign for three more years in the service of the Union.² Colonel Martin noted that in spite of the privations and tremendous hardships experienced by the men of the Eighth, four-fifths of these men enlisted for another three years.³

During the remaining period of January, 1864, the regiment and other elements of the Army of the Cumberland were sent in pursuit of the now retreating Confederate Army of Tennessee.⁴ On the 23rd of January the regiment received

¹Report, 1861-1865, p. 142.

²Ibid.

³Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 44.

⁴Report, 1861-1865, p. 145.

welcome news--the Eighth was ordered to proceed to Chattanooga. From Chattanooga the regiment would be sent home to Kansas on furlough. Colonel Martin stated that this order was greeted with wild enthusiasm by the war-weary veterans of the Eighth.⁵

The men of the Eighth proceeded to Chattanooga, and from Chattanooga to St. Louis, Missouri, by train and river steamer. Upon arrival at St. Louis the regiment was sent by rail to Atchison, Kansas, where a magnificent reception was given in its honor.⁶ Colonel Martin made the comment that it was during this journey home on furlough that the men of the Eighth, for the first time in nearly two years, slept with a roof over their heads.⁷

Following the reception at Atchison, the men of the Eighth were sent by rail to Fort Leavenworth, and on March 1, 1864, all the officers and men received a thirty-five day leave.⁸ On April 5, 1864, the regiment reassembled at Fort Leavenworth and it was learned that Chattanooga was its destination.

⁵The Kansas Knight and Soldier, Topeka, Kansas, October 1, 1886, p. 1.

⁶Report, 1861-1865, p. 145.

⁷Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 44.

⁸Freedom's Champion, March 7, 1864, p. 2.

⁹Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 45.

The journey back to Chattanooga was conducted by river steamer and by rail. The regiment reached the Tennessee city on April 21, 1864.¹⁰ During the next several weeks the Eighth remained in camp at Chattanooga. Colonel Martin noted that many of the officers and men of the regiment revisited the old battlefields of Chickamauga and Chattanooga.¹¹ He mentioned that the men were familiar with the terrain of Chattanooga, but the area over which the Battle of Chickamauga had been fought had only recently fallen into Union hands.¹² Martin reported upon the visit to the area where the Kansas regiment had fought.

But of the fields of Chickamauga and their surroundings we knew little. Only amid the wild excitement of battle had we ever seen them, and such opportunities of inspection are not favorable. We now revisited this ground made truly sacred soil by the loyal blood which crimsoned it on those September days. Where the Eighth fought we found the whitened skeletons of its glorious dead lying on the spots where treason's bullets struck them down, covered with a few loose stones, the only sepulchre that rebel barbarity provided. About twenty-five bodies were identified by peculiarities of form or remnants of clothing, and some by surviving comrades who knew the places where their companions fell. Details were sent out, and the remains of all were carefully collected and brought to Chattanooga, where they were interred in the National Cemetery. The graves of all recognized were marked.¹³

¹⁰Report, 1861-1865, p. 146.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., p. 147.

Another interesting part of Colonel Martin's visit to the battlefield of Chickamauga was that he mentioned examining a tree that was not as big around as a man and discovered thirty musket balls imbedded therein.¹⁴

Early in June of 1864, the Eighth was ordered to join General W. T. Sherman's army which was driving toward Georgia.¹⁵ By the 29th of June the men of the Kansas regiment had complied with that order and had moved into front line positions with Sherman's army.¹⁶

For the next three months the Eighth was with Sherman as he fought his way toward Atlanta, Georgia.¹⁷ Although the Kansas soldiers actually participated in no engagements of battle proportions during this period, there was hardly a day in which they were not under fire.¹⁸ On August 11, 1864, Martin's paper, Freedom's Champion, mentioned that Atlanta was under siege and that the Eighth was with the Union army surrounding the city.¹⁹

¹⁴Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 48.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 49.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷W. J. Tenney, The Military and Naval History of the Rebellion in the United States (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1867), p. 756; hereafter referred to as Tenney, Military and Naval History.

¹⁸Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 50.

¹⁹Freedom's Champion, August 11, 1864, p. 2.

On the morning of September 5, 1864, the army of General Sherman entered Atlanta.²⁰ The Eighth was a part of Sherman's victorious army.²¹ Although the Eighth had lost few men the campaign had been arduous for the regiment. Colonel Martin commented on the nearly three months of strife before Atlanta.

Thus terminated the operations against Atlanta. The Eighth Kansas was, from the 28th of June until the 5th of September, a period of sixty-nine days, under fire for sixty-three days and forty-four nights. It built, during that time, two thousand six hundred and eighty yards of breastworks, and rifle pits without number. During the thirty-three days it lay in front of Atlanta, its men fired away one hundred and twenty thousand rounds of cartridges. Its loss, out of a total effective force of about two hundred and twenty-five men, was one officer wounded and one captured, and eight enlisted men killed and thirty wounded. Aggregate loss during the campaign, 2 commissioned officers and 38 enlisted men.²²

The capture of Atlanta by Sherman put the Confederacy in a perilous condition.²³ General Hood who had replaced General Joseph Johnston as commander of the Confederate Army of Tennessee, had been ordered to take the offensive before the battle of Atlanta.²⁴ This resulted in drastic consequences for the Confederacy because Hood's army had taken

²⁰Bruce Catton, This Hallowed Ground, The Story of the Union Side of the Civil War (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1956), p. 354; hereafter referred to as Catton, This Hallowed Ground.

²¹Report, 1861-1865, p. 148.

²²Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 54.

²³Lloyd's Battle History, p. 487.

²⁴Catton, This Hallowed Ground, p. 342.

a tremendous mauling.²⁵ Still Hood, following the orders of President Jefferson Davis, was prepared to press the offensive.²⁶ Following the fall of Atlanta, Hood took his army north toward Nashville, Tennessee. Sherman put his army in motion to intercept this brash move by the Confederate commander.²⁷ The Eighth, with part of Sherman's army, moved in pursuit of Hood.²⁸ By evening of December 1, 1864, the Union army had crossed Hood's line of march in front of Nashville.²⁹

During the next two weeks Hood's forces probed the Union lines in front of Nashville.³⁰ On the night of December 14, the men of the Kansas regiment received orders to move against the Confederate positions on the following day.³¹ This would be the first battle action seen by the Eighth in which Colonel Martin would not lead the regiment or the brigade. On the 17th of November, 1864, Colonel

²⁵Kremer, 100 Great Battles, p. 253.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 254-255.

²⁷Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 56.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid., p. 57.

³⁰Kremer, 100 Great Battles, p. 259.

³¹Report, 1861-1865, p. 150.

Martin was mustered out of the Union service at the expiration of his term. Martin had served as commander of the Eighth three years and twenty-one days.³²

On the morning of December 15, the Eighth assaulted a part of the Confederate held line on Montgomery Hill near Nashville. The attack was a success and forty southern prisoners were taken by the regiment.³³ The Confederate army under General Hood took a severe beating on the first day of the Battle of Nashville. Hood was by this time short of reserves and supplies. In addition, the northern army greatly outnumbered the Confederate army of Tennessee.³⁴

As daylight came on December 16, the men of the Eighth were being prepared for another assault on the southern positions. The Kansas regiment was moved to a position on the Franklin Pike about four miles outside of Nashville.³⁵ Around three in the afternoon the Eighth was ordered to assault Confederate positions on Overton Hill.

In a few moments the charging column was enveloped in a terrific fire of musketry, grape and canister. The roar of the battle was deafening,

³²Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 58.

³³Report, 1861-1865, p. 151.

³⁴Lloyd's Battle History, p. 511.

³⁵Report, 1861-1865, p. 151.

and for fifteen minutes the bullets rained upon the devoted men with such fury that it seemed impossible for any one to escape. Col. Post, who commanded the column, was severely wounded early in the fight, and the first line which he led was broken. The horses of Col. Conover and Adjutant Washer, of the Eighth, were shot under them. The second, third, and fourth lines, advancing to where the first had broken, got into confusion among the fallen timber and abatis and huddled together. It was now seen that in this situation the enemy's strong, almost impregnable position could not be carried, and Lieut. Col. Conover asked permission of Lieut. Col. Williams, commanding the fourth line, to retire his regiment and reform it. The order was given, when the whole force fell back, moving in comparatively good order to a point a short distance in the rear. The troops were then immediately reformed and at once ordered to charge the enemy's works again. At this moment, however, the rebel position to the right was carried, and the whole rebel line broke in confusion.³⁶

The Battle of Nashville dealt Hood's army a terrible blow. One-third of the Confederate manpower of the Army of Tennessee had been captured. Nearly all of its artillery was lost and its retreat was hardly less than a race to the rear in order to escape the Union army.³⁷

The Battle of Nashville was the last action of battle size in which the Eighth participated.³⁸ Throughout the remainder of December, 1864, and during the months of January

³⁶Ibid., p. 152.

³⁷Lloyd's Battle History, p. 511.

³⁸Report, 1861-1865, p. 153.

and February, 1865, the men of the Eighth split their time camped first at Huntsville, Alabama, and then moving to Nashville, Tennessee.³⁹

On the 4th of April, 1865, the Kansas regiment was moved to a new camp in eastern Tennessee near a small settlement called Bull's Gap.⁴⁰ At Bull's Gap the Eighth received two important pieces of information: the news of General Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox in Virginia, and, a few days later, the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.⁴¹ Colonel Martin, who was in letter contact with various soldiers of his former regiment, commented on the Eighth's receiving these two messages:

The former was celebrated with the wildest demonstrations of enthusiasm. Alas! how soon came the sad news turning this joy into grief and this enthusiastic rejoicing into mourning, as the wires flashed over the land that saddest message they ever conveyed---"Abraham Lincoln is assassinated!" And surely none mourned this great National calamity with more profound sorrow than did the soldiers of the Eighth Kansas.⁴²

With the war over, the men of the Eighth expected to be discharged. Most of the men felt that their term of service as volunteers was terminated at the end of hostilities. Immediate discharge was not in the picture for the

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 154.

⁴¹Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 59.

⁴²Ibid., p. 60.

Eighth and other members of the 4th Army Corps, Army of the Cumberland. The 14th and 20th Corps of the army were mustered out, but the 4th was retained in government service.⁴³

General Robert E. Lee had surrendered his army in early April. Isolated remnants of Confederate armies continued to carry on the struggle following the surrender of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Kirby Smith who commanded Confederate forces west of the Mississippi did not formally surrender until April 26, 1865.⁴⁴

Among many Northerners there was a fear of guerrilla activity in the South, even after formal surrender.⁴⁵ This is a probable explanation of why some volunteer regiments were kept in uniform after the surrender of the main Confederate armies.

Colonel Martin stated that the men of the Eighth were highly disappointed that they did not receive mustering out orders with many of the other volunteer regiments. However, Martin said that the men of the Kansas regiment accepted the decision of their superiors and continued to serve the Union.⁴⁶

⁴³Report, 1861-1865, p. 161.

⁴⁴Tenney, Military and Naval History, p. 762.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 763.

⁴⁶Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 65.

On April 22, 1865, the Eighth was moved to the outskirts of Nashville and remained there until June 15th. On that date the Eighth boarded river steamers bound for New Orleans, Louisiana.⁴⁷ After disembarking at New Orleans, the regiment moved to Green Lake, Louisiana. While stationed in Green Lake members of the Kansas regiment amused themselves by hunting alligators which, according to Colonel Martin, were in plentiful supply.⁴⁸

On August 21, 1865, the Eighth was ordered to San Antonio, Texas, to serve provost duty. Lieutenant Colonel Conover of the Eighth was appointed Provost Marshal for the city.⁴⁹ The Kansas regiment served provost duty in San Antonio until November 29, 1865, when they received orders mustering them out of Union service.⁵⁰ The regiment was ordered to Fort Leavenworth for final discharge.⁵¹

The Adjutant General's Report for Kansas 1861-1865 describes the homecoming of the Eighth as they arrived in Kansas:

On the 5th of January, 1866, the regiment arrived in Atchison, where it received a fine ovation

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 67.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 68.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 72.

⁵⁰Report, 1861-1865, p. 172.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 173.

and was most hospitably entertained by the citizens. Arches, elegantly festooned and decorated, and inscribed with the names of the battles in which the regiment had participated, were thrown across the principal street; houses were decorated with evergreens and mottoes of welcome and compliment, and a formal reception was given at Price's Hall, where Judge Horton made an eloquent welcoming speech, to which Chaplain Paulson, of the Eighth, replied. The men were entertained until next day, when the regiment left for Fort Leavenworth.⁵²

On January 9, 1866, the Eighth was officially mustered out of the Union service, the last of the Kansas Volunteer regiments to be released. At the time of discharge the regiment numbered one hundred and ninety-six officers and men.⁵³

The Civil War service of the Eighth Kansas Veteran Volunteer Regiment had ended. Colonel Martin proudly recorded the termination of faithful and loyal service to the Union by the Kansas regiment:

Thus terminated the military history of the Eighth Kansas Veteran Volunteer Infantry. Its career, commencing at a very early period of our great civil war, and ending long after the last hostile shot had been fired, the last rebel flag lowered, and the last rebel soldier had surrendered, was conspicuous always for the loftiest and most sublime courage, the most unselfish and sublime patriotism, and a martial pride and discipline that no extreme of privation or plenty, of camp monotony or the fatigues of the march, of life in garrison or in the field, could every destroy. Tried by campaigns crowded thick with hardships

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Martin, Volunteer Infantry, p. 69.

and suffering; tried in the demoralizing atmosphere of a large city; tried in battles where the earth was crimsoned with its blood, and half of its heroic men were killed or wounded; tried by siege, and the near presence of grim and gaunt starvation---its steadfast patriotism, its constant order, its unfaltering courage, and its sturdy endurance were equal to every emergency.⁵⁴

The men of the Eighth had served long and well. During their term of service with the Union army they traveled 10,750 miles. The regiment fought in fifteen battles and suffered three hundred and thirty-six killed or wounded.⁵⁵

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 71.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 75.

CHAPTER V

THE EIGHTH KANSAS AND THE FINAL BUGLE, 1866-1900

Although the Eighth Kansas Veteran Volunteer Infantry was disbanded at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, in January of 1866, it was to be almost forty years before final tribute to the regiment would be paid.¹ In 1895 a grateful state would pay final tribute to the veterans of the Eighth by having monuments erected on the battlefields of Chickamauga and Chattanooga.²

In the years following the war, it was common for the men of the Eighth to hold frequent reunions. One such reunion was held at Fort Leavenworth in October of 1883.³ At this time the war had been over nearly twenty years and the men who had carried rifles up Missionary Ridge and who had faced the charge of Longstreet at Chickamauga were no longer young.

During the reunion of 1883, Colonel Martin addressed the veterans with the following remarks:

The hardships and privations of march and camp, and the casualties of battle, decimated its ranks

¹George W. Martin (ed.), Kansas Historical Collections, Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society, 1903-1904 (Topeka: George A. Clark, State Printer, 1904), p. 273; hereafter referred to as Kansas Historical Collections.

²Ibid.

³Martin, Reunion Proceedings, p. 2.

again and again during its long term of service; very many have since died, their lives shortened by wounds, or by the wasting effects of the campaigns in which they participated; and the survivors, scattered all over the country, probably do not number one-third of the 1,001 men who have answered "here" at its roll-calls.⁴

The years were taking toll on the Kansas regiment.

The deep feelings that Colonel Martin held for the Eighth were illustrated by the many references made to the regiment and to the men who served in it during Martin's term as governor of Kansas. Martin was well aware of not only the service record of the Eighth but of the Kansas contribution to the war effort in general. In an address while Governor of the State of Kansas, Martin once stated that the number of Kansas soldiers killed in battle during the Civil War was higher proportionately than that of any other state in the Union. Martin went on to say that Kansas was the only state in the Union which filled all of its quotas of volunteers for the Federal armies, and furthermore, Kansas furnished more soldiers in proportion to her population than any state in the Union.⁵

Typical of the speeches in which Martin commemorated the service of the men of the Eighth was a Memorial Day speech given at Wichita, Kansas, in 1886. In that speech Martin

⁴Ibid., p. 3.

⁵Report, 1861-1865, p. 108.

tells of the death of a young Captain of the Eighth who was killed during the Battle of Chickamauga. Martin stated that the name of this brave young officer who was killed while searching for wounded comrades was Captain Edgar P. Trego.⁶ Martin also mentioned that Captain Trego was buried in the National Cemetery at Chattanooga, Tennessee. Trego County, Kansas, is named for this young Kansas soldier.⁷

Other members of the Eighth who fought and died for their country were honored by their fellow soldiers of the Union. By 1886 five posts of the Grand Army of the Republic were named for men of the Eighth.⁸ The G.A.R. post at Colby, Kansas, was named for Charles O. Rovohl. Rovohl was a color bearer for the regiment and was killed at the Battle of Chickamauga. The post at Holton, Kansas, was called Will Wendell Post. Wendell had replaced Rovohl at Chickamauga and was also killed. John L. Graham Post No. 167 was named for Captain John L. Graham of the Eighth who was killed at Chickamauga. Captain Trego Post at Wakeeney, Kansas, was named for Captain Edgar P. Trego who, as mentioned, also died at Chickamauga. Sergeant Hale Post No. 328 at Blue

⁶The Topeka [Kansas] Capital, June 1, 1886, p. 1.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Kansas Knight and Soldier, Topeka, Kansas, July 15, 1886, p. 2.



Figure 9. This is a photograph of Sol R. Washer who served as Adjutant of the Eighth Kansas Volunteer Infantry. This photo of Washer was taken while he was serving on Governor Morrill's commission to select and erect monuments on the battlefields of Chickamauga and Chattanooga.

Rapids, Kansas, was named in honor of Sergeant Robert O. Hale who was killed at Chickamauga.⁹

Kansas did not forget her sons, living and dead, who fought for the Union. In 1895 the Governor of Kansas, Edmund N. Morrill, appointed a commission as prescribed by the State Legislature, to erect memorials and monuments on the battlefields where Kansas soldiers fought and died.¹⁰ This appointed commission placed monuments and other markers commemorating the service of Kansas soldiers on the various battlefields where Kansas was represented. J. L. Abernathy and S. R. Washer, both former officers of the Eighth, served on the Governor's commission.¹¹

The commission of Governor Morrill, carrying out the wishes of the State Legislature, erected monuments on the battlefields of Chickamauga and also at Chattanooga. Both of these were sites of the Eighth's greatest battles.¹² The Kansas Historical Collections of 1903-1904 states that a main monument was placed on the battlefield at Chickamauga and bears the following inscription:

Eighth Kansas Infantry, Third Brigade, First Division, Twentieth Army Corps. On the reverse

⁹Kansas Knight and Soldier, Topeka, Kansas, July 15, 1886, p. 2.

¹⁰Kansas Historical Collections, pp. 271-272.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

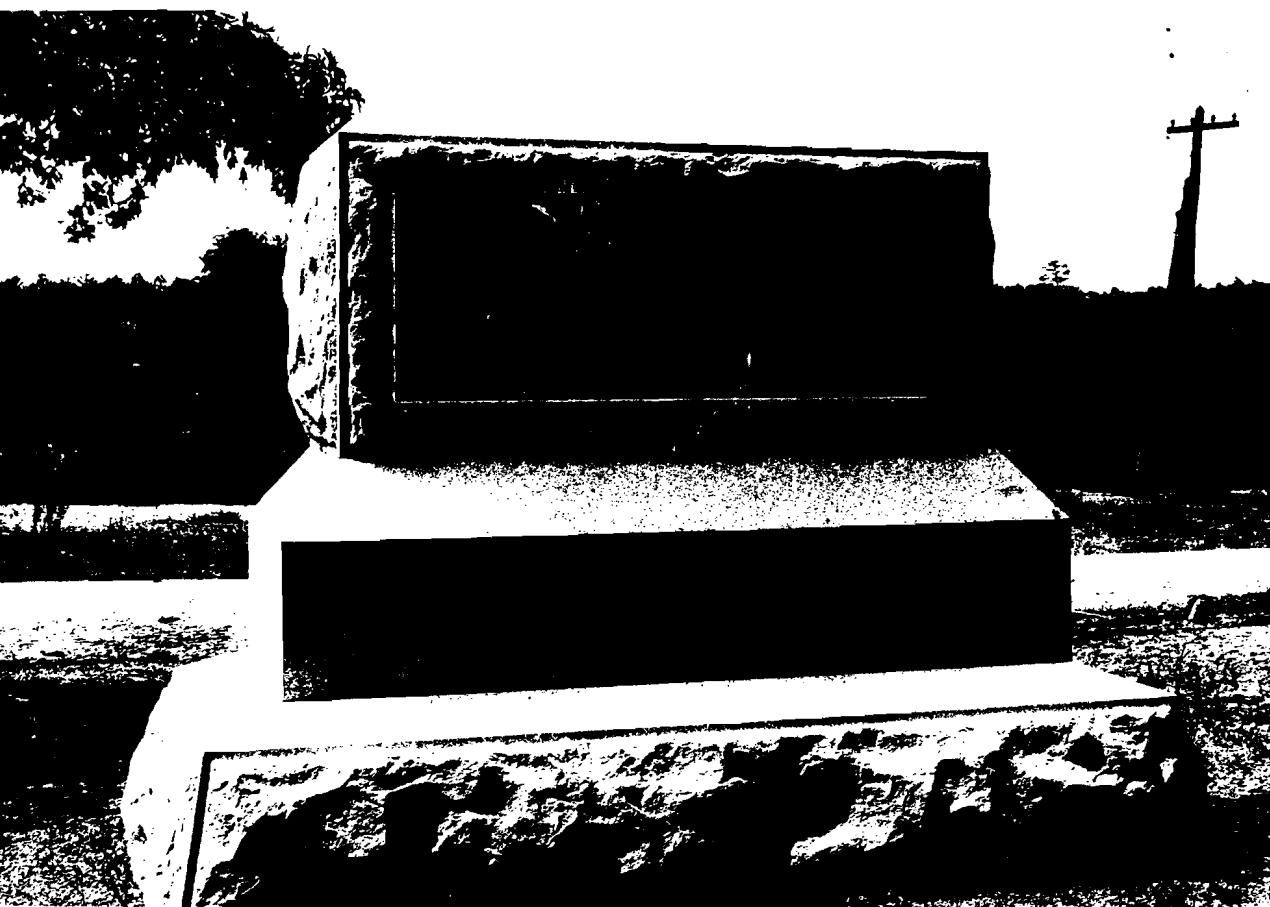


Figure 10. This monument was placed on the Battlefield of Chickamauga in 1895 by the citizens of Kansas to commemorate the service of the Eighth Kansas Volunteer Infantry during this engagement of September 19-20, 1863.

side is the following inscription, in bronze plate: "On September 19, 1863, the Eighth Kansas Volunteer Infantry, Col. John A. Martin, Commander, Heg's brigade, Davis's division, McCook's corps, went into action east of this point, and was in the hottest part of the battle from 12:30 until 6:00 p.m. During the battle Colonel Heg was killed. Colonel Martin assumed command of the brigade, and Lieut.-Col. J. L. Abernathy commanded the regiment. The fighting this day was severe. The ground where this monument stands was repeatedly occupied by the opposing forces. At the close of the day the regiment bivouacked west of the Viniard house. During the night the division moved to the high ground west of Crawfish Springs road, and north of Widow Glenn's house. September 20, at twelve o'clock, the brigade went into action on the Brotherton farm, but was soon forced to retire to McFarland's gap. The regiment joined General Thomas at six p.m. Total number engaged, 406. Loss: 2 commissioned officers killed, 9 commissioned officers wounded, 28 enlisted men killed, 156 enlisted men wounded, 25 men missing. Total loss, 220, or fifty-five per cent of strength of regiment."¹³

In the course of its work on the battlefield of Chickamauga, the commission erected a monument marking the farthest advance of the Eighth at Chickamauga on both the 19th and 20th of September 1863.¹⁴ The monument showing the farthest point of advance on the 19th of September is about five hundred yards east of the main monument and a granite marker identifies this spot. On the marker is the following inscription:

The Eighth Kansas Volunteer Infantry occupied this position at one p.m., September 19, 1863.¹⁵

¹³Ibid., p. 273.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 274.

¹⁵Ibid.

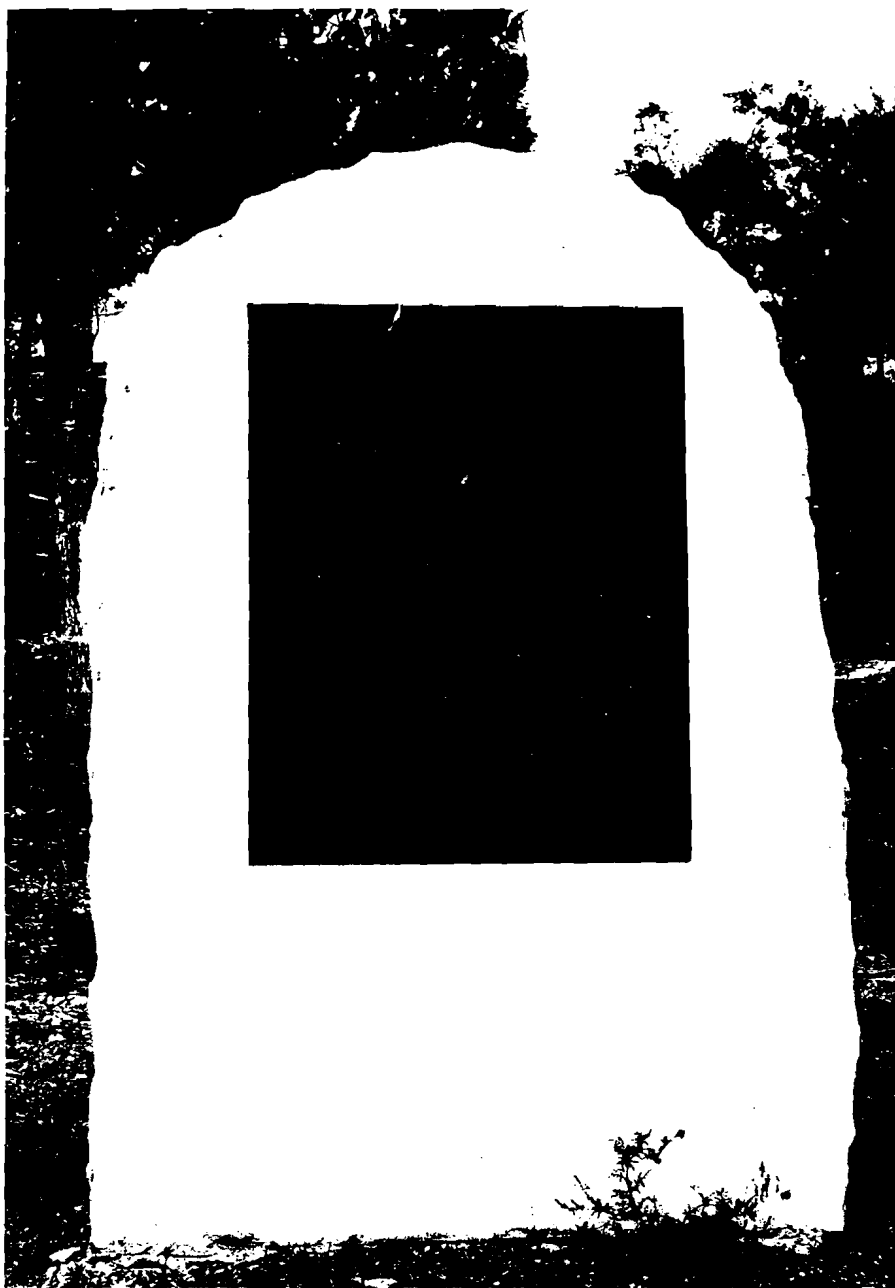


Figure 11. This monument was placed on Orchard Knob on the Battlefield of Chattanooga in 1895. The monument commemorates the capture of this important position by the Eighth on November 23, 1863.

In addition to the beautiful monuments erected by the commission on the Battlefield of Chickamauga, the commission also caused certain memorials and monuments to be placed on Orchard Knob and Missionary Ridge. These two important engagements which helped to break the Confederate siege of Chattanooga, Tennessee, were battles in which the Eighth played leading roles and saw extremely fierce action.¹⁶

The commission from Kansas caused a monument to be erected on Orchard Knob outside Chattanooga. The marker stands six feet six inches high and contains the following inscription:

On November 23, 1863, the Eighth Kansas Volunteer Infantry, Col. John A. Martin commanding, first brigade, third division, fourth army corps, moved on this point at two o'clock p.m., from the railroad track, in front of Fort Wood, as skirmishers for the brigade, and, supported by the brigade captured this knob and line of works without much resistance, and before the main line arrived. The regiment remained in this position until three o'clock in the afternoon of the 25th, when it moved with the brigade to assault the enemy works at the foot of Mission Ridge.¹⁷

Almost directly in front of Orchard Knob, at the top of Mission Ridge, the commission from Kansas placed a monument 17' 11" to commemorate the participation of the men of the Eighth in the successful charge up Missionary Ridge. The monument holds the following inscription:

November 25, 1863, the Eighth Kansas Volunteer Infantry, Col. John A. Martin commanding, Willich's

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.



Figure 12. This monument was erected on Missionary Ridge in 1895. The monument cites the service of the Eighth during the successful charge on this position November 23, 1863.

brigade, Wood's division, Granger's corps, advanced from Orchard Knob at three p.m., and with the brigade carried the works at the foot of the ridge, and continuing the assault up its face, the regiment broke through the opposing lines on the crest of the ridge at this point and a portion of it pursued the enemy 200 yards beyond and there engaged in a lively but short fight, while the rest assisted in driving the enemy from the left. The regiment bivouacked on the ridge near this point. Total number engaged 219. Loss: 1 commissioned officer wounded, 2 enlisted men killed, 23 enlisted men wounded; total 26.¹⁸

The years have since passed, and today no man lives who answered the call of Kansas to serve the Union. Monuments and words of commemoration can not possibly tell the story of the suffering, privation, discomfort, disease, and the final agony of death which were the companions of these Kansans who marched so many years ago.

The printed word simply falls short of adequate description of the events and emotions which these men experienced as they battled to save the Union over one hundred years ago. Perhaps it was left for an unknown author, probably a former soldier of the Eighth, to pen the final tribute to the Kansas regiment. This tribute, a poem, appeared in the Commonwealth, a Topeka, Kansas, newspaper on August 3, 1884. The occasion was a G.A.R. encampment at Topeka. The poem was entitled "The Eighth Kansas":

¹⁸Ibid.

Once more we meet--but not as when
With youth and hope we marched away,
A thousand men we mustered then--
A feeble remnant here today,

Our banner flashed in waves of light,
O'er serried columns brave and strong,
While thousands gathered to the sight,
With cheers of parting, loud and long.

The merry jest and laugh went round,
Our toils and hardships to beguile,
As with the soul of "Old John Brown,"
We tramped through many a weary mile,

We tramped and fought and fought and tramped,
War's fierce tide surging to and fro,
O'er mountains high and dismal swamps,
Until the grand concluding blow.

But now by conflict torn and marred,
Our flags hang out on the silent wall,
And we, gray haired and battle-scarred,
The struggles of the past recall.

For suffering binds with links of steel,
The souls that death together braved,
And hearts, with tender memories fill,
For those whose blood the nation saved,

Our comrades of those troubled years,
Who sleep beneath the silent sod,
Who yielding not to foes or fears,
Were true to country and to God.

Wasting as wastes the crumbling rock,
Worn by exposure, want and toil,
Falling in battle's deadly shock,
But dying with the conqueror's smile.

For them the camp-fire burns no more
Nor morning reveille shall awake;
The bugle's blast nor cannon roar,
Shall never more their slumbers break.

Their dust is scattered far and wide,
O'er battle field their valor won,
Neath Alabama mountain side,
And Georgia fervid Southern sun,

Kentucky's dark and bloody ground
Has closed upon the manly breast,
And Tennessee a place has found,
For many a comrade's final rest.

Down the gulf stream's cypress gloom,
Where mosses gray, funereal wave;
Or where magnolias blend perfume,
With orange blossoms above the graves.

Our Western households mourn the loss
of lovers, sons and brothers slain;
Yet joy relieves the bitter cross--
They died, but perished not in vain.

The Union banner floats supreme,
O'er every spot their feet have pressed,
And glory crowns the patriot's dream--
A land united and at rest.

Thus Kansas gave, in faith sublime,
The lifeblood of her children free,
While from it springs through after time
The flower and fruit of liberty.

But while we drop the silent tear
In memory of our comrades gone,
A grateful country greets us here,
And hails our work as nobly done.

Then let the tale from age to age,
Be told with varied speech and style,
In poet's song, on history's page,
And proud monumental pile.

The parting comes--the conqueror, Death,
Lays prostrate both the brave and strong,
But while the Union stands, the Eighth
Shall live in story and in song.

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