

The 12th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry



The Governor

The dominant political figure in Massachusetts during the war was Governor John Albion Andrew, a staunch Republican who energetically supported the war effort.



Massachusetts in the Civil War

Recruitment Massachusetts sent a total of 159,165 men to serve in the war. Of these, 133,002 served in the Union army and 26,163 served in the navy. The army units raised in Massachusetts consisted of 62 regiments of infantry, six regiments of cavalry, 16 batteries of light artillery, four regiments of heavy artillery, two companies of sharpshooters, a handful of unattached battalions and 26 unattached companies.



The Webster Division



Colonel Fletcher Webster

The 12th Regiment. Massachusetts. Volunteer Infantry, known as the “Webster Regiment”, was recruited in the latter part of April, 1861, through the personal efforts of Fletcher Webster, son of the statesman, Daniel Webster. During the first week in May, 1861, the regiment was transferred to Fort Warren, where its organization was completed.

and all organization quite
complete, without further
appointment.
I write with the warm
concurrence of Lt. Col. Mayan
recommending the appoint-
ment of Thomas Haviland Esq
Newton, who has been
thoroughly drilled by Lt. Col.
Mayan, for a Lieutenantcy,
under that I may select
for the adjutancy.
We have now to be
debited to the Second
Colonial for the services of
an officer.
I have the honour to be
your Excellency's
very obedt servt.
Fletcher Webster
Col. 19th Regt
In A.M.

Primary Source*

Letter from Fletcher Webster to the Governor Andrew requesting promotions. All military promotions needed to be approved by the governor.

Courtesy of
Massachusetts Archives

Five Companies

Five companies were raised in Boston and one each in Abington, North Bridgewater, Gloucester, Stoughton, and Weymouth. On June 26, Col. Webster and a large majority of the officers and men of the regiment were mustered into the service.

The regiment left Fort Warren for the seat of war July 23, and on the 27th it reached Sandy Hook, Md., near Harper's Ferry.



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THE UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY
BETWEEN BOSTON AND NEW-YORK,
AND INTERMEDIATE STATIONS,
CONNECTING WITH THE PRINCIPAL CITIES AND TOWNS IN THE U. STATES AND CANADAS.
OFFICE, 31 STATE STREET, TRAVELLER BUILDING.

Terms of conditions on which Messages are received by this Company for Transmission.
The public are notified that, in order to guard against mistakes in the transmission of messages, every message of importance
ought to be repeated by being sent back from the station at which it is to be received to the station from which it is originally sent.—
Half the usual price for transmission will be charged for repeating the message, and while this company will as heretofore use every
precaution to ensure correctness, it will not be responsible for mistakes or delays in the transmission or delivery of repeated messages
beyond an amount exceeding five hundred times the amount paid for sending the message, nor for delays arising from interruptions in
the workings of its telegraphs, nor for any mistake or omission of any other company over whose lines a message is to be sent to reach
the place of destination. All messages will hereafter be received by this company for transmission subject to the above conditions.
J. RENDALL, Gen'l Sup't, 145 BROADWAY, N. Y.
E. S. SANFORD, Pres't, 145 BROADWAY, N. Y.

Dated *Washn* 1861.

Rec'd, *Boston*, *June 19* 1861, *o'clock*, *min.* *M.*

To *Gov Andrew*

With your *2* approval the
-department will accept
Col Webster's Regiment &
have it immediately
mustered and ordered
on to Washington

Simon Cameron

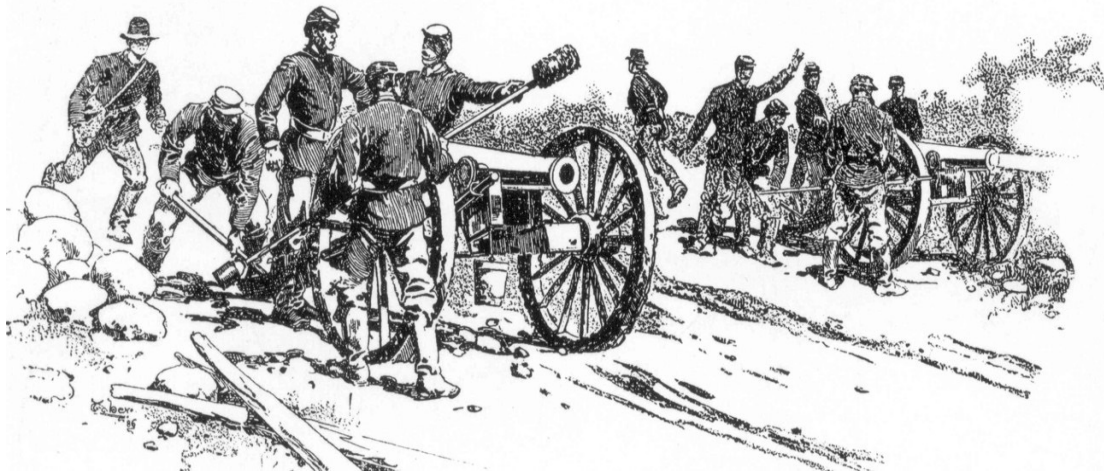
Primary Source*

* The original telegraph orders to move the Webster Regiment to Washington DC

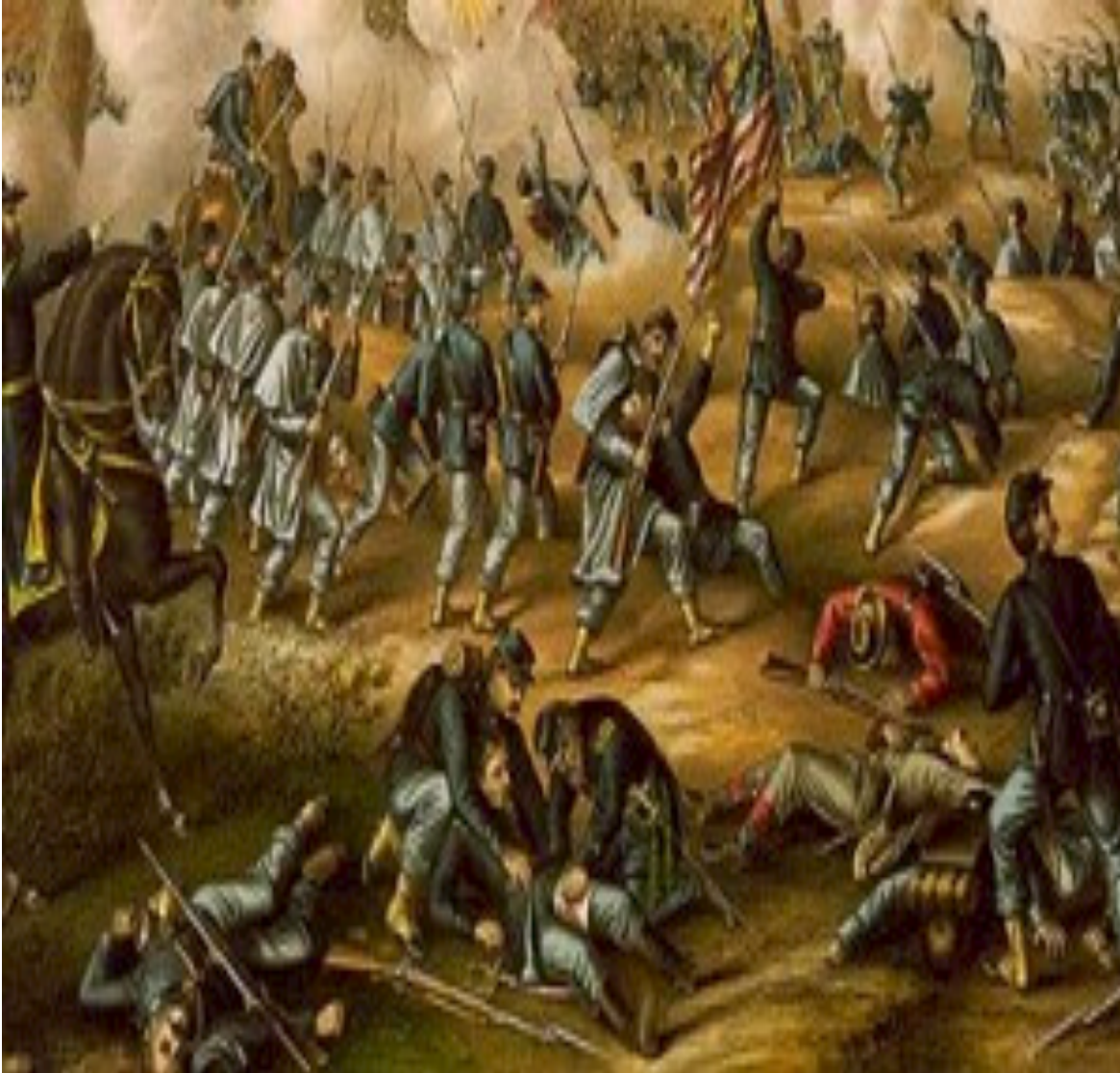
Courtesy of Massachusetts Archives

Off to the War

On July 19, 1861, the regiment was reviewed by Governor John Albion Andrew on Boston Common and presented with its colors. On July 23, the 12th Massachusetts departed Boston for the war front



Second Bull Run



At Second Bull Run, August 30, General Z. B. Tower was in command of the brigade in the absence of Gen. Hartsuff, who was ill. The 12th Regiment was heavily engaged near Bald Hill on the Chinn farm, losing its commander, Colonel Webster, and 25 officers and men killed or mortally wounded.

John Slattery

John Slattery, 18, Company
“H”, 12th Regiment Infantry,
Massachusetts Volunteers.
The first South Weymouth boy
killed during the Civil War.



Colonel Webster is killed

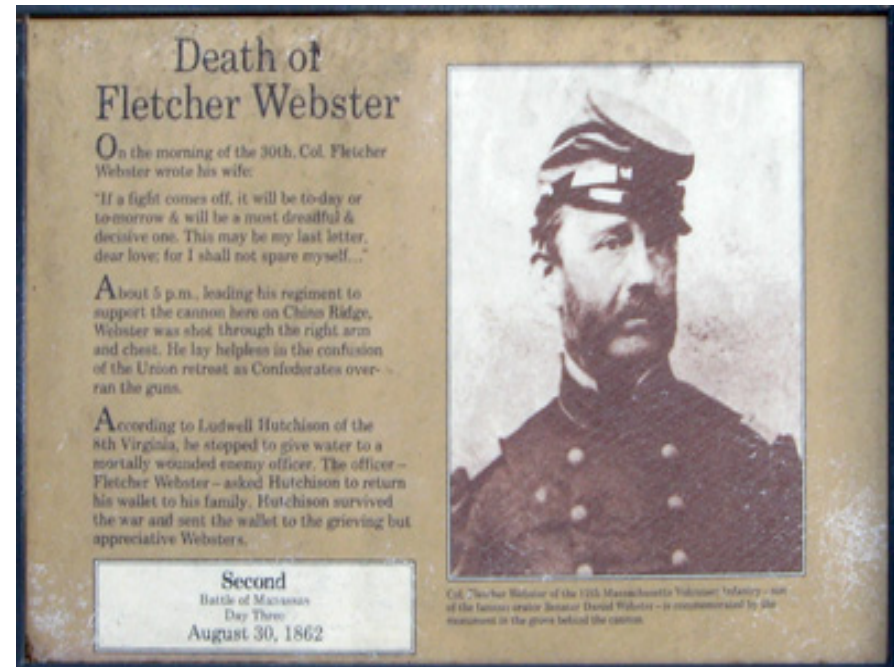
Death of Fletcher Webster

On the morning of Aug. 30th, Col. Fletcher Webster wrote his wife:

“If a fight comes off, it will be to-day or to-morrow & will be a most dreadful & decisive one. This may be my last letter, dear love, for I shall not spare myself...”

About 5 p.m., leading his regiment to support the cannon here on Chinn Ridge, Webster was shot through the right arm and chest. He lay helpless in the confusion of the Union retreat as Confederates overran the guns.

According to Ludwell Hutchinson of the 8th Virginia, he stopped to give water to a mortally wounded enemy officer. The officer – Fletcher Webster – asked Hutchinson to return his wallet to his family. Hutchinson survived the war and sent the wallet to the grieving but appreciative Websters.



Fought on the Bloody Cornfield



On September 17th, 1862 at Antietam, the 12th fought in the Bloody Cornfield, losing 224 officers and men, of whom 74, including Major Elisha Burbank and Assistant Surgeon A. A. Kendall, were killed or mortally wounded. Here it came into conflict with the famous Texas Brigade and captured the colors of the 1st Texas Infantry.

Heavy casualties at Fredericksburg

At Fredericksburg, Dec. 13, 1862, under the command of Col. James L. Bates, as a part of Reynolds' (1st) Corps, the 12th fought bravely in the attack on the Confederate right, losing heavily.

At a terrible cost, the brave men of the 12th had carried out their orders to support the attack. The division had suffered 1,267 casualties out of a total force of 3,500 men. The 12th Massachusetts had lost 105 of 258 men; the 16th Maine lost 230 of 417 in its first fight, but won the proud reputation of a fighting regiment.

Although the main battle had been an abysmal failure, Gibbon's soldiers had accomplished what no other Union division at Fredericksburg had managed: they had breached however briefly-the formidable Confederate line.



First Day at Gettysburg

On the first day of the engagement, July 1, 1863, as the slow and unplanned collision of the two armies began, the 12th Massachusetts (part of Baxter's brigade) was among the first of the Union units to occupy Oak Ridge and stall the Confederate advance northwest of town.



Part of a Massacre



Lying down behind a stone wall, Baxter's brigade (including the 12th Mass) watched in amazement as Iverson's brigade of North Carolinians advanced on their position, apparently oblivious to the danger in front of them. When the 12th Mass and the rest of their brigade opened fire, hundreds of Confederates were instantly cut down. Iverson's brigade suffered two-thirds casualties in a matter of minutes.

The 12th in the rest of the Civil War

Gettysburg July 1-3. Picket duty on the Rapidan until October. Bristoe Campaign October 9-22. Advance to line of the Rappahannock November 7-8. Mine Run Campaign November 26-December 2. Demonstration on the Rapidan

1864

February 6-7, 1864. Campaign from the Rapidan to the James May-June, 1864. Battles of the Wilderness May 5-7; Laurel Hill May 8; Spottsylvania May 8-12; Spottsylvania Court House May 12:21. Assault on the Salient May 12. North Anna River May 23-26. Jericho Ford May 23. Line of the Pamunkey May 26-28. Totopotomoy May 28-31. Cold Harbor June 1-12. Bethesda Church June 1-3. White Oak Swamp June 13. Before Petersburg June 16-18. Ordered home for muster out June 25. Mustered out July 8, 1864.

Regiment lost during service 18 Officers and 175 Enlisted men killed and mortally wounded and 83 Enlisted men by disease. Total 276.

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