

AT THE ATWOOD HOUSE

Chatham And The Civil War

by Spencer Grey

Second of two parts chronicling Chatham resident Francis B. Rogers' adventures in the Civil War, based on his journal, which is in the archives of the Chatham Historical Society.

It was not until the end of April 1863 that Rogers' regiment saw any significant action, but on April 28 they were detailed for skirmishing with General Palmer. When this action was over on the next day, Rogers reports that the company returned with two killed and several wounded. The following day was taken up with repairing roads and railroad tracks, but they were rewarded by finding a few eggs and being allowed to build a fire to cook them. On May 1, after a five-day absence, they marched back to camp where they "were ordered to fall in for four months pay. The order was promptly obeyed."

Because toward the end of May they were nearing the end of their enlistment, "orders were read at drill that all comrades that would re-enlist in heavy artillery would be immediately discharged and go home on 30 days furlough and receive \$75 down and \$75 more at the close of the war. Several responded."

On June 12 the regiment was called out by order of their colonel, who told them that their time of service would expire on July 20, but he asked them to continue to attend to their duties in the meantime. On June 24 the men were ordered to pack up and report at New Bern. Most of them were then transported to Baltimore, but the invalids, including Rogers, had to remain in the camp.

On July 5 they received orders for the invalids to report to New Bern, where they boarded a transport convoy for Boston. Invalids from the 51st, 46th, and 8th regiments joined them, making about 250 in all. When they were passing Cape Hatteras on the next day, Rogers's comrade, Charles E. Parker, died from typhoid fever. They prepared a box and packed the body in ice to preserve it until they reached Boston. Francis Rogers's final entry in his journal reports that they "...passed Chatham on July 9th at 4 p.m.; thick fog. At midnight were ashore on Situate Beach with a northeast storm coming on. We made an attempt to land the invalids but gave it up and waited patiently for morning, and with the assistance from the shore, we succeeded in getting out of our perilous situation and arrive in Boston at 7 a.m. on July 10th. Discharged July 29, 1863."

Francis Rogers was among the fortunate ones who survived the war, but 650,000 of those who fought lost their lives, many in battle but an equally large number died from their wounds, as medical treatment was often unavailable or inadequate.

The loss of life during the war that killed so many Americans—north and south—is felt vividly when we see the monuments, in every village, town, and city throughout the country, to the most costly war in lives lost of any conflict in our history.

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