

A Civil War Soldier to be Remembered

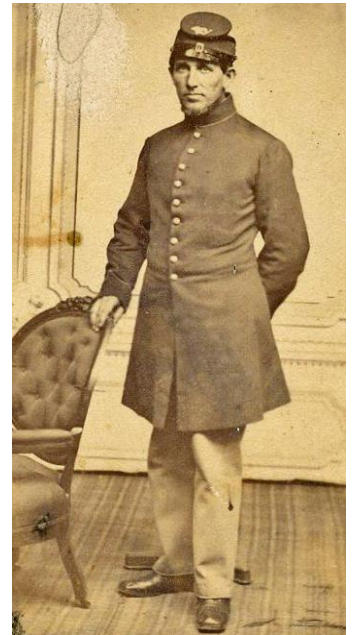
AT THE ATWOOD

By Judy Cuniff

From Sept. 1, 1862 to July, 29, 1863, Chatham born Pvt. Francis B. Rogers kept a Civil War journal -- two small notebooks, 3 x 5 inches in size. The pages are crowded with his handwriting, which is still surprisingly legible. It has entries for nearly every day, and it appears that some pages were written as events happened, others somewhat later. Most of the entries tell of daily life in camp, patrols, and reconnaissance expeditions.

On the inside cover of the journal is inscribed, "Francis B. Rogers, Chatham, Mass. Cape Cod, 43 Reg. Mass. Vol. 9 months." He records that it cost him \$16.11 for his outfit (soldiers had to buy their own uniforms). His coat is a standard U. S. frock coat with sky blue trousers. His issue 'Forage Cap' has a 'Hunting Horn,' the official insignia of the infantry, but it is a militia insignia, not the standard U.S. issue

Pvt. Rogers starts his journal, "Volunteered in the service of my country August 30, 1861. sent to Boston Sept 1st, examined the 2d, went home on Furlough the 4th. Returned to Camp the 11th. our supper consisted of Bread & tea... Sworn in Sept 20th to service of the U States of America... remained in camp until Nov 5 when we broke camp, went by steam to boston¹. marched to the commons, were presented with a stand of collors ... had the privilege of seeing our friends². we were then escorted to Battery Wharf where we went on board the Merimac an(d) hauled off into the stream." Their destination was Camp Rogers, New Bern, North Carolina.



On the Nov. 18, 1862, Rogers' journal records that "this morning the weather is good. have been fixing up a stove in our tent, then we shall have a easy time. Everything is lovely, the boys are enjoying themselves nicely, all's well. going to have fish and potatoes for dinner. are receiving our guns today. the boys are discussing the State aid, there are veryous opinions on the matter"

On Monday, Dec. 1, "the lon(g) roll was beet this morn at 3 oclock. there was quite an excitement here for a few moments in our tent. some couldn't find there guns, some lost there shoes ... Crowell got a little excited. on the whole there was a great battle loss, 1 rubber blanket & towel on our side. Frank is setting a kettle in our furnace so that we may fry our luxuries when we come in from battle. We turned in with our equipments on that we may be ready for a call but the call never came and so the day passed along. several boys are lug[g]ing there knapsacks filled with stones for punishment for disobeying orders."

¹ Spelling and punctuation preserved as far as possible

² Other Chatham men who enlisted in the 43rd regiment, Co. E, were Charles M. Upham (2nd Lt.), John W. Atwood (Sgt.), William H. Harley (Sgt.), Charles E. Atwood (Cpl.), and Privates Francis Brown, Benjamin S. Cahoon, John W. Crowell, Ephraim Eldredge, Cyrus Emery, James S. Hamilton, James T. Hamilton, Franklin D. Hammond, David Harding, Samuel H. Howes, Charles Johnson, Horatio F. Lewis, Storrs Lee Lyman Jr., Andrew S. Mayo, Benjamin Rogers, Joshua N. Rogers, and George A. Taylor.

On the 14th of December, 1862, Pvt. Rogers' Company E joined with other units in the Department of North Carolina, 1st Division, commanded by Brig. Gen. John Foster, to mount an expedition to Goldsborough Bridge. Foster intended to disrupt the Wilmington & Weldon Railroad in order to deny the Confederacy the use of the railroad.

On that day, Rogers writes, "the most trying Sabbath that I ever saw. commenced our march, found the roads about as usual. heard heavy firing ahead. the enemy was retreating. they fell back on Kinston and there we pitched battle which lasted about 3 hours... took 500 prisoners, killed and wounded quite a number. our loss, the 43 Mass lost 10, wounded a number. marched into Kinston at 3 o'clock..."

On Dec. 16, 1862, he writes, "a day to be remembered by us all. We commenced our march this morn at 8 o'clock ... toward Goldsborough. we marched about an hour and met the enemy on the Neuse River at Whitehall. had very heavy firing from 10 o'clock until 2 o'clock. shells fell around us too numerous to mention. Killed 1 wounded 1 of our company. The Regiment all laid down on the ground. such scenes reminds one of there friends as I am shure it was an hour never to be forgotten ... If it had been my lot to fall on the field I felt that all was well with me. I felt I was willing to trus myself in the hands of god knowing that he would do all things for the best. in the afternoon at 3 o'clock we fell in and started toward Goldsborough."

Company E was detached on outpost duty at Batchelor's Creek at the end of December through Jan. 11, 1863; an expedition was mounted toward Trenton mid-January; and the Regiment was at New Bern until April 7.

On April 11, the regiment boarded the transport Thomas Colier, bound for Little Washington. On April 12, 1863, Rogers writes: "Sunrise very pleasant, we are enjoying ourselves first rate. getting our hard tack & cold water. we have come about 80 miles, we are now in Pamlico Sound. we are having a very pleasant sail, are towing a schooner loaded with rations ... 9 o'clock heard heavy firing ahead. 11 AM have arrived and anchored near the rebels battery. we have 4 gunboats here and 3 other transports with troops on board. expect to run by there [Rebels] batteries tonight... 2 PM the gunboats are shelling the woods trying to find out where the rebs are cam[ped]... 4 PM 4 of our men have just come on board, were on board the gunboat while shelling the woods. they saw the rebs come down to the shore to plant a piece of artillery, but our folks saw them, hove a shell at them, and they scedaddled."

The 43rd had duty in Little Washington until the end of April, returned to New Bern, and had several more forays before moving to Baltimore at the end of June from whence they proceeded to return to Boston mid-July. They were mustered out on July 30, 1863. According to written accounts of the 43rd, the regiment lost 15 men in total, two killed in action and 12 by disease during their nine months of service in the Civil War.

The journal is a fascinating day-to-day personal account of service in the 43rd Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry 'Tiger' Regiment, Company E. It tells of the small battles and rough conditions that the brave and willing volunteers encountered, and their efforts contributing to the eventual victory of the Union Army.

The original journal was kindly gifted to Chatham Historical Society by Camille Ann Atwood, Pvt. Rogers' great-granddaughter and is on display at the Atwood Hose & Museum in the "Chatham in the Military" Exhibit.