



## ***12th Illinois Cavalry***

### ***Regiment History***



#### ***Adjutant General's Report***

The Twelfth Cavalry was organized at Camp Butler in February 1862, and remained there guarding rebel prisoners until June 25, when it was mounted, and was sent to Martinsburg, Va. The first time the Twelfth met the enemy was after the evacuation of Winchester, by General White, of Chicago. It had become necessary, therefore, that the forces at Martinsburg should establish their outposts. Lieutenant Colonel Davis was placed in command of these stations. About five miles from the camp, on the Martinsburg and Winchester pike, on the morning of the 5th of September 1862, he scouted the country as far as Bunker Hill, where he came up the enemy's cavalry, in numbers far superior to his own. These were in strong position, but the scouting party, by a vigorous charge, routed them, and drove them several miles, killing, wounding and capturing a considerable number.

On Saturday morning, the 7th, at day break, the enemy, having been largely reinforced, and designing to capture Colonel Davis and his command, made a bold attempt to get to his rear, and cut him off from his camp at Martinsburg. Anticipating this movement, Colonel Davis sent out a small party, under Lieutenant Logan, to reconnoiter. This detachment was surrounded, but the men succeeding in cutting their way through the enemy, and again joined the Colonel, who

immediately dispatched a messenger to Martinsburg for reinforcements. Captain Thomas W. Grosvenor (afterwards Major and Lieutenant Colonel), commanding Company A, with forty men, was immediately ordered forward, to be followed by the remainder of the Twelfth as soon as they could be got ready. As soon as the Captain reported, Colonel Davis ordered him out at once to meet the enemy. He drove several squads of rebels from ambush, in the woods and roadsides, until he reached Darkesville, when he met the enemy in force, to the number of eight hundred. As the little band of Federal cavalry approached the enemy, the latter fired upon them at short range a most terrific volley, severely wounding the Captain, and killing Lieutenant Luff's horse, thus leaving the company without a commander. Colonel Davis led the men in person, driving the enemy until their retreat became a rout, and the forty men literally masters of the field, the enemy running away beyond Winchester, before he could be rallied. In this engagement, the rebels lost 25 killed and 50 prisoners, while there was no loss on the side of the forty men.

A few days subsequent, the Twelfth rejoined General White's command, and with it fell back before the superior numbers of the enemy to Harper's Ferry.

On the following Sunday, Colonel Davis left Harper's Ferry, with his command, and struck across the country, in the direction of Hagerstown, capturing and burning a train of 60 wagons, and soon after joined General McClellan, at Sharpesburg.

While in camp at Sharpesburg, the Twelfth was reinforced by two companies, composing the McClellan Dragoons, which had been doing duty as a body guard to the General-in-Chief. This increased to ten companies. The Twelfth was assigned to General Averill's Brigade, and under that officer made several expeditions, until McClellan was relieved from the command of the army, when the Twelfth was sent on picket at Williamsport, and Dam No. 4, on the Upper Potomac.

On the 16th of November 1862, the grand army began to move by parallel routes. The Twelfth Cavalry was called away from picket and assigned to Sigel's Army, and act as its escort from Warrenton to Fredericksburg, frequently having severe brushes with scouting parties of J.E.B. Stuart's cavalry. After the disastrous battle of Fredericksburg the Twelfth was sent to Manassas and below, to observe the movements of Lee and Stuart. After performing this service, the Regiment was sent to Dumphries.

While there the enemy surprised the outpost pickets, and took about 50 of the Twelfth Illinois and First Maryland Cavalry men prisoners, when a vigorous fight ensued, which continued all day, but the enemy was finally repulsed, with severe loss, having 25 or 30 killed, and about 40 wounded, while our loss was but 3 killed and 8 wounded.

The Twelfth performed a conspicuous part in the celebrated "Stoneman" raid. On the 3d of May, Lieutenant Colonel Davis received orders to penetrate the Fredericksburg railroad, and if possible the Virginia Central, and to destroy communications between Richmond and Lee's Army, then confronting Hooker, on the Rappahannock. The Twelfth began the march before day break, passing down the bank of the south Anna, through a region never before occupied by our forces. It burned one bridge and dispersed a party of mounted guerrillas, who made a poor attempt to oppose it. The first line of railway was struck at Ashland. Lieutenant Mitchell, with a party of about a dozen men, was sent ahead to occupy the place. He dashed into the village and took it without loss.

When the remainder of the Regiment came up, the boys were set to work cutting the telegraph wires, tearing up the railroad track and burning a bridge. While at this work a train of cars approached from Fredericksburg, seven of which were filled with 250 sick and wounded officers and soldiers. Colonel Davis after receiving from them their version of the battle of Chancellorsville, paroled them.

The engine was rendered useless, and after destroying a wagon train and a quantity of harness, and taking about 80 mules, the Regiment moved out of Ashland.

The Central railroad was struck at Hanover station, on the afternoon of the 5th. Thirty officers and men were captured at this station. The work of destroying the railroad there was as effectually done as it was at Ashland. The telegraph wires were cut, and the depot buildings, store houses, stables and a train of cars, were burned. During the night the Regiment marched to within seven miles of Richmond, bivouacked until 8 o'clock the next morning, when it marched for Williamsburg.

At Tunstall station a train of cars, filled with infantry and a three-gun battery, was run up there, with the intention of debarking and giving the Twelfth battle. Colonel Davis at once took measures to break through the force before the men could get out of the cars, or put the battery in position. He therefore brought up the two foremost squadrons, and ordered a charge, which was executed, Captain Reans, with Companies D and F, taking the lead. The charge was made most gallantly, but it was impossible, however to break through. The Twelfth retired from the conflict with a loss of two killed and several wounded, among the latter Lieutenant Marsh, who was one of the foremost in the charge.

Failing to penetrate the enemy's lines at this point, Colonel Davis determined to cross the Pamunkey and Mattaponi Rivers, and make for Gloucester Point.

He selected Phinkells Ferry, over the Pamunkey, and occupied it, after driving away a picket on the other side, with whom the Regiment exchanged shots. While enroute to Gloucester Point, they captured 15 rebels and destroyed a large quantity of cavalry saddles, at King's and Queen's Court House, and a train of 18 wagons, loaded with corn and provisions, when near Saluda. In this raid the Regiment traveled a distance of over two hundred miles.

The total loss sustained by the Twelfth, in this most remarkable raid, was two commissioned officers and 33 enlisted men, while the Regiment brought with it 100 mules and 75 horses captured from the enemy. The amount of property destroyed was estimated at over \$1,000,000. A portion of the Twelfth remained at Gloucester Point while one Battalion was sent to General Dix, commanding at Fortress Monroe, and the remainder reported to Alexandria. The detachment which reported to General Dix made frequent excursions into the interior counties, for the purpose of suppressing a band of smugglers, who infested that district. On one these expeditions General Wm. H. Lee, a son of Robt. E. Lee, was captured and taken to Fortress Monroe.

In June, the Regiment was brought together. Immediately after the battle of Beverly Ford, the Twelfth joined Pleasonton, and was assigned to the First Brigade of the First Division. Burford's Division, without waiting to recover from the fatigue of the recent severe engagements, marched toward the Potomac from Aldie Gap, in the direction of Fredericksburg, where he arrived June 3. At an early hour on the 1st of July, General Buford fell upon the flanks of Longstreet's Corps, which was moving south from Carlisle, charging and recharging, and still

repeating the operation, forcing a portion of the enemy at every onslaught to halt, and form line of battle. In this manner the rebels were not only sorely damaged by the loss of a large number of men killed and wounded, but their movements were greatly impeded, which gave General Meade an opportunity to push forward his lagging infantry, and get them into position for resistance. A Brigade of Pennsylvania militia and a battery of artillery, commanded by "Baldy" Smith, which had got into Longstreet's front, and were being hotly pressed, with every indication of falling prisoners, were rescued from that unhappy fate from the daring west roughriders, under Davis, Medill and Chapman, who charged right into the face of the rebel infantry, and forced them to give up the pursuit. After this feat, the Brigade fell back on the main body of the Division, and until 10 o'clock Buford continued to hold his position against Longstreet's entire Corps of Infantry. At that hour he was relieved by the celebrated "Iron Brigade", of Wisconsin infantry, and there troops of the First Corps. On the 4th of July, when Lee's Army made its last grand attempt to retrieve its fortunes, the Brigade was hastened off toward Williamsport, with orders to seize the Ford and hold it against the enemy.

In the march from Gettysburg to Williamsport about 2,000 rebels were captured, and over 200 wagons and teams. The wagons were destroyed, and the mules driven to Washington.

On the 6th of July, the cavalry reached the vicinity of Williamsport, and being informed that the place was guarded by only one Regiment of Stuart's cavalry, the Eighth Illinois and a portion of the Twelfth, rushed forward, driving out the enemy.

After the defeat and retreat of Lee at Gettysburg, the Twelfth followed the fortunes of the Army of the Potomac. It was present at the cavalry battles which occurred at Falling Waters, the Rapidan and at Stevensburg, in all of which it acquitted itself with its usual bravery. On the 20th of November it was relieved from duty with the Army of the Potomac, and ordered home to reorganize as Veterans. This distinguished privilege was awarded the Regiment by the Secretary of War, "for brilliant services in the field".

On the evening of the 28th of November, the Regiment reached Chicago, and was received from first to last with one grand burst of patriotic admiration and enthusiasm.

At the conclusion of the brief season of rest the Regiment, which had been recruited up to the maximum number of 1,256 officers and men, re-assembled at Camp Fry. On the 9th of February 1864, the Regiment started for St. Louis, and went into camp there. Early in March it embarked on transports for New Orleans, and shortly after arriving there was ordered to join General Banks, on his retreat down the Red River. It participated in the different engagements of the retreat, losing a large number of men. Subsequently the Regiment was returned to New Orleans, and ordered to do picket duty on the Lafurche, from Donaldsonville to Thibodeaux, La., continuing on this line during the summer.

In the early part of September the Regiment was ordered to report to General Lee, commanding the Cavalry Division at Baton Rouge, when it was actively employed in scouting and picket duty. In the early part of November the Twelfth (then brigaded with the Second Illinois Cavalry, the Brigade commanded by Colonel Davis) and other cavalry Regiments under General Lee, made an expedition to Liberty, Miss., where they had a severe action, driving the enemy and capturing a number of prisoners, cannon and small arms. Lieutenant Colonel Dix, in charge of the outposts, repulsed several attacks of the enemy. Subsequently the Regiment participated in General Davidson's expedition against Mobile; returned to Baton Rouge on the 7th of January

1865; went up the river to Memphis, joining General Osband's Division. In the latter part of January, the Twelfth was a part of a raiding party through southeastern Arkansas. Returning to Memphis, it did scouting and picket duty until June, when it was ordered to join General Custer's Cavalry Division, at Alexandria, La. From there it marched with the Division to Hempstead, Tex., at which place it remained until sometime in September, when it marched to Houston, to Major General Mowet. From this time to the final mustering out the Regiment, distributed in detachments, was actively employed in guard and escort duty.

While at Memphis the Twelfth Cavalry was consolidated into an 8 company organization, and the Fourth Cavalry, having previously been consolidated into a Battalion of 5 companies, was consolidated with the Twelfth Cavalry.

The Regiment was mustered out at Houston, Tex., on the 29th of May 1866, and arrived at Springfield on the 14th of June, and on the 18th, it received final pay and discharge.