

**MASSACHUSETTS MINUTEMAN MEDAL TO 5<sup>th</sup> INFANTRY, LATER DIED OF WOUNDS RECEIVED AT PETERSBURG IN 1864**

MASSACHUSETTS MINUTEMAN 'JOEL.M.FLETCHER, PRVT.E.5<sup>TH</sup> REG'



Joel M Fletcher age 25 of Medford, MA, enlisted on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1861 and was mustered into Company 'E', 5<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Infantry Regiment on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1861. He was Mustered Out on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1861 but on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1862 he reenlisted into Company 'C' 39<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, being promoted Corporal. Fletcher was badly wounded at Petersburg on 18<sup>th</sup> of June 1864; Severely wounded in right leg, amputated. He died of wounds on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1864 at Alexandria, VA.

Battles/campaigns the 39<sup>th</sup> Regiment participated in include; Defences of Washington, Rappahannock Station, Mine Run, Battles of the Wilderness, Laurel Hill, Spotsylvania (where the Regiment suffered very badly), Cold Harbour and the siege of Petersburg.

**39<sup>th</sup> REGIMENT MASSACHUSETTS VOLUNTEER INFANTRY**

The 39<sup>th</sup> Regt. Mass. Vol. Inf. was recruited in the late summer of 1862 in towns and cities in the eastern part of the State. It went into camp first at Lynnfield, but was later transferred to Camp Stanton, Boxford. Here Col. P. Stearns Davis took command Sept. 1, and on the following day the last two companies, G and H, were mustered into the service. On Sept. 6 the regiment left for Washington City arriving two days later and being sent to Camp Chase on Arlington Heights. Here it was assigned to Briggs' Brigade of Casey's Division of Reserves. About the middle of the month the 39<sup>th</sup> was sent with the other troops of the brigade to guard the north bank of the Potomac River from Seneca Creek to Conrad's Ferry. Stationed at first at Conrad's Ferry, on Oct. 14 it was transferred to Seneca Creek where it was assigned to

Grover's Brigade. From the 11th of November, 1862, to January 5, 1863, Col. Davis commanded the brigade. Winter camp was established at Poolesville, Md., and here the regiment remained until April, 1863, when it returned to Washington and there did guard duty until after the battle of Gettysburg in July of that year.

Leaving Washington July 9, it was assigned to a provisional brigade commanded by Gen. Henry S. Briggs, and on July 12 joined the Army of the Potomac at Funkstown, Md. Here the brigade was assigned to Robinson's (2d) Division, Newton's (1st) Corps. Transferred to Rappahannock Station, it here became a part of Coulter's (1st) Brigade. The regiment served through the campaign of the fall in the vicinity of the Rappahannock, and participated in the Mine Run Campaign in the latter part of November. The winter of 1863-64 was spent at Mitchell's Station near the Cedar Mountain battlefield, Col. Leonard now commanding the brigade. In the consolidation of the Army of the Potomac into three corps in the latter part of the winter Robinson's Division became the 2d Division of Warren's (5th) Corps.

May 4, 1864, the 39th broke camp and started for Germanna Ford, crossing at midday and proceeding with the 5th Corps to the vicinity of Wilderness Tavern. It was engaged on the Orange pike in the Wilderness May 5 and 6, Col. Lyle succeeding Col. Leonard in command of the brigade on the 6th. On these two days the 39th lost 2 killed and 18 wounded. Moving on the night of the 7th toward Spottsylvania, it was engaged on the 8th and 10th on the Brock road near the Spindle farm, losing a total of 135 men of whom 32 were killed or mortally wounded. The fighting on this part of the field of Spottsylvania was known as the battle of Laurel Hill. Laurel Hill was a name by which the old William E. Jones farm was locally known. Gen. Robinson commanding the 2d Division having been seriously wounded in the fighting May 8, his command wail broken up and Lyle's Brigade was transferred to Cutler's Division. After the great assault on the "Angle", May 12, in which the 5th Corps did not participate, the 39th was moved with its corps to the extreme Union left where it remained, suffering few casualties, until the 21st when it left for the North Anna River.

From the 23d to the 26th of May the regiment was in position near Jericho Ford on the North Anna, suffering small loss. After the Cold Harbor fighting, during which the 39th lay near Bethesda Church and suffered only a few casualties, Col. Lyle's command became the 1st Brigade in Crawford's (3d) Division. The James River was crossed at Wilcox Landing June 16, and the regiment took its place in the lines before Petersburg. On the 25th it received 241 recruits by transfer from the 12th Mass. Regt. and on the 14th of July 103 from the 13th, the term of service of these two regiments having expired. Regiment lost during service 5 Officers and 91 Enlisted men killed and mortally wounded and 183 Enlisted men by disease.



The Massachusetts Minuteman medal was awarded Massachusetts '3 month' Militiamen who answered Lincoln's 'first call' for troops in April of 1861. In 1902 the State of Massachusetts authorised the production of this medal to be given to every Militiaman who answered this call, estimated to be about 3,800 men. The medals themselves were issued with officially impressed naming, giving the name rank and unit of the soldier. However as they were only awarded on application and many remained unissued. Medals were not issued by the State to any other soldiers, meaning of the 159,000 men from this State that fought for the Union, only a fraction actually received medal. Of the men that were in these original Militia units, the



majority went on to serve in other units during the War and as such their service can be hugely interesting.

Condition EF. A scarce medal to a soldier who died of wounds.