

SUPERB BOXED MASSACHUSETTS MINUTEMAN CASUALTY MEDAL TO PTE 5th MA WHO WERE MA MINUTEMEN INFANTRY TO SERVE AT 1st BULL RUN. POW WITH 19th MA AT GLENDALE AND DIED OF WOUNDS RECEIVED AT FREDERICKSBURG WHERE HIS REGIMENT ACTED AS A FORLORN HOPE CROSSING THE RIVER IN BOATS UNDER FIRE AND FOUGHT THEIR WAY THROUGH THE STREETS.



MASSACHUSETTS MINUTEMAN 'GEORGE A BROWN, PRVT.H,5TH REGT.'

Private George A Brown, a 25 year old Mariner from Salem, mustered into Company 'H' of the 5th Massachusetts (Militia) Infantry on 1st May 1861. He mustered out on 31st July 1861 after their 3 month service was over and mustered into Company 'H' 19th Massachusetts Infantry on 10th December 1861. He is noted on some sources as captured at the battle of Glendale on 30th June 1862, where his Regiment saw very heavy casualties but was presumably immediately exchanged. He deserted from 18th August 1862, returning on the 18th September.

The 5th MA was one of the three Massachusetts Regiments engaged in the battle of Bull Run (and only Minutemen entitled to a medal), July 21st 1861. Forming a part of Franklin's brigade, Heintzelman's division, of McDowell's army, it lost 34 men during this 1st battle large of the War. Noted for the colourful and varied uniforms worn by both sides, as many of the Regiments were Militia and neither had at this early time adopted fully the Blue and Grey later used to distinguish them.

The 19th MA were involved in many of the hardest fought battles of the earlier part of the War, including Fair Oaks, Glendale, where it lost 145 officers and men. At Antietam, it was again heavily engaged in the West Wood, suffering severe loss. At Fredericksburg, December 11th 1862, the 19th was one of two regiments of Hall's Brigade, that prior to the pontoons being finished, was sent as a Forlorn Hope for the Union Army, crossing the river in boats under fire and fought their way through the streets of the city. On the 13th, the 19th was in the assault on Marye's Heights, losing 104 officers and men including 8 colour bearers. Private Brown is noted as being wounded severely on the 13th December and dying of wounds four days later.

It must be remembered that although Regiments in the Civil War started at around a 1,000 men, after months and years of fighting their numbers got greatly reduced, the average in the 142,00 strong Army of the Potomac at Fredericksburg was down to around 400 men, many were even less, some 'greener' ones a bit more. The 19th MA started the battle with 355, so effectively lost a 3rd of its number at the battle. The 7th Michigan who were the other regiment in the Forlorn Hope started the battle with just 147 men!



Condition Mint, in box of issue with original tissue packaging. A very scarce casualty medal to a man with excellent early War service. With copy service/musters etc On CD

BATTLE OF FREDERICKSBURG, CROSSING THE RIVER AND STREET FIGHTING

Major General Ambrose Burnside's plan for the capture of Fredericksburg, Virginia in November 1862 depended on the timely arrival of pontoon bridge building materials so that his army could cross the Rappahannock River into the town before Confederate forces could arrive on the scene and contest the crossing. But the pontoons arrived late, and by the time they were there, General Robert E. Lee had already placed his army in defensive positions.

Despite this, Burnside pressed on with his plan. Early in the morning on December 11th, engineers began building six pontoon bridges at three different locations on the river, including two across from the center of town. These last two bridges came under fire from Confederate sharpshooters of Brigadier General William Barksdale's brigade of Mississippi regiments, who were effective enough to stop the work on the bridges. Union artillery shelled Fredericksburg, but could not dislodge Barksdale's Brigade.

To end the stalemate, Burnside accepted an idea proposed by Major Ira Spaulding to the 50th New York Engineers and relayed to the commanding general by Brigadier General Henry Hunt, Burnside's artillery commander. Hunt suggested sending a small force of infantrymen across the river in boats to clear out the Confederates and establish a bridgehead on the opposite side. Spaulding's engineers could then complete the task of building the pontoon bridges. Burnside told Hunt that he could proceed if he could find volunteers willing to try the risky crossing.

Colonel Norman J. Hall was a brigade commander in Brigadier General Oliver Howard's division of the Federal 2nd Corps, and volunteered his men for the mission. The assault would be spearheaded by the 7th Michigan Infantry, the regiment Hall commanded before he was

promoted to brigade command. The 7th Michigan would be followed by the 19th and 20th Massachusetts, the 42nd and 59th New York, and the 127th Pennsylvania volunteers.



The assault was a success. The 7th Michigan and 19th Massachusetts managed to secure the bridgehead, and the engineers completed the bridge. Hall's other regiments followed. An additional river crossing was completed on the south end of town and more Federals crossed over. After some fierce fighting in the streets of Fredericksburg, one of the few times in the Civil War where the fighting was house to house and street to street, Barksdale's Mississippians were driven off. Ultimately, the Battle of Fredericksburg would end in a Union defeat, but this operation was a Federal success.

Here is Colonel Hall's official report of his brigade's action at Fredericksburg:

'HEADQUARTERS THIRD BRIGADE, Camp near Falmouth, Va., December 17, 1862.

CAPTAIN: In compliance with orders, I have the honor to make the following report of the operations of the brigade under my command during the late battle in and before Fredericksburg, Va.:

On the evening of the 10th instant, my command was designated to take the advance of the army, as soon as the bridges should be built, on the following morning. On arriving at the point where the head of the column was to rest, I received orders to report with the brigade to Brigadier-General Woodbury, commanding Engineer Brigade, at the Lacy house. The bridges were not being advanced on account of the deadly fire of the enemy's sharpshooters, posted behind buildings and in cellars and rifle-pits along the opposite bank. Two regiments were deployed (the Seventh Michigan and Nineteenth Massachusetts Volunteers) along the bank of the river to cover the bridge-builders by their fire as skirmishers, but afterward withdrew them, to enable the batteries to fire shell. After some hours of delay, Generals Hunt and Woodbury consulted with me upon the practicability of crossing troops in boats, and storming the strong points occupied by the enemy, so as to protect the heads of the pontoon bridges, of which but one had progressed to any extent. It was arranged that, under cover of a heavy

artillery fire, the engineers should place boats at intervals along the bank, and provide men to row and steer them. Lieutenant-Colonel Baxter, commanding Seventh Michigan Volunteers, was informed of the plan, and his regiment volunteered to be crossed and storm the town as proposed. Captain Weymouth, of the Nineteenth Massachusetts, also volunteered to support the Seventh Michigan, if required, crossing in the same way.

The first-named regiment was deployed, and took post along the bank, while the latter lined the river as sharpshooters, together with Captain Plumer's company of sharpshooters (independent), which was ordered to report to me for this object. At a signal, the batteries opened their fire, and continued with great rapidity for over half an hour, the engineer troops failing to perform their part, running away from the boats at the first fire from the enemy and seeking shelter.

No prospect appearing of better conduct, I stated to Colonel Baxter that I saw no hopes of effecting the crossing, unless he could man the oars, place the boats, and push across unassisted. I confess I felt apprehensions of disaster in this attempt, as, without experience in the management of boats, the shore might not be reached promptly, if at all, and the party lost. Colonel Baxter promptly accepted the new conditions, and proceeded immediately to arrange the boats, some of which had to be carried to the water. Lieut. C. B. Comstock, chief engineer, Army of the Potomac, directed the embarkation personally, I believe. Before the number of boats fixed upon had been loaded, the signal to cease the artillery firing was made, and I thought best to push those now ready across, rather than to wait till all were filled, and to allow the enemy to come out of his concealment from the cannonade.



The boats pushed gallantly across under a sharp fire. While in the boats, 1 man was killed and Lieutenant Colonel Baxter and several men were wounded. The party, which numbered from 60 to 70 men, formed under the bank and rushed upon the first street, attacked the enemy, and, in the space of a few minutes, 31 prisoners were captured and a secure lodgment effected. Several men were here also wounded, and Lieutenant Emery and 1 man killed. The remainder of the regiment meanwhile crossed, and I directed the Nineteenth Massachusetts to follow and gain ground to the right, while the Seventh was ordered to push to the left. Seeing no preparations for advancing the bridge, which, according to the plan, was to have been

under construction when the crossing was commenced, I went to the engineer battalion and asked the commanding officer to send down parties at once. He replied that General Woodbury was in command, and was away. I entreated that men should be instantly sent, nevertheless, but could obtain no satisfaction.

The firing in the street had now become general and quite rapid, and, as I had been informed that a brigade of the enemy had been seen moving toward the bridge head, I requested General Hunt to reopen fire upon the flanks and in advance of the party which had crossed. I afterward learned from prisoners taken that this brigade of the enemy was General Barksdale's, composed of the Thirteenth, Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Twenty-first Mississippi Regiments. Several prisoners were taken belonging to the Eighth Florida Regiment, which was in the city.

All firing upon the bridge had been now silenced, and the bridge was rapidly completed. I reported to General Burnside directly the conduct of the engineer troops. An order for the Twentieth Massachusetts Volunteers to move across the bridge the instant it was down was incorrectly transmitted, so as to cause Acting Major Macy, its commanding officer, to throw it across in boats. This regiment was held in line along the bank to resist any attempts of the enemy to recover this point by an exposed movement, and the Seventh Michigan Volunteers and the Nineteenth Massachusetts Volunteers could hold against any advance through buildings.

The moment the bridge was ready, the Forty-second and Fifty-ninth New York Volunteers and the One hundred and twenty-seventh Pennsylvania Volunteers moved across, and the Twentieth Massachusetts was formed in column in the street. The guide, a citizen, was killed at the head of the column. Upon attempting to cross the second street, it became evident that the enemy was in considerable force, and could only be dislodged by desperate fighting. It was fast growing dark, the troops were being crowded near the bridge head in a compact and unmanageable mass, and I was informed that the whole division was to cross to hold the city. It was impracticable, in my opinion, to attempt to relieve the press by throwing troops into the streets, where they could only be shot down, unable to return the fire. To give time to fight the enemy in his own way, I sent urgent requests to the rear to have the column halted on the other side of the river, but was ordered to push ahead. The Seventh and Nineteenth had been brought to a stand, and I ordered Acting Major Macy, commanding the Twentieth Massachusetts, to clear the street leading from the bridge at all hazards.

I cannot presume to express all that is due the officers and men of this regiment for the unflinching bravery and splendid discipline shown in the execution of the order. Platoon after platoon was swept away, but the head of the column did not falter. Ninety-seven officers and men were killed or wounded in the space of about 50 yards. When the edge of the town was reached, the Fifty-ninth New York was sent to relieve the portion of the Twentieth engaged in the street leading to the left, and lost a number of officers and men. The Forty-second New York was ordered to advance by a street to the left, but, for fear of firing upon our own men, the order was countermanded. The One hundred and twenty-seventh Pennsylvania met some loss in crossing the bridge, but behaved in a very creditable manner.

The positions occupied when the firing was ordered to cease were held till late in the night, when it was found that the enemy had retired from the buildings throughout the town. The brigade was relieved at light in the morning by the troops of General Sully. Nothing transpired necessary to state in this report till about midday on Saturday, the 13th, when I was directed to form a second line of battle behind Colonel Owen's brigade, to support General French's attack upon the enemy in his works before the town. The One hundred and twenty-seventh Pennsylvania was temporarily assigned to Colonel Owen's command.

On arriving at the outskirts of the city (on Hanover street, I believe), I halted to gain the distance ordered, and to clear room before me, so as to pass the hot fire on the road rapidly.

While here I met Generals Couch and Hancock. The latter ordered me to charge the rifle-pits of the enemy, in column, up the road. I formed as broad a column as the street would admit of, and advanced the command, then less than 800 men, to execute the order. But, happily, General Couch changed the order after I had gone a short distance, and a line of battle was formed on the right of the road, with directions to charge upon the rifle-pits and wall in front of the enemy from that position. One of the regiments had countermarched, on starting, without my knowledge, and, in forming line, created some confusion at that point. The remainder of the line advanced rapidly and with good order for some distance over the hill, in the face of a heavy and well-aimed fire of infantry in front, and a terrible one of artillery against the right flank.

A portion of the Seventh Michigan, Forty-second and Fifty-ninth New York fell back, as did the Nineteenth Massachusetts a moment later. The Twentieth Massachusetts stood firm and returned the fire of the enemy, till I had, with the assistance of my staff and other officers, reformed the line and commenced a second advance.

The firing having commenced in my line, it was impossible to restrain it, so that an effective charge was not expected. The advance was renewed in fine style by the whole line, but gave way from the left. The Nineteenth Massachusetts gained several houses near the enemy on the road and held them, losing 2 commanding officers—9 officers in all, and many men. The Twentieth Massachusetts showed the matchless courage and discipline evinced on the previous day. Further attempts to advance were hopeless. I reported that I could hold my position, and was ordered to do so.

The remainder of the day, till late at night, was spent under a fire of shell from our own guns as well as those of the enemy. Twenty or 30 men were wounded by shots from the former. After midnight the brigade was relieved by General Sykes' division, and withdrew to the city. The Forty-second New York was detailed for picket duty next day. I know nothing of its operations while thus detached.

On the 15th, Col. William R. Lee, Twentieth Massachusetts, arrived and assumed command of the brigade. Nothing is required to be said in praise of the conduct of the officers and men of this brigade, while under my command, in the late battles. Lieutenant Stinson, aide-de-camp to General Howard, was sent to me for staff duty, and fearlessly carried my orders during the thickest of the fight. To him and to the officers of this brigade staff, Capt. William B. Leach, assistant adjutant-general; Lieut. William F. Milton, aide-de-camp; Lieut. C. P. Abbott, aide-de-camp, and Captain Crombargar, commissary of subsistence,

I owe both my thanks and the most honourable mention for the zealous performance of all their duties.

I have the honor to enclose lists of killed, wounded, and missing, and a tabular statement.

Very respectfully,
N. J. HALL,
Colonel Seventh Michigan, Commanding Brigade.

Capt. E. WHITTLESEY,
Assistant Adjutant-General.'