

Members of the Iron Brigade: Remembering the 24th Regiment

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MEMBERS OF THE IRON BRIGADE

Hold Their First Reunion Since the Civil War.

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The Twenty-fourth was organized from companies raised in Oswego and Jefferson counties and was one of the first regiments to go to the front after President Lincoln's call for volunteers in 1861.

On April 16th, 1861, a meeting was held in this city and measures were taken for the immediate raising of a regiment of volunteers. Recruiting began with enthusiasm and on April 26th the first company started for Elmira under the command of Captain John D. O'Brian, of this city. Captain O'Brian was the first officer in this State commissioned for the Civil War. This company was quickly followed by the following companies: Company B, Captain Edward M. Paine; Company C, Captain Frank Miller; Company D, of Parish, Captain Melzer Richards (afterward Lieutenant-Colonel of the Twenty-fourth Cavalry); Company E, Voley, Captain Orville Jennings; Company F, Oswego city, Captain Archibald Preston; Company G, Sandy Creek, Captain W.D. Ferguson (afterward Major of the 184th Regiment); Company H, Volney, Captain Albert Taylor (afterward Major of the Twenty-fourth Cavalry); Company I, Oswego city, Captain Levi Beardsley, and Company K, Ellisburg, Jefferson county, Captain Andrew J. Barney, subsequently promoted to Major.

The regiment was mustered into the service of the United States May 17th, 1861, with the following staff officers: Colonel, Timothy Sullivan; Lieutenant-Colonel, Samuel R. Beardsley; Major, Jonathan Tarbell; Surgeon, J.B. Murdoch, M.D.; Assistant Surgeon, Lawrence Reynolds, M.D.; Adjutant, Robert Oliver, Jr.;

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The regiment was enlisted for two years and after receiving its equipment was ordered to Washington, where it remained in camp until the Battle of Bull Run, the initial conflict of the rebellion. The Twenty-fourth did not take part in that engagement, but on the following day, July 22d, marched out of Washington and went to Bailey's Cross Roads and met the flying remnants of the Union Army. The regiment was placed on picket duty and was the only organized force between the victorious

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At Arlington Heights the regiment was brigaded with the commands mentioned above, and this brigade kept together for the two years the Oswego regiment was in existence. They built Fort Upton in the Fall of 1861 and remained there during the Winter. In the Spring of 1862 the brigade advanced to Bristoe Station and then went to Catlett's Station, and marched from there to Fredericksburg. It was this latter march that won for them the name of the "Iron Brigade," a name which has stuck to the regiments ever since. The brigade marched all day and all night, keeping up with the calvary, and were present in the morning when the slight engagement took place. The Twenty-fourth soon afterward entered into the thick of fighting, and was a the battle of Cedar Mountain, and the regiment held the post of honor, being the rear guard of Pope's retreat.

The regiment was under fire at Sulphur Springs, Rappahannock Station, and took part in the second battle of Bull Run at which Major Barney was killed. The battle of South Mountain was most disastrous to the regiment and three days afterward when the command went into the battle of Antietam there were but one hundred men fit for duty. It was at this battle that Captain O'Brian displayed great heroism and was shot in the leg and carried from the field. Captain O'Brian lost his leg and thirty-five others of the regiment were wounded. The regiment was all cut to pieces in the engagement and in the charge which took

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After this the regiment was at the second battle of Fredericksburg and the "Iron Brigade" covered the retreat and was the last to cross the Rappahannock, and for several days acted as pickets. May 29th, 1863, the regiment was sent to Elmira and mustered out.

The battle flag of the regiment bears the inscription: Falmouth, Sulphur Springs, Rappahannock Station, Gainesville, Manassas, South Mountain, Antietam, First Fredericksburg, Second Fredericksburg, Chancellorville.

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Unidentified soldier in 24th New York Infantry Regiment uniform; W.J Moulton, photographer; 11 & 113 Water St. Elmira, NY; albumen print on card mount, c. 1861; Library of Congress <http://lccn.loc.gov/2016646173>. This image is in the public domain due to copyright term is the author's life plus 100 years or less.



Questions for further research and discussion:

1. In your own words, what do you think of when you hear the phrase: Iron Brigade?
2. Locate all the geographic areas mentioned in this article. Label them numerically as the regiment reached each location.
3. What supplies would the soldiers of the Civil War need? How were they supplied/re-supplied?
4. What do you know about Bull Run? Research and determine the different endings of each Bull Run conflict.
5. How many soldiers from Oswego area did not return?