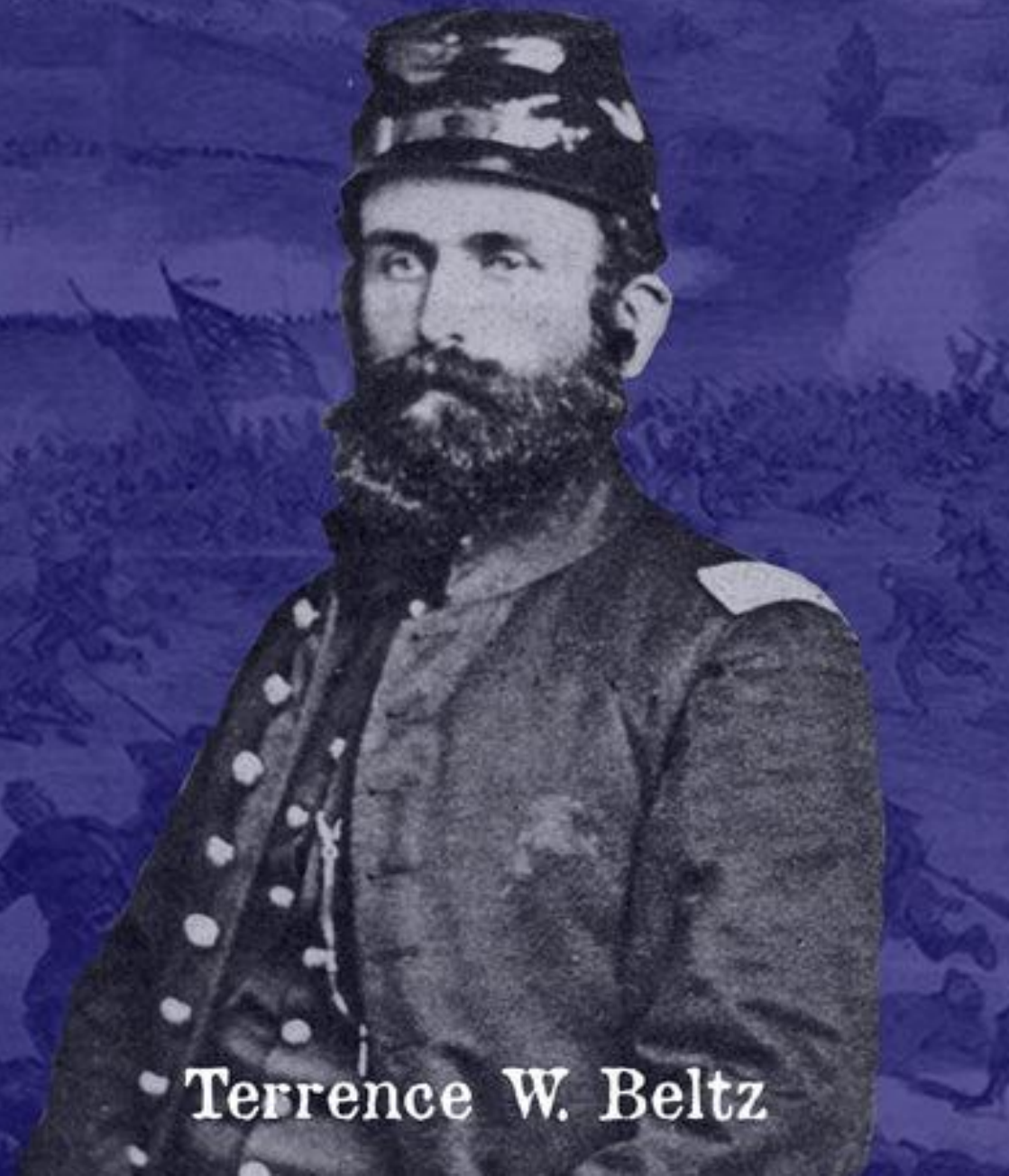
Unclaimed Valor

The History of the 130th Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry



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Colonel Zinn left his horse behind and mingled with his men on the march, urging them in a firm clear voice, "Forward men". After progressing only a short distance, "we saw on our right the concentrated fire of the Confederate artillery tearing through and silencing the five batteries brought across the river and stationed at the edge of the city," wrote Private Spangler. As they continued their march, artillery shells shattered rooftops, spreading debris over their heads. Confederate artillery zeroed in on the advancing division creating gaps throughout its ranks. The artillery onslaught that came from both Marye's Heights and Willis' Hill were too much for some men who sought shelter behind a nearby brick warehouse. Pushing forward and emerging into the open plain when the regiment was about to deploy in a line of battle, it came under a deadly artillery fire about the time it reached the canal Major General Burnside had refused to acknowledge existed. Private Spangler wrote the canal was "a most serious and embarrassing obstacle, and very distressing under a raking storm of projectiles." The canal was impassable with the exception of several damaged street bridges, many with only

the stringers intact, that left only room enough for soldiers to negotiate in a single file.

This delay provided Confederate artillery the time to adjust its aim accurately and pour its devastating fire into the oncoming Union columns. After negotiating the canal, the regiment continued by columns of four for a considerable distance to be met once again by massive Confederate artillery bombardment.75 Private Spangler recalled that, "while in this formation a shower of missiles created havoc in our ranks, one of which took off the head of Captain McLaughlin of Company E, scattering the brains over our company. Lieutenant Franklin G. Torbert from Company I was also killed. "When in line going up the field, a battery opened on our right flank killing two men," wrote Corporal Masonheimer.

The regiment was ordered to lay down, with no other orders. Private Spangler took this opportunity to rid himself of his haversack, which was"filled to repletion," that was hindering his advance. On his left was Private Eli W. Myers with Private William Clemmens to his right, both of Company K. Private Spangler remembered:

> A bullet knocked off Clement[']s [sic] cap and a moment later a shell exploded over us, a piece of which violently struck Myers in the back. I got up to assist in carrying him off the field, but being small, was pushed aside by others equally anxious to get beyond the range of fire for we all felt that success was a forlorn hope. The wound would prove fatal.

The devastating artillery fire and its deadly results caused a few men of the regiment to take momentary cover behind the depot on the nearby brickyard.81 The 130th and remainder of the Second Brigade quickly reformed behind the canal as the Confederate artillery continued to pour out its accurate and devastating shelling.

The Third Brigade made the first assault, losing half of its ranks within the first fifteen minutes. Within the next five minutes, after seeing the Third Brigade's attempt fail, the men of the 130th formed a line of battle that was 150 yards behind Colonel Andrew's Brigade. The men slipped and fell as they clawed their way out of the murky waste water canal and "tramped forward in neat ranks and measured steps" while Confederate artillery tried to slow their progress. Colonel Zinn jumped to his feet and shouted, "Stand up to it boys!" "Shot shell and bullets were pouring around us," noted Corporal Masonheimer. Pouring rifle fire into the protected Confederates as the regiment moved forward, the 130th came under a terrific storm of bullets from the tested veteran Confederates of the 18th Georgia, 24th Georgia, and Phillips Legion, belonging to Brigadier General Cobb's Georgia Brigade, assigned to Brigadier General Robert Ransom's Division. As they moved closer to the stone wall, the Confederate artillery changed its munitions from shell to canister, taking an immediate heavy toll of casualties by the hundreds. The 130th returned fire while charging across the ground that had been the

Fredericksburg Fairgrounds, stopping half way. Here Major John Lee was hit.

As the regiment's color bearer fell, Colonel Zinn, waving his sword in his right hand, grasped the falling regimental colors in his left hand lifted them in the air and shouted, "Stick to your standard, boys! The One Hundred and Thirtieth never abandons its colors; give them another volley!" These were the beloved Colonel's final words. Within seconds, a Rebel bullet ball struck him beneath his left eye. Within the hour, he succumbed to his mortal wound in the presence of the regimental Chaplain, George W. Chalfant. The chaplain later accompanied the colonel's body to his home to Churchtown. Company A's Commander, Captain William A. Porter, immediately assumed command of the regiment.

Within a short time, the regiment was swept back by musketry, and canister "rising tier after tier, which no troops could withstand," recalled Private Spangler. While the regiment was about to renew the attack, the Confederates leaped over the wall charging the Pennsylvanians, but quickly returned to the safety of the stone wall. Unable to withstand the massive Confederate artillery and musketry firepower, the regiment turned about and returned to the edge of the fairgrounds joining the 14th Connecticut. Within minutes, Captain Porter saw Union artillery to the rear begin firing, with its first rounds striking the regiment. The men of the regiment began to run, but regained their

composure as best they could. The open area of the fairgrounds left no cover from the friendly artillery fire, decimating the ranks.

The Second Brigade's ranks had dwindled significantly, losing its cohesion. The regiment remained on the field, with little effect, as long as possible to the point that its ammunition had been almost exhausted. Finally, acknowledging their desperation, some of the men returned to the canal while others left the field in small groups and headed back into the city. Brigadier General French gave the order for his division to make their way back to Fredericksburg.

As General Winfield S. Hancock came upon the field meeting the returning regiment, he greeted them with his personal orders to advance back to the heights with his newly-arrived division. Shattered and broken, the men of the 130th retired past him. Private Spangler later recalled that "he must have felt sorry for upbraiding us" since he was not aware that French had ordered the Third Division off the battlefield.

The regiment, along with French's entire Third Division, made their way back into the city, still suffering casualties from the Confederate artillery poised on Mayre's Heights. Confused and unorganized, the Pennsylvanians found whatever shelter available.