

Civil War

June 15, 1863

Lincoln calls for help

On this day in 1863, President Abraham Lincoln calls for help in protecting Washington, D.C., America's capital city.

Throughout June, Confederate General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia was on the move. He had pulled his army from its position along the Rappahannock River around Fredericksburg, Virginia, and set it on the road to Pennsylvania. Lee and the Confederate leadership decided to try a second invasion of the North to take pressure off Virginia and to seize the initiative against the Army of the Potomac. The first invasion, in September 1862, failed when the Federals fought Lee's army to a standstill at the Battle of Antietam in Maryland.

Lee later divided his army and sent the regiments toward the Shenandoah Valley, using the Blue Ridge Mountains as a screen. After the Confederates took Winchester, Virginia, on June 14, they were situated on the Potomac River, seemingly in a position to move on Washington, D.C. Lincoln did not know it, but Lee had no intention of attacking Washington. All Lincoln knew was that the Rebel army was moving en masse and that Union troops could not be certain as to the Confederates' location.

On June 15, Lincoln put out an emergency call for 100,000 troops from the state militias of Pennsylvania, Maryland, Ohio, and West Virginia. Although the troops were not needed, and the call could not be fulfilled in such a short time, it was an indication of how little the Union authorities knew of Lee's movements and how vulnerable they thought the Federal capital was.

Author - History.com Staff

History.com

Year Published - 2009

Title - Lincoln calls for help

<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/lincoln-calls-for-help>

Access Date - June 15, 2017

Publisher - A+E Networks

Brother and CPI Ross Schwalm's Ancestors (The Fighting Thompsons) were part of Lincoln's Call Up as militia soldiers in the 39th PA Militia. See attached slide of Great Grandfather and two 2nd Great Uncles.

Thompson, William Wallace Co H, 39th Regiment, Pennsylvania Militia
 Soldier's Rank In: Private. Soldier's Rank Out: Private. Discharged Aug 1863
 Relationship –Great Grandfather

COMPANY H. Captains, Peter A. Tilbert, (pr. to Maj., July 4, 1863,) John W. Barr; First Lieutenant, David P. Thompson; Second Lieutenant, William Lerch, Jr.; First Sergeant, Philip Keeney; Sergeants, Abraham Mengle, James M. Rohrer, Caleb Wheeler, James W. Neall; Corporals, George Miller, (George W. Thompson, Jacob Snyder, Theophilus Lewis, James T. Kendall, Josiah Stees, William Sbrink, Truman Miller; Musicians, John Jones, Andrew Snyder; Privates, Daniel Achenbach, Frederick Ailvord, Daniel Baylor, Michael Bretz, David Brenner, Rudolph Bartels, Theophilus Benjamin, John Barr, John Bonawitz, Jr., Frederick Brown, Samuel Clark, John Davis, Michael Duffey, William Evans, Henry Faust, John Fegley, James Fuller, Adam Feller, William Goodman, James Gammel, John Hendricks, Samuel Hendricks, Jacob Huber, Francis Huber, Andrew Huber, William Harvey, William Hughes, Henry C. Hain, Benneville Hautz, Isaac Hand, John Hummel, Benjamin James, Nelson Knapp, George Keeney, William Kyle, Ephraim Knipe, Samuel Keeney, David Lewis, Edward Lewis, Peter Miller, Jonathan Miller, Augustus B. Manwiller, Henry Moyer, Thomas Morgan, George M'Clellan, George Noll, John Ney, Archibald Phillips, William Phillips, William Parry, Jacob Reese, Andrew J. Reed, Daniel Reed, Jacob Rherer, Peter Rump, Israel Ream, Henry Row, Jacob Rahn, William Raser, Edward Shartle, George Stahl, Francis Spaetzer, David Thomas, Isaac Treon, William Thompson, Jacob Updegrove, John Updegrove, Daniel Updegrove, Robert White, John Wolf, Jacob Wolf, Peter Wolf.

David & George were discharged for medical reasons but returned to militia duty. Previous experience resulted in Officer and NCO rank.

Overview: Organized at Reading July 4, 1863, for the protection of Pennsylvania during Lee's invasion. Duty in the Dept. of the Susquehanna. Mustered out August 2, 1863.

Note - Three Brothers were in the same unit for a brief time.
 David & George Thompson had already served and were discharged from 96th PA

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June 15, 1864

Battle of Petersburg begins

During the Civil War, Ulysses S. Grant's Army of the Potomac and Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia collide for the last time as the first wave of Union troops attacks Petersburg, a vital Southern rail center 23 miles south of the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia. The two massive armies would not become disentangled until April 9, 1865, when Lee surrendered and his men went home.

In June 1864, in a brilliant tactical maneuver, Grant marched his army around the Army of Northern Virginia, crossed the James River unopposed, and advanced his forces to Petersburg. Knowing that the fall of Petersburg would mean the fall of Richmond, Lee raced to reinforce the city's defenses. The mass of Grant's army arrived first. On June 15, the first day of the Battle of Petersburg, some 10,000 Union troops under General William F. Smith moved against the Confederate defenders of Petersburg, made up of only a few thousand armed old men and boys commanded by General P.G.T. Beauregard. However, the Confederates had the advantage of formidable physical defenses, and they held off the overly cautious Union assault. The next day, more Federal troops arrived, but Beauregard was reinforced by Lee, and the Confederate line remained unbroken during several Union attacks occurring over the next two days.

By June 18, Grant had nearly 100,000 at his disposal at Petersburg, but the 20,000 Confederate defenders held on as Lee hurried the rest of his Army of Northern Virginia into the entrenchments. Knowing that further attacks would be futile, but satisfied to have bottled up the Army of Northern Virginia, Grant's army dug trenches and began a prolonged siege of Petersburg.

Finally, on April 2, 1865, with his defense line overextended and his troops starving, Lee's right flank suffered a major defeat against Union cavalry under General Phillip Sheridan, and Grant ordered a general attack on all fronts. The Army of Northern Virginia retreated under heavy fire; the Confederate government fled Richmond on Lee's recommendation; and Petersburg, and then Richmond, fell to the Union. Less than a week later, Grant's massive army headed off the remnants of the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox Station, and Lee was forced to surrender, effectively ending the Civil War.

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Website Name - History.com

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Brother and CPI Ross Schwalm's Ancestor Samuel Schwalm, 2nd Great Uncle crossed the James and participated in this first battle of Petersburg on June 15, 1864 as part of the 50th PA

Schwalm, Samuel Co. A 50th Regiment, Pennsylvania Infantry
 Soldier's Rank In: Private 19 Aug 1861. Soldier's Rank Out: Sergeant - 29 Sep 1864
 Relationship –2nd Great Uncle(Brother of Peter Schwalm)

SERVICE: Sherman's Expedition to Port Royal, S. C., October 21-November 7, 1861. Sailed on Steamer "Winfield Scott" and shipwrecked off coast of North Carolina. Occupation of Beaufort, S. C., December 6. Port Royal Ferry, Coosaw River, January 1, 1862. Duty at Port Royal Island, S. C., till July, 1862. Barnwell's Island, S. C., February 10 (Co. "D"). Pocotaligo May 29. Camp Stevens June 7. Moved to Hilton Head, S. C., thence to Newport News, Va., July 14-18, thence to Aquia Creek and Fredericksburg, Va., August 3-6. Operations in support of Pope August 6-16. Pope's Campaign in Northern Virginia August 16-September 2. Sulphur Springs August 24. Battles of Groveton August 29; Bull Run August 30; Chantilly September 1. Maryland Campaign September 6-24. Battles of South Mountain, Md., September 14; Antietam September 16-17. March to Pleasant Valley September 19-October 2, and duty there till October 25. Movement to Falmouth, Va., October 25-November 19. Battle of Fredericksburg December 12-15. Burnside's 2nd Campaign January 20-24, 1863. At Falmouth till February 12. Moved to Newport News February 12-14, thence to Kentucky March 21-26. Duty at Paris, Ky. till April 27. Moved to Nicholasville, Lancaster and Stanford April 27-29, thence to Somerset May 6-8, thence through Kentucky to Cairo, Ill., June 4-10, and to Vicksburg, Miss., June 14-17. Siege of Vicksburg, Miss., June 17-July 4. Advance on Jackson, Miss., July 5-10. Siege of Jackson July 10-17. At Milldale till August 12. Moved to Covington, Ky., August 12-23. Burnside's Campaign in East Tennessee August to October. Action at Blue Springs, Tenn., October 10. Clinch Mountain October 27. Knoxville Campaign November 4-December 23. Campbell's Station November 16. Siege of Knoxville November 17-December 5. Pursuit of Longstreet's army to Blain's Cross Roads December 5-26. Re-enlisted at Blain's Cross Roads January 1, 1864. Moved to Annapolis, Md., April, 1864. Rapidan Campaign May 4-June 12. Battles of the Wilderness May 5-7; Spotsylvania May 8-12; Ny River May 9; Spotsylvania C. H. May 12-21. Assault on the Salient May 12. North Anna River May 23-26. Ox Ford May 24. Line of the Pamunkey May 26-28. Totopotomoy May 28-31. Cold Harbor June 1-12. Bethesda Church June 1-3. **Before Petersburg June 16-18.** Siege of Petersburg June 16, 1864, to April 2, 1865. Mine Explosion, Petersburg, July 30, 1864. Weldon Railroad August 18-21. **Poplar Springs Church or Peeble's Farm September 29-October 2. Reconnaissance on Vaughan or Squirrel Level Road October 8. Boydton Plank Road, Hatcher's Run; October 27-28. Fort Stedman March 25, 1865. Appomattox Campaign March 28-April 9. Assault on and fall of Petersburg April 2. Pursuit of Lee to Burkesville April 3-9. Moved to City Point, thence to Washington, D. C., April 21-28. Grand Review May 23. Present at the laying of corner stone at Gettysburg July 4. Mustered out July 30, 1865.**

Regiment lost during service 8 Officers & 156 Enlisted men killed and mortally wounded and 4 Officers and 180 Enlisted men by disease. Total 348..