

Transcription

The 54th Marches Through Boston

From *The New York Times* – May 30, 1863

FIRST MASSACHUSETTS COLORED REGIMENT

Appearance of the Men—List of Officers, &c.
From the Boston Journal, May 28.

The Fifty-fourth regiment of Massachusetts volunteers, composed of colored men of this and other Northern States, took its departure for the field of active service to-day. This is the pioneer colored regiment raised in the Northern States. At different times and in different places since the war commenced, there has been talk of raising bodies of colored troops for service in the field, but it remained for Gov. Andrew to first carry out the idea, which he, in common with others, had so long entertained. The official order for raising this regiment, which is for three years' service, was issued about the 1st of February.

The first commission to a recruiting officer was made out on the 7th of February, to John W. M. Appleton, and within a day or two of that time he opened a recruiting-office in Cambridge-street. Soon after, another office was opened in New-Bedford, and within a few weeks at Providence, Philadelphia, and various places in New-York and the Western States. It was also proposed to obtain recruits from among the contrabands at Fortress Monroe, but this the Government would not allow.

Within a short time after the opening of the first recruiting-office, the volunteers were ordered into camp at Readville, and officers were commissioned as fast as the rules of the service would allow. The regiment was filled on the 14th of this month.

Since the men have been at Readville the encampment has been visited by thousands of our citizens, and the men have received words of approval and encouragement, and more substantial tokens of regard from our citizens. They have been well-behaved, have devoted themselves assiduously to learning their duties, and have improved to a degree that has cheered the hearts of their friends, and silenced the objections of those who doubted the expediency of placing muskets in the hands of colored men, under the impression that they would not fight. In all the showy qualities of the soldier they are the equal, any one who has seen them will admit, of white men, but their endurance, and above all their bravery in battle, is yet to be tested. They have the advantage, however, of being well led.

There is among them a pride in their organization; they are strong, active men, having confidence in themselves and their officers, and there is no doubt, no fear, on the part of their friends, that they will disgrace the cause for which they fight.

The regiment is armed with Enfield rifles, and is in all respects equipped and clothed in the same manner as the white regiments. Like the white soldiers, they have received the advance pay and bounty of the Government, and the bounty of the State, and the families of those residing in this Commonwealth are entitled to State aid. In all respects, except that they have only white officers, the men of this regiment are placed on an equality with those of any other new regiment in the service. Their future position depends upon themselves.

The complete roster of this regiment is as follows

Colonel—Robert G. Shaw

Lieutenant-Colonel—Norwood P. Hallowell

Major—Edward N. Hallowell

Surgeon—Lincoln R. Stone

Assistant Surgeon—C. B. Bridgham

Captains—Alfred S. Hartwell, David A. Partridge, Samuel Willard, John W. M. Appleton, Watson W. Bridge, George Pope, Wm. H. Simpkins, Cabot J. Russell, Edward L. Jones and Louis F. Emilio.

First Lieutenants—John Ritchie, Garth W. James, Wm. H. Homans, Orin E. Smith, Erik Wulff, Water H. Wild, Francis L. Higginson, James M. Walton, James M. Grace, R. K. L. Jewett.

Second Lieutenants—Thomas L. Appleton, Benjamin F. Dexter, J. Albert Pratt, Charles F. Smith, Henry W. Littlefield, Wm. Nutt, David Reid, Chas. E. Tucker and Wm. Howard.

The regiment reached this city from Readville at 9 A.M., and marched to the Common which was thronged with people.

The regiment broke camp at an early hour in the morning, and took the cars for Boston. The train bearing them reached the depot, in this city, soon after 9 o'clock. At first it had been arranged to have the regiment march direct to the wharf, to embark, but so great was the desire to see them, not only of the people of Boston, but of all the neighboring towns, that it was decided to afford the opportunity.

Arrangements were accordingly made for a review on the Common by Gov. Andrew. One hundred policemen were detailed to clear the streets on the route, and keep the lines at the parade ground on the Common, and this service they performed in a satisfactory manner, under the direction of Col. Kurtz.

At the depot a large crowd was collected, and the regiment was received with hearty cheers, and other demonstrations of welcome. The regiment was accompanied by Gilmore's Band.

A line was formed, and the command at once took up the march through the following streets: Pleasant, Boylston, Essex, Chauncy, Summer, High, Federal, Franklin, Washington, School, Tremont, Pemberton-square, Somerset and Beacon streets, to the State House. All along the route the sidewalks were crowded, and the windows and balconies were thronged. Men cheered and women waved their handkerchiefs, many of them more enthusiastically than ever they had done before. There was nowhere along the line a word of disapproval—not a sneer was heard, nor an unkind word expressed. In several places flags were thrown out by the occupants of stores or dwellings. In Essex-street, a lady presented Col. Shaw with a handsome bouquet.

The regiment halted in front of the State House a few minutes, allowing a good opportunity for the friends of the men to say a few parting words to them. Most of them, however, are strangers here, and recognized no familiar faces in the crowds that gathered around.

At a little after 10 o'clock the regiment marched down the street, escorting Gov. Andrew, who was accompanied by most of the members of his Staff. Maj.-Gen. Sutton and Staff, Maj.-Gen. Andrews and Staff, Gen. R. A. Pierce, Senator Wilson, Maj. Gordon, Commandant at Fort Independence; Hon. Richard Warren, of New-York; Capts. Collins, McKim and Read, of the Army; Capt. Couthaway, of the Navy, (recently paroled;) Maj. Hartwell, of the Massachusetts Fifty-fifth Regiment, President Hale, of the Common Council, and others.

They entered the Common at the Charles-street gate. Every place overlooking the parade-ground had long been thronged with people, and hundreds who had, and thousands who had not, tickets, were passed inside the lines. Among those present were most of the men and women of Massachusetts who have been prominent in the Anti-Slavery movement; included among them were Mr. Garrison and Edmund Quincy. Frederick Douglass, whose son is Sergeant-Major of the regiment, was also there.

A short rest was permitted, and during the interval that passed thus, there was a discussion of the propriety of raising colored troops. In that assemblage there were no objections and the unanimity of opinion was as great as was the pleasure with which the early friends of the measure greeted each other.

At 11 o'clock the regiment again took its place in line, and was reviewed by Gov. Andrew. The men then passed in review by companies before him, and though their lines were by no means perfect, they marched in good time, and wheeled with a readiness which showed that they had a clear idea of what was required, and only needed a little more practice to equal the best regiments that have left the State.

At 11 3/4 o'clock the regiment left the Common by the West-street gate, and marched down Tremont, Court, State and Commercial streets, to Battery Wharf. As on the route to the Common, so were these streets thronged with approving multitudes, who cheered as they "went marching on."

Col. Robt. G. Shaw, Jr., who commands the regiment, is regarded as a very superior officer. He went out as Captain of the Second Massachusetts regiment, and retained that position till appointed to his present command, having participated in several battles.

In the organization of the regiment he has displayed judgment, zeal and discretion, which has won him the confidence and esteem of the officers of the regiment and the State officials. He is a grandson of the late Robert G. Shaw, Jr.

The regiment reached the wharf at about twenty minutes of 1 o'clock.

The baggage had all been put aboard the *De Molay* previous to the arrival of the regiment.

The guns were at once placed in cases, and at 1 o'clock the troops marched on board the steamer by companies.

Capt. McKim was present, superintending the arrangements for the departure.

Adjt.-Gen. Schouler, Gen. Reed, and other State officials, were also present.

Several gentlemen were on the wharf, distributing tracts and other reading matter among the troops, and Mr. Frederick Douglass passed round among the different companies, bidding the soldiers farewell, and giving them words of encouragement.

The regiment is accompanied by a colored band, but they did not perform, being still under practice.