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Subject: 6th SC Regiment

General Message on 6th SCV Regiment

My great-great-grandfather, James Henry Rion, was the first commander of the 6th SC, from its organization in February 1861 until he resigned in June 1861 over a point of honor. During this time the regiment was in State service.

The 6th SC Regiment was organized as such on 8 February 1861 and was called into state service on 10 April 1861. It was immediately dispatched to Charleston arriving the evening of 11 April 1861. When they were awakened the morning of 12 April, by the bombardment on Fort Sumter, they were assembled, issued their arms for the first time and marched to The Battery from where they observed the bombardment.

Two of the original companies came from the 25th Regiment S.C. Militia, which Col. James Henry Rion commanded. The Fairfield Fencibles was made up of volunteers from the Eastern Battalion, while the Boyce Guards came from the Western Battalion. The Sixth Brigade S.C. Militia was composed of the 24th, 25th, 26th and 27th Regiments. The first two regiments from Fairfield, the latter two from Chester. The original 6th SC was composed of two battalions of five companies each; one battalion from Fairfield, the other from Chester. It is reasonable to assume that the nucleus of the other eight companies came from the remaining three regiments. Gilbert Motier Lafayette Strait, who became Captain of the Catawba Guards, one of the Chester companies, is addressed as "Col." in some of Rion's early correspondence, while the 6th SC was being organized. So, it is a pretty good bet that he commended one of the Chester Militia regiments.

But, while these volunteers marched away, the militia organizations remained intact. In fact, after Col. Rion resigned, he and most of the other men from the Fairfield companies of the 6th SC, who did not choose to go into Confederate service, went home and rejoined their militia regiments and continued to drill. Rion again drew on this source when he raised the Lyles' Rifles, later Co. B, 7th SC Battalion.

The companies of the 6th SC were dispatched to multiple locations during their subsequent service in the Charleston Harbor area, and were not rejoined as a regiment until it was withdrawn to Summerville in June 1861, to be reorganized prior to entry into Confederate service. The decision to enter Confederate service was determined company by company. Each company had to muster at least 65 men to remain as a unit and the regiment had to muster seven companies to

retain the 6th SC designation. In this manner three of the original companies, Fairfield Fencibles, Cedar Creek Rifles and Little River Guards, all from Fairfield, failed to enlist. This left the following companies with their subsequent letter designations: Boyce Guards [D] (Capt. James N. Shedd) and Buckhead

Guards [C] (Capt. Edward J. Means) from Fairfield and Chester Guards [C] (Capt. Obadiah/Obediah Harden), Chester Blues [F] (Capt. E. C. McLure), Catawba Guards [B] (Capt. G. Lafayette Strait), Calhoun Guards [A] (Capt. John T. Walker) and Pickens Guards [G] (Capt. J. M. Moore) from Chester. To these were added York Guards or Alston Rifles (see Note below) [H] (John M. White) from York, Limestone Guards [I] (William D. Camp) from Spartanburg and Carolina Mountaineers

[K] (Spartan D. Goodlett) from Greenville. Before the reorganization commenced, Col.

Rion resigned on a "point of honor" after failing, by a majority of three, to receive a vote of confidence from all the members of the regiment.

When the regiment was reorganized and reenlisted in April 1862, the Limestone Guards, Carolina Mountaineers and Calhoun Guards apparently failed to reenlist and the men from the Chester Blues combined with either the Chester Guards

or Pickens Guards. While there was quite a bit of movement of men between companies during this period, generally, the old companies, with designations and

commanders were now: Catawba Guards [A] (G. L. Strait), Buckhead Guards [H] (William Boykin Lyles), Boyce Guards [G] (James M. Phinney), Chester Guards [I]

(J. M. Crosby), Pickens Guards [F] (J. L. Gaston), and York Guards/Alston Rifles [B] (John M. White). To these were added new companies [C] (Edward B. Cantey) from Kershaw most formerly in Co. E, 9th SC, [E] (James Lide Coker) from

Darlington, most originally in the Hartsville Light Infantry, Co. G, 9th SC, [K]

(William S. Brand) most from Cos. C, D and F, 9th SC; and [D] (Jeremiah or Jerome W. Walker) from Aiken, most originally in Co. H, 9th SC. Also, some members of Company H in this organization came from Company B, 9th SC.

Notes: The above company history came from a "History of 6th S.C.V. Infantry" prepared by Col. J. H. Rion about 1880, combined with a search of company commanders' names in the "Roster of Confederate Soldiers," which is drawn from the index to compiled service records at the National Archives, the "Roll of the

Sixth Regiment, South Carolina Volunteers (Col. Jas. H. Rion, Commanding)" and the "Record of Events" for the 6th SC. The origin of the various companies in the initial state service and first Confederate service organization came from a speech to the 6th SCV Survivors' Association titled, "Fort Sumter to Dranesville," by Major Thomas W. Woodward. In that speech, Major Woodward named

Captain White's company

from York, the York Guards. The "Record of Events" gives Captain White's company as the Alston Rifles. The origins of the new companies added at the April

1862 re-organization are inferred from the reports of attendees in the minutes of the Survivors' Association. This may be an oversimplification, as Captain

Butler P. Alston in a speech to the Survivors' Association said, "At the reorganization of the army in 1862, several companies and detachments from Darlington, Kershaw, Lancaster, York, Clarendon, Sumter, Williamsburg, Edgefield, Barnwell and Lexington joined the ranks of this corps "

Charles Sidney Winder, the second commander of the regiment and first commander while it was in Confederate service, was a Maryland native, an 1850 graduate of West Point, and the youngest Captain in the U. S. Army when promoted in 1855. He resigned from the Regular Army on April 1, 1861, and was immediately sent by President Davis to Charleston, where as a Captain he served as acting assistant adjutant to Brigadier General James Simons, South Carolina Volunteers, commanding the forces on Morris Island. On May 11, 1861, Winder was commissioned a Captain in the C.S. Regular Army Corps of Artillery and given command of one of the first two regular artillery companies formed in Charleston. This company was assigned to the Charleston Arsenal. The War Department was to later change his regular rank to Major, but by that time he had been appointed by President Davis to command the 6th SC Infantry on July 8, 1861 and promoted to Colonel. The 6th SC was ordered to Richmond, Virginia from Camp Woodward, Summerville, South Carolina and departed on July 16. Colonel Winder joined the unit as it passed through Richmond on 20 July on its way to Manassas, where they arrived after the battle was over, Winder was promoted to brigadier general to date from March 1, 1862. He subsequently was assigned to command the "Stonewall Brigade" and was killed while leading it at the battle of Cedar Mountain, VA on August 9, 1862.

When the Fairfield Fencibles was organized on January 5, 1861, John M. Bratton was elected 1st Lieutenant, James Henry Rion was elected Captain. When the regiment was organized on February 8, 1861, James Henry Rion was elected Colonel and Bratton was promoted to Captain of the Fairfield Fencibles. When the Fairfield Fencibles failed to enter Confederate service, Bratton joined the Buckhead Guards as a private. Captain Brice, commander of the Little River Guards, did likewise, enlisting in the Boyce Guards. When the regiment was reorganized upon reenlistment in April 1862, Bratton was elected Colonel of the 6th SC succeeding Winder. He was recommended for promotion to Brigadier General, by Major General Ricard H. Anderson for his "gallant conduct in battle" at Seven Pines, VA where he was wounded and captured. Having lead Brigadier General Micah Jenkins Brigade since May 6, 1864, after Jenkins was accidentally killed by Confederate fire in The Wilderness, Bratton was finally promoted to brigadier general on June 9, to date from May 6. Colonel John Marcellus Steedman, who had begun the war as Captain of Company K, 9th SC and had been promoted to Major of the 9th SC before it was disbanded, replaced Bratton as commander.

The 6th SC would serve in the Army of the Potomac through October 1861, then the Potomac District, Department of Northern Virginia until those forces became the Army of Northern Virginia after General Robert E. Lee assumed command from the wounded General Joseph E. Johnston on June 1, 1862. It served from February to July 1863 in the Departments of North Carolina and Southern Virginia and from July to September 1863 in the Department of Richmond. The unit, as part of Longstreet's Corps, was transferred to Georgia in September 1863, but arrived too late to take part in the Battle of Chickamauga. In the spring of 1864, the regiment returned to the Army of Northern Virginia and served with it until surrendered at Appomattox.

The following is a list of the battles it was involved in (from the "Compendium of the Confederate Armies"):

Fort Sumter (April 12-14, 1861) -while in State service
Dranesville (December 20, 1861)
Yorktown Siege (April-May 1862)
Williamsburg (May 4, 1862)
Seven Pines (May 31-June 1, 1862)
Seven Days Battles (June 25 - July 1, 1862)
Gaines' Mill (June 27, 1862)
Frayser's Farm (June 30, 1862)
2nd Bull Run (August 28-30, 1862)
South Mountain (September 14, 1862)
Antietam (September 17, 1862)
Fredericksburg (December 13, 1862)
Wauhatchie (October 28-29, 1863)
Knoxville Siege (November-December 1863)
The Wilderness (May 5-6, 1864)
Spotsylvania Court House (May 8-21, 1864)
North Anna (May 23-26, 1864)
Cold Harbor (June 1-3, 1864)
Petersburg Siege (June 1864-April 1865)
Williamsburg Road (October 27, 1864)
2nd Fort Harrison (September 30, 1864)
Appomattox Court House (April 9, 1865)

The following is a capsule history of the 6th SC Infantry Regiment, from Crute's "Units of the Confederate States Army:"

"... ordered from Columbia, South Carolina, to Richmond, Virginia, on July 10, 1861. The men were from the counties of Fairfield, Chester, York, Darlington, Lancaster, and Lexington. It was engaged at Dranesville under J. E. B.

Stuart, then was brigaded under Generals R. H. Anderson, M. Jenkins, and Bratton.

The 6th fought with the army from Williamsburg to Fredericksburg, served with Longstreet at Suffolk, and later moved with D. H. Hill to North Carolina. Again

with Longstreet, it did not arrive in time to take part in the Battle of Chickamauga but was engaged at Knoxville. Returning to Virginia, it participated

in the conflicts at The Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and Cold Harbor, endured the

hardships of the Petersburg trenches, and saw action around Appomatox. The regiment reported 18 killed and 45 wounded at Dranesville and in April, 1862, contained 550 officers and men. It lost 27 at Williamsburg and fifty-two percent

of the 521 at Seven Pines, then sustained 100 casualties at Gaines' Mill and Frayser's Farm, 115 at Second Manassas, 58 during the Maryland Campaign, and 16

at Wauhatchie. In 1864, the unit lost 9 killed and 85 wounded during the Wilderness Campaign, and from June 13 to December 31, there were 26 killed, 176

wounded, and 16 missing. On April 9, 1865, it surrendered 30 officers and 328 men. The field officers were Colonels John Bratton, John M. Steedman, and Charles S. Winder; Lieutenant Colonels Andrew J. Secret and John M. White; and Majors James L. Coker, Edward C. McLure and Thomas W. Woodward."

Because Rion's service with the 6th SC was so brief my research for a biography of him has left my studies to be somewhat confined to 6th SC's formation

and its service in the Charleston area and Rion's subsequent service in the 7th

SC Battalion. However, he was very active in the 6th SC Survivors' Association and I have accumulated data on that activity. The one printed roster I have is for the ten companies that comprised the regiment during that early State-service period. Because of the repeated reorganizations mentioned above,

a single roster covering all members of the 6th SC, during its various compositions,

does not exist. The South Carolina Archives in Columbia has microfilmed copies

of the rosters of most units, created in the 1880s and 1890s, combined by the "Historian of Confederate Records" into five large folio volumes in 1899.

These can be viewed there and copied. I recently acquired my own copy of this microfilm, and can now confirm that they only reflect the rolls of the various companies for the last organization after the reorganization in April 1862. Broadfoot Publishing, in January 1999, published a two-volume South Carolina State

Roster which sorts the complete index to SC Compiled Service Records into unit rosters. This is probably the most complete SC unit rosters available.

The roster I have was printed in the Winnsboro "The News and Herald" in 1910, but is also contained in Fitz Hugh McMaster's "History of Fairfield County," pgs 125-131. Since it is for the 6th SC before it went into Confederate service, this roster of men is not included in the Broadfoot sort mentioned above.

I also have a printed copy of the 1883 address by Maj. Thomas W. Woodward to the Survivors' Association, which gives a record of the 6th SC "From Sumter to Dranesville." Maj. Woodward was severely wounded in the regiment's first battle at Dranesville. Included in the newspaper clippings of the Survivors' Association meetings is an 1878 address by Capt. Butler P. Alson on the history of

the regiment. There were frequent references to the progress being made, and money appropriated for, a formal history, but to my knowledge it was never completed and published. The draft is probably buried in some old vet's papers

in
an attic somewhere in Fairfield County.

I also obtained copies of letters written by Capt. Bratton (later Col. Bratton of the 6th SC and then Brig. Gen. Bratton) to his wife while the original 6th SC was stationed in the Charleston area and have a number of newspaper clippings describing the regiment's activities while there. The full set of Bratton letters is at the Caroliniana Library in Columbia, SC and in the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC. A new book just published (2003), "General John Bratton: Sumter to Appomattox In Letters To His Wife," by J. Luke Austin, was constructed around these letters. If not available through your local bookstore it can be obtained from the publisher Proctor's Hall Press, 285 Proctor's Hall Road, P.O. Box 856, Sewanee, TN 37375 for \$23.95 which includes shipping.

The Confederate Battleflag of the 6th SC, presented to it at Centreville, VA by General Beauregard in 1861 and carried through all the battles until just before the Maryland Campaign began, is currently on loan from the Confederate Relic Room and Museum to the State Museum in Columbia, SC where it is on display.

Hope this is a help to you. If you have specific questions, I will try to answer them. You have the address.

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