

The Montgomery Guards



Presented by Aaron Morrison

Montgomery County Genealogy Club

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Topics Covered

- Speaker introduction and connection to the topic
- Origins & Composition of Montgomery Guards
- Experiences of soldiers
- Lew Wallace's role
- 11th Indiana Service History in brief
- The legacy of the 11th Indiana/Montgomery Guards
- Questions and opportunities for further study

My Connection To The Montgomery Guards

- George Canada



Who were the Montgomery Guards?

The Montgomery Guards were a volunteer militia group, first organized by Lew Wallace in April 1856 and lasting until late 1860.

Many in this group would go on to become officers and soldiers in the 11th Indiana Infantry during the American Civil War.



Lew Wallace & His Role

- Moved back to Crawfordsville in April 1853 to set up private practice
- Veteran of the Mexican-American War
- Married to Susan Elston and had one son, Henry (born in 1853)
- Passionate about politics and war



Origin & Beginnings

- “Bloody Kansas” in fall 1855 as prelude for war
- Lew Wallace’s passion for the military & need to be “ready to fight”
- Volunteer militia units rose up around the country
- Wallace received commission from governor to organize unit in April 1856



Composition & Practices

- Sixty-five local men in total - from clerks, mechanics, farm boys, and Wabash College students
- State provided arms and equipment, but the unit collectively had to provide their own tents, uniforms, and band
- Drilled two-three nights a week using a book called “Hardee’s Infantry Tactics” as a guide



Becoming Zouaves

- Wallace read about French soldiers in a magazine
- Colorful uniforms and drills appealed to Wallace's sense of the theatrical
- Uniforms consisted of kepis with red cloth, red and blue Greek tunics, baggy grey breeches, and gaiters



Reaction - Local and State

- Some locals thought the Montgomery Guards thought it was all a “wicked waste of time and money”
- But others were impressed...



Reaction - Local and State

- “Discarding all fancy manoeuvring, they went through the drill of the regular service like veterans. They looked as if they could stand like a wall of iron... or, bayonet in hand make a gallant dash at the enemy’s line”

-Crawfordsville Review, report at the Grand Encampment in Lafayette, July 4th 1859



Reaction - Local and State



- “The Montgomery Guards at Crawfordsville, under the command of Captain Lew Wallace, is said to be now the best military company in the state. It will be recollected that the company at the time it was here during the military encampment last July...

Reaction - Local and State



- “...was considered one of the best drilled and best uniformed of those present. Since that time they have much improved in military tactics and can, as we are told, execute six hundred and thirty evolutions by the tap of the drum...

Reaction - Local and State



- “... We have no doubt but that the company will always maintain its high position so long as it keeps Captain Wallace at its head.”

-Crawfordsville Review,
January 1860

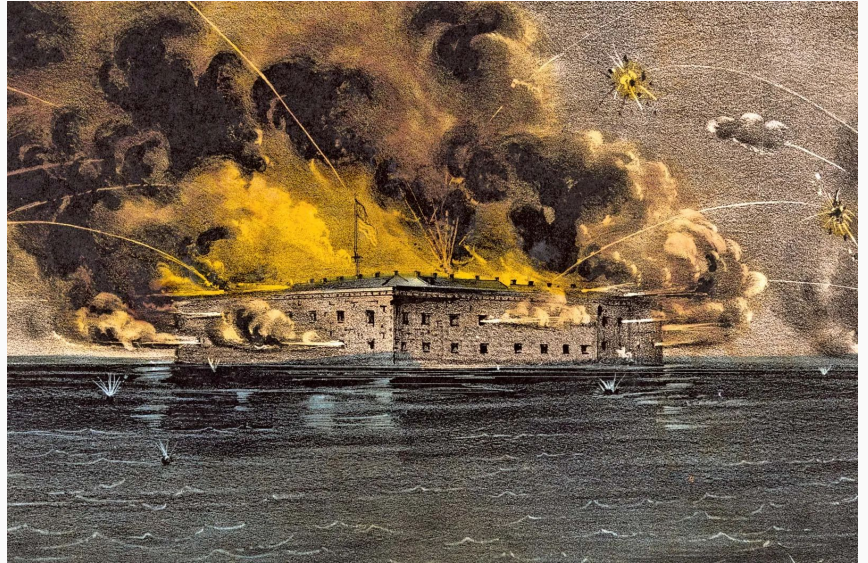
Reaction - Local and State



- Featured at the county fair and at Masonic order ceremonies
- High point was performance in Indianapolis during Washington's birthday in 1860
- Susan Wallace composed "Song for the Montgomery Guards"

War Begins

- Fort Sumter, April 12th, 1861
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11th Indiana Service History - In Brief

- Operations against Forts Henry and Heiman, Tenn., February 2-6, 1862.
- Investment and capture of Fort Donelson, Tenn., February 12-16.
- Battle of Shiloh, Tenn., April 6-7.



11th Indiana Service History - In Brief

- Battle of Port Gibson May 1.
- Battle of Champion's Hill May 16.
- Siege of Vicksburg, Miss., May 18-July 4.



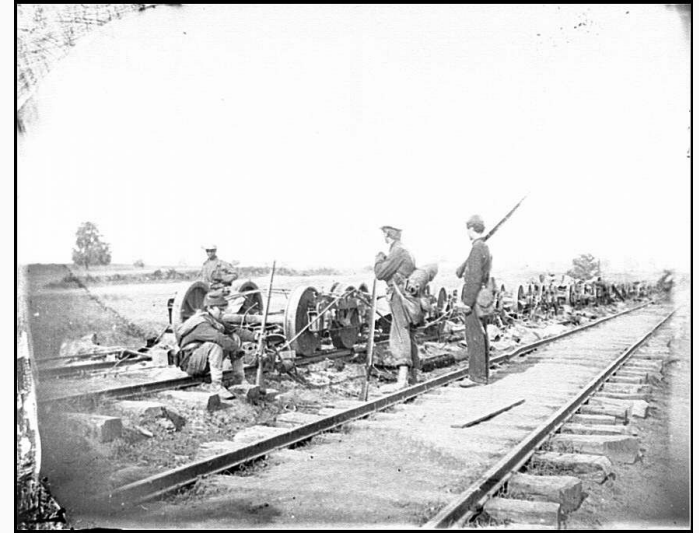
11th Indiana Service History - In Brief

- Ordered to Washington, D. C., July 19.
- Sheridan's Shenandoah Valley Campaign August 7-November 28.
- Battle of Opequan, Winchester, September 19.
- Fisher's Hill September 22.
- Battle of Cedar Creek October 19.



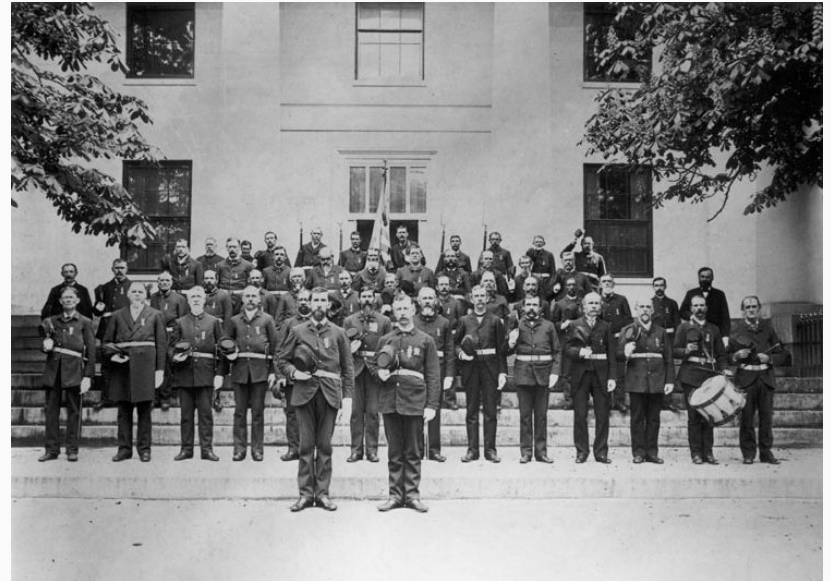
11th Indiana Service History - In Brief

- Duty in the Shenandoah Valley till January, 1865. Duty at Fort Marshall, Baltimore, Md., January 7 to July 26, 1865.
- Mustered out July 26, 1865.
- Regiment lost during service 1 Officer and 114 Enlisted men killed and mortally wounded and 3 Officers and 170 Enlisted men by disease. Total 288.



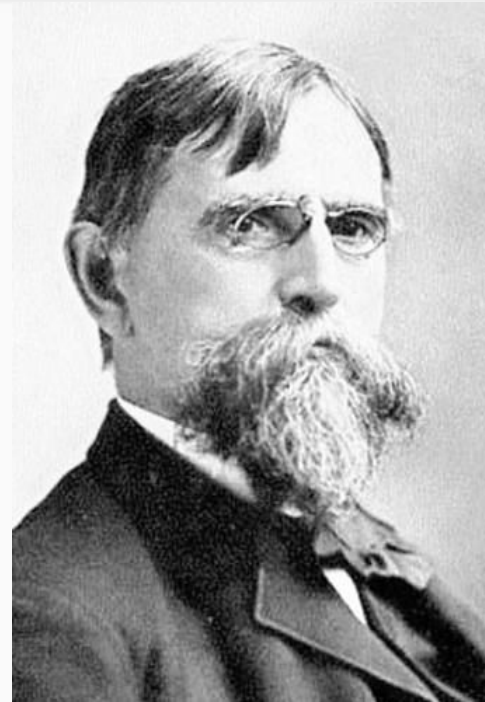
Post-War: The Grand Army of the Republic

- Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) was a fraternal organization composed of veterans of the Union Army
- G.A.R. became among the first organized advocacy groups in American politics, supporting voting rights for black veterans, promoting patriotic education, helping to make Memorial Day a national holiday, lobbying Congress to establish regular veterans' pensions, and supporting Republican political candidates.



Post-War: The Grand Army of the Republic

- The Indiana G.A.R., began in 1866
- McPherson Post No. 7, Crawfordsville, Ind
- Highest membership in Indiana was in 1889 and 1890 at 408,489
- The last survivor of the G.A.R. in the State of Indiana was John Christian Adams, who died 17 Feb. 1949, at his hone in Jonesboro, Indiana, aged 101.



Legacy

- Indy Eleven Soccer Team



Related Stories To Be Told

- How does the Montgomery Guards compare to the “militia-type” groups in the US today, such as the Proud Boys or Patriot Front? What is different about their reasons for existing?
- Free black men resided in Montgomery County and later enlisted in USCT units during the Civil War. What barriers were in place to prevent them from volunteering in the Montgomery Guards?
- Individual stories of soldiers

Questions?

References