

Union Corps Histories 9th Corps

Roanoke Island; New Berne; Camden; Wilmington Island; James Island; Manassas; Chantilly; South Mountain; Antietam; Fredericksburg; Siege Of Vicksburg; Jackson; Blue Springs; Lenoir Station; Campbell's Station; Fort Sanders; Siege Of Knoxville; Strawberry Plains; Wilderness; Ny River; Spotsylvania; North Anna; Bethesda Church; Cold Harbor; Assault On Petersburg, June 17th; Petersburg Trenches; Petersburg Mine; Weldon Railroad; Poplar Spring Church; Boydton Road; Hatcher's Run; Fort Stedman; Fall Of Petersburg.

A wandering corps, whose dead lie buried in seven states. Although the official order designating its number was not issued until July 22, 1862, still, the corps organization might properly be considered as dating back to the Burnside expedition to North Carolina, in February, 1862, and to the operations about Hilton Head, S.C.; because, the troops engaged in these movements were the only ones used in the formation of the corps. In July, 1862, two of Burnside's brigades left North Carolina and proceeded to Newport News, Va.; at the same time, Stevens' Division left Hilton Head and repaired to the same place. From these troops, thus assembled, General Burnside organized his famous Ninth Corps on July 22, 1862, the command consisting of three divisions, under Generals Stevens, Reno, and Parke.

After a short stay at Newport News the corps was ordered to reinforce Pope, and at Manassas it fought its first battle as the Ninth Corps. Only the two divisions of Stevens and Reno were engaged in this action; they numbered 12 regiments and 2 batteries,--less than 5,000 men, all told. General Reno was in command of both divisions, Burnside having been engaged at Fredericksburg in attending to the forwarding of troops. The losses in this small command at Manassas amounted to 204 killed, 1,000 wounded, and 319 missing; total, 1,523. Some of the regiments encountered a severe fire, the Twenty-eighth Massachusetts losing 234 men. General Stevens was killed at Chantilly.

General Reno retained command of the corps on the Maryland campaign, General Burnside having charge of the right wing of the Army, which was composed of the First and Ninth Corps. General Willcox was appointed to the command of Stevens' (1st) Division, while the Second and Third Divisions were commanded, respectively, by Generals Sturgis and Rodman. During this campaign Cox's Kanawha Division was temporarily attached to the corps. The command had also been greatly strengthened by the accession of several new regiments, just organized under the recent call for troops, and its four divisions

now numbered 29 regiments, and 5 batteries, with 13,819 present for duty, including the non-combatants.

The battle of South Mountain was fought wholly by Burnside's two corps, the Ninth Corps losing 157 killed, 691 wounded, and 41 missing; total, 889. The loss in the First Corps was about the same. General Reno was killed in this action, upon which General Cox succeeded to his command. At Antietam the corps lost 438 killed, 1,796 wounded, and 115 missing; total, 2,349, out of about 8,500 in action. General Rodman was among the mortally wounded. In October, Cox's Division returned to West Virginia, whence it had been withdrawn to reinforce Pope, and its brief connection with the corps terminated. This division had made a brilliant record by its gallant services at South Mountain and Antietam.

Upon the departure of General Cox the command of the corps fell to General Willcox.. General W. W. Burns was appointed to fill the vacancy thus caused in the First Division, and General George W. Getty was placed in command of the Third Division, formerly Rodman's. On November 5, 1862, General Burnside was made commander-in-chief of the Army of the Potomac.

At Fredericksburg, the casualty lists indicate that the corps took into action 31 regiments and 5 batteries, with a loss of 111 killed, 1,067 wounded, and 152 missing; total, 1,330. Not long after this battle General Sedgwick was assigned to the command of the corps, and General Willcox returned to the command of his division, relieving General Burns. On February 5, 1863, Sedgwick was succeeded by General W. F. Smith, and on the 12th the corps was ordered to Newport News, where it was pleasantly encamped for a month. General Smith's stay with the corps was of short duration, for he was succeeded in the following month by General John G. Parke. While Newport News, Getty's (3d) Division was detached and ordered to Suffolk, N. C., where it was subsequently incorporated in the Seventh Corps. It never rejoined its old command, although, in 1864, one of its regiments, the Fourth Rhode Island, was restored to the Ninth Corps.

In the meantime, General Burnside had been assigned to the command of the Department of Ohio, a district which included Kentucky and East Tennessee. He obtained permission for the transfer of his old corps to this field of operations, and, so, on the 19th of March, 1863, General Parke was ordered to proceed there with his two remaining divisions, Willcox's and Sturgis's. Just prior to the departure from Virginia, General Sturgis was relieved, and General Robert B. Potter was assigned to the command of the Second Division. The Ninth Corps was stationed in Kentucky for two months, during which it served as an army of occupation, its pleasant quarters and light duty making it

the most enjoyable period within its experience. In June it was ordered to the support of Grant, who was then besieging Vicksburg, and proceeding there promptly, it participated in the investment of that place, although not under fire. Upon the surrender of Vicksburg, Parke's two divisions joined the main army in its movement on Jackson, and became engaged in the fighting there, with a loss of 34 killed, 229 wounded, and 28 missing; total, 291. The First Division was then under command of General Thomas Welsh, General Willcox having been assigned to duty in Indiana. Although the Vicksburg campaign had not cost the corps the bloody tribute exacted in previous campaigns, still it was no less destructive of life, as disease made fearful inroads in the ranks. Among those who succumbed to the deadly malaria of the Vicksburg camps, was General Welsh, who, soon after, went home to die.

The corps left Mississippi in August, 1863, and returned to Kentucky, where, after a short rest, it joined in Burnside's advance into East Tennessee, a movement which had already been commenced. The two divisions were now reduced to about 6,000 men. General Parke having been made chief of staff of the Army of the Ohio, General Robert B. Potter succeeded to the command of the corps, with Generals Hartranft and Ferrero in command of the two divisions.

Ferrero's Division had a sharp little fight at Blue Springs, Tenn., October 10, 1863, and the whole corps was engaged, November 16th, at Campbell's Station. This was followed by the occupation of Knoxville and the gallant defense against Longstreet's forces, terminating, December 5th, in the defeat and withdrawal of the enemy. The campaign in East Tennessee was a memorable one by reason of the Siege of Knoxville, and the unparalleled privations endured by the men. General Willcox resumed command of the corps on January 17, 1864, relieving General Potter; on the 26th, Parke relieved Willcox, who then took command of the Second Division.

General Burnside was again assigned to duty as commander of his old corps, which was ordered to repair to Annapolis, Md., for reorganization. In April, the corps was assembled there, and was composed of the four divisions of Stevenson, Potter, Willcox, and Ferrero, the latter division being composed wholly of colored troops. The corps numbered 19,331, present for duty, with 42 pieces of field artillery; but this number was soon increased, the return of May 10th showing a strength of 32,708. In addition to the four divisions, with their two batteries each, there was a brigade of reserve artillery of 6 batteries, and, also, a provisional brigade of heavy artillerymen and dismounted cavalry. In all, there were 42 regiments of foot, and 14 batteries of light artillery. Ferrero's Colored Division had never been under fire, while many of the white regiments in the corps were

newly organized, or had served previously on garrison duty only. In the ranks of the old regiments were many recruits and conscripts.

In the battle of the Wilderness the corps lost 240 killed, 1,232 wounded, 168 missing; total, 1,640; and, at Spotsylvania, 486 killed, 2,119 wounded, 469 missing; total, 3,146; the heaviest loss at Spotsylvania occurring in the action of May 12th. General Stevenson was killed at Spotsylvania, May 10th, and Major-General Thomas L. Crittenden, formerly commander of the Twenty-first Corps, was assigned to the command of Stevenson's (1st) Division. During the Wilderness campaign, prior to the battle of the North Anna, the Ninth Corps was not included in the Army of the Potomac, but was a separate, independent command, reporting directly to General Grant. This proved to be a faulty arrangement, and, so, General Burnside, with General Parke, his chief-of-staff, waived the question of their superiority of rank over General Meade, in order that the corps might serve under that officer in the Army of the Potomac. At Burnside's suggestion, an order was issued by General Grant, on May 25th, incorporating the Ninth Corps with the main Army.

On the 9th of June, while at Cold Harbor, General Crittenden was relieved at his own request, and General Ledlie was placed in command of the First Division. In the first assault on Petersburg, June 17th, the corps made a brilliant attack, Potter's Division gaining possession of the works; unfortunately, the division was obliged to relinquish its foothold for want of proper support. The corps was engaged in a similar attempt on the following day, the losses in Potter's and Willcox's Divisions being unusually severe in proportion to the number engaged. Loss, 497 killed, 3,232 wounded, and 262 missing; total, 2,991.

The enemy's works proving too strong for assault, the army entrenched itself preparatory to the ten months siege which followed. On June 19th, Ferrero's (4th) Division of colored troops rejoined the corps, having been absent during the whole of the previous campaign, engaged on duty at the rear. Ferrero's men were now placed in the trenches with the other three divisions. The part of the line occupied by the Ninth Corps was very near the enemy's works, and an incessant firing was kept up during the siege, resulting in a daily loss of men, killed or wounded. While there was a comparative quiet in front of the other corps positions, the men of the Ninth were subjected to the terrible strain of a constant watchfulness and deadly exposure. The enemy seemed to be excited to an undue activity by the presence of Ferrero's Colored Division.

The Ninth Corps was prominently connected with the siege, by reason of the immense mine which was dug from within and in front of its

line. This mine, which was excavated by the 48th Pennsylvania, of Potter's Division, was successfully exploded, but the assault which followed was a failure. During this assault Ferrero's colored regiments went into action and fought well, acquitting themselves creditably; their failure, like that of the white regiments in this affair, resulted from causes outside of the regiments themselves. The loss in the Ninth Corps at the mine, was 473 killed, 1,646 wounded, 1,356 missing; total, 3,475. Immediately after this engagement, General Ledlie was relieved from command of the First Division, and General Julius White, of the Twenty-third Corps, was assigned to Ledlie's place.

On the 13th of August, 1864, General Burnside was granted a leave of absence; he never rejoined the corps, but was succeeded by General Parke, who remained in command until the close of the war. At the battle of the Weldon Railroad, August 19 - 21, 1864, the three divisions of White, Potter, and Willcox were engaged with considerable loss, although the three combined numbered less than 6,000 muskets; casualties, 60 killed, 315 wounded, and els missing. By this time the divisions had become so reduced in numbers that a reorganization of the corps became necessary, and so the regiments in White's Division were transferred to the divisions of Potter and Willcox. Under this arrangement Willcox's Division was numbered as the First; Potter's, as the Second; Ferrero's colored troops were designated as the Third Division. But, in December, Ferrero's Division was permanently detached, and most of his regiments were transferred to the newly-organized Twenty-fifth Corps, which was composed entirely of colored troops. General Ferrero, himself, was assigned to a provisional command at Bermuda Hundred.

The vacancy caused by detaching Ferrero's Division was filled by six new regiments of Pennsylvanians--one-year men--organized into a division of two brigades, the command of which was given to General John F. Hartranft. This division rendered gallant service at Fort Stedman, and Hartranft added to his laurels by the ability displayed at that critical juncture.

The morning report for March 31, 1865, showed a corps strength of 18,153, "present for duty, equipped," and 36 pieces of light artillery. With this force the Ninth Corps entered upon the final campaign, taking a prominent part in the storming of Petersburg, April 2, 1865, which resulted in the evacuation of Richmond and the downfall of the Confederacy. The corps was not only among the foremost in this brilliant assault, but its flags were the first to wave over the public buildings of Petersburg. This was the last battle in which the corps participated, and on July 27, 1865, the existence of the Ninth Corps was officially terminated.

Source: "Regimental Losses in the American Civil War (1861-1865)" -
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