

Sixty-Ninth Regiment New York National Guard (NYNG)

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The Sixty-Ninth New York State Militia (NYSM) was mustered into Federal Service on 9 May 1861 at Washington, D.C. The regiment fought at the Battle of Bull Run on July 21, 1861 where the Commander, Colonel Michael Corcoran was captured. The Regiment was mustered out of Federal service 3 August 1861 at New York (see Corcoran Era). While remaining in state service the Sixty-Ninth Regiment, NYSM formed the nucleus of the Sixty-Ninth Regiment, New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment which mustered into Federal service between 7 September and 17 November 1861 at New York and mustered out of Federal service 30 June 1865 at Alexandria, Virginia (see Sixty-Ninth Regiment NYSV).³¹¹ Except for the power over promotion's and appointments granted by Act of Congress, the authority of the State ceases on the transfer of a regiment into Federal service. This created a serious problem for New York due to the fact the Adjutant General would receive conflicting recommendations for promotion.

National Guard Designation

In 1862, with the Commander, Colonel Corcoran in a Confederate prison and with most of the officers and enlisted members of the Regiment volunteering for federal service, it fell upon Major James Bagley to rebuild the militia unit. New York State Militia units were re-designated on April 23, 1862 as the New York National Guard. The Sixty-Ninth Regiment, New York State Militia was now the Sixty-Ninth Regiment, New York National Guard (NYNG). Bagley was the senior officer with the Colonel and Lieutenant positions vacant. He assumed command of the Sixty-Ninth Regiment NYNG in 1862. Major Bagley had not accompanied the unit when they went to Washington in 1861 but stayed in the armory in New York in a caretaker role. However he met the Regiment at the Battery when they returned from the Battle of Bull Run and lead them back to the armory. Many who had fought were not happy with the situation of him leading the Regiment when he was not present during their trials.

In May, General Banks retreated to the Potomac in May, The enemy through the Shenandoah Valley rapidly and the War Department prepared for the defense of Washington. Unfortunately, there was not a single regiment of volunteers remaining to answer the requisition of the Government. In this emergency the Governor of New York decided to' call out the organized regiments of the National Guard. Orders were immediately issued that they should prepare to march, and between the 26th of May and the 4th of June twelve regiments, completely armed and equipped, and averaging seven hundred men each, were sent forward. The Sixty-Ninth under the Command of Major Bagley departed New York City on May 30th with 1,000 men. Although only called for 30 days, the regiment volunteered for a three month tour.

On the 23d of May, enlistments for three years, which had been suspended after the completion of the volunteer regiments in March and April, were again commenced. The Governors of the loyal states asked the President to call as many forces as necessary to put down the rebellion as quickly as possible. In reply Lincoln responded by calling an additional 300,000 volunteers³¹².

Muster into Federal Service 1862

The National Guard Regiment was mustered into Federal service May 26, 1862 at New York. The Regiment had a total strength of 1,000 members. They departed New York on May 30th for a 90 day tour defending Washington

New York State had increased the size of its militia in order to meet the increasing calls for more troops by the Federal Government but the need for a draft was anticipated. On April 23 the Legislature pass an act which required all persons liable to bear arms. The preparation began on August 13, 1862. Enrollment Officers were appointed and necessary books were prepared. Every person within the prescribed ages would be entered on the lists. In the counties of New York (Manhattan) and Kings (Brooklyn) the enrollment was placed under the immediate direction and control of General William H. Anthon.

In the 1862 Adjutant General's Report the necessity for a draft was discussed at length. The report said: "It may indeed be assumed that the right to use whatever measure necessary for the full and complete exercise of the power to "raise and support armies" is the natural coincident of the power itself, as that is deducible from the duty: with which the Government is invested to provide for the public defense; *these means must include the principle of conscription or compulsory service*". The concept of a "draft" would have a devastating effect on New York City within a few months.

On September 3rd, the Sixty-Ninth Regiment New York National Guard was mustered out of Federal Service. On October 14th the enrollment for the draft throughout the State was almost completed and commissioners and surgeons were appointed to hear and determine on claims for exemption. In New York City over 200,000 individuals were enrolled but a large numbers of persons claimed exemption on the ground of physical disability. After examination over 40,000 were exempted. There was a serious problem with individuals receiving bounties for enlisting and subsequently deserting. New York offered a State bounty of fifty dollars, in addition to the bounty and advance pay offered by the Federal Government.

Nucleus of the New Regiment

While remaining in state service the Sixty-Ninth Regiment formed the nucleus of the Sixty-Ninth Regiment New York National Guard Artillery Regiment also known as the 182d New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment which was mustered into Federal service September 17, 1862 at Newport News, Virginia³¹³. In November the Regiment was excused from attending Brigade Assembly since it was "absent at the seat of war, for which it volunteered."³¹⁴ There are no company officers listed in the 1862 AG Report. The report lists the Regimental Staff and Company officers only for the Sixty-Ninth Regiment New York State Volunteers.

1863

During the Annual Inspection conducted by Major Taylor, which was held on October 28, 1863, the Sixty-Ninth Regiment is listed with 442 present and 221 of its members listed as absent. Major Taylor noted the 69th paid little attention to drill. "Its company officers do not understand their duties, or, understanding them, have failed to give any evidence of it".

In the Adjutant General's Report for 1863 Major Bagley is listed as the Commandant with 2 Field Officers, 4 Regimental Staff, 29 Company Officers, 9 Sappers and Miners, 1 Leader of the Band, 21 Musicians, 8 Snare Drummers, and 366 NCOs and Privates. The regiment had a total

strength of 663. John McKeon is listed as an Adjutant Lieutenant, James B. Kirker is the Regimental Engineer, Robert Johnson is the Regimental Surgeon, the Surgeon Mate position is vacant, Joseph P. Tully is the Regimental Quartermaster, Reverend Thomas I. Mooney is back as the Regimental Chaplain (he had been recalled by Archbishop Hughes after he baptized the cannons at Fort Corcoran in 1861).

Companies

All officer positions in the regiment are listed as Artillery doing duty as infantry except Company "K" in which the officer positions are listed as Cavalry. Individual company strengths are not listed.

Company "A"

Captain Theodore Kelley, Commanding, First Lieutenant Daniel Strain, Second Lieutenants John Fahey and Dennis S. Sullivan.

Company "B"

Captain Thomas Lynch, Commanding, First Lieutenant, Joseph Murphey Second Lieutenants William P. Rogers and Mathew Beirne.

Company "C"

Captain Michael O'Keefe, Commanding, First Lieutenant John Rowen, Second Lieutenants John H. Ryan and Michael O'Conner.

Company "D"

Captain Thomas Clarke, Commanding, First Lieutenant Thomas Fay, Second Lieutenants Michael McGuire and Michael O'Boyle.

Company "E"

Captain Thomas Dempsey, Commanding, First Lieutenant John Bagley, Second Lieutenants Michael Duane and Andrew Read.

Company "F"

Captain John Breslin, Commanding, First Lieutenant Patrick Duffey, Second Lieutenants Michael Breslin and JohnDuffy.

Company "G"

Captain James McCraren, Commanding, First Lieutenant Charles Campbell, Second Lieutenant Patrick J. Buckley.

Company "H"

Captain William Butler, Commanding, First Lieutenant position is vacant, Second Lieutenants James Gannon and James Lyons.

Company "I"

Captain James P. McIvor, Commanding, First Lieutenant John Coonan, Second Lieutenants William Fogerty and Thomas M. Canton.

Company "K"

Captain Bernard Reilly, Commanding, First Lieutenant Richard Dalton, Second Lieutenants Edmund Conolly and Edward Hare.

Gettysburg

When General Lee marched north in 1863, the Governor of Pennsylvania asked for assistance to protect his State from the possibility of invasion by the Confederate Army. New York fearing the Confederates may march through Pennsylvania into the lightly defended center of the State (Buffalo, Syracuse, Utica, and then on to Albany and New York City) agreed to send troops to Harrisburg. Regiments began to depart for Harrisburg in June. The Sixty-Ninth Regiment was scheduled to depart on June 22nd but on orders from the Secretary of War, they were sent instead to Baltimore.

Draft Riots

On July 13, 1863, draft riots erupted in New York. The rioters, incensed at what they perceived as an inequitable conscription law which essentially exempted the wealthy, who could buy a \$300 exemption or pay substitutes to go in their places, were predominantly Irish laborers. Colonel Nugent of the 69th, who resigned his field commission after being wounded at Fredericksburg, had reverted to his regular army rank of captain and was acting as provost marshal in charge of New York City's draft. Although he was considered an Irish war hero, the mob attacked Nugent's house in the Yorkville section and burned it to the ground. The colonel's broken sword turned up a week later on the Upper East Side, a child's plaything, jewels pried from its hilt.

The regiment was in Baltimore under James Cavanaugh when the riots broke out. The officers of the regiment quickly drafted a series of resolutions expressing "regret and indignation" as the actions of the mob. They attributed the excesses of the rioters to "banded thieves from other cities" and volunteered to return home to repress the insurrection.³¹⁵ Although some historians claim that by the time the regiment came back to New York, however, the riots were over, one of the silver State issued "battle rings" currently in the armory reads: "Draft Riots 1863". This would imply that the regiment did participate in putting down the riot.

In his book, *The History of the Sixty-Ninth Regiment*, Richard Demeter states about Nugent's house: "While trying to burn the colonel's house, the rioters noticed portraits of Nugent, Thomas Meagher, and Michael Corcoran on the premises. The trespassers slashed the likenesses of Nugent and Meagher but left the picture of Colonel Corcoran untouched. The mob also hurled the tattered battle flag of the 69th New York Regiment out the window and stole the sword presented to Nugent in 1854 by the Irish Fusiliers. The flag was picked up and saved by firemen from Engine Company No. 45, and two weeks later police discovered the colonel's sword in the possession of a boy (though its pearls and other ornaments were missing)."³¹⁶

The Adjutant General's Report for 1863 notes: "On the 11th of July last, information was conveyed to your Excellency, that the draft would take place in the city of New York. It was found upon consultation with Major General Charles W. Sanford, Commanding 1st Division National Guard of the State, that he had but about six hundred (600) men upon whom he could

rely for the safety of the city in case of disorder or riot. The militia of New York City and Brooklyn were then in Pennsylvania, and in Maryland, following the retreating enemy". The Adjutant General (TAG) went to Washington that night in the hope of having the draft postponed until a sufficient military force could be returned to the city. The next morning the TAG received a telegram that the riot has broken out. The Secretary of War immediately directed a temporary suspension of the draft and ordered four regiments, belonging to the city, then in the field, to return without delay.

HEADQUARTERS, ST. NICHOLAS HOTEL
NEW YORK, *July 16, 1863*

To the SECRETARY OF WAR, Washington, D.C.

"There is great disorder here. It is important to have the New York and Brooklyn regiments sent home at once.

(Signed) HORATIO SEYMOUR."

WASHINGTON, *July 16, 1863.*

To His Excellency Governor SEYMOUR, New York:

Eleven New York regiments are relieved, and are at Frederick, and will be relieved as fast as transportation can be furnished them.

(Signed) EDWIN M. STANTON,
Secretary of War."

The timely arrival of these regiments enabled Major General Sandford to restore order and safety. The organized militia in the interior of the State was ordered to repair forthwith, to the city. Regiments responded promptly, but upon reaching Albany, the railroad and steamboat companies refused transportation, as the destruction of their depots and boats had been threatened by the mob if facilities were granted.³¹⁷

The Fourth Brigade Inspector General, Major Taylor noted in his report to the TAG speaking about the Fourth Brigade to which the regiment belonged: "After a month's duty there, it returned in July to perform another month of duty in aid of the authorities in maintaining order during the completion of the draft, which had been interrupted by a portion of the people who made it the occasion of a most disgraceful riot, requiring the strong arm of military power for its suppression"³¹⁸. It would seem from Major Taylor's report and the State-issued battle ring that the regiment did participate in putting down the Draft Riot of 1863.

1864

The regiment was once again mustered into Federal Service in 1864. "Mustered into Federal service 6 July 1864 at New York; mustered out of Federal service 6 October 1864 at New York"³¹⁹ The 1864 AG Report notes the Sixty-Ninth Regiment, under now Colonel James Bagley occupied Fort Richmond to defend the harbor in the event of an attack.³²⁰

"On the 29th of June last, upon request of Major General Dix, and pursuant to directions from the Commander-in-Chief, the Sixty-ninth Regiment, Colonel Bagley, was directed to report for

duty in the harbor of New York, to Major General Dix, for sixty days; which period was afterwards extended, with the assent of the regiment, to one hundred days.”³²¹

Regimental Staff

James Bagley, Colonel, Commanding

James Cavanagh, Lieutenant Colonel

Thomas Clark, Major

The total strength of the regiment is 700. Individual companies do not list their strength. All officer positions in the regiment are listed as Artillery doing duty as infantry except Company “K” in which the officer positions are listed as Cavalry. Individual company strengths are not listed.

Companies

Company “A”

Captain Theodore Kelley, Commanding, First Lieutenant Daniel Strain, Second Lieutenants Patrick Brodie and Patrick Flannagan.

Company “B”

Captain Keron Watson, Commanding, First Lieutenant, Patrick H. Collins, Second Lieutenants William P. Rogers and John Karr.

Company “C”

Captain Michael O’Keefe, Commanding, First Lieutenant John Rowen, Second Lieutenants John H. Ryan and Michael O’Conner.

Company “D”

Captain Thomas Clarke, Commanding, First Lieutenant Thomas Fay, Second Lieutenants P. McDonald and Michael O’Boyle.

Company “E”

Captain Thomas Dempsey, Commanding, First Lieutenant John Bagley, Second Lieutenants Michael Duane and Andrew Read.

Company “F”

Captain Patrick Duffey, Commanding, First Lieutenant Daniel Taggart, Second Lieutenants James Hughes and JohnDuffy.

Company “G”

Captain Charles Campbell, Commanding, First Lieutenant position is vacant, Second Lieutenant Patrick J. Buckley.

Company “H”

Captain James Gannon, Commanding, First Lieutenant Anthony Crossan, Second Lieutenant James Dolan.

Company "I"

Captain John J. Foster, Commanding, First Lieutenant Dennis Brown, Second Lieutenants William Fogerty and James Watson.

Company "K"

Captain Thomas Powers, Commanding, First Lieutenant John Hickey, Second Lieutenant Daniel J. Hurley.

On October 31, 1864 the regiment assembled on Washington Square for its annual review and inspection. Major Taylor, the Brigade Inspector wrote: "The 69th regiment, with a muster roll of nearly 500 members presented itself for inspection with only 240 officers and men including a band of twenty-four pieces. Only one company of the eight battalion companies present had the requisite number on the ground to entitle it to legal continuance. Nearly as many members of the regiment absented themselves from the most important parade of the year as were present, showing indifference in their duty to the State and country not warranted by any circumstances in the experience of the regiment. In view of this neglect it would be well; perhaps, to consolidate the companies, making only five. The troop of horse that has so long been attached to this regiment might, will advantage to the service, be joined to some other body of horse, unless it shall increase its numbers within the coming year, which has remained at about twenty ever since its organization. Attached as I am to this regiment from long military association, it is with regret I witness such indifference to duty, and with mortification that I am thus obliged to acknowledge it. The arms and equipments of the 69th are State property. They are in excellent condition, particularly the muskets, which are entirely new. The knapsacks, remaining in the regiment are very much worn and should be replaced by new ones of modern construction."³²²

The AG Report lists 194 individuals in the regiment re-enlisted.³²³

1865

The 69th regiment was inspected on the 17th of October, at Tompkins Square. There were 373 members present and 259 absent. Once again the Brigade Inspector commented unfavorably on the regiment. "To which may be added a hired band of 24 pieces, if thought desirable, to swell the nominal strength of the regiment. The absentees, numbering two-thirds of those present, added, will give a total strength of 632. It is the opinion of the undersigned, that the number present at inspection is about the real strength of the regiment, and that the absentees are continued on the rolls from year to year without advantage to the regiment. The 69th has one of the best located armories in the division, and if the premises now occupied by the police station could be added to those occupied by the regiment, it would be rendered at once attractive and convenient. As at present arranged, the armory is not a safe depository for the property of the State, the access to it being easily entered. I understand it is the intention of the police department to remove the station now occupying a portion of Essex market. Should that be the case, it would be well for the proper military authority to take some action regarding these premises, to the end that the armory accommodations for this regiment might be improved. By removing the bell-tower which now disfigures the building, and the partition wall which now divides the drill room, it could be nearly doubled in size. In 1864, 500 new Springfield muskets were issued to this regiment. At present but 370 of that issue can be found in the armory. The practice of carrying home arms and accoutrements has proved a cause of loss; as well the

occasional dismissal of a company, on returning from a funeral ceremony, at or near the quarters of the commandant, when the" members would carry the arms and equipments home, each intending to return them to the armory. In this way it is possible some of the arms may have been lost. It would be well to make more stringent laws, positively prohibiting the carrying away from armories any property belonging to the State". The report goes on to say about the 95th Regiment: "Under these circumstances, and the fact that nearly the whole of this command are of the same nationality as the 69th regiment, I most respectfully recommend the consolidation of this regiment with the 69th. Thus united it would make the 69th a strong regiment and give to it one of the best officers in the brigade as its commandant. This arrangement would prevent the disintegration and possible destruction of both regiments, the 69th having fallen off in its prestige as it has in its strength. Under command of Colonel Pinckney the 69th would regain its ancient reputation, and with the strength of the 95th added, it would become effective for any service that might be required³²⁴

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- ³¹¹ Lineage and Honors Certificate, 69th Regiment
- ³¹² Adjutant General's Report 1862, pg. 10
- ³¹³ Lineage and Honors Certificate, 69th Infantry, undated, signed by John W. Mountcastle, Brigadier General, United States Army, Chief of Military History who held that post in the 1990s
- ³¹⁴ New York State Adjutant General's Report 1862
- ³¹⁵ *Irish American*, August 1862
- ³¹⁶ Demeter, *History of the Sixty-Ninth Regiment*, pg. 154
- ³¹⁷ Adjutant General's Report, 1863, Vol. 1, pg. 26
- ³¹⁸ Adjutant General's Report, 1863, Vol. 1, pg. 46
- ³¹⁹ Lineage and Honors Certificate, 69th Regiment
- ³²⁰ Adjutant General's Report 1864, pg. 2
- ³²¹ Adjutant General's Report 1864, pg. 39
- ³²² Adjutant General's Report 1864, pgs. 59-60
- ³²³ Adjutant General's Report 1864, pg. 456
- ³²⁴ Adjutant General's Report 1865, Vol. 1, Pg. 55