

Illinois Adjutant General's Report – Regimental and Unit Histories – 1861 – 1866 –
Volume 5 – Published 100 - Pages 120 - 124

Frank Steiskal – Company F

Book 5 Listed as Steiskar, Frank (page 111)

History of the 82nd Illinois Infantry

The Eighty-second Infantry, named Second Hecker Regiment, in honor of Colonel Frederick Hecker, its first colonel, and formerly colonel of the Twenty-fourth Illinois Infantry Volunteers, was, like the latter, almost exclusively composed of German members and a Chicago organization. One company. ((Company C. the Concordia Guards) was an Israelitish company. (The Israelites of Chicago collecting, within three days, \$10,000 among themselves for its benefit.)

Company I was composed of Scandinavians.

The Regiment was organized at Camp Butler, Springfield, Ill., September 26, 1862, and was mustered into the United States service at the same place, October 23, 1862. On November, 1862, the Eighty-second left Camp Butler, one thousand strong, under orders to join the Army of the Potomac. It arrived at Arlington Heights, November 9. Was attached to General Franz Siegel's Corps, and marched to Fairfax court house, November 19. On December 11, it moved to Stafford court house, where it was assigned to the First Brigade (Colonel Schimmelfennig). Third Division (General Carl Schurz). Eleventh Army Corps, and. with that command, went into camp near Acquia Creek, Va., December 19, where the Regiment remained until January 20, 1863, a part of the Corps only participating in Burnside's attack on the heights of Fredericksburg. On January 20, a forward movement of the army was ordered, which was commenced, but abandoned on the 23d. a severe storm having rendered the roads absolutely impassable. Wagons, ambulances, batteries, caissons, were mired in every gully, almost beyond the possibility of extrication, and the troops returned to winter quarters as speedily as possible.

In this movement, which was known as the "Mud Campaign," the Eighty-second participated, advancing to Hartford Church, where it encamped until February 6, and then moved again to Stafford court house. With Howard's command, the Eighty-second moved from Stafford court house. April 27, and marched towards Chancellorsville and arrived at Kelly's Ford on the Rappahannock; it crossed on the evening of the 28th, and, after a few hours' rest on the southern side, moved to the Rapidan River, near Germania Ford, crossing that ford to Locust Grove, and forming line of battle along the Fredericksburg pike on the morning of the 30th. On the morning of May 1, small rifle pits were dug and barricades made. At noon May 2, the Regiment was placed in position, facing south, in the second line of battle, with the One Hundred and Fifty-seventh New York. About five o'clock, the enemy attacked the First Division, holding the right, routed and drove it to the rear, attacking the first line of the Third Division, which, after brave

resistance, gave way. The second line, comprising the Eighty-second Illinois and the New York regiment, held the enemy in check until a new line was formed in their rear, when it fell back about fifteen yards, leaving seventy killed and wounded on the ground it had occupied. While forming and rallying his men, Colonel Hecker was wounded, and fell from his horse while riding to the rear. Major Rolshauson, in going to his aid, was also wounded, when the Regiment retired in good order. The loss of the Eighty-second, before it re-joined the Brigade, was one hundred and fifty-six killed or wounded, including seven commissioned officers.

The Eighty-second participated in the engagement on May 4. and then returned to camp at Stafford court house, where it had a much needed rest until June 12, when it moved on the Gettysburg campaign. Before it quite reached Gettysburg, General Reynolds was killed, but his brave and sorely pressed Divisions still held their position near the Theological Seminary, above the town. At noon. General Howard arrived on the field, and assumed command of the troops, the immediate command of the Eleventh Corps devolving on Carl Schurz. This Corps was thrown into position to the right of the first, and received, soon after, the weight of the first attack of Ewell's fresh troops, which forced it back to the village of Gettysburg:, where the officers, to save their men from the terrible fire through the main streets, attempted to march them diagonally by crossing streets through the town, the attempt resulting in confusion, degenerating into a panic.

General Howard instantly selected Cemetery Hill, south of Gettysburg, as his line of defense, to which point the troops were withdrawn and re-formed, the First Brigade of the Third Division acting as rear guard—the Eighty-second Illinois guarding the rear of the Brigade in the retreat to the new position. The Eleventh Corps, in the line of battle of the following days, held the center—the crest of Cemetery Hill and the declivity in its front. The Third Division occupied the right of Howard's line, joining Slocum's Twelfth Corps on their left. Toward evening, on Thursday, the 2d of July, Ewell's Confederate Corps, by a sudden rush on our right, carried a portion of the line of rifle pits which had been constructed during the day, in front of Slocum's and Schurz's line, and which were protected by only a single Brigade—the right having been weakened to support Sickles, on the left, against the terrific assault of Longstreet's forces. On Friday morning the battle raged in the woods in front of Schurz. The rebels were still in the rifle-pits, and the infantry were fighting them where our gunners could give no aid, for fear of killing friend as well as foe. From early morning until past eleven—seven hours—the men fought to regain those rifle-pits, when Ewell's Corps was finally repulsed, and the Union line advanced to its former position.

Colonel Salomon, with the Eighty-second, made a charge upon the pits in his front. Driving the Confederates back with the loss of more prisoners than the number of his command. During the three days' fighting. Colonel Salomon had two horses shot under him, while leading his Regiment, which was especially complimented by Generals Howard and Schurz for its bravery and efficiency during the struggle. Its losses were

131 killed, wounded and missing. Captain Emil Frey and Lieutenant Eugene Hepp. Co. H, were taken prisoners.

The Eighty-second then joined in the pursuit of Lee, through Virginia, and then, on September 25, marched to Manassas Junction, en route for Tennessee. On October 19, Colonel Hecker was assigned to the command of the Third Brigade, of Schurz's Division, and the Eighty-second Regiment was transferred to that Brigade. On October 19, Hecker's Brigade was advanced to Russell's Gap, a gorge in the Raccoon Mountain, which it held and defended while Hooker's forces passed through the gap into Lookout Valley, and thence to Wauhatche, at the foot of Lookout Mountain, where they arrived October 28. On that night the Eighty-second had an engagement with Law's Division of Longstreet's Corps, and afterward joined the main army in Lookout Valley.

The Eighty-second, with the Eleventh Corps, remained in Lookout Valley until November 22, when it joined Grant's forces at Chattanooga, and participated, on the 23d, in the attack on the enemy, near Orchard Knob. On the 25th, Schurz's Division participated in the attack on Mission Ridge, and the following day reported to General Sherman, and took part in the pursuit of Bragg's forces.

The Eleventh Corps arrived at Cleveland, Tenn., November 29, and thence marched to Charleston, where orders were received to move to the relief of Burnside, at Knoxville. When this order was received, the troops under Sherman's command had no provisions nor a change of clothing; their shoes were almost worn out, and there was but a single blanket to a man, from Sherman down to the private. A march of 84 miles was before them. The command reached Loudon December 2, and then marched to Marysville, where intelligence was received of Longstreet's retreat' and the Eleventh Corps was ordered to return to Athens, and thence to Charleston and Chattanooga. At Chattanooga the Corps was returned to Hooker's command, December 17, and again went into camp in Lookout Valley, moving to Whiteside, Tenn. in January, 1864. In the re-organization of the army by Sherman, for the Atlanta campaign, the Eleventh and Twelfth Corps of the Army of the Potomac were consolidated as the Twentieth Corps, Army of the Cumberland, under command of General Joseph Hooker.

General Hecker resigned March 4, 1864, and the Eighty-second, under Col. Salomon, was assigned to the Third Brigade (Colonel J. S. Robinson), First Division (General Alpheus S. Williams) Twentieth Corps. The Regiment left Whiteside on May 3, 1864, joining the Corps at Triune on the 7th, and marched by way of Snake Creek Gap to Resaca, arriving there on the 13th. On the afternoon of the 14th, the enemy attacked our left. The troops resisted for a few moments, then wavered, and finally fell back through the woods, and over the barricades, toward and beyond Major Simonson's famous Fifth Indiana Battery. A few stopped after passing the barricades to support the guns, but the Confederates charging the second time with terrible yells, the remnant of the Brigade were put to flight and nothing but Major Simonson with his six guns and his few brave men that manned them seemed to stand between the army and disaster. Just then a cheer was heard, and down the gorge came the Eighty-second Regiment on the

double quick, and charging across the field, drove the enemy back to the woods, saved the battery and the left of the army. Every man of the Regiment won the highest praise for gallantry.

The Eighty-second occupied the field for the night, and on the following day was again engaged in an assault on the enemy's main line. On the morning of the 16th the Confederates retreated from their works, and before daylight evacuated Resaca and retreated across the Oostanula River, the Regiment joining in the pursuit. On 1 May 25th, the Eighty-second with the First Division (General Williams), which was leading Hooker's column, became engaged with the enemy soon after crossing the bridge over Pumpkin Vine Creek, about half way between Burnt Hickory and Dallas. The First Division was brought into action, and was for some time exposed alone to the attack of the whole Confederate force, but gained and held the advanced ground above the enemy's main line at New Hope Church, until reinforcements arrived. For their action in this affair

General Thomas publicly complimented the men on their bravery, Johnson's main line could not be carried, and on the 26th the troops threw up entrenchments, which they occupied until the Confederates under Johnson evacuated their works on June 6th. The loss of the Eighty-second Illinois on the 25th, in the advance toward Dallas, was eleven killed and sixty nine wounded out of a total of two hundred and forty-five in the ranks. In the forward movement of Sherman's army, June 5th, the Eighty-second took part in the various skirmishes which finally dislodged the enemy from his position on Lost Mountain, west of Marietta.

On June 15th the Eighty-second participated in an assault on the enemy's main line of works, near Pine Mountain, there losing five killed; and again on the 17th it lost one killed and three wounded, in an attack on the enemy's entrenched position, south of Noses Creek. By June 23d Hooker advanced toward Kennesaw, remaining there until July 3d when the Confederates having abandoned their works on Kennesaw Mountain, the First Division commenced the forward movement toward Chattahoochee River. In the Battle at Peach Tree Creek Williams' Division held the right of Hooker's line, Geary's held the center, and Butterfield's (commanded by General Ward) the left. Robinson held the left of Williams' Division. The following account of the battle, particularly of that portion engaged in by Robinson's Brigade, is from the pen of an officer of the First Division, who participated in the engagement:

"On July 19th the Army of the Cumberland arrived in position south of the Chattahoochee and to the north of Atlanta. "On the 20th instant a general advance in the direction of Atlanta was begun. "The day wore away until two o'clock P. M. The developments anxiously hoped for in the movements of McPherson and Schofield seemed to be awaited as a signal for active demonstrations by the Army of the Cumberland. But, the enemy appreciating the desperate condition to which he was being rapidly brought, bethought himself to make one bold, dashing, determined effort to thwart our designs. Accordingly, early in the afternoon a fierce fire broke out along

our picket lines. The storm soon extended along the line toward the right, where Williams' Division lay grouped along the crest of the rather high and densely-wooded hill. Between Williams' and Geary's divisions lay a deep hollow, down which, marked by the timber, the enemy was now advancing in heavy masses- General Williams saw, at a glance, the arrangement of his troops which was best adapted to meet this unlooked-for demonstration of the enemy. He hurried his Brigades into position, on the double-quick, and, although they moved with all possible celerity, was unable to get them into their proper positions ere they received a terrific fire from the enemy. Robinson's Brigade hastened along the crest of the hill, then, facing by the left flank, marched down the slope to receive the swarming masses of the over-confident foe.

The fire of the enemy was so murderous, and his advance so impetuous, that it seemed for a time as if Robinson's line must surely yield. The combatants were mingled with each other and fighting hand to hand. The safety of the corps, and indeed, of the entire army, seemed to depend upon the courage and determination of those devoted men. Should they give way, the enemy would gain possession of the hill, command the rear, break the center, capture hundreds of prisoners, our artillery, and drive the remnant of our troops back to the Creek, and, perhaps, to the Chattahoochee. But not one inch would those intrepid veterans yield. Though their ranks were fearfully thinned, and the tangled forest became strewn with bleeding forms as with autumn leaves, yet they determinedly maintained their position and compelled the enemy to withdraw, leaving behind dead and wounded."

Another writer says:

"The rebel attack rolled toward the left until General Williams' fine Division was fully engaged. It had advanced to close up on Geary's, General Knipe's Brigade in the center. General Ruger's on the right, and Colonel Robinson on the left. It fought until four o'clock, until long after dark, in a dense forest, without yielding a foot. When the enemy first advanced against Colonel Robinson's Brigade, the Rebels held up their hands, as if to surrender, upon which, seeing our lads hesitate, they instantly poured a volley into them. These wretchedly and cowardly tactics were practiced on other portions of the line."

The Eighty-second Illinois performed its part worthily with the rest, each man firing their one hundred and thirty to one hundred and forty rounds of ammunition during the three hours' engagement. On the 22d, the Twentieth Corps moved to Atlanta, where the Eighty-second, with its Brigade, remained until the movement to Atlanta was commenced on the 27th. At this time the Twentieth Corps was commanded by General Williams. At the Chattahoochee, General H. W. Slocum joined and took command of the Division, which, on September 2nd, entered and occupied Atlanta. Robinson's Brigade joined the Division and encamped near the city September 4th, having marched that day from Montgomery Perry on the Chattahoochee. From September 12th until October 4th, the Eighty-second guarded Confederate prisoners, and was then employed on the defenses around Atlanta until the 15th, when it formed part of the extensive foraging

expeditions. On the 15th of November, with the Third Brigade, (Colonel Robinson), First Division (General J. N. Jackson), Twentieth Corps (General A. S. Williams), Left Wing, Army of Georgia (General H. W. Slocum), the Eighty-second Illinois moved from Atlanta on the famous "March to the sea." The Brigade moved out by the Decatur road on the 16th, and was then assigned as rear guard of the Corps, and reached Milledgeville November 22d. It was then made advance guard of the Division and Corps, and moved to the defenses around Savannah. On the 28th the Regiment marched with the Army through South Carolina, reaching Chesterfield March 1st. On March 16th it was on the front line at Averysboro, being under fire from noon until dark, and losing about fifteen men.

Again, on March 19th, at Bentonville, the Brigade was thrown to the front, and being flanked, fell back and re-formed about a quarter of a mile in the rear, throwing down a rail fence for a barricade. There it maintained its position, the enemy charging several times, and being repulsed with great loss. In this action the Eighty-second lost twenty five men. On March 24, the command reached Goldsboro, where, after their march of sixty five days, a permanent camp was formed, the men received new and much needed clothing, and reveled in the luxury of once again receiving full rations. On April 10, camp was broken, and the men arrived at Raleigh, North Carolina, on the 16th, when, after marching eighteen miles farther in pursuit of the Confederates, news was received of Johnson's surrender, and the Eighty second, with its Corps, returned to Raleigh, and went into camp.

On April 20, the Regiment broke camp and proceeded to Richmond, where it was received by General Grant, when it took up the line of march for Washington, arriving at Alexandria May 20, and after participating in the grand review at Washington on the 24th, the Eighty Second was mustered out of service at the same place, June 9, and returned to Chicago, arriving June 16.—having marched during its time of service, two thousand five hundred and three miles, and participated in many severe engagements, with honor to itself and the city which sent it to the field.

The Regiment returned with three hundred men, under the following officers: Colonel Edward S. Salomon, Brevet Brigadier General; Lieutenant Colonel, Ferdinand Rolshauson; Adjutant, Otto Balke; Quartermaster, Hermann Pause; Surgeon, Charles E. Boerner; Assistant Surgeon, Hermann Deitzel. Company A: Captain. Anton Bruhn; First Lieutenant. Charles E. Stueven. Company B: Captain. George Heinzmann; First Lieutenant, Eugene Hepp. Company C: Captain. Frank Kirchner; First Lieutenant. William Loeb. Company D: Captain. Rudolph Mueller. Company E: First Lieutenant, Moses O. Lindbergh. Company F: Captain. Eugene F. Weigel; First Lieutenant. Frederick Thomas. Company G: First Lieutenant, Carl Lotz. Company H: Captain, Emil Frey; First Lieutenant, Joseph Riegert. Company I: Captain, Joseph Gottlob; First Lieutenant. Christian Erickson. Company K: Second Lieutenant. George Bauer.

The Regiment was greeted at the depot by crowds of friends, and escorted to the Turner Hall, where it was welcomed by William Rapp, Esq., of the "Staats Zeitung," and

General Hecker, its old Commander, and others,—Colonel Salomon replying, in behalf of the Regiment, to the numerous congratulatory speeches. On the 19th it was tendered a public reception at the great Sanitary Fair, then in progress, returning thereafter to Camp Douglas, where it received its final pay and discharge a few days later.