

34th North Carolina Infantry

by T. D. Lattimore

The Thirty-fourth Regiment of North Carolina Troops was composed of the following companies:

Company A--Ashe County--Captain, S. N. Wilson.
Company B--Rutherford and Cleveland Counties--Captain, John Edwards.
Company C--Rutherford County--Captain M. O. Dickerson.
Company D--Rowan County--Captain, William A. Houk.
Company E--Lincoln County--Captain, John F. Hill.
Company F--Cleveland County--Captain Abram G. Walters.
Company G--Mecklenburg County--Captain, William R. Myers.
Company H--Cleveland County--Captain, Samuel A. Hoey.
Company I--Rutherford County--Captain, James O. Simmons.
Company K--Montgomery County--Captain, David R. Cochran.

The regiment was organized at High Point, on 26 October, 1861, and during its existence was successively officered as follows:

Colonels--Collett Leventhorpe, Richard H. Riddick, William L. J. Lowrance.
Lieutenant-Colonels--William A. Houk, Charles J. Hammarskold, John L. McDowell, George T. Gordon, George M. Norment, Eli H. Miller, H. W. Abernathy.
Majors--Martin Shoffner, William A. Owens, Eli H. Miller, Joseph B. McGee, Francis L. Twitty, Geo. M. Clark.
Chaplain--A. R. Bennick.
Adjutants--James Riddick, William B. Lowrance.
Assistant Quartermaster--Joseph B. Carrier, John W. Clark.
Surgeon--John F. Miller
Assistant Surgeon--B. B. Williams
Sergeant Majors--Charles B. Todd, George Atwell, H. H. Rickerts, O. Sergeant, W. W. Hargrove.
Quartermaster--T. B. Twitty, Hospital Steward.
Drum Major--F. Bourgin.

We spent the winter of 1861 at High Point and Raleigh under rigid discipline, drilling hard, and having diseases which our mothers, in their kindness and watchfulness, had kept us from in our boyhood, to-wit, measles, mumps, whooping-cough, etc.

The Spring of 1862 found us at Hamilton, N.C., on the Roanoke river, "playing war." Colonel Leventhorpe had us to believe that we could sink all the gun-boats that could come up that river. Later we went to Goldsboro, where we re-enlisted for three years or "during war," at the request of the Confederate Congress, under an act, called by some, "The Conscript Act." Up to this time we thought we had seen something of war, crossing swamps and streams where there were no

bridges, but we found out later how little we knew of the actual hardships of long and continuous war.

From Goldsboro we went to Fredericksburg, Va., and for the first time were attached to a brigade and had a "sure enough" General to command us, and could really see the enemy from our picket posts.

Well, we couldn't persuade the Yankees to fight us, and having no order to disturb them, we struck camp and marched back to Richmond, where we were attached to Pender's Brigade, composed of the Thirteenth, Sixteenth, [Twenty-second](#), Thirty-fourth and Thirty- eighth North Carolina Regiments.

The history of this brigade tells the history of each regiment up to the end of the war. As an individual member I am not ashamed of any part of its history, and would be willing to apply the test of comparison with any brigade in the Army of Northern Virginia.

On 26 June, 1862, being a part of A. P. Hill's Light Division, we were ordered across the Chickahominy, and at Mechanicsville, where we had our first experience in real war, we were very anxious to fight; but some of us had serious misgivings as to how we would act when the test came. After being formed into line of battle we marched in the direction of the enemy and came in sight of him just before dark. We had been taught that the proper thing to do was to raise the "rebel yell" and charge, which we proceeded to do, and found ourselves in a creek not far from the enemy's works. In this fight our regiment lost 8 or 10 killed and 15 or 30 wounded. Late at night the brigade was withdrawn and renewed the attack at daylight on the morning of 27 June, when the enemy retired toward Gaines' Mill.

In the engagement at this last place Pender's Brigade was among the first troops to open the fight. Here many of us saw General Lee for the first time, who rode up while the brigade was being formed into line of battle, whereupon General Pender called the attention of his men by saying to them, "the eyes of your chieftain are upon you." The writer of this sketch witnessed every principal engagement of the Army of Northern Virginia from this time to the end of the war, but in no other battle in the long succession was the musketry to be compared to that of 27 June, 1862, at Gaines' Mill. The fighting continued till after dark when the Confederates were victorious, but at a fearful cost. The Thirty-fourth Regiment lost heavily in killed and wounded. Among the killed were some of the bravest men that ever shouldered a musket or drew a sword. Here fell Captain Walters, one of nature's noblemen. At the same time 14 of his men were killed and 25 wounded. Other companies of his regiment lost equally as heavily. Colonel R. H. Riddick was severely wounded. "Moore's Roster" says he was killed here, but this is a mistake; he was killed at Ox Hill.

On 28 June, with sad hearts over the loss of so many comrades, we set out in pursuit of the enemy. On the 30th, at Frazier's Farm, Pender's Brigade was in the thickest of the fight, charging and capturing a battery of artillery, which was pouring a fearful fire into us, and driving them entirely from the field. In this fight the Thirty-fourth Regiment sustained a terrible loss. Among the killed I recall from memory were Lieutenant Parks and Cowan of Company D, and Shotwell

of Company C, all brave young men. Lieutenant Parks not reaching the battery, laying his hand upon a gun, remarked, "This is my cannon," and was killed instantly.

The Thirty-fourth was not actively engaged in the battle of Malvern Hill on 1 July, but was under heavy artillery fire for several hours.

After these battles we camped below Richmond for several weeks, after which time we were ordered to Gordonsville where we were placed under the command of General Stonewall Jackson, who on 9 August, 1862--a very hot day--marched out to Cedar Run, where General Pope was waiting. Pender's Brigade was on the extreme left and drove the enemy from his position with comparatively small loss to the Confederates. After dark, the brigades still being in line of battle in an open field, a mounted Federal rode up within a few steps of our line and inquired what troops we were. An officer stepped forward to receive him, and approaching nearer, the Federal fired at him with his pistol. He wheeled and putting spurs to his horse dashed away. From three to five hundred shots were fired at the fleeing Yankee, but to no effect, so far as we could see. I mention this incident to show that the Northern army had some brave men and the Confederates some poor marksmen, especially when shooting by starlight.

The next movement of the regiment was with Jackson on his famous "flank" movement. Subsisting almost entirely on green corn, we reached Manassas Junction 27 August, and were engaged in driving the enemy across Bull Run, after which we had a grand feast from the abundant supply captured at Manassas Junction. After a few hours' needed rest we marched back to Manassas Plains, and were engaged almost continuously on 29 and 30 August in resisting the assaults of the enemy, and we were in the last charge that swept the enemy from the field late Saturday afternoon. The last fighting done at Second Manassas was by Pender's Brigade after dark near the field hospital of the Federals.

At the battle of Ox Hill, 1 September, 1862, this regiment suffered severe loss. Among the lost, Colonel R. H. Riddick and Lieutenant Colonel Eli H. Miller fell mortally wounded. Both were brave and efficient officers. Their loss to the regiment was irreparable. Colonel Riddick had been in the Mexican war and was a fine disciplinarian.

The next day we took up our march to Maryland, and crossing the Potomac at Leesburg, Va., rested a few days at Frederick City, proceeded from there to Williamsport, recrossed the Potomac on the night of 14 September and drove the enemy into their works at Bolivar Heights, in front of Harper's Ferry, thereby enabling the Confederate artillery, under cover of darkness, to be placed in a position which caused the enemy to surrender early on the morning of 15 September. We took 11,500 prisoners and 76 pieces of artillery. The Thirty-fourth was placed in charge of the pontoon bridge and was entrusted with the counting and discharging of the prisoners, after conducting them to the Maryland side of the river. We then moved by rapid march to Sharpsburg and reached that point in time to take part in the last fighting done by the right of Lee's army. The regiment at this time, owing to hard marching and exhausting fighting, was a mere skeleton. In the battle of Sharpsburg there were but four commissioned officers in the whole regiment. One of these, Lieutenant Bassinger, was killed.

On 20 September our regiment assisted in driving back the Federal force which followed General Lee into Virginia, killing many of them at Sheperdstown, who were attempting to recross the river on a dam.

After this the regiment was allowed to rest for the first time in six weeks to change their clothing, not having seen our wagon train with baggage since leaving Orange Court House. Nothing worthy of note occurred until November, when the regiment marched with Jackson's corps to Fredericksburg. It was actively engaged in the great battle of Fredericksburg 13 December, 1862, where it is said 12,000 of the enemy were killed or wounded in thirty minutes. The Thirty-fourth occupied an unfortified position on the railroad, fighting under a galling fire from the enemy. Besides the unusual number of killed and wounded, there was great suffering from intense cold, being exposed to the bitter December weather without fire. The remainder of the winter was spent at Moss Neck, below Fredericksburg, doing picket duty on the Rappahannock.

During the winter, which was so rigorous, even to those in comfort, many of the soldiers, for want of shoes for their frost-bitten feet, covered their feet with green beef-hides. Owing to scarcity of provisions they were more sorely tried during this winter, but were not discouraged, and when the spring of '63 opened they were ready to meet the enemy with their accustomed zeal and courage. The Thirty-fourth was with General Jackson on his great flank movement at Chancellorsville, and was at the head of the brigade on the plank road, and near the spot where the murderous bullets took us our beloved hero. After a long exposure to a frightful cannonading on the plank road the brigade was formed on the left, the right resting on the same road. Early on the morning of the 3d the brigade assaulted the enemy behind his works, built during the night, and after hard fighting, he was completely routed and driven out. During the fight the woods caught on fire from the explosion of hostile shells. The scene was sickening--the dead and wounded on both sides were burnt to a crisp. Numbers were so charred that their comrades could not recognize and identify them. After seeing the survivors of the Federal army safely over the Rappahannock, the regiment returned to camp at Moss Neck, where it remained until 5 June, 1863, when it set out on the march to fatal Gettysburg; was engaged and suffered heavy loss on the second day of July. Among the killed being the gallant and highly esteemed Major George M. Clark, of Montgomery county.

The brigade was now known as Scales', General Pender having been promoted, and fought on the right of the Chambersburg road and was exposed to a deadly enfilading fire from artillery on the left and infantry in front, from behind breastworks. For the first time in its history, the brigade was repulsed by this thunderous fire, but nothing daunted the men leaped to the fray on the third day and were in the famous charge about which so much has been written. Our brigade was in the second line under General Trimble, marching into the struggle with magnificent appearance, but was repulsed and driven back in disorder, as was every other command engaged in that destructive charge. Some of the Thirty-fourth Regiment were captured at the enemy's works. The retreat from Gettysburg to Hagerstown, Md., cannot be described. The soldiers were so completely covered with mud that the color of their clothing could not be distinguished. We remained at Hagerstown two or three days, subsisting on very short rations, but all the time skirmishing with the Yankees. On the night of 13 July the retreat was resumed toward Falling Water, our whole march being through mud and rain.

The Thirty-fourth was formed in line of battle about one mile from the pontoon bridge, and was among the last troops to cross the river. Many were captured near the bridge, some crossing after the artillery duel began across the river. The writer and two men were all that escaped of his company. What remained of the regiment camped for a short time at Culpeper Court House, and was engaged in a cavalry fight on __ August; had several men captured, and was then ordered to Orange Court House, where it did picket duty in the winter of '63 and '64.

The regiment received many recruits during this winter, mostly men between forty and forty-five years, who, with rare exceptions, made poor soldiers, and fell far short of filling the places of those who had been killed or disabled. Candor compels the admission that this grand old regiment toward the close of the war was not what it had been from the beginning, and without presuming to speak for others, the same may be said of all regiments which had seen like service. The regiment was at Bristoe Station in October, 1863, but was not actively engaged. However, it assisted in tearing up the railroad leading to the Rappahannock river, and was in line of battle at Mine Run for several days in the latter part of November, 1863, and suffered intensely from the freezing weather.

At the Wilderness on 5 May, 1864, the regiment, with the brigade, fought on the right of the plank road, holding their position till night against a strong opposing force. Early next morning we were surprised and driven back by an overwhelming number of the enemy and what seemed to be an imminent defeat was averted by the timely arrival of General Longstreet's corps.

The regiment was engaged and did good service at Spottsylvania Court House. The loss in this battle was comparatively light, as most of the fighting was from behind breastworks.

At the engagement at Hanover Junction, on 23 May, 1864, the regiment was engaged and lost severely. Three color-bearers were shot down, but the brave band held their position, and buried their dead and carried off the wounded.

At the Second Cold Harbor the regiment occupied the position on the right at Turkey Ridge. However, it was not actively engaged, but was exposed for a long time to the rapid fire of the enemy.

On 13 June we were in the engagement at Riddle's Shop, and for more than a mile drove the enemy in a running fight. The regiment took part in the battle near Petersburg on 22 June. At Reams' Station, 25 August, Scales' North Carolina and Anderson's Georgia Brigades made the first assault on the enemy's works and were repulsed with considerable loss, the right of the line being exposed to a frightful enfilading fire of artillery and musketry; but, while feeling the sting of defeat in our attack, with swelling hearts we witnessed the gallant charge of Cook's, MacRae's, and Lane's Brigades. Excepting some small skirmishing this last fight ended the campaign of 1864, and the regiment went into winter quarters at Battery No. 45, near Petersburg. During the winter the regiment made a forced march, through rain, sleet and snow to Bellfield Station, on the Petersburg & Weldon Railroad. The object of the march was to look after a raiding party of Federal cavalry. On our arrival we found that they had retired. This also was a winter of intense suffering among the soldiers. Almost destitute of provisions and clothing, many of them deserted and crossed the line to the enemy. On 25 March the Thirty-fourth was thrown forward

to support the picket line, which was about one mile in front of the main line of works. Superior numbers forced us to fall back to the works, losing considerably in killed, wounded and captured.

On 1 April, 1865, the regiment with the brigade, occupied a position on the right, south of Hatcher's Run. We learned soon after daylight that the Confederate lines between us and Petersburg had been broken. After this saddening news the regiment repulsed a force of Federal cavalry and then retreated to Southerland's Station, where a portion of Heth's and Wilcox's divisions hastily constructed breastworks from a rail fence behind which we repulsed two desperate assaults of the enemy, killing and wounding a large number, and capturing a stand of colors and many prisoners. Discovering that we were vastly outnumbered we fell back to the Appomattox river. There was no way of crossing the river except in a small boat which was scarcely sufficient to carry the higher officers.

The regiment marched all night and reached Amelia Court House the next day. At this time the ranking officer was Lieutenant-Colonel George Norment, of the Thirty-fourth Regiment, from Mecklenburg county. Here we joined the main army and General Lee provided for us the much-needed rations. The regiment, with the brigade, protected the rear of the army at Farmville, marching several miles in line of battle, beating back the enemy's cavalry, and was the last to cross the river. As we went out from the river a heavy artillery fire was poured down upon the regiment. On the morning of 9 April the brigade was moving into line near Appomattox Court House, and was in range of the enemy's musketry, when orders were passed along the line to cease firing. All understood what it meant--the Army of Northern Virginia was to surrender. We then fell back to an open field, near the famous apple tree.

The Confederate soldiery which had cast their fortunes with the destiny of the South, had suffered untold and indescribable hardships and privations, but when their grand chieftain rode in among them and announced the terms of surrender, the agony of soul and the depth of suffering exceeded anything ever before endured in the cruel war. In the vast array of ragged braves, whose courage and zeal had carried them to the very mouths of the bronze war-dogs of the enemy, not a dry eye could be seen anywhere. It seemed that they preferred to make one last charge and become engulfed in death, the last long sleep, to the painful duty of giving up their tattered flag which had waved over them in so many victories; but all was over, and the remnant of two hundred officers and men marched out and stacked their trusty muskets, laid down their bullet-pierced flag, never again to be unfurled in the rage of battle. Thus ended the great drama in which the Thirty-fourth played no mean part. The regiment deserves a more extensive history than this sketch, which has been written almost entirely from memory; which must necessarily have dimmed with the recession of thirty odd years; and the writer regrets that he has not had access to records from which to give the casualties of each battle in which the regiment was engaged.

T. D. Lattimore
Shelby, N.C.
9 April, 1901