

23rd Illinois Infantry

The organization of the Twenty-Third Infantry Illinois Volunteers commenced under the popular name of the "**Irish Brigade**", at Chicago, immediately upon the opening of hostilities at Sumter. It served until the war had fully closed, and among the officers whom it compelled to mourn as lost in battle was its illustrious Colonel, James A. Mulligan, of Chicago, who fell while commanding a division of the Army of West Virginia at Kernstown, in Shenandoah Valley, July 24, 1864, and perished while in the hands of the enemy, July 26, of three desperate wounds, received while at head of his own Regiment to which he had galloped in the confident and justified expectation that he would be able to make it the steady rear-guard of an overwhelming rout, caused by the advance of all of Early's army upon an unsupported and meager force.

The formal muster of the 23d was made June 15, 1861, at Chicago when the Regiment was occupying barracks known as Kane's brewery on West Polk street, near the river. From a barrack encampment, to the arsenal at St. Louis. On the 21st of July it moved to Jefferson City, at a time when Colonel Jeff. C. Davis was in command of the post. During the month of August it made various excursions into the surrounding country, Brigadier General Grant superseded Colonel Davis as commander of the post at Jefferson City, and on the 18th of September the 23d commenced a march of 120 miles on Lexington, Mo., where the first notable siege of the war of the rebellion occurred. Lexington, reinforced by the 23d, which arrived on the evening of the 11th, became a post of 2,780 men, Colonel Mulligan commanding. General Price with the Missouri State guard was marching upon the town, a convenient location near which Colonel Mulligan's command engaged actively in fortifying. The rebel advance under Raines with a battery of six guns assaulted the fortifications on the 12th but were repulsed. The post was then regularly invested by an army of 28,000 men with 13 pieces of artillery. For nine days the garrison sustained an unequal conflict, not

alone against the vastly superior forces of the enemy but against hunger and thirst, for provisions, hastily gathered in from the surrounding country, were inadequate and the water supply wholly failed. No reinforcement appeared, nor was there promise or hope of any. On the 20th the most determined and systematic of the enemy's assaults was made, and repeatedly repulsed, but in the afternoon it was determined to surrender. The killed and wounded of the Regiment numbered 107, while General Price officially report his loss at 800.

The officers and men, with the exception of Colonel Mulligan, who was detained as a prisoner and accompanied Price in his march into Arkansas, were paroled. On the 8th of October the Regiment was mustered out by order of General Fremont, but upon the personal application of Colonel Mulligan, who had been exchanged for General Frost, General McClellan, then commanding the army, directed that its organization be retained and that it should be considered as continuously in the service from the date of its original muster. Reassembling at Camp Douglas in Chicago, the camp being commanded by Colonel Mulligan, it guarded rebel prisoners there until June 14, 1862, when it was ordered to Harper's Ferry, Virginia. Its service thenceforward was in both Virginias. From Harper's Ferry it moved to New Creek, Virginia. It was at Clarksburg, Virginia, in September and later at Parkersburg, in both cases saving the towns from the menace of Imboden. November 10, 1862, companies B, D and K under Major Moore attacked Gen. Imboden on the South Fork of the Potomac, capturing forty prisoners and large supplies on the hoof. January 3, 1863, the Regiment made a forced march of 40 miles in 10 hours from New Creek to Moorefield to the relief of the Union force there attacked by Gen. Jones, who thereupon withdrew. in April 1863, being then at New Creek, the Regiment as assigned to the 5th Brigade, 1st Division, 8th Corps, Colonel Mulligan commanding the Brigade and Lieutenant Colonel Quirk the Regiment.