

## **ELISHA DYER, Sr.**



Elisha Dyer, "Senior" (The Father) served as Adjutant-General of the R.I. State Guard and 2 terms as Governor before the Civil War 1858 – 1861. He was succeeded by Governor William Sprague, Rhode Island's "Boy Governor", or President Lincoln's "Number One War Governor."

During the war Elisha Sr. served as Captain. of Co. B, of the 10th "Ward" R.I. Volunteer Infantry Militia, Emergency State Guard. As an Ex-Governor, he volunteered to fight when the 10th RIVI was called up and mustered without prior training by Governor William Sprague and sent to Washington, near Tennallytown, MD. They formed and left Rhode Island on May 23, 1862, to defend the Capitol against the menace of Stonewall Jackson, who had completely fooled and shocked all Union forces in the Shenandoah Valley, Northern Virginia and Maryland. The initial threat of Jackson to the Nation's capitol ended after the 7 Days Battles in Virginia, however service of the 10th was extended to continue guarding Washington due to the Union disaster at the 2nd Battle of Bull Run.

Shortly after the 10th RIVI arrived in Washington Captain Dyer and his company were ordered by the War Department to march on a farm just outside of town to seize a cannon said to be threatening the Nation's Capitol. The 10th received reports that a Confederate

cannon was being hidden in the area on a near by farm and the Rebels might try to fire it on Washington. Captain Dyer immediately took his Company, eager for battle, on a quick march to capture the cannon. All were expecting a hot skirmish with the Rebels. When they arrived at the farm they found the barn unguarded. The gun was captured without a shot fired. After they captured the gun they were disappointed to find that it was only a small 1/4 pound light infantry support piece, hardly worth the effort. It wouldn't have done the slightest bit of harm to Washington. Although the cannon was not actually a threat Captain Dyer completed his mission. He and his men captured the famous "Tennallytown Rebel Gun". They later sent the relic home as a gift to the people of Rhode Island. The little cannon was presented to the people of Rhode Island as a war trophy. Today it is known as the "Rhode Island Tennallytown Gun". Ironically the little cannon is actually regarded by experts and historians today as an extremely rare example of Civil War ordnance. It is one of the earliest models of a breach loading cannon and one of only "3" such extremely rare examples of Civil War ordnance known to exist. The Tennallytown Gun can be viewed on display at the Rhode Island State House.

The "Tennallytown Raid" was the only attempt at offensive combat action experienced by Captain Dyer and the 10th R.I. Volunteers during the war. The 10th was mustered only as a 90 day infantry regiment to reinforce Washington in its time of crisis in 1862. However, many of the men in the 10th re-enlisted in the 7th and the 12th R.I. Volunteer Infantry Regiments after they returned to Providence, R.I. Having completed their mission, Captain Elisha Dyer, Sr. and his Company B of the 10th R.I. Volunteers returned to R.I. where they were mustered out of service on September 1, 1862; having been relieved in Washington by regiments of Major General George B. McClellan's Union Army of the Potomac, prior to the Battle of Antietam.

Elisha Dyer Sr. died in Providence, on May 17, 1890, and is buried in Swan Point Cemetery, Providence. Elisha Sr. was a member of RI GAR Rodman Post No.12 (headquarters Old Arsenal 176 Benefit Street, Providence). Rodman Post, Slocum Post, Brown Post and Arnold Post of the RI GAR often worked together on behalf of their fellow Civil War Comrades. Elisha Dyer Sr. lived at 154 Power Street, in Providence He was also a member of the Massachusetts MOLLUS Commandery, MOLLUS ID No.03163 (headquarters Boston). His son would follow his footsteps. Together they would exemplify the true father and son meaning of Camp 7.