



Henry Head
Company G, 104th New York Volunteer Infantry

Henry Head was born on April 29, 1842 in Steuben County, New York. He enlisted in Company G of the 104th New York Volunteer Infantry (Wadsworth Guards) on March 2, 1862 at Camp Union in Geneseo, Livingston County, NY. The regiment soon moved to Camp Rathbone in Albany, and they boarded a train for Washington, D.C. on March 20, 1862. After a month of training at Camp Wadsworth, outside of Washington, they were moved to Camp Reliance, west of Alexandria, VA. Henry Head was hospitalized April 27 – May 2 for Pneumonia.

After moving around to a series of camps, the regiment was first engaged on August 9, 1862 at Cedar Mountain, VA. Over the next month, they fought at Rappahannock Station, Thoroughfare Gap, and 2nd Bull Run (Manassas), where Henry Head was wounded, losing the tip of his left index finger.

In September 1862, the 104th NY was attached to the First Corps, Army of the Potomac. Over the next few months, they were engaged at South Mountain; Antietam (where they spent 15 minutes in the infamous Cornfield, losing 1/3 of their strength in killed, wounded, and missing); Fredericksburg; and Chancellorsville. At Gettysburg, the First Corps came to the relief of Buford's Cavalry on the morning of July 1, with the 104th engaged on Oak Ridge at the angle with the Mummasburg Road. On July 3rd, the 104th came to the relief of the troops assaulted by Pettigrew's Division on the right of the Union lines during Longstreet's assault (AKA "Pickett's Charge").

The 104th was next engaged November 26 – December 2, 1863 in the Mine Run Campaign. Henry Head was hospitalized from March 14 – 23, 1864 for treatment of Salt Rheum (Eczema) and Scrofula (Tubercular infection of the lymph nodes). In 1864, the 104th fought at the battles of Wilderness, VA; Spotsylvania Court House; and North Anna, Totopotomoy, Cold Harbor, and Petersburg, VA.

On August 19, 1864, during the Battle of Weldon Railroad, virtually the entire regiment was captured in an engagement near the Globe Tavern. Henry Head and his comrades

were marched to Richmond, where they were imprisoned on Belle Isle, in the middle of the James River. After less than 8 weeks on the island, Henry Head was paroled with the sick and wounded. As he records in a deposition in his pension file:

I was paroled Oct 9th 1864. At time I was paroled, the prisoners on the Island had been sent south to Saulsbury [Salisbury, NC] all except the sick and wounded, some 300 on the Island. [...] on the Island we had no covers and had to lay on the ground. I was much reduced in flesh when I came off the Island – I weighed when captured about 180 lbs and when I got to Camp Parole I weighed 98. I had been sick on the Island so I could not eat anything to amount to anything [...] I did not have sufficient clothes on the Island and the Prison Authorities took my shoes. I was bare footed, and we suffered with cold especially cold nights - and there was a great deal of rain and we had no blankets or oil cloths, only our blouses & shirts – They took blankets & such things from us.

Henry Head was furloughed October 31 – November 15, 1864. He returned to his regiment December 15, 1864. The regiment – or what was left of it – fought at Hatcher’s Run, VA on February 6, 1865. On March 2, 1865 Henry Head was discharged at Petersburg, VA, due to the expiration of his 3-year enlistment.

Henry married Clarinda Davis in Fremont, Steuben County, NY on July 2, 1865. In the 1870s, Henry and his family moved to Michigan to take advantage of generous land grants being offered to veterans. They settled in Ewart, Osceola County, MI, but as Henry grew older the physical damage from his time as a prisoner began to take its toll. He was advised by his physician to seek warmer climates, and so in 1905 he moved his family to Farmville, Virginia – only 60 miles from where he had been captured and held prisoner 40 years earlier.

Henry Head died in Farmville on March 12, 1908. He was buried in the cemetery behind the Antioch United Methodist Church in nearby Cumberland. A memorial stone in the family plot in Ewart, Michigan guides the way to his final resting place.



Antioch UMC, Cumberland VA



Forest Hill Cemetery, Ewart, MI

August 23, 2015 – Cumberland, VA
Brother Alan Head and members of
Elisha Dyer Camp no. 7, RISUVCW

