

William Hartpence History 51st Indiana

FIFTY-FIRST INDIANA INFANTRY

The Fifty-First Indiana Infantry was organized at Indianapolis, Indiana, during November and early [sic] December, 1861. It was mustered into Federal service there on December 14, 1861. Nine hundred and thirty-nine officers and enlisted men were mustered into service as members of the regiment.

Like almost all Civil War units the Fifty-First Indiana Infantry was frequently known by an alternate designation derived from the name of its commanding officer. Names of this type by or for the regiment are shown below.

Abel D. Streight's Infantry
David A. McHolland's Infantry
William N. Dunny's Infantry
Benjamin J. Spooner's Infantry
William H. Colescott's Infantry
James W. Sheets' Infantry
William W. Searce's Infantry
Clark Willis' Infantry

Not long after being mustered into Federal service the regiment was ordered to Bardstown, Kentucky. There it was attached to the Army of the Ohio. The unit served in that Army until November, 1862. It then joined the Army of the Cumberland. In April, 1863, the unit was mounted (part of the unit being mounted on mules due to the scarcity of horses) and it participated in a raid deep into Confederate territory, aimed at Rome, Georgia. Almost all of the unit's members were captured at Cedar Bluff, Alabama, on May 3, 1863. The members of the unit were subsequently exchanged and saw service in the Department of the Cumberland. In September, 1864, the unit rejoined the Army of the Cumberland, serving in that Army until August, 1865. The unit ended its career attached to the Department of Texas. Listed below are the specific higher command assignments of the regiment.

Twentieth Brigade, Army of the Ohio Dec. 1861 – Jan. 1862

Twentieth Brigade, Sixth Division, Army of the Ohio Jan. 1862 – Sept. 1862

Twentieth Brigade, Sixth Division, 2nd Corps, Army of the Ohio Sept. 1862 – Nov. 1862

Third Brigade, First Division, Left Wing, 16th Corps, Army of the Cumberland Nov. 1862-
Jan. 1863

Third Brigade, First Division, 21st Corps, Army of the Cumberland Jan. 1863 – April
1863

Streight's Provisional Brigade, Army of the Cumberland April 1863 – May 1863

Garrison, Post of Chattanooga, Tennessee, Department of the Cumberland May 1863 –
April 1864

First Separate Brigade, Post of Chattanooga, Department of the Cumberland April 1864
– Sept. 1864

Second Brigade, Second Division, 4th Corps, Army of the Cumberland Sept. 1864 –
Nov. 1864

First Brigade, Third Division, 4th Corps, Army of the Cumberland Nov. 1864 – Aug. 1865

Attached, Department of Texas Aug. 1865 – Dec. 1865

After being captured in Alabama, the unit's original commanding officer, Abel Streight,
was moved to the Confederate prison facility at Libby Prisoner [sic], Richmond, Virginia.
Along with a group of other Federal officers, he succeeded in tunnelling out of the this
[sic] prison, passing through Confederate lines, and eventually rejoining his regiment at
Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Two members of the Fifty-First Indiana Infantry were awarded the Congressional Medal
of Honor for their activities. Details on these individuals are shown below.

Captain Marion T. Anderson, Company "D", Nashville, Tennessee, December 16, 1864

"...led his regiment over five lines of the enemy's works where he fell, severely
wounded.."

Captain Milton Russell, Company "A", Stone's [sic] River, Tennessee, December 29,
1862

“...was the first man to cross Stone’s [sic] River and, in the face of a galling fire from the concealed skirmishers of the enemy, led his men up the hillside, driving the opposing skirmishers before him...

The Fifty-First Indiana Infantry participated in more than thirty various type engagements during its career. These are identified below.

Movement to Nashville, Tenn. Feb. 7 – March 13, 1862

Movement to Savannah, Tenn. March 30 – April 6, 1862

Battle, Shiloh, Pittsburgh Landing, Tenn. April 6-7, 1862

Advance on and Siege of Corinth, Miss. April 29 – May 30, 1862

Pursuit to Booneville, Miss. May 31 – June 12, 1862

Movement to Louisville, Ky. in pursuit of Bragg Aug. 21 – Sept. 26, 1862

Pursuit of Bragg to London, Ky. and Battle of Perryville Oct. 1- 22, 1862

Movement to Nashville, Tenn. Oct. 22 – Nov. 7, 1862

Skirmish, Prim’s Blacksmith Shop, Edmonson Pike, Tenn. Dec. 25, 1862

Advance on Murfreesborough [sic], Tenn. Dec. 26-30, 1862

Battle, Stone’s [sic] River, Murfreesborough [sic], Tenn. Dec. 30, 1862 – Jan. 3, 1863

Reconnaissance to Nolensville and Versailles, Tenn. Jan. 13-15, 1863

Streight’s Raid to Rome, Ga. April 26 – May 3, 1863

Action, Sand Mountain, Ala. April 30, 1863

Action, Crooked Creek and Hog Mountain, Ala. April 30, 1863

Skirmish, Blountsville, Ala. May 1, 1863

Action, East Branch Big Warrior River, Ala. May 1, 1863

Action, Blount's Plantation, Ala. May 2, 1863

Skirmish, Big Warrior Creek near Gadsden, Ala. May 2, 1863

Skirmish near Centre, Ala. May 2, 1863

Action, Gaylivesville, [sic] Ala. May 3, 1863

Action, Cedar Bluff, Ala. May 3, 1863

Campaign in Middle Tennessee (Tullahoma Campaign) (detachment not captured) June 23 – July 7, 1863

Action, Dalton, Ga. Aug. 14-15, 1864

Operations against Hood in Northern Georgia and Northern Alabama Sept. 29 – Nov. 3, 1864

Skirmishes in front of Columbia, Tenn. Nov. 24-27, 1864

Battle, Franklin, Tenn. Nov. 30, 1864

Battle, Nashville, Tenn. Dec. 15-16, 1864

Pursuit of Hood to the Tennessee River near Bridgeport, Ala. Dec. 17-18, 1864

Skirmish, Columbia, Tenn. Dec. 21, 1864

Skirmish, Duck River, Tenn. Dec. 22, 1864

Operations in East Tennessee March 15 – April 22, 1865

Movement to New Orleans, La. June 16, 1865

Movement to Green Lake and San Antonio, Tex. July 15, 1865

The regiment served on garrison duty at San Antonio until finally mustered out of Federal service there on December 13, 1865. Returned to Indiana, the unit was officially discharged at Indianapolis.

During its career the Fifty-First Indiana sustained the loss of one officer and thirty-five enlisted men killed or mortally wounded. An additional six officers and two hundred and two enlisted men died from disease or other non-battlefield causes.