

Their thorough knowledge of the topography of the country, which became, to a great extent, the seat of the war in Western Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia, rendered their services to the Union cause invaluable. During the four long years of war from 1861 to 1865, they were almost constantly in the saddle, and from Gettysburg, in Pennsylvania, to Lynchburg, on the James, in Virginia, they scouted and fought with untiring zeal.

Companies A, C and D occupied the left bank of the Potomac with the Union Armies in the winter of 1861-2, the Confederate forces occupying the right bank of the same river. Company B entered on active duty in West Virginia during the same period.

In the early part of January, 1862, General (Stonewall) Jackson, with a Confederate Army, made a rapid mid-winter march from Winchester, Va., to Hancock, Maryland, and endeavored to cross the Potomac river at that point. A portion of the old battalion received a flag of truce and summons to surrender, and they, with a small Union force under General Lander, gallantly and successfully defended the town and river crossings. The balance of the battalion arrived during the night of January 7, 1862, having marched long distances all night, on one of the coldest nights of mid-winter, over the mountains and through a pitiless snowstorm. The timely arrival also of other Union forces, including the First Maryland Infantry Regiment, checked Jackson's farther advance.

The Confederate Army soon retired to their winter quarters near Winchester, when a detachment of "Cole's Cavalry," under Lieutenant Vernon, crossed the Potomac and followed them up, to ascertain definitely their whereabouts, numbers, etc., and, although an effort was made by the Confederate Cavalry to capture this detachment on its return from Winchester, the skillful pilotage of comrades, who knew every road and bypath, enabled them to return safely, and inspired that confidence so useful to themselves and the army in subsequent movements.

On the second day of March, 1862, Cole's Battalion crossed the Potomac river at Williamsport with Williams' Brigade, of Banks' Division, and, as the advance guard, marched to Martinsburg, Va.

On the 5th day of March, 1862, the battalion had quite a lively skirmish at Bunker Hill, Va., with the enemy's cavalry, capturing a number of prisoners.

On the 7th day of March, the battalion had a cavalry fight between Bunker Hill and Winchester, Va., in which the enemy were finally driven from the field; Captain Cole's horse was killed under him, private Stull was killed, and privates Keedy and Staley wounded. This was the first bloodshed in the opening of the campaign of 1862 in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. This engagement demonstrated to the command their ability to successfully cope with equal and even superior forces of Confederate Cavalry, which, at the commencement of the Civil War, was considered superior to the Federal Cavalry, by reason of the fact that the people in the Southern States were more accustomed to horseback riding and the use of firearms.

General Williams, their Brigade Commander, who had already tested the scouting qualities of "Cole's Cavalry," deemed the engagement of sufficient importance to issue to them the following congratulatory epistle: