

**THE ORGANIZATION AND  
EARLY HISTORY OF THE  
SECOND MASS. REGIMENT  
OF INFANTRY: AN ADDRESS**

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The Organization and Early History of the Second Mass. Regiment of Infantry: An Address by  
George H. Gordon

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**GEORGE H. GORDON**

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THE ORGANIZATION AND EARLY HISTORY

OF THE

Second Mass. Regiment of Infantry :

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

GEORGE H. GORDON,

BYT. MAJOR-GEN. OF VOLUNTEERS AND COLONEL SECOND MASS. REGIMENT OF  
INFANTRY IN THE LATE WAR,

AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SECOND MASSACHUSETTS  
INFANTRY ASSOCIATION, ON THE 11TH MAY, 1873.



BOSTON :

PRESS OF ROCKWELL & CHURCHILL,

122 WASHINGTON STREET.

1873.

U. S. 5947. 37. 2. 4.

1874, Jan. 12.  
Gift of  
Saml A. Green, M.D.  
of Boston,  
(Dec. 26, 1857.)

PRIVATELY PRINTED FOR THE ASSOCIATION.

## P R E F A C E .

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In conformity with a vote of the Association at its Anniversary Meeting in 1872, "that the Executive Committee be directed to request a member of this Association to prepare a paper upon matters connected with the history of the regiment, to be read at its next annual meeting," this paper was prepared. The subject was selected by the committee, without consultation with the author.





## THE ADDRESS.

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At this hour of social enjoyment I hope you will not be impatient if I exhibit a paper whose formidable proportions threaten not only to arrest, but destroy, all conviviality for the remainder of the evening.

If my effort to crowd an intelligible review of the early organization of our regiment into a thirty-minute recital shall be successful, it is more than I dare hope. Of course I have not been able to dwell upon personal achievements. I can only touch upon salient points in our organization; and even here, after the full account of that early period, given by our chaplain in his history of the regiment, I find it very difficult to follow without treading in his footsteps. I have endeavored, however, to refer as little as possible to topics treated by him, and have therefore made no mention of the past history of the lives of the officers and enlisted men.

When, on the morning of the fifteenth of April, 1861, a telegram from Washington to Governor Andrew, to send forward fifteen hundred men, was followed later in the day by a formal requisition for two full regiments of militia, there had been no thought or preparation for the service of other

troops to sustain the General Government. Gov. Andrew had taken steps to prepare the militia as early as the sixteenth of January, 1861, in his order No. 4, in which, you remember, all the members who were willing to respond to the orders of the Commander-in-Chief, when issued, in response to a requisition from the President of the United States to aid in the maintenance of the laws and the peace of the Union, were to signify it; those refusing, to be discharged and "their places filled by men ready for any public exigency which may arise."

On the fourth of February, 1861, the general officers of State militia, with a few citizens of military experience, were invited to confer with the Governor as to the best mode of preparing the militia for the field.

Soon after followed the act of the Legislature of February 6, 1861, authorizing additional companies of volunteer militia to be raised, and, upon the requisition of the President of the United States, to be marched out of the limits of the State.

How well and how promptly Gov. Andrew had executed his task was apparent, when the companies of designated militia, amidst the cheers of the multitude, disembarking at the various railroad stations, marched to their rendezvous on Boston Common, on the morning of the sixteenth of April.

I need not discuss, now and here, how inadequate the militia of any State would have proved for the war of the rebellion; nor need I enlarge upon their unfitness for the creation of a military organization for an indefinite term, and in distant States; nor to the absurd usage of the election of officers. Out of your experience came in time your con-

denation. Out of my experience in the beginning came mine, when the multitude, with emotions, and heart-swellings, and frantic cheers, heard Gov. Andrew, in inspired tones, bid God-speed to the third, fourth, sixth, and eighth militia regiments on the seventeenth and eighteenth of April.

Thus early in the war, at its outset, at that period when for the first time the country as a whole appreciated that war was inevitable; the one thing that men of military experience felt, was that the old militia organizations must give place to new military organizations. To feel thus and to act upon it was as much a matter of course as for any commander to rally in battle a dispersed battalion, and to act upon it in such manner that the part each man could do, when accomplished, would form a perfect whole, was not only the part of wisdom, but of prudent foresight. My course was plain. It was to raise a regiment modelled upon the regular army of the United States; an enlistment of men; an appointment of officers; an indefinite term of service. By what law such a regiment was to be held together, fed, paid, clothed, I knew not — there was no law; but there was something above law; something that makes law — necessity. So I addressed myself to two essentials that were requisites for the coming law to act upon, — essentials in getting together and organizing in form a regiment of men; and these were — first, the assent and cordial co-operation of Governor Andrew to raise it; second, the promise of the General Government to accept it.

On the fifteenth day of April, 1861, at the State House, with the single condition that I would wait until these