

Governor Brigg's Proclamation May 26, 1846

On 26 May 1846, Governor George N. Briggs of Massachusetts sent the following proclamation:

To the People of Massachusetts:

An act of Congress passed on the thirteen day of May instant, declares that 'by an act of the Republic of Mexico, a state of war exists between that Government [Mexican] and the United States', and said act further 'authorizes the President to employ the militia, the naval and military forces of the United States, and to call for and accept the services of any number of volunteers, not exceeding fifty thousand, who may offer their services.'

In pursuance of the provisions of that Act, I have received from the Secretary of War a communication dated the 19th instant, in which he says: 'On the part of the President, I have to request your Excellency [Governor] to cause to be enrolled and held in readiness for muster into the service of the United States, One Regiment of Infantry.'

Whatever may be the difference of opinion as to the origin or necessity of the war, the constitutional authorities of the country have declared that war with a foreign country exists.

The governor goes on further to request the service of the men of Massachusetts:

prompt and energetic co-operation of the whole people in the use of these means, is eminently calculated to produce that most desirable result.

To that end I call upon the citizen-soldier of Massachusetts at once to enroll themselves in sufficient numbers to meet this request of the President of the United States, and to hold themselves in readiness to be mustered into the service of the Republic when the exigencies of the country shall require it.

After some months of debate the election of field officers took place on 15 January 1847: Hon. Caleb Cushing of Newburyport, Massachusetts, Colonel; Capt. Isaac H. Wright of Roxbury, Massachusetts, Lt. Col.; Capt. Edward W. Abbott of Andover, Major. The 1st Massachusetts Infantry consisted of Company A mustered into service 17 December 1846; Company B and Company C mustered on 21 December 1846; Company D followed 30 December 1846; Company E, 5 January 1847; Company H, 9 January 1847; Company K, 23 January 1847; and Company F and the Field and Staff were mustered 3 February 1847. The last two companies to muster were Company G on 12 February 1847 and Company I on 15 February 1847.

In February 1847 the 1st Massachusetts Infantry Regiment embarked to join the American forces at sea near Brazos. Between 28 February and 30 April 1847 the

regiment was stationed at Matamoras, Mexico. On 20 May 1847 the regiment was ordered by Brig. Gen. Cadwellader to proceed to Camargo located 100 miles up the Rio Grande toward Monterey. The larger portion of the regiment arrived at Monterey by 23 June 1847. Col. Cushing was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General, and Lt. Col. Wright was not made Colonel. Around 16 August 1847 General Zachary Taylor ordered the entire regiment to go to Brazos. The unit did not participate in the Battle of Buena Vista nor Gen. Scott's triumph into Mexico City. The Massachusetts regiment did not march into the [Mexico] city until 9 December 1847. In 19 December the regiment marched to San Angel where it remained until 29 May 1848. The following month the regiment made its return to Boston. Between 24 July and 27 July 1848 the regiment was mustered out of service by Bvt. Brig. Gen. Thomas Childs of the United States Army.

The source for the above brief history comes from an unpublished typescript dated February 1920 by Fred W. Cross, "The First Regiment Massachusetts in the Mexican War."

Vocabulary

Eminent: Standing out so as to be readily perceived or noted: Conspicuous

Muster: To enroll formally

Exigency: That which is required in a particular situation

Embark: To go on board a vehicle for transportation

Student Questions

1. Approximately how many months did it take Massachusetts to raise and muster out the Secretary of War's request for One Regiment of Infantry (714 soldiers)?
2. In contrast, Tennessee was called to raise 2,800 volunteers. Within one week, over 30,000 people offered to volunteer.

Tennessee had about a 7-9% higher population than Massachusetts. Therefore, for this lesson, do not consider population a major factor in the amount of time to raise volunteers.

Based on what you know about U.S. history, why do you think it took Massachusetts longer to raise volunteers? Include facts in your answer.

3. Would you have signed up to fight in your state volunteer unit? Why or why not?