

(Captain A. D. Vaughn of company F) and one man killed, eight men wounded, and nine captured or missing. At the time of the action, the third (Colonel Louis Bell's) brigade in the second division of the Tenth Army Corps, comprised the Thirteenth Indiana, the Ninth Maine, the Fourth New Hampshire, the One Hundred and Fifteenth, and the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth New York regiments, occupying the earthworks vacated by the Ninth Army Corps. While confronting the enemy at Petersburg, the casualties in the regiment, from June 23 to August 1, exclusive of the losses on June 30 and July 30, numbered sixty-eight.

Having been withdrawn from the entrenchments at Petersburg, the third (Francis A. Osborn's) brigade, in the second (Brigadier-General John W. Turner's) division of the Tenth Army Corps, Major-General David B. Birney, commanding, was transferred to the Army of the James, and occupied defensive positions between the Appomattox and James rivers. At that time the broad shallow stretch of the James River, called Trent Reach, about three miles north of Port Walthall, on the Appomattox, was commanded by the guns of the confederate battery Dansler, advantageously planted on high ground west of the James.

Major-General Butler, perceiving that the battery could be passed by constructing a direct channel for the navigation of monitors and gunboats toward Richmond, five hundred and twenty-five feet long, across the narrow neck of land separating the water of the upper and lower reaches of the James, at Dutch Gap, then forming a horseshoe curve southward over a space of five miles, suggested to Lieutenant-General Grant the important advantages of excavating a canal at that point through which the river might flow. Major Peter S. Michie, the chief engineer of the Army of the James, having favorably reported the feasibility of such an undertaking, an order was given to begin it. A body of colored troops of the Tenth Army Corps, for a working force, and the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth New York Regiment, for picket duty in the vicinity of the projected canal, were detailed to proceed under the cover of darkness to Dutch Gap, and to perform the duties required of them.

Colonel Alonzo Alden, who had succeeded to the command of the regiment on returning to active duty upon the healing of the wound received by him at Cold Harbor, inaugurated, on the morning of August 10, the digging of the canal by removing the first shovelful of earth, which entitled the regiment to the honor of beginning the successful excavation of it. A barge having been moored in the eastern reach of the river, opposite the line of the canal, Colonel Alden made it his head-quarters, and the regiment pitched its tents westward of it and along the north side of the canal where it had been staked out by Major Michie.