

Michigan Every Day

By Patrick Sullivan and Carole Eberly

Sept. 14, 1862
Battle at Middleton, Maryland

When the 17th Michigan Volunteer Infantry Regiment marched out of Detroit in August, 1862 under the command of William H. Withington, it consisted of inexperienced soldiers. The men came straight from farms or workshops, were suited up for military service, given some rudimentary training, and shipped off for battle.

And the soldiers were young: one company in the regiment was almost entirely made up of students from the Ypsilanti Normal School (later Eastern Michigan University). They passed through Washington D.C. in early September on the way to Maryland, where they saw their first action on Sept. 14, 1862 at the Battle of Middleton.

A Michigan historical marker is located at the Maryland spot where the ragtag Michigan troops got their first taste of the Civil War. The regiment, which served under General Ambrose E. Burn-side's 9th Army Corps, found the enemy at around 9 a.m. that day. The 17th held their position against the Confederate troops for several hours. Later in the afternoon, the southern soldiers were ordered into an all-out attack on the Union line. At approximately 4 p.m., the Confederate troops for several hours.

Later in the afternoon, the southern soldiers were ordered into an all out attack on the Union line. At approximately 4 p.m., the Confederate and Michigan soldiers met in a field and the northerners pushed their enemy back.

The southern soldiers took positions behind stone walls. The Michigan soldiers steadily advanced and captured the walls, earning 17th the nickname, “Stonewall Regiment.” The battle was costly. Of 500 men who fought, 27 were killed outright and 114 suffered fatal wounds.