

## **First Church History Role Fact Sheet: Amasa Guild**

### **By Geoff Tegnell**

1840: Amasa was born in Dedham, the son of Sarah Elizabeth and Jason Guild. His father was a blacksmith and a manufacturer. He attended Sunday school classes at First Church and went to Dedham public schools.

1854: Amasa finished his schooling and got a job as a clerk for a Dedham business.

April 19, 1861: After the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter, President Abraham Lincoln asked for volunteers to bring the South back into the Union. Amasa enlisted in the company being formed by fellow townsmen. Amasa was selected to be a corporal in this company which ultimately became F Company of the 18<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment in the Union army.

May 1861: The First Church-based Ladies' Soldiers-Aid Society sewed uniforms for the new recruits while the town of Dedham provided them with rifles. They drilled up and down High Street. This Society met monthly throughout the war and ultimately produced 7967 piece of clothing for the troops as well as raising almost \$80,000 (in 2014 dollars) to support the needs of Massachusetts troops.

August 26, 1861: Amasa's company began their journey to Washington, D.C. where they bivouacked and trained as a unit of the Union's Army of the Potomac

March-July 1862: Amasa, promoted to corporal, and the 18<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts under General McClellan fought their way up the James River in Virginia, only to be defeated by the General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia in a failed effort of seize Richmond, VA, the capital of the Confederacy.

July 10, 1862: As a result of the losses caused by the defeat of the Peninsular Campaign, Lincoln called for more volunteers for the Union cause. Another contingent of Dedham men signed up in what was to be I Company of the 35<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment and left for Washington, D.C. on August 22, 1862.

August 28-30, 1862: Amasa and his Army of the Potomac comrades were defeated by the Confederates at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battle of Bull Run. Amasa's commanding officer, Captain Carroll, and 6 other Dedham soldiers were killed in this fight and the regiment's battle flag was lost on the battlefield. Of the 40 Dedham men engaged in the fight, only 14 were unharmed. In the words of a Dedham orator, "The Eighteenth was the first regiment to advance to the attack to and the last to leave the field."

October 12-20, 1862: The 18<sup>th</sup>, along the 35<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment (and Dedham's I Company), advanced into Maryland to counter a Confederate invasion by the Army of Northern Virginia. They met General Lee's forces at Antietam Creek on August 20<sup>th</sup> in an encounter that cost the lives of six Dedham

soldiers. This bloody fight ended in a stalemate with Lee withdrawing safely back into Virginia, but President Lincoln chose to consider the battle a Union victory and used it as an occasion to issue the Emancipation Proclamation that freed the slaves in Confederate territory.

December 1862: The Army of the Potomac again invaded Virginia and attacked the Confederates on the heights above Fredericksburg. Both the 18<sup>th</sup>, Amasa's outfit, and the 35<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts repeatedly assaulted the entrenched Confederates and were driven back with heavy losses including four Dedham men killed and many others wounded.

May, 1863: In the spring campaign, General Joseph Hooker, leader of the Army of the Potomac, attempted a surprise attack on the Confederate army at Chancellorsville, Virginia. But Lee's forces outflanked him and drove the Union forces, including Amasa and the 18<sup>th</sup>, from the field with the loss of one Dedham man killed.

July 1-3, 1863: Amasa, now a sergeant, and the 18<sup>th</sup> joined other Union forces in Pennsylvania at Gettysburg to repel Southern troops who were intent on encircling Washington and destroying the Army of the Potomac. After being pushed out of their front line positions by a Confederate attack, the 18<sup>th</sup> rallied to successfully counterattack. The following day, the Union army repelled the final Confederate attack and drove Lee back into Virginia. Meanwhile the 35<sup>th</sup> aided in the effort to seize the Confederate fortress controlling the Mississippi River and successfully defended Knoxville, Tennessee from attacking Confederates. The summer of 1863 was the turning point in the Civil War.

May 1864: The 18<sup>th</sup> and the 35<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiments began the invasion of Virginia that was to end in the surrender of Lee's army and the occupation of Richmond, the Confederate capital one year later. Amasa was promoted to lieutenant and that spring and summer, the two Dedham companies fought Lee's forces in a long campaign that had them drive east and southward from northern Virginia. Amasa and other Dedham soldiers from these units fought and died in the battles of the Wilderness, Spotsylvania Courthouse, North Anna River, and Cold Harbor. Then from June, 1864 till March 1865 the Union forces conducted a siege of the Confederate Army at Petersburg, Virginia until they drove the southerners from this last fortress protecting Richmond and compelled Lee to surrender at Appomattox, Virginia on April 9, 1865. Richmond fell and the last Confederate forces conceded defeat and the Civil War was at an end.

September 1864: When Amasa's term of enlistment ended, he returned to Dedham to marry and raise a family, having survived the war with only one wound. However, 46 of the 638 Dedham soldiers and sailors were not as fortunate, having died in the conflict.

1905: Amasa returned to Dedham in the fall of 1864 where he also found employment as a clerk for the C, B, and Q Railroad. In 1873 he married Georgianna Whipple and settled down to raise a family. Almost 40 years later, Amasa located the battle flag of the 18<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts lost at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battle of Bull Run in 1862 at a museum in Richmond. Amasa negotiated its return to Massachusetts and returned it to the Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor.

For more information, click onto the following URL's:

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