
THE WAR OF 1812

Following the campaign of 1794, our unit was stationed at Fort Defiance, and then helped build Fort Wayne in the Indiana Territory. In November of 1794, Captain Ford's Company was stationed at Greenville, in the Ohio Territory, where it remained for two winters. On May 27, 1797, the soldiers of our unit departed Fort Washington (now Cincinnati) and moved down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. The new position for our unit was at Belle Canton on the Clinch River in the Louisiana Territory.

In 1800, Captain Ford's Company was consolidated with Captain James Sterrett's Company, 1st Regiment of Artillerists and Engineers and assumed that name. In December 1803, our unit started to New Orleans on an expedition commanded by General James Wilkinson, a devious character who eventually became involved with Aaron Burr in his attempt to establish a country in the American West. Wilkinson betrayed Burr, exposing the fiendish plot of the man who killed the first commander of our unit.

During the War of 1812 our unit played a pivotal role in defeating the British Army. In 1812 and 1813, we occupied Fort St. John on Lake Pontchartrain, and Fort St. Charles at the mouth of the Mississippi. The British planned to attack New Orleans and control access to the entire Mississippi Valley. The entry of the British troops to the Gulf of Mexico region in the autumn of 1814 prompted General Andrew Jackson's arrival at New Orleans on December 1, 1814 to defend the town.

In late December 1814, a fleet of about 50 British vessels made a surprise landing east of New Orleans, at Lake Borgne. After these landings, some 2,000 British troops walked across the swamps to the banks of the Mississippi just below New Orleans. Following a number of skirmishes during late December and early January, General Jackson hastily fortified the terrain on which he chose to fight the British. Jackson positioned our artillery battery, commanded by Captain Charles Wollstonecraft, at Fort St. Philip.

The Battle of New Orleans was fought on January 8, 1815, between about 6,500 American troops, mostly militia, under the command of General Jackson and a British force of about 7,500, commanded by Sir Edward Pakenham. As the assault was launched and the British troops began to appear out of the early morning mist, they were met with murderous massed artillery fires followed by continued massed fires from the infantry. Jackson won the battle in less than a half-hour, largely due to the valuable aid of the French pirate Jean Laffite, who provided Jackson with the plans of the British Army.

Pakenham had hoped and expected that the British fleet would sail up the river to meet him at New Orleans and help him crush Jackson's forces. At Fort St. Philip, however, the British fleet was halted by the guns of two artillery companies, one of them being our unit. For eight days the British pounded the fort, but every time they tried to pass, their ships were driven back down the river by American artillery. For this achievement we earned the battle streamer embroidered, LOUISIANA 1815.

Jackson's improvised fortifications proved highly effective, and the American force suffered only 71 casualties while inflicting more than 2,000; Pakenham was one of the 289 British dead. The British abandoned further combat projects, and soon embarked for England. Peace terms had already been agreed upon in the Treaty of Ghent, signed on December 24, 1814, but at the time of the battle the treaty had not been ratified by the U.S. Senate and the information had not reached the battlefield.



The Treaty of Ghent

On June 1, 1921, in a reorganization of the Artillery of the Army, our unit became Company "F" of the 4th U.S. Artillery. Our commander at the time was Captain Jeremiah D. Hayden, and we were stationed near Mobile, Alabama. Following a short time in Florida, our unit received orders to return to New York, in 1927. It had been 42 years since our unit had departed New York for the frontier.

