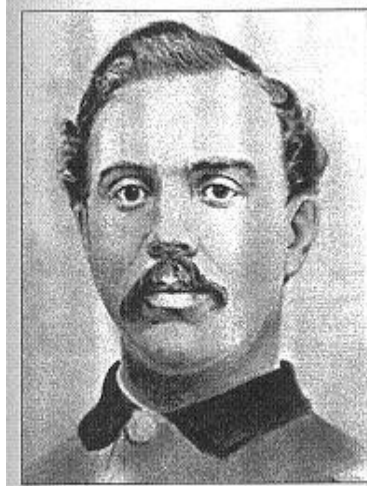


Lieutenant Augusto Rodriguez

by Tony (The Marine) Santiago



Lieutenant Augusto Rodriguez, Civil War Soldier and New Haven Firefighter

Lieutenant Augusto Rodriguez (born c. 1835), was a Puerto Rican who served as an officer in the Union Army during the American Civil War. Rodriguez served in the defenses of Washington, D.C. and led his men in the Battles of Fredericksburg and Wyse Fork.

Early years

Augusto Rodriguez was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico when the island was still a Spanish possession. He immigrated to the United States in the 1850s. The 1860 census of New Haven, Connecticut, shows there were 10 Puerto Ricans living there, among them Augusto Rodriguez, who resided in Columbus Ave.

1800s Puerto Rican Diaspora

During the 1800s, commerce existed between the ports of the eastern coast of the United States and Puerto Rico. Ship records show that many Puerto Ricans traveled on ships that sailed from and to U.S. and Puerto Rico. Many of them settled in places such as New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts. Upon the outbreak of the American Civil War, many Puerto Ricans joined the ranks of military armed forces, however since Puerto Ricans were Spanish subjects they were inscribed as Spaniards.

15th Connecticut Regiment

In 1862, Rodriguez volunteered and joined the 15th Connecticut Regiment, Connecticut Volunteer Infantry, also known as the "Lyon Regiment" in honor of Nathaniel Lyon the first general officer killed in the U.S. Civil War, organized August 25, 1862 at New Haven. The Regiment left Connecticut for Washington, D.C., on August 28 and was attached to Casey's Provisional Brigade, Military District of Washington, serving in the defenses of Washington until September 17, 1862.

Battles of Fredericksburg and Wyse Fork

From December 1-6, the 15th Connecticut Regiment marched to Fredericksburg, Virginia and was assigned to the 2nd Brigade, 3rd Division, 9th Army Corps, Army of the Potomac commanded by Major Maj. General Ambrose E. Burnside. Lieutenant Rodriguez led his men in the Battle of Fredericksburg, which was fought against General Robert E. Lee's Confederate Army of Northern Virginia from December 12-15. The battle resulted in a disastrous defeat for General Burnside and the Union Army. Burnside attempted to make an offensive movement on January 20, 1863, in which Lt. Rodriguez and the men of the 15th Connecticut Regiment were involved. However, the offensive, which became known as the "Mud March", was aborted because of constant rain.

On March 1865, Lt. Rodriguez and the 15th Connecticut Regiment were assigned to the 2nd Brigade, 2nd Division, District of Beaufort, N. C., Dept. North Carolina. From March 8-10, Lt. Rodriguez once more led his men combat in the Battle of Wyse Fork, a confrontation against a Confederate army being gathered under Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston and Union troops under the command of Major General John M. Schofield. The final outcome of the battle resulted in a Union victory.

The 15th Connecticut Regiment was assigned to provost duty as part of the garrison upon the occupation of Kinston, North Carolina by Union forces. They performed this duty until June 6th, when it was ordered to New Bern, North Carolina, to prepare for muster-out

Later years

The regiment was mustered out in June 27, 1865 and Rodriguez was discharged in New Haven on July 12, 1865. Little is known about what became of Lt. Rodriguez, except that as a civilian he became a firefighter in New Haven, plus the records show that he was also a proprietor of a cigar store, a bartender and saloon keeper.

Awards and decorations

Augusto Rodriguez's awards and decorations include the following:

*Army Civil War Campaign Medal