

## 2<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin Materials

Finding Guide to Chapter Eight of Captain R. K. Beecham's book, *Gettysburg: The Pivotal Battle of the Civil War*.

### Descriptive Summary

#### Repository:

Kenosha Civil War Museum Resource Center

#### Language of Material:

Material in English

**Abstract:** Captain Robert K. Beecham served as a corporal, Company H, 2<sup>nd</sup> Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry. This chapter describes the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wisconsin's charge against Archer's Confederate brigade on July 1, 1863. The author was an eyewitness and participant. Beecham later served as an officer with the 23<sup>rd</sup> USCT Regiment. See also: Stevens, Michael E. *As If It Were Glory: Robert Beecham's Civil War From the Iron Brigade to the Black Regiments*. Madison, WI: Madison House, 1997.

### Administrative Information

#### Access Restrictions

The Resource Center of the Kenosha Civil War Museum is open Wednesday-Friday, Noon – 5 p.m.

#### Use Restrictions

Photocopying available upon request. Fee required.

#### Preferred Citation

Identification of Item: 6<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin Article. The Civil War Museum, Kenosha  
Wisconsin.

Beecham, Captain R. K. Beecham. *Gettysburg: The Pivotal Battle of the Civil War*. Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co. 1911 (Chapter VIII, 61-96.).

#### Provenance

Material donated to the Civil War Museum by Mr. Lance Herdegen.

#### Processing Information

Processed by Richard Zimmermann

**Biographical Note: Captain Robert K. Beecham**

Robert K. Beecham was present with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry at Gettysburg as a corporal in Company H and also commanded two companies of African-American soldiers in companies B and H of the “23<sup>rd</sup> U S. Colored Troops, specifically at the Battle of the Crater in front of Petersburg,” July 14, 1864. He wrote an eyewitness account of his experiences at Gettysburg in his autobiographical book, *Gettysburg: The Pivotal Battle of the Civil War*. A copy of Chapter VIII, “The First Day at Gettysburg,” is housed in the Resource Center of the Kenosha Civil War Museum.

He was born on March 25, 1838 in New Brunswick Canada and moved with his family to Sun Prairie, Wisconsin in 1843. In July of 1856 at age 18, he journeyed to Kansas and joining James Lane’s “army” in Kansas to fight against slavery.

Returning to Wisconsin he joined Company H, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wisconsin Infantry as a private on June 11, 1861. He fought at 1<sup>st</sup> Bull Run. He was ill for much of 1862 and rejoined the Army of the Potomac for the December 1862 Mud March under Burnside.

Beecham served again with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry at the Battle of Chancellorsville, and following the battle, was promoted to corporal. On July 1 during the Battle of Gettysburg he was captured and sent to Virginia as a prisoner of war. He was freed in a prisoner exchange, August 1, 1863 at City Point, Virginia.

Following his release he volunteered for service with the 23<sup>rd</sup> USCT Infantry and was promoted lieutenant on December 19, 1863. Promoted once again to the rank of captain, Beecham commanded Companies B and H and fought with these men at the Battle of the Crater where he was captured once again.

Even though he escaped from a Confederate prison in North Carolina in February of 1865, he learned of favorable parole arrangements by the Confederates and surrendered voluntarily once again. He was then paroled in March of 1865 and mustered out of the service as a captain in May of that year. His photo and additional biographical information is available through the Wisconsin State Historical Society.

<https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM46690>.

**Collection Overview**

Within Chapter Eight of Captain R. K. Beecham’s book, *Gettysburg: The Pivotal Battle of the Civil War*, the author gives a detailed account of his experiences during the first day’s battle and includes observations about the following:

- The approach march of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wisconsin to the battlefield.
- Meeting with General Reynolds on the road.
- Combat with Archer’s brigade of Confederates in the woods near Willoughby’s Run.

- Anecdotes concerning Archer's capture and retreat of 2<sup>nd</sup> Wisconsin through Gettysburg.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> Wisconsin's final position on Cemetery Hill.