

= Frederick H. Dyer =

Frederick Henry Dyer (July 2 , 1849 ? September 21 , 1917) served as a drummer boy in the Union Army during the American Civil War . After the war , he wrote A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion ? a complete record of every regiment formed under the Union Army , their histories , and the battles they fought in ? taking forty years to compile .

= = Background = =

Born in 1849 , Dyer lost both his parents in childhood . In July 1863 , at the age of 14 , already two years into the civil war , Dyer and a friend ran away from school with the intention of joining the army . Although his friend 's aunt provided guardian consent for him to enlist as a minor , Dyer 's friend decided not to sign up . Dyer carefully assumed his friend 's surname , Metzger , to avoid being traced and returned to school . On July 25 , having passed the routine physical examination , he became a drummer boy in Company " H " of the 7th Connecticut Infantry Regiment .

= = Army life = =

Dyer continued to serve with Company " H " during the remaining two years of the war . It is unknown whether he actively participated in any fighting , and most likely would have helped the wounded during engagements . The 7th Connecticut was equipped with Spencer carbines in December 1863 , making it better equipped to fight than those armed with the slower muzzle @-@ loaded Enfield rifle .

The regiment saw action in several battles , during Dyer 's service , including :

Battle of Olustee ? February 4 , 1864

Drewry 's Bluff ? May 14 ? 16 , 1864

Bermuda Hundred ? June 14 , 1864

Richmond ? Petersburg Campaign ? June 16 , 1864 ? January 3 , 1865

Battle of Chaffin 's Farm ? September 29 ? 30 , 1864

Battle of Darbytown Road ? October 13 , 1864

Second Battle of Fort Fisher ? January 15 , 1865

Battle of Wilmington ? February 22 , 1865

On July 20 , 1865 , the regiment was mustered out of service , the war having ended in April .

= = Post @-@ war years = =

Dyer stopped using his false name after the war . He attended Russell Military Institute and Hopkins Grammar School in New Haven , Connecticut , reclaiming the education he left to become a soldier .

From the age of 18 , he became a commercial traveller ? an occupation he maintained for about fourteen years ? moving between various cities in the states of Pennsylvania and New York . He moved to Philadelphia in 1870 , where he manufactured and sold escutcheons to veterans . In 1875 he was married in Bridgeville , Delaware and moved to Pittsburgh until the fall of 1876 , then moved to Washington , Pennsylvania . Whilst living in Washington he went into business with a H. Frank Ward , forming " Dyer and Ward ? Printers , Stationers and Binders " , which ran from 1881 until 1885 .

Dyer moved around on business , residing in several cities between 1885 and 1912 , before settling his family in Cleveland , Ohio . In 1904 he set up a temporary residence in Des Moines , Iowa , and dedicated himself to working in isolation on the Compendium , compiling his collection of around 10 million names and dates , for almost five intense years .

Dyer remained in Des Moines until 1912 , to promote the Compendium from his office , before moving to Boston , Massachusetts , with his family .

= = Dyer 's Compendium = =

In 1867 , Dyer became a member of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) , a patriotic society of civil war Union veterans . It was around this time that he started to acquire details about Union regiments . His job as a commercial traveller brought him in touch with many veterans and officials , from whom he gathered official figures . The statistics he collected expanded into further areas , from regiments to details of formations , battles , movements , and similar data . He began to research using official records in various state capitals , and continued speaking to ex @-@ soldiers and high @-@ standing officers , such as General Sherman , who expressed interest in a comprehensive compendium and welcomed its future publication .

Dyer utilized the official materials available at the War Department , namely the Official Records of the War of the Rebellion . After 35 years of information gathering , he moved into a single room in Des Moines to start producing a compendium worthy of print . He made seven revisions , each taking around seven months , as he sifted through piles of paperwork and notes , to produce an accurate account of the Union army . Working day and night , sleeping in a bed placed close to his desk , he toiled over the Compendium from 1904 until 1908 , producing a 4 @,@ 025 page typed manuscript . Published on February 15 , 1909 , by " The Dyer Publishing Company " , through which he personally funded , wrote and promoted his work , printed by Torch Press of Cedar Rapids , Iowa , a total of 4 @,@ 500 copies of the Compendium were issued in a single @-@ volume edition , measuring 9 by 12 inches (imperial octavo) , spanning 1 @,@ 796 pages , and consisting of three parts :

Part I ? Number and organization of the Armies of the United States .

Part II ? Chronological record of the campaigns , battles , engagements , actions , combats , sieges , skirmishes. etc . , in the United States 1861 to 1865 .

Part III ? Regimental Histories .

Part II also contains 90 photographs of Union soldiers and officers , maps and drawings of uniforms and battles from the civil war , but also includes reproductions of Dyer 's 1863 recruitment medical form , and several personal letters . The original Compendium , which was bound in morocco leather and pebbled cloth , sold at \$ 10 apiece (equivalent to \$ 259 @.@ 26 in 2013 terms) .

The Compendium was well @-@ received by civil war veterans and historians alike , who praised both its accuracy and value , as well as its thoroughness when compared to official military records .

= = Death = =

Dyer died on September 21 , 1917 , aged 68 , of coronary sclerosis , survived by his wife and one of three children . He was buried at Mount Hope Cemetery , Boston , Massachusetts , in the GAR New Veterans lot on Webster Avenue , in an unmarked grave (no . 125) . It was his own request to be interred without a monument , stating that his Compendium would serve as a memory to his life , long after any monument had crumbled away .

= = Works = =

Since its original publication in 1908 , Dyer 's Compendium has been reprinted several times in the US due to its popularity amongst Civil War historians and enthusiasts . Editions are as follows :

A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion , 1908 , Des Moines , IA : Dyer Publishing Co .

1959 ? New York : Sagamore Press ; Thomas Yoseloff .

Includes a new introduction by Bell Irvin Wiley

1978 ? Dayton , OH : Broadfoot Publishing Company ; Morningside Press

Includes a new introduction by Lee A. Wallace , Jr .

1979 ? Dayton , OH : National Historical Society ; Morningside Press

1991 ? Bethesda , MD : University Publications of America

1994 ? Dayton , OH : Broadfoot Publishing Company ; Morningside Press

