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PORTUGUESE VOLUNTEERS IN THE UNION ARMY OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

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During the American Civil War of 1861-1865 when the population of the United States was 10% of what it is today, the casualties exceeded those of the Spanish American War, World Wars I and II and the Korean War. It wasn't until the Vietnam War, which lasted from 1958 until 1973, that the casualty figures became even. Although the Northern casualties were greater than those of the Southern Army, immigration and recruitment by the North of foreigners more than made up for the losses. It wasn't unusual for male immigrants arriving in large ports like New York to be greeted by Army recruiters. The Hungarian founder of the Pulitzer Prize for literature, Joseph Pulitzer, was recruited into the Union Army upon arrival in America.

Patriotic wars of revolution spread throughout Europe during the middle of the 19th century fueled by the success of the American and French revolutions. Refugees from these wars poured into the ports of North America and swelled its manpower. In 1848 alone there were uprisings in Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bohemia and Italy. One of the more colourful revolutionaries was Giuseppe Garibaldi of Italy who took refuge in the United States after the aborted uprising and applied for citizenship.

At the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861 the Union Defence Committee of New York City was successful in recruiting 4 volunteer regiments. Among them was the 39th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment which later was designated the Garibaldi Guard as a rallying point for foreigners. This regiment was organised by a Hungarian refugee, Frederick George D'Utassy, who became its colonel.

Prior to the formation of the Garibaldi Guard a Spanish and Portuguese Company had been recruited by Charles B. Norton, an American. This company was merged with the Garibaldi Guard to become Company D or 4th Company. D'Utassy rewarded Norton with the appointment as quartermaster of the Garibaldi Guard.

The officers and non-commissioned officers of the Spanish and Portuguese Company D of the Garibaldi Guard were:

Captain Joseph Torrens
First Lieutenant José Romero
Second Lieutenant Carlos de la Mesa
First Sergeant Francisco Lague
Sergeant Alexander Roy
Sergeant Eduardo Woodbury
Sergeant José Maria Moreno
Sergeant Ricardo Domingues
Corporal José Melo Freitas
Corporal Francisco Vallesterro
Corporal Aljandro Calvo
Corporal Juan Argumosa
Corporal Eulogio Nato
Corporal Juan Madrid
Corporal Francisco Gutierres
Corporal Antonio Dominguez

The following enlisted men were identified as Portuguese:

Joaquim Beira, aged 27, seaman from Porto
José Melo Freitas, aged 26, seaman from Vila Real
Joaquim Jorge, aged 21, seaman from Nazere
Joaquim Nunes, aged 28, seaman from Coimbra
Manuel Ignacio Pereira, aged 21, steward from Vila Mafalda
Manuel Saltarios, aged 22, carpenter

Colourful was hardly the word to describe the uniforms of the Garibaldi Guards. In the field they wore red shirts, blue pantaloons and black, round topped hats with a dark green feather.

The dress uniforms were even more flamboyant. Colonel Frederick George D'Utassy was, like the uniforms, flamboyant. He ended his military career by being cashiered by a court martial in 1863 and sent to Sing Sing prison in New York for gross misuse of funds.

In spite of the poor leadership exercised by Colonel D'Utassy the Garibaldi Guard participated in all the major battles of the Civil War in the East. They were in the first battle of Bull Run as a rear guard. They were surrendered in September 1862 at Harper's Ferry before the Battle of Antietam even though Colonel D'Utassy wanted to fight. They fought at Gettysburg in July 1863 and there is a monument to them in the Gettysburg National Military Park. In the final assault on Richmond they were there, and when General Lee surrendered at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865, the Garibaldi Guard was in formation. They participated in the Grand Review on May 23, 1865 and were mustered out on July 1, 1865.

The regiment lost, during service, 8 officers and 107 enlisted men killed and mortally wounded and 1 officer and 158 enlisted men by disease to a total of 274 men lost. As one can see, the losses due to disease were great and this is representative of other military casualties in the Civil War.

Of course, there were many Portuguese who served in other military formations of the American Civil War and one purpose of this article is to find, in Portugal, the names of these men. I have learned from a Professor at the University of the Azores that an ancestor of his wife from the Azores served on both sides during the war.

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