

**REPORT**  
**OF THE**  
**“Draft Riot” in Boston,**  

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**JULY 14TH, 1863.**  

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From the Diary of Major Stephen Cabot, 1st Batt. Mass. Vol. Heavy Artillery, who had command of Cooper Street Armory the night of the Riot.

Printed by vote of the Veteran Association of Co. A, 1st Battalion of Massachusetts Volunteer Heavy Artillery.



Tuesday, July 14th, 1863.

(FROM MY JOURNAL.)

Foggy and unpleasantly warm, sort of a dog-day; I came off duty as "officer of the day" pretty well tired out, and after dinner laid down to get a nap. Was awakened by hearing the whistle of a steamer; getting up, I found the City Boat, Henry Morrison, at the wharf. Col. Brown, "Governor Andrew's Secretary, I think," made his appearance. On being taken to Col. Dimick, he said he came with a request from Governor Andrew for troops to suppress a riot. He told us that the mob were beating the police, and that there was every appearance of serious trouble during the coming night, and he wanted all the troops the Colonel could let him have.

Under Col. Dimick's orders, I took the officers and 57 men of B Company; the officers and 51 men of C Company; and 58 men of D Company, under Lieutenant Parr, with Lieutenants White and Prescott; 166 enlisted men and non-commissioned officers. After serving 20 rounds of ammunition to each man, we took the Boat for Boston, the troops in fatigue dress. We marched from the Fort in exactly 25 minutes from the time I received the order from Colonel Dimick. The Colonel did not want me to leave the Fort, but I told him it was my plain duty to go with my men. We reached the City at 6.15 P. M., passage being delayed by the fog. After loading with ball cartridge, I marched the command up to the State House, and my adjutant, William Ray, reported to His Excellency the Governor.

The Governor instructed me to act under the direction of his Honor, Mayor Lincoln. Under orders from his Honor, I marched the command down Union Street, and detached Capt. Niebuhr, with his officers and 55 men, to guard the Armory of the Fusiliers on the corner of Union and Marshall Streets.

I then marched the remainder of my command to the Armory of the 11th Militia Battery in Cooper Street, followed by a crowd of hooting men, women and children. Some stones were thrown, but no serious demonstration was made before we reached the Armory. The doors were opened and I marched the command into the building, and ordered the doors and shutters closed, hoping that the crowd would disperse if the soldiers were out of sight.

Captain Jones reported to me for orders. I directed him to place one of the two 6 pounders on the floor facing the Cooper Street door, the other facing the No. Margin Street door, and to load both with Double Canister Shot. I posted a detachment on each flank of the Cooper Street gun. Then placed a file of men at each window upstairs, with orders to challenge any one who was seen to climb on the sheds or any other buildings in the rear.

Captain Jones urged me to fire blank cartridges; said he could not be responsible for firing canister into his fellow citizens. I told him that I did not intend to fire at all if it could be avoided, but that if I were forced to fire, I intended to do all the damage I could, and that I alone was responsible and that he could obey my orders or I would place my own officers and men in charge of the guns. At this he had the guns loaded, and did his duty like a man.

It was now getting quite dark, and the crowd rapidly

increased, and began a bombardment of the building, with slag, stones, and fire-arms. At about this time, 7.30 o'clock, a detective came in through the Margin Street door, and reported that the mob were beating a man in uniform at junction of Cooper and Blackstone Streets. I ordered Lieut. White of C Co. to take 20 men and drive the mob back at point of the bayonet, and rescue the man.

Lieut. White led his men out into No. Margin Street, and so into Cooper Street, he drove the mob back and rescued a man who proved to be Lieut. Sawin of the 11th Battery, who was trying to reach the Armory. He was severely beaten, and was covered with blood. I found the mob were closing up on the detachment and were stoning them furiously. I then sent out a relief under Capt. Livermore to support the men who were bringing in the wounded man, hoping to prevent the necessity of firing into the mob by a greater show of force, and gradually withdrew the two detachments through the No. Margin Street door. Unfortunately in the excitement a few shots were fired over the heads of the mob, but I never ascertained who gave the order, if any order to fire was given. When I heard the shots I went out myself, took a position between the mob and my men until they all got inside the building. During this rescue the mob were very furious, and some of my men were severely hurt by stones and my sword guard was somewhat damaged.

Capt. Livermore was knocked down and his sword was damaged. Quite a good many gun and pistol shots were fired by the mob. This firing over the heads of the mob encouraged them to suppose we were using blank cartridges, and rendered them more bold and aggressive. As soon as the doors were closed, the attack began in

earnest. Before this, in fact soon after we got into the Armory, I went out into Cooper Street with my Adjutant and Captain Jones and tried to warn the mob of what they might expect unless they dispersed. But it was impossible to make myself heard, and they stoned us all the time. Having done what I could by way of warning I went inside again.

. As it became darker they tore up the pavements, and brought large pieces of slag from some place, and then attacked the Cooper Street doors with axes and sledgehammers until it began to yield. The gun was about 15 feet from the door, with about 20 men on each flank to protect the gunners while reloading, by keeping up a cross-fire on the door after the gun was fired. Until this time the primer was not in the vent. The upper panels of the door were now knocked out, and the mob could stone and shoot us with impunity. I ordered the gun primed, but the gunner who undertook to prime the gun was driven off with stones. I again ordered him to his duty, and he then braced up, and the primer was inserted. I now felt that the time had come to act, and gave the order to fire, being myself at the left of the piece and just outside of the carriage. The concussion of course put out the gas-light. I ordered the gun reloaded, the gas having been at once relighted, and the flanking detachments kept up a cross-fire on the doorway until the gun was reloaded. This done, I ordered the firing to cease.

Upon going into the street nothing was to be seen of the mob, except those who had paid the penalty for lawlessness. As the building was almost surrounded with wooden sheds, I instructed the sentries to shoot, after proper challenge, anyone who came in sight. I found Dr.

Salter attending to the wounded men. When the firing was over, we found a dead man in the corner of the lower floor. I had two of my men take his body to the rear, and an examination showed that the body was that of a Mr. Currier,\* whose father was a policeman. I supposed at first that he came in out of the street, but we afterward found that he came in to get out of the mob early in the evening and was shot while in the Armory.

I had tried to get a messenger through to the Mayor earlier in the evening, asking him to send a Squadron of cavalry down to clear the street. And about an hour after the gun was fired, Major Gordon, with his Regulars from Fort Independence, and a Company of Cavalry, "The Lancers," and other troops marched down to our relief; escorting Mayor Lincoln, Gen. Pierce, and other City Officials. At the request of the Mayor, for my opinion of the best course to pursue, I advised that the troops and guns should be stationed in Faneuil Hall Square, leaving the Cooper Street Armory in charge of the Police; and to have a Cavalry patrol through the disorderly section. Major Gordon supported my view, and, after some delay, this plan was decided upon, and at about 11 o'clock we took up the line of march for Faneuil Hall, the injured men in carriages. Here the men of my command obtained rations, (the only food since their dinner at the Fort, 12 hours before.)

Captain Niebuhr reported with his command, and Major Gordon went back to Fort Independence, and placed his men of 16th Regular Infantry, under my command. Col. Frankle now took command of all the troops, by order of the Governor, through General Pierce, of his staff.

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\* My statement relative to the advent of Mr. Currier is hearsay, as I did not know of his being in the Armory until he was killed.

Having been in uniform, and without rest to speak of, from 9 A. M. on the 13th to 6 A. M. on the 15th, I was pretty well used up, to say nothing of the mental strain I was under at the Armory. I laid down in Capt. McKim's office and managed to get some rest; "they, Capt. McKim and his clerks," were very kind.

During the day, Col. Codman, with about 250 men of 43d Mass. Vols., reported for duty. Every arrangement was made to enforce order during the night, and the night passed without any disturbance, for the riot was a thing of the past. Major Gordon came up from the Fort and took command of his own and my men during the day, giving me a chance to rest; he returned to the Fort at 10 P. M. and I again took command. I made the rounds at 3 A. M., and found the sentry over the guns in the Square fast asleep. I woke up Col. Lee, of 44th Mass., to attend to it.

I got orders from Gen. Pierce on morning of 16th, to return to the Fort, and, after great delay in getting transportation, with C and D Companies, I returned to Fort Warren, leaving B Company, under Capt. Niebuhr, to come when relieved from duty. We arrived at the Fort at 12.15 P. M. on the 16th, I having had my uniform on 75 hours. I requested Colonel Dimick to allow me to take A Co. up to relieve B Company, under Capt. Niebuhr, who had been a long time on duty, but the Col. refused to allow it, and I wrote Gen. Pierce that I could not send him any more men.

The men were excused from tattoo roll-call. With three exceptions the men behaved well, and my officers and non-commissioned officers proved themselves all I could ask for.

STEPHEN CABOT, Major, Commanding.



July 17, before the Municipal Court, Boston, in the case of Commonwealth against James Campbell et al., on a charge of murder.

Captain Edward J. Jones, of the 11th Battery, Mass. Militia, testified as follows :

At half past seven the doors of the Armory were opened, and one hundred and fifty men armed as Infantry came in, under command of Major Cabot, who assumed command of the Armory. Cooper Street was then about full of people ; the windows of the Armory were broken by stones and brick-bats. Orders were given by subordinate officers to fire upon the crowd, but Major Cabot and myself prevented it.

Heretofore, bricks had been thrown through the windows, but now they were thrown against the panels of the door which were then broken.

Bricks were now thrown rapidly and the soldiers were driven back ; one brick hit witness. Major Cabot then ordered the cannon fired. It was charged with canister.

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*Adjutant General's Report, 1864, Page 19, says:—*

Major Gordon, U. S. A., in command of Fort Independence came from the Fort with a Company of his men, and offered the services of himself and command for any military duty which Your Excellency or His Honor the Mayor of the City of Boston might order him to perform.

Captain Whiton's Company of Heavy Artillery, Mass. Vols., also on duty at Fort Independence, came to the City and upon representations made by Maj. Rodman, U. S. A., in command of the U. S. Arsenal at Watertown, this Company was forwarded at once for guard duty at that

important post. Capt. Collins, Lieut. McKibben, and other U. S. Officers on duty at Boston, also tendered their assistance, and performed valuable service. It is not my purpose to give a detailed account of the riot or of the disturbances which occurred during the days of July 14th and 15th. It is sufficient to state that the military and the police by their courage and prompt action soon put an end to them, but not before blood had been shed upon the streets of Boston.

The rioters assembled on the evening of the 14th, in the neighborhood of the Armory of the Eleventh Battery in Cooper Street, which was attacked with stones and other missiles. The military under command of Major Stephen Cabot, First Battalion of Heavy Artillery, Mass. Vols., kept inside in perfect quiet, but with their guns loaded and ready for attack, should an exigency arrive.

At length an attempt was made by the mob to force an entrance to the building and obtain possession of the guns. It was not prudent to delay, and accordingly the word was given to fire.

The effect was electrical; several persons were killed and more wounded, how many, probably, will never be known as they were carried away by friends and afterward kept hidden. This virtually crushed the mob although riotous demonstrations were afterward made in Dock Square and other parts of the City, but the presence and firm front of the military, and the courage and activity of the police, cowed the desperadoes. Several arrests were made of persons supposed to be ringleaders, but no more powder and ball were fired. The one volley in Cooper Street did the work and saved many lives from death and much valuable property from destruction.

SPECIAL ORDER 396.

*Head Quarters, Boston, July 14th, 1863.*

Major Cabot, First Battalion 1st Regiment Heavy Artillery Mass. Volunteers, having with great expedition reported for duty from Fort Warren in response to a request by his Excellency the Governor, has with his command the thanks of his Excellency.

Major Cabot will report for orders to his Honor, Frederick W. Lincoln, Jr., Mayor of Boston. It is the wish of his Excellency that a portion of Major Cabot's command be ordered for duty at the Armory of the Eleventh Battery Light Artillery, in Cooper Street, to support the section of Light Artillery now there.

By order of the Commander in Chief,

WILLIAM SCHOULER,

Adjutant General.

