



Color guard of the 15th Infantry in action at Spotsylvania, Va., On May 12, 1864 (Original painting by Jeff Jargosch).

Richard Conner - Medal of Honor

“On the 30th day of August, A. D. 1862, on the Battlefield of the Second Bull Run, the color bearer, William Early, left the Regimental colors [caught] on a fence. Private Richard Conner of Company F, 6th Regt. N. J. Infantry Vols., under a very heavy fire from the enemy, ran to where the colors had been left, and tearing the flag from the fence, he put the flag under his blouse, and creeping on his hands and knees along a ravine he brought the flag back within our lines. For this act he was promoted Color Sergeant of the (6th) regiment by Col. Burling. I know these facts by reason of being an eyewitness to the whole affair, and in my mind, it was one of the most daring acts that I witnessed in the whole four years of my service.”

Affidavit by John J. Olden, Co. E, 6th Regt. N. J. Infantry Vols. in support of Richard Conner's successful application to receive a Congressional Medal, of Honor, June 19, 1897.



Richard Conner and his Medal of Honor (Gloucester County Historical Society; photograph by John W. Kuhl).

THE COLOR GUARD

In the 19th century, there was a profound feeling of honor and respect granted by the average citizen to his country and its most visible image, the flag.

During the American Civil War, the volunteer citizen soldier considered it the highest honor to be chosen to be a member of the regimental color guard. Appointment to the color guard was reserved for individual soldiers who continually maintained a high standard of service or performed a meritorious act during battle.

New Jersey regiments carried two battle flags, a national and a regimental which served as the identity of the unit. The U.S. military manuals of the day, Scott's *Abstract of Infantry Tactics* and Casey's *Tactics*, called for two different configurations for color guards, Scott's calling for a six-man guard and Casey's a nine-man guard. Photographic evidence leads us to believe that Casey's *Tactics* was the manual most relied on. Casey's nine-man guard called for a front rank of three sergeants. The center sergeant was designated color sergeant, and the sergeants to his left and right were the color bearers. Behind the rank of sergeants were two ranks of three corporals each, whose responsibility it was to see to the safety of the colors if the color bearers could no longer fulfill their duty.

In many instances the towns and cities that the soldiers mustered in from presented colors to the troops during grand ceremonies as the regiments left for war. It therefore came to pass that these flags not only represented country, but home. It is no wonder, then, that in battle the honor bestowed upon the color bearer would inspire him to carry his “charge” throughout the ordeal. He would give his last measure to ensure that the colors returned from battle intact, in the hands of its loyal soldiers.



Noncommissioned staff and First sergeants, 15th Infantry, with National Color, March 1864 (John W. Kuhl Collection).

REGIMENT IN LINE BY COMPANIES

