

History of SC-134-90:

This flag is called a “standard.” Smaller than infantry battle flags, cavalry standards were much better suited for mounted combat. Each company or troop of cavalry with the regiment also carried a small guidon--called a “swallow-tailed” guidon because of its shape--but the flag of the entire regiment was the standard. Because cavalry flags presented smaller targets for enemy bullets, they are usually in better condition than infantry flags. Another reason for this flag’s good condition is that it was presented to the regiment late in the war.

The Fourth Cavalry was mustered into service at Detroit in August 1862. Under the command of Robert H.G. Minty of Detroit, the regiment was sent to chase John Morgan and his famous guerrilla raiders out of Kentucky. The regiment soon moved on to Tennessee and Georgia, however, where it saw extensive action as part of a brigade composed of regiments from several states and led by their own Colonel Minty. “Minty’s Brigade,” as it was known, became one of the most famous of the war.

In late 1864, after the Fourth had been in the field for over two years, the regiment was sent to Louisville, Kentucky, to reorganize and equip. In November 1864, Colonel Minty returned from Flint and rejoined the regiment, bringing this flag as a gift from the “Ladies of Flint” to the Fourth. The flag was covered with battle honors which the regiment had already won, including Stone River, Shelbyville, Franklin, Sparta, Middleton, Unionville, Lebanon, McMinnville, Thompson’s Station, Hill Creek, Tunnel Hill, Chickamauga, Reed’s Bridge, Chattanooga, Kenesaw Mountain, Stone Mountain, Lovejoy’s Station, and the Siege of Atlanta. Even so, it is not a complete list and hundreds of skirmishes were also omitted. On the front of the flag is the regiment’s motto, “In Jure Vincimus”--“We Conquer in Right” On the silver plaque on the staff are the words, “Presented to the 4th Regiment Michigan Cavalry by the friends of the Flint boys. Blessings on our gallant Fourth. Victory o’er every foe.” A letter which accompanied the flag said, in part: “The names of Stone River, Chickamauga and Shelbyville, and other battle fields will remind you of your brave comrades who fell there. And also of other more recent and equally honorable fields not named upon your flag, but graven nonetheless deeply upon our memories. When you look upon this flag, remember that in Michigan many true and loyal hearts are watching every movement of the 4th with ardent hopes and fervent prayers for your speedy and final victory.”

The war was far from over. The Fourth had yet to participate in the mission which would win it world-wide fame. In May 1865, Colonel Minty received information that the President of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, was attempting to escape to the Atlantic Coast with members of his family and staff. Colonel Minty sent the regiment off in a desperate effort to intercept the fleeing president. Other Union regiments were also in hot pursuit, but it was a detachment of the Fourth Michigan Cavalry, under the command of Lt. Colonel B.D. Pritchard, who caught up with Davis and surrounded his camp in the woods near Irwinsville, Georgia. In the early hours of May 10, 1865, Davis surrendered to the Fourth Michigan Cavalry--and the Union. It is notable that one of the charter members of the original 1883 Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War Governor Henry Crapo Post was George Raab, a Flint resident who served in Company F of the Fourth Michigan Cavalry. In 1935, he was the last surviving member of the detachment which captured Jefferson Davis.

