

19th INFANTRY REGIMENT--SC-73-90

Organized at Dowagiac under Henry Gilbert, a wealthy businessman and newspaper owner, the regiment was recruited from the southwest counties, including Berrien County. Among the Niles men was the Lt. Colonel, David Bacon.

Mustered in on September 5, 1862, the regiment's first action was at Thompson's Station in Tennessee on March 4, 1863. On the second day of fighting, during hand-to-hand combat, the 19th captured several enemy flags—a signal honor—but in the last attack were themselves overcome and forced to surrender their own colors. Apparently, in an effort to save at least one of their flags from capture, the men of Company E took desperate measures:

In 1888, this plea was published in the National Tribune: “I want to know if any member of the old 19th Michigan has any old piece of the old flag that the rebels didn't get when we were taken prisoners at Spring Hill, Tennessee, March 4th and 5th 1863. Some of us boys in Company E tore the flag to pieces and divided it up. I have my piece yet in good shape—kept it while a prisoner, and when paroled sent it home to my wife, and will try to have it at the next reunion. L.A. Labadie, First Lt., Company K, 19th Michigan.”

The regiment was issued a new flag (of the best materials and in a tasty style)—which may be this one. In May 1864, the regiment joined General Sherman. On May 15, they were engaged at Resaca. Hamlin Coe wrote: “A good many of our boys were picked off by sharpshooters—we lost 101 in all. Although our regiment was broken and in disorder, they charged like tigers. I was with the color guard. There was ten of us when we charged but only three came off the field. I brought the old flag off the field, torn and riddled with balls. The boys cheered the rags when I brought them off—and we had a grand greeting.” Among those killed at Resaca was the 19th's colonel, Henry Gilbert.