

## NATHANIEL ALLEN AT THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG

**Narrator:** It was the second day at Gettysburg. The Rebel and Union armies faced each other in two lines about two miles apart. In the middle of the Union line was the First Massachusetts Infantry and in the middle of the regiment stood the color guard with the national and regimental flags.

These colors were not mere symbols. In the fog of battle they would be the rallying point for the troops as well as a means of identifying their location for the generals directing their forces.

Nathaniel Allen was a corporal in the color guard. This was an important job as a regiment's colors were a prize coveted by the enemy. When the attack came, the First Massachusetts took heavy casualties and was ordered to retreat. What happened next is described by the men who were there.

**Comrades:** About 11 a.m. on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July, the regiment was deployed as skirmishers in front of the First Brigade, Second Division, Third Army Corps, near the Rogers House on the Emmetsburg road, and remained in that position until late in the afternoon when the regiment was forced back by the advance of the Confederates in force and rallied on the regimental colors on the right of the brigade. While executing a movement of change of front to rear, the brigade received the assault of the enemy in open field and after a stubborn resistance, and heavy loss, was forced back towards Cemetery Ridge.

During said engagement, Corporal Nathaniel M. Allen, who was one of the Color Guard, received the National Color from Color Sergeant William W. Eaton, who was wounded. As the line of battle gave way, and was rapidly falling back, under a heavy fire and closely pursued, Corporal Allen saw Color Sergeant William Kelren, who carried the State Color, fall dead with his colors under him, and seeing that the State Color would in a moment

fall into the hands of the enemy, Corporal Allen in the face of galling fire, and none too quickly, ran back, pulled the flag and staff from under the body of Sergeant Kelren and brought both colors off the field. The severity of the fire at that portion of the field is shown by the fact that the Color Co. (B) lost 17 men, killed and wounded, and the company to the left of the colors (C) lost 18 men, killed and wounded, more than half of each company that went into action, total loss in the regiment in this action 122 men.

We desire to state that while these facts have always been known and frequently commented upon by members of the regiment, Corporal Allen could never be persuaded to apply for a medal of honor, always modestly saying, 'I only did my duty.'

We, his comrades, believe he should even at this late day, receive proper recognition for the brave and gallant act at that time.

**Narrator:** For his action at the Battle of Gettysburg, Nathaniel Allen was awarded the Medal of Honor on October 14th 1898.