



# **In Her Hour of Sore Distress and Peril: The Civil War Diaries of John P. Reynolds, Eighth Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry**

*John P. Reynolds*

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John Perkins Reynolds, a member of the "Salem Zouaves" (Company I, Eighth Massachusetts Infantry), left behind a unique record of one company's service during the early months of the Civil War. His detailed personal diary documents his company's hourly activities each day, forming a rare chronicle of a Union "three-month" unit. Reynolds was a talented and perceptive writer, and he meticulously recorded details about many important events. The early mobilization of Union volunteers, Northern and border state support for the war effort, the movement of troops to defend Washington, D.C., from an expected Confederate attack, the "rescue" of the U.S.S. Constitution, raids on secessionist farms in Maryland, and life in the troubled city of Baltimore are just a few of the topics highlighted in his diary. In addition, Reynolds included many insightful details about soldier life and material culture during the period. Army discipline, religious practices in the ranks, encounters between soldiers and civilians, training, rations, soldier humor and numerous other aspects of the soldier's existence were deemed noteworthy by the young non-commissioned officer. In essence, Reynolds chronicled the transition from civilian to soldier that was experienced by hundreds of thousands of early war volunteers during the Civil War.

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