REPORT

OF THE

COMMISSIONERS

ON

WAR RECORDS.

JANUARY, 1911.

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STATE HOUSE, BOSTON.

APPROVED BY

THE STATE BOARD OF PUBLICATION.
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

REPORT.

The Commissioners of War Records have the honor to submit the following report:

The work of this bureau during 1910 has progressed more favorably and expeditiously than in any previous year, notwithstanding serious disadvantages, consisting of illness and death in families of the clerks, the probable loss to the bureau, through nervous prostration, of the chief lady clerk, the retirement of one clerk, owing to a shock, and the resignation of another clerk, who was able to command higher salary elsewhere. Thus, while a greater volume of more difficult work has been done than ever before, the result has been a disappointment to the compiler.

The work of this year has been: on muster-out rolls, 64,483 cards; monthly reports, 16,971 cards; regular soldiers carded, 600; naval records carded, 362; total, 82,416. There have been sorted and assembled in proper order, in companies and regiments, 86,500 men. This work is indispensable, and in the way of preparation for future publication.

The compiler has been engaged during the greater part of the year in reading back, comparing, reconciling inconsistencies, and deciding which of two or more conflicting statements could be correct in the muster rolls carded. Thousands of errors, more or less flagrant, have been rectified; many thousands are yet to be corrected. This work has been the examination and rectification of the record, man by man, on the muster-out rolls, of 23 regiments and 47,086 men.

The regular rolls of all the volunteer regiments, battalions and independent companies, and of all the Massachusetts
Volunteer Militia regiments, batteries and independent companies in the service of the United States, are carded in full. The muster-out rolls of the cavalry, light batteries and heavy artillery will be done within a few weeks. These muster-out rolls are full of errors and contradictory statements, and require more investigation and laborious correction of blunders than any other rolls. And yet they are perhaps the most important (together with the monthly reports) of all. The monthly reports are in the hands of the most experienced member of the office force, the chief clerk. The carding of them will require several months of hard work.

The carding of letters from the War Department, from 1861 to the present, is kept up to date.

**NAVY.**

Sailors and marines, "final dispositions" obtained, 292 men; corrections and connections, 162 men; new services of sailors and marines, 11. Letters to Navy Department, town and city clerks, Adjutants-General of other States, Grand Army posts and to various officials and individuals, for information, 539; letters received in reply, 544. The naval records, corrected, finished completely or obtained for the first time, number 465.

The Legislature of 1907 required the compiler of war records to inform the General Court, in a supplementary report, in January, 1907, how far the work of the bureau of war records had progressed, and how long it would be before this work preliminary to publication would be finished.

The compiler estimated that it was then more than half done, and that by 1914 publication might be entered upon. As a matter of fact, the list of officers, sailors and marines, numbering probably at least 30,000 men, in the navy from Massachusetts, is so nearly done at the end of 1910 that the immediate work of preparation of it for publication could be begun to-day were it not for the fact that, as so many soldiers were transferred to the navy and so many sailors were also a part of the time in the land service, it would not be possible properly to give the "entire military history," as is required by the law creating this bureau.
As stated in previous reports, the work of correcting the records of officers and men who served in the armies of the civil war is carried on precisely as the same work is carried on in the War Department. It is the best system devised, and cannot probably be improved upon, either for accuracy or celerity. It consists in having slips or cards with headings printed to receive all necessary information contained in each of the rolls, reports or returns concerning the records of every man who served; for instance, the muster-in, descriptive and muster-out rolls, hospital records, casualty reports, town records, monthly reports, list of deserters and various other reports required in keeping military records.

Whatever befalls the soldier, the necessary record of the occurrence will appear on the card proper to be used in the case. When all the cards containing the military history of any soldier are finished and assembled in requisite order, the story of that man's service, from enlistment to discharge or death in battle, will appear in full.

This system was the one used by the Secretary of the Commonwealth in the admirable work, produced under his supervision, on the soldiers and sailors of the revolution who served from Massachusetts.

WM. H. BRIGHAM,
Adjutant General.

WM. M. OLIN,
Secretary of the Commonwealth.

HENRY E. TURNER,
Auditor of the Commonwealth.