

Report of Brig. Gen. Daniel Butterfield, U. S. Army, commanding Third Brigade, of engagement May 27. HDQRS. 3<sup>d</sup> BRIG., PORTERS DIV., 5<sup>TH</sup> PROY. ARMY CORPS, Near New Bridge, Va., May 30, 1862.

CAPTAIN: I would respectfully report that in compliance with orders received at 10.30 p. m. the 26<sup>th</sup> instant, my brigade marched toward Hanover Court-House at about 6 a. m. of the 27<sup>th</sup>. Our orders were to march at 3.30 a. m. The regiments were up and in readiness, but did not form line and start, waiting the movement of the brigade that was ordered to precede us. The rain was so severe as to prevent the men from building fires; they could not get them to burn, and in consequence many started on the march without coffee. Our march to the battle-field near Hanover Court-House was the most severe I have ever experienced. Half an hour before the fight began I hardly thought it possible for my men to pitch camp and prepare supper, so much fatigued were they with the march in mud, rain, and sun.

When the head of my column approached the position indicated as A on the map, where Bensons battery was in action, General F. J. Porter personally indicated to me the position he desired me to take with my brigade, indicating it, as understood by me, in the direction marked by the arrow C on the accompanying sketch.

I formed my brigade in the order mentioned below and as per sketch: On the first line the Seventeenth New York, Colonel Lansing, on the right; Eighty-third Pennsylvania, Colonel J. C. Lane, on the left, with skirmishers in front. The second line, Twelfth New York, Colonel Weeks, in rear of the right; Sixteenth Michigan, Colonel Stockton, in rear of the left.

Having personally surveyed the field, as well as having sent out some of my personal staff, I determined to change the position for attack very slightly from that indicated by General Porter, for the purpose of covering my approach to the enemy. I directed the command to move Page 723 ChAP. XXIII.]

#### HANOVER COURT-HOUSE, ETC.

723 through the woods in the order indicated above and halt at the point on the edge of the woods indicated by the fence marked \* \* \* I then ascended a small tree, where I was informed by Major Bartram, of the Seventeenth, I could discover correctly the whole position of affairs and act accordingly. Doing so, I found the enemy drawn up in line near the house and orchard (afterward used for general hospital and headquarters of General Porter), with a section of a battery in action, supported by the Thirty-eighth North Carolina Regiment. I since learned from prisoners that this regiment was about 1,300 strong.

To my right and rear was Bensons battery, and I think a section of Weedens (the cavalry in rear), replying to the fire of the enemys gun. A portion of the Twenty-fifth New York and a few of Berdans Sharp-shooters were in the positions indicated on the sketch. I determined to attack vigorously, and at once ordered the command forward in the order heretofore mentioned. The regiments, though much reduced in numbers by the march, the guards left in camp and with the wagons, moved up in the most admirable order, with all the precision of dress-paradeskirmishers firing gradually accelerating their pace. They charged the enemy and drove him back, capturing one of his cannon with caisson and ammunition complete, except the horses. We pursued rapidly and captured many prisoners. The enemy were completely routed.

After getting a long distance in advance of our first position I was informed by a prisoner that eight regiments of the enemy had gone to our right and rear. I deemed this of sufficient importance to halt from the pursuit and await support on my right or further orders. I did so, and threw out skirmishers on my right and left flank. I immediately advised

General Porter of the circumstances. General Porter and General Morell came on the ground afterward, bringing up the batteries and cavalry on my right. General Porter shortly afterward directed me to push on to Hanover Court-House and railroad station, which was done most rapidly considering the fatigued condition of the men, in order of battle as before, except that the Sixteenth Michigan (Colonel Stockton) led the left across the railroad bridge, and the Eighty-third Pennsylvania the right, by the ravine and road, and all moved across the Machumps Creek by the flank. I had ordered arms stacked with two regiments, and had sent an aide for the others to come in the field between the station and Court-House, when an order came from General Porter to move my command back to the rear to support General Martindale, who had been attacked from the rear.

As soon as possible I made my dispositions to return, ordering the Twelfth and Seventeenth New York to return by the road, and taking the Eighty-third Pennsylvania and Stocktons Sixteenth Michigan back by the railroad, with a view to flank the enemy and support General Martindale in whatever position I might find him. I could only judge of the location by the report of musketry, the dense woods hiding from sight any indication or points of position. As we approached the woods near the railroad the cheers of the enemy, with their unceasing volleys of musketry, led me to believe that they were gaining an advantage. I called upon my men to forward at double-quick and cheer. They responded with a will, cheering lustily. Our cheers were evidently heard by the enemy, for they slackened their fire apparently, and as we subsequently learned withdrew, whether to avoid being flanked or driven back from the front I am unable to say.

We pushed into the woods and came up on their flank, capturing many prisoners, in fact encumbered ourselves with them, and found

Page 724  
724

THE PENINSULAR CAMPAIGN, VA.

[CHAPTER XXIII

that we were in front of the Ninth Massachusetts, our line perpendicular to theirs. We pushed on and came out on the road where Griffins battery was just preparing to open fire (point marked II on the sketch). I was unable to get my horse across the ditch and fence on the roadside; crossed on foot, borrowed a horse from some one, and pushed the Eighty-third forward to press the enemy. Asked Lieutenant Kingsbury to push forward a portion of his battery, which was done, to the position marked K, supported by the Eighty-third Regiment.

Shortly afterward General Morell came up to the front in person. From him I obtained permission to push in the Fifth New York Zouaves, with a view to press and rout the enemy as completely as possible, and to bring up more troops. Everything was going on handsomely in front. My only desire now was to push forward troops enough to utterly rout the enemy and capture all the prisoners possible. I went back to get up more men the enemys fire slackened, the sun went down, and the day was ours.

By General Porters orders we camped on the battle-field. I inclose the reports of Colonel Lansing, Seventeenth New York Volunteers; Colonel McLane, Eighty-third Pennsylvania Volunteers; Colonel Stryker, Forty-fourth New York Volunteers. I have mislaid Colonel Stocktons, Sixteenth Michigan, but will send it as soon as found.

I had neglected to mention that the Forty-fourth were detached by General Morell on the march at the cross-roads, 3 miles from the scene of the engagement, and I saw nothing of them until after the fight. They were under General Martindale while in action.

I would call attention to Colonel McLanes report as showing the position of affairs at the close of the fight and the turning point of the second engagement.

Where all the regiments did so well it is improper to discriminate. The splendid bearing, under their baptismal fire, of the Eighty-third Pennsylvania and Seventeenth New York was worthy of the highest praise. The Eighty-third was in both fights, and behaved like veterans in the last as in the first.

The instances of individual gallantry were numerous. Major Von Vegesack, of my staff, was inside the enemys line of skirmishers while making a reconaissance to get information for me; was fired at six times, and narrowly escaped with his life. To him, as to Captain Hoyt, Lieutenant Livingstone, and Actg. Lient. B. M. Fisher, I was particularly indebted for valuable and efficient aid in the field of battle. Quartermaster C. B. Norton was with me during the warmest portion of the engagement, and was of great service to me, behaving with gallantry. Lieutenant Seymour, of General Morells staff, also aided me at one time in an important matter.

We turned over to the guard from all the regiments about 225 prisoners. Captured 160 stand of arms, which were forwarded to Colonel Kingsbury, of the ordnance department; one 12-pounder howitzer, now in possession of the Seventeenth New York Regiment; one Union Defense Committee wagon, now in possession of my brigade quartermaster (this wagon was probably taken from our forces at the battle of Bull Run); a hospital wagon with stores, which was turned over to Capt. Charles B. Norton.

I desire to call attention to the praiseworthy behavior of Lieutenant Burleigh, of the Seventeenth New York, who with some of his men sent out in the first fight as skirmishers, did not return by the route to join their regiment, but joined the Eighty-third and fought well.

The list of killed, wounded, and missing in my brigade is attache Page 725 CHAP. xxii.]

HANOVER COURT-HOUSE, ETC. 725 hereto in schedule marked A.\* I regret to add that Lient. Henry W. Perkins, aide-de-camp on lily staff, was taken prisoner. He was left behind on account of having been sick with fever for ten days; but anxious to be present at the battle, rode up in an ambulance, and was resting in the hospital at the time it was attacked. He was taken by the enemy, though too weak to sit on a horse. I am, very respectfully, yours, &#38; c., DANL BUTTERFIELD,

Brig. Gen., Commanding Third Brigade, Porters Division.

Page 726 [CHAP. XXIII.

726

THE PENINSULAR CAMPAIGN, VA No. 28. Report of uol. Henry S. Lansing, Seventeenth New York Infantry, of operations Map 2728. IIDQRS. 17TH REGT. N. Y. VOLS., 3D BRiG., PORTERS Div., Provisional Army Corps, May 30, 1862.

GENERAL: This regiment left camp on the morning of the 27th instant at 5 a. in., on the right of the Third Brigade, in a heavy rain-storm, and after a long march through heavy roads, deep with mud, debouched upon the plain in line of battle, where we found a field battery engaged with Bensons battery of ours. Colonel Johnson, of Twenty-fifth New York Volunteers, was moving toward the woods on the right, when we immediately moved to the Jeff, covered by two companies of skirmishers, A and B, the first under command of second Lieutenant Fox, and the latter under command of Captain Grower, both under the immediate command of Major Bartram. After feeling the wood for some distance I changed front, and formed on the edge of woods, on the right of the rebel battery, and facing it obliquely, there awaited your orders. On receiving them, to advance at once moved the

skirmishers forward upon the battery, followed by the rest of the regiment in quick time, in line of battle and arms at right-shoulder shift, cheering, exchanging shots with the enemy, killing and wounding several. Our fire was upon the battery, and as in approaching the gunner who fired the last shot being killed by a private of Company A (Flood), the enemy retreated, and we captured the piece, a 12-pounder howitzer; then changing our line more to the left, drove in their skirmishers, and were advancing to flank those in retreat, when we were ordered to halt. Forty prisoners captured, among them 2 officers, were sent to the rear, and Lieutenant-Colonel Morris, being too ill to proceed, was left with 5 men in charge of them.

Under your order we then moved on toward Hanover Court-House on the right of the Eighty-third Pennsylvania Volunteers, but were separated by a deep ravine and compelled to go to the right, and thus lost sight of the Eighty-third, but continued to advance, and just arrived there when I received orders to return, as the enemy were in our rear. My men, though wearied, pushed back with energy, and arrived near the ground of conflict just as the enemy retreated or had commenced to break. The regiment bivouacked upon their first battle-field.

During the absence of the regiment Lieutenant-Colonel Morris, seeing the enemy advancing, compelled his prisoners to draw the cannon to our front, now become the rear, and thus insured its safety. This piece is, I believe, the first one captured in the field by the Army of the Potomac.

On the morning of the 28th instant I was ordered to proceed to Hanover Court-House to seize the depot and provisions and support the cavalry command of General Emory and Benson's battery. Five companies under command of Colonel Morris made a reconnaissance with the cavalry and a section of artillery to the left of the road. Three companies were on picket twenty-four hours. On the morning of the 29th instant, at 5 a. m., four companies, under command of Captain Grower, marched 5 miles with the Sixth Cavalry and Benson's horse artillery, burning a bridge. Upon their return, at 1 p. m., we retraced our march to the battle-field. Arriving there, received orders to join the brigade and march for our camp at its present site near New Bridge Page 727 CHAP. XXIII.]

#### HANOVER COURT-HOUSE, ETC. 727

General Butterfield being ill, the undersigned took command of the brigade and marched it to camp, leaving Hanover at 3.30 p. m., but in consequence of detentions made by the troops and trains ahead did not arrive in camp until 3.30 a. m. At this morning's roll call all were present, although half my command had marched some 30 miles. Both officers and men behaved nobly, without an exception. As the result of the engagement I have to report none known to be killed or wounded; 8 missing. There were no dead buried by this regiment.

Respectfully submitted. II.

S. LANSING, Colonel, Seventeenth Regiment New York Volunteers.

*The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. / Series 1 - Volume 11 (Part I)*

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