

THE WAR OF THE REBELLION : A COMPILATION OF THE OFFICIAL RECORDS OF THE UNION AND CONFEDERATE ARMIES

Prepared, Under the Direction of the Secretary of War

By

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And

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Report of Col. Henry W. Birge [?], Thirteenth Connecticut Infantry, commanding Third
Brigade, of engagement at Irish Bend

HDQRS. Third Brigade, Grover's Division,
Opelousas, La., April 22, 1863.

CAPTAIN: I have the honor to report that, by order of Brig. Gen. Grover, commanding division, this brigade, consisting of the Thirteenth Connecticut Volunteers, Lieutenant-Colonel Warner; Twenty-sixth Maine Volunteers, Colonel Hubbard; Twenty-fifth Connecticut Volunteers, Colonel Bissell; and One hundred and fifty-ninth New York Volunteers, Colonel Molineux, embarked on transports at Baton Rouge March 28. Debarked at Donaldsonville March 29. On the 31st, marched to Pancaville [Paincourtville], 12 miles, the One hundred and fifty-ninth having been detached and sent to Thibodeaux on transport Empire Parish as guard of division baggage. April 1, marched to Labadieville, 12 miles. April 2, marched to Terre Bonne Station, 14 miles. At 9 p.m., same day, moved by railroad to Bayou Boeuff; in camp at Bayou Boeuff till the 9th instant, the One hundred and fifty-ninth New York joining the brigade on the 4th. On the 9th, marched to Brashear City; 11th, embarked on transports (Twenty-fifth Connecticut on Saint Mary's the other regiments on Laurel Hill), and at daylight on the 13th debarked at McWilliams' plantation,

on Grand Lake, the enemy with two guns and a small force, making feeble attempt to oppose our landing. Occupied during the day the position assigned the brigade. At sunset crossed the Bayou Teche, and by direction of the general commanding placed the regiments in position as follows: The Thirteenth Connecticut holding the bayou road to Franklin, about 1 ½ miles below Madam Porter's plantation; the One hundred and fifty-ninth on the right of the Thirteenth, the picket line of the two regiments extending from the bayou on the left to the woods on the right and connecting with the pickets of the Second Brigade; the Twenty-sixth Maine and Twenty-fifth Connecticut in line in the field on the right of the road, and 1 mile to the rear.

On the 14th instant marched at daylight toward Franklin in following order: The Twenty-fifth Connecticut, after passing picket line, with five companies as skirmishes deployed to the front from the roads to the bayou and on the right flank, and five companies in reserve in the opening between the wood and the road; two companies of twenty-sixth Maine in the road; first section of Rodgers' battery, under command of Lieutenant Bradley; eight companies Twenty-sixth Maine Regiment; One hundred and fifty-ninth New York Regiment; Rodger's battery, and Thirteenth Connecticut Regiment. Had marched about 2 miles, and the road at Irish Bend, where, following the course of the bayou it turns to the south, and crossing the open country, enters the wood, when the skirmishes on the right discovered the enemy posted in the edge of the wood, and concealed by a heavy rail fence. Brisk firing immediately commenced on both sides. The five companies of the Twenty-fifth Connecticut at once changed front forward, and advanced within 200 yards of the enemy's line. The Twenty-sixth Maine filed to the right into the field and formed on the left of the Twenty-fifth Connecticut, both regiments lying down and firing on the enemy whenever he could be seen. At the same time the first section of Rodgers battery was placed in position in rear of the interval between the two regiments, directing fire principally on two guns, which, from their position where the road enters the wood, had opened on our forces as they marched into the field. It becoming evident that the enemy were in strong force, by direction of the general commanding the One hundred and fifth-ninth New York was brought into action, forming on the left of the Twenty-sixth Maine. The Thirteenth Connecticut, turning the angle in the road, deployed between the road and the bayou, and advanced on the enemy's right, the second section of Rodger's battery taking position in the road and shelling the wood.

While these movements were in progress the enemy were re-enforced by the arrival on transports of troops from below, which, passing through the wood to the left of their line, gained unperceived a position in a deep ditch, concealed by thick bushes, and from which they obtained an enfilading fire on the Twenty-fifth Connecticut, Twenty-sixth Maine, and one hundred and fifty-ninth New York. These regiments held their ground bravely, and returned the enemy's fire with great spirit, until, having expended their ammunition, one-

fourth of their number killed and wounded, and it being apparent that they were opposed by a greatly superior force, having advantage of the cover of the wood and fence, they withdrew and reformed their lines in rear of the First Brigade, now coming up to their support. In the mean time the Thirteenth Connecticut, on the left of the road, had entered a grove between which and the main wood was an open field, about 300 yards in width. Emerging from this grove under a deadly fire it steadily advanced, the men loading and firing as they marched; broke the enemy's lines, and driving him back in the utmost confusion, captured two caissons, one limber, a quantity of small-arms, the flag of the Saint Mary's Cannoneers, several horses, and from 50 to 60 prisoners. The regiment was now far in advance of the right of our lines and in rear of the enemy's left.

Deeming it imprudent to press the enemy farther until supported I ordered Colonel Warner to fall back to the edge of the wood and hold that position. The Twelfth Maine coming up, the Thirteenth again advanced and pushed through the wood, the Twelfth following, and the skirmishers of the First Brigade at the same time entering on their right. Little or no resistance was offered by the enemy, but on reaching the opposite ground beyond he was discovered in line with artillery, supported by infantry and cavalry, on rising ground about 1,000 yards distant. I immediately reported the position to General Grover, and was ordered by him to withdraw the Twelfth Maine and Thirteenth Connecticut to the center of the wood, and to form them, with the Twenty-fifth Connecticut, Twenty-sixth Maine, and One hundred and fifth-ninth New York, in two lines, the left resting on the bayou.

Meanwhile the enemy's gunboat Diana had come up the Teche and commenced throwing shell and solid shot in the wood at short intervals. By direction of Gen. Grover a company of sharpshooters from each regiment was concealed on the bank of the bayou to pick off her gunners should she come within range, which at one time she threatened to do.

About 2 p.m. was ordered by General Grover to advance the Twelfth Maine, with a strong line of skirmishers in front, to feel the enemy. Before this order could be executed he suddenly withdrew, and the Diana was discovered to be in flames.

About 4 p.m. was ordered to withdraw from the wood and put my brigade in camp for the night.

The casualties of the brigade in this engagement were:*

Killed	Wounded	Prisoners	Missing
Thirteenth Connecticut:			
Officers.....	3.....		Men...

7.....	47.....	
			Twenty-fifth Connecticut:
Officers.....	2.....	5.....	Men
7.....	77.....	9.....
			Twenty-Sixth Maine:
Officers.....		1.....	
Men.....		1.....	
			One hundred and fifty-ninth New York:
Officers.....	4.....	4.....	
Men.....	15.....	73.....	20.....1.

A complete list of casualties has already been forwarded to you. It records the name of Lieutenant-Colonel Draper, who fell with three wounds, either of which would have been fatal. A good soldier, a gallant officer, an estimable gentleman, his death is mourned by his friends and is a loss to his country.

Adjutant Lathrop and Lieutenants Manley and Lockwood, of the One hundred and fifty-ninth New York, Captain Hayden and Lieutenant Dewey, of the Twenty-fifth Connecticut, all instantly killed on the field. Lieutenants Plunkett and Price, One hundred and fifty-ninth New York, mortally wounded and since dead. Their names are added to the list of patriots who have illustrated their devotion to their country by the sacrifice of their lives. Colonel Molineux, One hundred and fifty-ninth New York, and Lieutenant-Colonel Hersey, Twenty-Sixth Maine, very dangerously and painfully wounded while bravely encouraging their men, were carried from the field. I am happy to add that both are recovering. Captain Sprague and Lieutenants Strickland and Kinney, Thirteenth Connecticut, Lieutenant Reeves, Twenty-Sixth Maine. Lieutenant Waterman, Twenty-fifth Connecticut, all wounded, but not disabled, refused to leave the field until the close of the engagement.

*The copy of the foregoing report, received by the Adjutant-General of the Army is incomplete and without signature. Col. H. W. Birge, Thirteenth Connecticut Infantry, commanded the brigade during the time covered by the report.