

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
Lieut. Col. Robert N. Scott, Third U. S. Artillery.

Series I- Volume XV
Pages 167-170

Headquarters Reserve Brigade,
Bayou La Fourche, near Thibodeaux, La., October 29, 1862.

Major: I have the honor to report that this morning at 6 o'clock I dispatched Colonel Birge, in command of his regiment (the Thirteenth Connecticut), Barrett's cavalry, and one section of Carruth's battery, down the Bayou La Fourche to open communication with the city. I have just received a dispatch from him from Raceland Station, in which he says that he has communicated with Colonel Thomas, who is 1 ½ miles from him. He found at the station three freight cars, one passenger car, two barbette guns, spiked (32-pounders), two 12-pounder iron howitzers, in good order, and guns equipments, &c., scattered along the road.

I therefore propose now to give you a more detailed report of my operations since I left Donaldsonville. I left this place at 6 o'clock on Sunday morning last and marched on the left bank until I was within 1 mile of Napoleonville, where I bivouacked in line of battle. Believing that the enemy would, by means of the numerous flat-boat ferries which I knew were in the bayou, probably cross from one side of the bayou to the other, I took in tow a flat-boat bridge and carried it with me all the way, and have it with me now. I destroyed every boat I passed as prudential military measure. It has proved of invaluable service to me. I moved on the first day with but one company of the Eight New Hampshire on the right bank. The enemy's scouts were continually in sight of my advanced guards of cavalry,

and just before going into camp 1 captain of the enemy was killed by my advance guard and 3 prisoners were taken. Immediately afterward one of the Eight New Hampshire privates on the right bank was taken prisoner by the enemy.

I started on Monday morning again at 6 o'clock, but feeling that the enemy was in some force on the right bank I threw over the whole of the Eight New Hampshire and Perkins' cavalry by means of my floating bridge, and in this order moved down the bayou. At 11 o'clock, when I was about 2 miles above Labadieville, I received the report that the enemy was in force about 1 mile ahead, on the left bank, and that they had six pieces of artillery. I immediately ordered four pieces of Carruth's battery up (two pieces were with the rear guard and Thompson's was already ahead), and formed the Thirteenth Connecticut and Seventy-fifth New York in line of battle to support Thompson.

These two regiments formed splendidly, and moved at once forward to the attack through a dense cane field. I moved on with them and after emerging from the cane field I received the report, which was that the enemy was in position on the right bank also, and that he had four pieces of artillery on that side. At the same time I received the report that the enemy's cavalry was in the rear of my rear guard. I immediately swung by bridge across the bayou, ordering eight companies of the Twelfth Connecticut over to support the Eight New Hampshire, leaving two companies of this regiment, one section of Carruth's battery, and Williamson's cavalry to guard the rear. I immediately ordered also that a road be cut up the steep bank on both sides of the bayou for the passage of artillery and my train. I found soon that the enemy on the left bank, after delivering only the fire of its advance guard, which killed one of my cavalry and wounded another and killed two horses, had disappeared for some unaccountable reason. Fearing some ruse, I immediately ordered the Thirteenth Connecticut across the bayou to support the Eight New Hampshire and the Twelfth Connecticut; Thompson's battery to play upon the enemy's artillery, one the right bank, which was firing splendidly upon our forces and my bridge; ordered Carruth to cross over with his two advanced sections and the Seventy-fifth New York to support Thompson and guard the head of the bridge and the front of the train. I then crossed over, ordered the Eight New Hampshire to form line of battle across the road, the Twelfth Connecticut to form on its right, and ordered these forward to attack at once. They had scarcely commenced moving when the Thirteenth Connecticut arrived on a double-quick from across the bayou. I immediately ordered this in reserve. Subsequently, as the center guides of the Eight New Hampshire and the Twelfth Connecticut moved in different lines of direction, they became sufficiently separated to allow me to throw the Thirteenth Connecticut on the line between the two. I ordered this regiment forward in line of battle. The line thus formed advanced steadily at my command forward. In a very short time the enemy's battery retreated and also the infantry support. The fight did not last long. I found that the enemy had four pieces of artillery in the road. It was Connor's battery Company A,

Withers' light artillery, commanded by Capt. G. Ralston (who was wounded and is now a paroled prisoner); this battery, supported by the remnants of the Eighteenth Louisiana and the Crescent City Regiments, numbering together about 500 men. They were lying down in a ditch on the lower side of a plantation road in the edge of woods at Georgia Landing, and immediately on the left of the battery.

I ordered skirmishers at once in the woods to secure prisoners. Carruth arrived about this time, and I sent him with one section and Perkins' cavalry in pursuit. They pursued about 4 miles, Carruth firing upon the retreating forces on both sides of the bayou. I have since learned that Semmes' battery of six pieces, supported by Colonel Clark's [Clack's] (the Thirty-third) regiment of Louisiana volunteers, was in front on the left bank. I lost 18 killed and 74 wounded. [Revised figures were 18 killed, 74 wounded, 5 missing.] Lieutenant Francis, of the Twelfth Connecticut, was taken prisoner before the fight. We have buried 5 of the enemy and have 17 wounded in our hospital, but I have proof that their loss was greater. I took 166 of the enemy prisoners the day of the battle and 42 of them since; total 208. I released them all on parole. Col. G. P. McPheeters [commanding the Crescent Regiment] was killed. I delivered his body to some of his brother officers who were prisoners, and he was decently buried near the battlefield, the Chaplain of the Eight New Hampshire officiating. One of the pieces of the enemy's artillery broke down in the retreat. We secured it and have it now in our possession. All of my command did very well, both officers and men. The Eight New Hampshire advance steadily in front of the enemy's battery. The Twelfth and Thirteenth Connecticut crossed the bridge, formed in line of battle under the very accurate and splendid fire of the enemy's artillery without seeming to notice it at all. My cavalry has been of invaluable service to me; both officers and men have done splendidly. I wish I had four times the number. The signal corps also had my own and the enemy's wounded put in a house which I took as a hospital new where I went into camp. The next morning (yesterday) I moved down the right bank of the bayou, throwing over the Seventy-fifth New York and Williamson's cavalry on the left bank. I left about 30 wounded of my own, who could not be moved, and the enemy's wounded, in charge of Surg. B. N. Comings, of the Thirteenth Connecticut, and left with him provisions, money, and supplies for their care. I entered Thibodeaux at 3 o'clock p.m. [Tuesday, October 28] without opposition. I certainly expected a fight at this place. When I arrived a short distance from it I found from the smoke of burning bridges that they were retreating, and immediately prevented the total destruction of two railroad bridges, the one across Bayou La Fourche, the other across Bayou Terrebonne. I found three freight cars at La Fourche Crossing uninjured, one containing arms, shovels, and sugar, and another containing a lot of arms, ammunition, and retreat, proving that the enemy had left Bayou Des Allemands. I went into camp on Burton's plantation, about 1 mile below Thibodeaux. I will repair the damage on the two bridges tomorrow. The enemy has retreated to Berwick Bay. I send you

a list of my killed and wounded. I also send you a list of prisoners I paroled. I think it would be well to publish the latter list, as a great many are from New Orleans.

Very Respectfully, your obedient servant,

G. WEITZEL