

# 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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Series I—Volume XV

Pages 176—180  
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Report of Brig. Gen. Alfred Mouton, C. S. Army.

At Mrs. Meade's, November 4, 1862.

SIR: I have the honor of submitting the following report of the movements preceding and following the engagement of the 27th October, 1862, and details relative thereto.

Late on the 25th of October, 1862, I receive information that the gunboats and transports of the enemy were moving up the river slowly and cautiously and that in all likelihood they would soon be at Donaldsonville. They arrived there on the evening of the 25th and commenced landing troops, completing the landing on the 26th. Immediately I moved to Donaldsonville, and found that our troops at the point had fallen back, under command of Colonel [W.G.] Vincent, to the Racconici, in the parish of Assumption, about 12 miles from Donaldsonville. Colonel Vincent informed me that from all the information he had obtained the enemy numbered from 2,500 to 3,000 infantry, 250 cavalry, and two batteries of field artillery. To oppose this force, which was mainly on the left descending bank of La Fourche, Colonel Vincent had only 600 infantry and about 250 cavalry, with Semmes' field battery. The Disparity was so great that I deemed it my duty still to recede until the reinforcements I had ordered up arrived, and accordingly fell back to the plantation of Mr. Winn, 2 miles above Labadieville, where the Eighteenth and Crescent Regiments and Ralston's battery reached me at about 2 p.m., coming in from Berwick Bay and Bayou

Boeuf, where they were stationed. I had also ordered the Terre Bonne regiment militia forward, and they arrived at about 8 a.m. On the 27th Faries' battery was ordered up, but it reached me only on the morning of the 28th. The columns of the enemy were advancing on both banks in about equal force, and in consequence, to prevent being outflanked, it became necessary to hold positions on both sides of the bayou. The Eighteenth and Crescent, supported by Ralston's battery, were placed on the right descending bank, and the Terre Bonne regiment moved over to the left bank. Thus to oppose the enemy on the right bank I had, according to returns made, viz:

Eighteenth Regiment.....240  
 Crescent Regiment.....135  
 Ralston's Battery.....64  
 Detachment of Cavalry.....100  
 539

And on the left bank, viz:

Thirty-third Regiment\*.....594  
 Terre Bonne Regiment.....34  
 Semmes' Battery.....75  
 Second LA Cavalry.....150  
 853 + 539 = 1,392

The enemy moved down about equally strong on both banks, his force being from 1,500 to 1,800 on each side. The column on the right bank pressed on more speedily than that on the left, and approached our line of battle at about 9 a.m. near the road leading into the settlement called Texas, in Assumption. Our forces, though much inferior in numbers, resisted their onward march and effectually succeeded in checking them, until, unfortunately, Ralston's battery was so severely injured by the enemy's, and their ammunition giving out, they were compelled to fall back, which was done in some confusion, owing to the loss of their commander. I then took position about a mile and a half below, at Labadieville, at about 4 p.m., and awaited the advance of the enemy. This retrograde movement was rendered the more necessary from the fact that the enemy was crossing troops on pontoon bridge to the right bank and there massing forces.

Immediately I also threw across part of the infantry stationed on the left; and at the close of the day the force of the enemy numbered about 2,000 infantry, 100 cavalry, and a battery, while my own barely reached 1,000, including infantry, cavalry, and artillery. Informed that the enemy would make simultaneous movements via Donaldsonville, Des Allemands, and Berwick Bay, I had foreseen that the necessity would arise of abandoning Des Allemands and concentrating our forces, believing that the salvation of the troops required the adoption of this course. On the 27th, at about 12m., I gave orders to Major

Sanders, assistant quartermaster, to send over the train to get Colonel [T.E.] Vick's command, consisting of the La Fourche militia regiment, about 500 strong, and a detachment from the Thirty-Third of about 300, with instructions to save everything he could and to destroy everything he might be compelled to leave behind. At the same time I gave orders to the Saint Charles and Saint John the Baptist regiments and to the cavalry picket at the Vacherie and at the Boutte to fall back without delay on the main body.

Major Sanders executed his orders, and in person directed the conductor of the train to move off from the Terre Bonne Station to the Des Allemands to bring in Colonel Vick's command. The engineer on board, a Mr. Jacobs, laboring under a misapprehension of the orders given to Captain Kerr, superintendent, refused to go unless by orders in writing from Captain Kerr or from my headquarters. This man, I am inclined to believe from all the information I could obtain, acted conscientiously, but he certainly caused me much embarrassment. Mr. Nelson, the assistant superintendent, arriving at about 3 p.m., went over with the train, but fearing lest he might be violating orders he and the conductor merely ran through to deliver the orders and returned only with the sick and a portion of the baggage.

In the mean time Colonel Vick prepared for destroying everything at the Des Allemands Station, and after burning the bridge took up his line of march to join me. Colonel Vick's command was so worn-out by the labor required to destroy the Des Allemands Bridge and the depots and their tedious march over the bed of the road that he reached me only at about 3 p.m. of the 28th, notwithstanding the most strenuous efforts on his part to get in earlier.

My object, could I have united my force, was to make a desperate resistance and to drive the enemy back if possible, but when my reinforcements failed to come in no alternative was left to me but to maneuver with the enemy and save my force. In consequence I issued orders for the removal of the sick to Berwick Bay, and made all needful preparation for the removal of the stores.

On the 28th, whilst slowly receding, I held the enemy in check, and at about 12m. concluded that I was reduced to the sad alternative of evacuating the place or have my entire command captured. Resistance with the small force I had was no longer possible, especially as the men were worn-out with fatigue and loss of rest; besides, the mounted picket at Boutte had been driven in by the enemy, who was advancing by the Des Allemands to re-enforce the enemy in front of me, and vague rumors were afloat that the expedition to Berwick Bay had reached its destination. Information also came to me that two transports and two gunboats had gone down from Donaldsonville to New Orleans and that they had returned and were landing re-enforcements at the Assumption cut-off.

Hence I fell back to the Terre Bonne Station, embarked all the stores and troops, and moved them over to Berwick Bay. Colonel Vick's command had not yet arrived, and I remained at the station with the cavalry to protect and cover it, while I sent on the artillery and the cavalry to protect and cover it, while I sent on the artillery and wagon train via Chucahoula by land to rendezvous at Tigerville for transportation, the cars being already filled with troops and stores. About 3 p.m. such portion of Colonel Vick's command as he could bring up arrived, and it was sent on over the railroad track till it met a return train which had been ordered up to receive it.

At 4 p.m. all the troops which could be collected having been sent forward I caused the Thibodeaux Bridge, the La Fourche Crossing Bridge, and the Terrebonne Station to be burned, and moved on with the cavalry, reaching the bay on the 29th, and crossing everything by the 30th.

The casualties in the engagement of the 27th are, according to returns made, as follows, viz: killed, 5; wounded, 8; missing, 186; 3 horses were killed and 9 wounded; one 12-pounder howitzer axle broken, since replaced by one from Des Allemands.

The enemy's loss reaches fully 250 to 300, as I have been informed by an officer of the Eighteenth Regiment, who was taken prisoners and released on parole.

It is my painful duty to record the death of Colonel McPheeters, commanding the Crescent Regiment, who fell gallantly and nobly defending our sacred cause at the head of his command. Captain Ralston, commanding the battery, was wounded and captured. Efforts were made to bring him from the field, but failed, owing to the rapid advance of the enemy. This officer managed his battery with coolness and ability, and deserves much praise for the efficient service which he rendered.

Captain [B.S.] Story, commanding Company D, Eighteenth Regiment, and Lieutenant [J.D.] Burke, of same company, were captured and paroled. The former went over to New Orleans and the latter returned to New Iberia, their respective domiciles. Colonel Armant, of the Eighteenth Regiment, commanded the troops and disposed of them with ability and judgment, availing himself of every cover and protection at hand and falling back in perfect order.

The bridge at Bayou Boeuf, after all the troops and stores had been crossed, was burned, and all the public property at the bay which could not be saved was destroyed before abandoning the latter position, as hereafter explained. On the retreat, I am sorry to say, many of the conscripts attached to Colonel Vick's command lagged behind and are now in the enemy's lines, he reaching the bay with only 82 of them out of about 300.

Having been constantly moving since the 26th and closely watching and engaging the enemy has prevented me sooner from making a full report, and even now it is very imperfect, from the reason that I have been unable to obtain from the different commands all the information needed. I, however, had the honor on the 29th ultimo of submitting a brief statement of results, in the mean time urging upon General Taylor the necessity of his presence here. This communication was forwarded by mail to the care of Colonel Burke, with request that he would forward without delay. On the 30th, to the care Seger came up from the Passes and informed me that four of the enemy's boats were in sight, but the information obtained from the captain was so confused that I immediately dispatched Captain Fuller on board the Hart to ascertain the facts. Upon his return he confirmed the presence of the boats outside the obstructions placed in the Passes and reported four visible, two of which fired into him after he had opened on them to draw their fire to ascertain their caliber.

In the mean time, knowing full well that I could offer no resistance to gunboats at the bay, I dispatched Colonel Sulakowski up the Teche to select a defensible position and erect fortifications. The position chosen was about half a mile up the bayou, along a heavy point in the neighborhood of Mr. Charpantier's, where entrenchments were immediately commenced and preparations made to obstruct the steam a little above this, at Mr. Cornay's bridge, it being impossible to do so effectually anywhere below. Favored with a low tide, I had hoped the enemy would be prevented from removing the obstructions or finding a channel, and the work was urged forward with all the expedition possible under the circumstances, having obtained hands sufficient only by the 31st. From this time forward all dispatch was used and every means in my power employed to offer a successful resistance at this point before the arrival of the boats, but in this I was grievously disappointed. On the 1st Captain Fuller, who was constantly on the alert, informed me that one of the boats was within the obstructions and that the others were making their way past them. I bade him hold them in check and give me all the time he could, which he did to the best of his ability, and I immediately selected another position about 2 miles above the obstructions at Mrs. Meade's, where I commenced entrenchments with a view of establishing heavy guns.

On the 1st the four boats of the enemy had come within the obstructions and moved up the bay cautiously and slowly, and I again ordered Captain Fuller with the Cotton to face and delay them as long as he could. This he accomplished by retarding them at the bay on the 1st. On the 2nd they moved up the bay reconnoitering, and exchanged several shots with the Cotton without injuring her, and they finally dropped back to the bay at night, anchoring one of their boats at Gibbon's Point. Deeming it all important to save the Cotton, with the hope that I might perhaps check them with her in the bayou, should they remove the obstructions at Cornay's previous to the completion of the entrenchments, I

ordered him to back her up the Teche a little above the works, and there hold himself in readiness to engage the boats should they come up, while I urged on the entrancements. All the while I kept scouts forward, who informed me of the movements of the enemy. On the 3rd day the enemy moved up with his whole force, and at 2 p.m. engaged the Cotton and an uncovered land battery of rifled pieces, which I had stationed in such manner as to co-operate with and protect the Cotton. The engagement lasted till about 3:30 p.m., when the enemy's boats came within such close range that the battery and the Cotton were compelled to retire, and the enemy moved up to the obstructions. I as also compelled to withdraw the troops so as to get out of the range of the enemy's shells. As soon as the firing commenced all the Negroes on the works stampeded, and it was impossible to collect them until late last night, when I placed them in the entrenchments again and commenced mounting what guns I could so as to resume my position by 4 a.m. this morning, which I did and now hold. Captain Fuller deserves much praise for the valuable services which he was rendered me and for the courage and boldness with which he has met the enemy at every step.

The casualties of the engagement of the 3rd are 1 Private killed and 2 wounded on the Cotton. She received no serious injury, though slightly damaged. The enemy must have suffered seriously, as many of our shots reached the boats and shrieks and groans were heard. Permit me to repeat that the presence of General Taylor is indispensably necessary here.

Very Respectfully, your obedient servant,  
Alfr. Mouton  
Brigadier-General, Commanding