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Maguder's Report
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Battle of Big Bethel.

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LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY OF WAR.

— . . . —

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA, }
WAR DEPARTMENT, }
RICHMOND, March 31, 1862. }

*To the honorable the Speaker
Of the House of Representatives :*

SIR: In reply to the resolution of the House of Representatives, I have the honor to communicate herewith copies of the official reports, on file in this Department, of the battle of Bethel, on the 10th of June, 1861:

Very respectfully, your ob'dt serv't,
GEO. W. RANDOLPH,
Secretary of War..

✓

Respectfully
Yours
J. M. [illegible]

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REPORT OF COL. J. B. MAGRUDER.

HEADQUARTERS CAMP BETHIEL, }
BETHIEL CHURCH, *June 10th*, 1861. }

LIEUT. COL. 'GARNETT:

SIR: The enemy, thirty-five hundred (3,500) strong, attacked us at our post, and after a very animated conflict of two hours and a half was repulsed at all points and totally routed. Four companies of cavalry are now in hot pursuit towards Newport News. I cannot speak too highly of the devotion of our troops, all of whom did their duty nobly, and whilst it might appear invidious to speak particularly of any regiment or corps, where all behaved so well. I am compelled to express my great appreciation of the skill and gallantry of Major Randolph and his Howitzer Batteries, and Colonel Hill, the officers and men of the North Carolina regiment. As an instance of the latter, I will merely mention that a gun under the gallant Captain Brown of the Howitzer Battery, having been rendered unfit for service by the breaking of a priming wire in the vent, and not being defended by infantry from the small number we had at our command, Captain Brown threw it over a precipice, and the work was occupied for a moment by the enemy. Captain Bridgers of the North Carolina Regiment, in the most gallant manner retook it and held it until Captain Brown had replaced and put in position another piece, and then defended it with his infantry in the most gallant manner. Col. Hill's judicious and determined action was worthy of his ancient glory, and Colonel Stuart, Major Montague, Major Carey, Captains Walker and Atkinson, with every officer and every man under their command, did good service in the front of the fight.

The able and efficient manner in which Captains Douthatt, Phillips and Jones, of the cavalry performed the duties of

infantry, and Lieutenant Chisman of the Wythe Rifles, in protecting the rear of the position, is deserving of high commendation.

There were many acts of personal gallantry, some under my own observation, and others which were reported to me, that I will take occasion to mention in a subsequent communication. At present, I expect another attack, and have no time.

I am extremely indebted to the two brothers, Robert H. and Wm. R. Vaughan, my Acting Commissary and Quartermaster, for the most gallant and efficient services, no less than to my youthful aids Mr. George A. Magruder, Jr., and Hugh Stannard, who were always in the front of the fight, and upon whom I request the Government to bestow commissions, as they are desirous of entering the regular service.

In the hurry of this communication I may have omitted to mention many gallant men.

I have the honor to be,

(Signed,) Very respectfully, your obd't serv't,
J. BANKHEAD MAGRUDER,
Colonel Commanding.

To Col. R. S. GARNETT.

Number of killed and wounded on our side—1 killed and 7 wounded.

Enemy—10 dead bodies found as reported to me, and perhaps 50 wounded. Three prisoners.

Our force, all told, about 1,200 men.

Enemy—3,500 with 18 and 24 pound guns besides light guns.

(Signed,)

J. B. M.

(Official,)

JOHN WITHERS,
Assistant Adjutant General.

A. & I. G. O., March 31, 1862.

REPORT OF COL. J. B. MAGRUDER.

HEADQUARTERS YORKTOWN, }
 June 12, 1861. }

SIR: I had the honor to transmit by Mr. Hugh Stannard, a short account of a battle with the enemy at Bethel Bridge, on the 10th. This was written on the field, and I had not then had time to ascertain the number of killed and wounded on the other side. I think I reported ten killed and many wounded. I have now to report that eighteen dead were found on the field, and I learn from reliable citizens living on the road, that many dead as well as a great many wounded were carried, in wagons, to Hampton. I think I can safely report their loss at from 25 to 30 killed, and 150 wounded. I understand the enemy acknowledge 175 killed and wounded. It is a source of great gratification to me to be able to say that our own loss, as far as heard from, was only one killed and seven wounded—but too much praise cannot be bestowed upon the heroic soldier whom we lost. He was one of four who volunteered to set fire to a house in our front which was thought to afford protection to our enemy—and, advancing alone between the two fires, he fell midway, pierced in the forehead by a musket ball. Henry L. Wyatt is the name of this brave soldier, and devoted patriot. He was a member of the brave and gallant North Carolina Regiment.

I omitted to mention in my hurried dispatch of the tenth, the name of Capt. Jones, of ——— Cavalry, who rendered important service before and during the battle. I regret to say that one of his videttes was cut off by the enemy, and is presumed to have been taken prisoner.

I cannot omit to again bring to the notice of the General-Commanding-in-Chief, the valuable services and gallant conduct of the First North Carolina Regiment, and Major Randolph of the Howitzer Batteries. These officers were not only prompt and daring in the execution of their duties,

but most industrious and energetic in the preparations for the conflict. The firing of the howitzer batteries was as perfect as the bearing of the men, which was entirely what it ought to have been. Captain Bridgers, of the North Carolina Regiment re-took, in the most daring manner and at a critical period of the fight, the work from which Captain Brown, of the artillery had withdrawn a disabled gun, to prevent its falling into the hands of the enemy, and which work had been subsequently occupied by the enemy. This work was soon again occupied with another piece by Captain Brown, who resumed the effective fire. Captain Bridgers deserves the highest praise for this timely act of gallantry.

The Louisiana Regiment arrived after the battle was over, having made a most extraordinary march. They returned to Yorktown the same night, making a distance of 28 miles. It was not thought prudent to leave Yorktown exposed any longer. I, therefore, occupied the ground with cavalry, and marched the remainder of my forces to Yorktown. We took several prisoners, among them some wounded.

Our means of transportation were exceedingly limited, but the wounded enemy were carried with our own wounded to farm houses in our rear, where the good people, who have lost almost every thing by this war, and who could see the smoking ruins of their neighbors houses destroyed by the enemy, both in his advance and retreat, received them most kindly and bound up their wounds. I also ordered the humane Captain Brown to bury as many of the enemy's dead as could be found near our camp, which was done.

The cavalry pursued the enemy for five miles, but were stopped by the bridge across Back river at New Market, which was destroyed by the flying enemy after crossing it.

I am, sir, very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

(Signed,)

J. B. MAGRUDER,

Colonel Commanding.

(Official,)

JOHN WITHERS,

Assistant Adjutant General.

A. & I. G. O., March 31, 1862.

REPORT OF COL. J. B. MAGRUDER.

DIVISION HEADQUARTERS, }
 YORKTOWN, June 16th, 1861. }

SIR: I have the honor, herewith, to enclose for your information, the reports of Col. D. H. Hill, 1st regiment N. C.; Lieut. Col. Stuart, 15th Va. regiment; Major Randolph, Howitzer Battalion; Major Montague, Va. Battalion; Capt. Werth, Va. Battalion, of their respective commands, during the action of the 10th instant, at Bethel Church.

I am, sir, with great respect,

(Signed.)

J. B. MAGRUDER,
Colonel Commanding.

General S. COPER,
Adjutant and Inspector-General, Richmond, Va.

Official:

JOHN WITHERS,
Assistant Adjutant-General.

A. & I. G. O., March 31, 1862.

REPORT OF COL. D. H. HILL.

COL. J. B. MAGRUDER,
Commander York Line :

SIR: I have the honor to report that, in obedience to orders from the Colonel commanding, I marched on the 6th instant, with my regiment and four pieces of Major Randolph's battery, from Yorktown, on the Hampton road, to Bethel Church, nine miles from Hampton. We reached there after dark, on a wet night, and slept without tents. Early on the morning of the 7th, I made a reconnoissance of the ground, preparatory to fortifying. I found a branch of Back river on our front, and encircling our right flank; on our left was a dense and almost impassable wood, except about 150 yards of old field. The breadth of the road, a thick wood and narrow cultivated field, covered our rear. The nature of the ground determined me to make an enclosed work, and I had the invaluable aid of Lieut. Colonel Lee, of my regiment, in its plan and construction. Our position had the inherent defect of being commanded by an *immense* field immediately in front of it, upon which the masses of the enemy might be readily deployed. Presuming that an attempt would be made to carry the bridge, across the stream, a battery was made for its especial protection, and Major Randolph placed his guns so as to sweep all the approaches to it. The occupation of two commanding eminences beyond the creek, and on our right, would have greatly strengthened our position, but our force was too weak to admit of the occupation of more than one of them. A battery was laid out on it for one of Randolph's howitzers. We had only 25 spades, 6 axes and 3 picks; but these were busily plied all day and night of the 7th, and all day on the 8th. On the afternoon of the 8th, I learned that a marauding party of the enemy was in a few miles of us. I called for a party of 34 men to drive them back. Lieut. Roberts, of F company, of my regiment, promptly

responded, and in five minutes his command was en route. I detached Major Randolph, with one howitzer, to join them, and Lieut. Col. Lee, 1st regiment N. C. Volunteers, requested, and was granted, permission to take command of the whole. After a march of five miles, they came across the marauders, busy over the spoils of a plundered house. A shell soon put the plunderers to flight, and they were chased over New Market Bridge, where our little force was halted, in consequence of the presence of a considerable body, situated on the other side. Lieut. Col. Lee brought in one prisoner. How many of the enemy was killed and wounded is not known. None of our command was hurt. Soon after Lieut. Col. Lee left, a citizen came dashing in, with the information that 75 marauders were on the Back river road. I called for Capt. McDowell's company, (E) of the 1st regiment of North Carolina Volunteers, and in three minutes it was in hot pursuit. Lieut. West, of the Howitzer Battalion, with one piece, was detached to join them, and Major Lane, of my regiment, volunteered to assume command of the whole. After a weary march, they encountered, dispersed and chased the wretches over New Market Bridge—this being the second race, on the same day, over the New Market course, in both of which the Yankees reached the goal first. Major Lane brought in one prisoner. Reliable citizens reported that two cart-loads and one buggy-load of wounded were taken into Hampton. We had not a single man killed or wounded. Col. Magruder came up that evening and assumed command.

On Sunday, the 9th, a fresh supply of tools enabled us to put more men to work, and, when not engaged in religious duties, the men worked vigorously on the entrenchments. We were aroused at 3 o'clock on Monday morning, for a general advance upon the enemy, and marched three-and-a-half miles, when we learned that the foe, in large force, was within a few hundred yards of us. We fell back hastily upon our intrenchments, and awaited the arrival of our invaders. Lieut. Col. Stuart, of the 3d Virginia regiment, having come with some 180 men, was stationed on the hill on the extreme right, beyond the creek, and company G, of my regiment, was also thrown over the stream, to protect the howitzer under Capt. Brown. Capt. Bridgers, of company A, 1st N. C. regiment, took post in the dense wood beyond and to the left of the road. Major Montague, with three companies of his battalion, was ordered up from the

rear, and took post on our right, beginning at the church and extending along the entire front on that side. This fine body of men, and the gallant command of Lieut. Colonel Stuart, worked with great rapidity, and, in an hour, had constructed temporary shelters against the enemy's fire. Just at 9 o'clock A. M., the heavy columns of the enemy were seen approaching rapidly and in good order, but when Randolph opened upon them, at nine and a quarter, their organization was completely broken up. The enemy promptly replied with his artillery, firing briskly but wildly. He made an attempt at deployment on our right of the road, under cover of some houses and a paling. He was, however, promptly driven back by our artillery, a Virginia company,—the "Life Guards"—and companies B and G of my regiment. *The enemy attempted no deployment within musketry ranges during the day, except under cover of woods, fences or paling.* Under cover of the trees, he moved a strong column to an old ford, some three-quarters of a mile below, where I had placed a picket of some 40 men. Col. Magruder sent Capt. Werth's company, of Montague's command, with one howitzer, under Sergeant Crane, to drive back this column, which was done by a single shot from the howitzer. Before this, a priming wire had been broken in the vent of the howitzer commanded by Capt. Brown, and rendered it useless. A force estimated at 1,500 was now attempting to out-flank us, and get in the rear of Lieut. Colonel Stuart's small command; he was accordingly directed to fall back, and the whole of our advanced troops were withdrawn. At this critical moment I directed Lieut. Col. Lee to call Capt. Bridgers out of the swamp, and ordered him to re-occupy the nearest advanced work, and I ordered Capt. Ross, company C, 1st regiment N. C. Volunteers, to the support of Lieut. Col. Stuart. These two captains, with their companies, crossed over to Randolph's battery, under a most heavy fire, in a most gallant manner. As Lieut. Col. Stuart had withdrawn, Capt. Ross was detained at the church, near Randolph's battery. Capt. Bridgers, however, crossed over and drove the Zouaves out of the advanced howitzer battery and re-occupied it. It is impossible to over-estimate this service; it decided the action in our favor. In obedience to orders from Colonel Magruder, Lieut. Col. Stuart marched back, and, in spite of the presence of a foe ten times his superior in number, resumed, in the most heroic manner, possession of his intrenchments. A fresh howitzer was car-

ried across and placed in the battery, and Capt. Avery, of company G, was directed to defend it at all hazards.

We were now as secure as at the beginning of the fight, and as yet had no man killed. The enemy finding himself foiled on our right flank, next made his final demonstration on our left. A strong column, supposed to consist of volunteers from different regiments, and under command of Capt. Winthrop, Aid-de-camp to Gen. Butler, crossed over the creek and appeared at the angle on our left. Those in advance had put on our distinctive badge, of a white band around the cap, and they cried out repeatedly, "don't fire." This ruse was practiced to enable the whole column to get over the creek and form in good order. They now began to cheer most lustily, thinking that our work was open at the gorge, and that they could get in by a sudden rush. Companies B and C, however, dispelled the illusion by a cool, deliberate, and well-directed fire. Col. Magruder sent over portions of G, C and H companies, of my regiment, to our support, and now began as cool firing, on our side, as was ever witnessed.

The three field officers of the Regiment were present, and, but few shots were fired without their permission, the men repeatedly saying, "may I fire;" "I think I can bring him." They were all in high glee, and seemed to enjoy it as much as boys do rabbit shooting. Capt. Winthrop, while most gallantly urging on his men, was shot through the heart, when all rushed back with the utmost precipitation. So far as my observation extended, he was the only one of the enemy who exhibited even an approximation to courage during the whole day.

The fight at the angle lasted but twenty minutes. It completely discouraged the enemy, and he made no further effort at assault. The house in front, which had served as a hiding place for the enemy, was now fired by a shell from a howitzer, and the out-houses and palings were soon in a blaze. As all shelter was now taken from him, the enemy called in his troops, and started back for Hampton. As he had left sharp-shooters behind him in the woods on our left, the dragoons could not advance until Capt. Hoke, of Company K, 1st N. C. Volunteers, had thoroughly explored them. As soon as he gave the assurance of the road being clear, Capt. Douthatt, with some 100 dragoons, in compliance with Col. Magruder's orders, pursued. The enemy, in his haste, threw away hundreds of canteens, haversacks,

over-coats, &c.—even the dead were thrown out of the wagons. The pursuit soon became a chase, and, for the third time, the enemy won the race over the New Market Course. The bridge was torn up behind him, and our dragoons returned to camp. There were not quite 800 of my Regiment engaged in the fight, and not one half of these drew trigger during the day. All remained manfully at the posts assigned them, and not a man in the Regiment behaved badly. The companies not engaged were as much exposed, and rendered equal service with those participating in the fight. They deserve equally the thanks of the country. In fact, it is the most trying ordeal to which soldiers can be subjected, to receive a fire, which their orders forbid them to return. Had a single company left its post, our works would have been exposed. And the constancy and discipline of the unengaged companies cannot be too highly commended. A detachment of fifteen cadets, from the N. C. Military Institute, defended the Howitzer under Lt. Hudnall, and acted with great coolness and determination. I cannot speak in too high terms of my two field officers, Lt. Col. Lee and Major Lane. Their services have been of the highest importance, since taking the field to the present moment. My thanks, too, are due, in an especial manner, to Lieut. J. M. Poteat, Adjutant, and Lieut. J. W. Ratchford, Aid—both of them Cadets of the N. C. Institute, at Charlotte. The latter received a contusion in the forehead from a grape shot, which nearly cost him his life. Captain Bridgers' Company, A, Lt. Owens, commanding Company B, Capt. Ross, Company C, Capt. Ashe, Company D, Capt. McDowell, Company E, Capt. Starr, Company F, Captain Avery, Company G, Capt. Huske, Company H, Lt. Whittaker, commanding Company J, Capt. Hoke, Company K, displayed great coolness, judgment and efficiency. Lt. Gregory is highly spoken of by Major Lane, for soldierly bearing on the Sth. Sts. Cook and McKethan, Company H, crossed over under a heavy fire to the assistance of the troops attacked on the left. So did Lt. Cohen, Company C. Lt. Hoke has shown great zeal, energy and judgment, as an Engineer officer, on various occasions.

Corporal Geo. Williams, Company A,
 Privates, Henry L. Wyatt, “ “
 “ Thomas Fallan, “ “
 “ John Thorpe, “ “

Volunteered to burn the house which concealed the enemy. They behaved with great gallantry. Wyatt was killed, and the other three were recalled.

Sergeant Thomas J. Stewart, Company A, and private Wm. McDowell, Company A, reconnoitered the position of the enemy, and went far in advance of our troops. Private J. W. Potts, of Company B, is specially mentioned by his company commander; so are—

Sergeant	William Elmo,	Company	C,
	C. L. Watts,	“	D,
	W. H. McDade,	“	D,
Sergeant	J. M. Young,	“	E,
Corp'l	John Dingler,	“	“
Privates	G. H. A. Adams,	“	“
“	R. V. Gudger,	“	“
“	G. W. Werley,	“	“
“	John C. Wright,	“	“
“	T. Y. Little,	“	“
“	J. F. Jenkins,	“	“
“	R. W. Stedman,	“	F,
“	M. E. Dye,	“	“
“	H. E. Benton,	“	“
“	J. B. Smith,	“	“
“	G. W. Buhmann,	“	H,
“	James C. McRae,	“	“

CASUALTIES.

Private Henry L. Wyatt, Company K, mortally wounded.

Lieut. J. W. Ratchford, contusion.

Pri. Council Rodgers, Company H, severely wounded.

“ Charles Williams, “ “ “

Private S. Patterson, “ D, slightly wounded.

“ William White, “ K, wounded.

“ Peter Poteat, “ G, slightly wounded.

I cannot close this too elaborate report, without speaking in the highest terms of admiration of the Howitzer Battery and its most accomplished Commander, Major Randolph. He has no superior as an artillerist in any country, and his men displayed the utmost skill and coolness. The left Howitzer,

under Lieut. Hudnall, being nearest my works, came under my special notice. Their names are as follows:

Lieut. Hudnall, commanding, wounded,
 Serg't S. B. Hughes,
 G. H. Pendleton,
 R. P. Pleasants,
 Wm. M. Caldwell,
 Geo. W. Hobson,
 Wm. McCarthy,
 H. C. Shook, wounded,
 L. W. Timberlake,
 Geo. P. Hughes,
 Jno. Worth, wounded,
 D. B. Clark.

Permit me, in conclusion, to pay a well-deserved compliment to the 1st Regiment N. C. Volunteers. Their patience, under trial, perseverance, under toil, and courage under fire, have seldom been surpassed by veteran troops. Often working night and day—sometimes without tents and cooking utensils—a murmur has never escaped them, to my knowledge. They have done a large portion of the work on the intrenchments at Yorktown, as well as those at Bethel. Had all of the Regiments in the field worked with the same spirit, there would not be an assailable point in Virginia. After the battle, they shook hands affectionately with the spades, calling them “clever fellows and good friends.”

The men are influenced by high, moral and religious sentiments, and their conduct has furnished another example of the great truth, that he who fears God, will ever do his duty to his country.

The Confederates had in all about 1,200 men in the action. The enemy had the Regiments of Col. Duryea, (Zouaves,) Col. Carr, Col. Allen, Col. Benedict, and Col. Wardrop, (Massachusetts,) from Old Point Comfort, and five Companies of Phelps' Regiment, from Newport News. We had never more than 300 actively engaged at any one time. The Confederate loss was 11 wounded; of these, one mortally. The enemy must have lost some 300. I could not, without great disparagement of their courage, place their loss at a lower figure. It is inconceivable that 5,000 men should make so precipitate a retreat, without having sustained at least this much of a reverse.

Let us devotedly thank the living God for his wonderful interposition in our favor, and evince our gratitude by the exemplariness of our lives.

With great respect,

(Signed,)

D. H. HILL,

Col. 1st Reg't N. C. Volunteers.

(Official:)

JNO. WITHERS,
Ass't Adjutant Gen'l.

A. & I. G. O.,
March 31, '62.

REPORT OF LIEUT. COLONEL WM. D. STUART.

HEADQUARTERS DETACHMENT, 3D REG'T.,
 VIRGINIA VOLUNTEERS, YORKTOWN, VA. } }

Colonel JOHN B. MAGRUDER :

SIR: I have the honor to report that I took the position assigned me, in the engagement of the 10th, to the right and in front of the line-of-battle, and completed the slight breastwork erected to protect the command, consisting of three companies of my detachment, commanded by Capts. Walker, Childrey and Charters, numbering, rank and file, 208 men. The enemy deployed as skirmishers in the orchard, immediately in front and to our left, protected on the left by several frame buildings and sheds; those in front were dispersed by a fire from the first platoon of Captain Walker's company, but we were annoyed by the fire from behind the buildings, and the battery in the road to our left, but under cover of the breastworks, the men remained unhurt. After the dispersion of the skirmishers, a column of about fifteen hundred appeared in the road immediately in our front, extending from the left to right, with a battery of artillery in front, and advancing a line of skirmishers down the ravine on my right, protected from both view and fire, which fact was reported to me by scouts sent out for the purpose of observing their movements. The battery in front commenced advancing on the left of the ravine and immediately in our front. The battery supporting us on the left had been silenced and withdrawn sometime before this. These facts being communicated to you, in obedience to your orders, I retired in order through the swamp to the 2d position assigned me on the hill, on the left of the church. Here, one of my companies was detached, and sent to the support of Capt. Werth, another under Captain Walker was sent to Presson's, near the Warwick and York Bridge. About this time, Capt. Atkinson's company had arrived on the field, and with this and a detachment of the Wythe Rifles, I re-crossed the swamp, advanced and regained my former position. I was

supported at this time by a portion of company G, of North Carolina Rifles, and with their aid again drove off some skirmishers advancing through the orchard. The firing, however, after I regained my position, was irregular on the part of the enemy, and I only permitted some few shots to be fired at a prominent position of their column, and stragglers skulking behind the fences, owing to the enemy being much beyond rifle range.

Both officers and men under my command behaved with the greatest coolness throughout the whole engagement and none were injured.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

(Signed,)

WM. D. STUART,

Lieut. Colonel 3rd Va. Volunteers.

(Official)

JOHN WITHERS,

A. A. General.

A. & I G. O., March 31, 1861.

REPORT OF MAJOR GEO. W. RANDOLPH.

 YORKTOWN, June 12th, 1861.

Col. JOHN B. MAGRUDER,
Com'g the Division at Yorktown :

COLONEL: I have the honor to report that in the action of the 10th instant, the Howitzer Battalion, under my command, fired eighteen (18) solid shot and eighty (80) shells, spherical case and canister, and was injured in the following particulars:

A Lieutenant and two privates were wounded, (one severely and two slightly,) five (5) horses and three (3) mules were killed or disabled, the Parrott gun (iron rifled,) had its linstock splintered, and a musket ball passed through the felloe of the left wheel, a musket ball pierced the corner plate and a partition of the limber chest of one of the howitzers and lodged against a shell; two poles of caissons, one set of swingle bars, one large pointing ring, a chain for a rammer and several priming wires were broken; and one of the howitzers was spiked by the breaking of a priming wire in its vent.

I have already made a requisition for ammunition enough to fill all the chests of the battalion, and will submit as soon as practicable requisitions for what ever else may be required.

As the position of the pieces was under your own observation, it is only necessary to state that the Parrott gun, and one howitzer were posted in the battery immediately on the right of the road leading to Hampton; that a howitzer was placed in the battery erected on the right beyond the ravine through which a pass-way was made for the purpose of withdrawing the piece if necessary; a howitzer was posted near the bridge; the rifled howitzer was placed on the left of the road behind the right of a redoubt erected by the North Carolina Regiment; and a howitzer was posted in the rear of the road leading from the half-way-house; a howitzer having been

previously sent to the half-way-house under the command of Lieutenant Moseley.

Early in the action the howitzer in the battery on the right having been spiked by the breaking of the priming wire, was withdrawn from its position and the infantry supporting it fell back upon the church, but it was subsequently replaced by the howitzer of Lieut. Moseley, which arrived at a later period of the action.

The ford on the left being threatened, the howitzer at the bridge was withdrawn and sent to that point, and the rifled howitzer was withdrawn from the left of the road, and sent to assist in the protection of the rear.

The same disposition was subsequently made of the howitzer at the main battery, situated immediately on the right of the road.

The enemy came in sight on the road leading from Hampton a few minutes before 9 o'clock, A. M., and their advance guard halted at a house on the road side about (600 yards) in front of our main battery. Fire, however, was not opened upon them for ten or fifteen minutes, when from the number of bayonets visible in the road, we judged that a heavy column was within range.

The action then commenced by a shot from the Parrott gun, aimed by myself, which struck the centre of the road a short distance in front of their column and probably did good execution in its ricochet. At no time could we see the bodies of the men in the column and our fire was directed by their bayonets; their position being obscured by the shade of the woods on their right and two small houses on their left, and somewhat in advance of them. Our fire was immediately returned by a battery near the head of their column, but concealed by the woods and the houses so effectually that we only ascertained its position by the flash of the pieces. The fire was maintained on our side for sometime by the five pieces posted in front of our position; but as already stated, one of them being spiked and another withdrawn to protect the ford early in the action, the fire was continued with these pieces and at no time did we afterwards have more than three pieces playing upon the enemy. The fire on our part was deliberate and was suspended whenever masses of the enemy were not within range, and the execution was good, as I afterwards ascertained, by a personal inspection of the principal position of the enemy. The cannonade lasted with intervals of suspension from a few minutes before 9 o'clock,

A. M., until 1 1-2 o'clock, P. M., and the fact that during this time but ninety-eight (98) shot were fired by us, tends to show that the firing was not too rapid.

The earth-works, thrown up by the battalion, were struck several times by the common shot of the enemy, but no injury was sustained. They fired upon us with shot, shell, spherical case, canister and grape, from six and twelve pounders, at a distance of about six hundred (600) yards, but the only injury received from their artillery was the loss of one mule.

We found in front of our main battery, in and near the yard of the small house already mentioned, five killed and one mortally wounded by the fire of our artillery. We heard of two others killed at Cramdall's, about a mile from us, and have reason to believe there were many others.

The injury done to our artillery was from the fire of musketry on our left flank. The ground on that side, between us and the enemy, sinking down, so as to expose us over the top of the breast-work, erected by the North Carolina Regiment.

After some intermission of the assault in front, a heavy column, apparently a reinforcement or reserve, made its appearance on the Hampton Road, and pressed forward towards the bridge, carrying the United States flag near the head of the column. As the road had been clear for some time, and our flanks and rear had been threatened, the howitzer in the main battery had been sent to the rear, and our fire did not at first check them, I hurried a howitzer forward from the rear, loaded it with canister, and prepared to sweep the approach to the bridge; but the fire of the Parrott gun again drove them back. The howitzer, brought from the half-way house by Lieut. Moseley, arriving most opportunely, I carried it to the battery on the right to replace the disabled piece. On getting there, I learned from the infantry that a small house in front was occupied by sharp-shooters, and saw the body of a Carolinian lying thirty yards in front of the battery, who had been killed in a most gallant attempt to burn the house.

I opened upon the house with shell, for the purpose of burning it; and the battery of the enemy, in the Hampton Road—being on a line with it—and, supposing probably that the fire was at them, immediately returned it with solid shot. This disclosed their position, and enabled me to fire at the house and at their battery, at the same time. After

an exchange of five or six shots, a shell entered a window of the house, increased the fire already kindled, until it soon broke out into a light blaze, and, as I have reason to believe, disabled one of the enemy's pieces. This was the last shot fired. They soon afterwards retreated, and we saw no more of them.

The action disclosed some serious defects in our ammunition and equipment, for which I earnestly recommend an immediate remedy. The shell of the Parrott gun have a fixed wooden fuse, which cannot be extricated. The shortest being cut for four seconds. The consequence was, that the shells burst far in the rear of the enemy, and served merely as solid shot. Had they been plugged and uncut fuses furnished, I think that our fire would have been much more effective. The power and precision of the piece, demonstrated by the thirty rounds fired from it, render it very desirable that all of its advantages should be made available.

I therefore respectfully suggest that the shell be hereafter furnished plugged, and the fuses left uncut.

It is reported to me that the Borman fuses, used by one of the howitzers, were defective—the shells cut for five seconds exploding as soon as those cut for two.

The caissons of the Navy Howitzers were made by placing ammunition chests upon the running gear of common wagons, and the play of the front axles is so limited, that the caisson cannot be turned in the ordinary roads of this part of the country; and wherever the road is ditched, or the woods impassable, it cannot be reversed. There is also great danger of breaking the poles in turning the caissons quickly, as was shown in the action of the 10th instant. I am aware that the expedient of using wagon bodies was resorted to in order to save time; but, as it might lead to great disaster, I recommend that their places be supplied as speedily as possible with those made in the usual way.

The small size of the limber of the howitzers, (Navy.) renders it impossible to mount the men, and the pieces cannot move faster than the cannoniers can walk. In a recent skirmish with the enemy, in which we pursued them rapidly, we could only carry two men; and having got far ahead of the others, we had to unlimber and fire with only two cannoniers at the piece. The piece having only two horses, and the carriage being very light, it is hazardous to mount any person on the limber.

I therefore recommend that four horses be furnished to

each Navy Howitzer—one for the chief, and the other three for the men usually mounted on the limber.

We have succeeded, since the action, in unspiking the howitzer disabled by the breaking of the priming wire, but from the inferior metal used in making our priming wires, we shall have to lay them aside altogether, and I must request that better ones be furnished. At present I can say nothing more of the conduct of the officers and men of the battalion, than to express the high gratification afforded me by their courage, coolness and precision, and to ask permission at a future time, to call your attention to individual instances of gallantry and good conduct. I have requested the commandants of companies to furnish me with the names of such non-commissioned officers and privates as they think especially worthy of notice.

I am happy at having an opportunity to render my acknowledgments to Col. Hill, the Commandant of the North Carolina Regiment, for the useful suggestions which his experience as an artillery officer enabled him to make to me during the action, and to bear testimony to the gallantry and discipline of that portion of his command with which I was associated. The untiring industry of his Regiment in intrenching our position, enabled us to defeat the enemy with a nominal loss on our side.

I have the honor to be,

Your obedient servant,

(Signed,)

GEORGE W. RANDOLPH,

Major Commanding the Howitzer Battalion.

(Official copy:)

Jno. WITNERS,

A. A. General.

A. & I. G. O.,

March 31, '62.

REPORT OF MAJOR E. B. MONTAGUE.

On the morning of the 10th of June, my command reported to Colonel Magruder at Bethel Church, according to orders. At ——— in the morning information was received that the enemy in force were advancing upon us. Col. M. immediately ordered me to throw up a redoubt fronting toward a ravine over which it was supposed the enemy might attempt to turn our right flank. My men worked well and had nearly finished the redoubt, when the first gun from our batteries was fired, which took place at — o'clock, A. M. The enemy returned the fire with spirit, and the shells and shot flew thick and fast about my command, who were in a peculiarly exposed condition, my redoubt flanking towards and being nearly perpendicular to the points of attack. Fortunately for my command, however, the major part of the enemy's shot had sufficient elevation to pass over our heads, though many shell and solid shot fell within a few feet of our redoubt, one ball passed under my horse between his fore and hinder feet; several others passed within a few feet of his head, and a few buried themselves in our breastwork. Had the enemy's guns been slightly depressed he must have raked my whole line with his enfilading fire. A very short time after the firing commenced, I received an order to direct one of my companies, the Chatham Grays, under the command of Captain Werth, to defend a ford one mile below the bridge against the first battalion of the New York Zouave Regiment, and I saw no more of the company until after the fight. About — minutes after the fight, and after Lieut. Colonel Stuart had been compelled to fall back across the ravine and occupy my redoubt, Col. Magruder ordered me to take my command about 1 1-4 miles around to aid the Wythe Rifles, under the command of Lieut. Chisman, in guarding a marsh where he thought the enemy were attempting to turn our left flank. I immediately carried my command around to the point indicated at the double quick, joined the rifles, and deployed my whole command as skirmishers, over line of a quarter of a mile, under cover of

a dense foliage. We remained in this position until late in the evening, when we were ordered back by Col. Magruder to the church. The enemy did not attempt to cross our line, and we remained quiet and inactive during the remainder of the fight. We had no killed or wounded. Every man in my whole command, both officers and men were perfectly cool, calm and collected during the whole time which we were exposed to the enfilading fire from the enemy's battery, and to the diagonal fire of musketry from his left flank. I have no hesitancy in expressing my gratification at the manner in which my command, the Halifax Light Infantry, Captain Grammer, the Chatham Grays, Captain Werth, and the Old Dominion Rifles, Captain Dickinson, as well as the detachment of the North Carolina Regiment, under my command, conducted themselves during the whole engagement.

Respectfully reported,

(Signed,)

E. B. MONTAGUE,

Major Commanding Va. Battalion.

To COL. J. B. MAGRUDER,

Commanding Division.

(Official,)

JOHN WITHERS,

A. A. General.

A. & I. G. O., March 31, 1862.

REPORT OF CAPTAIN W. H. WERTH.

CAMP YORKTOWN, JUNE 13th. 1861.

To JOHN B. MAGRUDER,
Colonel Commanding Division :

I beg leave to make the following report of the movement of the troops under my command at the battle of Bethel Church, on the 10th instant.

By the order of E. B. Montague, Major of the Virginia Battalion at Bethel, my company, the Chatham Grays, was placed in the redoubt to the rear of the church to defend the right wing in case of a discomfiture. From this point, I was detailed by your orders to take position at the ford on the creek, about one mile below the bridge. I crossed my command over the open field under a shower of shell and canister, which the enemy poured into us from their battery, but sustained no damage.

A portion of the 5th New York Zouave Regiment (3 companies) was at this time advancing down the opposite bank of the stream for the purpose of crossing the ford, and thereby turn our left flank. I saw the movement, and at once took double quick and made the distance of over a mile in about nine minutes, beating the Zouaves and getting in position at the ford in time to cause them to halt. I obstructed the ford in all conceivable ways, by felling trees, &c., and then placed my first platoon on the north west side, under cover of an old mill dam, whilst my second platoon I placed in ambush on the opposite side, where the road leading to the ford could have been raked for 400 yards with deadly effect. At 10 o'clock and 10 minutes, one Naval Howitzer with a detachment from the Howitzer Battalion reported to me for duty. I at once placed the gun in a position 120 yards up the creek from my infantry, where I had a beautiful range for grape or canister on a spot in the road on the opposite side of the stream, over which the enemy would of necessity pass in attempting the passage of the ford. From this point I had the pleasure of getting one good shot at the ene-

my, which from the sudden rout of the party at which it was aimed, must have done much damage. I also threw down all the fences on either side of the creek, and cleared all the undergrowth and large timber so that after the enemy had passed the range of the howitzer from its first position, I could limber up, and in two minutes have it in position to deliver its fire between my two platoons, and immediately upon the ford. At 10 to 11 A. M., the Southern Guard, Captain ———, reported to me for duty. I at once joined this command with my company, all entirely concealed from the enemy. At a little past 11 o'clock, so completely ambuscaded was my entire force, one of the enemy sent down to examine the ford, come up to within 20 yards of my position and did not suspect the presence of any force, until I ordered him to ground arms, which he instantly did, and I had the pleasure of taking him prisoner. He had a fine Minnie musket, accoutrements, and 45 rounds of cartridges. I placed him under guard, and afterwards forwarded him to Headquarters. All the men under my command displayed a wonderful degree of coolness for troops who had never been under fire, and I am assured if we had been so fortunate as to have been attacked by a force five times our strength, that the command would have made a desperate resistance.

At sun down I was ordered to withdraw.

This special report is rendered necessary by my being detached from Major Montague's Battalion.

With high respect,

I am sir, yours, &c.,

W. H. WERTH,

Capt. Chatham Grays, Va. Vols.

JOHN WITHERS,

A. A. General.

(Official,)

A. & I. G. O., March 31, 1862.

REPORT OF CAPT. W. H. WERTH.

HEADQUARTERS, }
YORKTOWN, June 12th, 1861. }

COL. J. B. MAGRUDER,
Commanding Division:

SIR: I beg leave, very respectfully, to make the following report of my scout:

On Sunday afternoon, the 9th of June, 1861, I procured the corn and oats on the Back river road, as ordered, and had the wagons returning to camp in two hours and a quarter from the receipt of the order. I was then joined by one company of North Carolina infantry, one piece of the howitzer battery, and a detachment of Capt. Donthatt's cavalry, as I supposed, to assist me in making observations near Hampton, on the Back river. I approached New Market Bridge at 5 o'clock P. M., planted the howitzer so as to sweep the bridge, deployed my infantry in open order, on my right flank, in ambush, so that they could rake the road. The cavalry I posted in the rear, and threw out videttes on each of my flanks, to avoid a surprise. In this position, I waited for the appearance of the enemy. I, of course, had no idea of endangering my command by engaging the enemy, if in force. I was too weak. In a few moments alarm guns were fired by a chain of sentinels, extending from New Market Bridge to Fortress Monroe. In a few moments a force advanced from Hampton, (supposed to be a battalion of infantry, but marching in detached companies,) whilst, at the same time, one or more companies approached by the road leading from Newport News. These forces were each advancing upon New Market Bridge from *opposite directions*, thinking I had crossed the bridge with my command. Upon observing their approach with a glass, I quietly *retired* from my position to a point in the rear, three-quarters of a mile. The enemy approached the bridge, and when they suddenly came in sight of each other, they (each mistaking the other

for me,) opened fire and kept it up for some five minutes before they discovered their error. I was sitting on my horse, near the bridge, and saw the firing plainly with my glass, but did not, at the time, *know* the cause, although I suspected it. At dusk I took up the march for Bethel Church, the enemy following me, and the next morning the fight opened.

I am, sir, very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

W. H. WERTH.

One of the prisoners taken (since dead,) stated that, in this brush, there were 6 killed and 13 wounded; and corroborated all the above statements of my report.

W. H. WERTH.

Official:

JOHN WITHERS

Assistant Adjutant-General.

A. & I. G. O., March 31, 1862.

REPORT OF CAPT. W. H. WERTH.

CAMP YORKTOWN, June 12th. 1861.

To Col. J. B. MAGRUDER,
Commanding Division :

SIR: I beg leave to make the following report of a reconnoissance, made by me, of the enemy's position at Newport News, on Friday, 7th June. 1861:

I had under my command 20 picked men and horses, from the Old Dominion Dragoons, "together with two men from my company." Capt. Philips accompanied me, as did Lieut. Cary and Lieut. Harrison, the latter from the Charles City cavalry. My object was to make a close examination of the enemy's works at Newport News, which I knew would be of service to you in your future movements. I did not *start* with the intention of pressing my men into certain ruin by an attack upon an overwhelming force, but simply to make a reliable reconnoissance. At about 1 o'clock, I had approached the enemy's position to within two miles. I, Capt. Philips, and two men, were in advance of the detachment some 400 yards, whilst two men marched the same distance in rear. At this juncture I saw a squad of eight men on the bank of James river, and distant from me some distance, probably a mile and a half. I examined them with my glass and knew them to be soldiers. They immediately fled towards their fortifications. I saw at once that, if I allowed them to reach the works and give the alarm, that my whole command might be cut off and my reconnoissance broken up, so I at once ordered a forward movement at speed, so that I might cut them off. Our advance party of five being better mounted, and having so much the start, distanced the detachment in running the two miles, and placed them probably 600 yards in the rear. When our little advance party had ridden to within 700 yards of Newport News fortifications, I ordered Capt. Philips and the two men of the advance guard to change direction to the *right*, so that he

might get between the eight fugitives and the works, whilst I continued my direct advance upon the works, thinking, if Capt. Philips failed to intercept these men, that I should certainly meet them. After I had approached the fortifications of the enemy to within 400 yards, I turned to the right, (the James river side,) to head the eight men. I had gone in this direction probably two or three hundred yards, when suddenly I came up to within fifty yards of a party of the enemy, engaged in cutting wood. I was then entirely alone. I halted and hid myself behind a thicket, only twenty yards from the party. Here I remained long enough to count the number of men, distinguish the officers, &c. In about three minutes the eight men (whom Capt. Philips had failed to intercept,) raised the alarm in the Massachusetts regiment, (which was encamped outside of the works, and not more than 160 yards from the spot where I stood,) and I at once saw that I must do quickly whatever I intended doing, so I reined my horse back and walked him out into the clearing, in plain view of the whole party, and not more than twenty paces from them, picked out the commissioned officer and shot him dead in his tracks. The whole party then yelled "look out, look out for the d——d Virginia horsemen, they are down upon us," &c., and at once threw down everything they had, and commenced a retreat at a *double quick*. I put the spurs to my horse and rode into them at full speed, (giving, at the same time, a loud walla-walla war-whoop,) and then delivered my second shot, which brought another man (a private) dead to the ground. (I shot the first one through the heart, and the last one under the right shoulder-blade.) My horse by this time became totally unmanageable, and my third fire missed its aim but killed a sorrel mule. I fired only these three shots. The party consisted of *twenty-seven* privates of infantry, two privates of artillery, one commissioned officer and one non-commissioned officer of infantry—in all thirty-one. Their uniform corresponded with mine—gray cloth with black trimming. Capt. Philips and his party of two men had been joined, in the meantime, by the main party, and I soon crossed over to them. We then galloped after the retreating enemy, but saw one or two companies from the regiment running to the rescue, which induced me to apprehend an attack. In this I was mistaken, for, instead of the party of *thirty-one* rallying in the two companies, the two companies partook of the panic, and rushed back towards the fortifications, yelling "Virginia

horsemen" as long as I staid to hear them. The party of *thirty-one* had their arms stacked against a tree, whilst four of them were on guard with their muskets. I cannot say whether the guard fired or not, I did not pay much attention to them. The two companies which came to the rescue had their muskets, but *forgot to fire*. On the left wing of the encampment there was a field battery of two brass 12-pounders, unlimbered, which were not over 150 or 160 yards from us, but the gunners had abandoned the battery. If I had not been so entirely at the mercy of the guns of the fortifications at Newport News, (only about 600 yards off,) I should certainly have *burnt* the whole encampment, for it is my firm impression the whole regiment ran into the works and abandoned everything.

Capt Philips, I must say, proved, upon this occasion, that he was a man of consummate coolness and bravery, and his men are of that kind of metal which can be relied upon under *any and all* circumstances. Lieuts. Cary and Harrison were prepared for *anything*, and, I am convinced, would have followed to any place where their horses could have leaped.

In making the *approach*, I went by New Market Bridge and St. Clair's steam mill, but, upon returning, I took a new road through the woods, fearing the troops from Hampton had formed an *ambuscade* for my reception. I returned to Bethel by 6 o'clock without damage, and then joined my command, on Pocosin river.

I am, sir, yours respectfully,

W. H. WERTH,

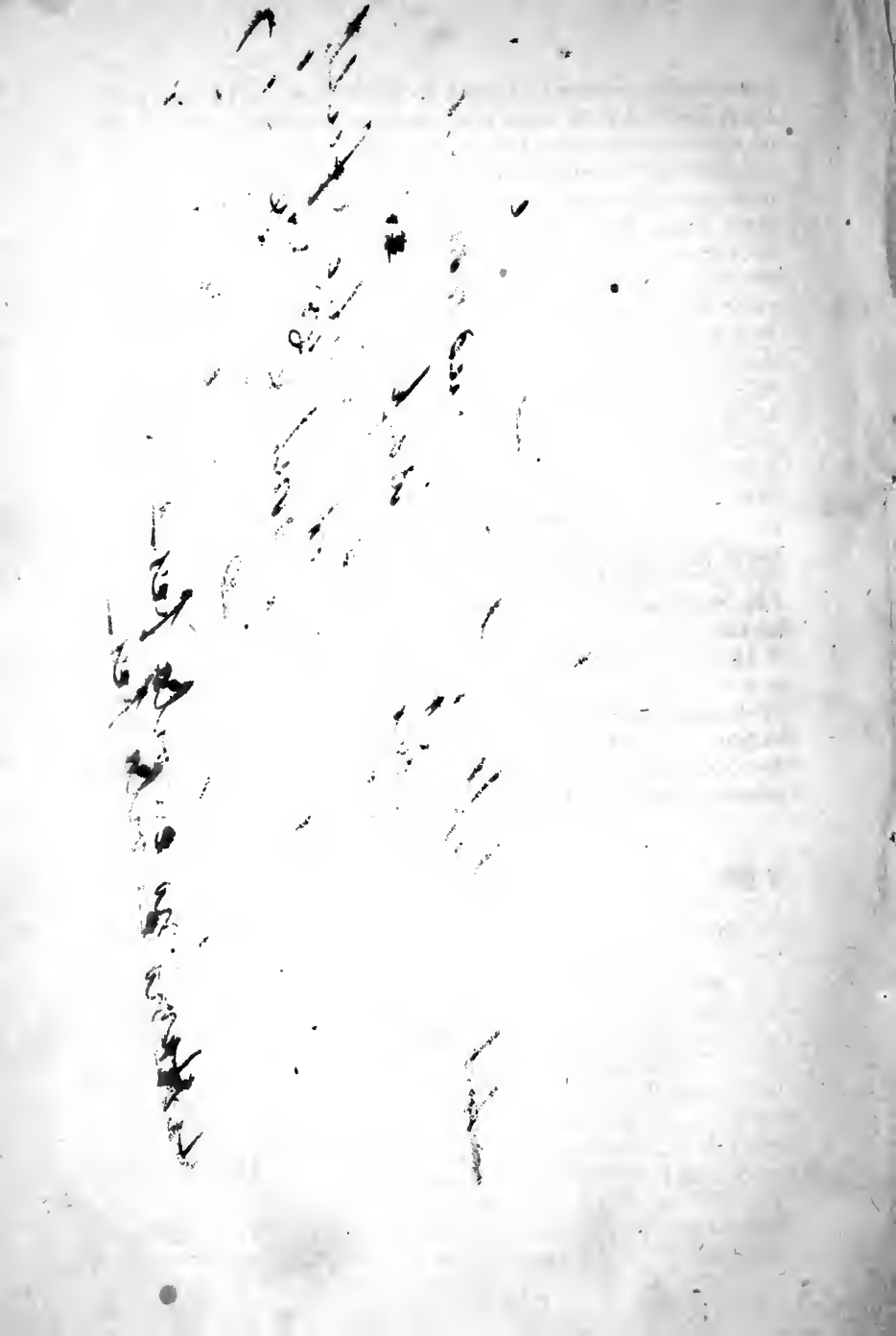
Captain Chatham Grays, Va. Vols.

Official:

JOHN WITHERS,

Assistant Adjutant-General.

A. & I. G. O., March 31, 1862.



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