

Hd. Qrs Manigault's Brig.
Near Dalton Ga Dec 8 "63
A.M. Manigault
Brig. Genl.

Official Report of the Battle at Missionary Ridge Nov. 23, 24, & 25 1863

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Hd. Qrs. Manigault's Brigade
Hindman's Division, Hardee's Corps A.T.
Camp near Dalton, Ga. December 8th 1863

Major J.P. Wilson
A.A. Genl.

Major,

I herewith respectfully submit my report of the part taken by this Brigade in the engagement of the 23rd & 25th Nov. at & near Missionary Ridge, Tenn.

On the 23rd ult. at about 2 PM information was brought me, that the movements of the enemy indicated an advance on our lines. That portion of the Brigade in camp in rear of the breastworks consisting of the 10th & 19th S.C. Regiments consolidated, & the 34th Ala Regt were immediately ordered to occupy their assigned positions & to hold themselves in readiness for an attack by the enemy.

The 24th Ala Col. N.N. Davis & 28th Ala Lt. Col. W.L. Butler were at the time on picket duty in front of my own & the position of General Anderson's Brigade. The former occupying a position in front of the two high hills, which were the most prominent points occupied by our entire line of outpost & generally known as the "Cedar" hills or "Garrity's" hill. The latter regiment to the left of this point, with a gap between the 24th Ala of some 300 yards, a corresponding gap existing between the right of the 24th Ala & the regt on like duty in front of Genl. Deas's position.

These two Regiments for the time being were under the command of the Division officer of the day; consequently I extended no orders to & exercised no authority over them.

A little before 4 o'clock P.M. the enemy commenced to advance in two lines, joined afterwards by a third, the whole preceded by a line of Skirmishers; the latter were soon checked but the first line moved steadily forward & came under the fire of our entire line, consisting of the picket reserves who had now been joined by the line of videttes & skirmishers & had taken position in the field works or rifle pits. The Comdg. Officer of the 24th Ala Regt after engaging the enemy in his front for some time perceiving that he would soon be overpowered by the heavy odds against him & in all probability cut off & captured, very properly withdrew his regiment, not however, until he had met with some loss in killed & wounded.

Lt. Col. Butler, Comdg. 28th Ala having received information from some source unknown to me, that he would be supported, determined to hold his position as long as it was possible for him to do so.

This gallant Regiment & its brave Commander coolly awaited the advance of the enemy & when within a short distance delivered a most destructive fire into their

crowded ranks; from its severity the front line staggered & halted, but being soon joined by the second line, the two together came on with one impulse & a contest hand to hand in many instances ensued. While thus engaged, Col. Butler perceived that the enemy had passed his right flank (they meeting with no opposition there) & were fast closing in upon his rear; to save his Command he gave the order for his regiment to retire & succeeded in extracting them from the perilous position, but sustaining a heavy loss in killed, wounded, & prisoners. I would refer you to the reports of Cols Davis & Butler for a more detailed account of this affair.

On the night of the 23rd of November these two Regiments 24th & 28th Ala were relieved from picket duty by the 34th Ala, Maj. Slaughter Comdg. & ordered to bivouac on the top of the Missionary Ridge; details from each were made to construct breastworks of timber on its brow; some 40 entrenching tools were furnished for this purpose but were taken away by superior authority, after having had the use of them for 2 or 3 hours; there were but four axes in the Command, the consequence was that work progressed slowly & the protection obtained against the enemy's fire in the new line was poor & insufficient, although every effort was made to make them as secure as possible.

The 10th & 19th S.C.V. Col. Trepley & 34th Ala, Major Slaughter, my two largest regiments, numbering nearly two thirds of the effective force of the Brigade, were by orders left at the foot of the ridge, to hold the breastworks there & to do picket duty.

During the 24th the enemy shelled our position at times with great severity, but fortunately injuring no one; with this exception all remained quiet in our front. The two hills taken by the enemy the evening before, were now fortified by them & a battery of rifle guns placed in position there.

At about 11 AM on the 25th the enemy's skirmishers, strongly supported, advanced, & drove in our pickets to the works at the foot of the ridge, their Sharp Shooters lining the skirts of the woods some 310 yards in our front. At the same time large numbers of troops were seen issuing from the enemy's works around Chattanooga; they immediately commenced deploying, extending their lines in front of this Division & to the right & left of it at a distance of about a mile from us. The heavy firing far on our right told plainly, that the battle had already commenced there.

Several hours were occupied by them in forming their lines of battle, our troops in the meantime were held in readiness to occupy the breastworks on the crest, so soon as an advance appeared to be positively determined by the enemy. My command at this point did not exceed six hundred (600) men, a number totally inadequate to fill out the works even in our rank. It was understood however, that the regiments from the foot of the ridge on retreating & reaching it, would be assigned to positions in them; (the breastworks).

At a few minutes before 4 o'clock P.M. the signal for the advance of the enemy's column or line was given by an almost simultaneous discharge of all their artillery in their different works & within a short space of time their dark lines were visible emerging from the woods in our front & entering into the open space in front of our lower line.

The troops in this last mentioned line, in obedience to instructions received, delivered their fire & rapidly retreated out of the works; endeavored to join their comrades on the crest with the least possible delay. These men knowing that during the passage from one point to the other, that they would be subjected to a heavy fire of artillery & musketry, which they could not return, endeavored to accomplish the distance

with too much speed. The consequence was, that many failed to reach the summit at all, but fall [fell] exhausted; some were killed or wounded, & those who at last gained the crest, reached it in a broken down, exhausted & demoralized condition. Many were forced to throw away arms, accoutrements & knapsacks, or in the effort to preserve them, ran the risk of being captured themselves. I am informed, that it had not been made known to the men or company officers that it was not intended to make any resistance at the lower breastworks, so that many not hearing the order to retire, seeing their comrades flying as they supposed, refused to follow them & were eventually either captured or killed. I saw these men firing on their foes when the latter were within but a few feet of the defences. Others again preferred falling into the hands of the enemy (I regret to have to state it) rather than run the gauntlet of fire, that they knew they would be exposed to in leaving one position to go to another. For many minutes after the arrival of these regiments on the crest of the ridge, both officers & men were so faded & fatigued as to be utterly incapacitated for service. The moral effect was to say the least, unfortunate. The confidence it gave our enemies seeing so large a body of their opponents so easily driven from a comparatively strong position, must have been stimulating & encouraging.

Having gained possession of our lower line, the Federals lost no time, but almost immediately commenced the ascent of the ridge; they moving steadily & in good order & with an apparent fearlessness worthy of a better cause. The fire of the entire line now opened upon them from the **rude** breastworks; their first line was soon broken & driven back; the second advanced & was in like manner broken; the two lines now became merged the one into the other. But they were unable to make any progress towards the summit. The fire from the breastworks swept the ascent from top to bottom. A few of the more daring spirits of the attacking force succeeded in gaining some 50 or 60 yards of the slope but this force was much scattered, without order & in no way dangerous; they to avoid the fire of our men soon sought shelter by lying down behind stumps of trees & wherever the irregularities of the ground offered protection. The order had been extended to cease firing, that no ammunition should be wasted, the efforts break my line had failed entirely, the enemy scarcely even having arrived within one hundred yards of my front; most of the attacking force had abandoned the attack on this point & had moved to the right & left of my position. I never was more confident of success & victory for our arms than at that moment. About this time I noticed a U.S. flag with a number of troops around it, immediately under the prominent knob about the centre of Deas's Brigade whose position was immediately to the right of me; not knowing that he was aware of their dangerous proximity; his battery being only within a few yards of them, but unable to fire owing to the almost abrupt descent at this point. I was about sending him information of the fact when one of my regiments, 34th Ala comd'd by Col. Mitchell (who had arrived only an hour or two before & assumed command) from the left of my line, passed me; its Comdg. Officer on my enquiring what this movement meant, informed me that they were moving to the support of Genl. Deas's in obedience to an order from the Division Commander (Brig. Genl. Anderson).

I must refer you to the reports of Genl. Deas & the Comdg. Officer of the regiments for an account of its conduct, etc. after leaving me. Some eight or ten minutes after this Regt. had passed & whilst standing in rear of & a little to the right of my centre, Capt. Walker my Adjt. Genl. came to me from the left of our line & informed me, that the hill or high point on which a battery had been placed near about the centre of Anderson's

Brigade, which Brigade was to the left of mine, was at that moment in possession of the enemy. Scarcely crediting it I moved to a position from which I could satisfy myself of the fact, & found it so, as he had reported. I immediately requested him to convey the information to the Brig. Genl. Comdg., & moved to the left to observe the enemy's movements.

I regarded it for the moment as only a temporary success & expected every moment to see the enemy driven from that position, but I saw no such movement in progress. The enemy were in possession of the battery at or near Col. Sharp's Hd. Qrs., their numbers increasing every moment. I could see none of our own men remaining in the works, the enemy were then forming a line at right angles across the ridge & at the same time turned one of the captured pieces on my own line. Orders now came for me to form a corresponding line with that of the enemy & to attack him & endeavor to retake that position & that the Brig. Genl. Comdg. The Division was making arrangements to support & assist me with corresponding lines in my rear. In order to do this I would have to weaken my front in the breastworks, having no reserve & one Regt. already taken away. I was about to make the best arrangements possible for the execution of this order & had ordered Capt. Dent to turn one or two of his guns on this point, when I discovered that some disorder existed at about the centre of my line & that the men were leaving the ranks in alarm. There was at the time no pressure in my front by the enemy & indeed no forces of the enemy within 100 yards of the breastworks. I can only account for the confusion here to the fact that this was the most elevated point within my line, the men here could see all that took place to their right & left & saw that their left was threatened, they were also more distinctly visible to the enemy on our left, who opening on this point with musketry, turned at the same time one or more guns captured by them in their (our) direction & opened fire. Every effort to restore order here proved unavailing. The right & left of the command still stood their ground. The enemy having completed their line referred to previously, now began to advance on my left flank, resting on the Shallow Ford Road, opening a steady fire on the 28th Ala, posted on my left. Whilst this was occurring the more advanced Federal soldiers in front of the centre of my line, seeing the works there abandoned, pushed forward & occupied it; others came to their assistance from the rear & together opened fire upon Capt. Dent's men & horses, he at the time being engaged in an effort to withdraw his battery. The Brigade on my right giving way at this juncture, my front broken & the command cut in two, the troops on the right & left of my line now began to retire in disorder; at this time, so far as I could see, the enemy had gained the ridge in several places on my right & left, also in my centre, our troops were now retreating hurriedly & in great confusion.

I succeeded in rallying about two thirds of my brigade some 5 or 600 yards in rear of our last unfortunate line of battle on the brow of a ridge covering the Shallow Ford Road. Here I was joined by Col. Tucker, Comdg. Anderson's Brigade of Hindman's Division with such men of his command as he had rallied. I determined to endeavor to hold this road knowing its importance, until I could get instructions from the Division, Corps or Army Commander.

About dark a Staff Officer of the General Commanding the Army in search of Lt. Genl. Hardee, joined me & extended to me the instructions he was bearing to that General, in conformity with which I immediately took up a line of march for the Bridge

near the Shallow Ford & reported to the Division Commander in person with the two Brigades at the bridge about 8 o'clock P.M.

In this movement I was not molested by the enemy.

I append a statement of my losses on this day, together with that sustained on the 23rd.

The unsatisfactory conduct of the troops of this Brigade on this latter occasion, I attribute to the manner in which they were posted to meet the attack of the enemy, the effect of which I have endeavored previously to explain & also to the fact, that they found themselves without support on the left, when that portion of the Division, in the lines adjoining them gave way, but even under these adverse circumstances they should have conducted themselves better. At the last moment even no necessity existed for the indecent haste, with which they abandoned the field to the enemy.

It gives me pleasure to bear testimony to the skillful manner in which Capt. Dent handled his battery & to the staunchness of his command generally. I regret that he should have lost so large a portion of his guns, whilst serving in a portion of the line entrusted to my care.

I can only regret that the Infantry on this occasion did not fight with the same obstinacy that characterized the conduct of these Artillerists. The Field Officers of the different regiments performed their part to my entire satisfaction & made every exertion to rally their men after our first line was broken. I am sorry to say that with a few exceptions, I received but little aid from the Company Officers.

Capt. C. J. Walker, A.A.G., Lieut. G.A. Jennison, Actg. Insp. Genl., Lieut. E. Malone, Provost Marshall, Capt. R.C. Clarke A.Q.M, 34th Ala & 1st Sergt. J.M.J. Talley of Co. "K," 24th Ala Regt; the three first were constantly employed throughout the engagement rendering good service & with the two last named, aided much in the successful effort to restore order & reform our lines.

Among the fallen on this illstarred day, none will be more regretted alike for his private worth & value as an officer, than Lt. Col. Julius T. Porcher of the 10th S.C. who fell a few minutes before our abandonment of the breastworks, but little doubt exists of his having been mortally wounded, his body falling into the hands of the enemy. An officer of rare merits, pure in spirit, courageous at heart, he died a martyr to his country's cause, a true gentleman & Christian soldier. In the same just cause we have to lament the loss of Capt. W. McAdory & Lieut. J.K. Calloway 28th Ala Regt., also Capt. F.M. Hopkins, Lieuts E. Miller & J.B. Mitchell 34th Ala Regt. & Lt. J.I. Northrup, 24th Ala; the last six fell into the hands of the enemy & were supposed to be either killed or mortally wounded; the loss of all these officers will be keenly felt by their commands & their places cannot be easily supplied.

The strength of the 24th & 28th Ala Regts Aggregate in the affair of Monday the 23rd amounted to 634 men.

Loss sustained, 186

On the morning of Wednesday 25th inst the morning report of the Brigade showed an effective aggregate of 1428 men

Loss sustained, 372

Total loss in killed, wounded, & missing in action of 23rd & 25th Nov. 1863 Five hundred & fifty eight (558) men. Many of the men reported "missing" are no doubt either killed or wounded.

I should have stated in the earlier part of this report that the position occupied by this Brigade on the crest of the ridge, lay between the two roads which cross the ridge & which connect with each other on the east side & is known as the "Shallow Ford Road."

I have the honor to be Major
Very Respectfully
(sgd.) A. M. Manigault
Brig. Genl.

Transcribed by Christopher A. Baker, University of Florida, 2008.