

Death of Colonel George Watson Pratt

report of Lieut. Col. Theodore B. Gates Eightieth New York Infantry, Third Brigade,
of operations August 1 (reported September 2, 1962)

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HDQRS. TWENTIETH REGIMENT NEW YORK STATE MILITIA, PATRICK'S BRIGADE, , DING'S DIVISION, Zlpton's Hill, Va., November 4, 1862.

CAPTAIN: Pursuant to the order of General Patrick, commanding this brigade, I respectfully submit the following report of the services and casualties in this regiment from the time of its departure from Cedar Mountain until its arrival at this place:

Orders to prepare three days' rations and be in readiness to march at a moment's notice were received at 2 p.m. August 18. The baggage of the regiment was loaded and wagons sent off that afternoon, and the regiment marched at 9 a.m. the next day. Bivouacked at 22 o'clock that night 3 miles westerly of Rappahannock Station.

Resumed march at 4 o'clock next morning and crossed the river at the station at 5.30 a. m.

Encamped that afternoon 2 miles north of the station and about 1 mile east of the river. Were ordered forward to near the river the next morning at 9 a. m. to support First New York Battery, Captain Reynolds, and were there occupied during the day, most of the time under a heavy fire from the enemy's battery and a part of the time from his sharpshooters also.

That night the regiment did picket duty along the river and covering Norman's Ford. Nothing of moment occurred during the night. Were relieved at about 5 a. m. the next morning by a regiment from General Hatch's brigade and returned to camp.

August 23, received orders at 4.30 a. m. to prepare to march at an early hour. Left camp at 10 a.m. and bivouacked in Warrenton at 8 p, m. Next morning marched some 2 miles beyond Warrenton toward the Springs and encamped.

August 26, marched at 6 a. m. for Warrenton Springs. As we approached the Springs the enemy opened fire upon us from two guns planted near a large yellow house on the opposite side of the river. Gaining the cover of the trees and buildings around the Springs, Company C was deployed forward as skirmishers, and found the enemy's sharpshooters posted along the river bank and fences in considerable numbers. Skirmishing continued all day.

August 27, marched from the Springs at 12 noon and bivouacked about midnight some 8 miles beyond Warrenton on the route to Gainesville.

August 28, marched early and reached a point on the Centreville road 2 miles beyond Gainesville; were halted while the roads and woods in front were reconnoitered by General Hatch's brigade, which, with General Gibbon's were in advance. The enemy were found in considerable force and a brisk engagement ensued, lasting till after dark. 'Was ordered up to support troops engaged, but darkness put an end to the engagement before we reached the field, Picketed roads west of us at night.

August 29, marched at 2 a. m. for Manassas Junction, which We reached early that morning. At 10 a. m. were ordered back to yesterday's battlefield, where the action had been renewed by General Some 3 miles from Manassas were ordered back, and returning to within a mile of the latter place filed to the left, and marching by the Sudley Ford road across a portion of the Bull Run battlefield, were posted in support of Reynolds' battery on the left of the road and about a mile from Chinn's house. About dusk we were moved

forward to them toward Groveton to support Hatch's brigade, which was engaged and likely to be turned on the right. We were withdrawn about 10 p. m., and posted a portion of the regiment with Reynolds' and Campbell's, and residue were detailed for picket on the front.

August 30, action opened by Campbell's battery; regiment moved some 11 miles to the right of Sigel, where we remained until 1 p. m., part of the time under fire. Were then moved back to near Groveton, where the brigade was formed in two lines in the following order: First line: Twenty-first New York Volunteers on the right, Thirty-fifth New York Volunteers on the left. Second line: Twentieth New York State Militia on the right and Twenty-third New York Volunteers on the left. In this order we advanced across the field, separating the right of our army from the enemy's left, and entered the woods near to and on the right of Groveton.

Here the Fourteenth New York State Militia (Brooklyn) and the Thirtieth New York Volunteers were drawn up in one line, the former on the right. The order was then given to advance, and the three lines moved slowly forward, receiving the enemy's musketry, grape, and canister, which increased as we advanced. The first and second lines melted away, and I found myself in the first line and under a murderous fire. I was at the right of the regiment, and on account of the density of the woods could not tell what was transpiring at the center and left, where **Colonel Pratt** was commanding. The right of my line advanced to within a few yards of the railroad embankment behind which the enemy were posted, when, a large proportion of officers and men being killed or wounded, the line fell back a few rods, closed up, and advanced again with the same result, and so for the third time the effort was repeated to reach the enemy behind his cover, but the fire was too heavy and my men had now become too few to give a hope of success, and with one lieutenant and a few men I retired upon the Nineteenth Indiana Colonel Meredith), being 100 yards in the rear, and formed my men on the left of that regiment, which now advanced, and, although behaving very gallantly, could not expel the enemy from his stronghold. Falling back upon the Seventy-sixth New York Volunteers, Colonel Wainwright, an aide-de-camp rode up and delivered an order from General Porter for all the troops to retire from the woods. This was obeyed in good order, the enemy following and firing in heavy volleys. Uniting the men of my regiment from the right to those of the center and left, who, as I am informed, retired in good order with the colors, I marched in the course of the night to Cub Run, where I bivouacked until Sunday morning, and marched into Centreville, where I joined the residue of the brigade.

September 1, at 3 a. m., received marching orders and proceeded to Fairfax Court-House. At 11 a. m. were ordered to return to Centreville, and after marching some 2 miles were counter-marched and proceeded out on the Braddock road, and were posted in order of battle behind works erected by the enemy heretofore to defend the approach to Fairfax and Centreville by that route. At 3 p. m. I was ordered to proceed up the Little River turnpike some 2 miles and take possession of, and hold at all hazards, a piece of woods on the left of that road. I reached the farther extremity of the woods as the enemy's skirmishers were rapidly approaching and within 150 yards of it. Firing was immediately commenced and continued briskly for two hours. The enemy ran up to within 200 yards of the woods a mountain howitzer, supported by a considerable body of cavalry, and opened a fire of grape and canister. My sharpshooters picked off several of the enemy's gunners and the piece was withdrawn. Soon afterward the enemy opened with shot and shell from a gun posted by the road-side three-fourths of a mile farther up the turnpike. About 5 o'clock, having been unable to make a lodgment in the woods, the enemy retired, and firing ceased here, while at nearly the same time to my left and in front a severe engagement was opened between the enemy and the troops of Generals Stevens and Kearny. I was relieved at 10 o'clock by the Ninetieth Pennsylvania Volunteers, Colonel Lyle. My loss was 2 officers and 12 men wounded.

September 2, rejoined the brigade at 8 o'clock, and marching with it at 2 p. m. reached this camp at 10 o'clock the same evening. The casualties in the several engagements and affairs referred to above are shown by the schedule hereto annexed.*

I cannot well conclude the report without a word of commendation of the officers and men under my command. Although several times subjected to tests as trying as the soldier usually meets on the field, there was, with few exceptions, perfect coolness and a resolute heroism I was very proud to witness.

Among the killed and wounded are many officers (including in the latter **Colonel Pratt**), whose loss is severely felt. Indeed, I have been obliged to consolidate fragments of companies which were left with a corporal only to command with other fragments and reduce my ten companies to four, and distribute my eight line officers

remaining for duty to these four companies.

I am, captain, very respectfully, yours,

THEODORE B. GATES,
Lieutenant. Colonel, Commanding

Capt. J. P. KIMBALL, Assistant Adjutant-General.

References:

History of the War of the Rebellion, volume 19, pp 374 - 376 (available in the Marist College library)

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