

Numbers 15. Report of Brigadier General John G. Parke, U. S. Army, commanding Third Brigade.

HDQRS. THIRD Brigadier, DEPT. OF NORTH CAROLINA,  
Carolina City, March 22, 1862.

CAPTAIN: I have the honor respectfully to submit the following report of the operations of the troops under my command from the moment the signal for landing was displayed on the steamer of the commanding general on the morning of the 13th instant to the evening of the 14th, when New Berne was taken:

My brigade is made up of the following regiments: Fourth Rhode Island, colonel commanding I. P. Rodman; Eighth Connecticut, colonel commanding Edward Harland; Fifth Rhode Island Battalion, major commanding John Wright; **Eleventh Connecticut**, lieutenant-colonel commanding Charles Mathewson. At the signal the light-draught steamer Union, with the Fourth Rhode Island Regiment on board, and the tug-boat Alert, with about twenty small boats in tow with detachments from the other regiments, steamed for the shore at the mouth of Slocum's Creek to make a landing at the point indicated by the general commanding in person. Finding obstructions in the mouth of the creek the steamer was unable to reach the bank, and the men were landed in small boats; an operation consuming much time. The men were immediately formed on their respective colors, and as the several regiments were landed they took up their line of march, following for some distance up the right bank of the Neuse River to a point where a company of the enemy's cavalry had been posted on advance-guard duty. Here the road leaves the river, and after passing one or two farm-houses in the pine woods it strikes the main county road leading from Beaufort to New Berne. This we followed for a short distance, and soon came to an extensive line of intrenchments crossing the road and extending to the railroad. This was entirely abandoned by the enemy. Here the railroad crosses the county road at an acute angle, and as the two roads continue on to New Berne in close proximity, the main command was divided. My brigade, by the order of the general commanding, followed General Foster on the county road, while General Reno marched up the railroad. Near night-fall we reached the second crossing of these roads, and as the command continued on in the same order, General Reno's brigade occupied the left. The march was kept up until after dark, when orders were received to halt and bivouac for the night. The regiments were then placed in position on the road-side. The roads generally were in bad order, and the men marched in many localities through water and mud. In addition, heavy showers fell at intervals during the day and night, and although the men had their overcoats and blankets the bivouac was extremely trying.

On the following morning, the 14th, the brigade was under arms and ready for the march soon after daylight. Before starting I detailed, by order of the general

commanding, the **Eleventh Connecticut** Regiment to relieve one of General Reno's regiment sin bringing up the boat howitzers and guns which had arrived during the night. Soon the whole command was in motion, my brigade following the guns, which were directly behind General Foster, while General Reno moved up the railroad. It was not long before the advance had engaged the enemy, and it was soon found that in the attack we would be exposed to a flank fire from heavy artillery as well as from field artillery and musketry in our front. The country is generally level and smooth and covered with a growth of pine and occasional clumps of undergrowth, the whole being styled "open piney woods.' On the field in front of the enemy this character of ground extends from the river to the vicinity of the railroad and running off to the left. Owing to the dense fog that prevailed but little could be seen, although the timber in front of the enemy had all been felled.

As before stated, my brigade followed General Foster's up the county road directly in rear of the howitzers. When the head of the column had nearly reached the edge of the woods, and General Foster's brigade was being placed in position and engaging the enemy, the general commanding directed me to file to the left and take up a position from which I could support either General Foster or General Reno when the occasion required. I directed the brigade through the timber, and guided by the fire of the enemy kept a course nearly parallel to his lines.

After passing General Foster's left and when the head of the column had approached within a short distance of the railroad I halted the brigade, and being exposed to a fire of both artillery and musketry, the regiments were placed in the hollow under as good cover as the ground furnished, and skirmishers were deployed just on the edge of the plateau to observe the enemy. An aide was then sent to the general commanding informing him of my position and that the ground ahead appeared very difficult. The drains spread into a swamp and the timber was felled, making the ground almost impassable.

Before I received a reply from the general commanding the colonel of the Fourth Rhode Island Regiment, finding his regiment too much exposed, moved it over to the railroad, the embankment affording good cover. While in this position I found that the fire in our front was increasing in intensity, and soon discovered some of our men, a portion of the Twenty-first Massachusetts, of General Reno's brigade, were forced to abandon a position they had attained inside the enemy's intrenchments. Lieutenant-Colonel Clark, commanding the Twenty-first Massachusetts, meeting Colonel Rodman, of the Fourth Rhode Island, informed him that he had been in the work, and assured him of the feasibility of again taking the intrenchments. Lieutenant Lydig, one of my aides, then made an examination of the entrance to the intrenchments by the way of the railroad, and finding it quite practicable, so reported it to Colonel Rodman, who assumed the responsibility and at once prepared for the charge. Lieutenant Hill, my other aide, reported immediately the state of affairs. Being thus in position to turn the flank of

the intrenchments resting on the railroad and brick-yard, and having just received orders from the general commanding that "we must flank the battery ahead," I approved the course of Colonel Rodman, and at once ordered the Eighth Connecticut and Fifth Rhode Island Regiments to his support. Colonel Rodman reports:

I then gave the order to charge. Passing quickly by the rifle pits (redoubts on our left flank), which opened on us with little injury, we entered in rear of their intrenchments, and the regiment in a gallant manner carried gun after gun, until the whole nine brass field pieces of their front were in our possession, with carriages, caissons, horses, &c., the enemy sullenly retiring, firing only three guns from the front and three others from the fort (Thompson) on their left, which happily passed over our heads.

The Eighth Connecticut and Fifth Rhode Island followed immediately in the rear and in support of the Fourth Rhode Island. We thus broke the enemy's center and drove him from his intrenched position between the railroad and the river. These regiments were immediately formed in line, and were soon joined by the Eleventh Connecticut, the remaining regiment of the brigade. This regiment, being engaged in bringing up the naval howitzers and guns, became detached from the brigade, and by the order of the general commanding was assigned temporarily to the command of Brigadier-General Foster, commanding the First Brigade, and I respectfully refer you to his report of their operations as well as to that of the lieutenant-colonel commanding.

Although now in possession of the entire work of the enemy between the railroad and river, the heavy firing on our left and beyond the railroad proved that General Reno's brigade was still hotly engaging the enemy. Much of the enemy's fire was directed upon us. I ordered the Fifth Rhode Island Battalion and Eighth Connecticut Regiment to advance cautiously and ascertain by skirmishers the ground still occupied

by the enemy. The brigade quartermaster and commissary, Captain J. N. King, then reported to me that the enemy still occupied rifle pits alongside the railroad and back of the brick-yard and a series of redoubts extending beyond the railroad and in General Reno's front. I then had the Fourth Rhode Island Regiment brought up, and ordered the colonel to drive the enemy from his position. This order was executed in a most gallant manner. Although exposed to a heavy and severe fire, killing and wounding most valuable officers and men, the regiment charged the enemy in flank, while a simultaneous charge was made by General Reno in front, thus driving the enemy from his last stronghold.

The brigade then marched directly up the railroad toward New Berne. As we approached it was soon evident, from the dense columns of smoke, that the bridge over the Trent and the city had been fired. By direction of the commanding general I left the railroad at the county-road crossing, and continued up the

county road, to secure, if possible, that bridge over the Trent. Before reaching the bridge I received an order to halt the brigade and select ground for a bivouac. In our immediate vicinity I found three encampment just abandoned by the enemy. They attempted to burn their tents, quarters, and stores, but owing to their hasty retreat they only partially succeeded. The fire was soon checked, and I secured good quarters, tents, and shelter for the entire brigade. Property of different kinds—arms, horses, camp equipage, horse equipments, and one caisson—were here captured. I directed the regimental quartermasters to make an inventory of the property and hand it to the brigade quartermaster.

In concluding this report I take great pleasure in expressing my thanks to every officer and soldier in the brigade. During the hard and fatiguing march of the 13th and the trying bivouac of that night not a murmur was heard. On the morning of the 14th all seemed as fresh and as ready as if they had just left the most comfortable encampment. All were under fire, and the officers seemed proud of the men they were leading and the men showed they had full confidence in their officers.

For the details of the movements of the regiments I have respectfully to refer you to the reports of the regimental commanders, to which are appended lists of the killed and wounded. I mourn the loss of the gallant dead and the wounded have my heart-felt sympathy.

My person staff, Captain Charles T. Gardner, assistant adjutant-general; Captain John N. King, brigade quartermaster and commissary; and Lieuts. M. Asbury Hill and Philip M. Lydig, jr., volunteer aides, were indefatigable in their exertions and rendered most valuable aid and assistance. They conveyed orders, brought timely reports, and made reconnaissances of the enemy, and although at times greatly exposed, I am happy to report all escaped untouched. Acting Brigade Surgeon Rivers entered upon his duties immediately on the commencement of the action and remained on the field throughout the day and night and was unremitting in his care of the wounded.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JNO G. PARKE,

Brigadier-General Volunteers.

Captain LEWIS RICHMOND,

Asst. Adj. General, Department of North Carolina.