

Report of Capt. Denis F. Burke, Eighty-eighth New York Infantry. Gettysburg Campaign

CAMP NEAR MORRISVILLE, VA., August 3, 1863.

Lieut. W. S. BAILEY, Acting Assistant Adjutant-General, Second Brigade.

LIEUTENANT: I have the honor to forward the following report of the Eighty-eighth New York Volunteers during the action at Gettysburg, Pa., on July 2 and 3:

On the morning of the 2d, this regiment advanced in line, and took up position on the left of the town of Gettysburg, in conjunction with the other regiments of this brigade. We held this position until about 5 p.m., when, the enemy having massed his forces on the left of our position, we were ordered to advance, and support the troops already in position there. We made our advance in brigade line of battle, being exposed during this time to a heavy fire of musketry and artillery. We steadily drove the enemy, charging repeatedly, and finally caused them to retreat in utter confusion, though we were opposed by a greatly superior force.

Both officers and men displayed the greatest gallantry and bravery, cheering and encouraging their comrades during the thickest of the fight. We drove the enemy for over half a mile through a thickly wooded and rocky country, and held our position until relieved by the Third Brigade.

The strength of the regiment entering the fight was 90 men, all told. Out of this number we lost 1 officer and 7 enlisted men killed, 1 officer and 16 men wounded, and 3 enlisted men missing, supposed killed.

I would beg to recommend to your notice for bravery and excellent conduct on the field the following-named officers: Capt. Patrick Ryder, First Lieuts. Charles M. Granger and Thomas H. O'Brien, and Second Lieut. Patrick J. McCabe: but the conduct of Adj. William McClelland--severely wounded, since dead--deserves particular notice. At all times in the hottest part of the fight, he kept encouraging the men and inciting them to still greater deeds of valor – a brave soldier and a good man, whom we can ill afford to spare.

Our division being outflanked on our right, we were ordered to fall back, which we did, and formed again to the left of the position we held in the morning and on the prolongation of our line.

We rested on our arms all night, and assisted, with the other regiments of the brigade, in throwing up breastworks, which we completed early on the morning of the 3d, and held until the close of the battle. The enemy shelled us at intervals during the morning, and at 1pm. opened with a severity which good military judges have pronounced to be the severest artillery fire of the war. Under cover of his artillery

and finally compelled to retire dismayed and routed. Numbers of the enemy threw down their arms, the enemy advanced and charged upon our lines, but was everywhere repulsed with terrific slaughter, and, rushing into our lines, surrendered as prisoners of war.

We were engaged in perfecting and repairing the breeches made in our breastworks on the evening of the 3d, and on the 4th in collecting arms and equipments left on the battle-field.

On the morning of the 5th, our pickets having discovered that the enemy was falling back, a reconnaissance was made, and found that the enemy was in full retreat toward the Potomac.

We held our position until the evening of the 5th, details in the meantime being engaged in burying the dead and attending to the wants of the wounded left on the battle-field. We then moved in the direction of Frederick, Md., under orders from headquarters.

In conclusion, I am proud to say that the Eighty-eighth acted in this fight as it has always done on former occasions when it has met the enemy.

DENIS F. BURKE,

Captain, Comdg. Eighty-eighth New York Volunteers.