

<http://www.csatrust.org/Bos/or-bos1.htm>

HEADQUARTERS EIGHTH MICHIGAN VOLUNTEERS,
James Island, SC, June 16, 1862.

SIR: I have the honor to present the following report of the action of the Eighth Regiment of Michigan Volunteers in the attack upon the Tower battery of the enemy near Secessionville, SC, to-day:

The regiment marched from camp at 2 a.m. In accordance with orders from Brig. Gen. I. I. Stevens, commanding Second Division, Companies C and H (Company H in front) were advanced within supporting distance of the regiment, with positive orders from General Stevens to push rapidly forward, using only the bayonet, and not to fire a shot unless compelled to do so by an attack of a much superior force. Upon arriving at the first negro houses in advance of our camp a halt was ordered, when Major Watts, of this regiment, who was there on duty as field officer of the day, was ordered to report to me, which he did promptly, and joined the regiment, acting as lieutenant-colonel. I moved my command rapidly forward without opposition to the first houses beyond our lines, where we found a picket of the enemy, consisting of a lieutenant and 3 men, who, after firing two shots at us, wounding 5 men of Company H, ran away. Two of them were soon captured by some of Company H. The others having gained considerable distance, the men were unable to catch them, when I dashed after them, soon overtook, captured, and sent them to the rear.

The regiment soon arrived at the open field in front of the enemy's works, when I formed my advance and battalion companies forward into line, and moved forward at a charge bayonet at the battery. By this time we could see the enemy formed in his entrenchments ready to receive us. The lines advanced steadily and in good order to within good musket-range, when the enemy delivered a close and deadly fire of musketry along his whole front, accompanied with rapid and heavy discharges of grape and canister and the fire of sharpshooters from cover. Still the regiment moved rapidly on, preserving their order and leaving the ground in their rear strewn with their dead and wounded, and did not stop until they gained the parapet and delivered there their fire upon the enemy in his works. But they were unable to contend against such great odds, and being entirely unsupported for a considerable time they fell back slowly, contesting every inch of ground a short distance, where they maintained ground until ordered to retreat, which they did in good order, although under fire. The regiment, however, had become much scattered, owing to the great number of officers who had fallen. A portion of the regiment was again formed upon the colors, and took up position in support of a section of the First Connecticut Battery.

The veteran coolness with which the Eighth Michigan Volunteers moved forward upon that battery and the literal execution of their instructions under such trying circumstances were most admirable. The conduct of the men speaks much more for the bravery of their officers than anything that I can say, yet I cannot refrain from mentioning Major Watson, who so gallantly conducted the right wing; Captain Doyle, who led the van to the very parapet, and stood upon it amidst a storm of bullets, coolly "spotting" his men with each discharge of his revolver, and not quitting it until his arm fell powerless by his side, shattered by a shot; Captain Church, who fell at the feet of the enemy, sword in hand, cheering on his men; Captain Guild, who fell in the hottest of the fight bravely fighting, musket in hand; Captain Pratt, who, though wounded, still led on his men until he fell from sheer exhaustion; Captain Lewis, who was severely wounded in the first fire; the gallant conduct of Lieutenants Donohue and Cottrell, who fell severely wounded at the head of their commands; also of Lieutenant Bates, commanding Company F, and Lieutenants Hutchison and Smith. I take great pleasure in mentioning the coolness, patient attention, and skill of our surgeon, J. C. Wilson, and notwithstanding the great disadvantage of having no assistants no one was neglected, but all made as comfortable as possible. And before closing this report I wish to testify my gratitude for and admiration of the valuable services and daring bravery of Lieutenant Lyons, of the commanding general's staff, who was chosen as the guide of the Second Division owing to his superior knowledge of the route, gained by his daring personal reconnoissance's, and when we arrived in front of the enemy's works he dashed to the front, and with a "Come on, boys," he displayed his willingness and ability to guide us into as well as up to the fort.

Upon the withdrawal of the forces the regiment was ordered to bring up the rear of the division, so that the Eighth Michigan was the first in and last out. I much desire, if space were allowed, to make mention of some of the cool and daring acts of bravery on the part of some of the privates and non-commissioned officers of this regiment. Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

FRANK GRAVES,

Lieutenant-Colonel, Commanding

Lieut. LEVI C. BRACKETT,

A. A. A. G., 1st Brig., 2d Div., North. Dist., Dept. South