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THE CAMP KETTLE.

We Know Only Our Country

Vol. 1

BEAUFORT S.C. JAN. 7, 1862

NO. 9

The Camp Kettle

Is published every opportunity by the
FIELD AND STAFF
of the Roundhead Regiment,
COL. LEASURE, COMMANDING.

Battle of Port Royal Ferry

For the information of our friends, we give a brief sketch of the part our regiment took in the late battle, and shall endeavor to avoid every thing but fact, without embellishment. At two o'clock on Tuesday morning, an order came to Col. Leasure from the Brigadier General Stevens, to hold the Roundhead regiment ready to march on Port Royal Ferry at 9 o'clock A.M. with forty eight hours cooked rations in their haversacks, and forty rounds of ammunition in their cartridge boxes. Two companies were to be left in charge of the camp under command of an efficient officer, one company was to relieve Capt. Parker's two companies of the 50th Pa. vols at the cross roads, and hold that position and eight companies were to march at 9 o'clock towards Port Royal Ferry by way of shell road (a road made of oyster shells.) Accordingly at nine o'clock, after leaving company E Lieut. Nelson, and company H Capt. Moore, in charge of the post at Beaufort under command of Capt. Moore, the column took up its march for the ferry. Four miles from the ferry, General Stevens awaited the column and gave further instructions. Two companies were to be sent to Seabrook to report to Capt. Elliott, of the 79th N.Y. vols. (Highlanders) in command of that point, four companies under command of Lieut. Col. Armstrong, were to take a position at the Ferry after dark, and remain in cover till called for to storm the fort across the ferry, and two companies, to be held in reserve, secreted near the ferry, ready to strip, at a moment notice, and build a bridge on boats across the channel, where the ferry boat was formerly, or otherwise establish the means of rapidly throwing over the storming column, which they were to join in carrying the trenches at the point of the bayonet. Flat boat were at hand, and a train of wagons would bring up the lumber for the bridge from Beaufort and be in readiness to furnish their loads at short notice.



Col. Leasure established his Head Quarters, a mile and a quarter from the ferry, where Major Morrison of the Highlanders had his Head Quarters, and dispatched company B, Capt. Dawson, and company C, Capt. Cornelius, to report to Capt. Elliott, in command at Seabrooke [sic] and designated company A, Capt. Templeton. G, Capt. Brown, I, Capt. Squires, and M, Capt. Campbell to form the storming party under Lt. Col. Armstrong, reserving company D, Capt Hamilton, and K, Capt. Van Gorder, to bridge the channel between the causeways, and company F, Cline, was sent to relive Capt Parker of the 50th Pa. vols. at the cross roads and hold that position. Col. Leasure then, accompanied by Lt. Col. Armstrong [,] Major Leckey, and Major Morrison of the Highlanders, and acting Adjutant Critchlow, made a careful reconnoissance [sic] of the ferry, and points on either side, and selected the positions in which the troops should lie concealed till called for. After dark Lieut. Col. Armstrong took his position (the companies having already gone to Seabrooke [sic]) and remained perfectly concealed from the enemy, up to the moment he got orders to advance.

At midnight the following orders
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were received by Col. Leasure, and shortly after General Stevens himself called, and gave him a general order to act as his own judgment might suggest in any circumstances that might arise during the day. The works were to be taken, and certain things were to be done, but the precise time and manner of doing them, were left to the discretion of Col. Leasure, who was placed in command of the forces in front of the fort at the ferry

HEAD QUARTERS, E.C.

BEAUFORT, S.C. DEC. 31, 1861.

COL LEASURE, Commanding Roundhead Regiment Pennsylvania volunteers
Port Royal Ferry.

SIR—Keep your command very quiet. Let there be neither music nor cheering nor loud talking. Instruct sentinels to hail in a low voice.

Ransom's [Ransom's] two guns will move about midnight to the position at day light which I have assigned to him. The Officer of the day should a little precede him to inform sentinels and avoid hailing.

You cannot fail to see how important it is, that there should be perfected silence.

Lt. Col. Armstrong must look well to the boats at the Ferry. They must be kept where they will be afloat at half tide, and be closely watched. A man should be kept in each boat. This matter of the boats is of vital concernment.

A large number of teams with plank and other material and with provisions will approach your Head Quarters about day light. They will be in charge of Capt. Lilley.

I shall get out to see you some time before midnight,

Truly and respectfully



ISAAC I STEVENS,
Brig. Gen. Commanding.

HEAD QUARTERS, E.C.
BEAUFORT, S.C. DEC. 31, 1861.

SIR—You will have command of a storming column, consisting of your own company, two companies of the Roundheads, and all you can gather up after day light of the company of the Highlanders on Picket duty to night in the vicinity of Seabrook.

Two gun boats which will lay off Whale Branch to night, will at early dawn enter the channel and on reaching the proper position will open fire upon the battery now erecting opposite Seabrook. Have your men seasonably in the boats at Seabrook, and when the gun boats make an impression on the battery, move over, seize the battery, destroy the works and take the necessary measures to bring off the guns.

After landing and getting possession of the batter [sic], you can rely upon the gun boats covering you. At the same time, take the necessary precautions to guard against the return of the enemy and their surprising you.

Get all the information you can about the enemy, but keep your command together and do not undertake to penetrate into the country.

Truly and respectfully
ISAAC I STEVENS,
Brig. Gen. commanding.

Capt. Elliott, 79th Highlanders.

The morning, (new year) dawned clear and calm and promised a fair day for the battle. This description may enable our distant friends to understand the position of affairs.

Beaufort is situated on Port Royal Island. A road made of oyster shells leads from Beaufort, across the island ten miles, to a point, where the channel of the Coosaw River, an arm of the sea, is narrow and deep, where a rope ferry had been established, connecting with another shell road on the main island, leading to Pocotaligo, on the Charleston and Savanna RailRoad. The channel at the ferry is, at low tide about two hundred and fifty feet wide, and when it is high tide, the water extends on either side some three eights of mile and this distance on each side, from high to low water mark is bridged by a narrow causeway of earth and shells filled into cribwork about eight to ten feet high. The main land lies on the northern shore of this arm of the sea, and at the end of the causeway on that side, the enemy had erected a very strong earth work, and mounted it with heavy artillery commanding the channel in both directions, and the causeways on each side. Several batteries

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had also been erected on the shores along the river so as to prevent the navigation arond [around] the North side of Port Royal Island. It was for the purpose of cleaning out those



batteries and the fort so as to keep up communication with the main, that the demonstration was made on New Year's day. Capt. Elliott, of the Highlanders with his own, and two companies of the Roundheads was to carry the battery opposite Seabrook on the west side of the Island, General Stevens, was to land at a point six miles above the ferry, while Col Leasure, with six companies of the Roundheads, and one (K,) of the Highlanders, under Lieut. Marshal was to bridge the channel and enter the fort from the front. Meanwhile, two gun boats were to steam up the channel on each side and cover the landing of the troops, and shell the enemy out of his earthworks along the shore.

At half past eight o'clock Col. Leasure, having placed his two reserve companies D and K under charge of Major Leckey, in a position to avail himself of them at any moment, took a position with a powerful field glass, in front of the fort on the opposite shore, where he could observe the progress of the landing troops under General Stevens on his right, and the operations of the gun boats on each side, and the enemy in the front. From his point he was able to arrange his plans, so as to coincide with the operations of General Stevens on his right, and Capt. Elliott on his left. On making a careful calculation of his means at hand, he made arrangements to re establish the ferry if a landing was to be made a low tide, and with this view, organized a boat party, under the command of Coxswain Conner, late of the U.S. Frigate Wabash, with the instructions to rapidly row two flat boats into the ferry at a given signal, and Lieut Col. Armstrong to take one company and meet thee flat boats at the ferry, cross rapidly over, enter the fort, and throw out shirimishers [skirmishers] to harass or drive back the enemy, who was to be seen a short distance to the rear of the entrenchments.

At half past three o'clock P.M. the enemy without firing a gun, fell back from his entrenchments under the shelling of the gun boats, and the order was given to cross the ferry. Company M under the lead of Lt Col. Armstrong passed rapidly down to the ferry, where the boats were ready, and crossing over at low tide he took possession of the works, and threw out pickets to feel for the enemy. By this time companies D and K with Col. Leasure arrived in the fort and in a few minutes Major Leckey brought up the other companies. At the same tim [time], two companies of the Highlanders who had been skirmishing in front of the main column arrived at the fort. Meantime the pickets from company M, came up with the rear guard of the enemy a short distance above the fort, and received the fire of one party of some fifty on their left and about forty on their right without damage, through within fifty yards of them. Two of our men returned the fire and two of the enemy fell. At this juncture, an officer who had come in with the skirmishers cried out to cease firing, as they were our own men that were up there, and the enemy on this misunderstanding escaped capture, because one of the New York regiments (the 47th) was dressed in gray clothes, the rebel color, and it seemed at the moment possible enough, that, while skrmishing [skirmishing] they had got into that position. By this time the main column under General Stevens, came in having fought its way for four miles through ambuscades and masked batteries, losing but two men killed and four wounded,



all belonging to the 8th Mich'n Reg't, Major Watson of that command being one of them. He was shot by a minie ball through the thigh.

The troops under the immediate command of Gen. Stevens, were the 8th Mich., 50th Penna., four companies of the Highlanders, the 47th and 48th New York regiments, with a section of Hamilton's Battery under command of Lieut Ransom, which was stationed at a point two miles above the Ferry to command a position on the enemy's side. The troops behaved with much spirit and remarkable coolness, and the result of the day's work will no doubt be salutary, at least on the part of the enemy.

Speedily Avenged

Some time ago, Mrs. Chisholm a refugee from Beaufort, one of the "haughty dames of the South" sent a negro with her card to Lieutenant Bankhead in command of the Pembina, asking him to accept the present of half a dozen pairs of silver plated coffin handles! which she sent along carefully packed in [a] little box. Knowing this, there was to us, a terrible significance in the thunderous deaths that boat hurled upon the shore, on the 1st and 2nd days of this [this] blessed year of 1862; for the insulted officer had vowed in his wrath that he would furnish a "home market" in Secessia for that kind of "postmortem" furniture, and verily he did it – Who will send the next insult to our navy?

The Camp Kettle

Being published by the "Roundheads" for their friends at home, more than anybody else, it is not to be expected that it can devote as much space to the affairs of other regiments as we could wish. All are worthy, but ours is a small "Kettle"

Our Number

We observe by a copy of the State records, that the "Roundhead" is the 100th, Regt. Penna. Volunteers.

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A Scene

We shall never forget one of the scenes connected with the late battle. On the morning after the battle, we were in the advance with the picket reserve north of the fort, maintaining a front towards the enemy who were in large numbers about a quarter of a mile from us in the edge of a dense forest, while we were in the open ground in line of battle. Our advance consisted of the Roundheads with two companies of the 47th and 48th N.Y. – Vol., and the 50th Penn'a Reg't, the latter on our left, and a little to the rear, to protect also the left of our position. While we retained the front, the gunboats opened fire over our heads, and for the space of an hour the scene was one of surpassing grandeur. Behind us lay the captured fort, and beyond it lay the dark, wrathful looking vessels, vomiting out sheets of flame with deep-mouthed thunder that shook earth, air and



water, while the the [sic] echoes along the forest edge, and amongst the neighboring creeks, were a perfect reproduction of the rapid explosions in the channel, and overhead the shells were hurtling along through the groaning air, on their mission of death, with a constancy and relentlessness of purpose, that boded ill to all who lay in their destructive pathway, and as the missels [missiles] reached their destination amongst the concealed enemy in the wood, their awful explosions seemed almost a realization of some hideous dream of horror and blood, for no sooner did the first shells explode in the cover, than the enemy rushed pell-mell into the road leading northward, when with fatal precision the shells suddenly changed their range to drop in the very centre of the crowded thoroughfare, and where a moment before we hosts of fleeing fugitives, there could be seen only an interminable cloud of dust, mingled with sulphurous smoke, while riderless horses dashed madly across the plain, their bridles all a-down, and saddles spread out like the wings of some wounded bird, the sublimest pictures of wild helpless terror, and blind despair. But the vengeful “demons of the deep” gave no moment of peace, no interval of silence till every vestage [vestige] of a lurking foe had left their cover, save the mangled corpses [corpses] of the stricken rebels. Amidst this scene, the whole forces had crossed the ferry, or gone on board the transports and we were ordered to fall back slowly and follow them, leaving the enemy to creep back how and when be best might, and gather up his dead for burial and care for the wounded.

When the whole truth comes to be known, the slaughter of that parting, will prove to have been even more fearful than that of the meeting hour the day before.

Decidedly Cool.

The Roundheads are now performing picket and advance duty in front of enemy—and on last Monday, Lieut. Johnston Ross of Co. H. with fifteen men crossed over to Hall’s Island to capture, if possible, some secesh soldiers who were there. The “Secesh” got wind of the visit and decamped to the main land where they sent word to a reserve corps of their friends [missing] which a company and ten pieces of artillery were sent to give them a warm reception. As soon as Lieut. Ross and his men were seen to be well in range, the guns opened on them with shell and shot, but did not harm any of them though the practice was pretty close. The Lieutenant and his men considering “a miss as good as a mile,” deployed as skirmishers and went forward to reconnoitre [reconnoiter] the enemy’s position. “Secesh” supposing of course, that such temerity could only proceed from having a good force in their rear, argued that the whole “machine” was moving over into them, and buckled up their “shoot wagons” and broke pell-mell for Poeotaligo [Pocotaligo] where they reported “Old Abe” after them in force. These latter facts we gain from three contrabands who had come in after having killed two soldiers of the enemy, who were guarding them to their company as prisoners, taken in the act of escaping to us.



“Cui Bono.”

Some may ask why, when we had made a lodgment on the mainland we did not go on? We did not understand that any advance was intended. The enemy had become insolent and taunted us in many ways, besides erecting batteries and fortifications along the shore at various points and it became necessary to give them a slight rebuke, and besides our fellows up here in front were “spilin’ for a fite” and it was thought best to give them a “New Years’ frolic” and an opportunity of getting accustomed to stand fire at the same time. We had the frolic and we stood fire, which is more than can be said by some other people we saw that day.

One of the “Secesh fellows” asked one of our pickets some time since why we did not come over, remarking at the same time that when they got us away from our gun-boats they would “give it to us.” Never mind answered pickie, “we intend to put gun-boats on wheels and take ‘em home overland.” “Secesh” seemed to “smell a mice.” When we get our boats on wheels, and go over to stay, we suppose they will still object to our style of fighting. Meantime our “New Years frolic” has resulted in much good.

Scope and Content:

The Camp Kettle, printed newspaper, four pages. "Published Every Opportunity by the Field and Staff of the Roundhead Regiment Colonel Leasure, Commanding." Beaufort, South Carolina. News for Union troops stationed in the Southern Department in and near Beaufort. Focus of this issue is the Battle of Port Royal Ferry. Note: Beaufort is situated on Port Royal Island, South Carolina.

