

[Dec. 1864]

Head Quarters 1<sup>st</sup> Div Ga Militia  
Lt Genl W. J. Hardie  
Commanding Department  
General

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of October last I received, at Macon, a telegram from General Hood directing me to assemble, as rapidly as possible, all our available forces in that vicinity, and make a demonstration on Atlanta as soon as the necessary transportation could be procured.

Under this order I, in as short time, had at Lovejoy Station a force numbering about 2800 effective muskets, three Batteries of Confederate Artillery, and two and three hundred local reserve Cavalry. The whole force was under my command much the larger portion of Infantry belonging to the 1<sup>st</sup> Division of Ga Militia. Finding this force inadequate to make a direct assault upon Atlanta, garrisoned as it then was, Genl Hood suggested that I should, if practicable, cross the Chattahoochee and destroy the line of Rail Road between that river and the Etowah. For various reasons which were submitted to Genls Beauregard and Hood (and by them approved) it was deemed neither practicable or expedient to make a direct attack upon Atlanta, or upon the Rail Road line as suggested, so my command continued in observation near Atlanta, preventing the enemy from foraging, and keeping them in their line of works, supporting Brig Genl Iverson who had just in advance of us, two Brigades of Cavalry.

In the night of the 12<sup>th</sup> of November Maj Genl Wheeler of the Cavalry reached my Head Quarters, and soon after, the advance of his forces from Alabama began to arrive. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of November the enemy moved out from Atlanta and

advanced upon us with his whole force, viz; the 15<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> Corps, with Artillery and Cavalry, which was soon afterwards joined by the 14<sup>th</sup>. Our Cavalry were driven that afternoon from Jonesboro to Lovejoys, and at dark I moved my force back to Griffin, at which place we had fortifications, and I felt we could there check the enemy should he advance directly upon us.

In the afternoon of the 16<sup>th</sup> it was ascertained that the great mass of the enemy's forces had moved through All Dorough, on the direct road from Atlanta to Macon, at which latter place there was at that time no garrison. At dark on the same day I left Griffin and marched my command to Forsyth, a distance of 35 miles, in 24 hours. Learning that the enemy were crossing to the East Bank of the Ocmulgee River, I moved the command to Macon, and about that time received orders from Genl Beauregard to report by letter to Lt Genl Taylor. A copy of that letter is herewith transmitted.

All of my command except the Ga Militia and two Regiments of State line troops (which reported to me just before leaving Lovejoys) were at this time turned over to Maj Genl Cobb. The defence of a portion of the line around Macon, on the West bank of the Ocmulgee River, was assigned to the force still left in my command. Before the troops were fairly in position orders were received to cross the river and occupy a position covering East Macon. This movement occupied the whole night. Soon after daylight, next morning, my five brigades were in the respective positions assigned them, no two being in the same part of the field.

During the morning of the 21<sup>st</sup> (Monday) the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, under your own personal instructions, given direct to the Col Commanding, was sent along the line of the Central Rail Road

with orders to move as rapidly as possible, either by rail or otherwise, to the city of Augusta. In the afternoon of the same day Anderson's Battery of Artillery was assigned to the Militia, and you directed me to move as soon as possible, with this Battery and the ~~1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>~~ <sup>2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup></sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Brigades of Militia, and the two Regiments of the State Line, to Augusta. They moved Tuesday morning in the direction of Genovoldville, with orders to halt there and await further instructions from me. You also informed me that you had ordered Maj. Cook, with the Athens and Augusta Battalions, to proceed to Augusta, and directed me to take them in my command if I came up with them on the route. Arrangements for transportation of Ammunition and supplies detained me for a few hours in Macon, which place you had left on the evening previous. Lt Genl Taylor arrived there on the morning of the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Information having been received showing very clearly that a much larger force of the enemy was near the city than was supposed when you gave the orders for my troops to move, he authorized me to direct them to return. My order reached them on the eve of an engagement with what was supposed to be a small force of the enemy.

Notwithstanding my order to avoid an engagement at that place and time, a collision occurred, we being the attacking party, and though the officers and men behaved with great gallantry, they failed to carry the works of the enemy, but held a position within one hundred and fifty yards of their line until after dark, when they were withdrawn by my order. The 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade of Militia was not engaged, having passed that point, in the execution of orders given by yourself. Maj. Cook commanding the Athens and Augusta Battalions,

moving under orders direct from yourself, was upon the ground and engaged in this action. Our loss was a little over six hundred, being more than one-fourth of the effective musters we had in the engagement. Several of the best field officers of the command were killed or wounded.

It is evident now that our men were opposed by the larger portion of one Corps of the enemy, while another was marching from Clinton on their rear, and I consider the troops were very fortunate in being withdrawn without disaster.

Lt Genl Taylor having become satisfied that the enemy were leaving the vicinity of Macon, directed me to move my command on Friday morning by rail to Albany, thence march to Thomasville, thence by rail to Savannah.

We arrived in Thomasville by noon Monday, having marched from Albany, a distance of between 55 and 60 miles in 54 hours. At Thomasville instead of finding five trains, the number I had requested to be sent, there were but two, and these could not be started until after dark, and did not arrive here until two o'clock Wednesday morning, occupying twice the time necessary between Thomasville and Savannah, and leaving the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Brigades at the former place.

Upon arriving here, almost broken down by fatigue and want of rest, with officers and men similarly situated, I received, before leaving the cars, a peremptory order from yourself requiring me to take the Militia of Georgia beyond the limits of the State, which was in direct violation of the Statute organizing and calling them into service. Considering the pained condition of both officers and men, I determined

not to move the Militia or the State Line beyond the limits of Georgia, until satisfied in my own mind that absolute necessity demanded it.

In a personal interview with yourself you informed me that the enemy had moved out from Broad River, were encamped within a few miles of the Savannah & Charleston Rail Road, threatening Grahamville and Coosawhatchie, and unless vigorously opposed, would cut both the road at one or both of these points soon after daylight, and that the only force you had in your whole command, which could, by any possibility, be brought upon the ground in time, was two regular Confederate Regiments from Charleston and you believed these would be there too late, and that if I could hold the enemy in check until 2 o'clock P. M., and prevent their cutting the road before that time, several thousand reinforcements from North and South Carolina, intended for Savannah would arrive.

In this interview I showed you my qualified authority from the Governor, to withdraw the Georgia State forces, under my command, from Confederate service, in case they were ordered beyond the limits of the State. After a full conference with yourself I was perfectly satisfied that for the purposes intended, it was right and proper the movement should be made, and I gave orders accordingly.

Notwithstanding some objections made by a portion of the officers and men, the order was willingly obeyed. The leading Brigade arrived at Grahamville about 8 o'clock Wednesday morning, the 30<sup>th</sup> of November. You kindly tendered me the services of your Chief of Artillery, Col. Gonzales, who upon our arrival at Grahamville, introduced me to Col. Colcock,

Capt Desbaussure who was thoroughly acquainted with the whole country, remained near me. The 47<sup>th</sup> Ga. had not yet reached the field. Within five or ten minutes after these dispositions had been made, the battle begun by an advance piece of our artillery firing upon the enemy. Their line of battle was soon formed, and from that time until near dark they made continuous efforts to carry our position.

We had actually engaged five pieces of Artillery, and it is due to the So Carolina Artillerists that I should say, I have never seen pieces more skillfully employed and gallantly served upon a difficult field of battle.

In an hour the enemy had so extended and developed the attack that it became absolutely necessary for me to place in the front line of battle my last troops, the 47<sup>th</sup> Ga Regt. making in all about 1400 effective muskets on the field, and all engaged. From time to time alterations had to be made in our lines, by changing the positions of regiments and companies, extending intervals &c. to prevent being flanked, and while we could not, from the dense wood, accurately estimate the number of the enemy, it was very clear that their force largely exceeded ours, and I awaited with some anxiety, the arrival of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Ga, and the forces expected from North & South Carolina.

Too much credit cannot be given to Col Colcock, Col Gonzales, Maj Jenkins, and Capt Desbaussure, to all the officers of my own staff, to Col Willis, com<sup>d</sup> of 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Ga Militia; Col Wilson, Commanding State Line Brigade; Maj Cook, Com<sup>d</sup> of the Athens and Augusta Battalions of Reserves, Lt Col Edwards, commanding the 47<sup>th</sup> Ga Confederate regiment, and to all the officers and men of every arm engaged upon.

Commander of the military district; Maj Jenkins, Commander of the immediate vicinity, and Capt Desbassure, Col Colcock's Adj't Genl. To these four gentlemen particularly, and other officers acquainted with the locality, I am indebted for the information upon which I based the directions of the whole operations for the day. Col Colcock reported the enemy rapidly advancing, skirmishing with some companies of his Cavalry, and a few pieces of Artillery. He was just starting to the front, and I requested him to select a position for my leading brigade so soon as I could despatch it to him. I awaited the arrival of the second train of my own troops and the 47<sup>th</sup> Ga, which was momentarily expected from Charleston. Having given the necessary orders to these forces, I joined Col Colcock a few minutes after ten o'clock, some four miles from the Grahamville depot, and about one-half mile beyond the position we finally assumed.

Col C. informed me the enemy had already occupied the position selected by him as the best for defence, before my troops arrived. This made it necessary, in my judgment, that the leading brigade should be countermarched at once, and placed in position on a line with our main Battery. The troops in rear were hurried up, and placed upon the same line to the right and left of the road. The enemy in the meanwhile steadily advanced along the main road upon ~~our~~ <sup>our</sup> position.

After a proper disposition of our forces had been made and a skirmish line ordered forward, Col Colcock the Commander of the district, and next officer in rank upon the field to myself, was assigned to the immediate executive command of the main line, Col Gonzales was placed in charge of the Artillery, and Maj Jenkins of all the Cavalry.

that field. In short, I have never seen or known of a battle field upon which there was so little confusion, and where every order was so cheerfully and promptly obeyed; and where a small number of men, for so long a time, successfully resisted the determined and oft-repeated efforts of largely superior attacking forces.

The flight of the enemy during the night, and the number of their dead left upon the field, is evidence of the nature of the attack, as well as the defence.

About 4½ o'clock P. M. Brig Genl Robertson arrived with a portion of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Ga. from Charleston, a Battery of Artillery, and a Company of Cavalry. These constituted an effective reserve, but came up too late to be used in the action. During the night the enemy retired rapidly in the direction of their gunboats.

Our loss in every arm of service was eight men killed and forty-two wounded. The enemy left over 200 of their dead upon the field, and their whole loss in killed and wounded is believed to be upwards of 1000.

At midnight Brig Genl Chesnut arrived at Grahamville Station with about 350 effective muskets of So Carolina reserves, and a little before daylight upon the morning of the 1<sup>st</sup> of December, Brig Genl Baker came up with about 860 of his Brigade from North Carolina; the remainder of his command, about 1100 reached Coosawhatchie at 9 o'clock.

Lt Genl Hardee arrived at Grahamville Station

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between 8 & 9 o'clock of the morning of the 1<sup>st</sup> of  
December.

The enemy having been beaten back on the 30<sup>th</sup> of  
November, and the Confederate forces having now arrived,  
there was in my judgment no longer any necessity for  
retaining the State troops of Georgia beyond their legal  
jurisdiction. I therefore asked and obtained permission  
to bring these exhausted troops back to their own State.  
They arrived here, by Lt Genl Hardee's order, about 10 o'clock  
that night.

For full particulars of the engagement near Graham-  
ville So. Carolina, I refer you to the reports of subordi-  
ate commanders, which will be forwarded as soon  
as furnished

Very Respectfully Yours Obedt Servt.  
G. W. Smith.  
Maj. Genl.