

**REPORT OF THE OPERATIONS OF
THE 3D BRIGADE, 3D DIVISION OF
THE 20TH ARMY CORPS, IN THE
ATLANTA CAMPAIGN OF 1864**

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Report of the Operations of the 3d Brigade, 3d Division of the 20th Army Corps, in the Atlanta Campaign of 1864 by James Wood

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JAMES WOOD

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THE 20TH ARMY CORPS, IN THE
ATLANTA CAMPAIGN OF 1864**

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA



James Wood
Col. 136 N. Y. S. Vol. I.
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U.S. Army, Army of the Cumberland

REPORT OF THE OPERATIONS

OF THE

3d Brigade, 3d Division of the 20th Army Corps,

IN THE

ATLANTA CAMPAIGN OF 1864,

BY THE

BRIGADE COMMANDER, COLONEL (NOW GENERAL)

JAMES WOOD.



With an Appendix containing the Proceedings and Address of General Wood on the Dedication of the Monument to the 120th Regt. N. Y. V. I., on the Battlefield of Gettysburg, October 16, 1888.

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1889.

THE ATLANTA CAMPAIGN.

The ATLANTA CAMPAIGN was one of the most important, effective and illustrious campaigns of the war of the rebellion. The Union arms in 1863, had, on the whole, been successful. The battle of Gettysburg had been fought and won, and Lee had been driven from his invasion of Maryland. Vicksburg, after a long struggle, had been captured, with the army that defended it. The investment of Chattanooga had been relieved, and the Rebel army under Bragg had been defeated and driven from his strong position on Missionary Ridge. The campaign of 1864 was thought to have opened auspiciously. Grant had been appointed commander-in-chief of all the armies and military forces of the United States. Lee, with a well disciplined, brave and gallant army, confronted the army of the Potomac on the Rappahannock. Johnson, securely intrenched at Dalton with a brave and valiant army, stood face to face to Sherman with the gage of battle. The Rebels showed a greater power of endurance and resistance than was expected. The "*on to Richmond*" was one bloody battlefield, with the sacrifice of slaughtered hecatombs of Union soldiers, and resulted not in the capture of Richmond but in placing the Union army on the south side of the James river, and in effect besieging Lee and his army in Richmond. Johnson with tactical skill and consummate ability avoided the blows offered by his able opponent, and led him by skillful retreats away from his base of supplies, into the interior of the Confederate States. The people of the North, in view of this long and bloody struggle, and the vitality exhibited by the Rebels, became despondent. General gloom and depression overspread the land. Even our great and devoted president was almost overwhelmed by it. Though re-nominated by the Republican party for re-election, he was appre-

hensive of defeat. The Democratic party, that party on which the Rebels relied to aid them in their struggle, had become arrogant and aggressive. Their convention, held at Chicago in August, 1864, to nominate a candidate for president against President Lincoln, declared that the four years of war which was to restore the Union was a failure. The capture of Atlanta on the 2d day of September, after the brilliant campaign which commenced on the 1st day of May, rifted the cloud of gloom and depression that overspread the North, and through it could be seen shining the bright sun of success. With that capture, and the defeat of Hood's army, the doom of the rebellion was sealed; and the surrender of Lee's army at Appomattox, and of Johnson's army at Raleigh, was its necessary and legitimate consequence. In that campaign I took an active part as the commander of a brigade in the 3d Division, 20th Army Corps. The following report, written at Atlanta after the close of the campaign, from memoranda kept by me in writing from day to day, shows its operations in detail. In the same division, Colonel now General Harrison, President of the United States, served and commanded, at first a regiment (the 70th Ind. V. L.), and after the 29th of June the 1st Brigade of that division. During the pendency of the political campaign of 1888 a "Life of Ben. Harrison" was written and published by General Lew Wallace, also a volunteer officer in the Union army. The reading of this "Life" awakened and revived my recollections of the campaign in which we both took a part. I thought some of the statements in "The Life" did me and my command injustice. I procured from the War Department a copy of my report. It is on file in that department, and unprinted and unpublished. All the incidents appertaining to that campaign, I think, should be made known. It was the turning point in the war of the rebellion. And it seems to me that the truth of history demands that every one who has knowledge of the events of that campaign should tell his story, that mistakes, if any, may be corrected, and equal and exact justice done to all who participated in it.

J. W.

REPORT.

HEAD-QUARTERS, 3D BRIGADE,
3D DIVISION, 20TH ARMY CORPS, }
ATLANTA, GA., *Sept.* 23, 1864. }

CAPTAIN:

I have the honor to submit the following report of the operations of the brigade under my command, composed of the 136th N. Y., 55th Ohio, 33d Mass., 73d Ohio and 26th Wis. Infantry Regiments to which the 20th Conn. V. I. was afterward added, since the 1st day of May last.

On the evening of that day I received orders to march at six o'clock the following morning.

At the hour named we broke our winter camp in Lookout Valley, and took up our line of march on the Chattanooga road, following the 1st Brigade of this division.

After passing around the foot of Lookout Mountain we left Chattanooga on the left, passed through Rossville, and reached Gordon's Mills at about half-past three o'clock, P. M., where we encamped for the night, having marched the distance of fifteen miles.

On the 3d of May we occupied substantially the same position taken the previous afternoon. A slight change was made for the purpose of getting more favorable ground on which to encamp.

On the 4th, at half-past six o'clock, A. M., the brigade marched from Gordon's Mills to Pleasant Grove Church, near Taylor's Ridge, and took a position formed in two lines deployed, on the right of the division, near the East Chickamauga creek. The distance marched was eleven miles. The brigade occupied this position until the morning of the

6th. During the time a substantial bridge for infantry was built across the creek by the brigade pioneers.

On the 6th, the brigade marched at five A. M., from Pleasant Grove Church to Lect's Tannery on Peavine creek, a distance of six and one-half miles, and took up a position in one line deployed, with one regiment in reserve; which position the brigade occupied until next morning.

On the 7th, at five o'clock, A. M., the brigade marched from Lect's, through Gordon's Gap, passing Gordon's Springs to Wood's Store, at the road leading to Buzzard Roost Gap, a distance of fifteen and one-half miles. Here the brigade was put in position in a single deployed line. The 33d Mass. was detached from the brigade in pursuance of orders received from division head-quarters, and directed to report to Col. Ross, Com'd'g 2d Brigade, who occupied the crest of a hill about one mile in advance of this brigade.

On the morning of the 8th I received from division head-quarters an order of which the following is a copy:

" Col. WOOD, Com'd'g Brig. :

" The Major-General directs that in compliance with the inclosed orders you move your brigade out in front of Col. Ross' position, and make a reconnoissance toward the enemy's position at Buzzard Roost. Guard well your flanks; keep a strong line of skirmishers well advanced; don't attack him in his intrenchments, if you should find such to be the case. If you can, draw him on to Col. Ross' position, should he follow you. If he has abandoned Buzzard Roost and you get possession, look well to your right. The General will be at Col. Ross' on the ridge.

" Very Respectfully, etc.,

" JOHN SPEED,

" A. A. G."

Which order was accompanied by instructions directing the manner in which the reconnoissance was to be made.

In pursuance of the orders I immediately got my command under arms and took up the line of march

for Buzzard Roost Gap. After passing the 2d Brigade (Col. Ross) encamped on the crest of a hill a short distance east of Wood's store, I threw forward an advance guard and ordered them deployed as skirmishers. At the same time I covered the flanks of the column with a line of flankers. In this way the column advanced toward Buzzard Roost Gap. When about two miles from the gap, the skirmishers in front of the column came in contact with and crossed the advanced skirmish line of *Carline's* Brigade of Johnson's Division of the 14th Corps. The brigade was in position about one hundred yards in the rear of this skirmish line and covered all the approaches to Buzzard Roost Gap from the west. I was informed by a major in charge of the skirmish line of this brigade, that he had advanced his skirmish line close up to the enemy's works in the gap; that the enemy occupied the gap in force; that he made a demonstration to attack the skirmish line so advanced, and thereupon the major, in pursuance of instructions, withdrew his line to the position he then occupied. As this condition of affairs was not contemplated by the orders and instructions I was ordered to make, I thought it advisable to communicate with Maj.-Gen. Butterfield, who was in the rear of my column. Accordingly I halted the column and sent a staff officer to Maj.-Gen. Butterfield with instructions to advise him of the information I had received, and receive his orders. Maj.-Gen. Butterfield immediately rode up to the front of the column, and, as I understood, had an interview with same major referred to from *Carline's* Brigade, and received the same information. Maj.-Gen. Butterfield, however, ordered me to proceed with the reconnoissance, and to feel the enemy. I, therefore, ordered four companies forward, deployed them as skirmishers, and threw out a line of pickets to protect my right flank. I also ordered the 73d Ohio to deploy in line of battle, and to advance with and support the skirmishers. The balance of the brigade was placed in position behind the crest of a hill, in the front, and at the foot of which the skirmishers were deployed. The ground between the position occupied by the brigade and