

Field Report: Co. B. 88<sup>th</sup> NYSV. Battle of Charleston

Report to Commander, Col. Patrick Kelly, 88<sup>th</sup> NYSV

Respectfully submitted by: 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Madden Co. B 88<sup>th</sup> NYSV, Commander Co. B

## Battle of Charleston

March 25, 1862:

Capt. Miles of the 79<sup>th</sup> NYSV has orders to land on Johns Island, with a force of three Companies and attack and seize gun emplacement on Johns Island. These guns are vital to the success of Union forces landing and attacking the city of Charleston. Col Kelly asked myself (1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Madden) for volunteers from Co. B, 88<sup>th</sup> NY. Three Volunteers, plus myself will be assigned to Capt. Miles of the 88<sup>th</sup> NYSV. (Pvt. Robertson, Pvt. Weathers, and Pvt. Williams).

March 26, 1862:

Reveille at 7AM: We boarded small vessels for our landing on Johns Island. The men are not use to open water travel. The water was calm but very cold as we boarded the boats.

After about an hour trip up the Charleston sound we came to our landing spot of Johns Island. The Navel officer and some of his men landed first. Then went out as skirmishers, to ensure it was not going to be an ambush. (The First Navy Seals, Huzzah!)

The Landing area was clear. No enemy in sight. Capt. Miles formed the three companies. We marched in a column into a heavy wooded area. We had about 3 miles to cover over land to get in position to attack the gun emplacements. We were given the order "arms at will" and total silence in the ranks. After about a half hour of marching we heard the skirmishers open fire. Capt. Miles gave the Order "by Co. in to line March". Our Company then march at the right oblique and were positioned on the right flank. We were in a battle line with about 50 yards between each company. We halted and waited for the skirmishers to fall back into the ranks. We then formed a single battle line taking cover behind trees and a ditch that ran about 100 yards along our front.

The rebels move into our line of fire but were unaware of our position we waited till there were within 25 yards of our position. Firing by company we inflicted, vicious volley after volley into their ranks. Soon the Rebels began to with draw. We kept pushing them firing by company. Around noon we halted. The men were exhausted from the heat and constant fighting. We sent out skirmishers to find the front line of the enemy but not to engage. We rested in the woods for about an hour.

We then were order to resume the march forward. We came to an opening in the woods, a large planting field in our front. Once again we heard the Order "Company into Line" "Forward March". As soon as the third company men entered into the clearing the rebels appeared on our right flank and opened fire. We right wheeled the three companies forming a solid battle line. The fight was hot as a hornets' nest. The fight continued for an hour before the rebels withdrew from that open field back into the wood line. We pushed forward into the woods and halted. The fight for the day was over. We did not reach our objective. We were order to camp for the night.

March 27, 1862:

. Reveille at 7AM: They men were fed a hardy breakfast. We knew the enemy would be ready for our assault on their position. We waited for orders. The day was sunny and very hot. We expected to form up and march into the clearing and charge the rebel position. Once we broke their lines we would move on the big guns and capture the objective.

The order came, "Fall in". We were first Company, and positioned on the right flank of the three companies. Skirmishers were sent out. And soon the gun fire was heard. We were ordered "Company into Line, Forward March". The rebels held a strong position behind some breast works. The battle plan was for the right and left flanks to wheel and the 2<sup>nd</sup> company to push straight ahead. We would fire into both flanks and envelope the rebel position.

The first hour of battle we were inflicting heavy losses on the enemy. Then from the rear of the enemy position three more companies of enemy infantry appeared. Also a cannon was brought up from the enemy rear. The order was "Charge a bayonet". All three Union companies charged. Many men in our company fell. It was hopeless. The rebel cannon fire canister shot mowing down entire front lines.

The order to retreat was given and the men fell back in good order. We continue to fall back to the landing zone. We board the boats and began our trip back to the brigade.

Casualties:

70 wounded

35 killed