

The following report was issued five days after the Battle of Cedar Creek (which took place on October 19, 1864). This account of the battle bears the names of two Ohio officers (and future U.S. presidents) – Rutherford B. Hayes and William McKinley. Please note: We transcribed the text as closely as possible from the typewritten report.*

HEAD QUARS. 2ND INFT. DIV., A. W. VA.,

NEAR CEDAR CREEK, VA., OCT. 24, 1864.

CAPTAIN:

I HAVE THE HONOR TO REPORT THAT ON THE MORNING OF THE 19TH INSTANT THE DIVISION UNDER MY COMMAND HAD ABOUT 2381 MEN FOR DUTY; OF THAT NUMBER 287 WERE ON PICKET, ONE LARGE REGIMENT OF THE 2ND BRIG---91ST OHIO---NUMBERING 378, WERE ABSENT GUARDING CATTLE BELOW MIDDLETOWN, AND ONE REGIMENT, 9TH WEST VA VOL. INFT. WAS CAMPED NEAR BREASTWORKS WHICH THEY WERE THROWING UP ABOUT THREE FOURTHS OF A MILE SOUTHEAST OF MY CAMP, LEAVING IN CAMP ONLY ABOUT 1445 MEN.

MY DIVISION WAS CAMPED AS A RESERVE ABOUT A MILE NORTH FROM THE LINE OF BREAST WORKS WHICH OVERLOOKS THE MOUTH OF CEDAR CREEK, AND WHICH WERE OCCUPIED BY THE 1ST DIVISION, COL. THOBURN.

AT EARLY DAYLIGHT WE WERE NOTIFIED BY LIEUT. BALLARD, A. A. A. G. OF COL. THOBURN'S STAF, THAT THE ENEMY WERE ALREADY DRIVING THE 1ST DIVISION FROM THEIR POSITION, MY COMMAND WAS IMMEDIATELY ORDERED UNDER ARMS AND SOON AFTER FORMED IN LINE OF BATTLE UNDER THE DIRECTION OF BREV. MAJ. GENL CROOK, MAJ. GENL WRIGHT ALSO BEING PRESENT.

MY RIGHT RESTED AT A POINT ABOUT 40 YARDS NORTH OF THE WOODS ON THE LEFT OF THE VALLEY PIKE EAST OF ARMY HD. QRS., AND MY LINE EXTENDED NORTHWARDLY TOWARDS A BRIGADE UNDER COMMAND OF COL. KITCHEN, WHICH WAS FORMING NEAR MY LEFT. THE LINE WAS FORMED AND THE MEN ORDERED TO LIE DOWN; THERE WAS A HEAVY FOG WHICH CONCEALED OBJECTS A LITTLE DTSTANCE OFF; BUT FIRING IN OUR FRONT AND BOTH ON OUR RIGHT AND LEFT FLANKS TOLD PLAINLY ENOUGH THAT THE REBELS WERE RAPIDLY ADVANCING.

AT THIS TIME AN ORDER WAS RECEIVED FROM MAJ. GENL. WRIGHT, TO MOVE BY THE RIGHT FLANK AND CLOSE UP ON THE 19TH CORPS WHOSE LEFT WAS ABOUT 100 YARDS FROM MY RIGHT. WHILE THIS ORDER WAS BEING COMMUNICATED TO THE BRIGADE AND REGIMENTAL COMMANDERS THE BRIGADE ON MY LEFT WAS OBSERVED TO BE BROKEN OR FALLING BACK, AND A LARGE NUMBER OF FUGITIVES EITHER FROM THE 1ST DIVISION, COL. THOBURN, OR FROM THE BRIGADE OF THE 19TH CORPS IN THE WOODS ON OUR RIGHT, CAME POURING PAST AND THROUGH THE RIGHT OF MY LINE, AT THE SAME TIME THE REBEL FIRE OPENED ON US IN FRONT AND ON BOTH FLANKS. THE LINE BEGAN TO FALL BACK, MANY SUPPOSING, AS IS SAID, THAT THE ORDER WAS TO THAT EFFECT. EVERY EFFORT WAS MADE BY ALL THE OFFICERS WHOM I HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO NOTICE, TO PREVENT CONFUSION AND A RETREAT. IN EVERY REGIMENT A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF MEN CONTINUED TO CONTEST THE ADVANCE OF THE ENEMY WITH DETERMINATION, AND SUCCEEDED IN DELAYING THEM UNTIL TIME ENOUGH WAS GIVEN TO GET OFF ALL THE TRAINS AND PROPERTY FROM OUR OWN CAMP, AND FROM THE CAMPS IMMEDIATELY ON OUR RIGHT AND AT ARMY HEAD QUARTERS.

THE MAIN BODY OF THE DIVISION FELL BACK, UNTIL THEY REACHED A RIDGE

WHERE A PART OF THE 6TH CORPS HAD BEGUN TO FORM. I DIRECTED MY COMMAND TO FORM ON THE LEFT OF THIS LINE, AND SUCCEEDED IN FIRMLY ESTABLISHING A CONSIDERABLE PART OF THEM AS DIRECTED. AFTERWARDS A PART OF THE 6TH CORPS UNDER GENL. GETTY FORMED ON OUR LEFT, THUS FORMING A LINE FACING UP THE VALLEY ABOUT A MILE AND A HALF NORTH OF MIDDLETOWN, WITH ITS LEFT RESTING NEAR THE VALLEY PIKE. WE REMAINED HERE UNDER ORDERS UNTIL ABOUT 3 P. M., WHEN AN OFFICER OF THE 6TH CORPS INFORMED ME THAT THEIR LINE BOTH ON MY RIGHT AND LEFT WERE ABOUT TO ADVANCE, AND THAT A GENERAL ADVANCE OF THE WHOLE LINE HAD BEEN ORDERED. I TOLD HIM THAT I HAD RECEIVED NO ORDERS TO ADVANCE, BUT THAT IN THE ABSENCE OF ORDERS I SHOULD ADVANCE WITH THE REST OF THE LINE. ABOUT FIVE MINUTES AFTERWARDS AND BEFORE ANY ORDER TO ADVANCE HAD BEEN GIVEN, I REC'D ORDERS FROM BVT MAJ. GENL. CROOK, TO MOVE MY COMMAND TO THE LEFT OF THE VALLEY PIKE, AND TO JOIN THE 1ST DIVISION, WHICH WAS THERE FORMED.

THE ORDER WAS OBEYED AND THE DIVISION REMAINED IN THE POSITION TAKEN UNTIL ORDERED FORWARD ON THE LEFT OF THE VALLEY PIKE, WHEN WE RAPIDLY MARCHED AS FAR AS CEDAR CREEK, FROM WHICH POINT AT ABOUT DUSK WE WERE ORDERED INTO CAMP AND OCCUPIED THE SAME GROUND WE HAD LEFT IN THE MORNING.

THE LOSS IN THE DIVISION IS AS FOLLOWS:

1ST BRIG., KILLED, 23,	WOUNDED, 102,	MISSING, ---	TOTAL , 125
2ND BRIG., KILLED, 3,	WOUNDED, 52,	MISSING, 31	TOTAL, 86
TOTAL KILLED, 26,	WOUNDED, 154,	MISSING, 31	TOTAL, 211

AMONG THE KILLED WAS LIEUT. COL. JAMES R. HALL, 13TH WEST VA. VOLS, WHO HAD NOT YET RECOVERED FROM WOUNDS RECEIVED IN A PREVIOUS BATTLE,

AND MIGHT WELL HAVE BEEN EXCUSED FROM RETURNING TO DUTY FOR MANY WEEKS. BUT WITH A NOBLE HEROISM AND DEVOTION TO DUTY CHARACTERISTIC OF THE MAN, HE WOULD NOT BE ABSENT WHEN A BATTLE WAS IN PROSPECT.

HE WAS HIT BY TWO BALLS, EITHER OF WHICH WOULD HAVE KILLED HIM EARLY IN THE ACTION, IN THE EXTREME FRONT, WHERE THE DANGER WAS GREATEST. NO BRAVER OR TRUER MAN FELL ON THAT DAY. ENCLOSED FIND COPIES OF BRIGADE COMMANDERS' REPORTS.

I AM, SIR,

VERY RESPECTFULLY,

YOUR OB'T SERV'T,

CAPT. W. MC KINLEY, JR.,

R. B. HAYES,

A. A. A. G.

COL. COMD'G.

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