

May 18th, 1864
Near Cassville, Geo
To M H Poythress
Gen'l
Commanding
1st Division
Sir,

As requested, what follows is my account of the battles for the crossings of the Oostanaula occurring on the 14th and 15th instant. Our regiment completed its march from Dalton by the evening of the 13th instant. We bivouacked with the rest of the brigade North of the enemy's supposed position and West of the Conasauga River. SE of us was the W&A RR. That night we used the last of the rations we drew at Rocky Face.

The next day, being the 14th instant, our brigade was ordered forward at about 12 ½ PM. Our brigade was ordered to cover a large area that faced the enemy works. Their position included works for infantry to our front and obliquely left, along with a large, well prepared battery position on a hill about 12 chains before us. Our battalion was assigned to form the right of the brigade line, covering an artillery battery that was placed to our left. Beyond the battery and further to the left was Col. Traylor's battalion. An enemy attack was expected, but I was ordered to protect the artillery from any sudden cavalry attacks and only attack exposed enemy infantry. Thus, I ordered my battalion into a shady grove to the right of our guns to await developments.

At about 2PM, a cavalry engagement began to our front involving both mounted and dismounted troopers. At some point during the fight, one of the guns from our horse artillery was captured by the enemy, who then began to employ it for themselves. However, since they were yet well away to our front, I hewed closely to my orders and stayed near the guns.

At about 2 ¼ PM, enemy infantry began appearing to our front, massing for an obvious attack towards our direction. Our artillery began to fire upon them, along with engaging the enemy artillery. Our position in the small wood, and an intervening breastwork of the enemy, shielded us from much enemy artillery fire. Shortly thereafter, enemy dismounted cavalry were joined by an enemy infantry battalion and began advancing towards our right front. I then ordered a change to our front to meet them and then an advance.

We began engaging the enemy in a brisk fire, using the edge of the trees for cover. Our fire soon compelled the enemy to halt. At this point, they began to bring in infantry reinforcements from our left along with a gun that they set up to our right front. The enemy coming up from our left soon took the breastworks in that area. Thus, faced with an enemy that had a superior position, backed by artillery, I felt it too hazardous to continue an advance, but I still felt that I could hold that area as a defensive posture by us would let us

use the woods for continued cover and the artillery to our rear would be able to help. The general should note that this is the situation I submitted to you via your first messenger to my position that afternoon.

It was at that point that fortune smiled upon us. The enemy artillery failed to fire upon our battalion, instead choosing to engage our artillery behind us. Then, the enemy infantry to our front began to withdraw, and then join their comrades to their right, leaving open the breastworks to our left. I ordered my men to stay concealed as best as they could to allow the enemy to leave us completely uncovered and then we made a quick dash towards the vacated works over a space of about 16 rods. This allowed us to open up a galling fire against the now exposed enemy left flank. The enemy soon realized the threat we posed to their entire line and sent a company of skirmishers towards our right in an attempt to outflank our position. However, Capt. Bell of the Leon Rifles countered this by moving his company to the right and used the trees there to establish a defensive line. His quick action, and the quick fire of the repeating rifles in his company soon forced the enemy to withdraw the flanking attempt.

While that action was taking place on our right, Lt. Hendrix of Co. K continued putting destructive fire into the enemy's exposed flank from his concealed position of the captured works. It was at this point I received a runner requesting that I withdraw and to join a main frontal attack with Col. Traylor. I stated that I could do so but that I would be yielding a superior position and that my battalion would be better employed in attacking the exposed enemy flank. It was quickly agreed that I should attack the flank immediately. Using the shock of Co. K's fire, Maj. Simmons lead the right wing in a flank attack of our own to plunge somewhat behind the enemy line, putting even more pressure on them.

I then brought the entire battalion out of the works and launched a full, flanking attack. The left flank of the enemy buckled, forcing them to divert a large portion of their infantry to change their front to face our attack, relieving pressure on Traylor's now developing attack on the enemy's center. The pressure of Traylor's attack began to force the enemy backwards, a movement that from our perspective was a motion from our left to our right.

With the mass of the enemy infantry to our front, a direct attack would have been impractical, so I ordered a continued shift to our right to stay as much as possible on the enemy's flank. We harassed them with as much fire as we were able. At this point, Col. Traylor appeared to breach the main enemy line in the center. This caused the enemy in front of us to retire in some disarray. They managed to attain their original positions and became strongly entrenched and I determined that a direct assault would profit little for the high losses it would require. Thus, I ordered only skirmishing on the right flank. Shortly thereafter, though, I received your order to break contact with the enemy and withdraw.

Our losses that day were exceedingly light with only 3 men killed and 6 wounded. This was certainly due to our being able to fight the enemy from a series of either excellent positions of the ground or a favorable disposition of the enemy's forces. As such, we spent almost the

entire engagement little exposed to much direct enemy fire while the enemies closest to us were often exposed to our most damaging attacks.

We were quickly relieved on the line and were soon back at our bivouac. Our wagons reached us then but only contained 1 day's rations. I ordered the rations cooked as another engagement the next day seemed likely. This concludes my report on the first day's action of the battle.

I remain, &c.

J Welch

Colonel

Commanding

2nd Batt'n

Nulli Secundus.