

A Summary of the 3rd US battery L&M in the Civil War

When the forces of the Confederacy fired on the United States flag at Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor in 1861, the total number of men enlisted in the United States Army numbered about 16,000. During the entire period of the War of Attempted Secession, while the Union Army would number about 2,000,000 men, the total number of men to serve in the United States Army would never exceed 45,000. In other words, only about two percent of the men who wore Union Blue served in the professional Army.

Of the total number of 745 line officers of the United States Army in 1860 (another 358 were staff officers), 212 were assigned to the Artillery. Most of these officers were career men from West Point or similar background, as the Army had seen the need for trained officers in the Artillery since 1828. When the regiments were expanded, it was specifically determined that the new Battery Commanders would be promoted from the line and not come from civilian life.

On the eve of the Civil War, the 3rd Artillery was spread wide, with nine companies on the Pacific Coast, two at Fort Monroe, and one in the Department of the West. Headquarters of the 3rd was established at San Francisco, and two companies of the regiment were now developed as light artillery, Company C and Company E, now called the White Horse Battery.

Company G of the 3rd was now moved to two points out in San Francisco Bay, establishing a garrison post on the west side of Angel Island with a small contingent, and also moving with a larger force to a forbidding island with a grim stone-walled work: Alcatraz. Here the 3rd Artillery was placed with duties not only to protect the entrance to the Bay, but to aid in the development of a military prison. This assignment fell to just sixty eight enlisted men, two officers, and fifty two civilians. Command of the 3rd US Artillery at San Francisco was given to Col. Charles Merchant. From the headquarters, Col Merchant was responsible for companies of Artillery stretching from Washington in the north to San Diego in the south.

Not all of the 3rd Artillery's staff were on duty with the regiment. Captain John F. Reynolds had been assigned in 1855 as Commandant of Cadets at West Point, and three other officers were said to be on leave during the pre-war period. By the time the Confederacy fired on Ft. Sumter, the members of Batteries Land M were under strength and under funded as a result largely of actions taken by Congress. In October 1861 these two batteries were combined and ordered East to join the Army of the Potomac under the command of Gen. George B. McClellan. Upon arrival in the East, the combined Battery L&M was placed under the command of Captain J.N.O. Edwards, a West Point graduate (Class of 1851) as part of Sykes' Division.

When the battery left San Francisco, it had also left its guns. Re-armed in the East with six matched 10-pounder Parrott Rifles, Edwards Battery was sent on McClellan's Peninsular Campaign, serving as the advanced guns in actions such as at Gaines' Mill, where two guns were overrun, and at Malvern Hill a rebel brigade closed to pistol shot range before being driven off.

After the Seven Days' campaign, Edwards' Battery was reassigned to the IX Corps of the Army of the Potomac. Once again the battery was called into action at the Battle of Antietam where it was cited for meritorious service.

Near the end of Spring, 1863, the battery went with the IX Corps to join in the siege of Vicksburg, Mississippi in the Western operations, arriving 6 weeks before the fall of that city in July, 1863. The unit did participate in the siege of Jackson, Mississippi, the siege of Knoxville and several other battles in the west before being returned to service in the Army of the Potomac in May 1864, where it served in the Battle of the Wilderness.

While other batteries of the 3rd U.S. Artillery served in the eastern theatre of operations during the Civil War, most were compelled to return to San Francisco to recruit and fill their ranks. However, Battery L&M managed to maintain themselves in the field throughout the War to Restore the Union.



Action of the 3rd US battery L and M in the Peninsular Campaign.

PENINSULAR CAMPAIGN--SEVEN DAYS' BATTLES

Report of Capt. John Edwards, commanding Batteries L and M, Third U.S. Artillery, of the battles of Mechanicsville and Gaines' Mill, engagement at Turkey Bridge, and battle of Malvern Hill.

July 5, 1862.

SIR: I have the honor to submit the following report of the taken by Batteries L and M, Third Artillery, in the late engagements with the rebels:

On the evening of June 26 I was directed to report with the battery to General McCall. It was about sunset when I reached his position. The battery was here exposed to the enemy's artillery fire. Two men were slightly wounded, two horses placed hors de combat, and two chiefs of pieces disabled by the fall of their horses. The battery was placed in position on the left of the line, where it opened a fire of case-shot and shell on the enemy's artillery and the woods harboring their troops. But a few rounds were fired, as it soon became too dark to fire with accuracy. At early dawn the enemy, concealed in the woods across the creek, opened a lively musketry fire upon our position, without inflicting any serious damage. At the same time I had received orders to withdraw to Gaines' Mill, which order was executed.

In the engagement of the 27th two sections of the battery, Lieutenants Hayden's and Kelly's, were posted on the right of the center in a hollow to the left of the house used as a hospital, from which position a partial view of the plain upon which the enemy debouched was had. Before opening fire here I was ordered to take one section in the field to the front near the wooded ravine that ran parallel to the right of the army. I took Lieutenant Hayden's section to this position. The pieces were no sooner brought into battery than the enemy opened fire upon them from at least six guns. A constant shower of shell and solid shot fell in and around the section. One cannoneer was wounded at the piece. The section opened upon them effectively with case-shot.

I then received notice from Colonel Warren that the enemy were preparing to charge us from the ravine. I threw double rounds of canister into the ravine, and at the same time received orders from General Sykes to retire behind the infantry. I withdrew the section and posted it on the hill behind the infantry. Lieutenant Brownson's section was joined to Lieutenant Kelly's in the position first mentioned, where an effective fire was kept up upon the infantry and artillery of the enemy. These sections remained in this position until the enemy's fire had comparatively ceased and their artillery was seen to withdraw. When the battle was renewed I was directed to detach one of the sections and post it on the high ground 600 or 700 yards to the left. I placed Lieutenant Kelly's section there, but the position was not a good one, as nothing could be seen. His section was afterward moved directly to the front across the road and in the angle of the field formed by the two roads, one coming from the direction of the enemy, the other running along our front. At this time the battery was split up into sections. Lieutenant Hayden's was posted on the hill in front of the hospital, Lieutenant Brownson's 400 or 500 yards to the left of it, Lieutenant Kelly's 600 to 700 yards to the left of the latter. As I could not be in these three positions at the same time, I passed from one section to the other continually, to observe and direct the fire.

About half an hour before our infantry fell back I withdrew Lieutenant Kelly's section from its exposed position to the height in rear. Shortly afterward, as our troops were breaking and running to the rear, I directed Lieutenant Kelly to limber up and retire. The guns were the last to leave that part of the field. I then rode to Lieutenant Brownson's section. He was already limbering up and in great danger of losing his section, as the rebels had gained the road in front. The two lead-horses of one piece had been killed and the two surviving horses were shot as the piece was being limbered. This gun was drawn to the rear by 2 horses. I started for Lieutenant Hayden's section, but found the grounds in and around the hospital, which was in rear of his position, occupied by the rebels. I kept on to the right of this building and soon met Lieutenant Hayden, who informed me that the enemy advanced upon him in large numbers; that he threw double rounds of canister, when he was struck in the leg by a musket-ball and fell. Upon recovering himself, his cannoneers had left and most of the horses were slain. I get but a confused account

of the capture of this section, Lieutenant Hayden having been wounded. I saw nothing of it myself. Lieutenant Brownson's section did a good deal of execution during the action, throwing double rounds of canister at the rebel infantry on two different occasions when they advanced beyond their cover. Eight horses out of sixteen were shot in this section alone. Lieutenant Brownson occupied nearly the same position through the engagement, and held it unflinchingly until the last moment, although the enemy kept up a continuous fire of artillery upon the section. I cannot speak too highly in praise of the lieutenants of the battery--First Lieutenants Hayden and Kelly, who were both wounded, the latter slightly, and Second Lieutenant Brownson. They all behaved with gallantry and coolness.

My guns were advanced nearer to the enemy by 500 yards than any artillery on the field. Had I been able to have reached the section in time I think I could have saved it. In this action 2 lieutenants, 1 sergeant, and 6 privates were wounded; 1 private missing, known to have been wounded, and 24 horses were shot. My own horse was shot under me.

In the artillery combat of the 30th June the battery was posted on the height occupied by the left of the army. The enemy opened their guns upon us from their concealment in the woods on the other side of the valley. The different batteries as well as my own, posted on this hill, opened fire upon them, and they were soon silenced. The battery suffered no loss here. On the 1st of July, in the afternoon, I was ordered to the front. General Griffin directed me to a position near a small house, about 900 yards from the woods in front, where the enemy had their forces concealed. Their artillery, hidden by the woods, played upon us, but their fire was bad. The battery returned their fire with effect. The enemy's sharpshooters crept along a wooded ravine to the right and on to the left some 250 yards off, from which points they annoyed us a good deal by attempts to pick off the cannoneers. Our own sharpshooters would not advance sufficiently to drive them off, and I was forced to fire canister at them.

After some time a regiment of rebels emerged from the woods waving their flag. The battery plied them with case-shot, and as they approached nearer with double rounds of canister. The Ninth Massachusetts Regiment, which was in rear of my battery, then rose up, gave a cheer, and advanced bravely as far as the rear of my limbers, where they crouched down and opened a fire of musketry in spite of all my efforts to stop them, thereby placing my men and horses in great jeopardy. I continued the fire of canister, and under its effects the rebel ranks were broken and many men ran to the rear. I then urged this regiment forward. They advanced a short distance beyond my guns. I ordered the latter to be limbered up and to withdraw. The rebels had approached so near one of my guns that Corporal Himmer shot one with his revolver. In this engagement Lieutenant Brownson was wounded in the head by a fragment of a shell. I directed him to retire to the rear. One private was killed, 1 corporal and 5 privates wounded, and 1 private wounded and missing; 5 horses were shot.

I have to report my commendation with regard to the officers, and also state that the greater part of the enlisted men fought nobly. I would mention First Sergeant App, who took charge of the caissons, and Privates Smith, Moffitt, Mallinger, Burke, Emmett, Reed, and others, who proved themselves good soldiers.

JNO. EDWARDS,
Captain, Third Artillery.

The Ninth Corps

The 3rd U.S. Battery L&M served in the 9th corps from March 1862 to the end of the war

The Troops that Major general Burnside took with him to North Carolina in December 1861, which was known as the Burnside Expeditionary Corps and which made a record for themselves at Roanoke Island, New Berne and elsewhere, were merged in the Department of North Carolina in April, 1862. They and some others from the Department of the South were transferred to the Army of the Potomac in July and on July 22nd 1862 became the 9th corps. 2 Divisions went to the assistance of General Pope and fought at second Bull Run and Chantilly. Afterward the corps distinguished itself at South Mountain, Antietam and Fredericksburg. After the latter battle Burnside was transferred to the Department of the Ohio and 2 divisions went with him. The corps took part in the siege of Vicksburg and was itself besieged at Knoxville Tennessee, where it suffered great hardships. In 1864, the corps was ordered east for reorganization, with Burnside at the head. At the end of May, it became a part of the Army of the Potomac, having acted as a separate command through the earlier battles of Grant. It was very prominent in the siege of Petersburg, and the famous "battle of the crater" took place in front of the 9th corps lines. In June 1865 the corps was transferred to the Department of Washington and was discontinued on August 1st, 1865. The corps was called the "wandering corps" because they fought in 7 states.

Summary of 3rd US Battery L&M Service

At San Francisco, Cal., until October, 1861. Ordered to New York October 14, thence to Washington, D.C. Battery L&M combined, Artillery Reserve, Army of the Potomac, March to May, 1862. Artillery, 2nd Division, 5th Army Corps, Army of the Potomac, to December, 1862. Artillery, 1st Division, 9th Army Corps, Army of the Potomac, to April, 1863, and Dept. of the Ohio to June, 1863. Artillery Reserve, 9th Army Corps, Army of the Tennessee, to August, 1863. Artillery, 1st Division, 9th Army Corps, Dept. of the Ohio, to October, 1863. Artillery, 2nd Division, 9th Army Corps, to January, 1864. Artillery, 1st Division, 9th Army Corps, to April, 1864. Reserve Artillery, 9th Army Corps, Army of the Potomac, to June, 1864. Camp Barry, Defenses of Washington, D. C., 22nd Army Corps, to February, 1865. District of Alexandria, 22nd Army Corps, to August, 1865.

SERVICE.--Siege of Yorktown, Va., April 5-May 4. New Bridge June 19. Seven days before Richmond June 25-July 1. Mechanicsville June 26. Gaines' Mill June 27. Turkey Bridge June 30. Malvern Hill July 1. At Harrison's Landing until August 16. Movement to Fortress Monroe, thence to Alexandria August 16-23. Maryland Campaign September 6-22. Battle of Antietam September 16-17. At Sharpsburg until October 30. Movement to Falmouth, Va., October 30-November 19. Battle of Fredericksburg, Va., December 12-15. "Mud March" January 20-24, 1863. Moved to Newport News February 7, thence to Kentucky March 21-28. Duty in District of Central Kentucky until June. Moved to Vicksburg, Miss., June 4-14. Siege of Vicksburg June 14-July 4. Advance on Jackson, Miss., July 4-10. Siege of Jackson July 10-17. Moved to Covington, thence to Crab Orchard, Ky., August 4-18. Moved to Knoxville, Tenn., September 10-26. Action

at Philadelphia October 16. Knoxville Campaign November 4-December 23. Campbell's Station November 16. Siege of Knoxville November 17-December 5. Blain's Cross Roads December 17. Strawberry Plains January 21-22, 1864. Duty in East Tennessee until March. Moved to Annapolis, Md. Rapidan Campaign May 4-16. Battle of the Wilderness May 5-7. Spotsylvania Court House May 8-16. Ordered to Washington, D.C., May 16, and duty in the Defenses of that city and Alexandria, Va., until August, 1865.

3rd Regiment Artillery lost during the civil war 2 Officers and 39 Enlisted men killed and mortally wounded and 3 Officers and 67 Enlisted men by disease. Total 111.