

Capt. John M. Cooney, Asst Adjt-Gen., Second Brig., First Div., Third Corps.

July 27, 1863

Captain:

I have the honor to submit the following report of the part taken by my regiment at the Battle of Gettysburg, Pa., on the 2d instant:-

By order, I formed my regiment on line of battle parallel to and facing the Emmitsburg road, on the right of the brigade, at early morn. Soon after, by order of General Ward, I moved my regiment as a support for a body of sharpshooters, under command of Colonel Berdan, to whom I was ordered to report, by Captain Briscoe of General Birney's staff. Advancing to and for some distance on the Emmitsburg road, I approached a dense wood on the west side of the road, and on entering it formed my regiment (as ordered) to support the advancing line of skirmishers, and followed at supporting distance. They soon, however, became hotly engaged, and I advanced double-quick to the line they occupied, and instantly formed my regiment under a heavy fire from the enemy, which we returned with a good will. Here I labored under a decided disadvantage, which will account for my heavy loss. The skirmishers were well secured behind trees, while my battalion filled the intervals. The enemy showed himself in overwhelming force, but so well did we hold our position that his advance was much checked and very disastrous, and not until ordered to fall back did a single man leave the ranks, with the exception of those slightly wounded, when I retired, giving an occasional volley to check his advance, which now became quicker.

I was obliged to leave my dead and seriously wounded on the field, and on arriving at the road formed my regiment, which had gotten somewhat confused from loss of men and obstructions in our retreat.

This engagement was short but severe, and serves to give me a renewal of confidence in the men I command. I sustained a loss of forty eight in killed, wounded and missing.

While on the move to join my brigade, I received an order from General Birney to take position in a peach orchard on the right of my previous one, and accordingly moved my regiment there and occupied it. Here I was enabled several times during the day to repulse the enemy's skirmishers (who seemed very anxious to drive us from it) and also to seriously harass the left flank of their advancing columns to the position which the other regiments of the brigade were holding, changing my front as circumstances required. In this position my regiment lay about midway between our own and the enemy's batteries, and a few of my command were more or less seriously injured from the frequent explosion of shells immediately over us.

I was heavily pressed in front and on my right flank about 4 p.m., but succeeded in repulsing, with considerable loss, the force, which was much greater than mine, and sent them flying back to their covers. An hour later they came forward again with a force

much greater than before, but I engaged them and held them for some fifteen minutes, when I received a severe flank fire on my left. I then saw a large force marching round to cut me off, and ordered my regiment to retire, and while doing so we received a most distressing fire, which threw my command into much confusion, and mixing them up with a portion of the First brigade, which was also falling back.

I regret to report the loss of my national colors, for no men fought harder under it that day than did my regiment, but Captain Keene of the color company and his 1st – and only – lieutenant, Henry Penniman, fell, the former pierced by four bullets, the latter severely wounded in the leg. The color-bearer fell, wounded; two of the guards were killed and four others seriously wounded; and, as darkness was fast approaching, I did not miss it till the following morning. If I had, they would have had me and my little squad or I would have had my flag.

As soon as I could rally the remainder of my shattered regiment, I joined the brigade, and the men lay on their arms during the night.

I am proud to say the conduct of my officers and men throughout the entire day is deserving the highest praise. Their coolness and courage in resisting a force which they could plainly see was four times their number I cannot pass over lightly, but feel somewhat recompensed for my loss by the knowledge that the few I have left are of the same material as the gallant spirits that have fallen.

I entered the engagement of the morning with 14 officers and 196 rifles, and lost during the day 113 killed, wounded and missing, including Major Lee wounded, Captain Keene killed, etc., a list of which has already been sent to headquarters.

I have the honor to be, captain, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Moses B. Lakeman
Colonel, Commanding Third Maine Regiment