

## Artillery Defense of Fort Magruder on May 5, 1862

In the afternoon of May 4, the Williamsburg Artillery along with the Richmond Fayette Artillery and a section of the Richmond Howitzers under Capt. E. S. McCarthy accompanied the Brigades of R. H. Anderson and Roger Pryor out of the Wynne's Mill line. They moved to Williamsburg to relieve the Confederate forces in the field works of the Williamsburg Line.

By the early a.m. of May 5, the Richmond Fayette Artillery (4 guns) and the 1<sup>st</sup> Company of the Richmond Howitzers (2 guns) were near or in the works at Fort Magruder. The two guns from Garrett's Williamsburg Artillery, under Lt. Coke, were in and near Redoubt 5 to the right of Fort Magruder.

Initially the Richmond Fayette Artillery, under Lt. Clopton, was posted outside and left of Fort Magruder to lay heavy fire on enemy field artillery less than a half of mile in front of the fort. When the enemy artillery withdrew then the Richmond Fayette artillery was moved inside the fort to take positions. The Richmond Fayette artillery lost 4 killed and 7 wounded, mostly from rifle fire from Union infantry in their front. The Richmond Howitzers had 2 men wounded.

Upon their arrival on the field the two guns of Garrett/Coke's Williamsburg Artillery were sent to Redoubt 5. The brass gun under the command of Lt. Palmer was placed to the left of Redoubt 5 toward Fort Magruder. The iron gun under the command of Lt. Coke was placed inside the redoubt. Coke kept up his fire for several hours till he ran out of ammunition then Palmer's brass cannon came inside the redoubt replacing Coke's gun. Col. Micah Jenkins reported, *"The Williamsburg Artillery kept up [fire] nearly all day with great gallantry and good effect."* General Longstreet noted, *"Garrett's Battery were distinguished for effectiveness and rapid fire."* General J. E. B. Stuart wrote in this report, *"I directed the artillery fire from the 2 redoubts to the right of Fort Magruder [redoubts 4 and 5] and pay tribute to the excellence of execution done by Captain Garrett for their accurate and incessant fire."*

There was a Confederate picket line that stretched across the entire battlefield. It changed hands several times during the day and it was rifle-fire from this area, when in Union hands, that resulted in most of the artillery casualties. The soldiers of the South Carolina Palmetto Sharpshooters were the Confederate infantry in front of Fort Magruder and Redoubt 5 contesting possession of the picket line. A battlefield map drawn by Lt. John Knox of the 5<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry shows their advance to the picket line and also where all of their men fell killed and wounded. Lt. Knox notes that Union forces were never able to advance up the slope beyond the picket line through the downed trees and the fire of the Confederate infantry.

At about 11:30 Captain Dearing of the Lynchburg Artillery reported to Col. Micah Jenkins and was sent into position to the left of Fort Magruder with his 12-pound Howitzer and six-pound field piece under the command on Lt. Richardson. They concentrated their fire on Union infantry and did not return enemy artillery fire. Lt. Thomas Richardson was killed and 3 privates were wounded including privates Deaton and Dillon with leg wounds. In the early afternoon Dearing's two guns were moved inside Fort Magruder. Around 2 p.m. Captain Stribling and his Fauquier

Artillery arrived with two 12-pound field guns and two 24-pound Howitzers and manned the position left of Fort Magruder. At around 4 p.m. as the fighting intensified to the right of Fort Magruder, they were ordered to take position between Fort Magruder and Redoubt 5.

Also, around 2 p.m. the Palmer's Stuart Horse Artillery under the command of Captain Pelham arrived with two 12-pound Howitzers and one Blakely Rifle. He took position to the right and in front of Fort Magruder and Redoubt 5. Captain Dearing reported that fire was "*kept up incessantly by the guns in the Fort and Captain Pelham's Horse Artillery outside until the enemy ceased firing and were out of sight.*" Pelham lost 2 men wounded, 4 horses killed and 2 horses escaped or deserted.

The Confederate artillery at Fort Magruder and the adjoining redoubts were able to maintain control of the battlefield and with their infantry support prevent any Union soldiers from reaching the central line of fortifications. During the night and in the early morning of May 6 the Confederate withdrawal toward Richmond would continue.

----- **The Artillery of Hooker's Division under Major Wainwright**

Early on May 5, around 7 a.m., under the command of Major Wainwright, the Union batteries of General Hooker's Division of Heintzelman's Third Corps arrived on the field at the intersection of the Yorktown Road and the Warwick C. H. Road. The 1<sup>st</sup> New York Battery D, 1<sup>st</sup> U. S. Battery H, 4<sup>th</sup> New York and 6<sup>th</sup> New York. Four batteries of six guns each. The first to arrive and deploy was the 1<sup>st</sup> U. S. Battery H. They began firing and Rebel artillery at Fort Magruder sighted them and returned fire. The regular Army soldiers of Battery H abandoned their guns and ran. Battery D showed up and manned the guns of Battery H. The 6<sup>th</sup> New York arrived and supported Battery H. In an unprotected position these batteries relocated near mid-morning. At that time, as noted earlier in the article, the Richmond Fayette Artillery moved inside Fort Magruder to man gun positions on the battlements.

The battle would rage back and forth across the open ground diagonally in front of Fort Magruder, Redoubt 5 and Redoubt 4. In the afternoon on one of the big Confederate pushes the men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Virginia Infantry (temporarily in Wilcox's Brigade) and 2 companies of the 9<sup>th</sup> Alabama overwhelmed and captured 4 guns of Capt. Webber's Battery H - 1<sup>st</sup> U. S. Artillery, and 5 guns from Captain Bramhall's 6<sup>th</sup> New York Battery. A detail of 100 men carried the 9 guns off the field. Two flags were also captured including one with the inscription "*To Richmond or Hell.*"

**Sources:**

*Miscellaneous Disbanded Virginia Light Artillery*, Robert Moore II, 1997, H. E. Howard – Lynchburg p. 21-25.

*The Richmond Howitzers*, Lee Wallace, 1993, H. E. Howard – Lynchburg p. 17.

*The Richmond Fayette, Hampden, Thomas & Blount's Lynchburg Artillery*, Richard Moore, H.E.H. 1991, Richmond / Fayette p. 10-12, Lynchburg p. 57-60.

*The Brooke, Fauquier, Loudon, and Alexandria Artillery*, M. J. Andrus, 1990, H. E. Howard, p. 64.

*The 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Stuart Horse Artillery*, Robert Moore II, 1985, H. E. Howard, p. 10-15.

*The First Virginia Infantry*, Lee Wallace, 1984, H. E. Howard – Lynchburg p.29.

*Major Charles Wainwright at the Battle of Williamsburg*, Don Kline, Williamsburg Battlefield Assn.