

"The Civil and Military History of Connecticut During the War of 1861-1865", W.A.Croffut, J.M.Morris, Ledyard Hill, NY 1868
Croffut & Morris p.332

A single brilliant episode relieved the dullness of the siege. It occurred on April 19, — a patriotic anniversary which might stimulate any American to deeds of valor.

The rebels had advanced cautiously to a slight elevation near the west bank of the Nansemond, and re-occupied Fort Huger, an old but unnoticed work of theirs, known to our troops as Hill's Point Battery, refitting it, and planting five new brass guns, — four 12-pounder howitzers, and one 24-pounder.

The fortification was so located at a bend as to sweep the stream for a long distance, annoying our gunboats exceedingly, and rendering all operations near that point quite perilous. It was thought best to dislodge the rebels. Late in the afternoon, six companies of the Eighth Connecticut, with six companies of the 89th New-York, in all about two hundred and eighty men, commanded by Col. John E. Ward of the Eighth, were embarked on board the gunboat *Step ping Stones*. A canvas screen drawn up around the boat effectually concealed the men. The orders from Gen. Getty were, " When the boat touches land, get off at once. Do not stop to call the roll or form a line, but let each officer rally all the men he can ; push right forward, and take the battery."

After these orders, the gunboat steamed up the river as if to run past the battery ; and the rebels made ready to fire. They waited for her to come past a small bluff which sheltered the boat for a short distance from the view and the fire of the enemy. Instead of passing, she quickly turned, and made for shore. As she struck, the gang-planks were shoved off. The boat swung round with the current, making the gang-planks useless ; but the men leaped into the mud and water up to their arm-pits, rushed along the side of the friendly bluff and into a small ravine which led around past the rear of the intrenchments. The rebels, discovering the ruse, now opened a sharp fire of musketry. Companies and regiments were hopelessly interspersed and commingled. Pausing a moment, they rallied around the officers indiscriminately; then, Lieut. Andrew Morgan taking the lead, started at full run along the ravine, up the banks, over the rifle-pits, and into the enemy's works, without firing a shot. "We cave !" screamed the astonished rebels; " we cave ! don't fire, don't fire ! "And the boys did not; for the victory was won.

The Connecticut and New-York soldiers were side by side. Both battalions dashed into the works together, and the two old standards, torn by bullets in many battles, were planted on the breastworks.

But the task was not ended. "Work quickly, boys !" was the word. The prisoners, a hundred and twelve in number,

were marched on board the gunboat; and the howitzers were rolled out of the works across a plowed field, and, within fifteen minutes, drawn to the beach.

Hardly were the prisoners secured, when the rebels were seen swarming from the adjacent woods to retake the battery.

The guns just captured were ranged as by magic around the bluff, and turned upon them with deadly effect. Meanwhile the marines had, with great labor and celerity, transferred several howitzers from the gunboat to the bank, and then dragged them up the bluff. They, too, opened on the rebels at the edge of the woods and in the woods with wonderful rapidity and accuracy.

The rebels fell back. By this time, the other four companies of the Eighth were ferried over; pickets were thrown out one-fourth of a mile; and the whole remaining force were set at work vigorously digging rifle-pits in the rear of the intrenchments.

The pickets were once driven in, but soon rallied, and again took their position.

To capture a strong battery with two hundred men, while thousands of rebel troops were within a mile, is no common achievement; and the men were proud of the feat.

The coolness and fearlessness of Col. Ward won for him the admiration and abiding confidence of the veterans of his regiment.