

Preface*

In the interest of humanity I have taken great pains and trouble to inquire into the tragedy that hapened at M. M. in 1857. How & by whom it hapened and the causes that brought it about and who was responsible for the same. I propose proving by as honorable men as there is west of the Missouri river when truth and justice takes the place of prejudice.

All the Mormons, especialy their leaders, were accused of the great crime or being accessory before or after the fact. Were the Mormons guilty or accessory and responsible for that matter? Let us look the ground over.

I will review the matter as a whole and the exciting times it hapened under to the end that truth and justice may some day be vindicated.

SNORT.

In 1857 the Buchannan army were marching against Mormons. Martial law was proclaimed and the people all mustered into service. Drilling and standing guard was the order of the day. Scouting parties were organized and marched hundreds of miles each way to prevent any portion of the army from approaching the Territory at any point. The further from Salt Lake the greater the excitement. The Indians all through the country partook of the same spirit in a twofold degree. As a people we had to be good friends with the Indians at all hazards. Their talk was generally about helping the Mormons when the army came.

About this time the doomed company came traveling through the country and the Indians began gathering in a threatening manner and after some of their number had eaten the animals poisoned by company and had died, the Indians began swearing vengeance and by the time said company got to the rim of the basin with their threats & hostile attitude to reds, the savages were angry and thirsting for blood & the further followed company the more their numbers increased and the more saucey they got till people of the settlements began to fear for their own safety.

Excitement was at fever heat.

About this time Indian Farmer Lee was heard of as being with Savages who reported to him that they had killed all the emigrant company an Mormons wanted to bury them they could.

Accordingly Lee sent express to Cedar City asking for help to come and bury the dead. The bell was rung. The people came together; the express was read from Lee in regard to emigrant company. After which a dozen or more of as honorable good citizens as lived in the country volunteered and started at once to go and bury the dead.

After we got out there we came to the conclusion that sending the express to us was only a ruse to get more whites out there because Lee afraid of Indians. At any rate when we got out there we found we were in bedlam or hell. Lee's camp with two or three whites painted like Indians were camped a little way from savages who were camped one mile over hill from the doomed company who had fortified themselves close by a spring of water & were protecting themselves as best they could,

Upon our arrival a terrible picture met our gaze. The valley strewn with carkuses of cattle and horses which the Indians had shot down through revenge. Indians were painted like devils, as though they just arrived from the infernal regions & howling with rage over sort their braves

being wounded, all tending to make everything as hideous and demon like as could be imagined. Lee was trying to pacify them and have them scatter and go away and let the emigrants go. So he said to us.

The savages then came to Lee and said if he and the Mormons did not help them to kill the Merrycats they would join the soldiers and fight the Mormons. The number of Indians there were variously estimated at anywhere from three to six hundred, all determined it seemed to accomplish the destruction of the company if they had to fight all the Mormons in the southern country. J. D. Lee being a Major in the Nauvoo Legion and commander over Kane County where we were then said we dare not make war with Indians. He then ordered all men present to join his command for self preservation.

Lee being Indian Farmer and Clingensmith being bishop where some of Indians often went to get something to eat when hungry, it seemed that these two men would have more influence with Indians than anybody in the southern country, but even these seemed to have lost their influence at this particular time when it was so much needed.

The men that had just came from Cedar held a council and after a good deal of deliberation what should be done.

It was agreed to send Higbee to inform Col. Wm. H. Dame, Commander of Iron Military District, the condition of things at M. M. Higbee proceeded at once to Cedar about thirty-five miles and reported to Major Haight that emigrant company were not killed as Lee express had stated the day before, but were fortified and were under a state of siege surrounded night and day by savages who were blood thirsty and crazy because some of their number had been wounded. To all appearances and attitude of Indians there were not men enough in Southern Utah to protect the company with force against the savages.

Under these circumstances Co. W. D. Dame was asked to say what should be done. I. C. Haight went to Parowan in the night and made the report to Col. Dame and returned next morning with orders which Higbee caned same day to Lee. Those from Cedar stopped there till he returned thinking to hold some restraint on Indians. When Mesenger returned he said Col. Dames orders given to Haight for Higbee to carry to Major J. D. Lee were:

Compromise with Indians if possible by letting them take all the stock and go to their homes and let the company alone, but on no conditions you are not to precipitate a war with Indians while there is an army marching against our people.

As Indian Farmer and a Major in the Legion, I trust you will have influence enough to restrain Indians and save the company. If not possible, save women and children at all hazards, Hoping you will be able to carry out the above orders in helping to make peace between the two parties.

by **WM. H. DAME** Col. Commanding Iron Military District

About this time a council was called of the leading men in Cedar, the nearest point of any importance to the excitement. The council decided to send an express to the commander of the district, Col. Wm. H. Dame, which he forwarded to Governor Young stating the excitement that was going on and the attitude and number of Indians and general outlook. Lee was notified to do all that was possible to persuade Indians to let company alone till express returned from Governor Young.

The next morning after Lee told this to Indian several of the Chiefs came to Lee and he came over to where whites were camped and said the chiefs had come over very much excited over

one of their big chiefs being wounded and they wanted to talk with him and Clingensmith. They said if we offered to befriend the Merry Cats they would fight us right away and if we did not help them to get the emigrants out of their fort today they would burn them out and kill men, women, and children and then fight the Mormons.

After a great deal of big talk and threatening about a half day with savages howling with rage and getting more excited all the time, Lee said he and Clingensmith had decided there was only one way to stop having an Indian war and save women and children. After all this talk we have agreed with Indians Chiefs that we would get the men of the company where they could get at them without their losing any more of their men on the following conditions that they would let the women and children go to Cedar City unmolested and they take all the stock and other property. Indians agreeing to perform their part of compact. Lee said the whites, "As Major in command of this county, I call on all of you in interest of humanity and the liberty of the scattering and helpless condition of our settlements to help me to carry out our part of this agreement. Major Higbee, you will assist, I trust."

Higbee said, "I have no command and am not an officer in this County. You older men know what is best to do. Is there no other way?"

Clingensmith said, "No, we are almost in an Indian war no helpless condition we must obey Major Lee."

I think most of the whites from Cedar were where they heard what Lee said, though the savages were yelling like demons.

The whites I think generally felt quite timid [timid] and enough to make them to the heart of a stone cry out against what seemed to be inevitable according to all appearances. Major Lee ordered all whites to get into line single file about six or eight feet apart and march down on plain in sight of the doomed and he and another would go down to emigrant camp and disarm them and load arms and helpless into waggon and send them up the road towards Cedar. When they passed by Clingensmith's Co. one fourth of a mile, women & children were sent up the same road. After they had passed same point about a half mile, men from emigrant camp came marching up the same road and when opposite to Clingensmith's company both the companies marched along on each side of the road as they were then about twenty feet apart, the doomed company on west and Clingensmiths on east till they came to a smooth open space on the west side of the road and a patch of oak brush close by on east side of road. Then the word halt was given. It is not known positively who by. Some say White. Others say him & two others were back at camp over the hill. Some say Clingensmith gave order who was at head of Company. One thing is known by all persons out there: it was Major Lee's orders whoever gave them. That was the signal for guns to fire. Lee said, "those that are too big cowards to help the Indians can shoot in the air then squat down so Indians can rush past them and finish up their savage work begun many days since."

It was said most of our company were nervous and afraid of Indian treachery and kept their guns loaded for their own protection. No doubt each individual knows more about that than any other person living and how they felt at that particular moment when some guns were fired and the men squatted down and Indians seemed to be there the same moment as they jumped out of the brush and rushed like a howling tornado past us. And the hideous, demon-like yells of the savages as they thirsting for blood rushed past to slay their helpless victims. It seemed to chill the blood in our veins.

A part of the doomed men fleeing from the yelling demons ran up amongst the women and children. The Indians say that was the reason they could not keep their young warriors from

killing all but a few little children that some of the old Indians saved and they wanted pay for saving them.

It did not seem five minutes from the time the Indians rushed past us until all was still in death. Before it had been known that there had been any treachery, the women and children were all killed but the few small ones.

Soon after this had all hapened Col. Wm. H. Dame came with a squad of men, having received an express from Governor Young to help the company get out of the power of savages and let them go. Haslem's ride 6 hundred miles in 6 days. You can judge his consternation when he arrived and found all still in death. Then all they could do was to give them burial and make the best of a terrible calamity. As Indian Farmer the Indians allowed Lee to take charge of all property for their use. Report says Lee went and reported all this matter to Governor Young and the Governor took steps to have this matter investigated and before it could be accomplished he was superceeded as governor of Utah. That ended his responsibility.

For the next eighteen years there was a great many blood kirdling stories told about some of those that had been out to help burry those that had been killed. These men generally, seeing the growing prejudice and feeling bad and ashamed of the cowardly part they were compelled to take in that tragedy realizing they could not prove a negative, they kept very still over the matter. Their reticence was taken for guilt by their neighbors. The presure brought against them & their famileys was hard to bear. Many on this account moved to other parts of the territory & some to other territories and states. Hunt them up then or now and you will find them generally law loving and law abiding, leading, honerable citizens, farmers, stock raisers, merchants, miller, and lawyers.

The prejudice was so great and a fresh invoice of U.S. officials it is not to be wondered at that several inditements were found. Almost invariable through prejudice, heresay, common gossip & it was generally under-stood the men indited dare not stand trial, for prejudice ran so high and the jury law 'was so elasticsearch that men could be convited easy if caught by packed juries and a prejudiced court.

The Mormon Church with its leaders were accused of this offense & declared guilty and they new nothing of it till twas all over. At this critical moment it took all the efforts that the Mormon people could put forth in the Lee trial to vindicate the leaders of the church by helping the court all that was possible to convict Lee, who tried to purger his soul by it to Brigham and leaders of Mormon Church.

Question: Were Mormons responsible for that tragedy? According to the best information to be obtained, laying prejudice aside is: The trouble grew out of the news of Buchannen's army marching against Mormons which was the cause of martial law being proclaimed through the territory of Utah by Govenor Brigham Young. This seemed to be the cause of all the trouble and excitement in the country. If so, the marching of Buchannen's army against Utah was the cause of the excitement and was the soul cause of all this trouble and the cause of this tragedy

This being conceded then, President Buchannen's General Amnesty issued in 1857 covered the whole ground.

The strained relations and vindictive feeling through prejudice caused by this tragedy being wickedly laid to and makeing the Mormons responsible for made it possible for and gave political birth to the Liberal Party and their untiring zeal and persiverence against Mormons has been verbialely vindictive and worthey of a better cause.

It is a well known fact that in the days of Judge McKean and other Federal officials with x-Bishop Warren of Parowan for a tool, Clingensmith was scared so near to death that he purgered

his soul to try to save his own neck. As though that matter was not wicked and bad enough without so much determined zeal to make a whole people responsible for it, that knew nothing about the matter till it was all over, nor then either, for whenever the truth has been told it has been exaggerated it was worse than a lie. Them that knew the truth did not dare tell it for fear of being brought in as accessories. So it has been left for gossip to tell what it pleased or imagined.

Why has this tragedy never been ventilated and shown up in its true light? The same reason that the men indicted has not stood trial – too much prejudice everywhere. Mostley in U.S. officials who come here full of zeal, anxious to make a record. The first people they get acquainted with generally are the exciting, disaffected ones, always having fault to find with something or somebody. A great and powerful nation could afford to be just and be as zealous to show up the plain truth as to convict someone, if it did happen to be a Mormon.

What I have written here can be verified by men that today are living in two nations and three territories who will tell the truth that it may be vindicated and justice satisfied and the blame rest where it belongs.

If the publick ever get a true historical account of that tragedy it will read almost as I have written it here. [Note: The word “almost” in the last sentence marked through with pencil several times as if the author did not mean for it to be read.] And the men that volunteered from Cedar to go bury the dead are the men that will verify this statement, whenever they can speak without being held as accessory to the tragedy. If the time ever comes when officers of the law are as anxious to free the innocent as to condemn the guilty.

A good many of them Cedar volunteers are still living and can tell how unjustly Federal officers have with prejudice tried to rule and ruin Utah and how they have succeeded as far as some men are concerned is well known.

Who is responsible for driving into exile as a felon a man like Higbee only about thirty years old at the time that matter hapened? You would say, “If he is not guilty, let him stand his trial.” Perhaps not. Let us weigh the matter and see. Because he went out there in the interest of Humanity, his friends are satisfied that with an elastic court and jury they would convict him as an accessory upon the same principle as he was indicted by, and through prejudice it shows on the face of the indictment and also on its back the grand jury, only eleven of them concurring and yet it is said they were got for the occasion. Then the witnesses against him must of been on the elastic principle also.

The jury knew as well as the witnesses themselves or me that not one of them were within thirty miles of that tragedy when it hapened, and two of them was in California. This all proves that these ten witnesses were willing tools to swear away a man’s life to please and incur favor with federal authority. History says an imported jury is about the same as an exported felon, not emblems of justice or peace.

It is high time that State Hood came and corected the elastic part of our jury law so the accused can be tried by their peers instead of transient, irresponsible hobos that can be bought and sold all along the line wherever and when ever wanted to create and manufacture newspaper excitement.

Here is a man spoken of above has been driven from the face of man and called a felon for a third of a century, financially, socially, and politically damned, his family scattered, some dead, others grown up and strangers to him. The heritage left them & their children is Grandfather & Father was a felon and a fugitive from justice.

It seems Somebody has contracted a Great debt.

The man is either guilty or innocent. Our great and magnanimous government ought to be

generous enough to inshure him a speedy and fair trial by his peers. Will they? Echo says, we will see.

Yours truly
BULL VALLEY SNORT
SALT LAKE, February 1894

* In presenting the account of John M. Higbee, the original wording and spelling has been adhered to strictly. For the sake of ease in reading, periods have been inserted, and the habit of the author in capitalizing some letters has been corrected. Although this is signed "Bull Valley Snort," there is no question as to its authorship.