



Type: Magazine Article

The Crooked River Battle

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Source: *The Historical Record*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (April 1886)

Published by: Andrew Jenson

Page(s): 54–56

Abstract: A short essay about the Battle of Crooked River during the Mormon-Missouri War of 1838, during which three Latter-day Saints, including apostle David W. Patten, were killed.

war. He has his name in the national patent office for thirty-six patents on different inventions. During the last eight or ten years he has been gathering the genealogy of the Boynton family, and is in this respect doing a great deal of good. He has been married thrice. His first wife died, the second left him, and he is now living with his third wife.

LYMAN E. JOHNSON,

A member of the first quorum of Twelve Apostles, was born in Pomfret, Windsor County, Vermont, Oct. 24, 1811. He was baptized in Feb., 1831, by Sidney Rigdon, ordained an Elder and subsequently a High Priest by Joseph Smith, called to the ministry in Nov., 1831 by revelation, and performed missionary labor in Ohio, the Eastern States and Nova Scotia. In 1834 he went to Missouri as a member of Zion's Camp, and was ordained an Apostle Feb. 14, 1835, in Kirtland, Ohio, after which he performed a mis-

sion to the Eastern States. He studied the Hebrew language in the winter of 1835-36, and after returning from another mission to the East in the fall of 1836 he entered into merchandising and soon after apostatized. At a conference held in Kirtland, Sept. 3, 1837, he was disfellowshipped, but made confession and was restored to his former standing a few days later. His repentance, however, was not genuine, and on April 13, 1838, he was excommunicated from the Church in Far West, Caldwell County, Mo. Until his death he remained friendly to his former associates, making frequent visits to Nauvoo, after the Saints had located there. He relinquished his business of merchandising and commenced to practice law, locating himself in Davenport, Iowa. A few years later he removed to Keokuk, Iowa, where he continued his practice, and was finally drowned in the Mississippi River at Prairie du Chien, Wis., Dec. 20, 1856.

THE CROOKED RIVER BATTLE.

Late in the evening of October 24, 1838, news reached Far West, Caldwell County, Mo., that the Rev. Samuel Bogart with a mob of about seventy-five men were committing depredations on Log Creek, destroying property and taking prisoners. On hearing the report, Elias Higbee, the first judge of the county, ordered Lieutenant-Colonel George M. Hinkle, the highest officer in command in Far West, to raise a force to disperse the mob and retake their prisoners, whom, it was reported, they intended to murder that night. The trumpet sounded, and the brethren assembled on the

public square about midnight. Captain David W. Patten, Parley P. Pratt and Charles C. Rich, with about forty others, volunteered, which number the judge thought sufficient, but upon the suggestion of Brother Rich, who believed a battle was inevitable, more men were raised by him in the small settlements on Goose and Log creeks, which increased the force to about seventy-five men when they all met together about six miles from Far West. The company was divided into small companies of ten, and then proceeded by the main road, four miles, to a point near Crooked River.

About this midnight march Parley P. Pratt writes: "The company was soon under way, having to ride through extensive prairies, a distance of some twelve miles. The night was dark, the distant plains far and wide were illuminated by blazing fires, immense columns of smoke were seen rising in awful majesty, as if the world was on fire. This scene of grandeur can only be comprehended by those acquainted with scenes of prairie burning, as the fire sweeps over millions of acres of dry grass in the fall season, and leaves a smooth surface divested of all vegetation. The thousand meteors, blazing in the distance like the camp fires of some war host, threw a fitful gleam of light upon the distant sky, which many might have mistaken for the *Aurora Borealis*. This scene added to the silence of the midnight, the rumbling sound of the tramping steeds over the hard and dried surface of the plain, the clanking of swords in their scabbards, the occasional gleam of bright armor in the flickering firelight, the gloom of surrounding darkness, and the unknown destiny of the expedition, or even of the people who sent it forth—all combined to impress the mind with deep and solemn thought, and to throw a romantic vision over the imagination, which is not often experienced, except in the poet's dreams, or in the wild imagery of sleeping fancy. In this solemn procession we moved on for some two hours, when it was supposed we were in the neighborhood of danger."

The company dismounted and tied the horses to Randolph McDonald's fence, and, leaving a few men to guard them, the remainder proceeded further on foot. Captain Patten divided the party into three companies, taking

command of the first himself, and put Charles C. Rich in charge of the second and James Durfee of the third. Apprehending that the mob was encamped at a Mr. Field's house, Capt. Patten took his men and went around to the right of the field, Durfee through the field and Rich round to the left. Rich arrived at the house about five minutes before the other companies, which gave him a little time to reconnoitre the premises. Capt. Patten made a short speech, exhorting the brethren to trust on the Lord for victory, then ordered a march to the ford, along the road.

It was just at the dawning of light in the East, and when near the top of the hill which descends to Crooked River, the words "who comes there" were heard and at the same instant the report of a gun. Young Patrick O'Banion reeled out of the ranks and fell mortally wounded, whereupon Capt. Patten ordered a charge and rushed down the hill. At a short distance the camp fires of the enemy could now be seen, but it was still so dark that little could be seen by looking to the west, while the mob looking towards the dawning light could see Patten and his men quite distinctly. When within about fifty yards of the camp, the brethren formed a line, with Capt. Patten's company at the right, which brought Bro. Rich's company in the road. Patten's company was partly shielded by a clump of trees, and Durfee's by a thicket of hazel brush.

The mob formed under the bank of the creek, below their tents, and fired all their guns upon the brethren. By this volley James Hendricks and Bro. Hodges, of Rich's company, and others were wounded. Capt. Patten ordered the company to fire, which was obeyed

immediately and the whole wilderness seemed for a few moments one continued echo of the reports of the deadly rifle. The watch word "God and Liberty" was then given, and Capt. Patten ordered a charge, which was instantly obeyed. The parties immediately came in contact with their swords, and the mob was soon put to flight, crossing the river at the ford and such other places, where they could get over. In the pursuit one of the mob wheeled around from behind a tree and shot Capt. Patten, who instantly fell mortally wounded, having received a large ball in the bowels. He wore a white blanket coat, which made him a conspicuous mark.

The mob left all their animals and camp equipage and dispersed in nearly all directions, and were so completely routed that almost every one of them reported that Bogart's whole company was destroyed, and he alone was left to tell the tale. When the truth became known, however, only one of the mobbers seemed to have been killed, while a number were wounded.

The battle ground was soon cleared, and the brethren gathered up a wagon or two, and making beds therein of tents, blankets, etc., took their wounded and retreated slowly towards Far West. Brother Gideon Carter was shot in the head and left dead on the ground, so defaced that his comrades did not know him, but as soon as

it was discovered who he was, his body was brought away and buried. Three brethren, including Patten, were wounded in the bowels, one in the neck, one in the shoulder, one through the hips, one through both thighs and one in the arm, all by musket balls.

When the returning *posse* came within five miles of Far West, it was met by a surgeon and several brethren from the city. Capt. Patten, who had suffered intense pains during the transportation from the battle ground, was carried into the house of Stephen Winchester, where he died the following night. About the same time young Patrick O'Banion died. They were buried together under military honors at Far West, on the 27th. The others, who were wounded, all recovered, but Hendricks remained a cripple during his whole natural life.

The prisoners (Nathan Pinkham, Wm. Seeley and Addison Green), who had been kidnapped from their home by Bogart's company the day previous, broke away from their enemies at the commencement of the engagement. Pinkham and Green escaped unhurt, but Seeley was severely wounded in attempting to run over to the lines of his brethren.

After the arrival of the *posse* in Far West, the spoils of the enemy were delivered to the colonel of the regiment, who afterwards delivered them to the higher civil or military authorities of the State.

THE HISTORICAL RECORD, a monthly periodical, devoted exclusively to historical, biographical, chronological and statistical matters, is published by ANDREW JENSON, Salt Lake City, Utah. Subscription price: \$1.25 per annum in advance.

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