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BATTLE AND MASSACRE AT FRENCHTOWN, MICHIGAN, JANUARY, 1813.

BY REV. THOMAS P. DUDLEY, ONE OF THE SURVIVORS.

The following incidents relating to the march of a detachment of Kentucky troops under Colonel Lewis to Frenchtown, on the River Raisin, Michigan, January, 1813; the battles of the 18th and 22d; the massacre of the prisoners, and the march to Fort George, on the Niagara river, were written by the Rev. Thomas P. Dudley, of Lexington, Ky., May 26th, 1870, and indorsed as follows:

A. T. Goodman, Esq., Secretary Western Reserve Historical Society:

DEAR SIR: I take pleasure in forwarding to your society an interesting and *reliable* narrative by the Rev. Thomas P. Dudley, of this city. Very truly yours,

LESLIE COOMBS.

LEXINGTON, June 1, 1870.

On the 17th day of January, 1813, a detachment of 550 men, under command of Colonel William Lewis, with Colonel John Allen, and Majors Ben. Graves and George Madison, from the left wing of the Northwest army, was ordered to Frenchtown, on the river Raisin, where it was understood a large number of British had collected, and were committing depredations on the inhabitants of that village. On the 17th, at night, the detachment encamped at the mouth of Swan creek, on the Maumee of the lake. On the 18th, they took up the line of march, meeting a number of the inhabitants retreating to the American camp, opposite to where Fort Meigs was subsequently built. Our troops inquired whether the British had any artillery, to which the reply was,

"They have two pieces about large enough to kill a mouse." They reached the River Raisin about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and while crossing the river on the ice the British began firing their swivels, when the American troops were ordered to drop their knapsacks on the ice. Reaching the opposite shore, they raised a yell, some crowing like chicken cocks, some barking like dogs, and others calling, "Fire away with your mouse cannon again." The troops were disposed as follows: The right battalion commanded by Colonel Allen, the center by Major Madison, the left by Major Graves. The latter battalion was ordered to dislodge the enemy from the position occupied by them, "being the same occupied by the American troops in the battle of the 22d," during which the right and center were ordered to remain where they were, in the open field, until Major Graves' command should force the enemy to the woods. While Graves was driving the enemy occasional balls from the woods, opposite Colonel Allen's command, wounded some of his men. Hence Colonel Allen ordered a partial retreat of forty or fifty yards, so as to place his men out of the reach of the Indian guns. Just as this order was accomplished, we discovered, from the firing, that Major Graves had driven the enemy to the woods, when he was ordered to advance the right and center. Up to this time the fighting was done by Major Graves' battalion. So soon as the right and center reached the woods the fighting became general and most obstinate, the enemy resisting every inch of ground as they were compelled

to fall back. During three hours the battle raged, the American detachment lost eleven killed and fifty-four wounded. About dusk Major Graves was sent by Colonel Lewis to stop the pursuit of the enemy, and direct the officers commanding the right and center, who had been hotly engaged in the conflict, and had killed many of the enemy, to return to Frenchtown, bearing the killed for interment, and the wounded for treatment. Nothing of importance occurred until the morning of the 20th, when General Winchester, with a command of 200 men, under Colonel Wells, reached Frenchtown. Wells' command was ordered to encamp on the right of the detachment who fought the battle of the 18th, and to fortify. The spies were out continually, and brought word on the 21st that the enemy were advancing in considerable force to make battle. On the 21st morning Wells asked leave to return to the camp, which he had recently left, for his baggage. General Winchester declined giving leave, informing Wells that we would certainly and very soon be attacked. In the afternoon Wells again applied for leave to return for his baggage. General Winchester again replied, "The spies bring intelligence that the enemy have reached Stony Creek, five miles from here. If you are disposed to leave your command in the immediate vicinity of the enemy, when a battle is certain, you can go." Wells left and went back.

On the 22d, just as the reveille was arousing the troops, (about daybreak,) the first gun was fired. Major Graves had been up some hours, and had gone to the several companies of his battalion, and roused them. Upon the firing of the first gun he immediately left his quarters and ordered his men to stand to their arms. Very many bombs were discharged by the enemy, doing, however, very little execution, most of them bursting in the air, and the fighting became general along the line, the artillery of the enemy being directed mainly to the right of our lines, where Wells' command had no protection but a common rail fence, four or five rails high. Several of the Americans on that part of the line were killed, and their fence knocked down by the cannon balls, when General Winchester ordered the right to fall back a few steps, and reform on the bank of the river, where they would have been protected from the enemy's guns. Unfortunately, however, that part of the line commenced retreating, and reaching Hull's old trace along the lane, on either side of which the grass was so high as to conceal the Indians. At this time, Colonels Lewis and Allen, with a view of rallying the retreating party, took 100 men from the stockade and endeavored to arrest their

flight. Very many were killed and wounded, and others made prisoners, among the former Colonel Allen, Captains Simson, Price, Edmundson, Mead, Dr. Irwin, Montgomery, Davis, McIlvain and Patrick, and of the latter, General Winchester, Colonel Lewis, Major Overton, etc. The firing was still kept up by the enemy on those within the pickets and returned with deadly effect. The Indians, after the retreat of the right wing, got around in the rear of the picketing, under the bank, and on the same side of the the river, where the battle was raging, and killed and wounded several of our men. It is believed that the entire number of killed and wounded within the pickets did not exceed one dozen, and the writer doubts very much whether, if the reinforcements had not come, those who fought the first battle, although their number had been depleted by sixty five, would not have held their ground, at least until reinforcements could have come to their relief. Indeed, it was very evident the British very much feared a reinforcement, from their hurry in removing the prisoners they had taken, from the south to the west of the battle ground, and in the direction of Fort Malden, from which they sent a flag, accompanied by Dr. Overton, aid to General Winchester, demanding the surrender of the detachment, informing they had Generals Winchester and Lewis, and in the event of refusal to surrender, would not restrain their Indians. Major Graves being wounded, Major Madison was now left in command, who, when the summons to surrender came, repaired to the room in which Major Graves and several other wounded officers were, to consult with them as to the propriety of surrendering. It is proper here to state that our ammunition was nearly exhausted. It was finally determined to surrender, requiring of the enemy a solemn pledge for the security of the wounded. If this was not unhesitatingly given, determined to fight it out, but oh, the scene which now took place! The mortification at the thought of surrendering the Spartan band who had fought like heroes, the tears shed, the wringing of hands, the swelling of hearts, indeed, the scene beggars description. Life seemed valueless. Our Madison replied to the summons, in substance, "We will not surrender without a guarantee for the safety of the wounded and the return of side arms to the officers." (We did not intend to be dishonored.) The British officer haughtily responded: "Do you, sir, claim the right to dictate what terms I am to offer?" Major Madison replied: "No, but I intend to be understood as regards the only terms on which we will agree to surrender." Captain William Elliott, who had

charge of the Indians, it was agreed would be left with some men, whom it was said would afford ample protection until carryalls could be brought from Malden to transport the prisoners there, but the sequel proved they were a faithless, cowardly set. The British were in quite a hurry, as were their Indian allies, to leave after the surrender. Pretty soon Captain Elliott came into the room where Major Graves, Captain Hickman, Captain Hart, and the writer of this (all wounded) were quartered. He recognized Captain Hart, with whom he had been a *room-mate* at Hart's father's, in Lexington, Ky. Hart introduced him to the other officers, and after a short conversation, in which he [Elliott] seemed quite restless and a good deal agitated [he, I apprehend, could have readily told why,], as he could not have forgotten the humiliation he had contracted in deceiving Hart's family, pecuniarily. He proposed borrowing a horse, saddle, and bridle for the purpose of going immediately to Malden, and hurrying on sleighs to remove the wounded. Thence assuring Captain Hart especially of the hospitality of his house, and begging us not to feel uneasy; that we were in no danger; that he would leave three interpreters, who would be an ample protection to us. He obtained Major Graves's horse, saddle, and bridle, and left, which was the last we saw of Captain Elliott. We shall presently see how Elliott's pledges were fulfilled. On the next morning, the morning of the massacre, between daybreak and sunrise, the Indians were seen approaching the houses sheltering the wounded. The house in which Major Graves, Captains Hart and Hickman and the writer were had been occupied as a tavern. The Indians went into the cellar and rolled out many barrels, forced in their heads, and began drinking and yelling. Pretty soon they came crowding into the room where we were, and in which there was a bureau, two beds, a chair or two, and perhaps a small table. They forced the drawers of the bureau, which were filled with towels, table-cloths, shirts, pillow slips, etc. About this time Major Graves and Captain Hart left the room. The Indians took the bed clothing ripped open the bed tick, threw out the feathers, and apportioned the ticks to themselves. They took the overcoat, close bodied coat, hat and shoes from the writer. When they turned to leave the room, just as he turned, the Indians tomahawked Captain Hickman in less than six feet from me. I went out on to a porch, next the street, when I heard voices in a room at a short distance, went into the room where Captain Hart was engaged in conversation with the interpreter. He

asked: "What do the Indians intend to do with us." The reply was: "They intend to kill you." Hart rejoined. "Ask liberty of them for me to make a speech to them before they kill us." The interpreters replied: "They can't understand." "But," said Hart, "you can interpret for me." The interpreters replied: "If we undertook to interpret for you, they will as soon kill us as you." It was said, and I suppose truly, that Captain Hart subsequently contracted with an Indian warrior to take him to Amherstburg, giving him \$600. The *brave* placed him on a horse and started. After going a short distance they met another company of Indians, when the one having charge of Hart spoke of his receiving the \$600 to take Hart to Malden. The other Indians insisted on sharing the money, which was refused, when some altercation took place, resulting in the shooting of Hart off the horse by the Indian who received the money. A few minutes after leaving the room, where I had met Hart and the interpreters, and while standing in the snow eighteen inches deep, the Indians brought Captain Hickman out on the porch, stripped of clothing except a flannel shirt, and tossed him out on the snow within a few feet of me, after which he breathed once or twice and expired. While still standing in the yard, without coat, hat or shoes, Major Graves approached me in charge of an Indian, and asked if I had been taken. I answered no. He proposed that I should go along with the Indian who had taken him. I replied, "No, if you are safe I am satisfied." He passed on and I never saw him afterward. While standing in the snow two or three Indians approached me at different times, and I made signs that the ball I received was still in my shoulder. They shook their heads, leaving the impression that they designed a more horrid death for me. I felt that it would be a mercy to me if they would shoot me down at once, and put me out of my misery. About this time I placed my hand under my vest, and over the severe wound I had received, induced thereto by the cold, which increased my suffering. Another young warrior passed on and made signs that the ball had hardly struck and passed on, to which I nodded assent. He immediately took off a blanket capot (having two) and tied the sleeves around my shoulders, and gave me a large red apple. The work of death on the prisoners being well nigh done and the houses fired, he started with me toward Detroit. After going a short distance he discovered my feet were suffering, being without shoes, and he having on two pair of moccasins, pulled off the outer pair, and

put them on my feet. Having reached Stony Creek, five miles from the battle ground, where the British and Indians camped the night before the battle of the 22d of January, their camp fires were still burning, and many had stopped with their prisoners to warm. In a short time I discovered some commotion among them. An Indian tomahawked Ebenezer Blythe, of Lexington. Immediately the Indian who had taken me resumed his march, and soon overtook his father, whom I understood to be an old chief. They stopped by the roadside, and directed me to a seat on a log and proceeded to *paint me*. We reached Brownstown about sundown in the evening, when having a small ear of corn we placed it in the fire for a short time, and then made our supper on it. A blanket was spread on bark in front of the fire, and I pointed to lie down. My captor finding my neck and shoulder so stiff that I could not get my head back, immediately took some of his plunder and placed under my head and covered me with a blanket. Many Indians, with several prisoners, came into the council house afterward, and they employed themselves dressing, in hoops, the scalps of our troops. There was the severest thunder storm that night witnessed at that time of the year. The water ran under the blanket, and the ground being lower in the centre around the fire, I awoke some time before day and found myself lying in the water, possibly two inches deep, got up and dried myself as well as I could. About daybreak they resumed their march toward Detroit, stopping on the way and painting me again. We reached Detroit about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and as we passed along the street, a number of women approached us, and entreated the Indians not to kill me. Passing on, we met two British officers on horseback, and stopped and chatted with the Indians, exulting with them in the victory, to whom the women appealed in my behalf, but they paid no more regard to me than if I had been a dog. I passed the night with the Indians at the house of a white woman in the city, who the next morning asked liberty to give me a cup of tea, with a loaf of bread and butter. In the afternoon the Indians paraded with their prisoners and the trophies, *scalps*, and marched to the fort. After remaining some time in the guard-house, where all the prisoners were surrendered but myself, my captors arose to leave with me. When we reached the door the guard stopped me, which seemed to excite the Indians considerably. Major Muir, commanding the fort, was immediate-

ly called for, and entered into a treaty for my release. It was said he gave as a ransom for me an old broken down pack horse and a keg of whisky. My Indian captor took affectionate leave of me, with a promise to see me again. Let me here say my Indian captor exhibited more the principle of the man and the soldier than all the British I had been brought in contact with up to the time I met Major Muir. The next day the British officers, Hale and Watson, invited me to mess with them so long as I remained in the fort. Three or four days afterward and the day before our officers, Winchester, Madison and Lewis, were to leave for the Niagara river, one of these officers accompanied me across the Detroit river to Sandwich. When passing to the hotel where they were, when I became opposite the dining-room door, I saw Major Madison sitting down to supper. The temptation was so strong I entered the door, to the astonishment of the Major and other officers, who supposed I had been murdered with many other prisoners. I am constrained to acknowledge the great mercy of God in my preservation thus far. On the following morning, when arrangements were being made for transportation of officers to Fort George, but none for me, my heart felt like sinking within me at the thought of being left to the care of those I had no confidence whatever in. Providentially a Canadian lieutenant was listening and as soon as all, both British and American officers, left the room, nobly came to me and said: "I have a good span of horses and a good carryall. You are welcome to a seat with me." I joyfully accepted his offer, and I hereby acknowledge that I met in his person a whole-souled man and soldier, through whose kindness, mainly, I reached Niagara river. When I was once more permitted to look on that much loved flag of our country, and paroled and put across the Niagara river on American soil, then, with all the suffering, I felt that I could once more breathe freely. I have again to acknowledge the goodness of God, in providing for reaching my home and friends, after traveling more than 1,000 miles, badly wounded, a half-ounce ball buried in my shoulder. But I lived to be fully avenged upon the enemies of my country in the battle of the 8th of January, 1815, below New Orleans. I have omitted many minor incidents that were in this communication, the writing of which has given great pain in my wounded shoulder.

THOMAS P. DUDLEY.

Lexington, Ky., May 26, 1870.