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Notes furnished
A. J. Pickett
by
Mr Reubin Hill of Wetumpka
in relation
to
the killing of Capt Butler and others
in Butler County Ala
in 1818 —

Col. A. J. Pickett

Nashville 18th Nov 1848

My Dear Sir

The fulfilment of the promise made you ~~when~~ here, has been unavoidably from causes that could not be controlled by me, The knowledge I possess of some of the few incidents connected with the early settlement of this country, I will detail to you, from which you can select what you may deem important in your laudable efforts in writing a history of Alabama,

I moved to Alabama, which was then the Mississippi territory, in the commencement of the year eighteen hundred and seventeen, and settled in Claiborne in Monroe County, It was then more populous, than at any period since, The town supposed to contain a population of from three to four thousand, it being the only point on the Alabama river where provisions could be obtained, The settlements in eastern Alabama being confined to the river and its margin, Corn and provisions of every kind were very high, Flour selling at twenty five dollars per barrel, Corn from five to eight dollars per bushel, and everything else proportionably high,

At the treaty made by Genl Jackson with the Creek Indians at Fort Jackson, a portion of the hostile tribe, refused to accede to the terms of

the treaty, This hostile and dissatisfied portion of them, were in the habit of murdering and committing depredations upon the frontiers remote from the river, waylaying the Federal road, stealing their horses, the mail carriers, horses were frequently stolen, (the mails from Georgia through this County being then carried on horse back)

In the beginning of the year 1818, my father Thomas Hill moved to Alabama, and settled upon Pine Barren Creek, in the western part of the now County of Butler, known as the Flat, He was the owner of a large stock of horned Cattle, and in looking after them, he found upon Cedar Creek, about eight miles distant from his residence, a body of very rich Cumberland land, He concluded to send a portion of his hands to cut down the Cane, burn it and plant corn, fencing would be unnecessary, because there would be no stock to interrupt it, His overseer and hands after building a Camp to protect them from the inclement weather, were engaged in cutting Cane, my brother Josiah Hill was at the Camp as clerk, some ten or twelve Indians came to the Camp, among them a half breed or quarteroon, by the name of Sarman Jack, took some Cane leaves, which were dried by the heat of the sun, the ends of which had become very sharp commenced tickling him in the ear and nose, My brother awoke and found himself surrounded by the Indians, and was much alarmed, The Indians highly delighted and laughing, at the annoyance it had afforded them Jack observed to him, we have easily we could have killed you, and no body would have known anything about it

They remained some time conversing with my brother then left in the direction of my father's residence, They went to his home, my father was in the clearing with some of the negroes, my mother and two sisters being in the house at their unexpected entrance, they became very much alarmed, Jack who could speak english told them not to be uneasy, no harm was intended them, Seeing some blankets laying on a trunk, Jack picked up one, and told my mother he wanted to buy it, and asked her the price, She told him that she did not wish to sell it, she wanted it for her own use, He pulled out four dollars threw them down, all left without saying anything, and Jack carried off the blanket, This was in the evening, They went that night to the Beach Spring on the Federal road, at this place a man by the name of Ogly had settled, built him a little log hut, a neighbour of his by the name of Eli Strand and his wife were on a visit to Oglys that night, The Indians surrounded the house, forced the door open, commenced the work of death upon the peaceable and unoffending families, They soon dispatched Mr Ogly with their tomahawks, Mrs Strand, and her infant child were tomahawked two of Oglys little daughters were tomahawked, Mr Strand and Mrs Ogly in the confusion of the moment, and the bloody scene which they were surrounded, made their escape out of the house, The Indians pursuing them

As they would approach near enough to strike Mrs Ogly with their tomahawks, a large dog would jump at and seize the Indian, he would turn round to beat off the dog, by

this means Mr Strand and Mrs Ogly made their escape, Mrs Ogly lay concealed in the Spring branch Strand in the high grass, The Indians then robbed the house of clothing, and everything else, cutting open the beds and scattering the feathers in every direction, they then left the place no doubt under the impression that they had killed both families, with the exception of the two that had made their escape, Information was rec'd by a few settlers at a place known now as Fort Dale in Butler County, three or four miles from the Beach Spring, that the Indians had murdered Ogly's and Strands families, they collected the next morning at the place and to their great horror and astonishment found Mr Ogly laying dead on the floor, his two little daughters badly tomahawked, still alive, Mrs Strand sitting in the chimney corner in a state of derangement, and incapable of giving them any information, of the bloody scene of the past night, she lived however a very little time, having died in the course of the day, Mr Strand and Mrs Ogly returned in the morning slowly and cautiously no doubt, expecting every moment to meet the fate their families had shared the night before, What a scene must this have been to them, Mrs Ogly to see her dead husband and her two little daughters tomahawked, for each of their skulls was fractured by the savages tomahawks, Mr Strand to see his wife bleeding and entirely unconscious of anything.

Mrs Ogly and her two little daughters were carried by their kind neighbors to their houses, Information was —

immediately conveyed to his Excellency Wm W Bibb then Gov. of the Alabama territory at St Stephens then the seat of territorial government, As soon as he received the information, with that promptitude which ever characterized his conduct, he ordered Colo, afterwards Genl Daniel Dale, to collect forthwith what men he could and repair to Beach Spring, His first object after reaching there was to send Mrs Ogly and her two little daughters yet living to Claiborne that they might receive medical as well as pecuniary assistance, The Genl could procure no other conveyance for them but an ox cart, in that they were brought to Claiborne under a small guard detailed by the Genl from his little force, A more distressing scene my eyes never beheld, than when this poor woman arrived in the ox cart at Claiborne in the month of June, a few bed clothes which probably had been given her by her neighbors were put down in the bottom of the cart as a bed upon which to lay her suffering children, the ox cart covered over with a raw hide, as a protection from the heat of the sun, their wounds had received no dressing, their groans, (for they appeared to be in the agonies of death) the distress of the poor mother, without money, without clothing except what they had on, without friends, or any acquaintance to whom she could appeal, or even a home to shelter her from the inclement weather, it was a scene that was calculated to excite the tenderest sympathies of the human heart, The cart with the escort stopped in front

of my Store door, so soon as I discovered who it was and her situation, I endeavoured to console the distressed and friendless woman, by an assurance that she would find protectors and friends, I sent immediately for Doctr John Watkins, now a resident of Monroe County, for whom I delight to bear my humble testimony, as one of the most estimable, benevolent and humane men,

Upon his coming we immediately procured a house for the poor woman and her suffering children to which she was conveyed, The Doctr attended the children with a devotion that was untiring, one of them got well and is probably now living, the other died in a short time,

Genl Dale built a small fort which is yet called Fort Dale in honour of this worthy man, in Bentley County

The people in the neighbourhood in which my father settled, became so much alarmed, after the murder of Mr Ogly and Mrs Strand, that they too built a fort which they named in honour of Gov. Bibb, and to which they all went with their families as a place of Security

The people of this fort understanding that Gov Bibb was to be at Fort Dale on the Federal road, on a certain day on his way up to Coosawda his residence and being anxious to know if he would send a military force to protect them from the apprehended attacks of the Indians, Mr Butler, Mr Shaw, Mr Gardner, Mr Saffold and Mr Hinson started one morning from Fort Bibb to go to Fort Dale distant about twelve miles, they got out about three miles from the fort, the Indians no doubt seeing them ride

Along the trail, concealed themselves near it in the tall grass as they rode up near the Indians fired, killed Mr Shaw, Mr Gardiner, broke the collar bone of Stinson, the leg of Mr Butler near the ankle, his horse threw him, still holding on to his double barrel shot gun, Stinson was thrown by his horse, and made his escape by concealing himself in the grass, Saffold retained his seat in the saddle unscathed by the Indians, Butler calls to him, Saffold don't leave me, the Indians guns are all now discharged let me get up behind you, this was how having run back to the fort, Saffold being so panic stricken or not hearing Butler left him to his fate and let his horse go with full speed back to the fort,

Butler having retained his double barrel gun was enabled to make his way back on hundred and fifty or two hundred yards before the Indians killed him, When the Indians would present their guns to shoot him he would get behind a tree, present his gun at them and keep them at bay, He thus made out to get as far as stated before they killed him, his foot print soon afterwards, with the corroborating statement of Mr Stinson shows the truth of the fact he stated, So much was the people alarmed at Fort Bibb and panic stricken, that three hundred men, ~~they~~ were suffered to lay three days unburied, with their bodies most horribly mutilated by the Savages, and their bodies to be devoured by the ravenous wild beasts of the forest, Thus they lay with an hundred and eighty able bodied men at Fort Bibb

Genl Dale went from his own fort down and burned them, A little subsequent to this period, a man living some ten or fifteen miles below Claiborne, by the name of Stokes was murdered, supposed to have been by the Indians, this created such consternation and alarm among the inhabitants at Claiborne, that they too determined to build a fort the fortening of old fort Claiborne having been destroyed, No pursuit or means were used to find out the murderers of Mr Stokes, The whole inhabited portion of the territory east of the Tombecbee river were much disgusted & alarmed for their own and families personal safety

Many families moved west of the Ala river, — Some time during the year 1819 Genl Jackson having been appointed Gov. of the Floridas, on his way to Pensacola crossed the Ala river at Sizemore ferry, At this place he sent for John Boyle and Zachariah McGirt both of whom he knew, having been with him during the Creek war, and knowing also that they possessed a knowledge of the Country, the Indians and their habits and each of them married Indian Country women, gave to each of them commissions as Captains, with instructions to raise two Companies of mounted men, and to scour the Country in every direction, They did so, Genl Jackson instructed them particularly, if they should find any Indians, whom they supposed to be friendly to the whites, to take them under their Care and protection, and send them to the

Big Warrior, the then chief of the nation of Creek Indians, There were some Indians supposed to be down on the Perdido river, and other portions of the southern territory, were believed to be friendly to the whites, but were afraid of returning to the nation, for fear of being molested or killed by the whites, Genl Jackson, with that penetration and foresight that belonged to this great and patriotic man, instructed these two Capts to be Careful that no injury should be done to any Indians that they might find, and afford them a sure and safe transit to the Big Warrior, Boyle after having raised his Company went down upon the Perdido river, a Stream between the Escambia and Mobile Bays, he came upon an Indian Camp at which he found an old Squaw, he inquired of her if there were no men About, She told him no, fearful perhaps at seeing so many armed men, that they would all be Killed, Boyle speaking the Indian language, assured her in her vernacular tonage, that not a hair of their heads should be hurt, and that he would send them safely to the Big Warrior, Her fears became quieted, and she told him there were seven men not far off gathering whartleburries, and under the assurance which he had given her of protection to herself and the men, she would go and show them to him, she did so, and found them as discribed to Boyle, He gave them the same assurance of protection and Came, that he had given

to the old woman, They very willingly consented to go with Boyle, with no doubt the hope and prospect of a reunion with friends and kindred, They all started back, Boyle upon reaching his own home with the Indians detailed a guard to carry them to Clarksville with written instructions to the Sheriff, to receive them and keep them safely in jail, no charge was made against them of any felonious offence, nor of any length of time for them to be confined, but a general injunction to keep them safely. They were brought to Clarksville by the guard and rec'd by the Sheriff, I was then acting Chief Justice of the Orphans Court, my residence was then about a half mile out of town, I met with the Sheriff in the evening of the day the Indians were brought in, he informed me he had seven Indians in jail, sent by Capt Boyle with instructions to keep them safely, I enquired of him if they were charged with having committed any offence, he said none, I told him to direct the guard to carry them back to Capt B. and to dispose of them in the way that I had commanded him, That the County could not be charged with the expense of keeping the Indians, as they had committed no offence, commanding officer of the guard received through the Sheriff the order I had given that the seven Indians should be carried back to Capt B,

The Capt of the guard requested the Sheriff to let them remain in the jail during the night, for safe keeping, and in the morning he would return with

them to Capt B. The guard set out with them the next morning, travelled three or four miles from Claiborne, the same Indians were all shot down and killed and left laying in the road in that condition, This dastardly and disgraceful act, was done by the guard and a portion of the abandoned and worthless population that at that time infested Fort Claiborne, After the performance of what they considered an act of bravery and heroism, returned to Claiborne to rejoice over it,

So soon as it became known in the place the Hon B. Murphy afterwards Gov of the State of Ala, Doctr John Watkins and some other of my friends sent a messenger to me to come immediately into town, I did so, and upon meeting with them they informed me what a disgraceful act had been committed, I sent for the Sheriff and inquired of him, if he knew the names of the guard, and those of our population that were concerned in the act, he said he did not but would ascertain, He soon furnished me with the names of the guard, as well as the persons that were concerned, I issued warrants, directed the Sheriff to go and apprehend every one he could find, By this time a large crowd had collected about the drinking shops, the greater portion of them nearly drunk, the Sheriff observed to me, I shall be resisted in the execution of these processes, he being a firm, resolute and determined man, I had no fears my self about resistance for I believed that men that were capable of committing so base an act

had not more to resist a Sheriff in the execution of the duties of his office, I directed him to summons every man he could find to assist him he summons Mr Murphy, the Rev Mr Rivers, Doctr Watkins, Mr Lucas and others, I directed him when he found one to take him into his custody, to enter into no conversation, to tell him he was his prisoner, the most of them were apprehended and no resistance made, We went into an investigation of the matter which occupied nearly the whole night, I think about ten were committed to jail, — others entered into bonds for their appearance at Court, those committed to jail in a few days, broke out and run away, those that had entered into recognizances, and their securities also fled, Thus the perpetrators of a most shameful and disgraceful act, escaped the punishment, which their crimes so justly merited, and Claiborne retired of a portion of her loathsome population, The Indians after this period committed few murders, Genl Dale was directed by Gov Bibb to raise three or four companies of mounted men, and scour the country on the east side of the ala river, from Claiborne as high up as Cedar Creek, he did so, often seeing fresh signs but no Indians, There were some troops sent by Gov B. to Fort Dale and Fort Bibb as a protection to the few settlers that remained at these forts, An Indian by the name of —

Pushamataho (I think of the Choctaw tribe) who was with Genl J. during the Creek war, (and this Indian it is said for Genl J. retained to the close of his life a warm and most devoted affection,) hearing of the Indian difficulties in Ala raised a Company of his countrymen, marched with them to St Stephens, and made a tender of it to Gov B. they were cheerfully accepted by him and sent on to Fort Dale and Fort Bibb.

This celebrated warrior and his Indians would trail the Indians through the swamps of Cedar Creek and Pine Barren, with the certainty of a hound trailing a deer, the hostile Indians would some times take the run of a branch or Creek, the Choctaws following them but never overtaking any of them, These few hostile Indians, supposed to have been seventy or eighty, kept the country in alarm and excitement for a considerable length of time, they finally crossed the Ala river near the mouth of Pine Barren Creek with the intention of making their way west of the Mississippi river,

I have thus my dear Cousin detailed to you the incidents within my knowledge connected with the early settlement of Ala, whatever inaccuracies you may discover in punctuation or grammer correct it for it has been hastily drawn up, With my best and ardent wishes for your success in your laudable undertaking, accept of my sincere regard —

Reuben Hill

Particulars of the murders in the Britten County 1818

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Colu A. J. Pickett

Montgomery

Alabama

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