THE BATTLE OF BLACK JACK.

By G. W. E. Griffith.¹

I

SETTLED in Kansas in the fall of 1855, on a claim in Franklin county, near the Douglas county line on the east branch of Ottawa creek, about two miles south of Baldwin City. I remember we called it five miles to Black Jack. The town of Prairie City had been located about one mile southwest of Baldwin, where a post office had been established where we got our mail. Stores had been started and a town site laid out, with the hope and expectation of building a city. Here we attended church and Sunday school on the Sabbath day.

Black Jack was on the road known as the Santa Fe trail, five or six miles northeast of Prairie City. A company of citizens had been organized for self-protection in the locality, both from Douglas county and Franklin county, living on the east and west branches of Ottawa creek, with headquarters at Prairie City. The citizens were all free-state men. Our company was under the command of Samuel T. Shore, residing south of Prairie City, on the west branch of Ottawa creek.

In the fall of 1856 a company of marauders, under the command of Captain Pate, camped at Black Jack and began to terrorize the citizens of the surrounding country. Doctor Graham, a physician and prominent citizen residing in Prairie City, was arrested and carried off and held captive in the camp of these lawless men, whose object seems to have been to drive from the country free-state men, and in this manner make Kansas a slave state. Other innocent citizens were captured and the people of the surrounding country were annoyed and alarmed. Great excitement spread among the people. Reports of acts committed by this lawless band were circulated all around and the people became alarmed for their safety.

On Sunday morning I took my wife and went to Prairie City to attend Sunday school and church as usual. We found our superintendent had been arrested and carried into captivity, and we knew not what might happen to him. Alarming rumors prevailed. People began to assemble where church was to be held. Many had their guns on their shoulders, which they stacked in the corner of the room. Rev. J. S. Gingerich, a United Brethren preacher, then residing about two miles south of the city of Lawrence, began to preach, and during the course of his sermon an excitement in the congregation suddenly broke out. Many men jumped up and ran for their guns which they had deposited in the corner as they came in. I had no gun, and did not at first know what the excitement was about, but on going to the door I saw six men riding up, armed and in line; but when the men rushed out with their guns cocked four of these men surrendered, but two in the rear turned and

¹ George Washington Ewing Griffith was born in Tippecanoe county, Indiana, December 22, 1833. His parents were James Griffith and Nancy Hunt Griffith, of Livingston county, New York. Griffith went from Indiana to Westmoreland county, Pennsylvania, where he taught school, and where he married Miss Priscilla A. Horbach (Harbaugh). He returned to Indiana, and from his native county he started to Kansas September 22, 1855. He had a brother at Fort Scott and he went there first. He and his brother came to Topeka, and later went to Franklin county and took claims. The claim of G. W. E. Griffith was on the line between Franklin and Douglas counties, two miles from Prairie City. There he became acquainted with Captain Shore and other free-state men. And there he met John Brown. He moved to Los Angeles, Cal., after the Civil War, and in the summer of 1924 he visited Lawrence and other places in Kansas. William E. Connelly interviewed him at Lawrence June 5, 1924. When he returned to California he wrote this article. Its value is that it is the story of an eyewitness.
fled as fast as their horses could run, with bullets from our churchmen's guns tearing up the dust in their front, rear and sides, but none of them were hurt; but the four captured were retained as prisoners.

It appears that our Captain Shore, as soon as he learned of the situation as above related, sent word to Captain John Brown, of Osawatomie, to come with his company and help us protect the people from these outlaws.

The camp of Captains Shore and Brown was not over one mile from my home on Ottawa creek. When night came I went home to sleep, but when morning came word was brought to me that the battle of Black Jack had begun and that I should join in without delay, which I proceeded to do; but I met our men on the way back with Pate and his men as captives. They were taken south to a location on Ottawa creek, and there a new camp was established with the captives held as prisoners. This camp as I recollect was about two miles below or south of Prairie City, and about three or four miles southwest from the present city of Baldwin.

I do not now recollect how long Captain Pate and company were held captives, but I clearly remember that Captains Brown and Shore advised me that Colonel Sumner was approaching with a company of United States cavalry, and instructed me to ride out and meet him and ask for an interview. When I met him he immediately asked me, "What is doing down there?" I informed him that Captains Brown and Shore held Captain Pate and company as prisoners down there, and instructed me to request an interview with him. He said, "All right; tell them to meet me right in the road." I returned as fast as my horse could run and delivered the message, but they asked me to return and request of Colonel Sumner to grant them a private interview apart from his company. I well remember that it did not appear to me that this was a proper request to make of a military officer, but I promptly obeyed; and on approaching Colonel Sumner he immediately spoke, saying, "Well, what now?" I advised him what Captains Brown and Shore desired, and he said in a stern voice, "Tell them I make no terms with lawless men." When I delivered this message, they came out on the road and met the colonel, and he halted his company and conferred with them. He told them that he had orders from Governor Shannon to release Captain Pate and his men, and that was his demand. Their arms were to be restored. Also the United States marshal was with him, and if the marshal had warrants for any one there, they must submit to arrest. It was all agreed to, and I heard Colonel Sumner tell the marshal that if he saw any one for whom he had a warrant that he should now proceed to execute his warrant. The marshal replied that he saw no one for whom he had a warrant. Then Captain Pate got up on a log and said he would like to make a few remarks. Colonel Sumner then lifted up his voice and said distinctly, "I don't want to hear a word from you, sir. You have no business here, the Governor told me so." Captain Pate and his company then disappeared, and I never heard of him afterwards.

It appears that the battle of Black Jack and the capture of Captain Pate and his men had created a big excitement in certain sections of Missouri, and it was reported at this time that a large band of Missourians, 1,000 strong, were at that time on their way to release Pate and take vengeance on the people who had arrested him. These facts were explained to Colonel Sumner in reply to his demand that we return to our homes. Demand was made upon him for protection against the army of lawless men then approaching. He had with him only one small company of about fifty men. He realized
the critical situation, and immediately asked our captain to send him a man
to carry a message to three companies of United States troops then stationed
near Osawatomie. I was named, and he gave me a sealed message, directing
that it be delivered to Captain Wood, in command of the three companies
at Osawatomie. Selecting a companion, we struck out about 5 p.m. We found
Captain Wood about 1 a.m. and delivered our message. After reading it, he
told me he was ordered to break camp forthwith and come to Prairie City.
He said his command had been located there for several months and it was
practically impossible to start "forthwith." He asked me for as full an ex-
planation as I could give him. He then called for a conference in command
of each company, after which he gave orders to sound reveille at 3 a.m., with
orders for every man to be ready to take the road at daybreak. Then it was
that there was hurrying to and fro such as I never saw before. Horses were
being fed, breakfast was being prepared, tents were being pulled down and
packed, wagons were being loaded, cannon and ammunition trucks were put
in line, baggage teams were loaded, and altogether made a long line. Sure
enough at the dawn of day we were on the road, and I was in front with Cap-
tain Wood to show him the way. For five miles the command moved slowly
on a walk, then Captain Wood gave order, "Slow trot." After that the move-
ment became faster and faster, and I found it difficult to keep up with even
a fast trot. It was a great sight to me to see 300 cavalry with several cannon—
ammunition wagons and baggage wagons with four mules to each, and drivers
cracking their whips and yelling at the mules, sweeping through the country
at the rate of eight or ten miles per hour.

Before twelve o'clock we drew rein at Prairie City, at the very building
where I had been to church the Sunday previous. There we met Colonel
Sumner, who greeted Captain Wood and told him, "You have done well."
He then gave me a ten-dollar gold coin and took my receipt. This was the
last I ever saw of Colonel Sumner, but later read of him as general of the
United States army on the Potomac.

It appears that before the arrival of Captain Wood, Colonel Sumner had
gone to meet the invading Missourians and had informed them of his pur-
pose to protect the community, and succeeded in influencing them to return.
I think they obeyed his demand, for peace reigned in that vicinity, and Cap-
tain Wood and his men remained in camp for a long time near where Baldwin
City is now located.

**JOHN BROWN.**

I was present with Captain Shore's company when Captain Brown's company
rode into camp in answer to Captain Shore's request for assistance. Lieutenant
Brown, son of John Brown, was in command. At first I supposed that he was
John Brown, but I was informed that John Brown was not present, and that
his company was under Lieutenant Brown, his son. Later on John Brown was
pointed out to me when he arrived. This was previous to the battle of Black
Jack.

Some time after the battle had taken place, while sitting on a log in camp,
Captain Shore told me the story which had come to him concerning the
murder of five men on Middle creek; which as I recollect was as follows: He

2. Mr. Griffith means the Pottawatomi. Dutch Henry's Crossing was the crossing of
the Pottawatomi, at what is now Lane, Kan., and not on Middle creek. This statement
that the crossing was on Middle creek should not discredit Mr. Griffith's story. He was looking
back so many years that objects blurred and confused themselves in the far perspective.
said that Brown and his company was on the way to aid us at Prairie City. They had gone into camp some miles this side of Dutch Henry's Crossing of Middle creek. Captain Brown called his company together in a conference. He said that the ball had commenced to roll and that it was best to make a clean sweep of it—that there were some men living at Dutch Henry's Crossing who were trying to introduce human bondage in Kansas. He then and there suggested that the company return and wipe out these men before proceeding further. His suggestion was discussed and voted down by the company—his own sons voting against it. The next morning at breakfast it was found that John Brown and six or seven other men were missing, who, it was afterwards learned, had gone back to Dutch Henry's Crossing and had committed the murder of five men by calling them out of their homes. This Captain Shore informed me accounted for the absence of John Brown when his company first reached our camp. Captain Shore denounced the act in unmeasured language, and was angry about it. I felt the same way, as I considered such methods as wrong and calculated to injure our cause. Captain Shore told me also that a warrant was out for the arrest of John Brown for these murders.

It appears that when Brown's company returned home after the intervention of Colonel Sumner and the release of Captain Pate, that Brown did not return with his company to their homes in or near Osawatomie, the presumption being that he feared arrest. It was know that he and others remained secreted in the woods somewhere on Ottawa creek. After this, one day I was on my way from Prairie City to West Ottawa creek, and I met John Brown in the road about one-fourth mile from Prairie City. He stopped me for a conversation. He got on the fence and sat there to talk to me as I sat on my horse. I remember the conversation definitely, as it impressed me as a view I had never heard before. He introduced the subject by stating that there was no law in Kansas, to which I agreed, as we all denied the validity of the bogus laws, as we called those enacted by the illegal legislature. In the absence of any law, it was the duty of every good citizen to do his part in enforcing God's law, which provides that any man who commits murder shall suffer death. That to make a human being a slave was worse than murder, and therefore any man aiding slavery in Kansas was worse than a murderer and should suffer death, and it was his duty and my duty to aid in the enforcement of God's laws in the absence of any civil law. He further went on to say that when he knew that a man was guilty and deserved death that he could "execute him with no more feeling than I would have in killing a chicken for my dinner."

The conversation was not continued further, as two United States soldiers appeared in the road, coming our way, and when John Brown saw them he jumped down from the fence and disappeared in the brush, and that was the last time I ever met him.

I fully understood his argument to me was intended to justify the killing of the men at Dutch Henry's Crossing, and which he no doubt knew that I had condemned.

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2. Still, Governor Robinson did not know John Brown had anything to do with the Pottawatomie affairs until some twenty years after its occurrence. Or if he knew, he did not know of any wrongdoing by Brown in the matter. Mr. Griffith's recollections are at fault as to this matter. John Brown was in camp with his company on Middle creek, and went back from that camp to the Pottawatomie.
Kansas State Historical Society.

There are some people who deny that Brown was guilty of this murder, but none of the old settlers ever doubted it. I was well acquainted with James Hanway, who resided in Franklin county, as I served with him on the board of county commissions, and he often visited my house. He was a friend of John Brown, who always stopped at his house; and Mr. Hanway told me that Brown discussed the murder of the men at Dutch Henry's Crossing, and made the remark to him at his home, "If that was murder I cannot say that I am not guilty."

HOME-COMING CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION AT COUNCIL GROVE, JUNE 27 TO JULY 2, 1921.

Celebrating the one-hundredth anniversary of Captain William Becknell's caravan or pack train that passed through Council Grove in 1821, the first successful trading trip to the Santa Fe, N. M., region and with merchandise for the Mexican civilization of the Southwest.

Prepared for the Kansas State Historical Society by Mrs. Mamie Stine Sharp, of Council Grove, Kan.

The monument to "Old Settlers of Council Grove" is placed on the lawn of the Carnegie City Library. It was bought with the net proceeds of the first edition of the sale of the book, "The Story of Council Grove on the Santa Fe Trail," by Mrs. Lalla Maloy Brigham. Part of the bronze tablet was paid for by the net proceeds of the sale of the pamphlet, "The History of the Home-coming to Council Grove," by Mrs. Mamie Sharp, and sponsored by the Civic Club of Council Grove.

On one side cut in the granite is the following:

1847—1921
Dedicated to the memory of the old Settlers of Council Grove, Kansas.

On the bronze tablet is the following:

1821—1921.
In Commemoration of the Home-coming to Council Grove,
June 27—July 2, 1921,
Celebrating the One Hundredth Anniversary of the First Pack Train to Pass over the Santa Fe Trail, led by Wm. Becknell.

1. Mamie Stine Sharp (Mrs. Elwood Sharp) came to Morris county, Kansas, with her father in 1872. At that time she was but five years old, but soon attended the little prairie school. She finally became a popular country school teacher, a position she held for years. In those days, one of the important duties of a teacher of one of those prairie schools, away off upon the lonely wind-swept prairies, was to guard the pupils from prairie fires and blizzards.

Her father, William Stine, took an active interest in his country and public affairs. Miss Stine married Elwood Sharp, only son of Hon. Isaac Sharp, a well-known pioneer. This marriage was in 1887. She became the mother of two children, Jessé, who is a teacher in Kansas City, Kan., and Dr. Elwood A. Sharp, of the United States navy. Dr. Sharp saw much service as a surgeon in France during the World War.

Mrs. Sharp has been identified with temperance work, political reform and civic development. Her church (Presbyterian) has a large place in her heart. She belongs to one of the oldest study classes in the state, the Thursday Afternoon Club, of Council Grove. She has held all positions of responsibility and honor connected with club work in her district.

During the World War, she was chairman of the Red Cross for her county. She received the service medal for more hours of work both in organization and work room than any other woman in the southwest Kansas division. Her party recently honored her with its nomination for the Kansas legislature.