

Bloody 1864

In late spring and early summer of 1864 the bands of bushwhackers that had inhabited the western counties of Missouri moved their operations to central Missouri. By late April the inhabitants of Cooper County had already witnessed the robbery of Seeley's store and the capture of bushwhackers: James Gilmore, Paddy Mullins, and James Murray. Now on the 25th of April 1864, Captain A. Harrison Thompson, Boonville merchant and Commissioner of Exemptions for Cooper County, received a telegram that seventy bushwhackers were heading towards Boonville. Thompson had twice written to Major-General Rosecrans requesting that the loyal men of the county be armed and that troops be stationed in Boonville. His pleas, however, had fallen on deaf ears of the Union generals who believed Thompson to be an alarmist.

Thompson was not the only one who was alarmed. On May 2, 1864 reports were received of union troopers being killed in Johnson County by guerillas. The reports further stated that the bushwhackers were heading towards Cooper County. The next day the operator of the telegraph at Tipton notified the Boonville telegraph operator that rebels were entering the town. Another dispatch from Mr. Spaulding, the stage operator, notified his Boonville partners that no stage would be leaving Tipton for Boonville. Emotions were raised to a feverish pitch. Pickets were posted outside of Boonville and many merchants took the precaution of packing up their stores and moving across the river into Howard County. The following day the citizens were chagrined to learn that rebels had not invaded Tipton. The invasion was actually a company of Union troops misidentified as rebels. On a lighter note, the Boonville citizens who had left for Howard County learned that a ham and egg breakfast could be had in Howard County for twenty-five cents and whiskey for a mere nickel.

A. Harrison Thompson continued to plead for arming the citizens of the county and placement of Union troops in Boonville. On May 20th, Brigadier-General Egbert Benson Brown acceded to the arming of two companies of troops. But it would not be until August 26, 1864 that these two ill-fated companies along with a third were organized and mustered into service.

Late spring merged into early summer with the Starke homes being burned, the attempted robbery of William Mayo, the robbery of Dr. Patrick Mahan, the death of James Nickels, the robbery of Nathaniel Leonard, John Tucker, J. Hutchinson, William Mayo, and Mr. Crutchfield, and the abduction of Leverett Leonard. Early summer witnessed the death of William Mayo and the wounding of Thomas Brownfield at Pilot Grove by men under the command of "Bloody Bill" Anderson. The J. M. Stephens store at Coal Bank was robbed along with the Tipton to Boonville stage. Bushwhackers hanged William Henry Harriman. He was saved in the nick of time by his black cook. Miscreants robbed Edward H. Harris and Ortho Zeller. Finally in mid-summer on July 15, 1864 bushwhackers killed John Henry Boller and robbed Christian Keil on the outskirts of Boonville.

It was that same sad day of July 15, 1864 when A. Harrison Thompson saw his request fulfilled. Captain Joseph Parke of the Fourth Regiment Missouri State Militia Cavalry arrived in Boonville with his company of soldiers. The citizens were elated noting that Parke's men were one of the most orderly and well-behaved group of soldiers to have every been in Boonville. This must have been a surprise to Franklin D. Swap, an Iowan who later became a noted Boonville dentist. On August 18, 1862 Swap had been

the Provost Marshall of Jefferson City. Swap at that time had charges prepared against Parke asserting that he regularly permitted some of the command to fall behind and pilfer the country of liquor, horses, saddles, and other property, most of which was shipped off or given to the regimental quartermaster who turned them over to citizens or soldiers of Parke's choice.

Parke had little control over the events in the county during the mid-summer of 1864. A man named White was killed at the Haas Brewery. Benjamin Leonard's outbuildings were burned. Christian Kiel was threatened to either leave the county or die within the next several days. Robbery became proliferate with the Boonville Stage, H. Talley, Captain H. Meyers, Judge John A. Trigg, and the store of John C. G. Goodwin all being robbed by bushwhackers within the space of two weeks.

These events did not go unnoticed by Major-General William Starke Rosecrans, who on August 14, 1864 chided Captain Joseph Parke. *Why do you not hunt out and whip [Clifton] Holtzclaw, who is loafing around Boonville? By a night march, going on by-roads, it seems to me you might catch and destroy this villain. Why should all the cunning and enterprise be on one side, and that the wrong side?* Quite a chastisement, and Parke responded on August 16, 1864 by making an incursion into Howard County. There he scouted the lower part of the county for two days during which time he encountered several small bands of guerrillas. Company E of the Fourth Regiment Missouri State Militia Cavalry wounded one guerilla and captured 3 horses, 3-double-barreled shotguns, and 3 revolvers. Parke had pleased his superiors and was flush with success.

On Sunday August 28, 1864, Captain Joseph Parke again crossed the river into Howard County. With him were forty-four men, including Lieutenant Franklin D. Swap. Reaching New Franklin, Parke headed east towards Rocheport. Although warned by the local citizens of the danger that "Bloody Bill" Anderson and his guerillas were in full force in the area; he continued to march forward. When within about four miles of Rocheport his command encountered two guerillas under the command of Clifton Holtzclaw. The bushwhackers were engaged and the men of the Fourth Regiment Missouri State Militia Cavalry wounded one guerilla and captured both of their horses.

This had all the earmarks of being a "cake walk" for Parke, and he continued his advance towards Rocheport. Advancing another mile he was suddenly attacked in rear by a band numbering 100 men, commanded by Holtzclaw and Anderson. Parke's outnumbered command was split into two parts. With his command cut in half, Parke left his men and with six others and rode to Fayette to obtain aid from Major Reeves E. Leonard of the Ninth Regiment Missouri State Militia Cavalry. Parke encountered Major Reeves Leonard marching in the direction of Rocheport; and with this aid he returned to the relief of his company.

While Joseph Parke was on his way to Fayette, the greater part of his command consisting of about twenty-four men had retreated to a house in the Missouri River bottom, and kept Anderson at bay by firing through the cracks of the house. Finding that Anderson had drawn off his men, they mounted their horses and rode back to Old Franklin with Parke and Leonard.

Three other men not in the house or with Parke made it back to Boonville about dark. One procured citizen's clothes and made it back in disguise. Another swam the river with his gun, taking advantage of the bar in the river to cross. One walked in with

his arm shattered. A fourth man was picked up on a log by the steamer *Cora Kenney*. He had been in the water for about four hours floating well below Rocheport. This part of the Company knew nothing of Captain Joseph Parke until the next day, when he made his appearance. Additionally two other men Mathew Golding and Archibald Banes would require some additional time before they could make their way back to Boonville.

The Union losses for the day were seven killed and two wounded. The Confederate losses were estimated at six killed and two wounded. Additionally Parke lost six horses killed and about the same number of horses wounded.

With his command reunited, Captain Joseph Parke and sixteen men remained in Howard County that night. In the morning they recovered the bodies of their companions who had been killed. The bodies were taken back to Boonville.

The names of the killed were Sergeant Calvin Moore; Sergeant George H. Baugh, Orderly Sergeant Porter W. Davis, found later shot and scalped, Corporal David A. Shough; Private John F. Hathaway; Private Alfred Gosnell; Private James O'Neal; Private Thomas Mitchell. Between Moore, Baugh, Shough, Hathaway, Gosnell, O'Neal, and Mitchell of the seven men, five had been scalped. Those wounded were Private Charles Starkey, whose right arm was shattered in the elbow and had to be amputated by Drs Charles S. Boarman and Henry C. Gibson, Adam P. Vance, who was shot in the back of the neck by a ball that was extracted. The Fourth Regiment Missouri State Militia Cavalry had lost eight killed and two wounded.

The dead were brought to Thespian Hall. Three bodies were in crude coffins and four coffins were procured for the others. The Reverend James. Morton opened the funeral services. Various other soldiers in Company E giving tribute followed him with remarks to their fellow soldiers. The coffins were taken to the Old City Cemetery on the western side of Boonville where they were laid side by side in one common grave. Later when the body of Orderly Sergeant Porter W. Davis was found he was buried in a separate grave in the cemetery.

Parke, having been goaded into action by Major-Generals Rosecrans and Pleasonton, now found himself facing their wrath. Major-General Alfred Pleasonton noted that *Captain Parke's forces were evidently surprised on the march and did not attempt to do any fighting. I recommend that Captain Joseph Parke be dismissed from the service for this affair.*

For Cooper County, the bloody summer and fall of 1864 had only just begun. Almost daily bushwhacker under the commands of Todd, Anderson, Gregg, and others would kill, torture, and rob the citizens of the county. The guerillas could ride a circuit of the county in only a day, robbing and killing on an hourly basis and be out of the county before their pursuers had even started the chase. The county in October would bear the invasion by General Sterling Price and his Confederate troops. While Price's troops, especially his Arkansas soldiers, were well-behaved; the camp outliers and bushwhackers would pillage the county. More months would pass before the Union State Militia along with Cooper County Militia would bring peace to the county.