

Missouri State Archives: Finding Aid 5.1

Mormon War Papers, 1837-1841

[Full-text transcription of: Letter from General John B. Clark, 1st Division of Missouri Militia in Richmond, MO to Governor Boggs, Jefferson City, MO]

Jno B Clark
to
Governor
Nov 10 1838
Copied

Head Quarters of the Militia
Employed against the Mormons
Richmond Novr 10th. 1838.

His Excellency L. W. Boggs,

Sir, a day or two before I received your first Order, I had upon information from a letter from Mr. Rees and Col Williams on their way to you, issued an order to have raised in my Division one thousand men ready to march on Monday the 29th. day of October last all of Which I communicated to you by express, the one however conveying my communication met one from your Excellency & returned.

On the 29th. according to my order the first Brigade rendezvous at Fayette proposed to march and did on that evening take up the line of march and reached Chariton on that evening.

At Chariton I recd. an express from Messrs Atchison and Lucas to you, which I forwarded and then I dispatched an Order to Gens. Atchison & Lucas with a copy of your several Orders to me, all of which you have been informed of by me. The next day October 30th, we reached Keytsville where we met the 2nd Brigade, Commanded by Genl. Robt. Wilson, who had been ordered to join me at that place

The next morning October 31st. I organized the two Brigades into a Division Officered the Same and took up the line of march for Richmond, we made force marches until we reached Richmond; on the day we reached Carrollton Novr. 2rd. I heard a report that Genl. Lucas had invested Far West, and effected a capitulation, the arms of which I sent you from here on my way out, I then sent another express to Genl Lucas to hold fast to

all he had (supposing he had the prisoners and arms) until I arrived, to make no final capitulation or treaty, until I did arrive, when I would communicate to him my plans for settling the difficulty, and also requesting him to report to me forthwith his acts Strength &c The express was directed to bring back to me at Richmond any communication the Genl. might desire to make.

The next day I reached Crooked River in the neighborhood of Richmond, at this place I learned that Genl. Lucas, had disbanded his forces, and marched the prisoners to Independence, I immediately Sent an express to intercept him, with orders to march the prisoners and arms back to Richmond for the reasons

contained in my letter to you; from Richmond I continued my march to Far West where I arrived on Sunday the 4th. When I reached there I encamped in the vicinity of Town. At night I went into town, with all my Field Officers & commenced ferreting out the guilty amongst the mormons who were there; this business employed my time for two days and nights. After I had Obtained all the information I could by disclosures from the dissenters from Jo. the Prophet (and there are not a few at this time) I caused the whole of the Mormons to be paraded, and took out of their ranks Such of those I conceived guilty as could be found, and put them into a room. A deep snow falling on this evening, and there being no chance to Obtain fuel or provinder, I was compelled to march back to Richmond with the prisoners forty six in number. I however the day before I left Far West dispatched Lt Col. Price from the Second Brigade to Richmond with two companies to receive the prisoners and arms, but on his arrival not finding them there, he went to Genl Lucas at Independence and informed him of his mission. The Genl. then sent them and they reached here on last evening, and they

are now here under a guard—. On the day I left far West, I ordered Gen'l. Wilson, with his Brigade (except the two companies with Col. Price) to Adam Ondo Ahmon, a town in Davies, which had a few days since surrendered and given up their arms, with instructions to take possession of the town, and disarm all the Mormons, and act in that quarter in accordance to your instructions to me, a copy of which was furnished him.

He was also instructed to take out from the mass of mormons such as probably could be convicted of crime, and have them committed and then carry them to Keytsville, and have them placed in Jail and guarded, but he was instructed not to leave that quarter until he had reinstated the Citizens in their property and homes as far as practicable, and if necessary leave a small force there to protect the citizens. I also ordered Capt. Comstock with his company in Livingston to continue there, disarming the mormons where=ever [sic] found, and report to Genl. Wilson at Diamon. for further orders.

This being done I proposed to march back to Richmond. The morning before I left Far West I called the whole of the Mormons together about five hundred (a great number having run away

between the Surrender, and my arrival) and informed them that the prisoners I had together with those taken by Genl. Lucas would be taken to Richmond, tried and punished if found guilty.—That they must comply with the terms of capitulation with Genl. Lucas

The situation of their women and children, and the inclemency of the weather induced me to modify the terms, and not require them to remove forthwith.

That they could remain until their convenience suited them in the spring. That no military guard would go with them, but I would pledge the honor of the State, they should not be hurt, and that their armes should be given up to them whenever they left the State, and not before. This they readily agreed to, so far as I coul Judge from their expressions.

This being done, I took up the line of march with the prisoners, and got here on Yesterday. On my arrival here I discharged the whole of the first Brigade. I will here state that on my way to Far West while at Richmond I wrote to Genl. Grant and ordered him to countermarch, and discharge his forces, the same order I sent to Genl. Willock from Far West, also Genl. Crowther,s Division was discharged at Richmond on their way

except the Boonville guards, who were taken on to Far West, and discharged here this morning.

Genl. White learning of the State of affairs, left his men at the River near Lexington, and came on to meet me with his Staff, at Far West, I then ordered him to counter march his Brigade except the Cavalry commanded by Capt Parsons, which Company is now here guarding the prisoners.

All the forces in this quarter are now discharged, except two companies commanded by Capt. Parsons and Capt Bogard, I detained Lieut. Col. Price to superintend the guard of the prisoners, and I also detained Genl. White, and his field officers here a day or two, for the purpose of holding a Court Martial if necessary.—I this day made out charges against the prisoners, and called on Judge King to try them as a committing Court, and I am now busily engaged in procuring witnesses, and submitting facts.—There being no Civil Officers in Caldwell, I have to use the Military to get witnesses from there which I do without reserve

Genl. Wilson's Brigade is Still in Service in Daviess County, under the instructions above stated. They will be discharged as fast as possible.

The most of the prisoners here, I consider guilty of Treason, and I believe will be convicted, and the only difficulty in law is, can they be tried in any county but Caldwell, if not they cannot be there indicted, until a change of Population, in the event the latter view is taken by the Civil Courts, I suggest the propriety of trying Jo. Smith and those leaders taken by Genl. Lucas, by a Court Martial for mutiny. This I am in favor of only as a derrier resort. I would have taken this course with Smith at any rate, but it being doubtful whether a Court Martial has jurisdiction or not in the present case, that is whether these people are to be treated as in time of war. and the mutineers as having mutinied in time of war, & I would here ask you to forward to me the Attorney General's opinion on this point. My whole object is to obey your orders, & settle this matter, so as to have the best effect upon the people, & at the same time not com: ;promit the character of the State. But it will not do to allow these leaders to return to their treasonable work again, on account of their not being indicted in Caldwell. I find that by inquiry that with all the enormities we have heard charged against these people, many of which charges we looked upon as the offspring of prejudice on the part of our citizens, the half has not yet been

been told. There is no crime from treason down to the most petty larceny, but those people, or a majority of them, have been guilty of, all too under the counsel of Joseph Smith jr, the prophet—They have committed treason, murder, arson, burglary, robbery and larceny and perjury—They have societies formed under the most binding covenants in form, & the most horrid oaths to Cir:

to convert the laws & put them at defiance, & to plunder and burn & murder & divide the spoils for the use of the Church—This is what they call the Danite Club or Society—These facts I gather from some persons I have who have disclosed—Under this horrid system many of the Citizens of Daviess County who went to that frontier poor, and who by their industry & economy had acquired a good living have been robbed of every article of property they have—their houses burnt before their eyes, & them & their wives & children driven out of the County without any kind of shelter In one instance I have been informed that a family was ordered off and their houses burnt in their sight, & a woman driven out while it was snowing with a child only four days old—In another case I was informed a family was driven away & the woman was compelled to ask protection in a few miles, where she was delivered of

of a child, in a short time after she was thus treated—These, sir, are some of the offences of these people—I do not wonder at the prejudices against them in their vicinity—I send you enclosed a copy of a Constitution of one of their societies from which you can gather some information. I design to continue my head Quarters here, until the investigation of the cases of the prisoners are closed. You shall be informed from time to time of the progress, as also of the movements in Daviess. Those facts I now communicate to you, supposing they would be useful to you before the meeting of the Legislature Your communication of the 6th was received today by Mr. Maupin—its contents were duly noted & shall be attended to—I have this evening informed the prisoners of what is charged against them and ordered the leaders to be bound, so as to be sure to save them—

I am, Sir, your obtd: Servt:

John B. Clark

Maj Genl:

Commg—