

Missouri State Archives: Finding Aid 5.1

Mormon War Papers, 1837-1841

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

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City of Jefferson Novr 29 1838

The Governor of the State of Missouri

Sir The whole of the forces placed under my Command for the purpose specified in your two orders of the 26th & 27th of last month (Copies of which are here attached marked A & B) being discharged I now in pursuance of your orders proceede to report to you my movements as well as to submit to you such facts as I have been able to embody showing the Commencement progress and termination of this perplexing difficulty One or two days before I received your orders above refered to I had upon information received from Messrs Rees Williams Dickson and Woods in writing (Copies of which are here attached marked C) issued orders to have raised in my Divison one thousand mounted men to be ready to march on monday the 29th of last month all of which I immediately communicated to you by express The express however conveying my communication met one from your Excellency conveying to me your orders and returned [~~“without”~~] [~~“going on”~~] On the 29th according to my order the first Brigade rendezvous at Fayette prepared [~~word~~] to march and did on that evening take up the line of march and reach Chariton On the next morning the 30th I received an express from Genls Atchison & Lucas to you but which had been sent to me by Col Williams your aid After examining it I enclosed it to you this letter stated that war was inevitable and that they would hold the enemy in check until you could arrive supposing from previous information that the forces under the command of Genls Atchison and Lucas would only be employed as stated I wrote to them telling them to act for the best.

according to circumstances until my arrival in which letter I enclosed copies of your two orders to me (this letter is here attached marked D) On this evening

we reached Keytsville where we met the second Brigade commanded by Brig Genl Wilson who had been ordered to join me at this place Here I organized the Division giving Col I W. Redman the command of the first Brigade in the absence of the Brigadier Genl the next day we took up the line of march for Richmond making forced marches On the day we reached Carrolton Novr 2nd I heard that Genl Lucas had invested Far West and affected a Capitulaton the terms of which was that the Mormons were 1st to give up their leaders to be tried and punished 2nd All who had taken up arms to make an appropriation of their property to pay their debts and the damages they had done 3rd the balance should leave the state forthwith and be protected out of the State by the Militia 4th to give up all their arms These propositions seem to have been proposed in writing by Genl Lucas and accepted to by the Mormons as I afterwards learned I here sent another express to Genl Lucas ordering him to hold to the prisoners and make no final treaty until I arrived when I would commu=nicate to him my views [] (a copy of this order is here attached marked E) This order however did not reach Genl Lucas as I am informed until after he had left Far West with the prisoners The next day I reached Crooked River learning here that Genl Lucas had disbanded his forces and marched the prisoners to Independance I immediately sent an express to intercept him with orders for him to march the prisoners and arms back to Richmond a copy of

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order is here attached marked F) I continued my march to Far West where the troops arrived on Sunday the 4th of this month Hearing at Richmond that some of the guard left by Genl Lucas at Far West were killing prisoners and committing other excesses I left my troops and went in advance riding all night in order to check such things, but when I reached there on examination I found the [“men chose as a” crossed out] guard had been misrepresented greatly and injustice done them in this matter as well as Gen Lucas’ troops in many respects When the troops reached Far West they were encamped in the vicinity of Town and a guard placed around the Army to keep the men from going in on that evening I went into town with all the field officers and instituted a military Court of enquiry to

ascertain who were the most guilty and ought to be put on their trial in the Civil Courts This business employed my time for two days and nights I will here remark that but for the Capture of Sampson Avard a leading Mormon (by Col Hall from the plat who is a fine officer) I do not believe I Could have [“gotten” crossed out] obtained any useful facts No one disclosed any useful matter until he was captured and brought in I [“did” crossed out] instructed every one who did disclose or give testimony that they were not bound to criminate themselves and that no steps would be taken to compel them We progressed with this investigation until all had disclosed who would willingly I then caused the whole of the Mormons to be paraded and selected such as I thought ought to be put on their trial before a committing Magistrate and put them in a room until the next morning

when I took up the line of march for Richmond with the whole forces and prisoners forty six in number I however the day before I left Far West dispatched Lt Col Price with two companies from the Second Brigade to Richmond to receive the prisoners and arms Genl Lucas had been ordered to have there On his arrival not finding them there he went to Independance and informed the Genl of [“his mission” crossed out] the nature of his mission They were then started and arrived the next day the arms however I did not succeed in getting before my departure from Richmond but supposed they Could not be crossed for the ice On the day I left Far West I directed Brig Genl Robt Wilson with his brigade except the two Companies Col Price had to Adam on Diamon a town in Daviess County to settle matters in that quarter he had [“him” crossed out] furnished him a copy of your several orders to me Genl Wilson is a good officer and also a [“good” crossed out] Lawyer and I thought therefore peculiarly fitted for that Command The manner in which he discharged his duty will be seen by his final report to me with my order to him a copy of which is here attached marked G) The Genl and his troops suffered very much by the inclemency of the weather but they acted kindly and humanely to the prisoners and deserve great credit While at Far West Brig Genl Parks reported to me his acts at Diamon under the order of Genl Lucas and I sent to him an order to keep the prisoners guarded until my arrival Charging him not to permit the property or persons of the prisoners injured in any way (a

copy of which order is attached marked H) General Parks fulfilled my orders to my satisfaction While in Far West I was applied to by a considerable

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number who informed me that they were out of provisions in Town but had plenty on their farms Not wishing to release any until I closed the enquiry I caused provisions to be dealt out to such as were destitute until they were discharged There was at Far west about five hundred Mormons (Several hundred having run off with their arms before my arrival) and at Adam on Diamon about one hundred and fifty or two hundred making in all about [~~“fifteen”~~] twelve hundred armed men when all together as well as I can ascertain There is now collected in the hands of my quarter Master and I presume Genl Lucas’ about [~~“Eight”~~] Seven hundred guns a great many pistols swords and spears but I have not now in my possession any means to ascertain the exact number but they have been receipted for and will be reported in due time by the proper officer Before I left Far West I had the mormons called together and addressed them in substance that they had cappitulated with Genl Lucas and made their own agreement and they would be expected to Comply & must comply [] it necessary for the public peace but that they would not be expected to go until their convenience in the spring—that no military guard would go with them—that none was necessary as I would pledge the honour of the State they should not be hurt—that their arms should then be given up to them I did not see what else I could do under the circum=~~stances~~ without setting at naught [~~“every thing”~~] what had been done by Genl Lucas which I thought would have produced another difficulty with these people of perhaps more danger than the one that was then settled this being done I marched to Richmond with the prisoners and applied to the

to the Honl A. A. King to try them He commended the examination immediately after the Defendants obtained Counsel Before their trial commenced they were informed what was alledged against them I spoke to Col Wood to assist the Circuit Attorney in the prosecutions for the reason given in my last communication The enquiry

as you may well imagine takes a wide range embracing the crime of Treason Murder Burglary Robbery Arson and Larceny. Genls White Grant and Willock were directed to discharge their troops as soon as I learned of the surrender and that they were on their march—Also the troops from the 5th Division under the Command of Genl Woodward except the Boonville guards Commanded by Capt Chiles and the Company of Cavetry commanded by Capt Parsons both of those Companies were kept to guard the prisoners The guards to bring them to Richmond and the Cavetry to guard them after they got there The whole of the troops are now out of service and were discharged as early as possible according to your orders Brigadier Genl Wilson who was sent to Davis County to settle matters in that quarter made a report of his acts and opinions of the commencement of this difficulty which is dated the 25th and it is so replete with information that I have appended it to this report as heretofore stated. I can bear testimony to the good conduct of my whole immediate command both officers and men they all conducted themselves on the march and while with the Mormons as honourable Citizen Soldiers and I state to you Sir that none of my Division

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at any time nor any of the forces after I arrived at Far West committed any violence either upon the property or persons of the Mormons of either sex Any statement or insinuation to the Contrary is false and a slander upon my Command and our Citizens I am led to make this statement to your Excellency on account of strictures I have seen in some of the public journals of the Country About the troops generally and consequently embracing my command I cannot vouch for the troops before my arrival but I do afterwards and in justice to the officers commanding before I will state that I believe that great injustice has been done them also I have the testimony of the most intelligent Mormons on this subject (which I attach marked I) It is humiliating to the Militia who are Citizens generally of a high order to see the public journals of the Country publishing every report that is put out without knowing

whether it be true or false for the purpose of casting reproach upon our arms and Country I make this statement to rescue my my Command from such unmerited censure which I know to be false as far as they are concerned and leave other general officers having the Command before my arrival to act as they please in the premises. I have not been able to satisfy myself as well as I would desire of the causes of this difficulty but enough is shown by the evidence I here attach marked (J.) to enable the Country to appreciate your prompt movement in ordering out the Militia to put down an insurrection of no ordinary Character It had for its object Dominion the ultimate subjugation of this ^ state and the union to the laws of a

few men called the Presidency [~~“of the Church and”~~ crossed out] their Church was to be built up at any rate peaceably if they could but forcibly if necessary These people had as you will perceive banded themselves together in Societies the object of which was to first drive from their society such as refused to join them in their unholy purposes and then to plunder the surrounding Country and ultimately to subject the State to their rule They have [~~“been”~~ crossed out] committed great injury to the Country by burning robing &c these things however their Leaders say was done to punish the Citizens of our State for past violence to them [~~“in other places”~~ crossed out] how true this is you can determine from the evedince herewith sent In their incur sions they have murdered Robed stole and burnt and committed many inhumane acts [~~“to”~~ crossed out] on helpless families I have no doubt but what we have [~~“guarded”~~ crossed out] many citizens who have vary much mistreated these people but never to such an extent as to create the idea in a rational [mind] who loved his country that the [~~“Country”~~ crossed out] Government ought to be subverted and the laws put at defiance

The whole number of Mormons killed through the whole difficulty as far as I can ascertain are about forty and several wounded there has been one citizen killed and about fifteen badly wounded I give it as my decided opin =ion that much more blood would have been shed than was if their had [~~“not”~~ crossed out] been [~~“so many”~~ crossed out] only troops enough ordered out by your Excellency to conquer the insirgents in a battle by having a large number. [~~“Such was”~~ crossed out] Their influence [~~“that the Mormon men”~~ crossed out] awed them into

submission to the first troops that appeared before their Town This I am authorized to say by inteligent Mormons ["among whom" crossed out]

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much has been said to the prejudice of those engaged in the battle at Hauns Mill not having received before my departure from Richmond an official account of that battle from the officers commanding Since my arrival here I ["have" crossed out] addressed a note to Majr Ashby a Senator from Chariton who was ["in that battle" crossed out] there for information his answer is here appended and marked (K.) to which I refer you

I would inform your Excellency that I have been informed by Mormons that there are now about one hundred females the wives of those who were killed and run off who are destitute and depend on their friends for support. I do not know how many of the prisoners will be committed ["convicted" crossed out] not having heard the evidence in defence ["but I suppose from the evidence that a great portion of them" crossed out]

When I left Richmond I obtained copies of all the evidence that had been ["taken" crossed out] given in that I could procure and engaged a gentleman to copy the balance on both sides and forward it to me at this place by each ["male" crossed out] mail The evidence I have is not certified but I heard it delivered and know it is substantially copied That part of S. Avars evidence giving a list of those persons engaged in crime is by accident omitted As fast as the balance arrives it shall be submitted Every facility was afforded the prisoner in getting their witnesses &c that could be and as far as I could observe the investigation was conducted upon legal grounds They have able counsel who are vigilant in their defence. No payrolls have yet been made to me but

they will be very soon when I will forward them in due form There is some public property which my Quarter Master ["General" crossed out] was ordered to report to the Quarter Master General.

Having now submitted to your Excellency the course taken by me under your several orders in every material step as well as such

information as I [word crossed out] possess Permit me to assure
Your Excellency that I entered on my duties
with fearful apprehensions that my experience
and ability to command had been overrated
by you and it would have given me pleasure
if such an important trust involving so much
had been committed to other more competent
hands But in the discharge of my duty I
have endeavoured to comply with your orders as
I understood and construed them making the
restoration and preservation of the public peace
the great object to be attained all which I
respectfully submit to your Excellency hoping
that my acts may be satisfactory to you and
yours [word crossed out] to the Country

I am sir with consideration
of high respect your

Obt Servant

John B Clark

Majr Genl Comg

Rept Genl Clark to
Comr in Chief

Nov. 29th. 1838

Copied