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## MAJOR JOSIAH H. DEMBY'S HISTORY OF CATTERSON'S MILITIA

EDITED BY TED R. WORLEY

In the 1890's ex-Governor Powell Clayton asked Josiah H. Demby to write for him an account of the operations of Brigadier General R. F. Catterson's militia in South Arkansas in 1868-69. When Clayton published his **Aftermath of the Civil War, in Arkansas** in 1915, he included in it some of the material supplied by Demby but most of Demby's account has remained unpublished.

Josiah H. Demby, a native of Georgia, served in the Civil War in Company G, Fourth Regiment, Arkansas Cavalry, U. S. Army, from which he was discharged June 30, 1865, at Little Rock. He remained in Arkansas the rest of his life and represented Scott, Polk, Montgomery, and Hot Spring Counties in the General Assembly in 1868 and Montgomery County in 1879. He died at Hot Springs February 13, 1918.

Originals of the documents her published are owned by Louise Demby (Mrs. O. L.) Shull of Hot Springs. Permission to copy and publish them was obtained from Mrs. Shull by A. Howard Stebbins, Jr., Little Rock.

Hot Springs, Nov. 11th, 189---

Gen. Powell Clayton

Dear Gen

Yours of the 8th asking me for a full statement of Militia transactions so far as my memory can furnish received and in reply will state that I have in my possession all the orders for the formation of the 1st Regt Ark State Guards and the order putting them into active service and what they did under Gen Catterson in South West Ark. I have an old trunk with the papers all in them, will take them and give the facts. I remember well the conversation you and I had in the Gov office in Nov. 1868 and your personal orders to me, remember well the Union soldiers that were assassinated in 1866, 1867 and 1868.

Prominent Ku Klux leaders have told me that if you had waited only ten days longer that they would have had a force sufficient to whip all the Militia that you could raise and that nothing but your prompt action saved the Republican leaders, that you was too quick for them. I will write it up and send to you soon.

Yours Truly

J.H. Demby

## **HISTORY OF CATTERSON'S MILITIA**

BY MAJOR J. H. DEMBY

In July 1868 the people of the Counties of Hot Springs, Clark, Pike, Polk, Scott and Montgomery, Arkansas, considered it expedient to organize a regiment of State Guards, the men to furnish their horses, arms and equipment. The young men responded quickly and the Regiment was organized in August, mustered and commissioned. It was composed of farmers, who had been soldiers in the Union and Confederate Armies and their sons.

The Ku Klux Klans were actively organizing at this time in the counties along Red River and boundary line of Arkansas, Texas, Indian Nation and Louisiana. A great many bad men joined these clans and with hideous masks rode over the country robbing, scaring, whipping and killing many Negroes and white men. Many of the property owners were afraid of them, but many others fed and encouraged them to kill the Civil Officers.

These clans would ride into the county seat of a county and make a target out of the court house. In October these clans killed, or run out all the Civil Officers, and a reign of terror existed in all the counties on the Texas, Indian Nation and Louisiana lines. The governor was appealed to by the law abiding citizens to send soldiers into their counties to restore order. The Governor ordered the First Regiment, Arkansas State Guard into active service on the 2nd day of November 1868, and placed Major J. H. Demby in command of the regiment, and General Catterson in command of South-West Arkansas.

Major J. H. Demby concentrated the ten companies of Guards at Murphreborough, marching day and night.

On the 13th of November Major Demby received information that the insurgents had a large amount of arms and ammunition at Center Point. Major Demby ordered Captain Reeves to take 100 men and proceed to Center Point and take possession of all arms and ammunition, and that he would move with the entire command early the next day, the 14th.

General Catterson arrived in Murphreborough accompanied by his staff after dark, November 13th and assumed command. The entire command marched out early on the road leading to

Center Point, 20 miles west, on the 14th. When in about eight miles of Center Point, Captain Reeves and his command were met retreating. Captain Reeves reported that the town was full of armed men, that they had ordered him to withdraw his command, and as they greatly outnumbered him he thought it best. General Catterson ordered Major Demby to take four companies and advance. When Major Demby's command arrived in sight of Center Point, the Insurgents could plainly be seen with arms in their hands, and they yelled "Fall in, here they come." Major Demby ordered Captain Reeves to move to the right and get on the Mt. Ida Road, and Lieutenant Cotton to move to the left and get on the Nashville Road. When Major Demby with the center came to a small creek at the foot of the hill, The Insurgents opened a deadly fire on them. The Insurgents took shelter behind houses and shot out of windows. Major Demby's men returned the fire but at a disadvantage. Just in time, Captain Reeves command got on the Mt. Ida Road and opened fire on the Insurgents' left flank. Their line broke and they fell back to a church and formed again. Major Demby reformed his line and charged. The Insurgents fell back again, five miles, and formed again. The Militia had one killed and five wounded in the line near Major Demby. The Insurgents had two killed and seven wounded in the line in front of Major Demby. The Militia captured 60 prisoners. Lieut. Cotton failed to get on the Nashville Road, giving the Insurgents a chance to escape.

If Lieut. Cotton had obeyed orders and got on the Nashville Road all the Insurgents would have been captured.

(See affidavit of Clement W. Cearley, attached, Marked "A" ). General Catterson came up at this time and followed the Insurgents with a part of the command. When Catterson's command came in sight of the Insurgents they broke and crossed the Red River into Texas and Indian Nation.

During the fight the soldiers saw men shooting out of the windows in a two story building. After the firing ceased the soldiers forced the outside door of this house and went up stairs. It was the Ku Klux Lodge room. The masks were hanging on the walls and the Stars and Bars was spread on the altar with Seymore [Seymour] and Blair lettered on it. The soldiers noticed an opening in the ceiling in one corner of this building about 18 inches square. A soldier was crowded into the loft. He spied several men hiding, and he compelled them to come down. John Crawford was one of them. (See affidavit of A. C. Ussery, attached, marked "B" ). Ten years afterward John Crawford was State Auditor. (He defaulted) and I, Major J. H. Demby, was member of the Legislature from Montgomery County. Crawford said to me the Lodge had met as soon as Captain Reeves retreated and the quick return of the Militia had taken them by surprise.

The prisoners were sent immediately to Little Rock, and the Governor sent them back. General Catterson organized a court martial. The Militia arrested and brought before this court the leaders and those who had murdered or robbed, gave them trial and those proven to be murderers were hanged. This court martial held sessions at Rocky Comfort several days and the two men, Cardwell and Wallace, were duly convicted and hanged for the murder of [P. J.] Andrews and [H. F.] Willis. Andrews was adjutant of the 1st Regiment, Arkansas State Guards.

The command moved to Richmond and while there a farmer named John Manning come into General Catterson's quarters and reported that there was a lot of Negroes under the command of a

white man Partian in his settlement and while he was absent from home one of them had visited his house and assaulted his wife.

General Catterson ordered Captain Davis to take his company and go with John Manning and arrest this band of men, and for John Manning to bring his wife. Captain Davis returned with 22 Negro men and their captain Partian, a white man. These 22 Negro men and their white captain Partian were lined up and General Catterson asked Manning's wife to point the man out. She pointed out one man, Jim Stimson, and said he was the only one who came into her room or said anything to her. The man pointed out, Jim Stimson, was brought before the court martial and sentenced to be shot. General Catterson had the sentence executed with a detail of eight soldiers, who made a coffin and placing the condemned man on it, shot him to death in the presence of the militia and citizens of Richmond. (See affidavit of J. L. Wacaster, attached, marked "C" ). General Catterson gave the Captain Partian a drastic talk and told him and his command to go home and if he heard anything more of them he would shoot the whole lot.

From Richmond the Militia marched to Fulton. When near Fulton Col. McWorther took the road to Washington and did not return. Major Demby reported it to General Catterson and for this Col. McWorther was court martialled and dismissed from service. The Militia then went to Lewisville down Red River to the Louisiana line, then to Magnolia. While General Catterson was at Magnolia in the latter part of December, the Governor ordered him to march to South-east Arkansas to Hamburg in Ashley County to the relief of General Sam Mallory, who was in trouble and needed immediate relief. When Catterson's command arrived at Hamburg they found lawless men prowling over the country, and the courthouse had bullet holes on all sides and the civil officers were in hiding. (See affidavit of Thomas J. Rawles, attached, marked "D"). The Militia soon arrested all Insurgents that did not flee to Louisiana, in Ashley County, and marched on to Monticello, in Drew County. General Catterson found General Mallory without any soldiers, cooped up in the courthouse.

The Militia soon arrested all the lawbreakers they could find, and marched on through Bradley County by way of Warren to Pine Bluff and then to Little Rock. The Militia was paid and discharged, the companies being marched by their captains to their homes.

Colonel McWhorter of the First Arkansas State Guards was court martialled and dismissed, and Major J. H. Demby was promoted to Colonel of the First Regiment, Arkansas State Guards. Major Demby took his seat in the House of Representatives from Montgomery County, Arkansas.

The Militia was in active service sixty-five days, from November 1st, to January 5th, without tents, marching day and night. It accomplished a great deal of good by ridding southwest and southeast Arkansas of bands of lawless men, hanging many, and running the balance into Indian Nation, Texas and Louisiana. Many of those men were driven out by the Militia, over one hundred, were afterwards hung at Fort Smith by the U.S. Court for crimes committed in the Indian Nation, now Oklahoma. See records of the U.S. Court at Fort Smith, Arkansas, Judge Isaac Parker, Western District of Arkansas.

## Appendix "A"

Clement W. Cearley, my post-office address is Myers, Garland county, Arkansas. I am 68 years old, was born near Royal, Garland County, Arkansas, and have resided in Garland County all my life. I was a soldier in Company H, Third Missouri Cavalry, U.S., and am a U. S. pensioner of the Civil War. I was First Lieutenant of Captain Morgan Ussery's Company of the Arkansas State Guards in 1868, and was in the battle of Center Point, Ark., fought on the 14th day of November 1868. I was in the line of battle near Major Demby, and saw Joe Lamb killed and Lieutenant Kymes badly wounded. Joe Lamb belonged to Capt. Ussery's Company, and Lt. Kymes was Regimental Commissary. John Head, a lawyer, who lived at Richmond in Little River County, Ark. was in command of the Insurgents. Maj. Demby commanded his forces with skill and displayed great bravery.

If Lt. Cotton had obeyed orders and got on the Nashville road all the Insurgents would have been captured.

(Seal) (Signed) Clement W. Cearley

Sworn to the and subscribed before me this

13th of January, 1913.

(Signed) J. H. Demby, Notary Public.

## Appendix "B"

Hot Springs, Arkansas

A.C. Ussery, 64 years old, present post-office address is Bear, Montgomery County, Arkansas, was born in Pulaski County, Arkansas and have lived in Arkansas all my life, and have been a farmer all my life. I was a member of Company F, 4th Arkansas Cavalry, and am a U.S. pensioner. I was a member of Captain Morgan Ussery's Company, Arkansas State Guards, was Quartermaster Sergeant of the Company. I was in the battle of Center Point fought on the 14th day of November 1868. I was in the line near Major Demby and I saw Joe Lamb shot and killed and Lieutenant Kymes badly wounded. After the firing ceased I had noticed men shooting out of the windows of a two story house. Myself and other soldiers forced the door and went up the steps. It was the hall of the Ku Klux Klan. The walls was hung with hideous masks and the Stars and Bars were spread on the altar in the center of the room. The flag had Seymore [Seymour] and Blair lettered on it. There was an opening in one corner of the ceiling about 18 inches square. We forced a soldier up through this opening and he spied men hiding and forced them to come down. About this time Major Demby appeared and ordered us to take the prisoners to the yard where we were collecting prisoners, there were 5 or 6 of these men, and John Crawford was one of them. I saw Cardwell and Wallace hung at Rocky Comfort they had killed Andrews and Willis. I saw the Negro shot at Richmond, and was in the Ku Klux Hall at Richmond and saw the

uniforms that the members used. There were false faces, white sheets with holes in the middle, white cows' tails, and rubber sacks to hold water.

I saw the courthouse at Hamburg, it had holes mad by bullets on all four sides of the building.

(Seal)

(Signed) A. C. Ussery.

Sworn to and subscribed to before me this  
23d day of January 1914.

(Signed) J. H. Demby.

#### Appendix "C"

Hot Springs, Ark.

J. L. Wacaster. I am 64 years of age, was born in Montgomery County near Caddo Gap. My post-office address is Hot Springs, Arkansas. I was a member of Captain Morgan Ussery's Company, 1st Arkansas State Guards. Major Demby had me detailed to cook for him the day the Company left Mt. Ida on the campaign. I cooked for him until the Regiment was paid and discharged from active service at Little Rock in January, 1869. Major Demby would select a good large tree and have it cut down, the Regimental Flag would be raised near that log, the Head Quarters mess would get a good fire started and all hands go to work to make the night as comfortable as possible. Maj. Demby never eat a meal, but one with a relative in Monticello on Christmas day, in a house, but always by his log with the Regimental Head Quarters Mess. I saw the Negro shot at Richmond. I saw the two men, Cardwell and Wallace, that had killed Andrews and Willis, hung at Rocky Comfort, Little River County, Arkansas in November 1868. I remember seeing the bullet holes in the courthouse at Hamburg in Ashley County, that had been shot by the Ku Klux.

#### Appendix "D"

Hot Springs,  
Arkansas

Thomas J. Rawles. I am 66 years old, was born in Montgomery County, Arkansas near Bear post-office. I was a soldier in Company D, 4th Arkansas Cavalry and am a U. S. pensioner of the Civil War, and I was a member of Captain Morgan Ussery's Company, 1st Regiment, Arkansas State Guards, and was in the Battle fought at Center Point Arkansas on the 14th day of

November 1868. I was near Major Demby when the fight opened, and when our right got on the Mt. Ida road and on their flank and rear, and the Insurgents broke and fell back behind the fences, Maj. Demby ordered his line to charge and I was one of the men that led that charge. After the fight was over I noticed a man shooting out of the window of a two story house. Me and other soldiers forced the door leading up stairs and there was the Klu Klux Hall. The uniforms consisting of sheets with holes in the center and false faces, and white cows tails, and other hideous devices. There was an opening in the ceiling about 18 inches square and we forced a soldier up through the opening and he spied men hiding up there, and we made them come down. There were 5 or 6 of these men, about this time Major Demby appeared and ordered us to take these prisoners to the yard where we were collecting prisoners. The Stars and Bars were spread on the altar in the center of the room with Seymore and Blair lettered on it. Stanley was sheriff to Little River County. The Insurgents shot at him, put a ball through his coat, he out ran them. The Insurgents had just killed Andrews and Willis and robbed them of their money. This all occurred near Rocky Comfort in Little River County, Arkansas in November and December 1868.

Witnesses to Signature

(Signed) Thomas J.  
Rawles

Bettie Rawles  
Minnie King