

From Elias Stover to William Sayer Blakely

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Camp Blair Kans[.]

March 25, [18]62

Friend Billy[.]

The Kans[.] [2nd] is in the field again. The night of the 1st inst[.] our camp was thrown into an excitement by an order from Col. Mitchell for each company to detail from thirty to forty men to be ready to march at 6 PM mounted and armed with one days rations.

There was all kinds of "camp rumors" as to our destination and the object in view, but your experience in military matters is such that it is useless to say that no one except the Col[.] knew anything about the expedition.

We marched in the direction of Little Santa Fe and arrived there about 11 P. M. twelve miles distant from our camp. Major Pomeroy with [*text stricken through*] forty men under command of Capt. More, and thirty under myself, left the command at Santa Fe and marched eastward into Missouri with a guide who stated that he could take us to a house where the notorious "Quantrill" with a party of his men were stoping for the night. After marching about three miles through the brush and over the roughest road imaginable, our guide informed us that we were within a few nods of the house all though nothing could be seen, it being quite dark, (there being no morn and very cloudy.)

The Major ordered all to dismount except every sixth man who was to remain mounted and hold horse and a guard of twelve men under my charge who was to ride forward and support him should he meet with any resistance.

The night was quite cold and chilly and we sat for more than thirty minutes shivering in our saddles anxiously awaiting the signal that was to bring us into action, when all of a sudden the clear report of firearms broke the stillness that surrounded us and brought every man erect in his seat and caused

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our horse to jump and prance as if eager for the engagement.

I ordered my men forward with a gallop but before we reached the scene of action report after report rang out upon the still night air and informed us that that our "boys" had stirred up a hot nest of rebels and were having a plenty to do to take possession of them. When I arrived I ascertained that the Major had surrounded the house with his men (a member of Capt. Mores Co. since died). He instantly returned the fire and when I arrived both parties were at work in good earnest. We soon drove them from the windows and silenced their fire. When the Major ordered them to lay down their arms and they should be treated as "prisoners of war". We did not rush to fire on the house more than we could possibly help as there was a family in it.

After many assurances that they should not be burned, the old man[.] his wife[.] two daughters[.] and four sons came out and gave themselves up and claiming to be good union people. We ascertained from them that Quantrill with twenty two of his men was inside; that they were well armed and would fight to the last. The Major again ordered them to surrender, and two of them came forward and gave themselves up. The rest wanted some time to consider the proposition but they was told that they could not have a minute and we were just ready to open fire on the house when they gave us a volly[.] severely wounding Major Pomeroy and one of our horses. I

went to the Major's assistance and found that a rifle ball had passed completely through the thick of his thigh and that he was bleeding profusely (an artery being severed).

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With my handkerchief and revolver I guided his leg sufficiently to stop the flow of blood and had him removed out of range of their fire. The fall of the Major so exasperated us that we determined to decide the matter at once, by firing the house. Our men had but five "rounds" apiece when we left camp and many of them now had fired their last shot while those inside seemed to have an abundance of ammunition and the walls of a log house to protect them. Both ends and the front-side of the house was left; the back was light siding but had neither doors or windows in it[,] consequently we did not guard it so strong as the other parts. We piled dry wood and lumber against the house and set it on fire and soon the whole building was in flames.

It being life or death with those inside they made a desperate attempt, and succeeded in bursting off the siding on the back side and eight or ten of them made their escape, the brush and timber being within twenty feet of the house.

The boys killed two of them as they were entering the brush, and one man discharged his carbine and then clubbed it, and, broke it in two pieces over one fellow's head, unveiling him as "stiff as a mitten."

We killed five inside of the house, three as they were escaping, and took six prisoners. I hear that Quantrill was with those that escaped. We also took all of their horses and saddles, twenty-six in number besides several revolvers[,] rifles and other arms. If we had had a plenty of ammunition and a few more men we would have killed the last one of them. Col[.] Mitchell with his men did not arrive until it was all over. Seeing the house on fire was the first intimation he had of our engagement.

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We did not expect to meet with such resistance[;] therefore[,] we was not prepared for them. There was another party of them in another house about two miles from the one we burned and had the Col. known of it he could have captured every man of both parties. Quantrill is a sharp desperate fellow, but he got in a tight place and got handled rather roughly and may thank his stars that he escaped with a whole head. One of the prisoners says that he was badly wounded in the house but I fear there is no truth in the statement. Our boys all done well, and acted finely. Major Pomeroy is doing finely, and considered out of danger. All of the junction boys are well. We are ordered to New Mexico but I do not know when we will march.

Some of the boys have probably written all about our little fight long before this but I had nothing in particular to do this evening, so I thought I would give you a description of our first brush with our new [2nd] Kans. We have been having very severe weather since the first of March. I have received several copies of your paper for which I am very much obliged. Please consider me a subscriber and send the paper to A. W. Stover, South Thomaston, Maine and I will send the change in a few days.

Do you know Billy that I am ok and glad that the boys at Fort Riley "guttled" the "frontier." It is the best thing that I have heard of for months. The secessionist of Davis Co[.] have had their way long enough and I think the boys done right in commencing at home. Your paper is getting lots of curses for denouncing and for not sustaining the Boys although you and Martin do not get the credit of it. We know well enough where it comes from and consider

the service. Please give my warmest regards to Pierce for his oposition to the denunciation.
Please write. My regards to all.

As ever yours[,]
Stover