

"Servile Insurrection in Virginia - Stampede of Slaves,"
Pittsfield (MA) Berkshire County Eagle, October 20, 1859

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Servile Insurrection in Virginia.
STAMPEDE OF SLAVES!
The Federal Arsenal at Harper's Ferry in Possession of the Insurgents.
Storming of the Arsenal by United States Troops, Ossawatimie Brown Leading the Rebels.

On Tuesday, the daily newspapers brought the startling intelligence that a threatening insurrection had broken out at Harper's Ferry, for which no sufficient reason was assigned. A band, said to be composed of negroes and white men, numbering two hundred and fifty, on Saturday night seized the bridge and took possession of the Government arsenal, which is located at Harper's Ferry. The express train, going east, was twice fired into and the assistant baggage master was said to have been killed, while one of the baggage masters, in attempting to cross the bridge, was seized by the insurgents and put in confinement. The streets of the town had been barricaded and were said to be in the possession of the originators of the revolt. Government troops had been sent on from Washington to quell the disturbance, and those in the immediate neighborhood had also been called out. Some considered the movement as originating with the Abolitionists, while others looked upon it as an attempt to get possession of the funds in the Government pay-house, a large amount having been recently deposited there. The Telegraph on Tuesday gave the following particulars:—

HARPER'S FERRY, Oct. 18.—8 A. M.
The armory has been stormed and taken after a determined resistance. Col. Shutt approached with a flag of truce and demanded a surrender. After expostulating some time the rioters refused to surrender.

The marines advanced to the charge and endeavored to break the door down with sledge hammers, but it resisted all their efforts. A large ladder was then used as a battering ram, and the door gave way. The rioters fired briskly and shot three marines—the marines firing in turn through the partly broken door. The marines then forced their way through the break, and in a few minutes resistance was at an end.

The rioters were brought out amidst most intense excitement, many of the militia present trying to get an opportunity to shoot them.

Capt. Brown and his son were both shot. The latter is dead, and the former is in a dying state. He lies in the armory enclosure, talking freely. He says he is old Ossawatimie Brown, whose feats in Kansas had such a wide notice; that his whole object was to free the slaves, and justifies his action. He says that he had possession of the town, and could have murdered all the people, as he has been murdered in return.

J. G. Enderson was also shot down in the armory. He was from Connecticut.

The dead body of a man, killed yesterday, was found within the armory.

Brown declares that there were none engaged in the plot but those accompanying him. The prisoners are retained in custody within the armory enclosure.

A later dispatch says there is intense excitement in this city and nothing is talked of but the insurrection. Gen. Stuart, through Gov. Wise, has communicated an order to Gen. J.

Watkins, of this city, to prepare, equip and mount immediately a body of men for service in the mountains near Harper's Ferry, where many of the insurgents have taken refuge. The troops will leave this afternoon.

Gov. Wise passed the Relay House, en route for the seat of war.

Three artillery companies from Fort Monroe arrived this morning, and are quartered at Fort McHenry.

HARPER'S FERRY, Oct. 18.—12 M.
Soon after the storming of the Armory four dead bodies of the insurgents shot yesterday were found within the enclosure. Capt. Brown and his son were dangerously wounded. Only two of the insurgents are un wounded. Their names are Edw'n Coppich, a white man from Iowa, and Shields Green, colored, from Iowa.

The party originally consisted of 92 persons, of whom 15 are killed, 2 mortally wounded, 2 unhurt and 3 went off with the slaves on Monday morning.

Soon after the assault on the armory some firing took place from the hills on the Maryland shore, supposed to be from Cook and his party, who left on Monday morning. It was returned with a general volley, but both parties were too distant to be damaged.

A company of armed men has gone in pursuit of the fugitives. There are probably 1000 armed men here. They have been pouring in all night from all parts of the surrounding country.

George Turner, a graduate of West Point, and one of the most distinguished citizens in this vicinity, was shot yesterday while coming into the town. He died during the night.

Three of the rioters are lying dead in the streets, three lying dead in the river, and several are said to be lying in the Armory enclosure.

The following is a list of the killed among the citizens and soldiers, as far as ascertained: Fountain Brekhem; Haywood, a negro porter at the railroad station; Joseph Burnley, of Harper's Ferry; Evan Dorsey and George Richardson of Martinsburgh.

Another rioter, a negro named Leary, had just died. He confessed to the particulars of the plot, which, he says, was concocted by Brown, at a Fair in Ohio, two months ago. The rioters have just sent out a flag of truce, and say if not protected by the soldiers at present here, they will hang all their captives.

WASHINGTON, Oct. 18.
The Secretary of War this morning received a telegraphic despatch from Col. Lee, dated 7 o'clock, saying that he called upon the rioters, who were barricaded in the engine house on the Arsenal grounds, to surrender, and promising to protect them until the wishes of the President could be ascertained. This proposition was made in order to save the lives of the prisoners who were in the possession of the insurgents.

This message was sent through Lieut. Stuart, of the 1st Cavalry. The insurgents declined to surrender, whereupon, at a preconcerted signal from Lieut. Green, the detachment of Marines, who were near by, forcibly broke into the engine house, killing two of the rioters and capturing the remainder. Two of the Marines were wounded—one of them mortally. Ossawatimie Brown, leader of the rioters, was also mortally wounded. Several officers of the Arsenal, together with the other prisoners, all escaped unhurt.

The War Department has despatched an order for the troops at Norfolk, who are at Fort McHenry, to remain there until further orders.

The President of the Ohio and Baltimore railroad telegraphs to New York that the insurrection is entirely suppressed. All the outlaws are killed or arrested. All the freight

and passenger trains are running with entire regularity and safety. No damage has been done to any portion of the railway track, trains or property.

BALTIMORE.—P. M.
An eye witness who has returned from Harper's Ferry, describes the scene there as follows:—

The first attack was made by a detachment of the Charlestown Guards, which crossed the Potomac river above Harper's Ferry, and reached a building where the insurgents were posted by the Canal on the Maryland side. Smart firing occurred, and the rioters were driven from the building. One man was killed here, and another arrested. A man ran out, and tried to escape by swimming the river. A dozen shots were fired after him; he partially fell, but rose again, threw his gun away, drew his pistols, but both snapped; he drew his bowie-knife, and cut his heavy accoutrements off, and plunged into the river. One of the soldiers was about ten feet behind him; the man turned around, threw up his hands and said, "Don't shoot;" the soldier fired, and the man fell into the water with his face blown away; his coat skirts were cut from his person, and in the pockets was found a captain's commission to Capt. E. H. Lecman, from the Provisional Government. The commission was dated October 15th, 1859, and signed by A. Brown, Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Provisional Government of the United States.

A party of five insurgents, armed with Minnie rifles, and posted in the Rifle Armory,

were expelled by the Charlestown Guards. They all ran for the river, and one, who was unable to swim, was drowned; the others swam out to the rocks in the middle of the Shanandoah, and fired on the citizens and troops on both banks. This drew on them the muskets of between 200 and 300 men, and not less than 500 shots were fired at them from Harper's Ferry, about 75 yards distant. One was finally shot dead; the second, a negro, attempted to jump over the dam, but fell wounded, and was not seen afterwards. The third was badly wounded, and the remaining one was taken unharmed.

The white insurgent, wounded and captured, died in a few moments after in the arms of our informant. He was shot through the breast and stomach. He declared that there were only 19 rifles engaged in the insurrection.

For nearly one hour a running and random firing was kept up by the troops against the rioters. Several were shot down, and many managed to limp away wounded. During the firing the women and children ran shrieking in every direction, but when they learned that the soldiers were their protectors, they took courage, and did good service in the way of preparing refreshments and attending the wounded.

Our informant, who was on a hill when the firing was going on, says all the terrible scenes of a battle passed in reality before his eyes. Soldiers could be seen pursuing singly and in couples, and the crack of a musket or rifle was generally followed by one or more of the insurgents biting the dust. The dead lay in the streets where they fell, and the wounded were cared for.

A body of 40 mounted men left Baltimore this afternoon for Harper's Ferry, to pursue the rioters. It is reported that many have escaped, and are secreted in the mountains.

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BALTIMORE—7 P. M.

The Baltimore Infantry troops have just arrived, and are now marching to their armories. Their services were no longer required at Harper's Ferry, the Government and Virginia troops being amply sufficient for all emergencies.

The report of the American commences with a notice of the originators. The principal originator of this short but bloody insurrection was undoubtedly Capt. John Brown, whose connection with scenes of violence with the Border warfare in Kansas has made his name familiarly notorious throughout the whole country. Brown made his first appearance in Harper's Ferry more than a year ago, accompanied by his two sons—all three of them assuming the name of Smith. He inquired about land in the vicinity, and made numerous investigations as to the probability of finding ores there, and for some time boarded at Sandy Point, a mile east of the Ferry.— After an absence of some months the elder Brown reappeared in the vicinity and rented or leased a farm on the Maryland side, about four miles from the ferry. They bought a large number of picks and spades, and this confirmed the belief that they intended to mine for ores. They were frequently seen in and about Harper's Ferry, but no suspicion seems to have existed that Bill Smith was Capt. Brown, or that he intended embarking in any movement so desperate or extraordinary; yet the development of the plot leaves no doubt that his visits to Harper's Ferry and his lease of the farm, were all plots of his preparation for an insurrection which he supposed would be successful in exterminating slavery in Maryland and Western Virginia.

Brown's chief aid was John E. Cook, a comparatively young man, who has resided in and near the Ferry some years. He was first employed in tending a lock on the canal, and afterwards taught school on the Maryland side of the river; and after a brief residence in Kansas, where it is supposed he became acquainted with Brown, he returned to Ferry and married there. He was regarded as a man of some intelligence, and known to be anti-slavery, but was not so violent in the expression of his opinions as to excite any suspicions. These two men, with B.'s two sons, were the only white men connected with the insurrection that had been seen about Ferry. All were brought by Brown from a distance, and nearly all had been with him in Kansas.

The first active movement was made at about 10 1-2 o'clock on Sunday night. Wm. Williamson, the watchman at Harper's Ferry bridge, whilst walking across toward the Maryland side, was seized by a number of men, who said he was their prisoner and must come with them. He recognized Brown and Cook among the men, and knowing them, treated the matter as a joke; but, enforcing silence, they conducted him to the armory, which he found already in their possession.— He was detained till after daylight and then discharged. The watchman who was to relieve Williamson at midnight, found the bridge lights all out and was immediately seized.— Supposing it was an attempt at robbery, he broke away, and his pursuers stumbling over him, he escaped.

The next appearance of the insurrectionists was at the house of Col. Lewis Washington, a large farmer and slave owner, living about four miles from the ferry. The party headed by Cook proceeded there, and rousing Col. W., told him that he was their prisoner. They also seized all the slaves near the house, took a carriage horse and a large waggon with two horses. When Col. Washington saw Cook he immediately recognized him as the man who had called on him some months previous, to whom he had exhibited some valuable arms in his possession, including an antique sword presented by Frederick the Great to George Washington, and a pair of pistols presented by Lafayette to Washington, both being heir looms in the family. Before leaving, Cook wanted Col. W. to engage in a trial of skill at shooting, and exhibited considerable certainty as a marksman. When he made the visit on Sunday night, he alluded to his previous visit and the courtesy with which he had been treated, and regretted the necessity which made it his duty to arrest Col. W. He, however, took advantage of the knowledge he had obtained by his former visit, to carry off all the valuable collection of arms, which Col. W. did not recollect till after the final defeat of the insurrection.— From Col. W.'s he proceeded with him as a prisoner in a carriage, and twelve of his negroes in a wagon, to the house of Mr. Allstadt, another large farmer, on the same road. Mr. A. and his son, a lad of 16, were taken prisoners, and all their negroes within reach forced to join the movement. They then returned to the armory.

All these movements seem to have been made without exciting the slightest alarm in the town, nor did the detention of Capt. Phelps's train at the upper end of the town attract attention. It was not until the town thoroughly waked up and found the bridge guarded by armed men, and a guard stationed at all the avenues, that the people found they were prisoners. A panic appears to have immediately ensued, and the number of insurrectionists at once increased from 50 (which was probably their greatest force, including the slaves who were forced to join) to from 500 to 600. In the meantime a number of workmen, entered the armory and were successively taken prisoners, until at one time they had not less than 60 men confined in the armory. This was the condition of things at daylight, about which time Capt. Cook, with two white men, accompanied by 30 slaves, and taking with them Col. Washington's large wagon, went over the bridge and struck up the mountain road towards Pent.

The following is a fragment of a letter found in Brown's pocket:

"CAPT. BROWN—Dear Sir: I have been disappointed in not seeing you here ere this, to take charge of your freight. They have been here now two weeks, and as I have had to superintend the providing for them, it has imposed upon me no small task besides; and, if not soon taken on, some of them will go back to Missouri. I wish to know definitely what you propose doing. They cannot be kept here much longer without risk to themselves, and if any of them conclude to go back to the State, it will be a bad termination to your enterprise."

The foregoing occupies a page of fine letter paper, straw tinted, is written in pencil, and not dated, and was evidently written by a person of education; and the freight he had was, no doubt, that usually carried on the underground railroad.

Slave Stampedes on the Southern Borderlands

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