

The Black Hawk War, 1832

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Letters – "The Battle of Bad Axe: General Atkinson's account"

Written to Major General Scott, Commanding N.W. Army, Chicago, Ill. Headquarters
1st Army Corps, North Western Army, Fort Crawford, Prairie de Chien, on Aug 9, 1832

Sir--I informed you on the 5th. Inst by a short official note, of the action on the morning of the 2d inst. between the troops under my command and the Sac enemy, on the bank of the Mississippi, opposite Ioway river.--Having recieved the reports of the officers commanding brigades and corps, I have the honor of reporting more in detail the events of the day. After having pursued the enemy five days by forced marches, from his passage of the Ousconsin, we found ourselves at dusk, on the evening of the 1st inst. after a march of 25 miles, within a few miles of his position.... After marching about three miles, the advance of Dodge's battalion came up with a small party of the enemy, and killed eight of them, and dispersed the residue....The enemy was driven across several slucies down the river bottom, which was covered with fallen timber, underwood and high grass. The regular troops, and Dodge at the head of his batalion, soon came up and joined in the action, followed by a party of Posey's troops, when the enemy was driven still farther through the bottom to several small willow islands successively, where much execution was done... As soon as the enemy were slain or dislodged from the willow bars, the regular troops under Col. Taylor, and a company or two of volunteers, were thrown aboard of the steam-boat "Warrior" that had just arrived, and were landed on the two adjacent islands to scour them of the enemy. Assisted by a detachment from Henry's and Dodge's commands on the river bank some three or four Indians were found and killed. Both the regular and volunteer troops conducted themselves with the greatest zeal, courage and patriotism, and are entitled to the highest approbation of their country. To Brigadier General Henry, of the 3d brigade of Illinois volunteers, Gen. Dodge, of the Michigan volunteers, and Col. Taylor, of the United States' Infantry, ther greatest praise is due for the gallant manner in which they brought their respective corps in, and conducted them through the action. ... The enemy sustained a loss of about 150 men, killed--the precise number could not be ascertained, as a large propotion were slain in endeavoring to swim to the islands. Forty women and children were taken prisoners, seventy horses captured, &c. &c. The loss on our part, was--of the U. States Infantry, 5 privates killed, and 4 wounded--Gen. Posey's volunteers, 1 private wounded--Gen. Alexander's, 1 private wounded--Gen. Henery's , 1 lieutenant and 5 privates wounded--Gen. Dodge's, 1 captain, 1 sergeant, and 4 privates wounded. The steamer "Warrior," by the direction of Capt. Loomis, had escended the river, with a small detachment of the 4th U.S. Infantry, under the commant of Lieut. Kingsbury, accompanied by Lieuts. Holmes and Torrence, on the day previous to the battle, to warn the sioux of the approach of the Sacs:--in returning, near the battle ground, a party of Sacs was discovered, and fired upon, when a smart skirmish ensued. The Indian loss is since reported to be 23 killed--one now on board the steamboat, slightly wounded. Lieuts. Holmes, Kingsbury, and Torrence, as well as Captain Throgmorton, the commander of the boat, were conspicuous in the affair. A great advantage was derived from the presence of the steamboat, on this occasion, as it retarded the enemy in crossing the river. I enclose herewith a list of the officers of the volunteers under Generals Henry and Dodge. A list of the officers of the other volunteer corps will be transmitted as soon as received, which I request may be placed on file in the War Office.

I have the honor to be, sir, With great respect, Your most ob't serv't H. ATKINSON, Brig. Gen. U.S. Army
To Maj. Gen. W. Scott, Commanding N. W. Army.

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