

CHIEF JUSTICE WOODWARD TO COLONEL PROCTER.

(War-1812. Massacre at Fort Dearborn.)

TERRITORY OF MICHIGAN

October 8th 1812

SIR

It is already known to you that on Saturday the 15th day of August last, an order having been given to evacuate Fort Dearborn, an attack was made by the savages of the vicinity, on the troops and persons appertaining to that garrison on their march, at the distance of about three miles from the River Chicago, and the greater part of the number barbarously and inhumanly massacred.

Three of the survivors of that unhappy and terrible disaster, having since reached this country, I have employed some pains to collect the number and names of those who were not immediately slain, and to ascertain whether any hopes might yet be entertained of saving the remainder.

It is on this subject that I wish to interest your feelings, and to solicit the benefit of your interposition; convinced that you estimate humanity among the brightest virtues of the soldier.

I find, sir; that the party consisted of ninety three persons—of these the Military, including officers, non-commissioned officers and privates, amounted to fifty four—the Citizens, not acting in a Military Capacity, consisted of Twelve—The number of women was nine, and that of the children eighteen.

The whole of the citizens were slaughtered, two women and twelve children.

Of the Military twenty six were killed at the time of the attack, and accounts have arrived of at least five of the surviving prisoners having been put to death in the course of the same night.

There will remain then twenty three of the Military, five women, and six children, whose fate, with the exception of the three who have come in, and of two others who are known to be in safety at St Joseph's, remains to be yet ascertained.

Of these, amounting in all to thirty four persons, I will furnish you with the names of all that I have been able to identify.

First, there is one officer, a Lieutenant, of the name of Linch T. Helm, with whom I have had the honor of a personal acquaintance—He is an officer of great merit, and of the most unblemished character. His father is a Gentleman originally of Virginia, and of the first respectability, who has since settled in the state of New York.—The lady of this Gentleman, Young and amiable victim of misfortune, was separated from her husband—She is understood to be now at St Joseph's—Mr Helm was conveyed a hundred miles into the Indian Country, and no accounts of his fate have yet reached this quarter.

Second, Of the six non commissioned officers, four survived the action; John Brozier, a Sergeant; Daniel Dougherty, a Corporal, one other Corporal by the name of Bowen, and William Griffin, Sergeant now here.

Third, Of the privates it is said that five, and it is not known how many more, were put to death in the night after the action. Of those who are said to have thus suffered, I have been able to collect only the names of two, Richard Garner. and James Latta—Mr. Burns a Citizen, severely wounded, was killed by an Indian woman, in the day time, about an hour after the action.—Micajah Dennison and John Fury were so badly wounded in the action that little hope was indulged of their recovery.—

There will thus remain twenty to be accounted for, of whom I can only give the following names, Dyson Dyer, William Nelson Hunt, Duncan McCarty, Augustus Motte, John Smith, John Smith, his son a fifer, James Van Horn.

Fourth, Of the five women, whose fate remains to be ascertained, I am enabled to give the names of all—They were Mrs Burns, wife to the citizen before mentioned as killed after the attack,—Mrs. Holt Mrs Lee, Mrs. Needs, and Mrs. Simmons,—among these women were six children saved out of the whole number, which was eighteen; part of them belonging to the surviving mothers, and part of those who were slain.

As to the means of preserving these unhappy survivors from the distressing calamities which environ them, if they have preserved their lives, and which the rigours of the approaching season cannot fail to heighten, I would beg leave to suggest the following.

First, to send a special messenger to that quarter, overland, and with such safe guard of Indians or others, as can be procured, charged with collecting the prisoners who may yet survive, and accounts of those who may have ultimately suffered; and supplied with the means of conveying them either to Detroit, or Michigan, to Michillimackinac.

Second, to communicate to Captain Roberts, who now commands at Michillimackinac, the circumstances of the case in full, and to request his cooperation in effecting the humane object of their ultimate preservation.

I am not authorized by my Government to make the Assurance, but I shall not doubt their cheerfully defraying such expenses of ransom, or conveyance, as circumstances will justify; and private funds are also ready to be applied to the same purpose.—I do not less doubt your willing and zealous assistance and with a confident hope of it, permit me,

Sir

to assure you of the high respect
with which I have the honor
to be your obedient servant

(Signed) A. B. WOODWARD

Col: Henry Proctor

[C 677-p 150.]