

## Forgotten History--Phillips County Indian Scares

# The Ft. Bissell Indian Scare of 1872 (cont.)

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*PART ONE: The Kirwin Indian Scare of 1871.*

*PART TWO: The Fort Bissell Indian Scare of 1872.*

*PART THREE: The Fort Bissell Indian Scare of 1872 (cont.).*

*PART FOUR: The Last Indian Raid in Kansas Scare of 1878.*

### PART THREE

This is the third installment of a four part series on 1870s Indian scares in Phillips County. Last week's installment involved a false alarm by Charley Fredericks, who warned that Apache Indians were approaching the area. This claim resulted in the construction of a stockade on the Bissell Ranch around which a week-long series of comedy of errors started taking place. These comedic mishaps included an altercation between two mules and two horses which brought the settlers into a panic, thinking it to be an Indian attack, and the shooting of a calf by a trigger-happy camp guard, Sam Rooney, who believed it to be an Indian and afterward became the object of good-natured ribbing from Bissell's daughter.

Today's segment is a continuation of the Ft. Bissell scare of 1872. It is reprinted from a 1906 edition of the *Phillips County Post*, and was written by an anonymous participant who was identified, jokingly, as being "one of the soldiers."

### The Reconnoiter

Early one morning Mr. Boughton, with a picked squad of the bravest of the

brave, went out to reconnoiter to the west in order to ascertain if his homestead claim was still there intact, and to look out for the enemy as there was some doubt in the minds of many as to there being or having been any Indians in sight.

Riding to the top of a steep high ridge of ground they came face to face with a band of buffalo hunters. Each party mistaking the other to be hostile Indians, turned and fled in opposite directions as fast as their horses could be persuaded to carry them (with the aid of whip and spur), as if endeavoring to place as many acres as possible of that beautiful prairie between them in the very shortest space of time. With the hunters heading toward the setting sun and the scouts toward the fort, Irish Pat, far in the advance, was shouting "To arms, to arms, they come, they come. Ten thousand strong, five thousand mounted hostiles and as many more on futt."

Pat had heard of the hostile Indians and supposed they were those on horseback. Next in order came Jeff Overlander; coming to the brow of the perpendicular bluff opposite the fort his mule stopped short but Jeff went on, lighting on the broad of his back in the middle of the creek below, and was pulled out more dead than alive, yet thankful that he had saved his scalp. Dr. Boneset soon set his broken bones, reconstructed his anatomy, and sent him home to his people in Doniphan county for safe keeping.

The report of the scouts seemed to confirm the original false alarm report of Charley Fredericks, and Pat's hostiles were expected to call and pay their respects at any time.

### Porcupine Quills

The night following the day of the reconnaissance, an attack was expected and Mr. Pratt volunteered to stand guard at the place where Rooney had shot the calf, since this was considered to be the danger point. As Mr. Pratt carried the marks of a brave soldier of the late Civil War, his services were gladly accepted.

At the early dawn of day which is the favorite time for the Indians to attack, the report of Pratt's gun bro't the guards out, and the officer of the guards enquired into the cause of the firing. Pratt explained that as time was getting somewhat monotonous, and fearing there would be no Indians to try his new gun, he had shot something down on the line, but did not know what it was, "Guessed it was a hedge-hog."

The officer administered a rather sharp reprimand and lecture on the fellow for wasting ammunition in times of such great danger. He also threatened to prefer charges of conduct unbecoming a soldier against the peace and dignity of the people there assembled and contrary to the articles of war in such cases made and provided, as well as for insubordination.

Mr. Pratt replied that he considered such language very much against his own peace and dignity and unbe-

coming a common citizen clothed with imaginary military power. Pratt, saying he intended to throw up his job and go home in the morning before breakfast, further said he did not believe the scout recently undertaken by Boughton had seen any Indians, and did not believe there were any hostiles within five hundred miles.

*Unfortunately, the tale of Ft. Bissell ended suddenly at this point.*