



7-1-2008

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Recommended Citation

Studies, BYU (2008) "Nephi Johnson 1908 Statement," *BYU Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 47 : Iss. 3 , Article 17.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol47/iss3/17>

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Nephi Johnson 1908 Statement

AFFIDAVIT.

Nephi Johnson, being first duly sworn, deposes and says, I am a resident of Mesquite, Lincoln County, State of Nevada, and of the age of seventy five years, I came to Southern Utah, in the year ~~1851~~ 1851, arriving at Parowan, on the 13th day of January, of that year. During the year 1857, I was living at what was known as Johnson Springs, situated about six miles North of Cedar City, Utah, I was in Cedar City, when the train of emigrants passed through Cedar, on their way to the Mountain Meadows, where they were afterwards killed, in what is known as the "Mountain Meadow Massacre"; The company was of a mixed class, some being perfect gentlemen, while others were very boastful, and insulting, as they said that they were coming back, and assist the Johnson army to exterminate the Mormons, It will be remembered that at this time there was a United States army, under Gen. Johnson on its way to Utah, with the understood intention of destroying the Mormons, which filled the people with fear, and greatly excited the most of them, I did hear Capt. Francher, who was the leader of the emigrants, rebuke the boastful ones of the company, for making these threats.

Two days later Isaac C. Haight, told me that he and John D. Lee, had slept together at the Iron Works, and that Lee had proposed to gather the Indians and destroy the emigrants, and that he (Haight) had consented to it, but he had sent James Haslem to Salt Lake City, with a letter to Pres't. Brigham Young, to learn what we had better do, but that Lee had gone on gathering the Indians together to make the attack, and I then advised him to wait until he received the letter, or the answer, as it was a great responsibility to kill so many people.

At that time I was often called upon to interpret for the Indians, being acquainted with their language, and it was soon after talking with Haight, that Indians came to me and reported that attacks had been made on the company; they reported three different attacks, in the third of which Lee led the attack in person, and received one bullet through his hat, and one on each side of his body through his shirt, but his skin was not broke, Capt. Francher was killed in the third attack. All the attacks were made at Night time. Several Indians had been killed and others wounded, also several of the emigrants had been killed and others wounded.

I was still staying on my farm at Johnson Springs, but shortly

afterwards two messengers came to me from Cedar, bearing an order from ~~ix~~ Isaac C. Haight, for me to report at Cedar, and upon arriving there, he told me that trouble had arose between John D. Lee and the Indians, and he wanted me to go out to the Mountains Meadows, and try and settle the difficulty, as I was a friend of the Indians. In the morning of the same day that I got word from Haight to come to Cedar, Indians had told me that the agreement that they had had with Lee, was that they were to get all the horses, and now Lee had sent some of the best to Harmony, and they were going to kill Lee if he did not return them. Haight also told me that Lee wanted to withdraw, but that he had sent him word that he had commenced, and he must finish it, and that he had sent a company of men to assist him John M. Higbee was also sent to assist Lee, and I went to the Meadows with Higbee, and met with Lee and the Indians at the Meadows, known as Hamblin at the present time, and which was about four miles north of where the ~~xx~~ emigrants were located.

Next morning the difficulty was settled, and the Indians agreed to assist in killing the emigrants, and the white men went to within a rifle shot of the emigrant camp, and sent a man with a flag of truce, towards the camp, and he was met with a similar messenger from the camp, and after a consultation had been arranged, in which Lee and Higbee represented the white settlers, an agreement was entered into, by which the emigrants were to give up their arms, and Lee's men were to take the company back to Cedar City, taking the wounded and as many of the women and children as possible in the three wagons, and the rest of them were to walk, behind the wagons, while the men were to walk a little distance behind the women. The emigrant wagons being left on the camping ground, as the horses had been driven off. John D. Lee said when he returned from the consultation above referred to, that the emigrants were very suspicious, and that he had ask them if he looked like a bad man, and they answered no, but that they were sure that white men had been with the Indians when the attacks had been made, but upon Lee giving his word that he would protect them they consented to leave their camp. I was sent to tell the Indians what they were expected to do, and so suspicious was Lee of me, that he sent an Indian boy who could talk English, to see that I carried the right ~~xxx~~ message; the Indians would not believe this Indian, so I had to go, and after telling the Indians what they were to do, I remained on a hill about thirty rods from where the killing was to take place, and could see every

thing that took place.

The company moved out from their camp, the wounded, and as many of the women and children as could ride were in the wagons, with the rest of the women and children walking close behind, while the men were walking some little distance behind, with the white settlers walking along side of them, the emigrant men being un-armed, while the settlers had their arms; when the company had reach the divide, where the waters sepearate, part going down towards the Clara Creek and the other part going towards the Meadows, and on towards the Desert, John M. Higbee gave the agreed signal "Halt", when the Indians who were in ambush, rushed in between the white settlers and the emigrant men, and began the killing of the men, and the white settlers assisted, and the Indians assisted by John D. Lee, killed the wounded and the women and children, except the little children, I saw John D. Lee, kill some of the women and children, for I was in a position to see, and did see it all. I was immediately sent with four men to prevent the Indians from looting the wagons, but when I got there, I would not do so, for I let them do as they pleased. I was told at the ~~the~~ time, that when they rested from the killing, and I had gone to the wagons that they gathered the children together, and Klingin Smith, selected seventeen of the smallest children together, and handed the older ones over to the Indians who killed them,

In justice to most of the men that went to the Meadows, I will state that they were mostly young, and were under orders what they did, and most of them thought that when they left Cedar City, that the emigrants had been killed by the Indians, and that they were going to bury the dead, and for that purpose they took their shovels along, and their arms to protect themselves from any attack from the Indians.

When Isaac C. Haight received the answer from James Hagslem, in which he was forbidden to injure the Emigrants, but to render them all the assistance possible, he cried like a child, but it was too late; most of the men who took part in the killing, also considered them as their common enemies, and under the excitement caused by the advent of the Johnson Army they felt partly justified in destroying them.

There is no doubt in my mind that John D. Lee, in reporting the affair to Governor Young, lied to him and laid it on the Indians, for some fifteen or twenty years afterwards, Brigham Young sent for me to come to Salt Lake City, and requested me to tell him all I knew of the whole affat

which I did, and while I was relating it to him he walked the floor, and was deeply impressed by the statement, and several times said why did Lee lie to me, and soon afterwards John D. Lee and several others were excommunicated from the Church. He said at the time, that the young men who took part in the massacre would not be held responsible, for they were young, and under orders, but there were some who were responsible, and he would hold them responsible.

At the time of Lees Trial for murder, which took place at Beaver City, Utah, I was in hiding, for I did not want to have anything to do in the matter, but Daniel H. Wells, sent my son to me, with a request that I come to Beaver, and see him which I did, and after telling him what I knew of the affair, he called in Howard, the Prosecuting attorney, and introduced me to him, and ask me to relate to him what I knew of it, with the request that go on the witness stand and testify to what I saw, and knew, which I did, and from all that I know, Brigham Young, nor any official in the Mormon Church never tried to hide any part of the truth pertaining to the "Mountain Meadow Massacre" from the proper officials, and rendered all in their power to bring the guilty to punishment.

I have made this affidavit, not for publication, or for general circulation, but that the truth may be put in writing, that in the event of it being needed to refute error in the future, and after the eye witnesses have passed away, it may be used for that purpose.

Nephi Johnson

State of Utah)
County of Washington) ss

Nephi Johnson, being first duly sworn, deposes and says that he is the signer of the foregoing instrument; that he has read the same and knows the contents thereof, and of his own knowledge the same is true. This affidavit consists of three pages besides this page

Nephi Johnson

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 22nd day of July, A.D. 1908.

My commission expires
April, 19th, 1912.

D. H. Morris,
Notary Public.

