

[The Alms Massacre]

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Dec. 3, 1937

Words: 3,650 Dup

The Alms Massacre

Our family left Sherman, Texas Sept. 22, 1879 for Arizona, where one of my uncles was supposed to be living. We came by Deming where we were warned that the Indians were out and we had better not go by Cooke's Peak, one of the Indians favorite Places of attack. My father never having had any dealing with any Indians, was not afraid of the Indians and came on by the Peak: luck was apparently with us for a big snow storm came up, and we never saw an Indian.

When we got to Silver City the weather was so disagreeable that father got a place for us to stay. While in Silver City we heard that my uncle was in the Frisco Valley, area up in the hills mining.

Father took us to the Frisco Valley and settled. We made the third family in the valley.

Up in the hills Mexican sheepmen became angry because the settlers were coming into the valley, they told the Apaches that the white settlers would be easily taken as they were new to this country, and as the Apaches were always ready to attack an easy victim they were ready to raid the new settlers at once.

In the later part of April 1880 the Indians under their chief, Victorio, at the Cooney mine up in the hills. The attack was made just as the men were quitting work for the day. Three of the men from the mine were killed, another, Mr. Taylor was shot in the leg the shot

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breaking his leg. Mr. Taylor hid out in a near by cave. The rest of the men scattered into the hills. Mother and we children slept in the wagon; as the only house that we had was a lean to. When I went out to the wagon to go to bed I heard a strange noise up in the hills. I ran into the house and said, "There is something up in the hills". The entire family came out to listen, when they didn't hear anything they tried to make me believe that it was the frogs down in the swamp. I had been raised in town, and any unusual noise attracted my attention, and I knew the noise I heard was up in the hills, and wasn't a noise usually heard at night. After the family had gone to bed I could not sleep, because I kept thinking about the noise in the hills. I got up and sat on a big trunk in the front 2 of the wagon. I heard some loud talking, and soon decided that it was over at the Robert's house. I thought that probably that some of the family was sick and needing help. I was just ready to wake up mother when I heard a horse coming. Thinking that it was some of the Roberts family I waited to see what theyparty wanted. The horse came up on the far side of the leanto. I called "We are on this side of the house." A man rode around the house and asked "Where is your father?"

I replied: "In the house asleep".

"Go wake him, and tell him that the Apaches are out, that he had better get all of his stock in the corral at once and get ready for an attack. I haven't the time to awaken him as I must go warn others."

I thanked the man, and ran to the house to awaken father. The family soon was busy, father put the stock in the corral and went after my brother and uncle that slept in the store across the creek. When the men came back my uncle and oldest brother stayed at the corral to guard the stock. Mother and I started to moulding bullets for our old 44 Winchester.

Mr. Cooney and another man called Chick came down from the hills, and told us that they had been hiding in the hills after the attack at the mine. When night came they began to

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howl so the dogs would bark and they could get their bearing, thereby explaining the noise that I had heard.

Mr. Cooney had been on Indian scout for five years, and said that we need not that the Indians would raid their cabins and no bother the settlers we did not worry as we thought that Mr. Cooney knew what the Indians were likely to do. We laughed and moulded bullets the rest of the night.

When morning came Chick kept wanting to return to the mine. Mr. Cooney, the Indians will just raid the cabin, but is not safe to go up there now as the Indians are still in the country." Chick insisted that he was going; finally rather than let him go alone Mr. Cooney consented to go if they could borrow some horses to ride. My father did not have any horses as we drove mules from Sherman, and he was 3 using them to make his crop.

After several hours the horses returned riderless with blood on then Mr. Potter and Mr. Motsiner jumped on the horses and took off up the mine as it was feared that the men had run into trouble and needed help. The men were ambushed by the Indians. Potter's gun was shot from his hand, the jar of the shot injuring his arm, but he drew his six-shooter and fought his way out of the ambush, and rode back to the ranch before the Indians were able to attack the ranch.

The Indians had always feared Capt. Cooney, and when they saw that they killed him they rejoiced. They thought that if they could surprise Cooney, the settlers were not expecting an attack. The warriors left the squaws to mutilate the bodies of Cooney and Chick.

When the horses returned riderless the Roberts family decided to send out an alarm. A man rode over to our house and told us to hurry to the Roberts house.

My father thought that we should fortify our place as our house was on a plain and the Roberts house was at the foot of a hill, and the Indians could shoot down the hill. Mother insisted that we go on over to the Roberts Ranch. My brother said that he would stay with

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the stock at the corral. We finally got the two white mules to the wagon and started for the ranch.

We saw some cattle standing on a hill, the cattle were watching something. Mother said "Paw drive faster the Indians are coming the cattle are watching them."

"Oh mother, there is a plenty of time those cattle are watching us, the Indians aren't near yet."

Paw just would not hurry, and mother would urge him to drive faster. Paw would just tease her and never drive any faster. We were leisure driving along when we came to the top of the hill, and the cattle started to run, and our salute was a bullet. The Indians were coming toward us. I grabbed the old Springfield, which was a old model being the 1865 model. Paw called: "It isn't loaded. The shells are in my belt." The belt was a new belt and very stiff. I tugged but could not get any 4 of the shells out; paw was driving very fast. And I was pointing the gun at the Indians in hopes that they would stay back if they saw a gun. If I had been able to load the gun I could never hit the Indians as the gun was bouncing around so; as father was really making a race for the Roberts ranch now. I screamed to the family to lie down in the wagon so the Indians couldn't hit them easily. Bullets were whizzing all around us. The Indians were getting nearer all the time. My brother was standing at the corral watching the attack, but could not help us, as his gun was not a long range gun. The men at the Roberts Ranch saw the trouble that we were in and six of the men rode out to help us; thereby risking their lives; the party of men rode between us and the Indians. The Indians began to shoot at the men on the horses; there-fore giving us a chance to get to the ranch. We were traveling at quite a speed by the time we reached the ranch. We had to pass by the house, and pulled up behind a old log shed. Just as we halted one of the white mules fell dead, the first shot of the Apaches to take effect for they were sure shooting wild. We got out of the wagon down by the wall. My sister said: "I haven't seen any Indians." She had been lying down in / the wagon. She decided to peep around the corner to see an Indian, a shot missed her head about an inch. To get

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to the house we were going to have to leap a ditch, the men told us soon as there was a slack in the firing to make for the house. The firing ceased, and we knew the Indians were surrounding the place. We made a dash for the house, the Children made it across alright, but we were afraid mother would be unable to make the leap across the ditch as she was short and weighed about one hundred and sixty-five pounds. When mother came to the ditch she leaped across that ditch as spry as a deer. She said it was time to get in a / hurry.

The house was a long house made of logs with a door at each end. The beds were placed around the wall of the room, and the women and children put in the center of the room for protection. Therewere thirty-one men in the house besides the six members of the Colter family, five in the Roberts family and six in the Mender family.

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My brother couldn't stand the suspense of not knowing what happened to us, made a ride for the ranch, and arrived without a scratch. Luck was surely with us for bulletshas hit all around us, and not a one was unjured. The Indians were able to keep up a constant fire as fifteen warriors would drive up and fire; then drop back to reload their guns and another fifteen would take their place thereby keep up a a constant fire as they were always moving in a circle. There were two-hundred thirteen warriors counted.

The Indians surrounded the house some shooting down the hill many of the shots lodged on the dirt roof, others knocked holes in the wall making it unsafe to move about as the Indians could see any movement in the house through the cracks.

Late in the afternoon one of the small children was crying for something to eat, and the food was all across the room in the cupboard. My brother was standing on one side of the cupboard, and I wished to take his place as I knew that he was tired. I asked Mrs. Roberts if the [nild?] was in the cupboard; when she said it was I had an excuse to go after the mild as the children Hadn't had anything to eat all day.

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I made a dart across the room safely. I asked, "Brother do you want me to take your place for a while?"

"No, it is too dangerous as the Indians have nearly hit me several times through the cracks in the wall."

The girls in those days were taught to shoot the same as the boys. I have spent many hours at target practice with my brothers and father.

Mr. Wilcox was standing on the other side of the cupboard spoke up and said "Agnes, when you start back across the room you go as fast as possible; those Indians are shooting at every thing they see move."

Before I started back Mr. Wilcox saw his partner out in the yard trying to get to the house. Mr. Wilcox stepped to the door to aid his partner in getting to the house by exposing himself. I darted across the room and as I handed the child the glass of milk Mr. Wilcox cried: "My God, boys I'm shot." He stood his gun down by the door facing and walked over to the fireplace and laid down. Before anyone could reach him he was dead.

Early in the fight an Apache had been shot, the warrior rolled down the ditch, that we had to jump, into the water. We thought that he was dead, which he probably was; but he disappeared when Mr. Murray tried to get to the house. Mr. Murray had gone into the hills early in the morning to round up some cattle, when he heard the firing he knew the Indians had attacked and hid out in the hills. Late in the afternoon he decided that it was time to try to make it to the house, but he tried to come in too early. The boys sure did have to do some real shooting to make the Indians stay back; in order for Mr. Murray to get to the house. While the boys were making every effort to get Mr. Murray to the house the Indian in the ditch had disappeared. Whether the Indian was unjured, and saw a chance to get away or one of the other warriors slipped down, and carried him away or what happened to him was never known.

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Mr. Foster understood the Apache language and signs, he told the boys that Victorio was trying to get his warriors to rush down to the house, as our ammunition was low he cautioned the boys to never shoot unless they were sure of the shot. For if the Apaches ever did get to the house it would be all off with the settlers, as the warriors could soon capture the place as they had plenty ammunition. The Indians always had ammunition, a Indian scout would always go out with a lot of ammunition when he returned he never had any, he would tell his commanding officer that he shot at rabbits and birds, but he was storing it away for future use as he knew he would probably be back with the tribe the next year, many times he sent his ammunition to his tribe. The warriors made several rushes for the house, but the boys made it too hot to get too close.

The Apaches are superstitious about fighting after night, and when dark came the Indians made camp at the present site of Alamo. The yelling and whooping really came off. They danced and made merry for they had the white settlers penned. Our 7 man soon became tired of their fun making, and sent a few shots over in their direction. The Indians moved a little farther away and no more was heard of them, so close to the ranch.

We figured that we were in for a siege, and had better fill everything with water. If the Indians were to cut the ditch we would probably have to give up the fight from thirst.

Two men volunteered to try to get through to Silver City for help and ammunities. To go to Silver they must go by the Indian camp. The men came around and told us all good-bye, they never expected to come back, and I don't suppose anyone in the room ever expected to see them again, but God was merciful for they went by the camp safely. At the ranches along the road they were able to secure fresh mounts. The men arrived in Silver City early the next day and gave the alarm, and rushed over to the fort.

Captain Madden had been out on an Indian scouting trip, and was just returning to the post with thirty-five of his troops and scouts he ordered [hissmen?] to turn and march to

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the Frisco Valley. The men marched by Silver City where seventy-five citizens joined the troops. The men were tired but they never let this hinder them in their rush to the settlers.

The morning after the battle we were surprised that we weren't fired on, but Mr. Indian had decided that the white settlers weren't to be taken so easily, and had sent a runner over to the San Carlos Reservation for more warriors. The men decided as the Indians weren't bothering to try to bury Mr. Wilcox. They constructed a crude wooden coffin and decided to bury him on the hill behind the house. If the Indians were seen coming a shot was to be fired from a pistol.

The men were carrying the coffin up the hill when a shot was heard. The men hastily placed the body under a tree and made a run for the house. When the men had gathered at the house it was discovered that one of the men had accidentally dropped his gun, and made it go off. Many days later we were able to laugh about the incident, 8 but it sure wasn't funny then.

There was seventeen head of stock in the Roberts coral when the fight started, but they were all killed. Our old white mule stood by the old log house all day, and was never hit.

The second morning-after the fight Captain Madden came in sight of the ranch. As soon as he could see the ranch with his field glasses he tried to see the condition of the ranch he cried: "We are early enough for I see white men." The cry of rejoicing went up from that group could be heard for many miles.

Mr. Indian had early in the morning moved on into the hills for they apparently heard that soldiers were coming. They went by the places where the mexican shepherders were and killed thirty-five men. The Indians were angry because the sheepmen had told them that the new settlers would be easily taken, and they hadn't been able to accomplish their victory. A Mexican taken prisoner by the Indians told us that the Indians told us that the Indians had nine dead warriors with them.

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After the soldiers arrived and found us safe they decided that it would be foolish to try to follow the Indians, as the men were all tired as well as their mounts, also many of the men from Silver City were afoot.

When we returned home we didn't have a thing left. Sheriff Whitehill was in the valley at the time of the attack and came on to the ranch, and father sent us back to Silver with him.

Sometime after the fight an Apache scout came into the mining camp with Chicks coat on, the one he had on the day he was killed. The boys at once took Mr. Scout prisoner, and took possession of his horse. The Indian scouts always helped his tribe against the white people.

One morning the boys told the Indians that he was to follow them. The Indian asked: "Where are you taking me?"

One of the boys answered; "Going to show you the trail."

"Yes I know the trail that you will show me, and it will be a long one." The boys took the scout out and hung him.

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My father bargained with the boys, for the scouts' horse or mule to make the crop.

Sometime after the hanging of the Indian a government man came by, and demanded the horse from the boys. They told him that the horse had been sold and paid for, and they guessed that he couldn't have him.

The government agent came to father and demanded the horse. Father told him; "I don't intend to let you have the horse. The Indians took everything I had, and I have bought and paid for this horse, and I intend to keep it. The agent told father the government couldn't be responsible for their scouts and father said; "Turn your damned Indians loose and we

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sill take care of them.” When father told him this the man went on about his business and was never heard of again.

The families that were in the valley never did receive anything for their loss, as the government agent said that the Indians weren't at war with the government. A negro detachment was sent into the valley but they were useless. Father was talking to one of them once and he said; “We daren't shoot at an Indian. We are just out here to bury the dead.”

Mrs. Agnes Mender Snyder.