

Testimony taken by Thaddeus Hyatt of the National Kansas Committee

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This testimony relates the story of the burning of John Tecumseh "Tavy" Jones' house in August of 1856 from the viewpoint of the man who was lying sick and being nursed by Mrs. Jones at the time of the raid. DCB

Lawrence, 5, Dec 1856

Testimony of Nathaniel Parker

Age 32, next Jany, unmarried. Entered the Territory in the Fall of /55 about 1st Sept. Went immediately to the Ottawa Reserve and hired to John T. Jones known as Ottawa Jones a half breed. Lived with him until March 1856.

I was born and brought up in the City of New York...I brought about \$200.00 into the Territory. I gave \$90 for a claim & spent \$35 more on it making \$125.00 in all. This claim proved to be in the [Indian] Reserve Lands & I lost it and my money. I was taken sick in June with fever & ague brought on by my being sun struck. I have had the chills ever since. I have been in no battles. I was present at the Battle of Black Jack in the Mill guarding the women & children with 4 others all armed. I was at Lawrence when invested by "The 2800." I was placed in the round fort at the head of ____ 'St. by old Capt. [John] Brown. We saw the enemy coming from the direction of the Blue Mound & from the timber below the town on the Kaw. When Old Brown saw them he gathered all the men in the town with pitchforks and clubs and every other implement of warfare to man the works. The old man encouraged us by saying that although we were few in number, yet by firing low we could whip them. He says to the men, says he, if you want to be in this fight, go down to the corn field and support the men there, all of you who have Sharp's rifles!" An advance guard of perhaps 150 or 200 of the invaders were approaching and our scouts commenced firing upon them. It was to support these 25 that Old Brown invited our Sharp's rifles to go. I think I was at Lawrence about 3 weeks. I was supported in camp by the Commissary. When I first came up I had to go into the hospital. I had not recovered from the abuses I rec'd at Jones.

The affair at Jone's took place during the night of the 2 of Aug. A party of the marauders, the principal part from Westport, under Capt. Hays surrounded Jones' house. I had gone there to board and get well. I had lived on my claim until I was so sick that I could not stay any longer. It was about 12 at night when the invaders knocked in the windows. I at first thought some one had got into the pantry and was smashing the dishes. There were Mr. Jones & myself and his wife & two boys, one 10 yrs a Pottawatomie whom Jones had adopted & the other 16 a hired boy. We made no effort to get out at first. When Hays found that no one came out at their command, he cried out to his men "fire now fire the

house & that will bring them out I am[xxx],’ When Jones heard that he seized his shot gun & opened the door at the same instant presenting his gun & demanding “Who is there?” Dont fire—dont fire” said the men dodging out of the way. At this instant Jones started to run, when they commenced firing, so that he ran right between their cross fires. He ran 4 miles to father Moores, in his shirt. They said if there were any women or children then they might come out undisturbed. They had set the house on fire before Jones left. Jones had just made his escape when about a dozen of them rushed up stairs headed by a man with a torch who a soon as he saw me cried out “here is one of them – surrender give up your arms!” I had just got out of bed & was putting on my pants when one of them rushed up to the bedside where I was & drew a two edged sword and just had it over my head ready to split me down when another one standing at my right side, cried out “hold on, don’t murder him here, I’ll fix him” and with some oath, dragged me along. I wanted to get my shoes as I was barefoot & sick, but they would not let me. As I was dragged out among the crowd of howling wretches, one of them cried out “let him run if he’s a mind – damn him I’ll pick him off!” at the same instant leveling his rifle at me: the other still jerked me along, outside of the picket gate, when a man on horseback cried out “put a rope around his neck, damn him I’ll fix him.” He wanted to attach the rope to the pummel of his saddle & so tow me along & very soon tow a man to death. But the other still held on to me wanting me to confess who had made his escape. He carried me to the edge of the creek, probably some 10 or 15 feet deep, and at that instant loosened his hold & looked over the brink as if to see something. He then drew his sword and presented the point of it to within two inches of my breast, but without doing me any injury, returned it to its sheath. At this instant some one struck me a blow just above the temple which knocked me senseless. From that time I was unconscious for some 2 hours. When I came to I was laying down by the rivers brink, not far from the water. (Ottawa Creek) I found my throat cut just below the ear an inch and a half or so and extending across my jaw to the bone. This cut I believe brought me to & saved my life. My throat was swollen even with my chin – my nose without any skin upon it and my right eye completely [page 4] closed up and swelled out as big as my fist. My hair was matted with blood. My head felt as large as a bushel. I have not yet fully regained the use of my jaw. I cannot open it as wide as common. It was full 5 weeks before I was healed up safe. My right ear is now quite deaf. My head continued dizzy for full four weeks. When I would attempt to walk I was in danger of falling.

Mrs. Jones remained by the house outside. She says 20 men could have routed the whole of them as they were frightened all the time for the picket guard hearing the tramping of the horses in the pasture fired his signal gun thinking our men were down upon them. Hearing this, Hays cried out to his men “Speed home! Boys, speed home!” and seizing their plunder the scoundrels fled after taking two bags of money from Mrs. Jones, one of gold & one of silver \$500, in all.

I have about 50cts; am in need of all things.