

C. G. Allen's response to Redpath and Hinton's call for information about John Brown

Allen, a "minister of the Gospel" at Cottonwood Falls, Kansas Territory, writes in response to James Redpath's and R. J. Hinton's call for "anecdotes & reminiscences" concerning "the brave & philanthropic [John] Brown," who the preacher first met in 1856 in Lawrence, Kansas. Allen left Lawrence when a call came for volunteers to aid in the defense of Osawatomie, Kansas, in August of that year. While there engaged, he saw his first "Border Ruffians," whom he described as "miserable specimens of humanity. They were ragged & dirty. Their cloths & faces were to a considerable extent covered with tobacco spit." Allen and the men with whom he traveled missed the Battle of Osawatomie by moving south before the attack in an effort to find the attackers before they reached the town.

Creator: Allen, C. G. (Cyrus G.), 1826-1899

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Col. Bridger. I saw nothing remarkable in the
appearance that day. In a day or two after this
we were told from Des Moines that an attack was
expected on that place shortly. I earnestly requested
we sent for men to come & assist in defending it
I volunteered among others to go. I think that Brown rode
with a company of horsemen of about fifty. I took
a different road in company with about a dozen
men all armed with Sharp Rifles. Our route ~~was~~ the
most the way through the prairie without a road
We passed by Black Jack where Brown threatened
a company of Missourians who numbered more than
double of Brown's company. Some of my company
was in the fight & said that they had pretty warm times
then, at night we camped on the open prairie with
no other shelter but the Company of Heaven. We wrapped
our blankets round us & used our ~~blankets~~ saddle for
pillows. We had failed to arrive at Stanton a town
about 6 miles above Des Moines where we intended
to get supper. Consequently we had to go without.
The next morning at about 9 o'clock we arrived at it with
our appetites in good condition to relish a breakfast
The rain had commenced pouring down in torrents
and we found the town entirely deserted except a man &
boy who had come back to take away some of their effects
They told us that the inhabitants left the place the night
before. They were then down in the timber unprotected
from the storm. Some of them were sick of the fever
They had heard that the Border Ruffians were coming
to plunder & burn the place & scalp the inhabitants. After the rain
had ceased we made our way to Des Moines as hungry as wolves
We arrived there a little past noon. Nearly all the families
had left. The snow had ~~fallen~~ from the surrounding

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and gathered there & built two block houses for shelter in case of an attack. They had look holes & in every way were well constructed as a shelter for defence. Our first care was to answer the demands of an increasing appetite. Shortly after our arrival Capt Brown arrived. He partook of ^{his} ~~any~~ thing, but the character of a lounge. I very soon saw him surrounded by the leading men there talking about the ~~best~~ best means for the defence of the place. He thought best to meet the enemy at the crossing of the Marais Des Cignes & there pour a deluge of fire into them & if we failed to stop them there to then fall back to the fort. Said he "you may depend they will not come unless they bring a large force". After talking awhile he said "We are most to public in our conversation let us stop one side". He said among other things that natural fortifications were better than artificial ones. They could not be easily battered down or burnt. Our whole force consisted of about 75 men. While there an earnest desire was felt for the Missourians to come. While there one evening it was proposed to go somewhere & get a quantity of arms in possession of the Border Ruffians. The fact of their having arms & the place where they were was uncertain. Brown did not approve of the idea of going on an ~~expedition~~ uncertain expedition. Said he "They say that 'Old Brown is rash enough' if such is the case when he says to go on, you had better hold on, I recollect when I was a boy that men used to come to my father & say 'I don't know what to do' he would tell them 'if they don't know what to do, to be very careful not to do any thing until they found out what to do'. When you find out where to go & what you are going for then Old Brown is with you". We were sitting out doors with a candle in one snuff & looking at a snuff of

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the country. After conversing awhile, He said: "It is not prudent for us to sit and here with a light. If the enemy are about we are giving them an excellent opportunity to send a shower of bullets among us." We then went into one of the block houses & appointed scouts to go out early next morning to see if the enemy were any where about. After conversing awhile we retired to our quarters. ~~Our scouts~~ The next day near night Brown came riding into town alone, looking very good natured. He asked if we wanted any proslavery beef. He said that he had got some that was number one. That he had been out that day collecting taxes. I afterwards learned that he had taken some fine cattle from the plantation of an antislavery Border Ruffian. Our scouts learned that a large company of Border Ruffians were on their way from ~~the~~ Fort Scott to Osawatomie. We concluded that we would spare them the trouble of coming clear to O. to have a fight & that we would meet them half way. Brown was not at O. when the news came. About fifty of us started and about nine o'clock at night, ~~the~~ After riding about 6 miles we picked out our horses, wrept ourselves up in our blankets & laid down in the grass for the night. The next morning many of us took breakfast with a free state settler who lived near by others had provisions with them. We then mounted & after riding about five miles we came to a settler by the name of Rice. ^{the} Capt. was riding in advance. I saw him first. He came riding back with a smile on his face, saying "There is 120 of them within a mile & a half of us." I thought it a pretty thing to laugh about for fifty to attack one hundred & twenty. We immediately sent out two scouts in the

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direction of the enemy's camp & a messenger back to Capt. Brown. Our Scouts had been gone but a short time when they returned with two prisoners. These were the first Border Ruffians that I had seen. Consequently I looked upon them with no small degree of curiosity. They were miserable specimens of humanity. They were ragged & dirty, their clothes & faces were to a considerable extent covered with tobacco spit. Notwithstanding they were treated with the utmost civility, they shook as if they expected to be debauched immediately. They informed us that fifty of their company had gone up the Pottawatomie to burn some houses & grain stacks belonging to Free State men. They seemed perfectly willing to give us any information we asked for relative to their men. They claimed that they were induced to join the Border Ruffians in order to recover some horses that had been stole in their neighborhood. While we were waiting our Scouts brought in two more prisoners, who were also very much frightened. They had been in sight of the enemy's camp. It lay laid down behind a corn field on the bottoms near Middle Creek. Presently Capt. Anderson came up with about a dozen men. Our men became so anxious to go & commence the fight that it was hardly restraining them. It was feared that the enemy would get wind of us & run off & spoil our gun, if we remained there much longer. Accordingly we concluded that we would commence the play before Brown arrived. Capt. Anderson was well acquainted with the ground about the enemy's camp. He called upon 25 free men to volunteer to go with him to go around the enemy & cut off their retreat at the crookings of Middle Creek. I was among the volunteers. About one half of them were mounted & the rest on foot. We proceeded with

with one of J.B.'s men

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the utmost caution. crossing the Creek about one half mile before the camp. After crossing we saw a man apparently looking at ^{us} about three fourths of a mile above us. After looking for a while he ran into a house near by. Capt. A. told a Dr. that was along to take the horse men & go to the upper crossing as soon as possible, that we were discovered. He would guard the lower crossing with the foot men. According to we put spurs to our horses & galloped along with the speed of arrows. While passing a cornfield some suggested that they might be concealed in there. Whereupon the Dr. seemed to contract his body into as small a compass as possible that he might stand a less chance of being hit. Upon arriving at the crossing ~~we~~ we dismounted & hitched our horses. After scanning us ~~the~~ closely two men started from the house upon a run in the direction of the enemy's camp. We ordered them to halt, but they paid no regard to it. The Dr. told us to fire on them. We cocked our rifles & brought them to our faces. They concluded by this time that discretion was the better part of valour & turned & run towards the house as fast as they had left it. We had not got more than partly stationed before we heard the ~~the~~ crack of a Sharps rifle. Said one "boys the play has commenced," shortly after this the report of another gun was heard. Then another & another, till for a short time there was almost a continuous roar of ~~guns~~ guns. After continuing for about a minute the firing ceased. The next moment ~~two~~ two horsemen came to the crossing where we were stationed scanning their horses at their utmost speed. As they came down the bank opposite us. they were ordered to halt. They slackened their speed & appeared like stopping, but they struck their

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into their houses & seemed bent on sparing us. After ordering them to halt three times, the rifles cracked, one of their legs was broken & he lost his balance in the saddle & fell to the ground. Crying loudly for quarters. His horse was slightly wounded in the side by the same shot that broke his leg. The other one made his escape amid a shower of bullets, but not without leaving some blood on the bushes as he rode through them. During the whole affair & ~~feeling~~ ^{feeling} the most miserably characterized pervaded my mind. Human beings were trying to shed the life blood of each other. What a scene of depravity & wickedness. Who but the Democratic Party & the Abolitionists could be ultimately responsible for it. We were doing nothing more than protecting our lives & ~~houses~~ ^{property} & the our homes from being burnt our property from being carried away by ruthless hands. And our wives & daughters from the outrage of the most despicable wretches that ever cursed our land. The riderless horse pursued after the fleeing enemy, mounted & rode after him. After following him for about one quarter of a mile, I overtook him by the side of a corn field. Just before seizing him by the bridle I heard a firing in the direction of the ~~corn~~ field. My first thought was that some of the scouts I saw concealed in the field & were firing at one. But as I did not hear any bullets whistle I concluded that I was mistaken. Just as I had seized the horse's bridle I looked up & saw eight of the scouts riding towards me, running their horses at their utmost speed. I thought then that I had got myself into business. But as they came up I discovered that they were too badly scared to ^{do} any body any harm. They asked me where those men had gone & I told them off that way pointing in the direction that they were running. As they passed one of their old hats fell off, but the owner did not look round.

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to see where it had gone to. I was tempted to fire on them but a second thought suggested that I had better reserve my fire for a more dangerous position. Upon riding back to our men I saw the wounded Lieutenant. His leg was broken about half way between the ankle & knee. I loathingly mangled it. A Sharps bullet had done the dreadful work. He had been an editor in ~~Atchafalpa~~ Mississippi. I was then printing a paper at Fort Scott. I could not but feel pity for him. although there seemed to be almost an entire want of ~~any~~ manliness in his looks. & he was going ~~on~~ ~~to~~ into an enterprise of the most revolting character. He said the reason that they did not halt was because they had sworn to each other that they would neither give nor take quarters. Soon after my return to our men we heard a tremendous cheering in the direction of the camp. We were well satisfied as to whom the cheering came from & responded by three hearty cheers. We then rode over to the camp & found our men in high spirits. They had taken in all fifteen prisoners a considerable amount of provisions & other things necessary to carry on a war. As soon as they got in rifle shot of the camp they fired & continued to advance towards the enemy & load & fire. The Border Ruffians discharged their pieces without injury & then took to their heels. They had waving in their camp a blood red flag bearing the inscription "Bourbon Rangers". "Death or our Constitutional Rights". I seem that they thought that their Constitutional Rights consisted in running & they chose that rather than death. Among the prisoners there was one of the most eccentric appearance. He was about four feet & a half in height. His head was very diminutive in size. while he had as big

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a nose as I ever saw on a man's face. His eyes seemed almost to touch each other. When I saw him ~~he~~ he stood with his back against the fence, working like a toad in a thunder shower. When he was seized by one of our men, he cried & said if he would let him go he would go right home, that he was just from college & that his father had sent him there.

After remaining in the camp but a short time we proceeded ~~on our way~~ to Mr. Rice's. On our way we met Old Brown looking very much disappointed because he had not been in the fight. Some of his men gave a warm shake of the hand regretting that they had not been there to participate in the fun. After we arrived at Rice's Brown addressed us, saying: "Well boys I learn that you have had a fight, have beaten the enemy & not a man of you hurt?" "And thank the Lord for it." Three deafening cheers were then given for Capt. Brown. He then told his men to give us three cheers, which was done with a hearty good will. He then went to riding about saying: "If any of you have fresh horses I are not under the orders of your Captain. Come up on the rise of ground & form into line." This he repeated several times in a loud clear & determined voice, occasionally saying: "We have got business on hand." About twenty five followed him, with them he went in pursuit of those ruffians that had gone up the Pottawatomie. After getting refreshment we repaired to near the camp ground of the enemy where we camped for the night. At about nine o'clock at night we heard a cow bell rattle as if shaken by a human hand. We very quickly procured one & answered it. A large company of us went & lay behind a fence. Some fancied that they heard their horses snort, & one of them said "By God they have gone." The next morning Brown came to us

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appearing as active & fresh as if he had had a good night's rest. He had followed the company of Puffians that had gone up the Pottawatomie all night but had not overtaken them. Said he, "You will please give us time to get breakfast & then we will go with you in pursuit of ~~the~~ the enemy. If you think best we will go with you without our breakfast, but we would like to have some before starting."

It was thought best to discharge the prisoners on parole. Upon giving them their discharge Captain Shore talked to them in a very mild manner, warning them of the consequence if they again entered the Border Puffian Service. Capt Brown listened with a smile on his face. After Shore had got through said he, "Gentlemen I would like to say a word to these prisoners." Several responded "Yes and," said he, addressing the prisoners, "I perceive that some of you have too much intelligence to have been led into such an ~~entirely~~ undertaking by deception. You know very well the nature of the business you were going ^{on}. You may well think that your getting easily dealt by, after you have been conducted in the manner that they have in robbing the Free State people they have gone as far as to take the jewelry from the fingers & ears of females. I don't know that your pockets have been disturbed. You are getting off easily this time but if you are caught in another as dirty a scrape you may guess what your fate will be." ~~He~~ He.

Upon leaving, no one of the most intelligent of the prisoners came & shook hands with me & said that he hoped that we never would be arrayed against each other again.

Upon the request of some of Brown's men I joined them that morning. All but B's company started for Little Sugar Creek. Whether the Border Puffians had fled. After ~~the~~ breakfast we ~~the~~ followed on

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On the way Brown was quite talkative. His conversation was of the most pleasant & instructive character. One thing I observed that he ~~was~~ never said a word that did not mean something. He always talked directly to the point & every word was big with meaning. I forgot to say that as we were passing the house near the crossing where I was stationed during the fight of the previous day, I told him about the men leaving it for the camp. He told ^{me} that ~~we~~ ^{we} ought to have taken the prisoners of war as they were carrying information to the ~~our~~ ^{our} enemy. Several men were sitting out in front of the house. B. asked me if they were among them. I told him that they were. Lind ^{for} Come with me & I will talk to them a little. I went & pointed out the two men. But they positively denied being the men. & claimed that they were Free State men. B. told them if they were ever detected in carrying information to the enemy or otherwise aiding them, they might be hard upon & they would be dealt with. On our way to Little Sugar Creek the old man drilled ~~us~~ ^{us} some in tactics, forming ^{us} into line of battle &c. ~~XXX~~ ^{On arriving} ~~remained~~ on the said creek we found the company who had preceded us, preparing their dinner. Brown took us to a house ~~XXX~~ ^{where} where we dined. The occupant told us that the Border Ruffians passed there the night before, headed by Sheriff Brown, terribly frightened. He said that Sheriff B. told him that he was afraid that the whole lot would be killed off before morning, that without their ^{dear} knovle the Free State men came & cut off their picket guard. While some of his men were playing cards, others eating dinner & others sleeping in their tents, sharp bullets commenced whizzing among them giving them the first intimation that the old abolitionists were any where about. He told us that the Border Ruffians camped near him previous to going over to Middle Creek the night before.

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leaving they ^{had} ~~made~~ some great speeches in their camp
 They said that they were not going after plunder but the
 A & Abolitionists' scalps. After dinner we rode about
 through the neighborhood. From all that we could learn
 Sheriff Brown & his company had sought safety in Missouri.
 We called at a house where a woman by the name of Arthur
 resided. It was in sight of Sheriff Brown's house.
 Mrs. A. told us that her husband had fled to the states
 for safety. But she could get no tidings from him
 & she feared that she had been killed. She seemed almost
 frantic in view of what she was then suffering & her ~~poor~~
 future prospects. She was surrounded by several pretty little
 children who were poorly clad & appeared to be poorly fed.
 She said that she had received every abuse from Sheriff
 & that a friend could inflict upon a helpless woman.
 He had threatened to burn her house. His men had shot into
 her house & had taken the money which her husband
 had left for her to purchase provisions. What she would
 do she did not know. On learning this some of our men
 proposed to go immediately & burn Sheriff Brown's house.
 But Capt. Brown said in his determined manner
 "No! that would be to punish like Border Ruffians."
 We returned to the house where we got dinner & put up
 for the night. As usual we slept out with no
 shelter but the canopy of Heaven. We had with us a fugitive
 Hungarian, who had been in some of the most important
 battles in Hungary. We asked him about Kosuth.
 He said that he was like Capt. Brown, he was every
 where at once. This Hungarian was taken prisoner
 at the battle of Osawatomie & taken and shot down
 in cold blood the next day.
 I forgot to mention that we rescued from the Bor. Ruff.
 on Middle creek a free State man by the name of Partridge.

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It was their intention to bury him that afternoon.
The poor fellow was killed at the battle of Osawatomie.
Brown was the first one up in the morning, calling
his men up. We had already been absent longer than
we had orders when we left Lawrence. Captain B. Paid the
man that entertained us, liberally. We there parted with
the old man & started for Lawrence we arrived
at Osawatomie about two P.M. After remaining there
about two hours we left & traveled about a mile beyond
Stanton where we camped. I did not approve the idea
of leaving O so soon. We reached Lawrence the next day
a little before six P.M. Our friends were very glad to see us
all well. They feared from our delay in coming back
that we had either been killed or taken prisoners.
In a few days after our arrival we heard of the
battle of O. It was feared that Capt. B. was killed.
The most painful solicitude was felt with regard
to his father. How my heart leaped for joy when I heard
that he was safe. The next & last time that I saw
he came in front of my tent where I lay sick unable
to sit up. I asked Col. Harvey for some of his men.
Said he: "I want some of your men to go & assist me
in repelling the outrages of the Border Ruffians.
I have suffered from Free State men every indignity that
they could heap upon me yet I am determined to
serve through the war." Harvey talked rather discouraging.
Well said B. You can think about it & give me an
answer after awhile. This was on Sunday. Gen. Lane
was in town & several speeches were made. Brown was
sent for to make a speech. He replied "I would not
come if Gen. Lane himself should send for me".
He was very strict in his observance of the Sabbath. He would
allow no swearing among his men.

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His son Frederic was a little previous to the battle of
Osawatomie shot down in cold blood. After he fell
his mouth hung open & the cowardly rascals would
present the muzzles of their guns to his mouth & fire
into. I heard several say that they thought Capt. Brown
to be insane after the battle of Osawatomie.
There are many other things which I may write
which undoubtedly had a tendency in deciding Brown's
future course. But I have already been tedious, you
will undoubtedly get them from abler pens.
This imperfect document is now the property of
the author of the forthcoming work. He can do as
he pleases with it. I have written as rapidly as I could
move my pen. My children have occasionally chattered over
my paper while writing. The ^{fact} which I have prepared to
withstand I would repeat under oath. Others have been
obtained from the most reliable sources.
By all means send me the book when it is
published. I have no doubt but I shall take pleasure
in circulating it. My best regards to the author.
My address is Cottonwood Falls, Chase Co., N.D.
Yours in behalf of Freedom
C. G. Allen

P.S. I have been under the impression that Mrs. L. Marie Childs
is the author of the work I have written with that thing in
view. If I am mistaken the author whoever it may be has the
same privilege that I have granted her.

C. G. A.

C. G. Allen
Rem. J. Brown
Andrew Stark
Sick