

John Brown's slave-stealing raid into Missouri

*Harold Dellinger, Special Projects Editor
www.WindingRiver.com*

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John Brown's revenge for the Marais des Cygne Massacre and other offenses of the Missourians was to plan and execute a slave stealing expedition into Missouri. There was relative peace in Kansas Territory at this time, and most Kansans advocated waiting further developments for a while. But John Brown wanted to avenge the seven - by his count - invasions of Kansas by the Missourians including, of course, the raid on Marais des Cygne.

A Missouri slave by the name of Jim Daniels, disguised as a broom salesman, visited friends of John Brown in Kansas and reported that he, his pregnant wife and their two children were to be sold to Texas to settle an estate. Daniels requested help in avoiding that action, which would surely break up his family.

On the night of December 20, 1858 John Brown and 20 others entered Missouri from the makeshift "Fort Snyder," which Brown had constructed along and within sight of the Missouri-Kansas border. As the party approached the Little Osage River (which joins the Marais des Cygne River in Missouri), they split into two groups. Brown led a group of 12 along the north side of the river, and Aaron Stevens was placed in charge of the remainder and proceeded south of the river.

John Brown's group visited first the Hicklan farm where Jim Daniels and family resided and worked. They were "liberated" by Brown, along with several Conestoga wagons, oxen mules, horses and household goods. Brown then traveled to the nearby Larue homestead where five more blacks were loaded into the wagons, as well as household items such as bedding. Larue and a visitor, Dr. A. Ervin, at first resisted Brown, but acquiesced when Brown threatened to burn him out.

The Stevens portion of the "Brown Band" raided the homestead of David Cruise, a wealthy landowner. Cruise let Stevens into the house but then locked the door behind him and pulled his gun on Stevens, who then shot him dead. A female slave by the name of Jane was taken, as well as livestock and other provisions.

The 11 ex-slaves were transported to a cabin near Osawatomie, Kansas Territory. Brown himself lingered near the Missouri-Kansas border in case there was any pursuit, but there was none.

Missouri, and in fact the nation, was properly alarmed. The governor of Missouri, Robert M. Stewart, authorized a \$3,000 reward for the capture of Brown, and United States President James Buchanan added \$250, but Brown was not taken. Within weeks the Missouri counties of Bates and Vernon were virtually depopulated of slaves, most of whom were transferred into the interior of Missouri or sold further south.

Brown eventually took his captured cargo to Topeka, Kansas Territory and then up the Lane Trail to Nebraska (where they stayed with the Otoe Indians), thru Iowa, Illinois and Michigan. Brown spoke to sympathetic crowds along the way and raised support for the trip. Eighty-two days after the raid, Brown placed the escaped slaves, plus one born on the way, on a ferry from Detroit, Michigan to Windsor, Ontario where they were safe from the Fugitive Slave Act.

Brown declared "the arm of Jehovah protected us."