

Osborne Russell

Osborne Russell was an American fur trapper during the 1830s and 1840s. This is a quote from his "Journal of a Trapper". [Changed for easier reading using ChatGPT.] Original found at <https://archive.org/details/journalatrapp00yorkgoog/page/n6/mode/2up>

We had been camping for about an hour when fourteen white trappers rode up to us very fast. They were part of Mr. Bridger's group, which was camped at Henry's Lake, about twenty miles to the south, and they planned to reach the Madison River the next day. His group had sixty white men and about twenty Flathead Indians (non-Utah Indians). The trappers stayed with us overnight, sharing stories about life in the mountains and news from the eastern states.

Early the next morning, eight of the trappers went down the stream to set traps along the main fork of the river. About an hour later, they came back quickly because around eighty Blackfoot Indians were chasing them. We right away moved our horses into a corral that had already been built and got ready to fight. While this was happening, the Blackfoot reached the cliffs and began shooting into our camp from both sides. The cliff on the east side was very steep and rocky, with tall pine trees, and it came within forty yards of our camp. On the west side, the cliffs were covered with thick groves of quaking aspen trees. From these high places, the Indians fired many bullets without stopping.

Their shots did not hurt us, but they killed our animals that were left out in the open. We hid ourselves in the thick bushes around the camp and waited for them to come closer. However, they were too afraid of our rifles to move close enough for us to fire back.

Original

We had been encamped about an hour when fourteen white trappers came to us in full gallop. They were of Mr. Bridger's party, who was encamped at Henry's Lake, about twenty miles in a southerly direction, and expected to arrive at the Madison the next day. His party consisted of sixty white men and about twenty Flathead Indians. These trappers remained with us during the night, telling mountain "yarns" and the news from the States. Early next morning eight of them started down the stream to set traps on the main fork, but returned in about an hour closely pursued by about eighty Blackfeet. We immediately secured our horses in a yard previously made for the purpose, and prepared for battle. In the meantime the Indians had gained the bluffs and commenced shooting into the camp from both sides. The bluff on the east side was very steep and rocky, covered with tall pines, the foot approaching within forty yards of us. On the west the bluffs were covered with thick groves of quaking asps. From these heights they poured in fusee balls without mercy or even damage, except killing our animals which were exposed to their fire. In the meantime we concealed ourselves in the thicket around the camp to await a nearer approach, but they were too much afraid of our rifles to come near enough for us to use ammunition. (pg 35)