

## Etienne Provost

*Leroy R Hafen is a retired history professor from BYU. His article "Etienne Provost, Mountain Man and Utah Pioneer" was published in 1968 in a historical magazine. Etienne Provost was a French-Canadien Mountain Man who explored large parts of Utah in the early the 1820's. [Changed for easier reading using ChatGPT.] Original found at [https://issuu.com/utah10/docs/uhq\\_volume36\\_1968\\_number2/s/104905](https://issuu.com/utah10/docs/uhq_volume36_1968_number2/s/104905)*

When he returned to St. Louis on February 24, 1838, he brought news of a terrible smallpox outbreak that had caused great suffering among the tribes living along the upper Missouri River... There was one dangerous man among them called the "Bad Gocha" (which means "bad left-handed one"). He joined a group of trappers led by a well-known frontiersman named E. Provost on a stream that flows into what is now called Big Lake. Bad Gocha invited the trappers to join him in smoking the peace pipe, but he said it was against his beliefs to have any metal nearby while smoking. Provost, knowing the Indians were superstitious, agreed and told his men to set aside their weapons. The Indians and the trappers sat together in a circle and began the ceremony. But at a planned signal, the Indians attacked, using knives hidden under their robes and blankets. Provost, who was very strong, barely escaped with three or four others. The rest of the fifteen-man party were killed.

## Original

When he returned to St. Louis on February 24, 1838, he brought news about a terrible smallpox outbreak that had caused great suffering among the tribes on the upper Missouri. and understood that he would stand no foolishness... There is one evil genius among them, called the "Bad Gocha," (mauvais gauche—bad left-handed one) who fell in with a party of trappers, led by a well-known mountaineer, Mr. E. [Provost], on a stream flowing into the Big Lake that now bears his name, several years since. He invited the whites to smoke the calumet of peace with him, but insisted that it was contrary to his medicine to have any metallic near while smoking. [Provost], knowing the superstitious whims of the Indians, did not hesitate to set aside his arms, and allow his men to follow his example; they then formed a circle by sitting indiscriminately in a ring, and commenced the ceremony; during which, at a preconcerted signal, the Indians fell upon them, and commenced the work of slaughter with their knives, which they had concealed under their robes and blankets. [Provost], a very athletic man, with difficulty extricated himself from them, and with three or four others, alike fortunate, succeeded in making his escape; the remainder of the party of fifteen were all massacred.