

## The Fort Rock Fight

In the year 1866, Fort Rock, on the old road between Prescott and Hardyville, was the scene of one of the most bitterly fought battles between the pioneers and Indians of early days.

Fort Rock took its name from a rock house built upon an elevation and used as a station in 1864 and 1865. Early in the fall of 1866, the station was occupied by J. J. Buckman and his son, Thad, and one Charley Hay. A day or two before the fight, Thad, in play, built himself a rock play-house out of the abundant square faced rocks which were plentiful there, in the shape of a semi-circular wall about 18 inches high, extending from one corner of the rock house to the opposite one. That same night, or the one following, the mail carrier, Poindexter, accompanied as escort by Pat McAteer and a soldier from Fort Whipple, on their way to Hardyville stopped for the night at the station.

Early the next morning, while making preparations to leave, the Indians, (Wallapais) opened fire upon them from several directions. At the first fire Mr. Buckman was shot in the groin and fell inside Thad's play-ground wall, where he laid all day upon his back. McAteer and the little soldier also dropped inside the wall, as the volley of shots precluded a retreat inside the house.

That Buckman was shot in the leg and he and Poindexter and Hay, being near the door, retreated inside the house. The battle waged continuously, with cessation, all day long. Poindexter and Hay loading the guns for Thad and holding him up to the portholes to shoot, as he was the only one who had good eyesight and a steady nerve. Outside the house McAteer and the soldier kept up the battle and shot at every Indian that exposed any portion of his head or body, they shooting from different corners of the wall and covering opposite directions.

Out in the valley some three hundred yards was a reef of rocks, behind which was a battle kept up all day long, with McAteer, by Indians armed with a Henry rifle. Several times during the day McAteer silenced the gun, but the dead Indian was replaced by another and the battle resumed until again silenced and another took up the gage of battle. This was kept up all through the day.

Thad from his porthole was doing good service and preventing an approach from his side, while McAteer and the little soldier covered the other approachable parts.

While the battle was waging, the little soldier said, "Mac, I see a big Indian on a black horse way down the valley approaching, giving orders to others who are some six or eight hundred yards off and thinks he is out of range, but I think I can raise my sights and get him." "Shoot away", says Mac. The soldier was armed with one of the old fashioned needle guns which were then used by the army, and at the crack of the gun down went the Indian. "I got him, Mac," says the soldier. "Bully for you," says Mac. Evidently all of the fighting men of the Wallapais who were armed with guns were in this fight, and it was said afterwards that the whole tribe were in mourning for the many killed--some forty of their fighting men.

The writer of this, while on his way to California in a party consisting of Governor R. C. McCormick and wife, a mail contractor and Ben Block, visited the battle ground and were shown the positions occupied by the different parties. A block about ten inches square placed up the wall by McAteer as a protection to his head while shooting, was still in the position placed and showed the marks of many bullets as evidence that the Indians made many close calls upon him for his scalp.

This is a matter of true history, if my recollection fails me not. A Pioneer.



Homer Wood tells me that it was Sam Miller who came upon John J. Buckman when he, with his son and another man, were attacked by Apaches and left to die.

Miller took Buckman, who was badly riddled through the intestines, to the nearest Post at Hardyville and left him there for treatment, and also to die. Upon Miller's return freight trip from the coast, he stopped off at the Post and asked how long Buckman had lived. (Buckman, by the way, could neither read nor write, according to Mr. Wood). He was told that the old man was still alive and had absolutely refused help of any kind. "He's up there in one of those cabins," Miller was told. Later, Miller found Buckman well along the road to recovery. "I expected to find you dead. What did you do to keep alive?" he asked. "Oh," Buckman answered, "I just ate lots of coarse food and stopped up the holes in my gut, and I got well."