

Guy Prentiss (#1)
No date
by Margaret Hatch

Statement of Guy Prentiss, Camp No. 1, to Miss Margaret Hatch.

Q Were you in camp during the storm?

A Yes

Q Now tell us what happened about getting out?

A Our Captain, Hardacre, notified us at 1:00 P.M. on Monday September 2nd, that there would be a train about 2:30 to transfer us to Homestead, out of the reaches of the storm. At that time it was not storming so bad, but the wind was blowing some. As I walked down toward Snake Creek I met a salesman driving a brand new Dodge Coach. He said "Do you belong to this camp?" I said "Yes" and he said "You had better get out. I heard an hour ago another storm would hit here at 6:30 and would get worse all night".

Q Who told you that?

A I do not know his name - he was a salesman.

Q Did the officers have this same notice?

A Regarding the officers, we would not know - we were not in a position to contact them for they were at Matumba. Our only contact would be through our Captain. However I met Mr. Sheldon

on Wednesday morning the 4th - he was blowing the fire to boil some

coffee and I said "What do you think about this affair, from start to finish?" He said it was negligence on the part of Mr. Ghent.

Q Do you know if your officers made any attempt to remove the men except for the train?

A Mr. Hardacre had worked hard all day and he went to the Hospital to get reports which were coming in but all we knew about what he learned were what he relayed to us - he kept telling us the

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the train was on its way and it would come soon. He said that at 4:30 and the train came by at 7:00.

Q Were you on the train?

A Yes.

Q Did it stop, or did you catch it on the run?

A The only reason we caught it was because a cable had broken from the boom and we got on the train from the other side. About three miles from the camp the water was rising and they cut the speed down to 8 miles an hour. Then the glass broke out and everybody got panicky. I thought the way of least resistance and I went on top of the train with one leg in the transom. I thought everyone on the train was drowned, the water was so high - it was shoulder deep when I climbed up. After a while I heard people talking and looked down and saw a crowd of them were still there and I called to them and they broke out around the transom and got me down.

Q Did you receive any orders in camp that you could not leave if you so desired?

A No.

Q If you could have gotten transportation, you could have gone?

A Positively.

Q Did you make any attempt to suggest the use of trucks to get out?

A No. Not personally.

Q Did you personally identify any of the dead?

A Yes: Frank Leslie and I don't believe his Mother will ever know, unless I write her, the was he passed away. He came from Andover, Mass; and Berkley E. Taylor, our mail carrier and a fellow by the name of Mulvihill; Jack Foster; Butler; Dr. Maine and a fellow, I can't recall his name. I did not identify any more, I was worn out and anxious to get away.

Q You got on board of the train at Camp 1?

A Yes.

Q That was when it was held up on account of the cable?

A Yes.

Q How long did it take them to get the train loose from the cable?

A About 20 minutes.

Q What time was that?

A About 7:20.

Q Did you talk to the train crew?

A Yes.

Q Did they say anything about the cause of the delay in getting the train down?

*Branch
carrying
gun.*

A No. They were very reticent. Trainmaster Branch was aboard with a .35 and compelled four or five of the men to help with the cable - that is Veterans I mean. Regarding what they said, any person with average intelligence could read the hand writing on the wall. They were very cautious about what they said, how they said it and to whom they said it. So if anyone had a personal chat with any of the railroad men, I do not know who, and I did not see it. I was watching the game pretty closely. I would venture

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to say that there wasn't a man on the train besides a newspaper reporter that talked with any man on the train crew.

Q Is there anything else you would like to tell us, Mr. Prentiss.

A No - I think not.

Miss Hatch: Thank you very much for telling us this.

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct transcript of the statement made by the above named Veteran.

Marguerite Scull
Marguerite Scull, Stenographer.