

Incident of the Black Hawk War

By Charles Whittlesey

Among the recollections of the season I spent in Wisconsin in 1832, is the following incident of the Black Hawk War, which occurred on the banks of Rock River, after the so-called Stillman's defeat, or battle of the Kishwaukee or Sycamore Creek. I cannot now bring to mind the authority on which the statement is based, not being present, and therefore give it only as the remembrance of an old man.

Gen. Atkinson had not arrived in camp, and the command of all the troops, regular and volunteer, devolved upon Col. Zachary Taylor of the army. He was to move northward, across the river, in pursuit of Black Hawk and his followers. A portion of the volunteers held that they were called out only to defend the State of Illinois, and were not inclined to march. The column was formed with the volunteers in front. Before the order to move was issued, Col. Taylor rode up to the volunteer troops, and made them a brief speech.

He said that orders had been passed along from Washington and the president, to pursue the Indians. It might be that some of them would yet be president of the United States; and if so, they would expect their orders to be obeyed. At any rate, he should obey such orders, and if there were any who did not wish to cross the river, there stood the United States infantry behind them. Forward, march!

It may not be true that Capt. Abraham Lincoln, of the Illinois volunteers was present at that time; but as he served the whole campaign, he must have been. If so, that command included two men who became presidents of the United States—Taylor and Lincoln.

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