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Frank D. Reeve

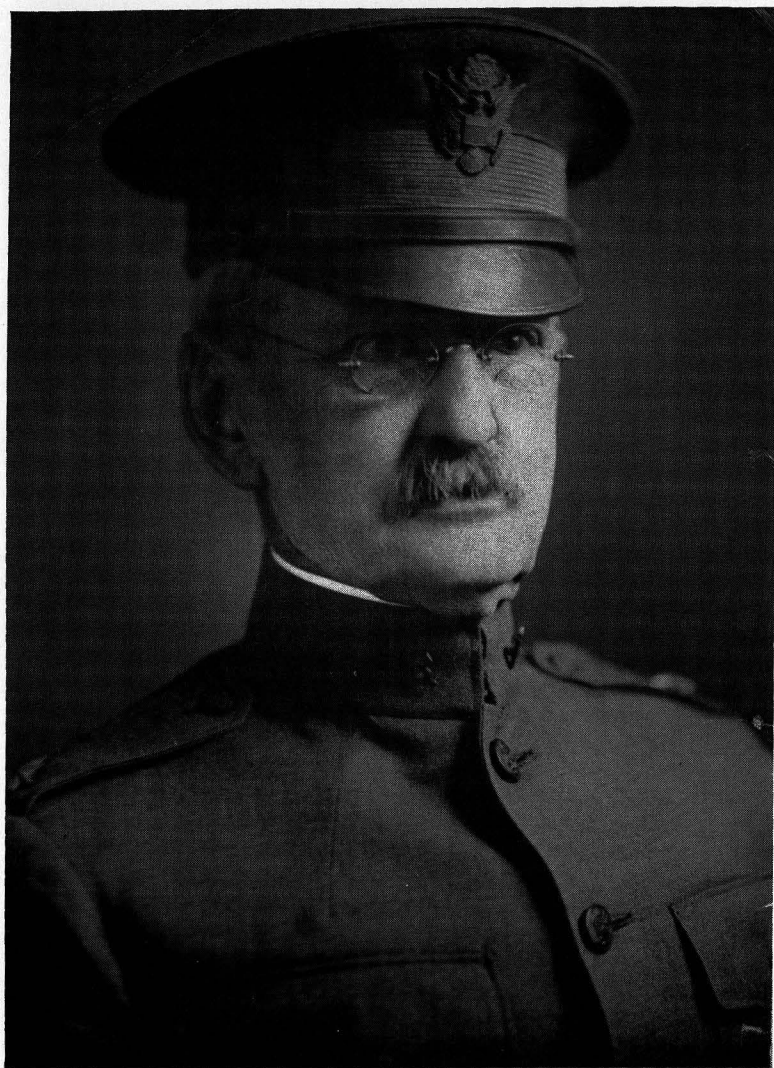
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Frederick E. Phelps

## FREDERICK E. PHELPS: A SOLDIER'S MEMOIRS

*Edited by* FRANK D. REEVE

### Introduction

According to "the old leather bound Bible," Frederick E. Phelps was born in Saint Mary's, Ohio, on October 8, 1847. His grandfather had been an eminent lawyer and supreme court judge in Connecticut. His father, Edward Marshall Phelps, secured his education by working his way through Kenyon College, Ohio. Language teacher, lawyer and farmer, Edward Phelps was never financially successful. Lucinda Phelps, Frederick's mother, graduated from the University at Norwalk, Ohio. Her son wrote that she was a person of great moral strength and intelligence, and guided the household so cleverly that the family was scarcely aware of her control.

Captain Phelps' childhood and youth were spent in Saint Mary's or on one of his father's farms nearby the village. He retained many pleasant memories of the days spent swimming, fishing, hunting, and ice skating in the ponds and woods so easily accessible. Hunting was his favorite sport and one in which he excelled. Because of his skill he was able to earn some of the money he needed to go to West Point and later, in New Mexico and Texas, to supplement the army diet which, at best, was limited.

In the summer of 1865, he left home for the first time. It was difficult, but he would not have missed the opportunity for anything. Fortune had provided him with a relative, Frank C. Le Blond who, as a member of Congress, secured an appointment to West Point for him, thus fulfilling a childhood ambition for the young man.

Phelps was a soldier through and through. His reminiscences of West Point reveal his respect for the dignity of that institution, even when telling his escapades. His democratic ideals are best indicated by his approval of the "hazing" of first year students. This activity, he said, tended to "level," because one was subjected to it without consideration

for family position. He participated in, and enjoyed, the pranks of yearlings and plebes. He remembers standing sentry duty at his first encampment. It was common practice to annoy the sentry, if possible. At this particular time, someone was throwing a pillow at him. He threatened to bayonet the pillow the next time it was thrown—and did. After ripping it open and scattering the feathers far and wide, he learned that it was his own pillow! As punishment for such unseemly conduct, he spent every free moment for the next month picking up feathers on the camp grounds. He was conscientious, too, studying hard and late, maintaining a soldierly attitude and being proud of his accomplishments. Through Secretary of War Edward M. Stanton, who had been his father's roommate at Kenyon College, he was reappointed to the Academy after having failed in mathematics during his first year. This failure was a great disappointment to him, but unavoidable, since the subject was difficult and he had not been well prepared. He finally graduated on June 15, 1870, thirty-seventh in a class of fifty-eight. This standing, he wrote, was in part the result of having the maximum number of demerits allowed fourth year men.

At Christmas of 1863, Phelps met Maria L. Patrick of Urbana, Illinois, when she was visiting her cousin in Saint Mary's. Though he didn't see her from that time until his graduation, they corresponded regularly and were married in the summer of 1870. As soon as he was located in New Mexico, he sent for his bride. She journeyed to her army-post home only to be buried there a few years later.

In the spring of 1888, when the 8th Cavalry made its famous march from Texas to Dakota Territory, Phelps left the Southwest. Then his health and that of Mary's (sister to Maria), his second wife, made it necessary for them to leave Fort Yates, Dakota Territory, for the East to consult doctors. As a result of the physical examination which found him unfit for active duty, he was retired April 20, 1891. Mrs. Phelps died in February, 1892.

Captain Phelps married Anna Louise Rawlings and settled down in Saint Mary's. Time lay heavily on his hands with nothing to do and with no special interest other than

the Army. After several business ventures, which were unsuccessful, he accepted a position as Instructor in Military Tactics and Science at the Agricultural and Mechanical College of North Carolina at West Raleigh. From this college his oldest son, Fred, graduated in 1904. Unable to obtain an appointment to West Point, young Fred enlisted and won his commission through the ranks, which pleased his father very much.

Because of Mrs. Phelps' health the family returned to Ohio for awhile. In 1907, after requesting duty with the Army, Captain Phelps was placed in charge of the recruiting office in Pittsburg, and two years later was appointed Quartermaster. He thus rounded out his last years in the service that he loved, the United States Army.

During his tour of duty in Pittsburg, he dictated his memoirs to his secretary incorporating in them material composed at an earlier time. Five copies were made, one for each member of his family. The copy here printed was secured from his daughter, Mrs. S. H. Eyler, El Paso, Texas. The early part of the manuscript, dealing with his boyhood days, is not printed, nor the part relating to his life after leaving Texas. The picture that he presents of army life on the Southwestern frontier covers those years when the conflict with the Indians was running its final course, a time now fading from the living memory but recorded for future generations in such writings as the memoirs of Captain Phelps.

Preparing a text for publication is a tedious task, but in this case much helpful assistance has been received from Miss Caroline Brentari, a graduate student in the Department of History, University of New Mexico.

ON the 19th of July, 1870, I was married to Maria L. Patrick in her old home at Urbana [Illinois], and we spent the summer at Urbana, Saint Mary's, and Celina, where my sister Mollie lived. In August I received notice from the War Department that I was promoted from cadet to Second Lieutenant, 8th Cavalry, to date from June 15, 1870, the day of my graduation, and that I was assigned

to Troop A. Before we graduated, we were allowed to send in a request for the branch of service we desired, and our choice of regiments in that branch. I had read a book about New Mexico, and knowing that the 8th Cavalry was stationed there, I asked for that regiment. I soon found that my troop was stationed at Fort Craig,<sup>1</sup> New Mexico, and my order directed me to report on or before October 1st at my station. I could not find out, or at least did not find out, whether there were any quarters there or not. So in September I left my wife behind me and went to Louisville, Kentucky, where I met my classmates, who were assigned to the same regiment, Wood, Godwin, Williams, Cox, Cobb, and Fountain, and also met there Kerr,<sup>2</sup> who was assigned to the 6th Cavalry, now a retired Brigadier General, and Hodgson,<sup>3</sup> who was assigned to the 7th, and was killed in the Custer massacre. Wood and Godwin had also been married and had their wives with them. We proceeded to Fort

1. Fort Craig was established in April, 1854, about ten miles north of Fray Cristobal, near the beginning of the dangerous and dry route of travel known as the Jornada del Muerto. It was on the right bank of the Rio Grande in townships 7 and 8 south, ranges 2 and 3 west. General John Pope recommended in 1870 that it be abandoned, but it was not until March 3, 1885, that the War Department relinquished control of the site by transferring it to the Department of the Interior.

2. Edward Edgar Wood was born in Pennsylvania. He served with the rank of sergeant in the Pennsylvania Cavalry from September 8, 1862, to July 22, 1864, and was mustered out with the rank of Lieutenant, August 7, 1865.

Edward Allison Godwin was born in Virginia. He served in the West Virginia Cavalry from February 13 to July 8, 1865.

Richard Algernon Williams was born in Pennsylvania.

Robert Edward Cox was born in Alabama. He resigned from the Army September 3, 1874.

Edmund Monroe Cobb was born in Massachusetts.

Samuel Warren Fountain was born in Virginia. He served in the Ohio Infantry during the Civil War was May 2 to September 3, 1864.

The above five soldiers were classmates of Phelps, graduating from the United States Military Academy and receiving commissions as 2nd Lieutenants, 8th Cavalry, June 15, 1870.

John Brown Kerr was born in Kentucky. He graduated from the United States Military Academy and was commissioned 2nd Lieutenant, 6th Cavalry, June 15, 1870. He received the medal of honor for action against Sioux Indians, January 1, 1891.

3. Benjamin Hubert Hodgson, friend and classmate of Captain Phelps, was born in Pennsylvania and graduated from the United States Military Academy. He was commissioned 2nd Lieutenant, 7 Cavalry, June 15, 1870, and was killed in the battle of the Little Big Horn, June 25, 1876.

During one phase of the battle, Major Reno ordered a retreat, making it necessary to ford the nearby river in order to reach the opposite hill. "Lieutenant Hodgson's mount was hit and sank. He grasped a trooper's stirrup and was pulled through but as he gained the farther shore, an Indian bullet killed him." Fairfax Downey, *Indian-Fighting Army*, p. 205 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941).

Leavenworth to report to the Department commander, Major General John Pope,<sup>4</sup> and in a few days we took the train for Kit Carson,<sup>5</sup> Colorado, from which place we were to go down into New Mexico by coach, but on arriving at Kit Carson, we found encamped there two hundred recruits under a Captain Keller<sup>6</sup> enroute for New Mexico. The next day Wood and his wife, Godwin and his wife, and Cobb took the coach for Fort Union,<sup>7</sup> New Mexico, and the rest of us were to follow the next day, but Captain Keller telephoned to Fort Leavenworth<sup>8</sup> and asked that we be assigned to duty with the recruits to march down. This suited us exactly. He started with his men the next morning before we had received a reply, but during the day the telegram came directing us to report to him for duty and assigning for our use a six-mule team and wagon. There was an officer on duty at Kit Carson, as Commissary, and from him we purchased a supply of canned stuff; about four o'clock in the afternoon we started out to over-take the command. We had no arms, except Williams, who had a little four-barreled revolver, carrying a twenty-two cartridge, and I had an army

4. John Pope was born in Kentucky, March 16, 1822. He graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1842 and was commissioned Brevet 2nd Lieutenant, Topographical Engineers. He distinguished himself in the War with Mexico and in the Civil War; he attained the rank of Major General, October 26, 1884. General Pope directed the work of Army engineers in drilling for water in the arid Southwest. He commanded the Department of the Missouri 1870 to 1884 and retired from active service two years later. He is sketched in *Appletons' Cyclopedia of American Biography* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888).

5. Kit Carson is located in Eastern Colorado. It was the railroad terminus for travelers to New Mexico when Phelps was there.

6. Jacob William Keller was born in Prussia. He volunteered for service in the Union Army during the Civil War and was mustered out with the rank of Captain, January 26, 1864. He re-enlisted as 2nd Lieutenant, July 28, 1866, and retired with the rank of Captain, December 15, 1870.

7. Fort Union was established in 1851, either in late July or early August, by Colonel E. V. Sumner, in a more suitable location than Santa Fe for headquarters and a supply depot. It was located on the Santa Fe trail by way of Raton-pass, about ten miles north and west of the junction of the Sapello and Cebolla creeks which unite to form the Mora river, and on the west side of Turkey mountain, Latitude 35° 54' and Longitude 105° 9'. The post and timber reserve covered 66,880 acres. In Phelps' term of service in the Southwest, the Fort was headquarters for the 8th Cavalry. For an early description see Secretary of War, *Report*, 1852, p. 75. 32 cong., 2 sess., sen. ex. doc. 1, pt. 2 (659); Ass't Surgeon J. Letterman, *Sanitary Report*, October, 1856, pp. 221f. 36 cong., 1 sess., sen. ex. doc. 52 (1035).

8. Fort Leavenworth was established in 1827 on the Arkansas river for the protection of travelers on the Santa Fe trail. It was abandoned after the Civil War. A brief description can be found in *The Southwest Historical Series*, ed., Ralph P. Bieber, II, 101 and III, 122 (The Arthur H. Clark Co.: Glendale Calif., 1932 and 1935).

revolver, which an officer there asked me to take down to my Post and turn it over to the commanding officer there, it having been taken away from a deserter. At that time the Comanches were on the war-path, but I don't suppose it occurred to any of us that we were taking big chances. Darkness soon came, but the driver knew the road; we had gotten out about ten miles when we saw the flash of a gun off to our right and three shots followed in succession. We did not know what to make of them, but in a few moments heard an undoubtedly Irish voice yelling for us to stop. We accordingly halted and called to him; in a few moments one of the recruits, a wild Irishman named McCarthy, joined us, scared nearly out of his senses. Some way he had wandered away from the command and was lost and seemed exceedingly glad to join us. We arrived at the encampment about nine o'clock and reported to Captain Keller. Not one of us had a blanket or buffalo robe, and we had no tents, but we were young, vigorous, full of life, and managed to get through the night. There was a contract doctor with the command; and he had in some way lost his blankets and invited me to sleep with him in the ambulance. We shivered all night long in the keen October air, and the next morning, to our disgust, found four woolen blankets under the seat, of which we knew nothing. The recruits marched over the old overland trail,<sup>9</sup> making from twelve to twenty miles per day, according to the supply of water. Captain Keller appointed Cox as Adjutant and gave him a pony to ride, while the rest of us, except one, who marched with the troops, rode in the wagon. Captain Keller had an ambulance of his own for himself and family, for he brought his wife and two children with him. He was a plain, blunt soldier, and a good one, but completely under his wife's thumb. She never addressed him by name, but always spoke to and of him as "Commanding Officer," and it used to amuse us immensely to hear her call out to him, "Commanding Officer, supper is ready." He also had with him a Second Lieutenant of Infantry, named Cottell.<sup>10</sup> We had formed our own

9. They were following a route southward from the Smoky Hill route to Denver to connect with the old Santa Fe trail as Fort Lyon.

10. Hampden Samuel Cottell was born in Maine. He enlisted in the 15th Illinois



mess and invited him to join it. We found a soldier who was willing to cook what little we had to cook, and we got along all right. When we arrived at Fort Lyon,<sup>11</sup> Colorado, we at once bought blankets and soldier over-coats, and drew two wall tents for our use. While at this Post I was going up one night from out camp to call upon some officers and, in attempting to jump an irrigation ditch, severely sprained my right ankle which completely disabled me for three or four weeks. I had brought a shot gun with me; there was plenty of game, prairie chickens, ducks, and snipe, but I could not walk and none of the other officers cared for hunting, so we lived on ham, potatoes, coffee and soggy bread, for our cook could not make good light bread. However, this bothered us but very little, and we gladly marched on and in due time arrived at Fort Union, New Mexico. Here Captain Keller turned back and Lieutenant Cottell was assigned to the command of about one hundred of the recruits, who were to go on down to southern New Mexico to the various posts. Godwin and his wife here joined us. Our party then consisted of Godwin and his wife, Williams, Cox, and myself; Cobb, Wood, and Fountain had joined their troops at Fort Union. We had splendid weather. Cottell was easy to get along with and we had a pleasant march to Fort Craig. Here I joined my troop. I found that my Captain was A. B. Wells.<sup>12</sup> My First Lieutenant was named Hunter,<sup>13</sup> but he

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Infantry, May 24, 1861, and was mustered out with the rank of Captain, June 3, 1864. He re-enlisted for the third time, June 18, 1867, with the rank of 2nd Lieutenant. He was assigned to the 15th Infantry, August 3, 1870, and retired from active service, February 29, 1876.

11. William Bent built New Fort Bent in 1854 and sold it to the Federal government in 1859. It was renamed Fort Wise in honor of Governor Henry Wise of Virginia. After the secession of Virginia, the Fort was renamed Lyon in honor of General Nathaniel Lyon of Civil War fame. Undermined by floods from the Arkansas river, it was moved to a new site about six miles northeast of Las Animas. The Reservation embraced 5,874 acres. It was turned over to the Department of the Interior December 2, 1889.

Biographical sketches of General Lyon are in *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* and the *Dictionary of American Biography* (hereafter referred to as DAB).

12. Almond Brown Wells was born in New York. He joined the Nevada Cavalry with the rank of 1st Lieutenant, July 13, 1863. Mustered out after the War, he re-enlisted as 2nd Lieutenant in the 8th Cavalry and attained the rank of Colonel, 1st Cavalry, February 2, 1901.

13. Pendleton Hunter was born in Michigan. He was commissioned 2nd Lieutenant, 8th Cavalry, October 12, 1867, and promoted to 1st Lieutenant, May 1, 1870. He was mustered out, January 1, 1871.

was absent on a scout. Captain Wells informed me that he was to go away at once on a board to purchase horses, and that I would have command of the troop until one of them returned. I was assigned for quarters to one-half of an adobe building consisting of three rooms with mud roof and mud floor and not a stick of furniture. I had never been in command of a company, of course, but was lucky in having an excellent first sergeant. I frankly told him that I knew little or nothing about company papers and that he must guide me in these matters; under his instructions, I soon became proficient in making out company papers. Lieutenant Hunter had part of the troop with him, but there were about eighty men held there; two days after my arrival, the first sergeant informed me that there had been no drill for sometime and the men were getting rusty in mounted drill. I immediately informed him that we would have mounted drill the next morning at ten o'clock. Cavalry officers in those days had to purchase their own horses, but as I had not as yet had an opportunity to do so, I told the sergeant to send one of the troop horses up to my quarters, which I would use until I could find one that would suit me. The next morning I came out of my quarters in undress uniform and found an orderly trumpeter holding his horse and mine. I noted that the horse was what is called "wall-eyed," that is, nearly the whole of the eyeball was white, and I knew from my experience at West Point that a white-eyed horse generally had a bad temper; so I carefully examined the cinch, the bridle, and all the equipment. Stepping up along side of the horse to mount I noticed that he cast one eye back toward me, and I knew at once that if I mounted in the usual manner by placing the left foot in the stirrup he would try to throw me off before I could get fairly seated in the saddle; but my West Point drill came to my aid and, without touching the stirrup, I made one bound and landed squarely in the saddle. Before he could recover from his astonishment I had both feet in the stirrups and was ready for him. He immediately commenced to buck, that is, he would arch his back like a bow, spring up into the air two or three feet and come down with all four of his feet together,

stiff legged, which, if the rider is not prepared, generally throws him off the horse, but after bucking around for a few minutes, he found that he could not unseat me and immediately bolted. Fort Craig was then one of the most desolate posts on the frontier. It was situated on the edge of a plain, twelve or fifteen miles wide, and almost perfectly level, covered with gravel and scarcely a bush. The Post consisted, like all frontier Posts at that time, of a number of buildings scattered around a square, and these buildings were connected by an adobe wall perhaps three feet high, not as a defense, but to keep stray cattle out of the parade ground. The first sergeant had marched the troop out on the plain and it was waiting for me, perhaps a mile away. I noticed a grin on the face of the trumpeter, a little devil named Young, but one of the best soldiers in the troop, and I soon found that the horse was not headed for the gate, but straight for this adobe wall, and I suppose that Young expected to see me thrown off, but as we approached the wall, I "gathered" my horse, and he took the wall with a flying leap, followed closely by Young and his horse. We went skimming across the plain toward the troop. As I approached the troop I saw a broad smile on the face of every man. When within about one hundred feet I drew sharply on the reins, the heavy bit stopping the horse almost instantly; sliding on all four feet, he came to a dead stop just about the regulation distance in front of the troop. The first sergeant saluted and reported the troop "all present," so drawing saber I commenced drilling them. I saw at once that some kind of a job had been put up on me and if ever a troop got a good grinding drill, A Troop did that day.

It was a very hot day and for two hours I never gave them a moment's rest; by the time the drill was over, they were heartily sick of it and anxious to get back. Marching them to within one hundred yards of the Post, I directed the first sergeant to march them to the stable and dismiss them; motioning to the trumpeter to follow me, I put my horse straight at that same adobe wall, cantered across the parade ground to my quarters and dismounted. The next morning, when the first sergeant brought me the morning report, I

asked him who rode that horse, for in a cavalry troop each man has a horse assigned to him, and no one else rides him. He told me that it was an extra horse and not assigned to anyone. I asked him why he selected that particular horse for me; looking a little embarrassed, he informed me that the troop had insisted that he should assign that horse to me to see if I could ride. New officers joining were generally called "Johnny come lately" by the men, of course, in private; officially they were addressed as "Lieutenant." He was considerably embarrassed and finally told me that there was only one man in the troop who could ride that horse with any comfort, but that he guessed that the men had discovered that "the Lieutenant could ride as well as any of them," and volunteered the information that I had "made good," as he called it.

I told him that I would keep the horse until I purchased one of my own, and I rode him a good share of the time for the next six or seven years, in fact, as long as I was with the troop. I purchased a horse of my own shortly, but for drill and scouting I used this troop horse and I never rode a better one. I got along very well with the troop and in about a month Lieutenant Hunter returned from his scout. I found him a pleasant, jovial, red-headed little man who bore a fine reputation as a scout and Indian fighter. Unfortunately for him, he was a very hard drinker and left the troop to my care; we got along very nicely, but he did not last long. The Army had been reduced from forty-five regiments of infantry to twenty-five; on the first day of January, 1871, all vacancies in the cavalry were filled by transfer from the unassigned list, and an order was issued to get rid of worthless officers. The commanding officer of each regiment had been directed to send in the names of those officers who ought to go out; Hunter was one of them, and on that day he was mustered out of the Army with one year's pay. I never saw him again but once. Four years afterward, I was at Las Animas<sup>14</sup> and entered a barroom of a hotel to purchase a cigar; there, behind the bar, as a barkeeper, stood my old

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14. Las Animas is located in southwestern Colorado on the south side of the Arkansas river.

First Lieutenant. I spoke to him, but he looked me straight in the eye and told me that I was mistaken, that his name was not Hunter, and that he had never seen me before. I knew, of course, that it was him, and that he was evidently "down at the heel," but still had pride enough not to wish to be recognized, so I said nothing, and have never seen or heard of him since.

Captain Wells was at that time a comparatively young man, not yet thirty, who had served in the Nevada Volunteer Cavalry during the war, had been appointed First Lieutenant in the 8th Cavalry when the regiment was organized in 1866, and had just been promoted to Captain when I joined. He was not married at that time, but inside of a year married a lady at Santa Fe, the daughter of a Surveyor General<sup>15</sup> of the territory of New Mexico, a sweet motherly woman to whom I was always much attached, and whom I have not seen since 1888. He was a man of good education, but had a peculiarity that made it hard to serve with him at times, and that was his exceeding jealousy of the officers of his troop. He expected us to obey his orders absolutely and, of course, that was right; but the slightest variation or exceeding of an order, the doing of anything however slight without first consulting him, made him savage in a moment, and this peculiarity made him a hard man to get along with. He was a magnificent drill master, very proud of his troop, but knew little how to manage money matters and the troop fund was always indebted to him for, to do him justice, he never hesitated to advance his own money to purchase anything in the shape of provisions, vegetables, etc., if needed in addition to the ration. The ration, in those days, was not what it is now. Fresh beef was furnished seven days out of ten, but was poor and tough. Vegetables were absolutely unknown in New Mexico at that time; from 1870 to 1874, I do not remember ever seeing an Irish potato, and sweet potatoes only once. Besides the beef, the men had bacon three days out of ten, salt fish, bread baked daily, which was

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15. Probably the daughter of T. Rush Spencer, Surveyor General of New Mexico in 1870 and very likely in 1871. James K. Proudfit took the office in early October, 1872. I have no direct reference for the year 1871.

good, and now and then a little canned stuff, and that was all. It was hard living, and yet we were in no way to blame for the nearest railroad was nearly five hundred miles away at Kit Carson. The country around was a desert and it was impossible apparently to raise anything, at least we never succeeded in doing so. In November, I was ordered back to Fort Union in command of a number of teamsters, with empty wagons, and an escort of four or five men. I immediately wrote to my wife to join me there by Christmas. On arrival at Albuquerque I met Fountain, who had come down from Fort Wingate<sup>16</sup> with another train from there, and we went on to Fort Union together. New Mexico is elevated so high that the winters are very severe and from Albuquerque, for nearly a week, we plodded through snow perhaps a foot deep. I had an ambulance that the Quartermaster of Fort Craig had furnished me to bring my wife down, and Fountain, of course, rode with me. We arrived at Fort Union the day before Christmas, but I found no wife, only a letter stating that she could not start until the end of the month, when she came by coach, I meeting her some fifty miles north of the Post. She had come from Kit Carson, the only passenger in the coach, and had been alone with the conductor and driver for two days and two nights, but the conductor had been exceedingly kind and courteous to her and she got along very well. I immediately started back to my own post and arrived there about the first of March, but had not been there more than ten days when I was ordered to take command of an escort to take convicts up to Fort Union; of course, I had to leave my wife at Fort Craig alone, and when

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16. There were two Fort Wingates in New Mexico. Old Fort Wingate was located southwest of Mt. Taylor on the Gallo, a short stream flowing northward into the Rio San José. The site was selected by Colonel Canby in the summer of 1862 and the Fort was probably established by Lieut.-Colonel J. Francisco Chaves, late in that year, in preparation for Colonel Carson's campaign against the Navahos the following year.

New Fort Wingate was located at Ojo del Oso, or Bear springs, on the north end of the Zúñi mountains, near the headwaters of the Rio Puerco of the West, in Latitude 35° 29', Longitude 108° 32'. (Old Fort Lyon was located there in 1860-1861). A reservation of 100 square miles was set aside by Executive Order February 13, 1870, and establishment of the post was authorized that same year.

For a description of New Fort Wingate in 1880, see Joe Wasson in *NEW MEXICO HISTORICAL REVIEW*, V, 279 (July 1930). Also Secretary of War, *Report*, p. 526. 53 cong., 2 sess., vol. 1 (Washington, 1893).

I had almost arrived at Fort Union, I received orders to return to Santa Fe with my prisoners and to proceed to Fort Wingate with them, one hundred miles west of Santa Fe. When I got back back to my Post on the third day of July, I found my troop had been transferred to Fort Bayard,<sup>17</sup> New Mexico, and she had gone with the Captain and Mrs. Wells. I followed as soon as possible, and one boiling hot day in July rode into old Fort Bayard, which was to be my station for the next five years. When Lieutenant Hunter was mustered out, his place was taken by William Stephenson.<sup>18</sup> He was a thin, spare man over six feet in height, had been in the army a number of years as a soldier, and was promoted from the ranks. He was one of the finest rifle shots I ever saw, and possessed an almost uncanny success in fishing. They used to say that he could catch more fish in a stream where no one else could ever get a bite than we could use, and I never saw as successful an angler.

When I arrived at Fort Bayard, it was certainly a desolate looking place. No building in the post was more than one story, most of them built of adobe and scattered in an irregular square, around a square, the officers then being on the west side. Officers are given quarters according to rank, and I soon found that I was the junior officer at the Post; if it had not been for Stephenson, who gave me his quarters, I would have had to go into a tent. To be sure the quarters did not amount to much, but he cheerfully gave me what he had and went into a tent himself, and for this courtesy we never forgot him. I had only two rooms, but we put up two tents in the rear for a dining room and a kitchen, and, having youth and health with us, we were very happy. A description of the Post I afterwards wrote in an article which will be found in the next chapter.

17. Fort Bayard, named in honor of Captain George D. Bayard who died in service during the Civil War, was established, August 21, 1866, to protect miners in the Pinos Altos district against Apache Indians. It was located about nine miles northeast of Silver City, southwestern New Mexico, Latitude 32° 48' and Longitude 108° 9'. The reservation was established by Executive Order, April 19, 1869, and embraced an area of 8,840 acres. The last garrison was withdrawn, January 2, 1900, and the plant has been used as a Government hospital since then.

18. William Stephenson was born in England. He enlisted as a private in the Union Army during the Civil War. He attained the rank of 1st Lieutenant, December 2, 1868, and retired from active service, April 23, 1879.

From 1871 to 1876 I was stationed at Fort Bayard, a lonely, isolated post in the extreme southwest corner of New Mexico, one hundred miles west of La Mesilla,<sup>19</sup> on the Rio Grande. Nestled at the upper end of a beautiful valley, it was on the north protected from the winter blasts by the towering peaks of the Sierra Diablo, and on the east by the broken crags of Santa Rita, in which lie the famous Spanish copper mines.<sup>20</sup> On the south, a long, narrow valley terminates in a winding cañon leading out into the open plain, a cañon dangerous at all times (for the trail of the Apaches from the Rio Negro<sup>21</sup> to the Gila led through it), and on the west it is bounded by rolling hills covered with the beautiful crow foot grama grass.<sup>22</sup>

The locality was all that could be desired; the Post everything undesirable. Huts of logs and round stones, with flat dirt roofs that in summer leaked and brought down rivulets of liquid mud: in winter the hiding place of the tarantula and the centipede, with ceilings of "condemned" canvas; windows of four and six panes, swinging, door-like, on hinges (the walls were not high enough to allow them to slide upward): low, dark and uncomfortable. Six hundred miles from the railroad at Kit Carson, Colorado, with nothing to eat but the government rations—beef, bacon, coffee, sugar, rice, pepper, salt, and vinegar,—together with a few cans of vegetables divided pro rata, old Fort Bayard was the "final

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19. The Doña Ana Bend colony was established in the Mesilla valley by José María Costales in 1843. After the United States annexed New Mexico in 1848, settlers at Doña Ana who preferred to retain their Mexican citizenship moved across the Rio Grande and founded the town of Mesilla. P. M. Baldwin, "A Short History of the Mesilla Valley," *NEW MEXICO HISTORICAL REVIEW*, XIII, 314-324 (July, 1938). For a description of the town in 1880, see Joe Wasson, *op. cit.*

20. The famous Santa Rita copper mine is located in the southern part of the Pinos Altos mountain, southwestern New Mexico. It was worked at least as early as 1804 by the Spanish. For an early description see J. R. Bartlett, *Personal Narrative* . . . I, 178f, 227f (New York, 1854); and S. W. Cozzens, *The Marvellous Country*, p. 51 (Boston, 1891). Its history is told in John M. Sully, "The Story of the Santa Rita Copper Mine," *Old Santa Fe*, III, 133-149 (1916).

21. Phelps must mean the Rio Miembres, or perhaps the Rio Grande. The Rio Negro is too far west to fit this description.

22. Crow foot grama grass is a perennial which affords good pasturage for stock in the arid Southwest. For a discussion of the various grama grasses see Leslie N. Goodding, *Notes on Native and Exotic Plants in Region 8*, p. 17 (Albuquerque, New Mexico: United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, Region 8, 1938).



jumping off place" sure enough, I thought, as I first rode into it in the summer of 1871.

My house consisted of one room and a kitchen, the front room twelve feet by ten. One wall was built of stones picked up on the adjacent hillside, one was of adobe (sun dried brick), one of pine logs, set on end, and the fourth of slabs from a sawmill. The floor was of rough boards, a foot wide; the ceiling of canvas, the roof of mud, the front door of two boards on wooden hinges with a wooden latch, one window, with four panes of glass, the sash immovable—this was the parlor.

Back of this, and connecting with it by a doorway without a door, was a smaller room with no window and a floor of hard, smooth mud. To tell the truth, the whole thing was originally built for a stable. Poor as these rooms were, they were a Godsend to me! Quarters in a garrison are assigned according to rank, and being the junior officer at the Post, I would have had to go into a tent had not a bachelor officer, with that gallantry so characteristic of the military profession, insisted upon my taking these two rooms, while he went into canvas. But putting up two tents, one for a dining-room and one for a kitchen, we made ourselves quite cosy and comfortable.

When Troop A of the 8th Cavalry was ordered to Bayard from Fort Craig in the spring of 1871<sup>23</sup> for field service, the Captain brought with him his newly-won bride, a woman of women, whose sweet face and gracious manner had endeared her to the regiment, whose presence she has graced for all these years; and the young, slender, blond-whiskered Second Lieutenant brought with him the bride of his youth, who had given up home and friends in the far-distant Ohio and bravely followed her husband to that lonely station which she was destined never to leave, for from that desolate place her pure soul took its flight to the God who gave it.

The First Lieutenant was a veteran, rising from the ranks of the old 13th Infantry, and transferred to the 8th

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23. The settlers in southwestern New Mexico were much disturbed over Indian affairs at this time. For a brief discussion see the *NEW MEXICO HISTORICAL REVIEW*, XIII, 289ff (July, 1938).

Cavalry in the general shake up of January, 1871. He stood six feet two in his stockings, as slender as a telegraph pole, with long blonde moustache and thin gray locks of hair, always carefully brushed to cover that bald spot that would show; he was a deadly shot with a rifle, and had an almost uncanny skill in coaxing fish to bite; slow of speech, and more afraid of ladies than anything under the sun, he walked with that peculiar sway that betrays the man who has lived in the saddle, for though he had long been in the infantry he had served all his military life on the frontier, and had always owned his saddle horse. In the Post an omnivorous reader and smoker, in the field a pushing, energetic scout and fighter, such was the commander under whom I was to make my first scout, "old Pard" Stephenson.

In the summer of 1872, General Thomas C. Devin,<sup>24</sup> Lieutenant Colonel 8th Cavalry, was in command of the Post. He was a grizzled, gray and iron-willed old man, one of Sheridan's Hard Hitters. In July he sent for Stephenson, who was in command of the troop, the Captain being at Santa Fe as a member of a big general court martial, and gave him his orders for a scout to beat up the country to the west and southwest, to see if there were any Apaches off their reservation,<sup>25</sup> and, if we found any, to "clean 'em out" if we could.

We were to carry fifteen day's rations, and for that purpose five or six pack mules were furnished us, or rather five or six mules from the Post Quartermaster's herd, for if one of them had ever been "packed" he had forgotten all about the pleasure of it, and retained all his native tricks and manners. However, we got off at four P. M., and so did most of the packs by four-thirty, but by means of much pulling, tying

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24. Thomas Casimer Devin was born in New York. He began service in the Union Army with the rank of Captain, New York Cavalry, July 19, 1861, and was mustered out January 15, 1866, with the rank of Major General. He re-enlisted that same year in the regular Army as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Cavalry. He attained the rank of Colonel and died April 4, 1878. He is listed in *Appletons' Cyclopedia of American Biography* and *Herringshaw's Encyclopedia of American Biography*.

25. The Apache reservation at this time was located at Cañada Alamosa, northwest of present day Hot Springs, New Mexico. The people in southwestern New Mexico accused the Indians of depredating and retreating to the security of the reservation. The story is told in the *NEW MEXICO HISTORICAL REVIEW*, XIII, 261ff (July, 1938).

and some cussing, we made them stick on somehow for the first twelve miles when we went into camp, or rather bivouac, for we carried no tents.

That night, after we had eaten our frugal supper of cold bacon and bread, and had swallowed a quart of black coffee "strong enough to float an egg," we lay on our blankets, smoking our fragrant pipes, and Stephenson was telling me his plans, when suddenly there was a crash in a neighboring thicket; a snort of fear, a trampling of hoofs, and in a second every man was on his feet, for we all knew what was up—a stampede of our horses. Something in the bushes, maybe a frightened deer or skulking coyote, had startled one of the horses picketed to a bush; with one strong pull up came the bush by the roots, and tearing through the herd, scattered here and there where they could pick grass all night, the bush swinging at the end of his lariat like a flail, he soon stampeded the whole crowd. Lariats broke, bushes came up root and branch, and in a second away they went (except four or five, which, having had reputations for just such work, had been securely tied to trees, and whose lariats tied about their necks, being new and stout, held them fast), rushing through the brush like a hurricane, leaving us paralyzed with disgust, and worse still, afoot.

There was nothing to be done until daylight; no man could follow in that rough country in such a dark night, and we knew they would go straight back to Bayard. At the first peep of day I was after them with all the men we could mount, and picked them up along the trail, for as they became separated in the darkness some had stopped and finally gone to grazing, but most of them we found as we expected, in their own corral at Bayard. Sneaking in the back way we drove them out quietly, hoping no one would see us, but as we turned the corner of the corral there was "old Tommy." What under the sun ever did escape those piercing blue eyes? With ears tingling with shame under the cruel, rasping sneer he flung as I rode past him. "Well young man, you have made a FINE start for a cavalryman," I hurried out of the Post and away to the awaiting troop.

Sarcastic, biting as was his tongue, savage as was his

manner, we loved the old campaigner and feared him as, I opine, we did not fear the Almighty, yet gloried in him; when the eyes that rested kindly and proudly on him who did his duty and glared like a tiger at the dead beat and shyster had closed in the last long sleep, his regiment mourned as they have never mourned since, and the memory of "old Tommy" will always abide with the "8th Horse."

Nobody was to blame for our stampede, but all the same "Pard" and I had both learned a lesson we never forgot; every night after that one of us personally inspected the horses and saw that the side lines were on. The ordinary cavalryman hates to put them on his horse, but after he is left afoot once he changes his mind, and neither of us ever again had a stampede.

As soon as we could get a bite to eat we were off and marched to and down Bear Creek<sup>26</sup> to Walnut springs, and the next day to the muddy Gila where the crumbling chimneys marked the site of old Fort West.<sup>27</sup> From here we marched across to the Frisco [San Francisco]<sup>28</sup> river, and so on down through the Stein Peaks Range,<sup>29</sup> a desolate region, where we struck the first "sign." This was a single pony track, several days old, for the edges of the depression made by the hoof were crumbling, and in places were almost filled with sand. To the uninitiated there was nothing to show that it was not some wandering miner's or hunter's pony that had made that faint trail, but to the eager eyes of Jim Bullard,<sup>30</sup> our civilian, but not civil guide (he was

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26. Bear Creek is a tributary of the Gila near its headwaters and flows in a northwesterly direction.

27. Fort Floyd, probably named in honor of the Secretary of War, was established by Colonel Bonneville as headquarters and a supply depot for his campaign against the Apaches in 1857. It was located on the east side of the Gila near the junction of that stream with Bear Creek. Part of the troops located on the west side of the Gila in "Camp Union."

This same location was probably the site of Fort West, established in January, 1863, when General Carleton ordered another foray against the Apache.

For an account of the Bonneville campaign see Frank D. Reeve, ed., "Puritan and Apache: a Diary," *NEW MEXICO HISTORICAL REVIEW*, XXIII, No. 4 (October, 1948) and XXIV, No. 1, (January, 1949).

28. The San Francisco river rises in the extreme west-central New Mexico and flows southwestward into the Gila river.

29. The Stein Peak range is in southwestern New Mexico close to the Arizona boundary.

30. John and James Bullard came from Missouri in 1866 to mine and farm in

about as morose, insolent and foul-mouthed a brute as I ever saw), and to Sergeant Foster, our oldest soldier, they told a different tale. Foster was a slender, wiry man, an excellent shot, an experienced plainsman, and worth two Bullards.

There was no mark of a horseshoe, and in that country no white man used an unshod horse, so it was an Indian pony. No danger of a Mexican roaming alone in the Apache region. It had rained heavily all over this country a week before. We had now been out ten days, and if these tracks had been made before that time they would have been obliterated. Following them a few miles, the guide suddenly sprang off his horse and picked up what I, in my greenness, supposed was an old chew of tobacco; and I was right in one sense, it was Apache tobacco, so to speak, a mouthful of roasted mescal root.<sup>31</sup> This is a favorite article of diet among the Mescalero Apaches, and when this gentlemanly "ward of the nation" threw away his chew after he had exhausted its sweetness, he little thought that eager American eyes would see it and thus know that a thieving reservation Indian had been there, where he had no business to be, a hundred miles away from his reservation.

All that day we patiently followed that single track, our guide tracing the pony's trail over hill and plain, through sand and rocks, like a bloodhound; his rough, evil face set and dark with revengeful thoughts, for his brother had fallen the year before by the hand of an Apache in Kelly's<sup>32</sup> fight that avenged the brutal murder of Mrs. Keerl, whose—"but that is another story," as Kipling would say.

Late that night we halted at a hole half filled with dirty

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the Pinos Altos mountain. They were conspicuous in the history of that section. John was killed in pursuit of Apaches, February 28, 1871. Bullard Peak, about 20 miles north of Clifton, Arizona, was named in his honor. Conrad Naegle, *The History of Silver City, New Mexico, 1870-1886*, p. 71. Ms. University of New Mexico, 1943 (Master of Arts thesis in History).

31. Mescal root is from the Huachuca century plant, an important item in the diet of the Apaches. The Mescalero Apaches are supposed to be named after this food. For a discussion of Apache foods see Edward F. Castetter and M. E. Opler, *Ethnobiological Studies in the American Southwest*, III, 35ff, 52 (Biological Series, University of New Mexico, 1936. IV, no. 5).

32. Major William Kelly led a cavalry detachment from Fort Bayard on the same campaign against Apaches that resulted in the death of John Bullard, but did not participate in the engagement when Bullard lost his life. Naegle, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

water, but welcome, for we had not had a drop for twenty-four hours, and we were half way across the San Simon valley.<sup>33</sup> Twenty miles to the west of us towered the crags of Mount Graham,<sup>34</sup> then the favorite haunt of the Apaches, and the trail headed straight for it.

The early dawn found us again on the move, plodding over the heavy sand while the pitiless sun blazed over our heads. The heat reflected a hundred fold from the white sand drifts, with the cloudless sky bending over us, glowing like a sheet of brass. About noon we entered the foot-hills, passed through them, and about 3 P. M. halted at the foot of a steep hill over which the trail led, crowned with prickly pear and stunted bushes. Bullard, Foster, and three or four men proceeded cautiously to the top, and there was the object of our search—an Apache village of eighteen wickiyups, or huts. This was on a steep, rocky hill, with a flat top; at the foot, in the narrow cañon separating the two hills, flowed a bright, sparkling stream, and scattered along this were a number of Indian women busy making their *tiswin*, or Indian whiskey, the fermented juice of the mescal plant.

Quickly, in obedience to a sign, Stephenson went to the top, crept behind a clump of bushes, and swept the ground with his field glasses. No chance for a surprise here. The only way was to go over the hill, down into the valley, and then up the opposite side in the face of the Indians, and the rascals had made a rude fortification of rocks by piling them along the crest behind which they could lie in perfect security while the advancing force must come up over open ground. Deliberately rising to his feet, his tall form looming like a flagstaff against the sky, he signalled us to come on.

The instant he was seen a pandemonium of yells and shrill shrieks went up, and every squaw rushed up the hill, sending down the loose gravel and shale in a rattling shower. Quietly we climbed the hill, down the other side, halted at the little stream and quickly arranged the plan of attack.

*(To be continued)*

33. San Simon valley lies between the Peloncillo range (including the Stein Peak range) and the Chiricahua in southeastern Arizona.

34. Mount Graham is a prominent landmark in the Pinaleno range, southeastern Arizona; altitude 10,713 feet.