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## ACROSS THE PLAINS IN 1866

By THOMAS A. MUZZALL\*

The Command consisting of the 3rd U. S. Cavalry, commanded by Col. M. S. Howe, U. S. Army and the 57th U. S. Colored Infantry, commanded by Col. Paul Harwood, U. S. V., with a large train of waggons, all under the command of Col. M. S. Howe started from Fort Smith, Ark. enroute to Fort Union, N. M. on the 8th of June, 1866.

*June 8*—Crossed the Poteau River at 5 P.M. and camped on its banks to allow time for our train to cross it. Rained during the night.

*June 9*—Left camp about 10 A.M. and marched about 10 miles. This country is a beautiful one, the soil is splendid black loam, timber is plenteous and of good kind, water good and a plenty. The weather is very hot, so much so that the men fell out in great numbers, quite exhausted. One poor fellow died on my hands from sunstroke. Today we passed through Scullyville. This was a flourishing town before the War, but it is now in ruins. The land about us is owned by the Cherokee tribes, and is called on the maps "Indian Territory." They farm little and raise a great number of cattle, but they are a lazy, shiftless set. We have no road, our route lies between 34 and 36 degrees of Latitude.

*June 10*—Strike tents at 8 A.M. and march through a pretty country, the prairies look like a flower garden. I gathered some flowers and pressed them in a book. We marched about 18 miles and encamped in a small body of timber a half mile off the trail. About 200 men fell out today, the weather is so sultry.

*June 11*—Strike tents at 5 A.M. and march about 11 miles through a fine country, in fact the finest I ever saw. No men fell out today as it is cooler on account of a cool wind. We

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\* Copied March 6, 1956 by his Granddaughter, Gene Marquette Minium. "I copied it faithfully, his handwriting is as perfect as engraving, and altho' small, is a pleasure to read." Gene M. Minium, Springfield, Oregon.

[See biographical sketch of the diarist in *Notes and Documents*. Ed.]

crossed the San Bois River today and passed the Laureate range of mountains.

*June 12*—Strike tents at 7 A.M. and march about 14 miles, it has rained all day at intervals. The scenery is of the same character as of yesterday. The men are getting along fine. We cross the Santa Rita River.

*June 13*—Strike tents at 6 A.M. and march about 15 miles. We had to take to the mountain ridges today as the bottom lands are so wet from heavy rains that we cannot travel on them. The men have to work hard pulling the waggons through the mud for the poor mules pulled so hard that they could pull no more without rest.

*June 14*—Lay in camp today to rest the mules, it rained heavily all day. A courier went back so I sent a letter to my wife.

*June 15*—Strike tents at 1:30 P.M. and move a mile or two to a higher ridge, the men pulling the waggons through the mud for the mules can get no foothold, the ground is so soft. The men are giving out with this heavy labour of pulling loaded waggons through the mud. Two cases of hernia reported to me.

*June 16*—Start at 5 A.M. and move a mile or two and stop on a hill. The ground is too soft even for our saddle horses. I expect we will be compelled to wait a few days to give both men and beasts a little rest, and let the mud settle.

*June 17*—Remain in camp today as we are mud bound. I caught two tarantulas and a centipede and put them in alcohol to preserve them.

*June 18*—Still in camp mud bound. I had one man die today of pneumonia. Gaines Creek is ahead three miles but impassible. We must wait for it to go down.

*June 19*—Still in camp. Our waggons all caught up with us today, we have a great time drying out our baggage.

*June 20*—Strike tents and march about 12 miles, crossing Gaines Creek. The men had to wade, the current is very

swift. We are now only about 85 miles out of Fort Smith and are 12 days out. Now in higher country I think we will get along better. Fresh fish in abundance.

*June 21*—Strike tents at 5 A.M. March about 14 miles, crossed several creeks.

*June 22*—Strike tents at 6 A.M. March about 20 miles. Very fine country.

*June 23*—March at 8 A.M. for about 18 miles, cross Boggy River.

*June 24*—Lay in camp to allow the supply train to get up to us as it is far behind and has had a hard time getting along. Weather fine and scenery.

*June 25*—Marched at 5 A.M. Passed Talbert's Seminary, now in ruins the result of the War. Crossed Blue River, passed Brogan's Rancho. We marched 20 miles today.

*June 26*—Start at 5 A.M. and march 15 miles, we are getting near the Canadian River. It rained heavily today.

*June 27*—Start at 5 A.M. and march 17 miles, crossing headwaters of the Topofky River. We are traveling directly towards the Canadian River.

*June 28*—Remain in camp today to repair waggons and to get an Indian guide from a Caddo village a few miles from here. The water here is badly tainted with alkali but the weather is fine.

*June 29*—Still in camp. Weather fine and cool. I caught some tarantulas, scorpions and two horn'ed toads.

*June 30*—Still in camp. The Washita River is not fordable on account of late rains. We were mustered for pay today. Got a Comanche Indian for guide. We have a plenty of Indians in camp, begging.

*July 1*—Still in camp. Washita too high for fording. Pass the day watching Indians.

*July 2*—Start at 5 A.M. and march about 35 miles, 20 miles of it without water. The weather is very hot today. We will

have to go around the head of the Washita and then on the great divide between it and the Canadian River.

*July 3*—Start at 5 A.M. March about 16 miles. The country is poor and water bad.

*July 4*—Start at 5 A.M. March about 4 miles to better water. We lay by for rest to celebrate the 4th. Weather very hot.

*July 5*—Start at 5 A.M. March about 16 miles. We ford Walnut Creek and get on the wrong trail through the obstinacy of Col. Howe. Our guide leaves us in consequence. Weather fine, country poor.

*July 6*—Start at 5 A.M. March about 15 miles. Some slight rain this forenoon. We march not more than ten miles in a direct course. Crossed many pretty streams. Bottom land very fine. Saw some buffalo carcasses today.

*July 7*—Start at 5 A.M. and march about 12 miles, some slight rain this forenoon. We camp on the Washita River. A large driving of cattle is following us for protection, they are going to Santa Fe, New Mexico to be sold.

*July 8*—Start at 5 A.M. and march about 18 miles, passing Stanwhait's (Stand Watie) old stand. He is a Seminole (Cherokee) Indian and was a Brig. Gen'l in the C.S.A. My old Regiment often fought his. (Pea Ridge Battle, Ark.)

*July 9*—Start at 5 A.M. and march about 12 miles. We camp at Fort Cobb. The Fort is in ruins, was built of red sand stone and sun dried bricks, there are some good bridges crossing the stream on which the Fort stands. It was evacuated upon the outbreak of the War.

*July 10*—Start at 5 A.M. and march about 22 miles and camp on the Washita River. We passed through a prairie-dog town today. Saw live buffalo and killed several rattle snakes, 5 to 6 feet long. I saved the rattles.

*July 11*—Another 5 A.M. start and march slowly on account of ravines which the Pioneers have to fix for us to cross. We march about 14 miles and see plenty of gypsum, which taints the water badly. The men killed some few buffalo. I had some of the meat for my supper. Too fresh for my taste.

*July 12*—Start at 6 A.M. marching 14 miles. Col. Harwood and his orderly are both out hunting buffalo. They had better look out or they will get lost. We camp close to a canyon; the Pioneers have a great task here to cut a road through the canyon. I shot at a prairie-dog today and missed him, but the windage of the ball knocked him over, and I caught him alive and unhurt. I shall try to make a pet of him. Col. Harwood and orderly have not returned to camp yet. We are getting alarmed for their safety.

*July 13*—Started late at 9 A.M. and marched about 12 miles. We have lost Col. Harwood and his orderly, they have not been seen since yesterday morning and some scouting parties were sent out to look for them.

*July 14*—Start early and march about 8 miles. Col. Howe has sent out six companies of Cavalry to hunt for Col. Harwood. I am afraid the Comanches have got him, if they have, it will be all day with him, for they will surely kill him. No buffaloes in sight today.

*July 15*—Start early and marched about 20 miles. The Cavalry have returned, they could find no trace of Col. Harwood. We will have to wait for Time to tell what became of him. I am sorry for him, he was a good officer and a gentleman. We saw large herds of buffalo today, and a part of a herd broke through our train, completely scalping one of the drivers. He will die. We camped near some strange looking large mounds this evening, they are composed of shells. I collected some for preservation.

*July 16*—Didnt start 'til noon and marched about 12 miles. The Regimental Quartermaster was placed under arrest by Col. Howe today for allowing his herders to steal horses from the Indians some weeks ago.

*July 17*—Remained in camp all day. The Cavalry took another hunt for Col. Harwood. We are camped on Epsom Creek. The water is horrible.

*July 18*—Start early and march about 28 miles. The country is a high dry plateau. We are again approaching the Canadian River. Saw a rainbow by starlight tonight. No news of Col. Harwood.

*July 19*—Another early start and march slowly, as both men and animals are suffering for water. We pass the Antelope Hills. There are six of them, very singular looking, four of them look like immense forts. They can be seen 10 miles off, they are composed of carboniferous sandstone. This morning some of the officers and myself discovered a solitary buffalo; we gave chase on foot and, surrounding him, drove him to the column where we killed him. I got his tongue. It looked ridiculous to see how respectful we were to his Majesty every time he turned to look at us, we would scamper off, and then we would follow him and boast of what we would do to him!

*July 20*—Start early and march about 20 miles and reach the Canadian. We find good water and grass but no wood.

*July 21*—Start early and march about 3 miles to Valley Creek; passable water, soil poor, plenty of sand, gypsum, ising glass, but sparse vegetation.

*July 22*—Start early and march about 20 miles along the banks of the Canadian. The weather is sultry and we suffer for water as the Canadian is so badly tainted with alkali that we cannot drink it. Today we passed a wagon capsized. It evidently belonged to some venturesome trader who had been murdered by the Indians as we found his scalped body and the bodies of two women, also mutilated a few steps from his wagon. We buried all. We are camped opposite the Natural Mounds.

*July 23*—Start early and march about 15 miles along the Canadian; our mules are dying very fast, many men desperately ill. The weather is so hot, grass is poor, and the water so alkaline.

*July 24*—Start early, march 15 miles along the Canadian, passed a beautiful spring.

*July 25*—Start early, march about 15 miles, camp in a valley surrounded by mounds formed of small round stone, similar to those found on a sea beach. The air is dry and pure, water very nauseous, all vegetation dried up due to excessive heat.

*July 26*—Start at 3 P.M. and finally cross the Canadian, camp near a crossing at the foot of a very high bluff. I have a negro in my care, he is dying from general dropsy.

*July 27*—Remain in camp today. The poor negro died in the night, so today, Dr. Wright and I performed a post mortum. I caught a giant centipede today, he fought hard. We are nearing the "Fort Gibson and Santa Fe Road" and are about 240 miles from Fort Union.

*July 28*—Start early and march about 15 miles. We have good water. In a very sandy country with little or no grass, crossing 2 or 3 creeks with a few scattering bushes with grape vines on them. Brought up to date my list of men lost and where buried.

*July 29*—Start early and march about 15 miles. We have good water and grass tonight but no wood. We begin to see signs of civilization. We are nearing the great Santa Fe Road.

*July 30*—Start early and march about 22 miles and camp at an old Camp ground called Camp Jackson. We saw a great deal of mirage today. The men and animals are improving now since we get good water and grass. Today the soldiers and teamsters got to fighting, and I had several nasty wounds to dress.

*July 31*—Start early and march about 11 miles and camp on a well timbered stream. It rained all night, the country is improving.

*August 1*—Start early and march about 22 miles, encamp on a beautiful stream with a plenty of fish in it.

*August 2*—Start early and march about 25 miles. We pass a very large tree, completely petrified, it was miles off on the prairie and not a tree or shrub in sight. We are camped near a big spring.

*August 3*—Start early and march about 12 miles to what is said to be Utah Creek, a large swift running stream, well timbered. Saw a great deal of iron blossoms indicating a plenty of that metal in the soil.



*August 4*—Start early and march about 17 miles and encamp on the same stream as last night and find that it is the Canadian River. Utah Creek is three miles ahead. This country is very mountainous. "Anton Chico" peak is in sight. We are now in the Rocky Mountain Range.

*August 5*—Start early and march about 18 miles, crossing the Canadian, it is here called Rio Colorado, or Red river. We reach Fort Bascom, this is a new Fort built since the War commenced. It is built of adobe, which is a kind of sun-dried brick. The Fort is on the south side of the Colorado river.

*August 6*—Start early and march about 14 miles over a rough country, we are in the mountains and they are covered with a scrub cedar. Water good. "Wagon Mound" is in sight.

*August 7*—Start early and march about 14 miles over a mountain road which is awful rough, but at least a road. At night after camping, I ascended a very high hill close to camp, it is over 300 foot high, straight up.

*August 8*—Start early and march about 15 miles. We encamp at the foot of an immense peak, I ascended it, after great exertion. I was rewarded by the beautiful, I might say, glorious, view I obtained. I could see the snow-clad peaks which were towering far above me. Cactus were here growing from 7 to 8 ft. high.

*August 9*—Start early and march about 16 miles and encamp on the same stream as for the last two or three nights. We pass two "Ranches," and thousands of sheep, goats and cattle. The people here are too lazy to milk the cows. They have thousands running wild and they buy their butter, "Monti-kee-ya" from the traders and have to pay from \$1.50 to \$2.00 per pound for it.

*August 10*—Start early and march about 12 miles. Close to camp is a large corn field, we buy a few ears of corn at 16 2/3rds ¢ per ear. Chickens at \$2.00 each and eggs at 25¢ each. The Mexicans know how to charge.

*August 11*—Start early and march about 20 miles through a canyon all the way. We camp on the top of a hill, the road up

the hill is about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile long and is at an angle of about 35 degrees. Our teams will be all night getting up the hill. It is raining heavily, but I am in a small cave, so I don't fear the rain.

*August 12*—Start at 10 A.M. and march about 18 miles across a high plateau and camp in a Mexican village. We caught a slight glimpse of Fort Union. The Cavalry, with Col. Howe have gone on to the Fort tonight.

*August 13*—Start early and march about 10 miles, passing Kroenig's Rancho. This is one of the Santa Fe Stage Stations. Here we saw large fields of wheat and oats. At 11 A.M. we reached Fort Union. We will probably be here for a few days and then be sent off to some petty mountain Fort. Kit Carson is here, also Major Gen. Pope and Bvt. Brig. Gen'l Carleton. I found some letters from home awaiting me here. I answered them this morning.

*August 14—to the 20th*—In Camp, doing nothing worth recording.

*August 21*—This morning we were all agreeably surprised to see Col. Harwood come walking in to Camp. He had escaped from the Indians and made his way by Fort Smith and Little Rock Ark. to St. Louis, Mo., from there to Fort Leavenworth, Kans., and then by stage to this place. We were very glad to see him. He took command of the Regiment. We have received orders to scatter to different Posts. Two companies with Regt. Headquarters and the Col. and myself, are to go to Fort Stanton in the White Mountains in New Mexico, among the Apache Indians.

#### MEMORANDA OF TRIP FROM FT. UNION TO FT.

#### STANTON, N.M., via BOSQUE REDONDO.

*August 22*—Start early and march about 12 miles. We have a splendid outfit. I have a nice ambulance to ride in and a waggon for my baggage. The weather is cool and pleasant. We turn our faces to the South now.

*August 23*—Start early and march about 18 miles, reaching Las Vegas. This town our first town since leaving Ft. Smith. It is prettily situated on a swift running stream called the Rio Gueyena, which means "Chicken River." Just as we got our tents pitched a Mexican came to get me to go and see a Mexican who had just dropped dead while mowing. Dr. W. and I went to see him and found him quite dead and the Sheriff and two policemen were present. The "Alcade" of Las Vegas particularly requested us to open the man to see what caused his sudden death. Dr. W. felt somewhat indisposed, so the task fell on my shoulders. I performed the operation in the presence of the Alcade and the City officials and found the man had died from the bursting of an aneurysm of the aorta, at the point where it first leaves the heart. I found a hole big enough to admit two fingers easily. The river is so high here that we will have to lay by until it goes down a little.

*August 24*—Remain in camp. Dr. Wright tried to cross the river and got his buggy smashed to pieces and nearly drowned himself. There are some splendid Mineral Springs here.

*August 25*—Crossed the Gueyena river today with a great deal of difficulty. We lost one mule in crossing. We camped in the evening and I went with the officers to a Fandango in Old Town.

*August 26*—Start early and march about 18 miles to Apache Springs. Rained all day. This is a dismal looking country.

*August 27*—Start early and march about 16 miles to a swift stream. General Sykes with a part of the 5th Infantry are near us, water-bound. Barren place.

*August 28*—Start at 7 A.M. and march about 20 miles, crossing the Gueyena river again. Gen'l Sykes and command are one mile ahead.

*August 29*—Start early and march about 9 miles, then stop to allow our train to catch up. They stopped behind to find some of the mules that had strayed. I went fishing and saw a large spring. It was about 100 yards wide and I tied three

long fishing lines together, and then could not touch the bottom. I also killed a very large rattlesnake. The country is improving.

*August 30*—Start early and march about 19 miles, passing several Ranches kept by Americans. The soil is very productive, yielding 50 bushels of wheat or 60 bushels of corn to the acre. Potatoes will not grow here., they say because of the alkali in the soil. Butter is \$2.00 per lb., bacon is 40 cts. per lb., onions are \$1.00 per dozen, corn is 50 cts. per dozen ears, eggs are \$2.50 per dozen, and hay is \$50-to \$60. per ton.

*August 31*—Start early and march about 20 miles and camp at a Cavalry outpost of Fort Sumner which is 12 miles on from here. Weather hot, no wood.

*Sept. 1*—Start at 4 A.M. and reach Fort Sumner at 8 A.M. We camp about a half mile from the Fort. This Fort is built of adobe and has a farm of about 2400 acres; it's worked by the Navahoe Indians who are kept here to prevent them from doing any damage to the settlers. There are 7500 of these Indians here, all fed by the Govt. This Fort is on the Pecos River and is generally known as the "Bosque Redondo," which means round timber. The Pecos is so high that we will have to wait perhaps for a week for it to go down low enough for us to cross it. Weather close and sultry.

*Sept. 2nd to the 5th.* Lay in camp waiting for the Pecos to get low enough for fording. We have orders to kill all male Indians we may meet after leaving here, and to take the females prisoner but not to hurt them. I think we will move tomorrow. I sent some letters home. The weather is very hot.

*Sept. 6*—Start early and march about 12 miles. In crossing the Pecos this morning we had to unload our waggons and take the baggage over in a small boat and let the mules swim over with the waggons. We made the crossing safely and are now on what is called the Dry Horn Route, and we have near 80 miles with no water before us.

*Sept. 7*—Start early and march about 30 miles of forced march. Camp near a small hole containing a little surface

water which is horrible to taste. No wood, weather very hot, grass is good, country nearly level.

*Sept. 8*—Start early and make about 25 miles today. Camp in a deep canyon where we found a little water in a rock. The animals have had no water since day before yesterday and they will have to go without until tomorrow night. The "El Capitano Mountain" is in sight. Fort Stanton is on the other side of it, they tell me.

*Sept. 9*—Start early and march about 35 miles to a splendid mountain stream, refreshing to both men and animals. We camp near what is called Hopkin's Ranche the Ranche was burned and Hopkins and his men were murdered here a short time ago by the Apache Indians. We are at the foot of El Capitano and Fort Stanton is only 25 miles from here. Weather cool.

*Sept. 10*—Start early and march 25 miles to Ft. Stanton. We reach the Fort by 3 P.M. and camp close to it. The Fort is now garrisoned by New Mexican troops but they will move out in a day or so and we will compose the garrison. The Ft. is on the south side of the Rio Bonito which is a most beautiful stream running from the Blanco Mts. This day's camp is surrounded by mountains and I like it, the air is so pure. The Hospital Steward here will go away with the New Mexican troops. He gave me a Mexican hairless dog which I will take home if it lives and I live. I am making it a blanket out of my regimental cape.

*Sept. 11*—Remain in camp to rest. Tomorrow we will move into the Fort and the Mexicans will move out. This evening we are to have a Ball given in our honor by the Mexican officers. Very few Senoras and less Senioritas here.

*Sept. 12*—Moved into the Fort. I took charge of the Hospital, which is a miserable dirty hole, and my men have commenced cleaning it out.

*Sept. 13*—Finished cleaning the Hospital buildings and fixed me a room for my own comfort. My hairless dog proves a

docile companion. The days pass so much alike in a Fort that I wont record any more while here.

*Sept. 24*—Ordered to go to Fort Leavenworth Ks. It will be too cold to keep a record, I'm afraid. Will go to Ft. Union tomorrow.

*Oct. 29*—We left Fort Union enroute to Fort Leavenworth and arrived at Fort leavenworth after making a march of about 790 miles in 31 days of actual marching. We were snowed-in two days on the Arkansas River and were also forced to way-lay over at Fort Riley for two days.

The Regiment is to be mustered out of service immediately, and I have a furlough of 30 days allowed me to visit my home and family in Ross Station, Indiana.

Exuent Omnes,