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Crossing Arizona edited by Leland J. Hanchett the 1849 diary of stanislaus lasselie

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Chapter Nine Gila Trail

Stanislaus Lasselie was thirty-eight when he decided to leave his Logansport, Indiana, law practice to "see the elephant." Lasselie's participation in the Mexican war no doubt influenced his decision to travel a southern route and also hardened him for the rigors of the journey. As a matter of fact, he often poked fun at his greenhorn traveling companions as he recalled each day's events. Patricia A. Eter, "The 1849 Diary of Stanislaus Lasselie," Overland Journal.

After trying to follow the Old Spanish Trail from Santa Fe and being halted by flood conditions, Lasselie's group decided to use the Gila Trail as had General Kearney's Army of the West, when guided by Kit Carson. This route was possible only because the group used pack mules instead of wagons.

Thursday, June 28: Traveled thirty five miles. After traveling twelve miles we left the Rio Grande and took Gen. Kearney's trail. Rain in afternoon. The country after leaving the river was somewhat broken but after going a few miles we past over beautiful table lands with the exception of three or four deep ravines. Very little timber from the river to where we camped some twenty miles. There was no water.

Friday, June 29: Traveled thirty miles through broken lands and between range of mountains. Found plenty [of water] all day. Rain all night.

Saturday, June 30: Traveled thirteen miles. Campd on the Membrere [Mimbres] river. Beautiful little valley with plenty of Cotton wood, ash, walnut &c. Eat and stewed fine currents. Fished in the river. Killed small game. Country mountainous.

Sunday, July 1: Traveled eighteen miles. Camped at the Copper mines once considerable of a town but now destroyed by the Apachees [Apaches]. An alarm at night. Guard he[a]rd as he thought an Indian yell on the mountain. As there was rain the two preceeding days there was not many of the arms in order. Country mountainous.

Monday, July 2: Traveled twenty miles—but not so broken as the two days before. One of the company lost his mule and pack. We camped near a small prairie with fine spring running through it.

Tuesday, July 3: Traveled thirty miles. Nooned on Night creek. Campd on the Gila river where Gen. Kearney had camped and where Emory says his camp was amidst mountains that looked like huge hay stacks. Towards evening Kelley killed a bear said to be a grizzly one. A great many fish were

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...hay stacks. Towards evening Kelley killed a bear said to be a grizzly one. A great many fish was caught.

Wednesday, July 4: Did not travel to day—it being the 4th. In the morning we fire[d] a salute. Had for my dinner grizzly bear soup with rice. Some party went a fishing some hunting and some a gambling especially two Mexicans who were with us. Here my horse becoming lame I gave him his liberty. As there was much grass and being in the Gila valley he certainly fared well—Many turkeys and other game was killed to day. Emory says that the fish in the Gila river have no scales. He is mistaken.

Thursday, July 5: Traveled thirty miles. Past some very large mountains in the forenoon. In the afternoon the country was broken but not so mountainous. We could see ranges of mountains far in the distance. Rained in the afternoon as well as a little at night.

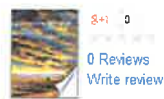
Friday, July 6: Traveled twenty five miles. Day very warm. At night a little rain. The Gila valley getting much larger. Past a great many old Indian camps.

Saturday, July 7: Traveled ten miles. Saw Apaches Indians (three) for the first time. Disappointed in getting horse shoes and nails left by Kearney.



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Sunday, July 8: Traveled thirty five miles. Took a cut off over the mountains and avoided the Devils lurnpike spoken off by Emory. We save three or four days travel by doing so. The guide had never travel[ed] the cut off but was of the opinion that much might be saved by going it. After ascending the mountain and saw to our great surprize saw the Gila river on the other side between us and the Black mountain. We also saw the Graham [Mount Graham]. We had provided ourselves with water not noting how long it would take us to get through, but after reaching the top of the mountains and seeing the river we became careles of the water not supposing the river to be over eight miles. Some thought it not over three miles but to our great distress it was some twenty miles. For might [my] part I suffered very much for water and it was with much difficulty that I succeeded in reaching the river. Men and horses both gave out. I was the only person who walked the distance without giving out. I started before my mess and as I thought I could walk it without much trouble I concluded to walk to the river driving one of our horses. I was so dry for water that could not swaller or utter a sound. I drank by about 3 quarts of water and 1 quart of coffec.

Monday, July 9: Traveled ten miles only for the reason that we had to rest our horses. Our camp was in the midst of salt spnien by Emory also in the big valley he speaks of. Some of the party saw Indians. We missed a Mexican that we had along with us and thought he might be killed. At night he came to camp. Doubled the guard at night. Come very near having our camp burnt up.

Tuesday, July 10: Traveled twenty five miles. Fine soil in the valley and valley very large. The valley is on the south side and easy to Irrigation and will admit dense population.

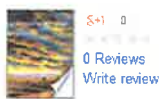
Wednesday, July 11: Traveled twenty five miles. While nooning three Apaches and a small girl came in camp. They bore a white flag. They had muscal [mescal] to trade and traded for bulcks, powder, shorts &c. The muscal is very good and we all like it. One of the Indians was nearly naked and very black. The guides daughter traded with the Indians. The Apaches are not as warlike looking as the Comanches. Some of them had carbines and old Mexican shotguns. They seem to be very shy of us. This day we past the foot of Graham mountain. Turnbuli mountain [Mount Turnbuli] just ahead of us. We [are] going between the mountain and river.

Thursday, July 12: To day we traveled about a mile from camp but David C. Buchanan meeting a serious accident we return to where we had camp. While Buchanan was riding by the side of [name omitted by author]. Whites rifle went off and struck Buchanan in the thigh entering some six inches. Doctor Bush tried to extract the bullet but it having glance [glanced] he could not succeed. Several plans were suggested to carry Buchanan on. The plan adopted was to send some thirty men on this evening nine miles down the river and make canocs their being no timber here suited for that purpose. Jo Dale shot a mule last night by punching. When we returned with Buchanan to camp we found several Indians who ran on our approach.

Friday, July 13: Traveled fifteen miles. Built a raft for Buchanan but it was not practicable. The river was too low and too many rapids. About dark a party went up the river to meet the raft. They found the raft three miles up the river. They came in camp at ten o'clock at night. They brought Buchanan on a litter along with a horse timber could be had. He was carried by men.

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Saturday, July 14: Traveled six miles and camp at head of the canon. The guide was of the opinion that we had not time to go through before night. Kearney went round being informed by Indians that he could go through. Capt. Miller resign(ed) his office. Hildley elected in his place. A litter was prepared for Buchanan partly carried by men and partly by mules. While traveling today we overtook several Indians by surprize. They had no sooner seen us than they broke and run leaving their packs behind of muscal and parched acorns. We hailed them when one of them halted and returned to us and haloes for the others. The one that stoped was rather elderly the others were quite young. They were all naked and had bows and arrows. We bought their muscal by paying them powder, bullets, buttons, needles, thread, tobacco &c. A Mexican along pulled off his shirt to trade for Mescal. They wer[e] very anxious to get blankets. After camping there were several Indians in camp and traded mescal. There were several squaws came in camp. They were horse back and were naked with the exception of a cloth around their loins. They rode like men straddling their horses. They spoke some



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
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Gila River Near Kearny, Arizona

Mexican. They were much tickled in looking at themselves in a small looking glass, especially the young Indians.

Sunday, July 15: Traveled twelve miles, through the canon, most the way along the river sometime down the bed of the river. Climbed some very high mountains. Past in a ravine [ravine] going to the river a beautiful spring with thick undergrowth and walnut trees also sycamore trees and blackberries vine. The men found much trouble carrying Buchanan up and down the mountains as well as crossing the river several times. We camped on the canon.

The mountains along the canon was some six hundred feet high. They were rated by some of the company at fifteen hundred. Emory did not pass through the canon where we camped and mist [missed] one of the most interesting views I saw on the route taken by him. The bluffs along the canon in places were perpendicular and of bare stone. Most of the rocks in the mountains pleche[d] towards the south but it is not a general thing.

Monday, July 16: Traveled fifteen miles. Crossed the river several times. I waded a foot several times, carrying Buchanan on a litter. In the afternoon another mule was hitched to the litter which made it easier on the men. We camped at night where there was an Indian encampment—The company traded considerable with them, buying their moccasins, muscal &c. They had a kind of jelly made of the apple of the cactus. It eats very good and makes drinkable wine. As soon as they saw we they all broke and ran towards their lodge on the side of the mountains, but as soon as they saw we were friendly they came back to us, and presented us with muscal &c. in abundance. Men, women and children had baskets, and their hands full of it. I saw among them basket jugs plched over with pine resin. They hold water very well and for traveling are much better than our tin canteens or gourds. They were all naked when we saw them but as soon as they traded for a shirt or a handkerchief they would put it on. The squaws could do no trading and had to remain naked.

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Tuesday, July 17: Traveled twenty miles. This morning the Indians came in camp most of them having shirts and pants but barefooted, making quite a contrast from yesterday. They shook hands with us as we left them. They traded off their moccasins for the above articles. Past [San] Pedro river. Got through the cañon just before we past the river. The country to day was mountainous as usual.

Wednesday, July 18: Traveled twenty miles. Past a small cañon. Crossed the river several times. Some of the company found one stray horse and two mules, which no doubt belonged to some pack company that was before us. We nooned where there was a large quantity of prickly pears. The company eated to excess, and many were made sick. At night after camping it was reported that an Irishman was left behind who complained of being sick by eating the prickly pears. He laid out all night. The mountains today were romantic in the highest degree. One I noticed in particular looked like a large dome.

Pima Villages

Thursday, July 19: Traveled fifteen miles. To day after traveling six or eight miles, the mountains which had become a bore to us for several days past disappeared gradually. At noon there came to our camp three Pimos [Pima] Indians who appeared very friendly. Camped near a cold spring.

Friday, July 20: Traveled fifteen miles to where there was good grass. Indians came to camp to trade panole [pinole], &c. In camping the company got scattered.

Saturday, July 21: Laid by all day. A Great deal of trading with Indians. I had a large lot of beads which I disposed off without much difficulty, especially to the squaws. Indians gathered beans of the musquite trees and mixed it with their bread stuffs. The bean is sweet.

Sunday, July 22: Laid by all day. In the morning the Indians traded a little. Buchanan (David) was taken to the Head Chief of the Pimos who seemed to be hospita [hospitable] towards him as well as kind. Their houses are like a bake oven without windows. Only one door in the shape of a half circle to their houses. They sleep out in the open air and seem to have no use for houses. The Pimos, men and women, are built strong and well made. Most of them were naked, but after trading awhile with us they most of them had shirts &c. Some had on red, blue, and other colored shirts. Truly odd fellows.

Monday, July 23: Traveled fifteen miles—Camped about a mile from the head chief. Here the Indians flocked to our camp in large numbers and had [a] larger quantity of marketing to sell. The chief was down in camp and one of the company showed him his likeness in Erory's work. His wife was by and recognized the likeness. It greatly tickled other Indians who was standing by at the time. Saw an old gentlemen who was hunting stray animals who informed me that he and a party of emigrants were attacked and robbed by a band of Indians on their way down the Hela [Gila].

Tuesday, July 24: Traveled about fifteen miles. Camped near the Maracopas [Maricopas] where their [there] was wells dug and plenty [of] fine grass. We also traded with them. They are friendly with the Pimos and have also a chief. We were informed by them that the Apaches had killed five American emigrants and also two Maracopas and that they had sent out four hundred warriors to