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PERSONAL NARRATIVE

OF

EXPLORATIONS AND INCIDENTS ... )

IN

TEXAS, NEW MEXICO, CALIFORNIA, SONORA,  
AND CHIHUAHUA,

CONNECTED WITH

THE UNITED STATES AND MEXICAN BOUNDARY COMMISSION,  
DURING THE YEARS 1850, '51, '52, AND '53.

BY

JOHN RUSSELL BARTLETT,

UNITED STATES COMMISSIONER DURING THAT PERIOD.

*IN TWO VOLUMES, WITH MAP AND ILLUSTRATIONS.*

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refused to accede to it, and told them that Francisco and one other would answer my purpose, as first proposed.

At six o'clock this morning we set off, the party consisting of Dr. Webb, Messrs. Thurber, Pratt, Scuton, Force, Loroux, and myself, with attendants. Lieutenant Paige, with six soldiers, also accompanied us, that officer wishing to examine the opposite bank of the Gila, as well as the lands contiguous to the Salinas, with a view of establishing a military post in the vicinity of the Pimo villages. After crossing the bed of the Gila we pursued a westerly course about eight miles to the point of a range of mountains, near which we struck the bottom-lands. We now inclined more to the north, and in about eight miles struck the Salinas, about twelve miles from its mouth, where we stopped to let the animals rest and feed. The bottom, which we crossed diagonally, is from three to four miles wide. The river we found to be from eighty to one hundred and twenty feet wide, from two to three feet deep, and both rapid and clear. In these respects it is totally different from the Gila, which, for the two hundred miles we had traversed its banks, was sluggish and muddy, a character which I think it assumes after passing the mountainous region and entering on with alluvial banks. The water is perfectly sweet and neither brackish nor salt, as would be inferred from the name. We saw from the banks many fish in its clear waters, and caught several of the same species as those taken in the Gila. The margin of the river on both sides, for a width of three hundred feet, consisted of sand and gravel, brought down by freshets w

the stream overflows its banks; and from the appearance of the drift-wood lodged in the trees and bushes, it must at times be much swollen, and run with great rapidity. The second terrace or bottom-land, varies from one to four miles in width, and is exceedingly rich. As it is but little elevated above the river, it could be irrigated with ease. At present it is covered with shrubs and mezquit trees, while along the immediate margin of the stream large cotton-wood trees grow. Near by we saw the remains of several Indian wigwams, some of which seemed to have been but recently occupied. Francisco told us they were used by his people and the Pimos when they came here to fish. He also told us that two years before, when the cholera appeared among them, they abandoned their dwellings on the Gila and came here to escape the pestilence.

Owing to the intense heat, we lay by until five o'clock, and again pursued our journey up the river until dark, when, finding a little patch of poor grass, we thought best to stop for the night. Supper was got, and a good meal made from our fish. As we brought no tents, we prepared our beds on the sand.

We had not long been in when we saw a body of twelve or fifteen Indians on the river making for our camp. At first some alarm was felt, until Francisco told us that they were Pimos. They proved to be a party which had been engaged in hunting and fishing. They were a jolly set of young men, dancing and singing while they remained with us. I told them we would like a few fish for breakfast, if they would bring them in. With this encouragement, they took leave

ing east from where we were, the whole prospect was shut in by mountains rising one above the other. I was informed by Loroux, that such was the character of the country all the way to New Mexico; and that there were no more broad desert plains or luxuriant valleys like those of the Salinas and Gila rivers for the entire distance. He came here from Albuquerque, on the Rio Grande, by the valley of the Rio Verde, in fourteen days.

We found the river clear and rapid, as at the first camp, with many trout, whose silvery sides glittered in the translucent stream. The quantity of water passing down the Salinas is more than double that of the Gila, which only becomes a respectable river after it receives the waters of the former. Yet there are seasons when the whole is evaporated, or absorbed by the sandy bed through which it passes, before reaching the Colorado. When at Hermosillo, in Sonora, I met an American who had passed over the same route, and he found the bed dry in many places.

At five in the afternoon, the heat being less, I crept from beneath my shelter of willows, where I had spent several hours, and, accompanied by Dr. Webb, mounted my mule, and left for the plateau in advance of the party. A ride of a mile brought us to the tableland, when we made for a large mound or heap which arose from the plain. In crossing the bottom we passed many irrigating canals; and along the base of the plateau was one from twenty to twenty-five feet wide, and from four to five feet deep, formed by cutting down the bank—a very easy mode of construction, and which produced a canal much more substan-

tial than if carried across the bottom. It must have extended many miles. The whole of this broad valley appeared to have been cultivated, though now overgrown with mezquit shrubbery.

On reaching the great pile, I found it to be the remains of an adobe edifice from two hundred to two hundred and twenty-five feet in length, by from sixty to eighty feet wide, its sides facing the cardinal points. Portions of the wall were visible only in two places, one near the summit, at the south end, where, from the height of the pile, it must have originally been three or four stories high; and the other at the northern extremity, on the western side. These remains just projected above the mass of rubbish and crumbled walls. The rest formed rounded heaps of various heights and dimensions, worn into deep gullies by the rain; the whole presenting a striking resemblance to the mounds which mark the site of ancient Babylon.

The higher walls seen in the sketch, probably belonged to an inner portion of the building. Near this is a conical hill, formed, doubtless, by the crumbling away of the higher portion or tower. Near the wall, which projects from the lower portion, at the northern end, are some large masses of this wall which have fallen. The adobe is still very hard, so much so that I could not break it with the heel of my boot. Several broken metates, or corn-grinders, lie about the pile. I picked up a stone pestle and some small sea shells. Along the eastern side are the remains of a long wall, extending beyond the building, now but a rounded heap, which seemed to have formed an inclosure. On the western side is an exca-