

307

No Cash

THE LAST BUGLE CALL / C8

A History of Fort McDowell
Arizona Territory
1865 - 1890

By
Bill Reed

3 1730 02828 7808

McClain Printing Company
Associa
Parsons, West Virginia
1977

JUN 16 1978
JUN 16 1979

CONTENTS

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Preface | vii |
| Acknowledgments | ix |
| A New Post | 3 |
| —The Regulars Arrive | 19 |
| —Kill the Poor Devils | 40 |
| —A Most Unhappy Post | 60 |
| —Tonto War | 80 |
| —Swan Song | 96 |
| —Buildings and Life | 114 |
| Epilogue | 147 |
| Appendix | 149 |
| Bibliography | 157 |

Standard Book Number 87012-261-4
Library of Congress Card Number 76-29549
Printed in the United States of America
Copyright © 1977 by Bill Reed
Apache Junction, Arizona
All Rights Reserved

ently the Indians were hungry and stopped to eat the animal. At any rate Ilges moved through the pass unmolested. The Indians caught up the next day, however, and trailed the command into McDowell, occasionally showing themselves and firing their guns. The scout returned to the post on February 25, 1867.⁵¹

The object of the expedition had been accomplished. It was felt that Meadow Valley was too marshy and supplying a post there much too difficult. Ilges suggested a site in Tonto Valley⁵² where it was established near the present site of Pumpkin Center.

The new commanding officer was not as pleased with the Pimas and Maricopas as his predecessors had been. Seventy of these Indians had been enlisted as scouts in December of 1866. They had been at McDowell drawing rations and clothing. Ilges had ordered them to ready themselves for the above scout but they left on the eighteenth for their homes. Ilges complained that he had no control over them, they came and went as they pleased, scouted when they pleased, and did no soldierly duties, and unless the general commanding ordered otherwise he was going to court-martial each of them separately if they refused to accompany him on a scout planned for the twentieth of March.⁵³

The general commanding may have ordered otherwise but in any event the confrontation did not take place as no scouts were sent out in March. Scurvy had appeared on the post again and Sanford was sent to Prescott for vegetables and medicine. The month was difficult in other ways. Heavy rains caused flooding in the Salt and Gila rivers, cutting off communication with the outside world. A boat, built for such emergencies, at the lower crossing of the Salt was carried away by the rising waters. The rain also caused the sod roofs of the enlisted men's quarters to wash out and they leaked badly, bringing on "bronchitic" attacks among the men. The post surgeon feared an epidemic of dysentery if the needed repairs were not made.⁵⁴ The garrison spent most of

the month trying to complete the construction of the post. The guardhouse had been built but was without a roof.⁵⁵

It may be that the threats made by Ilges to the scouts had some effect as a scout, under his command, went out on April 17, composed mostly of the seventy enlisted Indians and one hundred and eighty volunteer Pimas and Maricopas who were peevish and caused a great deal of frustration for the McDowell commander. On the first night out, they lit fires, against his orders, in full view of the mountains through which they were to pass. The next night they kept fires going all night and the following day, complaining they were out of rations, the majority of them departed. The destination of the scout was Greenback Valley and on arriving there they found several recently abandoned rancherias. Evidently the fires had warned the Apaches. The command went to Tonto Valley where the remaining eleven Indians left for home, killing three "bucks" and capturing a "squaw" on their way. Ilges returned by way of the Salt River, reaching McDowell on the twenty-sixth.⁵⁶

On the day the scout left, an altercation broke out between two civilian employees of the post. Joseph Kelsey shot, and killed, George Davis over some old difficulty. Kelsey was confined in irons to await the arrival of civil authorities.⁵⁷ During an attempt to escape, he was shot in the arms and legs. He was later taken to Prescott for trial.⁵⁸ Davis was buried in the post cemetery.

During the month (April) Lieutenant Bennett was ordered to join his regiment, the 6th Cavalry, and William Hancock was placed in charge of the government farm. The number of civilian employees was forty-eight with a monthly payroll of \$2,350. Sometime prior to the end of the month Companies A and B of the 32nd Regiment of Infantry arrived at the post.⁵⁹

On May 1, Captain Joseph H. VanDerslice, with eighty men from the 14th and 32nd Infantries, left the post in pursuit of hostiles who had stolen mules from one of the

If our newly appointed psalm singing cusses (say Friends if you think best) will make one tract distributing trip through the Pinals, I will freely forgive them their inequities and ever after be a staunch supporter of their system.⁶⁴

On January 19, 1871, a packtrain belonging to W. B. Hellings and Company, loaded with grain for Camp McDowell, was attacked fifteen miles south of the upper Salt River crossing. A Mr. George King was killed and two men wounded. The hostiles took twenty mules and burned the grain and wagons with a loss to the shipper of \$7,000.⁶⁵ A detachment of cavalry from McDowell pursued the Apaches but were not successful.⁶⁶ Mr. Hellings was again a victim when his stock was stolen near Wickenburg on the twenty-first.⁶⁷ Second Lieutenant John M. Ross, 21st Infantry, with a small detachment of cavalry, pursued, found, and charged the Apaches who escaped. The stolen stock was recovered.⁶⁸

Four unsuccessful scouts were out in January, February, and March.⁶⁹ Another change of troops took place in April. Troop C, 1st Cavalry, left the post on April 5 en route for San Francisco, and on April 8, Captain George B. Sanford and his E Troop, 1st Cavalry, departed for the same destination. These units were replaced by Troops D and M, 3rd Cavalry, and Major Nathan A. M. Dudley assumed command of Camp McDowell on April 8, 1871.⁷⁰ Company I, 21st Infantry, returned from the road building in July giving the garrison a strength of one hundred and four officers and men.⁷¹

Sanford, and his men, had spent almost five years of hard duty at Camp McDowell. They marched to San Diego arriving there on May 6 having been on the road for almost a month. The troop was assigned to Benica Barracks and Sanford applied for, and was granted, a four-month leave of absence to travel in Europe. He had earned his long deserved rest. Sanford spent many more years in the West fighting Indians, returning to Arizona in 1882 during the uprisings of that year. He retired in July 1892 and died July 13, 1908, a vic-

tim of cancer.⁷² His story is one of the typical dedicated army officer who served his country, obeyed orders, all without complaint or glory. .

Chapter III Notes

1. *Post Return*, January 1868.
2. *Ibid.*, February 1868.
3. *Ibid.*, April 1868.
4. *Ibid.*, March 1868.
5. *Ibid.*, May 1868.
6. *Ibid.*, April 1868, and *Letters and Telegrams, Verde Returns*, June 1868.
7. Grant to Department of California, dated May 13, 1868, National Archives, *Records of the United States Army Commands, Letters Received, Department of the Pacific*, vol. 296 (R.G. 98), microcopy, Arizona Historical Foundation, Arizona State University, Tempe, Sack's Collection. Hereafter cited as *Army Commands*, vol. 296.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Arizona Miner*, Saturday morning, June 6, 1868.
10. *Post Return*, May 1868.
11. *Arizona Miner*, July 18, 1868.
12. *Post Return*, June 1868.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, September and November 1868.
15. *Ibid.*, May through August 1868.
16. *Ibid.*, October, November, and December 1868.
17. Endorsements on several letters sent by Blake to various persons, National Archives, *Records of the United States Army Commands, Fort McDowell, Arizona Territory, Endorsements on Letters Received, 1867-1873* (R.G. 98), microcopy, Arizona Historical Foundation, Arizona State University, Tempe, Sack's Collection. Hereafter cited as *Endorsements*.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. Heitman, *Historical Register*, p. 223.
21. *Endorsements*, dated December 26, 1868.
22. *Ibid.*, dated December 28, 1868.
23. *Ibid.*, dated January 4, 1869.
24. *Post Return*, January 1869.
25. *Endorsements*, dated January 18, 1869.

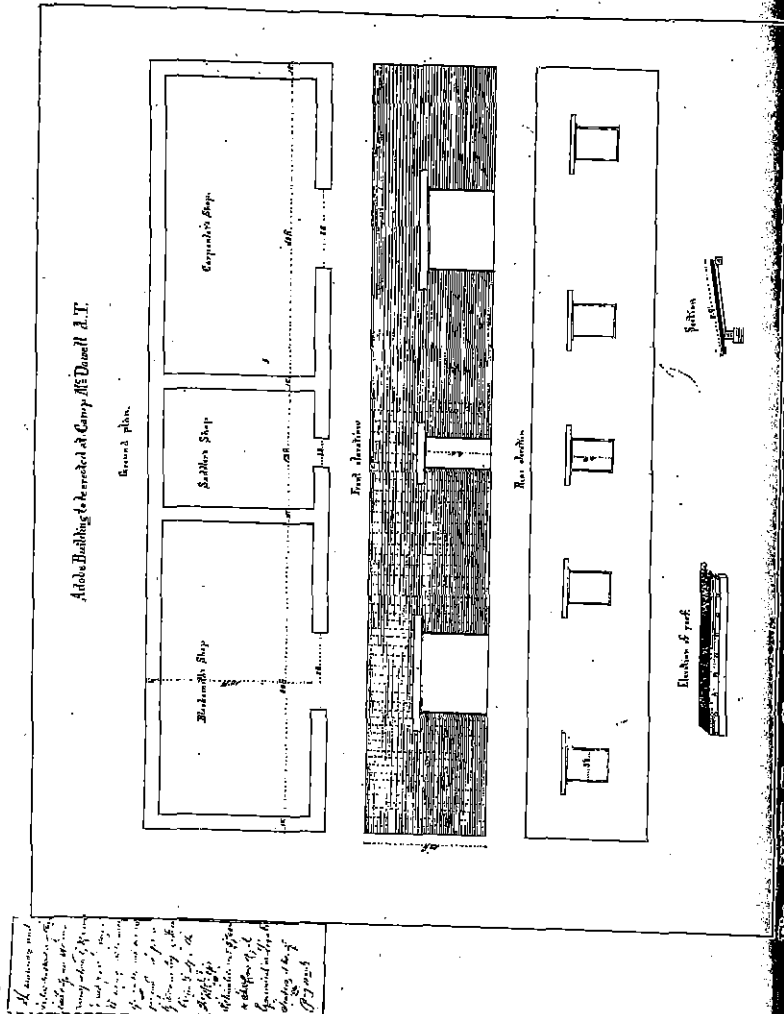


Figure XVIII. Floor Plan, shops, 1872. Courtesy Arizona Historical Foundation

Handwritten notes:
 The building was
 built of adobe
 bricks and was
 very strong. It
 was built by
 the soldiers of
 the post. It
 was used for
 the shops and
 the kitchen.
 It was built
 in 1872.

on the north side of the parade ground are readily identifiable today (1976). The old adobes have melted leaving small rises with deep depressions inside the former walls.

Water for the post was hauled the 2,100 feet from the Verde River in wagons and stored in barrels placed at strategic points. Sometime prior to 1874 a steam pump was installed³⁹ and in the spring of 1879, two water tanks were erected behind the hospital.⁴⁰

Food, for the most part, was unpalatable and there were always shortages. The lack of trains to haul it, and the expense of such, precluded luxuries. Cattle were driven to the post by contractors but it was often of poor quality, and because of primitive storage, spoiled after slaughter. When the post and company gardens failed, as they often did, fresh vegetables were virtually unobtainable.⁴¹ The men, and women, of McDowell then subsisted on dried peaches, canned corn and canned tomatoes. Most objectionable was the canned butter. In 1877, the officers of the post submitted a ten-page report on various tests performed on this commodity and concluded that the butter contained "26 2/3 foreign matter" which they identified as being lard and tallow.⁴²

Until the arrival of the railroad at Maricopa Wells in 1878, troops going to the post marched, perhaps walked would better describe it, from Drum Barracks to Fort Yuma, thence up the south bank of the Gila River with camps made at Gila City, Filibuster, Stanwix, Oatman's Flat, and Gila Bend. At this latter place travelers went east, across a bleak, waterless desert, forty-five miles to Maricopa Wells. From there the road turned in a northerly direction and ran thirty-five miles, across more waterless desert, to the crossing of the Salt River at Maryville (across the Salt River from the present-day Lehi). Almost due north, a march of fifteen miles through the treacherous McDowell Canyon and the tired men reached their destination.⁴³ In the early days they were little better off than they had been on the march. As has been noted,