

146

Ariz.  
9355.7  
? Mich

Fort McDowell in the Eighties

by

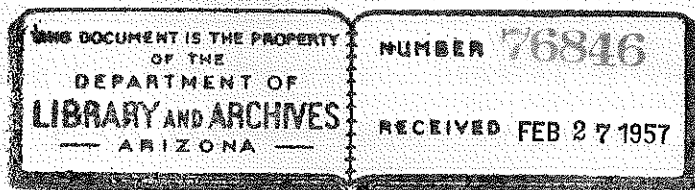
Dan (J-W) Huntington

---

*r. lora*  
This story was written at the suggestion of Mr. Madison R. Loring. Mr. Huntington lived at Fort McDowell in the eighties. He also lived in Phoenix for a number of years.

---

Manuscript submitted by Mr. Loring in 1957.



## Fort McDowell in the Eighties

In September, 1865, Fort McDowell was established, with five companies of California Volunteers, as a point from which to operate against the Indians of the neighboring mountains. The post was situated on the west bank of the Rio Verde, about eight miles from its junction with the Salt River, and is about eighteen hundred feet above sea level. The sickly place called Camp Date Creek, about sixty-five miles southwest from Prescott, was first established as Camp McPherson in 1866 the name being changed in November, 1868. It afforded considerable protection to travellers between Prescott and the Colorado River. It was on their way to the Pima Villages that Dr. Tappan and four soldiers were killed entirely through the carelessness or overconfidence of Major Miller, who said there were no Indians and neglected to take proper precautions.

The "Arizona Miner" says that General McDowell was given a reception in Prescott on the 14th day of February, 1866, at which reception he stated that he had sent all possible troops to the Territory including a regiment of regulars. According to the same authority, General McDowell issued a special order on February 7, 1866, establishing a government farm at Fort McDowell in charge of Lieutenant Colonel Bennett, and authorizing the employment of three men to build a ditch and drain and cultivate the soil.

On March 28, 1886, the military headquarters for the Territory were removed from Prescott to Tucson.

Before leaving for San Francisco, General Upton had arranged with General McDowell for a military escort to protect the party in their surveys.

They arrived in Yuma in due time and after having their outfit overhauled at the shop of Chris Horner, they continued up the Gila, along the overland road, with Maricopa Wells as their destination. Upon reaching Maricopa Wells, the Messrs. Ingalls established their headquarters at that place, which was, at that time, the most important station between Arizona City (now Yuma) and Tucson.

The two deputies conducted their surveying work in the Salt River Valley under many difficulties, the Indians stealing several horses from them, and retarding the progress of their work. At the close of the day's labor the party of surveyors would make camp near the river where the only available water supply could be found, and, after they had disposed of their evening meal, would extinguish the camp fires and in the darkness would move the entire camp to the higher ground in order to mislead any prowling Indians who might have marked by their fires the location of the river camp. Observing this precaution at all times, no open attack was made upon the party.

On the 27th of March, 1868, Deputy W. F. Ingalls commenced the work of subdividing the township around the Phoenix settlement, completing the same on the 4th day of April. From April 8th to the 16th he sectionized the township to the east in which the city of Tempe is now located.

It may be stated in this connection that John B. Allen made the first application for pre-emption of homestead land in Arizona. Under date of July 27, 1864, he sent from Tucson to the Surveyor-General of Arizona the following: "The Surveyor-General of Arizona is hereby notified that,

in pursuance of law, I, John B. Allen, of First Judicial District, in the Territory of Arizona, have pre-empted a tract of land containing one hundred and sixty acres lying almost two miles west of the southwest corner of the Pima and Maricopa reservation, and enclosing what is known and designated as the Maricopa Wells."

John B. Allen was an old pioneer and a business man in Tucson. Like all pioneers he had many ups and downs during his life. He was a pioneer merchant of Tombstone, and after that he settled in Florence and represented the Territory several times in the Legislature.

In 1857 the Yumas and Mohaves organized a joint expedition against the Maricopas. They raised a large band and attacked the Maricopa Villages about the first of September. They burned some houses and killed some women and children, which was speedily avenged. The Pimas and Maricopas were reinforced by the Papagoes until their numbers were equal to those of the invaders. At Maricopa Wells, about four miles west of the present station of Maricopa, on the Southern Pacific, they fought a great battle in which the Yumas were defeated with the loss of over two hundred warriors. Out of the Yuma warriors only three returned alive. Francisco fell in the fight, killed, it is said, by his own men who thought he had brought disaster upon them by defending the whites.

It was a wonderful sight to see the large mesquite forests which extended for several hundred miles along rivers and creek bottoms. Loaded down with ripe beans with enough beans to feed many thousands of humans, animals and fowl. It is said that Yumas and Mohaves fought for possession of the mesquite forests. The mesquite was the principal source of food

and fuel. Some pioneers class mesquite as a mineral as the roots furnished as much timber as the surface. The U. S. Government furnished the Indians with wagons so the Indians could haul the mesquite wood to the cities as the railroad hauled for the large industries. At this time there is no more mesquite as when the trees were cut down the roots were pulled up for fuel. One can travel for miles and never see a mesquite tree. The mesquite has no equal as a pleasant odor when burned.

### 1885

Maricopa Wells is where the Army met our train and accompanied us to Fort McDowell. The Southern Pacific Railroad at that time was not completed into Phoenix. The trip took two days to go from Maricopa Wells to Fort McDowell. A vehicle with four mules could travel without any difficulty as we forded the Gila River at Sacaton and the Salt River at McDowell crossing. The first day we stopped over at Jonesville (near Mesa) a Mormon settlement. The next day we arrived in Fort McDowell about two o'clock in the afternoon. We first met an Army officer who said he had just had a fine meal cooked by a Pima Indian belle, of mesquite beans. All she charged was a package of cigarettes. He also said that wherever a mesquite grows is rich soil. He said he had eaten a worse meal in New York City and Washington, D. C., than the meal cooked by the Pima belle at Pima Village.

Fort McDowell by its location proved to be a valuable fort in the winning of the battle over the savage Apaches. It was the fort that planned many scouting expeditions to uncover many of the hiding places of the bands that robbed and murdered many of the small groups of parties

through Arizona. The scouting party would uncover many rancherias hidden away where one would never think that any human could find as many large supplies as were found including firearms of all description and ammunition. The Army would destroy and burn everything. In travelling, parties would be organized and escorted by the soldiers moving from one fort to another. Fort McDowell was a place where the troops would go to Fort Reno and Tonto Basin through to San Carlos. Any parties would have the protection of the Army. Cornelius Edson (Sandy) Huntington would often go with these soldiers and return with the incoming parties from Fort Reno where he became a close friend of the Grahams who would haul by wagon from Phoenix to Fort McDowell and then by pack train to Tonto Basin. Sandy and the Grahams became lifelong friends in later years. The Grahams' pack trains of about twelve men, large and rugged, good marksmen and horsemen, would give the Indians a battle that they never would forget. After the Graham-Tewksberry feud broke out Sandy and Tom Graham would meet in Phoenix at J. W. Frakes Livery Stable where Tom Graham would put up his horse and buggy. As the years went on everything seemed to be peaceful. One day Sandy Huntington and his friend Steve May happened to be visitors at Graham's ranch near Tempe. They were looking after the ranch while Tom Graham was taking a load of grain to Tempe. When near Tempe Tom was assassinated by Tewksberry. On the night of the day after the assassination of Tom Graham, Sandy Huntington and Steve May thought that some of the men that assassinated Tom Graham would return to the ranch. So as a precaution they staked out in the barn instead of the ranch house at which place they could give any hostile raiders a hot reception as both men were well armed and good shots.

In subsequent years Sandy Huntington and Mr. Billups, an attorney, took one of the Daggs brothers on a camping trip in the mountains for Daggs' health. (The Daggs brothers have been charged with ordering the driving of sheep into the Tonto Basin country which was responsible for bringing on the bloody Graham-Tewksberry feud.) Daggs passed away shortly afterwards. Soon after that Sandy Huntington and Mr. William Billups, a cousin of Attorney Billups from Fort Madison, Iowa, were raising blooded horses on the Daggs ranch as Mr. William Billups had purchased the ranch from the Daggs brothers.

Mr. William Billups and Sandy Huntington raised blooded stock, particularly horses and these animals had a fine reputation all over the Territory of Arizona.

Tom Graham was one of the best liked and respected men in Maricopa County. Sandy Huntington had no fear of physical danger by reason of his close friendship with Tom Graham and the Daggs brothers. I never heard my brother Sandy ever mention the Tewksberry Clan.

Cornelius Edson Huntington first started his career as a veterinarian in San Diego, California. As a boy at Hinton's Livery Stable he worked with veterinarians. Later in life he rode, trained and raised blooded horses and dogs. When he arrived at Fort McDowell you would find him helping the cavalrymen doctor their horses and dogs. In after years he was fond of hunting. He became a trail blazer and knew every cattle ranch in Arizona. There were no signs on the roads in those days to guide one. Billy Cook, a sheriff and cattleman of Maricopa County,



who was up on this range in the New River Mountains on a roundup with other cattlemen when his young son was going hunting near Phoenix in a cart with a shotgun. The gun slipped out of the cart, the butt end hit the ground and the gun discharged killing young Cook instantly. No one knew how to get word to his father in the New River Mountains so Sandy Huntington secured a team of horses from Gibson's Stable. With a light rig he drove all night, arriving at his destination early next morning to inform Billy Cook of the accident. That is how well he knew Arizona.

#### Arrival at Fort McDowell in 1885

My first thing to do was to find a place to swim as the weather was very warm. Sandy and I made a survey of Verde River only a few blocks from the fort. We discovered that the river was full of beaver dams with plenty of fish behind dams where the water was deep. Game was so plentiful we did not bother with it. We noticed that most of the officers' wives were out shooting quail, doves and rabbits. The Cavalrymen would take their horses to have a swim. They certainly enjoyed it as they came out of the deep water and rolled around on the sand and kicked up as playful as a kitten.

The next thing was a place to play baseball. We noticed the soldiers playing on the parade grounds so we were given the privilege of playing there when the soldiers were not using it. We were warned not to leave anything on the ground as Major Chaffie, Commander of the post, would get the Provost Sergeant after the kids and there would be no playing ball on the parade ground. The Army brought baseball to the west and had all

of the best players. As baseball is an Army game and was started before the Civil War. One time Fort Lowell was playing Phoenix. Sergeant Muniz of Troop M, Fourth Cavalry was drafted to play with the Phoenix team. He had played with the Phoenix team against Fort Lowell, and was leaving after dark early in the evening. His mount, a fine horse, he called him his "pal," was galloping at a very fast gait, being homeward bound, when he came to a bridge over a canal. The water had overflowed the approach to the bridge which was adobe mud, the horse slipped and stumbled, throwing Muniz against the railing of the bridge. Muniz was taken to Phoenix by some campers, where all possible aid was given but he died of his injuries a few hours later. This accident cast a cloud of sorrow over the Fort as I have never heard of a soldier ever being killed on account of a baseball game. Even to the present day whenever there is a week-end in military camps baseball is played.

I often turned out to say goodbye to the Army going out to fight the Indians and it is often said that all would not return.

Many of the officers had their start in Fort McDowell. Will C. Barnes was a signal officer in Fort McDowell and afterward a businessman, cattleman and Arizona Historian. A man by the name of Andrews had charge of the water supply and cooling system at Fort McDowell. His brother had charge of the blacksmith shop. Andrews, who had charge of the water supply, later had charge of the water works in Phoenix where he and L.D. Copeland invented a compound pump which was a great saver of fuel. The blacksmith also did well at Prescott. McCann brothers furnished the meat for the post. Wilcox Bothers were the post traders. The Mormons

furnished the barley, hay and wood from Mesa City, also some of the horses. One of the sports that the soldiers enjoyed was when the hay was all stacked it was surrounded with mesquite wood four feet long, about six feet high, put there to season, and was used for a fence to keep the wild life away from the haystacks. The wood would become infested with rattlesnakes as long as eight feet with a body as large as a human leg. Then a king snake would come along and kill the rattler.

Fort McDowell was abandoned in 1890. It was made an Indian Reservation where Indians farmed and raised stock.

Some sixty years later I was a guest of Mr. Charles A. Stauffer. I was visiting my brother, Cornelius E. (Sandy) Huntington at Prescott and I had passed by the headwaters of the Verde River. It had started to rain when I left Prescott. When I met Mr. Stauffer at Phoenix he suggested that we visit the Bartlett Dam on the Verde River. It was agreeable. He said it was the first time that the water was running over the dam and he wanted to see it. When I arrived at the dam I was surprised to see the pure crystal water flowing over the spillway as I expected muddy water after several days of rain. It was in April and the wild flowers were all in bloom which made my visit very enjoyable. This being an early description of Fort McDowell in early days ending at Bartlett Dam I want to pay tribute to two individuals who have done most to establish the reclamation service, President Theodore Roosevelt, Spanish American War Veteran, Pioneer of the West, and Tom Boyle, Grand Army Veteran, Pioneer of the West.