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A LOG OF THE TEXAS-CALIFORNIA CATTLE TRAIL, 1854

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II

2d August 1854 Left Franklin to-day at four O'Clock, after remaining about one week. Had a splendid rain. The first one since we left San Antonio. The clouds hand low around the tops of the mountains and seem to be within gun shot. These mountains abound in silver, and within the vicinity several mines are in the different processes of opening and working; one mine known as the Step[h]enson mine yields abundantly and has lately been disposed of to a company — some of whom are members of Congress — for Thirty thousand dollars; Franklin has also been purchased for about the same amount and by the same company; this induces me to believe the Pacific Railroad bill is not far from its passage. Near El Paso is supposed to be the crossing point.

4th Left camp at sunrise. The day bids fair to be a pleasant one. It is now raining on the mountain tops, which are entirely covered with clouds; — grasing the cattle in the valley.

Made fifteen miles to camp near Fort Filmore, raining hard all morning, had dinner — pretty rough, after living on town fare for a week. Will soon get used to it however, dont care how rough, so that I get to California soon.

The features of James Company are considerably changed, some men have been discharged and some new ones received; I can hardly tell whether the change has made any improvement; it is verry difficult to collect any body of men together, without having some black sheep in the flock.

Cool wind blowing and sun shining. Had a bath just before supper, while bathing a sharp little rain came up and we had just time to get our clothing under shelter.

5th Saturday. Prospect of a fine day, leave camp early. Will pass fort Filmore in one mile and a half. Filmore is quite a large post, four companies are stationed here. This post is in

ground being wet, and having to use it for a bed-stead, you may judge what a comfortable ? night I had.

This is going to California with a vengeance, in fact a man would not see the Elephant with two tails, if he had more comforts than we have.

The soil here is of good quality; land rolling; wood, stunted Post oak, one mile from the road; Grass, good and of different quality from that behind us. It has a large head of seed, and the cattle eat it greedily.

Some few deer have been seen, but none killed. Water, I expect the old adage, "that the least said &c." is more applicable than any description I could give; however by taking a piece of coffee sack I managed to strain out the Tadpoles—the larger sized animalculae I did not care about altho' verry preceptible to the eye — and filled a demijohn.

The hills are covered with white quartz that seems to have been melted. I am told that this is the gold blossom.

29th Tuesday, sun shining. Waiting in camp to dry beef. Left about one o'clock, made about seven miles amid a sharp rain. Crossed the *second small stream* mentioned by Col. Cook, it was dry, but about three miles further on crossed a wet weather stream of clear rain water. This is delicious drinking water and being soft, of course is fine for washing. The mountains are thickly covered with timber.

30th Sun rose cloudy, still continues so. Air cool, slight wind blowing. Still in camp waiting for our beef to cure.

Prospect of rain induced us to go on, left camp at 8 o'clock, after three miles entered the Guadalupe Pass. There is nothing remarkable about this pass, only that the road is verry rough and difficult to travel with wagons; there are two imposing looking stones at different places. The last one is opposite a large cave that runs a short distance in, and seems to have been a camping place. These stones are worthy of some notice from the peculiarity of their position, stand at a great highth, and seems as if a touch would send them thundering down the mountain, to the destruction of all below.

31st Thursday, still falling weather, we are about two thirds through the pass, by night we were encamped at some eight miles

distance from the outcome. One small wet weather stream we crossed not less than thirty times.

September 1st 1854 Friday. Now encamped near — some three miles — the "Old Rancho of San Bernardino".

About four o'clock in the afternoon a severe rain and Thunder storm came up. The cattle were feeding in the hollow, a vivid flash of lightning which made a report like the explosion of thousand cannon, struck a *white* steer, glancing along the belly, and scorching the hair off, thence to another *white* steer — he showed no marks — about fifty yards distant and killed them both, knocking down all — some twenty — intervening and on the line of the stroke; several men felt the effects, although the camp was about one hundred and fifty yards from the herd. Paid a visit to the old ruins of the rancho; from the plaza enclosed with the walls, and the number of apartments, I should judge that from fifteen to twenty families lived here at the time of its desertion.

Scattered about the plaza are several peices of stone mortars, such as is used at the present day by the Mexicans for pounding corn; one blackish grey peice in particular seemed to be of the same grit as is used for mill stones. In one corner are the remains of a kiln, the sides of which are covered with salt glazing. I suppose this was used for burning their crockery; portions of the *Toula* roof, still in good preservation lie scattered on the ground; Col. Cooks journal reports the remains of a Peach Orchard (so I am told); we found none. How long this rancho has been deserted, I cannot tell, not having read Cook's report.³¹

³¹San Bernardino was one of the early settlements of northeastern Sonora and at one time its vast herds were said to number 80,000 head. On account of the depredations of the Apaches, it was abandoned soon after the breakup of the missions in 1828. Its cattle reverted to the wild state, and Cooke supplied his command with beef from them. They were of a vicious breed, attacking, without provocation, the wagons, teams, and men as they passed through the old San Bernardino ranges. Upon December 11, 1846, Cooke reported that "There was quite an engagement with bulls, and I had to direct the men to load their muskets to defend themselves . . . one ran on a man, caught him in the thigh, and threw him clear over his body lengthwise; then it charged on a team, ran its head under the first mule and tore out the entrails of the one beyond. Another ran against a sergeant, who escaped with severe bruises . . . one ran at a horse tied behind a wagon, and as it escaped the bull struck the wagon with a momentum that forced the hind part of it out of the road. I saw one rush at some pack mules, and kill one of them. . . . We crossed a pretty stream which I named 'Bull Run.'" Cooke, P. St. George, *The Conquest of New Mexico and California*, 139-146.

Left at two o'clock having been detained with drying the beef killed the day previous by the lightning. After travelling several miles, missed one of the largest steers in the drove. This old fellow from his size and being a mule was a general favorite; and from the sober gait, selected place in the drove and other peculiarities was often the subject of remark and meriment. I forgot to mention that, Cook, reports numerous wild cattle, which I suppose was left by the people of the rancho. We saw no signs of them; We encamped for the night, and sent two men back for the steer. They returned at dark unsuccessfull.

2nd We had a good start this morning. Weather is still lowering and cloudy, had a comfortable night; made about eight miles to camp for noon, found plenty water on the road; a fresh Indian trail seen within one hundred yards camp.

The variety of Grasshopper is numerous here, and some are as gaudily painted as butterflies, one species I noticed in particular, is four inches long.

With what few words I possess, and such poor powers of description, it would be like daubing a superb painting over with mud, to attempt to describe the sunset of this evening; The finest efforts of a painter could not possibly convey an idea of its beauty.

3rd Sunday. Fine clear night; day opens clear and agreeable. Made about six miles to camp for noon. Indian trails — fresh — were again seen this morning, no doubt the rascals are watching us.

On the road side, a letter posted up, gave us the whereabouts of the trains ahead. I have learnt, since on the road, that there is an extensive beef monopoly in San Francisco, composed of men of wealth.

I shall probably be in San Francisco in six weeks, will in all p[r]obability leave the train at the Colorado Rio. Found a Centipede six inches long.

4th Had a fine night, Clear and moonshine.

I recd a challenge yesterday evening, from our crazy german; he offers to fight with pistols, or American fashion, what he means by American fashion I cant tell; this morning however, he made a break at me and I endeavored to learn him my fashion of fighting; th[r]ough mistake, I picked up a soap weed instead of the

Poker, and he escaped with a few bruises and sound skin. I will copy the challenge verbatim, its a rich document.

Mr Bell

You have sade I have stud two times on gard for let him have his Rifle that every man can pich in. — It is no meestake that you have talk about me. I call this verry common talk. I call you now to pech in. "(in the way that I have purpose) to fite with pistol) or with the American fasion the suner you settle it the better. I think it no youse to talk about it any more! Let me know what you will to

Frank

5th Had an unpleasant night. Left camp at nine o'clock. Found plenty of water, known as the head waters of San Pedro.

Counded ten different kinds of grass Hopper; from the shining jetty black, to the Pea green; one kind has no beauties untill he flies, then is displayed a rich pink color under the wings, the outside has a dirty color. Travelled th[r]ee hours and are now nooning it. Started late and encamped about six o'clock.

6th Left about nine o'clock Crossed the San Pedro several times.

At 12 O'Clock we passed the ancient ruins mentioned in Col Cook's Journal; they are composed of five or six walls of old houses, made of adobes a stone correll or two.³² By what people this town was built, I have not been able to learn.

The valley through which the San Pedro passes is a desirable location for ranches. The hills on either side are covered with timber huge loose stones and a good quality of grass; some portions of these hills are verry pretty and contain little tree hidden nooks and reminded me that I could spend an hour pleasantly; as our family were used to do, Sabbath noons at the sp[r]ings on the south of Knoxville.

The rock here is conglomerate, soil of good quality, timber of cotton wood, and oak. Upon the whole this is the most habitable place seen since I left San Antonio.

I should have mentioned that yesterday we passed a newly made grave; the inscription informed us that James Houston lay beneath, and had been killed by the Indians; a letter from Major

³²Cooke refers to this as the San Pedro ranch. Along with the settlement at San Bernardino, it was broken up by the incessant attacks of the Apaches. Cooke, as cited in note 31.

Erskine, posted on the grave stated that Beck's train had been attacked ten days ago, and this man killed, also one hundred head of cattle taken from the Train.

A few miles on the road, at the ruins of an old rancho some old Peach trees were found, but no fruit; on the top of a small hill, the remains of what seemed to be a smelting furnace were found, also portions of cinder.

About four o'clock we commenced crossing a mountain, of tolerably difficult ascent, — tis st[r]ange Col. Cook did not mention this in his journal, we got into the scraps unwarily and had to encamp in them all night.⁸³

7th Slight rain during a portion of the night.

Morning opens foggy and cloudy. Left a cart on the other side of the mountain last night, and are waiting for it to come up.

Left camp about three o'clock, and travelled three or four miles. From the top of a high hill, the beautiful valley in which the town of *Santa Cruz* lies, lay stretched before us; a more desirable place for farming purposes could not be wished for; it has untill very lately been under cultivation, the hedges and diches still remain, and corn stalks are still to be seen on the ground, but the hostility of the Indians has stopped all operations.

Since we arrived at this camp — from where we can see the steeple of the church — we have learned that the Indians have been playing the very devil. *Mangus Colorado* the chief of the Apaches in this section, made an attack on Fairchild's party at the place where we last camped, and drove off his entire stock, killing a brother of Fairchilds, who now lies burried within twenty yards of the ambulanche. The companies of Erskine, Franklin & Dean, and an other party, who are encamped west of Santa Cruz; made up a volunteer party in connection with some citizens, and made pursuit. In going to the scene of action, they came on an other party of Indians and pitched into them, killing Twenty three, and only three of their own party wounded.

⁸³Cooke's failure to mention this mountain is explained by the fact that the trail herd continued west inside the Mexican line while Cooke's road led north into Arizona along the San Pedro. The trail the herd had taken was one followed by Major Lawrence P. Graham in 1848. He marched from Janos to Santa Cruz before turning north along the stream of the same name to reach Tucson. Bancroft, *History of Arizona and New Mexico*, 479. Cooke, "Report," as cited in note 30, p. 555.