

California Volunteers

*By A. Hunt **

THE FOLLOWING EXCERPTS from California newspapers of the years 1865 and 1866 speak eloquently for themselves. They indicate that, while the volunteers mustered into service in California in the last year of the Civil War did not get into the main action, they nevertheless performed valuable garrison duties along the outposts of the western frontier. They endured the hardships of incredibly long marches through the California and Arizona deserts at times of the year when the temperatures are already intolerable. They fought against marauding Indians and, in a few instances, skirmished with Confederate Irregulars. And, to judge by the tone of their letters, they did their duty uncomplainingly and with good humor.

The first two of these excerpts are editorials which call attention to the scant credit which the California volunteers had received. The others are letters from soldiers on active duty.

From *The Arizona Miner* (date unknown, but probably late 1865):

THE CALIFORNIA VOLUNTEER

No troops raised during the War of Rebellion have received less credit for their services than the California Volunteers, while few have served their country at a greater sacrifice.

Abandoning lucrative pursuits and comfortable homes, they have shown a height and purity of patriotism never surpassed.

Yet, in the Eastern States, little, if anything is known of these excellent soldiers. As an act of simple justice to them and particularly

*This article was submitted with no other identification except the name. If the author sees it in print, the editor will be glad to receive further identification from him.

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to those who, since the entry of the California Column in the Spring of 1862, have been stationed in this Department, we propose in our next issue to begin a series of articles to be entitled the "California Volunteers," where they have been, and what they have done.

We shall be able, we think, to prove to the country that while they have not been permitted to perform upon a conspicuous field, they have rendered most important services in a highly creditable and satisfactory manner.

From the *Marysville Appeal*, December 26, 1865:

RETURNED SOLDIERS

Wm. Boring, Patrick Hearn, Geo. W. Mack and J. M. Babb, the latter a faithful correspondent of the *Appeal*, returned to Marysville, Dec. 23, 1865.

One of them tells us, "We have drilled in garrison together, heard the sound of reveille which called us to duty at our allotted posts; shared the toil of the march over rugged mountains, through deep caverns and dense forests; periled our lives in many fights and skirmishes with hostile Indians; endured cold and hunger; sat night after night beside the company fire; stood picket many nights when the snow and wind descended upon us; shared the tough soldier's fare of salt pork and hard tack; lay night after night on the cold damp earth shivering with cold; heard the tattoo which gave signal for all except the guard to retire with the earth for a bed and a stone for a pillow.

"We have campaigned through woods, swam rapid streams, marched through pleasant praries and over fearful precipices where if we had made one false step, we would have fallen and been dashed to pieces at the bottom."

They rallied at the call, ready to meet what danger might come. They have the respect of every loyal man.

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From the *Calaveras Chronicle*, July 1, 1865:

In Camp near Tubac,
Arizona Territory
May 19, 1865

Editor:

Although you may not have expected to hear from this out of the way part of the world, I had previously made up my mind that I should send you an account of the travels and adventures of Company E¹, Seventh Infantry², California Volunteers, which, as you know, was raised in Calaveras.

After spending a few pleasant months at the Presidio we at length received orders to take up our line of march for Arizona. Consequently we, together with Company D³, and Col. Chas. W. Lewis and Regimental Staff, embarked Mar. 31st on board the steamer *Senator* for Wilmington. Here let me say that if any of your readers desire a pleasant trip with a sailor and a gentleman, I would recommend that they apply for passage with Capt. John S. Butters, of the *Senator*, who will make it a pleasure trip indeed.

Arrived at Wilmington, (which although a seaport, is approached by a small shallow creek with lighters), we marched to Drum Barracks, about one mile from town, arriving there on the afternoon of April 2nd.

Behold, then at one o'clock, April 4th, Companies D and E, accompanied by a train of 10 wagons, leaving civilization behind for a three years' sojourn in the wilds of Arizona.

Leaving Drum Barracks, we marched 8 miles that afternoon, making camp on a small creek of excellent water.⁴ April 5, 1865: Leaving camp at 6:30 A.M. April 5th, we marched 18 miles to San Gabriel River (a noble stream about 4 feet wide), leaving Los Angeles 12 miles to left. That night a messenger arrived from Col. James F. Curtis with news of fall of Richmond, at which there was great rejoicing.

April 6: The next day we made 18 miles over good road and

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camped at Temescal on a small creek in a beautiful grove of cottonwood. That night had our first discomfort—heavy rain—which to folks lying on the ground, is not pleasant.

April 8: We traveled 16 miles to the Big Lagoon⁵ passing the Little Lagoon⁶ on the way. The road is a level plain—soil, barren and rocky.

April 9: On the 9th, we marched 26 miles through a rolling country, making camp at Temecula or Melrose, an old Overland Station now inhabited by Indians. On Monday we traveled 15 miles through a hilly country to a place called Dutchman's Ranch. (Gef-tareus).

April 11: On April 11th, 18 miles to La Cruz.⁷ On the road, at a place called Cable's Ranch, lives a sister of the late Moses Ferguson, formerly of Mokelumne Hill.

April 12: On April 12th, 22 miles to San Felipe through a thickly settled Indian country. This day Sergeant-Major Davidson and Quartermaster Sergeant Richardson took a wrong trail and have not been heard from since, although every effort was made to find them. The next two days we marched 36 miles over a barren and sandy country, arriving on the 14th at Carriso Creek, the last march that side of the great Yuma Desert. Here, changing the march to night, we left camp on the evening of the 15th and marched 36 miles to Indian Wells, an old stage station where we found about enough water to use and not very good at that.

Next night we traveled due east 30 miles—18 of which was hard good road—the balance being heavy sand. At 5:00 A.M. we made Alamo Wells. Leaving 6:00 P.M. we passed Seven Wells at 12:30 o'clock and camped at Cock's Wells, having marched 24 miles. We met here Company E, Fourth Infantry California Volunteers, returning from Yuma to Drum Barracks.

April 18: On the 18th we started at 5:00 P.M. marching 12 miles over a heavy sandy road, and then 6 miles to Pilot Knob on the Colorado River, which we reached at 11:30 P.M.

April 19: On the 19th, leaving camp at 7:00 A.M. we pro-

ceeded through a heavy sand storm for 10 miles on the river to Fort Yuma. Arrived here, we rested one day to prepare for the harder journey yet to come. At Yuma, we found Companies A and B, Seventh Infantry, California Volunteers under command of Capt. James P. Olmstead of Company A.

April 21: On the 21st we started on our march up to the Gila. Leaving Yuma at 1:00 P.M. we marched 5 miles. Next day we made a camp called Oroville, 17 miles. Owing to the strolling propensities of some of our mules, we were compelled to lay over one day.

April 24: On the 24th we marched 17 miles over a very sandy road arriving at Filibuster Camp, the former rendezvous of Crabb and his men before they went into Sonora.

April 25: Next day 18 miles to Mohawk Station.

April 26: On the 26th, 20 miles to a beautiful camp on the river, one mile from the road, called Teamster's Camp.

April 27: On the 27th, 24 miles to Burke's Station, through a beautiful country covered with wild timothy and a profuse growth of mesquite trees, as indeed, there is all through Arizona.

April 28: On the 28th we traveled over barren rocky mesas, 11 miles and passed the spot where the Oatman family were murdered in '56, camping on Oatman Flat, 12 miles from last camp. Here we received the news of the assassination of President Lincoln. The greatest indignation and sorrow was manifested, and it was lucky for the murderer that he was not in our camp.

April 29-30: The next two days we marched 29 miles to the Big Bend of the Gila.

May 1: May 1st, leaving camp at 5:00 P.M. we marched over sandy mountain desert to Maricopa Wells.

May 3: Leaving on the 3rd, we marched 15 miles to Pimo Village, passing through a large number of Indian villages.

On our trip we had Mr. Ammi White, his wagon, and last, though not by any means the least, his young partner, Jerry Stevens, the incomparable Jerry—Jerry the hunter. Now if you, or any-

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body else ever, go that way, do stop and see Jerry. He is an institution himself (as he would be anywhere) the life of the party. The only drawback about Jerry is his contempt for the noble Apaches. He doesn't like them. But language fails to do him justice; call and see him and you will not regret it.

May 4: On the 4th, 12 miles to Sakatone Station, the last camp on the Gila. Leaving that camp we marched 24 miles to Blue Water Station, a deep well on a sandy plain.

May 5: The next day we marched 17 miles to Picachio where we expected to find water, but being disappointed were compelled to travel 25 miles further to the well at Point of Rocks. Arriving there at 8:00 P.M. we found water, and were obliged to dig out some 30 feet of the well which had caved in, reaching water at 3:00 A.M., having been 24 hours and marched 42 miles on one canteen of water to the man and nothing to eat. On the road we passed the graves of Lieut. James Barrett and three of his men of the First Cavalry, California Volunteers, killed by secessionists in '62.⁸

May 7: On the 7th we made Tucson, a town formerly of importance. It is built of adobe and has but three or four white inhabitants. We camped 2 miles this side on an alkali flat, near Santa Cruz River.

May 9: On the 9th, marched nine miles to camp on same river, passing on the way, the old Mission of San Xavier, 137 years old, the inside of which beggars all description. It contains some fine paintings and some of the most beautiful plaster statues I have ever seen.

May 10: The next day we marched 24 miles through a fine thickly wooded country.

May 11: On the morning of the 11th at 9:00 o'clock, we marched through the town of Tubac and proceeded one half mile beyond our present camp, having been 42 days from San Francisco, and having marched 651 miles in 34 days.

Tubac is a small adobe town at present inhabited by Mexicans and garrisoned by Company L, First California Cavalry, Captain

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John L. Merriam. This company was partly raised in Calaveras County, and here, now, are some 40 or 50 Calaveras men besides our own Company. Among others I saw: Lieut. A. W. Norton, formerly Justice of Peace at West Point; Corporal Wood; Privates Thos. B. Grant, O. W. Show, Henry A. Butterfield of Mokelumne Hill.

I will not trespass longer on your space but in my next will endeavor to give you some idea of the vast, mineral wealth, as well as of agricultural value of the celebrated "Gadsden Purchase."

Yours & etc.
Calaveras.

From the Dutch Flat *Enquirer*, August 12, 1865, a letter to J. F. Calderwood from his brother Captain M. H. Calderwood of Company D, Seventh Infantry, California Volunteers:

Calabasas, Arizona Territory,
June 27, 1865

I wrote a letter by the last Express which I hope you will receive before this reaches you. I think that I told you that I should move in a few days. I left Tubac on the 21st with my company and came up here, fifteen miles from Tubac, where there will be a fort built this summer, if the Indians will give us time to build it. So much for the reason why I am here.

Now for the current news. On Friday I was out with an escort of the Sergeant and six men hunting for lime rock, to be used in the new fort. I had looked around some time and was one and half miles from camp, when I got the news that the Indians had broken into the Valley about a mile and a half above where I was. I immediately started for the fight with my six men. I went about one mile and came to a ranch on which the Indians were then advancing to attack. They saw me before I did them, and broke and ran. I kept on a half mile farther to the ranch that was attacked. Around and

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in the house, four women and two children lay dead, and one man mortally wounded. The women outside the house were stripped of every rag of clothing.

They did not kill all the people there, as I broke into their nice little arrangement, as I had done at the ranch below. They saw me coming before their work was finished and left the scene of their exploits without giving me a chance to exchange shots with them.

When I first got up to the ranch, I was told that there were 200 Indians. I thought then they would see the small number of my company and venture on and attack, but they did not see fit to pitch in. I waited here until I got more men. I then followed the Indians and they made a break back to the mountains. They stopped long enough to kill an oxen about six miles from the scene of their first attack, but I did not give them time to do more mischief. I followed them until twelve o'clock that night, and being out of provision, I had to desist and come home. Some of my men marched over 50 miles that day without a single complaint.

I have a company of men that will fight or march with any of them. My company broke up the raid of the Indians and saved the lives of at least twenty persons, so you can see that we have done some good already, with a good prospect of doing more.

The Indians are still dangerous, so much so, that I have doubled my guard and sent out three parties on picket. If they attack me, I will give them a very warm reception. This is a very warm country, a great deal warmer than it is in California. We have the old fashioned thunder and lightning here as we did in the States.

I wrote you in my last that I had not been well since I left San Francisco, but now I am in good health and walk twenty or thirty miles without any trouble. My men are all well.

The place where we are stopping is an old Mexican military post, built a good many years ago, but is now almost in ruins. It is a very pleasant place with plenty of wild turkeys, so we have

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more or less game to eat. Vegetables are rather scarce but we have gardens growing which will furnish us a supply this fall.

Capt. M. H. Calderwood
Company D Seventh Infantry,
California Volunteers.

NOTES :

1. This company was raised by Captain Hiram Ashley Messenger of Camp Seco, Calaveras County, and mustered into the service of the United States November 29, 1864 at San Francisco. The company was stationed at the Presidio, San Francisco, from the date of organization to the last of March 1865. It then went to Tubac, Arizona Territory, until May, 1866, when it was ordered back to the Presidio, San Francisco, for the final muster out which occurred June 28, 1866. In accordance with Special Order No. 61.
Captain Hiram Ashley Messenger was born in Peru, Berkshire County, Massachusetts. He left there April 19, 1852 and came overland to Stockton, arriving October 19, 1852. He soon followed the throngs of gold seekers to Mokelumne Hill. Later he purchased a thousand acre ranch near Camp Seco. Capt. Messenger was one of the original projectors of the San Joaquin and Sierra Nevada Railroad. He discovered and helped develop the copper mines at Camp Seco. He served one year in the state legislature. His home, "Casa Blanca," was one of the finest in Calaveras County. His daughter, Mrs. Ed Mayer, still lives at Campo Seco, and is one of three pioneers, still living in the town that was once the center of rich gravel mines.
2. This regiment of infantry was organized in San Francisco Jan. 24, 1865, under Col. Chas. W. Lewis, who was mustered a Colonel Jan. 11, 1865. He was made Brevet Brigadier-General of Volunteers Mar. 13, 1865, for faithful and meritorious service; was mustered out May 22, 1866. He died Feb. 3, 1871.
The headquarters of the regiment was at Presidio, San Francisco, until March 1, 1865; then at Tubac, A. T. until June, 1865; then at Fort Mason, A. T. until its return to San Francisco to be mustered out, which took place May 22, 1866.
There are no remarks on the muster rolls or monthly returns of headquarters or the companies of this regiment, showing the service they performed.
3. This company was raised by Captain M. H. Calderwood at Dutch Flat and was mustered into the service at the Presidio, San Francisco, January 28, 1865; it remained at the Presidio until April, 1865, when it marched to Tubac, Arizona Territory, where it remained until September, 1865; then at Fort Mason, A. T. until March, 1866, when it was ordered to the Presidio for muster out, which took place May 22, 1866.
Forty seven of the Dutch Flat boys, enlisted in Captain M. H. Calderwood's Company. According to the muster rolls, Dutch Flat supplied a total of sixty-one men for the Column from California.
4. San Domingo Ranch.
5. Laguna Grande is now known as Lake Elsinore.
6. Lagunita is Lee's Lake.
7. Puerta La Cruz is an Indian village, about five miles from Camp Wright near Oak Grove, San Diego County. Its origin is described as follows in an entry in Father Sanchez's Diary, dated September 10, 1821: "Spanish missionaries left Santa Isabel and followed the canyon to where it enters San Jose Valley. Instead of turning east at this point, they continued north, crossing the highest hill, and in two and one half hours reached a small hill jutting out into the road. They placed a cross here. There were springs to the north and west and hilly land south-east. They selected this site for a mission and called it Puerta de La Cruz."
8. Lieut. James Barrett killed in action April 15, 1862.