

I receive with great pleasure the message from General Scott.  
The greatest aid has been taken to expel him against me, but I trust  
Col. W. J. Worth has been so successful in his children before the people of the  
8th Inf't.  
Tampa Bay Florida  
notions might have been established in the way with the objection

of a gentleman.  
Fort Shannon  
2 March 1841

My Dear Col./

Yours of the 22nd Ult. I have the pleasure of receiving. I  
have long ceased to call this indian Hunt "war". The only way it can be  
terminated is by negotiation, & I trust the present one will not be  
broken in upon for some time; if the indians should run off, the efforts  
at negotiating should not cease; if they can be kept quiet during the summer  
much will be gained; good faith should be kept with them; it is the very  
worst policy to deceive an indian. I regret that I am not in a situation  
to assist in the pacific measures. I would very cheerfully do so if I was.  
The plan I would pursue would be to scout on the line from this to Fort  
Fanning for some twenty miles on each side of the road, & withdraw all the  
troops from the interior except on the eastern atlantic coast, & let the  
indians understand that all caught within the boundaries prescribed would be  
treated as enemies

My command is much reduced by disease, but I trust they will  
regain their health here. I have left one company at Fort Mellon; this post  
should be kept up at a great sacrifice.

SEMINOLE INDIAN WAR FLORIDA 1841

\* Fort Shannon 2 March 1841

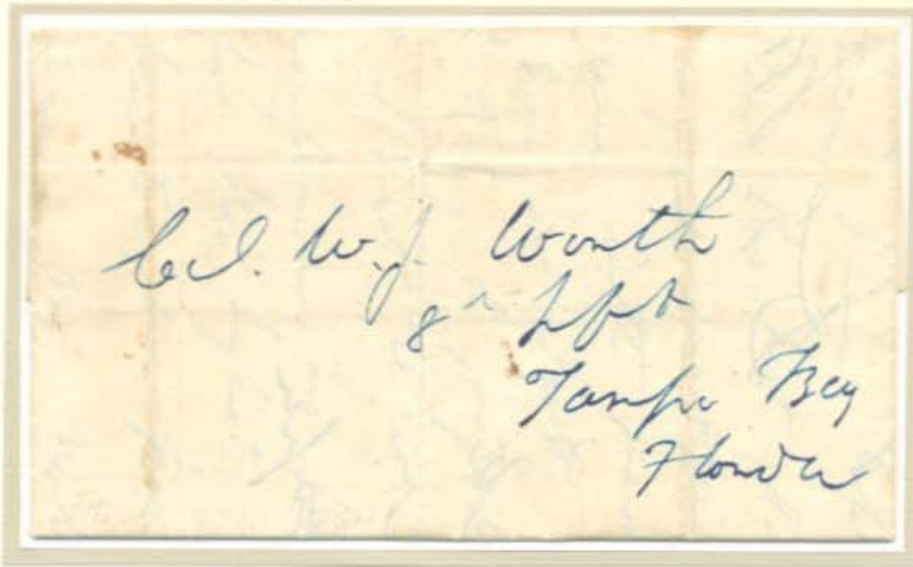
My Dear Col. Yours of the 22nd Ult. I have the pleasure of receiving. I have long ceased to call this Indian Hunt "war". The only way it can be terminated is by negotiation, & I trust the present one will not be broken in upon for some time; if the Indians should run off, the efforts of negotiation should not cease; if they can be kept quite during the summer much will be gained; good faith should be kept with them; it is the very worst policy to deceive an Indian. I regret that I am not in a situation to assist in the pacific measures. I would very cheerfully do so if I was. The plan I would pursue would be to scout on the line from this to Fort Fanning for some twenty miles on each side of the road, & withdraw all the troops from the interior except on the eastern Atlantic coast, & let the Indians understand that all caught within the boundaries prescribed would be treated as enemies. My command is much reduced by disease, but I trust they will regain their health here. I have left one company at Fort Mellon; this post should be kept up at a great sacrifice.

I receive with great pleasure the message from General [Winfield] Scott. The greatest pain has been taken to prejudice him against me, but I trust he is convinced he has been misinformed; but his position before the people for the highest office in our country prevented me from writing him long since. My notions might have been misconstrued - no man can say with the shadow of truth I have ever uttered a syllable derogatory to him as an officer or man. I intend to go north in the spring, when I trust I shall have the pleasure of meeting him. [Scott]

Very truly yours\*

*D. S. Twiggs*

Col W. J. Worth/8th Inft/Tampa



Col. W. J. Worth  
8th Inft  
Tampa Bay  
Florida

Letter carried by military courier from Fort Shannon, on the St. Johns River at Palatka to Tampa Bay. Col. David E. Twiggs, commanding the 2nd Dragoons, writes to Wm. J. Worth, 8th Infantry, on the possible strategy for the Seminole Indian war. He also mentions Genl. Scott running for president - "the highest office in our country". Genl. Worth commanded the First Division and Twiggs the Second, Army of Invasion, in the war with Mexico 1847. Both were officers in the War of 1812. Twiggs joined the Confederate States army as a Maj. Genl. in 1861. He died July 15, 1862.



GENERAL TAPPAN AND MOUNTAIN VIEW.

From the original made in the possession of the Publishers.

London, New York & Philadelphia, U.S.A.





ANNEXATION OF TEXAS 1845  
TAYLOR ORDERED TO CORPUS CHRISTI

Lieut. Israel B. Richardson writes to his father from "Fort Jessup, La. July 2nd '45" . . . we are getting ready for a March - Orders have at length arrived for the troops to enter Texas, as soon as the results of the Texan convention is known, which meets on the fourth of July - Their Congress has already decided unanimously that annexation shall pass - This result was brought . . . . . immediately from Washington Texas to this post - Lieut. Lay [George W.] 6th Inf has just arrived here direct from Washington D.C. with dispatches for Genl. Taylor - Genl. Taylor's instructions from our Sec. of War, are to proceed with the 3d and 4th Infantry and 2nd Dragoons, to some point on the Gulf and enter Texas as soon as the results of the convention is made known to him - Genl. Taylor has an order published yesterday for the 4th Infy to proceed day after tomorrow by water from Grand Ecore to N. Orleans Barracks by water and then await for further orders - Also an order for the 3d Regt. to proceed to the same place by water immediately and then await further orders - The Dragoons will march by land on their horses - The Infantry are expected to remain at N. Orleans Barracks between four days and a week, for the purpose of storing all their baggage at that post or with the Quarter-master in the City, and also for the purpose of shipping from the Red River boats, into larger ones - It is only 24 hours sail from N. Orleans to Galveston, and in three weeks at most, we shall be upon the Rio del Norte. Capt. Stockton's fleet mounting 160 guns in all, is also waiting orders at Galveston - Both Regts. of Infy are now full, 2 detachments of recruits having arrived within 2 months from N. York - The Regts are each, about 550 strong including rank and file - There is a report also that the 3d artillery is under orders for Texas - The report that Genl. Arista [Mariano] was concentrating the Mexicans in force for the purpose of occupying the Country East of the Rio Grande and West of the Neuces [river], turns out to be correct, from the information recieved by travellers coming from that part of the Country - Capt Waggaman [George G.] U.S. Artillery has been dispatched to Washington Texas for the purpose of informing Genl. Taylor of the time when the Convention of Deligates of the several Counties, agree to annexation - As it is only 250 miles to Washington their seat of government and as their convention is expected to agree immediately, by the 10th of July we may be at Galveston on the 15th at farthest - Our Regt. marches for Grand Ecore on the 6th - . . . . . I. B. Richardson"

\*\*\*\*\*

The Texas Congress accepted annexation to the U.S. as a state on July 4, 1845. General Taylor landed a force near Corpus Christi on July 25th. On March 8, 1846 he issued his proclamation for the Occupation of Texas to the Rio Grande River. SEE original copy in this collection.

*Quartel General, Ejercito de Ocupacion,*  
Corpus Christi, 8 de Marzo, de 1846.

ORDEN. 7  
NUM. 30. 5

EL Ejercito de Ocupacion en Tejas, estando ya para tomar posicion sobre la banda izquierda del Rio Grande, bajo las ordenes del Ejecutivo de los Estados Unidos, el General en Jefe, desea espresar la esperanza, que el movimiento sera provechoso a todos los interesados, y para cumplir exactamente con un fin tan laudable, ha mandado a todos de su mando, que mantengan, el bajo la mas escrupuloso respecto, los derechos de los habitantes que se encuentren en ocupacion pacifico de sus respectivos avocaciones, tanto sobre la banda izquierda, como la derecha del Rio Grande. Bajo ningun pretesto, ni de cualesquiera manera, se ha de entremeter en los derechos civiles, ni los privilegios religiosos de los habitantes; pero siempre mantendra el mayor respecto a ambos.

Cualesquiera cosa que se necesite, para el gasto del Ejercito, sera comprado por el Provedor, y pagado a los mejores precios. El General en Jefe, tiene la satisfaccion de decir, que tiene confianza en el patriotismo y la diciplina del Ejercito bajo su mando, y esta seguro de que sus ordenes seran obedidos con la mayor exactitud.

**Z. TAYLOR, Bt. Bd. General en Jefe,**  
Ejercito de los Estados Unidos.



## THE WESTERN MAILS

PALO ALTO 1846

Capt. Charles H. Larnard, 4th regiment, reports to Col. Ethan Allen Hitchcock on the battles of May 8 and 9th, at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma. Written on the captured letterhead of the Mexican "General en Cefe" 5 days after the two battles.

"Camp opposite Metamoros/May 14, 1846

My dear Col You will have seen long ere this reaches you accounts of our success in the papers. It has not been in my power however to write sooner. It was with some difficulty that I got off letters to my family. No doubt however you have some one of your own regiment who has been more prompt. This paper was, as you see by the heading, part of Genl [Mariano] Arista's staff baggage - I thought you might like to have a sheet of it. Since the battles [Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, May 8th and 9th] all has been quiet. Genl. Taylor is still at Pt Isabel where he went on the 11th. We are encamped on our old positions. We have reports that reinforcements are on the way to join the enemy, but for the present his army is completely disorganized. The battle was won without an order or a maneuver from the Genl. Solely by the impetuosity and daring of officers & men. The 8th, 5th & 4th, lost most killed & wounded after the Dragoons. May [Capt. Charles] had nine men, a corporal and an officer killed in his squadrone; his charge was the most brilliant and dashing thing of both days, the enemy made no stand... except in small parties here and there. At the first day the principal credit belongs to Duncan [Capt. James, Light artillery] and the artillery in general; the 5th repulsed a charge of [Mexican] lancers but the remainder of the Infantry had little to do but to lie still and be shot at. The enemy lost from 7 to 800 in killed and wounded in this first action, the battle of "Palo Alto" (High Stick) - There whole loss on both days in killed wounded and prisoners is not less than 1500 probably more, many men drowned besides in swimming the river [Rio Grande] in their flight. Had the town [Matamoros] been summoned that night I have little doubt it would have surrendered. Of the eight pecies of artillery taken, six 6 pds & two 12s, all but three were loaded with cannister, I drew the loads with my own hands the next day; they were all brass guns and very good, though the carriages were old & clumsy, their artillery was well served and armed with much precision. Their shells were thrown with great precision after a little practice, but they usually struck and mised before bursting, and most of them were copper or gun metal, very many did not burst at all. Our garrison fired away 2/3 their ammunition on the first day and were unable afterwards to return the enemies fire for fear of an assault, the 18th had only 120 rounds per gun. The officers who were exchanged say that Genl [Pedro de] Ampudia was the first to recross the river and that immediately on his arrival he charged Arista with having sold the Army. Genl La Vega is said to be the only one in whom they had confidence and he certainly acted most gallantly and was taken by [Capt] May \* standing between the wheels of a gun and defending himself against several dragoons. Lincoln [Capt George, killed Feb. 23, 1847 at the battle of Buena Vista] of the 8th [regiment] cut down two Mexicans with his own hand, one of whom had first severely wounded Jordan [Lt. Charles D.] of the same Regiment. I do not attempt giving you any connected account of the actions because you will see the official report as soon as you do this. A more complete victory was never gained against the same disparity of force, had present been sharper large bodies would have surrendered, but our men were worn out and could not follow far. . . . . I hope you may soon be able to join us again. I miss you constantly in spite of the estrangement which for some time you had seemed to feel. I do not think from all I can learn that Morris [Lt. Lewis N., killed on Sept. 21, 1846 at battle of Monterey] \* did your regiment justice, but of this you will know more than I. truly yours / C."

4.<sup>th</sup> DIVISION MILITARY

GENERAL IN CHIEF,



CORRESPONDENCE

PARTICULAR,

Camp opposite Metamora

May 14. 1846

My dear Col

You will have seen long on the  
pages you are aunts of our success in the papers, it  
has not been in my power however to write sooner,  
it was with some difficulty that I got off letters to my  
family, no doubt however you have some one of your  
own agent who has been more prompt. This  
paper was, as you see by the heading, part of Gen. Strickland's  
staff baggage - I thought you might like to have a  
sheet of it. Since the battles all has been quiet, Gen.  
Wayn is still at Ft. Graham where he went on the 11<sup>th</sup>  
we are encamped on our old positions. We have re-  
ports that reinforcements are on the way to join the  
Army, but for the present his army is completely  
disorganized. The battle was won without an order  
or a maneuver from the Gen. solely by the impetuosity  
and daring of officers & men. The 5<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> lost most  
killed & wounded after the dragons, May had some  
men a corporal and an officer killed in his Squadron  
alone; his charge was the most brilliant and dashing  
thing of both days, the enemy made no stand after it  
except in small parties here and there. Of the first  
day the principal credit belongs to Duncan and  
the other regiments. The 5<sup>th</sup> repulsed a charge of lanciers



10  
MAY 19 1865  
J. A. B.

10  
Care E. A. Hitchcock  
3rd Regt. Va. S. Inf. B.

Atkins No. 1  
If the st. has left  
with the steamboat  
please procure them  
at once

recd. May 24. 65

14 - May 1865  
written upon a  
sheet of paper taken  
in the battle of the  
9 - May near Manassas  
road

Capt. Charles H. Fairbank  
4th Massachusetts  
14 - May 1865



## THE WESTERN MAILS

Hitchcock suffered from chronic diarrhea most of his life and had gone back to St. Louis to be treated by the famous army surgeon Dr. William Beaumont. Beaumont had resigned in 1839 and was in private practice at the time of this letter. While stationed at Fort Mackinac, in 1822, he treated Alexis St. Martin, a young Canadian, who had been wounded in his side by a shotgun blast. Although St. Martin survived, the "fistula" exposing the interior of the stomach never closed but developed a flap of skin that could be pushed aside. Thus Dr. Beaumont was able to observe the action of the stomach and the gastric juices over a period of years. His published observations constitute the greatest contribution ever made to the knowledge of gastric digestion. Beaumont was a great friend of both Hitchcock and Robert E. Lee. He died in 1853 and St. Martin in 1873.

- \*Although May was given credit for the capture of La Vega, it was Col. Belknap and the 8th Infantry who should have got the credit
- \*Lt. Morris took over command of the 3rd Infantry from Hitchcock. In 1847 Scott brought Hitchcock back as his Inspector General for the invasion of Mexico. Morris was killed at the battle of Monterey.



## THE WESTERN MAILS

W.W.S. BLISS TO ETHAN ALLEN HITCHCOCK JULY 1846.

"Matamoros, Mex. / July 23 1846

My dear Col. I had just completed a hasty sketch of our route to Saltillo and was doubting which of several correspondents to send it to, when your kind favor of June 29th settled the matter, and I wondered that I should have hesitated a moment. I am much gratified at the lively interest you have taken in my own personal fortunes as connected with our affairs in May and will now tell you all about the fate of the "little sorrel." Soon after the enemy opened his batteries upon our line on the 8th [Palo Alto], I was despatched with an order to the 5th Infantry on the extreme right. On my way thither I saw Lt. Ridgely's [Randolph, killed by a fall from his horse striking his head] mare standing in front of the battery with her lower jaw shot off - the first blood shed I witnessed. On my return from the right flank I discovered that my horse was bleeding at the nose and ascertained that he had been grazed by a ball, but not enough so to disable him. Not long after I joined the General [Taylor] our group moved to the right and when about in rear of the center a cannon ball coming obliquely from a Mexican battery on the left struck my horse in the left shoulder and came out at his breast - He instantly fell with me, but rose again to his feet when unsaddled. As he evidently could not live I caused him to be shot to put him out of misery. The General was on my left and about a half length in rear at the time - the ball passed just in front of his horse [Old Whitey] - was on my right. This ball seems to have been rather a stray one - at any rate we were under no heavy fire; but late in the afternoon, the General & his staff were exposed to a fire which it is almost miraculous that they all escaped. Capt. May [Charles] was in motion with his squadron [dragoons] and formed a conspicuous mark for one of the enemy's batteries. The General had just been indicating to Capt. M. the direction which he wished him to take for a particular purpose, when several guns were opened upon the mass and fired in the most rapid succession. The General with his staff & escort was exactly in the range and was exposed to great danger. One ball passed between the legs of his horse and killed that of his orderly - others struck May's squadron, and wounded several men & killed half a dozen horses.

Excuse me for these perusal details - they have been invited by the interest you seem to take in the particulars of the engagement. I could supply many more had I some time and patience. But they will keep until we meet again. Many of those which appear the papers are altogether apocryphal - others are distorted, and I have scarcely seen a sensible account of either affairs. The troops are now in motion for Camargo where a depot is to be established from which we shall move up the valley of the San Juan to Monterey - The 1st and 2nd Brigades are or soon will be in position at that point to be followed by the 3rd in a few days. Genl Worth [Wm. J.] retains command of the 1st Brigade. I suppose Genl Twiggs [David E.] (Heaven save the Mask !)? will have the 2nd Brigade, and Col. Smith (P.F.) whose vols. are going home, the 2nd. The cavalry will come under Sumner [E.V., Major] who ought to come to the 2nd Drag[oons] as Major. Major Munroe [John] is constituted "chief of artillery". The volunteers (12 new men) have been Brigaded by the President [Polk] and have their own generals. Genl Harmer [Thomas L., died Dec. 2, 1846, presented a sword by Congress, posthumously, for gallant service], the Ohio Brigadier, is here, and seems to be a clever man. Maj. Genl. W.O. Butler of Ky [Kentucky] is to command the Ky & Tenn. troops - an old regular officer and very competent man, as we learn. Governor Henderson of Texas is mustered as Major General of the Texas volunteers. The vols. from Louisiana, Alabama & Missouri which were mustered for six months are all to be discharged at the end of three under instructions from the Secretary of War - indeed a portion of them are not allowed to have been legally in service at all. Many of these volunteers are anxious to go home but others are not, and among them and the officers generally this proceeding creates much mortification.



Matamoros, Mex.

July 23 1846.

My dear Col.

I had just completed a hasty sketch of our route to Saltillo and was doubting which of several correspondents to send it to, when your kind favor of June 3<sup>rd</sup> settled the matter, and I wondered that I should have hesitated a moment.

I am much gratified at the lively interest you have taken in my own personal fortunes as connected with our affairs in May and will now tell you all about the fate of the "little corner." Soon after the enemy opened his batteries upon our line on the 5<sup>th</sup>, I was dispatched with an order to the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry on the extreme right. On my way thither I saw Sr. Redondo's men standing in front of the battery with his lower jaw shot off—the first blood shed I witnessed. On my return from the right flank I discovered that my horse was bleeding at the nose and ascertained that he had been grazed by a ball, but not enough so to disable him. Not long after I joined the General, our corps moved to the right and when about in rear of the center a cannon ball coming obliquely from a Mexican battery on the left struck my horse in the left shoulder and came out at his heart. He instantly fell with me, but rose again to

to employ such means if likely to prove successful.  
I have written a long and perhaps tedious  
letter but I could not well make it shorter. I hope  
you will find yourself able to answer it in one of moderate  
length.  
I remain most truly yours,  
W. W. Bliss

Col. E. A. Hitchcock,  
3d Infantry.

E. A. The enclosed joins me in kind wishes for  
your health, and regrets for your own sake and that of  
the service that you are compelled to be absent. Field  
officers of head and activity are rare enough. W. W. Bliss

Capt. W. W. Bliss  
Quarters  
July 23. 1876



## THE WESTERN MAILS

But the President, under the law, has no other course, and the Louisiana people may thank Genl. Gaines [Edmund P.] for bringing them into this scrape. Genl. Taylor required from La. four regiments of Infantry, for the longest period authorized by law - the last clause being intended to cover the case of new legislation at Washington, such as was actually had soon after. Genl. Gaines however calls for heaven knows how many regiments - not only from La. but Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky & Missouri, and all for six months, a period entirely unknown to law. Such of these extra regiments as had actually left for the seat of war before a countermand could reach them were accepted by the President for three months - but the others which came in - two regiments from La. & a battalion from Alabama, are declared to be in service against law and cannot be paid out of any existing appropriation. The 12 months volunteers are rapidly coming in. 18 regiments and a battalion are destined for this point & some three or four regiments for San Antonio. General [John E.] Wool who commands the column intended to operate from San Antonio towards Chihuahua, is placed under General Taylor's orders, but Genl. [Stephen Watts] Kearny acts under independent orders from the Government and will not report to Genl. T. unless circumstances should bring him within our sphere, which he will no doubt take care to avoid. [Kearny operated independently in New Mexico and California]. Steamboats are plying in the river [Rio Grande] as high as Camargo but with considerable difficulty - from that point our transportation inland must be by wagons and pack mules. The General expects a column say of 6000 men to Monterey; a larger force cannot well be subsisted from our own depot. He hopes to find at Saltillo a country affording some resources to his army and will in that case bring forward as many troops as can be subsisted.

I think the Mexicans may meet us once more - perhaps in great force. It is said that [Mariano, General] who is now President (elected by Congress) is moving north with a large army and will give us battle near Monterey. It may be that we shall have no general affair but only a succession of minor efforts to hold particular points. The sketch I send you is copied from a manuscript map found among Genl. [Mariano] Arista's papers and I have represented on it in a mode similar to that on that map the chain of the Sierra Madre and the defile through which the route from Monterey to Saltillo passes. With the exception of ..... mountains. it is not unlike some of the passes in Vermont and may be defended to advantage at particular points - "La rinconada" being one. I think we may look for opposition in this defile, if we do not encounter it at Monterey.

What of meditation or adjustment? I have seen the remarks of Mr. [Daniel] Webster in the Senate and only wish they had come from the other side [Webster was a Whig] that they might have more influence with the President [Polk was a Democrat]. After all it seems to me that the voice of the senate must have great weight. Commander Mackenzie [Alexander Slidell, see Mutiny of U.S.S. Somers in this collection] of the Navy arrived here a few days ago from Havana and had a confidential interview with the General. The camp of course is filled with rumours in regard to his mission. I have reason to believe that his communications to the General were important. He left immediately for the north.\*

The General's son [Richard]\* is with us and if his health permit will go as far as Monterey. I am agreeably disappointed in him. He is well educated and sensible, and not adverse to talking of books and kindred topics. He has had an experience far beyond his years and seems to have lost the freshness usual at his age (21). The General's family will probably spend the sickly months at Fort Pike [La.] or perhaps Biloxi [Miss.]. Young Taylor desires his respects to you.

I hear tho not officially, of my appointment in the staff as Major [bvt. maj. a g 7 July 1846]. While I am gratified with this much of distinction and particularly so on account of my mother and friends. I confess that it does not bring the elation which it ought, and does not reconcile me any the more to a profession which has lost all its charms for me. I long for the time when I shall be able to settle once more to books and study - there is so much undone that I wish to do. Again I regret that I receive this promotion at the expense of Schriver [Capt. Edmund, resigned July 31, 1846, later Maj. Genl. Civil War, Died Feb. 10, 1899], at whose suggestion I was originally appointed in the

## THE WESTERN MAILS

adjutant General's dept. But my position here compels me to accept what under other circumstances I should probably find it expedient to decline. The General is pestered with all sorts of presents and complimentary letters. "Palo Alto" hats, India rubber pouchs and even boxes of patent medicine are sent him and must all be acknowledged. But his greatest torment is the Presidential question. Every mail brings letters from all parts of the Union on that subject - one desiring to know whether his views coincide with Mr. Clay's. [Henry]: another advising him not to commit himself by writing long letters, and warning him against this one and that one: but all saying he can be run in if he will. He replies to all these. . . . . that he has no views to the Presidency - that he is opposed to the elevation to that office of any military chief - and that above all he does not wish his name used in any such connection while operating in the field - as it might inspire the Govt. with distrust and impair his usefulness. [Pres. Polk was of the opposite party of both Scott and Taylor and for that reason was unhappy with both]. Depend upon it, he has no higher ambition than to retire to the bosom of his family. I cannot believe that he will suffer himself to be brought forward as a candidate under any circumstances. I deeply regret as do all our friends that your health still continues so shattered. I truly hope that the autumn will revive the tone of your system and bring you back to us. [See Larnard to Hitchcock in this collection] In the meantime Major [Wm. W., died of wounds Oct. 31st received at battle of Monterey]

time Major Lear [Wm. W., died of wounds Oct. 31st received at battle of Monterey] commands the 3rd with a good deal of efficiency and much to the satisfaction of some of its best officers. It is very long since I have heard from any of the Latimer family, but I hope before a great while to hear from some of them. Should you write, or see any of them in the east please make my very kind regards. Do the same also to Mr. Irwin if this letter should find you still in St. Louis which I hardly expect. Since commencing this sheet we have heard from Camargo that our troops have been extremely well received at that place - that [General Antonio] Canales' followers had left him and Carvajue would doubtless come in, if invited. As [Genl. Mariano] Arista has been disgraced by his government, it would surprise me if he could be made of use to us in effecting a separation of their northern provinces. The General will not hesitate to employ such means if likely to prove successful. I have written a long and perhaps tedious letter, but I could not well make it shorter. I hope you will find yourself able to answer it in one of moderate length. . . . . W.W.S. Bliss

Lt. Col. E. A. Hitchcock, 3rd Infantry.

P.S. The General joins me in kind wishes for your health, and regrets for your own sake and that of the service that you are compelled to be absent. Field officers of head and activity are rare enough. W.W.S.B."





M. P. LEVITSKY

THE SACRIFICED SOLDIER

BATTLE OF NOVAJA ZEMLYA.

Mouth of the Rio Grande July 31, 1846

Dear Mary,

We marched here day before yesterday, and have been ever since encamped on the banks of the river about two hundred yards above the mouth - Our situation is very pleasant here so long as it continues dry weather, but if we should have a heavy rain, our camp ground will become a swamp two feet deep in mud - We shall not remain here more than three days longer I think. We send a detachment of 200 men in the morning to Burita about ten miles up the river to clear away a camp ground; so soon as the ground is cleared we shall march there and remain until we get drilled which will not be till about the middle of September - About that time the fighting will commence - This is the most glorious climate in the world; the sea breeze which blows all the time makes it cool and pleasant even in the middle of the day; and at night a man cannot sleep comfortably without a blanket - Last night the musketoos commenced on us for the first time - tonight we spread our musketo bars - We are encamped right at the water edge my tent is not six feet from the water - I can sit under my tent and catch as many fish as I want - Crabs are abundant; we have them every day for dinner. It would do you good to be at dinner; sitting upon the ground, with a big tumbler of coffee & hard biscuit in one hand, and about half a pound

"Mouth of the Rio Grange, July 31, 1846

Dear Mary, We marched here day before yesterday, and have been ever since encamped on the banks of the river about two hundred yards above the mouth - Our situation is very pleasant here so long as it continues dry weather, but if we should have a heavy rain, our camp ground will become a swamp two feet deep in mud - We shall not remain here more than three days longer I think. We send a detachment of 200 men in the morning to Burita about ten miles up the river to clear away a camp ground; so soon as the ground is cleared we shall march there and remain until we get drilled which will not be till about the middle of September. About that time the fighting will commence - This is the most glorious climate in the world; the sea breeze which blows all the time makes it cool and pleasant even in the middle of the day; and at night a man cannot sleep



comfortably without a blanket - last night the musketoos commenced for the first time - tonight we shall spread our Musketo bars - We are encamped right at the waters edge - my tent is not six feet from the water - I can sit under my tent and catch as many fish as I want - Crabs are abundant , we have them every day for dinner. It would do you good to see us at dinner; sitting upon the ground , each with a big tinful of coffee & hard biscuit, and about half a pound of fat bacon in the other - I dont think I was ever as hungry in all my life as I was day before yesterday after our march from Point Isabel here - The distance is about nine miles, with one river to ford - we started at eleven oclock in the forenoon and arrived here a little after two in the afternoon, pitched our tents and had dinner cooked by three o'clock - Mose [the colored boy servant] makes a very good cook and is a most excellent boy - He is the only servant we have, every boy of the kind had been picked up along the river by the volunteers who had gone before us, and we found it impossible to get another servant of any kind - but our regiment is now very healthy; there is not as many sick as there would be among the same number of people almost anywhere in Indiana. In fact I beleive that the banks of the Rio Grande are as healthy as the banks of the Ohio. We have not had a case of sickness since we arrived at Point Isable - All that we have sick are we brought here sick with us and they are all fast recovering. The country around here is not very beautiful to the sight; on the sea coast white sand beaches miles in extent meet the eye in all directions - On the banks of the river, a low flat mud bottom extends as far as the eye can reach; the banks are not more than three feet higher than the river, and have nothing but a tough grass growing upon them - mingled with a species of ground cherry something like the kind that grows in Indiana, but much larger and better pland. There are no inhabitants here of any kind. As we go up the river however I am told the country gets better, and around Matamoros there is said to be a fine country. The river itself is very rapid, about two hundred yards wide, and the middiest water I ever saw. It makes most excellent coffee, the mud being a good substitute for cream - By letting it stand a few hours with a peice of prickly pear in it, it becomes very clear, and is really a very excellent & healthy water - It is the only water we have; all the springs and wells being full of salt, and not fit to drink.

Aug. 1, 1846

..... This afternoon we got orders to march about four o'clock, struck our tents immediately and about eight o'clock this evening encamped at our present camping ground about nine miles from the mouth of the river - Tomorrow we move back about a mile to a high piece of ground in the chapparel, where we shall remain to drill for about six weeks - We get plenty of fresh beef here for the trouble of shooting it - Cattle are roming in the woods in great numbers without owners, the Mexicans all having left here - The country about the mouth of the river is very singular in its appearance, being perfectly level for thirty or forty miles in every direction, and not more than two or three feet higher than the river - I lay in my tents where it is now pitched and dip water out of the river - The land is not culterated and is so saturated with salt water that I do not believe any thing could be raised upon it. There was once a large city built upon the island at Point Isabel where we first encamped but it was swept away by a hurricane and no traces of it are now to be seen. We meet every day large numbers of the Louisiana troops returning home, their time being out - They all have their beards about six inches long, and are really the roughest looking specimens of human nature I ever saw. I suppose however we shall not look much better by the time we have been here three months. Dr. Arthur is still at Point Isabel laying in his medicines, hospital stores & John Dann has charge of the medical department during his absence, and gives universal satisfaction by the way in which he discharges his duties - I I had intended to fill out this sheet before I quit writing but it ie now about midnight, and I am somewhat tired and the letter must go at daylight - Do not have the least uneasiness about my health - I never felt better in my life, and I do not believe there is a healthier country in the world - Milt desires to be remembered to somebody - Give my love to all enquiring friends, and write at least once a week - continue to direct your letters to Point Isabel - care of the Quartermaster - to me as Capt. of Company I. 3d Regimant of Indiana Volunteers

yours affectionately T.W.Gibson"

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## THE WESTERN MAILS

ETHAN ALLEN HITCHCOCK

"West Point August 1st 1816

My Dear Brother I have recd your letter of the 14th ult. & I acknowledge you have written both; most & last; but that is not saying much for you, for we both maintained silence quite too long. In consequence of my letter to Sister Mary, I can give you no news, as I have given her an exact account of all that has happened at this place of any consequence to the family; therefore my design in this is to give you a copy of the course of studies which is to complete my Education - as follows. -

United States Military Academy West Point May 22nd 1816 -

The following branches of Science & Instruction shall be considered as comprising a complete course of Education at the Military Academy at West Point, state of N. York, viz English & French Languages; & the review of the Latin & Greek Languages; Mathematics; Military Drawing; Natural & Experimental Philosophy, including Astronomy; Engineering; Geography; History; Ethics; Military Instruction & The Sword Exercise.

- 1 English Language. A course of English shall consist of English Grammar & Composition.
- 2 French Language. A course of French shall consist in pronouncing the Language Tolerably, and translating from French & English to English & French with accuracy.
- 3 Latin & Greek Language. A course of Latin & Greek shall embrace the review of the Latin and Greek authors usually taught in Academics. No Cadet shall be compelled to study those Languages who shall not have been taught them previous to his appointment.
- 4 Mathematics. A complete course of Mathematics shall embrace the following branches; viz, The Nature & construction of Logarithms; and the use of the tables, Algebra, to include the solution of Cubic Equations and all the preceding rules, Geometry, to include Plane & Solid Geometry also Rectivs & Proportions[?], and the construction of Geomtrical Problems; Application of Algebra to Geometry; Practical Geometry on the ground; Mensuration of Planes & Solids. Plane Trigonometry, with its application to surveying & measuring Heights & Distances; Spherical Trigonometry, with its application to the Solution of Spherical Problems. The doctrine of Infinite Series, Como [?] Sections with their application to Military and other Projectiles; Fluctions to be taught and studied at the option of the Profssor & Student.
- 5 Drawing. A complete course of Drawing shall include the elementary drawing of figures; Rules & Practice of Perspective; Pleins & Profiles of Permanent Fortifications of every kind; as also of Field work, & Topographical Plans.
- 6 Philosophy. A complete course of Philosophy shall embrace the following branches; viz The principles of Mechanics with their general application; Hydraulics, Pneumatics, Optics; The Elements of Chemistry, Electricity Magnetism & Astronomy.
- 7 Engineering. A complete course of Engineering shall embrace the following brabches, viz Military & Civil Architecture :Permanent & Solid Fortifications; Field-works generally; Rules for the calculations of Labour, . . . . . & materials necessary for the construction of diferent kines of works, also rules for the construction of all the appendages necessary in Field-works; The construction of Mines & . . . . .; and the different modes of attacking & Defending Fortified places, also Castramentations [the art of encanpment]
- 8 Geography. A complete course of geography shall embrace the solution of the several problems of the spheres usually prefixed to the systems of Geography by means of . . .Globe. A knowledge of the grand Divisions of the Earth, if the ExtentBoundaries Relatives Situations of the Several Countries situated on each of those grand Divisions, embracing likewise a knowledge of their natural Productions, Commerce, Manufactures, Government, Naval & Military Strength, relative importance with use of the maps &c.

- 10 Ethics. A course of Ethics shall include the elements of Moral Science, also of Natural & Political Law.
- 11 Military Instruction. A complete course of Military Instruction shall embrace a general course of Tactics, A knowledge of Infantry Duty to command with the elementary Drill of the Soldier, & to include the discipline [discipline] & police of the Battalion & Platoon in all its parts. A knowledge of Artillery Duty including the Artillery Drill; Practical Gunnery & also the performance of the regular Duty of a camp.
- 12 Sword Exercise. Under the Sword Exercise shall be included the Broad Sword Exercise with the cut & Thrust or Small Sword either or both according to circumstances.

You will plainly see by the above that I shall not be promoted as soon as you think & I am as far from wishing it as any person. If you could make it convenient to leave home before the first of next month, I should like it much better because of the absence of the Cadets. I wish you by all means not to forget to fill your Trunk with Books, Youngs works for one, & to bring all the Latin Books you have as I am Determined to learn that Language if possible. Dont fail in this last request. Give my love to all the family; Tell Sister Mary to write me & make Mama write me. - Your affectionate Brother  
Ethan A. Hitchcock'

P.S. I have marked with a (x) all I have studied."

*Ethan A. Hitchcock*  
*E.A.H.*



Postmarked at "West Point August 2" 1816.

**ETHAN ALLEN HITCHCOCK - 1798/1870** - graduated from West Point the year before the above letter was written - July 17, 1817. He rose to rank of Captain and from 1824 to 1827 was assistant instructor of infantry tactics at the academy. In 1829 he was commandant of cadets having under his instruction Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, William L. Sherman and other Civil War officers of distinction. As a Lt. Col. of the 3rd Infantry, served in the Indian wars in Florida and with Genl. Zachary Taylor's army of occupation in Mexico in 1845. After a short leave of absence because of ill health, he returned to Mexico in time to serve as inspector-general to Genl. Winfield Scott's Army of Invasion in the conquest of Mexico 1847/48. He resigned in 1855 because of continued ill health. In 1862 he offered his services because of the Civil War and was appointed major-general of volunteers serving until he was mustered out Oct. 1, 1867. Hitchcock's mother was a daughter of the celebrated Revolutionary patriot Ethan Allen of Ticonderoga. See other letter in this collection by Hitchcock.



B-HARRIS-1 8

Forage Return for 23 Horses & Mules in the service  
 of Capt B McCulloch's Company of Texas Rangers  
 for five days commencing the 16<sup>th</sup> and ending the 20<sup>th</sup>  
 of June 1846

(cost -) 650  
 2644  
 8

Fort Brown June 16 <sup>th</sup> 1846	No of Horses	No of Mules	Total of animals	No of Days	Total of Rations	Daily allowance for each Horse & Mule			Total of Allowance			Remains	
						Qts Corn	Qts Oats	Lbs Hay	Bush Corn	Bush Oats	Lbs Hay		
	20	3	23	5	115	4	6	5	14.25	20	15	5	

I certify that the above is correct and just

Ben McCulloch  
 Capt Texas Rangers

Received Fort Brown 16<sup>th</sup> June 1846 from Capt  
 Miller asst Q Master U.S.A fourteen Bushels and  
 twelve quarts of corn ~~and twenty one Bushels and~~  
~~sixteen quarts of oats~~ in full of the above  
 Requisition

1105  
 5712

Ben McCulloch  
 Capt - Texas Rangers

## THE WESTERN MAILS



Capture of Captain Thornton.

Point Isabel, Texas  
10th May 1846

*My Dear Doctor*

*You will be surprised at the request that I am now about to make. I have been deprived of my sword by Genl Taylor Comdy the Army here, and placed in arrest, for attacking and endeavoring to cut my way through 2000 Mexicans, with 50 dragoons — His alleged charge against me I understand is disobedience of orders in attacking — but I was surrounded and had either to attack or lay down my arms. Genl Taylor got into a towering passion at my defeat and said I had disobeyed his orders — he has refused me an investigation or to remove my witnesses from the scene of danger — he has refused to furnish me with any charges and has sent none on to Washington so that the War Dept might order a court — he has placed the despot here over me on the eve of an expected battle three days ago. I requested to be permitted to take a musket and go into the ranks. This he peremptorily refused me and in the most insulting manner. My witnesses are exposed to danger, and it is most important that I should have an immediate investigation. Thus my Dear Sir — I must ask you aid in affecting some friend in Washington to go to the President and ask for an immediate investigation by a Court composed of officers of the Army here who are familiar with my case. The difficulty is to get a court in time to enable me to take part in the operations going on here. The circumstances of the case are thus — Gen Taylor about three weeks since learned that 2500 of the enemy had crossed the Rio Grande 30 miles above. He sent me with only fifty men to get minute information of them — to see them myself. My guide — who was a Mexican — and who has since gone over to the enemy — betrayed me and gave information of my movement to the enemy. I was surrounded by 2000 men including 1500 cavalry. I charged them and endeavored to cut my way through. I lost one officer and eight men killed, and four wounded. My horse was shot and fell upon me — and I was unable to rise — The balance surrendered. Two days after not being able to get into our camp, I was taken prisoner, and was carried to Matamoras where I remained a prisoner a fortnight but have since been exchanged. Gen Taylor upon my written application — also refused to suspend my arrest until the operations were over in order to enable me to take part in them — in fact he has publicly denounced me — and has treated me in the most shameful and unjustifiable manner. By using your influence to get the President to order out an investigation into my conduct at once — you will greatly oblige me. Please present me kindly to your good lady and the children —*

*Very sincerely yours — S.B.Thornton*

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## THE WESTERN MAILS

### AMBUSH AT CARRICITOS RANCH APRIL 25, 1846 AND THE OPENING SHOTS OF THE WAR WITH MEXICO.

General Zachary Taylor, on hearing reports that the Mexican had crossed the Rio Grande, ordered Captain Seth B. Thornton and a scouting party of dragoons, to investigate but not to engage the enemy. On the 25th Thornton, and his squadron with a Mexican guide, proceeded about 26 miles up the river without seeing signs of the enemy. Inquiries along the way indicated that the Mexicans crossed the river. At this point the guide refused to go further so the party moved forward without him. About three miles further they came to the Carricitos ranch house which was enclosed by a chaparral fence except for the side facing the river. The house was about 200 yards from the gate to the enclosure. Thornton halted his party and entered the gate to speak to some persons who were apparently at work. By some misunderstanding the entire party entered the enclosure and were immediately surrounded by Mexicans. In the skirmish that followed several dragoons and one officer were killed. A body of Mexican cavalry charged and Thornton ordered a retreat and in attempting to cut their way out, Thornton was thrown from his horse and rendered unconscious. He was later captured by the Mexicans and his men surrendered. They were exchanged and returned to General Taylor who charged Thornton with disobedience of orders and placed him under arrest. At the same time Taylor advised Washington that hostilities had begun and that a state of war existed. On May 13, 1846 the United States declared war with Mexico.



This folded letter was probably carried to New Orleans by military express where it entered the regular mails. It was postmarked at New Orleans June 2, 1846 and rated "SHIP 12" — 10 cents postage and 2 cents ship fee.

**SETH BARTON THORNTON** joined the U.S. Army as a 2nd Lieutenant in the 2nd Dragoons on June 8, 1836. He was promoted to 1st Lt. on Nov. 16, 1837 and then to Captain on Feb. 1, 1841. On July 4, 1845 Texas agreed to annexation and U.S. troops were sent to Corpus Christi, under Zachary Taylor, to act as The Army of Occupation. During the march from Fort Jessup to Corpus Christi Seth Thornton was charged with disobedience of orders by Major Thomas T. Fauntleroy, who later became a Major General in the Confederate States Army in the Civil War. It was a petty charge and Thornton was exonerated on Sept. 12, 1845 by a Court Martial. Thornton's plea for a Court Martial did reach the President through his letter to Doctor Randolph and the Court was convened at Matamoros, Mexico on July 11, 1846 by orders of the President of the United States. On July 16th the Court found Thornton "not guilty" to all charges brought by General Taylor regarding the ambush at Carricitos Ranch and Thornton was given back his command. On August 18, 1847 General Scott started a reconnaissance of Mexican positions in the valley of Mexico. He sent General W.J. Worth and his command towards San Antonio with Captain Mason, under escort by Thornton's Dragoons, in advance. The first cannon ball fired by the Mexicans at San Antonio struck and killed Captain Thornton. He was the first to fall in the battles for the valley and the City of Mexico.

## THE WESTERN MAILS

**THOMAS WARE GIBSON**, Captain, Co. I, 3rd Infantry Regiment, Indiana Volunteers, was born at Philadelphia on May 11th, 1815. He moved, with his parents, to Lawrenceburg, Indiana in 1821. Appointed to West Point Academy in 1831, where he remained for three years. Entered the Navy as a Midshipman and served until 1836. Opened a law office at Charlestown, Ind. in 1837. In 1846 he raised Company I and served as its captain in the 3rd Regiment in the Mexican War. He died at Louisville, Ky. on Nov. 30th, 1876 and was buried at Charlestown.

In the following group of letters to his wife Mary, he draws a most interesting and historical account of his Mexican experience, beginning with his arrival at New Orleans. . . . "Point Isabel July 27th 1846 Dear Mary - The day after I wrote my last letter we had an incessant rain for about fifteen hours. The brig in which we were to embark did not arrive and such a scenes our camp presented at night I never witnessed before. Expecting to get on board the brig none of us had made any preparations for supper. The fires were all out and the water a foot deep in the tents. In addition to all this all our provisions had been packed up and sent to the river to be put on board the brig - The boys however determined not to be out done - There were but two companies left on the ground, my own and the Lawrenceburg company - Three or four foraging parties were sent out and in a little while we had four or five cords of wood, a calf, two pigs, & bread in abundance; and about a ton of hay to sleep upon - . . . The next morning, our company and the Lawrenceburg company, embarked on board the brig *Prairie* and were towed down to the mouth of the Mississippi by a steam tow boat - The first three days we had very pleasant weather, though it was rough enough to make most of the company very sea sick. Daily [David W. Jr.]\* has been sea sick the whole passage - Mc Combs [sergeant Milton] has been so sick as not to be able to raise his head - This all passes away as soon as they set foot on land. The fourth day out we had a severe gale of wind which lasted all day and all night. The vessel was a very small one, our men were much crowded, about a dozen cases of measles broke out the day we sailed, and when the weather became so rough as to make it necessary to close the hatches you may judge what a time they had of it below decks - I remained on deck during the whole storm."

THE ABOVE DESCRIBES THE VOYAGE FROM NEW ORLEANS TO PT. ISABEL.

"Today we got to anchor but none of us have yet got on shore - The water is so shallow that we cannot get nearer than about three miles of the land, and as the brig goes right back I shall have to close this before I go on shore an consequently cannot tell you what the prospect is for a fight. . . . I am writing this on board the brig, and she is rolling and pitching so that I doubt whether you will be able to read it all or not - Every few minutes she makes a surge and rolls tables, chairs & everything else into a heap together - The country here appears from the sea to be low sandy beach, and is very healthy - The climate is delightful; I have not felt a day here anything like as warm as we have at New Albany, and the nights are cool enough to make my blanket coat extremely comfortable. The mosquitoes are pretty much gone for the season - . . . A great many of our boys got very tired of soldiering while they were sea sick, and wished themselves at home, but as soon as they got well their home sickness was all gone. Mc Combs swears he will go round by land on foot before he will try the sea again - Mose [Gibson's negro servant] was very sea sick the first day but soon got over it. I do not know how I should have got along without him. The last four days of our voyage has been very tedious - we have had delightful weather; the men have been in fine spirits, and a mile or two off in the night, a stranger would have thought some camp meeting had got up sail and went to sea. They generally kept up singing till midnight. . . . I still think we shall be home before Christmas. . . . Our passage here from New Orleans has been very tedious. Ten days on shipboard is rather wearisome when in a steamboat, or with a fair wind we might have got over in two days & a half. The distance from Orleans to this place is five hundred & fifty miles. I wish our friends at home who have such a



Point Isabel July 27<sup>th</sup> 1846

Dear Mary-

The day after I wrote my last letter we had an incessant rain for about fifteen hours. The brig in which we were to embark did not arrive and such a squall as our camp presented at night I never witnessed before. Expecting to get on board the brig none of us had made any preparation for supper. The fires were all out and the water a foot deep in the tents. In addition to all this all our provisions had been packed up and sent to the river to be put on board the brig - The boys however determined not to be out done - They went but two companies left on the ground, my own and the Lawrenceburg company - Three or four fragrant parties were sent out and in a little while we had four or five cords of wood, a calf, two pigs, & bread in abundance; and about a ton of hay to sleep upon - When they got it all I do not know and did not take the trouble to ask. The next morning our company and the Lawrenceburg company, embarked on board the brig procees and even towed down to the mouth of the Mississippi by a steam tow boat - The first three days we had very pleasant weather, though it was rough enough to make most of the company very sea sick. Had, has been, <sup>be</sup> sick the whole passage -

horrible idea of this climate could be here a few days and see it. The air has a different feeling, the sun & stars have a different look, everything seems like a different world. The weather is not as warm as it is in Indiana, and let the sun shine as hot as it will we have always the cool sea breeze to counteract its effects. I suppose you will have ripe peaches at home perhaps by this time."

Gibson then reminds them to take good care of the garden and the orchard and goes on to describe the flowers and gardens of the southern states and gives directions on how to address letter to him, viz "Capt. T.W. Gibson, 3d Regt, Ia, vol, Point Isabel, Texas, care of Quartermaster.... mail the Herald to me..... but not to write on them as these Southern Post Masters are very particular." (Otherwise they will be treated as first class mail).

T. Ware Gibson"

Mrs. Mary W. Gibsob/Charlestown/Clark county, Ind."

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\*David W. Gibson Jr. and his brother, Harrison, were both in Gibson's Co. SEE their letters in this collection.



ever so full as they are of fruit, and some of them larger than  
turkey eggs. Oranges, Lemons & grow here in abundance  
The climate seems to be particularly remembered to a certain  
person, and wants you in your letters to me to let her  
know how she is getting on - Tell Lydia & Milly they  
staid close to school and that I expect to find them good  
scholars when I come home - Have you ever given  
father that statement of his nut account with Levi  
& left with you - If you have not do not forget to get  
it done. If he does not keep pushing Levi he will send  
a chest from him - We are about leaving the ship  
there, so far well for the present - If I get an opportunity  
after I get on shore I will write another letter back by the  
same vessel that brings steady boats often and tell all  
friends to write - for the mail is so uncertain that I shall  
not get half that are written. Tell Liza that Milt has got  
his whiskers turned out so furiously, that she could not get  
near enough to his mouth to kiss him, if it was to save her  
Tell Mr Campbell to mail the Herald to me after he has  
read them, but not to write on them as these Southern  
Post masters are very particular - Give my love to all my  
friends and to the girls in particular - If you see  
Whitman tell her that Eliza is well and doing  
though I have no doubt she will get letters herself from  
the Home Do not fail to write -  
Yours truly  
Wm. Nelson

Miss Mary W. Gordon

Charleston

Blacksburg, Va.



Mary H. Gibbon Sarah Le Gorman January  
I Belilah McFarrell  
Taltillo, Mexico, January 7<sup>th</sup> 1847 -

dearest Mary. I wrote you from Camargo, from Misio, from Monterey and <sup>over</sup> the day of my arrival  
the place, all of which letters I hope you will receive in due course of mail - I found two letters of  
awaiting me here when I arrived - I mentioned this in my last letter but for fear you should  
have missed it mention it again, so it will be doubt a satisfaction to you to know  
your letters come to hand - We are high up in the mountains here, where such a thing as  
heat is never known; the air is pure & clearer than in any place I have ever been,  
the days are as warm as an August day at home, but as soon as the sun sets, it  
is cold enough to freeze water ~~and~~ an inch thick. We are however more comfortably  
lodged than we have been at any time since we have been in Mexico, except when  
at Reimsa. I have my tent pitched inside of a mud house and plenty of straw  
to sleep on, and four heavy blankets to wrap up in so that I suffer no  
inconvenience from the cold - A stream of the purest mountain spring water  
is within thirty yards of my door, and we have plenty to eat, of good flour  
if we choose fresh baked bread & good fresh beef, so that you see we are  
no danger of starvation at present. Apples & peaches are raised here but as these  
people know nothing about breeding or grafting their fruit is all budding and  
consequently very poor. The grape is raised in great quantities about Santa  
Fe further up in the mountains. A few are raised here but they do  
not seem to thrive very well - There is a large cotton factory about two miles  
from our camp carried on by Americans - I was over there yesterday, and found  
the American families living there - The work is done by Mexican girls  
who make about 3000 yards of coarse cotton goods per day - They sell it  
out four times as high as it is sold in the United States. There are  
some very large silver mines in the mountains a few miles from us, but  
they cannot be worked on account of the want of wood. Every stick of  
wood which we use here, has to be brought thirty miles upon the backs of  
mules & such asses. The houses here are all built of unburned brick  
bricks are made very large, mostly two feet in length by eight or ten  
inches in breadth & six inches thick. The best houses are those plastered  
the outside with a cement which is harder than stone when it is dry.



looking at a couple of hundred of them at Mass the other m  
you are the headache - The Mexican women in no part of  
country are very handsome - They all have fine teeth & eye  
very coarse & very black hair, and of various complexion  
from the real Indian red to as clear red and white as  
our own girls. There is very little negro blood among them  
I do not remember to have seen a dozen in Mexico  
had negro blood in their veins. There are very few women  
an entirely white, most of them being a mixture of Spanish & Indian  
There is a great curiosity among them - I can't make them  
that his father & mother are both black - They insist that one  
has been white. The Mexicans about here are all friendly & do  
than they were upon the Rio Grande, and all look at us as though  
it would afford them a great deal of satisfaction to cut all  
throats if they were not afraid to do it. They have kept a  
quiet - occasionally they catch one of the troops out by surprise  
& perhaps drink & murder him, and then the volunteers take  
about twenty of them to pay for it before they can be stopped  
They have taken lately here to procuring the liquor that they  
to the soldiers - so soon as it was discovered, every man  
who had liquor to sell was seized & confined - They have  
a hundred of them in the guard house - It is a very  
good thing for us, for the men are afraid of being prisoners  
consequently all keep sober & we have the best troops  
with them - My company I have never had any trouble  
manage at all - They are admitted by every body to be  
most orderly and well behaved men in this or any other  
Regiment in the service. In point of drilling our regiment  
will now bear a comparison with any regular troops  
the service. I am looking with great anxiety for your  
letters from home and hope that the next mail will  
me an account of your being safely through your confinement  
The mail here once a week - by riding night & day they  
Camargo in three days about 200 miles - from there to the front  
four days - so that in point of receiving letters I am only  
further from you than when at Camp ~~Salmon~~ wrote off



## THE WESTERN MAILS

### ON THE ROAD TO BUENA VISTA

"Saltillo, Mexico, January 7th 1847 . . . . We are high up in the mountains here, where such a thing as sickness is never known; the air is purer & clearer than in any place I have ever been. The days are as warm as an August day at home, but as soon as the sun sets, it gets cold enough to freeze water an inch thick. We are however more comfortably fixed than we have been at any time since we have been in Mexico, except while at Reinosá. I have my tent pitched inside of a mud house and plenty of straw to sleep on, and four heavy blankets to wrap up in so that I suffer no inconvenience from the cold - A stream of the purest mountain spring water runs within thirty yards of my door, and we have plenty to eat, of good flour or if we choose fresh bakers bread & good fresh beef, so that you see we are in no danger of starvation at present. Apples & peaches are raised here, but as these people know nothing about grafting their fruit is all seedling and consequently very poor. The grape is raised in great quantities about sixty miles further up in the mountains. A few are raised here but they do not seem to thrive well - There is a large cotton factory about two miles from our camp carried on by Americans - I was over there yesterday, and found four American families living there - The work is done by Mexican girls. They make about 3000 yards of coarse cotton goods per day - They sell it about four times as high as it is sold in the United States. There are several very large silver mines in the mountains a few miles from us, but they cannot be worked on account of the want of wood. Every stick of wood which we use here has to be brought thirty miles upon the backs of mules & Jack asses. The houses here are all built of unburned brick - The bricks are made very large, mostly two foot in length by eighteen inches in breadth & six inches thick. The best houses are then plastered on the outside with a cement which is harder than stone when it dries. The ground floor is made of the same cement & a beautiful floor it makes - . . . . . The great Catholic Cathedral here is a most magnificent building. By far the finest I have seen in Mexico - It would hold I should think ten thousand people. There are hundreds of images of Christ, the Virgin Mary & Saints of all sizes, shapes & colors, and some very fine paintings. The churches here are very rich - It is supposed that they own three fourths of all the wealth in the country. This building & its ornaments could not have cost less than a million of Dollars - There is an image of the Virgin Mary in one of the churches of the city of Mexico, whose dress & jewelry alone cost more than a million of dollars. I think it would make any intelligent catholic sick of his religion, to travel through this country and see the way things are carried on by the priests here. We have just heard that it is reported in Matamoras that our regiment was cut to pieces between Monterey & Camargo - I am afraid the story will get home before our letters and may give you all some uneasiness - Do not believe any thing you hear or see in the papers about us - All the newspapers that we see from Indiana are filled with lies about our miserable condition. If you would believe half you see in the papers you would think half of us were dead, the other half sick and all starving - There is not a word of truth in it. There are not two men sick in the regiment, and we have abundance of good provisions. It is the nature of some men to grumble at everything . When we were in camp Belknap where we could not get fresh beef, they grumbled because the government fed us on salt provisions - Now when we are in a country where Salt provisions cannot be had, they complain because they are fed on fresh beef. These are the kind of men who are continually writing home letters complaining of the hardship they have to endure. I think myself that we have suffered less in every respect, than we had a right to expect we would when we started. Men who came out here thinking the campaign would be a pleaser excursion, have doubtless been disappointed - for my own part I knew exactly what I was about when I started and consequently have not encountered any hardships that I did not anticipate. We have just received intelligence here that Genl Taylor's rear guard had been cut off on his march to Victoria - I do not believe it myself,

## THE WESTERN MAILS

though it is generally credited - We have between five and six thousand troops here - Genl Taylor has with him about four thousand, and there are about a thousand at Monterey. If the enemy should advance upon us we can soon concentrate these forces and whip any fifty thousand Mexicans that ever breathed. I am very much afraid however that they will not come within whipping distance. We have no game here but rabbits & partridges. We killed a number of deer on our march between here and Monterey. The mountains are full. " Gibson then tells of a soldier who fell in a deep well and almost drowned and after personal matters he continues " The City of Saltillo & the suburbs contains about fifteen thousand inhabitants - The inhabitants have a more genteel appearance than in any place I have been. The women are excruciatingly ugly - So much so that looking at a couple of hundred of them at mass the other morning gave me the headache - The Mexican women in no part of the country are very handsome. - They all have fine teeth & eyes - Very coarse black hair, and of nervous complexion from the real indian red to as clear red and white as our own girls. There is very little negro blood among them - I do not remember to have seen a dozen in Mexico who had negro blood in their veins. There are very few however who are entirely white, most of them being a mixture of Spanish & Indian - Mose \* is a great curiosity among them - I cant make them believe that his father & mother are both black - They insist that one must have been white. The Mexicans about here are less friendly & social than they were upon the Rio Grande, and all look at us as though it would afford them a great deal of satisfaction to cut all our throats if they were not afraid to do it. They have kept very quiet - occasionally they catch one of the troops out by himself & perhaps drunk & murder him, and then the volunteers kill about twenty of them to pay for it before they can be stopped. They have taken lately here to poisoning the liquor that they sell to the soldiers - So as soon as it is discovered, every Mexican who had liquor to sell was seized & confined - They have about a hundred of them in the guard house - It is a very good thing for us, for the men are afraid of being poisoned & consequently all keep sober & we have the less trouble with them - My company I have never had any trouble to manage at all - They are admitted by every body to be the most orderly and well behaved men in this or any other regiment in the service. .... I am looking with great anxiety for more letters from home. .... Gibson"

\*\*\*\*\*

\*Mose, Gibsons servant, was a negro boy of very light complexion. It is interesting to note Gibson's remarks on the wealth and power of the Catholic church, while most of the population lives in abject poverty. Also, that he attended a morning mass. Gibson was a "Christian" of Protestant orientation. See letter of "July 31, 1846" for more on Mose.



Saltville, Mexico, Jan. 27<sup>th</sup> 1847

dear Mary. We are still alive, and as the brethren at home would say "on praying ground", I fear there is very little of that kind of exercise carried on out here. Last night was a exciting time - we learned yesterday that the Mexicans had captured Maj. Gaines and eighty of Col. Marshall's Ky. regiment, and what is the most mortifying part of the whole captured them without firing a gun. The particulars we have not yet learned - we had information from our spies & others that the Mexicans eight thousand strong were to attack us last night or today - every thing was prepared for them, but they did not come. We are looking for them today - we have four thousand troops here, and Taylor would be here tomorrow with two thousand more - I am afraid if the enemy till Taylor gets here, that that they will not attack us at all. Poor Moore has some troubles - the negro is frightened half to death. And the men take a great deal in dearing him. Our patrol shot a Mexican last night - They saw him upon our top with a gun & ordered him to come down - he refused to do so, and they shot him down with a musket ball. Most of the respectable families have left the city and gone to the ranches in the country, armed, in anticipation of a battle here - do not let this letter alarm you, for the mail does not go out for four days and I shall not close the letter till then, and if we have a fight it will be before time, and if I am killed I will let you know it at the close of my letter - consider the dangers we have already gone through as greater by far, than those of half a dozen years - The whole company are in perfect health, and fine spirits, and all anxious to get lance at the Mexicans. We had a light shower of rain last night, the first I have seen for some four months. The houses here all have flat roofs covered with lime cement, and the rain as the most tremendous clattered when it falls upon them. Most of the roofs leak - houses are all built of large unburned bricks, and the best ones are plastered inside out, with a kind of lime very much like our water lime. The houses very seldom have any fire places in them, and are very inconvenient. I have not seen a dozen carpets since I have been in the country, and in this whole city there are not half a dozen windows that have glass in them. It is not on account of this for there are a great many very wealthy people here - They do not know to live, and are too infernal proud & obstinate to learn - They have the same system & use the same kind of tools & implements that were in use in the country

**ON THE WAY TO BUENA VISTA  
ON THE ROAD TO BUENA VISTA JANUARY 1847  
ON THE ROAD TO BUENA VISTA JANUARY 1847**

"Dearest Mary, We are still alive, and as the brethren at home would say "on praying ground", though I fear there is little of that kind of exercise carried on out here. Last night was a very exciting time - we learned yesterday the the Mexicans had captured Maj. Gaines [John P. ] and eighty men of Col Marshalls [Humphrey] Ky. [Kentucky] regiment, and what is the most mortifying part of the whole affair captured them without firing a gun. The particulars we have not yet learned - we had also information from our spies & others that the Mexicans eight thousand strong were to attack us last night or today - Every thing was prepared for them, but they would not come. We are looking for them today - We have four thousand troops here, and Genl. Taylor will be here tomorrow with two thousand more - I am afraid if the enemy wait till Taylor gets here, that they will not attack us at all. Poor Mose has his own troubles - The negro is frightened half to death. And the men take a great delight in scaring him. Our patrol shot a Mexican last night - They saw him upon a house top with a gun & ordered him to come down - he refused to do so, and they brought him down with a musket ball. Most of the respectable families have left the city and gone to the ranches in the country around, in anticipation of a battle here - Now do not let this letter alarm you, for the mail does not go out for four days yet, and I shall not close the letter till then, and if we have a fight it will be before that time, and if I am killed I will let you know it at the close of my letter I consider the dangers we have already gone through as greater by far, than those of half a dozen battles - The whole company are in perfect health, and fine spirits, and all anxious to get a chance at the Mexicans. We had a light shower of rain last night, the first I have seen for more than four months. The houses here all have flat roofs covered with lime cement, and the rain makes the most tremendous clatter when it falls upon them. Most of the roofs leak - The houses are all built of large unburned bricks, and the best ones are plastered inside and out, with a kind of lime very much like our water lime. The houses very seldom have any fire places in them, and are very inconvenient. I have not seen half a dozen carpets since I have been in the country, and in this whole city there are but half a dozen windows that have glass in them. It is not on account of poverty for there are a great many very wealthy people here - They do not know how to live, and are too infernal proud & obstinate to learn - They have the same customs & use the same kind of tools & implements that were in use in the country a hundred years ago - Our improved ploughs have been introduced among them frequently, but they will not use them, and prefer sticking the their old fashioned wooden plough - So of every thing else - Steamboats, rail roads, every thing of the kind is entierly unknown among them, and will continue to be so until our people get possession of this whole country which they are just as sure to do as that the sun continues to shine. These Mexicans are a doomed race - they are not fit to live any where, much less in such a splendid country as this. January, 28th 1847

We had quite an excetement in town last evening growing out of an attempt made by three Mexicans to lasso & murder one of the second regiment - Genl Lane [James H. ] has issued an order this morning to shoot every Mexican who is seen with a lasso in his possession. The intelligence we have today from the enemy is, that after taking the Kentuckians & Arkansas men prisoners they fell back, so that we are to have no fight for awhile. In the party of our mem who were taken there were fifty of the Arkansas cavalry and thirty of Kentucky cavalry - Part of the Kentuckians were from Pennington's company, the one to which Ross & the other boys from our town belong. Whether they were among those who were captured I do not know - The prisoners we learn were treated with the utmost kindness by the Mexicans, who sent them off immediately to the City of Mexico. Ca



the City of Mexico. Cassus Clay [Captain Cassius M. Clay] of Kentucky is among the prisoners taken. We have just learned that Genl Butler [William Orlando, Bvt. Major, War of 1812; Maj. Genl. 1846 received presentation Sword by Congress for gallantry in the storming of Monterey, Mexico 1847; hon. discharge Aug. 15, 1848; died Aug. 6, 1880] will remain at Monterey, and that Genl Taylor will be here in a few days and then we expect to push forward - Every one is rejoiced that Taylor is coming - Every one has confidence in him, and the Mexicans fear him worse than they do the devil. My company was out last night on picquet guard about two miles from town - one of the men saw some pretty little animal running along the road and took after it, for the purpose of stopping it, he threw his blanket over it, when it turned out to be a pole cat - [Skunk] - I hardly think he will use that blanket this campaign again, and I dont think he will hear the last of it for the rest of his life. Last night was quite cool and it is by no means warm in the shade today. Upon the whole however the weather is very pleasant here - In the course of a couple of weeks their spring will open on the Rio Grande, and corn planting will commence. Speaking of spring reminds me of our ground at home - Last year Jo Mc Combs wanted to work it - If he wants it this year had you not better let him attend it. But whatever you do, be careful of the trees. The apple and pear trees will need some pruning. The peach trees will not, but their roots may need the worms scalded out of them - Get your father to trim the grape vines for you, and trim the rose bushes yourself - Those perpetual hardy roses need close trimming in the spring - Keep the strawberries clear of weeds in the start and you will have no trouble with them afterwards.

#### January 29th

Anothe party of the Kentucky cavalry under Capt. Heady [W. J.] eighteen strong was captured yesterday by the Mexicans. I think they will learn after a while to keep a better look out when in the enemy's country than they have been in the habit of doing - whenever the Mexicans can catch any of our regiments asleep they can have us. We will get our fort finished today, and then we can whip off twenty thousand of them if they will only come. The city is almost depopulated, more than two thirds of the people having moved out to the ranches in the country - They are much more afraid of their troops than they are of ours. We have always treated them well, but their own soldiers rob & plunder them of every thing they have, and they can get no redress for it by complaining to the officers. We had quite an exciting night last night again - Parties of Cavalry, dashing in & out of town all night - the heavy tread of companies marching along the pavements in the stillness of the night - the stern challenge of the sentinels - added to the fact that many confidently expected an attack during the night, made the scene quite impressive - As for myself I shall expect an attack when I see the bayonets & hear the bullets of the enemy whistle and not before - Then I am certain not to be disappointed. The Mexican whom we shot the other evening will get well; so say the doctors.

#### Jan. 30th 1847

Well the mail is just in & has brought me an armfull - one from Ferguson at Idianapolis & two from Henley - I saw Frank Williams today and learn that none of the boys from Clark county were among those whom the greasers [Mexicans] captured - From your letter it seems that you heard of their capture at home about a month before it happened [!] - That beats the telegraph - Col. Marshall came up last night with the rest of his regiment. I saw him for a few minutes today at the great Western's. And who I think you ask is the Great Western? Well she is the most extraordinary woman I ever knew or heard of - she is considerably larger than I am - has been in the army about twenty years, was in Fort Brown during the whole bombardment, exposed to as much danger as any officer or soldier in the fort - They could nt prevail upon her to take refuge in the bomb proof rooms - but during the while of that terrible three days did that woman continue to cook for the soldiers at the guns and carried their food to them with her own hands when the bullets were whistling like hail around her head - she keeps a tavern for the officers here - And she a caprain! One man who escaped from the Mexicans of the Kentickians who were captured under Maj. Gaines got in yesterday - He got into camp stark naked & without having eaten anything foe four days but a rat that he had the good luck to catch - He was the interpreter of the party, and had been formerly one of the Texans who were taken [captured] at Mier [1843, See Mier Expedition below] and had escaped, from the Mexicans. Although they were treated the other prisoners with the greatest kindness he soon learned that they intended to shoot him. [most likely because he had been one of 17 who had escaped at Mier] He managed to get near a very fine race mare of Major Gaines,

## THE WESTERN MAILS

### BUENA VISTA, FEBRUARY 22, 23, 1847

Historic letter, by Captain Thomas Ware Gibson of the 3rd Indiana Regiment, vividly describing the charge of the Mexican Lancers. Written on the battlefield.

Aqua Nueva Mar. 1, 1847

Dearest Mary,

Last night I received your letter of the 18th Jan. I find from it and various letters that my men have received that you are all very uneasy at home about us. In fact Santa Anna seems to give you all more trouble there than he does us who are nearer to him. You speak of his coming with ten thousand men to use us all up. Well he came with twenty one thousand and he has gone back with about ten or twelve thousand, the worst whipped man that ever was seen in these parts. He came confident of victory, knowing his own numbers and knowing that our force did not exceed four thousand five hundred — On the 22d he sent a very polite note to Genl Taylor requesting him to surrender — Old Zach's reply was "Tell him to go to hell." There was not much fighting done on the 22d as Santa Anna wanted to reserve the main battle for his birthday the 23d — He promised his men a great ball in Saltillo at night so soon as they had killed or taken us all. Well they tried it. All day long the roar of from thirty to forty cannon and twenty thousand muskets was incessant, balls fell like hail stones around us. Twelve & twenty four pound cannon balls played among us till the music of their whistle became familiar to our ears, till night closed the scene — At daylight next morning Santa Anna & his army were fifteen miles off the battle field and encamped on the very ground from which I am now writing to you. Upon the field he left 1000 dead and as many wounded — They carried off a great many both of the dead & wounded and the full extent of their loss will never be known — I believe they must have had twelve hundred killed & two thousand wounded. In addition to this seven or eight thousand disappeared in the mountains — Many of whom have died there of hunger, others have come in and give themselves up as prisoners and the rest have escaped and returned to their homes. When last heard from Santa Anna himself with the wreck of his army was fifty miles from here retreating in the greatest haste & confusion, leaving the road behind him strewed with the sick, the dead, the wounded & the dying. The war is over, the last battle is fought — they can never rally again. Our own loss is killed 270 wounded 460 — of the wounded some have since died, others will die, many have lost limbs and others are crippled for life in various ways. Coombs when I wrote you was wounded & fell by my side had his thigh amputated close to his body. He lived till night before last and then died. Conoway is doing well but will probably be a cripple for life as the bullet is between the bones and cannot be got out. Our regiment lost fewer than any other in the field — The reason of this was that the enemy never could break our ranks. The greatest loss that the other regiments sustained was when they got in confusion got their ranks broken and were charged by the horsemen. We were under fire upwards of seven hours and lost nine killed & fifty six wounded in our regiment — of the wounded Coombs and seven others have since died, and others probably will die. Great God what a sight the battle field presented the next morning — thirteen or fourteen hundred dead men and as many wounded and dead & wounded horses by hundreds were there — In one place scattered here and there, where they had been killed by a scattering or distant fire. In other places piled in heaps where some close and deadly conflict had raged. At the spot where the Mexican lancers charged our regiment forty two men and a dozen horses were piled up. The head of their charging column was directed upon my company. They came up 1000 strong at a gallop all singing and with their long bright lances poised above their heads. Every man in the regiment stood as immovable as if he had been a post — We let them gallop up till the foremost rank was within thirty feet of my company and then the order to fire was given — five hundred muskets blazed upon them at once and rider & horse rolled over together by scores — we killed forty two of them — how many were wounded we could not tell as their horses carried them off — All this while the enemy's cannon were playing upon us — and just as we fired I saw a man's head taken off by cannon ball not ten feet from me — This was but one of many a scene of the kind we went through with on the 23d. I wrote J.D. Ferguson a long letter a few days after the battle which I suppose he showed you. Your wounded cousin is doing well. The first gun that was fired on the 23d Mose & Mitchell broke for Saltillo and we saw nothing more of them for two days. I am afraid you will get the news of the battle before you get our letters, and as a matter of course you will have us all killed or wounded. Genl Taylor was slightly wounded, and his clothes were cut several times with bullets — Genl



Agua Nueva Mex. 1. 1847

Maunt Mary.

Last night I received your letter of the 18<sup>th</sup> Jan, I find from it and various letters that my men have received that you are all very uneasy at home about us. In fact Santa Anna seems to give you all more trouble than than he does us who are ready to hear you speak of his coming with ten thousand men to use us all up. Well he came with twenty one thousand and he has gone back with about ten or twelve thousand, the worst whipped man that ever was seen in these parts. He came confident of victory, knowing his own numbers and knowing that our force did not exceed four thousand five hundred - on the 22<sup>nd</sup> he sent a very polite note to Genl Taylor requesting him to surrender - old Jack's reply was " Tell him to go to hell" There was not much fighting done on the 22<sup>nd</sup> as Santa Anna wanted to reserve the main battle for his birth day the 23<sup>rd</sup> - He promised us more a great ball or Saltillo at night so soon as they had killed or taken us all, well they tried it - all day long the war of four thirty lb. cast iron cannon and twenty thousand muskets was incessant, balls fell like hail stones among us. Twelve & twenty four pound cannon balls played among us all the music of their whistle became familiar to our ears, till night closed the scene - at daylight next morning Santa Anna & his army were fifteen miles off the battle ground and encamped on the very ground from which I am now writing to you, before the field he left 1000 dead and as many wounded - they carried off a great many bottles of the dead & wounded and the full extent of their loss will never be known.

to correct of - I write to Santa Anna about your own fight - I had told his men that Santa Anna had

AND PHELI BROTHERS AND CO. PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR

been ever since the battle engaged in burying the Missions  
dead, but have not yet thrown all buried yet. There was among  
this dead a young captain, a splendid looking fellow - I saw  
him in the heat of the fight waving his sword & exhorting on  
his men - I saw him fall and after the fight went to him -  
He was shot in four places but still alive - I found him as  
comfortably as I could gave him water and covered him with  
a blanket - the next morning I went to him & found him  
dead - In his hand was a letter from his wife in Mexico  
which I suppose he had just received before the battle, I have  
got the letter and intend keeping it.

Capt. Toppet of our regiment had gone home sick from  
Camp Belknap in August last - we are thought he was  
our ready horse but he did and saved his horse and  
returned here - he arrived here but two days before the  
battle and was shot about the middle of the afternoon.  
He had but half an hour and died on the field  
of Clay - Mr. Rice, Menden & Gill were all killed dead  
upon the field at the head of their regiments -

How so many of us escape seems almost a miracle.  
I really believe that there was more than 100 musket balls  
that did not miss six six inches - one struck me a  
glancing lick on the back of the head and terrified  
me over but I got up again immediately and suffered  
no inconvenience from it except a lump on my head which  
disappeared the next day - The ball that killed County  
struck me first - I think the district meeting must  
be a very - proving to us - God thought - with the after  
Many of the  
Gibson



## THE WESTERN MAILS



### BATTLE OF BUENA VISTA.

Lane was wounded twice, but staid on the field all day & all night. John Drum lost all his clothes & everything he had except what was on his back. Most of the men have lost their blankets but they will get new ones in a few days. The citizens of Saltillo have been ever since the battle engaged in burying the Mexican dead, but have not got them all buried yet. There was among their dead a young captain, a splendid looking fellow — I saw him in the heat of the fight waving his sword & cheering on his men. I saw him fall and after the fight went to him — He was shot in four places but still alive. I fixed him as comfortably as I could — gave him water and covered him with a blanket — the next morning I went to him & found him dead — In his hand was a letter from his wife in Mexico which I suppose he had just received before the battle. I have got the letter and intend keeping it. Capt Taggart of our regiment had gone home sick from Camp Belknap in August last — no one thought he would ever reach home but he did and recovered his health and returned here — he arrived here but two days before the battle and was shot about the middle of the afternoon. He lived half an hour and died on the field. Col Clay — McKee, Hardin & Yell\* were all killed. Lead upon the field at the head of their regiments —

How so many of us escaped seems almost a miracle. I verily believe that there was more than 100 musket balls that did not miss me six inches — one struck me a glancing lick on the back of the head and tumbled me over but I got up again immediately and suffered no inconvenience from it except a lump on my head which disappeared the next day — The ball that killed Coombs struck me first — I think the meeting must have been praying for us — Good night — write often yours affectionately

Gibson

Mary Gibson

Do not let them (newspapers) publish this letter as it is written so casually and I have not time to correct it. I wrote to Lum before the fight. I have recd but two letters from him.

\*Colonels Henry Clay Jr. (son of the statesman), Wm. R. McKee, John L. Hardin and Archibald Yell.

THE WESTERN MAILS

St. Louis, Missouri,  
April 3, 1847.

My dear Brother -

Matthews, Morris & Davis's  
letter of the 11<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> January & yours of the 13<sup>th</sup>  
Feb. reached me a few moments since - They are  
inclosed in a letter from Kane who found them  
at Comuzo - He forwarded them yesterday from  
Mountain - I have written you a few of late  
my last was written on the 24<sup>th</sup> March with one  
to the children & a check for the Bank of the State  
of New York for \$100 - all I have I must write

Way 11  
J. Browne Dix Esq.  
Boston,  
Mass.

Major Roger S. Dix writes about the battles of Buena Vista and Chihuahua:  
"I led back about 200 men & well & nobly did they do their duty afterwards."  
Dix had rallied the retreating 2nd Indiana troops by seizing their flag and  
leading them back into battle alongside the 3rd Indiana and the Mississippi  
Rifles at the battle of Buena Vista. The cover was carried by ship to Mobile  
where it entered the mails and was rated "WAY 11" in red. April 27, 1847.

most excellent care of myself, in every way -  
There have been times when I have felt a painful  
retrospection of what happened to me &c. but



THE WESTERN MAILS

RETREAT INTO VICTORY  
BATTLE OF BUENA VISTA

Saltillo, Mexico April 3, 1847

My dear Browne:

....By this time, at any rate, if not some days ago, you have heard of our Battle at Buena Vista & the glorious result. I say, did we not give the yellow skinned rascals "goss"? There never was such a battle. I have no wish to see such another. Assure Mother again from me that I have done fighting & shall not be in another battle. There will not be another on this line, at least, I think not. If there is, I shall have no hand in it, I have done all that was necessary. I have shown my willingness to serve my country & thank God, have gained some little credit. I have duties to perform to my children & my family & they shall have precedence of all others. Mother will not regret, when she learns that I gained some little reputation, that I was in the Battle, particularly as I came out unscathed.... Last night, despatches arrived from Chihuahua - Col. Donophan, with his Missouri volunteers, had a fight with the Mexicans on the 28th Feb. & defeated them. They were 4000 strong - his force about 1000 - 'Tis said only one American was killed - About 300 of the enemy were left dead upon the field - It would really appear as if Americans, no matter what the disparity of numbers, could not be conquered. The battle of Chihuahua lasted but a few minutes. The Americans charged them & it was all over. On my return from Monterey I called on Gen. Wool & he read me his report of the Battle. He mentioned me & thanked me for my gallantry in rallying the troops (retreat of the 2nd Indiana regiment). Gen. Taulor also mentioned me in his report - They have neither of them done the Indianians justice - They say the Regt. was not rallied - 'Tis true twas not - as a regiment, but I led back about 200 men & well & nobly did they do their duty afterwards - The Gen. should have done them the justice to have said this- I met one old friend, Campbell 2nd Dragoons, a few days since & in talking over the battle he remarked that he would have given 10 years of his life to have been in my place, "carrying the flag" - He said he would then be certain of "getting the sugar plantation" - poor fellow, although he was in very hot places during the battle he found no opportunity of distinguishing himself. Some men have luck & indeed I had it on that day - I say..... I think the Dix star is in the ascendant - God grant it, for I think all of the name have suffered enough heretofore - May the year 1847 prove to the end as favorable as it has commenced....

R. S. Dix

Postmarked: MOBILE ALA APR 27 (1847) WAY 11 all in red to Boston.

Roger Sherman Dix was a paymaster, with the rank of Major, at the battle of Buena Vista. He was graduated from West Point July 1, 1827 and was brevetted Lieutenant Colonel for "gallant and meritorious service" on February 23rd at the battle of Buena Vista. Dix died January 7, 1849.



BATTLE OF BUENA VISTA



GENERAL TAYLOR'S THEATER OF OPERATIONS IN THE NORTH.



BRASOS  
APL 10, 1847

10

"Buena Vista Mexico March 22d 1846 [ '47 ]

"Dear Bro - I beg your pardon for not informing you that I was not killed at Buena Vista...Well I got out of it alive....their balls and grape shot scratched my skin twice - Our regiment was under Mexican fire for about 8 or 10 hours - We charged upon the Mexicans twice during the day - our first charge was "done up brown" - we made the "hombres" show their backs and left 3 or 400 of them dead on the field with very little loss on our side although we made the charge under the fire of about four times our number - second charge was not quite so Successful - the Mexicans surrounded us - broke our ranks and came very nigh giving us hell and probably would have done it had not every man considered that his scalp depended upon his own exertions and then was seen the superiority of the Americans over the Mexicans - Although surrounded by ten times our number we fought our way out and rallied under the protection of our battery and was ready to fight them again but Santa Anna left during the night and we have not seen him since - Our loss was heavy - the company I was in out of 45 had 6 killed and 8 wounded. Wm T Shaw"

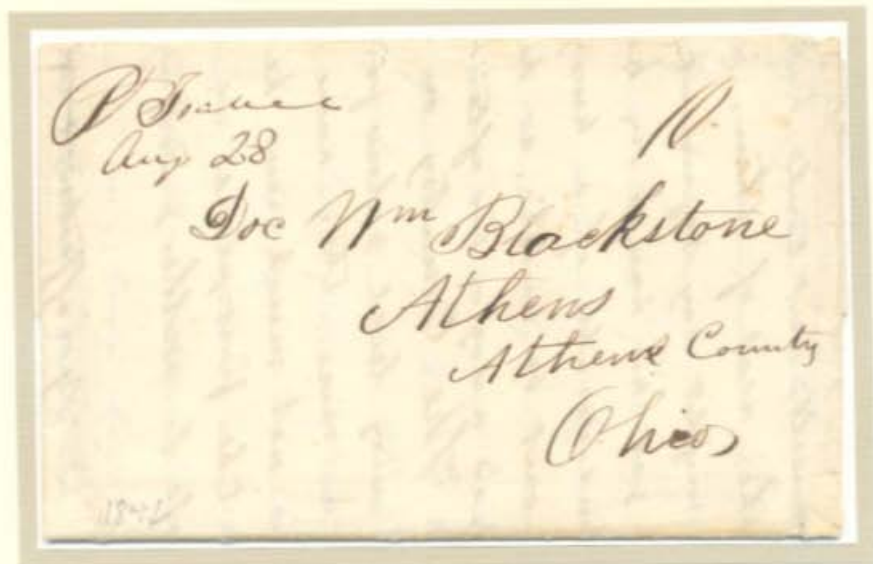
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The action referred to took place on Feb. 23, 1847.  
Cover is postmarked with the type I straight line BRASOS/APL 10, 1847.  
This is the so called error in spelling, but many collectors believe at this early date the authorities had not yet determined the correct spelling of BRAZOS.



THE WESTERN MAILS

Camp Bellknop August 7th 1846



"Camp Bellknop August 7th 1846 666

"Dear Father....write after receiving this direct to Camargo Mexico, as we expect to march from here [to] there in four or five days, stoping a day or two at Matamoras...It is about 19 miles to Matamoras - we will make the march in two days & it is about 120 from there to Camargo & 75 from there to Monterey that is by land, these distances being all double by water, Genl Taylor has marched from Matamoras to Camargo & they are afraid he will take the place before we get there. he told Col Morgan [George W. ] that it would not require such hard fighting as the battles of the 8th & 9th [Palo Alto & Resaca de La Palma] - I still think there are plenty of the same opinion that we will be home in from 3 to 5 months - those that have the good luck to live....We sent out a foraging company to kill some cattle, which are very plenty, there are plenty of every variety of game there is any where....Col Morgan & Col Irvin [William, 2nd Ohio inf., died Oct. 4, 1852] are both very sick, Col Irvin is dangerous - he is affected with Gonorrhoea so Capt Tucker [Stephen S. ] who is affected in the same way told me (this is secret of course) This Country is filled with rattle snakes - they have killed several in our encampment of great size - one was killed by the first regiment having 21 rattles on - there are plenty of birds of every size & description - Every thing was intended by nature to defend itself - the frogs have prickles [horned toads]. The flies bite more severe than ours, the grass even will stick your feet. I was over yesterday to Barita & saw some of the Texas rangers going down with their pack horses to mouth [Rio Grande] for provisions, who informed me that they were going to Victoria to attack it about 125 miles south of Matamoras - they dont anticipate much of a battle. There are fifteen steamboats on the rio grande & more coming on every day. They are passing & repassing here all the time - There are plenty of Armadillos here. there was one caught the other day - ....I.K.Blackstone"

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Folded letter postmarked at "Pt Isabel/Aug 28"1846 and rated "10"cents to be prepaid.

## THE WESTERN MAILS

### IN THE WAKE OF BUENA VISTA

Agua Nueva Mar. 4th 1847 -

I write oftener perhaps than necessary but I do so in the apprehension that many of my letters may not reach you on account of our mails sometimes being captured by straggling parties of the dispersed Mexican army. A party of some seven hundred men which we sent day before yesterday to pursue the retreating enemy returned last night after having followed them as far as (La) Encarnacion, about thirty miles from here. They had all left there leaving about five hundred of their wounded. Santa Anna could muster but about four thousand men when he left. The number of his killed and wounded has been underrated. We are now satisfied that not less than twelve hundred were killed & twenty five hundred wounded. The field of battle is still covered with their dead and the stench is most horrible. The stragglers are scattered through the mountains by thousands and must many of them starve to death. You need not expect to hear of any more fighting in this quarter. It took Santa Anna six months to raise his army and in one day we scattered it like chaff before the wind. It is now well ascertained that Santa Anna had twenty one thousand men on the field of battle and we had three thousand eight hundred all told. Coombs died on the night of the 27th (February). His thigh had been amputated the day before. Conway the other man wounded in my company is doing well. John Dunn had his trunk robbed during the battle - they got every thing he had in the world except what he had on his back. He had just been paid a couple of hundred dollars in gold which fortunately he had about his person & saved it. About thirty of our wounded have died since the battle making our whole loss killed three hundred. We have had some fighting between here and Camargo, the particulars of which we have not yet learned. We know however that the greasers were whipped. I believe that our little army could go out tomorrow in a fair field and whip fifty thousand of the best Mexican troops that ever were on a field of battle. One thing is certain, we would be willing to try it. Dead upon the battle field we found many of our acquaintances from Saltillo who had professed to be great friends of the Americans but who slipped out and joined Santa Anna as soon as he approached. A great many of the Mexican officers brought their wives with them, so confident were they of victory. The 23rd was the birthday of Santa Anna and he had promised his army a great ball in Saltillo at night. ....It is one of the most disagreeable days today I ever saw. The wind is blowing a hurricane & I am looking every minute for my tent to blow down, and the dust is so thick that you cannot see twenty steps before you. Nothing to eat but hard biscuit full of black bitter bugs and salt pork. Pleasant way of living, is it not? In all the biscuit we have had before the bugs were tolerably well flavored, but the last lot, are very bitter. In addition to this the enemy captured our coffee pot during the battle and we have to make coffee in a skillet, but the greatest hardship I have had to endure yet, was doing without cigars on the day of the battle. Poor Mose was frightened nearly to death. We left him an Mitchell (two Negro camp helpers) at the ranche in our rear. They stayed there till about ten oclock, when a stray cannon ball found its way down there. This was more than they could stand and they broke for town running every step of the way five miles without stopping. There was a large body of the enemy's cavalry near the road and it is a great wonder that they were not both killed. Just as they got to town an attach was made there, so that they jumped out of the frying pan into the fire.



THE WESTERN MAILS

Agua Nueva Mar. 4<sup>th</sup> 1847 -

Dear Mary;

I write oftener perhaps than usual but I do so in the apprehension that many of my letters may not reach you on account of our mails sometimes being captured by straggling parties of the dispersed Mexican army. A party of some hundred men who were sent out before yesterday to pursue the retreating enemy returned last night after having followed them as far as Cuernavaca, about thirty miles from here. They had all left them leaving about five hundred of their wounded. Santa Anna could muster but about four thousand men when he left. The number of his killed and wounded has been underrated, we are now satisfied that not less than twelve hundred were killed & twenty five hundred wounded - The rule of battle is still covered with their dead and the stench is most horrible. The stragglers are scattered through the mountains by thousands and must many of them starve to death. You need not expect to hear of any more fighting in this quarter -

They did not return to the camp till three days after the battle. We all supposed they had been killed or made prisoner. Mose says he did not run, he only retreated.... I mentioned I believe in one of my letters home to some of you, that John Ross was killed - James Ross was near being killed but Frank Williams saved him by shooting the Mexican who was about to spear him. The Louisville legion to which Col Duersne belongs was not in the battle. (Kentucky regiment) They were at Monterey. Genl Lane was wounded twice - but did not leave the field. Col. Lane was hit three times but not hurt. I was hit but once, the ball struck me a glancing blow on the head and knocked me down but did not hurt me. The ball that killed Coombs clipped my clothes as it passed. I verily believe that 100 balls did not miss me six inches - and that more than a thousand musket balls passed among the ranks of my company. How we escaped so well is a miracle - We feel almost disposed to attribute it to a special interposition of providence in our behalf.....

T. Ware Gibson

about his person & saved it, about thirty of our wounded have died since the battle making our whole loss killed ten hundred

## THE WESTERN MAILS

WE WHIPPED THEM THREE TIMES - BUT THEY DID NOT KNOW IT  
SANTA ANNA.

Agua Nueva, Mar. 9, 1847. . . . Dearest Mary. . . . It is two weeks today since our big fandango at Buena Vista, and yet it hardly seems to have been ten days ago. This is the fourth letter I have written to you besides two to Ferguson and one to Lane, but the Mexicans have taken such a fancy to read our letters lately, that I don't know whether you have received any of them. They have captured several of our mails lately going & coming, and a great many letters which were directed to officers out here were found in the pockets of dead Mexican soldiers on the field, who had robbed the mail a few days before. tomorrow we march back to Buena Vista. This is in consequence of the badness of the water here. There were about a dozen dead Mexicans & a hundred beefs head and paunches lying in the spring at its source, and it is thick enough to make tolerable soup by the time it reaches us, our camp at the battle ground will not be a very pleasant one, as there are a great many dead Mexicans and horses lying about over the field - The wolves & buzzards however are pretty busy and they will not last long. We are going to erect fortifications at the pass - We will not have any use them, for Santa Anna will not show his head in these parts again soon. I think I mentioned in my last letter that Coombs was dead - He died on the 27th the day after his thigh was taken off. Conoway [Martin A.] is doing well but will probably be lame for life. Thirty or forty of our wounded have died since the battle and some men will yet die, making our whole loss in killed upward of three hundred - Terrible as the slaughter was, I would rather go through five such battles, than one such encampment as that at Camp Belknap on the Rio Grange where we lost ten in battle, we lost one hundred by sickness, I lost some very near & intimate friends in the battle. There is none whom I regret more than Capt Kinder [T.B.] - he was wounded by a cannon ball carrying away the calf of his leg, and afterwards basely murdered by the scoundrels while in a wagon on his way to the hospital in the rear - They murdered all of our wounded that fell into their hands - While our men were giving bread & water to their wounded on the field and were giving them blankets, and exposing themselves to a deadly fire of cannon balls & grape in going to their succor, they were skulking about over the field and cutting the throat of every wounded American they could find - The only man they spared was Coombs and it would have been mercy to have killed him compared to what they did do - They stripped him naked & rolled him into a bunch of prickly pears [cactus] so that there was scarcely a spot on his body that had not a thorn in it - Through that long cold bitter night he lay wounded, alive & naked upon the field - Curses on their coward hearts, we will pay them well for it if ever we get another chance at them. But of this I fear there is no hope during our term of service [12 months]. I believe that tho this is at an end, for I do not believe that Santa Anna can raise another army equal to the one we whipped. He left San Luis with thirty thousand men - Twenty one thousand of these he had on the field of battle - The rest he had sent round to our rear to cut off our retreat. They captured a train of 100 wagons loaded with provisions, murdered the wagoners & burnt the wagons - They then made an attack on the Ohio troops at Marin and got well whipped. It was during this time that they captured our mails. The country is now clear of them. Santa Anna came here confident of victory - He had a finely disciplined army of 21000 men with 30 pieces of artillery - He knew our force as well as we knew it ourselves, and knew that we were all volunteers & he thought volunteers would not fight - He said after the battle that he had whipped us three times, but we were such fools that we did not know it. In fact he was not far wrong - the battle was going against us when our regiment met the lancers and gave them such a bloody welcome - we let them ride up to within thirty feet of us and then killed & wounded 200 of them at one fire [Underscored by editor. also see Gibsons letter of March 1st and March 4th] - we then turned upon about 2500 of their infantry on our right and gave them a half a dozen rounds killing & wounding great numbers and driving them back to the mountains. This closed the battle and gave us the



Agua Nueva, Mar. 9. 1847 -

Friend Mary -

It is ten weeks today since our big forwarding at  
Burra Vista, and yet it hardly seems to have been ten days ago.  
This is the fourth letter I have written to you besides two to Ferguson  
and one to Sam, but the Mexicans have taken such a fancy to  
read our letters lately, that I don't know whether you have  
received any of them. They have captured several of our mails  
lately both going & coming, and a great many letters which  
were directed to officers out here were found in the pockets of  
dead Mexican soldiers on the field, who had robbed the mail  
a few days before. Tomorrow we march back to Burra Vista.  
This is in consequence of the badness of the water here. There  
are about a dozen dead Mexicans & a hundred beefs heads and  
parrots lying in the spring at its source, and it is thick  
enough to make tolerable soup by the time it reaches us,  
but soup at the battle ground will not be a very pleasant  
one, as there are a great many dead Mexicans and horses  
lying about over the field. The robbers & buzzards however  
are pretty busy and they will not last long. We are going  
to erect fortifications at the pass - We will not have any use for  
them, for Santa Anna will not show his head in these  
parts again. Sam, I think I mentioned to you in my last letter  
that Sambo was dead - He died on the 27<sup>th</sup> the day after  
his thigh was taken off. Cleary is doing well but will  
probably be lame for life. Thirty or forty of our wounded have  
died since the battle and some more will yet die, making

"The guns still roared at intervals; but silence fell at last,  
And on the dead and dying came the evening shadows fast;  
And then above the mountains rose the pale moon's silver shield,  
And patiently and pitying she looked upon the field."

the first cannon ball came among us, and we saw nothing  
of them again for four days - Morse says he did not run,  
he only retreated - Notwithstanding the desperate fight our  
men made we had a good many coward among us -  
Then were there or four hundred men and some officers  
who were as badly frightened as Morse, and who ran  
to the rear and to town early in the day - Their names  
will all be exposed - There were about forty of our  
regiment among the missing. From my company  
Warble, Neal, Baringer, Wade & Brown were the  
first shower of musket balls that came among us -  
The rest, men & officers stuck by me through thick  
and thin & fought like devils all day -  
In a letter to Ferguson the other day I mentioned  
this but in the list omitted the name of Neal - Tell  
John to add him to the black list. Men who will  
come this far from home to meet the enemy and then  
desert their comrades in the hour of that deserve  
no mercy, no compassion - In my letter some  
time ago I stated that the Neutarkians & Askansas men  
who had been captured by the enemy were murdered - This  
report, though apparently well authenticated at the time  
turns out to have been untrue - They are all safe, at  
the city of Mexico, and probably released by the time.

2<sup>d</sup> of the 1<sup>st</sup> he made an arrangement with Santa  
Cruz to carry away the calf of his leg and afterwards  
there from Capt. Hunter - He was wounded by a cannon ball  
very near & returned friend in the last. There were some  
men in battle, the last we heard of by dispatch, 5 last from  
the city of Mexico - We shall see what will be the result.



## THE WESTERN MAILS

victory. It was here that Coombs fell, just a little before sunset, Capt Taggart [J.] was killed a few minutes afterwards and was the last man who fell - The first man killed on the 22nd was one of our regiment, and the last who fell on the 23rd was also of our regiment [Indiana 3rd] Our regiment was longer under fire than any other on the field, was engaged often in close fight with the enemy than any other & yet lost fewer men than any regiment on the field. The reason of this was that we never gave way, & never got into confusion - Our loss in killed & wounded is only 66 while hardly any other regiment on the field lost less than 100. A number of men belonging to other regiments were killed in our ranks but we do not count them. Dr. Athon was dashing about over the field in the early part of the day and came near being shot several times, but in the after part of the day he had his hands full at the hospital . . . I looked in a glass today the first time for a month and hardly knew myself - My hair has become dark almost as yours. I suppose it is owing to exposure - My health was never better in the world than it is now - It took me almost a week to get over the fatigue of the battle. The first letter I wrote you the morning after the battle, I wrote while I was so sleepy that I had to rub my eyes to keep them open - as soon as I had finished it I wrapped up in a blanket and threw myself down among the sticks, and the way I slept for about twelve hours. . . . Mose & Mitchell disappeared when the first cannon ball came among us, and we saw nothing of them again for four days - Mose says he did not run, he only retreated - Notwithstanding the desperate fight our men made we had a good many cowards among us - There were three or four hundred and some officers who were as badly frightened as Mose and who run to the rear and to town early in the day - Their names will all be exposed - There were about forty of our regiment among the missing. From my company Varble, Neel, Baringer, Wade & Brown run the first shower of musket balls that came among us - The rest, men & officers stuck by me through thick and thin & fought like devils all day - In a letter to Ferguson [John] the other day I mentioned this but in the list omitted the name of Neel - Tell John to add him to the black list. Men who will come this far from home to meet the enemy and then desert their commander in the hour of trial deserve no mercy, no compassion - In my letter home some time ago I stated that the Kentuckians & Arkansas men who had been captured by the enemy were murdered - This report, though apparently well authenticated at the time turns out to have been untrue - They are all safe, at the City of Mexico, and probably released by this time, as Genl Taylor made an arrangement with Santa Anna for their release, the day after the battle, by exchanging for their prisoners we had taken in the battle of Buena Vista - Do not be discouraged from writing on account of the loss of our mails - . . . . . Gibson"

"Buena Vista - Mar. 11th we marched here & encamped yesterday all well - the ground does not smell as bad as we expected it would - the wind blows the smell from us - no mail yet but we hope for one tomorrow - we have just heard of the loss of the Pen. [Pennsylvania] regt."

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At the time the American and Mexican armies were fighting on the field of Buena Vista, the Mexican cavalry attacked three companies of the Ohio infantry at Marin and were repulsed with loss. Also, at about the same time, Feb. 23 or 24, a wagon train was captured by Mexicans who butchered the teamsters and burned the wagons. When found some of them had been staked to the ground and then cut to pieces, while other bodies were being consumed in flames.

Sergeant William Coombes was shot on the 23rd and died on the 27th after his leg had been amputated at the thigh. He was the only man killed in Gibson's Co. I, 3rd regt. Indiana Volunteers at Buena Vista. His treatment, after being shot on the battle field, as described by Gibson, is shocking!



## THE WESTERN MAILS

" BUENA VISTA Mar 18th 1847 - Still no mail. The latest date I have from home is your letter of Jan 16th - We have not heard a word from Camargo since the fandango, and am getting uneasy about it. If the enemy have taken it they will run us short of provisions - of that however I do not think there is any probability. I think it very likely however they have had some sharp fighting down there. At all events they have managed in some way to keep the road stopped up so that we can get no mail, and I doubt whether you have received any of the many letters I have written - We have just received the news of another revolution in Mexico, of which I suppose you will hear before you get this. Santa Anna has gone to the City of Mexico and his army is pretty nearly disbanded. You need have no further uneasiness. We will have no more fighting here. Col. Bowles, the Col. of the 2d Indiana Regt is under arrest upon a charge of cowardice & incompetency. It is said during the fight when under musketry fire he hid himself behind his horse and that he himself gave the order to retreat, and then run like the old scratch [devil] was after him. He will be tried by a courtmartial and there the truth will appear. If half that is said about him be true he ought to be shot, and probably will be. \* Two of the wounded of our regiment have died and one or two others will die - I shall send Conway home as soon as he is able to travel. He will be lame a long time, if not for life. Abbott of my company who was attacked with pleurisy the day after the battle has recovered and all the company are now in good health. The reputation of Indiana will suffer greatly from the way in which our second regiment acted. Thank God they can charge none of it upon the third regiment - We were under fire longer than any other regiment in the field, were closely engaged with the enemy oftener than any other, and twice saved the battle, and never once gave back a foot. I would rather that every man and officer in our regiment had been left dead upon the field, than that the charge should rest upon us. The men are not to blame for the rout of the 2d Regt. The company officers are not to blame - The shame rests upon higher shoulders. It rests upon some of Gov. Whitcombs pet officers. It is to be hoped that Indiana will learn a lesson from this that she will not soon forget - . . . . . The inhabitants of Saltillo have all come back again, except those that were rubbed out in the fandango - We found a good many of our old acquaintances turned up on the field the next morning - They professed to be friendly to us, but as soon as Santa Anna appeared they joined his army. There were I suppose a hundred from Saltillo killed. I enclose you a rough sketch of the last desperate charge of the Mexicans on the 23d which will enable you to understand it better than any description I can give [not present]. The future of the battle turned upon that charge [of the Mexican lancers] - If they had have succeeded not many of us would have ever seen the United States again - but our regiment stood as firm as a rock. Not a Mexican of the leading squadron of the lancers escaped, and very few of their horses. I have marked on the map also the place where Conway [private Martin A.] was wounded about half an hour before, and the place where Coombs [Sergeant William Coombs] fell about an hour afterward. At the place where Coombs fell we lost more men in about one minute than we lost in all the rest of the day. There were but eight companies of our regt. with us, the two rifle companies having been on the mountain in the morning were cut off by the lancers when the 2d Regiment were forced to retreat to the ranch in the rear.

Mar. 19th 1847

We have just heard that our lost train of wagons which left Monterey on the 6th with an escort of 400 men has been captured and the escort killed or taken prisoners - If this is so they got all the letters that were written for ten days after the battle, and you will not hear of the battle for a month yet. This is really provoking if true - I do not believe the story myself. Genl Kearney \* has had a fandango at Chihuahua, and cut 4000 of the Mexicans to pieces - about 1000 of them were rubbed out - The American loss I do not know - We have also just received news from the city of Mexico that the Mexicans are fighting among themselves - That a battle lasted three days in the city and was still going on at



Buena Vista Mar 15<sup>th</sup> 1847 -

Dearest Mary. Still no mail. The latest date I have from home is your letter of Jan 16<sup>th</sup> we have not heard a word from Camargo since the fandango, and are getting to be a little uneasy about it. If the enemy have taken it they will run us short of provisions - of that however I do not think there is any probability. I think it very likely however they have had some sharp fighting down there. At all events they have managed in some way to keep the road stopped up so that we can get no mail, and I don't know whether you have received any of the many letters I have written -

We have just received the news of another revolution in Mexico, of which I suppose you will hear before you get this. Santa Anna has gone to the city of Mexico and his army is pretty nearly disbanded. You need have no further misgivings. We will have no more fighting here. Col. Bowles, the Col. of the 2<sup>d</sup> Indiana Regt is under arrest upon a charge of cowardice & incompetency. It is said that during the fight when under musketry fire he hid himself behind his horse and that he himself gave the order to retreat, and that some like the old Scotch was after him. He will be tried by a courtmartial and there the truth will appear. If half that is said about him be true he ought to be shot, and probably will be. Two of the wounded of our regiment

\*The "fandango at Chihuahua" was the battle of Sacramento, near the City of Chihuahua, on February 28, 1847. Stephen W. Kearney was in California at the time. SEE Lieut. Hinton letter in this collection for description of this battle.

Captain Gibson was a Whig in politics, but changed to a Democrat when General Taylor accused the 2nd Indiana regiment of cowardice on the field of Buena Vista.

Colonel Bowles did come back to the battle, as well as 200 of the 2nd which had been rallied by Major Dix. SEE Dix letter in this collection "Saltillo, Mexico April 3, 1847."

none of it upon me. I  
than any other Regiment in the field, were closely engaged with the enemy  
afterwards than any other, and twice saved the battle, and never once  
gave back a single foot. I would rather that every man and  
officer in our Regiment had been left dead upon the field, than that

Mar. 20<sup>th</sup> 1847-

Our camp is all joy today - our trains are all safe, our mail is in and we have all got letters from home. Your letters of the 3<sup>d</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> of February both arrived today. I am truly sorry to hear of Delilah's illness but hope that your next letter will bring me better news of her. Gen Taylor is somewhere between Cannons & Monterey. No one knows what the old error is after, but he has got something or other in his head. The Mexicans begin to think he is the devil himself. The weather still continues pleasant, and we hope that the cold weather is over. The boys are all beginning to count how much longer they have to stay, and are getting anxious to be at home again now that there is no more prospect of another fairing. We do not know yet whether we will be started home in time to be at Albany by the time our year expires, or whether we will be kept here the whole year before we start - If so we will about get home in time for the August elections. That is the time that I think we will reach there - Our camp is perfectly healthy - There are scarcely any in the hospital but the wounded, and they are mostly doing well. Tell John Ferguson that I have at least a dozen letters due one from him & several from Parker - Tell Lin that Matt says he takes a great deal of pleasure in reading the letters he gets from her. If Lydia has not got rid of her skills get Mr May to make a preparation of quinine and Sulphate of Iron in the proportion of one eighth of a grain of the Sulphate to 1 grain of quinine - And give from one to three

the change should rest upon us. We have not a word of news from the 2<sup>d</sup> Regt. The company officers are not to blame - The change of the 2<sup>d</sup> Regt. It was upon higher characters. It was upon some of our best officers. It is to be hoped that Providence will learn a lesson from this, that the will not come again.



## THE WESTERN MAILS

the last accounts. They are a sweet set these Mexicans. I wish we could get them all together upon one plain and then get a chance at them with about twenty five thousand men - We would make short work of the war. Your cousins wound is doing well but it will be a couple of months before he can go about again. Our provisions are getting rather short, and if we do not receive some in four or five days more we shall have to fall back to Monterey. By the way talking of provisions I wish you could see our table & kitchen furniture. It would make you laugh I know - Let me give you a list of it. 3 tin cups, 2 tin plates - 1 old knife, an old iron stew pan in which we make coffee - 1 frying pan, 1 iron table spoon & 1 iron tea spoon. This is all. Dont you think the Mexicans would get a rich prize if they captured them. Tough beef, Mexican bread and coffee are all that I have eaten this two months, till this evening I got some tea which was quite a luxury. These are small matters however that we never think of except to laugh once in a while when we think how our friends at home would fare if they should happen to drop in on us at dinner time and have to take pot luck with us I am afraid they would have trouble to make out a dinner. Coffee is the most indispensable thing for a soldier - If we can only get a good tin cup full of strong coffee we can always make out - This we could not get during the two days fandango, and felt the want of it very much - On the night of the 23d when I lay down to sleep among the dead & dying on the battle field, I would have freely given fifty dollars for a quart of hot strong coffee - The next morning as soon as we found that the enemy was gone I found an old negro cooking down at the battery and gave him half a dollar to make me some - I had not drank anything but water for forty eight hours and never did anything tast so good before - Luckily I had filled my pockets with segars and had plenty all through the battle -

Mar. 20th 1847 -

Our camp is all joy today - Our trains are all safe, our mail is in and we have all got letters from home. . . . . Genl Taylor is somewhere between Camargo & Monterey. No one knows what the old coon is after, but he has got something or other in his head. The Mexicans begin to think he is the devil himself. The weather still continues pleasant, and we hope the cold weather is over. The boys are all beginning to count how much longer they have to stay, and are getting anxious to be at home again now that there is no more prospect of another fandango. We do not know yet whether we will be started home in time to be at Albany [Indiana] by the time our year expires [they were 12 month volunteers], or whether we will be kept here the whole year before we start - If so we will about get home in time for the August election. That is the time that I think we will reach there - Our camp is perfectly healthy - There are scarcely any in the hospital but the wounded, and they are mostly doing well. . . . . We look for another mail in a couple of days. . . . . Again let me assure you that there will be no more fighting here during our stay - that is certain - So certain is Genl Taylor of this that he stopped the work on a little fort we were building at town [Saltillo]. T.W.Gibson"  
[Mary] M.W.Gibson/Charlestown, Ind."

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\*A court of inquiry found Bowles ignorant of military tactics and never should have been in charge of the regiment. The court concluded that he did not lack courage or bravery, only the capacity of judgement as commander. The charge that he hid behind his horse was not proved. However his actions did hurt the reputation of Indiana for years to come. Genl. Taylor gave most of the credit to the Mississippi rifles, but then they were commanded by his son-in-law Jefferson Davis. Davis and the rifles had been with Taylor on the 22nd and had he been at Buena Vista things might have been different. Another IF - If Taylor had followed his orders from Washington to occupy the Rio Grande River between it's mouth and Monterey, the battle may never have taken place. IF he had lost the battle he would have placed Scott in a very precarious situation! But he won and was on his way to the presidency of the United States. The Indiana troops started home from Buena Vista on May 24, 1847.

THE WESTERN MAILS



BATTLE OF BUENA VISTA

The following letters addressed to David W. Daily were written from the theater of war in Mexico by his sons Lieutenant Harry Harrison Daily and David W. Daily Jr. They both served in the 3rd Regiment of Indian Volunteers at the battle of Buena Vista along with Capt. Thomas Ware Gibson,

Camp Buena Vista  
Mch 29th 1847

We received another mail on yesterday and I anxiously expected to receive a letter, but was doomed to disappointment - Our Company received two - One for Lieut Fouts from M B Cole of Feby 14. I understand that Doctor Athon (James S.) & Lieut Carr also received letters but as they are at Town I know nothing of it. Doctor has been at Town since the 2d inst. attending to the wounded. Lieut Carr has been in two or three days on a visit - they are both well. Doc looks better than I ever saw him. Our Company are all well with the exception of Wm Abbott of N. Providence who has been quite sick but is now recovering and Martin Conaway still confined with his wound - he is still mending and passes off his time by cursing the yellow skins. We have no reliable news of the enemy, and cannot possibly tell what their intentions are, as far as attacking this line again, the news of the Insurrection going on at the City of Mexico (that I spoke of in my last) has no farther confirmation, the 3d Ohio Regiment arrived here to day, which makes 7 Regts of Inf. 1 of Cavalry 2 Batterys & 1 Squadron of Dragoons Our force here. Genl. Taylor is encamped at Walnut Springs 5 miles from Monterey. 6 Compy's of the Virginia Regt have arrived at Monterey and I understand the other 6 Compys (the Regt has 12 compys) are to remain at Camargo. What disposition is to be made of the remainder of the new troops I have not understood, Genl. Taylor a few days since marched to Catarina a town of 12000 inhabitants the head quarters of Genl Urrea who had been so active in destroying our trains. When he got there he found the Genl had vamoused. he however planted his cannon, and gave them warning that if they did not pay the expenses of the trains destroyed he would destroy the town, which they agreed to, and he returned to his old Encampment. Genl. Taylor would not order a court martial in the case of Col Bowles so the "Old Man" has returned to duty (Bowles gave the order for the 2nd



*THE WESTERN MAILS*

Indiana to fall back which turned into a route). We have news that Genl Scott has taken Vera Cruz without the firing of a gun (Vera Cruz gave up on the morning of the 26th of March and three days later the city and the Fortress of San Juan de Ulua was turned over to the Americans). I think from all appearances that we will remain here until about the 20th of June at which time we will take the back track for home which will make it about the 1st of Sept. before we reach there - Some hopes are entertained that we will have the Exquisite pleasure of flogging the greasers once more before our term of service Expires.....  
H.Daily

Major Gorman has obtained leave of absence for 60 days, and gone home. And I have no doubt with the intention of trying his gun powder popularity for Congress - So the world ways some great men made in the last battle.

Postmarked: SL "BRAZOS/APL 16,1847" Rate 10

More anon H.D.



Camp Buenna Vista May 7th 1847

Dear Father & Mother

.....I have no news I beleive of much importance to relate to you our road to the Brazos - Everything presents that appeara(n)ce at present - there was a meeting called today among the different regiments to see how many of the men would revolu(n)teer. Col Lane says he thinks we will start in a few days but we may not start from here untill our time is up - I am verry sorry to hear that the Indiannians has receives so little praise from the battle for I do tell you that there never was a sett of men fought better than our regiment (the 3rd reg.) or the 2nd Either Except where they were forced to retreat and that was in disorder on account of Bowle's ignorance of military tacticks - the Kentucyans must reccollect that both Col. McKee & Clay lost their lives in trying to rally the cowardly rascals when the lancers charged on their regiment - that Every man of them Brooke and run like sons of Bitches and Both McKee & Clay appealed to them to stand and they had no ears and they both tryed (to) rally them - But it was all in vain and they stood calling to them untill it was to late to save

THE WESTERN MAILS

their own lives, and the Illinois must recollect that twice we saved them from being cut & carved all to pieces and more than that, that 2 companies from the 2nd & 2 from the 3rd regiments of Indiana fought all day on the mountain height on the 22nd and on the morning of the 23rd - that (the) 2nd Indiana opened the fight and 3rd Indiana wound it up which you will see in the Picket Guard (newspaper).....it is very hard writing on my lap and paper paper very hard to get and have to pay 6½ cents per sheet.....

Postmarked: SL "BRAZOS/MAY 29,1847". Rate: 10

Yours untill death  
D.W.Daily Jr.



Buena Vista May 13 1847

Opportunity offers by which I can send this to Monterey and probably to N Orleans by Col McCarty who goes to Monterey to obtain leave to go to N Orleans, with the intention of contradicting the slanderous reports they have on the Indianians, and find out the authors of the anonymous letters. The 2nd Ky (Kentucky) Regt leaves for the states tomorrow, at what time we will take up the line of march is still uncertain but I think in the course of 20 days. Capt Gibson & company are stationed at the pass 2 miles from this on the Agua Nueva road, all well. I have just learned that the order has been issued for us to march the 20th - The Comanche Indians attacked the settlers at the Agua Nueva Ranche a day or two since and killed some 8 or 10 of them. We had announced on parade last evening the fact of Genl Scott gaining another victory over the Greasers (Mexicans) at Cerro Gordo & the total dispersion of the Mexican Army. Some think we will carry home the news of a peace, but I think differently for after we have taken every place of importance in Mexico,

we will not have crippled them in the least, if any thing rather bettered there condition than otherwise, for the greater portion of money expended in this country by the troops finds its way into the coffers of the (Mexican) government. A peon cannot come into camp to sell milk but what he is met at the guard station as he leave by a Mexican who levies a tax on him for the privilege he enjoys of selling his marketing to the American Soldiers, we not only have to whip them, but in some degree have to pay them for fighting us.

Harry (Harrison Daily)

Postmarked: NEW ORLEANS La./JUN 3 Rate 10



Mar 27th 1847

"Buena Vista, Mar. 23d 1847

"Dearest Mary, I have just learned that a few days after the battle an express was sent from Camargo home, with the news that we were defeated and all killed or taken prisoners. So that I suppose our friends at home had a gloomy time of it until they got the correct news. It was fourteen days before they heard from us at Camargo. --- the enemy have now left this part of the country entierly. Our mails leave here once a week and send you a letter by every mail and also by private hand whenever opportunity offers. Our last mail which is the only one we recieved since the battle brought me two letters from you, which I answered by return mail. . . . . We can learn nothing certain yet as to the time when we shall start home." Gibson continues about the mails, the weather, and the crops now ready for harvest - wheat, peaches etc. On "March 24th 1847" he continues that the boys are all anxious to go home and that "We have a rumor in camp today that Vera Cruz has been taken by Genl Scott but no one knows how the news got here. [Vera Cruz surrendered March 29th] He must certainly have had a battle there before this time & I hope he has succeeded in taking the place. The infernal conduct of the Mexicans here towards such of our wounded as fell into their hands has so exasperated me towards them that I would rejoice to see the whole nation exterminated. . . . . We have just heard of another attack by the [Mexican] lancers upon one of our trains between Monterey & Camargo. We lost three men killed & the Mexicans forty. We have not one fourth enough troops here and where the troops are to come from to supply our places when our time is out, is more than any one here can tell. In less than three months the time of all the troops now here will expire except the few regular cavalry and artillery, not more than 400 in number. It is now nine o'clock at night, the boys are all setting around the fire singing an old fashioned hymn, Mose [negro servant] leading the choir. . . . .

**Mar 27th 1847.** . . . . Up here in the mountains they have nothing but tough beef & molasses. The last account we had from Santa Anna he was on his way to the city of Mexico to try and suppress the revolution that had taken place there - He had but six thousand troops with him and the other Mexican General who was apposed had thirty thousand, So that I suppose Santa Anna's career is pretty near to a close. We have a report here that Vera Cruz was taken by Genl Scott with out a fight- The Mexicans I suppose concluded that the climate would kill our troops off fast enough; and so it will if they remain there during the summer months - It is perhaps the most unhealthy place in the world - The yellow fever commences there about the middle of May and lasts till November, and sometimes all winter. In the mountain region where we are sickness is almost unknown. There is in fact nothing to produce it. Comway is recovering finely & rapidly, all the rest of the boys are well. In fact we have no sickness in the regiment. This is very different from what it was on the Rio Grande last summer when we had less than two hundred sick at once. . . . . Gibson"

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Note: The revolution mentioned, was lead by a General Peña y Barragan with support of the Catholic Church, but was disintegrated with the return of Santa Anna. Scott was well aware of the vomito (yellow fever) season and stayed at Vera Cruz only long enough to organize the expedition. On April 8th General David e. Twiggs, commanding the 2nd Division of the Army of Invasion, left Vera Cruz. The route was selected by Scott, following the route that Hernando Cortez had taken in 1519, to the second conquest of Mexico.

*of course that we are to have the men fighting in the front  
 must have performed the same, that is the last time*

Geno Vesta, Nov. 25<sup>th</sup> 1847

Friend Mary,

I have just learned that a few days after the battle  
our professions sent from Genoa's hand, with the news  
that we were defeated were all killed in battle. I am  
so that I suppose our friends at home had no way of knowing  
if it were they got the news. It was fortunate however  
they have been as at Genoa. The same persons or men  
we are the enemy has left this part of the country  
entirely. Our soldiers have been a week since I saw you a letter by  
my mail and also by private mail. I thought opportunity offers  
two but would write in the only manner I can. Since  
the little thought I see two letters from you. While I am  
by return mail. Thus I think in the next letter I have written  
you since the last. I am very anxious to hear from  
you by next mail to know how I shall be in a letter  
to you. I am very anxious to hear from you to know  
how you are & to tell you I will write you. They are  
entirely different in the papers and much larger. I have  
learned nothing certain yet as to the time when we shall start  
home. I am of opinion that we will not start home before  
the latter part of July. We are anxiously expecting news from  
Gen. Scott at Genoa. He has doubtless had a battle since  
before this time. I think that he will find it a hard task to  
take the castle from the enemy. If properly defended he  
cannot take it in less than three weeks, and long  
before that time the yellow fever will do his time away  
or kill off all his troops. Our wounded still continue to do  
well. The inhabitants of Sullista have all returned to their homes.  
There are hundreds of families there, some of the first  
to return. I am very anxious to hear from you to know  
how you are & to tell you I will write you.



## THE WESTERN MAILS

"Buena Vista May 6th 1847

"Dear Mary - Dont you get tired of seeing "Buena Vista written at the head of my letters? I know I am tired of writing it. In fact I never was as tired of a place in my life as I am of this. Thank fortune they cannot keep us here much longer. If they intend to have us at New Orleans by the 22d since as it is said they do, we must start from here in the course of ten days from now as it will take us six weeks to go to New Orleans - The weather is delightful here now, but at Monterey I learn it is excessively hot. The new troops are dying off by hundreds there and on the Rio Grande - all the old troops however are perfectly healthy - We have all kinds of rumors from the South about Scotts Army - One day we hear that it was victorious - The next that it was defeated and Scott killed - That there has been a battle there I have no doubt, and I have very little doubt that Scott has whipped them, though it is likely with a great sacrifice of life. I think that the Mexicans here have the correct intelligence but will not communicate it to us. They [U.S. Army] are making great efforts here to induce our men to reenlist for the war, but without any success. Mr. Polk has seen fit in making his appointments of officers to take men at home and entirely disregard the applications of those who have served here during the last year, and he will find it very difficult to persuade volunteers who have served a year, to enlist under a set of green horns who would scarcely know the difference between a cartridge box and a pepper box. Out of the whole division numbering five thousand volunteers - they will not be able to raise a single company.\* Many of the men would willingly stay under experienced officers but not under Mr Polks new appointments. Some of my men are talking of staying 6 months longer as teamsters - They get \$25.00 per month and..... - Mc Combs is talking of staying awhile and cooeping - he can get \$40.00 per month - I think however when the time comes they will all conclude to come home and most of them be willing to stay there -

May 7th 1847 - Another mail and I recd two letters, one from..... & yourself and one from I. D. Ferguson, both dated Apl 4th. It turned out just as I expected, that all the Indianians would be mixed up together in the rout of the 2d Regt, though we were more than a mile distant from them at the time they gave way; they being on the extreme left, we on the extreme right. The truth however has I suppose come out before this. The third Indiana was longer under fire than any regiment on the field - slept on the field in the most advanced position, and was the only regiment on that bloody field whose ranks were never broken, and thus never once gave way Most of the scoundrels who have been writing home slandering us are men who were skulking in town during the whole of the battle. We will give them the devil yet if we can ever meet with them. Well Lui has played smash in her frolic with old Gosh. I thought her courage would fail when it came to the sticking point. I have written to you at least once a week - by last mail I sent you a newspaper published at Saltillo containing a refutation of the slanders upon our troops - By this mail I send you a Monterey paper containing a poem of John upon the battle - There was an error or two in the print which I have corrected with a pencil. There have been great efforts made to induce our men to re-enlist and if the officers that Mr Polk appointed had part of them been selected from the officers out here now, a good Many would have stayed but as it is they cannot get a man. Three of my men can get situations as teamsters at \$30.00 per month -... I shall try and persuade them out of the notion, but do not know whether I can or not..... May 8th /47 Today I received news from Scott upon which it is thought reliance can be placed. It comes in a Mexican newspaper published at San Luis and states that a battle was fought near Jalapa [Battle of Cerro Gordo and occupation of Jalapa April 18th] in which the Mexicans were defeated. You however will get the correct intelligence long before this reaches you. I was weighed today and just reached one hundred & forty seven pounds - when I left Albany I weighed one hundred & eighty. ... I am in hopes I shall not become fleshy again - ..... We have a great many visitors up from Monterey to see the battle field - They stay a day or two and go off loaded with relics from the field - such as bullets, pieces of shells and some of them take a fancy to Mexican skulls. I dont know but what I will pack up a



## THE WESTERN MAILS

skeleton myself and bring home. Dont you think it would make a fine ornament for the parlor. There are more than a hundred of them lying unburied on the field yet, notwithstanding a party of eighty men were three days engaged in burying them after the battle. The weather is most wretchedly hot today - Too hot to keep men out as sentinels and if old Taylor was here he would not do it, but old Granny Wool [General] would keep them out if [it] was hot enough to fry pancakes - We keep 100 sentinels around camp night & day - One hundred go on and stand two hours and are relieved by another hundred who take their places. In addition to this we have picket guards out six or eight miles from camp in all directions and our scouts go from fifty to one hundred miles from camp. Santa Anna thought to catch us napping on the 22d [Feb] but we heard of his approach before he was within thirty miles of us. Santa Anna says in his official account of the battle that we got our information from one of his men who deserted, but in this he is entirely mistaken - our own scouting parties brought us all the intelligence we had. They were within a hundred yards of his camp on the night of the 20th at Encarnacion and came in on the 21st about noon and reported to Genl Taylor that Santa Anna was there with about twenty thousand men. If he could have caught us at Agua Nueva, we should not have got off as easily as we did, though I have no doubt we could have whipped him then; we would however have lost a great many more men than we did & might possibly have been whipped -

May 9th 1847 It is Sunday and we have had a very heavy shower of rain & hail this afternoon which has cooled the air and rendered it very pleasant this evening. I saw peaches today as large as hens eggs - in two weeks more I think we shall have some ripe ones. The news from Scott today is, that the Mexican army dispersed without much of a fight and that there was no longer any force remaining to oppose Scott's progress. A Mexican army however is soon dispersed and soon raised again. [how right Gibson is]. \* They may have no army today - and in twenty days have thirty thousand men again. They got such an awful flogging from us that I suppose they were afraid to try us again - Scott who had three times as many men as we had, and ten times as much artillery -

May 10th - Well it is now certain that we will remain here until the last hour of our time, so that you need not look for us till about the first of August. Mr. Polk I suppose thinks by this means to force a great many of the men to re-enlist, but he will find himself very much mistaken. Capt Sullivan got here last night. He says that they have all sorts of hard stories about the 2d Indiana regiment in the states. I suppose that in Indiana you have got Genl Taylor's official report long before this and this will show where our regiment was and what it was doing and how it acted in the fight. \* We were all in hopes to have been off from here in a few days and are greatly disappointed at having so long to remain yet. It will however be about as healthy in New Orleans in the latter part of July as it would earlier in the season and a month more or less is not much - so we must grin & bear it. Tell the friends of my boys that they are all well - there is not the least sickness in the regiment. We have had the whole regiment vaccinated and many of them have sore arms. Do not fail to have all the children vaccinated who have not been, as possibly we might bring it home with us in case it should happen to get into the regiment, of which however I think there is not much danger. Keep all the little ones for me -  
Mrs Mary W. Gibson Yours affectionately/T. Ware Gibson"

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\*James K. Polk was a democrat and the two most prominent generals - Winfield Scott, head of the army, and Zachary Taylor - were both Whigs of the opposite party. Scott was ordered to formulate plans for the invasion of Mexico and Polk was trying to get Congress to make Senator Thomas Hart Benton a Lieut. General and send him to Mexico as head of the invasion forces. Benton would out rank Scott who was a Maj. General. However he failed and gave into the advise of his Secretary of War Wm. L. Marcy and gave the command to Scott. Thus Winfield Scott, half-betrayed by Polk, half-equipped, half-supplied and continually intrigued against by politicians who held general's commissions, went on to win the war. While peace negotiations were in progress, following



Buena Vista May 6<sup>th</sup> 1847 -

Dearst Mary -

Don't you get tired of seeing "Buena Vista written at the head of my letters? I know I am tired of writing it. In fact I never was as tired of a place in my life as I am of this. I thank fortune they cannot keep us here much longer. If they intend to have us at New Orleans by the 23<sup>rd</sup> June as it is said they do, we must start from here in the course of ten days from now as it will take us ~~six~~ weeks to go to New Orleans. The weather is delightful here now, but at Monterey I learn it is exceedingly hot. The new troops are dying off by hundreds there and on the Rio Grande - all the old troops however are perfectly healthy - We hear all kinds of rumors from the South about Scott's Army - one day we hear that it was victorious - The next that it was defeated and Scott killed - That there has been a battle there I have no doubt, and I have very little doubt that Scott has whipped them, though it is likely with a great sacrifice of life. I think that the Mexicans here have the correct intelligence but will not communicate it to us. They are making great efforts here to induce our men to enlist for the war, but without any success. Mr Polk has been fit in making his appointments of officers to take men at home and recruit.

the occupation of Mexico City, Polk ordered Scott home in disgrace to face a court of inquiry, based on charges made by the lying of Gideon Pillow, who had just been promoted by Polk to Major General. On Feb. 2, 1848 Polk ordered his peace commissioner, Nicholas Trist, home in disgrace. However, Trist, at the request of the Mexicans stayed on and signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which Polk and Congress had to accept if they wanted to end the war. James K. Polk may have been one of our best presidents, between Jackson and Lincoln, but he was not big enough to conduct a war!

\*In spite of all the killed and wounded and the thousands of deserters at Buena Vista, Santa Anna was able to round up another army. This was repeated following his defeat at Cerro Gordo and again he raised an army - even larger than before. Santa Anna's problem was "staying power" not man power.

\*General Taylor, in his official report, gave credit to Jefferson Davis and his Mississippi Rifles, for the repulse of the Mexican Lancers and accused the 2nd Indiana with cowardice at the battle of Buena Vista. Gibson never forgave Taylor for this and he bolted the Whig party and became a Democrat.

of my ... carrying of ... 6 months longer as ... They





Matamoros Oct. 9<sup>th</sup> 1846 -

Friend Mary -

I have but a moment to drop you a line & let you know that we are all well - yesterday my company & Capt. Allen's men rode to Reynosa two hundred miles above here and embarked on board a Steamboat and today are thus far on our route. I wrote you about a week ago informing you of the death of Storytte & Culbreth, which letter I suppose you have rec<sup>d</sup> the day after I had written & received your letter of the 3<sup>d</sup> Sept. - So write often and keep direct your letters to "Matamoros, on the Rio Grande" "Island of Guantimanco" I will write you again as soon as I get to Reynosa which will be in about three days. It is one of the healthiest places on the river - I do not have the least apprehensions about my health - for I assure you I never had as good health in my life before - Three of my old classmates were killed at the battle of Monterrey - The wife of one of these <sup>Major Hardover</sup> arrived here to meet her husband the very day the news of the battle & his death reached here - It was a most desperate fight - The papers may lie about it as much as they please but we had at least 1000 men killed & as many more wounded - The Mexican loss was much greater - opinion is much divided as to the continuance of the war - My own opinion is that the war is ended & that we

shall be at home about Christmas - The Indiana troops  
have been badly used in being kept back while others  
who came here after us were taken into the fight -

The steamboat shakes so badly that I do not know whether  
you will be able to read what I have written -

We are just rounding up at the wharf and I have  
not time to add another word -

Mrs Mary M. Gibson  
Chadestown  
Delaware County  
Indiana -

Yours affectionately  
Miss Gibson



GEO. H. THOMAS TO JEFFERSON DAVIS  
ON GENL. TAYLOR AT BUENA VISTA

" Fort Belknap Tex  
August 1st 1858

Colonel. I recieved by the mail of last week, Dr. Wood's letter of the 10th of May addressed to me at Fort Leavenworth, asking me to communicate to you such facts regarding the conception and termination of the battle of Buena Vista as may have come to my knowledge so far as the merits of the conflict were due to Genl. Taylor,, the main points desired being "the facts ocuring between the absence Genl. Taylor at Saltillo and his return to the field on the morning of the 23rd". With regard to the first point the conception and planing of the battle, I do not believe there is a single officer whose mind is unprejudiced, of all those who participated in the battle, who does not give Genl. Taylor full credit for the selection of the ground and the general plan of arranging the Army for the reception of the enemy, that is, he directed that Washington's [Captain John M., 4th Artillery ] Battery should be placed in position at the Angostura, that the aroyo on his , Washington's, right should be examined thoroughly, and if necessary Artillery and such other troops as could act most efficiently should be so posted on its left flank as to secure our right from being outflanked, and the main body, of the army was directed to be posted on the main plateau to receive the enemy. Before leaving Ague Nueva I learned that it was Gen Taylor's intention to halt at Buena Vista . I do not now remember whether I heard the General say so himself the evening before the Army left Agua Nueva, or heard it from some member of his staff. Towards subdown on the 22nd [Capt. Thomas W] Sherman's [ 3rd Artillery ] Battery, to which I belonged moved forward from a slight eminence about half a mile in rear of the Angostura to the foot of the hill on which Col. Hardins [John J., 1st Illinois Infantry ] Ret. was posted, where we remained during the night. About the same time Bragg's [Lieut. Braxton, Light Artillery] Battery which had also been drawn up near our first position, crossed the aroyo with Col. McKee's [Wm. R., 2nd Kentucky Infantry] Regt. to support it, and took up an advanced position near its head, and where the ground was completely cut up with ravines. I am also under the impression that the body Skermishers which had been posted on the slopes of the mountains on the extreme left of our position was strengthened by men from the Kentucky and Arkansas horse. Col Bowles [Wm. A., 2nd Indiana Infantry] Regt. with three pieces of Washington's Battery under O'Brien [Capt. John Paul Jones, , bvt Major for gallant conduct at Buena Vista ] had been early posted on the plateau extending from the road to the mountains on our left, & near the head of the first ravine running from this plateau towards the road. I have always believed these arrangements were made by Genl. Taylor's orders. His Inspector Genl. pointed out to Sherman the position he was to occupy, and then directed him to execute any orders he might recieve from Genl Wool. Col McKee and Bragg were posted by his Chief Engineer. Just at day light on the 23rd my section was directed to report to Col [Sylvester] Churchill Inspector Genl, to be assigned to a position in the line of battle. He placed me with one piece on the right, and Lt. French [Samuel G., , Capt. gallant conduct at Buena Vista , later maj. genl. C. S. A. 1861-1865] with the other on the left of Col Bissell's [Wm. H., 2nd Illinois Infantry] Regt. which I found in position at the head of the 2nd ravine leading from the plateau towards the road. Soon after the squadron of the 1st Dragoons was posted behind the right of Bissell's Regt. and Mc Cullough's [Ben, Texas] Rangers took up a position at the head of the next ravine towards the road & about 200 yds to my right and rear. Soon after reaching the position assigned me by Col Churchill the battle commenced by a Simultaneous assault on our extreme left, and a strong demonstration on the Angostura. The latter was soon repulsed by Washington's Battery, but the asaalt on our left was successful. Col Bowle's Regt [2nd Indiana that turned an order to fall back into disorderly flight. See Gibson, Daily and

Dix letters in this collection] Regt. having been driven from the field, and O'Brien being without support had to retire leaving one old piece, after gallantly holding his position till the last moment. Col Bissell's Regt. and the Squadron of Dragoons fell back about 300 yds and reformed on the edge of the large ravine running from the mountains to the road in rear of the Angostura, and separating the main plateau from the broken ground between it and the Rancho of Buena Vista. Being entirely unsupported at this time I moved back towards the road with my piece and having taken a position between McCullough's Compy. and the right of Bissell's Regt. commenced firing upon passing columns of the enemy. Capt. s Sherman & Bragg having also reached the position which I occupied the fire of six pieces soon stopped the further advance of the enemy towards the Angostura. But a large body of Cavalry and Infantry had succeeded in crossing the main plateau and having driven our light troops from the sides of the mountains, and disperced the Kentucky and Arkansas horse, were advancing towards the road in rear of the Rancho, when Genl. Taylor accompanied by Genl Wool [John E.] reached the plateau. At this time the battle had abated somewhat in the center, and soon after reaching the plateau Genl. Taylor dispatched all the Dragoons and Artillery leaving only my piece on the plateau to assist the Mississippi Rifles [1st Regt. under Col. Jefferson Davis to whom this letter is addressed] and Col Lane [Joseph, Indiana Brigade, 2nd & 3rd] Regt. in driving back the enemy's advance. With this reinforcement the enemy's advance troops were soon driven back to the mountains, and the greater part of their Infantry dispersed, after several contesting the ground they had gained, Up to the time of Genl. Taylors return to the field the day had gone against us; after his arrival allthough the enemy made their strongest efforts, they were successfully resisted, and without wishing to disparge Genl. Wool's talents as a commander, it is my belief that he had lost the battle before Genl. Taylor reached the field."

Hon. Jeff Davis  
SEC War.

Geo H Thomas"  
Maj 2nd Cavl

Fort Belknap Tex  
August 1st 1858

Colonels.

I received by the mail of last week, W. Woods letter of the 10th May addressed to me at Fort Leavenworth, asking me to communicate to you "such facts regarding the conception and termination of the battle of Buena Vista as may have come to my knowledge so far as the merits of the conflict were due to Genl. Taylor, the main points desired being "the facts occurring between the absence of Genl. Taylor at Sallillo and his return to the field on the morning of the 23rd." With regard to the first point the conception and planning





*Council Grove Mo. June 14<sup>th</sup> 1847*

"We arrived at this place to day and will remain encamped untill the morning - On the 7th Inst Company B. 1st Dragoons left Ft Leavenworth as an escort and Guard to Maj Bodine [Charles] Paymaster in the U.S. Army who takes out some \$350,000 - to pay off troops in Santa Fe. We are about 100 strong and have 12 waggons - On the 3rd day out an Express caught up and brought out the last Eastern mail and was pleased to recieve one (a letter) from you. I can spare but a moment to acquaint you that I am again going out to New Mexico - I forgot to say we have 120 waggons loaded with provisions for our troops in Santa Fe which are a few days ahead of us, which will proceed in company as soon as we get up. The whole road is full of hostile Indians who are plundering all the trains not guarded by a military escort. They have some 800 Lodges about 200 miles from here and it is our commanding officers intention to give them battle on coming up. They are the Comanches & Pawnees. I hope we are able to find them and give them a severe punishment for they richly deserve it - Yesterday we met a train [of] waggons belonging to the Government returning and they had a man who had been scalped by these monsters - Four of the men were out hunting buffalo, when suddenly ten Indians burst on them killing two, wounding one who escaped and the fourth supposing him dead took his scalp! His friends found him still breathing, they took him to the waggons, and by a miracle almost is still alive. It was a horrid sight: not a vestige of hair remained and the skin was taken off clear to the skull! It made a great impression on our men and they all swear signal vengeance on such demons. We just now hear they have taken the mules from a train of ours ahead of 30 waggons, we of course shall move rapidly and try to regain them with other property. The Mexicans have visited these tribes and made presents to induce to harrass & stop all American trains. I shall not be surprised that after having been to Santa Fe we shall have to return and Guard this road untill Winter sets in - My health continues uninterruptedly good - You must not expect a long letter for I have but a little chance or time to write much. You can see by any large map of U States where I am penning these few lines - it is 160 miles from Ft Leavenworth. We have made but small progress as yet owing to the roads which are the worst of all in the whole route - . . . . . If any one should wish to write me they can direct to me B Troop U S Dragoons Santa Fe via Ft Leavenworth and I will get it sooner or later - . . . . . M I Baker P.S. It is uncertain whether we remain in Santa Fe, go to California - go to the Southern Army [Mexico] - come back to guard this road, or return immediately to Ft Leavenworth, . . . . M I B "

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EL ESCALO S<sup>TO</sup> DE DIVISION D. ANTONIO LOPEZ DE SANTA ANNA.

Presidente de la Republica Mexicana.

Engraving by G. G. Thompson, N.Y.



HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY, }  
NATIONAL PALACE OF MEXICO, Sept. 18, 1847. }

GENERAL ORDERS—No. 289.

1. The army, by degrees and beginning as soon as practicable, will be distributed and quartered over the city as follows:
2. The first division on, or near, the direct route from the gate of San Cosma towards the Cathedral, and extending a little beyond the east end of the Alameda. This division will keep a competent guard, with two guns of medium calibre, at that gate.
3. The second division about the Plaza Mayor and extending towards the gate of San Lazaro, or the Peñon, at which it will keep a guard and two pieces of artillery as above.
4. The third division on, or near, the direct route from the gate of Peravillo, or Gaudalope, towards the Cathedral, but not South of the Convent of San Domingo, and will keep a guard with two pieces of artillery, as above, at that gate.
5. The Volunteer division on, or near, the direct route from the gate of San Antonio towards the Cathedral, but not north of the Hospital of Jesus, and will keep a guard, with two pieces of artillery, as above, at that gate.
6. The brigade of Cavalry will be quartered in the Cavalry barracks near the National Palace, marked, on the plan of the city, small *m.* This brigade will furnish, daily, a detachment of a corporal and six men to the respective gates of divisions, to serve as couriers (or estafetas) between the gates and the commanders of the respective divisions, and for other like purposes.
7. No private house shall be occupied by any corps or officer, until all suitable public buildings within the above ranges shall be first fully occupied; and all officers, attached to troops, shall be quartered with, or near, their troops respectively.
8. No rent shall be paid by the United States for any building occupied by troops or officers, without a special direction from general headquarters; nor shall any private house be occupied as quarters without the free consent of the owner, or orders from general headquarters. No deviation from these injunctions will be tolerated.
9. The collection of customs or duties at the several gates of the city, by the civil authorities of the same, will be continued as heretofore, until modified by the civil and military Governor (Major-General Quitman) according to the views of the General-in-Chief. But supplies belonging to the Quartermaster's and Commissary's departments will at once be exempted from all duties.

By command of Major-General Scott:

*H. L. Scott,*

A. A. A. G.

HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY,  
WASHINGTON, D. C., August 10, 1862.

GENERAL ORDER, No. 20.

1. The Army of the Potomac is to be organized as follows:  
1. The Army of the Potomac is to be organized as follows:  
2. The Army of the Potomac is to be organized as follows:  
3. The Army of the Potomac is to be organized as follows:  
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18. The Army of the Potomac is to be organized as follows:  
19. The Army of the Potomac is to be organized as follows:  
20. The Army of the Potomac is to be organized as follows:

*H. W. H.*

A. A. A.

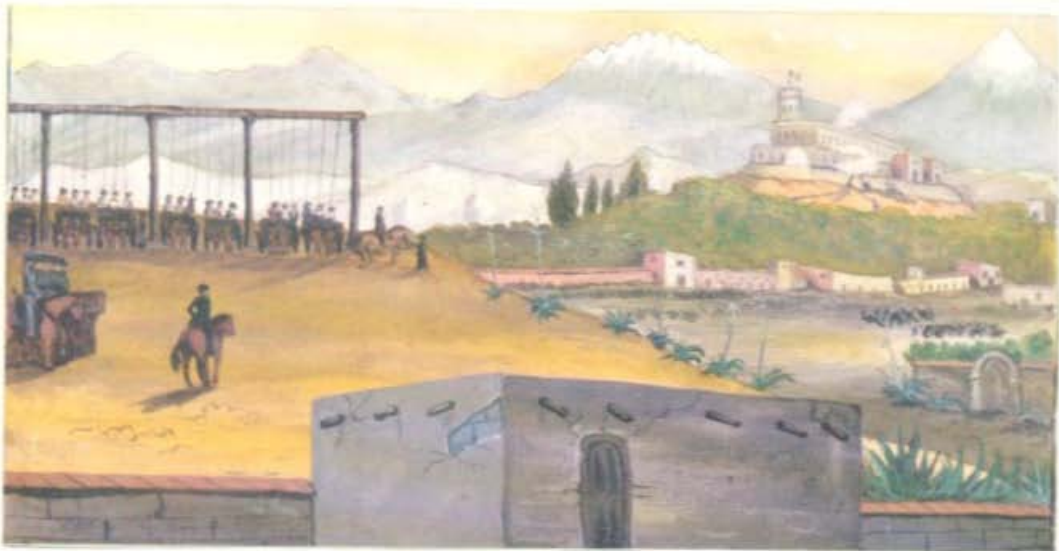


## THE WESTERN MAILS

\*General Scott relied upon his engineer officers, Maj. John L. Smith, Robert E. Lee, Geo. B. McClellan, J. L. Mason and Pierre G. T. Beauregard, to make reconnaissance of the territory and enemy positions, before making tactical decisions. In this case his selection of an almost impossible route must have taken the Mexicans by surprise. It is noteworthy that a traveling wagon circus followed the army on its way to Mexico City. Bensley's American Circus opened in Mexico City Sept. 26th.

\*Churubusco and Contreras were fought the same days—19th and 20th of August. Cerro Gordo was fought on the 18th of April.

\*Peace negotiations ended in failure and the armistice was terminated on the 6th of August. The Mexicans wanted to dictate the peace at their price, which Scott refused to consider. This was followed by the bloody Battle of Molino del Rey on the 8th and the storming of Chapultepec on the 13th and the battle for the City of Mexico, which was occupied by Scott's army the following day - Sept. 14th.



San Patricio Battalion members await hanging at the moment U.S. troops storming Chapultepec raise the American flag in victory.

\*John Riley, 5th U.S. Infantry, deserted at Matamoros along with 250 others. A good part of the deserters were Roman Catholics. Mexican propaganda urged Americans to come over their side and be rewarded by land and money and that the U.S. was waging a holy war on Catholic Mexico and the church. This resulted in the organization of the San Patricio Battalion with Riley at its head. At least 65 of them, were captured at Churubusco, tried by court-martial and sentenced to death. Scott commuted 11 to 50 lashes, the letter D branded on their cheeks, and to dig the graves of those to be hanged. Sixteen were hanged at San Angel, four at Mixcoac on the 9th and 10th of September. On the 13th, thirty others were forced to stand on mule carts with the hangmans noose around their necks and watch the American troops storm the Castle of Chapultepec. At the very moment that the Stars and Stripes was raised over the castle, the signal was given and the carts were driven forward dropping the prisoners into eternity. Riley was one of the 11 whose death sentence was commuted. One report has it that he married a wealthy Mexican lady and lived out his life "repected" in Mexico.



Winfield Scott  
Lieut Genl U S A

No. 3rd Army

A. G. Office

Winfield Scott,

Major Genl U S A

FREE



Mr. Abraham Bull

Troy

New York



West Point N.Y.  
Nov. 14<sup>th</sup> 1848

Capt G W Callum  
Comdg. Engr. Co.  
Sir;

According to your directions I have the honor to submit the following statement of the operations of the Engr. Co. in Mexico.

Everything done by the Co. in the field having been fully stated in the reports of the officer who commanded it throughout the war, I shall make this statement as general as possible, referring for particulars to his reports & to the statement which he will probably make on his return to this post.

During the months of July August & a part of Sept. 1846 the Co. was carefully drilled as Infantry & made the different materials of a siege, besides running the principal kinds of saps & forming the Ponton Bridge.

The Engr. Co., 71 rank and file, commanded by Capt A S Swift, with 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt G W Smith & Port 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt M Callum, all of the Engrs., as his detachment left West Point N.Y. on the 24<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1846, & sailed from the Narrows, N.Y. harbor, in the ship *Clinta*, on the 26<sup>th</sup> for Pasaos de Santiago, under orders to report to Maj. Gen Taylor then commanding the Army of Occupation.

West Point, N.Y.

Nov. 14<sup>th</sup> 1848

Mr. G. M. Allen

Washington

Statement of operations of  
Sigsbee Co. during the war with  
Mexico.

*[Faint, mostly illegible handwritten text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.]*



# He Was An American Dragoon.

*John Cornock Describes His  
Thrilling Hand-to-Hand  
Combat With a Mex-  
ican Lancer.*

**J**OHN CORNOCK, of 114 Fourth avenue, who is now long past the threescore and ten mark, is one of the last of the American Dragoons. He was in all the battles of the Valley of Mexico, with Gen. Philip Kearney at Cherebusco, was one of Gen. Winfield Scott's body guard, and served in the Mexican war until its close. He was also one of the Argonauts, and knew many of the early gold seekers. But the story is best told in his own words:

"I am one of the last of the living U. S. Dragoons—one of those who learned to use the sabre before they did the razor. In my earliest days, when living in Albany, I delighted to read of the battles that were fought against England. At school we used to fight those battles over again on our slates. We would make a row of O's on each side of the slate. One side represented the British, the other the Americans. Two boys would take sides, and each armed with a sharp pencil make quick strokes across the slate, the one crossing out the most O's winning the battle.

"As I grew older martial music and the booming of cannon affected me so that no power could keep me from following the sound. When news of Taylor's victory on the Rio Grande was first received in Albany I wanted to volunteer at once, but was rejected on account of my youth. Again, in September, 1846, when I would have enlisted in Capt. Frisbee's company of Stephenson's California Volunteers, I was refused for the same reason. So I waited till the spring of 1847, when I went to New York City and enlisted in Company E of the Third Dragoons, then being raised.

"This was the only dragoon company that was raised in this State during the Mexican War. Most of the members belonged in New York City and Brooklyn. They were intellectually the peers of any company that ever entered Uncle Sam's service.

"Our Captain was William H. Duff, principal of a military college on Staten Island. He was graduated from Maynooth College, and in courage, education and military service was every inch a soldier. Our First Lieutenant was Joseph Dwyer, who was for several years Adjutant of the Seventh Regiment. Among our non-commissioned officers was A. A. Selover, who afterwards became San Francisco's first Postmaster. He was also John C. Fremont's partner in the Mariposa gold mines; also a partner of Jay Gould, and eventually a Wall street magnate. Gen. D. McGregor, who was Colonel of the Fourth New York Infantry (Scott's Life Guards);

Major John B. Braham, also an officer in the same regiment; William H. Fox, for several years a member of the Produce Exchange, and who lives now at Glenwood, N. Y.; Rollicking Tom O'Neil, doorkeeper of the White House during the Pierce administration; Henry Ford, master mechanic in the New York Central machine shops, at Albany; Capt. William McKittick, who was killed at the head of his company at Petersburg, Va.; Gen. William Montgomery and Col. Fred Stevens, later of the Confederate army, were also some of those of our company, who distinguished themselves.

We did not care the cause of war to know.

We only knew in far off Mexico.

Our little army, always our Nation's pride,

Faced gallantly red war's advancing tide,  
And unless soon reinforced, would be,  
It and our country's flag in jeopardy.

"We embarked on a Sunday morning in May, 1847, at Fort Hamilton, on an old brig named the *Mobile*. She had been used as a salt carrier, and was damp and totally unfit to carry the Tenth Infantry, and our company of one hundred and six men, officers and their servants, which were placed aboard her. We dubbed her the 'Floating Coffin.' There was but one deck and but one main hatch. There was a scramble for the most desirable quarters, that led to an embryo mutiny. This the officers were unable to quell, and they signaled the revenue cutter *Legare*. She bore down on us with such force that she struck us amidship and stove in the brig's side.

"This occurred near Barnegat. It stopped the fight, for from the noise of crashing timbers we all expected to go to the bottom. The damage, however, was all above the water line. We were



JOHN CORNOCK.

towed back to Fort Hamilton and transferred to the bark *Henry Harbeck*, and after a pleasant voyage of thirty days landed at Vera Cruz, where we were furnished with horses and army equipments.

"I suspect what I thought of Major-Gen. Winfield Scott would arouse a great many

*A Brooklyn Man's Story of  
the Stirring Days of '49  
With the California  
Argonauts.*

of the Army,' with the command of 500 men. The corps consisted of four companies of the Third Dragoons under President Polk's brother, Major William H. Paik, and four companies of Texas Rangers, under Col. Jack Hays, the celebrated Indian fighter.

"We came upon the guerrillas at the town of Tebusatlapan. They were commanded by Padre Jaurata and Col. Martinez. They gave us a royal salute—bullets whistling in our direction from nearly every house in the town.

"It was hand-to-hand fighting—surrender or be shot. My own experience was exciting enough. A guerrilla attempted to escape, and I started in hot pursuit. It was soon a race for life. The guerrilla rode a small, wiry mustang, trained so well that his rider could turn him around so suddenly that he would lose but little of his speed. His pursuer rode a horse of good Kentucky stock—strong and tireless.

"The race was up a road that allowed of no turning either to left or right. The horses were evenly matched for speed.

"After a long chase I made up my mind to give him a parting shot and return to my command. I raised my carbine, fired, missed, but still kept up the mad chase, allowing the carbine to drop and drawing a pistol from its holster to make one more shot. At that instant the guerrilla wheeled suddenly and came charging down on me, lance in hand.

"I fired the only shot I had. The bullet struck him between the eyes and he was a dead man. My horse had reared and the lance intended for his rider was buried in the horse's breast and we both fell in one confused heap. The guerrilla was dead and it was some time before I recovered sufficiently to rejoin my comrades.

"During the fight the town had caught fire and after the enemy had been disposed of, our boys saved the town from the destruction it deserved for fostering those robbers. Padre Jaurata escaped, but his two ablest lieutenants, Martinez and Montan, were killed with more than 150 of his men. We made many prisoners and Padre Jaurata's guerrillas were never heard of in the road again.

"After the war was over and we were mustered out at St. Louis, I went back to my home in Albany, but by the spring of '49 had made up my mind to go to California. I could only raise \$130, and as the trip cost \$500, I had a problem to confront. But I planned to go as far as St. Louis, and trust to striking some opportunity from there. On the way out I met others who were bound in the same direction. We agreed to chip in, buy an outfit and make the trip overland.



MARKET ACTIVITY INCREASING.  
FINANCIAL.

BOSTON, CINCINNATI, PHILADELPHIA, CHICAGO.

**L. E.**

**Better Than Standard Oil Stock.**  
"I would rather own this process than the Standard Oil Co. You can get almost any price you ask for it," says Prof. James S. Rogers, A Gas Engineer of National Reputation.

**NOTE**—Lander, Perry & Clark, or new process show a saving of 60% and more.  
A direct saving of 60% or more.  
By this new process as follows:  
Present consumption of coal at their big plant will be equipped with the This firm, located at New Britain, Plant of Lander



**Manufacturer of Thoroughly A New Process.**  
Do you realize that some 250 cent saved, asking for figures for equipping Do you realize that the profits on These shares are now selling at 50c the place. Those best informed predict

**\$1,000,000**

THE DAILY STANDARD

people. I don't believe this country has ever produced a finer man or soldier. He was straight and honest. He had the courage of his convictions. In some respects something like Roosevelt. He was not popular with his officers. He wouldn't allow them to swear. I once heard him say to an officer whom he caught cursing a private: 'Tut, tut, captain, a man who deserves such language as that ought to be court-martialed.' When in his military uniform he lived up to its full dignity. When he doffed that he was one of the most genial of men. But he made no favorites, nor sought friendships.

Perhaps it was because the Civil War followed so close on the heels of the Mexican War, that more has not been made of this war in history. The country gave some of her best men. On that terrible, yet glorious day in August, fifty-five years ago, when we stormed the City of Mexico, such men as Generals Scott, Worth, Smith, Quitman and Shields and Colonels Harvey and Bennet Riley were in charge. A summary of the day's work showed that ten thousand Americans, mostly volunteers, hampered with a long-wagon train, and a field hospital to defend, after marching and fighting for thirty-six consecutive hours, whipped, in the open field, 30,000 Mexican troops, protected by three lines of earthworks skillfully built, and flanked by almost impassable ditches.

When we were before the City of Mexico the Mexicans outraged a rule of civilized warfare by firing on our white flag. This cost them \$200,000. Of this amount Gen. Scott spent \$100,000 in making his soldiers comfortable. The other \$100,000 was sent to Washington to start the building of the National Soldiers' Home. It is understood the hospitality of this home has never been open to the Mexican veterans.

One of the handsomest plots in Greenwood was the burial place of nine of our Chapultepec heroes. It is not far from the entrance, on Battle Hill, and commands a fine view. For years it was marked by little wooden headboards. When these rotted away we raised enough money to place iron railings in their stead. These are now rusted out. There is an urn on the plot, but the pedestal it stands on is rotten. For three years I have planted and cared for this place, and for the last two years have been the only veteran to visit it. A foundation was laid for a monument, but there is no reason now to think one will ever be placed there. In a few years it will likely be altogether forgotten.

"During the war our army and supply trains were constantly annoyed by guerrillas who infested that region. One of the boldest of their chieftains was Padre Jaurata, the soldier priest. His celebrated band consisted of a thousand desperate and daring horsemen, well skilled in guerrilla warfare.

It was their plan to swoop down on that part of the train in which the specie and valuables were located, murder the teamster, take the plunder, and, if time allowed, destroy the wagon. They showed no mercy, and took no prisoners.

Gen. Scott made up his mind to exterminate Padre Jaurata and his band. He thereupon assigned to this duty Gen. 'Jo' Lane, who was styled the 'Marion

and two yoke of oxen and a wagon, and were well enough stocked to last six months. When we left the frontier I had but ten cents in my pocket, and there were 3,000 miles in front of me.

"On that long trip across the plains there was not a white settlement between the Missouri River and California. A third of the trip had been accomplished when our outfit was stolen by the Indians.

"At Fort Laramie I hired out as cook at \$30 per month. But it was a somewhat perplexing situation, since I had had no previous knowledge of such business. In thinking the matter over it was evident I must do something else. I had a chance to go back to the States, but decided never to go back until I had seen California. So with a companion I had met at the Fort—also stranded—we started to make the trip afoot. We were practically unarmed; the distance twelve hundred miles, and the dangers of the route at that early day may be imagined.

"All went well until the head of St. Mary's River was reached. Here, the Indians coming upon us unawares, my companion was shot, and I only saved my life by dodging through the willows that skirted the banks of the stream. Many times my only food was pit from the thistles and berries from the bushes that grew by the way-side.

"At what is now Carson City I met an old comrade who offered me \$25. Still further on, at the place where Placerville now is, I met an old schoolmate from Albany. He looked me over and invited me to step into a nearby trading camp with him, saying to the proprietor, 'Give this fellow whatever he needs.'

"At Placerville I gained my first experience in mining. I was elected town marshal of Michigan Bluffs, in Placer County, at the time the gamblers were driven from that place.

"Leland Stanford was a friend of those days. We had known each other back in Albany, when he had been a law student, while I was a clerk in the same building. He told me himself that in Wisconsin, where he hung out his shingle for a while, he had but one case, and he never got paid for that. Out in the West our acquaintance was renewed. I saw him hang Long Tim Johnson, a gambler, to a tree. All the world knows the financial power he became. Yet when he went out West he didn't own more than the clothes he wore.

"In after years I was captain of an emigrant train, and in the travels across the plains met many old Indian fighters, Jack Hays, Ben McCulloch, the Bridger boys, Kit Carson and 'Old Man' Rubbeaux were some of them. We had varied and oftentimes thrilling experiences.

"For twenty years I lived in California. My luck in the gold field was like many another's, sometimes bad and sometimes good. I liked the freedom of the life. I have lived in this house now for sixteen years, and I really don't care to talk in order to be talked about."

Mr. Cornock has never worn eyeglasses, and reads the finest print with ease. He takes long walks every day, and ten or twelve miles is an ordinary distance for him to cover. His face has the glow of health, and although he carries a bullet hole in his head—a souvenir of the Mexican War—he is a fine example of well-preserved manhood.