

LIEUTENANT AVERELL'S RIDE AT THE OUTBREAK  
OF THE CIVIL WAR

By Muriel H. Wright

One of the most significant accounts telling of the exciting events on the frontier of the Indian Territory, now Oklahoma, at the outbreak of the Civil War was Lieutenant Averell's description of his fast journey from Washington, D. C., to Fort Smith, Arkansas, and his wild ride west toward Fort Arbuckle in April, 1861, carrying a special order from the War Department for the withdrawal of all the United States troops from the midst of the Indian nations in this Territory. Military protection from invasion, or from enemies within the borders of their lands had been promised by the United States, in treaties with the five great, southern tribes—Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, Seminole—when they had been removed by the Government to this part of the west thirty years before. The withdrawal of the forces of the United States Army was an event that was far reaching in the history of the West as the Indian Territory was a strategic region between the North and the South, in the War just beginning.<sup>1</sup>

Recently hospitalized from wounds received while on frontier duty with his Regiment of Mounted Riflemen at Fort Craig and Fort Defiance, New Mexico, Second Lieutenant William W. Averell reported for duty in Washington, D. C., four days after the firing on Fort Sumter. The following day, April 17, he was given an order by letter to deliver to Lieutenant-Colonel William H. Emory, First United States Cavalry, in command of the district embracing Forts Washita, Arbuckle and Cobb in the Indian Territory.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>References to sources used in compiling this article include: Annie H. Abel, *The American Indian as Slaveholder and Secessionist* (Arthur H. Clark Company, Cleveland, 1915); J. B. Thoburn and M. H. Wright, *Oklahoma: A History of the State and Its People* (New York, 1929), Vol. I; *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Ser. I, Vols. I and LIII (hereinafter cited as *Official Records*); letter from Joseph M. O'Donnell, Chief, Archives and History Division, United States Military Academy, West Point, New York, March, 1961.

<sup>2</sup>William Hempstead Emory a native of Maryland, graduated from the U. S. Military Academy on July 1, 1831, and first served with the 4th Artillery, U. S. A. He was appointed 1st Lieut., Corps of Topographical Engineers (1838), and was engaged in a number of notable U. S. surveys in the West, including that for the Boundary between the United States and the British Provinces (1844-46), the Boundary between California and Mexico (1848-53) and was with Brig. Gen. S. W. Kearney's Expedition to California (1846-47). Transferred to the 1st Cavalry in May, 1855, Bvt. Lieut. Col. W. H. Emory gave distinguished services as Commissioner in the survey of the Boundary between the United States and Mexico in 1857. He was stationed at Fort Arbuckle in 1858-59, during which time he recommended

Colonel Emory himself had been in Washington in March, where he had received orders just before setting out on his return to the Indian Territory to concentrate the three garrisons of his command at Fort Washita. He was given wide discretionary power in this since Army Headquarters at Washington could form no intelligent idea on what course he should take in his far away command.<sup>3</sup> When he arrived at Fort Smith, his base of supplies, he found the place threatened by secessionist forces in Arkansas. He also had word that the supply of ammunition being shipped up the Arkansas River for Forts Smith, Washita, Arbuckle and Cobb had been seized by secessionists at Napoleon downstream and that Fort Washita, about 165 miles southwest, was stocked with supplies to last only until May 31.<sup>4</sup> Preparatory to concentrating his whole command at this post, he set out with some of his Cavalry troops from Fort Smith on April 13.<sup>5</sup> En route on the road, when he had word that a large force of Texas Confederate troops was marching north toward Fort Washita, Colonel Emory ordered the withdrawal of its garrison. The next day, April 17, Fort Washita was taken over by the Texans.<sup>6</sup>

At the evacuation of this military post, Colonel Emory's troops encamped a few miles northwest on the Fort Arbuckle

a site for a new military post, which ten years later was chosen as that for Fort Sill. In 1859, Major Emory established Fort Cobb on the Washita River (present Caddo Co.), and two years later as Lieut.-Col., 1st Cavalry, he was in command of the troops at Fort Smith, (Ark.) and the three Forts—Washita, Arbuckle and Cobb—in the Ind. Ter. He became a distinguished officer in the Union Army during the Civil War, and was commissioned Bvt. Maj.-Gen. on March 13, 1865, for "gallant and meritorious services" in the Battle of Cedar Creek, Va. He died Dec. 1, 1887.—Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army*, and George B. Cullum, *Biographical Register of the U. S. Military Academy* (New York 1868), Vol. I.

<sup>3</sup> *Official Records*, Vol. 1, p. 659. Fort Gibson was an abandoned (1857) Army post at the beginning of the Civil War.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 648.

<sup>5</sup> In a letter addressed to Headquarters U. S. Army, dated Fort Smith, April 13, 1861, Col. Emory gave a brief account of what he had done before setting out for Fort Washita. He closed his letter with these remarks: "Having stated all I know affecting the honor and safety of the troops and the interests of the United States, and what has been done in executing the orders of the General-in-Chief, I now come to the object of my letter. Owing to the turn of affairs have recently taken, the position of an officer from a Southern State out here on duty has become extremely embarrassing; so much so as to impair his efficiency. Therefore, I urgently request that I may be allowed to turn over this command, with my instructions, to Major Sacket [at Ft. Arbuckle], or such other officer as may be selected, and that I may be permitted to return to Washington City, where I can explain my reasons for the step. If those reasons should prove unsatisfactory, I am prepared to resign my commission. I respectfully suggest it has never been the policy of any government to employ officers to operate against their own section of country."—*Ibid.*, pp. 665-6.

<sup>6</sup> Col. Emory's Report, *ibid.*, pp. 648-9.

road, in the vicinity of present Emet, in Johnston County, where he was joined by Captain S. D. Sturgis with his command of Cavalry from Fort Smith on May 30. Captain Sturgis had evacuated the remaining troops from that post late in the day on April 23, about an hour before 300 armed secessionist forces of the State of Arkansas and 10 pieces of artillery arrived at this place, by boat.<sup>7</sup> On May 31, Colonel Emory set his whole column of the First Infantry Regiment and the First Cavalry on the march west toward Fort Arbuckle.

In the meantime, Lieutenant Averell was hurrying west with the order from the War Department. William Woods Averell was born in Steuben County, New York, on November 5, 1832. He graduated from the Military Academy at West Point on July 1, 1855, and as brevet Second Lieutenant, Mounted Riflemen, he was stationed at Jefferson Barracks (1855-56), and at the Cavalry School for Practice at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, to 1857. He was assigned frontier duty in command of the Escort to the Commanding General of the Department of New Mexico, and did active service scouting out of Fort Craig and Fort Defiance for two years. He engaged in several skirmishes with the Indians of this region, including that with the Kiowa (1857), with the Navaho Expedition and with Ky-a-tano's band in Chusco Valley (1858). At the Puerco of the West in October, 1858, he was severely wounded in a night attack on his encampment. He was on sick leave (1859-1861) when he reported for duty at Washington in April, at the outbreak of the War.<sup>8</sup> Lieutenant Averell delivered the order of the War Department to Colonel Emory on his march west toward Fort Arbuckle, on May 2.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Capt. Sturgis' Report, May 21, 1861, *ibid.*, pp. 650-1.

<sup>8</sup> Cullum, *op. cit.*, pp. 411-12, and Heitman, *op. cit.*, p. 176. Commissioned 1st Lieut. of Mounted Riflemen, May, 1861, Lieut. Averell was transferred to the 3d Cavalry, Aug. 3, 1861, and about two weeks later again, to the 3d Pennsylvania Cavalry as Colonel; commissioned Brig. Gen., U. S. Volunteers, Sept. 26, 1863. He took part in the Virginia campaigns, and was commissioned Bvt. Maj. Gen., U. S. Army, March 13, 1865. He resigned from Army on May 18, 1865, and the following year was appointed U. S. Consul General of Canada, holding this office until 1869. He returned to private life, and secured several patents for asphalt paving, later being involved in court suits to hold his interest and rights that had been appropriated by others without his permission. He was reinstated by Congress as Captain in the Army, on the retired list in 1888, and served for a long period as Assistant Inspector General of Soldiers' Homes. He died at Bath, New York, on February 3, 1900 (O'Donnell, *op. cit.*).

<sup>9</sup> *Official Records*, Vol. I, p. 667.

Headquarters of the Army

Washington, April 17, 1861

Lieut. Col. Wm. H. Emory,

First Cavalry, Commanding Fort Arbuckle

Sir:

On receipt of this communication, you will, by order of the General-in-chief, with all the troops in the Indian country west of Arkansas, march to Fort Leavenworth, Kans., taking such useful public property as your means of transportation will permit. The troops may or may not be replaced by Arkansas volunteers. The action of that State will not affect your movement.

Capt. A. Montgomery, A.Q.M., will be left at Fort Smith, to take charge of public property, and as staff officer of volunteers who may be mustered into the service of the United States.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

E. D. Townsend

Assistant Adjutant General.

Lieutenant Averell's narrative is brought to light from the pages of the *Official Records*, and here published in *The Chronicles* to recall the days in the spring of one hundred years ago when the people of the Indian Territory were drawn into the tragedy of the great Civil War in the United States:<sup>10</sup>

Washington, D. C., May 31, 1861.

Col. L. Thomas,

Adjutant-General U. S. Army:

Sir: I have the honor to report that, having returned to duty on the 16th of April from an unexpired sick leave, I received the following order on April 17, viz:

Headquarters of the Army,

Washington, April 17, 1861.

Lieut. William W. Averell,

Mounted Riflemen, Washington City:

Sir: You will, by order of the General-in-Chief, proceed at once to Fort Arbuckle and deliver the accompanying letter to Lieut. Col. W. H. Emory, or the senior officer present, receive from him communications for the Government, and return to this city.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

E. D. TOWNSEND.

Assistant Adjutant-General.

Upon the back of this order was the following indorsement, viz:

---

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. LIII, pp. 493-496. Some paragraph divisions have been made by the Editor, in Averell's narrative, for clearness in this number of *The Chronicles*.

Headquarters of the Army,  
Washington, April 17, 1861.

The General-in-Chief directs the quartermaster at Fort Smith to extend every facility to Lieutenant Averell to enable him to execute his orders with promptitude.

F. J. PORTER,  
Assistant Adjutant-General.

Providing myself with a rough traveling suit of citizen's clothing, I left Washington at 2.45 p. m. on the 17th of April, by the Baltimore and Ohio Railway. At Harper's Ferry, where the train stopped for a few minutes, I saw Capt. Roger Jones, commanding a detachment guarding the arsenal at that point, who informed me of his apprehensions of an attack by the Virginians, and that, aware of the insufficiency of his force to defend the public property, he had made arrangements to destroy it and withdraw his small force into Maryland. The towns and villages through which my journey to Saint Louis was made were alive with agitated people turning out volunteers in response to the call of the President. I arrived at Saint Louis on the evening of the 19th, and left on the morning of the 20th by the first train to Rolla, Mo., where I arrived, 115 miles distant, at 5 in the afternoon.

Leaving Rolla by the first stage coach at 5 a. m. the 22d, with several prominent Southern gentlemen as fellow-passengers, I proceeded, with changing horses, mails, and passengers, toward Fort Smith, through towns wild with secession excitement and rumors of war. The unruly temper of the people and their manifest readiness to embrace any pretext for violence made it necessary for the safety of my dispatches and their successful delivery that my name and character should remain unknown. Having assumed a name and purpose suitable to the emergency, I experienced no great difficulty in passing safely through several inquisitions. I was obliged to drive the stage a greater part of the distance between Cassville and Bentonville, on account of the drunkenness of the driver, there being no other male passenger. At Evansville I met the intelligence, which momentarily astounded me, that Fort Smith had been captured by a force of secessionists 800 strong, which had come under the command of Colonel Borland from Little Rock. Near the foot of Boston Mountain, on the southern side, the rumor was confirmed by the passengers of a coach from Fort Smith which we met, happily in a pitchy dark night, which prevented my recognition by some of the lady passengers, wives of army officers who might have known me.

Crossing the Arkansas River on a ferry-boat we reached Fort Smith at 9 o'clock on the morning of the 27th. The town

was in a political frenzy. The fort had been evacuated by Captain Sturgis, with four companies of the First Cavalry, four or five days before, and the post quartermaster, on whom I had an order for transportation, was a prisoner in the guard-house. Secession troops were having a "general training" and target practice. It was perilous to make inquiries regarding our troops, and the only information obtainable of them was that they had gone westward, that pursuit up the Arkansas and from the direction of Texas was on foot, and that bridges had been burned and the streams were swollen from recent rains.

Exchanging my gold watch and a little money for a horse, saddle, and bridle with a man whose principal incentive to the trade was his apprehension of losing his horse by public seizure, I mounted for the remainder of the journey. It was 260 miles to Fort Arbuckle. Having been out of the saddle two years on account of my wound, and having just completed a toilsome, jolting journey of 300 miles in a coach, I was in poor condition for the struggle before me.

The horse was unbroken to the saddle, and after a fierce but unsuccessful effort to throw me ran wildly away through the successive lines of drilling troops, but I managed to guide him in a westerly direction and mastered him before reaching the Poteau River. This stream, 100 yards wide, was bank full and the bridge destroyed. Removing my heavy black overcoat, I swam the horse across, after a fearful struggle, in which I lost my overcoat and also suffered some injury from being struck by the horse. Twenty miles west of Fort Smith the road forks, the right hand going to Fort Arbuckle and the left to Fort Washita, these points being separated by sixty-five miles. Between the two routes the volcanic protrusion called the San Bois Mountains rise in several ranges about 1,500 feet high and gradually sink to the level of the undulating prairie seventy-five miles west of the fork. The deep trail showed that Sturgis had taken the left-hand road to Washita; therefore I went forward on the other the distance of about a mile to establish my trail in case of pursuit and then crossed over to the other road.<sup>11</sup>

The next morning I was overtaken at Holloway's Overland Station,<sup>12</sup> fifty-four miles west of Fort Smith, by four

---

<sup>11</sup> This fork in the road was west and south of the Choctaw Agency (Skullyville or Walker's Station), the site of which is about 1½ miles northeast of present Spiro, LeFlore County, Oklahoma. Averell followed the right hand road (Fort Arbuckle Road, also known as the "California Road") for a mile or so, and then crossed over to the Fort Washita Road which he followed to the "Narrows" on Brazil Creek, southwest.

<sup>12</sup> Averell was following the road to Fort Washita (the Butterfield Overland Mail Route). Holloway's Station was a stage stand on the Butterfield

mounted desperadoes, but my would-be captors, finding me wearing the light-blue uniform overcoat of a private soldier, which I had obtained at a station to replace the black one lost in the river, were easily persuaded that they had missed their man and I was not the one they wanted, but a rancorous secessionist like themselves who was going to fetch a sister from the army on account of the prospective troubles. Permitted to pursue my way, and quitting the road a few hours later to graze my horse, the same party, undeceived by a study of trails, passed me in hot pursuit. Resuming the road after them, a friendly wayfarer, who had met them and heard their inquiries, informed me of their wrathful purpose to shoot me on sight.

With the intention to reach the trail crossing to the Arbuckle road at the western end of the mountains, if possible, and to avail myself of the sheltering woods which covered their southern slopes if necessary, I rode cautiously forward. But ere the desired trail was reached the party was descried returning, whereupon I took to the woods and was fired upon and ordered to halt. Realizing that I could make a trail faster than they could find it my course was taken directly across the mountains and my escape made good. The Arbuckle road was found about two hours after midnight, after experiencing considerable trouble in keeping my horse, which I was obliged to lead during the night in the woods through howling packs of wolves.<sup>13</sup> The next day I was headed off by the same party on that road and pursued. After another troublesome night in the woods among wolves and impassable ravines I found a Cherokee cabin, some food for myself and horse, and a guide to the Arbuckle road, ten miles west of Perryville.<sup>14</sup>

Another weary day and night brought me near to Cochran's ranch,<sup>15</sup> forty miles from Arbuckle. Here it was ascer-

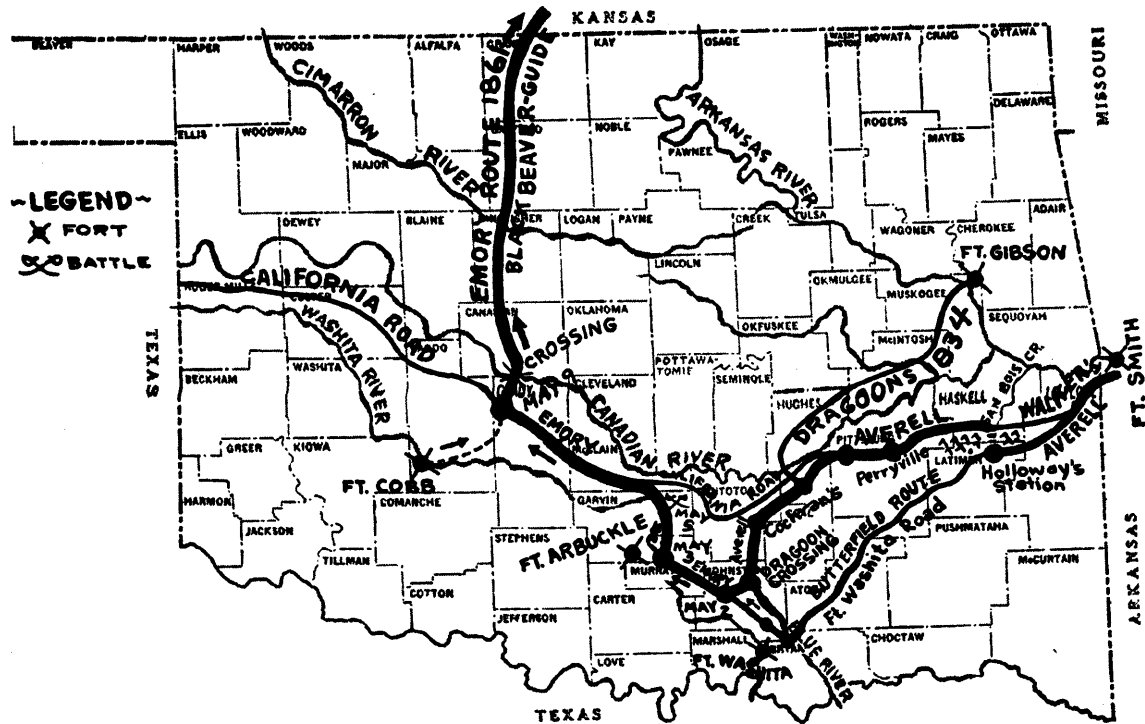
---

Stage Line that carried the U. S. mail between St. Louis and San Francisco, 1858-1861, its operation ceasing June 30, 1861 ("Report on the Butterfield Overland Mail," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 4 [Winter, 1958-59]). Averell may have purchased the light-blue uniform overcoat at Walker's Station (14 miles west of Fort Smith). The site of Holloway's Station is at "the Narrows" on Brazil Creek, about 3 miles northeast of present Red Oak, Latimer County.

<sup>13</sup> Lieut. Averell left the Fort Washita Road (Butterfield Overland Mail Route) approximately at the west side of present Red Oak, and after traveling north through wild country reached the Fort Arbuckle Road (California Road) after midnight, in the vicinity of old Sans Bois Town, near Sans Bois Creek, Haskell County, on April 29.

<sup>14</sup> The Cherokee cabin spoken of was that of a Choctaw (possibly Chickasaw) as there was a Choctaw settlement in the region of present Arpela, Pittsburg County, which was within the boundaries of the Choctaw Nation in 1861.

<sup>15</sup> Averell was near Cochran's the morning of May 1st. His "Cochrane's Ranch" was known in local history as Cochran's Store, the site of which is about 1½ miles southwest of present Frisco, Pontotoc County, on the south side of Clear Boggy Creek. This was the home of Robert Cochran, a white



(M. H. W., 1861)

Lieutenant Averell's Route from Fort Smith west, April 27 to May 2, 1861, with dispatches to Colonel Emory, and the withdrawal of all U. S. troops from the Indian Territory (now Oklahoma), at the outbreak of the Civil War.

tained that our troops had left Arbuckle and were concentrating at Washita, forty miles to the southward. Obtaining a fresh horse and an Indian guide we set out for Washita, but toward night were overtaken by a blinding storm of wind and rain, in which the Indian lost the way and I lost the Indian.<sup>16</sup> Making my way to the Big Blue River I swam it in the dark and unsaddled, tied my new horse to one stirrup, and running my arm through the other lay down and slept till morning.<sup>17</sup> Upon awaking the Indian, who had found me, informed me that we were not far from the road between Washita and Arbuckle and about ten miles west of the former place.<sup>18</sup> When arrived at the road a deep double trail made in the mud of the previous evening disclosed the fact that a heavy body of mounted troops had moved westward. Following it about six miles we came upon the First U. S. Cavalry and the First U. S. Infantry breaking camp, the infantry already stretched out on the road toward Arbuckle. Riding to Colonel Emory, who was already mounted, I delivered the dispatches.<sup>19</sup> They were soon communicated to his officers. It was made known to me that the enemy was concentrating upon and had taken possession of Fort Washita the previous evening, and that I should have found myself again in his hands but for the storm which had prevented me reaching that point the previous night. In an ambulance I accompanied Colonel Emory's command to Fort Arbuckle, where we arrived May 3, and found Major Sacket, Captains Crittenden, Williams, and others who had been left with a small force in charge of the post when the main body went to Washita.<sup>20</sup> The trains were loaded

man, whose wife was a Chickasaw. After the Civil War, Cochran moved his store about 3 miles east, and the place was named "Stonewall," (old Stonewall) for General "Stonewall" Jackson of Civil War fame. A post office was established at old Stonewall in 1874. Cochran's was on the Dragoon Trail (of 1834), which after the Civil War was called the Texas Cattle Trail.

<sup>16</sup> When he became lost from his Indian guide in the storm, Lieut. Averell was following the Dragoon Trail (Leavenworth Expedition, 1834) which was a well known road southwest to Fort Washita by this time in 1861. (See Leavenworth Expedition—George H. Shirk, "Peace on the Plains," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1, [Spring, 1950], pp. 2-41.)

<sup>17</sup> The road followed by Lieut. Averell crossed Blue River at the "falls" known as the "Dragoon Crossing," later Belton on Blue, about 10 or 12 miles west and south of Wapanucka, Johnston County.

<sup>18</sup> The Dragoon Trail struck the Fort Arbuckle Road about 7 miles north of Tishomingo, Johnston County.

<sup>19</sup> When Lieut. Averell handed the order of the War Department to Col. Emory in this dramatic scene, the course of the Civil War was set in Indian Territory. The meeting took place on the Ft. Washita-Ft. Arbuckle road in the vicinity of present Reagen, Johnston County, on May 2, 1861.

<sup>20</sup> Lieut. Averell set out in the ambulance with Col. Emory's command and the escort for Fort Arbuckle, early in the morning of May 3rd. Later in the day, the column of troops moved up to the east side of the Washita, about 5 miles east of Fort Arbuckle.

to their utmost capacity, and on the 4th of May the flag was lowered with military honors, Fort Arbuckle was abandoned, and we marched northward, conducted by the Indian guides Possum and Old Beaver.<sup>21</sup> We were pursued by a body of Texans two or three days, but ceased to be annoyed after the capture of their advance guard of about thirty men by Captain Sturgis, in which undertaking I accompanied him by permission of Colonel Emory. I left Colonel Emory's command on the march for Leavenworth at El Dorado, in Kansas, and reached Washington yesterday and endeavored to report at once to you. Finding you engaged with the Secretary of War, I went to his house, but as you were unable to see me I avail myself of this my first opportunity to report.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

WM. W. AVERELL,

*Second Lieutenant, Regiment Mounted Riflemen.*

#### WITHDRAWAL OF THE U. S. TROOPS FROM THE INDIAN TERRITORY

The main body of troops from Fort Arbuckle and two companies from Fort Cobb joined Colonel Emory on May 3, on the east side of the Washita River, about five miles east of Fort Arbuckle. The location of the overnight encampment was about a mile north of the present site of the City of Davis, in Murray County. Early the next day (May 4) when the loaded wagons came over from Fort Arbuckle, the whole column moved north up the east side of the Washita with Black Beaver, the Delaware scout as guide, on the march to relieve Fort Cobb, heading—as Colonel Emory states in his report—for “the road which lies on the open prairie north of the Washita River, so as to render the cavalry available.”<sup>22</sup> This open

On this same day (May 3, 1861), Major Delos B. Sacket, First Cavalry, was commissioned Lieut.-Colonel of Second Cavalry. A native of New York, he graduated from the U. S. Military Academy, West Point, July 1, 1845. He served as 2nd Lieut., 1st Dragoons (1845), 1st Lieut., 2nd Dragoons (1846), Capt., 1st Cavalry (1855); in Military Occupation of Texas and in the War with Mexico. He was commissioned Bvt. Major-General, U. S. A., on March 13, 1865, for “faithful and meritorious services” in the Civil War.—Cullum *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 131-2.

<sup>21</sup> Black Beaver was the noted Delaware scout who served as guide to many famous U. S. expeditions and exploring parties in the West. His band of Delaware was settled in the vicinity of the Wichita Agency, near Ft. Cobb, Caddo County, and had been identified with the Ft. Arbuckle region since this post was first established at old Camp Arbuckle near present Byars, McClain County.—George H. Shirk, “The Site of Old Camp Arbuckle,” *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXVII, No. 3 (Autumn, 1949), pp. 313-15; Carolyn Thomas Foreman, “Black Beaver,” *ibid.*, Vol. XXIV, No. 3 (Autumn, 1946), pp. 269-92.

<sup>22</sup> Col. Emory's Report, *Official Records*, Vol. I, pp. 648-9.

prairie road lay some thirty miles north, by the meanders of the trail being followed, and was one and the same as the road leading west, noted in history as the California Road, over which Black Beaver had been a guide to Captain R. B. Marcy's California emigrant train in 1849.<sup>22a</sup>

Late in the day on May 5, Colonel Emory received a message addressed to him "Commanding Troops in the Field," and dated "Fort Arbuckle, C. N., May 5, 1861," from the Sergeant left in charge of the store of supplies remaining at the post, which stated:<sup>23</sup>

I regret to report that this post was this morning taken possession of by a portion of a large force of Texans, who are marching in the rear of your column (report says two thousand men). The officer commanding demanded me to give up to him, in the name of the Southern Confederacy, the whole of the United States property in my charge, which I complied with, as I could offer no resistance, my command being disarmed previous to leaving their companies. He has promised to myself and command a safe passage with our families and private property from further molestation until we get to Fort Leavenworth. Only for the interference of Mr. Myers he would have made us prisoners of war.

At this point, Colonel Emory's report states:<sup>24</sup>

On the 5th, finding myself followed, I halted, and sent Captain Sturgis with his company and Lieutenant Averell to the rear, to bring into my camp the advance guard of the pursuing forces, which he did happily without having to shed blood. The same day Arbuckle was occupied by a large force of white people from Texas. The next morning [May 6] the above-mentioned guard, mostly composed of gentlemen acting under erroneous impressions, retraced its steps, and I followed my course to relieve the command at Cobb, for the safety of which I had reason to entertain serious apprehensions, and which I had ordered to meet me.

The column had halted near the present McClain-Garvin County line, north of the present town of Paoli. From here Captain Sturgis with his cavalry troops and Lieutenant Averell turned back along the trail that they had just traveled, and met the pursuing forces a few miles from present Pauls Valley

<sup>22a</sup> Robert H. Dott, "Lieutenant Simpson's California Road Across Oklahoma," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 2 (Summer, 1960), with map. Leaving the present location of Davis on the east side of the Washita River, the route was north along the trail that led to old Camp Arbuckle, near present Byars, where Black Beaver's Delaware band lived up to about 1859. Black Beaver knew well this trail to Fort Arbuckle from the time of its establishment west of the Washita in 1852 for he had served as guide to many U. S. expeditions through this country even before that time.

<sup>23</sup> Report, Sgt. Charles A. Campbell, Co. E, 1st Inf., "Occupation of Fort Arbuckle, Ind. Ty., by Texas Troops," *Official Records*, Vol. I, p. 652.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 648. The trail being followed under the guidance of Black Beaver struck the "open prairie road," or California Road, near and south of present Wayne, McClain County.

in Garvin County, east (or northeast) of the Washita.<sup>25</sup> From available records, this encounter on May 5, 1861, was the first between the armed forces of the Union Army and the Southern Confederacy in the Indian Territory at the outbreak of the Civil War.

Three days more of marching west on the "open prairie road north of the Washita River"—the California Road—and on the fourth day, May 9, at a point thirty-five miles northeast of Fort Cobb, Colonel Emory found the command (two companies of infantry) from that post. This meeting with the Fort Cobb troops took place near the present City of Minco, in Grady County. From here, on the same day—May 9—, Colonel Emory marched his whole command—"eleven companies, 750 fighting men, 150 women, children, teamsters, and other non-combatants"—north, taking the most direct course to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas," as the nature of the ground would permit." The column crossed the Canadian River at what was many years later known as the Silver City Crossing, northeast of Minco in Grady County.<sup>26</sup> Thence, the route was north passing in the vicinities of the present cities of El Reno, Kingfisher, Enid, Pond Creek and on toward the location of present Caldwell, Kansas, and northeast. The traces of the road left by the departing Union troops along this route in 1861, through western Indian Territory north of the Canadian, were followed by the great cattle herds driven north from Texas after the War, a road that became famous as the Chisholm Trail.

When Colonel Emory wrote his report to the War Department from the field, "Headquarters Troops in the Indian Country, West of the Arkansas City, May 19, 1861," he stated in part:<sup>27</sup>

Nothing has been left behind that would have been left in time of peace. Contracts were made to bring such stores as were left, and were worth transporting (chiefly clothing of soldiers and officer's baggage), but I understand the clothing has been seized. If this be the fact, these soldiers who have not mixed in the politics of the

<sup>25</sup> The Texas Confederate forces following Col. Emory's column were out of Fort Washita.—Thoburn and Wright, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 310.

<sup>26</sup> This became the well known crossing on the Canadian River for Texas cattle drives up the Chisholm Trail, near which Silver City was located. This Silver City Crossing was one of the points from which the "run" into the Oklahoma Country was made on April 22, 1889.—*Ibid.*; also, "Silver City on the Chisholm Trail," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 2 (Summer, 1958), pp. 210-11; and *ibid.*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 2 (Summer, 1960), p. 210, list of "Oklahoma Historical Markers and Monuments, 1959-1960."

<sup>27</sup> Col. Emory's Report was written at his headquarters en route, on the west side of the Arkansas River, some miles west and south of the present City of Wichita, Kansas, on May 19, 1861.—*Official Records*, Vol. I, pp. 648-9.

country, who stand to their colors, and do their duty faithfully, should be reimbursed.

There is no money with this command, which has been a source of great embarrassment; and I beg to call attention to the estimates, and request that funds be immediately sent, to enable me to discharge useless persons I have been compelled to bring along, and also to pay the faithful Delaware guides.

Of the three staff officers stationed at Fort Smith, and who, it is presumed, had possession of the funds, if there are any in this country, Paymaster Brown is the only one who shared the fortunes of the troops, but he joined the command without a dollar.

The last word of Colonel Emory's report on the abandonment of Forts Washita, Arbuckle and Cobb in the Indian Territory, is his message to the War Department:<sup>28</sup>

Headquarters Troops from Texas Frontier  
*Fort Leavenworth, May 31, 1861*

I arrived here this morning, and turned over the command to Major Sackett in good condition; not a man, an animal, an arm or wagon has been lost except two deserters.

W. H. Emory

*Late Lieutenant-Colonel First Cavalry, Commanding  
Lieutenant-Colonel Townsend,  
Assistant Adjutant-General*

---

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 649.