

# *Desert Tracks*

**Publication of the Southern Trails Chapter  
of the Oregon-California Trails Association**

May 2026



**San Francisco Mountains (Extinct Volcanoes), New Mexico**  
**Balduin Möllhausen**  
just north of today's Flagstaff, AZ and near Leroux Springs

## *Desert Tracks*

*Publication of the Southern Trails Chapter of the  
Oregon-California Trails Association*

Past issues can be found via a link on the  
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southern-trails.org

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## On the Cover:

“San Francisco Mountains (Extinct Volcanoes), New Mexico” – chromolithograph by Balduin Möllhausen in *Diary of a Journey from the Mississippi to the Coasts of the Pacific with a United States Government Expedition*, by Balduin Möllhausen, translation by Mrs. Percy Sinnett, London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, & Roberts, 1858. Möllhausen was the artist and topographer with the Whipple Expedition of 1853-1854. This scene is seven miles north of today's Flagstaff, AZ and near Leroux Springs, where the group camped on Dec. 27, 1853. See also another lithograph, "San Francisco Mountain," by John C. Tidball on page 69 of Eugene C. Tidball, *Soldier-Artist of the Great Reconnaissance: John C. Tidball and the 35<sup>th</sup> Parallel Pacific Railroad Survey*.

## Thoughts From the Editors...

- **This issue of *Desert Tracks* marks several firsts.** This is the first issue co-edited by Gerald Ahnert, who has previously been the most prolific author in this journal, and who is considered by many to be the world's expert on the Butterfield Overland Mail trail in Arizona – *welcome Gerry!* This issue is also longer than any other issue. And, this is the first digital-only issue of *Desert Tracks* (see next bullet-point).
- **This is the first issue of the digital-only, on-line version of *Desert Tracks*.** The Southern Trails Chapter has published *Desert Tracks* in several versions since 1991. It started as a newsletter, and has evolved into a magazine, and now will become digital-only due to the high cost of printing and mailing a printed version. The current plan is for a journal of varying lengths, and it will be issued as articles are available. It will appear along with the previous issues at <https://southern-trails.org/222-2/desert-tracks>. Southern Trails Chapter members will receive a short email with the clickable link to the current issue whenever it is issued. Those who are not chapter members can also access the digital issues, as well as the archived previous issues, at the Southern Trails web page.
- **Temecula OCTA Southern Trails Chapter Symposium was held on February 2-5, 2026** at the Little Temecula History Museum and Temecula city meeting space. The conference began on February 2 with a presentation by archaeologist Stephen Van Wormer on Carrizo Creek and the Mormon Battalion in Box Canyon. February 3 was lecture day, with presentations by Dan Judkins on “Earliest Travelers and Anza’s 1775 Expedition,” Melissa Shaw & Chris Jones on “Kearny’s Army of the West, and the Mormon Battalion,” Mark Howe “On the Border,” Gerry Ahnert on the “Butterfield Overland Stage,” Dan Judkins on “49’ers in Southern California,” and Rebecca Farnbach on “Walter Vail and the Empire Ranch.” The symposium concluded with a road rally and guided tours to the Butterfield Overland Mail stage stations at Oak Grove, Warner Ranch, Vallecito, Palm Spring, and Carrizo, with a hike into the Mormon Battalion’s Box Canyon. Thanks to Melissa Shaw, Chris Jones, and Rebecca Farnbach of Temecula Valley Historical Society.
- **Archaeologist Aaron Wright of Archaeology Southwest has been exploring indigenous trails** in Western Arizona, primarily along the Gila River, along with Gerald Ahnert. Dr. Wright has posted several on-line videos about his trail discoveries. One is “Trails as Transcendental Archaeology” at <https://www.archaeologysouthwest.org/2025/12/23/trails-as-transcendental-archaeology/>, and “On the Trail of Trails: A Dialogue,” at <https://www.archaeologysouthwest.org/2023/09/25/on-the-trail-of-trails-a-dialogue/>. Of particular interest is “Following in Their Footsteps,” at <https://www.archaeologysouthwest.org/2020/11/12/following-in-their-footsteps/>.
- **This issue includes an article, “Building the Southern Overland Trail through Indian Territory,” by Susan Dragoo.** This is a reprint of a chapter of her 2024 book *Finding the Butterfield: A Journey Through Time In Indian Territory* which highlights the Butterfield Overland Mail route, tracing it through southeastern Oklahoma. The book combines historical research with modern exploration, offering insights into the trail's impact on the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations between removal and the Civil War. The book is available at Amazon.com.
- **The National Park Service has made rapid progress so far in 2026 on the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail.** Text for their management plan recently went out for review and comment to seven experts including Gerald Ahnert, Susan Dragoo, Bob Crossman, Chris Wray, and John Fahey. We will report further progress here in *Desert Tracks* as it becomes publicly available.

## About the Writers...

**Gerald T. Ahnert** is the new Associate Editor of *Desert Tracks*. He is well-known as the authority on the Butterfield Overland Mail route through Arizona. His new book is *The Butterfield Trail through Arizona's New Frontier: Alkali Dust and Blistering Sands*, Rodeo, NM: ECO Publishing, 2025. Gerry has and continues to be a regular author for *Desert Tracks*. He also serves as an advisor to the National Park Service as it develops plans for the new Butterfield National Historic Trail. He is involved with the Butterfield National Historic Trail Association and several of its state chapters. Gerry is a member of the Board of Directors for the Southern Trails Chapter of OCTA. He continues his tradition of spending three months a year on the Southern Trails network in Arizona, and three months at his cabin in the Yukon of Canada, and is actively involved in continued research into the Butterfield Overland Mail and the Southern Trails.

**Shaun Comfort, MD MBA** is a Neurologist with over 20 years of experience in the biopharmaceutical industry and a prior career in Aerospace Engineering Physics. In his work, Dr. Comfort applies AI using Large Language Models and decision analysis techniques to problems in pharmacovigilance. He published his first book in 2020 on mathematical estimation in healthcare: [\*How Much Is that Cure in the Window? Simple Math Solutions for Complicated Problems in Biology, Medicine, and Healthcare\*](#). In his free time, he enjoys using Bayesian methods to evaluate puzzles such as retracing historic trails across the southwest and has a particular interest in the 35<sup>th</sup> Parallel routes established by Marcy, Whipple, and Beale.

**Daniel G. Judkins** is the Editor of *Desert Tracks*. He also serves as a board member of the Southern Trails Chapter of OCTA, a board member of the Anza Society, and a volunteer at Tumacácori National Historical Park. He is the President of the Tubac Historical Society, where he also serves as the chair of the Research Team. He is a site steward for the Archaeological Conservancy's 20-acre "South Barrio" adjacent to the Tubac Presidio State Park, an 18th-century site. His passion is the history of the American Southwest during all of its phases, reading, book and map collecting, historical research, writing, and hiking the trails.

**Susan Dragoo** is an Oklahoma-based writer and photographer. Since 2016, the Butterfield Overland Mail route in Indian Territory has been a significant focus of her research and writing. She has retraced the Indian Territory section of the trail in its contemporary form, identifying and documenting original segments, and photographing the trail along the way, becoming the state's foremost living authority on the trail and compiling a comprehensive set of resources for the trail. As President of the Oklahoma Chapter of the Butterfield National Historic Trail Association, Dragoo is working with the National Park Service and the State Historic Preservation Office to implement the new historic trail status, preserving and protecting the trail, and providing interpretation and education. A former healthcare executive, Dragoo has a diverse educational background, including degrees in Telecommunications, Management, and Biostatistics. She is a certified life coach, an avid runner and hiker, and an inveterate traveler. Susan and her husband Bill also run Dragoo Adventure Rider Training, based in Norman, Oklahoma. Dragoo is a native of Okmulgee, Oklahoma, the capital of the Muscogee Nation.

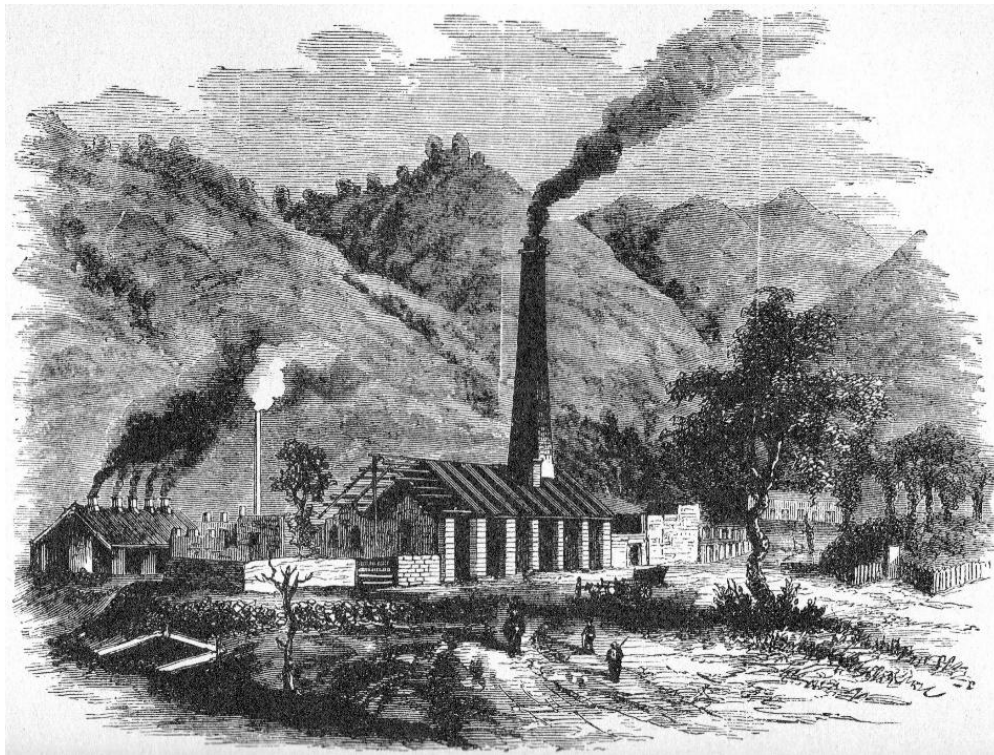
# The Farthest West Civil War Confederate Graves

by  
Gerald T. Ahnert

In 1861 at the beginning of the Civil War some of the Union officers, such as Captain Richard S. Ewell, who was from Virginia, deserted their posts at Arizona's Fort Buchanan to join the Rebel forces. Others from Arizona's Fort Breckenridge would follow. With the abandoning of the Arizona forts the Apache thought that they had finally driven the Americans from their land. Those that remained were under constant threat of Apache attack.

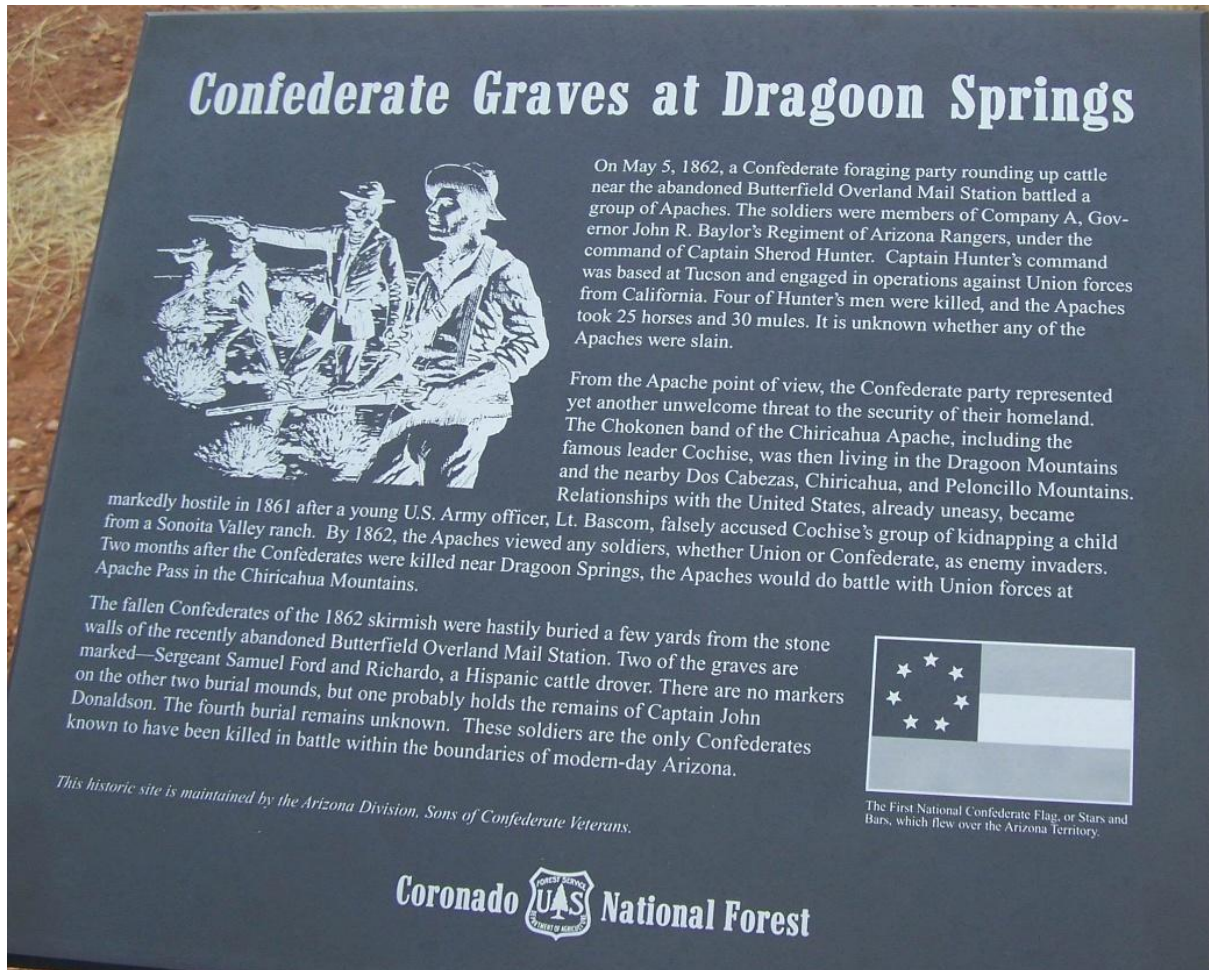
One of the few mines that continued to operate was Sylvester Mowry's Patagonia Silver Mine about 75 miles southeast of Tucson. One of his employees was John (Jack) Donaldson (see Figure 1). Mowry's secretary John R. Mills reported that Donaldson was the Superintendent of the wood choppers and had expressed strong views favoring the Rebellion.<sup>1</sup> The story of John Donaldson's employment at the Patagonia Mine to the time of his enlistment with Hunter's forces, his death, and burial location has many references. In late February 1862 Confederate Captain Sherod Hunter and his soldiers entered Arizona to occupy Tucson for the Confederacy. John Donaldson, along with George Pope, Old Man Lamison, and Lamison's son would be killed by the Apache only a few days after joining Hunter's band of Rebels in Tucson. Their graves would be the farthest west Civil War Confederate graves.

In early 1862 a large force of advancing Union California Volunteers was too much for Hunters' small band. They abandoned Tucson in mid-May 1862. The Union occupied Tucson in late May 1862 and arrested all those that they suspected of aiding the Confederates.



**Figure 1.** Headquarters and offices of the Mowry Silver Mine where Donaldson was employed.  
*Adventures in Apache Country*, John Ross Browne, Harper & Brothers, 1871, p. 210.

Sylvester Mowry, the owner of the Patagonia Mine, was arrested for being “secesh”—a Southern sympathizer. In July 1862 he was taken to Fort Yuma and imprisoned to await his court martial. In preparation for his court martial affidavits were taken from employees at the mine. Much information is provided in these affidavits both for John Donaldson and Sgt. Samuel Ford. Ford joined Hunter’s forces after they arrived at Tucson. He would be killed by the Apache on May 5, 1862, at Dragoon Springs in the canyon one mile from Dragoon Springs Stage Station while Hunter’s forces were retreating to join the Confederates at Mesilla, New Mexico (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** The Butterfield Dragoon Springs Stage Station graves marker. Photo. G. Ahnert.

The marker at Dragoon Springs Stage Station cemetery is based on speculation given in L. Boyd Finch’s *Confederate Pathway to the Pacific*. As a result, on the marker is: “There are no markers on the other burial mounds, but one *probably* holds the remains of Captain John Donaldson.” Many references show that Donaldson was not buried at Dragoon Springs Stage Station.<sup>2</sup> His rank with Hunter’s forces is not known as he was never officially registered. He was given the rank of Captain when he was in Texas during the Mexican War.

Finch speculated that Sgt. Ford knew John Donaldson because they both had been customs agents.<sup>3</sup> Before Donaldson was employed at Mowry’s mine, he had been stationed at Calabasas, Arizona, as Collector of Customs. Before Ford joined Capt. Hunter’s forces he was a customs patrolman stationed at Las Cruces, New Mexico.<sup>4</sup> They were conducting their duties 320 miles apart separated by the frontier. These affidavits as well as others mention both Donaldson and Ford in their testimonies. They give a clear itinerary for the time Ford

spent at the mine. None of them tell of Donaldson visiting Ford. John R. Mills was Mowry's secretary. In his affidavit to be presented at Mowry's court martial he wrote:

"I recollect of the mine being visited by one Samuel Ford. Ford arrived at 8 o'clock PM and was brought to Mr. Mowry's quarters, he stayed in my room during the night."<sup>5</sup>

Another affidavit by employee Jeremiah Riordan gives additional details about Ford's visit:

"During my employment as \_\_\_\_\_, one representing himself as Sergeant Ford of Capt. Hunter's company of Confederate troops visited the store. . . . To the best of my recollection Mr. Mowry was in the store in company with Sergeant Ford. I am certain he was there on the same day as the Sergeant on this occasion Mr. Mowry examined a lot of the percussion caps which were in the store for sale. I think Sergeant Ford was looking at them at the same time. The quality of the caps did not seem to meet the approval of Sergeant Ford. . . . I think Sergeant Ford left the same day I saw Mr. Mowry examine the caps."<sup>6</sup>

One of the documents presented at Mowry's court martial was a handwritten obituary for John Donaldson. It was written by Mowry and was transcribed by his secretary John R. Mills:

"Mr. Mowry in writing letters would sometimes make rough draughts and would hand them to me to make copies of, which he would sign. . . . Other letters I would simply write at his dictation."<sup>7</sup>

For Mowry's court martial, the handwritten Donaldson obituary as well as the affidavits were all transcribed by Erastus W. Wood, Aide de Camp.<sup>8</sup> This was the first obituary written by Mowry and was not the one that was later published in a Kentucky newspaper. The transcribed obituary was used by Finch to further speculate that Donaldson was buried at Dragoon Springs Stage Station. But Finch left out some key passages that when cross-referenced tell another story.

Finch included from Mowry's first obituary for Donaldson: "Killed by the Apache Indians, May 5, 1862, near [*sic*] Tucson, Arizona. . ." He used *sic* for Tucson to imply that it was a mistake. He does this to tie the rest of his speculation about the location of Donaldson's death. A key passage in the obituary that Finch left out was "***His horse escaped and running into Tucson carried the first news of the catastrophe.***" It was eighty-five miles by the trail between Tucson and Dragoon Springs Stage Station. Finch stated from the obituary that: "Returning to Tucson from a ***short expedition he fell in rear of troops*** to accompany a friend who had charge of a ***large herd of beeves.***" This states that they were on the march when attacked and not at the Dragoon Springs in the canyon one mile from the station. A report from Colonel Carleton, California Volunteers, about the Confederate-Apache battle at Dragoon Springs stated that they captured: "***30 mules and 25 horses.***"<sup>9</sup> Finch did not note these contradictory statements about the type of cattle.

From a newspaper article published one month after the Confederate-Apache battle:

"From the Correspondent of the Daily Alta California with Gen. Carleton's Column from California. 23<sup>rd</sup> [June 1862] . . . Near the stage station are the graves of Hunter's men, killed by the Apaches. On the graves were these inscriptions, neatly cut in rough stone, executed by one of the Union prisoners they had along: 'S. Ford, May 5, 1862' and 'Ricardo.' Ford was a Sergeant and Ricardo was a poor Mexican boy the Texans had forced into service at Tucson."<sup>10</sup>

As seen in this report only two were killed and buried north of the station gate. Donaldson is not mentioned. It also confirms that they were buried right after the battle as a Union prisoner carved the names on the grave marker of the two that were killed. The information given in a 1967 U. S. Forest Service desecration report stated: "One of the graves of the historic massacre [of Butterfield employees] on September 8, 1858, was

disturbed at some time previous to this inspection of June 6<sup>th</sup>. The grave of Ford was excavated and the body or its remnants removed.”<sup>11</sup>

Mowry’s twice transcribed Donaldson Obituary was never published. In July 1862 Mowry was in Fort Yuma prison awaiting his court martial. On July 24, 1862, he wrote a shorter obituary that was published in the *Louisville Daily Democrat*, Kentucky, August 28, 1862. It gives the date that he was killed as May 4, 1862—not May 5, 1862. Because the first handwritten obituary was transcribed twice it is probably the cause for the error (see Figure 3).

Killed by Apache Indians, May 4, 1862, near Tucson, Arizona, Captain John Donaldson, a native of Kentucky. Captain Donaldson was an officer of volunteers during the Mexican war, and later held various public positions, among them member of the Constitutional Convention of Kansas, member of the upper House of the Legislature, Auditor of the Territory, and still later Collector of Customs for the Calabazas District of Arizona. He was an ardent Southern man, and at the time of his death was a volunteer to the command of Captain S. Hunter, C. S. A. This brief notice of his death is the only tribute that one of his many friends can pay to the memory of a gallant gentleman. The friends of Captain Donaldson in Kentucky and Indiana will have the mournful satisfaction of knowing that his remains were recovered and interred with respect and affection.

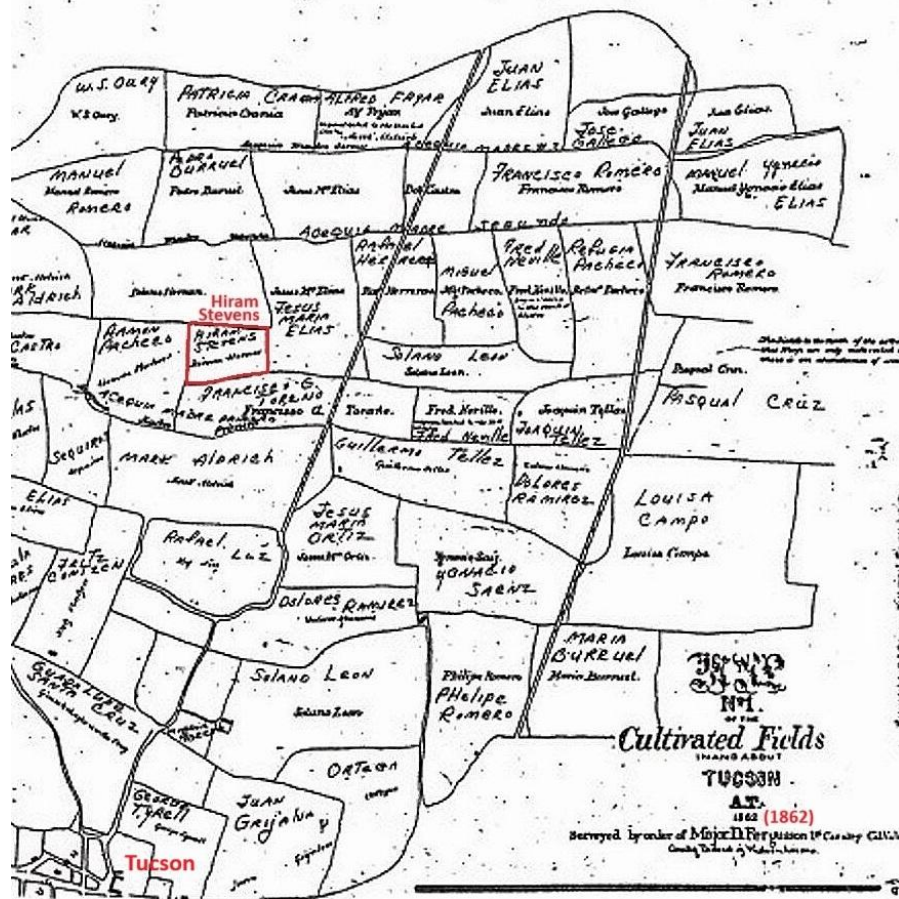
Kentucky and Terra Haute (Indiana) papers please copy. S. M.  
FORT YUMA, CAL., July 24, 1862.

**Figure 3.** The article states: “his remains were recovered and interred with respect and affection.” This again indicates that Donaldson was not killed at Dragoon Springs near the stage station.

In 1854, Nathan Benjamin Appel moved “to Tucson, Arizona, where he was engaged in freighting and merchandising for many years.”<sup>12</sup> In later life, he furnished a “list of names of persons who remained in Tucson and surrounding country when the rebellion broke out, and the country was left entirely to the Apaches.” In his list was: “**Pope, Lamison’s Son, John Donaldson, Old Man Lamison, killed by Apaches half way to Rillito.**”<sup>13</sup> Although Appel’s statement was twenty-two years after Donaldson’s death, it confirms Mowry’s statement in the first obituary that Donaldson was killed during “a short excursion from Tucson.”

“Pope” was Goerge Pope listed in the 1860 census for Tucson as “26, Grocer, Value of Real Estate, \$10,000, Value of Personal Estate \$300, Place of Birth, Mississippi.” In 1860 he married Maria Patricia Granilla. On February 1, 1861, Pope and Granville Wheat purchased a house and lot on Main Street in Tucson from Palatine Robinson. On April 25, 1861, he purchased a house west of Tucson along the Butterfield Overland Trail from Samuel Lewis. Pope was from Mississippi and like Donaldson he joined Hunter’s Confederate forces in Tucson a short time before his death and died along with Donaldson on May 4, 1862. On

July 13, 1862, Pope's widow sold the house and picket corral west of Tucson on the Butterfield Overland Trail to Hiram Stevens.<sup>14</sup>



**Figure 4.** Map No. 1 of the Cultivated Fields in and about Tucson A.T. 1862. Surveyed by Major D. Fergusson. The lot of Hiram Stevens was previously owned by George Pope. *United States Department of the Interior National Park Service National Register of Historic Places, Continuation Sheet, p. 48.*

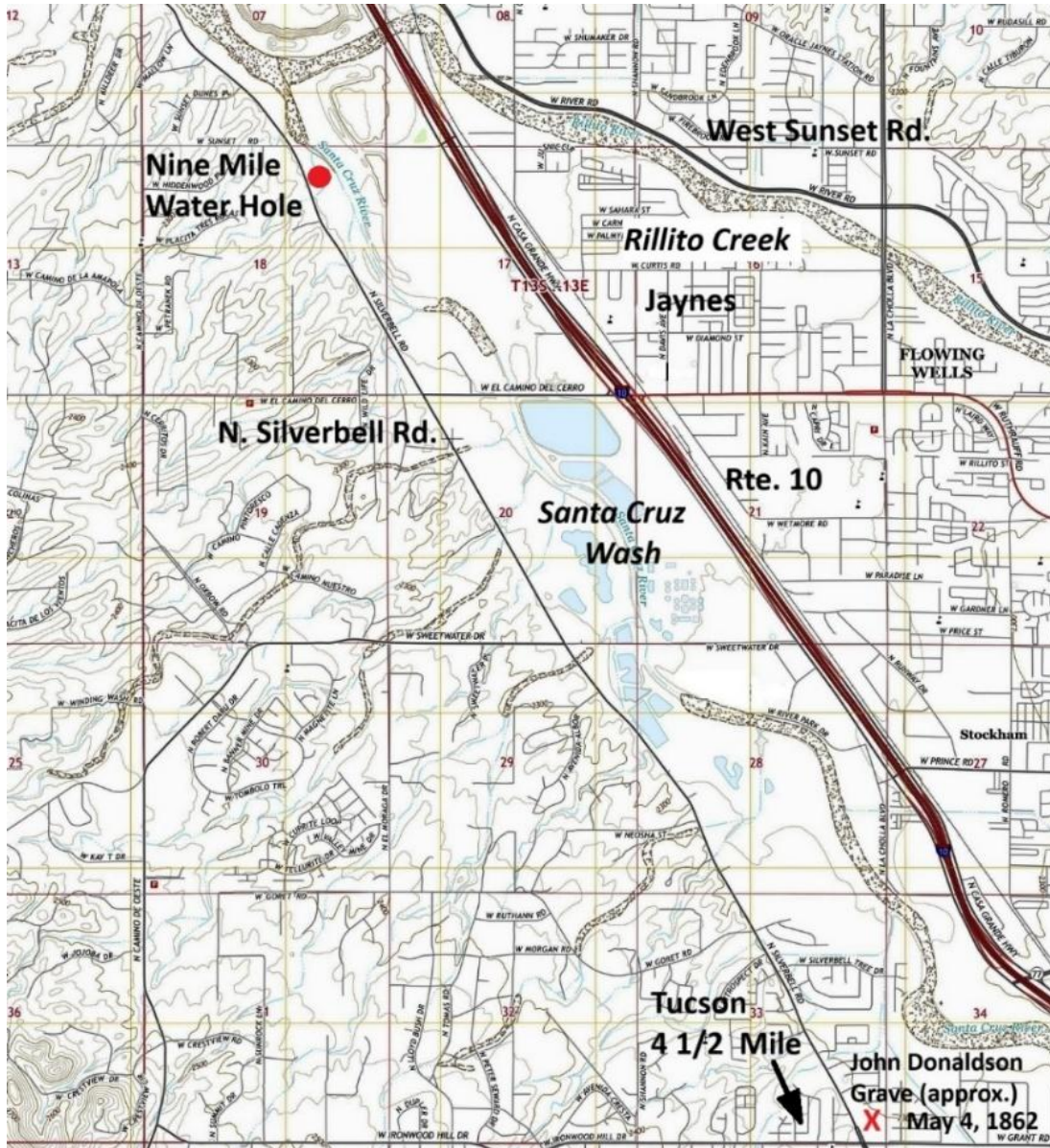
The Apache were on the warpath to kill or drive the remaining Americans from their territory as stated by Sylvester Mowry in a letter to Brigadier General Sibley, C.S.A., that was presented at Mowry's court-martial. As seen in Mowry's report the Apache were engaged in trying to steal livestock from places other than just Dragoon Springs:

“The Indians have committed some daring depredations of late, appearing near Tucson, it is said 250 strong well-armed, they succeeded in getting away with about 150 head of cattle and horses, but were closely pursued by a few white men, and about 100 Papago friendly Indians, who killed and wounded a number of Apaches.”<sup>15</sup>

As shown on Major D. Fergusson's 1862 map (Figure 4, above), the plot of Hiram Stevens was previously the corral and house of George Pope and his wife. Donaldson, Old Man Lamison, and his son, were on the Butterfield Overland Trail driving cattle to Tucson when they were killed by the Apache. It is possible that they may have been buried near Pope's old house.

Nine Mile Water Hole in Section 18 on the map (see Figure 5, next page) was an important source of water on the Southern Overland Trail. Because of its abundant flow of water, it attracted many cattle to the site. Donaldson, Pope, Old Man Lamison, and Lamison's son may have been killed by the Apache while herding

cattle from Nine Mile Water Hole to Tucson to be combined with other livestock and taken with them on their retreat to Mesilla, New Mexico.



**Figure 5.** Possible location of John Donaldson’s, George Pope’s, Old Man Lamison’s, and Lamison’s son’s graves. *Annotated US Geological Survey section, Marana Quadrangle.*

**Summation:**

The marker at the four Dragoon Springs Stage Station graves is not definitive for John Donaldson being buried there as it states: “one *probably* holds the remains of Captain John Donaldson.”

Finch states that Ford and Donaldson may have been friends for the singular reason that they were both customs agents. Their posts were separated by the frontier 320 miles apart. As a cross reference, the many Mowry mine employee affidavits show that Sergeant Samuel Ford did not visit John Donaldson when he came to Mowry’s mine to buy pistol caps.

Mowry's first Donaldson obituary had been transcribed at least twice for his court martial. In it Mowry stated that Donaldson was killed while "returning to Tucson from a short expedition." A short expedition is not a 170-mile trip from Tucson to Dragoon Springs Stage Station and back.

Mowry's first Donaldson obituary states that Donaldson was killed while they were herding a "large herd of beeves." In a report by California Volunteers Colonel Carleton, he stated that the Apache stole from the Confederates "30 mules and 25 horses"—no beeves (cows).

A newspaper account written by a member of Colonel Carleton's California Volunteers gave only two names for those with Confederate Captain Sherod Hunter killed by the Apache. Reported was Sgt. Ford and Ricardo, who was a Mexican boy that was with them to herd the cattle.

The second Donaldson obituary written by Sylvester Mowry on July 24, 1862, and published in a Kentucky newspaper states that Donaldson was killed May 4, 1862—not May 5. It also states that "his remains were recovered and interred." Combined with the information given by Mowry in the first Donaldson obituary and presented at his court martial about his horse returning to Tucson after a short excursion shows that he did not die at Dragoon Springs Stage Station. As a cross reference those that were killed at Dragoon Springs Stage Station were aided in their burial by a Union prisoner.

Although it was twenty-two years after Donaldson was killed, Nathan Benjamin Appel reported that Donaldson was "killed by the Apache halfway to Rillito." That would be about four to five miles northwest of Tucson. There are those that might suggest that time would have clouded Appel's statement although it clearly cross references the previous evidence stated.

J. Homer Thiel, Tucson archaeologist and historian, adds important information for George Pope leading to his death on May 4, 1862.

### **Additional:**

There are six documented Civil War Confederate graves in Arizona.

In late February 1862, Private Benjamin Mayo of the Confederate States Army was buried near San Simon Stage Station. In 1862, Captain Hunter's personal papers were found at Tucson, and he wrote about the violent winter storms on their march from the Rio Grande and the death of Mayo from exposure.<sup>16</sup> The exact location of the grave is not known.

May 4, 1862, John Donaldson, George Pope, Old Man Lamison, and Lamison's son were killed by the Apache about five miles northwest of Tucson, Arizona. Since they probably joined at Tucson only a few days before their deaths they were not officially registered with the Confederate Army.

May 5, 1862, Sergeant Samuel Ford was killed by the Apache and buried under one of the four rock cairns north of the Dragoon Springs Stage Station. Since he joined at Tucson, he was never officially registered with the Confederate Army. Because the 1967 desecration report states that Stgt. Ford's body was removed, there are now no Confederates buried at Dragoon Springs Stage Station.

[Endnotes are on the next page.]

## ENDNOTES:

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<sup>1</sup> Letters received by the Office of the Adjutant General, Main Series, 1861-1870, NARA M619, source [www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com), “In the District Court of the Fourth Judicial District of the State of California, Sylvester Mowry vs James H. Carleton,” letter by Lieut. Col. E. E. Eyre, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry, California Volunteers.

<sup>2</sup> Gerald T. Ahnert, *Desert Tracks*, “The Mystery of the Four Rock Cairns at Dragoon Springs Stage Station on the Southern Overland Trail,” Publication of the Southern Trails Chapter of the Oregon-California Trails Association, September 2022, pp. 14-21. This article defines the burial order under the four rock cairns seen opposite Dragoon Springs Stage Station gate.

<sup>3</sup> L. Boyd Finch, *Confederate Pathway to the Pacific*, “Four Graves at Dragoon Springs,” p. 152.  
Note: On the dust cover for Finch’s book is “An admitted *partisan* of the “Lost Territory of Arizona.” Partisan: A strong supporter of a person, party, or cause; one whose support is *based on a feeling rather than on reasoning*.

<sup>4</sup> *Louisville Daily Democrat*, Louisville, Kentucky, August 28, 1862. This was the second John Donaldson obituary written by Sylvester Mowry July 24, 1862, while he was in the Fort Yuma prison awaiting his court martial.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, Mowry court martial. Affidavit of John R. Mills.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, Mowry court martial. Affidavit of Jeremiah Reordan.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*. Mowry court martial. Affidavit of John R. Mills.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, Letters received by the Office of the Adjutant General, Main Series, 1861-1870.

<sup>9</sup> *The War of the Rebellion, a Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series I, Vol. L, Part I, Reports, Correspondence, Etc., Washington, Government Printing Office, 1897, 1095.

<sup>10</sup> San Francisco *Daily Alta California*, August 10, 1862.

<sup>11</sup> Robert B. Tippeconic, District Ranger, to Forest Supervisor, Coronado N. F., File No. 2760, June 9, 1967, Subject: Withdrawals (Butterfield Stage Station), “Violation of the American Antiquities Act of June 8, 1906 upon the Butterfield Stage Route (Dragoon Springs Station) was found upon personal inspection of the site on June 6, 1967.”

<sup>12</sup> Hayden Pioneer Biographies, Arizona State University Library, Nathan Benjamin Appel.

<sup>13</sup> *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, Tucson, “Old Timers,” July 12, 1884. Although additional information has been found to identify Pope, no additional information has been found for Lamison.

<sup>14</sup> J. Homer Thiel, Senior Project Director/Historical Archaeologist, Desert Archaeology, Inc., Tucson, Arizona, *Maria Patricia Granilla*.

<sup>15</sup> Letters received by the Office of the Adjutant General, Main Series, 1861-1870, NARA M619, letter from Mowry to Brig. General Sibley, C. S. A. presented at Mowry’s court-martial.

<sup>16</sup> “Personal Papers belonging to Capt. S. Hunter, found in Tucson,” *National Archives Microfilm Publications, Microcopy No. 318*, Washington: The National Archives and Records Service General Services Administration, 1961.

**[next article begins on next page]**

# An Old West Grave for an Arm—and a Head!

by  
Gerald T. Ahnert

There are many unknown graves at Butterfield's Overland Mail Company stage stations. Two of the most unusual are at Arizona's Dragoon Springs Stage Station—one contains an amputated arm and the other a severed head!!! The station was built in early September 1858 and was the last of ten stone-fortified stations going west. Today, it is the only ruins of a Butterfield Overland Mail Company stage station above ground to be found in Arizona.

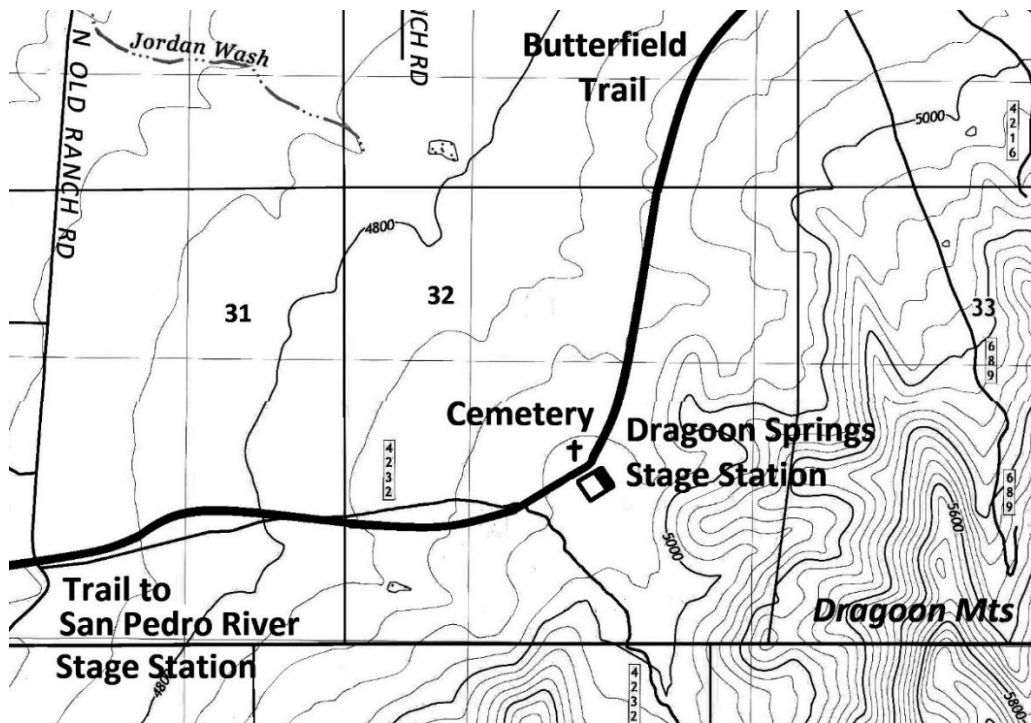
A bloody massacre, by three Mexican laborers, started at midnight on September 9, 1858. The construction crew for the station was headed by Overland Mail Company Superintendent William Buckley. Buckley and some of the crew had just left to build an adobe stage station at the crossing of the San Pedro River. Left behind to finish the Dragoon Springs Stage Station roof was Silas St. John, James Burr, William Cunningham, James Laing, and the perpetrators of the massacre laborers Guadalupe Ramirez and Pablo Ramirez, alias Chino, of Sonora, and Bonifacio Mirando of Chihuahua. Shortly after the massacre, Buckley sent a letter describing the massacre to his hometown newspaper in Watertown, New York, and wrote the following:

The last hope that there might be an error or falsehood in the first report of the massacre of our old fellow townsman, Mr. James Burr, and his companions, at Dragoon Springs has been dispelled by a letter from William Buckley, one of the superintendents of the overland mail company, to his father. The details of the horrid murder equal in atrocity anything we read in the annals of crime. Mr. B. writes from Tucson, seventy-five miles from Dragoon Springs, September 14, five days after the murder. We copy from his letter:

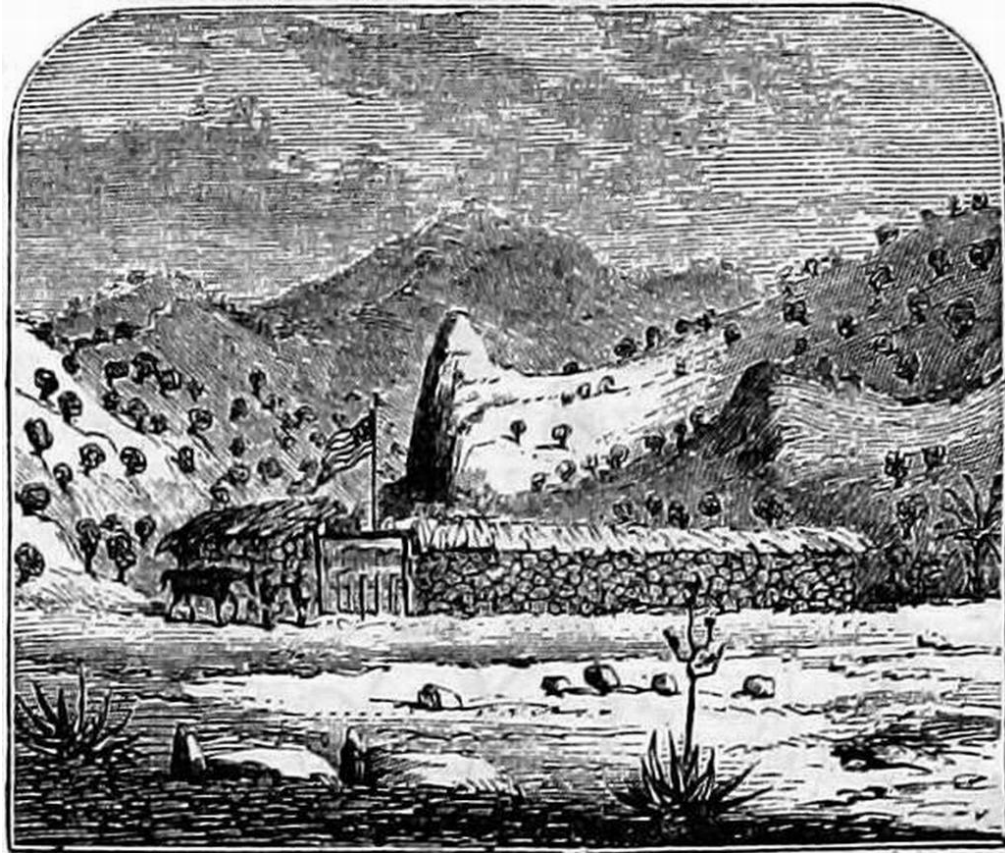
“Uncle James, Mr. St. John, Mr. Cunningham and Mr. Laing, together with three Mexicans in our employ, were stationed at that place, [Dragoon Springs.] Everything had gone on well. I had not learned of any trouble between the men. I had eight mules with quite a large amount of property at the place. The murder was committed by the three Mexicans. Mr. Laing is undoubtedly dead before this. Mr. St. John is wounded, but I think with good care he will recover. The murder was committed in order to steal the property, as I had quite a large amount there. Uncle James was lying outside the corral when he was found, which was on Sunday morning. The murder was committed on Wednesday night. He lay in his blankets, with his head on one side all broken in. He had been killed with a stone hammer, and from all appearances he was struck two blows. He undoubtedly died without a struggle, from his appearance and position when found. Mr. Colwell and another man I had sent up to Dragoon Springs arrived there Sunday morning. Soon after the stage came up with Lieutenant Mowry, Colonel Leach, and several other passengers. Immediately on their arrival they buried uncle James and attended to the wants of the wounded men. They had nothing to eat or drink from Wednesday night to Sunday morning, being unable to move from the corral. Everything was done for them that men could do.”<sup>1</sup> (See Figures 1-3, on the next two pages.)



**Figure 1.** Dagoon Springs Stage Station. In the lower left can be seen the four rock cairns covering the graves. In the center are the station ruins. The photo is looking to the south and the canyon that is the location of Dagoon Spring. Photo by author.



**Figure 2.** The location of Dagoon Springs Stage Station and graveyard. Annotated US Geological Survey section, Knob Hill and Dagoon Quadrangles.



**Figure 3.** Dragoon Springs Stage Station and Butterfield employees' graves. Silas St. John's amputated arm was buried between these two graves.

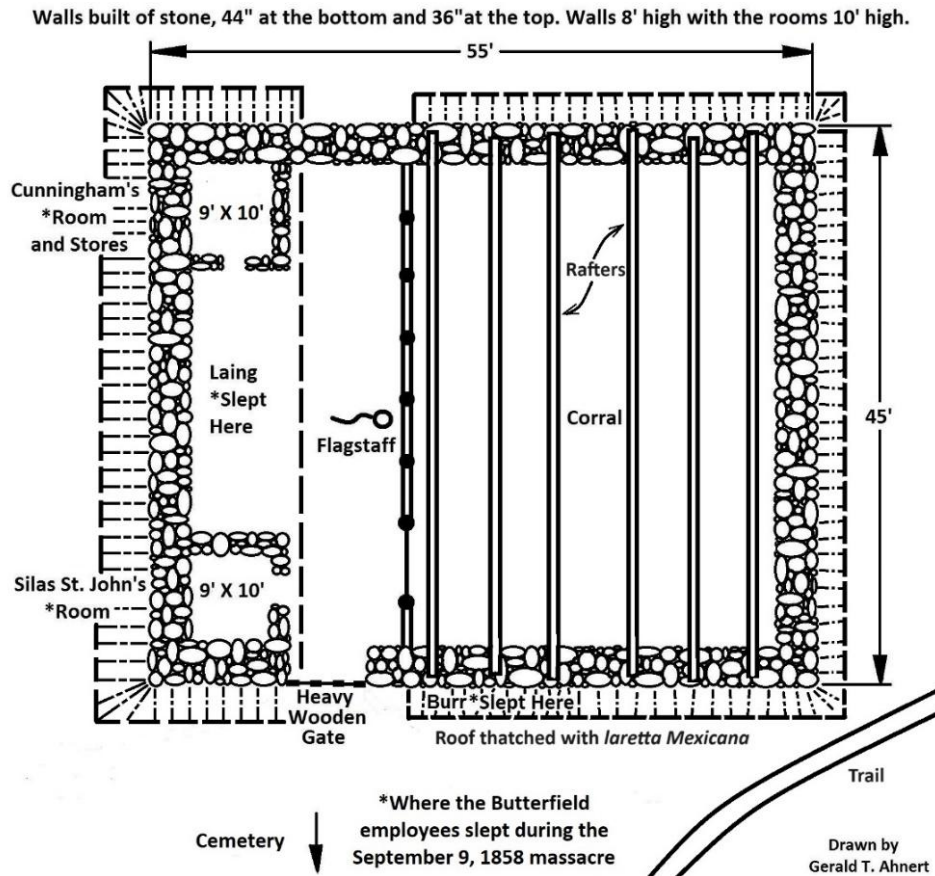
The 1860 drawing of the station is by H. C. Grosvenor, of Tubac, manager of the Santa Rita Mine. In the drawing, the ground-level perspective makes the two staggered graves appear to be head-to-toe, but there is a space between them. With the drawing is a description of the station and graves:

“This station, or *corral*, is 85 miles east of Tucson. It is a rectangular enclosure, protected by a stone wall eight foot high. One third of the space is occupied by storehouses and the sleeping apartment of the station master. These structures are covered by thatched roofs. The mules are kept in the other part, ready for change on the arrival of the mail. A heavy wooden gate defends the entrance. The two graves in the foreground are mementos of a tragedy that occurred on the night of September 8, 1858. Rude wooden slabs at their head bear brief inscriptions.” “His wounds began to mortify on the second day, and to fill with maggots. He could not sleep at night for the wolves, which came round and poked their noses through the gate bars, howling for admission. And during the day, crows and buzzards perched on the walls, attracted by the smell of dead bodies.

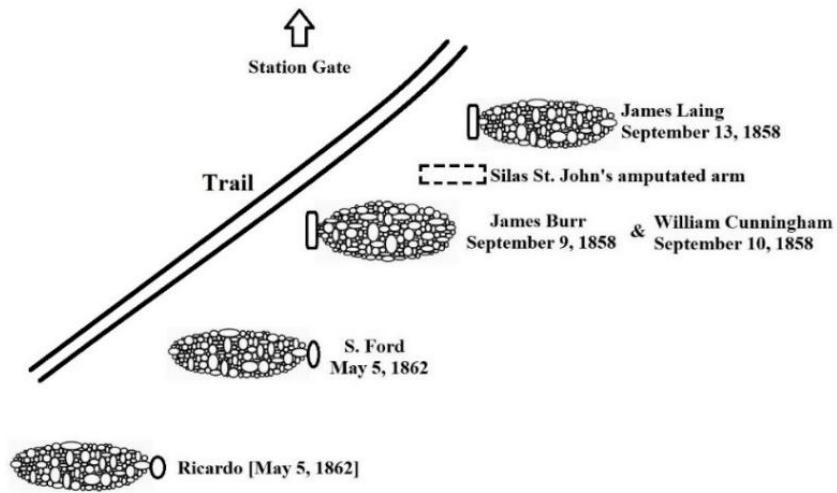
With little hope of living, St. John succeeded in writing an account of the murder in a small book [each station was issued a log book], for the information of the mail party that was due the succeeding Monday. Fortunately, it arrived on Sunday, the day previous to the time, when an express was forthwith sent to Fort Buchanan for Dr. Irwin. On his arrival, St. John had lain nine days in his blood. He amputated his arm at the shoulder joint, with, however, no hope of saving his life. The maggots having consumed the mortified flesh, and prevented the more rapid spread of putrefaction he eventually

recovered and received from government the appointment of Indian agent for the Mariposa [Maricopa] Indians. Such is the history of one of the numberless tragedies that mark the life on the frontier.”<sup>2</sup>

The space between the graves was confirmed in a letter survivor Silas St. John wrote to Arizona historian Sharlot Hall in 1908, “My good left arm was buried between the two graves.”<sup>3</sup> (See Figures 4 and 5 below.)



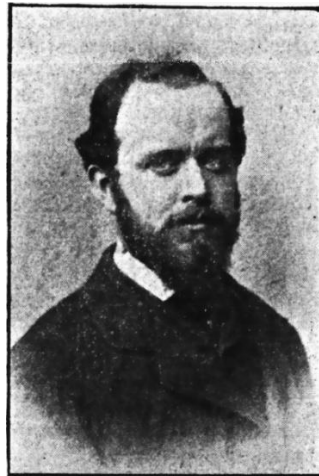
**Figure 4.** Butterfield’s Overland Mail Company Dragoon Springs Stage Station showing the position of the sleeping employees during the massacre that occurred shortly after midnight September 9, 1858.



**Figure 5.** This is the order of burial according to Silas St. John for the Butterfield massacred victims and those killed May 5, 1862, because of the Confederate-Apache battle. The present marker does not conform to St. John’s description. Drawing by Author.

Silas managed to get off a shot as the Mexicans were hightailing it for Mexico and he hit Bonificio. His remains were found a short distance from the stage station. In an interview with Silas St. John published in *The San Diego Union*, June 1, 1913, he stated the following:

“One of the strangest things to me about the attack was the fact that that fellow Bonificio, the one that hacked me in the hip with the ax blade took part in it. I had saved his life six years before in Messilla [Mesilla], when he was being done up by a lot of greasers and after that he had always been very devoted to me. He was a good-looking Mexican with red hair. He was the one I shot, and some time afterwards we found his bones picked dry by coyotes and his red hair, where his friends had dropped him.”<sup>4</sup> (See Figure 6 below.)



**Figure 6.** Silas St. John, at the age of 24. From: *Weekly Journal-Miner*, Prescott, Arizona, March 6, 1912.

After the massacre, that resulted in his left arm being amputated, Silas returned to his hometown of New York City. Shortly after he returned to Arizona and remained in the service of Butterfield’s Overland Mail Company until the line’s service ended in Arizona March 1861. He then returned to New York City and was employed by Adams Express Company for the next thirty years. Late in life he returned to Arizona and then in

1914 he moved to San Diego California. After a long adventurous life, he died at the age of eighty-four in San Diego on September 15, 1919.<sup>5</sup>

In 1878 he was interviewed about his many escapes from death, which included the massacre, and appeared in many newspapers. At the end of the interview, he stated “Do you think I was born to be killed?”<sup>6</sup>

Someplace near the station is an unmarked grave containing a severed head. In the *New York Herald*, September 12, 1860, there was an article from a correspondent at Fort Buchanan:

In May 1860, a human head, having been, to all appearance, severed from the body but a few days, was found near the Dragoon Spring mail station. The features were not decayed—eyes grey, hair brown, teeth good—evidently the head of a young or middle aged American. How it came there no one knows. It is a mystery which would do credit to Rochester. Probably some lonely man on his way to the gold region was killed by Mexicans and the head thrown near the station to mystify and intimidate the inmates.<sup>7</sup>

The severed head may also have been buried between the two graves of the Butterfield employees. There is no doubt that there are other unknown or unmarked graves along the Butterfield/Southern Overland Trail and at most of the stage stations. But are there other graves that contain severed human body parts along the trail?

### Endnotes:

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<sup>1</sup> “Particulars of the Murder of Mr. James Burr and Companions,” *The New York Herald Reformer*, Watertown, NY, November 4, 1858.

<sup>2</sup> John Warner Barber, *Our Whole Country or the Past and Present of the United States*, Vol. II, Cincinnati: 1861, 1448.

<sup>3</sup> Silas St. John, *Sharlot Hall Museum*, Prescott, Arizona, Letter June 16, 1908, to Miss Sharlot Hall, Dewey, AZ.

<sup>4</sup> “Meet after Span of 50 Years; Men of ’49 Talk of Early Days,” *San Diego Union*, CA, June 1, 1913.

<sup>5</sup> “Obituary,” *The New York Sun*, New York City, NY, October 7, 1919.

<sup>6</sup> “Death-Grazing Episodes.” *The New York Times*, New York City, NY, June 13, 1878.

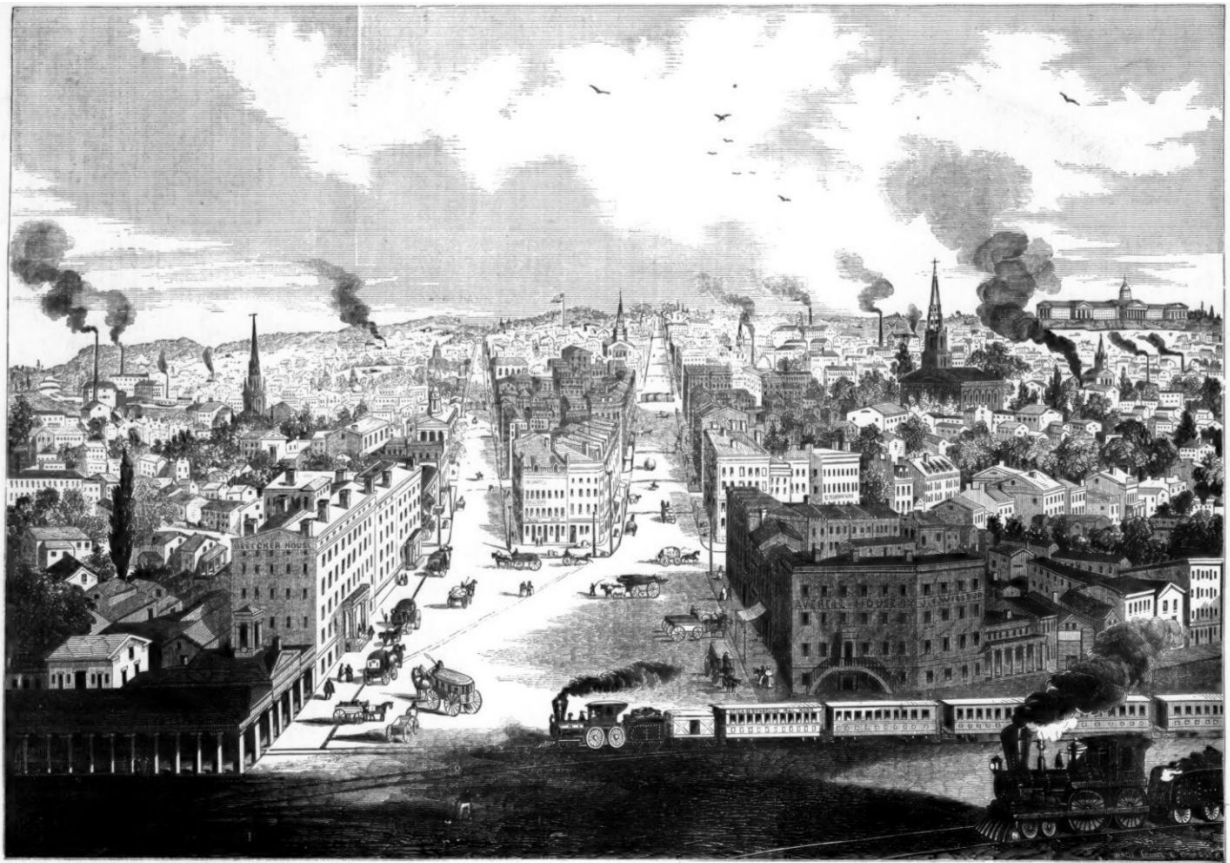
<sup>7</sup> *New York Herald*, New York, NY, September 12, 1860.

**[next article begins on next page]**

# The Butterfield Overland Mail Company Connections to Utica and Rome, New York

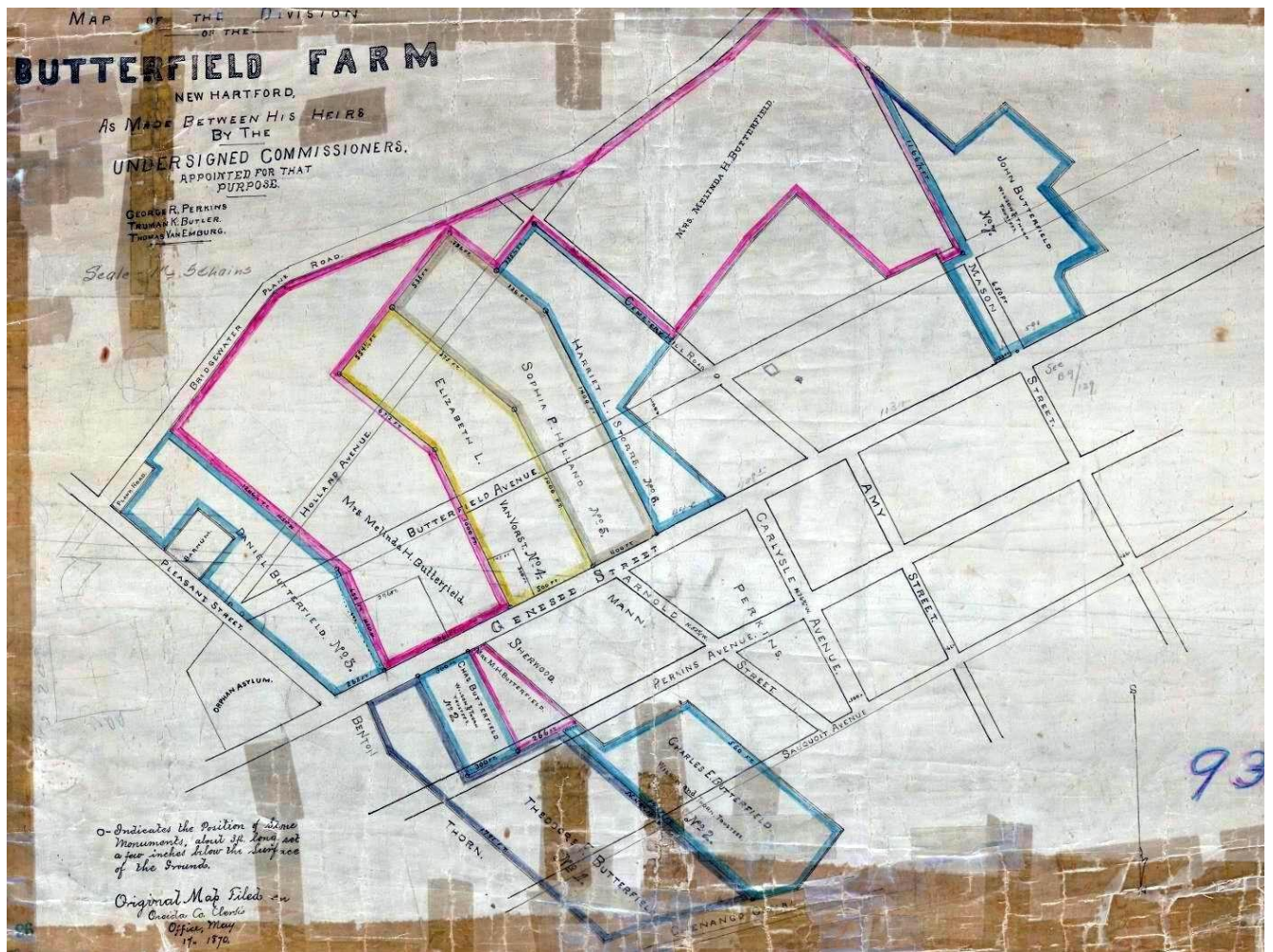
by  
Gerald T. Ahnert

Why are there “Killed by the Apache” inscriptions on tombstones in upstate New York when it was the land of the Iroquois and not the Apache? In September 1861 *New York Herald* correspondent Waterman L. Ormsby was on the first Butterfield stage to leave Tipton, Missouri, for the 2,700-mile trip to San Francisco, California. One of his reports stated: “The employees of the company I found, without exception, civil, and attentive. They are most of them from the East, and many, especially of the drivers, from New York state.”<sup>1</sup> Many of the senior managers and others that were temporarily employed by Butterfield’s Overland Mail Company on the Southern Overland Trail from 1858-1861 lived and died in Utica and Rome, New York. Although many returned to upstate New York some remained in the Southwest after this Old West enterprise was ordered to cease operations because of the start of the Civil War.

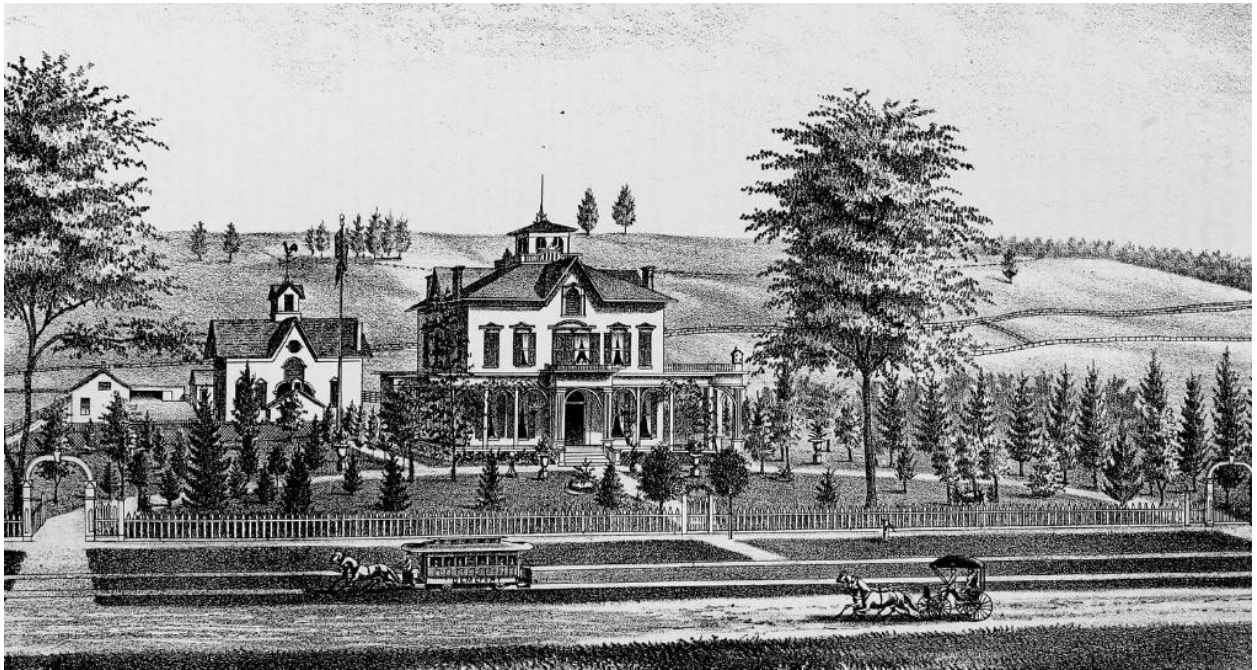


VIEW OF THE CITY OF UTICA, NEW YORK.

The drawing of Utica, New York, is from *Ballou’s Pictorial Drawing -Room Companion*, June 2, 1855. In the lower right are two of Butterfield’s railroads about to stop at the terminal to drop off passengers. They would then go to the front of the adjacent hotel where they would board a Butterfield stage. Several stages are shown. The street in the middle is now Genesee Street which was called Seneca Turnpike. It was used as a “Butterfield Trail” from Utica to Albany and Buffalo.



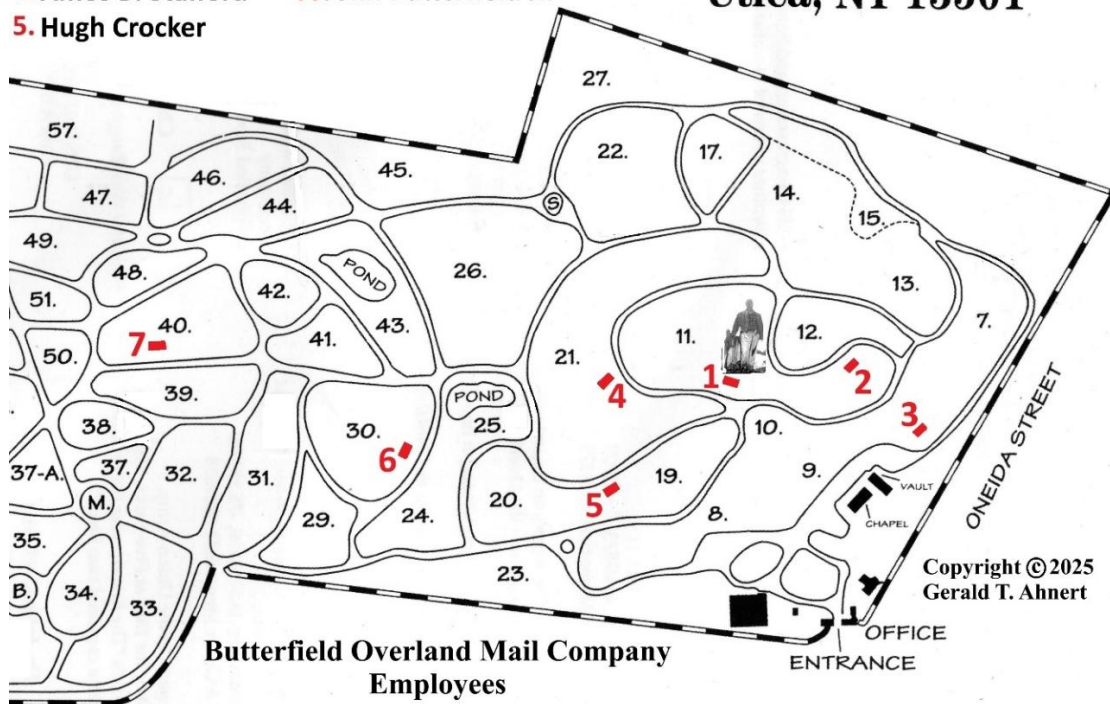
The 1870 plot of the Butterfield Farm in the New Hartford section of Utica. All four of his sons' plots are shown. John Jr., Charles, and Daniel were employed by the Overland Mail Company. Two of the streets seen are Butterfield Avenue and Holland Avenue. These streets still exist today. Holland Avenue is named after John Sr.'s son-in-law Alexander Holland, Overland Mail Company Treasurer. John Sr.'s daughter was married to Alexander and is seen as the owner of plot "Sophia P. Holland, No. 5." Courtesy *Forest Hill Cemetery Archives*, Utica, NY.



John Butterfield's mansion. The street railroad shown was owned by John Butterfield and connected Utica to Forest Hill Cemetery. *History of Oneida County, 1878.*

- |                         |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. John Butterfield Sr. | 6. Charles Butterfield   |
| 2. Henry Bates          | Mary (Balde) Butterfield |
| 3. James V. P. Gardner  | Sophia (Balde) Nellis    |
| 4. Amos B. Stafford     | 7. John Butterfield Jr.  |
| 5. Hugh Crocker         |                          |

**Forest Hill Cemetery**  
**2201 Oneida Street**  
**Utica, NY 13501**



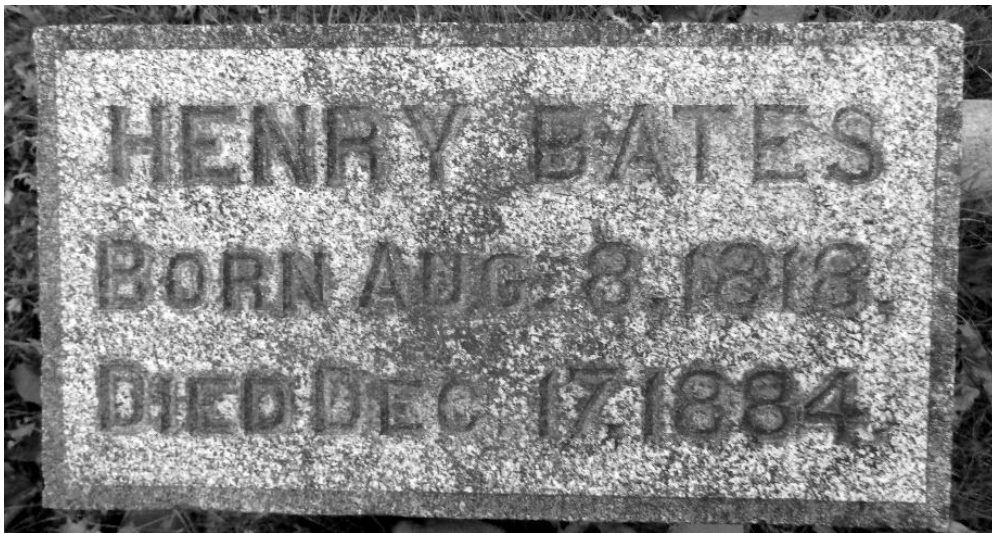
Forest Hill Cemetery, Utica, New York, and nine graves of Overland Mail Company employees.

No. 1: The monument and grave of John Butterfield Sr. Plot 11, Lot 41, President and manager of the Overland Mail Company.<sup>2</sup>



John Butterfield Sr. monument and tombstone. Photo G. Ahnert.

No. 2: Henry Bates, 11A, Grave 6. Superintendent from Preston, Texas to Fort Chadburn, Texas.<sup>3</sup>



Henry Bates tombstone. Photo G. Ahnert

No. 3: James V. P. Gardner, Plot 9, Lot 4. OMC Contractor/Bidder.<sup>4</sup>



James V. P. Gardner tombstone. Photo G. Ahnert

No. 4: Amos B. Stafford, OMC stage driver stationed at Fayetteville, Arkansas,<sup>5</sup> Plot 21, Lot 2471.



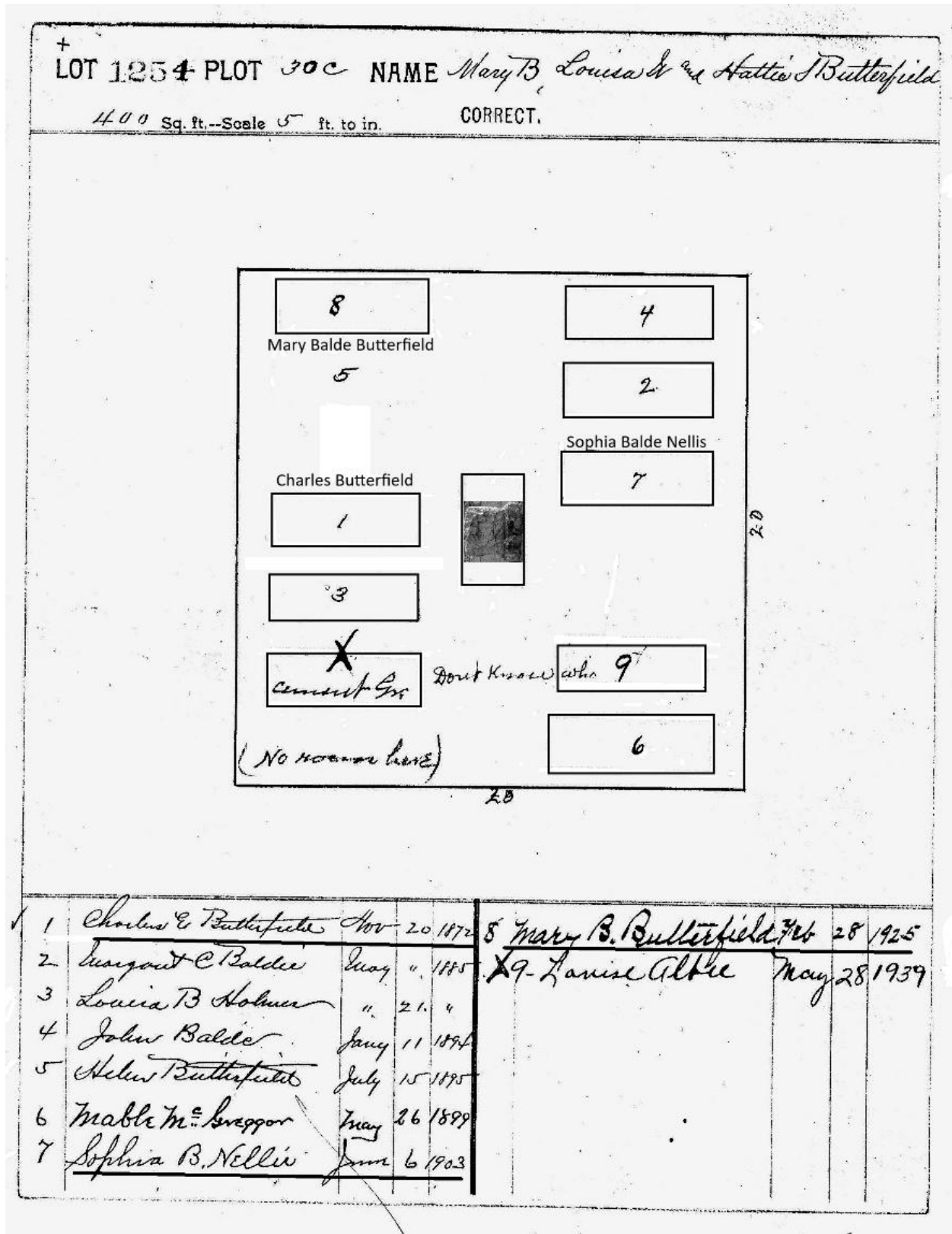
Amos B. Stafford tombstone. Photo G. Ahnert

No. 5: Hugh Crocker, Superintendent from St. Louis, Missouri, to the border of Texas,<sup>6</sup> 19A, Lot 298.



Hugh Crocker tombstone. Photo G. Ahnert

No. 6: Charles Butterfield, Superintendent stationed in Fayetteville, Arkansas,<sup>7</sup> his wife Mary, and Mary's sister Sophie. Plot 30, Lot 1254.

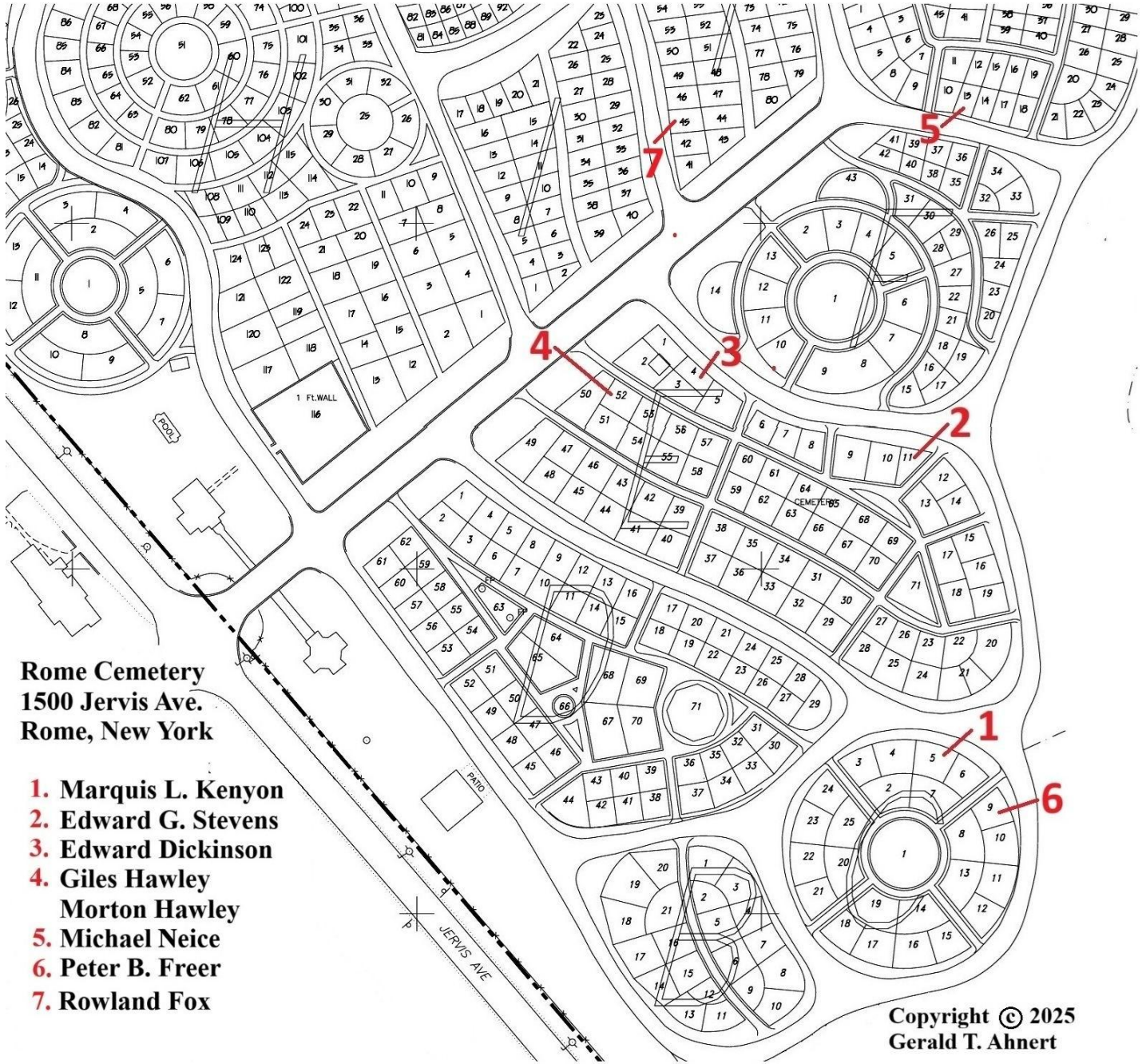


Charles Butterfield family plot. Courtesy Forest Hill Cemetery Archives, Utica, NY.

No. 7 is John Butterfield Jr., Plot 40, Lot 2374. Overland Mail Company Senior Superintendent.<sup>8</sup>



John Butterfield Jr. family plot and tombstone. Photo G. Ahnert



**Rome Cemetery  
1500 Jervis Ave.  
Rome, New York**

- 1. Marquis L. Kenyon**
- 2. Edward G. Stevens**
- 3. Edward Dickinson**
- 4. Giles Hawley  
Morton Hawley**
- 5. Michael Neice**
- 6. Peter B. Freer**
- 7. Rowland Fox**

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Gerald T. Ahnert**

**Butterfield Overland Mail Company Employees**

Rome Cemetery, Rome, New York, and eight graves of Overland Mail Company employees.  
Rome is twelve miles from Utica. *Rome Cemetery Directory*, Rome, NY.

No. 1: Marquis L. Kenyon, Section C, Stone 5. The architect of the Butterfield Trail and one of the seven Contractor/Bidders. He was also the Fort Yuma to San Francisco Superintendent.<sup>9</sup>



Marquis L. Kenyon tombstone. Photo G. Ahnert

No. 2: Edward G. Stevens, Section E, Stone 11. In June 1858 Stevens arrived in California to purchase livestock and to contract for the establishment of stations between San Bernardino and Fort Yuma.<sup>10</sup> In March 1861 after Butterfield's mail service ceased, he was employed at Sylvester Mowry's mine south of Tucson, Arizona. He was killed by the Apache near the mine and was first buried in the mine cemetery. It was later reported that his remains were moved to the Rome Cemetery: "The return of the sealed lead coffin was made in a covered wagon, William Stevens spending a year on the return trip. Mrs. H.T. Dyett, a niece of the Arizona pioneer, remembers her father telling how he came through the territories of nine Indian tribes on his way back home with his brother's body and how at times he guarded the coffin by sleeping upon it."<sup>11</sup>



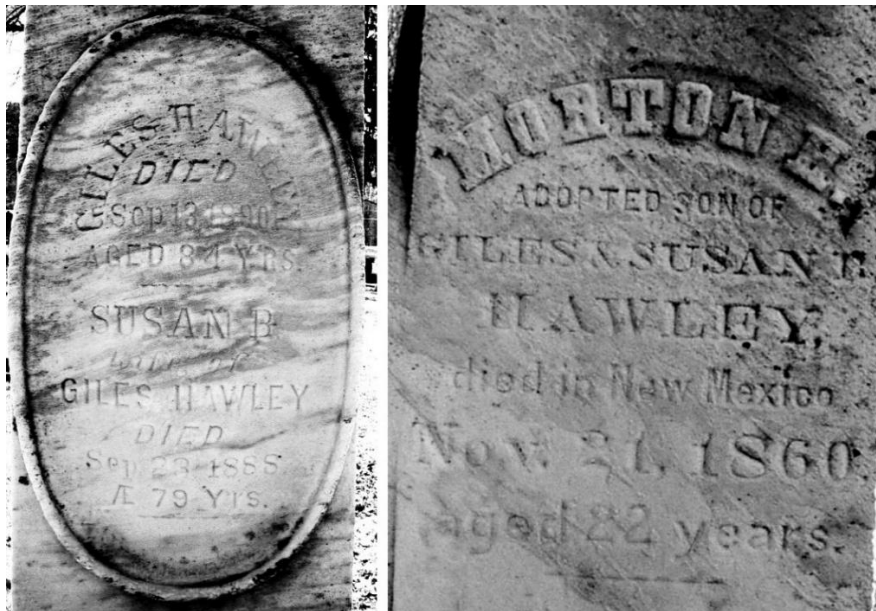
Edward G. Stevens tombstone. Find a Grave.

No. 3: Edward Dickinson, Section E, Stone 4. Stayed in New Mexico after his employment with the OMC. Died at Fort Sumner, New Mexico.<sup>12</sup>



Edward Dickinson tombstone. Find a Grave.

No. 4: Giles Hawley and his adopted son Morton, Section E, Lot 52. Giles was a section Superintendent stationed at Mesilla, New Mexico.<sup>13</sup> Morton was with Giles at Mesilla and died there of typhoid.<sup>14</sup>



Giles Hawley and son adopted Morton tombstone.

No. 5: Michael Neice, Section J, Stone 13. Road Agent for Superintendent Giles Hawley at Mesilla, New Mexico. Killed in western New Mexico by the Apache while fleeing ahead of Confederate troops.<sup>15</sup>



Michael Neice tombstone.

No. 6: Peter B. Freer, Section C, Stone 9. He was employed at a New Mexico Butterfield stage station. In 1861 after his employment, he moved to Texas.

**COLONEL PETER FREER.**

—

**His Body to be Shipped to Rome,  
New York.**

—

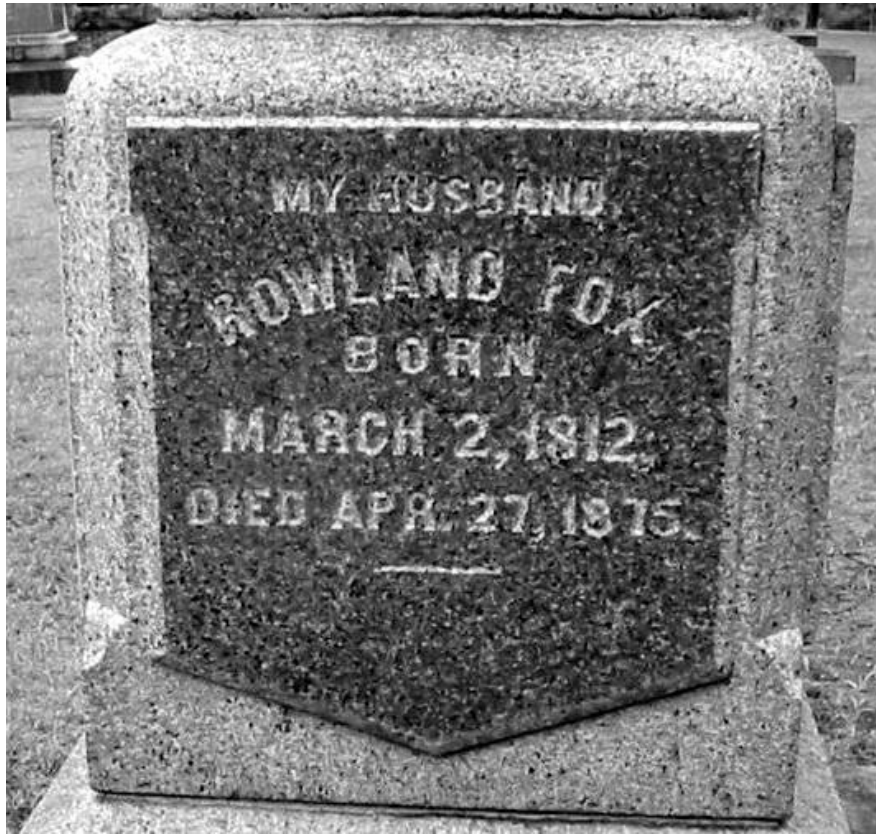
The remains of the late Colonel Peter B. Freer arrived last night from Austin. The corpse was met at the depot by J. H. Bolton, Eminent Commander, and John H. Heustis, Generalissimo of the San Antonio commandery Knights Templar, who escorted the body and placed it in the asylum. Preparation for burial was made by the San Antonio commandery Knights Templar, at 10 o'clock this morning.

Previous to the funeral, and as the Sir Knights were assembling, a telegram came to the Sunset ticket office from the brother of deceased at Rome, N. Y., desiring that the remains be shipped to that place, and the procession to the cemetery was accordingly dispensed with. Arrangements for shipping the body to-night were then made, and it will be accompanied by the commandery, the members of which will leave for the Sunset depot at 6 o'clock this evening.

San Antonio Light > Mon, Jan 19, 1885 > Page: 4

Peter Freer's obituary.

No. 7: Rowland Fox, Section I, Lot 45. Superintendent from St. Louis-Memphis to Red River (Oklahoma-Texas border).<sup>16</sup>



Rowland Fox tombstone.

There are many more Butterfield Overland Mail Company employees to be discovered in these cemeteries through further research.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Waterman L. Ormsby, *The Butterfield Overland Mail*, ed. Lyle H. Wright and Josephine M. Bynum, San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1991, 94.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the Postmaster General*, 35th Congress, 2d Session, Ex. Doc. No. 48, Post Office Department, March 3, 1859, 1-11.

<sup>3</sup> *The Memphis Daily*, Memphis, Tennessee, July 3, 1858.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Amos B. Stafford, Federal Census, July 16, 1860, Fayetteville, Arkansas Post Office, 164.

<sup>6</sup> *The Memphis Daily*, Memphis, Tennessee, July 3, 1858.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Butterfield, Federal Census, July 16, 1860, Fayetteville, Arkansas Post Office, 164.

<sup>8</sup> *The Waterville Times*, Waterville, New York, March 12, 1909.

<sup>9</sup> *The Memphis Daily*, Memphis, Tennessee, July 3, 1858.

<sup>10</sup> *Los Angeles Star*, "Overland Mail Route," June 12, 1858.

<sup>11</sup> [Edward G. Stevens \(unknown-1863\) - Find a Grave Memorial](#)

<sup>12</sup> *Weekly Santa Fe Gazette*, New Mexico, February 22, 1868.

<sup>13</sup> *New York Herald*, January 15, 1860.

<sup>14</sup> *Utica Daily Observer*, Utica, New York, December 12, 1860.

<sup>15</sup> *Nashville Union and American*, Nashville, Kentucky, June 13, 1861.

<sup>16</sup> *The Memphis Daily*, Memphis, Tennessee, July 3, 1858.

# Retracing Lieutenant Whipple's 35<sup>th</sup> Parallel Railroad Survey from Fort Smith to the Pacific Ocean

by

Shaun M. Comfort, MD, MBA

## Abstract

In 1853 Lieutenant Amiel Whipple's 35<sup>th</sup> Parallel expedition was a success and its results served as a guide for later railway and interstate construction across the western US. Unfortunately, following Whipple's 35<sup>th</sup> Parallel exact route today is not possible due to errors in the longitude estimates made during the expedition. This article illustrates the author's use of Bayesian methods similar to those used to find the *USS Scorpion* and the *SS Central America*, to aggregate Whipple's data with other estimates to estimate his most probable camp positions in Latitude and Longitude.<sup>1</sup> This work demonstrates the value of Bayesian models to integrate sparse, conflicting information to estimate present locations for historic trails or artifacts.

## Introduction

In 1853 Lieutenant Amiel Whipple led an expedition of the US Army Corp of Topographical Engineers (COTE) from Fort Smith across the largely unexplored west of the United States, following a route approximately 35 degrees north latitude to California. The purpose was to perform a detailed survey of the topography, geology, botany, biology, and ethnography that could inform the best route for a transcontinental railroad to California. This was one of several expeditions conducted by the COTE on behalf of Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, to determine the most feasible route to connect the eastern US with California. Whipple's survey was a military expedition funded by Davis with \$40,000 in 1853 dollars. At the time of departure from Camp Wilson just south of Ft Smith, it consisted of approximately 70 men, 240 mules, a large flock of sheep, multiple wagons, at least one *carratella*, and various scientific instruments he had purchased in Philadelphia.<sup>2</sup> In addition, Whipple's expedition included approximately 17 experts in botany (JM Bigelow), geology (Jule Marcou), art (HB Mollhausen), railroad engineering, astronomy and surveying to assist with collection and classification of specimens for the Smithsonian, depiction of the topography, and navigational measurements for calculating latitude and longitude coordinates. I've specifically called out these names because of their contribution to the success of the expedition (Bigelow and Mollhausen) as well as their own published diaries of the expedition (Mollhausen<sup>3</sup>), and the usefulness of their data to modern route reconstruction (Marcou).<sup>4</sup>

## Methodology

The approach I adopted to estimate the nearest modern location for the Whipple expedition camps is based on Bayesian reasoning combined with historical detective work. Specifically, I used as many references as I could find that described expedition locations that I could place on a modern map (*ie*, Google Earth) with some range of uncertainty. References ranged in specificity and precision from lists of latitudes and longitudes from Whipple, and Tom Jonas field reports, to approximate statements about camp sites (*e.g.*, "a few miles east of x") by Foreman.<sup>5</sup> In some cases, I was fortunate enough to find camp sites by name on Google Earth such as Marl Spring or Jacob's Well. In all cases I had to estimate the potential error or uncertainty associated with actual camp site latitude and longitude using the ruler function on Google Earth to subjectively draw a circle

around each site to represent my best guess for the error. The result was what Lawrence Stone termed “scenarios” or clusters of sparse and sometimes inconsistent estimated locations with differing uncertainties.<sup>6</sup> For each referenced data source, I assigned a subjective gaussian probability distribution whereby my estimated uncertainty radius from Google Earth became the respective standard deviation for the data source latitude or longitude. Finally, I used Whipple’s original reported camp locations as a Bayesian Prior and updated these with the other references to derive a final weighted average latitude and longitude position based on the estimated errors (*i.e.*, standard deviation or  $\sigma$ ) for each data source.

Mathematically this is done by adding the individual data source precisions as follows:

$$Precision = \rho = \frac{1}{\sigma^2} = \frac{1}{variance} \quad \text{Equation 1.0}$$

The final location precision is simply the sum of the individual data source precisions:

$$\rho_{final} = \rho_1 + \rho_2 + \dots + \rho_n \quad \text{Equation 2.0}$$

Given the prior and individual precision estimates, the final estimated position is a Bayesian posterior (*i.e.*, weighted average) estimate based on the individual locations. For this document I call this the most probable position (MPP):

$$MPP = \frac{loc_1\rho_1 + loc_2\rho_2 + \dots + loc_n\rho_n}{\rho_{final}}$$

As an illustration of this, I show my estimated aggregate uncertainties (in statute miles for the five different sources I used. These included Whipple’s stated locations, Dr. Foreman’s estimated locations, Modern GeoLocations on Google Earth, Marcy-Whipple’s California Road by Dr. Dott projected onto Google Earth, and Whipple’s topographic map projected on “Map’s Online”). I estimated the uncertainty for the different sources by drawing circles on Google Earth that contained the different positions and the closest modern known locations I could identify, and averaged them. As shown below, Whipple’s latitude data has a much smaller uncertainty than his longitude data.

<b>Data Source</b>	<b>LAT Err Radius (sMi)</b>	<b>LON Err Radius (sMi)</b>
<b>Whipple Data</b>	0.500	7.00
<b>Foreman Data</b>	2.300	3.100
<b>Modern GeoLoc</b>	0.478	0.478
<b>MWCAR Dott</b>	1.459	1.459
<b>Historic Map Est</b>	1.537	1.537
<b>Average</b>	<b>1.25</b>	<b>2.71</b>

**Table 1. Estimated Uncertainty for Different Data Sources**

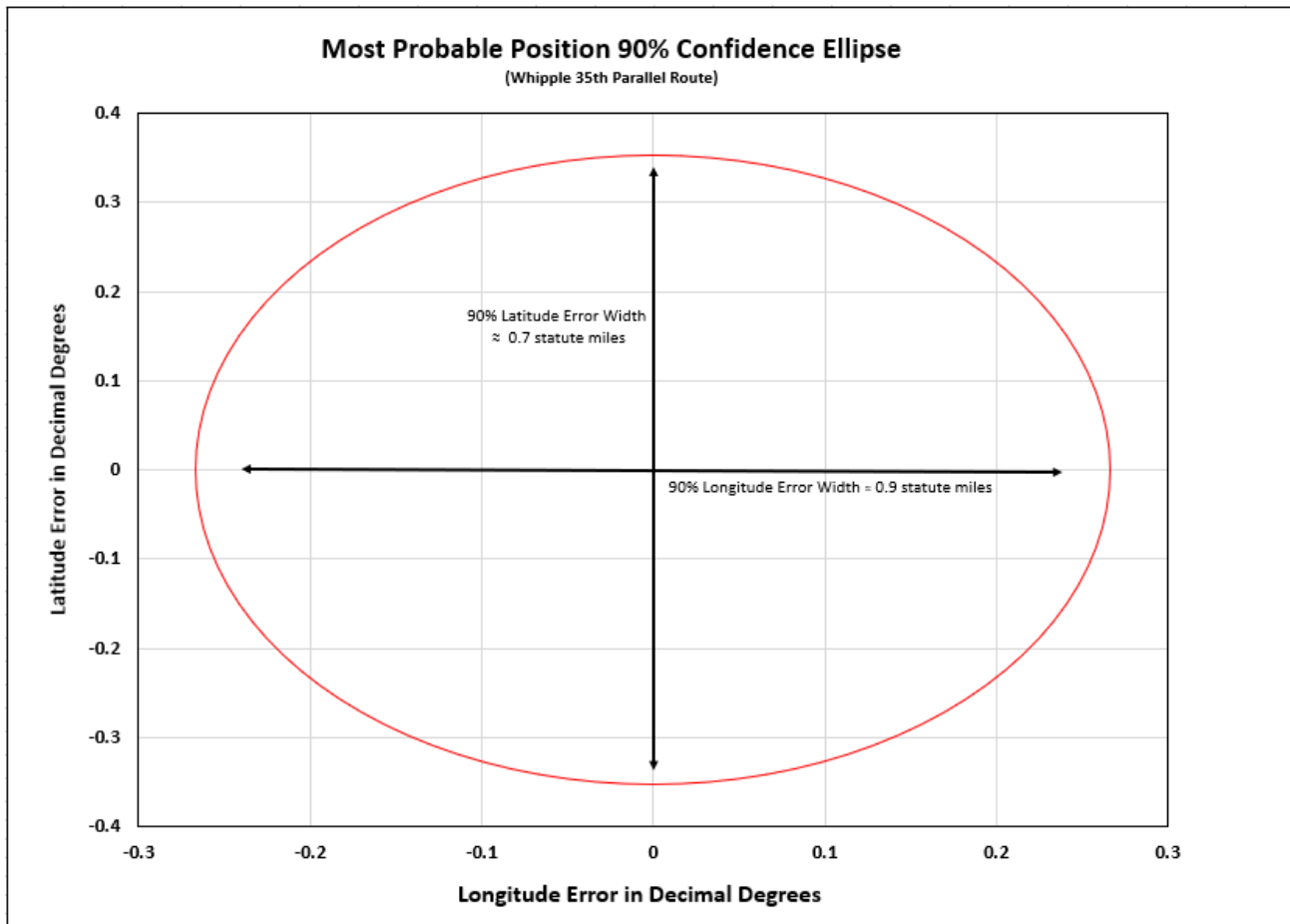
From this I derived my final estimated standard deviation, precision estimates, and the uncertainties for the most probable Whipple Latitude and Longitude. Note that the small final error ranges in Table 2 are due to the much higher weight given to the more precise estimates, while Table 1 simply takes the arithmetic average of the

errors resulting in much larger values. Mathematically, the Bayesian estimate is to be preferred while the simple average could be used as a “pessimistic” upper limit to the possible uncertainty in estimated position.

LAT Est Sd (sMi)	Lon Est Sd (sMi)
0.198	0.262
MPLat 90% Radius (sMi)	MPLon 90% Radius (sMi)
0.33	0.43
MPLat 90% Range (sMi)	MPLon 90% Range (sMi)
0.65	0.86

**Table 2. Estimated Uncertainties for Most Probable Position**

Finally, the uncertainty can be shown graphically as an ellipse in Figure 1 below, with the major and minor axes corresponding to longitude and latitude, respectively. Inspection shows that the final estimated longitude uncertainty (sd = 0.43 sMi) determined from the Bayesian model is approximately 30% larger than the latitude error (sd = 0.33 sMi).



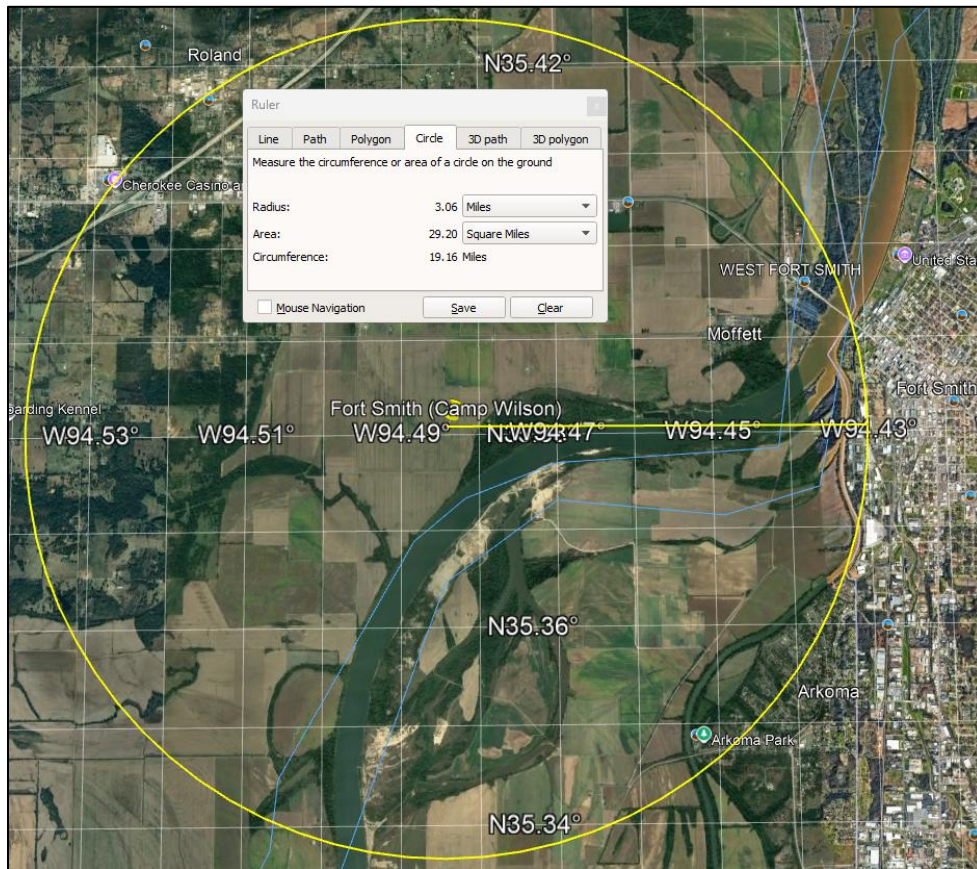
**Figure 1. Most Probable Position Confidence Ellipse**

While the discussion of the underlying math behind this may seem tedious at first, I think it's important for readers to understand that my retraced route has an associated uncertainty for the most probable positions. I take this time in the beginning to help individuals wanting to use my results to perform field work for historical archeology, precise trail mapping, *etc.* It is my hope that my results will be helpful as a guide to planning a field search of Whipple camp locations within a geographic range.

### Data Sources

As discussed above, several data sources were used to create my final position estimates. I discuss each of these in turn in the following sections.

*Whipple's Report* – In 1854, Lt. Whipple published his final report on the 35<sup>th</sup> Parallel expedition with 11 chapters describing various aspects of the mission including the general route, geography, suitability for railroad construction, geology, botany, and the ethnological observations of native American tribes along the way. For the purposes of this paper, the astronomical positions and distances for each camp in Appendix B were the primary data source for initial position estimates. Plotting these on Google Earth quickly revealed that the latitude estimates appeared reasonable but the longitudes were far removed from known modern locations. As an example, Whipple's longitude position for the initial Fort Smith- Camp Wilson location places the camp approximately 3 miles west of the Fort Smith historic site, across the Arkansas river in Oklahoma as shown below!



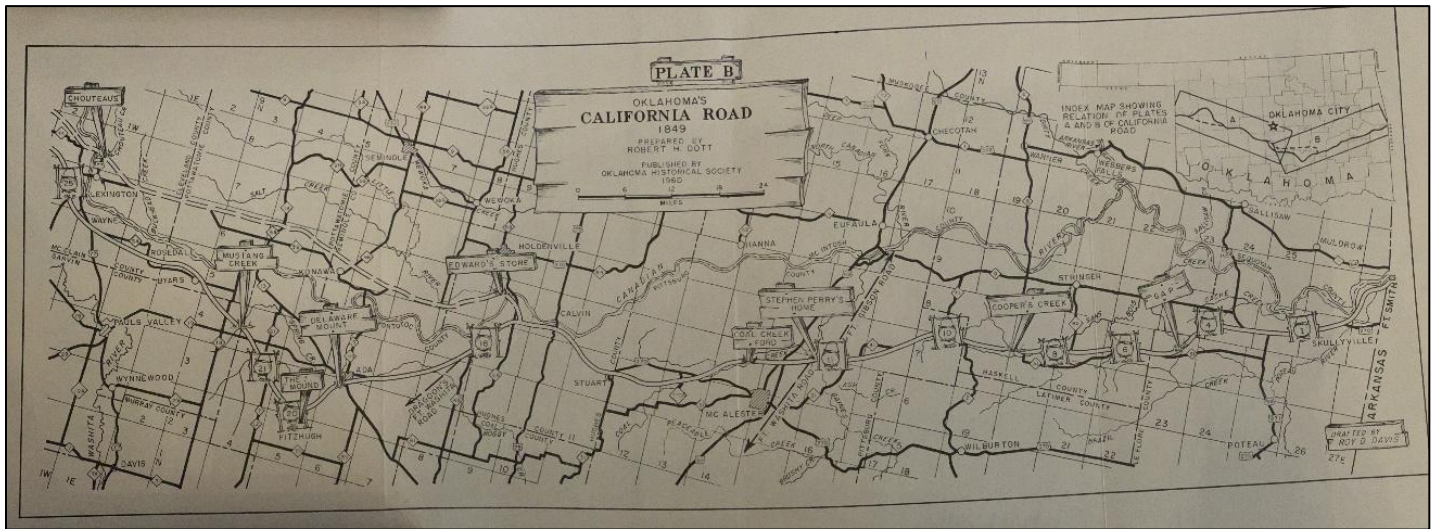
**Figure 2. Whipple Camp Wilson Location vs Likely Actual Location**

Plotting the Whipple positions and comparing to other identifiable locations such as Anton Chico, Marl Springs, *etc.* shows a pattern of large inconsistent errors in longitude likely due to the crude nature of the tools used at the time.<sup>7</sup> Fortunately, the latitude estimates appeared in close alignment with identifiable modern locations. In addition, other data sources can be combined with Bayesian reasoning to largely correct for the original errors in longitude.

*Google Earth Geolocations* – Fortunately a number of original Whipple locations are known or can be identified today using Google Earth. For example, Whipple states that Camp Wilson was set up “a few hundred yards south” of Fort Smith.<sup>8</sup> This allows a reasonable estimation of the location below the historic fort, which still stands today. Other locations such as Scullyville, Anton Chico, Albuquerque, Atrisco, Isleta, Inscription Rock, Navajo Spring, and Leroux Spring allowed development of a geo-referenced dataset of high precision location estimates for selected sites. Comparison of these locations against Whipple’s stated Latitude and Longitude support the conclusions stated in the previous section and allowed numeric estimation of the position errors listed in Table 1.

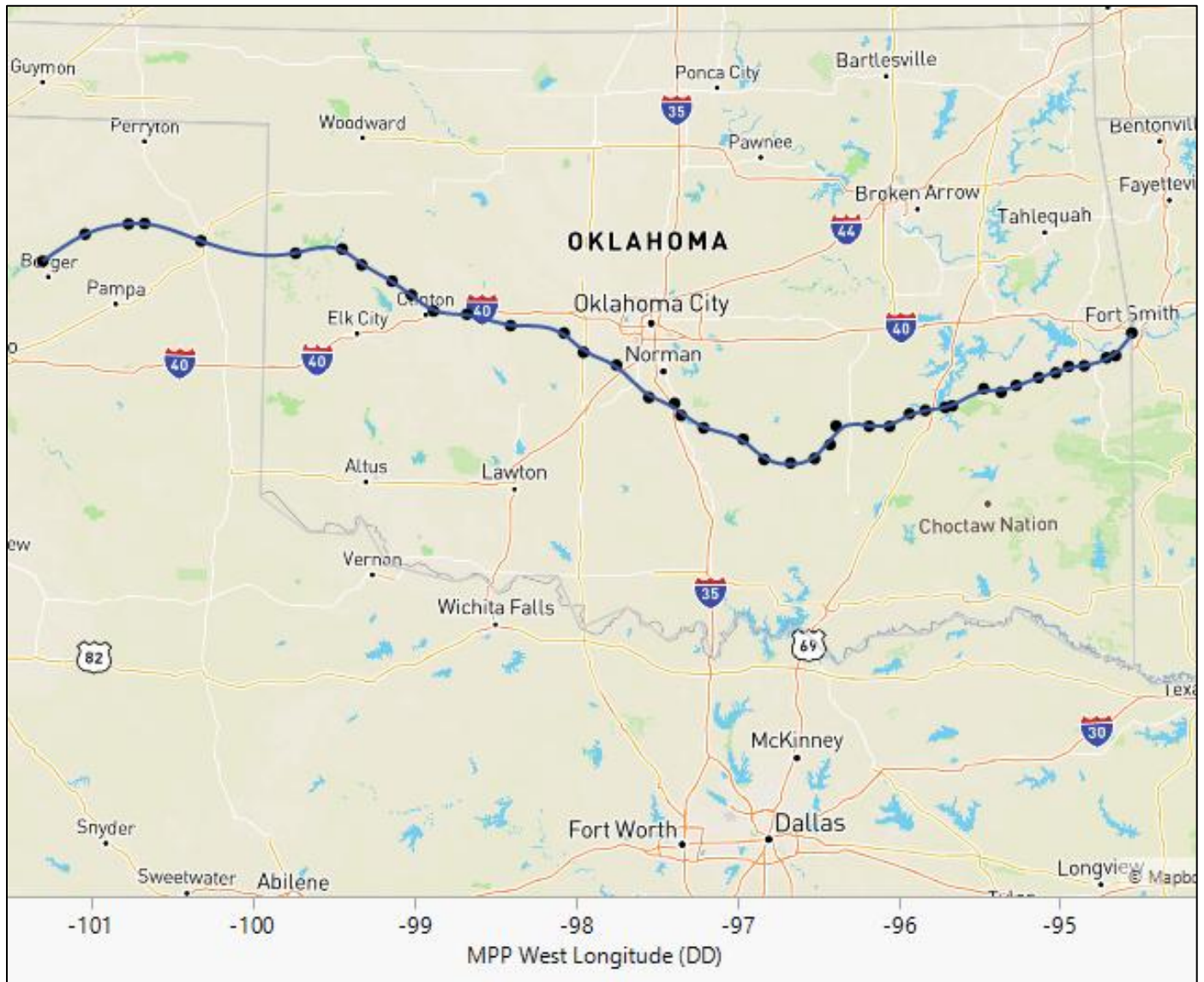
*Professor Dott’s California Road Reconstruction* – A number of modern locations could easily be found for some of Whipple’s camp locations, particularly in the far western states of New Mexico, Arizona, and California. Unfortunately, very few modern locations in the first part of Whipple’s journey in Oklahoma and Texas retain the same place names. Many of the early camp locations for the expedition refer to stream names and Indian villages no longer in use today. Fortunately, a petroleum geologist named Dr. Robert H. Dott

became interested in the original Marcy and Whipple expeditions of the 1850s and published a manuscript on the location of Rock Mary and the course of what became known as the “California Road” through Oklahoma in 1960. This reconstruction made use of Whipple and Marcy expedition notes on the geology and geography of the region they passed through. He was able to correlate this with modern geologic maps to help determine the location of the red sandstone butte name “Rock Mary” by the Capt. Randolph Marcy expedition in 1849. The result was a reconstruction of the route across Oklahoma followed by both Marcy and Whipple, plotted against modern features of the time illustrated in Figure 3.



**Figure 3. Dott’s Reconstruction of the Oklahoma California Road**

Using this I was able to manually plot the corresponding position of the California Road route on Google Earth using landmarks listed on both. Here I assumed a 1.5 mile error (standard deviation) in latitude and longitude locations based on a combination of the position uncertainties in Dott’s map and my ability to extract and place waypoints on their modern locations. I then used the daily linear distance reported in miles from Whipple’s report along Dott’s reconstructed route to estimate the daily camp locations. Figure 4 (below) shows my results for the daily Whipple camps (shown as dots) connected with a smoothing spline, superimposed on an Oklahoma-Texas maps using JMP SAS 19 software.



**Figure 4. My Reconstruction of the Oklahoma California Road**

Professor Foreman’s [Book on the Whipple Expedition](#) – Foreman’s book on Whipple contains a reconstructed map of the expedition as well as multiple location estimates in footnotes throughout the text. The position estimates are imprecise but still useful from the Bayesian perspective as additional information that can be aggregated. A typical location description is from page 51 where Camp 16 Shawnee town is discussed. Footnote 18 states that the location is:

*“Four or five miles northeast of Allen, Oklahoma”.*<sup>9</sup>

Given multiple statements of approximate locations I decided to use a best guess standard deviation estimate of three statute miles for both latitude and longitude location estimates, which discounts the weighting in the final estimation while still allowing Foreman’s estimates to contribute.

David Rumsey Map Collection – A key result of Lt. Whipple’s expedition was a map of their proposed route to illustrate the suitability for railroad construction. The final expedition maps were created and are available in digital form from the US Library of Congress (LOC) as well as the David Rumsey Map collection. Two portions of the expedition maps are shown below, downloaded from the LOC for illustration purposes. The first shows the route and geographical features from Fort Smith to Albuquerque on the Rio Grande River.



**Figure 5. Whipple Map #1: Fort Smith, AK to Albuquerque, NM**

The second map shows the route from Albuquerque to their final destination of San Pedro, California.



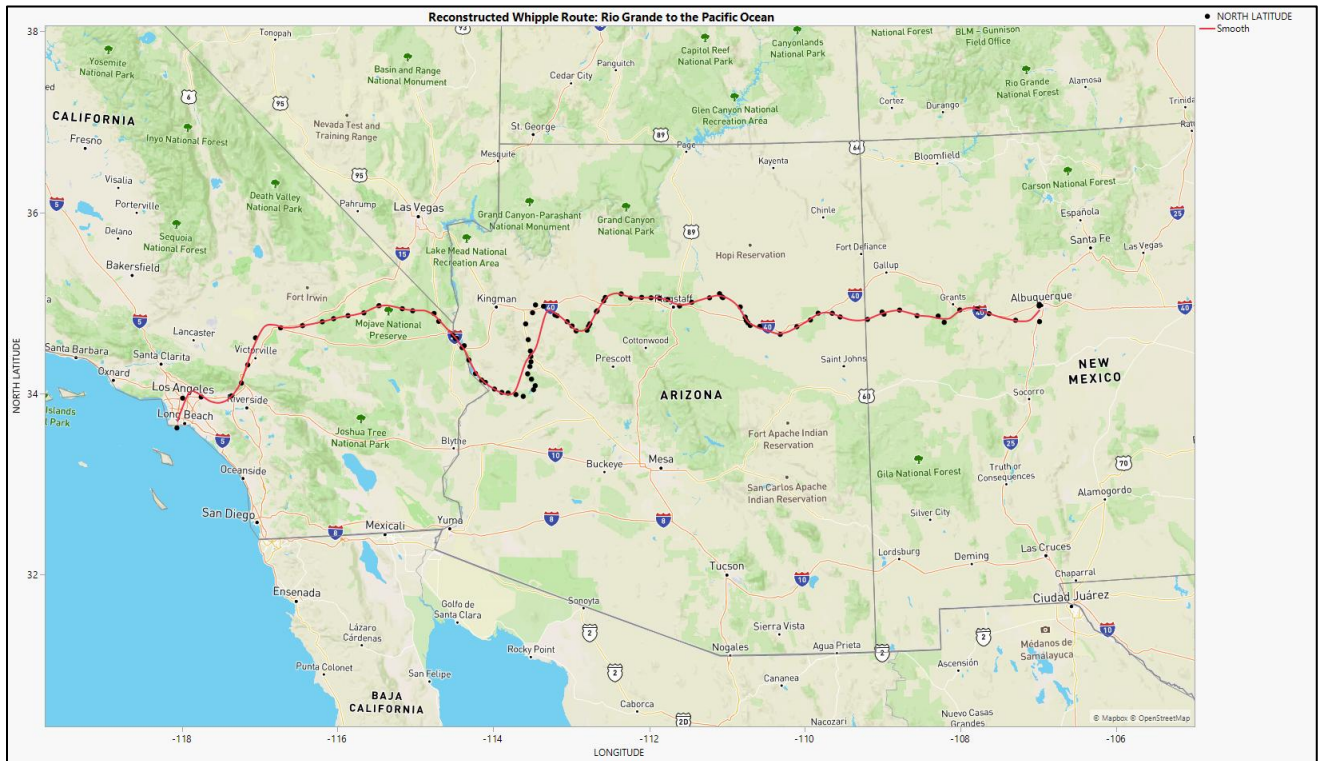
**Figure 6. Whipple Map #2: Albuquerque, NM to San Pedro, CA**

The David Rumsey map collection allows one to project historic maps onto digital modern surfaces and adjust them using different projection techniques to account for errors. I used affine, polynomial, and TPS map correction methods to line up known geographic features (eg, location of the Rio Grande, Canyon Diablo, etc.) with each projected campsite. I could then manually estimate the approximate modern latitude and longitude from the map projection by visually averaging the location across the different projection method locations. While this was a cumbersome exercise, my rationale was that this was still another plausible data source even accounting for the combination of map projection errors and my subjective visual placement errors. For the final calculations, I assumed a standard deviation error of approximately 1.5 statute miles in both latitude and longitude.

**Results** - The final step in this effort was to aggregate the estimated locations from all the different data sources using the methodology outlined in the beginning along with the estimated errors from Table 1. Using Equations 1.0 and 2.0 with Whipple's original latitudes and longitudes as a prior, I obtained the final latitude and longitude estimates, associated error standard deviations, and 90% confidence limits for each camp location. These final results are included as an appendix CSV table available upon request. In addition, I recreated Lt. Whipple's two published maps (Figures 5 and 6) using JMP SAS 19 software. The large points correspond to camp sites placed on modern maps with a best-fit mathematical spline to illustrate the general course of the journey. Note that the spline has difficulty with some of Whipple's route in Figure 8 due to the large direction changes he made to search for "Bill William's Fork" after leaving the current Flagstaff area.



**Figure 7. Reconstructed Map #1: Fort Smith, AK to Albuquerque, NM**



**Figure 8. Reconstructed Map #2: Albuquerque, NM to San Pedro, CA**

It is my hope that these results will be of use to trail enthusiasts, historical archeologists, and those that would enjoy the thrill of retracing one of the great transcontinental routes of American history. I would also consider my results preliminary in the sense that new more-precise location data for a given camp can easily be incorporated into the current Bayesian model to produce a more accurate probable position route. I encourage anyone with more specific data to please reach out to myself or Mr. Daniel Judkins to discuss further. Finally, my reconstructed Whipple route data is available as a CSV file upon request.

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## ENDNOTE

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<sup>1</sup> Lawrence. D. Stone, "Search for the SS Central America: Mathematical Treasure Hunting," *Interfaces* 22(1):32-54, Jan-Feb 1992. Also see Henry R. Richardson and Lawrence D. Stone, "Operations Analysis During the Underwater Search for Scorpion," Duke University, accessed 7/15/2024 from [https://www2.stat.duke.edu/~banks/130-labs.dir/lab10.dir/1971\\_Richardson\\_Operations%20analysis%20during%20the%20underwater%20search%20for%20Scorpio ns.pdf](https://www2.stat.duke.edu/~banks/130-labs.dir/lab10.dir/1971_Richardson_Operations%20analysis%20during%20the%20underwater%20search%20for%20Scorpio ns.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Jonas, T., "Using Rephotography to Find Historic Trails and Campsites in the Southwestern United States," Southwest Explorations.com, Jonas, T., 2010, available at <https://southwestexplorations.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Rephotographybook.pdf>. Also see Wright, M. H., and G. H. Shirk, "The Journal of Lieutenant A. W. Whipple," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 28(3):235-283, Fall 1950, available at <https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc2123384/>

<sup>3</sup> Mollhausen, B., *Diary of a Journey from the Mississippi to the Coasts of the Pacific with a United States Government Expedition*, Vol 1., translated by Mrs. Percy Sinnett, London, UK: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1958.

<sup>4</sup> R. H. Dott, *Rock Mary and the California Road*, Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, (1960) 1970.

<sup>5</sup> Grant Foreman, *A Pathfinder in the Southwest: The Itinerary of Lieutenant A. W. Whipple During his Explorations for a Railway Route from Fort Smith to Los Angeles in the Years 1853 and 1854*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968.

<sup>6</sup> Lawrence D. Stone, "Search for the SS Central America: Mathematical Treasure Hunting," *Interfaces* 22(1):32-54, Jan-Feb 1992; and Lawrence D. Stone, "Revisiting the SS Central America Search," A paper presented at the 13<sup>th</sup> Conference on Information Fusion (FUSION), 2010, and IEEE Xplore webpage, accessed from ResearchGate: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/224218780\\_Revisiting\\_the\\_SS\\_Central\\_America\\_search](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/224218780_Revisiting_the_SS_Central_America_search), 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Tom Jonas, "Using Rephotography...", see full citation at endnote #2 above.

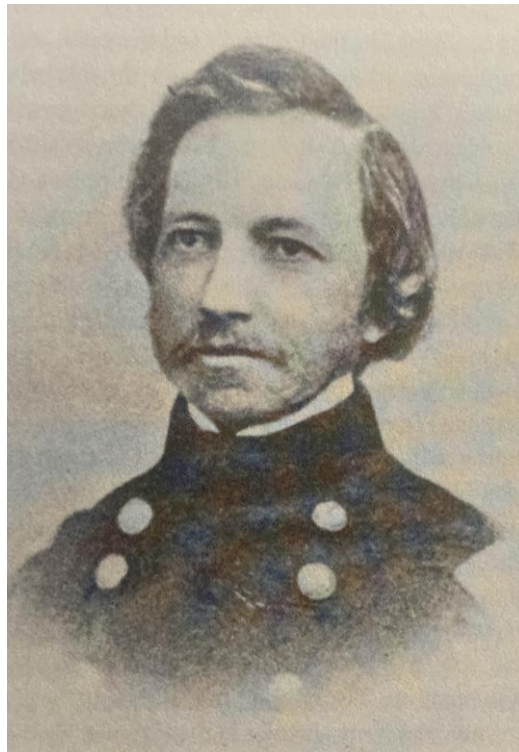
<sup>8</sup> Grant Foreman, *A Pathfinder in the Southwest: The Itinerary of Lieutenant A. W. Whipple During his Explorations for a Railway Route from Fort Smith to Los Angeles in the Years 1853 and 1854*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

# About the 1853-1854 Whipple Expedition along the 35<sup>th</sup> Parallel

by Daniel G. Judkins

Amiel Weeks Whipple (October 21, 1817 – May 7, 1863) attended Amherst College and West Point, where he graduated in the class of 1841. During his early military career he surveyed the Patapsco River, sea approaches to New Orleans, the Portsmouth Harbor, and the northeastern boundary of the United States, after which he did extensive survey work for the United States Boundary Commission. At one point he served as the interim chief surveyor for the commission.<sup>1</sup>



**Fig. 1.** Amiel Weeks Whipple. Photo is in the public domain, from Wikipedia.

Congress authorized the Pacific Railroad Surveys<sup>2</sup> designed to find the best route for a transcontinental railroad. These included five major surveys of possible railroad routes to California, including...

- 1) the Northern Pacific Survey along the 47<sup>th</sup> and 49<sup>th</sup> parallels from St. Paul, Minnesota across the Great Plains and over the northern Rocky Mountains to the Puget Sound in Washington Territory

- 2) the Central Pacific Survey along the 37<sup>th</sup> and 38<sup>th</sup> parallels from St. Louis to the Salt Lake area and on to San Francisco
- 3) Southern Pacific Survey along the 35<sup>th</sup> parallel from Fort Smith, Arkansas through Indian Territory (Oklahoma), northern Texas, New Mexico, what is now Arizona to the Colorado River, and on through the Mohave Desert to Los Angeles
- 4) the Southern Pacific Survey along the 32<sup>nd</sup> parallel across Texas from the Red River to El Paso, through New Mexico and what became Arizona, ending in San Diego
- 5) the Pacific Coast Survey along the Pacific coast itself, from San Diego to Seattle.

Whipple was appointed to lead the 35<sup>th</sup>-parallel survey from Ft. Smith, Arkansas to Los Angeles. With about 70 men, the Whipple Expedition left Ft. Smith on July 15, 1853. Some key members of the expedition in addition to Whipple are listed below.

## Antoine Leroux

Leroux joined the Whipple Expedition in New Mexico, to serve as its guide. Early in 1853 Leroux headed to Washington, DC, likely at the behest of Senator Thomas Hart Benton. There on March 1 he made a formal statement to Congress on what he viewed as the best route for a railroad to California, over Choctopa Pass in Colorado. This was also the route that Senator Benton of Missouri was working toward. Returning from DC, Leroux was guiding a group of emigrants west on the Santa Fé Trail when he was overtaken by Edward F. Beale's party on May 20. Beale was the newly-appointed Superintendent of Indian affairs for Nevada and California. Beale wanted Leroux to guide him, but Beale arranged to meet him a few days ahead on the trail due to his commitment to the emigrants he was guiding. However, Leroux fell ill with pleurisy on May 24, interrupting these plans. After recovering, Leroux proceeded to his home in Taos. Beale soon met him there.<sup>3</sup> But Leroux was unable to accompany further west due to two prior commitments to guide other expeditions. First he went into western Colorado, over Cochetopa Pass, and into Utah with the Gunnison-Beckwith Expedition, part of the Pacific Railroad Survey along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, the very route he had recommended to Congress in March. On September 18 Leroux went well ahead of the group to explore for the best locations for water in eastern Utah along a segment of the Old Spanish Trail, and returned to the main group on Sept. 22. That night he drew, or helped to draw, a map of the route ahead for the group to use, as he had to return to New Mexico to meet up with Whipple and his 35<sup>th</sup>-parallel survey, since that had been arranged earlier.<sup>4</sup>

Leroux met up with the Whipple Expedition in Albuquerque in early October 1853. Leroux had guided the Sitgreaves Expedition from Zuni, NM west along the 35<sup>th</sup> parallel in 1851.<sup>5</sup>

During their trip from Albuquerque, via the Zuni Pueblo, and down the Little Colorado River to near the 35<sup>th</sup> parallel, then West to the San Francisco Mountains near today's Flagstaff, AZ and on west to the Colorado River, into the Mohave Desert of California, and eventually to Los Angeles, several key bits of information about Leroux were revealed in John C. Tidball's diary, one being the only known drawing or likeness of Leroux himself, and the other being Tidball's description of how Leroux found sites for water:

“Water was our great desideration\*. Our course was generally perpendicular to the mountain ranges and but seldom along the few streams encountered by us. Flowing springs were rare almost to total absence, and our chief water supply was to be found only in holes or pockets in the sides of mountains. These water holes contained generally an abundance for our wants. Finding these holes was Leroux's great art. From an eminence he would gaze long and steadily at the dreary prospect before him, a prospect that generally gave but little hope of water for ourselves and our thirsty animals. Presently he would say in

his quiet way: 'Dare is de wat.' 'Where?' someone would ask. 'Dare at de foot of dat butte.' 'But which butte?' would be asked, there being a multitude of buttes. He would indicate by giving his hand a horizontal swing of a quarter of a circle taking in a scope of country often greater in extent than the state of Delaware, mostly of jagged mountains which if they had been flattened would have covered more than the area of Pennsylvania. This was his method of pointing. He never aimed directly at the mark with his finger as others do, but gave a sweep with his hand. A few more questions, however, would fix the attention to the exact spot, which generally proved to be a gigantic cliff of basaltic rock appearing at such great distance as a mere speck against the mountain side. Many tedious hours would be consumed in toiling over and winding around spurs of mountains to reach the indicated spot. But we never failed to find the water."<sup>6</sup>

\* "Desideration" -- the act of desiring, wishing for, or longing for something, stemming from the Latin *desiderare* (to long for).

"According to Tidball, a clump of small cottonwood trees was a never-failing sign of water in this region. At that season of the year, they were leafless and difficult to see at a distance. 'But Leroux' practiced eye always proved more keen than our field glasses.' "<sup>7</sup>

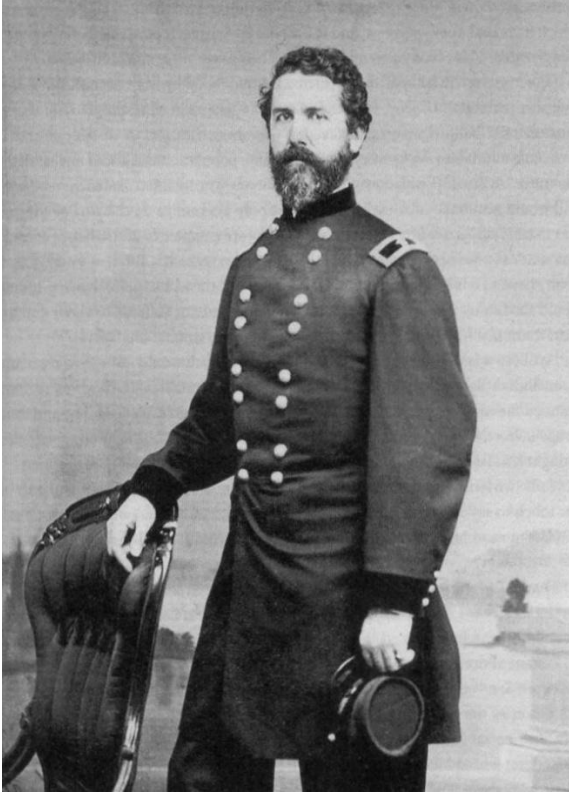
"The nature of mountain ranges and what lay beyond them appeared to be as well known to him as though he could see through their rocky diaphragms."<sup>8</sup>

"He was rather under the standard size, but every ounce of him was genuine man. His muscles were unencumbered by fat, his wiry form in a manner indicative of the endurance required of one pursuing his mode of life. Swarthy of complexion, with straight black hair and clear black eyes, he showed in his whole make up a man equal to the occasion. His native language was the Spanish of New Mexico [*sic*], but his broken English was quite intelligible. He, however, talked but little, and never boastingly of himself. He was no swashbuckler cowboy, but a genuine mountaineer of a pair with Kit Carson."<sup>9</sup>

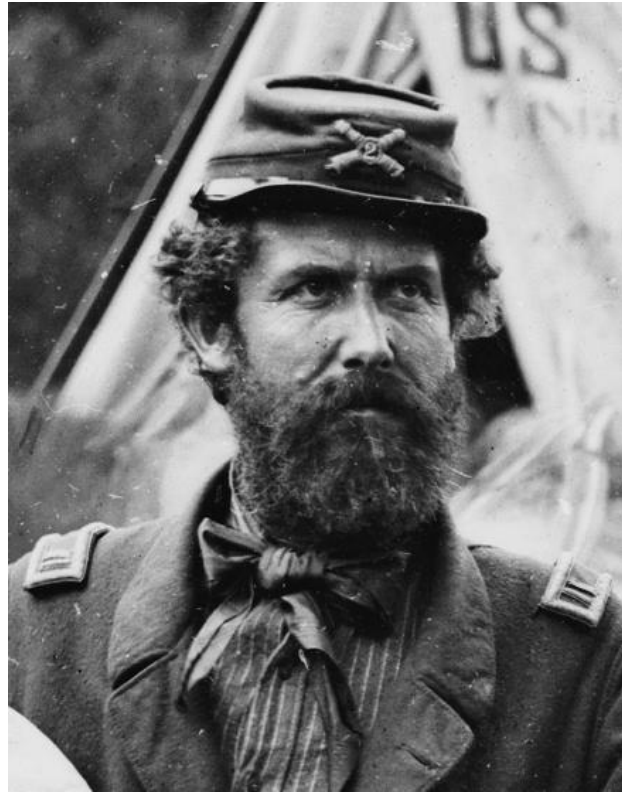


**Fig. 2.** Sketch of Antoine Leroux on his mule by John C. Tidball  
Made during the Whipple Expedition. The original is believed to be in the Beineke Library at Yale.

## John Caldwell Tidball (January 25, 1825 – May 15, 1906)



**Fig. 3.** Brevet Brigadier General John C. Tidball, 1865. U.S. Military Academy Archives image.



**Fig. 4.** Captain John Caldwell Tidball, US Army, June 1862. This is a detail from the larger Library of Congress image of Tidball with his officers (LC-B811-435), Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Digital ID, [cwpb.01024](#)

Tidball was born near Wheeling, Virginia and grew up on a farm in eastern Ohio. He graduated eleventh of thirty-eight cadets in the United States Military Academy (West Point) in 1848, and entered the United States Army as a brevet second lieutenant in the Artillery. He was soon promoted to second lieutenant on February 14, 1849. He was elevated to first lieutenant on March 31, 1853 and served in the Third Seminole War.<sup>10</sup> He then was assigned to the Whipple Expedition, 1853-1854, heading to New Mexico and briefly stopping at Fort Union, Santa Fé, and Albuquerque before arriving at Fort Defiance in August 1853.<sup>11</sup> Tidball joined the Whipple Expedition on December 12, 1853 near Lithodendron Creek and the Little Colorado River in what is now northeastern Arizona.<sup>12</sup> In 1859 he served in the Army's expedition to put down John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry, Virginia.<sup>13</sup>

Tidball married Mary Hunt Davis in May 1853, soon leaving for the Whipple Expedition. They had three children; she died of complications after the third child was born in 1857.<sup>14</sup>

Tidball's Civil War service was extensive, receiving five commissions for gallant and meritorious conduct. President Abraham Lincoln personally complimented him for his service at the Battle of Gettysburg. At the beginning of the Civil War he was a first lieutenant, was promoted to Captain in May 1861. In 1862 he was

credited with introducing the custom of playing “Taps” at military funerals. He became a colonel in 1863 for the U. S. Volunteers.<sup>15</sup>

In December 1864 President Abraham Lincoln nominated Tidball as a brevet brigadier general of volunteers, and was confirmed by the Senate in February 1865. But in December 1864 he had left the U.S. Volunteers and returned to the regular Army. On July 17, 1866, President Andrew Johnson nominated Tidball for the rank of brevet brigadier general in the regular United States Army, and this was confirmed by the Senate in July of 1866. This was followed by a second nomination by President Johnson to the rank of brevet major general of volunteers, confirmed by the Senate in March 1866.<sup>16</sup>

After the Civil War and after being mustered out of the volunteers, Tidball returned to the Regular Army as a captain, but was soon promoted to the rank of major in February 1867. He served in various roles including Commander in Alaska for six years (this position preceded that of Governor of Alaska). He also served at West Point, as Commandant of the Artillery School, and in reorganizing artillery instruction in the military. As aide-de-camp to General William T. Sherman, he was promoted to colonel in the early 1880s.<sup>17</sup>

When Tidball retired, he was regarded as the Army's premier artillerist. His 1880 instruction book, *Manual Of Heavy Artillery Service*, served for decades as the army's guidebook to artillery strategy and operations. Tidball was appointed brigadier general on the retired list, April 23, 1904.<sup>18</sup>

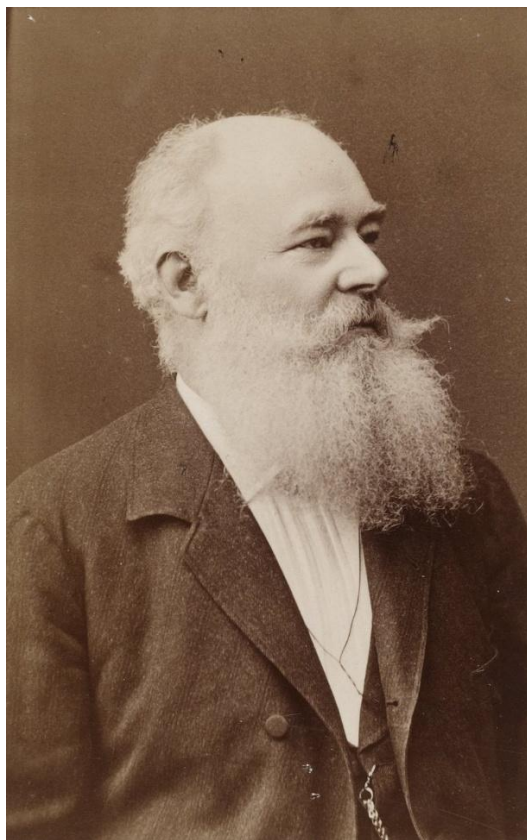
Well after the Civil War ended, Tidball married his second wife, Mary Langdon “Mamie” Dana in March 1870, having five children of their own – first two daughters and a son, and finally having twins in 1875 (a son and daughter).<sup>19</sup>

In 1880 he wrote the *Manual of Heavy Artillery Service*, which was the army's main guide to artillery operations. Tidball retired from the military in January 1889, at a time when he was considered the top artillerist in the Army. In 1904 Tidball was appointed brigadier general on the retired list. He died at the age of 81 in May 1906, and was buried at West Point.<sup>20</sup>

## Heinrich Balduin Möllhausen

Möllhausen was an artist and explorer from Germany, recommended with a letter of introduction from Alexander von Humboldt who participated in three American exploring expeditions. First was an exploring and scientific expedition in 1851 into the Rocky Mountains with a fellow German he had met in America, Duke Paul Wilhem of Württemberg. The second American expedition he participated in was the Whipple Expedition. Following the Whipple Expedition he returned to Germany where in January of 1855 he was given a lifetime appointment as custodian of the royal libraries in Potsdam. This position gave him the income and the freedom to continue his travels and writing. He then published his diary of the Whipple Expedition, *Tagebuch einer Reise vom Mississippi nach den Küsten der Südsee (Diary of a Journey from the Mississippi to the Coasts of the Pacific)*. Möllhausen was then invited by Lieutenant Joseph Christmas Ives, who he had become acquainted with on the Whipple Expedition, to join him in a government exploration of the Colorado River. They traveled from San Francisco to Yuma, and from there up the Colorado, first in a small steamer built specifically for the trip, they continued on foot to the Grand Canyon, ending the trip at Fort Defiance, New Mexico (now Arizona) on May 23, 1858. Ives wrote *Report Upon the Colorado River of the West* (1861), with illustrations by Möllhausen, which were of the first views of the Grand Canyon ever published. He then returned to Germany

and continued his writing career. He died in Berlin in 1905. The former co-editor of *Desert Tracks*, David H. Miller, translated Möllhausen's narrative of the Colorado River trip from German to English.<sup>21</sup>



**Fig. 4.** Photo of Heinrich Balduin Möllhausen later in life.



**Fig. 5.** Möllhausen in mountain-man clothing, from Grant Foreman, *A Pathfinder in the Southwest*, p. 16.

## Albert H. Campbell

A.H. Campbell was a 26-year-old artist and civil engineer with the Whipple Expedition. He was born in Virginia, and graduated in 1847 from Brown University in civil engineering. He had done surveying of San Francisco Bay in 1849-1850, before joining the Whipple Expedition in 1853.<sup>22</sup> After the Whipple survey, Campbell also participated in John Parke's 32nd parallel survey to San Diego in 1854-55.<sup>23</sup>

## Lieut. Joseph Christmas Ives

Ives, a topographical engineer, was Whipple's chief aide and assistant astronomer. He attended Yale College for a year, then transferred to West Point where he graduated near the top of his class in 1852. Hew joined the Whipple Expedition in Albuquerque on Oct. 6, 1853. In 1857 he was made commander of an expedition exploring the Colorado River, along with Möllhausen. From 1859 to 1860 Ives was the chief engineer for the construction of the Washington Monument. Later he served as Jefferson Davis' aide-de-camp in the Confederacy.<sup>24</sup>

## Men of Science on the Whipple Expedition:

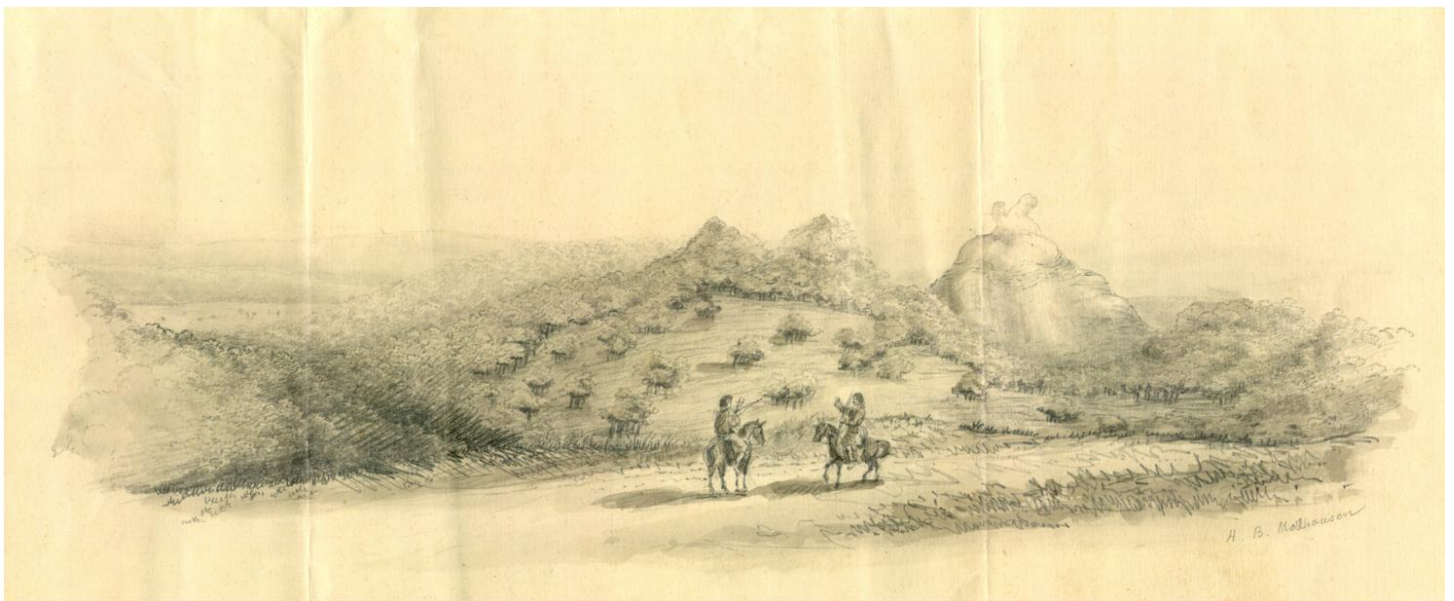
- Dr. John Milton Bigelow, surgeon and botanist<sup>25</sup>
- Hugh Campbell, assistant astronomer<sup>26</sup>
- George Gibson Garner, assistant astronomer<sup>27</sup>
- Dr. Caleb Burwell Rowan Kennerly, physician and naturalist, working closely with Möllhausen<sup>28</sup>
- Jules Marcou, geologist and mining engineer<sup>29</sup>
- Thomas J. Parke, assistant astronomer and computer<sup>30</sup>
- John P. Sherburne, assistant meteorological observer<sup>31</sup>
- William White, Jr., assistant meteorological observer<sup>32</sup>

## Select Diary Entries from the Pacific Railroad Report

*July 14, 1853* – Left Camp Wilson, a few hundred yards south of the fort [Fort Smith, Arkansas, and immediately entering the lands of the Choctaw nation, in Indian Territory, later the state of Oklahoma]...<sup>33</sup>

*August 29 – Camp 29.* Have travelled today nineteen miles, passing “Rock Mary” and other mounds accurately described by Simpson and others. The first part of the march was over a pleasant country, with occasional springs, and a view of the Cross Timbers to the left. ...<sup>34</sup>

### Möllhausen draws Rock Mary near the Cross Timbers



**Fig. 6.** Sketch of Rock Mary by Heinrich B. Möllhausen, 1853, Oklahoma Historical Society, no. 9256.OD36, Amiel Weeks Whipple Collection.

*September 6.* Crossed out of Indian Territory in what is today's Hemphill County, Texas.<sup>35</sup>

*September 10 – Camp 40.* Crossed the Canadian River, “a quarter of a mile wide, two to three feet deep, and full of quicksands...” in an area that abounded in wild grapes and cottonwoods.<sup>36</sup>

*September 19.* Passed into New Mexico east of Tukumcari.<sup>37</sup>

*September 26 – Anton Chico.* Overlooking the Pecos River, Anton Chico had 500 residents, most on the west bank of the river. The adobe houses were graced by red *chile ristras*.<sup>38</sup>

*September 29.* The party divided when leaving Anton Chico, with most heading directly toward Albuquerque, and Whipple with Dr. Bigelow, Mr. Marcou, Mr. Möllhausen, and Mr. Sherburne, with five soldiers and two wagons, taking a separate route further north.<sup>39</sup>

*October 5 – Albuquerque.* Via La Cuesta and Galisteo just south of Santa Fé, the Pueblos “San” [Santa] Domingo [aka, “Kewa”] and San Felipe, and “Bernardillo” [Bernalillo], arrived in Albuquerque, with its 2,500 inhabitants.<sup>40</sup> While in Albuquerque arranging for supplies, the services of Antoine Leroux as a guide were secured. From Möllhausen's *Diary of a Journey*, II, 25: “And the confidence which he [Leroux] inspired – a confidence that had been earned by thirty years' toil in primeval wildernesses – made us all rejoice not a little at having secured his services.” The exploration resumed on November 10.<sup>41</sup>

*November 18 – Camp 68.* Arrived at El Moro [Inscription Rock].<sup>42</sup>

*November 23 – Camp 70.* Encountered a smallpox epidemic at Zuñi pueblo.<sup>43</sup>

*November 30.* Enter what is now the state of Arizona.<sup>44</sup>

*December 2 – Camp 76.* In area of Lithodendron Creek, the area of petrified forests. “Quite a forest of petrified trees was discovered to-day, prostrate and partly buried in deposits of red marl. They are converted into beautiful specimens of variegated jasper. One trunk measured ten feet in diameter, and more than one hundred feet in length. Some of the stumps appear as if they had been charred by fire before being converted to stone. The main portions of the trees have a dark brown color; the smaller branches are of reddish hue. Fragments are strewn over the surface for miles.”<sup>45</sup> Trails expert and cartographer Tom Jonas identifies the location – “Whipple's party crossed the path of today's Interstate 40 somewhere around Pinta and entered what is now the

Petrified Forest National Park north of the highway. They more or less paralled the highway for 15-20 miles and crossed back to the south side of the highway near where it crosses Lithodendron Wash. Camp 76 was probably west of Pinta in Dead Wash before they entered the limits of today's National Park.”<sup>46</sup>



**Fig. 7.** Möllhausen, The Petrified Forest in the Valley of the Rio Seco, New Mexico. Hanhart Chromo Lith.

*December 3 – Camp 77.* Entered the Colorado Chiquito [Little Colorado River]. “Many petrified trees have been seen today, their woody texture preserved in silex, producing jasper variegated with rich and bright colors. Many specimens have been collected by members of the party for seal rings.”<sup>47</sup>

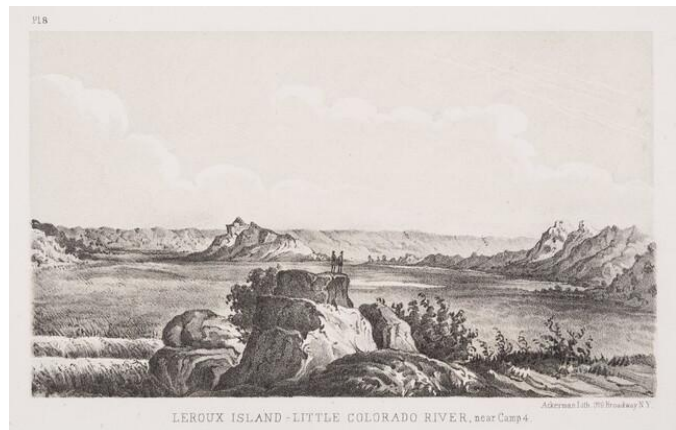
*December 5 – Camp 78.* Eleven miles down the Colorado Chiquito “to the bed of a river coming from the north, to which we gave the title of Leroux’s fork [Leroux’s wash on modern maps, just west of Holbrook, AZ].” Nearby was a feature known as “Leroux’s Island.”<sup>48</sup>



**Fig. 8.** View looking upstream from gage underneath Hwy 77 bridge. Holbrook Levy can be seen on the opposite side of the River in the far distant outcropping of rocks. Water level is 4.5'. Photo at <https://water.noaa.gov/gauges/lhba3>, Little Colorado River at Holbrook, National Water Prediction Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.



**Fig. 9.** Leroux Island on the Little Colorado River, litho by Richard H. Kern. Although this litho by Kern was not a part of the Whipple Expedition, Leroux likely took the Whipple party by this same “island” late in 1853.



**Fig. 10.** Leroux Island rephotography by Jonas in Andrew Wallace and Richard Hevly, *From Texas to San Diego in 1851*, 2<sup>nd</sup> page of photos after p. 152. “Leroux Island” is the pinkish distant hill left of center. The men on the rock are Andrew Wallace (left) and Tom Jonas. This is a 2002 photo by Tom Jonas and Rose Ann Tompkins, both of whom are members of the Southern Trails Chapter of OCTA.

## Select Diary Entries from the Whipple Expedition

*December 12 – Camp 82.* Lt. Tidball, arriving from Ft. Defiance, joins the group.<sup>49</sup>

*December 13.* Group leaves Little Colorado River and heads due west toward the snow-covered San Francisco peaks.<sup>50</sup>

*December 14.* Unexpectedly encountered a chasm “100 feet in depth [actually 250 deep], the sides precipitous, and about three hundred feet across at top,” ... “named Cañon Diablo” near today’s Navajo community of Leupp.<sup>51</sup>

*December 17.* To search for water, this being our third day without it, we turned the southwest point of San Francisco mountain, and, avoiding the valley on the left, kept up on the spurs close at its foot. After travelling about seven miles, we reached a permanent spring that poured from a hillside and was lost in the grassy plain below. In honor of the guide it was called Leroux’s spring. It is the same to which he conducted Captain Sitgreaves two years since, but by a different route, passing around the north and the western base of the mountain.<sup>52</sup>

*December 27 – camp 91.* Camped near Leroux’s spring in the San Francisco mountains, seven miles northwest of today’s Flagstaff, remaining there for nearly ten days while exploring the surrounding country in search of a feasible route for the railroad.<sup>53</sup>



**Fig. 11.** Daniel Judkins at Leroux Springs Nov. 2, 2012, 159 years after Leroux and the Whipple Expedition was there on December 27, 1853 at their Camp 91. Judkins visited Leroux Springs on 11-2-2012 with Shannon Clark, formerly of the U. S. Forest Service, and he fortunately still had a key to the spring cover. The spring still flows south from a short dark canyon into the grass of a little park, seven miles northwest of present Flagstaff.



**Fig. 12.** Judkins looking down into Leroux Spring.

*December 29 – camp 91.* This morning, the summit of San Francisco being visible, the triangulation commenced yesterday was completed. The height above Leroux’s Spring was found to be 4,673 feet, making it about 12,000 feet above the level of the sea. At noon, the temperature of the spring, where it issues from the

hill-side, was measured. The immersed thermometer read 48.8 degrees; 3.2 degrees higher than the surrounding atmosphere. That is probably the mean temperature of the place. The water pours, in several streams, down the ravine, producing a fringe of green herbage.<sup>54</sup>

January 1, 1854. Visited “New Year’s Spring,” ... “a pool ten or twelve feet in diameter, with water twenty inches deep, below a stratum of ice three inches thick.” The spring was near today’s Williams, AZ.<sup>55</sup>

*February 6.* Encountered numerous saguaro cacti.<sup>56</sup>

*February 7.* At junction of the Santa Maria and Big Sandy rivers, which forms the Bill Williams River.<sup>57</sup>

*February 20, Camp 127.* Arrived at the Colorado River junction with the Bill Williams fork.<sup>58</sup>

*February 23 – Camp 130.* Met with Mojave Indians.<sup>59</sup>

*February 27 – Camp 134.* Crossed the 500-yard wide Colorado River using “an old and much worn India rubber pontoon.”<sup>60</sup>

March 2-13. Along the Mojave River to the Mormon Road from Salt Lake City.<sup>61</sup>

March 16 – Camp 149. Over Cajon Pass.<sup>62</sup>

March 18 – Camp 150. Heading west toward Los Angeles.<sup>63</sup>

March 20 – Camp 151. Camped at Rancho de Chino.<sup>64</sup>

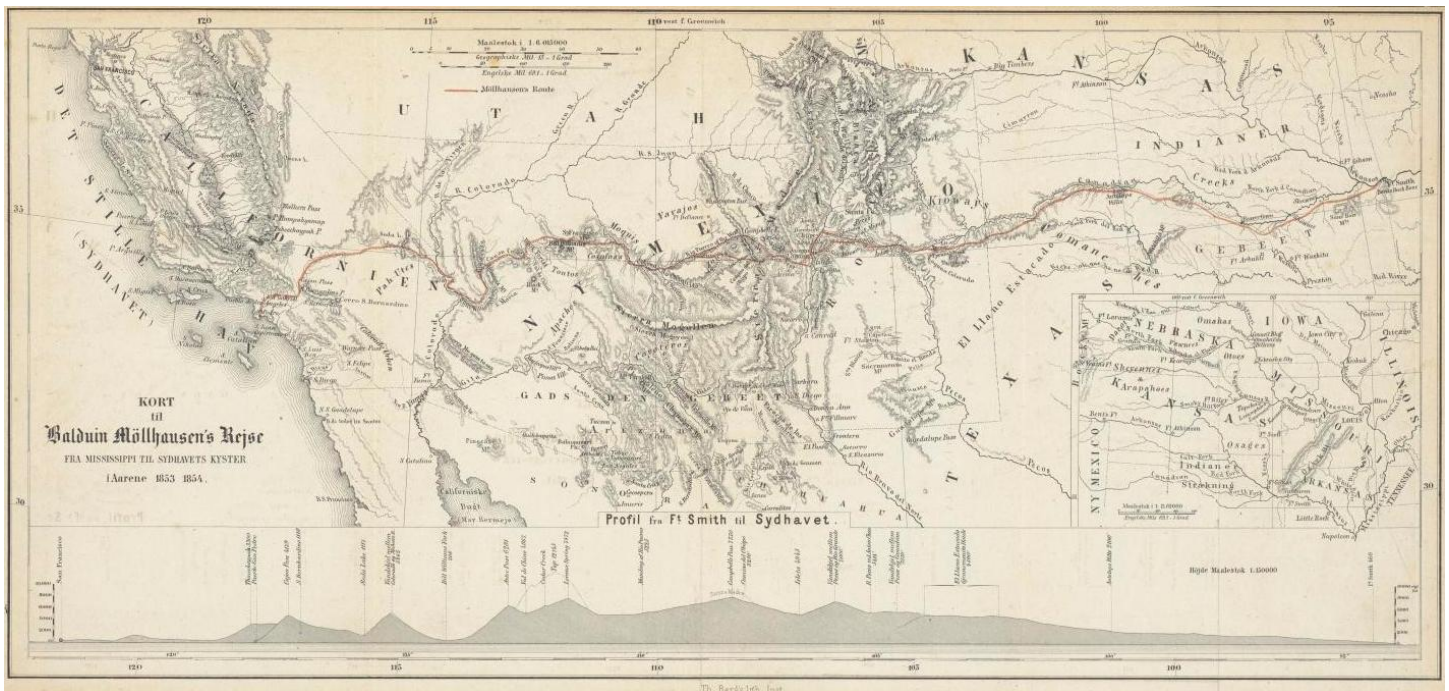
March 21 – Camp 152. Passed by Mission San Gabriel and camped overlooking the city of Los Angeles.<sup>65</sup>

## After the Whipple Expedition

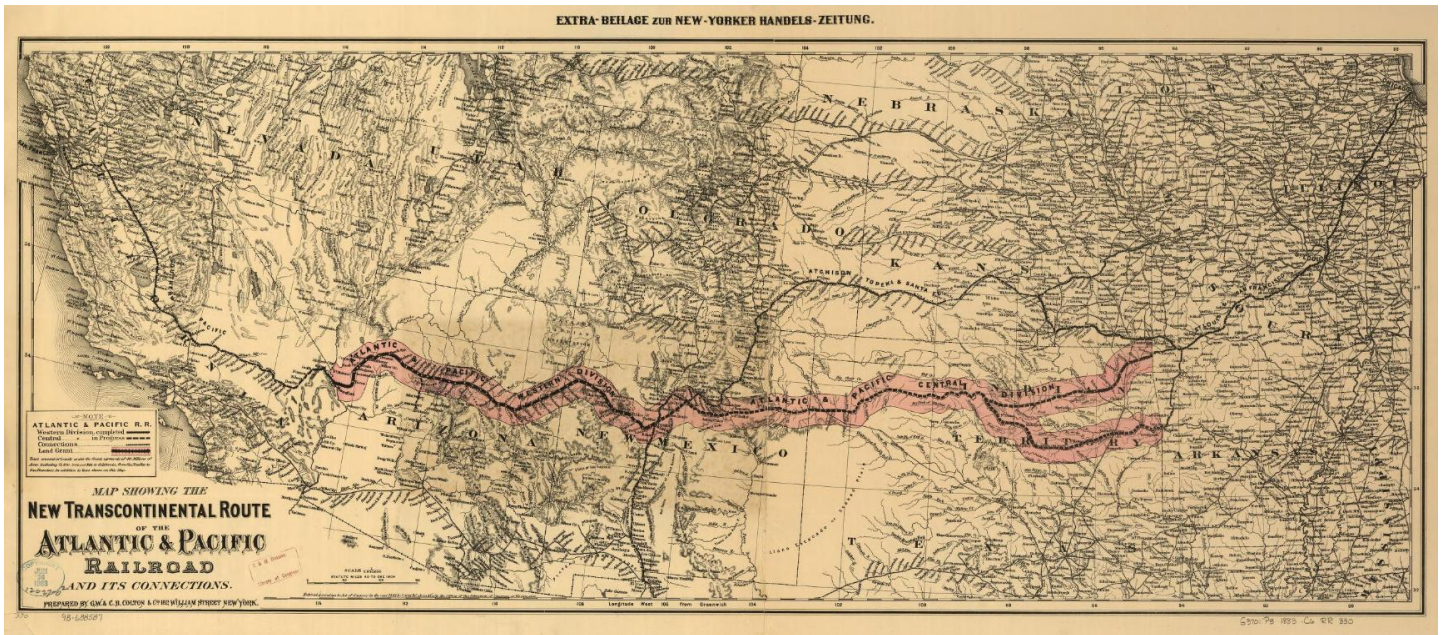
“From August 1857 to January 1858, an expedition to establish a wagon road from Fort Defiance to California, followed Whipple’s route. It was headed by a civilian (and ex-Navy Officer) named Edward Fitzgerald Beale, and although Beale’s survey was not as important as Whipple’s, it became equally famous due to the fact that Beale’s party employed camels which the U.S. Army imported to Texas for experimentation in the Southwest. References to the 35<sup>th</sup> Parallel Route as the “Beale Camel Trail” commemorate Beale’s passage and his work clearing a wagon road, although Beale’s party neither pioneered the trail nor was the first to survey it.”<sup>66</sup>

The trail was later used by others, “including wagon freighters, emigrants, and stagecoaches. Between 1800 [sic, 1857] and 1884, the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad constructed its Western Division along this route, later becoming the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway.”<sup>54</sup>

“Occasional wagons continued to use the route into the very early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and then automobiles began to use it. It evolved into U.S. 66, along basically the same route. Part of the old wagon road remains intact in the Petrified Forest, paralleling the modern highway and the railroad.”<sup>54</sup>



**Fig. 13.** Möllhausen’s map of the route of Whipple’s 35<sup>th</sup>-parallel Expedition, from *The Portal to Texas History*, <http://texashistory.unt.edu> .



**Fig. 14.** G.W. and C.B. Colton & Co., Atlantic & Pacific Pacific Railroad Company, and Chicago & Pacific Railroad. *Map Showing the New Transcontinental Route of the Atlantic & Pacific Railroad and Its Connections*, New York: Extra-Beilage zur New-Yorker Handels-Zeitung (Extra supplement to the New York Commercial Newspaper), 1883, 35x80 cm original, <https://www.loc.gov/item/98688587/>.

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- <sup>3</sup> Gwinn Harris Heap, *Central Route to the Pacific*, LeRoy R. and Ann W. Hafen, eds., Glendale: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1957, 89-96.
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- <sup>13</sup> “John C. Tidball” in Wikipedia, at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_C.\\_Tidball](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_C._Tidball).
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, and Eicher, 2001, pp. 737 and 715.
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- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*
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<sup>34</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 70. Grant Foreman's footnote: "Rock Mary is a peculiar formation rising about sixty feet out of the level plain. By Lieutenant Simpson and other young officers it was named in 1849 for Mary Conway, a popular seventeen-year-old girl of Arkansas, a member of the large party of emigrants escorted by Captain Marcy's company as far as Santa Fe (Foreman, *Marcy and the Gold Seekers*, 214.) Camp 29 was made near Weatherford in Custer County at the west edge of the

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“Natural Mounds”; see also Grant Foreman, *Marcy & the Gold Seekers: The Journal of Capt R. B. Marcy with an Account of the Gold Rush Over the Southern Route*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1939) 1968.

<sup>35</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 77.

<sup>36</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 85.

<sup>37</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 92.

<sup>38</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 99-100.

<sup>39</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 102-103.

<sup>40</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 111.

<sup>41</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 111.

<sup>42</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 131-134.

<sup>43</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 140-142.

<sup>44</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 151.

<sup>45</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 153-154.

<sup>46</sup> See Tom Jonas’s “Southwest Explorations” website at <https://www.southwestexplorations.com/petrified-forest> .

<sup>47</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 154.

<sup>48</sup> See pages 12-13 of Tom Jonas, “On the Trail – Then and Now: Re-Photography as a Tool to Understand the Southern Trail,” *Desert Tracks*, February 2022, 12-21, available at <http://southern-trails.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/February-2022.pdf>; also see Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 155-156.

<sup>49</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 160-161.

<sup>50</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 162.

<sup>51</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 163-164.

<sup>52</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 165-166.

<sup>53</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 166.

<sup>54</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 175.

<sup>55</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 177.

<sup>56</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 215.

<sup>57</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 216.

<sup>58</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 225-226.

<sup>59</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 232.

<sup>60</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 241.

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<sup>61</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 248-264.

<sup>62</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 267-269.

<sup>63</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 272-273.

<sup>64</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 275.

<sup>65</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pathfinder*, 276.

<sup>66</sup> National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form of September 17, 1976, completed by Gordon Chappell (Regional Historian, National Park Service, Western Regional Office, San Francisco). References used for the National Register application included:

- Rufus K. Wyllys, *Arizona: The History of a Frontier State*, Phoenix: Hobson & Herr, 1950, 115-116.
- Thomas E. Farish, *History of Arizona*, Vol. 1, Phoenix: 1915, 263-268.
- Harlan D. Fowler, *Camels to California*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1950.
- H. Craig Miner, *The St. Louis-San Francisco Transcontinental Railroad: The 35<sup>th</sup> Parallel Project, 1853-1890*, Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1972.
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**[next article begins on next page]**

# The Southern Overland/Butterfield Trail in Indian Territory/Oklahoma

by Susan Drago

By 1858, when the first Butterfield Overland Mail stages reached Fort Smith, in the present state of Arkansas, the military installation already had a forty-one-year history. The original fort was established in 1817 on the promontory of Belle Point, at the confluence of the Arkansas and Poteau Rivers. Waterways were then the highways of America, and the fort's position on the Arkansas made it an essential gateway to the frontier.



**Figure 1.** The Southern Overland/Butterfield Trail through Indian Territory (Oklahoma). Eleven of Butterfield's Overland Mail Company, 1858-1861, stage stations were in Choctaw Nation. Colbert's was in Chickasaw Nation. The trail entered Oklahoma at Fort Smith, Arkansas, and crossed into Texas on Colbert's Red River Ferry. The Butterfield Trail is now our eleventh National Historic Trail. Map by G. Ahnert.

Fort Smith was the westernmost U.S. military installation at the time, placed strategically to quell ongoing violence between the Osages and the Cherokees as pressure grew from Cherokee migration into Osage territory. From its inception, Fort Smith played a prominent role in the western expansion of the U.S., militarily and through the creation of infrastructure, including the building of roads eventually used for migration, military purposes, and delivery of the Overland Mail.<sup>1</sup>



**Figure 2.** A 1933 hand-drawn map by historian Muriel H. Wright of the Butterfield Trail through Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations. *Courtesy Oklahoma Historical Society.*

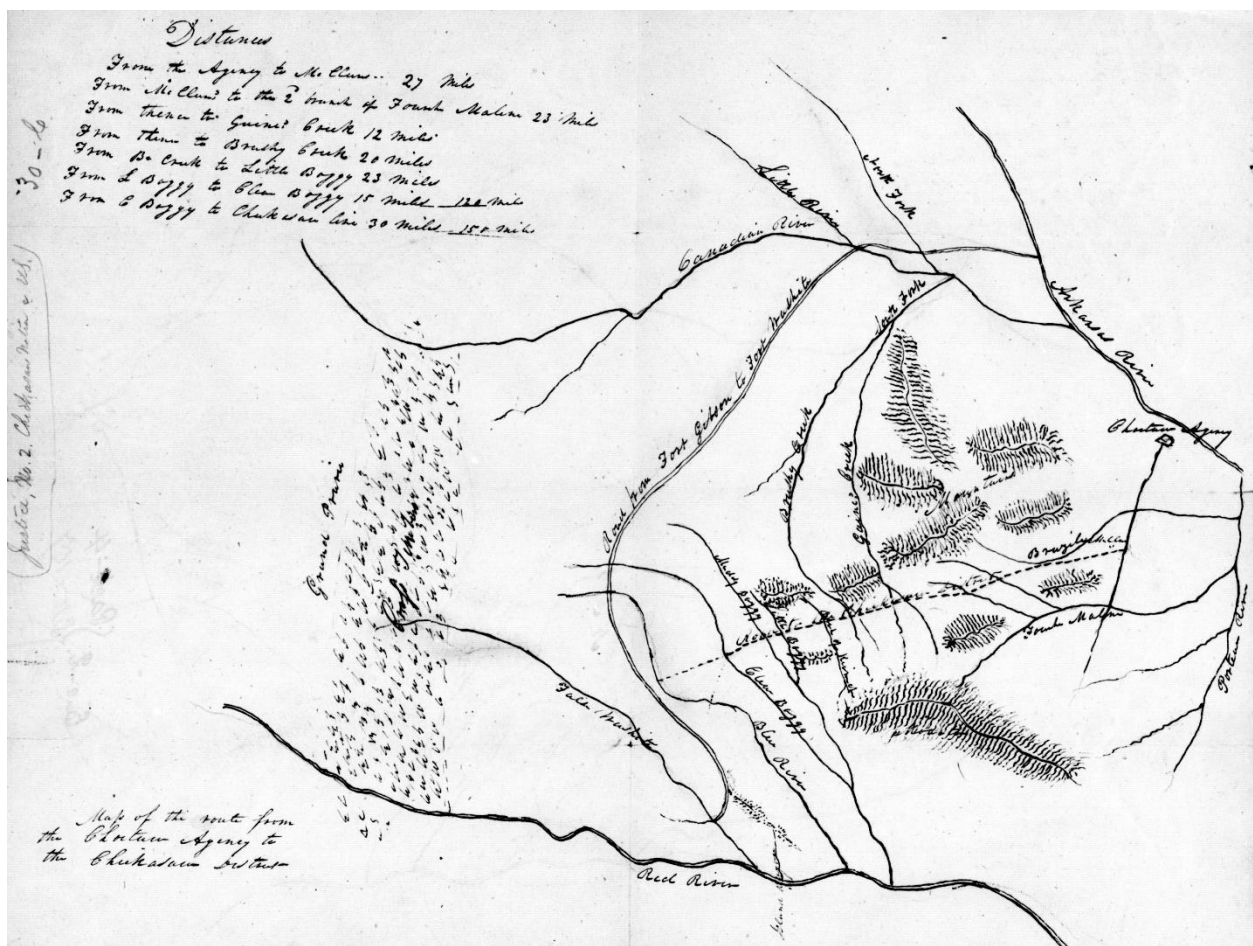
Military survey and building crews operated out of Fort Smith when, between 1825 and 1827, Congress authorized construction of military roads on the Arkansas frontier. Intended to improve defenses and communication and to facilitate the anticipated relocation of Native American tribes from the southeast, two of these military corridors extended west from Fort Smith. One went to Cantonment Gibson, established in 1824 on the Grand River, and another to Cantonment Towson, established in 1824 near the confluence of the Kiamichi and Red Rivers.<sup>2</sup>

In the summer of 1827, road construction began between Cantonment Gibson and Fort Smith as well as east from Fort Smith to Little Rock, Arkansas. Civilian contractors built the road from Fort Smith to Little Rock, but fifty-five soldiers from Gibson used basic hand tools on the road between Gibson and Fort Smith, creating a roadbed sixteen feet wide, reducing stumps in the roadway to less than a foot, and building causeways over wetlands.<sup>3</sup> In March of 1827 Congress authorized a road between Fort Smith and Cantonment Towson on the Red River, but it took nearly six months to survey the route and in November of that year Major Alexander Cummings, the Towson commander, complained that he lacked the manpower to complete the project. Work stopped in October 1828 after ongoing delays.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile in Mississippi, pressure grew for the Choctaws to vacate. In 1830, President Andrew Jackson gained Congressional approval for the Indian Removal Act and Choctaw leaders signed the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, ceding what remained of their eastern territory and agreeing to move west. Soon, in preparation for the impending removal, western Choctaw agent Francis W. Armstrong, appointed in 1831, renewed the attempt to complete a passable road between Fort Smith and the re-designated Fort Towson. Armstrong intended to move the Choctaws up river on boats to the Choctaw Agency on the south bank of the Arkansas River, then send them over land toward Towson, where supplies would be distributed. With the poor condition of the old road, Captain John Stuart, an infantry officer then stationed at the re-designated Fort Gibson, was assigned to build a new one and, with twenty enlisted men, two officers and a medical doctor, he commenced the project on March 28, 1832 in spite of his concerns that both transport and food supplies were insufficient. Work began with cutting down the west bank of the Poteau River for a boat landing. Clearing a path through thirteen miles of dense canebrake and undergrowth required more than two weeks, and it was April 15 when Stuart finally reached the Choctaw Agency. Heavy rain, rocky, steep terrain, a dwindling food supply and fear of Indian raids plagued his efforts as he continued south, but Stuart kept moving over the mountains and across countless streams. Having no blasting powder, his crew used sledgehammers, pry bars, blocks and tackles to remove large rocks. On June 16 his team completed the road to Horse Prairie on the Kiamichi River, about twenty miles west of Towson.<sup>5</sup>

Captain Stuart was a pivotal figure in another aspect of the removal. As the Choctaws were re-settling in the Indian Territory in 1834, the ongoing problem of illegal alcohol sales to the Indians prompted the Army to establish Fort Coffee under Stuart's command, just nine miles west of Fort Smith at Swallow Rock, a bluff on the south bank of the Arkansas River. With a wide view up and down the river, the fort's directive was to stop boats carrying liquor into Indian Territory. The Army maintained Fort Coffee as a military establishment for only four years, but during the removal it also served as a receiving point for Indians arriving from the east. By the end of 1837, more than 3,500 Chickasaws waited there for a road to be opened to the western lands allocated for them by the Choctaw Nation. The opening of that road began on December 21, 1837, when

scouts set out to mark it. Following the Fort Towson Road for about twenty-five miles, they turned west and traveled another twenty-five miles to the Fourche Maline River, then southwest for another sixty-nine miles to Gaines, Brushy, and Little Boggy Creeks and, finally, Clear Boggy Creek. “Boggy” is a translation of “*Vazzures*,” the French name given the stream by early traders, from the word “*vaseux*,” meaning silty or muddy. There, they found good water, excellent pasture for livestock, and enough cane to subsist horses all winter. Its location was central enough to serve as a depot for provisions for the Chickasaws. William Armstrong, who succeeded his brother Francis as Choctaw agent after the elder Armstrong’s death in 1835, sent out men to open the road shortly after. On February 18, 1838, five hundred Chickasaws with twenty-eight wagons and teams left Fort Coffee to move to the depot on the Boggy, which became known as “Boggy Depot.”<sup>6</sup> The road would become known as the Fort Smith-Boggy Depot Road and would later carry the stage wagons of the Butterfield Overland Mail.<sup>7</sup>



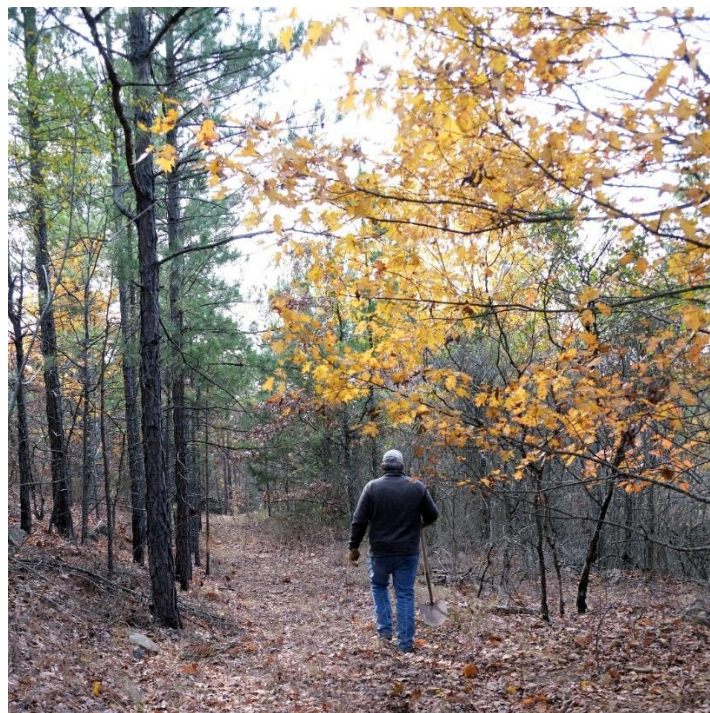
**Figure 3.** Road from Fort Coffee to Boggy Depot-1837. Ref: Kingsbury Map M234-143-0389.

Oklahoma historian Muriel H. Wright wrote that if a straight edge were placed on a map of southeastern Oklahoma between Fort Smith and Boggy Depot, the route of the trail would deviate little from that line. With good roadbeds along the valleys, shallow stream crossings and easy passes through the San Bois and Winding Stair Mountains, she extolled it as the best route from Fort Smith across the Choctaw and Chickasaw lands to the Red River, serving as a natural pathway long before the first permanent settlements.<sup>8</sup>

Near present-day Atoka, the Fort Smith-Boggy Depot Road converged with the Texas Road, originally a trail leading from St. Louis to trading posts among the Osage people in southwest Missouri and northeastern Oklahoma.<sup>9</sup> First known as the Osage Trace, by the 1820s it was well traveled, continuing into Texas and providing the avenue for thousands of home seekers traveling to Texas before the coming of the railroad in 1871-1872.<sup>10</sup>



**Figure 4.** Trace of the Southern Overland/Butterfield Trail near Lake Atoka. *Photo S. Drago.*



**Figure 5.** Trace of the Southern Overland/Butterfield Trail Between Riddle's and Pusley's stage stations. *Photo S. Drago.*

With the discovery of gold in California in 1848, Fort Smith found yet another opportunity for distinction. Local newspaperman John F. Wheeler, who was the printer for the first book printed in Indian Territory in 1835<sup>11</sup> and rode in the first Butterfield stage with John Butterfield and *New York Herald* correspondent Waterman Ormsby in 1858, saw potential in Fort Smith as a launching point for the overland journey to the California gold fields. He led an effort to petition the Arkansas legislature and, ultimately, Congress to survey a road up the Arkansas and Canadian River valleys to Santa Fe, New Mexico. Wheeler contended this would be the most efficient route, with terrain over which wagons would roll relatively free of mountains and good range for livestock most of the year.<sup>12</sup> Wheeler's work paid off, and the Army authorized a military escort to Santa Fe for California-bound emigrants gathering at Fort Smith in the spring of 1849. Troops would protect the gold seekers from Indian attack, smooth the roads on steep grades, and mark fords along the route, which followed the south bank of the Canadian River and the watershed between the Canadian and the Washita Rivers. A detail led by Lieutenant Frederick T. Dent of the Fifth Infantry went ahead to reconnoiter the route, crossing the Poteau on March 27, 1849 to open the California Road.



**Figure 6.** Looking across the Poteau River from Fort Smith at the 1858 crossing location. *Photo S. Drago.*

U.S. Army Captain Randolph B. Marcy arrived at the end of March to command the military escort. On April 4 he struck out along the road, and, during that month, four hundred wagons moved through Fort Smith, with more gold seekers departing through the spring and summer. Marcy reached Santa Fe on June 30 and wrote that caravans using the more northern Santa Fe Trail lagged about two weeks behind his own company, validating the pronouncements of folks back in Fort Smith about the efficiency of the Southern Route. The Gold Rush lasted about ten years, and thousands of emigrants passed through Fort Smith annually until 1861 and the outbreak of the Civil War. On his return, Marcy escorted a wagon train bound for El Paso, Texas. Sixty miles north of El Paso at Doña Ana, New Mexico, he turned east toward Fort Smith and found the return route shorter than his westbound path along the Canadian. This became known as the Doña Ana Road and gold seekers used it heavily. Between Boggy Depot and Fort Smith, this route primarily followed the road established for the Chickasaw immigration from 1837 to 1839, later used by the Overland Mail. Thus, the road through Indian Territory that would soon be used by Butterfield's stages became a well-established thoroughfare as a result of the removals, the Gold Rush, and the military's need to improve supply and communication routes to its posts south and west of Fort Smith.<sup>13</sup>

In 1858 Fort Smith housed an active military post with an adjacent civilian community of 2,500, incorporated as the town of Fort Smith in 1842. In the year of heavy activity preceding the start of the Overland Mail, Fort Smith and neighboring Van Buren newspapers reported on Butterfield's men and equipment passing through. In April 1858 the Van Buren *Arkansas Intelligencer* announced that an Overland Mail exploring party including John Butterfield, Jr. had traveled the route from San Francisco to Van Buren in fifty-two days' time, calling the path "practicable and free from Indians," having seen none but the friendly sort.<sup>14</sup>

That same month, the news that Fort Smith would be the connecting point for the mails from Memphis and St. Louis was welcomed with great enthusiasm: "The forming of the junction on our frontier will be of great advantage to Western Arkansas. It will serve to draw attention to the many advantages possessed by us, and will undoubtedly, draw a large emigration to settle upon our cheap and fertile lands."<sup>15</sup> In early August 1858 a large number of Butterfield's horses, mules and stages passed through Fort Smith on the way to take their places along the route.<sup>16</sup> During the life of the Butterfield, the Overland Mail stages made twice-weekly stops in Fort Smith, at 3:30 a.m. each Friday and Monday, then taking forty-five hours to travel the 205 miles to Sherman, Texas, if westbound, or seventeen and one-half hours to cover the sixty-five-mile distance to the next major eastbound stop at Fayetteville, Arkansas.

Tandy Walker, a mixed-blood Choctaw born in Mississippi, was serving as Governor under a new constitution adopted by the Choctaws at Skullyville in 1857. Like other influential Choctaws and Chickasaws, Walker viewed the Butterfield company favorably.<sup>17</sup> He was among the citizens who maintained relay stations at their homes and obtained government permits to build bridges and toll gates, charging usage fees to non-citizens.<sup>18</sup> The Choctaw government did not appropriate money for road improvements, but required all male citizens between the ages of eighteen and fifty to work the roads for six days a year.<sup>19</sup>



**Figure 7.** Choctaw Tandy Walker—Governor of the Choctaw Nation. *Courtesy Oklahoma Historical Society.* His gravestone and burial site in the Skullyville Cemetery. *Photo S. Dragoo.*

The travelers leaving Indian Territory had to use Colbert's Ferry to cross into Texas. Benjamin Franklin Colbert, the son of Chickasaw parents, owned the ferry. Correspondent Waterman L. Ormsby was on the first Butterfield stage heading west. In one of his reports to the *New York Herald* he wrote: "His boat is a simple sort of raft, pushed across the shallow stream by the aid of poles in the hands of sturdy [African] slaves. . ." Ormsby also states: "and saw quite a large number of his slaves busily engaged in lowering the present steep grade up the banks"<sup>20</sup>

In 1858 compared with the region the Overland Mail route traversed farther south and west, the roads in Indian Territory were well established by 1857, when John Butterfield began his efforts to prepare the stagecoach route. Although the Overland Mail ceased operation on the Southern Route in early 1861, the roads in Indian Territory continued to get heavy use until the coming of the railroad, when population centers shifted away from the Fort Smith-to-Boggy Depot Road. Today, traces of the old trail traverse a very rural, sparsely populated region of Oklahoma, making the days of stagecoach travel seem not so very long ago.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Edwin C. Bearss and Arrell M. Gibson, *Fort Smith: Little Gibraltar on the Arkansas*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979, 5-13.
- <sup>2</sup> Bearss and Gibson, *Fort Smith*, 105.
- <sup>3</sup> William P. Corbett, "Rifles and Ruts: Army Road Builders in Indian Territory," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 60(3):294-309, Fall 1982.
- <sup>4</sup> Patrick B. McGuigan, "Bulwark of the American Frontier: A History of Fort Towson," in Odie B. Faulk, Kenny A. Franks, and Paul F. Lambert, *Early Military Forts and Posts in Oklahoma*, Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1978, 10-11.
- <sup>5</sup> Carolyn Thomas Foreman, "Report of Captain John Stuart on the Construction of the Road from Fort Smith to Horse Prairie on Red River," *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 5(3):333-347, September 1927.
- <sup>6</sup> Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1932, 220-221.
- <sup>7</sup> Muriel H. Wright, "Old Boggy Depot," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 5(1):4, March 1927.
- <sup>8</sup> Muriel H. Wright, "Historic Places on the Old Stage Line from Fort Smith to Red River," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 11(2):798, June 1933.
- <sup>9</sup> Wright, "Historic Places," 801.
- <sup>10</sup> Grant Foreman, *Down the Texas Road: Historic Places Along Highway 69 Through Oklahoma*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1936, 6-9.
- <sup>11</sup> Wright, "The Butterfield Overland Mail," 69.
- <sup>12</sup> Bearss and Gibson, *Fort Smith*, 198.
- <sup>13</sup> Grant Foreman, *Marcy and the Gold Seekers: The Journal of Captain R. B. Marcy with an Account of the Gold Rush over the Southern Route*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1939.
- <sup>14</sup> "Overland Mail Exploring Party," *Arkansas Intelligencer*, Van Buren, Ark., April 23, 1858, 2.
- <sup>15</sup> "California Overland Mail," *Arkansas Intelligencer*, Van Buren, Ark., April 16, 1858, 2.
- <sup>16</sup> "The Overland Mail," *Arkansas Intelligencer*, Van Buren, Ark., August 13, 1858, 2.
- <sup>17</sup> Waterman L. Ormsby, *The Butterfield Overland Mail*, San Marino: Huntington Library, 1942, 27.
- <sup>18</sup> Roscoe P. and Margaret B. Conkling, *The Butterfield Overland Mail, 1857-1869*, Glendale: Arthur H. Clark, 1947, 235.
- <sup>19</sup> Angie Debo, *The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1934, 114-116.
- <sup>20</sup> Ormsby, 35.