

# Papers of the Seminole Negro Indian Scouts



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Brief Description	Details of search for a band of Mescalero Apaches that had a skirmish with Lt. Bullis and some Seminole Negro Indian Scouts in Oct. 1877
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<<SOURCE TEXT BEGIN>>

Fork Clark, Texas  
December 18, 1877  
To the Acting Assistant Adjutant General  
District of the (An?)  
Fort Clark, Texas  
Sir -

In obedience to written and verbal instructions, dated and received from the district Commander on the 4th day of November,[indecipherable], I started from the camp of the 8th Cavalry Battalion on the Pinto, near Fort Clark, Texas, at 10 o'clock a.m. on the 10th of November, with Companies A. and K. 8th Calvary, supplied with rations for thirty days, and forage to last the crossing of the Pecos, and proceeding via the route indicated, arrived at Pecan Springs, near headwaters of Devil's river, on the Clark and Stockton road on the 13th. Lieut. Beck, with Company C, 10th Calvary; Lieut. Bullis, with his Seminole negro scouts; Lieut. Clay, with a detachment of the 10th Infantry, reported to me and joined my command at this point.

On the 14th, after distributing the rations and forage, the march was continued, and crossing the Pecos River at Col Shafter's [indecipherable]. (33.jpg) Paint Rock Springs on the 17th, Bullis and Clay having done considerable hard work with their men between Pecan Springs and this point to get the wagons over. On the 18th the animals were rested, cargoes for packed mules assorted, sick men, unserviceable horses, and six days rations for the Entire command were turn over to Lieut. Clay, who was, with his detachment, to remain at this point. On the 19th the wagons were started back to Clark for supplies, and I moved toward the Rio Grande with a command, made up as follows: Company A, 8<sup>th</sup> Calvary, Capt. Wells, commanding, Lieut. Phelps and forty-seven enlisted men; fifty-two horses and twelve pack mules. Company K., 8<sup>th</sup> Calvary, Lieut. Geddes, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry, commanding, Lieut. Guest and thirty-seven enlisted men; forty-six horses and thirteen pack mules. Company C, 10<sup>th</sup> Calvary, Lieut. Beck commanding, forty-eight enlisted men; forty-nine horses and eleven pack mules; and Lieut. Bullis with thirty-seven Seminole negro scouts, and one Lipan squaw, and one Mexican (guides), and thirty-three horses and eleven pack mules – in all, eight officers, including assistant Surgeon Comegys, United States Army, one (34.jpg) hundred and sixty two enlisted men and (2) two guides with (15) fifteen days rations ,to find, if possible, the Indians that had attacked Bullis on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month.

These Indians had stolen some animals belonging to a man, by the name of Briscoe, in San Felipe, crossed into Mexico, and re-crossed to Texas, where, on the north bank of the Rio Grande, they had apparently established their winter quarters in an almost inaccessible net-work of bluffs, peaks, cliffs,



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boulders and cañons, about (100) hundred miles distant from San Carlos and a little East of North from that point. From the last best information obtainable, and from the fact of Captain Lebo's command having exhausted the water, but a short time previously on the trail to the north of the Rio Grande, I decided to cross the river and march across that point of Mexican territory, extending North, in what is known as the "Big Bend", and then re-cross to our outside and accordingly did so.

On the 23rd., having marched (78) seventy-eight miles, making two camps without fire or water, crossed the Rio Grande twice, passed over some good country and some indescribably rough and dangerous, I (35.jpg) reached the abandoned camp, which evidently had been a large one. On this day, my command worked hard, but could only make a distance of (6 1/2) six and one half miles, having to use lariat-ropes to prevent pack mules from falling off the narrow trail and recover horses and mules, that had fallen and roll down among the boulders – Eleven (11) in all rolled, slid and tumbled from the Extremely difficult and hazardous path, and were all, more or less injured, but were all recovered. In some instances, the lash-ropes on the packs snapped in pieces and the cargo of rations scattered down over the cliffs, some rations were damaged in crossing the river and nearly all the medicines were destroyed. Here we found innumerable stock-signs and Evidences of bands from different tribes of Indians in one general Encampment. From this point three definite and distinct trails departed, each showing an Equal number of stock-sign, besides much scattering sign. On account of a shod horse and a mule sign, of later date than any other sign being discovered on the center trail, I followed it, expecting the other trails might work into it in a few days, which they did not." (36.jpg)

In a march of (5) five miles, the Lebo's trail was struck and, my animals having been without water since 11 o'clock A.M. of the previous day, I changed direction, following his trail south to the Rio Grande, leaving the Indian trail running in a westerly direction. After following up the river (16) sixteen miles, I left it and marched up on Easy and wide cañon, almost due West, cutting the Indian trail about (7) seven miles from the river and followed it South, then SouthEast and East, crossing the Rio Grande at dark, at a point about (30) thirty miles Northwest from the main peak of Sierra Carmel.

The Indians has Evidently zig-zagged around her for many days, to hide their trail, but, by keeping well ahead with the guide and (5) five Seminole-trailers, the march of the column was not delayed and we made almost direct from point to point, as signaled or indicated by one or more of my party, - although the trail could not be considered a very "hot" one, I felt perfectly justified in following it into this uninhabited Mexican region, for two reasons: one was, the squaw assured me it was trail of Alsate's band, who is a Mescalero-Apache, a renegade from his tribe in New Mexico (37.jpg), and for two years a refugee from Mexican justice, and the other, that the animals stolen from San Felipe, had been trailed to his camp.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> the trail led in the direction of Mount Carmel, but shortly after midday turned in the direction of San Carlos, which, the squaw said, was two days distant and no water Enroute. She also assured me that she knew of a "truaja", about two hours march to the East, containing plenty of water for all the animals for many days. We followed the squaw till dark at a rapid pace, without a halt and at dark leaving Capt. Wells, who had come up with me, to bivouac the command which was some distance back, with two orderlies and four scouts, I followed her for two hours, found out she was deceiving me, but found no water. On rejoining the command the water and food was taken away from her, her guard was doubled and she was informed through the interpreter that, if her deceptions should result in any material suffering by the command, she would be shot to death."

The march was continued at daylight, the next morning, dismounted and in (9) nine miles of a seeping spring was found in Mount Carmel, nearly (38.jpg) in a direction opposite to that taken by the squaw the night previous.

Lieut. Bullis and his men made a reservoir and had sufficient water for the men, when the command arrived and afterword a detail from each Calvary Company, under the supervision and personal direction of the Lieut. Geddes, made a large reservoir, tapping and draining Every ~~Every~~ springlet and seep into it and, at 3.30 o'clock P.M. we commenced watering the animals, which was a tedious performance, lasting until 11.45 o'clock P.M. Each animal having received ten gallons of water, measured out in camp-kettles. This amount was far from Enough to quench thirst, but was sufficient to



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allay suffering and cause the animals to commence grazing. At daylight on the 28th, watering was recommenced, Each Company moving out rapidly on the march, as soon as through watering. The Indians had not left this point more than three or four days in advance of our arrival. We found here pieces of leather, cut from the pack saddle lost by Bullis' men, the Evening they were attacked, which gave me assurance that we were again on the trail of the same band.

This morning was bitter cold - water in canteens frozen solid, men only summer allowance (39.jpg) of clothing and Company "C" "10th Cav., were without great coats. For fear of losing the game, which I felt sure of, I pushed ahead with five spies and trailers and two orderlies. Bullis followed thirty minutes later and the other Companies were ordered to follow in rapid succession after watering. One trailer was left back with Each Company on account of the falling snow, which for some time gave us considerable bother, but at the same time Ensured our success.

When we first struck the trail, it was twenty-three days old, and when we left it on the 26th, running in the direction of San Carlos, it was at least sixteen days old and indicated about one hundred animals, but the squaw, in and her attempt to mislead and deceive us, had, much to her horror and disgust, brought us within Easy striking distance. At 12 M., stopping to graze and wait for a sight of the head of the column, I dispatched two spies to the summit of a little gap in the foot-hills, behind which we halted. In a short time they brought me a report of seeing three horses in the little valley beyond but the fog prevented any other discovery. As soon as Bullis arrived, I sent him with five men, on foot, to reconnoitre. (40.jpg) After a delay of two hours we moved forward – the Indians having left the day previous – and the horses had strayed back from their next camp, which to me was convincing Evidence that the Indians were only one camp in advance of us at this hour. After camping in a secure and hidden nook, about two miles distant from the spot, where the Indians had been camped, two spies were sent out, to find if their trail led through a certain gap in the mountains and in the direction of a certain known water, but darkness coming on, a decision could not be reached. At 8 o'clock P.M., five spies were sent off on the best horses, to the nearest known water, around the south Eastern base of Carmel, with instructions to bring me information before daylight, in case they found Indians.

At 3.45 A.M. on the 29th instant, I sent the Mexican guide up on the highest peak in our vicinity, to look for the morning Indian camp-fires; he returned shortly after daylight, having seen a camp of five fires. The spies sent out the Evening before, not having returned, I started up the ragged and difficult mountain with one hundred (100) men on foot – leaving a guard of sixty with our animals, it being scarcely possible and Entirely impracticable to take them along. It required two hours (41.jpg) hard scrambling, to get up the hill, we were suddenly astonished by seeing two of the spies riding into our camp, down below at full speed, shouting and firing their pistols. Geddes, being in the rear with his Company, was ordered back down the hill with all possible haste – and Bullis, being in the advance was called back to interpret, as the shouting was done in the Mexican language, but not hearing distinctly and misinterpreting my order, Bullis followed after Geddes.

In about twenty-five minutes, Geddes was seen to reach the camp and immediately to saddle up and start out at a rapid gait – knowing that he was fully able to protect our stock and whip anything, that might be brought against him in that open country and, knowing that longer delay would be fatal to success, if we had not already delayed too long, I moved forward across the mountain top, on double time, knowing that Bullis would be too much Exhausted, to again climb the hill at once. On arriving at the break, in the head of the cañon, in which the guide had located the Indian camp, it was soon discovered that the Indians had taken fright and were moving with their stock and camp paraphernalia (42.jpg) up into the mountains, following a trail on the opposite wall of the cañon, from where we were. The disposition of the command was ordered and commenced in less than five minutes. The Indians were not aware of our presence in their immediate vicinity and it was Evident, they had moved out of their camp as a precautionary measure, having had somewhat to do, in connection with the hurried arrival of the two scouts in my camp, a short time before and whose arrival had, I now felt, delayed me just long Enough to prevent a complete surround and capture of the Entire band. As the little affair is so minutely described in the itinerary Rept and made up by 2nd Lieut. F.E. Phelps, 8th Cav., who was specially detailed for that duty, I do not consider it necessary here to re-describe it.



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The delay caused by the scouts coming into camp, was Entirely accidental and could not, under the circumstances, have been foreseen or prevented, as on the Evening previous, they carried out their instructions, went to the water, passing the mouth of the cañon, where the Indians were Encamped, who, seeing their trail Early next morning, hid in ambush and suddenly attacked them - two scouts (43.jpg) Escaped and rode ten miles into camp, as already described, and three took shelter in a deep and rocky ravine and for some hours defended themselves against heavy odds, with the loss of one horse. I cannot speak too highly of the Energy and perseverance, displayed in this morning's work, by both Officers and men, and although the affair is insignificant, in comparison, yet withal, it could not have been accomplished without hard, tedious and distressing work.

The altitude of Sierra Carmel is great, in comparison to the country surrounding this post, and in addition to the distress, occasioned by vigorous and sudden Exertion in the rarefied atmosphere to unaccustomed lungs, was added the pain, caused by quick respiration of intensely cold air. On my return-march, the command rested three days at Paint Rock Springs, awaiting supplies.

I desire the attention of the District Commander to be invited to the fact of the good condition of the animals of my command – they were twenty-three days without grain and, in Eighteen days of that period, they marched three hundred and thirty five miles and made Eight camps, without water and came in with very few, if any, sore backs. I attribute their (44.jpg) remarkable good condition to the fact of their having been herded out Every night (Except when on one occasion grass was gathered for them from the mountain-side) and to the unceasing care, the Company Commanders caused to be bestowed upon them.

There was a constant rain during the last Eight days of the march and although the clothing of the men and officers was all torn and tattered and Entirely insufficient, to protect against the inclemency of the weather, yet Everyone appeared to be in a good and happy mood and withal preferred active field service to garrison duty. Enclosed please find Itinerary and map of route. Total distance marched (~~610~~) six hundred and ten miles.

I am, Sir,  
Very respectfully,  
Your obedient servant  
(Sgd.) S. B. M. Young  
Capt 8th Cav.  
and Brevet Col. U.S.A.

Note – It is supposed the Indians disposed of their stolen stock in San Carlos – the march was carefully timed and the distance may be under dash, but not over Estimated.

(Sgd) S.B.M. Young (45.jpg)

<<SOURCE TEXT END>>



## National Archives Microfilm Publications Reference

Collection	"Special Files" of Headquarters, Division of the Missouri, Relating to Military Operations and Administration, 1863-1885
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# Papers of the Seminole Negro Indian Scouts

Fort Clark, Texas  
December 18, 1877  
To the Acting Assistant Adjutant General,  
District of the Arsenals,  
Fort Clark, Texas,  
Sir—  
In obedience to written and verbal instructions, dated and received from the district Commander on the 4th day of November, ult., I started from the camp of the 8th Cavalry Battalion on the Pintos, near Fort Clark, Texas, at 10 o'clock a.m. on the 10th of November, with Companions A. and K. 8th Cavalry, supplied with rations for thirty days, and forage to last to the crossing of the Pecos, and proceeding via the route indicated, arrived at Pecon Springs, near the headwaters of Devil's river, on the Clark and Stockton road on the 13th. Sicut Brock, with Company C, 10th Cavalry, Sicut Bullis, with his Seminole negro scouts, and Sicut Clay, with a detachment of the 10th Infantry, reported to me and joined my command at this point.  
On the 14th, after distributing the rations and forage, the march was continued, and crossing the Pecos river at Col. Shafter's





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Painted Rock Springs on the 17<sup>th</sup>, Bullis and Clay having done considerable hard work with their men between Pican Springs and this point to get the wagons over. On the 18<sup>th</sup> the animals were rested, Cargos for pack mules assorted, sick men, unserviceable horses, and six days rations for the entire command were turned over to Lieut. Clay, who was, with his detachment, to remain at this point. On the 19<sup>th</sup> the wagons were started back to Celant for supplies, and I moved toward the Rio Grande with the command, made up as follows: Company A, 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, Capt. Mills commanding, Lieut. Phelps and forty-seven enlisted men; fifty-two horses and twelve pack mules. Company K, 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, Lieut. Geddes, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry, commanding, Lieut. Gural and thirty-seven enlisted men; forty-six horses and thirteen pack mules. Company C, 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, Lieut. Beck commanding, forty-eight enlisted men; forty-nine horses and eleven pack mules; and Lieut. Bullis with thirty-seven Seminole Negro Scouts, one Lipan Squaw and one Mexican (guide), thirty-three horses and eleven pack mules - in all, eight officers, including assistant Surgeon Comegys, United States Army, one

034.jpg









# Papers of the Seminole Negro Indian Scouts

reached the abandoned camp, which evidently had been a large one. On this day, my command worked hard, but could only make a distance of (6 1/2) six and one half miles, having to use lariat-ropes to prevent pack-mules from falling off the narrow trail and recover horses and mules, that had fallen and rolled down among the boulders — Eleven (11) in all rolled, slid and tumbled from the extremely difficult and hazardous path, and were all, more or less injured, but were all recovered.

In some instances, the lash-ropes on the packs snapped in pieces and the cargo of rations scattered down over the cliffs, some rations were damaged in crossing the river and nearly all the medicines were destroyed. Here we found innumerable stock-signs and evidences of bands from different tribes of Indians in one general encampment.

From this point three definite and distinct trails departed, each showing an equal number of stock-sign, besides much scattering sign. On account of a shod horse and a mule sign, of later date than any other sign being discovered on the center trail, I followed it, expecting the other trails might work into it in a few days, which they did not.





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In a march of (5) five miles, Lebo's trail was struck and, my animals having been without water since 11-o'clock A.M. of the previous day, I changed direction, following his trail south to the Rio Grande, leaving the Indian trail running in a westerly direction. After following up the river (16) sixteen miles, I left it and marched up an easy and wide Cañon, almost due West, cutting the Indian trail about (7) seven miles from the river and followed it South, then South East and East, crossing the Rio Grande at dark, at a point about (30) thirty miles Northwest from the main peak of Sierra Carmel.

The Indians had evidently zig-zagged around here for many days, to hide their trail, but, by keeping well ahead with the guide and (5) five Seminole trailers, the march of the column was not delayed and was made almost direct from point to point, as signalled or indicated by one or more of my party, — although the trail could not be considered a very "hot" one, I felt perfectly justified in following it into this uninhabited Mexican region, for two reasons: one was, the squaw assured me it was the trail of Alseti's band, who is a Mescalero - Apache, a renegade from his tribe in New Mexico

037.jpg





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and for two years a refugee from Mexican justice, and the other, that the animals, stolen from San Felipe, had been trailed to his camp.

On the 26<sup>th</sup>. the trail led in the direction of Mount Carmel, but shortly after midday turned in the direction of San Carlos, which, the squaw said, was two days distant and no water Enroute. She also assured me that she knew of a "truaja", about two hours march to the East, containing plenty of water for all the animals for many days. We followed the squaw till dark at a rapid pace, without a halt and at dark leaving Capt. Wells, who had come up with me, to bivouac the command which was some distance back, with two orderlies and four scouts, I followed her for two hours, found out she was deceiving me, but found no water. On rejoining the command the water and food was taken away from her, her guard was doubled and she was informed through the interpreter that, if her deception should result in any material suffering by the command, she would be shot to death.

The march was continued at daylight, the next morning, dismounted and in (9) nine miles a <sup>spring</sup> Spring was found in Mount Carmel, nearly





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in a direction opposite to that taken by the  
squad, the night previous. —  
Lieut. Bullis and his men made a reservoir  
and had sufficient water for the men, when  
the command arrived and afterward a  
detail from each Cavalry Company, under the  
supervision and personal direction of Lieut. Godde,  
made a large reservoir, tapping and draining  
every ~~every~~ springlet and seep into it and,  
at 3.30 o'clock P.M. we commenced watering  
the animals, which was a tedious performance,  
lasting until 11.45 o'clock P.M., Each animal  
having received ten gallons of water, measured  
out in camp-kettles. This amount was far  
from enough to quench thirst, but was sufficient  
to allay suffering and cause the animals to  
commence grazing. At daylight on the 28th,  
watering was re-commenced, each Company  
moving out rapidly on the march, as soon  
as through watering. The Indians had  
not left this point more than three or four  
days in advance of our arrival. We found  
here pieces of leather, cut from the pack-saddle  
lost by Bullis' men, the evening they were  
attacked, which gave me assurance that we  
were again on the trail of the same band.  
This morning was bitter cold — water in  
canteens frozen solid, men only summer allowance





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of clothing and Company C<sup>10</sup>th. Cav. were without great coats. For fear of losing the game, which I felt sure of, I pushed ahead with five spies and trailers and two orderlies. Bullis followed thirty minutes later and the other Companies were ordered to follow in rapid succession after watering. One trailer was left back with each Company on account of the falling snow, which for some time gave us considerable bother, but at the same time ensured our success.

When we first struck the trail, it was twenty-three days old, and when we left it on the 26<sup>th</sup>, running in the direction of San Carlos, it was at least sixteen days old and indicated about one hundred animals, but the squaw, in her attempt to mislead and deceive us, had, much to her horror and disgust, brought us within easy striking distance.

At 12. M., stopping to graze and wait for a sight of the head of the column, I dispatched two spies to the summit of a little gap in the foot-hills, behind which we halted.

In a short time they brought me a report of seeing three horses in the little valley beyond but the fog prevented any other discovery.

As soon as Bullis arrived, I sent him with five men, on foot, to reconnoitre.





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After a delay of two hours we moved forward — the Indians having left the day previous — and the horses had strayed back from their next camp, which to me was convincing evidence that the Indians were only one camp in advance of us at this hour. After camping in a secure and hidden nook, about two miles distant from the spot, where the Indians had been camped, two spies were sent out, to find if their trail led through a certain gap in the mountains and in the direction of a certain known water, but darkness coming on, a decision could not be reached. At 8 o'clock P.M., five spies were sent off, on the best horses, to the nearest known water, around the southeastern base of Carmel, with instructions to bring me information before daylight, in case they found Indians.

At 3.45 A.M. on the 29th. instant, I sent the Mexican guide up on the highest peak in our vicinity, to look for the morning Indian camp-fires; he returned shortly after daylight, having seen a camp of five fires. The spies, sent out the evening before, not having returned, I started up the ragged and difficult mountain with one hundred (100) men on foot — leaving a guard of sixty with our animals, it being scarcely possible and entirely impracticable to take them along. It required two hours

041.jpg





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hard scrambling, to get up the hill, we were suddenly astonished by seeing two of the spies riding into our camp, down below at full speed, shouting and firing their pistols. Geddes, being in the rear with his Company, was ordered back down the hill with all possible haste - and Bullis, being in the advance, was called back to interpret, as the shouting was done in the Mexican language, but not hearing distinctly and misinterpreting my order, Bullis followed after Geddes. In about twenty five minutes, Geddes was seen to reach the camp and immediately to saddle up and start out at a rapid gait - knowing that he was fully able to protect our stock and whip anything, that might be brought against him in that open country and, knowing that longer delay would be fatal to success, if we had not already delayed too long, I ~~to~~ moved forward across the mountain top, on double time, knowing that Bullis would be too much exhausted, to again climb the hill at once. On arriving at the breach, in the head of the cañon, in which the guide had located the Indian camp, it was soon discovered that the Indians had taken fright and were moving with their stock and camp paraphernalia





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up into the mountains, following a trail on the opposite wall of the Cañon, from where we were. The disposition of the command was ordered and commenced in less than five minutes. The Indians were not aware of our presence in their immediate vicinity, and it was evident, they had moved out of their camp as a precautionary measure, having had somewhat to do, in connection with the hurried arrival of the two scouts in my camp, a short time before and whose arrival had, I now felt, delayed me just long enough to prevent a complete surround and capture of the entire band. As the little affair is so minutely described in the itinerary kept and made up by Ind. Lieut. N. E. Phelps, 8th. Cav., who was specially detailed for that duty, I do not consider it necessary here to redescribe it.

The delay, caused by the scouts coming into camp, was entirely accidental and could not, under the circumstances, have been foreseen or prevented, as, on the evening previous, they carried out their instructions, went to the water, passing the mouth of the Cañon, where the Indians were encamped, who, seeing their trail early next morning, hid in ambush and suddenly attacked them — two scouts

043.jpg





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Escaped and rode ten miles into camp, as already described, and three took shelter in a deep and rocky ravine and for some hours defended themselves against heavy odds, with the loss of one horse. I cannot speak too highly of the Energy and perseverance, displayed in this morning's work, by both Officers and men, and although the affair is insignificant, in comparison, yet without it could not have been accomplished without hard, tedious and distressing work.

The altitude of Sierra Carmel is great, in comparison to the country surrounding this post, and in addition to the distress, occasioned by vigorous and sudden exertion in the rarefied atmosphere to unaccustomed lungs, was added the pain, caused by quick respiration of intensely cold air. On my return-march, the command rested three days at Paint Rock Springs, awaiting supplies.

I desire the attention of the District Commander to be invited to the fact of the good condition of the animals of my command - they were twenty three days without grain and, in eighteen days of that period, they marched three hundred and thirty five miles and made eight camps, without water and came in with very few, if any, sorebacks. I attribute their





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remarkable good condition to the fact of  
their having been herded out every night  
(except when on one occasion grass was  
gathered for them from the mountain-side)  
and to the unceasing care, the Company  
Commanders caused to be bestowed upon them.

There was a constant rain during the last  
eight days of the march and although the  
clothing of the men and officers was all  
torn and tattered and entirely insufficient,  
to protect against the inclemency of the  
weather, yet every <sup>one</sup> appeared to be in a  
good and happy mood and withal  
preferred active field service to garrison duty.

Enclosed please find Itinerary and  
map of route. Total distance marched  
(~~600~~) six hundred & ten miles.

I am, Sir,

Very respectfully

Your obedient servant

(Sgd) S. B. M. Young

Capt. S. Cas,

and Major Col. U. S. A.

Note - It is supposed the Indians disposed of their  
stolen stock in San Carlos - the march was carefully  
timed and the distance may be under, but not  
over estimated.

(Sgd) S. B. M. Young

