Patrolling the Santa Fe Trail: Reminiscences of John S. Kirwan

Introduction by Merrill J. Mattes

THE Kirwin reservoir project, on the North Fork of Solomon river, in Phillips county, Kansas, brings into prominence the name of a soldier who fought valiantly in the Indian wars of the Kansas frontier. In 1859-1861 Pvt. John S. Kirwan of Company K, 4th U. S. cavalry, based at Fort Riley, helped to patrol the Santa Fe trail. After an interruption of four years, occasioned by the Civil War, Col. John S. Kirwan of the 12th regiment, Tennessee Volunteer cavalry, returned to Kansas to deal once again with the Indians, setting up a stockade on the North Fork of the Solomon called Camp Kirwan. This encampment was obscure, short-lived, and historically inconsequential, but it did inspire the naming (but not the spelling) of the new settlement of “Kirwin” in 1871.

Although Phillips county was created by the Kansas legislature in 1867, Indian alarms deterred its settlement until 1870. In December of that year the townsite of Benton was located at the mouth of Deer creek, on the left bank of Solomon river, by William Swanson and John McBride. By June, 1871, prospective settlers had appeared in numbers, the Kirwin Town Company was formed, and a city of ambitious proportions, named for the abandoned army camp across the river, was plotted. One of the earliest structures was a log stockade, frequently used during a succession of Indian “scaries.”

Kirwin is now a modest village ranking fourth in population in Phillips county, behind Phillipsburg, Logan, and Agra. With many large and substantial abandoned buildings, it has obviously seen better days. Indeed, despite the fact that Phillipsburg became the county seat in 1872, Kirwin was for several years the largest

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town in the county, due to its capture of the government land office in 1875 and the arrival of the Atchison, Colorado and Pacific railroad (now a branch of the Missouri Pacific) in 1879. Its decline began in 1887 when the Chicago, Kansas and Nebraska (now the Rock Island railroad) reached Phillipsburg. In 1898 the land office was removed to Oberlin.¹

Kirwin retains the distinction of being the first permanent settlement in Phillips county and the locale of the Kirwin Chief, which contained the earliest publication yet found of the immortal ballad “Home on the Range.”² The Kirwin reservoir project is restoring growth and new prestige to the community.³

Construction of the Kirwin dam by the Bureau of Reclamation, United States Department of the Interior, is part of an all-embracing water control plan for the Missouri river basin, launched by the Flood Control Act of 1944. The National Park Service, another agency of the Department of the Interior, co-operates with the bureau by making surveys of historical and archeological features of proposed reservoir areas, by authority of the so-called historic sites act of 1935. In the Missouri river basin this is the specific responsibility of the history division of the Region Two office of the National Park Service, at Omaha, Neb., in collaboration with the Missouri river project, river basin surveys, Smithsonian Institution, headquartered at Lincoln, Neb.

In 1946 archeologists of the Smithsonian Institution reported evidence of “a small military post” in the Kirwin reservoir area on the edge of a low bluff on the south bank of the Solomon, about one half mile above the mouth of Bow creek and one and a half miles southwest of Kirwin village. In December of that year, the writer made a field investigation, examining the site and obtaining data from local residents who had a wealth of tradition but few solid facts regarding “old Camp Kirwan.” This was later supplemented by meager data from published sources available in the libraries of the Kansas State Historical Society and the State His-

³. The reservoir behind Kirwin Dam will spare Kirwin but will inundate the site of Camp Kirwan. Construction of the dam is tentatively scheduled for completion in December, 1955.
torical Society of Missouri, and disappointing but somewhat more substantial data from the National Archives in Washington, D. C.

The discovery of Kirwan's reminiscences of adventures along the Santa Fe trail in 1859-1861 was a by-product of efforts by the National Park Service to gather data relating to the doomed site of Camp Kirwan, 1865.

John M. Gray, citizen of Kirwin and an authority on local history, informed the writer that on June 24, 1946, he was visited by John S. Gregory of Lynwood, Cal., a great-grandson of Colonel Kirwan. An inquiry directed to Mr. Gregory led to correspondence with his aunt, a granddaughter of Colonel Kirwan, Mrs. M. Schuring, also of Lynwood. After consultation with relatives living in Missouri, Mrs. Schuring came up with "a copy of the autobiography that had been made up out of a diary Colonel Kirwan kept in his youth and written down some 50 odd or more years ago by one of the children." The original diary itself is apparently missing.

The rather impressive career of John S. Kirwan is outlined in the now scarce History of Laclede, Camden, Dallas, Webster, Wright, Texas, Pulaski, Phelps and Dent Counties, Missouri.4

Kirwan was born in Lempster, Sullivan county, N. H., June 22, 1840. His parents, Hugh and Bridget (Hanigan) Kirwan, were born in the counties of Galway and Rosscornon, Ireland, respectively, and were the parents of ten children, five boys and five girls, John being the eldest. John nearly missed being an American citizen for it was not until May, 1840, that his father immigrated to America, to engage in farming.

In 1851 Hugh Kirwan died, at age 65, and his widow and children moved to Manchester, N. H., where John attended school and worked part time in the factories. In 1855 he entered the dry goods house of H. Doherty & Company, Boston, as a salesman, but in 1856 he returned to Manchester to act as a salesman for Wright & Gill, and W. A. Putney & Company. In 1858, at age 18, John "ran away from home" and enlisted in the regular army at Boston.5 He was shortly sent to the school of instruction for cavalry, "the mounted service," at Carlisle Barracks, Pa. His subsequent adventures as an enlisted cavalryman on the Kansas frontier in 1859-1860 are the theme of the appended reminiscences.

In the fall of 1861 his company was ordered from Fort Leaven-
worth to campaign with Union armies in the South. Kirwan participated in many hard-fought engagements during the next few years. He was colonel of the 12th Tennessee cavalry at Eastport, Miss., when ordered with his regiment to St. Louis, Mo., on May 1, 1865.

The 12th Tennessee cavalry left Eastport May 11 by steamer and arrived at St. Louis May 17. The official report on the summer’s campaign is given in the report of Bvt. Brig. Gen. George Spalding, regimental commander, who did not personally accompany the expedition:

The Regiment was remounted and refitted and sent to Fort Leavenworth to report to General Mitchell. Left St. Louis May 30th, and arrived at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, June 7th. On the 18th the Regiment started as an escort for a party of surveyors with orders to establish camp on the North Fork of Solomon River, west of the 2d Guide meridian, which point it reached July 10th, 1865. The Regiment furnished the surveyor’s a sufficient escort and the rest of the Regiment scouted the country through Southern Nebraska and Northern Kansas, as far as the Colorado line. Sept. 3d, orders having been received to return to Fort Leavenworth for muster out, the Regiment started to Fort Leavenworth where it arrived Sept. 18th. Oct. 7th, the Regiment was mustered out by Capt. Hubbard, 13th Mo. Cav., and A. C. M., and started to Nashville Oct. 9th, where it arrived the 19th, and was finally paid and discharged Oct. 24th, 1865.


In forming my plans for the campaign my understanding was that the hostile Indians were to be punished at all hazards, and this I intended to do, knowing if I was allowed to press the campaign according to my plans that before another spring a satisfactory and durable peace could be obtained. My general plan of operations was marked out as follows, viz: General P. E. Connor, commanding District of the Plains, was to move against the northern Indians in three columns; General J. B. Sanborn, commanding District of Upper Arkansas, to move with three columns against the southern Indians, and two separate columns, small and light, were to move, respectively, up the Republican and Smoky Hill Forks of the Kansas River, and keep the country between the Platte and Arkansas Rivers free from Indians, and aid in keeping the great overland routes unobstructed. In addition to these dispositions troops had to be kept posted on the Platte stage and telegraph lines from Fort Kearny, via both Denver and Fort Laramie to Salt Lake City and along the Arkansas route to New Mexico.

The column sent up the Republican was under Lieutenant-Colonel Kirwan,

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6. Photostated excerpt from a published history of Tennessee during the Civil War furnished by Mrs. John Trotwood Moore, state librarian and archivist, State Department of Education, Nashville, Tenn.
Twelfth Tennessee Cavalry, and was about 350 strong. It kept that country
clear of Indians during the entire summer, and protected the Government
surveyors who were employed in completing the work they were driven from
the year previous. The force sent up the Smoky Hill route under Major
Pritchard was about 250 strong. While scouting that country it at the same
time opened that route to Denver, which is now traveled with a daily stage,
and is about 100 miles nearer to Denver from all points south of Saint Joseph
than the Platte route. . . .

In a report of several pages, given over mainly to the unsuccessful
“Powder river expedition” under General Connor, the sortie “up the
Republican” is thus revealed as a minor operation, but an essential
part of the grand strategy designed to suppress the Sioux, Cheyenne,
Comanche, and their allies who had been staging a rebellion of their
own out on the Plains while the Civil War was in progress.

Three related documents from the National Archives will serve
to throw light on the hitherto obscure history of Camp Kirwan, the
focal point of Colonel Kirwan’s campaign “up the Republican”:

Head Quarters District North Kansas
FORT LEAVENWORTH June 12th, 1865

Special Order
No. 118

2 The commanding officer 12th Tenn. Cav. will detail two
Companies of his command to report to Lieut. Col. Heinrichs comdg. Post
Fort Leavenworth for duty with the garrison at this Post

3 The remaining companies of the regiment will proceed as
soon as the regiment is paid to the north Fork of Solomons Fork west of the
2d Guide meridian and will under the command of the regimental
commander be encamped at such point as will enable the command to
carry its orders into execution

4 Three escorts will be furnished one to accompany surveying
party with Mr. Angell, one with party under charge of Mr. Chester Ruthruff
and with Mr. Hugh McKee

5 Hugh McKee will have general supervision over the surveying
parties and his suggestions and directions as to the movements of escorts
so far as they may relate to the movements of the surveying parties

6 The encampment of the command will be made at such
central point in the country to be operated and with such reserves as to
enable the detachment to concentrate if necessary for offensive or defensive
movements

7 The commanding officer will make the prescribed reports and
returns to these Head Qrs.

8 John W. Smith will be placed upon the Q. M. rolls as a scout

7. The War of the Rebellion: a Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and
Confederate Armies, series 1, v. 48, pt. 1. (Washington, 1896), pp. 382-348. See, also,
with compensation at the rate of six ($6) and one ration per diem from the
21st ult. and will accompany the 12th Tenn. Cav.

9 The commanding officer 12th Tenn. Cav. will furnish John
Smith Guide with a horse and equipments.

By Order of
Brig. Genl. ROST. B. MITCHELL
J. W. PRATT
A. A. C.

Comdg Officer
12 Tenn Cav 8

Headquarters United States Forces,
Kansas and the Territories,
FORT LEAVENWORTH, July 30th 1865

Brig Genl C. J. Stalbrand
Com'dg District of Kansas.
Fort Leavenworth.

General:

I am directed by the Major General Commanding to instruct you to cause
the 12th Tennessee Cavalry to make a scout up the Republican and back on
the Solomon, watching close for any Indian signs, and whipping any party of
Indians there may be in that country. They will leave a sufficient force to take
care of their camp and protect surveying parties, which need not be very
large, as it is said there are no Indians near their present camp, and their
movement will attract the attention of any Band between Smoky Hill and
the Platte.

They should make a rapid march, and reconnoiter thoroughly, going beyond
Big Timbers on the Republican. On their return they will send to Kearney
and telegraph to the Commanding General, wherever he may be, the result
of their reconnaissance, and make their written report to you.

I have the honor to be, General,
Very Respectfully, Jr Ob Svt.
J. F. BENNETT
A. A. Genl 9

Hd. Qrs 12th Tenn Cav.
CAMP KIRWAN KAN Aug. 22d 1865

Captain

I have the honor to state that I received your dispatch Aug 6th inst and
proceeded according to instruction to the Republican up the Republican ten
miles above the Big Timber thence south to North Fork of Solomon thence
down Solomon to Camp

The only Indian signs I could see any where was at the Big Timber and
that appeared to be nearly a year old (about the time General Mitchell made
his scout last fall)

The command with me numbered one hundred and sixty strong. We were

8. Records of the War Department, Headquarters District of North Kansas.
about sixteen days and marched a distance of three hundred and forty seven miles

Very Respectfully Your Obt Servt
JNO. S. KIRWAN
Lt. Col. Comdg.

To
Cap John Pratt
A. A. G. 10

From these records it appears that Camp Kirwan was clearly a temporary summer encampment from which the troops embarked on patrols to scout out the country for Indian predators, and to protect the surveyors.11 It seems equally clear that Indians were scarce in that region, no engagements took place, and the surveyors were unmolested. This documented picture is quite different from the picture of “Fort Kirwan” based on a quite unreliable source painted by Garfield in an early issue of The Kansas Historical Quarterly:

Somewhat different from that of other forts in Kansas is the history of Fort Kirwan. Built to meet the necessity of frontier defense, it failed to meet that need and consequently was abandoned. The fort was established in 1865 by Colonel Kirwin and a company of Tennessee volunteers who were sent to protect the Kansas frontier. The site chosen was near the confluence of Bow creek with the North Solomon river in what is now Phillips county. Colonel John Kirwin, its builder, finding the country swarming with the hostile Indians, judiciously decided to vacate. There were no settlers needing protection within one hundred miles of the fort.12

Kirwan must have been favorably impressed with the Solomon river valley, for immediately after being mustered out of service with his regiment he filed on a homestead in Ottawa county, Kansas, soon opening the first store in the budding community which be-

10. Ibid., U. S. army command, District of Kansas, K 126, 1865.

The regimental records for the year 1865 include the usual muster rolls and returns. Ordinarily these returns would show the detailed movements of this regiment, but the “Record of Events” column is not filled out.—Letter of August 14, 1862, to the writer from Richard G. Wood, for Dallas Irwin, chief archivist, War Records Branch.

11. “Camp Kirwan” appears in the SE¼, SE¼, Sec. 32, T. 4 S., R. 16 W., 6th P.M., original township plat issued by the surveyor general’s office. Roads from Camp Kirwin to Fort Riley and Fort Kearney are indicated.

Lyman H. Perkins, who originally homesteaded the quarter section which embraces the “Camp,” apparently respected the historic site for he refrained from cultivating it. Today the shallow outline of a ditch or trench, roughly 65 feet square by actual measurement, survives, bordered on the east by a grassy plateau, on the south by a cultivated field, on the west by deep gully, and on the north by the cottonwood-lined Solomon river. Evidence supports the theory that Camp Kirwan consisted only of a few tents within a stockade or enclosure, probably composed of upright cottonwood poles. The site was well selected, commanding an excellent view of the river and adjacent plain. Reconnaissance by a Smithsonian Institution field party in 1883 failed to reveal further significant evidence. The reputed near-by grave of a soldier who died of cholera in 1865 remains unconfirmed.

came present Minneapolis. Again demonstrating qualities of leadership, in 1866 he was elected a delegate from Ottawa county to the state Republican convention at Topeka, and was there elected one of the vice-presidents of that convention.

For reasons not made clear, Kansas must somehow have lost its charm for Colonel Kirwan, for in 1867 he moved to St. Louis, Mo., and became a member of the police force of that city, first as a sergeant, then as a captain. In 1870 he resigned from the force and took the stump with other liberal Republicans, in favor of the enfranchisement of Confederate soldiers.

In 1871 he entered the St. Louis post office and worked there for over 16 years, resigning on December 1, 1887. On January 1, 1880, he purchased a farm near Raymondville, Mo.\(^{13}\) Here he died in 1909.\(^{14}\) His only child, Ella Cecelia Kirwan, married Benjamin Osborn Holt of Raymondville, having four children, one of them being Mrs. M. Schuring of Lynwood, Calif., to whom we are indebted for the following reminiscences of the Santa Fe trail in 1859-1861.

**REMINISCENCES OF JOHN S. KIRWAN**

When I was a youngster, on the farm where I was raised on Lempster Mountain, Sullivan County, New Hampshire, I read a novel written by Charles Lever, called “Charles O’Malley, or the Irish Dragoon.” This fixed my ambition to become a soldier, when I was old enough to be one.

My father died when I was eleven years old; my mother sold the little farm and the family moved to Manchester, N.H. I worked in the mills there for a short time, until a friend managed to place me in a Wholesale & Retail Dry Goods House in Boston, Mass. where I stayed for about a year. A member of the firm opened a store in Manchester, N.H. and I was more than glad to return there with him and be at home again. I remained there until I was nineteen years old, when I ran away to Boston and enlisted in the Mounted Service, U.S. Army.

Lt. Ramson [Hyatt C. Ransom] of the Mounted Rifles was recruiting Officer and informed me, that he could not accept me, unless I had my mother’s consent. The recruiting Sergeant noticed my disappointed looks and followed me out to the sidewalk. He told me to come back the next day late in the afternoon as by that time

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\(^{13}\) History of Laclede, Camden, Dallas, Webster, Wright, Texas, Pulaski, Phelps and Dent Counties, Missouri. See Footnote 4.

\(^{14}\) From supplemental biographical data supplied by Mrs. M. Schuring, Lynwood, Cal.
in the day Ransom would be so intoxicated, that he would not know how old I was and that he (the Sergeant) would put my age down as twenty two. I did not like the idea of the deception, but solaced my conscience thinking the Sergeant was doing the deceiving.

In about ten days we had about twenty recruits and started for Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. At New York and Philadelphia we received quite a number of recruits and numbered over a hundred on leaving Philadelphia. We arrived at Carlisle Barracks at about 4 P. M. as hungry a set of boys as you ever saw. As we arrived between meals there was nothing to be had but some hard tack and cabbage soup and this did not agree with me. Some of the boys were very much disappointed until the next day when they found out that the regular fare was all right. After we rested a day we were assigned to different squads and started to drill.

Carlisle Barracks at that time was the General Rendezvous for recruits of the Mounted Service. Approximately 500 men were there, divided into Companies of about 50 men each and lettered alphabetically. The post was commanded by Lt. Col. [George B.] Crittenden of the Mounted Rifles (who afterwards went with the South). Among the Officers I remember were Capt. J. B. Gordon [?], of the 1st Dragoons, 1st Lt. and Brevet Capt. McRea [Alexander McRae?] of the Mounted Rifles, 2nd Lt. Joe Wheeler, Mounted Rifles, 2nd Lt. Fitzhugh Lee of the Dragoons, and 2nd Lts. [Andrew] Jackson [Jr. ?] and [Lunsford L.] Lomax of the 1st Cavalry, and several others that I cannot remember just now.

Lee, Wheeler, and Lomax appeared to be the brightest and most athletic of the lot of young officers there and were foremost in picking up handkerchiefs from the ground, their horses on the run, vaulting on and over their horses on a walk, trot, or gallop, and cutting heads placed on posts on the drill grounds. We were drilled constantly when the weather permitted during the fall and winter of 1858 and '59. At this time the Army was composed of 5 Mounted Regiments. (1st & 2nd Dragoons, the Mounted Rifles and 1st and 2nd Cavalry) 4 Regiments of Artillery, and 10 Regiments of Infantry.—Cavalry and Infantry, [comprised] 10 Companies to a Regiment. [There were] 12 Companies in a Regiment of Artillery (2 Light Batteries and 10 Companies of heavy Artillery). The heavy Artillery were drilled in infantry tactics. [I do not remember the name of the Colonel of the 1st Dragoons; Col. Philip St. George Cook[e], commanded the 2nd Dragoons; Col. [William W.] Loring, Mounted Rifles; Lt. Col. Crittenden, 1st Cavalry (now 4th); and
Col. E. V. Sumner and Lt. Col. Jos. E. Johnston, Wm. H. Emory, Senior Major and John Sedgwick, Junior Major [also with 1st cavalry]. The 2nd Cavalry (now the 5th) had Albert Sidney Johnston, Colonel; Robert E. Lee, Lt. Colonel; Earl Van Dorn, Senior [Junior?] Major and Geo. H. Thomas, Junior [Senior?] Major.

About the 1st of May 1859 about 50 recruits were assigned [to] 4 Companies of the 1st Cavalry, stationed at Ft. Riley, Kansas Territory; Lt. Ransom of H Company of that Regiment was in command of the squad, and we travelled by rail to St. Louis and from there by steamboat “War Eagle” to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. We had to foot it from Leavenworth to Fort Riley, 125 miles and arrived there very footsore and tired on the last day of May. There we were divided among the four Companies F, G, H and K. I was assigned to K. They were all ready to go on the plains and only had awaited our arrival to start, which we did the following morning, June 1st, 1859.

The different Companies of the Regiment were located as follows: F, G, H and K at Fort Riley, Kansas, E and D at Fort Smith, Arkansas, C and I at Fort Arbuckle, Indian Territory and A and B at Fort Cobb, Indian Territory. The Officers of the 1st Cavalry were Col. E. V. Sumner, commanding the Department of the West, Headquarters at St. Louis, Mo., Lt. Col. Joseph E. Johnston, detailed as Quartermaster General of the Army, Washington, D. C., Sr. Major Wm. Emory, Bvt. Lt. Col., Jr. Major John Sedgwick. The line Officers were:

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<tr>
<th>Co.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rank</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Wm. Beal [I]</td>
<td>Capt. of Va.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Delos B. [Sackett]</td>
<td>North</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>Thos Woods [Wood]</td>
<td>North</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>James M. [McIntosh]</td>
<td>Miss.</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td>Samuel D. [Sturgis]</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>W. D. Desouer [De Saussure]</td>
<td>S. C.</td>
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<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Edward W. B. [Newby]</td>
<td>North</td>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Eugene Carr</td>
<td>North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Geo. H. Stuart [Stuart]</td>
<td>Maryland</td>
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The First Lieutenants that I can remember were [George?] Bell of K; D,[aidl] Stanley of C; J. E. B. Stuart of G; Ransom of H; Elmer Otis of F; [Philip] Stockton of B; [Oliver H.] Fish of I. As the Regiment was never to-gether before the war it is hard to remember all the names but I remember the following Second Lieutenants: Joe Taylor of K; [George D.] Bayard of G; [John A.] Thompson of F; Eli Long of H; [Edward] Ingraham of I; Lomax of D; Ives [Alfred Iverson?] of C; Jackson was at Ft. Arbuckle in A or B
Company. Some of these names became very well known during the war.

Leaving Fort Riley we crossed the Kaw River near the Fort and marched in a Southwesterly direction until we reached the Santa Fe trail at Lost Springs; and followed this to the Big Bend of the Arkansas River. As you will remember '59 was the year of the discovery of gold at Pike’s Peak. There were two routes that the Peakers followed, the Northern one from Omaha along the Platt River and the other from Independence, Mo., along the Santa Fe Trail to the Arkansas River and along the north side of that river to the Raton Crossing, thence north by way of Pueblo to the new town of Denver. We were ordered to the Arkansas Valley to protect the emigrants going that way, from any Indian attacks, as there were five tribes of them roaming through that country, viz: The Kiowas, Comanches, Cheyennes, Arapahoes and Apaches. All were supposed to be at Peace or said to be, and we had very little to do during the summer, moving camp short distances as the grass was fed short, and for sanitary reasons.

We remained there until the latter part of September when we started back to Fort Riley. Everything appeared lovely and we all anticipated a nice comfortable time the following winter at the Fort. We reached the Little Arkansas River on the evening of September 30th. About 2 A.M. the 1st Sergeant laid his hand on my shoulder and whispered in my ear: “Get up quick and make no noise, the Indians have broken loose and killed Peacock and burned his ranch”; this ranch was about 30 miles back on the road we had just travelled, at the point where the Santa Fe Trail crossed Walnut Creek a short distance from the Arkansas River. Two of the Companies G and K, were started at once; the other two F and H were to start at daylight. We made the 30 miles in two hours, and found the ranch partially burned up and the contents scattered everywhere. After killing Peacock, they scalped him, and three or four men employed by him ran away.\textsuperscript{15} It was one of them that rode to where we were and informed us of the murder.

We found one Indian only and he was so beastly drunk he could not get away and his pony was standing near him, apparently as sound asleep as its master. Just as day was breaking that Indian seemed to raise from the ground as if by magic, jumped on his pony and started away for the Bluffs. No one waited for a command but jumped on his horse and took after him. We thought

\textsuperscript{15} Although George H. Peacock’s trading post was attacked September 20, 1859, no one was killed. However, a year later, on September 9, 1860, Peacock was killed there by the Kiowa chief Satank.—*Western Journal of Commerce*, Kansas City, Mo., October 15, 1859; *Emporia News*, September 22, 1860.
that he had gotten away from us when suddenly Lt. Bayard came through the crowd like a whirlwind on a racer, that his uncle Senator Bayard had sent him before leaving Fort Riley. Bayard gradually lessened the distance between him and the Indian until he got within range of him, when he fired two shots over his head to stop him. This however seemed to put fresh energy in the pony, who made a fresh burst of speed. The Indian evidently thought Bayard was not a good shot; he leaned forward on his pony and slapped his back with his hand in derision. Just as he straightened up again, Bayard put a bullet in his back between the shoulders and he dropped off his pony, dead.

We immediately started back to the ranch, about 5 miles distant. We knew that an Indian war was now certain, as an Indian had been killed and from all appearances a chief of considerable prominence. Capt. Desauuer, who was in command, called a Council of his officers and it was decided to immediately hunt for the Indians. A guard was detailed for the wagons and we took 3 days rations in haversacks. We started over the Bluffs and after scouting for four days we were unable to overtake them and found that we were then only about 15 miles from Peacock's ranch, as the trails crossed and recrossed in every direction. After returning to the ranch we found that Major [James] Longstreet, Paymaster of New Mexico had camped there for the night with his escort, and I saw him the next morning. He was then a man of middle age, large and fine looking, and he left us the following day. [The next time Mr. Kirwan saw Major Longstreet was at the Banquet of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion, at the Planters Hotel, 1892.]

It was decided that the command should return to Fort Riley as instructed. Just as we were ready to start, the monthly mail for Santa Fe and Albuquerque came up; they had a covered wagon drawn by four mules which made the distance from Independence, Mo. to Santa Fe, approximately 800 miles in an average time of 16 days. There were three men with the wagon, Larry Smith, the conductor and his brother Mike, the driver and an extra hand by the name of Cole. They wanted to go through without an escort, but Capt. Desauuer would not allow them as he did not consider it safe and decided to send an escort with them part of the way or until Smith thought he was out of danger. A detail was made up of seven men from each Company, one commissioned officer, Lt. Otis, and two non-commissioned Officers, Sgt. Cavendish and Corporal Richmond, a total of thirty. I was one of the
detail of my Company and the next morning as the command started East towards Fort Riley, we went West with the mail. We passed Pawnee Rock (about 15 miles) at 10.30 A.M. and reached a creek called Pawnee Ford at 2 P.M. where we made camp for the night. Smith was very impatient at the slow travelling and said he didn’t believe there was an Indian in the country. Otis tried to reason with him but to no avail and at 4 P.M. the mail pulled out. That was the last time we saw Larry and Mike Smith alive.

The next morning, just as we were ready to start back, a man bareheaded and covered with blood rode into camp. We at once gathered around him and found that it was Cole, the extra hand, who was with the mail wagon the day before. He was weak from the loss of blood and suffering intense pain from wounds. His shoulder and arm were broken and the top of his head was nearly scalped. He told us, that as they crossed a dry run called Jones Dry Fork about six miles from where we were, the Indians came out of the dry creek bed and surrounded them, crying: “wano Americano.” The wagon was stopped and conductor Smith ordered Cole to get out and give them whatever they wanted; he gave them a large box of sugar crackers, coffee, bacon, hams and some flour. After they had eaten what they wanted, the chief or the one acting as such, motioned for Cole to get up behind him on the pony. When Cole refused to do so, two of them jumped off their ponies, grabbed him and tried to force him to get on the pony. He jerked loose and ran around to the other side of the wagon and climbed in. In the mean time the Smiths had been turning the wagon around and got ready to start back towards our camp, but just then they opened fire, killing both brothers at the first volley. Larry was shot and killed with arrows, one going right through his heart, Mike was shot through the head.

When Cole got into the wagon, he picked up the lines from the dead man’s hands and started the team. Just then he was shot and although suffering terribly, he held the lines with his right hand. The firing frightened the horses and they ran a good gait. One Indian tried several times to run in front of them but failed in the attempt and Cole decided to shoot him the next time he tried. The mules kept up the pace until they passed the bottom of the dry creek, when they came to a walk and as they got on top of the bank, the same Indian rushed forward again, but just as he got in front of the mules Cole fired his Sharp’s carbine, killing him. He rolled off
his pony in front of the mules, which caused them to turn from the
road and make a curve towards a large cottonwood tree standing
near the creek. By this time it was getting dark and as the team
turned, Cole jumped out of the wagon and laid flat on the ground.
No one had seen him jump and when the Indians got up on the
bank of the creek, they did not follow the curved tracks made by
the wagon wheels, but went straight from the creek bed to the
cottonwood tree, where the mules stopped. They undoubtedly ex-
pected to find the bodies of the Smiths and Cole in the wagon and
their disappointment at not finding the latter was plainly told by
their howls. Two of them started back on the trail of the wagon
wheels, while the others scalped poor Smith and plundered the
wagon. The two on the trail of the wagon wheels kept together
until about two hundred feet from where Cole was, when one
circled to the right and the other to the left, leaving him in the
middle between them. They met on the road and followed it down
into the creekbed. Cole from his prone position could see them,
while they on their ponies could not see an object on the ground
and naturally supposed that he had hid somewhere along the bank
of the creek.

As soon as they [the Indians] disappeared down the creek bank,
Cole commenced dragging himself along on the ground, by catching
the Buffalo grass with his good hand. He kept this up until he
fainted from pain and loss of blood. How long he laid there he does
not know, but the pain of his wounds and the cold night air caused
him considerable suffering. He crawled up on his feet and looked
around but could not tell where he was. He had seen a campfire a
long ways off and thinking it was our campfire started in that di-
rection until after a long wearisome tramp he got near enough to it,
to hear dogs barking. He nearly fainted again, as he knew, that
there were no dogs in the soldiers camp and that it must be an
Indian camp. He immediately turned back to get as far away from
that campfire as possible, and trudged along reaching the Santa Fe
trail a little before daylight, where he was lucky enough to meet a
party of returning Pike's Peakers, consisting of 15 wagons, 21 men,
16 women and 10 children, to whom he told what had happened.
They dressed his wounds as well as possible and as he knew we
were to start back in the morning, he insisted that they let him have
a mule and rode as fast as he could to reach us.

Lt. Otis decided to proceed to Jones' Creek, bury the Smith boys
and escort the Pike's Peakers back to the settlements. He picked
two men with best and fastest horses to take a dispatch to Capt. Desasuer to report what had happened. These two men rode 90 miles that day and overtook the command at Cow Creek, where it went into camp to wait for us. We went on to Jones Creek and met the Peakers, who had made camp near a waterhole in that creek. We borrowed some picks and shovels from them and they helped us dig a wide deep grave and buried the Smiths. We then made another start for the command. The Peakers all had small rifles and plenty of ammunition; the women also had small rifles and were not afraid to use them, making in all over 60 carbines and rifles, besides each cavalry man had a heavy revolver and a saber, so we felt perfectly safe.

When we got to Ash Creek about 5 miles East of Pawnee Fork, we saw an Indian talking to a greaser, who was jerking Buffalo meat, but as soon as the Indian spied us he galloped off. One of our men could talk Mexican and the greaser told him the Indians were massed on the ridge or bluff running from Ash Creek to Pawnee Rock, about ten miles distant, where the road ran parallel to and about a quarter mile from the bluff. We placed the wagons in the center and moved on; the women or larger children drove, while the men walked on the side of the next bluffs and the cavalry front and rear of them. The women were brave and even the children were plucky; poor Cole, whom we had placed in a wagon insisted that he would fight too, so we propped him up on a bed, with his Sharp’s carbine which was found at the place where he jumped out of the mailwagon. This was the same kind of carbine, we were using.

Pretty soon we came in sight of the Indians scattered along the bluff as far as we could see, moving up and down the sides of the slope. They did everything possible to draw us on, and away from the wagons, but Otis gave positive orders, that we were not to fire a shot unless attacked and under no circumstances to leave the wagons. They did not attack us and we moved along as rapidly as possible, until we arrived at a crescent-shaped pond about 5 miles East of Pawnee Rock, where we made Camp for the night. The wagons were placed so as to make a barricade from one point of the crescent-shaped pond to the other, making a pretty good defensive position in case we were bothered.

The next day we reached the Big Bend of the Arkansas River and the day thereafter found our command at Cow Creek, where K Company awaited us, the other Companies having gone to Fort
Riley. Lt. Otis and the men of the other Companies left us the next morning, taking Cole with them to the Hospital at the Fort where he eventually recovered, and the Peakers went on to the settlements. We remained until the 27th of November, guarding the mail between Cow Creek and Fort Union, New Mexico (600 miles), when we were relieved by Lt. Bell and a detail of 40 men, who made their headquarters at Pawnee Fork, and started to build Fort Larned.

We reached Fort Riley on the 29th and the next day I was detailed for guard duty. The guardhouse was a two-story building and like all the buildings there was built of rock, the lower story being used as a guardhouse while the upper part was an Assembly-room for the reserve guards, reached by a wide stairway. I was placed on Post number One and part of my duties were to guard a couple of soldiers, who were sentenced to walk in front of number one and carry a knapsack with 30 pounds of brick in it for 30 days. One of them asked to be allowed to take off his knapsack and draw a bucket of water from the well at one end of the Post, and as the day was cold, I did not want to call any of the men out, so allowed him to do as he requested.

They had their drink and just as he was putting on the knapsack, the officer of the Day, Capt. Nathaniel Lyon, came in sight, so I called out: “Turn out the Guard, Officer of the day.” He answered, angrily and sharply: “Never mind the Guard,” so I called out: “Never mind the Guard” and came to a proper salute. He paid no attention to the salute, but walked straight up to me and asked: “How long have you been in the service, sir?”

You learn fast in the Army, and quick as a flash it occurred to me, that a batch of recruits had arrived at the Fort about two weeks before and some of them were assigned to K; so I answered: “A little over two weeks sir.” He asked the Sergeant of the Guard, Lon Stokes, who belonged to K if that was true and he promptly lied like a gentleman for me and said it was. He then turned to me and said: “It is a good thing for you, that you are a recruit, or I would punish you properly, sir, for letting that prisoner take off his knapsack, sir.”

This was the first time I had seen the Captain, but I knew of him well by reputation and that was, that he was the most tyrannical officer in the Army. It was reported of him, that one time a batch of recruits came to his Company and he got them in line and commenced with the man on the right as follows: “How long have you been in the service, sir?” The man would tell him. “Have you
ever been punished, sir?” The man said “No.” “Well, I will punish you, sir, I will punish you properly, sir.” The next one told him he had been punished, and Lyon said: “You were not punished properly, sir, I will punish you properly, sir,” and so on. Every one had to be punished and no one knew how to punish properly excepting Captain Lyon himself. His after career showed, that he was fitted for a large command, not a small one, and his patriotism showed bright when the opportunity offered. He never had the softening influence of a home, as he was an old bachelor and therefor cranky. But issues raised by the War gave his brain sufficient material to work on and made him a great General. I at least had no cause for complaint, as I considered I got off easy.

Lyon commanded B Company and Capt. and brevet Major [Henry W.] Wessel[1]s, commanded G Company, 2nd Infantry. Lyon and his Company were sent to St. Louis Arsenal in April of 1860 and Wessels to the new Fort Larned. Colonel F. W. Schaunert was then 1st Sergeant of Wessels Company G.

Preparations were made for a general crusade against the Indians as soon as the grass started, as our horses as well as the Indians’ had to subsist on it. There were two columns put in the field; our 4 Companies of the 1st Cavalry and two Companies of the 2nd Dragoons, commanded respectively by Capt. [William] Steel[e] and Lt. [Francis C.] Armstrong. 2nd Lt. Merrell [Lewis Merrill] was also with them. Major John Sedgwick, 1st Cavalry in command. The other column was composed of the six Companies of the 1st Cavalry, stationed at Fort Smith, Ancheta and Cobb, under command of Capt. Sturges.

We left Fort Riley about the 1st of May 1860, marched to Fort Larned and there completed our outfitting with pack mules; we did not take any wagons, except an ammunition wagon and one ambulance. We crossed the Arkansas River near Fort Larned and struck for the North Fork of the Canadian River. We scouted through that country for some time, stopping now and then for a few minutes to allow the men to get off their horses and stretch, as is the custom. My horse had a sore back and I was riding a pet mule we had. At one place where we stopped to stretch, I dropped the reins on the mule’s neck, lazily swung my carbine over my shoulder, and placed my right foot on the ground. My spur caught in the coil of the lariat rope as I drew my foot from the stirrup, and as I stooped to release it, the carbine slipped off my shoulder and struck the mule. This made her jump, which drew my foot
in the coil of rope and threw me on my back. The mule seeing me fall, became frightened and ran, dragging me behind her. The carbine was fastened to my shoulderbelt by a swivel and every now and then gave me a whack on the head. Lt. J. E. B. Stuart hollered out: "Stop that mule, or she'll drag that pack to pieces." About that time, the ring holding the lariat broke and I was released, but I never forgave Stuart for his joke.

We moved through part of New Mexico, called the Salt or Sand desert and recrossed the Arkansas River at Anberry’s [Aubrey’s] Crossing, Colorado Territory. Company G was sent scouting while the remainder stayed on the river bank to rest the horses, as they were pretty well fagged out. Company G struck the trail of a band of the Kiowas about 40 miles North of the Arkansas. Lieutenants J. E. B. Stuart and Bayard immediately charged them and had a running fight until they reached a creek, called Black Water. The Indians were hampered with their squaws and children and were compelled to make a stand. Stuart charged again, killing about twenty. The Indians broke, leaving their squaws, teepees and a hundred ponies. Lt. Bayard was hit by an arrow in the cheekbone just below the eye. Sergeant Okeleston was shot in the left arm and two privates slightly wounded. Two days later they returned to camp. About the same time Sturges caught up with their main body on the Republican River above where Concordia, Kansas, now stands and gave them battle, killing a large number. Their chiefs then sued for peace.

The Government appointed a commission to meet the five tribes at Bents Fort, 60 miles above Anberry’s [Aubrey’s] Crossing. At this point the Government decided to establish Fort Wise, named in honor of Governor Wise of Virginia. Major Sedgwick was assigned as commander and our four Companies as a garrison. We used Bents old Fort as a quartermaster department and erected the officers and Company quarters, about one-half mile above. We remained there until the latter part of October 1861, when we were ordered to Fort Leavenworth.

There was an intense political feeling, especially among the officers who were nearly all democrats; the enlisted men had little to say, but the officers talked freely, especially those from the South, who predicted that Breckenridge [Breckinridge] would surely be elected. As we received our mail only once a month and sometimes six weeks, the result of the election was not received until about the middle of December 1860, and it caused considerable consterna-
tion among the officers. The southerners talked treason while the northern ones commenced to hedge. In the early part of 1861, several of them got leave of absence and returned to the States. Among them Major Sedgwick and Capt. Geo. H. Stuart.

In the latter part of May a large party of traitors came through from New Mexico, officers and their families from the Mounted Rifles. They had twelve ambulances and fifteen Government wagons, with an escort of 50 men from the mounted rifles, all supplied with Government provisions. They were royally received by our officers and as they marched on to the parade ground, our band was ordered to play “Dixie” for them. They remained two days to rest up and then went on to attempt to destroy the Government and Flag, they had sworn to protect, using Government troops, ambulances, wagons and provisions in doing so. J. E. B. Stuart accompanied them for which the enlisted men were not sorry. Major Sedgwick went East shortly after the election and the command devolved on Capt. Desasuer of South Carolina, an ardent rebel. Some of us were afraid, that he would start with the Companies south to Texas and surrender us. The feeling among the enlisted men was intensely loyal and some of each Company got together and organized a lodge of “Good Templars,” sworn to secrecy, ostensibly for the promotion of temperance, but really to capture Desasuer, should he attempt to take us South. He must have suspected something like that for he never made the attempt, and for the honor of the old 1st Cavalry, not one of the enlisted men ever went South or left the flag to my knowledge. On leaving Fort Wise, K Company had only 36 enlisted men and of these 10 were commissioned in the regulars or volunteers.

When the traitor, General [David E.] Twiggs, surrendered the Department of Texas, the six Companies of the 1st Cavalry in the Indian Territory were included, but the noble, loyal Captain Sturgis, who was in command, disregarded the order, gathered his scattered Companies together and marched from Fort Cobb in the Ancheta Mountains, 800 miles to Leavenworth, taking over 200 six-mule wagons loaded with Commissary and quartermaster stores, 25 ambulances and $300,000. [sic]—in gold. Of our officers who remained loyal and gained distinction were General Sedgwick, General Thomas Wood, General David Stanley, General W. H. Emory, General Eli Long and General Bayard (Gettysburg, only one killed). Of those who went South are General J. E. B. Stuart, who was killed by Sheridan’s troops, General Lomax, whom Sheridan licked so badly in Virginia and Generals Jackson and Ives.