

JOURNAL
OF
CAPTAIN A. R. JOHNSTON,
FIRST DRAGOONS

JOURNAL.

September 25, 1846.—Left Santa Fé, to go 13 miles to Major Sumner's camp, preparatory to start to-morrow en route to California; camp overrun with horses to be sent to the United States—dragoons' horses; command all mounted on mules; country desolate. The creek of Santa Fé runs off in the sand a few miles below town, and cultivation ceases; no trees, cedar shrubs, dry ravines at camp, volcanic signs, and many springs, producing ten excellent springs of water, sinking almost as soon as it rises; no grass near camp fit for pasture.

September 26.—Started with dragoons at 7—the ox teams starting at daylight; the night was unpleasant, from loose animals running through camp after the corn blades purchased by the officers for their horses and mules; the grass was all eaten out before about camp and the country around Santa Fé, and to-day is thinly covered with grama grass and occasional cedar shrubs, betokening the greatest sterility; the newness of the country is apparent. Passed to-day a succession of strata dipping to the east, sandstone, blue and red marl, and white clay, intersected with basaltic dykes. South of camp a high nob is formed by an abrupt escapement of secluded shrub, dipping from the bluff to east; in several places to-day sudor volcanoes; the country is covered with basalt on the west of Del Norte, and in many places on the east plants of the artemesia sort abundant; several mules missing this morning; two wagons broke to-day—one a king bolt and one a tongue; camp in tolerable grass near San Philippe, on the Del Norte.

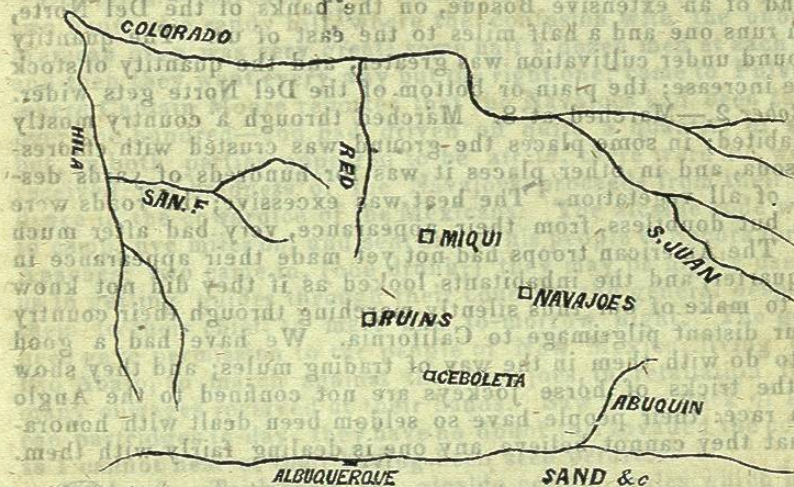
September 27.—Marched at 8; many of the mules which broke loose during the night gave much trouble in the morning to catch them; some complaints of their depredations on corn fields were settled, by paying damages. Passed Algodones, Bernalillo, and Sandia. In Algodones there was signs of poverty, very little being required, apparently, to feed the people upon. Fitzpatrick remarked, that he now thought more of Oregon, as he had seen many places there as good or better than the valley of the Del Norte, which he had not thought ever would support any population. At Bernalillo the wealthy cultivate the grape, and make a delicious wine. The grape grows upon small bushes on the flats, and is irrigated like the other products. We found peaches there inferior to any in the United States, as also any grape cultivated in the open air. Fences are made of clay, by putting the mould in the wall and filling it, and leaving the large brick thus formed to dry there. They appear to be rather used to keep men out than horses or animals, as in many places the top of the wall was cov-

ered with prickly cactus. The village of Sandia is an Indian pueblo, and they appear to own large herds of cattle; but from the genuine Indian yells which proceeded from one of their dances, it is plain they have retained many of their customs since, as they have their color, in becoming Catholic in their faith. Some mules were bought at forty dollars, and some fine horses exchanged for mules at our camp, one mile below Sandia; grass good; water from Sica; a fine copper mine a few miles east of this camp in the hills; heard that the Navajoes had committed some more mischief on the frontiers; volcanic signs, dykes, strata of lava, &c.

September 28.—Remained in camp until noon, awaiting the arrival of the ox teams which had fallen behind. Many water fowl were fired at about camp, and few killed; soldiers are generally bad shots; the game was tame, and showed that the Yankees had not often been among them. Beaver slides, and their work on the cotton-wood on the banks of the Del Norte, were seen in several places; they, too, will not rejoice at the change of government. The Spanish or Indian population have never turned their furs to advantage, else they would not have lived for hundreds of years in such a close neighborhood. The volcanic appearance is less at camp; but the hill east is seamed with some igneous rock. Broke camp at three o'clock, and marched three miles to the vicinity of the ranches of Albuquerque, through the deep sand on the banks of the Del Norte; one ox team did not get up until in the night; one of them broke the hounds, and was left.

September 29.—Marched at 8; passed the ranch of Albuquerque when the people were just coming out of church; the women were carrying some saint in procession to his home; some of them held a canopy over the santa, and four carried the image; the procession moved to the sound of a drum. The general's staff partook of some refreshment at two of the houses. It was remarked how delightfully cool the houses were, after being in the hot sun. The process of building houses, make brick, dry them in the sun, build with mud mortar, lay over the roofs beams which come from the distant hills, then boards or poles, then earth and spouts, whitewash with gypsum, smear the walls outside with mud, also the floors; the houses being hung with looking-glasses and images, floors carpeted, no pain in walking about—mode of building peculiarly adapted to the country and climate. Passed Albuquerque, and the general was pressed to stop, but declined all further hospitality; crossed the Del Norte at Albuquerque, the ford being about two and a half feet deep, sandy, but not quicksand; marched eight miles below Albuquerque, and encamped on an open plain where the Navajoes crossed the Del Norte at the time of their depredations a few days since; after three companies of volunteers crossed the river to go to Cibolleta, a party of Navajoes crossed at this point and killed eight Mexicans on the east of the Del Norte. At this point there is not a tree growing within reach of us: the troops had to purchase fuel. The sand drifts in various places had accumulated in hills. Sand seems to adhere on its own kindred material instead of covering the surface of the land. It is fortunate it is so; this

country would otherwise be impassable as well as uninhabitable. The inhabitable portion of New Mexico is confined to the immediate borders of the streams. The bottoms on the Del Norte are about one and a half miles wide on the average so far down, and are elevated but a few feet above the level of the running water.



The Del Norte is rapid and regular, and its waters can be tapped at any point without a dam, so that irrigation is carried on successfully. It remains for greater improvements, in this respect, to develop the resources of the country. A large canal along the base of the hills might carry all the water of the Del Norte, and be a means of transportation, while its surplus water could be employed in the winter for filling reservoirs, and during the summer to carry water directly upon the fields: in this way the country could be made to feed ten times the present population. The rains of this country all fall upon the mountain tops, and the valleys are thus dependent upon irrigation, as the water only reaches them in the big drains of nature. At our camp during the night we could see upon the distant hills the camp fires of the shepherds who lead their flocks afar from the habitations.

September 30.—Marched at 10; the ox teams not having overtaken us, passed Paharito, Padillo, Isleta, Los Lentos, and encamped at Los Lunas; pleasant camp in good grass, distance 14 miles; during the day had some places of deep sand through which it would be difficult to drive wagons; the road generally good; some extensive groves of cotton-wood (pecan) on the river, otherwise the country bare of trees or shrubs; volcanic rocks showed themselves on two small hills on the west of the Del Norte; the upheavement of the hill on the east of the Del Norte shows a force to the west, but at what point it has been exerted is not apparent. There is no hard wood in this country to mend wagons with—an oak bush occasionally, but generally not sound. Plantations of trees would no doubt flourish. I asked Don Jose Luna's son if he

ever went fishing in the Del Norte; he said no; he was afraid the Navajoes would catch him.

October 1.—Marched at 9; the ox teams being near camp, on their way when we started; passed a succession of valleys, and encamped below Puebletors, (distance 16 miles,) opposite the upper end of an extensive Bosque, on the banks of the Del Norte, which runs one and a half miles to the east of us. The quantity of ground under cultivation was greater, and the quantity of stock on the increase; the plain or bottom of the Del Norte gets wider.

October 2.—Marched at 8. Marched through a country mostly uninhabited; in some places the ground was crusted with efflorescent soda, and in other places it was for hundreds of yards destitute of all vegetation. The heat was excessive; the roads were good, but doubtless, from their appearance, very bad after much rain. The American troops had not yet made their appearance in this quarter, and the inhabitants looked as if they did not know what to make of our thus silently marching through their country on our distant pilgrimage to California. We have had a good deal to do with them in the way of trading mules; and they show that the tricks of horse jockeys are not confined to the Anglo Saxon race: their people have so seldom been dealt with honorably that they cannot believe any one is dealing fairly with them.



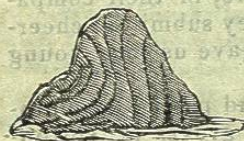
The mountains below Socora, through which we are to approach the Gila, appear in front of us; from their appearance, one would naturally look for a pass to the Gila in the gap above, instead of going around the one on the left. The apparent distance of mountains is very deceptive; the guesses vary to-day from fifteen to sixty miles about the same mountains. The knobs do not present themselves in ranges yet, nor do they appear much above the general level. The river hills passed to-day are composed of coarse conglomerate, running in seams with sand, all scarcely of the consistence of stone: pebbles of all the productive minerals mixed with pebbles of lava. The knobs on the right of the Del Norte appear to be composed of peaks of granite. The heat to-day excessive. Encamped opposite La Jozin, in a pleasant grove of cotton-woods.

October 3.—Laid in camp, awaiting the ox teams and some Mexican teams, which had fallen one day to our rear; caught some fine cat fish and soft-shell turtle in the Del Norte. During the day, an express came in from Pulvidera, 12 miles down the river, informing the general that the Navajoes had attacked the village; and he had been sent by the alcalde to bring the artillery where they were still fighting when he left; Captain Moore was sent with company "C," in defence of the Mexicans, and orders were sent to-day to Colonel Doniphan to make a campaign in the Navajo country; examined minutely the diluvial deposit which fills the valley of the

Del Norte as far as Taos; it is alternate seams of gravel and sand, apparently deposited on a shore composed of pebbles of limestone; all the primitive rock scarce; of granite in places; of lava basalt in particular localities, more or less.

October 4.—Marched at 8, taking the river road, and spending two hours at a sandy hill, where the confusion with the unbroken Mexican oxen was very great; some half a dozen men at each team, and then they went every way but the right one; came to Pulvidera, where Captain Moore reported that the Navajoes had been there—over one hundred—and had driven off quite a quantity of stock; but, as both parties appeared to be afraid, there were no wounds received; the boldness of the Navajoes proceeds from their confidence in the cowardice of the Mexicans. The alcalde rode with us to camp, five miles on, and sent one of his people to Socora for some Apaches; two came in, (one drunk;) they may be highly useful to us in getting guides through their country; the general despatched them to their chief, to meet him to-morrow night. The general here gave permission to the people of New Mexico, living on the Rio Abajo, to march against the Navajoes, in retaliation for the many outrages received at their hands. Saw a fine flock of American partridges to-day; they have no doubt just invaded the country, as I cannot hear of their having been seen before.

October 5.—Took from the alcalde certain mules which he had taken from the citizens as fines for their trading with the Apaches; these mules the alcalde had taken as his own property, and seemed to think it a hard case to think that the general should take them as public property; we marched at half past 8, and came to Socora, having heard, just as we were about to leave camp, that the best road to the Gila was directly out from the Del Norte at this place; all the command express satisfaction at the prospect of so soon getting out of the settlements; as the Mexicans, by the want of fairness in dealing, have made every one anxious to leave them behind. It will never do to make an offer to a Mexican anything near the price, as he is sure to insist upon more, and thinks you are not in earnest, even if you send him off. We hear, at Socora, that six deserters from Major Sumner's command at Santa Fé have been taken up at El Paso by the Mexicans. The hills opposite to Socora are composed of diluvial drift rocks; back of Socora, west of the Del Norte, the mountains are composed of volcanic rocks of all colors, and various character; a white seam of a substance like magnesia; in one place, the rocks exhibited the appearance of falling into a semi-molten state; the hills at the base of the mountains are composed of fragments of the igneous rocks in an undisturbed state, with no appearance of being rounded by attrition. We had considerable discussion again this evening about the route to the Gila; the guide we engaged had not contemplated the difficulties beyond the point where he struck the Gila, and he inclines to go 18 miles south of the copper mines; we will now probably go down the Del Norte



still further.

October 6.—Marched at 9, after having great trouble in getting some ox carts from the Mexicans; after marching about three miles, we met Kit Carson, direct on express from California, with a mail of public letters for Washington; he informs us that Colonel Frémont is probably civil and military governor of California, and that about forty days since, Commodore Stockton, with the naval force, and Colonel Frémont, acting in concert, commenced to revolutionize that country, and place it under the American flag; that, in about ten days, their work was done, and Carson, having received the rank of lieutenant, was despatched across the country by the Gila, with a party to carry the mail; the general told him that he had just passed over the country which we were to traverse, and he wanted him to go back with him as a guide; he replied that he had pledged himself to go to Washington, and he could not think of not fulfilling his promise. The general told him he would relieve him of all responsibility, and place the mail in the hands of a safe person, to carry it on; he finally consented, and turned his face to the west again, just as he was on the eve of entering the settlements, after his arduous trip, and when he had set his hopes on seeing his family. It requires a brave man to give up his private feelings thus for the public good; but Carson is one such! honor to him for it! Carson left California with 15 men; among them, six Delaware Indians—faithful fellows. They had fifty animals, most of which they left on the road, or traded with the Apaches, giving two for one; they were not aware of the presence of the American troops in New Mexico; they counted upon feeling their way along, and in case the Mexicans were hostile, they meant to start a new outfit, and run across their country. When they came to the Copper-mine Apaches, they first learned that an American general had possession of the territory of New Mexico. The Apaches were very anxious to be friendly with the Americans, and received them very cordially, much to their surprise. The column moved on *ten miles*, and encamped under a beautiful grove of cotton-woods, and the general issued an order reducing the command to 100 men, taking C and K companies with him, and leaving B, G, and I companies under Major Sumner's command, in the New Mexican territory. The officers to march with the expedition are General Kearny, Captains Turner and Johnston, Major Swords, quartermaster, Assistant Surgeon Griffin, Lieutenants Warner and Emory, topographical engineers, Captain Moore, Lieutenants Hammond and Davidson, 1st dragoons. Each company has three wagons, with eight mules in each, and the whole of the other companies put under requisition to supply C and K companies with the best outfits. It went hard with some of the company commanders to part with their fine teams, the accumulation of many years, in their companies; but the public service being paramount, they submitted cheerfully. The Apaches came to us to-day, and gave us four young men as guides.

October 7.—Took leave, and marched at 9; and passed an uninhabited country with fine bottoms of grass and groves of cotton-

wood; the hills and out-country as desolate-looking as before; the most of the grass in the bottoms is of a harsh character; but the grama abounds on the hills. We passed several places where the volcanic action was perceptible; near camp, the hills are capped with a rim of black basaltic rock, some of five feet thick; about two miles from this evening's camp, passed the ruins of an old village, probably Valverde; there were no signs of houses, except the piles of dirt and pieces of pottery scattered about.

October 8.—Marched at 8; distance, 18½ miles; the bottom of the Del Norte grows narrower, and we had much rough road and sand; the thorny mezquite and other bushes making it necessary to have a pioneer party with axes to clear the road; we halted at a dense thicket of willows, in which we saw a flock of wild turkeys; passed the commencement of the jornada of 100 miles without water on the Chihuahua road; on the other side of the Del Norte, it is separated from us by a high volcanic mountain. The mountains along here seem to get more lofty; occasional seams of dark basalt or trap are seen, but most of the peaks are composed of lighter colored lava or trap, thrust up as granite usually is, and changed to a reddish color by exposure of its surface. The back-bone of North America appears to have split open along here, and all the igneous rocks have been thrust up with a general parallelism, without making a continuous range along this seam. The waters of the Del Norte run (while the waters of the Arkansas, the Gila, and other streams flow east and west) directly from it. An experienced traveller in these regions tells me that a fine road could be gotten from some place about here to the frontier settlements of Texas, on its Red river. If so, the future city of New Mexico must be about the south end of the Jornada mountain. We are now near 200 miles down the Del Norte from Santa Fé, but the stream is still unfit for any purposes of navigation. Carson tells us that, at the rate we are travelling, we will not get to Angelos in four months.

October 9.—Marched at 8, after repairing the hound of one of C company's wagons, which broke at dark last night; our road all day was very rough, and we made but little progress with the wagons; in one place, the guides were two hours hunting a route around a hill which lay in our way, capped with basalt; the basalt is of a dark color, containing, probably, a large portion of iron. It was seamed in various ways with a light colored substance, which divided the mass into irregular spheroids. Some of the basalt was cellular, some solid; in all, about eight feet thick. In another place, the same seam fell into a hollow, and was about fifteen feet thick, with an irregular columnal structure; near this was a mass of volcanic cinder. This basalt, or trap, capping the hills, is one of the reasons why travelling is so difficult in this country; as this, coupled with the loose gravel and sand in which the feet of the animals sink, makes a wagon drag heavily; and already we begin to hear of resorting to packs. We passed to-day a remarkable mass of conglomerate, which had been

left when the hill it stood upon washed away. It resembled a house, at a distance, very much. From one of the hills, we could see the mountain of Albuquerque, 150 miles distant. We marched to-day about 18 miles, and crossed the river at a good ford, into a remarkable bend, southwest of the Jornada mountain; wagons arrived about 5, p. m.; having gone about 11½ miles, a number of mules gave out in the teams to-day, indicating that our rate of travel must be very slow to reach California with wagons. Upon due consultation, the general determined to remain in camp, and send to Major Sumner for mules to take back the wagons and other property which we could not need in packing, and resort at once to packing as a means of transportation. This he resolved upon, knowing what he had passed over; and, upon the report of Carson, who represents the country as worse rather than better in front. Leaving, then, to Captain Cooke the task of opening a wagon road, he determined as above. A Mexican, Tones, and Corporal Clapin were despatched at midnight, and ordered to ride to Major Sumner before stopping—60 miles.



Sketch of Jornada mountain.

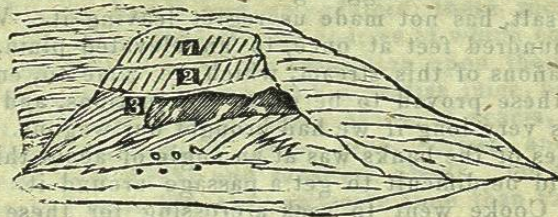


1. Volcanic. 2. Sedimentary. 3. Volcanic. 4. Chalky.

October 10.—Frost and ice in the morning; remained in camp; Santiago Ortiz and another New Mexican came into camp with mules for sale, which they said they got from the Apaches in trading; as this is contrary to the laws of the territory, the general confiscated all the mules they said they had gotten from the Apaches, and sent them off. They said they knew it was contrary to law, and were willing to submit; the general gave them a paper stating what he had done, and the reasons for it; they then asked for license to trade with the Apaches, which was granted them; they asked leave to withdraw, and departed. Grass at camp not good.

October 11.—Ice and frost; the water of the river getting cold; the water is reddish, and does not settle as soon as that of the Missouri; visited a locality of rock resembling that of chalk in appearance, about two miles east of camp; it outlooms at the base of the Jornada mountain, with a difference of ten degrees east under the mountain; it rests upon coarse sandstone, or rotten conglomerate, and underlies the stratified masses of the Jornada; a deep wash in the hill is walled with this white rock as an amphitheatre; it is in a full state so highly charged with lime, that, in times past, water has formed large masses of tufa in the crevices of the same rock and the adjacent ones in front of it; next the river, is a large mass of protracted black basalt; on the top of the higher hills, a mile

further east, and resting upon the superincumbent strata of the chalky substance, are large masses of lighter colored trap; near the



base of the black volcanic masses in the bed of the Del Norte, there rises a spring highly charged with carbonate of soda; in fact, throughout the valley of the Del Norte, soda effloresces on the surface of the bottoms, in many places perfectly white. In passing along the river, I saw the tracks of the otter, the catamount, the wildcat, the bear, the raccoon, the polecat, the crane, the duck, the plover, the deer, and the California quail. The latter differs from the quail of the United States: the male has a plume of black, and the female of reddish feathers, and the plumage of both has more blue in it than that of the United States.

October 12.—Laid in camp, wondering why our pack-saddles did not come; a wish was expressed for a parcel of Irish wheel-cars to transport our baggage over the rough country; the idea may be worth something; a wheel car is a horse wheelbarrow. All persons who have resorted much to packing for an army, know how destructive it is to animals.

October 13.—Lt. Ingolls arrived with the pack-saddles and the mail, containing general orders No. 30 to 36, and letters which required answering. We had already moved our camp across the river, to a camp with fine grama grass; we then stayed all day, and completed our work, wrote to friends, and closed the door to future communication with the States, as we will now pass into the Apache country, where it is probable no one will dare follow us.

October 14.—Marched at a quarter before 9, and got off pretty well, as we had almost a pack for every person; all were busy to the hour of starting, from the general down; but our pack-saddles were bad and our lash ropes worse; with a few cases of kicking and no accidents, we made our march down the river, (17 miles,) and encamped opposite to the mountain San Diego. The country passed over was the same pretty much as before. The mountain San Diego appears to be composed of strata upheaved, and dipping east, with a steep escarpment on the river; along its river face are seams of basalt; opposite to it, dipping south, is a locality of compact blue limestone, probably cretaceous. West of this is a small mountain with the strata dipping north, with a steep escarpment to the south; all this within five or six miles; about here our road was more broken than usual. The eastern part of San Diego mountain appears to be covered with cedar bushes; but at the distance we are from it, the best spy glass cannot distinguish them from volcanic rocks.