

sumes decidedly a new character—level, dry-looking plains, fertile-looking soil, being a dark vegetable loam; timber scarce, but no perfectly bare prairies, being sparsely set everywhere with scrubby *mezquite*, and occasional pecan, hackberry, live-oak, &c., altogether very similar to the lower plains about San Antonio.

The Arkansas regiment followed the same route, and arrived at San Antonio (or Camp Crockett) on the 28th of same month.

Captain Hughes desired some account of the history of San Antonio de Bexar. In this brief notice I shall aim to insert nothing that was apparent to every observer, as I could not have the presumption to relate what Captain Hughes was more capable of seeing for himself.

Tradition says that the present site of this town was originally a *Pueblo* of Indians, called the *Texas*, whence the name of the province. Judge Morgan (of San Antonio) informed me that according to the archives, a presidio, or garrison, was established there in 1715, and that a colony of families immigrated to the place from the Canary Islands in 1732. Nevertheless, it will be perceived from the following passage in "Los Tres Siglos de Mexico," p. 78 of vol. 2, that attempts at least were made at a much earlier period. After speaking of the settlement of Monclova, the author relates that in the year 1691, "in the neighboring province of *Asinais*, or, as called by the Spaniards, *Texas*, (perhaps the most pacifically-inclined nation on the continent,) the governor of Coahuila was ordered to select a site for a *presidio*; and it was provided that fourteen *padres Franciscans* should labor in that ministry. The *presidio* and missions were actually located during this period; yet a long drought having supervened after the lapse of two or three years, which caused the death of the cattle that had been taken there, the loss of the crops, and the ill will of the Indians towards the Spaniards on account of the vexations occasioned them by the latter, nearly all the missions were abandoned."

Yet, by the two following passages from the same history, pp. 113 and 130, we will perceive that Judge Morgan's information was virtually correct, or nearly so: "1715. At the close of this year the *presidio* of Texas was already established, and the *padres Franciscans* employed themselves in reducing those savages and forming *pueblos*." "1731. In this year the Marquis de Casafuerte sent a colony of Canarians, who settled in the town which he caused to be built, the plan of which was laid off by Don Antonio de Villaseñor."

According to tradition, the original *presidio* was located west of San Pedro creek, two or three hundred yards from the *Plaza Militar*. But upon the immigration of the Canarians (or *Isleños*, Islanders, as more frequently termed by the people,) the Indians, I suppose, having been pretty well rooted out, the former located themselves just east of the present church, forming what is still termed the *Plaza de los Isleños*. The church is said to have been founded about 1740, and the *Plaza Militar*, immediately back of the church, was doubtless established between this period and the immigration of the Canarians.

Of those old missions in the vicinity of San Antonio I need only say a word concerning their foundation. The most important are said to have been built under the direction of a famous monk called Padre Margil. The mission of La Concepcion, as tradition says, is the oldest, which is confirmed by the date, over the door, of 1754; while that of the Alamo is

1758. I could find no date about either of the other ruins except on the steeple of San José, which I think is not to be depended upon, being 1781.

I can now think of nothing else that would be likely to interest Captain Hughes, of which he might not have obtained information himself more satisfactory than I could presume to give him. I will merely add that, by various observations, I determined the latitude of the public square of San Antonio to be $29^{\circ} 25' 30''$; longitude, by eclipses of Jupiter's satellites, about $98^{\circ} 52'$ west from Greenwich.

Owing to the very hasty manner in which the foregoing paragraphs were written, I find, upon glancing over them, so much monotony, repetition—indeed, confusion and ambiguity, I fear—that I could not offer them to Captain Hughes in their present condition, had I time to re-write them; but I must trust to his indulgence for an apology.

Very respectfully,

JOSIAH GREGG.

PARRAS, December 7, 1846.

Memoir of a reconnaissance of a route from Monclova, Mexico, to Monterey, Mexico, made in November, 1846.

SIR: On the 14th of November, 1846, I left Monclova, under orders from Brigadier General Wool, to proceed to Monterey with all possible despatch, and to report to Major General Taylor for despatches. Incidentally I was to make a reconnaissance of the route between the two places, but the first object was speed. An escort of six men of the Arkansas regiment, commanded by Lieutenant Desha of that regiment, accompanied me, as did also Captain Webb of the Illinois volunteers, and Mr. Danno of New Orleans, a commissary agent. Both of the latter were on their way to the United States.

Having no guide, I was obliged to depend for my knowledge of the road on such information as I could pick up about it in Monclova on the morning of the start.

I left the town about 7 a. m., and after travelling for about two hours in a direction east of south, arrived at a small village called Castaña. Here was a fine stream of good water, and a very good camping ground. The village is small, not containing more than two or three hundred inhabitants. They are supported by the cultivation of the land in the vicinity, which produces fine crops of corn. Twenty-three miles farther is Bajan. This is a deserted rancho, and the ground in the vicinity gives evidence of having once been in a high state of cultivation. There is a small stream of good water here, and a pool formed by an embankment. In the immediate vicinity of the pool the ground is marshy, and there is a fine growth of grass upon it. Here I encamped for the night. At Castaña I was joined by a Mexican, who, finding out that I was going to Monterey, requested permission to travel with me. As he said he had been over the road frequently, I was very glad to grant him the permission, and found him very serviceable as a guide throughout the whole route.

From Monclova to Bajan the road is nearly straight. Between Monclova and Castaña it is rough, but from the latter place to Bajan it runs

over a plain, and is very smooth. The only vegetation along this part of the route is the muskeet and prickly pear. At intervals, some coarse dry grass appeared, but it was so covered with the dust, which was very thick, that it was almost useless as food for the horses.

The road runs along a valley, bounded on both sides by high mountains, the tops of which are about ten miles apart.

As far as Bajan the roads to Monterey and Parras from Monclova coincide. At that point they separate—that to Monterey striking to the east, and the Parras road keeping to the west.

The Monterey road for twenty miles is good, running over a soil that appeared to require only water to make it fertile. As it is, nothing but muskeet and cactus grow, solely owing, I imagine, to the absence of rain. The direction of the road varies a little north of east, bending gradually to the south. About twenty miles from Bajan is a miserable rancho, where we found a large flock of goats. These subsist on the scanty herbage in the vicinity, and water is obtained for them from a large well. The water was pretty good, but would not have been sufficient for General Wool's command without a large supply of vessels to contain it, for constant drawing for twenty-four hours would have been required for the large quantity of animals with the army.

From this point the road becomes more rough, and approaches nearer to the mountains to the east of it. The direction is still southeast. About seven miles from the rancho it crosses a small stream, on which was a fine growth of grass. The water of this was so bitter that we could not drink it. Eight miles farther is another rancho, the family at which appeared to be engaged in making muscal. Nothing but the maguey and muskeet grows in the vicinity, and the master of the place told me that he obtained his corn at a hacienda to the northeast, which was not in sight. Probably this rancho is a dependency of the hacienda spoken of. The only water was contained in a tanque, was nearly putrid, and there was very little of it. We arrived here at 4 p. m., and after feeding our horses, and resting for an hour, set out again. About 12 p. m. we encamped in a large growth of muskeet, with some good grass. The night was very dark, so that, from the last rancho to camp I know nothing of the road, except that it was very rough, and once we made a considerable ascent and descent, which, with the partial view of the mountains near us, led me to believe we were going through some mountain pass. The whole distance travelled to-day was fifty miles.

As there was no water at or near the camp, we started about 4 o'clock a. m., and, after travelling twenty miles over a road a good deal cut up by rain channels, arrived at a place named, according to the guide, Cañas.

This we found to be a hacienda, with a large extent of ground in a high state of cultivation. Sugar-cane was the principal crop. There was some corn growing, but not more than enough for food for the inhabitants of the place. We rested here during the heat of the day, and about 3 p. m. started again, and after travelling twelve miles, encamped two miles south of a place called by the guide Pueblito. The vicinity of the road during this day's march, until we arrived at Cañas, presented almost identically the same appearance that it had previously. It was entirely barren, producing nothing but muskeet and maguey, and was hemmed in by high mountains, apparently ten miles apart. At Cañas all this changed. The maguey disappeared, the Spanish bayonet taking its

place; the soil produced some grass, and we appeared to be getting into a country susceptible of some cultivation. Four miles south of Cañas we crossed a stream about thirty yards in width and two feet in depth, which flowed eastwardly through a gap in the mountains to the west, and which had worn for itself, in the soft soil, a deep and broad bed. The road was crossed at intervals of two or three miles by small streams flowing from the mountains, and the banks of these were well settled by small farmers, who produced an abundance of corn.

On the 18th, making an early start, we arrived at a village about five miles from Pueblito, called Abasolo. It contained about five hundred inhabitants, and is beautifully situated on both sides of the river above mentioned.* Here we obtained corn for our horses. Two miles farther, is a small village called Chipinque; three miles from this, another of the same size named Topo Grande; and six miles farther, another called Topito. The river leaves the road at Chipinque, flowing off towards the east. At Topito another small stream crosses the road, flowing northeast. It is doubtless a branch of the first stream. Thirteen miles farther is Monterey.

Along the whole of this day's march (twenty-four miles) the country was well settled, well watered, and the soil was fertile—the whole face of the country presenting a more cheerful appearance than anything I had yet seen in Mexico.

The great scarcity of water on the part of the road midway between Monclova and Monterey presents an obstacle to the march of an army almost insuperable. In the whole distance from Castaña to Cañas there is but one running stream, and the water of that is so impregnated with salts that it is impossible to drink it. My guide told me that it affected horses so much that they never were allowed to taste it. The supplies of water at the two ranchos are so limited that they would not go far towards remedying the evil.

The road is but little travelled by Mexicans; for the Camanches, in making their marauding excursions into the west, cross the road in several places, so that a small party is in great danger along the whole route. I was informed Bajan had been deserted on account of the depredations of the Indians, and that now it is a favorite camping-ground for them on their way to and from the scenes of their depredations.

Respectfully submitted:

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To Major G. W. HUGHES,

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From Monterey to Saltillo.

Not finding General Taylor at Monterey, I left that place on the 20th of November for Saltillo, where he then was. As the road between these two places has been often described by reconnoitring officers who have gone over it, I shall merely state that it is a good wagon road, well watered,

* This stream is doubtless a branch of the San Juan.