



Thomas Montgomery and family papers.

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We then started at 10 P.M. to return to camp. The moon was not reaching us, although some
thought we would reach camp by midnight - but our ideas of distances were
rather mixed for once, for it took us till sunrise next morning to get back to camp and
then we came straggling in one after another, for we lost our way among the hills
and after firing cannon & throwing up rockets we heard no answer and laid over
till morning light should guide us on our weary way. Never was men better pleased
than we at sight of Camp. Two Cots & hungry were we, but well pleased with our
adventure, since they were over. I would not have missed being among that number for evidence
I have been thus particular in noticing the events of that day, because it was most particular
our battle, for none but the 7th had any hand in it, till the Indians were driven from their
own chosen position & it was a choice one for them to fight in, but poorly they met it.
The battle is called the Battle of the Big Mountain, and the Camp is called after the General.
I will be more brief now. I will keep closer to my diary. There was killed on our side
Dr. Meier, St. Freeman & Private Stock all of the M. R. and all imprudently. Another of the Cavalry
boys was killed by lightning from a thunder shower which occurred during the fight.
Mr. Brackett from St. Louis, Battle Contractor was missing and supposed killed till to day
when the mail from Camp Atchison told that he was still alive. He soon had to
July 25th At noon struck tents & marched a mile to Camp Whelan. The two boys riding
Lt. Vanday. Started out at 5 A.M. Marched for our old battle ground through
the Indian camps & where we were before night of 24th

After we marched 10 miles, the Scouts reported Indians meeting us. We halted
and after a little camped by a Lake called Buffalo Lake. Camped & left under
the 6th deployed in advance. The artillery shelling them. Immediately Indians
were seen all around and we were formed in line. Just then a squad of 100
Indians swept down the hill from the west among the trees. We then
were met by Cavalry who swiftly pursued them killing 4 Indians.
One white bear. Saw his scalp & body and other scalps, skinning
up all afternoon killing in all 16 Indians, only one M. R. wounded.
Captured a Squaw. 27th The 7th again in advance. Cos. 3 & 4 deployed
in front, next to the Scouts. Indians seen in forenoon but they retreated.
Marched over an extensive level prairie 25 miles and camped over a river
called Stone Lake. Camp Shunaman. Corp. of Correll guard to night and
to march. 28th The train had scarcely started when cannonading was heard
in advance and a brisk skirmish ensued for an hour. The Indians suddenly
appeared on all sides horse & foot, several hundred. Our forces were deployed to
meet them. The train formed, the cannon firing away at them
they made them retreat & the train moved on. Went over a level prairie country 25
miles, and camped on a small stream. Camp Steer. Quite a number of
teams gave out. A wounded soldier died & buried. 5 Indians were killed this morning
and one captured during the march, who reports 62 killed in all. Three Indians
were killed and scalps since coming into camp. I was in a position this
morning to see the whole affair, to see the consternation & hurry among the bands
the hurrying to & fro of companies, the Cavalry deployment, the firing of the
of the Indians, the driving away of our scouts, the yelling & warring of the savages
the rapid volley of muskets, the rapid discharge of artillery, the confusion
of the whole, the whistling of the bullets, and the galloping from side to side on
both sides, made a grand sight generally.
29th Reached at 11 A.M. occupied 5 hours crossing stream. Marched to Mission River
which came in sight at 4 P.M. 12 miles & saw hundreds of Indians on the opposite
side. The Cavalry & Battery went ahead early & was hidden in the dense woods which
lined the river bottom & hours before we came. It lay in the hot sun for some time while
the 6th leg. Skimmed through the dense bottom 2 miles wide down to the river.

say I turned in the evening without accomplishing much only making observations. They found that the Indians had crossed the River in a great haste, but left on this side all their transportation, consisting of 150 wagons with great quantities of harness, robes, &c. and large quantities of pemmican. The orders of the battery were to shell the river bottom only. If they had been permitted to shell the Indians on the high bluffs before them, they could have slain numbers of them. It is supposed vast numbers of Squaws & Paposes were drowned in crossing this mighty River, which is here from $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile wide, as they had no means of crossing except by attaching ropes pole to wagon boxes. We then marched down the river 5 miles and camped on Apple River, Camp Houghton. The Indians fired on the skirmishes, as they reached the river to get water, but the balls fell short in the water. At night it was found that 3 were missing. One Lt. Beaver, a volunteer aid on Sibley's Staff. An Englishman of fortune & high respectability, and a graduate of Oxford University, the two other privates of Co. K. 6th Regt. Signal guns were fired, and rockets thrown up during the night, but they did not come in. They were supposed killed. Lt. Beaver was bearing despatches from Gen. Sibley to Col. Crooks & when last seen was on his way back. July 30th Indians fired the Prairie last night in order to burn us out, but it done us no harm. Black firing was kept up by the rockets. The Regiment turned out under arms and remained out some time. Will stay here a day or two. Fired signal guns. After dinner a force of 4 companies from each Regt. went out under Crooks to search for Beaver &c. and to destroy all the Indian property on this side of the river. Our Co. went out to guard a forage train &c. At dark the boy returned. They found the body of Lieut. Beaver and the others & killed 2 Indians. One Beaver in his return took the wrong trail and was shot by 2 arrows, and his horse shot by balls. ~~He~~ ^{He} was killed 2 Indians, as two pools of blood were found. Even in the rain being short he was not scalped, but a piece was taken out of his Chin with rain on. He was robbed of everything by them, but his shirt & drawers. One of Co. K. 6th was also found scalped, the other was sun struck & returned to camp. They destroyed about 120 wagons harness &c. and brought some up to camp. After this threw up some fine rockets & fired signal guns to notify Gen. Sully if he was in the country of our presence. 31st Warm day, stay in camp to day also. Lt. Beaver buried at 10 A.M. with Masonic honors. Co. K. out to guard forage train, after which I with others went up on a high hill one mile South, and across the Apple River and had a fine view of the Missouri River & Country 15 miles each way. It was a grand sight. At 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ had dress parade. Complimentary orders were read from Gen. Sibley announcing that 46 Indian bodies were found & from 120 to 150 known to be killed. Only 3 of our men killed & 3 wounded. That the objects of the expedition were fully accomplished; the enemy routed and that we would start homeward in the morning. Our Lt. Col. in an order complimented his men also for their valor. About nine o'clock in squads crossing to this side of Missouri. An attack expected. At 10 P.M. nearly the whole Brigade turned out, and deployed round camp, did some extra rifle pits, and lay on arms all night. Indians fired into camp, & with fire returned, & stampede about cattle, but it was stopped & no damage done. Indians supposed to be secret in the timber on the bottom close to camp, but it would be a needless exposure of life to try & pursue them any further as we could not cross the Missouri, we only having 5 pontoon boats along out of 21, which was not enough to cross the train. A Council if war was held. Some were for pursuing the Indians with a select force, and by crossing on a ferry, others were opposed to it, so it was decided to return which perhaps was best as we had only enough rations to get back in, and did not know what might happen.

August 1st Bid good bye to the Missouri and started forward
the 7th in advance, Co. K & I deployed in front. Indians fired on our
rears. Our numbers were in camp shortly after we left. Came near
our old trail. Camped by water, plenty grass. Co. I & K. Camped at night.
Name of Camp, Braden. Signal guns, rockets, and fire balls, fired to
signal duty if he was in the country.
2nd Marched 20 miles East to Camp Banks. Saw a herd of buffalo. Saw
3rd Marched 14 miles N.E. to Camp Kennedy, over quite a stony country, and
approaching the big hills. On windy day. Saw 3 buffalo as near as 1/2 mile.
Camped by spring water, plenty grass. A scout died this morning. At night
we had the heaviest rain & thunder storm of the season since near all night.
4th the 7th in advance, Marched N.E. 18 miles to Camp Pittman our present
camp. At 11 A.M. reached Camp Pittman where we had the first glimpse
of the big hills & ground in sight all day. Went on our old trail & camped on
Swine Lake, 5th Day over here 6 day because the mules were giving out.
Early in forenoon, the scouts reported Indians all over the prairie before us. So we
were ordered to march and were all ready, but it proved to be the mail
and half breed escort, which we were all rejoiced to see, and put a stop to
our marching to day, all was excitement to hear from our other camp and
to get our mail. I was happy to receive a letter, as stated before.
The news from the other camp was that they were all well. Part of them
had been to Devil's Lake after some Indians, but they were gone, a few days
they captured however one Indian. Little Crow's son he is now a prisoner.
Little Crow himself is also killed. We were also glad to hear of Breckhoff's
safety although he had a hard time of it for a few days.

Camp Pittman Aug 10th Had to cease writing last night to go
on guard. Marched to day 18 miles to this place and now by candle light
hasten to close as the mail leaves in the morning. Our Lieut. Col. and
Marshall, starts tomorrow morning also, for St. Paul, with despatches
and probably, to know what disposition will be made of this troops.
The hope to reach our other camp, Saturday or Sunday. The boys no doubt
will be glad to see us. The probable will reach Fort. Totten country in
about 2 weeks. It is 280 miles from St. Paul, which we may reach by
the middle of Sept. if all be well and we go that way. But it is hard
to tell yet which will be done with us.
I have now given you a synopsis of our doings so and will reserve the
details till I get home. Have written longer than I intended, but
I hope it will be interesting. If not I will try & do better next time.
I would like to write to some of my other friends, but lack in time. You might
let those round home read the foregoing if they wish to. It is accurate in every
particular, so near as I can find out. This as I wrote before is all a vast prairie
country without any timber, much middling, well water with little grass.
The water in some are salt, in others alkaline and others fresh. We have dug wells at
every camp to get good drinking water. We always camp by a lake, river or marsh.
The grass is much better now than it used to be, but the high lands are still
barren and very often stony, and out there quite hilly. The mules although
much lightened in their loads, cannot stand as long a march as the soldiers
can. The Co. march much faster but for them a great many give out.
We had to burn some wagons, we could not take along. The all stand the march
is remarkably well. No one in the brigade has died from sickness since we left camp.

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