

REPORT OF CAPTAIN JOHN STUART ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ROAD FROM FORT SMITH TO HORSE PRAIRIE ON RED RIVER

CAROLYN THOMAS FOREMAN

The Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek authorizing the removal of the Choctaw tribe of Indians from the East was executed September 27, 1830, and in 1831 Francis W. Armstrong, the agent was located at the Choctaw Agency thirteen miles west of Fort Smith to superintend the passage of those who were going to locate on Red River. It was planned to bring the Indians up Arkansas River and land them near the agency. A site near the landing place was selected for Fort Coffee in 1834.

Armstrong obtained from the government at Washington an order calling on the commanding officer at Cantonment Gibson to furnish a detail of soldiers to construct a wagon road from Fort Smith to Red River over which the emigrants could pass. Lieutenant-Colonel James B. Maney in command at Fort Gibson, ordered Captain John Stuart on March 22, 1832, to proceed to Fort Smith, and there consult with Colonel Robert Bean, a famous woodsman, and begin the construction of the road.

¹Francis W. Armstrong, a native of Virginia, was appointed to the army from Tennessee. He was assigned to the Seventh Infantry as a captain but resigned April 30, 1817; he served as United States Marshal for the District of Alabama and in March 1831, was appointed agent for the Choctaw in Arkansas Territory. Later he became Acting Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Western Territory, holding this office until his death August sixth, 1835, at the Choctaw Agency.

²Order issued by the Secretary of War in November, 1831. Regimental Order No. 33 issued by Lieutenant-Colonel James B. Maney, Seventh U. S. Infantry, March twenty-second, 1832, at Cantonment Gibson.

³James B. Maney was born in Delaware and appointed to the Army from the same state. He was assigned to the Seventh Infantry as Lieutenant-Colonel January 1, 1822 to rank from the first of June 1821. He died February 23, 1852.

⁴Heltman in his Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, 1789—1903 vol. 1, page 925 spells Stuart's name Stewart and he gives the following account of his service—John Stewart was

Armstrong had written Colonel Many that he had made the necessary examination for the purpose of ascertaining the utility and practicability of the contemplated road and that he was fully satisfied of its importance to the public. He selected Colonel Bean to accompany the command to "point out the precise ground over which the Road will run," and he suggested the importance of completing it before the extreme heat of the summer as he had learned from persons acquainted with the country that the flies would be hard on the horses and oxen employed in the work.

Though embarrassed by conflict between the military and Indian service which deprived him of adequate means and facilities for doing the work, Stuart, with his force of men, made the road; on his return to Fort Gibson he prepared the following report' to the commanding officer.

Fort Gibson 19 July 1832.

Sir:

In making a report of the Road which I have just completed the opening of, from Fort Smith on the Arkansas to Horse Prairie on Red River, through the Choctaw Nation, I have in view two material points, First to give as minute a description of the Road opened, and the country through which it runs as possible, and with the means which I have had within my control; and in the Second place I will attempt to give as complete a history of the commencement progreffs, and ultimate completion of the same as possible.

The road has never been regularly surveyed but was marked out by a citizen of Arkansas Territory (Col. Robt. Bean) he commenced his blazes at Fort Smith, and terminated them at Horse Prairie, about 20 miles above Fort Towson on Red River; I commenced the Road at Fort Smith, and followed those blazes throughout as nearly as practicable, and after arriving at the South end of the Road, I would have liked on my return to have made an accurate survey and measurements of it from Red River to Fort Smith, but I

born in Kentucky and entered the army as a private in 1814; he was made a sergeant in 1815 and a second lieutenant in the Seventh Infantry the thirteenth of August 1819; first lieutenant sixth of October 1822; captain June 30, 1828. He died December 8, 1838.

¹War Department Adjutant General's Office, Old Files Division.
180 A. 32.

had neither suitable instruments to effect that object or authority to do so; I did however, cause a rough measurement to be made by a Sergeant and four men detailed for that purpose, which measurement was superintended by Doctor Holt of Little Rock, the attending Surgeon to the detachment—who very politely volunteered his services for that purpose.—The measurement was made with a galls rope, but not with standing I think it is tolerably accurate, in as much as I know that every exertion was made by the party to have it so, this prairie (Horse) is almost a perfectly level plain, it is nearly three miles in width, and will from all appearances be muddy in the wet seasons, the Road then runs* about 8 miles over a flat country covered with Post Oak, Black Jack &c to the Kiamichi Prairie, a great portion of which space will be miry for the first year, or until it is trodden hard. It then runs through the Kiamiche Prairie 13 miles, nearly the whole of which space is gently rolling and dry, and is susceptible of making a good road. It then runs about 12 miles over a succession of small hills or ridges to the Prairie Fork of Kiamiche, for the first 9 or 10 miles of this space, the soil is almost entirely sand, and is covered with a thick growth of Post Oak, and Black Jack Saplings, from 6 to 8 inches in diameter and is thickly covered with an under brush of the same kind of timber, together with luxuriant galls, this space abounds plentifully in fine cool water; in the last 2 or 3 miles the ridges are much higher, the timber large, and the soil is clay with a very considerable portion of stone, the Prairie Fork is 70 feet across the bottom, its current is gently, and the stream has less the appearance of a torrent than any of the tributaries of the Kiamiche, the road then runs about 6 miles over a rolling country, partly timbered and partly prairie—with a great portion of stone to the Rocky Fork, which is 132 feet wide with a very rocky bottom, and is a most dreadful torrent; it then runs over a rolling and rocky country with heavy timber for about 6 miles to the mountain Fork, which is also a furious torrent and is crossed within 400 yards of its mouth, it is 99 feet

*It is to be observed that in this part of his report Captain Stuart is traveling from Red River to Fort Smith over the completed road. while in the succeeding statement he describes the route from north to south.

across the bottom, which is filled with round stone of all sizes, and will always be a bad ford; from this creek the land gradually ascends and is rocky for about the distance of three miles, where the road descends the mountain to the Kiamiche River, and runs up that stream about 20 miles, and in some places comes so near to it as to be within the influence of the back water, a high mountain runs all this distance parallel to the River, and not more than two or three miles distant from it at the farthest, and at the lower end of this valley the mountain closes for near two miles so close on the River as to make it extremely difficult to make a way suitable for waggons to pass on, within this short space there are about 20 deep ravines; which break down the side of the mountain and cross the Road, all of which I had to fill up with stone, by making a wall on the lower side with large stone, and then fill up the upper space to a proper level, with small stone and clay; a great portion of this space was thickly covered with stone, and some of them which had rolled down from the side of the mountain were so large as to be immovable with the means which I had, but notwithstanding my limited means I turned out of the way a great number of those stones which were of immense weight by means of pries, and the block and tackle, here much time and great labour would be required to make a good road, but I succeeded in about four days in opening a tolerable good waggon road, the remainder of this valley is in a general way gently rolling with considerable stone and some Prairie, there are several small creeks within this 20 miles, the bottoms of which are rocky and their currents, when high are very swift; Jacks Fork' at the upper end of this pass or valley is 134 feet wide, and has the appearance of being very swift in its current when high, near this River the mountain which has run parallel to the Kiamiche & nearly on a N & S course, now turns and runs several miles parallel to Jacks Fork on a N. W. course, and then turns and runs

"To the entrance of Jack's fork, as it is called, the Klamesha continues hemmed in with lofty pine hills. From hence the mountains diverge; the highest chain still continuing on one side to border the main stream, while, to the north, we came in sight of the "Potatoe hills." Nuttall's Journal, *Thouult's Early Western Travels*, vol. xlii, 225.

S. W. by W. leaving a valley about five miles wide, between it and the main Ozark Mountain, through which valley I think the road should have been made; about one mile from the crossing of this last mentioned stream the road runs into the Prairie of Jacks Valley, and after passing about 3 miles in an open and handsome prairie, it strikes into a cluster of hills or small mountains, mostly of a round or conical form, from which circumstance they are called Potatoe Hills, and crossed one of the largest of them which is very steep on both sides, and much the most so, on the South side where the ascent is about 200 hundred yards long, this cluster of hills is about three miles wide where the road crossed it, and the whole of that space is covered with a heavy forest of Pine and Oak timber; after leaving this cluster which appears to have somewhat the shape of a triangle, the road runs about 3 miles through a Prairie when it again strikes into a heavy forest of Pine, Oak, and Cedar timber, this grove continues two or three miles to the foot of the Ozark Mountain, in this space there are several large Creeks; this mountain is upwards of 4 miles over, and the ascent on the South side is very gradual but is very Rocky, after reaching the Summit the road runs on the narrow top of a spur of this mountain about a mile, when it turns down the North side which is much more steep than the South side, and is for a part of the way down, very rocky, here great labour was required to make a good road, but it was not half so difficult as several other places on the Road, after descending the mountain the road runs about five miles down a creek in a very narrow valley between two high mountains, and this creek is crossed about 12 times in that space, and is very rocky at all the crossings, and for upward of one mile of this distance the mountains close so close to the Creek as to require great labour and much trouble to make even such a way as to enable waggons to pass on; I succeeded however in about 4 days in making a tolerable good waggon road, and as good a one as I could make with the tools which I had with me; I had no instruments for blowing stone, and without them it was impossible to make a good road; this creek is crossed 3 or 4 times within this narrow space and is so much filled with large rocks which have fallen from the sides of the mountain that it was almost impossible to make a ford on

some of them which could be crossed with waggons, some of them I succeeded in getting a sufficiency of the stone rolled out, to make a narrow pass for wagons, and in the others I was compelled to leave the large stone in the ford, and to fill up the space around them to the level with small stone which were broken very small with the sledge for that purpose.

About a mile below this place, the valley widens, and the country for about two or three miles is level and fertile, and within this space the large creek on which the road has run so long, is crossed the last time, it is one of the branches of the Fouche Maline, a branch of the Porteau; soon after crossing this Bayou, the road ascends a considerable mountain, which is extremely rocky and rough, this mountain is about 3 miles over and continues to be rocky the whole way over, and is covered with a heavy forest of Pine and Post Oak timber; after leaving this high land the road runs into a prairie, and it is then alternate prairie and timber to the main branch of the Fouche Maline, which is one of the main branches of the Porteau, this stream is 62 feet across the bottom, it is a bold running stream with a gravelly bottom, and sandy banks, and rises at times to a great height, the country for some distance on both sides of this Bayou is flat, and soft in wet weather, and will be badly calculated to bear up loaded waggons until it is sufficiently travelled on to beat it hard, from this Bayou to the East fork of the same, two miles distant, the country is of the kind last described, and from this last Creek the road runs on high rolling ground with a great portion of rock, for the space of 5 miles to Flat Creek, crossing in that distance one very high and steep hill, from flat creek to the Block House a distance of four miles, the country is very hilly and rough and the road runs over a good deal of stone. From the Block House to the Cavinole Mountain about six miles, the country is with the exception of one high rocky hill tolerable level, and is timbered with Pine and Oak.

"The nomenclature of these regions is quite confusing; much of it, though corrupted in form, bears marks of French origins now irrecoverable. Fourche Mallin on modern maps is Fourche Melane or Malane, and on some old charts is given as Meline Creek, a branch of Cavinole Creek, which, in its turn, is a tributary of the Poteau." Nuttall's *Journal, Thwaites's Early Western Travels*, vol. XIII, 209, footnote 170.

The Cavinole Mountain* is about one mile over, and the slope on the South side is very gradual, but on the North side it is extremely steep and Rocky, and required great labour to make a road over it; from this Mountain to the Bayou Telle a branch of the Porteau, is about 5 miles; the country between those points is tolerably level with alternate prairie and Post Oak groves, the soil is clay and will be very soft in the wet season until it becomes beaten. The Bayou Telle is crofsted at an island and is 66 feet wide on the channel side, and is near twice that width on the Shoal side; From this Bayou to Armstrong's Creek is 3 miles; the country is heavily timbered with Post Oak Elm & Hickory &c and with the exception of one high rocky ridge or mountain, which begins to rise at the crofging of the Bayou Telle, the ground is mostly level and soft, and like all Post Oak land, will continue to be soft when wet until it is rendered hard by tramping; from this creek to the Choctaw Agency" (9 miles) the country is mostly prairie, it is rolling and dry and will make a good road; the distance from the Choctaw Agency to Fort Smith is 13 miles; the first four of which is rolling dry land timbered principally with Post and Black Oak, and there is in this space a handsome little prairie near a mile wide; after leaving the high lands the road runs into a heavy timbered bottom which extends down between the Arkansas and Porteau to their junction, the first two miles of this bottom is covered with a thick under brush closely interwoven with green briers, which made the opening of the road very tedious and extremely unpleasant; the last seven miles of this space is a thick and heavy cane brake, so much interwoven with briers and vines, as to render it almost impenetrable; this last mentioned nine miles occupied my party in opening it near two weeks, here the road runs near the Arkansas River the whole way; the soil is sandy and dry, and will make a fine road when it is sufficiently tramped; the Porteau is crofsted nearly opposite Fort

*Cavinole Mountain was described by Nuttall in his Journal and he wrote that "The natives and hunters assert that subterraneous rumblings have been heard in this mountain." Nuttall's Journal, *Thosote's Early Western Travels*, vol. xiii, 207.

"Choctaw payments were made here and the place was called Skullyville from the Choctaw word for money, Iskull-fehna.

Smith, where the River is too deep to be forded, and where a ferry will necessarily have to be kept.

The distance from Red River to Fort Smith by the measurement made by Dr. Holt and Sergeant Ball is upwards of one Hundred and Forty seven miles.

The land over which this road runs is for the most part, an ash colored clay, extremely poor and is timbered principally with Post Oak, and Black Jack, with occasional groves of Pine and there is on the whole route something like 20 or 25 miles of Prairie, a very considerable portion of the route is covered with stone; and from where it begins (near the Agency) to the Kiamiche Prairie it is entirely a free or sand stone, and from that place to Red River, a distance of about 20 miles the stone is entirely lime stone.

The first 50 or 60 miles of the Road, or that part from Fort Smith to Fouché Maline, is opened from 16 to 20 feet wide and the balance of it is narrower, the reason for which will be hereafter explained. It is however in no place less than from 10 to 16 feet wide and in many places 18 and 20 varying in width according to circumstances; on fine dry land when the woods are open the road is narrow, because there will never be more than the width of a waggon travelled on, In thick groves of Timber on the sides of hills or mountains, or in soft places, it is open wider, and is in no place so narrow that waggons cannot pass each other except some few places where for 50 and a 100 pards the road is dry along the sides of steep hills &c.

STATEMENT¹¹

In order that this part of my report may be more easily and clearly comprehended, I have preceded it with a journal of the measurements &c of the Road which I opened. In obedience to Regimental Order No. 33 of 1832, I proceeded and opened a road from Fort Smith to Red River on a route blazed and marked by the authority of Col. F. W. Armstrong Agent to the Choctaw Indians. When this Regimental order No. 33 was issued some doubts were entertained whether the necessary arrangements for opening the road should be made by the Indian or Qr. Master's Dept; and the prevailing

¹¹War Department, Adjutant-General's Office, Old Files Division, 130 A. 32 and 185 S. 32.

opinion of the Officers of this garrison together with that of the Commanding Officer (Col. Many) was, that inasmuch as it appeared that the road to be opened was exclusively for Indian purposes, that not only the necessary preparation for opening it, should be made by the Indian Department, but that the expenses appertaining to the same should also be borne by that Department. Col. Many however, gave orders to the Actg Afst Qr. Master Lt. Carter to furnish me with one Hundred Dollars on account of the Qr. Master's Dept; and one Hundred on account of Subsistence together with 90 days provision for my detachment which consisted of Lieuts. Davis¹² and Northup¹³ of the 7th Inf. Dr. Holt of Little Rock Act Afst Surgeon to the detachment and forty rank and file, he also directed that I should be furnished with two waggons and teams, and such tools as would be necessary to enable me to perform the duty assigned me, all of which was furnished excepting tools for blowing stone and they could not be procured at the Post.—I considered the two waggons as being totally insufficient to transport the baggage and provisions of the detachment, and made a Requisition on the Act. Afst. Qr. Master of the Post for five additional waggons and teams and a one-horse cart, this requisition was rejected by Col. Many on the grounds that he did not feel himself authorized to fill it, but was of the opinion that arrangements had or would be made at Fort Smith by the Indian Department to transport my supplies.—I left this place for Fort Smith on the 22nd of March in a keel boat with every thing on board which had been furnished me except the two waggons, which were sent by land; I arrived at that place on the 26th and immediately commenced preparing to comply with the instructions furnished me by Col. Many; Col. Bean whom I was instructed to consult with in relation to the locality &c of the road, was absent, and I could find no one who knew anything about it, except that Col. Bean had left that place a few days before and had blazed a way through

¹²John P. Davis was a native of Maine and after his graduation from West Point he was assigned to the Seventh Infantry as a brevet second lieutenant and second lieutenant in July 1829. He was dismissed from the service in 1845 and died in 1853.

¹³Lucius Ballinger Northrop was born in South Carolina and appointed to West Point July 1, 1827. He became a brevet second lieutenant of the Seventh Infantry July 1, 1831. Died February 9, 1894.

the cane brake in the direction of the Choctaw Agency, where they understood a road was to be cut; on the 27th I saw Capt McClellan Sub Agent to the Choctaws, and Lieut Raines of the Army, who was doing duty in the Indian Dept., at Fort Smith, who informed me that Col Bean was then engaged in blazing the way for the Road between that place and the Choctaw Agency, and that they were well convinced that he had no written instructions from Colonel Armstrong, or the War Dept; in relation to the Road, and at the same time they assured me that no arrangement of any kind had been made by the Indian Department towards opening the Road in question, further than to mark the route on which it was to run; and that it was the opinion of Col Armstrong as well as their own, that all the expenditures required in cutting it were to be made by the Qr. Master's Dept; I then had no other alternative left me than to apply to Capt. Brown" Superintendent of the Choctaw Emigration at Little Rock for assistance.

Col Bean was sent for, and on the 28th I succeeded in having an interview with him, whom I found had received no written instructions in relation to the Road, but had verbal instructions to mark a route for a Road, from that place by the Choctaw Agency to a point on Red River called Horse Prairie, some considerable distance above Fort Towson and near the mouth of Boggy, and that he was then engaged in the performance of that duty. I then re-examined the orders and instructions which I had received on the subject, and came to the conclusion, that notwithstanding the general order contemplated, the opening of the Road" from Fort Smith to Fort Towson, that I was bound to follow the blazes made by the authority of Col. Armstrong, and accordingly commenced opening the Road that day on the West Bank of the Porteau, and afterwards dug down the banks of that stream so as to make a good boat landing on both sides; I then proceeded to cut the road on the rout blazed, through a

"Jacob Brown, a native of Massachusetts, rose from the ranks and served in the Quarter Master's Department, being made a captain in 1825. He died from wounds received in the defense of the fort afterwards known as Fort Brown, Texas.

"A more direct road from Fort Smith to Fort Towson was begun in March 1839 under the direction of Major W. G. Bolnap of the Third Infantry. *Batesville (Arkansas) News* July 18, 1870.

heavy cane brake, which has already been described, and about the 8th of the same month, I caused the Act Afst Qr. M. to the detachment, Lt. Davis, to make and forward to the Qr. M. Genl. an estimate for \$2410, to meet the expenditures of the Road; \$2000 was furnished on this estimate, which was not received until the last of June, after the road had been completed and the party at Fort Smith on the return to Fort Gibson. I arrived at the Choctaw Agency on the 15th of April, here heavy rains fell and the ground became extremely soft and I stored everything that could be dispensed with, and proceeded on with the road to the Bayou Telle where I established my camp, and employed the waggons in bringing up the stores; I next proceeded on with the road to the Cavinole Mountain, keeping the two waggons constantly employed in bringing up from one camp to another the baggage and provision of the detachment; the rains continued to fall and the new road became so soft, that I was compelled to keep constantly with the waggons from 8 to 10 men, for the purpose of assisting them over the mud, and sometimes I had my whole party employed in that way, which caused great delay in the opening of the road, I reached the Cavinole Mountain on the 29th of April, where I intended to pitch my last camp unless I should receive further aid in the way of transportation as I was determined not to employ the men any longer in playing the part of oxen; I was detained at this place several days in opening the road over the mountain, during which time I received a letter from Col. Many and at the same time I received intelligence from Capt. Brown at Little Rock, that 4 waggons with three yoke of oxen to each, had been despatched from that place to my aid; Here I began to be apprehensive that I would not have provision enough to subsist the detachment until the road would be completed, and as Lt. Davis was going to Fort Smith for the purpose of meeting the waggons then on their way from Little Rock I directed him to procure at Fort Smith an additional supply of provisions and to bring it up in the waggons; he succeeded in purchasing several barrels of flour but could not procure pork at that place in any way, and it was then too late to send to this place for it—I then opened the road about 7 miles beyond the mountain and established my camp on a large Bayou called Cavinole Bayou, where I determined to remain until the waggons should

come up and as the means of transportation would be very limited, I concluded that I would build a small Block House and leave in it all the baggage which I could possibly dispense with, together with one barrel of pork and one of flour to be used on my return. From this place I found from the report of Choctaw Indians and others that it would be necessary for me to use great circumspection in all of my future movements in order to avoid being surprised by the Western Indians, who it was said were committing depredations on the South side of the Ridge, consequently it became necessary to keep the arms of the working men constantly near them, and having no cart with me, or waggon to spare, I was compelled to construct a sled with a suitable gun rack in it, in which about 10 stand of arms were conveyed and kept constantly up near the front of the party when moving. I was detained at this place about 10 days during which time I cut the road about five miles in advance of the camp, and built a small Block House. Lt. Davis and the waggons at length arrived bringing with them all the provisions which has been stored at the Agency, except a small portion which was intended for use on the return of the party, and such of the tools as had been left at that place and were likely to be required on the rout, and after giving them some repairs as well as the waggons which I had brought with me, I stored such things in the Block House as were to be left, placed it in charge of two men of my Company, and about the 15th May proceeded onwards with the road to the Fouche Maline a fork of the Porteau, where I met Col Bean, who had completed the blazing of the road, and was then returning to join my party, he did not however join them, but went on to Fort Smith and returned and joined me on the South side of the mountain; he informed me on meeting me, that agreeably to his opinion, I was then at least 90 or a 100 miles from the point of destination, a much greater distance than I had any idea of; here my apprehensions of a scarcity of provisions began to increase, in consequence of which I came to the conclusion that I would be compelled to make the road which had thus far opened from 16 to 20 feet wide, some what narrower and in a few days more I reached the commencement of the passes of the Ozark Mountain where I pitched my camp and proceeded to make a minute examination of the rout the

whole way over the mountain, and found it to be extremely rough and rocky for a great portion of the way, and in some places it was almost impossible, and had I followed closely the way blazed over the main Peak of the Mountain I would not have been able to have made a waggon road over it in less than two weeks but I fortunately found a pass over it which was in my opinion decidedly a better route than that blazed, and not more than two or three hundred yards farther, and so much more easily opened that I succeeded in making a good waggon road the whole way over in about 7 or 8 days.

It was now near the last of May, and I had remaining but about 20 days Flour, and about 15 days Pork, and to add to the difficulties which already awaited me, it became necessary from my proximity to the Pawnee^{*} Indians to use additional caution and circumspection in my movements. I accordingly fitted up one of the ox waggons with suitable gun racks &c to convey all the arms and accoutrements of the working party, together with the ammunition &c and kept the party from this place to Red River and back, as near together as was possible, and kept as strong a guard at night as I was able to do, and was compelled to guard the horses and oxen while they grazed at night, for which purpose I mostly kept one sentinel on horseback, and in progressing with the work in the course of the day I kept one man near the head of the party loaded with arms, so that in case of an attack some of the men could be armed in an instant, and cover the others while they were engaged in obtaining their arms &c from the waggon, about this time Col Bean joined me and gave me very flattering accounts of the route over which the road had then to run, here Lt. Northrop went out with a party for the purpose of making some observations, and to hunt Buffaloes, he was absent two or three days when he returned and reported to me that he had been about 25 miles on the blazes and that he was of the opinion that the ground for that distance was as bad or worse to make a road on, than any which I had come over, and that he was of the opinion that there was one place, a narrow pass between mountain and

^{*}Pawnee was the elastic term by which they roughly classified prairie Indians in the Southwest and denoted particularly Pawnee Picts or Pique, Tawehash or Wichita Indians.—Foreman, Grant, *Pioneer Days in the Early Southwest*, 116.

the Kiamiche River which would be impassible; here I had a strong thought of stopping operations on the Road and turning back, but the rout had been blazed, the Indians and others had began to travel on it, public expectation was awakened, and it was very important that a road should then be made through; I went ahead the next day in company with Col Bean and made a minute examination of the pafs spoken of by Lt. Northrop, and found that it was practicable to make a Road through it, but that it would require great labour to effect it, I then determined to go on and open the road at all hazards, and from the difficulty which surrounded me I concluded to reduce the road to a width barely sufficient for waggons to pafs over with convenience and to open it wider on my return, I now saw plainly that from the length of time which I would be detained at this place, my stock of provision would be evidently exhausted before I could reach Red River, consequently I determined to send a party to Fort Towson, for the purpose of procuring an additional supply, and accordingly the next day 3d of June I despatched Lt. Northrup with six men and as many horses, for that place, with instructions to bring up as much provision as his horses could carry, and to make arrangements for 20 days rations for 50 men to be delivered at Horse Prairie (where the Road was to terminate) by the time I would possibly arrive there, all of which he very promptly effected, and returned to the party with his horses loaded with provisions in about 6 days, at least two days sooner than I had expected him; I succeeded in about four or five days in opening through this difficult pafs a tolerable good waggon road; whilst at this place a party of Choctaws who had been hunting on Boggy, came past me in great haste, and said that they had been run in by the Pawnees, who were in considerable force immediately on the west side of the Boggy; after clearing this pafs I proceeded on to Red River with as much despatch as possible where I arrived on the 16th June, having then on hand about 6 days rations of flour, and about 3 days rations of pork, and the supply expected from Towson had not arrived, the next day I despatched an exprefs to that place for the purpose of ascertaining the cause of the delay; by the return of which I was informed that the annual supply for that garrison had failed to arrive, and that the boat containing it was aground near a

hundred miles below, and that the garrison had necessarily consumed the supply which had been intended for me and that they were then reduced to a half allowance of corn in lieu of bread. I was also officially informed that I would not be able to procure corn, short of 80 or 90 miles, I now had no other alternative left me than to put the men on half allowance, and to return with all possible haste to the Block House, distant 110 miles, where I had left a small supply of flour and pork; I found that beef could be procured in the neighborhood of Fort Towson, in the course of a few days but my situation would not admit of any delay, and Lt. Stephenson of the 7th Inf. who is doing business in the Indian Department came to my camp and very politely agreed to furnish me with a few beeves from that Dept.; which he thought he could deliver to me at that place in the course of one or two days; the next day 19th of June at 10 o'clock I commenced my return march leaving Lt. Davis and several soldiers to bring up the beeves so soon as they should arrive, and on the second day he overtook me with three small beeves, which afforded the men a tolerable supply all the way back, by giving them one and a half ration of beef, and a half ration of flour; this supply however was so limited that I was compelled to hurry back, and did not have time to make as much repair or improvement to the road as I had intended to do, I was barely able to cut out of the way, such trees as were most likely to be in the way, improve some of the hill sides, fords of creeks & and to remove as much of the loose stone as I could do without detaining the waggons.

I arrived at Fort Smith on the 28th of June and at this place on the 3d of the present month.

JOHN STUART.

(Copied from the original in the War Department by Carolyn Thomas Foreman who has supplied the introduction and foot-notes.)