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Article Summary: Immediately after the Civil War the United States Army was charged with protecting the advance of white settlers into the central plains. The Republican River Expedition had to endure a month of hard marching and disappointing results before its victory at Summit Springs.

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Photographs / Images: Fort McPherson, Major General Eugene A Carr

THE REPUBLICAN RIVER EXPEDITION,  
JUNE-JULY, 1869  
I. ON THE MARCH

BY JAMES T. KING

THE Republican River Expedition, like other frontier task forces, was organized for a single specific purpose. In June and July, 1869, the Expedition operated in the area of the Republican River Valley in Kansas, Nebraska and Colorado and was charged with the duty of driving the Indian out of this last stronghold on the central plains.

In the years following the American Civil War, the burden of protecting the advance of white population into the central plains was borne primarily by the thin ranks of the United States Army. The units of this frontier army were often undermanned, overofficered, inadequately supplied and beset by discouragement and adversity; and the Republican River Expedition was no exception. These and other aspects of a small-scale Indian campaign become apparent in the story of the five-week operations of this Fifth United States Cavalry detachment from the time of its de-

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parture to the eve of the victory at Summit Springs on July 11, 1869, which "forever secured to the white race the undisputed and unmolested possession of the Republican River and its tributaries."<sup>1</sup>

The situation that called the Expedition into existence had become serious by late in the spring of 1869. A letter opened by the commanding officer of the military Department of the Platte, Gen. Christopher C. Augur, on the morning of June 1 bore the seal of the Governor of the State of Nebraska. It was a desperate appeal for help.

"I have just received news from the Big Sandy and Republican [Rivers]," Gov. David Butler had written to the General:

The Indians are in arms again and are again threatening to repeat their former depredations in that region. The news which I have received is no idle rumor. . . . I would ask if you can send a company of soldiers to that region. If you can how soon can you do it? Can you spare them for four months? Or if not how long can you spare them? If you cannot spare them at all can you furnish me with ammunition, subsistence and transportation for one hundred men, immediately? Or if not with all, with what of these can you furnish me?<sup>2</sup>

General Augur doubtless was concerned, but he could have been little surprised, for the Governor's hasty note was only the latest in a series of reports of actual and threatened Indian terrorism in the country surrounding the Republican River. Earlier in the spring, a particularly dangerous group of Cheyenne, a warrior society known as

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<sup>1</sup> George F. Price, *Across the Continent with the Fifth Cavalry* (New York, 1883), p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> Letter, Gov. David Butler to Gen. C. C. Augur, May 31, 1869. Records of U.S. Army Commands, Selected Documents, Hq. Dept. of the Platte, Letters Received, 1867-1869. National Archives and Records Service (NARS) Record Group (RG) 98, Ms. Microfilm at Nebraska State Historical Society. This body of records is hereafter cited as NARS RG 98. All manuscripts and microfilms are at the Nebraska State Historical Society unless otherwise noted.

the Dog Soldiers,<sup>3</sup> had taken refuge in the Republican Valley.<sup>4</sup> Led by the redoubtable Chief Tall Bull, the Dog Soldiers had managed to elude the dragnet that followed Gen. Philip H. Sheridan's winter campaign on the southern plains. They had been joined by numerous Cheyenne stragglers and by Sioux, particularly the bands under Little Wound, Whistler and Pawnee Killer. The plains Indians were becoming more and more hard-pressed by the inexorable extinction of the buffalo and by the extension across the prairie of the Union Pacific Railroad. Sullenly, through the spring of 1869, the warriors concentrated in the Republican Valley had watched white settlement move gradually closer to their stronghold. By the month of May, they could restrain themselves no longer; smearing on their war-paint, the Dog Soldiers plunged into a series of depredations that brought terror and death to the Republican country. Storming across the plains from the Saline River in Kansas to the Big Sandy in Nebraska, the Indians first struck a small hunting party, then levelled farms and homesteads in a series of lightning raids throughout the region. After nearly annihilating the crew of a Kansas Pacific railroad train, they had ended by destroying a German settlement in Kansas, killing thirteen settlers and carrying off Mrs. Susanna Alderdice, her baby, and Mrs. Maria Weichell to their Republican Valley stronghold.<sup>5</sup> It was apparent that Governor Butler's information was indeed "no idle rumor."

For the moment, however, General Augur could offer little more than token assistance. The frontier Army had

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<sup>3</sup> G. B. Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians* (New Haven, 1922), II, 71. According to Paul I. Wellman, *Death on Horseback, Seventy Years of War for the American West* (New York, 1947), p. 93, membership in the Dog Soldier band was restricted to "the fiercest and most dangerous of all the Cheyenne Warriors"; the group "had its own dances, songs, ceremonial costumes and insignia, besides special medicines and taboos."

<sup>4</sup> C. C. Rister, *Border Command, General Phil Sheridan in the West* (Norman, 1944), pp. 147-8.

<sup>5</sup> M. H. Garfield, "Defense of the Kansas Frontier, 1868-1869," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, I (August, 1932), pp. 468-9; C. C. Rister, *Border Captives, The Traffic in Prisoners by the Southern Plains Indians* (Norman, 1940), p. 162. The Alderdice baby, notes Rister, was strangled by the Indians on the way back to the Republican.

been left a skeleton force as a result of the great demobilization of 1865-1866. "If I detach companies from my command," Augur had to reply, "which is the only mounted force I have to protect all exposed settlements, I will have none to operate against the Indians. . . . To enable settlers to protect themselves, I send you, as you request, fifty Spencer carbines and ten thousand rounds of ammunition for them." But the General could hold out some hope for more substantial aid in the very near future: "A command of cavalry will leave Fort McPherson on the 9th inst. against all Indians in the Republican country." If it was obvious that the root of the trouble lay in the concentration of Indians in the valley, the solution was just as obvious: "The only permanent safety to your frontier settlements," Augur noted, "is to drive the Indians entirely out of the Republican country. This is what I hope to do this summer."<sup>6</sup>

Even as Augur wrote, the Cavalry command of which he spoke—the Republican River Expedition—was assembling at Fort McPherson. Under ordinary conditions, command of an expedition of this sort perhaps would have gone to a captain; but, due to the abundance of high-ranking officers in the frontier army, Augur had assigned the task to Bvt. Maj. Gen. Eugene Asa Carr, major of the crack Fifth United States Cavalry.<sup>7</sup> The erect, dark-bearded General Carr was an experienced frontier officer. Described by one of his junior officers as "a master of the methods of Indian warfare",<sup>8</sup> the General was a West Point graduate with almost twenty years' active service, much of it on

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<sup>6</sup> Letter, Gen. C. C. Augur to Gov. David Butler, June 1, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>7</sup> C. C. Rister errs in his statement that Carr was sent out by Bvt. Maj. Gen. W. H. Emory at Fort McPherson. General Carr's orders were issued by General Augur, commanding officer of the Department of the Platte. Although General Emory was colonel of the Fifth Cavalry, the companies serving in the Republican River Expedition were on detached service and therefore not under regimental direction. (Rister, *Border Command*, p. 149; cf. Letter, Bvt. Maj. Gen. W. H. Emory to Bvt. Brig. Gen. G. D. Ruggles, July 10, 1869. NARS RG 98.)

<sup>8</sup> Price, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

the Kansas, Nebraska and Colorado frontiers.<sup>9</sup> Carr had a splendid Civil War record of field command. For a time he had been commanding officer of the entire Army of the Southwest until he was forced from the field by an illness apparently brought on by wounds suffered in battle. Like hundreds of other officers left without commands after the great post-war demobilization, General Carr had accepted the sop of brevet rank with a reduced command rather than leave the Army.<sup>10</sup>

Carr was not the only high-ranking officer to serve with this task force. The Republican River Expedition, like the rest of the frontier army, was noticeably rank-heavy. Second and third in command were, respectively, Bvt. Col. William Bedford Royall, another hero of the late war, and Maj. Eugene W. Crittenden, nephew of Sen. John J. Crittenden of Kentucky.<sup>11</sup> In command of the undermanned companies of the Fifth Cavalry—none was more than half its authorized strength<sup>12</sup>—were a number of veteran officers, Majors Thomas E. Maley, Gustavus E. Urban, Leicester Walker, and John B. Babcock; Captains Jeremiah C. Denney, George F. Price, Robert Sweatman, Philip Dwyer, John H. Kane, Edward M. Hayes and W. H. Brown; and Lieut. Charles B. Brady.<sup>13</sup>

To supplement the thin regular Army ranks, the famous Pawnee Battalion had been assigned to serve with the Fifth Cavalry. The Pawnee Battalion—a detachment under the command of Maj. Frank J. North made up primarily of Pawnee Indian troops—eventually contained three companies, led by Capt. James Murie, Capt. Sylvanus

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*; F. B. Heitman, *Historical Record and Dictionary of the United States Army* (Washington, D. C., 1903), I, 285.

<sup>11</sup> Price, *op. cit.*, pp. 292-3; Heitman, *op. cit.*, I, 338, 849.

<sup>12</sup> Report, Bvt. Maj. Gen. E. A. Carr to Bvt. Brig. Gen. G. D. Ruggles, June 17, 1869. NARS RG 98. Hereafter cited as Report, Carr to Ruggles, with appropriate date.

<sup>13</sup> Fort McPherson Post Return, June, 1869. Records of the War Department, Office of the Adjutant General. Post Returns Fort McPherson, Nebraska, formerly Cantonment McKean and Post at Cottonwood Spring. 1863-1880. National Archives. Ms. microfilm.

E. Cushing and by Major North's brother, Capt. Luther North.<sup>14</sup> General Carr, who had never commanded Indian troops, did not conceal his doubts about the "lazy and shiftless" redskins. But manpower was at a premium, and Carr surely felt that Indian troops were better than none at all.<sup>15</sup>

Whatever the General's feelings about the Pawnee, there was no doubt in his mind about the competence of the Chief of Scouts of the Fifth Cavalry, the famous William Fredrick "Buffalo Bill" Cody. Lauded by Gen. Philip Sheridan for his "endurance and courage,"<sup>16</sup> Cody had been assigned to Carr in the winter campaign of 1868. So impressed was General Carr with Cody's "great skill . . . his fighting . . . his markmanship" that upon being placed in command of the Republican River Expedition, Carr had requested particularly that the scout be retained with the regiment "as long as I am engaged in this duty."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Muster Rolls, Pawnee Battalion, Companies A, B, and C. October, 1869. NARS RG 98. The North Brothers and their famous scouts are the subject of G. B. Grinnell, *Two Great Scouts and Their Pawnee Battalion* (Cleveland, 1928) and R. H. Bruce, *The Fighting Norths and Pawnee Scouts* (New York, 1932) and numerous newspaper and magazine articles. Grinnell, well known for his extensive research and publications on the plains Indians, in this book has used almost word for word several manuscripts now in the archives of the Nebraska State Historical Society. One of these manuscripts (A. Sorenson, "A Quarter-Century on the Frontier, or the Adventures of Major Frank North, the White Chief of the Pawnees," mss., Letters and Papers of Frank Joshua North, 1840-1885, Nebraska State Historical Society) was written in collaboration with Major North and appears to be reasonably accurate in its coverage of the Republican River Expedition. But when accounts conflict, Grinnell has accepted the other (L. H. North, "Recollections of Capt. Luther H. North," mss., Letters and Papers of Luther Hedden North, 1874-1935, Nebraska State Historical Society). Parts of this manuscript are unreliable, due no doubt to the fact that it was written some fifty years after the events, and Captain North's failing memory is reflected in errors in Grinnell's book.

<sup>15</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, June 17, 1869. NARS RG 98. Cf. Report, Bvt. Maj. Gen. E. A. Carr to Bvt. Brig. Gen. G. D. Ruggles, July 20, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>16</sup> P. H. Sheridan, *Personal Memoirs of P. H. Sheridan* (New York, 1888), II, pp. 300-1.

<sup>17</sup> Report, Bvt. Maj. Gen. E. A. Carr to Bvt. Brig. Gen. G. D. Ruggles, May 22, 1869. NARS RG 98. Carr also requested that a \$100 bonus be paid to Cody "for extraordinarily good services." Letter, Bvt. Maj. Gen. E. A. Carr to Bvt. Brig. Gen. G. D. Ruggles, May 22, 1869. NARS RG 98.

In addition to the military, the Expedition included the usual complement of teamsters, wagoners and herders—civilians picked up in frontier settlements—as a rule neither particularly ambitious nor especially reliable.<sup>18</sup> They were charged with the duty of maintaining and driving the cumbersome wagons of the Expedition's supply train.

This, then, was the composition of the task force that was soon to penetrate the Indian country surrounding the Republican River: a detachment of eight to ten small companies of the Fifth Cavalry would be riding beside a battalion of dark-skinned warriors a few years removed from savagery; they were accompanied by one of the most famous of frontier scouts and by an unruly group of civilian workers. Somewhat heavy in rank and more than a little light in enlisted men, the polyglot column would be led in its march by one of the noted Indian fighters of the frontier Army.

On June 7, 1869, when Carr received his orders from headquarters to move out in two days, the command still was not completely prepared for the march. For the past two weeks, the General had been working through Army red tape to secure at least the bare essentials for a campaign into hostile Indian country.<sup>19</sup> Equipment—some of it of inferior quality—and personnel had been arriving

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<sup>18</sup> Report, Bvt. Maj. Gen. E. A. Carr to Bvt. Brig. Gen. G. D. Ruggles, June 11, 1869. NARS RG 98. According to the account of one J. E. Welch, there was a group of "volunteers to serve without pay" accompanying the column. (Letter, J. E. Welch, Edith, Texas, to Col. Henry O. Clark, June 16, 1891. Reprinted in C. T. Brady, *Indian Fights and Fighters* [New York, 1923], pp. 173-9. This letter, almost totally unreliable, presents a badly confused picture of the march of the column and the concluding Battle of Summit Springs. Unfortunately this letter comprises almost the whole of Brady's treatment of the Expedition.

<sup>19</sup> Among those things most needed, the General had written, were medical men, teamsters, a signal officer, "colored servants," remounts, wagons, pack mules and various other supplies. (Letter, Bvt. Maj. Gen. E. A. Carr to Bvt. Brig. Gen. G. D. Ruggles, May 22, 1869. Letters, Bvt. Maj. Gen. E. A. Carr to Bvt. Brig. Gen. G. D. Ruggles, May 30, 1869. NARS RG 98.

daily, but the Expedition still lacked vitally needed wagons and supplies.<sup>20</sup>

Whatever the state of preparation of the Expedition, headquarters was explicit in the task it set before General Carr: "The object of your expedition," his orders read, "is to drive the Indians out of the Republican country, and to follow them as far as possible, and most of the details must be left to your judgment." In addition, Carr was asked to keep a journal, report regularly on his progress and to prepare maps and make note of facts concerning the almost unknown country of the Republican Valley. "The Departmental Commander," the instructions concluded, "relies upon your known energy and skill to accomplish successfully a result so important."<sup>21</sup> Whether "energy and skill" could compensate for half-filled ranks and shortages of equipment may have appeared questionable to General Carr. But he had his orders. The column must move.

As a rule, there was little to brighten the dreary existence at a frontier post. The departure of the Republican River Expedition, however, brought some rare dash and sparkle to the routine life of Fort McPherson, and the garrison troops and their families took full advantage of it. General Augur and a number of his staff officers had arrived on June 8 to be present for the occasion. Welcomed by the post commandant, Gen. Thomas Duncan, the departmental officials were conducted to the parade ground for a full-dress review of the Expedition.<sup>22</sup>

Both the Cavalry and the Pawnee performed on the hot, dusty McPherson parade ground. As the veteran Fifth Cavalry troopers went through the precise mounted drill, their blue and yellow uniforms and their sabres glistening

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<sup>20</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, June 11, 1869. NARS RG 98. Some of the supplies intended for the Expedition were still arriving a month after the column had left. (Letter, Bvt. Brig. Gen. Thomas Duncan, commanding Fort McPherson, to Bvt. Brig. Gen. G. D. Ruggles, July 8, 1869. NARS RG 98.)

<sup>21</sup> Orders, Bvt. Brig. Gen. G. D. Ruggles to Bvt. Maj. Gen. E. A. Carr, June 7, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>22</sup> Sorenson, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

in the bright July sun doubtless made a splendid show for the small audience gathered at the fort. And despite the bizarre dress of his Indian battalion,<sup>23</sup> Major North was "highly complimented by the reviewing officers for the efficiency of drill to which he had brought the Pawnees."<sup>24</sup>

That evening, after the review, the Pawnee Scouts shed their uniforms. The white troops had had their ceremonial in the afternoon, and the Indians had cooperated, but the evening belonged to the Pawnee. Though a parade might satisfy the whites, the Indians were not about to begin a campaign against their enemies without their own traditional ceremonies, and the visiting officers and the ladies of the fort gathered near the campfires to watch the war dances of the Pawnee tribe.<sup>25</sup>

On June 9, with flags flying and the music of the regimental band echoing in the still summer morning, the Republican River Expedition marched out of Fort McPherson and moved ponderously across the prairie to the south.<sup>26</sup> "It was indeed a gallant command," remarks one author, "and General Carr had good reason to feel proud of his troops."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Reports on the appearance of the Pawnee Battalion do not agree. Sorenson—whose source of information was Major North himself—states that the Indian troops "turned out in all sorts of styles—some with their overcoats on and some without, and some with pantaloons and others with only breech-cloths, some with hats and others without; some with pantaloons changed into leggings by having the seat cut out; some with boots and others with moccasins; some with spurs on their moccasins and others wearing them on their bear [sic] heels; and a few appeared in full uniform." (Sorenson, *op. cit.*, p. 134.) Grinnell, however, has made a point of stating that "fanciful and quite untrue stories have been told of this occasion," and that "at this review, the Pawnees appeared in full uniform." Grinnell's information apparently came from the "Recollections of Capt. Luther H. North." (Grinnell, *op. cit.*, p. 183. Cf. L. H. North, "Recollections . . .," *loc. cit.*)

<sup>24</sup> Sorenson, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Journal of the March of the Republican River Expedition . . ., Bvt. Maj. Gen. E. A. Carr, Commanding, June 9, 1869. NARS RG 98. Hereafter cited as Journal of the March, with date of entry.

<sup>27</sup> Sorenson, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

Moving south and east along the Platte River, the long, winding column was led by the Pawnee Scouts, temporarily under the command of Capt. Luther North.<sup>28</sup> The Scouts were followed at a close distance by eight companies of the Fifth Cavalry. Behind the cavalry, the fifty-four wagons of the supply train stretched out into the distance. And somewhere in the clouds of dust raised by the lumbering train was a wagon belonging to Scout Cody. With the business acumen that was later to make him a great showman, Cody had hired a teamster and loaded his wagon with groceries, canned fruit and vegetables to sell to the soldiers.<sup>29</sup>

The first day's march was a short one. After laboring along the banks of the Platte for a short distance, the Expedition went into camp after travelling only three miles from Fort McPherson.<sup>30</sup>

Before the march was a day old, it was becoming apparent that non-regular Army personnel did not take military discipline very seriously. That evening Cody invited Captain North to dinner at his home in nearby North Platte and they left camp without orders. As they were returning late that night, they were caught in a blinding rainstorm. "We waited until the storm was over," recalled North many years later, "and tried to figure out where we were but could not. Cody said, 'Well, we are fine scouts, lost within three miles of the fort.'" At daybreak they at last found the road to camp, but rather than let the embarrassing facts be known, "we told them we had stayed at the fort overnight on account of the rain."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Major North had left for Columbus, Nebraska, to enlist a third company of Pawnee. (F. J. North, *Diary*, une 9, 1869. *Mss. Letters and Papers of Frank Joshua North, 1840-1885*. Nebraska State Historical Society. Hereafter cited at F. J. North, *Diary*, with date of entry. North's diary has been carefully edited and reprinted in its entirety in D. F. Danker, ed., "The Journal of an Indian Fighter—The 1869 Diary of Major Frank J. North," *Nebraska History*, 39 (June, 1958).

<sup>29</sup> L. H. North, "Recollections . . .," p. 66.

<sup>30</sup> *Journal of the March*, June 9, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>31</sup> L. H. North, "Recollections . . .," p. 67.

Shortly after North and Cody returned, the column was ready to move. Just before six o'clock in the morning, June 10, the march was resumed. Entering Snell's canyon, south of the Platte, the command followed "a practicable roadway through the large sandhills which run parallel to the Platte." To the Expedition, a "practicable" road often meant that it was just possible to worry a wagon over it. Passing the sites of many wood-choppers' camps, the column emerged from the canyon and followed a winding route to the south out of the Platte Valley. Dark clouds began to gather on the horizon as the cavalry led the lurching wagons over the "quite rough" country of the plains.<sup>32</sup> The troops had more to worry about than the approaching storm. Despite its jaunty departure from Fort McPherson, the command was already in serious trouble. General Carr described the situation to headquarters: "We left back (6) six wagons as the corn [for the horses and mules] had not yet arrived; but more corn came at the last moment and was put on the (54) fifty four wagons and overloaded them." This was just the beginning; "the mules [pulling the wagons] were already tired from hauling across the Platte," and to make matters worse, "many teamsters were drunk." As a result of all this, Carr noted dismally, "several wagons were overturned and most of the rations came in after dark."<sup>33</sup>

As the column approached Medicine Creek the storm at last broke. After a day's march of twenty-seven difficult miles, the drenched, hungry soldiers pitched their tents on the banks of the river and went into camp.<sup>34</sup>

If the situation was bad on June 10, things were little better the next day, though this time the crisis was of an entirely different kind. The march had been resumed at 6:15 a.m. on June 11. After moving a little over five miles down Medicine Creek, Carr suddenly called the command to a halt and ordered it to camp. One of his veteran officers

<sup>32</sup> Journal of the March, June 10, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>33</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, June 11, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>34</sup> Journal of the March, June 10, 1869. NARS RG 98.

had had a complete mental breakdown. The General appointed an escort of several troopers and placed the officer, Capt. Jeremiah C. Denney, in their care. Captain Denney, who had been grieving over the recent death of his wife, had served with the Fifth Cavalry since its organization in 1855. Carr must have been saddened as he wrote headquarters, "I send in Captain J. C. Denney who is not fit to command troops and utterly beyond recovery. He came to the doctor today and told him his wife had just informed him that he would die in an hour."<sup>35</sup> Tragically, the Captain's premonition erred only in the time. Escorted back to Fort McPherson under guard, he was placed in the post hospital; the next day he seized a revolver and blew out his brains.<sup>36</sup>

From this camp on Medicine Creek, Carr made another in his series of attempts to obtain equipment for his command. He still needed ambulances. Optimistic authorities had allowed him only one—with, as the General noted, "worn-out wheel boxes. I wish that you would order (2) two to be sent with the next train. . ."<sup>37</sup> Many weeks—and many requests—later, Carr would still have too few.

Scouting operations began early the next morning, June 12. At 4:30 a.m., Lieut. Charles B. Brady, with Company L and a group of Pawnee Scouts, set out for the Republican to search for signs of Indian activity. At ten o'clock a second party was sent out under Lieut. William J. Volkmar to scout along Deer Creek. In the meantime, the main force of the column continued south down Medicine Creek. Suddenly Volkmar's detachment stumbled onto "a

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<sup>35</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, June 11, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>36</sup> Fort McPherson Post Return, June, 1869. Records of the War Department. Captain Denney was buried at Fort McPherson, with the full garrison in attendance. (Price, *op. cit.*, pp. 409-11.) Such an incident was hardly unique to this Expedition. At almost that exact spot, for instance, just two years before, a colonel in Gen. G. A. Custer's detachment of the Seventh Cavalry had committed suicide "while," wrote Custer, "in a fit of delirium tremens." (Quoted in M. Merington, ed., *The Custer Story: The Life and Intimate Letters of General Custer and His Wife Elizabeth* [New York, 1950], p. 204.)

<sup>37</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, June 11, 1869. NARS RG 98.

hunting party of about 20 Indians." The first contact with the hostiles had been made. Before Volkmar could organize for a charge, the Indians dashed over a hill and were gone. The news was rushed to the main column. The alarm was given. Immediately going into camp, Carr sent out a company of cavalry and a group of Pawnee to follow the trail, while a courier was sent to call in Lieutenant Brady's detachment. Their action was in vain. Following in the Indians' path, the pursuit party discovered that the trail soon scattered off in different directions. They were forced to return with the news that the Indians had escaped. All was again quiet by midnight, when Lieutenant Brady's detachment, contacted by the messenger far down the Republican, at last rode into camp.<sup>38</sup>

The sun was high on the horizon when, at 5:30 a.m., June 13, the Expedition broke camp and began again to move south, following the overgrown ruts of an old wagon road leading toward the Republican.<sup>39</sup> According to a story told by Capt. Luther North, General Carr had arranged to bring his pet greyhounds with the Expedition, and now decided to take them out for an antelope chase. Asserting, says North, that his greyhounds could catch "anything," the General assembled a group of officers and rode ahead until an antelope had been sighted. The dogs, Captain North related,

. . . saw [the antelope] at once and started for him. He saw them, and instead of running away, he trotted toward them. Then we rode up in sight. By this time the dogs were only one hundred feet from him, and he turned and ran the other way.

The General said, "Oh, they will catch him before he gets started." . . . When we came into sight of them they were running across a big flat, and as our horses were pretty well blown we stopped and watched them. The antelope soon went out of sight over a hill about a mile away, with the dogs about two or three hundred yards behind, and when they reached the top of the hill they stopped for a minute, looked, then turned and came trotting back. No one had said a word up to this time, when Cody spoke. "General," he said, "if anything the antelope is a little bit ahead."

<sup>38</sup> Journal of the March, June 12, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, June 13, 1869.

From that time on, North states, it was the adjutant who took out the greyhounds.<sup>40</sup>

At last the command struck the Republican, reaching its banks about five miles below the mouth of Medicine Creek. Just a few yards from this point stood the decaying remains of an old log stockade—"by whom built, or when, was unknown." Forging the river here, the column moved down stream to the mouth of Deer Creek and, at the end of their day's march of almost twenty miles, went into camp on a "very sandy" site.<sup>41</sup>

Luckily, there was enough timber near the camp site to build a bridge over Deer Creek. The next morning the wagons were pulled across the bridge and the column pushed steadily on down the "bottom" of the Republican Valley. It was an uneventful day. After urging the wagons over twenty miles of the soft soil and grassy gullies of the Republican bottomland, the column reached the mouth of Prairie Dog Creek. Moving five miles beyond the mouth of the Prairie Dog, the Expedition halted for the day and went into camp.<sup>42</sup>

If the troopers were hoping for a break in the monotony of the march, they found it the next day. Breaking camp early in the morning on June 15, Carr sent out scouting parties to look for Indian signs. Though detachments had been out every day, no Indians had been seen since Lieutenant Volkmar's contact on June 12. It was certain that Indians were present somewhere in the area. But after several hours of operations, the scouts returned to the column with only negative results to report. About mid-day, the General called the Expedition to a halt and ordered camp made on the banks of the river.<sup>43</sup> The Pawnee were encamped about a half mile below the cavalry, and the wagon train was strung out in the center; Cody had drawn

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<sup>40</sup> L. H. North, "Recollections . . .," p. 67.

<sup>41</sup> Journal of the March, June 13, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, June 14, 1869. Report, Carr to Ruggles, June 17, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>43</sup> Journal of the March, June 15, 1869. NARS RG 98.

up his grocery wagon and made camp near the Pawnee Scouts. Taking advantage of the good grass near the river, the wagon boss had sent two teamsters out to graze the mules. The camp settled down for supper. Suddenly a war whoop broke the stillness of the late afternoon, and seconds later a teamster galloped into camp with an arrow in his body. The Indians had made their presence known.<sup>44</sup>

The Indians, who apparently had hidden in the underbrush when the column went into camp, doubtless had assumed that there would be plenty of time to drive off the mule herd while the cavalry was preparing itself for action. If successful, it would have been a serious blow to the Expedition, for without mules the wagon train was unable to move.<sup>45</sup> But while the cavalry was sounding "boots and saddles" the Pawnee had shed their uniforms and, without bothering with saddles or bridles—or orders—had set off in hot pursuit of the hostile war party.<sup>46</sup> Cody, whose horse had not been unsaddled, was the first to cross the river, but he was soon overtaken by Captain North and the Pawnee. Before the cavalry was able to leave the camp, Cody, North and the Pawnee had engaged the hostiles in a running fight. Soon Col. W. B. Royall and several companies of cavalry joined in the pursuit. Though the chase lasted until nightfall, only two of the marauders were killed. After losing the war party's trail in the darkness, the tired, hungry pursuers halted and returned over the moonlit prairie to the camp.<sup>47</sup> The search could wait until tomorrow.

The next morning, Captain North rode over to the cavalry camp to report the action to General Carr. "I thought," North wrote to his uncle, "I had done pretty well to get all the mules back." But the General was unimpressed by the spur of the moment charge, and he was not about to com-

<sup>44</sup> Sorenson, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

<sup>45</sup> Journal of the March, June 15, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>46</sup> Sorenson, *op. cit.*, p. 135; Letter, L. H. North to J. C. North, November 28, 1874. Mss. Letters and Papers of Luther Hedden North, 1874-1935. Nebraska State Historical Society. Hereafter cited as Letter, L. H. North to J. C. North, November 28, 1874.

<sup>47</sup> Journal of the March, June 15, 1869. NARS RG 98; Price, *op. cit.*, p. 136; Report, Carr to Ruggles, June 17, 1869. NARS RG 98.

pliment an officer who had violated military protocol by leaving camp and engaging in an action without orders. According to North,

I went up to his tent and there before all of his Officers he reprimanded [sic] me for leaving camp to pursue the Indians without orders from him. I answered as civilly as I could that the only way to fight Indians was to go for them as fast as possible whenever they were found. he said that he understood his business and that all I had to do was obey orders. I told him that I expected to obey orders but that when the Indians attacked a camp that I was in I intended to go for them and that I shouldnt wait for orders from him nor any other man [...] having spoke my little piece I touched my pony with the spurs and dashed away to the head of my company.<sup>48</sup>

"I expected," North remarked, "that I would be placed under arrest but was not." Surely the General was itching to arrest such an upstart captain of volunteers who presumed to lecture him on "the only way to fight Indians"! But Carr was in a poor position to arrest any officer, whatever his breach of discipline or insubordination. With the already small command deep in Indian country any further reduction in numbers might be dangerous. The General probably also took into account the fact that the captain and his men were irregular volunteers almost completely unaccustomed to Army discipline, and that however unmilitary their procedure, they had, after all, saved the mules.<sup>49</sup> But the result could have been much less happy; in Indian territory, Carr's experience told him, isolation could often mean annihilation. North's behavior was a courting of disaster. The incident could not be allowed to pass without reprimand.

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<sup>48</sup> Letter, L. H. North to J. C. North, November 28, 1874.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* Years later, however, Captain North insisted that General Carr "put me under arrest, and put Captain Cushing in charge." The next morning, North claimed, Carr sent his adjutant ahead with orders to Captain Cushing to send out a scouting party. When told that Captain North was the only officer who knew enough of the Pawnee language to give orders, North claimed, "the adjutant laughed and rode away, but was soon back with word from the General that I was released from arrest, that I should take command again and send the scouting party as directed. This I did, and that was the end of the matter." (L. H. North, *Recollections . . .*," pp. 71-2.) This later account is wholly unsubstantiated by the records of the Expedition.

The incident did little to dispel Carr's earlier doubts about the reliability of Indian troops. "The Pawnees," the General wrote to headquarters, "are rather lazy and shiftless; but I hope to make their Indian qualities useful. I would however like to exchange all but (30) thirty of them for good cavalry soldiers."<sup>50</sup> But for the time being, the problem could rest, for the Indians who had attempted the stampede could not be far away, and if immediate action was taken, there was still a chance of catching them.

Reveille sounded at three a.m. After bolting down breakfast, the sleepy soldiers placed five days' rations on pack mules and prepared to move out. Assigning one company to remain as protection for the slow-moving wagon train, the General ordered the command forward at daybreak. The raiders' trail was at first quite clear,<sup>51</sup> and soon became so heavy that the Pawnee were certain that a village must be near.<sup>52</sup> At seven o'clock the command halted briefly at the swollen waters of Prairie Dog Creek. The stream was obviously too full for the wagon train to cross without bridging. Carr could waste no time; the wagon train, which until now had managed to remain close to the cavalry column, had to be left completely behind. Turning to the south, the troops followed the marauders' path for twenty-five miles. The trail led straight to the North Fork of the Solomon River. The column marched down into the bottom-land, splashed through the stream, rode up the bank—and found to their dismay that the Indians' tracks scattered in all directions. The trail was lost.<sup>53</sup>

Even the Pawnee were confused.<sup>54</sup> There was little hope now of finding the raiders. For want of anything tangible, the General turned the column off to the west, "followed some scattered pony tracks" for a short distance and then went into camp.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, June 17, 1869. NARS RG 98.

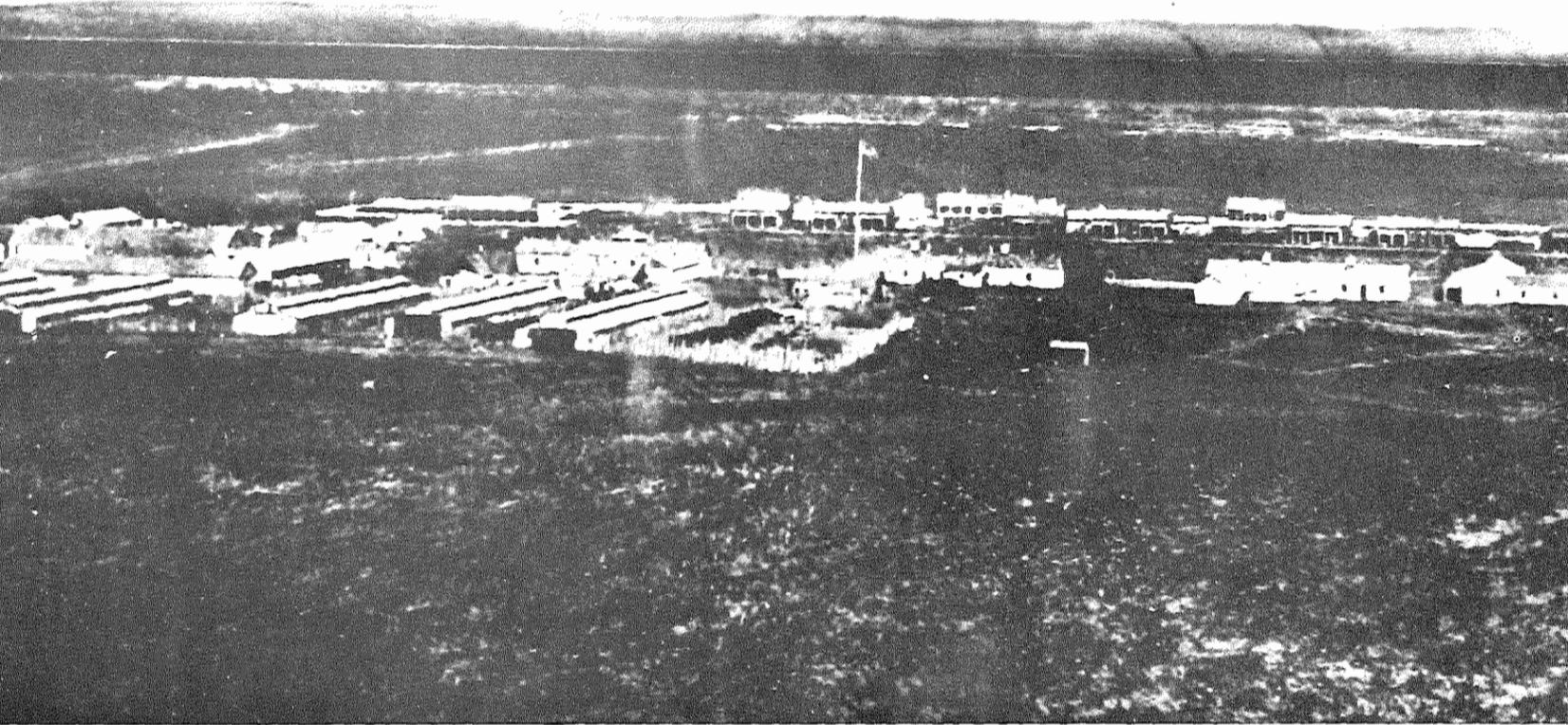
<sup>51</sup> Journal of the March, June 16, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>52</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, June 17, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>53</sup> Journal of the March, June 16, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>54</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, June 17, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>55</sup> Journal of the March, June 16, 1869. NARS RG 98.



Fort McPherson



Major General Eugene A. Carr

Nature added a fitting end to a day of discouragement. Evening brought a torrential thunderstorm that lasted most of the night.<sup>56</sup>

The ground was still wet when reveille sounded at three o'clock the next morning. Camp was broken at 5:30, and, again sending out the usual scouting parties, Carr moved the column to the southwest.<sup>57</sup> During the day, Maj. Frank North—who had been delayed by the thunderstorm—joined the column with the newly recruited Company C of the Pawnee Scouts, and again assumed command of the battalion.<sup>58</sup>

Difficulties apparently had not been confined to the main column, for Major North had found his share. His company had drowned four horses in crossing the Platte on June 13. Striking out across the plains, they had encountered such withering heat—"Oh what a long dry march," the Major had written, "mules horses and men nearly perished"—that the thunderstorm had seemed a relief.<sup>59</sup>

More frustration awaited General Carr. Major North had been given a message from the departmental adjutant, General Ruggles, to deliver to the Expedition's commander. Carr must have been incredulous when, upon opening the letter, he found orders to detach Captain Sweatman's company from the command. "He is to go for the summer," the orders read, "to cover and protect settlements on the Little Blue."<sup>60</sup> Carr was to exchange his "good cavalry soldiers" for the newly arrived company of "lazy and shiftless" Pawnee!

As he sat down to acknowledge receipt of the orders, the General may have reflected briefly upon the many regiments under his command when he had led the mighty Army of the Southwest in the Civil War. Now, the loss of

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, June 17, 1869.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*; F. J. North, Diary, June 17, 1869.

<sup>59</sup> F. J. North, Diary, June 13-17, 1869.

<sup>60</sup> Orders, Bvt. Brig. Gen. G. D. Ruggles to Bvt. Maj. Gen. E. A. Carr, June 11, 1869. NARS RG 98.

a single company made a considerable difference. There was a note of exasperation in General Carr's reply:

I detach Captain Robert Sweatman's Company "B" in compliance with orders.

It is very disheartening to me for my command to be reduced; it was already too small, (companies not half full) and there are a good many men whose terms will soon expire.

I have to escort my supply trains; and when I go on a trail I do not feel justified in leaving less than a company. And then, if I wish to divide my command for pursuit, or any purpose, the parties are too small to act with confidence and vigor.

Custer's smallest command last winter was (11) eleven full companies with, I believe, Infantry train Guards. I send with this, official application for (4) four full companies of Infantry.<sup>61</sup>

Carr had little prospect of getting four full companies—or even one company—of infantry, and doubtless he was quite aware of it. But an official request was one certain way to point up his dissatisfaction with the size of his force and perhaps would discourage a further reduction of his command.

With Company C of the Pawnee filling the gap left by the departure of Sweatman's company, the numerical strength of Carr's column had not been reduced. But the General, still unconvinced of the soldierly qualities of Indian troops, noted that the Pawnee were not as well mounted as the regular cavalry. Indeed, Carr reported, the Scouts were so "miserably mounted" that "their ponies can hardly keep out of the way of the troops on an ordinary march," and would "require (50) fifty good ponies to mount them properly."<sup>62</sup> Carr's mind could hardly have been at ease as he watched Captain Sweatman's company leave the column for the east.

Regardless of the loss of the company, the campaign continued. The General moved the column to the southwest a few miles and then ordered it into camp.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, June 17, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Journal of the March, June 17, 1869. NARS RG 98.

From this camp near the North Fork of the Solomon River in Kansas, Carr made out his regular report to headquarters. After recounting the actions of the previous day, the General again pointed out to departmental officials some of the most pressing problems of his command. The expedition seemed to be suffering more from the difficulties of the march itself than from any hostile Indians. "I hope," wrote Carr, "you will order a sufficient number of wagons so that our train may not be overloaded, and thus delay us." There were far too few vehicles even to adequately "carry our (20) twenty days supplies and baggage," and Carr requested "fifteen additional wagons" for the wagon train accompanying the column. But those fifteen were by no means enough to meet the needs of the entire operation.<sup>64</sup> A supply train was to meet the column in two weeks at "Thickwood," a point on the Republican south of Fort McPherson.<sup>65</sup> Under-equipped himself, Carr could hardly provide wagons enough for such a supply unit: "we also need fifty wagons to carry the (20) twenty days supplies from Fort McPherson to meet us, not including the baggage wagons of the Escort, which should be (2) two per company."<sup>66</sup>

With the train hardly able to carry the bare necessities of the campaign, there had been no room for luxuries. Hoping to avoid as much hardship to his men as possible, Carr brought the situation to the attention of headquarters. "Being out constantly," the General wrote, "the troops should be provided with some comforts, or it will be more than humane [sic] nature can and will stand."<sup>67</sup> The few "comforts" in Cody's wagon doubtless had long since been exhausted.

Despite Carr's requests during preparations at Fort McPherson, a supply of hobbles to keep the mules in camp had been overlooked. He now asked that they be made at

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<sup>64</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, June 17, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>65</sup> Journal of the March, June 29, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>66</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, June 17, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

Fort McPherson and then sent to him," as they have facilities, old blankets, etc. for making them there, and we find it very difficult to make them in the field." Troops could not easily be spared for such tasks, and, the General added with a note of disgust, "it is almost impossible to get the teamsters to make them."<sup>68</sup>

The ambulances requested earlier had not yet arrived, and the commander gently reminded headquarters that "I attended to ambulances in my last."<sup>69</sup>

There was little to cheer the General as he affixed his sprawling signature to the report and prepared to send it off. During the day, the scouting parties sent out that morning had rejoined the column and could report finding no more than a trail left by a detachment of the Seventh Cavalry operating out of Fort Hays. At three o'clock in the afternoon, the Expedition's wagon train—left far behind during the cavalry's gallop to the banks of the Solomon—lumbered into the quiet camp.<sup>70</sup> Carr may have ruefully surveyed the creaking, overburdened wagons as he summed up the events of the day's difficult thirty-mile march: no sign of the Indians, the loss of an entire company to guard duty in the east, its replacement by a group of "miserably mounted" Indian troops, short supplies, requests that seemed to be completely ignored—and all this with a small command of hardly four hundred troops in the heart of Indian country.

The next day the General moved the command only a little more than a mile, then went into camp to send out scouts to continue the search for traces of Indian activity. To avoid a repetition of the Pawnee's reckless charge at Prairie Dog Creek several days earlier, Carr was careful to see that each scouting party was made up of both a group of Pawnee and one or two companies of cavalry. But the reports differed little from those of the day before.

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Journal of the March, June 17, 1869. NARS RG 98.

There were no fresh Indian signs. The scouts could claim to have found only old wagon trails, a dilapidated log stable of uncertain date, a broken wagon and the remains of a cavalry camp of the previous winter.<sup>71</sup>

On June 19, the column moved north back toward the Republican. The next ten days were spent in a wandering march through the rolling hills of the Republican Valley.<sup>72</sup> For the most part conditions were similar from day to day. The Indians were staying out of sight. The rugged country continued to wreak havoc with the wagons. There was still a shortage of supplies.<sup>73</sup> New misfortune now beset the Expedition. Illness and injury began to take such a toll of soldiers that "at one time our two ambulances overflowed so that a sick Officer could not find a place." The General's plea for more ambulances had been only partially heeded, and at last he was forced to carry sick and injured men in the gradually emptying wagons.<sup>74</sup>

There were some compensations for the difficulties of the march through the Republican Valley, for the territory, at least, was more pleasant than the plains crossed on the march to the south. The route of travel lay cross-country from the Prairie Dog to the rendezvous at "Thickwood" in the southwest corner of Nebraska. Although the units of the command were forced to make some journeys as far as twenty-five or thirty miles without water, they could always depend upon striking a reasonably comfortable, well-watered campsite before nightfall.<sup>75</sup> Major North noted these conditions in his diary: on June 21, the Expedition "marched 28 miles without water. Have a very good camp tonight on Short Nose" [Prairie Dog Creek]; on June 22, "we march[ed] 25 miles . . . I have a fine camp here," and

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, June 18, 1869.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, June 19-29, 1869.

<sup>73</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, June 30, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* One of the most seriously ill was Capt. James Murie, Company C, Pawnee Battalion. Major North, worried by Murie's illness, wrote later that "I am real sorry I did not send him home with the train." (F. J. North, Diary, July 2, 1869.)

<sup>75</sup> Journal of the March, June 19-29, 1869. NARS RG 98.

on June 24 "came accross the country to big Beaver [Creek] here we find splendid fuel and water."<sup>76</sup>

The long days were relieved by diversions that probably came naturally to a command of this sort. Their recreation was simple, if somewhat rough. Despite one day's long, dry march, Major North and several others were not too weary to have "some fun riding one of our bucking horses. it threw [Sgt. Sam] Wallace 3 times. finally a lieut. [of the regulars] rode it."<sup>77</sup>

Buffalo hunting, a pastime born of necessity, was a regular part of the days' activities. Killing buffalo was good sport, and it produced a welcome addition to the rations of the troops as well. "Killed lots of Buffalo," recorded Major North in his diary one evening, "had lots of ribs."<sup>78</sup> The buffalo hunt was traditional with the Pawnee, and the Regiment's Chief of Scouts was soon to become the most famous buffalo hunter of all time. In one day's incident related by a biographer of Major North, the Major and Cody had left the column to watch the Pawnee "make a surround." After they had encircled one herd and killed thirty-two buffalo, the Pawnee were preparing to surround another herd, when Cody asked North to "Let me show your Pawnees how to kill buffalo." The Pawnee withdrew, and Cody, it is told, "in a run of about half a mile . . . dropped thirty-seven buffaloes, killing one at nearly every shot and stringing them along on the prairie about fifty feet apart."<sup>79</sup> Such slaughter, however, was evidently uncommon on this expedition, for the usual number of buffalo killed seems to have been only a few at any particular time.

There was a quieter kind of entertainment as well. It perhaps was left only to the regulars to enjoy the time-honored tradition of gathering around the camp-fire for singing. On this expedition the troops may have sung some

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<sup>76</sup> F. J. North, *Diary*, June 21-24, 1869.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, June 21, 1869.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, June 23, 1869.

<sup>79</sup> Sorenson, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

of the songs that Major North hastily pencilled in his notebook—such as, for instance, this lusty ballad:

I'm just as fond of beauty/ as any one can be  
 With pretty eyes and rosy cheeks/ I always love to see  
 But none of us have got them/ except myself and you  
 For I know a little fellow/ and he's got the money too.

Cho: Oh, don't I love my honey/ and won't I spend his  
 money

I am happy as a flower/ that sips the morning dew  
 For I know a little fellow/ and he's got the money too.

Or the lament that North must have heard from one of the many displaced Rebels in the frontier Army:

Oh the old home aint what it used to be/ The banjo and the  
 fiddle has gone

An no more you hear the darkies singing/ among the sugar  
 cane and corn.

Great changes have come to the poor old [land]/ But this  
 change makes [me] sad and forlorn

For no more we hear the darkies singing/ among the sugar  
 cane and corn.<sup>80</sup>

Some members of the command—particularly young Lieut. William J. Volkmar, who kept the command's journal—often rode a short distance from the command to investigate the hitherto largely unexplored countryside. Upon returning, he made careful notations of his findings in the *Journal of the March*. On June 21, for example, the Lieutenant wrote:

Passed a rising mound, lying about two miles to the north. This mound has upon its top the figure of a man, spread upon his back, with spear and shield; a medal is attached to his neck; —all made, in outline, from small pieces of limestone. This mound is about three miles south of the Beaver Creek and is about three miles west of the mouth of that creek. It is supposed to be an Indian place of worship. The mound was named by Lieut. Volkmar, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, who discovered the image, the "Homo Calcis" mound.<sup>81</sup>

The journal and General Carr's reports added a great deal of information to the little yet known about the Republican Valley. Including in his reports both corrections and suggestions for improvement of the "very meagre as well as incorrect" information on Army maps, Carr noted es-

<sup>80</sup> F. J. North, Notebook, Mss. in Letters and Papers of Frank Joshua North, 1840-1885. Nebraska State Historical Society.

<sup>81</sup> Journal of the March, June 21, 1869, NARS RG 98.

pecially the correct courses of both known and previously unknown streams—including the one which yet bears the name he gave it, the Driftwood.<sup>82</sup>

On June 29, still in the Republican Valley, the column went into camp on "Buffalo Head Creek," near Thickwood on the Republican, to await the arrival of the supply train from Fort McPherson. As usual, scouting parties were sent out in several directions. Ordering the troops to prepare for a muster and mounted inspection to be held the next day, the General prepared to write another report of his operations to headquarters.<sup>83</sup>

Not a single hostile Indian had been seen since the raid on the mule herd on June 15. But Indian signs had been appearing with increasing frequency. In recent days, it had seemed to be almost too quiet, and the hoofprints around the column's line of march<sup>84</sup> were occasionally too fresh for comfort. Innocent objects had begun to take on suspicious characteristics as an "Indian fever" at last crept over the command. Major Crittenden and his escort, for instance, came into camp with the wagon train at two o'clock on June 29 and reported that a large number of Cheyenne had been seen lurking near the McPherson road.<sup>85</sup> Carr immediately ordered two companies to equip themselves for a three days' march and sent them out to investigate. They returned hours later with the news that the "Cheyenne" were only a herd of grazing buffalo.<sup>86</sup>

Meeting with only slightly more success was a detachment under Sergeant Wallace that had been sent out earlier and in a different direction. Wallace had been able to report a trail that was "pretty fresh," but that was all.<sup>87</sup>

Meanwhile the General was finishing his report. Again he had launched a barrage of requests—more ambulances,

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<sup>82</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, June 30, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>83</sup> Journal of the March, June 29, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, June 28, 1869; L. H. North, "Recollections . . .," p. 72.

<sup>85</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, June 30, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>86</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, July 20, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>87</sup> F. J. North, Diary, June 29, 1869.

some expressmen to carry dispatches to the fort, two good horses for Cody—but Carr apparently was beginning to question the wisdom of his incessant hammering for supplies. “I hope,” he wrote, “The General will not think me too persistent in these applications. I know he is inclined to supply me with everything in his power which he deems necessary; and I will rest content with what I receive: but still,” Carr added hopefully, “I feel it my duty to report deficiencies, in case they may have been overlooked, or orders may have been given and not obeyed.”<sup>88</sup> General Carr, still vexed by the loss of Company B, made it clear to headquarters that he wanted no such thing to happen again. Noting that he had sent Major Crittenden with two companies to follow a “promising” trail, Carr added somewhat testily that “Should the trail take Major Crittenden [north] to the [Union Pacific] railroad & beyond, I will be left with only five companies with which I suppose I must make some sort of a scout up the Republican. I hope that you will bear this in mind. . . .”<sup>89</sup>

The Indian troops, the General could report, had caused no trouble of late. He felt even that “the Pawnees are improving somewhat in discipline and general usefulness; and [I] hope to get good service out of them.”<sup>90</sup>

The eagerly-awaited supply train from Fort McPherson had arrived, and as Carr sat writing in his tent, the troops were busy “transferring the supplies to the train of the command,”<sup>91</sup> while the officers were “busy . . . getting ready to muster.”<sup>92</sup> The “lots of stores” brought in from McPherson bolstered the spirits of the weary command. As Major North put it, “we will live high again for a while.”<sup>93</sup>

The next morning, June 30, the column was mustered and the mounted inspection held.<sup>94</sup> Later in the day, the

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<sup>88</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, June 30, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Journal of the March, June 29, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>92</sup> F. J. North, Diary, June 29, 1869.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, June 30, 1869.

McPherson train, its empty wagons carrying the Expedition's wounded and injured, set off for the north.<sup>95</sup> The column remained in camp for the remainder of that day and all of the next, resting, organizing supplies and sending out scouting detachments. Carr informed the command that the march would resume in the morning.<sup>96</sup>

Moving out at dawn, July 2, the column continued up the Republican "bottom." The timber along the river, which had been heavy in the eastern part of the valley, began to thin by July 3, as the command moved steadily toward the west. There was little wood near the campsite as the column halted to make camp on the Frenchman River (North Fork of the Republican). In the afternoon, July 3, a scouting party returned with the most promising news so far. A fresh trail had been found, and a Cheyenne camp that had not been "abandoned more than thirty-six hours" had been located. The numerous mule shoes found around the camp indicated that these Indians had recently stolen a large number of animals from the frontier settlements.<sup>97</sup> This, perhaps, was the trail of the Dog Soldiers themselves!

The Indian signs grew even more promising as a more extensive investigation was made. "The trail," reported the General, "seemed to follow the general course of the North Fork of the Republican, keeping, however, about ten miles away from that stream and encamping on the heads of small tributaries."<sup>98</sup> These Indians—apparently about thirty lodges with three hundred animals—were moving very cautiously up the river, attempting to disguise their trail. "They would scatter," Carr noted, "when leaving camp; then come together on the high, hard prairie and drive their animals in every direction to confuse the trail; then scatter again and not reassemble till near their night camp."<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Journal of the March, June 30, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, June 30, July 1, 1869; F. J. North, Diary, June 30, July 1, 1869.

<sup>97</sup> Journal of the March, July 2-3, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>98</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, July 20, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

This party was too large and too careful to be simply a casual hunting party; it must almost certainly be an important part of Tall Bull's village. The Indians, believed General Carr, must surely be near.<sup>100</sup> The situation called for immediate action. Carr detached three companies of cavalry along with Lieut. Gus Barclay's company of Pawnee Scouts, and gave them pack mules to carry three days' rations. Colonel Royall was placed in charge of the small unit.<sup>101</sup> Ordering Royall to "try to surprise them, kill as many warriors as possible and capture their families and animals," the General sent the detachment out to follow the trail.<sup>102</sup>

As Royall set off to the west, the main column forded the Republican. It was still early in the morning as they entered the rugged, sandy, treeless country north of the river. At four o'clock in the afternoon the command found a site near a "clump of trees, the only timber on the river worth mentioning," and encamped to await word from the Colonel's scouting party.<sup>103</sup>

Soon dispatches from Royall's unit began to arrive. They contained no news of any real success. Though he "had passed several camps lately abandoned," Royall on July 5 had not overtaken the Cheyenne.<sup>104</sup> Major North, for one, was disappointed: "I [should] think," he wrote, "that he has found the Indians before this time."<sup>105</sup> Carr, too, must have been disappointed as he read in the message brought by Royall's courier that, after following the trail for thirty-eight miles, the tracks appeared to be four days old.<sup>106</sup>

Little could be accomplished by remaining here. On July 6 the main column broke camp and began slogging through the barren sand hills of the high plains. It was a

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Journal of the March, July 4, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>102</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, July 20, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>103</sup> Journal of the March, July 4, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, July 5, 1869.

<sup>105</sup> F. J. North, Diary, July 5, 1869.

<sup>106</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, July 20, 1869. NARS RG 98.

trying march. "Sand till you can't rest," wrote Major North in his diary; and still "no news from Royal today."<sup>107</sup> The sky was cloudless. With the hot sun beating down on the shifting sand, it is not surprising that tempers began to grow short. "Sam and Bart walked about ten miles for disobeying the q[uar]ter] m[aster]."<sup>108</sup> Water was becoming scarce. The Frenchman River did not extend as far west as the inaccurate Army maps had indicated, and Carr was forced to turn the command toward the headwaters of the Black Tail Deer Creek to go into camp.<sup>109</sup>

Meanwhile, Colonel Royall was still on the trail of the Cheyenne. Moving to the north from his camp of July 4, Royall had led his detachment eighteen miles across the country. Suddenly his Pawnee sighted a group of horsemen. It was a war party of twelve hostiles, carrying one wounded warrior on a litter. This was enough for the Pawnee; once more, discipline was broken. "The Pawnee reported that the 'Whole Party' was there," General Carr later reported, "and started in pursuit, and the troops had no choice but to follow."<sup>110</sup>

The small group of hostiles was no match for Royall's detachment. The Scouts rode the Cheyenne down, took three scalps and captured eight horses, two with an Army brand.<sup>111</sup> The chase had led the small command almost back to their starting point. Because they had only one more days' rations, and because the main band of Indians would probably be warned by the small party that the Pawnee had impetuously charged, Royall decided to return to the column.<sup>112</sup>

The cavalry camp was thrown into confusion about two o'clock in the afternoon, July 7, as the soldiers sighted

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<sup>107</sup> F. J. North, Diary, July 6, 1869.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* "This reference," says Danker, "possibly referred to Samuel Wallace, first sergeant, and Barton Hunt, a teamster, both of Company B" of the Pawnee Scouts. Danker, *op. cit.*, p. 137 n.

<sup>109</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, July 20, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> F. J. North, Diary, July 7, 1869.

<sup>112</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, July 20, 1869. NARS RG 98.

a party of Indians streaking across the empty sandhills, yelling and brandishing scalps on poles. The cavalrymen at first believed it to be a Sioux raiding party. But as the Pawnee who had remained behind were making no preparations for battle, it was apparent that the approaching Indians were not hostile, and Captain North assured General Carr that it was just some of his own troops celebrating a victory. Lieutenant Barclay's Pawnee, leading Royall's detachment into camp, were bringing news of their skirmish.<sup>113</sup> The Pawnee's commander was jubilant: "To-day," wrote the Major, "has been a great day for the Scouts." That night, the Pawnee Scouts, no less jubilant than their major, celebrated with a victory dance.<sup>114</sup>

The gaiety of the Pawnee was in sharp contrast to the gloom in the General's tent. Despite the fact that this was the first real victory of the campaign, the affair gave General Carr little cause to rejoice; the Indians who had escaped the Pawnee's rash charge doubtless had already alerted the main body of hostiles. Already following a trail four days old, the lumbering column could now only fall further behind the fleet Cheyenne.<sup>115</sup>

Nevertheless, the trail had been the first of any importance, and there was still little else to do but continue to follow it. "I had little hope of overtaking the Indians," said Carr, "but thought I could at least hunt them out of the country." There seemed little need now to travel light; "the trail being reported so old, and the Indians being alarmed, and, it being probable that it would require a chase too long for rations to be carried without wagons," the General determined to take the entire command on the trail. It was impossible to get the heavy equipment through the sandhills to the present camp, so the discouraged commander moved his column back down the Frenchman River to find a good route to the Indians' trail.<sup>116</sup> Sharp Chey-

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<sup>113</sup> Sorenson, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>114</sup> F. J. North, Diary, July 7, 1869.

<sup>115</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, July 20, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

enne eyes were watching, apparently, as the column reversed direction and began to retrace its tracks.<sup>117</sup>

During the day, while the main body of the Expedition was moving through the inhospitable country, three men under Cpl. John Kyle of Company M left the column to bring in a straying cavalry horse. They were several miles from the column when, suddenly, eight Indians swooped down on them. Corporal Kyle led the little party to a sheltering rock, and killing the horse for a defense, opened fire on the hostiles, managing to wound two before the Indians retreated. Apparently the Cheyenne had indeed been aroused by the July 5 attack.<sup>118</sup>

That evening, the command encamped at the same spot they had used on July 4 and 5, on the Frenchman, a few miles east of the Colorado border. Fighting off mosquitoes, the regulars and Scouts made camp beside each other on the banks of the river and settled down for the night.<sup>119</sup> Suddenly, about eleven p.m., the silence was shattered by the rattle of gunfire. Galloping past the sentry at the east end of the camp, several mounted Cheyenne charged through the horses in an attempt to stampede them, then spread confusion into the middle of the camp itself. Yelling, and firing in all directions into tents and wagons, they dashed out of the west end of the camp and disappeared into the night. The attack was over as quickly as it had begun.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Letter, L. H. North to J. C. North, November 28, 1874, *loc. cit.*

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.* (Corporal Kyle was commended in Carr's report for this action.) Journal of the March, July 8, 1869. NARS RG 98. Cf. Price, *op. cit.*, p. 136. Price is mistaken in stating that Kyle's party was attacked by thirteen Indians.

<sup>119</sup> F. J. North, Diary, July 8, 1869.

<sup>120</sup> Price, *op. cit.*, p. 136. There were five Indians in the raiding party, according to Major North. Captain North says there were not more than "six or seven." Carr reports only that there were "a number" of them. But impressionable young Lieutenant Volkmar insists that there were thirty. Cf. F. J. North, Diary, July 8, 1869; L. H. North, "Recollections . . .," p. 74; Report, Carr to Ruggles, July 20, 1869. NARS RG 98; Journal of the March, July 8, 1869. NARS RG 98.

The swift raid had left the column with only one casualty, and that one was not wounded by the Cheyenne. Completely unprepared for such an unusual night-time attack, the troops had fired at anything that moved. Sergeant Mad Bear of the Scouts, who had dashed forward into the hail of bullets to reach a fallen Cheyenne, had been hit by a wild shot from the cavalry. General Carr, possibly beginning to soften somewhat in his attitude toward the Pawnee, gave Mad Bear special mention for bravery in his report to headquarters.<sup>121</sup>

There could now be little doubt that Colonel Royall's skirmish had warned the Cheyenne. The presence of Cheyenne in numbers enough to attempt a raid made it likely that there were perhaps even more in the vicinity. The trail, then, seemed to be getting warm. But the whereabouts of Tall Bull's main force was unknown—and while skirmishes might hamper the Indians' activities, their main village must be found and destroyed to achieve a really decisive victory.

Only by a series of forced marches was there any possibility of overtaking the Cheyenne. Therefore, despite the oppressive heat, General Carr decided to push on at once.<sup>122</sup> At dawn the next day, July 9, Carr changed the direction of the march and set out to the north. It was, as the General noted, "a very long, hot and tiresome day's march" through the barren expanses of northeastern Colorado.<sup>123</sup> "The country," wrote Lieutenant Volkmar in the Journal, "is a succession of sand hills, and a hot blast which

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<sup>121</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, July 20, 1869. NARS RG 98; F. J. North, *Diary*, July 8, 1869. Mad Bear, Carr noted, had also accounted for two of the three Cheyennes killed by Royall's detachment on July 5. Luther North and Grinnell both state that it is unknown how Mad Bear was injured. Cf. L. H. North, "Recollections . . .," p. 74; Grinnell, *Two Great Scouts*, p. 191.

<sup>122</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, July 20, 1869. NARS RG 98. Luther North and Grinnell both claim that the command remained in camp the next day. It did not. Cf. L. H. North, "Recollections . . .," p. 75; Grinnell, *Two Great Scouts*, p. 192; and *Journal of the March*, July 9, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>123</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, July 20, 1869. NARS RG 98.

blew all day, rendered the march very trying."<sup>124</sup> The tired, thirsty column pushed on through the shifting sand and at last, about four o'clock in the afternoon, went into camp on "Bechers Battle ground,"<sup>125</sup> over thirty miles north of their starting point on the Frenchman.<sup>126</sup> "March 30 miles without water," wrote Major North in his diary, "and oh how hot and dry. we have nothing . . . but standing rain-water."<sup>127</sup> The column was now not far from the point where Colonel Royall had left the Cheyenne's trail.

It was already warm at five o'clock the next morning, July 10, when the command doggedly resumed the march.<sup>128</sup> A "thick growth of cactus" covered the ground "for miles" along the winding route of the march, and the sun beat down unrelentingly on the little column pushing its way through the sandhills. The rigorous thirty-two mile march was worth the effort. Crossing the winding Frenchman River "some eight times," the troops discovered an abandoned Indian camp, then another, and then still another. The command was fast approaching the Cheyenne; they had covered in one day the territory the Indians had traveled in three!<sup>129</sup> And the last camp apparently had been abandoned only that morning.<sup>130</sup> Prints of a white woman's shoe had been seen along the trail; there could be little doubt now that these were Dog Soldiers, the band that had terrorized the settlements of Kansas and Nebraska.<sup>131</sup> Carr

<sup>124</sup> Journal of the March, July 9, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>125</sup> F. J. North, Diary, July 9, 1869. This campsite was in the vicinity of Colonel Royall's skirmish on July 6. "It is not to be mistaken," warns Danker, "for the better-known site of the Beecher Island battle of 1868," some thirty miles to the south. Danker, *op. cit.*, p. 138n.

<sup>126</sup> Journal of the March, July 9, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>127</sup> F. J. North, Diary, July 9, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>128</sup> Journal of the March, July 10, 1869. NARS RG 98. Grinnell, again repeating North, states that the command remained in camp this day to await a wagon train from Fort McPherson. It did not. The train in fact was not due for several days. It is difficult to account for North's statement; it may be that he confused the command's own wagon train, which was left behind the next day (see below), with the McPherson train. (L. H. North, *Recollections . . .*, p. 76; Grinnell, *Two Great Scouts*, p. 194.)

<sup>129</sup> Journal of the March, July 10, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>130</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, July 20, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>131</sup> Sorenson, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

halted on the site of the third camp and began making preparations for swift action.

In the meantime, the Cheyenne Dog Soldiers under Tall Bull had struck out from the Frenchman River across the sandhills toward the South Platte. Finding the Platte and other streams too full for safe crossing, Tall Bull—perhaps against his better judgment<sup>132</sup>—made the fatal mistake of going into camp on White Butte Creek, near Summit Springs, Colorado. Why Tall Bull felt secure enough to allow camp to be made with the cavalry so close behind is not clear. Perhaps, since he had scattered his village—as Carr had found the previous week—into many small parties, he felt that this would throw the cavalry off his trail.<sup>133</sup> Such a belief would have seemed to be confirmed by the apparent withdrawal of the column as it turned back to the east to find a better way to the Cheyenne's trail.<sup>134</sup> Whatever the reason for Tall Bull's carelessness, it was to result in disaster for the Dog Soldiers.

In his camp some twenty miles to the south, General Carr was hurriedly preparing for the next day's march. The adversities of the last four weeks—and especially of the past few days—had taken their toll of the command. Carr's inadequate wagon train had had no room for proper forage for the horses, and the grass of the valley had been replaced by the yucca and cactus of the sandhills. The troops were tired, but their horses were exhausted. Assembling his command, Carr selected for duty all available men, "that is, all those whose horses were fit for service." The outlook was bleak; out of seven companies of the Fifth

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<sup>132</sup> This, at least, is Captain Price's belief. He states that the delay was made "at the suggestion of the medicine man and against the advice of Tall Bull." (Price, *op. cit.*, p. 140.)

<sup>133</sup> This explanation is accepted by S. Vestal, *Warpath and Council Fire* (New York, 1948), p. 170.

<sup>134</sup> This opinion is offered by Captain North; "they had seen us turn back and thought we were going straight to Fort McPherson." North adds that "When he [the Indian] knows that an enemy is after him it is impossible to take him unawares, but let him think himself safe and he is the most careless being on earth." (Letter, L. H. North to J. C. North, November 28, 1874.)

Cavalry (almost four hundred men) and three companies of the Pawnee Scouts (one hundred and fifty men), the General could muster only two hundred and forty-four cavalry and fifty Scouts for the next day's forced march.<sup>185</sup>

There was no way of knowing the number of warriors in the Cheyenne village. But even with the Expedition's force reduced by half, speed and strategy might compensate. General Carr ordered three days' rations placed on pack mules. The heavy wagon train would be left behind under guard of those unable to make the march. Major North and his fifty Scouts would precede the command at a short distance. The column would march at daybreak.<sup>186</sup>

The campaign was approaching its climax. Behind the Expedition lay over a month of hard marching with—until now—most disappointing results. Equipment had been meagre and often defective; supplies had been short. But they had sufficed. The country itself had been an adversary, but it had been conquered. The ranks of the command were thin, but—despite the General's fears—there would be soldiers enough for the task at hand; even the unpredictable Pawnee would gain Carr's approval.

There was little doubt on that evening of July 10, 1869, that the next day would bring a conflict. "We will have a fight tomorrow sure," wrote Major North in his diary; "I hope we may come out victorious. I shall be careful for the sake of the dear ones at home."<sup>187</sup>

The command bedded down for the night to await the morning's forced march that would lead them to victory at the Battle of Summit Springs.

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<sup>185</sup> Report, Carr to Ruggles, July 20, 1869. NARS RG 98.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*; Letter, L. H. North to J. C. North, November 28, 1874.

<sup>187</sup> F. J. North, Diary, July 10, 1869.