



1874 JOURNEY OF AN OFFICER'S WIFE ON THE SAN ANTONIO-EL PASO ROAD

ONE-ACT PLAY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



In the summer of 1874, Colonel George L. Andrews, commander of the Twenty-fifth U. S. Infantry—a Buffalo Soldier regiment, returned to Fort Davis, Texas where he was serving as post commander. Accompanying the colonel were his new wife, Emily, and her teenage daughter, Maud, from a previous marriage.

In April of 1873, the colonel's first wife, Alice, had died in New York City. The colonel had remained back East to settle her estate and to visit with his only son, George, a cadet at the United States Military Academy at West Point. It was during this period that the colonel courted Emily. The couple was married in Portland, Maine on May 13, 1874, and soon afterwards the colonel began to make preparations for bringing his new family to the frontier.

The Andrews party journeyed by ship to the Texas coast and then by rail to Austin--which, at the time, had a population of 12,000. At Austin, an escort of Buffalo Soldiers (25th Infantry, the colonel's regiment) from Fort Davis met them. Under the command of Lieutenant Henry Landon, the escort contained two non-commissioned officers (NCOs), ten troopers, three six-mule teams, four mules for the "private ambulance of Colonel Andrews, and the necessary camp equipage."

They traveled to Fort Davis along the Austin-Fredericksburg stage road and the San Antonio-El Paso Road. Mrs. Andrews and Maud rode in an army ambulance, which was a common form of transportation for officers' families at the time; it was a stout wagon with leather seats and a canvas top. A light wagon carried their servants, and there were other army wagons to carry the family's household goods—including a piano. They departed Austin on Aug. 10 and arrived at Fort Davis on September 8.

The second Mrs. Andrews kept a detailed diary of her journey from Austin to Fort Davis written in the form of a letter to her father. In the diary, Mrs. Andrews described many of the experiences common to military wives on the frontier after the Civil War. Mrs. Andrews viewed the frontier through the eyes of a middle-class, eastern-raised woman, and her account provides an interesting picture of the late 19th-century West. Her original forty-three page diary is preserved in the Barker Texas History Center at the University of Texas.

To piece together a historical story, historians use many different items. Below are some primary sources that tell us about Colonel and Mrs. Andrews.

At eleven o'clock yesterday morning Mrs. Emily R. Brown, daughter of Hon. H. K. Oliver of Salem, and daughter-in-law of Hon. J. B. Brown of this city, was married to Colonel George L. Andrews, of the 25th Infantry, U. S. A. At the conclusion of the ceremony the newly married couple started on a wedding tour up the Hudson.

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MARRIED.
In this city, May 13, at St. Luke's Cathedral, by Rev. Chas. W. Hayes, Geo. L. Andrews, Col. 25th Infantry, U. S. A., and Mrs. Emily K. Brown.
In Woolwich, May 2, Alfred B. Pughard and Miss Clara M. Crooker.
In Bath, May 11, Robert Holmes of Bath and Margaret A. Howe of Gardiner.

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1. The above articles are wedding announcements for Colonel Andrews and Emily Brown. Old newspapers often give historians information about people in history. Read both wedding notices from a newspaper in Portland, Maine, and make a list of things you have learned about Colonel and Mrs. Andrews.
2. The next two pages are copies of a letter that the new Mrs. Andrews wrote to her father in Maine, telling him about her trip to Texas. These letters and entries from her diary help to give us a picture of life and travel to Texas in 1874. Have you ever kept a diary or journal? Staple several sheets of paper together or use a notebook, begin your journal and write a journal entry telling about a day in your life.
3. Everyone loves stories. Many authors and playwrights take historical events from primary sources and create a story or play everyone can enjoy. The following play was written by Mary Williams, National Park Service historian at Fort Davis National Historic Site. With your classmates, produce and present this play for your class or another class. Use props or costumes, if you like. Have fun making history come alive!

"Surviving"
"Gripping Springs"
"In Camp" Sept. 11. 1874

My Dear Father,

Feeling sure that some little account of our trip through Texas, would be interesting to you, I have tried to note down each day's doings, and I enclose send them to you.

Necessarily this has often been written in the greatest hurry, either when just ready for a start in the morning, or when tired and sleepy after a long day's march, so you must read with the greatest leniency.

I must go back to the starting of yesterday, before I try to describe to you this strange scene, as it appears to me this morning.

We were all up bright and early intending to be off by eight o'clock, but at the last moment something was found to be out of order with one of the wagons, so that we were detained till it was nine before we left the Hotel.

The people of Austin (the most of whom seem to have nothing to do) stood in crowds to see us start.

The Col. rode ahead on his favorite "Billy" next followed the "Ambulance" with Maud and myself inside, and two servants, next, then a light wagon with the other servants,

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and finally the army masons brought up the masonry under the edge of Linn's Landing.

We made a good many friends in Austin, and the balcony was quite full of ladies and gentlemen, to wish us "Bon voyage."

On leaving town the first event was the crossing of the Colorado River, which we expected to do on a plankton bridge, but this was destroyed a short time since by the sudden rise of the river, so we went a little farther up, hoping to find the rope ferry in order, but we found no ferry-man, so back we descended to the 'ford'. The water was clear and bright, and as we stopped in the middle of the stream to water the mules, while I looked up and down at the various teams crossing back and forth, I wondered what you all would say at home at the next night.

It has been such a long period of sunshine that the road for some miles was very dusty, but the day was cool, and a high wind blew it away from us, so we had very little annoyance from it. The country is rolling, many of the hill sides on which we passed seemed to be a mass of rocks, and as the brakes were put on to allow the ambulances to slide slowly down the steep places, I fairly held my breath; I came to the conclusion however that there was very little danger of its tipping over, espe-