

# FORSYTH SCOUT - BEECHER ISLAND

## Newsletter # 6, July 2008

Welcome to more new readers of the Newsletter this month. I'm glad to have all of you with us. Three more of Scout A. J. Pliley's descendants are now with us, along with another descendant of Scout Chalmers Smith and one from Scout Piatt's line, and probably some others that I can't think of right now. Sorry!



### Calendar

**Fort Harker Days** will be coming up in July at Kanopolis, Kansas. This is where the Scouts left from on their expedition that would make them famous. Jim Gray, The Cowboy, at Drovers Mercantile in Ellsworth, Kansas, can provide details. He can be contacted at [www.droversmercantile.com](http://www.droversmercantile.com) or [kansascowboy@kans.com](mailto:kansascowboy@kans.com), or 785-472-4703

On September 13 & 14, 2008, the 109<sup>th</sup> **Beecher Island Reunion** will be held at the battleground. For information check here:

[http://www.wrayco.net/museum\\_beecher.html](http://www.wrayco.net/museum_beecher.html)

or write:

Beecher Island Battle Ground Memorial Association, 33041 County Road 20,  
Wray, CO 80758

Who is planning on attending the reunion this fall? If it is convenient, please drop me a note.  
[meili416@sbcglobal.net](mailto:meili416@sbcglobal.net)

If anyone has an event that you would like to have included in the newsletter, please feel free to submit it to me. It should have some historical connection to the Scouts, the Beecher Island battle or Great Plains Indian Wars or settlement of the mid-west.

This edition was going to highlight both Scouts Donovan and Pliley, but became too large, so we will feature Scout Allison J. Pliley this month and Scout John Donovan next month.

## Another Scout That Went for Relief 2<sup>nd</sup> Party

### Scout Allison John “A. J.” Pliley

1. Allison John “A. J.” Pliley was born April 20, 1844 in Ross County, Ohio, (son of John Pliley and Mary S. Waddle).

In the 1850's the Pliley family moved to Soldier Township, north of Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas. He was apparently the youngest of the Pliley children, his older siblings were, Austin W.; William S.; Rufus; Edwin and Albert Augustus, most of whom lived in the Topeka, Kansas area at one time.

A. J. served with the 15th Regiment, Kansas Cavalry, Co. F, entering as a private, and being a Second Lieutenant when discharged.

On August 21, 1867, A. J. was at the battle of Prairie Dog Creek, in the northwest corner of Phillips County, near the cities of Phillipsburg and Norton, Kansas. This battle involved the 18<sup>th</sup> Kansas Volunteer Cavalry, which were Kansas soldiers, who were activated to assist the U. S. Army.

Following the fight at Beecher Island, A. J. was at the Battle of the Washita, on November 27, 1868 when Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer's 7th U.S. Cavalry attacked and destroyed Black Kettle's camp on the Washita River. This was a six month enlistment, and he served as a Captain..

Following the killing of most of Scout Tom Alderdice's family and a number of other citizens in what would become Lincoln County, Kansas, A. J. was the Captain of a militia that spent time in the Saline River and Spillman Creek areas. Several of the former Scouts also served in this militia

In the 1870 census, A. J. is found twice, listed once with his parents in Shawnee County, north of Topeka and again in Wichita.

After his life of adventure, A. J. settled down, married and later in life operated a sand dredge on the Missouri River in Kansas City. He is known to have attended at least one reunion at Beecher Island.

On September 30, 1871 in Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas, he married Martha "Mattie" Louise Young, (daughter of Richard B. Young and Elizabeth \_\_\_\_\_). Mattie was born April 25, 1851 in Weston, Platte County, Missouri and died May 28, 1934 in Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas.

A. J. died February 22, 1917 in Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas. A. J. and Mattie are buried in Quindaro Cemetery, Kansas City, Kansas.

Children

2. i. Mary Elizabeth Pliley was born June 6, 1872.
3. ii. Marie "Mattie" Azelia Pliley was born October 10, 1874.
- iii. Belle Ethel Pliley was born December 21, 1877 in Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas, and died there May 11, 1878. Her burial place is unknown.
- iv. Bessie Jean Pliley was born February 25, 1879 in Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas.

On June 26, 1906 in Leavenworth, Leavenworth County, Kansas, she married Charles T. Fry, (son of Edward Fry and Frances Ann "Fannie" Young). Charles was born February 24, 1868 in Weston, Platte County, Missouri, and died July 8, 1932 in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri and is buried in Mt. Washington Cemetery, Kansas City, Missouri.

Bessie died July 20, 1961 in Kansas City County, Missouri, and is buried in Quindaro Cemetery, Kansas City, Kansas.

4. v. Pearl Lydia Pliley was born October 28, 1881.
5. vi. Ruby Lee Pliley was born July 26, 1884.
6. vii. Ella Virginia Pliley was born June 18, 1887.
7. viii. Goldie Y. Pliley was born August 19, 1891.

## Second Generation

2. Mary Elizabeth Pliley was born June 6, 1872 in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ County, Kansas.

On August 3, 1892 in Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas, she married Mahlon N. Utter, (son of George V. Utter and Roxelina Adelia Haynes). He was born August \_\_, 1871 in Otsego, Otsego County, New York, and died November 5, 1946 in Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas.

Mary died November 14, 1949 in Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas, Mary and Mahlon are buried in Oak Grove Cemetery, Kansas City, Kansas.

Children

- i. Hazel Shirley Utter was born August 14, 1893 in Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas.

On June 29, 1952 in Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas, she married John Bertin Hoover, (son of Abraham Hoover and Catherine Davis). John was born October 4, 1882 in Excelsior Springs, Clay County, Missouri and died October 18, 1952 in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri and is buried in Mount Washington Cemetery, Kansas City, Missouri.

Hazel died December \_\_, 1977 in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, and is buried in \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. She had no known descendants.

8. ii. Gladys E. Utter was born November 1, 1902.

3. Marie "Mattie" Azelia Pliley was born October 10, 1874 in Seward, Seward County, Nebraska.

On \_\_\_\_\_, 1902 in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ County, Kansas, she married Richard Ovid Armstrong, (son of Ambrose Armstrong and Sarah Jane Smith). Richard was born June 8, 1874 in Milton Township, Pike County, Illinois, and died February 24, 1955 in Leavenworth, Leavenworth County, Kansas.

Mattie died February 23, 1943 in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri. Mattie and Richard are buried in Mount Moriah Cemetery, Kansas City, Missouri.

Children

9. i. Fred J. Armstrong was born October 4, 1904.

10. ii. Mary Della Armstrong was born September 10, 1907.

11. iii. Goldie "Pat" Armstrong was born \_\_\_\_\_, 1910.

4. Pearl Lydia Pliley was born October 28, 1881 in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri.

On \_\_\_\_\_, 191\_ in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ County, Kansas, she married Lesley Pinkney Bell. Lesley was born June 11, 1880 in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ County, North Carolina, and died March 15, 1937 in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ County, Kansas.

Pearl died July 10, 1966 in North Hollywood, Los Angeles County, California. Pearl and Leslie are buried in Quindaro Cemetery, Kansas City, Kansas.

Children

i. Leslie Bell was born March 30, 1918 in Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas and died June 11, 2001 in North Hollywood, Los Angeles County, California.

5. Ruby Lee Pliley was born July 26, 1884 in Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas.

On \_\_\_\_\_, 1911 in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ County, Kansas, she married John W. Shindler. He was born about 1866 in Missouri and was still living in 1930.

Ruby died November 12, 1954 in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ County, Kansas and is buried in Quindaro Cemetery, Kansas City, Kansas. There was a John William Shindler who died October 8, 1947, near Mt. Pleasant, Cass County, Missouri and is buried at Mt. Hope Cemetery, Kansas City, Kansas, who might have been her husband or former husband.

Child

i. Martha L. Shindler was born April \_\_, 1918 in Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas.

6. Ella Virginia Pliley was born June 18, 1887 in Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas.

On September 16, 1913 in Leavenworth, Leavenworth County, Kansas, she married John Henry Winger, (son of \_\_\_\_\_ Winger and Nara Nora \_\_\_\_\_). He was born March 7, 1890 in Gainesville, Ozark County, Missouri, and died October \_\_, 1970 in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, buried in \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

Ella died December 26, 1955 in Washington Township, Jackson County, Missouri and is buried in Floral Hills Cemetery, Kansas City, Missouri. They were later divorced.

Children

12. i. John Henry Winger Jr. was born April 22, 1914.
- ii. Edna Nora Winger was born August 30, 1922 in Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas.

On November 18, 1945 in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, she married Leslie Ramsey Jr. He was born April 17, 1923 in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, and died July 25, 1985 in Harrisonville, Cass County, Missouri.

Edna died May 6, 1999 in Harrisonville, Cass County, Missouri. Edna and Leslie are buried in Orient Cemetery, Harrisonville, Missouri. There are probably living descendants of this branch.

7. Goldie Y. Pliley was born August 19, 1891 in Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas.

On March 25, 1916 in Kansas City, Jackson, Missouri, she married Obed O. Pound, (son of Preston Stout Pound and Mary P. Taylor). He was born November 2, 1888 in Carroll County, Missouri, and died October \_\_, 1980 in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri.

Goldie died March 31, 1980 in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri. Goldie and Obed are buried in Floral Hills Cemetery, Kansas City, Missouri.

Children

- i. Dorothy June Pound was born February 1, 1917 in Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas.

On October 8, 1938 in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, she married William E. Gossett. He was born \_\_\_\_\_, 19\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ County, \_\_\_\_\_, and died \_\_\_\_\_, 19\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ County, \_\_\_\_\_.

Dorothy died June \_\_, 1996 in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri.

Dorothy and William are buried in \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

13. ii. Maxine Pound was born February 6, 1919.

## Third Generation

8. Gladys E. Utter was born November 1, 1902 in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ County, Kansas.

About 1922 she married Edward F. Hartness, (son of Thomas R. Hartness and Cora F. \_\_\_\_\_). He was born April 23, 1897 in Maryville, Nodaway County, Missouri, and died March \_\_, 1973 in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri.

Gladys died January \_\_, 1965 in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ County, \_\_\_\_\_. They are buried at \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

### Children

- i. Hazel Evelyn Hartness was born about 1923 in Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas.

On February 14, 1947 in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, she married Harold E. Davis.

- ii. Louis Edward Hartness was born October 24, 1924 in Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas.

On December 31, 1944 in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, he married Velma Lee January, (daughter of James Richard January and Winona B. Sawtell). She was born July 17, 1925 in Parsons, Labette County, Kansas, and died September 28, 2006 in Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas.

Louis died September 29, 1989 in Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas. They are buried in West Lawn Memorial Gardens, Topeka, Kansas. It is believed that descendants of this branch are still in the Topeka, Kansas area.

9. Fred J. Armstrong was born October 4, 1904 in Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas.

On \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_, 1926 in Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas, he married Leona Miller, (daughter of Edward Miller and Delia Cramer). She was born September 28, 1908 in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ County, \_\_\_\_\_, and died August \_\_, 1979 in Bolivar, Polk County, Missouri.

Fred died July \_\_, 1987 in Bolivar, Polk County, Missouri. Fred and Leona are buried in \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

### Children

- i. Donald Eugene Armstrong was born October 7, 1928 in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ County, Missouri.

On August 8, 1952 in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ County, \_\_\_\_\_, he married Mary Ann Nocar, (daughter of Joseph Nocar and Josephine Sitar). She

was born September 5, 1930 in Linthicum Heights, Maryland and died July 28, 2004 in Medical City, Dallas County, Texas.

Donald died April 6, 2003 in Kaufman, Kaufman County, Texas. Donald and Mary are buried in \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

- ii. Freddie Armstrong.
- iii. Jeanne Armstrong.
- iv. Patricia Ann Armstrong.

10. Mary Della Armstrong was born September 10, 1907 in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri.

On \_\_\_\_\_, 1927 in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ County, \_\_\_\_\_, she married James Franklin Jester Sr., (son of Charles A. Jester and Hattie J. Anderson). James was born June 15, 1904 in Horton, Brown County, Kansas and died September 9, 1993 in Shawnee Mission, Johnson County, Kansas.

Mary died October 25, 1992 in Shawnee Mission, Johnson County, Kansas. Mary and James are buried in \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

There are living descendants of this branch of the Pliley family.

11. Goldie "Pat" Armstrong was born \_\_\_\_\_, 1910 in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ County, Missouri.

She married (1) Ray Hoover.

She married (2) David Lorenez. They had at least one son.

12. John Henry Winger Jr. was born April 22, 1914 in Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas.

He married (1) \_\_\_\_\_.

On December 21, 1955 in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, he married (2) Pauline M. Littlefield. She was born June 28, 1915 in Randolph County, West Virginia, and died February 23, 2003 in Dripping Springs, Hays County, Texas.

John died August 5, 1995 in Van Nuys, Los Angeles County, California.

There is at least one living descendant of this branch.

13. Maxine Pound was born February 6, 1919 in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ County, Kansas.

On November 2, 1941 in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, she married Henry Russell Quimby, (son of Carl D. Quimby and Edna May Moeche). He was born March 16, 1919 in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, and died March \_\_, 1977 in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ County, \_\_\_\_\_.

Maxine died January 31, 1991 in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ County, Missouri. Maxine and Henry are buried in \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

There are two descendants of this family are still in the Kansas City, Missouri area.



Allison Pliley is the only one of the four Scouts that went for relief that is known to have attended any of the Beecher Island reunions. Pierre Trudeau and John Donovan had died before the Reunions were started. Jack Stilwell, while still living when the reunions began, is not known to have attended any of them.

Below is what I thought was an interesting article about Allison J. Pliley.



## A Hero of America's Gamest Battle Here

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### **Captain Allison J. Pliley of Kansas City, Kansas, one of Colonel Forsyth's Fifty-one Who Fought the Indians at Beecher's Island -- He Crept Through the Red Lines at Night and Went for Aid, Which Arrived in Time to Save the Band -- How Fifty-one Fought 1,200 in an Engagement More Heroic Than the Alamo**

"Where does Captain Pliley live?" a stranger asked a grocery delivery boy on Argentine Boulevard one afternoon last week.

"Old Cap. Pliley?" the boy responded, "I'm going there; get in the wagon."

"What is he the captain of?" asked the stranger.

"Oh, I don't know," the boy answered as he drove up and stopped before a little vine covered cottage. "Never heard him say, Just a nickname, I suppose."

Such is fame. Forty years ago the name Captain Allison J. Pliley was known all over the western frontier. When he was 24 years old the little old man that now sits on the shady porch of his home, 1308 Cheyenne Avenue, Kansas City, Kansas, was among the widely known scouts, Indian fighters and cavalry officers that cleared the plains of Kansas and Nebraska of the hostile Indian tribes and paved the way for the farmers and ranchmen that have made these states what they are. Captain Pliley had an active part in many of the thrilling adventures of the plains.

He was in the little band in the "Beecher Island massacre."

### **A Kansan Since 1858.**

Allison J. Pliley was born in Ross County, Ohio, April 20, 1844, of German and Scotch parentage. In 1858 the family moved to Kansas and settled near Topeka. Four years later the young man made a prairie schooner trip to Denver. The next year he made a similar trip, and, upon his return, enlisted and served two years in Company F, Fifteenth Kansas on the plains.

In 1866 he tried to settle down to the study of law in Topeka, but the call of the plains was too insistent. The blood of the Highlanders and of the military German grandfather, a Revolutionary soldier under General Greene, began to tell. He refused a commission in the eleventh Kansas and became a scout. There was more chance for reckless adventure scouting.

The summer of 1866 was one of excitement on the plains. The Indians were restless. Now and then a scout would be found slain. Depredations became more frequent, and in 1868 General Philip Sheridan established headquarters at Hays City, then Fort Hays, Kansas. Young Pliley having thrown away his law books, joined a company of fifty-one scouts under Colonel George A. Forsyth;

A scout named Comstock had been killed by Cheyenne and Sioux near Willow Springs. Colonel Forsyth's command was sent in pursuit. Twelve miles east of Fort Wallace they came upon the remains of a wagon train. The bodies of the immigrants were laying about and some of the wagons were still burning.

They followed the fresh trail to the Republican River and then to the Arickaree, a branch of the Republican River, in Colorado. Here a larger trail of Indians joined the band that had killed the immigrants.

### **On the Trail of a Big Force.**

The older scouts told Colonel Forsyth that his fifty-one men were trailing ten or twelve hundred Indians, but the colonel replied that he did not care if they were ten or twelve thousand in the band, he had been sent after the murderers. They camped the night on the bank of the Arickaree, opposite the island since famous as Beecher's Island and beneath the bluff now called Squaw Point. The night was clear and beautiful and Captain Pliley says, in spite of the fact that their rations had given out that day and that they knew they were camping near twenty times their number of the fiercest warriors on the plains, the men were in good spirits.

Just before daylight a small band of Indians dashed through the camp and succeeded in stampeding some of the horses. When it became light enough to see Colonel Forsyth went up on the bluff and looked over the plain with a field glass.

"The world is covered with Indians," he said on his return. "They are coming, Fight as you choose."

The small force crossed the stream to the island, made their horses fast to the trees and began to dig trenches. At 6 o'clock, before they had finished the trenches the fight started. Confident in their numbers, the Indians encircled the small band. Swinging low on the sides of their ponies and shooting from beneath the necks of the animals they charged time and again.

### **Dug Trenches Between Charges.**

Between charges the scouts worked at the trenches. In the first two hours twenty-two were wounded. Five of these died that night, among them the surgeon of the party and young Lieutenant Fred Beecher, a nephew of Henry Ward Beecher, and for whom the island was named. Colonel Forsyth was wounded in the leg and scalp, but not dangerously enough to give up the command. After the first two hours the scouts had completed the ditches and after that the bullets of their enemies passed harmlessly over them.

That night Colonel Forsyth called for volunteers to go for aid. The nearest troops were at Fort Wallace, more than one hundred miles away. A. J. Pliley, "Jack" Stilwell and Trudeau responded. Stilwell and Trudeau were chosen.

They slipped out that night. The next night Pliley and Chauncey Whitney were the volunteers, as no one believed that Stilwell and Trudeau had gotten through the Indian lines.

Chauncey Whitney was fat and unfitted for the work, and although they made several trials they did not get out that night. At one time they were within twenty-five feet of their foes when a flash of heat lightning showed them the Indians stretched out on the ground in front of them. The third night Pliley and Jack Donovan made the attempt. By crawling on their hands and knees, lying flat often to allow parties of Indians to pass, they succeeded in getting through the lines. The next day, without water or food they lay in a buffalo wallow, to resume their journey at night again. To avoid leaving a trail they were wearing Indian moccasins. This was a mistake, as the cactus cut their feet until they swelled horribly. Four days after they started they reached Fort Wallace, Stilwell and Trudeau had already arrived, but had found an insufficient force there to go to the rescue. Donovan and Pliley, footsore and tired, continued their search for troops. Donovan found Colonel Carpenter and Pliley traces Colonel Brisbane.

### **The Relief of the Scouts.**

Both companies reached the island the same day within hours of each other. Troops sent by Stilwell and Trudeau arrived twenty-six hours later. They found Colonel Forsyth's scouts still entrenched. The Indians had left about one-half of their number to guard the men they considered already as good as taken, and the other half had gone ahead. With the arrival of the soldiers the Indians fled. On the field were found 250 warriors dead, and, after the Indian custom, placed on scaffolds out of reach of the wolves. The "Massacre" at Beecher's Island was not such a one-sided affair after all.

Captain Pliley returned with Colonel Forsyth's weakened scouts to Fort Hays. General Sheridan, "Little Phil," as he was known to the frontiersmen, had heard of the adventure, and, at his suggestion, Governor S. J. Crawford made Allison J. Pliley captain of Company A, Nineteenth Kansas regiment, which was organized at that time.

When the West became quiet and scouts were no longer needed, Captain Pliley came to Kansas City, Kansas, where he is engaged in the sand business. He likes to think of old times, but the ignorance of the grocery boy is an evidence of how little he talks of them. Last year he attended a reunion of the Beecher Island survivors. The accompanying pictures were taken on the old battle field. The bluff in the distance is Squaw's Point. At the reunion a band played on the point and the women of the party sang.

"Very different music from what we heard that morning forty seven years ago," said Captain Pliley. "When Squaw's Point was given its name the squaws and noncombatants gathered on the cliff, it was a case of 'We salute you, who are about to die.' And such a doleful salute!"

"The Indian 'death song' is sung to the enemy only when his defeat appears certain, and most

of us believed the squaws had a right to sing it to us that morning. I never expected to go over the old ground forty years afterward and talk about the old times then.”



**After reading the following, I don't think you would want to mess with Pliley's horse.**

Chronicles of Oklahoma

Volume 6, No. 4

December, 1928

THE RISKS OF ARMY DESERTION ON THE FRONTIER

JOSEPH B. THOBURN

Page 445

The punishment for desertion from the military service of the United States army has always been severe. In addition to the certainty of such punishment if apprehended, the soldier who deserted while on duty with troops in the field during a campaign against the Indians, faced a serious situation in case he happened to meet with hostile savages after making his get-away from the camp of his command. Moreover, in such situations, it was often dangerous for a small detachment to go in pursuit of deserters, so it frequently happened that no effort was made for the apprehension of such fugitives.

It is recorded that one soldier of the Nineteenth Kansas Volunteer Cavalry deserted while that regiment was encamped at Camp Wichita (now Fort Sill), as a part of the Washita Expedition, in 1869. His trail led northward and a small detachment of troopers, under the command of a non-commissioned officer, followed in an effort to overtake and capture him. Riding rapidly, the detachment gained upon the deserter, who was mounted on a horse that was plainly giving out. Suddenly, a small band of hostile Indian warriors hove in sight. The frightened deserter saw them and vainly sought to escape by doubling back on the trail, but he was soon overtaken and shot down by the Indians, who were well mounted. The detachment witnessed this scene from afar and then, being unequal in strength to that of the band of Indians, retreated to the camp and reported.

Nearly a third of a century later, when the Kiowa and Comanche country was thrown open to settlement, a member of that detachment was numbered among the new settlers. One day, shortly after his arrival at Lawton, he related the story of this deserter and his fate to a company of people, several of whom were Indians. His story was interpreted by one of the younger Indians to an aged warrior, concluding with the statement that a strong searching party which had been sent out had been unable to find the remains of the slain deserter. Thereupon, the old warrior responded that the body of the unfortunate white man had been concealed among some (Page 446) big rocks on a neighboring hillside. Later, he showed the exact spot and a careful search revealed a few fragments of half-decayed bone, a couple of tarnished blouse buttons and a rusty belt buckle, which were the only mementos of a wilderness tragedy.

Scarcely less tragic and much more dramatic is the story of the punishment meted out to three thievish deserters from the same regiment, which has just come to light in the publication of the diary of Private David L. Spotts, of Troop L, in a volume entitled "Campaigning with Custer and the Nineteenth Kansas Cavalry in the Washita Campaign, 1868-69," recently issued by the Wetzel Publishing Company, of Los Angeles, California.

The entry in his journal for Tuesday, Feb. 9, 1869, briefly records the fact that three horses, belonging to as many officers of the regiment had been stolen the night before; also that, inasmuch as no men were missing, it was surmised that the thief or thieves had operated with the connivance of at least one of the camp guards and that the horses had been hidden out, to be picked up and run out of the country later. The entry in the diary for the next day states that the horses belonged respectively to Capt. Allison J. Pliley of Company A, to Capt. David L. Payne of Company H, and to Lieut. Luther A. Thrasher, who was the regimental quartermaster.

The entry also states that three men who had been absent part of the previous night had disappeared and it was believed that they were thieves as well as deserters. It is interesting to note in this connection that Captain Pliley had been one of Forsyth's scouts in the Battle of Beecher's Island, on the Arickaree fork of the Republican river, only about five months before; also, that Captain Payne was none other than he who was destined to become the dauntless leader of the Oklahoma Boomers, less than a dozen years later.

Each of the three missing animals was much prized by its owner and Captain Pliley's pony, "Blossom," was a racing animal and a regimental favorite, so that popular indignation over her disappearance was very pronounced among the officers and men of the entire regiment. Captain Pliley (Page 447) and Captain Finch of Company L were granted permission to go in pursuit of the deserters and the missing horses. The assistance of Osage Indian scouts and trailers, who were attached to General Custer's headquarters, was secured to locate the trail. Thereafter, the two officers proceeded without escort or other assistance, as the trail was plain after a recent rain. It led toward Red River. A projected regimental horse race was postponed until Captain Pliley could return with Blossom. The two captains were gone for a week, with the prevalent opinion in the regiment that they would capture the deserters and recover the horses. The entry in the diary for Wednesday, February 17, records their return with the horses and with the guns of the deserters but without bringing in the latter as prisoners, as had been expected. They did not say what they had done with the culprits, though Captain Pliley said: "They were looking at the sun when we last saw them." Captain Finch said that they did not kill the deserters, but beyond those brief statements no information was vouchsafed and both officers remained reticent concerning the matter until the end of their service with the regiment. After the officers and men of the regiment had been mustered out and discharged from the service, Captain Finch related the story of the recovery of the horses, which was as follows: "As we followed the trail made by the stolen horses, Captain Pliley frequently swept the horizon ahead with a pair of powerful field-glasses. Finally, on the fourth day, they were discovered, far ahead. Warily following, their camp was located by the light of its fire. We came into their camp before daylight, and just as they were about to get up we walked up and told them to get up and hold up their hands. Their clothes were placed some distance away and they were marched to them and told to put them on. Then we faced them toward the rising

sun and told them to march and not look back or we would take a shot at them. They obeyed our orders to the letter." What became of the three miscreants, unarmed and afoot in the wilderness, nearly if not quite a hundred miles from the nearest settlement in Texas, is not known. In (Page 448) any event, however, with rivers, wild beasts and possibly hostile Indians between them and such a destination, the punishment that was thus meted out to them by the two justly indignant officers was unusual to the point of extreme severity.

-JOSEPH B. THOBURN.



## Trivia and Other Odds and Ends

### The Surgeon with the Relief

On the day of the relief of the Scouts at Beecher Island, Scout Lewis Farley had his badly wounded and infected leg amputated by Dr. Jenkins Fitzgerald, who had arrived with the command of Colonel Louis Carpenter. Unfortunately, due to complications, Scout Farley died later in the day.

Dr. Jenkins "John" Augustus Fitzgerald, originally of Iowa, later was stationed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where he met and in 1872 married Emily L. McCorkle, from an old Pennsylvania family. From there they were ordered first to West Point, New York, where their first child, Elizabeth, was born in 1873, and then to Sitka, Alaska, where their son, Herbert "Bert", was born. Emily was one of the first American women in Sitka.

After two years in Alaska, the family was ordered to Fort Lapwai in Idaho Territory, where they lived through the Nez Percé and Bannock Indian Wars. Her letters tell of her experiences and adventures as a military wife on the frontier. Her letters are published in the book, "**An Army Doctor's Wife on the Frontier: Letters from Alaska and the Far West, 1874-1878.**"

Dr. Fitzgerald died in 1879. Emily died in 1912.

I have not had time to track down or check this book out, and it has no real bearing on the Beecher Island fight, but may have some information on one of the participants of the relief.



## Geographic Locations Named After Beecher Island Participants

From Reader Mike Nelson



Forsyth Library, on the campus of Fort Hays State University in Hays, KS, was named for George A. Forsyth, the leader of the Beecher Island Scouts. Are readers aware of other locations, buildings, or features named after the Beecher Island Battle participants? I am

cognizant of Camp Beecher (Sedgwick County) and Camp Pliley (Lincoln County), the town of Culver, Kansas, Morton Township (Ottawa County, Kansas) and Roman Nose State Park in Oklahoma. Drop me a note and include a picture if available. Perhaps we can then compile a list. csrockguy@yahoo.com



This article I found that addresses the naming of Camp Beecher, which would later become Wichita, Kansas

Camp Beecher  
Headquarters Department of Missouri  
Fort Hays, Kansas, October 19, 1868  
General Field Orders, No. 3

The station of United. States Troops at the mouth of the Little Arkansas river, Kansas, will hereafter be known as Camp Beecher, in commemoration of the name and services of Frederick H. Beecher, 1st Lieutenant, 3d Infantry, who was killed in battle with Indians, on Arickaree Fork of the Republican river, September 17, 1868.

By command of Major General Sheridan J. Schuyler Crosby, Brvt. Lieut. Col., A. D. C. [9]



Reader Joe Rosa recently wrote asking if I was aware of a revolver, possibly a .36 cal. Whitney, which was inscribed with Peate's name. Apparently years ago there was a news article about it. I recall reading it somewhere, but can't remember where. Does any one else recall ever reading or hearing about this firearm? If so, please drop me a line.



A note from Orvel Criqui, The Scout on the Kaw. (Author of Fifty Fearless Men)

"The markers that we obtained for Sharp Grover and Thomas O'Donnell are official government issue. We found that during pension requests the congress declared that the Forsyth Scouts were entitled to same honors and privileges as regular army. It took lots of red tape and proof but no problem to obtain the markers."



All for this month. More next month.  
Until then, Happy Trails.

Mike