



Fort Davis Readers' Theatre



Army Dougherty Wagon at Fort Davis, late 1880s

One-Act Play Based on the Diary of an Officer's Wife

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Based on the Diary of an Officer's Wife

The following play is based on Mrs. Andrews's diary.

Actors:

Colonel George Andrews

Mrs. Emily Andrews

Miss Maud Brown

Lieutenant Henry Landon

Servant 1

Servant 2

Servant 3

Trooper 1

Trooper 2

Trooper 3

Narrator

Narrator: This is the first evening in camp for the group. They left Austin that morning and had traveled about 25 miles that day.

Colonel Andrews: I will have the servants put our tent here. Next to it will be the two tents for the servants. It won't be long before the fires are started. Then we will have supper.

Mrs. Andrews: This country is so beautiful! I am surprised to see so many fields of cotton plants and to see the water in the streams so bright and clear.

Maud: Mama, did you see how the men put irons on the feet of the mules so they won't go anywhere? The soldiers also stand guard while the mules graze.

Mrs. Andrews: Everything is very nice.

Narrator: After eating their supper, all of the travelers go to bed as they

plan to be on the road before dawn the next morning. The next scene takes place several days later. The group is in camp for the night. Some of the soldiers are talking.

Trooper 1: The captain said that 12 Indians made a raid on a wagon train that was camped in this very spot last night.

Trooper 2: I heard the Indians stole 17 mules.

Trooper 3: Some soldiers left early this morning to follow the Indians, but as the Indians had a twelve-hour head start, there is not much chance that the soldiers will find them.

Colonel: Emily, I hope all this talk about the Indians raiding here last night did not scare you.

Mrs. Andrews: I am not afraid. I know that I am very well protected. I fear more for the safety of the animals, which the Indians seem to want more than humans.

Colonel: We need to get to bed very early tonight as I hope to be on the road at least three hours before sunrise tomorrow.

Narrator: It is now 3:30 am and the group is about to set out. Word has been received that the Indians [probably Comanche or Kiowa] are actually closer than the colonel had first thought. So extra precautions are being taken.

Servant 1: It is hard to pack up everything without making any noise.

Servant 2: Since Indians have been seen, that means we will have to travel very slowly, giving time for the lookouts to make sure the road ahead is clear.

Mrs. Andrews: Maud, until the danger of Indians has passed, you will need to ride with me inside the wagon.

Servant 3: Don't worry, Mrs. Andrews. We should be out of this Indian

country today. I heard the lieutenant say we are going to head to Fort Concho.

Narrator: The group does go on to Fort Concho in San Angelo. It is a little out of the way but is a good place to rest.

Colonel Andrews: We won't be able to spend very much time here, as Lieutenant Landon and I just received orders that we have been detailed to court-martial duty in Fort Stockton.

Lieutenant Landon: And I heard that we might stay at least a week at Stockton.

Mrs. Andrews: Fort Concho is a very pleasant post and the people are all so kind to us. I wish we had more time to visit.

Colonel: We may have an opportunity to visit here again soon.

Narrator: The group leaves Fort Concho for Fort Stockton. They camp for the night about 25 miles southwest of the Concho River. For most of the trip, they have averaged about 25 miles per day.

Trooper 1: The lieutenant just received word that an Indian killed a Mexican man here last night.

Trooper 2: Not very good news. I know I'm in for another night of sleeping with one eye open.

Lieutenant Landon: (turning to one of the soldiers) Private, in view of the attack last night, we need to station a special guard around the colonel's tent tonight.

Trooper 3: (saluting the officer) Yes, sir.

Narrator: The group has a peaceful night. The next day they start early

and soon come upon the grave of the Mexican man killed by Indians two days before. The grave is covered with a few rough stones and a stick to mark the head. Maud learns from the servants that every Mexican who passes the grave will add a stone to the pile to keep the body covered so that there will be no danger of it being dug up by coyotes. After traveling all day, the group stops for supper. The colonel explains to Mrs. Andrews and Maud that they will not be camping that evening.

Colonel Andrews: Because of the lack of water on the plains we are going to make a night drive tonight.

Mrs. Andrews: What do you mean, a night drive?

Colonel Andrews: We will be traveling all night and all day tomorrow. The animals will not be able to drink until just before we set out. Then we will harness them and take them to the spring and let them drink all they want.

Colonel Andrews: Lieutenant, will you see that the kegs for water are filled?
(turning to Lt. Landon)

Lieutenant Landon: (saluting) Yes, sir. I have already ordered the men to do that. We should have 90 gallons of water in the kegs and all the canteens will be filled as well.

Colonel Andrews: Good, Lieutenant. Then we are all set to begin the longest segment of the trip.

Lieutenant Landon: Yes, sir. It will be 65 miles before we can make camp again.

Maud: I plan to sleep most of the way.

Mrs. Andrews: I think that is an excellent idea.

Narrator: The group makes it to the Pecos River safely. But before

they can make camp, they must cross the river.

Servant 1: I heard the soldiers talking that the pontoon bridge is not very safe.

Maud: What is a pontoon bridge?

Servant 1: It is like a big flat boat.

Servant 2: The animals will wade across. But if the water is high, all the animals will have to be unloaded and the baggage carried over by hand.

Servant 3: The mules are accustomed to fording or swimming the rivers. They are very unwilling to try the bridge.

Servant 1: In that case, we will need to put a soldier at the head of each animal before it will cross.

Narrator: As the mules are led across the river, Mrs. Andrews and Maud walk through the water since the colonel thinks it too dangerous to ride across. Once safely across, they make camp for the night. In a few days, the group arrives at Fort Stockton.

Mrs. Andrews: Although, I am anxious to get to Fort Davis, I have enjoyed the time here. Major Hart is very kind to have us stay at his quarters here at Fort Stockton.

Colonel Andrews: The officers' quarters are certainly large and very comfortable.

Mrs. Andrews: I especially enjoy sitting on his wide porch, which is covered with the most beautiful Madeira vines.

Maud: It is fun to get to go horseback riding every day and to attend some of the concerts and shows that the soldiers put on in the evenings.

Colonel Andrews: I am sure that if you find Fort Stockton enjoyable, you will like Fort Davis very much.

Narrator: The next day the group leaves Fort Stockton and heads to Fort Davis. As they travel down Limpia Canyon, Mrs. Andrews comments on the beauty of their surroundings.

Mrs. Andrews: I wish I could find the right words to describe this beautiful canyon in a letter to my father back in Maine. The view here seems to get prettier the more we get into the mountains. It is like seeing a beautiful painting.

Colonel Andrews: It is certainly a breathtaking ride. The rocky hills look so massive with the gray moss growing on the hillsides. The purple cactus, the tall “Spanish Bayonet” yucca plants, and the mesquite bushes make the country seem a little wild looking.

Maud: I wish I could spend several days right here wandering around in all the wonderful ravines.

Narrator: After spending the night in Limpia Canyon, the party breaks camp for the last time. The date is September 8, 1874. They have been on the road for over a month on their trip from Austin.

Mrs. Andrews: In a way, it is sad to see our tents being taken down for the last time. I have so enjoyed the pleasant camp life. In thinking about the journey, I believe that yesterday we saw the most beautiful scenery of the entire trip.

Maud: It was fun crossing water so many times! The colonel told me

that we crossed Limpia Creek 22 times!

Narrator: Soon the party arrives at Fort Davis.

Mrs. Andrews: This is certainly a beautiful setting for an army post, and our new house is so large and comfortable. It is much more than I had expected.

Colonel Andrews: I hope you will like it here, Emily. Fort Davis is considered one of the better posts on the frontier. The climate is good, and as you can see, the scenery is beautiful.

Mrs. Andrews: I am sure both Maud and I will be very happy here.

Narrator: Not long after arriving at the post, Mrs. Andrews and Maud began preparing for their first Christmas in the West. Maud's mother and stepfather were planning to have a big party on Christmas Eve at Fort Davis. All of the children who lived at the fort--both the children of officers and enlisted men--would be invited. Mrs. Andrews was busy making decorations for the large tree that would stand in the front parlor of their home. In addition to receiving an orange and a piece of hard candy, each child would receive a special gift purchased or handmade by Mrs. Andrews. The boys would receive bags of marbles, while the girls would receive little cloth dolls that Mrs. Andrews made herself.

Colonel Andrews added two rooms onto the north side of the commander's quarters to accommodate his family, making it a seven-room house. The Andrews' family called Fort Davis home until 1880, when the colonel transferred to the Department of the Dakota.

The End