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NOTES AND DOCUMENTS RUNNING THE BLOCKADE

Edited By Marsha Marks

In 1863, after the fall of Vicksburg, Heyman Herzberg, a Georgia merchant, realized that the Confederacy was doomed and made up his mind to move his business and his family to Philadelphia. Against almost insurmountable odds, he succeeded in doing so.

Herzberg kept a diary of the journey, a typescript copy of which is located in the American Jewish Archives, on the campus of Hebrew Union University in Cincinnati, Ohio. The portion of the journey through the Tennessee Valley is reprinted here verbatim.

After a few hours' travelling, we came to the foot of the mountains which run along the Tennessee River and belong to the Sand and Lookout Mountain range. One time we had an immense mountain on our right, while at the left was a sudden declivity of hundreds of feet, and the top of the highest tree reached to the level of the road. At this point we all left the carriage, except the children, and it took the greatest care to keep the horses in the narrow road. One moment we had a terrible anxiety at a point where there was a sudden turn in the road, and if I had not jumped in time to the head of the horses and turned them quick to the right, the carriage with Mr. Heyman (who was driving) and the children would have been thrown down the deep valley below and no doubt been shattered to pieces.

But all went well afterwards. We had noticed a good many sign posts pointing to Van Buren, but they never seemed to agree to the distance. We intended to stop there for midday lunch. At last we came to a blacksmith shop with a few wooden shanties. I inquired of the blacksmith: "How far is it to Van Buren?" and imagine my surprise when he said: "You are right on the public square of it." We thought it would at least be a village. After distributing of our provender we had taken along, and which all had turned into crumbs from the jolting of the carriage, and taking a drink of fresh water, we started again, this time up as difficult a road as it was possible for a carriage like ours to get. The blacksmith told us we could never get up the road with our team, but we were not to be frightened so easily.

We were anxious to reach Warrentown [Alabama] on the Tennessee River on our way to Huntsville, Alabama. At first it was not so hard, but gradually the road got full of boulders of all kinds of sizes, and sometimes our carriage was nearly capsizing when one of the wheels was high and the other low, and hardly a sign of the road to be seen for boulders. We all had to walk and unload the baggage and carry the children, and I carried a stone to lock the wheel of the carriage after the horses had pulled a short distance. Then we would return for the children and the baggage. By that time the horses were rested again, and we repeated the performance.

After untold hardships we reached the plateau of the Sand Mountain, where the road was again plain and level for miles. We thanked God when we saw a house, as it was already dark and we thought we would stay all night. In this we were, however, disappointed, as we found all available space in possession of a Southern guerrilla company. They were, however, very polite to us, as we were in the company of ladies, and suggested that we drive on a couple of miles to the home of a preacher named Williamson who, no doubt, could accommodate our party. Although our horses were nearly exhausted, we continued, and arrived at said Mr. Williamson's. He said he would be glad to keep us but had no provisions to spare. We told his wife we had coffee with us, if she would give us hot water, and she said she would, as she had not seen coffee for some time. So with our bag of provisions we were all satisfied. Our horses we turned loose in the meadow, as grass was all we could get for them. We had, however, a good night's rest and felt alright next morning. Our horses seemed fresh, and we started once more on our journey northward.

We had now a much easier road which took us through a very shady forest and then down gradually, until we reached a village about noon, where we halted and had the good fortune to get a square meal at a farmhouse with plenty of milk and also feed for our horses. Then we continued to the Tennessee River, which we reached towards evening, intending to cross at once. Imagine our surprise, however, when we found the ferry picketed by a squad of Confederate soldiers, who would not allow us to cross over. They told us they had been stationed there by Col. Smith, who had a regiment of cavalry with him and had proceeded to Memphis and would leave pickets at every ferry on the river. In vain I showed my pass from the Secretary of War. They would not let us cross except we would get the permission of Col. Smith. I then made up my mind to overtake the regiment, which had left that morning. I took the best one of our carriage horses, and the soldiers lent me a sad-

dle and I started that same evening.

On inquiry I found that if I went up the mountain through the woods bordering on the Tennessee River, I could make a short cut and overtake the regiment before they started from their quarter the next morning. After bidding my folks good-bye, I commenced this difficult and desperate trip. The horse climbed up the mountain by a footpath so steep that I could not keep my seat on the saddle. Then I dismounted and took hold of his tail, and he pulled me up to the top of the mountain, when I resumed my seat in the saddle. About midnight I met a darkey who, for a silver dollar, guided me to a place where I could rest for a few hours. I told the man owning the cabin that I wished to overtake the regiment on the Summerville Pike, and he was confident that I could do so if I continued my trip at two or three o'clock A.M. I asked him to show me his bed, and he agreed to awake me in time and feed my horse and have it ready at half past two.

At this time I continued my trip, and my landlord went with me until daylight to prevent my getting lost in the woods. Then, after explaining everything satisfactory, I kept on my way and about 6:00 A.M. emerged from the wood and saw Summerville Pike before me. About a half an hour later I came to the place where the regiment had camped but had left already. On inquiring, however, I found that Col. Smith was at a farmhouse at breakfast, and I was very glad of this. The col.[onel] was very kind, and especially so as I showed him a letter from Col. Gartrell in Atlanta, who was a cousin of his; but, to my greatest regret, he would not give me the desired permission to cross the Tennessee River. He said my pass from Richmond was all right but had to be countersigned by Gen. Bragg in Chattanooga.

This was a severe sentence, and the distance from Chattanooga and the risk of being pressed in the service and [in] going there was more than I would undertake. The col.[onel] politely invited me to breakfast and I, being nearly starved, gladly accepted. After trying very hard, I had to give up the attempt to change his mind. Nothing would tempt him to disregard his instructions, and the only advice he would give me [was] that I would [should] overtake him with my team and cross the river before he would station all his pickets, or continue on to Memphis, Tenn. The latter I considered the best, as the roads were good, and it would be impossible to get ahead of his regiment with our team. I tried to get some feed for my horse but could not beg or buy anything, as the regiment had cleaned up everything in that line. So I told Col. Smith good-bye and went on my return journey.

Now I came to a most interesting event which gave me renewed hope. I approached a cabin and asked the old lady if she had anything to eat for my horse and I would pay her well. She said she had a basin full of bran. I mixed this with water, and the horse was enjoying the feast; and in the meantime I talked with the old lady and told her the trouble I was in. Then a couple of boys about ten to twelve years of age came in and said: "Good-bye, grandmother," and I asked where they were going. She said they were going home and lived across the Tennessee River. I asked the boys how they would cross now, as pickets were stationed all along, but they said they knew the ferryman, who could take them across anyhow. I then told them if they would wait a day longer so I could bring my folks, I would give each \$5 to show us the ferry. They thought that would be nice, but they doubted if I could get the carriage across. I then said we would leave the carriage if we could not do any better.

This being satisfactory settled, I left them to return to my folks left at the Tennessee River near Warrentown. I hardly could get my horse forward and had to dismount to make it easier and when, late in the afternoon, I got in sight of the carriage, my cousin David, seeing me pulling the horse by the bridle and looking so miserable, said: "Oh," and expected to hear of my fruitless trip. I told the folks all and also of my appointment with the two boys and, although fearful of it being a disappointment, all agreed it was the best we could do. David had been out that morning foraging for our party, and also for the horses, and had succeeded so well that my horse felt all right the next morning when we took an early start for the Summerville Pike.

As we had to take the road it was about twenty to twenty-five miles, and late in the afternoon, before we got in the neighborhood where the two boys were. They met us, and we all concluded to start the next morning, as it was too late that night. The next morning our two boys came with us and, once more bidding their grandmother good-bye, we continued on the Summerville Pike for a couple of miles and then had to take a road right through the woods which, the boys said, would bring us to the Tennessee River.

After a short while we saw the river and also a farmhouse, and some horses with military saddles on them were tied to the fences, and we also saw a picket guard stationed on the river bank. This was a great disappointment also to the boys, who had not anticipated it. One of them pointed to a man in shirt sleeves sitting on the fence, [and] said: "There is the ferryman." I approached him and found what I expected, that he was forbidden to use the ferry any more. He told me he lived across the river and would go home directly to

stay there. Then I told him we were very anxious to avoid the trip to Memphis and I offered him \$50 to take us across. On hearing this he jumped up and, slapping me on the back [so] that it hurt me, he said: "By God, you shall cross!" I asked him how about the soldiers, and he said I should pay no attention to them; he knew them and would make [it] all right. I gave him the money, and he went to the river and straightened out a large ferryboat big enough for our horses and carriage and told the soldiers to carry the children on the ferry. We all went on and never looked at the soldiers. After pulling the ferryboat across with the rope, the soldiers again put down their guns and carried the children on the bank, and we continued our trip, thankfully taking leave of the two boys, who took another road.

Now we were about five miles away from the pike leading to Huntsville. The road was nearly impassable, and soon our carriage was up to the axles in the soft mud, and the horses were unable to get it out and getting in always deeper. I told Cousin David: "Now it is your turn to get us out of the scrape, as I did the hard riding day before yesterday." He growled a little but took one of our horses to look for help. Sooner than we expected he came back, accompanied by about twenty-five negroes to whom he had promised \$1 each. They soon got hold of the carriage and lifted it bodily out of the mud and carried it safely to solid ground, to a higher point in the road. We resumed our seats in the carriage and were directed to an abandoned plantation where Cousin David had hired our help.

We were put in possession of the best cabin and an old aunt [Negress] fried chickens for us and gave us a splendid supper, and we all stayed in one room and slept well that night. After a good breakfast we started again and soon reached the pike shaded with beautiful trees, enjoying a fine ride to Huntsville. Then we put our horses and carriage in a livery stable, and we all went to the Huntsville Hotel, intending to rest ourselves three days before resuming our journey. Our horses also needed rest, as they "were sore from bad usage and bad harness."

The next day David took his oldest boy, Ben, for a walk and also to look at our horses. I stayed upstairs with the ladies to enjoy the needed rest. After being away an hour, Cousin David came into our room looking as though he had seen a ghost and white as a sheet. He asked me what was the name of the col.[onel] I went to see on the Summerville Pike. I told him Col. Smith of Macon, Ga. He said he saw a good many soldiers downstairs and, looking at the hotel register, he saw Col. Smith and staff registered. I told him that must be some other Col. Smith, as the one I saw was on his way to Mem-

phis. In order to satisfy myself, I went downstairs to take a look at him. They were sitting around in the lobby and, sure enough, my col.[onel] was among them. Of course, as he saw me, it would not do to show fear, so I walked straight up to him and offered my hand. He had been very friendly before and had asked me for my company at breakfast, which I accepted before returning to my folks at the Tennessee River. He now refused to shake hands and asked when we crossed the river. I told him the truth and said it was at Lyman's Ferry. When he heard this he cursed the ferryman for disobedience to orders and then told his orderly to bring the horses around. I could not succeed to get him in a pleasant mood, offered him cigars, which he refused.

The orderly arrived with the horses, the command to mount was given, and they galloped away in the direction of the pike we had come from. I went upstairs and reported to the folks; and when they heard, they wanted to leave Huntsville at once, for fear of being brought back when the col. heard we had bribed the ferryman. It was late in the afternoon, and I said we had better wait until early next morning, as we would not be able to travel at night in a strange country. The distance to Lyman's Ferry was sixteen miles and the col. could not possibly reach us by next day. So we made everything ready for an early start between four and five o'clock next morning. This we accomplished as our horses were fresh again. We trotted them towards Fayetteville, Tenn. As luck would have it, we got for a while on the wrong road, having made a mistake, and thereby escaped the soldiers, which, we afterwards learned from a Huntsville merchant, had been sent out to arrest us. Toward evening we got in another bad place in the road and, although not really muddy, was half full of water in a place where the steep bank prevented the horses from getting a firm foothold. As luck would have it, a farmer with an ox team helped us out of the scrape.

I got David to take hold of the front wheel while I went on the back wheel, up to our waists in the muddy water, and as the oxen pulled and the coach started I splashed all the water I could on David to punish him for driving so bad. He did not know I did it but thought the wheels splashed him full. Then, following the road, we got late in the evening to a U. S. post and were out of the Confederacy at last.

Huntsville and the surrounding territory was neutral ground, sometimes occupied by one party and sometimes by the other. We had given our names and were given passes to Nashville, but it being too late, we found a place to rest not far from Shelbyville, where we dried our clothes and slept all night. Our carriage needed repairs

and, a blacksmith being handy, we got it repaired next morning before starting again. We continued our trip safely, with the exception of some bad roads. When I was assisting to start the horses, I had the misfortune to run the carriage wheel over my foot, in consequence of which my leg was very much swollen by the time we arrived at Shelbyville. I spent the night on a couch with my left foot in a washtub full of water, which took all the inflammation out by the next morning. Passing through Murfreesboro, we noticed the effects of the battle which destroyed the place, and spent the next night near La Vergne, and the next day arrived early at Nashville.