

Hart, John Benton. Bluecoat and Pioneer: The Recollections of John Benton Hart, 1864-1868.

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Introduction

11th Kansas Cavalry, stories told by John Benton Hart in 1918—Civil War in Missouri then working for the Army along the Bozeman trail—Red Cloud's War, 1866-68—3 small sections previously published

Born in Pennsylvania (July 10, 1842, lived in Ohio and then Buchanan County, Missouri; moved to Kansas about passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act

Talked into doing this by his son

Enlisted in 11th Kansas Infantry on September 9, 1862-20 years old

Wounded at Prairie Grove, December 7, 1862

His regiment converted to the 11th Kansas Cavalry Regiment

Battles against Sterling Price's forces in October 1864

Indian response to the infamous Sand Creek Massacre

Went to Montana goldfields in 1867

He and a brother worked as wranglers with freight wagon on Bozeman Trail

Worked for army during Red Cloud's War; and carrying mail between Fort F. C. Smith and Fort

Fort Phil Kearny—90 mile journey

He and brother returned to Kansas in summer of 1868

Became a successful rancher and served one term in Colorado House as a populist

He died in 1928

Manuscript composed between 1918 and 1923—combines both Johnny and his son Harry's voice

Clever problem solver but also mischievous

What is published here is a third of the available material

Chapter 1 Under Moonlight in Missouri

Substantial introductions to each section set the context clearly—perhaps more than the manuscript deserved

Foraging, a kindly woman in Lexington Missouri gives them bread and milk, 16
They rescue the woman and her aged fathers from plunderers from another Kansas regiment, 17—Jennison’s Jayhawkers,, 15th Kansas Cavalry
Troops greatly interested in a sweet potato patch, 18, 23
Some lead fragments hit arm during fighting around Lexington, much to the amusement of Colonel Moonlight, fighting along Little Blue River, 20
Brave young girls opened a gate for them under fire, 21
Chased by Marmaduke’s Confederate cavalry, 24
Escaped through a swamp—refreshing unpretentious to account of this rather panicky flight, 24
Hates to leave his bunk mate who has a broken back, 25
Later saw Confederates put the man out of his misery by shooting him, 25
Decides their captain was a coward, 25
Charge on a ford without authorization but took some prisoners, 27
Battle of Westport, 27ff
Got whipped, company lost 16 men, 27
Praises colonel Moonlight for “good common sense,” 30
Watched Pleasanton’s cavalry tangle with Confederates, 31
Poor looking artillerists—fine description, 32
Guarding artillery during a guerrillas ambush in 1863 near Kansas City, 33
Pushed through a wood fence, 33
Artillery fire, 34
Horses legs broken and riders going down, 35
Helps a wounded Confederate, cut books off his feet, 35
Fine description of bivouac in the rain, 36
Two more attempts to cook his sweet potato, 37-38
Confederate graves, 39
Defiant woman and collapse of Price’s power, 39
Has long exchange between here and a lieutenant, likely embellished, 39-40
Captured 20 sleeping Confederates, 41
Doubtful conversation on war in Missouri, 42
At Platte Bridge on Oregon Trail, trade and toll bridge, 43ff
Verbal altercation with an Indian, very minor affair, 46-47
Protecting cattle from Indians, 48
He and his partner killed Cheyenne chief who was attacking one of their men, admits to be so mad after the chief had fought them after being seriously wounded that the scalped him, 49
“like a couple fools . . . makes me fell ashamed tot his day.” P. 49
Admonished for scalping chief who could not then enter the happy hunting grounds, 50

An Indian woman from another yelled and chewed on the scalp, 51
 Some former Confederate soldiers at the post commanded by Lt. Caspar Collins, but this is all jumbled, 52
 Real tensions was between Kansas and Ohio troops, 52
 Small group of Indians lure soldiers out of the camp, 53
 Attacked by painted Indians, used arrows and then spears, 54
 Drew pistol on Indians and they usually went to the ground, 55
 Shoved his fist down an Indian's throat, "an animal indeed," 58
 Claims to have pulled 93 arrows out of one dead soldiers, 59
 Wells Fargo Mule Train, 61ff
 North Platte, Nebraska
 Bullwhackers, would get wagons into an oval in camps
 Indian scare, not clear if this was real or not, 64-65
 Two women emigrants fighting, 66
 Western distances deceptive, men try to walk to Chimney Rock, 66-67
 Finding water, 67-68
 Working on wagon tires, 68-71
 Crossing stream with oxen, found a demijohn of brandy buried in the sand, 71-72
 Crazy Woman Creek, 73
 Praised for their work on the wagon tires, 74
 Told it was better to work for Wells Fargo than look for gold, 74-75
 Took wagon train to Fort C. F. Smith, 75
 Red Cloud's War, ambushes along the Bozeman trail, 79
 Johnny Hart and his brother found work around Fort C. F. Smith on the Bozeman trail in Montana, 79
 Hayfield Fight near Fort Smith, 86
 Johnny and brother working hayfield 3 miles from the Fort
 Shots fire and flag as signal of Indians, 88
 Gathered in defensive position in a corral, 88
 Officer killed and another soldier immediately rifled through his things, 90
 Shoot Indians trying to climb over their corral, --great material on Indian and army tactics
 Al Colvin speech about medicine poles
 Repeated charges by the Indians—much detail on this fight—very vivid
 Wood hauling again, 101
 Trying to float logs down a canyon to Fort Smith, 102
 Indians and whites kid each other for missed shots on games, 102-3
 Poisoning wolves for \$2.50 a wolf, 103
 Killed a mountain sheep for meat, 104
 Skinned the dead wolves, 105
 He stalked elk and wolves stalked him, 106-7
 Describes how wolves hunt elk, 108
 Sold meat but disappointed in price for wolf pelts, 109
 Carrying mail between Fort C. F. Smith and Fort Kearny often down by Crow Indians, 110
 Heard that mail carriers were often drunk and complains about them, 110
 General Bradley questions Hart's qualifications, 111
 100 miles between the forts, 114

Wanted shoes for his two horses that made them look barefoot, 114-15
 Feeds horses, hobbles them, and camps in woods where he can see the horses, 117
 Successful ride to Fort Kearny, 118
 Nice description of saloon at Fort Kearny, 119
 Carry whiskey back to Fort Smith, 120
 Not sure Johnny's account as mail carrier is true, 122\
 Mountain Crow War Dance, 123
 Much detail about appearance and procedures, 125
 Better to be dressed up among the Crows, 125
 Both appalled and fascinated—not an unsympathetic observer, 128
 Cruel trick played on a group of Crow Indians including old women and men, 130-38
 Having trouble with stolen wood, 138
 Loaded a piece of wood with gunpowder—explosion then injured some Crows, 139
 Admonished by General Bradley for both pranks, 142
 Montana militia, profiteering selling horses, 143
 Stumbled into a Cheyenne village with horses, 145
 Rescued by a Crow chief, 146ff
 Chiefs not absolute rulers, 149
 Great power of old warriors, 150
 Medical treatments, 152
 Storm preparation better than white men, 153
 Murder of warriors, 153
 Gave chief shooting lessons, 155
 Found wallet with gold, 158
 Asked to take annoying nephew to Ft. Kearny, 159
 Always alert during day sleeps, like an animal, 161
 Nephew is not in good physical condition and a real whiner, 162
 Got him to the fort, 164
 Mail carrier chased by Indians, 165ff
 Shot a three Cheyenne, 166
 Shot several Indians and their ponies, 170-71
 Rescued from fort and bleeding from arrow wounds, 172
 Praises Major Burt at Fort C. F. Smith, 174
 Annuities for the Crow, 175ff
 Chief Blackfoot welcomes him and fed him well, 175-76
 Two young Crows starving themselves to go the Great Spirit—said white men had only money, 176
 Indian agent badly cheating Crow on their annuities, 179
 Crows very skilled at crossing a river, 181-82
 Indians signing for annuities, 183
 Met Jim Bridger, 185-89
 Dispute over a harness repair kit, 190-92
 Hart had knocking of talking people into things, 192
 Crow disliked whites in their territory but did not go on warpath or scalp a white man, 193
 Treaty to abandon F. C. Smith and other forts, 193