Fort Belknap Texas
August 1st 1858

Colonel.

I received by the mail of last week, Dr. Wood's letter of the 10th May, addressed to me at Fort Leavenworth, asking me to communicate to you "such facts regarding the conception and termination of the battle of Buena Vista as may have come to my knowledge so far as the merits of the conflict were due to Genl. Taylor," the main points desired being "the facts occurring between the absence of Genl. Taylor at Saltillo and his return to the field on the morning of the 23rd." With regard to the first point the conception and planning of the battle, I do not believe there is a single Officer whose mind is unprejudiced, of all those who participated in the battle, who does not give Genl. Taylor full credit for the selection of the ground and the general plan of arranging the army for the reception of the enemy, that is, he directed that Washington's Battery should be placed in position at the Angostura, that the arroyo on his right should be examined thoroughly, and if necessary Artillery and such other troops as could act most efficiently should be so posted on its left bank as to secure our right from being outflanked, and the main body of the army was directed to be posted on the main plateau to receive the enemy. Before leaving Agua Nueva I learned that it was Gen Taylor's intention to halt at Buena Vista. I do not now remember whether I heard the General say so himself the evening before the Army left Agua Nueva, or

or heard it from some member of his staff. Towards sundown on the 22nd Sherman's Battery, to which I belonged, moved forward from a slight eminence about half a mile in rear of the Angostura to the foot of the hill on which Col. Hardin's Regt. was posted, where we remained during the night. About the same time Bragg's Battery which had also been drawn up near our first position, crossed the arroyo with Col. McKee's Regt. to support it, and took up an advanced position near its head, and where the ground was completely cut up with ravines. I am also under the impression that the body of Skirmishers which had been posted on the slopes of the mountains on the extreme left of our position was strengthened by men from the Kentucky and Arkansas horse. Col Bowl's Regt. with three pieces of Washington's Battery under O. Brien had been early posted on the plateau extending from the road to the mountains on our left, near the head of the first ravine running from this plateau towards the road. I have always believed these arrangements were made by Genl. Taylor's order. His Inspector Genl. pointed out to Sherman the position he was to occupy, and then directed him to execute any orders he might receive from Genl Wool. Col McKee and Bragg were posted by his Chief Engineer.

Just at daylight on the 23rd my section was directed to report to Col Churchill Inspector Genl, to

be assigned to a position in the line of battle. He placed me with one piece on the right, and Lt Deuch with the other on the left of Col Bissell's Regt, which I found in position at the head of the 1st ravine leading from the plateau towards the road. Soon after the Squadron of the 1st Dragoons was posted behind the right of Bissell's Regt and McCullough's Rangers took up a position at the head of the next ravine towards the road & about 200 yds to my right and rear.

Soon after reaching the position assigned me by Col Churchill the battle commenced by a simultaneous assault on our extreme left, and a strong demonstration on the Angostura. The latter was soon repulsed by Washington's Battery, but the assault on our left was successful. Col Bowlin's Regt. having been driven from the field, and O'Brien being without support had to retire leaving one old piece, after gallantly holding his position till the last moment.

Col Bissell's Regt and the Squadron of Dragoons fell back about 300 yds and reformed on the edge of the large ravine running from the mountains to the road in rear of the Angostura, and superseding the main plateau from the broken ground between it and the Rancho of Buena Vista. Being entirely unsupported at this time I moved back towards the road with my piece and having taken a position between McCullough's Comp'y. and the right of Bissell's Regt. commenced firing upon

passing Colums of the enemy. Capt.s Sherman & Bragg having also reached the position which I occupied the fire of six pieces soon stopped the further advance of the enemy towards the Angostura. But a large body of Cavalry and Infantry had succeeded in cropping the main plateau, and having driven our light troops from the sides of the mountains, and dispersed the Kentucky and Arkansas horse, were advancing towards the road in rear of the Rancho, when Gen.l Taylor accompanied by Genl Wool reached the plateau.

At this time the battle had abated somewhat in the Center, and soon after reaching the plateau Genl. Taylor dispatched all the Dragoons and Artillery (leaving only my piece on the plateau) to assist the Mississippi Rifles and Col Lane's Regt. in driving back the enemy's advance. With this reinforcement the enemy's advanced troops were soon after driven back to the mountains, and the greater part of their Infantry dispersed; after which contenting the ground they had gained. Up to the time of Gen.l Taylors return to the field the day had gone against us; after his arrival, although the enemy made their strongest efforts, they were unsuccessful as before, and without wishing to disparage Gen.l Wool's talents as a commander it is my belief that he had lost the battle before Gen.l Taylor reached the field.

Very Respectfully
Your obt Svt
Geo. H. Thomas
Maj. 3d Cav.

Hon. Jeff. Davis
Sec War

125 pkt

George H. Thomas Appletons : "1840 2nd Lieut in the 3d artillery…When the Mexican War began, he accompanied the column under Gen. Zachary Taylor, distinguished himself at Monterey, where he was brevetted captain, and at Buena Vista, 22 and 23 Feb. 1847, bore a more decisive part. The success of that battle was largely due to the artillery. "Without it" says Gen. John E. Wool in his report, "we would not have maintainted our position a single hour….instructor Artillery at military academy"

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Inst at daylight on the 23rd my section was directed to report to Col. Churchill Inspector Genl., to be assigned to a postion in the line of battle. He placed me with one piece on the right, and Lt. French with the other on the left of Col Bessell's Regt. which I found in position at the head of the 2nd ravine leaving from the plateau towards the road. Soon after the Squadron of the 1st Dragoons was posted behind the right of Bessells Regt and McCallough's Rangers took up a position at the head of the next ravine towards the road & about 200 yds to my right and rear.

Soon after reaching the position assigned me by Col. Churchill the battle commenced by a simultaneous assault on our extreme left, and a strong demonstration on the Angostura. The latter was soon repulsed by Washington's Battery but the assault on our left was successful. Col. Bowle's Regt having been driven from the field, and O"Brien being without support had to retire leaving one old piece after gallantly holding his position till the last moment. Col. Bessell's Regt and the squadron of Dragoons fell back about 300 yds and reformed on the edge of the large ravine running from the mountains to the road in rear of the Angostura, and seperating the main plateau from the broken ground between it and the Ranche of Buena Vista. Being entirely unsupported at this time I moved back towards the road with my piece and having taken a position between McCullough's Compy and the right of Bissell's Regt commenced firing upon passing columns of the enemy. Capts. Sherman & Bragg having also reached the position which I occupied the fire of six pieces soon stopped the further advance of the enemy towards the Angostura. But a large body of Cavalry and Infantry had succeeded in crossing the main plateau and having driven our light troops from the sides of the mountains, and dispersed the Kentucky and Arkansas horse, were advancing towards the road in rear of the Ranche, when Genl. Taylor accompanied by Genl Wool reached the plateau.

At this time the battle had abated somewhat in the center, and soon after reaching the plateau Genl. Taylor dispatched all the Dragoons and Artillery (leaving only my piece on the plateau) to assist the Mississippi Rifles and Col. Lane's Regt in driving back the enemy's advance. With this reinforcement the enemy's advanced troops were soon after driven back to the mountains, and the greater part of their Infantry dispersed; after several contesting the ground they had gained. Up to the time of Genl. Taylors return to the field the day had gone against us; after his arrival, although the enemy made their strongest efforts, they were successfully resisted, and without wishing to disparage Genl. Wool's talents as a commander, it is my belief that he had lost the battle before Genl. Taylor reached the field

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