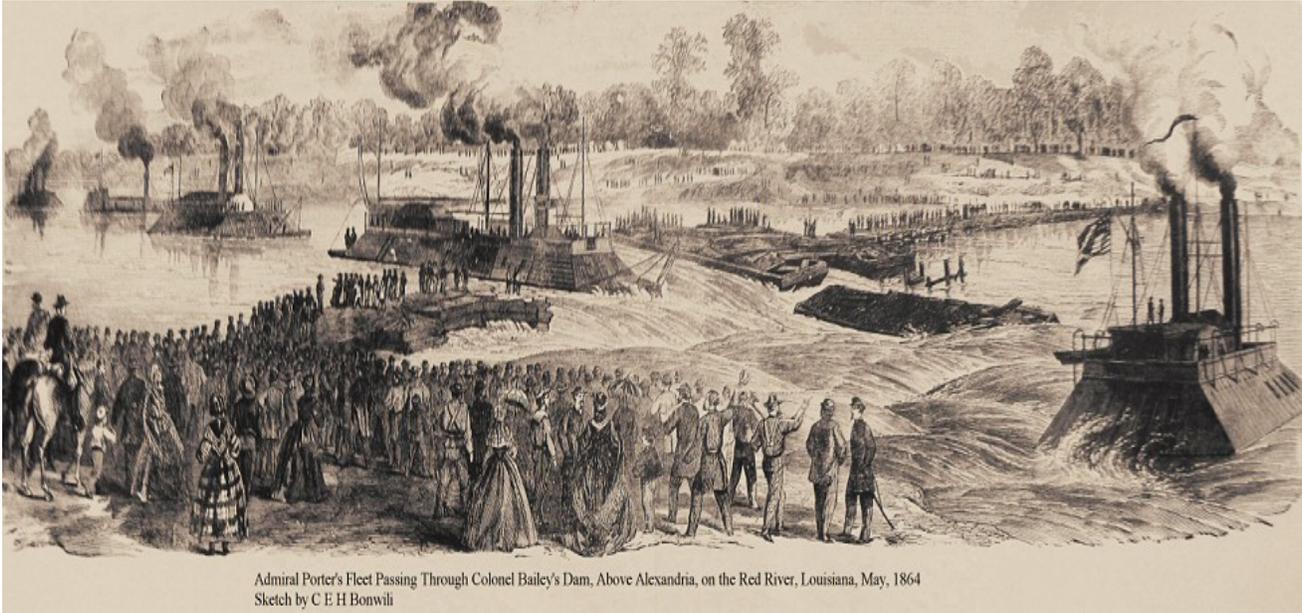


## Retreat from Alexandria to the Mississippi River: 120<sup>th</sup> Ohio Volunteer Infantry

[Click here for map to follow for this page on the retreat from Alexandria.](#) **You will have to right click and choose to open it in another page or tab.**



Admiral Porter's Fleet Passing Through Colonel Bailey's Dam, Above Alexandria, on the Red River, Louisiana, May, 1864  
Sketch by C E H Bonwill



Drawing above is from *Battles and Commanders of the Civil War* : a graphic and pictorial history prepared directly from the government records in the Departments of War and Statistics, by Frank Leslie and Marcus J. Wright, 1902 and 1906. pp378-379

Portrait of Brig Gen Bailey, USA, is public domain at Wikipedia

Bailey's Dam made it possible to get Porter's fleet past Alexandria and down the Red River and Gen. Banks then began his retreat from Alexandria.

Two personal accounts connect the 120<sup>th</sup> OVI to the retreat from Alexandria.

The first is Corporal Columbus Arehart, Co B 120<sup>th</sup> OVI

A Centennial Biographical History of Richland Co OH, by

A. J. Baughman, 1901, pp 512 - 514

"Mr. Arehart took part in the fighting at Graham's plantation [near Alexandria,

LA], May 5 to May 7, 1864; at [Avoyelle's Prairie] Prairie Bayou, May 14 to 16;

at [Bayou de Glaize May 18]De Glaize, May 16, 1864;

Note: Graham's Plantation could be Tyrone Plantation. 6576 Bayou Rapides Rd. Alexandria, LA, near the Alexandria airport. Built in 1843 by George Mason Graham.





Portrait: public domain Wikipedia

**Confederate General, Richard Taylor, CSA**

Destruction and Reconstruction: Personal Experiences of the Late War, by Richard Taylor, 1883, D. Appleton. Page 190: "After many days of energetic labor, the enemy on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May succeeded in passing his fleet over the falls at Alexandria, evacuated the place, and retreated down the river, the **army, on the south bank, keeping pace with the fleet.**"

Page 191: "To harass the retreat, the horse and artillery, on the river above Alexandria, were directed to press the enemy's rear, and the remaining horse and Polignac's infantry to intercept his route at Avoyelles Prairie. During the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, and 16<sup>th</sup> he was constantly attacked in front, rear, and right flank; and on the 17<sup>th</sup> Wharton charged his rear near Mansura, capturing many prisoners, while Colonel Yater, with two regiments of horse, cut in on the wagon train at Yellow Bayou, killed and drove off the guard, and destroyed much property. Meanwhile

Liddell, on the north bank of the Red, followed the fleet and kept up a constant fire on the transports. But for the unfortunate withdrawal of his battery, before alluded to, he could have destroyed many of these vessels. On the 18<sup>th</sup> we attacked the enemy at Yellow Bayou, near Simmsport, and a severe engagement ensued, lasting until night. We held the field, on which the enemy left his dead, but our loss was heavy, four hundred and fifty-two in killed and wounded; among the former, Colonel Stone, commanding Polignac's old brigade. Polignac, in charge of division, was conspicuous in this action. The following day, May 19, 1864, the enemy crossed the Atchafalaya and was beyond our reach.

[Note: On 8 May 1865, Taylor surrendered his forces near Mobile, AL.]

**Many of the following records were found in: The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies: Prepared by the Late Lieut. Col. Robert N. Scott, Third U. S. Artillery. Published Under the Directions of the Hon. Redfield Proctor, Secretary of War, by Maj. George B. Davis, U. S. A., Mr. Leslie J. Perry, Mr. Joseph W. Kirkley, Board of Publication. Series I - Volume XXXIV - in Four Parts. Part III - Correspondence, Etc...page numbers are indicated.**

**Co**

**CSA** Page 163.

May 14, skirmish at Wilson's Plantation.

May 15, Skirmish at Avoyelles or Marksville Prairie.

May 16, engagement at Mansura.

May 17, action near Moreauville and skirmish at Yellow Bayou. May 18, engagement at Yellow Bayou.

Summary by Maj. Gen. Banks.

Chap XLVI page 193 [The Red River Campaign]

Headquarters Department of the Gulf, on board U. C. Steamer Avenger, Mississippi River, May 21, 1864.

[A dam had to be constructed above Alexandria to get the union boats down the Red River. ]

"On the release of the gun-boats the army took up its line of march for Simsport. **It encountered the enemy in full force on its march, on a prairie near Mansura, where it occupied a position covering three roads, leading to Cheneyville on the right, to Simsport on the left, [and to Moreauville,] over one of which the army must pass. A sharp engagement ensued, lasting about four hours, and chiefly confined to the artillery. Our troops getting possession of the wood in which the enemy was posted drove him back to the road to Moreauville. We pursued him upon the second road to Simsport, where it arrived on the morning of the 17<sup>th</sup>. The Atchafalaya was bridged by the use of the transport vessels, and the passage of the river was completed. On the evening of the 20<sup>th</sup> [18<sup>th</sup>?], General Mower's division of the Sixteenth Corps, supported by a brigade of cavalry of the Nineteenth Corps, had a sharp engagement on Yellow Bayou with the enemy, in which we captured 180 prisoners. Our loss in killed and wounded was 140. The enemy's force was**

**estimated at 8,000.** Throughout the entire campaign, except in killed and wounded (in which at Sabine Cross-Roads, Pleasant Hill, Mansura, Yellow Bayou, and other battles our losses have been severe), no prisoners, guns, wagons, or other material of the army have been captured by the enemy, except that abandoned to him in the unexpected engagement at Sabine Cross-Roads on the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup> of April. With the exception of the losses sustained there the material of the army is complete. General Canby arrived at Simsport on the 18<sup>th</sup>, and remained until the passage of the river was completed. The **troops will rendezvous at Morganza**, on the Mississippi, a point they reach today and to-morrow.  
N. P. Banks, Major-General



[Note: This is the second personal account connecting the 120<sup>th</sup> to the retreat. John Summerfield Petty, originally of Company C, 120<sup>th</sup> OVI, became "Clerk at Head Quarters for the 13th Corps in the Field." Petty had been with General McClernand by the time of the Snaggy Point disaster and was not actually with the 120<sup>th</sup>. They had taken the transport Emma up the river to Alexandria [from Texas] where they arrived on 26 April 1864. On May 4<sup>th</sup> he wrote in **his diary**, "I was roused out of sleep by Captain Harvey (of my Co.) 120<sup>th</sup> O.V.I. who was sent here [Alexandria] to procure a boat to return down the river about 30 miles to bring the remnant of the regiment to this place." He says about the City Belle, "The enemy with two pieces of artillery and several hundred men opened a brisk fire on them disabling the boat and afterward capturing and burning it. Col. Speigel – Col Mudd )(2<sup>nd</sup> Ill.) and many of the officers of the regt. were killed or wounded. Out of my Company [C], Gillis, Gray,

Serbert, Hunst, Stouffer, Frances, Fisher and many others are missing. Some are known to be dead." [1<sup>st</sup> Sgt Gillis, killed; Sgt John gray, captured; Corp Joe Seibert, killed; Sgt David Hurst, captured; Pvt Daniel Stauffer, escaped; Pvt John Fronce, captured; Corp Harrison Fisher, captured.] On May 5<sup>th</sup> he wrote, "A large mail was lost on the 'City Belle'. " After the capture of two gunboats and another transport with the 56th Ohio on board, on May 6 he said, "I must confess that things in this Department [Gulf] look rather dark. Our supplies will not last over twenty-five days, and unless we succeed in effecting more than has been done lately – we will come to mule soup and parched corn. Such is unsuccessful warfare." "General McClernand continues quite feeble. If we retreat from here I fear it will fare hard with him – as he is so very nervous and anxious about our present situation." Wednesday 11 May Head Quarters for McClernand "embarked on the Transport Mittie Stephens about 8 o'clock P.M." *They didn't leave Alexandria until about 5 pm on Friday 13 May. They made it down to Baton Rouge where Petty received a letter promoting him to Sergeant Major of the 120<sup>th</sup> OVI to which he returned. His diary ended at this point.*



Portrait public domain Wikipedia

Page 519 on May 9 1864 **Brig. Gen. Lawler** was assigned to take over the Thirteenth Army Corps for John McClernand while McClernand was ill.

Page 558

Headquarters Department of the Gulf  
Alexandria, La., May 12, 1864

Brig. Gen. M. K. Lawler, commanding Thirteenth Army Corps: The

commanding general directs that the troops and transportation of your command on the other side of the river be at once withdrawn to this side.

Geo. B. Drake, Assistant Adjutant-General

Page 558

Message sent to U. S. Forces, near Fort De Russy by D Dwight, Brigadier-General and Chief of Staff from Alexandria, 12 May 1864 to Brig. Gen. Fitz Henry Warren, Commanding US Forces, near Fort De Russy  
"The naval fleet have passed the rapids safely. The army moves toward Marksville tomorrow; we shall probably attack the enemy about 5 o'clock to-morrow afternoon. There are about 2,000 cavalry [CSA] on north bank of river under Liddell and Harrison, main body on south bank under Taylor. [General Richard Taylor, CSA, was the son of Zachary Taylor and the son-in-law of Jefferson Davis.]

The commanding general directs that you move with vigor upon the rear of the enemy upon either bank of the river. Your judgment and information may advise keeping near the gunboats, if you move on any force superior to your own."

*Union* Page 322. Second Brigade May 14 (return trip) **marched along Red River** via Marksville, and Simmesport, arriving at the mouth of the Red River on the 21<sup>st</sup>, having engaged the enemy on the 14<sup>th</sup> (at Wilson's Landing) on Red River, on the 16<sup>th</sup> at Mansura and on the 18<sup>th</sup> at Yellow Bayou.

Page 585...a bridge had been burned by the rebels on the Cheneyville road.

Page 586 Headquarters Department of the Gulf, Near Marksville, May 14, 1864  
[to] Brig. Gen. A. J. Smith, Comdg, Detach. Sixteenth and Seventeenth Army Corps:  
General: The major-general commanding directs that you move your whole command at 3 A. M. to-morrow, and take position on the right of the 19<sup>th</sup> Army Corps. General Emory, commanding the Nineteenth Army Corps, has been ordered to move his whole command at 3 A. M. to the position beyond Marksville occupied by our advance this evening. You will move at daylight to turn the left flank of the enemy, and take possession of all the roads leading to Cheneyville. The major-general commanding desires you to make this movement with the utmost vigor, and to be ready to move promptly at the hours indicated. The wagon train will be in park in rear of the town, guarded by a brigade of cavalry. In moving across the prairies, and when practicable for the purpose of shortening the column, you will move your command in columns of regiments.

By command of Major-General Banks:  
Geo. B. Drake, Assistant Adjutant-General.

Page 601-602

Headquarters Department of the Gulf, **Near Marksville**, May 15, 1864  
[to] Rear-Admiral D. D. Porter, Commanding Mississippi Squadron:  
Admiral: We shall camp to-night between Marksville and Mansura, headquarters at Marksville. Simsport is 20 miles distant. We shall make our headquarters there to-morrow night. I should be glad, if the river admits, if you would send down one or two boats to that point. The enemy has returned in our front, showing some artillery and dismounted cavalry, but has made no decided resistance.

N. P. Banks, Major-General, commanding

*Boats were going to be needed to get the troops across the river at Simsport.*

Page 602

U. S. S. Choctaw, Off Fort De Russy, La., May 15, 1864, 3 p.m.

[to] Maj. Gen. N. P. Banks, Commanding Department of the Gulf:

Sir: In obedience to instructions from Admiral Porter, I have the honor to inform you that he, being very unwell, has gone down to the mouth of this river and left me in command at this place. He has ordered me to stop all boats that have provisions and forage on board until I hear from you. **The empty transports are to proceed immediately to Simsport.** I shall be pleased to learn your wishes at as early a moment as possible.

Frank M. Ramsay, Lieutenant-Commander, Commanding.

More from Ramsay at 7:30pm: **"All the transports have gone to Simsport. Eight gun-boats have gone with them to protect them."**

[Click here for maps of battle at Mansura.](#) Right click and choose to open in another window or tag.

The War of the Rebellion: v.1-53 [serial no. 1-111] Formal reports, both Union and Confederate, of the first seizures of United States property in the southern states, and of all military operations in the field, with the correspondence, orders and returns relating specially thereto. 1880-1898. United States War Department

Chapter XLVI Operations in Louisiana and the Trans-Mississippi States and Territories. January 1-June 30, 1864  
pp234-235 maps

Page 211 Report of General Banks...some dates are not correct.

The army on its march from Alexandria did not encounter the enemy in force until near the town of Mansura. He was driven through the town in the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup> [15<sup>th</sup>] of May, and at daybreak next morning our advance encountered his cavalry on the prairie east of the town. He fell back with steady and sharp skirmishing across the prairie to a belt of woods, which he occupied. The enemy's position covered three roads diverging from Mansura to the Atchafalaya. He manifested a determination here to obstinately resist our passage. The engagement, which lasted several hours, was confined chiefly to the artillery until our troops got [page 212] session on the edge of the woods, first upon our left by General Emory, and subsequently on our right by General Smith, when he was driven from the field, after a sharp and decisive fight, with considerable loss.

page 603

Headquarters Department of the Gulf, Near Marksville, La., May 15, 1864

[to] **Brig. Gen. M. K. Lawler, Commanding Thirteenth Army Corps:**

**The major-general commanding directs you to move your whole command at 3 A. M. to-morrow to a position directly in the rear of the town of Marksville, and hold yourself in readiness to move to support Generals Smith and Emory. The wagon train will be in park in your rear, guarded by a brigade of cavalry."**

**Geo. B. Drake, Assistant Adjutant-General**

Page 604

Headquarters Department of the Gulf, Near Marksville, May 15, 1864.

[to] Brigadier-General Emory, commanding Nineteenth Army Corps:

General: You will move forward at 3 A. M. to-morrow with your entire command to take position at the farthest point in the front, where our troops have to-day reconnoitered. At Daybreak you will move forward and attack the enemy with the greatest vigor. General Smith moves from your right flank to turn the enemy's left at the same time. General Arnold has been ordered to take position in rear of your right flank. **The Thirteenth Army Corps will be in reserve near Marksville.** It is of the greatest importance that this movement be made with promptitude and vigor. The wagon train will be in park in the rear of the town, guarded by a brigade of cavalry, and when practicable, for the purpose of shortening the column you will move your command in columns of regiments.

By order of Major-General Banks: Geo. B. Drake, Assistant Adjutant-General.

Page 605

Headquarters Department of the Gulf, Mansura, La., May 15, 1864

Brig. Gen. M. K. **Lawler**, Commanding Thirteenth Army Corps:

**The commanding general directs that you still take charge of the trains, hurrying them on. The enemy have retreated, apparently, on two roads, one toward Moreauville, the other toward Enterprise.**

Geo. B. Drake, Assistant Adjutant-General.

Page 605

Message from Drake to Brig Gen A. J. Smith, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Corps

"A servant captured upon the City Belle has escaped from the enemy this a. m., and reports them falling back upon the Bayou de Glaize. They expect our force is going by the river from Fort De Russy. You will push on to Moreauville, in your regular position in the column, with all possible speed. You must come across to the Moreauville road."

page 616

Headquarters Department of the Gulf, Near Marksville, May 16, 1864.

[to] Brigadier-general **Lawler**, Commanding thirteenth Army corps:

You are charged with the protection of the train during the march to-day. You will keep sufficient troops on flanks and rear, in conjunction with cavalry from General Arnold's command, sufficient for its proper protection. General Arnold and yourself are charged with the **protection of the train** during to-day's march.

By command of Major-General Banks: Geo. B. Drake, Assistant Adjutant-General

page 616

suddenly there are orders May 16th from Drake at Marksville to have the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> move to the right and attack the left of the enemy and drive him.

Page 617

And Col. W. H. Dickey's brigade Corps d'Afrique was called in to 2 miles from Marksville, to the right a little of the Mansura road.

Page 632

Gen Drake gave orders 17 May for the order of marching at 7 o'clock on the road to Simsport. 1<sup>st</sup> 19<sup>th</sup> Army Corps. 2<sup>nd</sup> all trains in order indicated previously. **3d 13<sup>th</sup> Army Corp.** 4<sup>th</sup> detachments of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. Fifth the cavalry. **Each command will halt at Yellow Bayou until camp can be indicated by a staff officer.**

Page 632

Headquarters Department of the Gulf, Simsport, May 17, 1864.

[to] Brig. Gen. W. H. Emory, Commanding Nineteenth Army Corps:

the major-general commanding desires you to direct Colonel Robinson to destroy the enemy's works on Yellow Bayou to-morrow.

C. S. Sargent. Acting Assistant Adjutant-General.

Page 633

Simsport, May 17, 1864.

[to] Brig. Gen. A. J. Smith, Comdg. Detachment Sixteenth and Seventeenth Corps:

The major-general commanding directs that at Daylight to-morrow, as soon as the wagons have crossed, you cross Yellow Bayou with your whole command and occupy the line, with your left resting on Red River and your right on Bayou De Glaize, throwing one regiment across Bayou De Glaize. **If the present position of the Thirteenth Army Corps interferes with taking up this line, General Lawler will move his command nearer Simsport.** Colonel Robinson has been directed to destroy the enemy's works on Yellow Bayou, and the commanding general directs you to protect his working party while executing this order.

C. C. Sargent, Acting Assistant Adjutant-General

Page 648

"Headquarters Department of the Gulf, Simsport, May 18, 1864.

[to] Brig. Gen R. Arnold, Chief of Cavalry: You will move with your command to-morrow morning at as early an hour as practicable, supported by General Lawler's corps, with whom you will communicate to-night in order to have a through understanding, across the bayou by the dike, beyond the right flank of the enemy, endeavoring to gain the cut-off in his rear. You will furnish General Lawler with a guide." Geo. B. Drake, Assistant Adjutant-General

Page 666 "The major-general commanding directs me to inform you that the movement contemplated in his instructions of last night to the flank and rear of the enemy will not be made except in the event of an attack from him in front."

"You are directed by the major-general commanding to return, immediately upon the receipt of this order, to your camps near Simsport."

Headquarters Department of the Gulf, Simsport, May 19, 1864.

[to] Brig. Gen. Richard Arnold, Chief of Cavalry:

General: I am directed to inform you, in answer to your note just received, that the commanding general desires all **the wagon trains to cross before any of the troops cross.**

C.S. Sargent, Acting Assistant Adjutant-General.

Page 211 Report of General Banks...some dates are not correct. [Note: the water was high in the river.]

The 16<sup>th</sup> [probably the 18<sup>th</sup>] of May we reached Simsport, on the Atchafalaya. **Being entirely destitute of any ordinary bridge material for the passage of this river (about 600 yards wide) a bridge was constructed of the steamers, under direction of Lieutenant-Colonel Bailey. This work was not of the same magnitude, but was as important to the army as the dam at Alexandria was to the navy.** It had the merit of being an entirely novel construction, no bridge of such magnitude having been constructed of similar materials. **The bridge was completed at 1 o'clock on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May. The wagon train passed in the afternoon, and the troops the next morning,** a better spirit and condition, as able and eager to meet the enemy as at any period of the campaign. The command of General A. J. Smith, which covered the rear of the army during the construction of the bridge and the passage of the army, had **a severe engagement with the enemy under Polignac on the afternoon of the 19<sup>th</sup> [18<sup>th</sup>], at Yellow Bayou, which lasted several hours.** Our loss was about **150 in killed and wounded;** that of the enemy much greater, besides many prisoners who were taken by our troops."

N. P. Banks, Major-General Volunteers

The following came from the Muster Roll records of some of the companies of the 120<sup>th</sup>.

Captain Henry Eberhart, Co B May and June, 1864 June 30, 1864 shows station of company, at Morganza, La.

Record of events: On the 1st day of May 1864 the 120th Regt. O.V.I. received orders to embark for Alexandria La on board the steamer "city Belle" [City Belle] which orders were promptly obeyed by Col. Marcus M. Spiegel commandant 120th OVI when within 30 miles of Alexandria May 3rd the boat was attacked by the enemy who opened upon the boat with a five gun battery, immediately disabling the boat, killing the Col. and many of the men. **Only 164 of the Regt succeeded in making their escape.** All Books, Returns, Rolls etc on board were destroyed by the enemy. **Arrived at Alexandria May 4. Left Alexandria May 13th, arrived at this place May 22nd.**

Captain Benjamin F. Miller, Company D: **May and June, 1864** shows station of company, Morganzia, La. Record of events: The 120 Regt (including Comp D) while at Baton Rouge La was ordered to embark on steamer City Belle May 1, 1864 to proceed to Alexandria La on the 3rd day of May the steamer was attacked and captured. **17 men of Comp D,** with others of the regiment made their escape and arrived at Alexandria on the 4th the army left Alexandria on the 13 of May and arrived at Morganzia, La. on the 22 of May where we have since been encamped.

Company E: Had one man killed and fourteen taken prisoners. **One com. officer and twenty six men escaped,** and arrived at Alexandria May 4th distance 30 miles. May 12th was ordered to the front. May 13th was deployed as skirmishers and covered the Retreat for five miles. Marched day and night (nearly) and arrived at Morganzia's Bend La on the Miss, River - distance 100? miles - May 22nd 1864.

Captain Elias Fraunfelder, Co F: On May 3rd the enemy fired on the boat with Inft and Artillery and captured the boat when we proceeded **on foot to Alexandria La, a distance of thirty miles arriving there on the 4th day of May 1864. Left Alexandria on May 13th and arrived at Morganzia Bend La on the Miss River May 22/64.**

Captain James B. Taylor, Co H: **Twenty seven men of Co H were taken prisoner, four of whom have since returned - one wounded** - marched to Alexandria and back to the place where Gen Banks evacuated ?al.

Captain Christopher Au, Company I: Boat captured and almost two-thirds of the Regt. Every thing belonging to the Regt lost. those escaping arrived at Alexandria on the 5th. **Joined the Brigade May 13th. Left Alexandria and arrived at Morganza La on the Miss. River the 22nd of May where we are at present.**

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