The Non-Commissioned officer of any wartime personnel is hardly in a position to judge of the general conduct or course of battle, yet his narrative has its interest and perchance a value of its own sort. The following account of the enlistment of a volunteer in the Mexican War and of his voyage to Mexico and his experiences in the march from the coast to Mexico City, which was climaxed with the capture of the Capitol of Mexico, shows phases of the march of Scott's men, seen from the point of view of the individual campaigner and, as such, has an interest different from the many occurrences of various recorded accounts.

James Skelly, the writer of this diary, was born in Cambria County, Pennsylvania, in 1823. He was one of the two older sons of John Skelly, Sr., and Mary (McGough) Skelly, who lived on a farm two miles north of Wilmore. Prior to re-enlisting in the Cambria Guards, he taught the Settlemyer schools for at least one term. He was enrolled December 11, 1846, at Ebensborough, for the war; was mustered in with the company January 4, 1847, at Pittsburgh, as a Corporal; was promoted to sergeant in September or October 1847, and was mustered out with the company July 14, 1848, at Pittsburgh, as sergeant. After being discharged from the army, he married Miss Susan Singer of Jackson Township and subsequently went to Kansas where he engaged in farming.

He had several children, but of their history, and, also, that of the remaining days of his life, accurate information was not available. The original of this diary is owned by a great grand-daughter, Mrs. John Oliver, of Belton, Texas.
James Skelly

James Skelly of Summerhill Township Cambria County Penn. left Ebensburg ¹ Jan'y 2, 1847 with the Cambria Guards for Mexico—and reached Blairsville on the same day

And left Blairsville on the 3rd and on the same day reached Murraysville in Westmorland County

left Murraysville on the fourth and reached Pittsburgh on the same day and was mustered into the Service of the United States on the same day

On Jan. 5th A D 1847 was mustered into the Service of the United States destined for the War in Mexico and inspected on the same day and our names and ages Entered [...] on the 6th day of the same month we elected our Regimental officers one Colonel one Lieutenant Colonel and Major: Wm B Roberts ² for [of] Fayette ³ Colonel [,] John W Geary of the American Highlanders [Lieutenant Colonel] William Brindle [,] Lycoming, ⁴ Major [,] on the 7th. [we] received orders to be ready to march again Saturday 10, O'clock

On Friday the 8th we made all necessary arrangements to march again the time designated

And on Saturday the 9th day of January, we Embarked on the Steam boat Wisconen for New Orleans [...] on Sunday 10th at 6 O'clock we Landed in Cincinnati on Munday morning arrived at Louisville about 5 o'clock it being the 11th day of the same month as above mentioned

On Tuesday 12th. day at a quarter past 3 we Entered the Mississippi River at the mouth of the Ohio [...] Some 8 or 10 miles bellow we stoped to take wood where some 15 or 20 men violated orders by going ashore—

On the 13th there was a Court Martial heald and [the accused] Sentenced to stand for the term of Two days and Six hours on and six off Sergent Cline lost his command for 24 hours—

On Friday the 15th landed at Baton Rouge where our arms were unmasked and conveyed to the Bar[ra]cks and Inspected and reloaded

On Friday 16th day of Jan. we landed at Orleans and anchored in the river over the night.
the next morning we moved down the river about 5 miles where we landed layed out over night without tents in a shed along side the Mississippi River.

On Sunday we Received our tents the Cambria [Guards] arrived on Monday about 2 o'clock afternoon.

On Tuesday was in the city of New Orleans where we saw about 1500 ships anchored along the warfs—

Rained on Wednesday on the previous [afternoon?] one of the rangers were shot in the city by a girl he was in company with—

On Thursday was cold Friday was cold also Number of letters writing since left Pittsburgh 1 to Wm Palmer to John Skelly and one to John Skelly Jr one to John Astor

Saturday was cloudey and about 8 O'clock at night commenced Raining which overflowed the camp ground by day-light on Sunday morning to the depth of from 5 in to 2 feet —on find[ing] our tents in water Some of the men went [to] the city to seek shelter while some repaired to the bank of the Mississippi and struck up fires to drie themselves—

On the same day we Embarked on board the General Veazie on Monday we received new supplies of provisions—On Tuesday it Rained Wednesday clear and dry so as to enable us to drie our Tents so as to be ready to start on the following day For Point Is[a]bell in Texas—Thursday was our day designated for our departure on board the General Veazie but owing to the Rain and [sic] we were Prohibited—on Friday 29th we departed for Mexico on Board the Gen. Veazie—

Saturday 30th was clear and was anchored in the Mississippi all day—Sunday Morning was clear we lifted anchor and was Toed across the Bar into the Gulf and our boys were all in good spirits—it being the 31st day of the month—

N. E. of Tampico min all recovering

Monday 8th. Tuesday of 10th. another storm some are sick, a fair wind Unfavorable—Small pox aboard

Thursday 11th. Friday 12th. winds still Unfavorable

Saturday 13th. Sailing Not seen the Sun for several days, dont know where-abouts.—a Grate deal of [grumbling?] among the men Officers intend to land at the first oppurtunity—Sunday 14th. The sun made her appearance revival of our spirits vessel crosed our bow Buiscuit stolen Monday 15th. off Tampico all anxious for a sight of land Evening stood out to sea—

Tu[e]sdaysday 16th. made land against evening [sun?] but put to [sea] again—one of the sailors choked the first mate who had stolen a barrel of our crackers—Wednesday 17th. made sail for Lobez [Lobos] a small island 60 miles S of Tampico Thursday 18th. arrived at our destined 10 A. M. [sic] 18 vessels anchored off the Island Amongst which is [a] man of war the Ballance of 100 is expected within one week which are to be Rendevouze here a few weeks and then sail for Vera Cruize. The Island of Lobez [Lobos] is situated about 8 miles off mainland. It is about 3 miles in circumference quite romantic in appearance. Its surface uneven wooded and the tents has the appearance of an In-dian Vilage

Friday 19th. made every preparation to go shore but we are desappointed and were compeld to take bunks back to there place

Saturday 20th. This day was directed to ship cleaning and fighting of 4 [soldiers]. all sullen and put under quarten [quarantine] for 10 days.

Sunday, 21st. A squall last night Blown from our anchorage 1 mile waiting for Scott sent for him on the 19th. Another case of small pox reported Wm. Ivory still low 1 two or three thousand Mexicans are said to be on Mainland opposite the Island Allso a force of several thousand (6) marching of[f] to attack Tampico.

Fourten fires announced the arrival of Gen. Scott

Monday 22 Sea rough for [sailing] 10 more ships arrived today. Tuesday fine day prospects of effecting a shore in two or three days—Still in good health—Received orders No. 21 & 20, from Scott camp—Inspected on 23 day of month 24th. 25th. aran[g]ed [?] on with[in] the readeo [?] of shore—[sic]
Friday 26th. This day all exseitement from negligence or some criminal carelessness of our Regimental Officers. Scott heard for the first time that we were not on shore—Several new cases of small pox has appeared. A petition has been drawn up and handed our officers requesting them to make a correct statement of our case to Gen Scott & c.

Sunday 8—the 27th. wrote a letter to Father in Pennsylvania and sent it off on Sunday—28 [.] on Sunday 28th. Several U. S. State officers came on bord. U. S. State surgeons reported the ship alive with small pox

Promise of shore tomorrow [.] March 1st Monday, No shore tomorrow is the day. Massachusetts steamship with Gen. Scott on board weighed anchor and sail[ed] for Tampico [with] all the ships [except] the Veazie upon which there a rained a sullen silence the band now struck up which raised the spirits of the men

Wednesday 3rd. this day thank God we did get on the Island and washed our blankets and tents

Thursday 4th. day I tried my hand at washing washed one pair of drawers and dirty shirt By and [an] arrival [of a] Schooner from Tampico bring[ing] news of Battle at Saltillo between Gen Taylor & Santana [Santa Anna] Taylor victorious 6000 Mexicans killed and only 500 Americans killed in all after four day fighting By and arrival on the same day March 21st. Gen Scott landed and taken Alvarado 10 with the loss of one man wounded cut off water and communications from the Castle of San Juan d' alloa

Alarm in camp on Sunday night 21st. by one of the sentinels by and arrival of schooner from Veria Cruiez [Vera Cruz] brings news of Bombarding of the city commenced [.] on the 2[1]st. also report of two more engagements in the nabourhood of Saltillo between Gen. Taylor and the Mexicans—

Thursday 9th. April
on the Island of Lobos we struck our tents and embarked on the ship Gen Veazie and emediately set sail for Vera Cruize—on Sunday morning 12th. was hailed by a sloop of war from which we received information of the City of Vera-Cruize and the castles of San Juan d' alloa being taking by the Americans about 4 o'clock P. M. Landed at Vera-Cruize and anchored opposite City and Castle
Col Geary went ashore and brought a true account of the Battle which commenced on the 8th. & lasted till on the 9th. after seventy hours Bombarding of the castle and city the Mexicans surrendered to the Americans. The stripes and Stars are now in triumph waving over the castle of San Ju-an dee-aholoa. The loss sustained by the Mexicans amounted to about 8 or 10,00 while that of the Americans was only 28 killed on Monday 13th. we disembarked & pitched our tents.

Gen. Worth was appointed Governor of Vera Cruize. Received letter from from [sic] Father on the 12th. April answered it on the 13th. of the same month—

On Saturday 17th. about 5 o-clock packed knapsacks and left Vera-Cruiz and encamped about four miles that night at a bridge—on Sunday 18th. we was detailed as a Rear Guard by Gen Quitman of Public Stors maid about four miles to a bridge where we encamped for the night. Left early next morning. Every thing saw flocks of Parrotts distance made 10 miles Tu[e]sday 20 was wakened by choers of the Battle Cerro-Gorda—[Cerro Gordo]

In the morning to [ok]up the line of march and reached the National Bridge. This day marched 21 miles passed several streams and mountains and encamped within four miles of the Battle Ground on the 22 took up our march for the day and encamped within six miles of Jalapa at the Barracks [.] on the 23rd. took the line of march and arrived in camp about 3 miles distant from Jalapa—on the 25th. Received letter from Father answered it on the 26th.

Wrote to John [Skelly] on the 27th. On Thursday 6th May by order of Gen Scott was designated as a Garrison for Jalapa—Marched in and took possession on the same day and quartered in the Barracks—

Wrote letter to Joseph A Dimond 17th. May

May 18th. wrote to Edward Glass—wrote Elisha Plummer the 22nd. May—

Monday 14th. June Rec'vd order to march to Cerro Gordo for the purpose meating Gen. Kaidwaledar [Cadwallader]

orders was countermanded—on the 15th. Train arived in town and Brought a large mail—on 15th. June received a letter from John Saster on Wednesday 17th. took up the line of march from Jalapa 14 for Perote and encamped at the 3 mile encampment for the night—
left for Perote on the 19th.—on the 20th. had an engagement with 2,000 Mexican Lanciers—on the 21st. arrived at Perote—

Left Perote on 29th. made Tissyalahalico [Tlascala] on same day—Left on the 4th. of July arrived at [La] Puebla on the 8th. day of July 15

Visited the Pyramids of Chuluila [Cholula] on Tuesday 27th. July A D 1847

August 5th. wrote to a letter to Father [sic]—

Took up the line March from Puebla on Sunday 8th. day of August arrived at St. Augustin [San Augustine de las Cuevas] on the 19th. The Battle of Mexico fought on the 19th. and 20th. of August A D 1847—

Wrote a Letter to Father from St-Augustin on the 27th. A D 1847

Sept. 8th. A D 1847

Left St. Augustin for the city of Mexico and encamped eight miles from St. Augustin [for] the night—

Left St. Angels [St. Angel] on the 11th. Reached Tacubya [Tacubaya] on the 12th. Sept. A D 1847—Ordered to charge at 9 Oclock and in and hour and half the Stars and Stripes were over the Castle of Chepultepec and fought our way up to gate of the city. remained there over night Sept. 13th. 1847 Thursday 14th. A. D. 1847

Flag of Truce came to General Quitman informing him that the [Mexican] soldiers had left city

Marched to the citadel and remained in quarters

Sept. 15th. A D 1847,

Remained in quarters the Firing continued all day

Sept. 17th. 1847

Quartered in the Musem being under a Safe Guard the violation of which is death—

Removed quarters to a large building situated in the Southern part of the city in the Road leading to the Gate of San-Antona [San Antonio] formally occupied as a Tobacco Factory, on 21st. Sept. A D 1847—

Nov. 15th. 1847 Mexico City mail arrived hear from Vera-Cruz Bringing numerous Letters for the troops

Mexico City December 18th. 1847 orders was read on dress Parade stating that we was to March to Tucubuya on the following day
Mexico City Dec. 19th. 1847 [...] Sunday about 10 Oclock took up the march for San Angels where we was quartered in the Convent of de San Angelis—

[Here the diary ends.]

1. County seat of Cambria County, Penn.
2. Colonel W. B. Roberts commanded the 2d Regt. Pennsylvania Volunteers, numbering 1055 (foot).
3. Fayette City, Fayette County, Penn.
4. Lycoming, Lycoming County, Penn.
5. The 9th.
6. See entry of the following Tuesday—the 16th.
7. When concentrated at the Isle of Lobos, Scott's army numbered approximately fourteen thousand men.
8. Evidently Saturday is intended.
9. The advance was Pt. Lisardo.
10. About three miles from Vera Cruz.
11. The regular siege of the city continued from the 9th. to the 27th. of March.
12. (for the time)
13. Situated about mid-way between Vera Cruz and Jalapa.
14. General Scott had advanced from Puebla and the garrison was broken up, as the army was not strong enough to spare such a detachment. Perote was to be made a depot and the line of communication was left undefended.
15. General Scott had entered Pueblo on the 15th. day of May.
16. Scott had granted an armistice and had also twice delayed his advance on the capital because of Trist's presence with his policy of "conquering a peace." Meanwhile, the force Skelly was with had arrived.
17. Probably similar to a closed camp.