

# NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

## TARLETON BATES' JOURNAL, 1798

Edited by FREDERICK F. SEELY<sup>1</sup>

AMONG the young men of energy and resourcefulness who played important roles in the history of Pittsburgh around 1800, few names are more prominent than that of Tarleton Bates. This handsome and popular young Virginian, the second son of Thomas Fleming Bates, of Goochland County, Virginia, was born on May 22, 1775, and first appears in Pittsburgh in July of 1795, when he had accepted a clerkship with Major Isaac Craig, commissary of military stores, and was living in Craig's house near the mouth of the Monongahela. Something of Bates' stormy life for ten years in the Pittsburgh area has already been told.<sup>2</sup>

His service as clerk to Major Craig, and later to James O'Hara, contractor for army supplies, was followed by his appointment as assistant to the new prothonotary of Allegheny County, John C. Gilkinson, whom he succeeded in April, 1800, upon Gilkinson's death. In August of that year John D. Israel founded the *Tree of Liberty*, a fervid anti-Federalist paper, which Tarleton Bates, Henry Baldwin, and Walter Forward soon began to control and to use for the advancement of Republicanism in Western Pennsylvania. From this point on, Tarleton Bates played a prominent part in Pittsburgh politics until January 8, 1806, when he was killed by Thomas Stewart in a duel provoked by political antagonisms.

In July, 1798, Quartermaster-General John Wilkins offered Tarleton Bates the post of quartermaster at Natchez, and Bates was eager to accept this position deep in the contested frontier. Major Craig, however, could not let Bates go until September, but the young man received the impression that the post would be held open for him and that the quartermaster-general would make no permanent appointment until then.

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<sup>2</sup> Charles W. Dahlinger, *Pittsburgh, a Sketch of Its Early Social Life*, 141-150 (New York, 1916); Mrs. Elvert M. Davis, "The Letters of Tarleton Bates," *ante*, 12:32-53 (January, 1929), and "The Bates Boys on the Western Waters," *ante*, 29:1-34, 85-138 and 30:15-67, 107-144 (1946-1947).

Though he hoped to depart in mid-September on the long journey down the Ohio and the Mississippi to Natchez, it was not until September 29 that he left Pittsburgh. He arrived at Cincinnati on October 13, and, while resting there, was informed through Major Craig that General Wilkins had already appointed a quartermaster for the Mississippi. Bates was requested to return to Pittsburgh, which he did in November in great disgust and disappointment, complaining that the expense of the preparations and equipment for his journey had left him penniless.

Back in Pittsburgh he left the quartermaster's office and joined in the contracting operations of James O'Hara, former quartermaster, whom Wilkins had replaced in 1796. It appears from his letters<sup>3</sup> that Bates did make the journey to Natchez in the following year, but the circumstances remain obscure.

The record of Bates' journey down the Ohio in 1798 is preserved in a leather-bound notebook,<sup>4</sup> four by eight inches, in which he kept not only his diary but jotted down memoranda on many topics. He appears to have been a methodical and judicious young man, and the notebook contains not only detailed memoranda concerning loans and personal accounts, but extensive tables of weights and measures, gun calibers, etc. The book was also used for recording his later political bets and was actively kept by him as a journal until a week before his death.

Preceding the start of the journey, the notebook contains many entries relating to Bates' preparations for his expedition, financial arrangements, purchases of stockings, sheets, sewing silk, etc., as well as notations on the condition of the river. On September 12 he records the substance of a long conversation with Mrs. Maria Butler, the widow of General Richard Butler, in which Mrs. Butler urged him to abjure the name "democrat" and to abide by the government in all respects.<sup>5</sup>

A notation, undated but doubtless made in late September, records that Craig, the quartermaster at Pittsburgh, issued to him among other supplies "one skiff with 4 oars, awning & flag," but we are not told who

<sup>3</sup> Davis, "The Letters of Tarleton Bates," 42.

<sup>4</sup> This notebook is among the John Earle Reynolds papers in the Reis Library, Allegheny College, Meadville, Pennsylvania. Upon Bates' death it passed into the possession of his close friend and executor of his will, Henry Baldwin.

<sup>5</sup> This is evidently the conversation that Mrs. Davis regrets is lost, "The Bates Boys on the Western Waters," *ante*, 29:96 (Sept.-Dec., 1946).

his companions were on the journey, until he was joined at Marietta by Captain Matthew Ernest, who since 1797 had been stationed at Detroit as quartermaster. It was through Captain Ernest that a year earlier Bates had obtained a clerkship at Detroit for his younger brother, Frederick, who was destined to end a distinguished career as governor of Missouri.

The following journal is transcribed from Tarleton Bates' notebook and preserves his spelling and punctuation in all cases, although paragraphs are indicated in an otherwise almost solidly written record of events from day to day:

*Saturday Sep. 29. 1798 at 9 oClock A.M.*

Left Pittsburg in a skiff 20½ feet long painted with painted awning & a flag. A beautiful day, a little head wind. few residents on the River—one side of the river generally hilly—the long Island's head 5 miles its foot about 12 miles—above, at the foot of Hamilton's Island & just above McKee's rocks Chartiers Creek falls into the Ohio—rested opposite the mouth of big Beaver—slept in the barge with two blankets rather uncomfortably, 29 miles by land 35 by water

*Sunday Sep. 30.th*

Started about sunrise—very foggy—passed the three riffles pretty well—9 oClock kept to north of a small Island and got over with sticking difficulty altho we drew but about 6 inches water—Stopt a few moments at George Town a pleasantly situated valage on the South bank about half a mile above (opposite) the mouth of little Beaver & about a mile above the State Line—¼ of a mile above Yellow Creek passed a very narrow & very beautiful island nearly in the shape of a ¼ of a hoop or rim say half a mile long—the channel falls on the outside next the Territory Shore<sup>6</sup>—The lower end has handsome clusters of willows the upper a very beautifully graveled flat bar.

On the lower bank of Yellow Creek is a pleasant situation with two huts—Opposite the other side the river has the appearance of a very extensive flat—Slept on the Indian Shore opposite Niestley's  
*Oct. 1.*

Got a ground at the head of a small Island—but turning to the Indian Shore passed it in a fine channel—breakfasted 8 miles from Niestleys—opposite Gamble's—Passed to the Virga side of Col. Brown's fine large Island—The head of a riffle very difficult—a second small Island at the foot of the larger—

Steuben, about 5 or 7 houses on the Indian side 5 miles above Buf-faloe, *Buffaloe*, 12 miles above Wheelen, 3 below Mingo bottom about 40 houses on a very narrow strip of low ground—on the lower side is Buffaloe Creek with a wooden bridge with stone abutments & a high hill on the upper a long flat, a hill close behind—oppose over the

<sup>6</sup> That is, the Ohio, or Northwest Territory, side; sometimes it was called the Indian shore.

river is a narrow flat extending to the left, & high hills above to the right. These are covered with Spruce Pine & have a pretty appearance—passed an Island to the Indian Shore & rested 90 miles from Pitt.—The woods are now putting on the Yellow Livery of autumn—forgot to mention an oil Spring in the bottom of the river at Georgetown which may be very distinctly smelt—& the oil sometimes seen floating on the surface.

*Tuesday Oct. 2<sup>d</sup>*

Came 11 miles (passing 2 Islands to Wheelen where I breakfasted at the White Horse on 3 eggs, 3 dishes of tea & at least a proportionate quantity of bread, toast & fried bacon. The town is on a bold bank consisting principally of one street so removed from the shore as to be scarcely visible from the water—Consists of about 60 houses one good looking brick one & 5 or 6 taverns—The Inhabitants appear tolerably Genteel & were they not Virginians might pass for decent people. The river is very shoaly just above & continues very shallow opposite the town & Island—Wheelen Creek is immediately at the town's foot close by the old picket Fort Randolph.—Left Wheelen half past eleven—Indian Wheelen on Grave Creek is 12 miles below on the Virg<sup>a</sup> side The fog was this morning Cemeareanally dark.—Below Grave Creek passed a very large body of deep water High Hills alternately on each side—sometimes pretty high opposite—3 or 4 miles below on the Virg<sup>a</sup> side an extensive flat land, under whose willows maples and sycamore, with the entwining Grape might tempt the Gods to take up their abodes under their delightful shade—Too happy would I be in their Arcadian bowers to enjoy with her whom nature has robbed the Graces to adorn—My lovely Emma<sup>7</sup>—an Elysium that the Ancients fancied, but which I alone, in that sweet charming spot with my divinity might taste Lay at the foot of Captena Island 18 miles from Wheelen passed the Island to the right and got fast—The main channel lies to the Virg<sup>a</sup> side.

*Wednesday October 3<sup>d</sup>*

Passed Captena Creek one mile below the Island on the right shore—Passed another Island on the right, we should have gone to the Virg<sup>a</sup> side—Breakfasted 27 miles from Wheelen. About 47 miles above Marietta passed on the right of a very beautiful Island of about a mile in length lying close in to the Virginia Shore, a quarter of a mile below which lies another near the same shore (Fishing just above which we dined is about 51 miles above Marietta on the left shore perhaps 15 yards across the mouth) a second Island on the same side & yet a third at the lower end of a handsome prospect 2 or 3 miles having 3 Islands in view—passed another Island & staid all night just above its foot 33 miles above Marietta—

*Thursday Octo. 4.*

Passed on the left of an Island & breakfasted at the foot of the long reach 25 miles from Marietta at the sign of the 3 cross Gimblet

<sup>7</sup> Emily Morgan Neville, daughter of Colonel Presley Neville, and later married to W. D. Simms. She appears to have been twelve or thirteen years old at this time, although the now defaced inscription on her tombstone in Trinity Cathedral cemetery is said to have recorded her age at death in February, 1821, as thirty-one.

handles where they sell life & health & pleasure in a Gill of whiskey but not a morsel to eat. We passed yesterday & this morning large flats of charming looking land on the Virga side chiefly hilly on the other—Passed a long narrow Island close in to Virga shore—We have had clear pleasant weather till this day about 11 o'clock 18 miles from Muskingum—passed two Islands almost joining, & then a 3<sup>d</sup> Island all to the Virga shore—Muskingum Island is 3 miles long when the river is low you to the Virga Shore, Marietta is situated just opposite its lower end; where we arrived about Sun down just as Cap. Ernest arrived.<sup>8</sup> Little Muskingum River falls into the Ohio above the Island just below the latter falls in at right angles between which & the Ohio lies Marietta—laid out on a very extensive plan, but built thinly & in patches—There are two handsome houses situate on the Ohio bank & Col. Sproat's<sup>9</sup> is a handsome house ¼ mile on the street leading from the Ohio to the Stockade where Gen. Putnum resides.<sup>10</sup> Staid all night at Buel's sign of Queen of France & had a very fun game of whist with large bowles of apple toddy with Col<sup>o</sup> Sproat, Cap. Buel & Grief Greene.<sup>11</sup>

*Friday October 5.*

Detained at Marietta till ¾ after 10 o'clock. left two long Islands to our left. The first we should have left to the right—Dined opposite the mouth of the little Kenawha 12 miles from Marietta where we got an excellent cheese of 11 lb for 185 cents of Mr. Stone.<sup>12</sup> Twelve miles above Marietta the land on both sides begins to have a level & rich appearance & 12 miles below on the Territory side commence the Bellepre Settlement or miles of the most elegant farms upon the best soil in America. To live here must be to live indeed, where Yankee industry has within a very few years transformed a wilderness of ponderous timber rendered almost impenetrable by vines into smiling Fields of plenty which teach the heart to adore the Supreme Intelligence who requires at the hand of man nothing but Temperance & Industry to possess all that can be desired or coveted. Who can behold these things without a conviction that there is a, who taste them without adoring The Supreme Director of all things—passed along large & beautiful Island<sup>13</sup> to the V<sup>a</sup> Shore, the lower end near the end of Bellepre Settlement. Little Hockhocken on Indian side is 16 miles from Marietta. rested on the Indian Shore 22 miles.

*Saturday Oct. 6.*

Passed big Hockhockin on the Indian Shore 2 miles above Belle-

<sup>8</sup> Captain Matthew Ernest had been appointed six weeks earlier as register of the land office for Wayne County and was on his way to be sworn in at Cincinnati. He had come overland by horseback and continued to Cincinnati with Bates.

<sup>9</sup> Ebenezer Sproat, a founder of Marietta and first sheriff of Washington County, Ohio.

<sup>10</sup> General Rufus Putnam, superintendent of the Ohio Company of Associates and a founder of Marietta.

<sup>11</sup> Griffen Greene, an early settler of Marietta.

<sup>12</sup> Captain Jonathan Stone, who purchased land and settled here in 1789.

<sup>13</sup> Blennerhassett Island.

view on the Vir<sup>a</sup> just above which there is another small Creek. Passed in the fog an Island on our left. Breakfasted at Belleview 30 miles from Marietta. One frame house & a few small dirty looking hovels. A handsome level situation with high bank having a view two miles up and a considerable distance down the river. Passed two little creeks in forenoon one the left, the other to the right Shore. Overtook a merchant's boat 20 days from Pitt. Passed a very small Island to the right & after diner on the left of a larger one—Saw vast numbers of spiders crossing the river, they skimming on the water with a large web floating above with which they were blown over the water with great swiftness.

Passed a small V<sup>a</sup> Creek.—To the Territory side of a small Island 35 miles above big Kenawha at the lower end of which we slept on the Vir<sup>a</sup> Shore—Land on both sides generally flat & looks Rich

*Sunday Oct. 7.*

Passed Mill Creek on the left & three Island near the Vir<sup>a</sup> Shore—Tart's fall's 30 miles above Kenahwa—3 miles below which we breakfasted. Land has a pretty appearance.—Gen. Washington has 5 miles on the river & one back of excellent Land above Tart's falls in Vir<sup>a</sup> 5 or 6 miles below there is a settlement of 8 or 10 new Cabbins on each Shore on beautiful Land.

Dined on the Territory Shore about 13 miles above Kenhawa—cut E M N<sup>14</sup> in a large beach the upper side of a run & small deserted clearing—passed a body of fine looking land in V<sup>a</sup> particularly a small pretty log house surrounded with tall streight Saplings just above the 8 mile Island—Another very pretty looking place with small Cabbins opposite the head of Island which we leave on the left—a very small Island—Saw numbers of willow bugs skimming on the surface. Rested on the Territory opposite an Island of considerable extent wch is formed by a small body of water circumscribing it. This water has more the appearance of a Creek than of an emanation from the river, as well where it flows from as where it flows into the Ohio. The land is still the Ohio Company's with some small reserved tracts.

*Monday Oct. 8.*

Rowed 6 miles to Point Pleasant or mouth of big Kenhawa, which is a fine large river—& the point beautiful situation having a mile or two view up & down the Ohio & up the Kenawha—A Town is laid out but a very few houses perhaps 8 or 10 dwelling only.—Saw M. Vanbibber<sup>15</sup> an old but very well looking man quite blind with his white beard plaited & upwards of 12 inches below his chin. for 8 miles above Point Pleasant on either side are cabbins. Got 2 Gallons of whiskey at Kenhawa & proceeded 4 miles to breakfast at Gallipolis which stands at the foot of a small Island on the Territory. Yesterday at Breakfast it clouded up for a few hours & we had strong head winds. but the day closed finely. Gallipolis was a large cantonment in two rows of Huts, but they are decayed & there are a few scattering well looking log houses—We got 2½ loaves of bread for 1

<sup>14</sup> For Emily Morgan Neville.

<sup>15</sup> Probably John Van Bibber, a member of a pioneer family who came to this locality about 1780.

dollar—The Baker had a sweet little daughter about 13 with whom I conversed some time and with whom it would be no difficult matter to fall in love—passed an Island & encamped on the V<sup>a</sup> Shore supposed 25 miles from Gallipolis—Land level to V<sup>a</sup> shore—a little rain about dusk, and

*Tuesday, Octo 9*

We were roused up at daybreak by rain which cont<sup>d</sup> but a little while—Breakfast just above big Guiandot Creek 40 miles below Kenhawa which is on the Vir<sup>a</sup> Shore No settlements yesterday evening nor this morning till now, when there a settlements on good level land on both sides. Saw a Bear take the water from the Territory side, we pursued him with all our might & missed heading it by only about 20 feet. We threw the ax at it. It was so fat, & black & tired & large it could scarcely mount the bank after getting on shore. Passed little Guiandot on the V<sup>a</sup> Shore.—Little Guiandot on V<sup>a</sup> side.

Dined on the Kentuckey shore of Big Sandey Creek which divides V<sup>a</sup> from Kentucky being about 50 miles from Gallipolis—a Creek of considerable size. Had a violent head wind & Slept on the stones on the Kentucky beach 10 miles below Sandy.

*Wednesday Oct. 10.*

Went ten miles & breakfasted on the Kentuckey Shore just below little Sandey in Mason County it being the same County from the V<sup>a</sup> line to Lime Stone. Excellent water with smooth pebbly—& Sandy bottom. Passed little Sciota on the Territory side—dined on the territory nearly opposite the mouth of big Tyger. Just below the mouth of which in Kenty are a range of high curious looking hills with tops nearly of the same height but with large hollows toward the river—the land on the Kentucky Shore good—the hills said to be very poor.

An elegant, heart cheering prospect the hills just above mentioned to the left Sciota Hills (in the Territory) in front & an extensive flat to the right, added to which is an extended view of the river & behind with hills on the Terri<sup>o</sup> & plains on the Kentucky Shore. Sciota is a large stream just below which is a kind of hut town of 6 or 8 houses on a pleasant high bank with a level plain backed by hills.—More very beautiful hills on the Kenty side. Slept at John Belli's<sup>16</sup> in the Territory 4 miles below Sciota & 45 above Lime Stone. We unfortunately missed QMas. Gen. Wilkins who with Senator Ross<sup>17</sup> & Alex. Scott had staid there all night & left it at 11 oClock this morning.

*Thursday Oct<sup>o</sup> 11*

Left Belli's before sunrise. Passed Kinakinic on the Territory Shore. Breakfasted on the Territory & dined on d<sup>o</sup> one mile below Graham's Station a settlement of 20 odd Cabbins in Kentuckey. Having an Island very small & large sand bar just below which we passed on the Indian side 25 miles from Belli's. Opposite to which Island Brush Creek a considerable stream empties from the Terri-

<sup>16</sup> Major John Belli, who bought land at the mouth of Turkey Creek in 1795.

<sup>17</sup> Senator James Ross of Pennsylvania, who, with Bezaleel Wells, laid out the town of Steubenville in 1798.

tory on the bank of whose mouth stands a neat pretty House neither large nor small but just as it ought to be—Half a mile below which stands on same bank a pretty unfinished log house with a stone chimney up the river & a shade behind—Saw several martin poles before doors this day.—Just at the foot of the 3 Islands (8 miles above Limestone which we passed to the Ken. Shore) on the Territory is a high, level, beautiful bank where are allready nearly completed two or three very pretty houses. One with a Gallery & porch before has up a sign. The Town is called Manchester.

Slept two miles below it on the opposite side bottom 10 miles from Limestone. Altho' the stars shone at our lying down—we were in a little time sprinkled with rain which continued during the night by fits wch caused us to move our bed 3 times. About midnight we were serenaded with the howling Orgies of a canoe's Crew, whose lungs were the lungs of Stentor & whose every muscle was a cord of risibility, who did not honor our fire with the presence but moved down & were succeeded by a boat's crew going to General Muster, who would have graced the shores of the Cape of Good Hope, if blackguardism, brutality & indecency could have added grace to any shore. Their Captain, Stratten, made first his rueful appearance before our fire, (which might well have served to roast a Grecian Hecatombe) His head Handkerchiefed, his uniform coat covered with an old bath coating surtout, His legs adorned with boots, his side with a silver mounted sword, his stature good his face comely, but his countenance clouded & chopfallen, for alas! he had lost his hat. His cocked hat which was worth 10 dollars had whilst the poor Captain slept on the prow under cover of the shades of night slipt from his head and floated majestically down the stream & which we next morning picked up.

*Friday Oct<sup>o</sup> 12.*

Three miles from lime Stone passed Brooks's in Kentuc. a very handsome high but level situation. A pretty house with a portico & Gallery above it in front, another house & beautiful tree with small short limbs nearly like a sugar loaf on the upper side.—Cabbin Creek on the left. The bank from Brook's to Limestone is adorned with Houses & decorated with a comely row of Sycamore. Breakfasted at Limestone 65 miles above Cincinnati, a trifling little place, perhaps a dozen or so houses on a high cragged bank, with hills close behind, having a pretty view of the river above & below. Passed Eagle Creek on the right, Lee's Creek on the left & dined opposite Lee's Station a beautiful low ground on the left. In the evening passed a string of 9 - 10 or 12 pretty houses most agreeably situated on a charming level bank 18 miles from Limestone on the Kentucky side Above which on the left is White Oak Creek<sup>18</sup> of some considerable size & just above a string of houses is a small creek called \_\_\_\_\_,<sup>19</sup> rested on the Kentucky Shore 37 miles above Cincinnati. Had an enormous fire & a large mess of sweet potatoes.

*Saturday Oct. 13.*

Started early & breakfasted in Kentucky. I eat but a small cold

<sup>18</sup> White Oak Creek is on the right.

<sup>19</sup> Left blank in the manuscript; evidently Bracken Creek.



choaking potatoe being very unwell—Hoisted a blanket and went charmingly by big Indian Creek in the Territory—Dined in Kentucky 5 miles above Columbia—The woods have exchanged the vivid green of Spring for a dusky autumnal brown—Little Miami a considerable water, but at this unexampled low time nearly dry is 6 or 7 miles from Cincinnati Its banks are adorned on one side with beautiful trees of some size on the other with lovely willows. For some distance above & below the delightfully level is made rendered yet more beautiful by Columbia settlement by being cleared built & cultivated There are below the Creek, 3 pretty looking houses the lower having 6 windows & 2 doors in front & is painted red with white Corners There is also a large new house unfinished at the mouth of a small run at the lower end of the settlement. One mile above Cincinnati from the Territory side falls in Deer Creek (it should be Run) & opposite the town lies New Port on Licking-Creek.

*Sunday Oct. 14.*

Dined with Mr. Sec'y Harrison<sup>20</sup> & teaed with Mrs. Wilkinson. At the Sec'y's altho the Sabbath saw him administer to Matthew Ernest the oath of office as Register of the land office for Wayne Co the oath for support of the Constitution, etc.

*Saturday the 27, Oct<sup>r</sup> 1798*

A cold raw day saw a muster of Major Sandford's Battalion in Newport, the day cool and the next morning to my great astonishment found the snow about 3 inches deep.

*Tuesday the 30.*

Saw a Muster of the Militia in Cincinnati the foot appeared shabby, unarmed & without uniform but the Co of Cavalry under Cap. Finlay were good looking men, well mounted, handsomely uniformed & well accoutered, the Co consists of about 50 but there were only about 30 on parade.

*Wednesday the 31<sup>st</sup>*

Spent the evening & 2 or 3 hours of the next morning at Jesse Hunt's. House warming. where there were 10 or 12 married Ladies, 4 or 5 single Ladies and upwards of 20 gent.—Miss Brown & Miss Nancarrough danced minuets together with tolerable grace & a degree of self-confidence entirely captivating, and they accordingly did captivate—not me, but—those amongst whom I might feel proud to be led captive—Miss Stites of Columbia looking all lovely, and but for rather too stiff an upper lip would have been altogether fascinating.—M<sup>me</sup> Fitzgerald too did honor to the room.

<sup>20</sup> William Henry Harrison, appointed the preceding July as secretary and lieutenant governor of the Northwest Territory.