

# The Andrew Broaddus Santa Fe Trail Letter

Letter of Elbridge Jackson Broaddus to Franklin Tipton — July 4, 1892

Prepared from the five manuscript pages supplied by the family, with transcription assistance from ChatGPT. The manuscript remains the primary source; uncertain readings are explicitly identified rather than silently corrected.

## Working Transcription

### Page 1

Chillicothe Mo. July 4th 1892

Franklin Tipton Esq Richmond Mo.

Dear Sir:

Your favor the 7th inst. at hand. In reference to my father's trip to Santa Fe sometime about 1820, as near as I now recollect the facts are about as follows.

My father at that time was a resident of the State of Missouri. With a party of Santa Fe traders, including Kit Carson, he left what is known as Old Franklin Mo. with goods packed upon wagons bound for Mexico. After having accomplished about half the distance in attempting to get his gun from his wagon, to shoot some wild animal that had invaded the camp of the traders, it was discharged shattering his right arm. In this condition he was hauled in his wagon, for the Company did not get an account of small matters, until it became apparent to him that unless his arm was amputated he would not

### Page 2

live to get to Santa Fe where it was expected he could receive surgical aid. He therefore called upon a friend by the name of Thos. Talbott to cut off his arm. Talbott not being a surgeon and not having any experience in his art which refused at first to undertake the work. But my father convinced him that he would die unless the operation could be performed at an early day. The subject of this Talbott had already considered the specialties of the Surgeon and had formed a way of operation that could with [uncertain] be successfully performed. The operation was as follows: To improvise a saw from a butcher knife to saw off the bone and to stop the bleeding of the arteries and veins by heating the knife [uncertain] and having them. The operation was successfully performed and he continued

### Page 3

his trip to Mexico, sold out his goods and returned to Mo. In 1827, he returned to Madison Co Ky, where he died at a ripe old age in Dec. 23 1872.

It may be also remarked that Williams who was [uncertain] in his celebrated exploring expedition through the Rocky Mountains was the guide and Indian interpreter of the Santa Fe traders with which my father was connected. Andrew Broaddus was a man of Herculean strength, firm and imperious, with unyielding will and apparently insensible to pain or fatigue. Kind and even generous to the poor, but haughty with his equals.

As for myself

I was born in Madison County June 9th 1836 [date as written; see note below] read law under the Hon. Lewis F. Burnham at Richmond Ky and was admitted to the bar in March 1858. In April 1867 moved to Chillicothe Mo where I have since lived. In 1874 was elected judge of the 17th judicial circuit of the State for term of six years.

### Page 4

In 1890 elected mayor of the City of Chillicothe for one year. On the 17th of Sept 1891 was appointed judge of the 17th judicial circuit by Gov. Francis, to fill the unexpired term of Judge James M. Davis who resigned on account of poor health. I am now a candidate for nomination in what is known as the 7th judicial circuit, the State having been redistricted since my appointment; the circuit is the largest in the State presided over by a single judge. It is composed of Ray,

Caldwell, Daviess and Livingston. I have already been endorsed for nomination by two of the candidates. The circuit has nearly 600,000 inhabitants. I am a widower with nine children, two of whom are married.

When I look over my past life and find how much I must have done, and how little I have achieved I feel greatly discouraged. I hope you will be

## **Page 5**

satisfied with the imperfect sketch I have given you. I will send a copy of your history when you get it completed.

Yours Truly

E. J. Broaddus

P. S.

Please see Jerry Mowden [surname uncertain], who can give you a better history of my father than I can. I have not time to review what I could [uncertain].

E. J. B.

# Historical Comparison

**Elbridge J. Broadus, 1892 letter:** Says Andrew was traveling with Santa Fe traders, explicitly names Kit Carson, describes the rifle accident, and names Thos. Talbott as the man who performed the amputation. He gives a family-level account of the improvised surgery.

**Josiah Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies:** Gregg independently describes a Mr. Broadus at Walnut Creek in the summer of 1826. Gregg says the rifle was being drawn muzzle-first from a wagon and discharged into the arm; the bone was badly shattered, gangrene followed, and an improvised amputation was eventually performed. This is a remarkably close independent confirmation of the core event.

**Kit Carson's own dictated autobiography:** Carson says that in August 1826 he joined the party and that Andrew Broadus suffered the accident while removing his rifle from a wagon to shoot a wolf. Carson says there was no medical man, that amputation became necessary, and that a member of the party performed it using a razor, old saw, heated wagon king-bolt, and tar from the wagon wheels. Carson says Andrew recovered before reaching New Mexico.

**Family Bible / genealogical note:** A later genealogical publication preserves a family note saying Andrew was with Kit Carson, accidentally shot off his arm while preparing to shoot buffalo, then made a saw from an old knife and used a heated wagon pin to stop the bleeding. This broadly supports the family tradition recorded by Elbridge.

## Points Worth Noting

- Transcription note: This is a conservative working transcription from the five supplied manuscript images. I have retained the writer's wording and spelling where legible. Words or phrases that I could not read confidently are marked [uncertain].
- Important date note: Elbridge writes 'sometime about 1820,' but both Josiah Gregg and Kit Carson place the accident in 1826. Andrew Broadus was born in 1792, making him about 34 at the time—very close to your recollection of his age.
- Important judicial note: In this letter Elbridge describes himself as a judge of the 17th Judicial Circuit and later as a candidate for the 7th Judicial Circuit after redistricting. The letter itself does not call this an appellate-court judgeship.

## Sources Consulted

- Josiah Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies, Vol. I, chapter on 'Prairie Surgery,' pp. 59–60 in the 1844 edition. The passage identifies Mr. Broadus and places the accident at Walnut Creek in the summer of 1826.
- Christopher (Kit) Carson, Kit Carson's Own Story of His Life, as dictated about 1856–57 and first published in 1926; the early-life section gives Carson's account of Andrew Broadus's accident and the improvised amputation.
- Early genealogical publication: The Nebraska and Midwest Genealogical Record, Vol. IX, 'Broadus Family Bible,' including the note attributed to Mrs. J. B. Noland concerning Andrew Broadus and Kit Carson.

## A Note for Family Sharing

This transcription was made with assistance from ChatGPT by examining the supplied scans of the original five-page manuscript. Because this is a historical family document, difficult readings have been marked as uncertain rather than presented as fact. The comparison with Gregg and Carson was then used to test the major names, dates, places, and details of the story.