

*900 MILES  
ON THE  
BUTTERFIELD TRAIL*

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passengers' meals. When this happened, nobody in the family was allowed to go back to bed until the dishes had been washed.<sup>49</sup>

In 1860, Uncle Mat France moved his family thirteen miles farther west and operated the Clear Fork Station for Butterfield.<sup>50</sup> John Chadbourne Irwin, the venerable memorist born in 1855 who spent his entire life in central West Texas, told the Conklings his father (John G. Irwin) and T. E. Jackson were associated with the Clear Fork station at some period in 1859. Regardless of who eventually ran the Clear Fork station, when Ormsby visited it on that first trip the station keeper's log house was just being erected. The intrepid New York reporter states that the Clear Fork of the Brazos, despite its name, was not very clear, "but even its muddy waters were a grateful boon for a bath while our horses were being changed. . . . Dr. Birch, the Mail Agent, had everything in readiness, so that I had to finish dressing in the wagon, so short was the delay."<sup>51</sup> The Reverend Mr. Tallack was rather horrified at the bathing habits of some of his fellow passengers. Noting that he carried towels and a sponge with him so as to take quick advantage of a hasty bath when possible, he added, "Many passengers go through the entire route without once changing their linen, and sometimes without the barest apology for [not] washing."<sup>52</sup>

From the Clear Fork the Butterfield Trail went southwest along the north bank of Lambshead Creek, today within historic Matthews-Lambshead Ranch. On the ride, passing around and over the low hills of southwestern Throckmorton County, Ormsby noticed two bluffs "whose position reminded me forcibly of East and West Rock as seen on entering New Haven harbor." The stage road also weaved its way between the cavalry post at Camp Cooper (1856-1861) and the hilltop site that would become Fort Griffin in 1867.

→ Entering Shackelford County, the road crossed what is today the J. H. Nail ranch, continuing southwestward to Smith's station. No house had been built there by September 1858, and those at the station were living in tents, cooking on an outdoor fire. "Our supper," Ormsby wrote, "consisted of cake cooked in the coals, clear coffee,