

FROM THE PLAINS.

109 Miles West of St. Joseph,)
May 13, 1849)

We are now on the great prairie--nothing to relieve the monotony of the view but a few small groves, indicating watering places. The prairies of Illinois are mere garden spots in magnitude compared to this great plain. This would be a beautiful county if timber was plenty. We have seen but few Indians. They have stolen some cattle, but they were all recovered. We keep a strong guard at night. No accident has yet happened to us, and we get along with as little difficulty as any other 20 men on the road.

We expect in a few days to intersect the Independence road, when there will be a great rush. It is represented that there are great numbers ahead of us; but we suppose that the great body is behind. When we lay by,-- as we have to-day--many companies pass us--a hundred have gone by to-day. They all seem to be in a hurry, and it is thought they drive too fast. The grass is not very good generally; but the mules do well. Some of our men complain that our loads are too heavy, and probably we shall throw away our ovens and lids and surplus iron. As we advance we find a great many articles thrown away by emigrants.

We expected to find it lonesome on the plains, but it is not so; we have plenty of society, and that of the best men. We are either passing or in sight of teams the whole day, and we generally find out where each other are from, &c. Our encampment is near others, and time passes swiftly. I will resume my journal: [We make brief extracts from it.]

Monday, May 7, 1849.--Received a delegation from a company from Dayton, Ohio, which desired to join us, and organize as one company-- which was agreed to, and they were to come up with us on the march. We left camp at 10 A. M. at the sound of the bugle, and this day passed 128 ox teams--encamped on the prairie, having traveled 12 miles.

Tuesday, 8th.--Passed an Indian Mission; some improvements,-- horse mill, blacksmith shop, and farm, carried on by government, and a school, in which there were between 30 and 40 Indian children. It was evident the natives were making but slow progress in civilization, growing out of their repugnance to labor. Traveled 16 miles and encamped.

Wednesday, 9th.--Some rain; traveled 8 miles and encamped on a branch; had to pack our wood nearly a mile; 85 oxen and six mule teams passed us.

Thursday, 19th.--Some dark clouds hanging about the horizon. Started at 7 A. M.; groves of timber near, indicating water; camped at 5 P. M., on a fine creek; made 28 miles. The Ohio company having joined us, J. B. Watson was elected general superintendant, and an advisory committee appointed to assist him. We passed a very fine dog, which had given out.

Friday, 11th.--Signs of rain; started at 7 A. M.; showers of rain; crossed Minehaw, a beautiful stream, with rocky bottom and timber on its

margin. This is a great place for emigrants. Here we saw a fresh grave--of a man from St. Louis, who had been long in ill health. Every tree about had bits of paper fastened to them, written upon, informing emigrants and friends that the writers were well and had passed this point;--traveled 23 miles and encamped.

Saturday, 12th. Some clouds, cold; started at 7 A. M.; passed a dead ox partly skinned; came to an encampment where many things had been left, and a wagon burnt up. We crossed three tributaries to-day. Our Ohio friends broke a wagon tongue by the running away of the cattle; no further damage done. Timber on the creek elm, and had bad fires. Traveled 21 miles.

Sunday, 13th. The morning bright and beautiful. 28 wagons encamped with us last night.--The day has passed very pleasantly. 130 wagons have passed us to-day. We find that a majority of the teams travel on the Sabbath, what the result will be on their teams, the end will prove. There is a family of children in camp to-night; the little creatures are playful and happy.

There were a train of 34 wagons passed to-day in which were Mr. Leviston and lady and two children (formerly Miss Woodson of Springfield.) Their wagon was beautifully arranged and as neat as a parlor. The lady looks well and appears as if at home.

B. R. B.

P. S. Tuesday 15th. All well, and moving on well, we are eight miles above where the Independence road strikes ours, and 140 miles from St. Joseph.

Head Waters Little Blue,)
May 30, 1849.)

Another week has passed since I wrote you. Nothing strange has occurred in our company since then. We all enjoy excellent health. The road is most excellent, and the country most beautiful. The streams have rapid currents, and the waters are as clear as crystal, with pebbly bottoms. Springs of great beauty are breaking out constantly; the air is pure, and there seems nothing wanting to make this country most desirable for the agriculturalist but timber. When the autumnal fires are kept out, timber will spring up and grow with rapidity. This may soon be;--for game is becoming scarce, and the natives will have to leave the country.

We have seen a few buffalo and antelopes, but none of them have been shot. We are now in the Indian country. They are very shy of us,--few of them having come into the camps. We keep a strong guard at night.

We are constantly passing notices from those who have preceded us,--written upon paper, elk horns and boards;--so that we are apprised of all that is going on ahead of us. The number of deaths known to me I have given in my journal. The season is so backward that Flora has not put on her beautiful vestments here. I have seen but few flowers that I have not seen before. I send you a specimen of the wild pea, in the midst of a field which is our encampment. The air is filled with its perfume. We have encamped to spend the Sabbath. Some of our company are now out hunting, while others, like myself, are engaged writing to friends "far away." I have dated this on Sunday, though in fact written on Saturday. We have an opportunity of sending letters by private express--which brings letters to us at 25 cents and deposits ours in the nearest post-office at one dollar.

Time passes away swiftly on these plains. We have an abundance of society--interesting, well educated persons--but we are absent from many we love.

I have given you the general features of the week, and now resume my journal:

Monday, May 14.--Rained hard, with a high wind. Resumed our journey--came to the Big Blue, a rapid stream--passed a wagon which had broken down, and partly burnt. Here was a fresh grave of a young man who had died of inflammation of the bowels. Traveled 23 miles to day, and passed 113 wagons.

Tuesday, 15th.--Cloudy and cold; started at 7 A. M.; passed three new graves--one of the persons died of fever, one of a bowel complaint, and the other was killed by being run over by a wagon. Made 22 miles to-day.

Wednesday, 16th.--Cloudy and cool; started early; came to Walnut Creek, took in wood,--crossed over the creek, and crossed Sandy, a pretty stream; saw some antelope, but failed to secure any. B. A. Watson shot at one, but at too great distance to take effect. Made 23 miles--rained hard at sun-down.

Thursday, 17th.--Cloudy morning; started early; some excitement in consequence of two drivers mistreating a mule, but it ended in smoke; struck the Little Blue again, and 'nooned'--encamped at night along its bank; caught some fine fish; passed 95 teams to day; saw some abandoned Indian lodges; made 25 miles.

Friday, 18th.--Sun rose clear, caught fish and a turtle; traveled up the river all day; passed 59 wagons; road sandy and gravelly; made 23 miles.

Saturday, 19th.--There was a thunder storm last night; it frightened our mules; morning very windy; passed the Louisville company, which had just buried one of their number; shot by accident, we made our camp at 11 A. M. Mules want rest, grass good and fine water.

Yours,

B. R. B.

JOURNEY TO CALIFORNIA

We have been favored with the Journal of Mr. B. R. Biddle, our townsman, written while on his route to California, and which abounds with interesting descriptions of the country, and incidents which occurred on the route. We shall copy from this Journal, from time to time, all matters which shall appear to possess a general interest. We have no doubt this Journal will be found as interesting to our readers as if has been to us. The first date is

"Sunday, June 17th, 1849--638 miles from St. Joseph, 96 miles from Fort Laramie, and 1026 miles west of Springfield, Illinois.

I again embrace the opportunity which this day of rest affords, to continue my journal. The incidents of the last week have been of the most interesting character. Our road has led over hill and dale. The scenery was grand, the country sterile and barren, with, now and then, a mountain stream rushing on to mingle with the waters of the Platte--affording to the emigrant a cooling draught, amid the flying sand, which almost produces blindness. We have, to-day, encamped on the bank of the Platte, near a grove of large cotton wood, where there is a sufficiency of grass for our mules. We have been very lucky in getting good encampments on the Sabbath. While others are moving on--pleading necessity as a justification--we stop all day.

We reached this encampment on yesterday, at 3 p. m., which gave us an opportunity of doing some washing; as usual, it was done up in good style. Sattly and Doran went out with their guns and soon announced they had killed a buffalo, and asked for men and mules to bring it into camp.--Volunteers turned out and, by 10 p. m., they came in, loaded with choice meat. The party pronounced buffalo plenty on the hills. Others went out fishing and caught some fish. The cooks were busily engaged preparing supper, which made the camp present a busy scene. Thus, you see, the hills furnish us meat, the streams afford us fish, and, to-day, the grove is vocal with the music of birds. The mag-pie, a bird not found at home, yields us considerable amusement by its tameness, eating out of our hands and chattering all the while. This bird can be learned to talk and is of considerable value.

This day finds us all well and in fine spirits.--Our teams, I think, will take us through. We have nothing to fear, except the want of grass for our mules. The country here is very dry; but little rain has fallen; vegetation looks parched and dry. Some of those who are trying to get to the Promised Land, and think themselves endowed with the spirit of foretelling events, anticipate distress among the mountains; but we have no such forebodings. Our trip, thus far, has been of the most favorable character; and, by paying strict regard to the welfare of our mules, and taking our time, we shall succeed in getting over safe. There is a great rush, and some have injured their teams by traveling them too far. This part of the road is very gravelly and hard--a superior road to travel on with animals that are shod; but the oxen are getting sore feet; some have already been left.--The ferry across the Platte is between twenty and thirty miles from here, and they say is past fording. There is a great rush to make this point. There are twelve or fourteen hundred teams ahead of us. This

will appear large to you. But admitting so many to be ahead of us, we are still in the first fourth of the whole number, as we thought, from the statement of others. The Platte, here, is a very insignificant stream, compared with what it appeared below; it has changed from a river of the plains to a mountain stream, rushing along with the sprightliness of an arrow. It is not more than a hundred feet wide at this point. We have seen some small deposits of gold in the sands; but not enough to tempt us to stop short of the great prize ahead. There is a rumor that gold, in quantities, has been discovered on Laramie's Peak--a very high spur of the Rocky Mountains, and that some wagons from Illinois had turned aside to go to it.

It is said, a man went to see the mountain, was several days from his train, and brought of what he saw there, which was pronounced gold. This Peak is covered with perpetual snow. Fort Laramie is 4,470 feet above the level of the sea, and this mountain is 2000 feet higher. We are getting up quite high; we are rising near a thousand feet a week.

I sent you a long letter from Fort Laramie, but doubt whether you will receive it. I have no confidence in the men. They have established themselves to make money; and from the way they swindle emigrants, I am disposed to believe, when they have got their twenty-five cents from us for each letter, that they don't care much whether they go or not, after we are gone.

I will now commence my daily journal, and continue it until I have a chance to send it to you.

Monday, June 11th.--Pleasant morning. We moved off at five and a half o'clock, in advance of some sixty ox-teams. The road was fine indeed. To-day, the timber was a little more abundant than we have seen it before on the Platte.--We saw nothing of Fort Bernard, as set down in the books, eight miles from Fort Laramie. About 5 p. m. we came to the Laramie Fork of the Platte and in sight of Fort John, which is now deserted--nothing remains but its mud walls. This branch of the Platte river is about 50 feet wide, with a very deep and rapid current. Encamped 7 p. m. Distance 22 miles.

JOURNEY TO CALIFORNIA

By B. R. Biddle

(continued)

Tuesday, 12th.--This morning is cool. Started at half past five. Drew up to the fort I have described in a former letter. We found a great many encamped in the vicinity, all anxious to sell provisions and exchange heavy wagons for light ones. Some would sell a wagon at \$5; others, in preference to taking so low a price, burnt theirs or left them by the road-side. Bacon, beans, powder, lead, trunks, &c., were left upon the plains.--It seems very wrong to throw to the wolves what the poor Indians might use to advantage, but for the cupidity of the fur-traders--men who give them scarce a tithe of what their furs and skins are worth,--we have seen but few Indians on this part of the route. It is said the traders have told them they must keep away from the emigrants else they will give the cholera, small-pox and the like. After leaving the Fort, we commenced ascending the Black Hills. They have not appeared to us half so bad to get over as they have been described by writers. We passed the Warm Spring--a most delightful spot in the midst of desolation. The water is clear as crystal, and not so warm but that man and beast can drink freely of it as it flows in great abundance. The thermometer was thrust into the water, by which it was ascertained to be 10 deg. warmer than the surrounding atmosphere. We filled our casks; and encamped at 5 p. m. where there was good grass. Distance 15 miles.

Wednesday, 13th.--Morning cloudy. Started after an early breakfast. Passed over an undulating country. Crossed Butter creek, a very beautiful and limpid stream, dancing down from a mountain on our left, whose summit is covered with perpetual snow. The grass is getting scarce, and the timber gradually becoming more abundant. The wood is mostly pine, and has a fine appearance at a distance, on the hills around. This afternoon the road has been rough. The snow-peak is still in view. Encamped at 5 p. m. Distance 23 miles.

Thursday, 14th.--Clear morning. Sold a little wagon we had bought at St. Joseph, so as to be able to rest two of our mules, in turn. After traveling one mile we came to Heber spring and a creek; from which we began the ascent of a very steep bluff; traveled over a rough, hilly road; crossed La Bonte, a small but rapid river. Encamped at 6 p. m.--grass very poor. Distance 20 miles.

Friday, 15th.--The sun rose this morning with a threatening look, but cleared up without rain, so we had a pleasant day of it. Forded a creek and traveled along a valley, and entered a region bearing traces of volcanic eruption. The valley and hills looked red like brick. There was no vegetation except immense fields of wild sage. Amid these ruins arises a lonely pyramid, composed of loose fragments of rock, to an altitude of several hundred feet. I clambered to the summit. The alabaster, and red, grey and white sandstone, give to the whole of this picturesque country a singular appearance. The timber is small yellow-pine. There is but little grass. The road has been very crooked, to-day--following the winding of the ridges; but it is, certainly, the best natural road in the world. Crossed La Prele, said to be the largest tributary of the Platte above Laramie's Peak. Passed the dry bed of a creek. Encamped at 6, on a hill--grass so scarce the mules did not have enough to eat--plenty of good water. Distance 21 miles.

Saturday, 16th.--Some appearance of rain--Moved off at 5. Roads broken and irregular.--Crossed Fouche Bois--too small to be called a river. Four miles from that, we came to the Platte, after having been away from it for eighty miles. Five miles further, we came to a fine fish-stream called Deer creek. The lack of an abundance of grass prevented us encamping there over Sunday. The wood and water were abundant, and some had stopped and commenced washing. We came on, however, some five miles from the creek to the spot we occupy.

Sunday, 17th.--The sun rose in smiles. Nothing has occurred to distinguish this day particularly from the Sundays which have preceded it, save a little excitement, in camp, in consequence of three buffaloes descending the hills and threatening to take our fortress by storm; they, however, turned their course a little. Game is very plenty. This afternoon closes rain-like.

I have written this under the shade of a tree on the river-bank, surrounded by clusters of roses, while the birds are discoursing melody among the adjacent hills.

Monday, June 18th.--The sun rose clear. We started at the usual time. All well. Our mules are lively and look well. We traveled up the river a few miles from our encampment. In descending a bad hill, we broke the 'hounds' of a wagon; but the united wisdom of the camp soon repaired it. The road is crowded with teams, all anxious to make the ferry so as to have their turn; but the ferry not being able to accommodate them in time, they have had recourse to rafting. We spent the noon near the lower ferry. The number of those waiting to cross is increasing very fast. It is five miles from this to the Mormon ferry--We found over a hundred teams before us. The ferry-boat consists of two rough canoes, lashed together, and a few rough pieces of timber laid across them for the wagons to run on. They take but one wagon at a time. They swim all the horses and cattle. Several men and horses were drowned in attempting to swim over, as the current is very swift. They are able to take over from fifty to sixth wagons per day, at the charge of \$3 per wagon. Six hands have charge of the ferry.-- They have laso a temporary black-smith shop, and charge \$4 for shoeing a horse, \$8 for an ox, and other work in that proportion. They have ferried over, in the three weeks preceding our arrival, seven hundred wagons; and it is supposed, as many have crossed at other points--making the number, in advance some fourteen or fifteen hundred wagons; and, we suppose, we are in the first third of the emigration. Any one has the right to keep a ferry, or raft, and charge what he pleases. We encamped near the ferry at 5 p. m.--Distance to-day, 16 miles.

Tuesday, 19th.--Cloudy morning. There being no grass in the vicinity, we had to take our mules some four miles, to the hills, to graze. Doran killed a mountain-goat--a very remarkable animal, with horns like our sheep, only a great deal larger. It is very strong, muscular and active. The flesh tastes like mutton. This day has been taken up pretty much in washing and cooking.--Expect to cross the river, to-morrow. Our men are all well.

JOURNEY TO CALIFORNIA

By B. R. Biddle

(continued)

Wednesday, 20th.--Clear. Our wagons were moved up to the ferry, this morning, and our mules taken out to graze; we remained with them until 1 p. m., and then brought them in and swam them over without any accident. Our wagons were all got over safe, by 3 p. m.; when the government troops came up and took possession of the ferry, cutting off two wagons that had been in our company from St. Jo. This act, on the part of the commanding officer, was looked upon with indignation, and would have given rise to a conflict if our better judgment had not prevailed. Dividing a company by an officer of the government sent out to protect the emigrants, is an act too mean and contemptable for the meanest ox-driver on the plains to be guilty of. The Mormons, knowing how we had been treated by this government dignitary, determined to bring the two wagons over after night, and did so. By their kindness, we were re-united, about 10 o'clock at night. Preferring not to be in the neighborhood of the officers whose duty it was to protect us, we encamped, at 6 p. m., 3 miles from the ferry.

Thursday, 21st.--Very fine morning. Started early. At 9 a. m. we bade farewell to the Platte. We all felt glad upon leaving it, though we had derived much pleasure from the contemplation of its wild and romantic scenery. It is a remarkable stream, carrying, in its course to the Father of Waters, the great volume of water from the vast expanse of plain, and the melting of the snows of the Rocky Mountains, yet it is a perfect nullity as to all the purposes of navigation. We ascended the bluff, passed several lakes of bad, poisonous water, and, at 3 p. m., came to a mineral spring and a filthy looking pond near by. We drank cautiously of the spring, though men and mules were very thirsty. The waters of this whole region are so strongly impregnated with salt, alkali and sulphur that most of it is undrinkable. The cattle seem to suffer most from its effects. The road is sandy and pulls very heavy. Encamped at 5 p. m., between ranges of high hills, and opposite, on the left, to what is called the Buttes, composed of red sand stone; they look very pretty.--Distance 21 miles.

Friday, 22d.--This morning is beautiful and bright. The mornings now are cool, but the days very warm. There has been but little rain here, and it is surprising how the vegetation has reached the maturity it has. Grass is scarce only in spots. Wild sage and a plant they call grease-wood, dispute with each other the occupancy of the soil. They both burn freely, green or dry.--Water is scarce. Our course, this morning, lay between two ledges of rough, elevated piles of dirty looking rock; and, when we least expected it, we came to a spring of cold water, but not enough for our mules. Two and a half miles from that, we came to the celebrated Willow Spring--a feeble spring, but of good water, free from impurities. You can imagine how this beverage, given by a bountiful Providence to the weary traveler, was relished by us. We then ascended a long hill, from which we had a fine view of the surrounding country. At 4 p. m., we came to a pretty running brook, glittering like a serpent in the grass. At 5, we came to a creek of swift, pure water. Encamped 2 miles beyond it, at 7.--Gnats and mosquitoes very troublesome. Took our mules to the creek bottom to graze; and the guard took a tent down so as to watch them.--Distance 24 miles.

Saturday, 23d.--Fine morning. The atmosphere of this mountain region is of the most invigorating kind. All of us are in the enjoyment of excellent health. I have increased some eight or ten pounds. All the company have increased in weight. There are few instances of fifty men being associated together, and taking their chances of camp life who have enjoyed such perfect health. The road is very sandy, this morning, which makes it hard work for men and mules. About 9, we arrived at Independence Rock on the Sweet Water--a tributary of the Platte. It is thirty yards wide, and good but not cold. Independence Rock is a conspicuous land-mark. It derived its name from some of the first emigrants having celebrated the 4th of July upon it. It is a pile of granite, and resembles a ship turned bottom up. It is about one hundred and twenty feet high, and near three quarters of a mile around the base. Upon the summit, I found written thousands of names, ranging in date from the first to the last party of emigrants. We crossed the Sweet Water, about two miles from the rock, at a ford twenty yards wide. Here we found the carcasses of four oxen which had died from having drank poisonous water. Five miles from the rock is the Devil-s Gate--a mountain gorge, between whose perpendicular walls of granite, four hundred feet high, the river, circumscribed in width to a few yards, dashes and foams over the rocks; having a fall of fifteen feet in three hundred yards. After traveling four miles, we encamped on the river-bank surrounded by the best grass and near one of the best springs we have found in this territory; the water is cold as ice. There is an abundance of wood on the bluff half a mile off. Distance, to-day, only 16 miles.

Sunday, 24th.--Morning bright and cheerful, promising a warm day. Our mules, in sight under the mountain, having gratified their appetite, are resting to the left. On the summit of a lofty peak, to the east, the snow is glistening in the brilliant sunshine. The Devil's Gate is full in view, while, to the west, the still higher points of the Rocky Mountains are inviting us onward.--Surrounded by such scenery, and in the enjoyment of the bounties of nature in this wild region, we are thankful that no accident or misfortune has happened us since we started from home.

These mountains deserve their name of Rocky. The primitive rock, piled in grand profusion, with a few straggling, stunted pines and cedars struggling for a hold, cause them to present a rugged and singular aspect. The hills and mountains we are accustomed to see, are pigmies compared to them. We are six thousand feet above Springfield and are yet to ascend four thousand more before we get to the Valley of the Sacramento. Next Sabbath, we expect to be on the Pacific side of the South Pass. There is nothing to mar our expectations of procuring the full reward of our toil. There will, however, be a great deal of suffering, in many companies, before they reach their destination. There are many families among the emigrants--I pity them. There is a disposition to press on with the current--each one trying to get ahead of others, frequently urging the teams beyond their strength, all traveling farther, each day, than any emigration before them. Many press on regardless of the Sabbath, fearful, if they stop, that others will pass them; but we expect to be able to overtake them, by encamping over Sunday. The season has been favorable to emigrants;--cool and rainy, affording abundance of water for the oxen.

Monday, 25th.--The morning clear. All reported well. Started at the usual time, and followed up the river. The road is of deep sand, which causes the wagons to run heavy. The scenery, along our route to-day, is very imposing. The Wind River Mountains, on our right, lift their hoary summits to the clouds, with a chain of granite hills between them and us. Several notches in the hills gave us fine views to the north. The snow lay in the valleys and hollows, on our left; which indicates that we are at a very great elevation. The boys engaged in snow-balling, this morning. The nights now are quite cold, and the days hot. The health of many emigrants has been injured by the water, the rarity of the atmosphere and the constant fatigue they undergo; but the general health is good. Though some of us have been affected, to some extent, by some of these causes, we are getting along very well. The animals seem to be more affected than the men. We passed five dead oxen and one mule, to-day. Encamped on the Sweet Water, at 5 p. m.-- but little grass. Distance 25 miles.

JOURNEY TO CALIFORNIA

By B. R. Biddle

(continued)

Tuesday, 26th.--This morning pleasant. We started at sun-rise. From some high ridges, we had magnificent views of the snow-capt mountains. We left the river, and traveled ten miles on a very sandy road, when we came to the river again. We took the mules two miles up the river to graze at noon. Saw the carcasses, to-day, of six oxen and one mule. Here we took in water, as it is sixteen miles to the next watering place. Encamped, at 5 p. m., ten miles from the river. Distance 20 miles.

Thursday, 27th.--Very pleasant morning. Had a fine rain last evening, which laid the dust and made it more pleasant traveling. A full view of splendid mountain scenery. After going six miles we came to the river where we spent the noon. Then left the river and ascended a long, high hill; traveled over a very barren and rocky piece of road, where there scarcely seemed to be any life in anything around. We descended from this scene of desolation among hollows, the hills surrounding us like walls. We stopped, for the night, near a hollow where there was ice three feet thick, the constant melting of which made a rivulet which afforded us good water. There was plenty of fine grass and the wild sage answered as fuel. We saw nine dead oxen to-day. Distance 23 miles.

Thursday, 28th.--Morning pleasant. Started at 5 a. m. Ascended a very gently sloping ridge, with beautiful little groves of willow, on the left, that seemed to receive their nourishment from a spring. Crossed a small creek and a short distance beyond came to a large one, and, beyond that, a few miles, came to the river, where the sparkling volume of water and gently sloping hills, on all sides, made a beautiful landscape. Here we left the Sweet Water for the last time. We were all sorry to part with it. We had often been benefitted by its refreshing waters, which had endeared the mountain stream to us. We had traveled upon its banks for more than a hundred miles--had followed it to its source in the mountains of snow. The snow is now lying in the hollows around us, notwithstanding the days are very warm. We now ascended an easily rising slope, which brought us to the far-famed South Pass--7470 feet above the level of the sea. We passed the summit about a mile before we were aware that we had arrived at the dividing point. There is nothing to distinguish the spot. The ascent and descent is so slight that few would think they had attained that lofty elevation which divides the waters of the Atlantic and the Pacific. Immediately after passing this point, we entered the Oregon Territory, and, traveling two miles, arrived at the Pacific Spring, the water of which is very cold. We encamped near it, with many others who had arrived before. The grass is cropped very short. Stopped at 6 p. m., and took our mules to graze on the hills near by. Distance 26 miles.

Illinois Daily Journal June 25, 1849

FROM THE PLAINS

Fort Kearney, Platte River, May 24, '49.

We have the pleasure to say that we are in good health and spirits and are progressing finely towards our place of destination. We have had good weather and good roads. No accident has befallen us. Mrs. M's health has rapidly improved. Our team is doing well. Oxen six years old are better than mules for this trip.

Yesterday we met a company of traders from the Rocky Mountains. They say we will have good roads, and grass as far as they have been (400 miles) towards the Rocky Mountains. We hear nothing to discourage us, and hope to reach California in September.

About 200 teams have passed us, and we suppose there are some 3,000 behind. The Springfield ox teams are about a day's travel behind; and the Springfield mule teams are about the same distance ahead, and we expect to overtake them in two or three days. They are all well, both parties, as far as we know. We are constantly passing mule teams, which left St. Joseph before we did.

We are now 230 miles from St. Joseph; 40 miles more will carry us to the buffalo region, where, it is said, they are plenty. 340 miles from this will bring us to Fort Laramie, which we hope to reach by the 18th of June; and Fort Hall is 550 miles from that point; which we expect to reach by the 1st of August.

Messrs. Morgan, Harris and Turley are with us,--all well. The weather is good. We are now passing Fort Kearney, and I must close.

Yours, &c.

Charles Maltby.

Mr. S. B. Moody, Springfield, Ill.