

Murphy, Patrick Henry

This book contains the interesting story,

"Across the Plains,"

experienced, as written, in diary form, by

Finneas P. M. Murphy,

in the year 1854,

"Covered Wagon Days"

This was typed from a copy made by his daughter, Gerda L. Murphy,

and presented to her brother,

Ralph L. Murphy

in the year 1913

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Across the Plains

On April 11, 1854 - I bid adieu to St. Louis and departed for California, thinking that the pleasant time I would have on the plains, killing game and riding after the herds of buffalo, would over-come all suffering and hardships which I might be compelled to endure.

So on the after-noon of the eleventh I started in Wiles & Company's train of twenty-one men. We wore until May 11th reaching St. Joseph; here they bought 525 head of cattle, 35 horses, and 4 wagons, which were drawn by oxen. I bought my outfit in St. Louis; it consisted of one double blanket, a gun, ammunition, and some clothes.

We had a hard time going through Missouri. We had a snow storm in the last of April which left the roads covered with mud and water. We camped out, all the way, rain or shine; considering we were all used to good beds and board being changed, in quick time to hard fare and the wet ground for a bed, you can judge of our feelings, but we all felt well and were in good spirits; but we were on a hard trip and so were prepared for any-thing.

At St. Joseph we camped one day and purchased provisions.

On the 12th of May we ferried the stock across the river, and traveled five miles through very heavy timber, and camped at the bluffs, on the edge of the plain; but before we reached the camp ground, it began to rain and continued all night; here was work to guard 550 head of horses and cattle, on the open plain; there were ten men on guard this night and were relieved at 12 M. by ten more.

The next morning two men went back to St. Joseph for two wagons, that we left, and returned in the evening. It is still raining.

May 14th. It has been raining in torrents all day, a band of our cattle strayed off today but we found them.

15th. We started this morning for the plains, bidding farewell to the last abode of white men, until we reach the forts, or trading posts, and those are not more than half white. The roads were good and a fine day.

16th. A fine day and good roads. We saw a few indians going to the river. Grass short but good.

17th, 18th. and 19th. were fine days; roads good, they extended over rolling prairie, with timber on the streams. It was very good farming land.

20th. This was a very stormy day; we could scarcely keep the cattle together; we put a guard on the cattle on the creek-bank; everything was wet and the creek over-flowing its banks. I slept on the wet ground with a little brush under me for a bed. We could not cook much supper because the wood was wet. It was raining and the water was muddy. We set our logs afire and some of the boys burned their boots. This was a hard day and night, but we thawed out by the morning sunshine.

21st. We started again on our trip. The roads, over rolling prairie, were very good.

May 22, 1854. We crossed the big Elou river, the banks were very soft, making it very hard to cross; we paid \$5.00 per wagon for ferrying. We had good roads, with plenty of wood, water and grass; camped in the bottom; the horses left camp in the night and went back to the river.

23rd. We were in sight of five trains. No indians or game in sight.

24th. Land here is rolling prairie and is fine for farming.

25th. Thursday. A horse ran off with saddle and bridle; I rode after him, ten miles, on my mule; when I caught him, both had nearly given out. Camped on Elou River; good water, grass and wood. Crossed several creeks.

26th. Raining. In sight of eight trains. Camped on little Elou; plenty of wood, grass and water.

27th. Raining. Camped on Elou river; roads were good; grass very poor.

28th. Sunday. Raining. We went over the hills and laid over.

29th. Camped on Elou river; good grass. A heavy storm, in which the tents were blown down; cattle stampeded and every body up in the storm after the cattle. Indian alarm.

30th. Raining. Gathered up cattle after the storm and had to drive them three miles from camp; three of us were without supper. Each of us had a mule and two revolvers; the latter we held in our hands all night. At 1 A.M. there were two shots fired at camp, supposed to have (been) fired at an indian, by the guard.

May 31, 1854. Wednesday. We started this morning, and five miles from camp, there were about five-hundred indian warriors; met a woman on horse back that the indians chased and stopped their wagon; they stopped us and we were going to fight them; we were all arranged with our guns and pistols; and being surrounded by the indians, we compromised by giving them a little sugar and flour; they took a bowie knife from a man that belonged to another train. Roads good with some hills; this is thirty-five miles from Fort Kearney. Camped on Platte bottom and had to use buffalo chips to cook by.

June 1st. Thursday. Passing Ft. Kearney; and sent word over about the indians; the captain ordered out a dozen men after them. Camped three miles west of Ft. Kearney; some willow for fuel, good grass and plenty of water.

2nd. Camped on Platte. Raining all day, no wood.

3rd. Camped. No wood. Traveling up the Platte River.

4th. Sunday. No wood at camp to-night. Plenty of grass on the river. Roads swampy.

5th. Monday. Good grass and plenty of wood. We laid over two days. Four of the boys went buffalo hunting and succeeded in killing two; one of the men was thrown off his mule and was hurt some; his mule ran off and they did not find him until next day; the men arrived at camp at mid-night.

8th. Thursday. We traveled twenty miles with good roads and plenty of grass.

9th. Traveled twenty-five miles; passed middle ford; no grass all day. Camped on the island; plenty of wood; grass.

10th. Good roads but no wood. The cattle stampeded last night; we ran them four miles before we could head them off.

11th. Sunday. Camped on the bottom. No wood.

12th. Crossed the south fork of the Platte river; the Ford was deep in places and had to swim the cattle. There were two "sheep trains" waiting for the water to fall.

Some of the band of Indians we encountered near Ft. Kearney, arrived on their way to their country; they had a fight with the Pawnees and were whipped; fourteen were killed; their party consisted of Souise, Schayness, and Shoshoness.

The river is $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile wide; the mail wagons crossed ahead. One wagon and team drifted down stream; there was a woman in it; the outfit came near being lost. Camped on the river. Good grass.

13th. Crossed some hills to Ash Hollow; here being plenty of wood but grass very scarce. We were now in sight of trains on the north side of the Platte River. Camped on the bottom, five miles from Ash Hollow. There is alkali water here. Two of our boys had a fight here but no one was injured. A heavy storm came up in the night and blew down the tent and wet everything. It is 110 miles to Ft. Laramie. Roads are sandy. We are traveling close to the river.

14th. Wednesday. Roads sandy. Passed Indian mound 40 ft. high, being the shape of an egg. Camped on the bottom; no wood.

15th. We had a rain storm; camped on bluff; roads sandy; no wood and poor grass.

16th. Friday. Camped on bottom, five miles north of table Rock, seventeen miles of chimney rock. No wood. Alkali water. Passed two creeks of spring water.

17th. Camped on bottom, five miles from Chimney Rock; poor grass; no wood.

18th. Sunday. Passed Chimney Rock. There were two trading posts here and also a black-smith shop. Camped on the bottom, within eight miles of Scotts bluffs. A great many trains are in sight. Poor