

MUJC

from Jackson County Historical Society  
Independence Mo

(original at University of Missouri,  
fair collection of manuscripts)

See Merrill J. Mottet

Platte River Road Narrative

Entry # 556

D I A R Y

OF

JOSEPH HENRY MERRILL

OF

A TRIP TO CALIFORNIA WITH HIS FATHER WHEN  
HE WAS ABOUT EIGHTEEN YEARS OLD.

*Merrill*  
Mottet/Collection

A BOY'S TRIP FROM MASSACHUSETTS TO CALIFORNIA

Saturday, March 1, 1849

Left Boston this evening at 5 o'clock in the Norwich cars, having started for California. I have said good-bye so many times to-day I am half sick, or at least I have a feeling about me now I wish I was rid of. Nothing worthy of note occurred on the road until the cars arrived at McDonelsonville, when our engine was rendered useless by the breaking of a water pipe; this delayed us about one hour, much to the annoyance of the half frozen passengers. At "Allyn's Point" took the steamer Worcester; the night fine, the air chilly and sea quite rough.

I find myself in better spirits than I had anticipated. My friend Woodward left the boat at New London, saying "God Bless you Joe, Good-bye."

I believe my only regret at leaving home is that my going is not approved by Cate; but I hope to convince her in time that I am not wild.

Tuesday, March 6th.

I left New York City at 9 o'clock this morning via Jersey City R. R. The country seems low and level, the soil of a reddish clay. About 12 M. we passed a covered bridge of a mile in length; this is at the head of the Delaware River; the scenery at this point fine. Passed the former residence of General Moreau; he was banished by the French Government for some offence and afterwards joined the Russian Army, in which he had both legs shot off; his old stables, quite a number, are still to be seen. I learned this from a Baltimorean.

We arrived at the City of Philadelphia about 2 P.M., rode direct from the wharf to Baltimore Depot; dined at a restaurant. Left Philadelphia at 4 o'clock; quite rainy. Rode some hours along the Delaware; the whole distance we saw small crafts on the river and some of them drawing eight feet of water. Got on the boat which carried us to Baltimore; got a fine supper. Passed the spot where the famous prize fight twixt Hyer and Sullivan took place, but it being dark I discovered no traces of blood.

Arrived at Baltimore at 2 A.M., cold, drowsy, and hungry. Unable to procure lodgings, as everybody is coming home from Gen. Taylor's inauguration, I camped on a settee at the American House.

Wednesday, March 7th.

Left Baltimore this morning at 7 for Cumberland. Sky cloudy during the morning but the sun shone at about 11 A.M. Passed through a fine country of fine upland farms, though I thot' I discovered a want of Yankee enterprise and industry in their down flat fences, etc. Arrived at Cumberland about 7 P.M. In today's travels we passed Harpers Ferry, a wild, rough, rocky looking spot, the river cutting through a high mountain, steep precipices on either side. At this place is a manufactory of government arms.

On my arrival at Cumberland, I supped immediately, engaged passage on board a stage coach and rode all night over a rough road and almost frozen. Had a blow-up with an outsider who could not stand the cold and declared he would ride inside altho' the seats were all occupied.

Thursday, March 8th

Morning found me still in a stage coach. Took no breakfast; rode over a hilly country all day, getting no dinner and walking up hard hills. Of course on arriving at Brownsville I ate a hearty supper, the getting up of which did credit to the landlord. As soon as tea was over, up comes the stage and I took another night ride; being much fatigued I slept nearly the whole night as well as I could in a stage.

Friday, March 9th

Still in that miserable old coach with a drunken driver. Arrived at Wheeling, Va. about 11 A.M. My first impressions of a southern city are decidedly in favor of short stops. If this is a sample of the south, I prefer a New England home. Everything looks old, black, gloomy and dingy and indeed the whole of the last two days travel indicates a want of enterprise.

During the afternoon engaged passage on board the steamer Connecticut and at 6 P.M. went floating down the "River of the Ohio". This is a most beautiful river, but on the whole does not meet my ideas of its beauty; but I have not seen much yet and will not pass sentence yet for I am nearly worn out for want of rest.

Friday, March 23rd

Arrived at St. Louis this morning at the break of day. The view (I for a wonder being up) a fine one; one of the greatest business places in the west. The levee completely blocked up with drays, merchandise and people; it was confusion to perfection. On leaving the boat Mr. V. and self looked at a few lots of mules and after looking about us made a purchase of 11 at \$80. each.

This city affords little to travellers to admire; less than other western cities I have visited. Streets narrow, dirty and lumbered with all sorts of merchandise, etc.

Saturday, March 24th

During the morning was on board the Jewess looking after our plunder. Quite unexpectedly came across Joshua Copp, Esq. of Burlington, Iowa, and wrote a line to brother Arthur by him.

After dinner started our mules for our trip to Independence via land route; found them very troublesome; drove seven miles and stopped at a Mr. Pennard's farm house. He told us "come in" meaning the yard; ordered us assistance from his "boys" (blacks) and received us very cordially. He told us he was a Swiss by birth and gave his whole history with now and then an amusing anecdote. We were glad to find ourselves in so good quarters for the old fellow is a true gent.

Saturday, April 7th

Nothing of interest today except our arrival at St. Joe. This town like most of western ones is built on a high bluff; it contains more brick buildings than any I have noticed and is a place which gives credit to its inhabitants; I doubt not it must soon be a place of much business as it is much more preferable as a starting point for emigrants bound westward to that of Independence or St. Louis.

On coming along shore we were cheered by the thousand emigrants already arrived and about to start for the Gold Mines in California. Shaking of hands, congratulatory exclamations and the like, together with the noise and bustle always attendant on the arrival of a steamer, made the scene one of enthusiasm to most, but only served to make me lonely and half homesick; had not the escape of one-half our mules on landing and a fruitless hunt till 9 in the evening in the rain kept my mind in another channel, I am sure there would have been no help for me here alone and unacquainted as I was; but no; I am in for it.

Tuesday, April 10th

The town is filled with emigrants, all parts of the states well represented in numbers at least, if not otherwise. All seem anxious to make a commencement of their long march to the Pacific. I learn some trains have already left, though so early a start is thought to be very unwise by men who are judges of the matter.

Wednesday, April 25th

Today completed the arrangements of wagons, guns, etc. We are now ready to leave camp "Washington". Dr. McK gives our present camping place this name. I am getting to relish hard bread and bacon very well though I miss the cream in my coffee.

Thursday, April 26th

Today brought our mules to camp; they are so fractious we had work to get them across the river; this occupied our attention most of the day.

Saturday, April 28th

I have been hunting two lost mules all day; got lost about 10 o'clock and wandered about the open prairie for several hours. Everything to be seen was dry grass; no tree or shrub; one lost on a prairie with no landmarks to guide him is in a bad fix. Tho' I had no fears, yet I must say I had about as disagreeable feeling as I ever had in my life. On my return to camp, having found my way, and the mules, I found father badly hurt; he was assisting in breaking a mule; the animal got loose, ran directly over him bruising him about the neck, head and arms quite severely. Dr. Ames dressed his wounds and had scarcely finished when our fine Indian pony broke his picket and was off. The boys were soon after him, but returned late at night not having succeeded in catching him.

Thursday, May 3rd

Moved on finely this morning. During the P.M. reached Wolf Creek; found this creek very bad crossing; playing about its banks was quite an encampment of Indians. We did not succeed in getting all our wagons across; we encamped on the west bank; our tent was hardly pitched when a severe thunder storm came on, so severe we were unable to get a supper, so we went to bed tired, cross and hungry.

Friday, May 4th

When I awoke this morning I found myself lying in about 4 inches of water; it has rained nearly the whole night and is still raining. After a deal of trouble we managed to get us up a breakfast, which was only hard bread and coffee. About 11 o'clock managed to get our other wagons across the creek. Everybody in camp cross, Ego Idem.

Saturday, May 5th

Our little train moved this morning about 9 o'clock; we traveled along slowly during the day, 13 miles over a fine prairie of gentle slopes covered with a fine growth of green grass; we could see nothing but one blue sky and the rolling plain, no tree, no shrub, no little streams, no timber, nothing. At sundown we were forced, owing to the condition of the animals, to encamp on a high ridge without water, except for the animals, and without wood. The roads to-day have been quite heavy; to drive long drives as we have been forced to, without nooning, has fagged our mules.

Sunday, May 5th

Held a council this morning and decided to move on tho' it is Sunday. We have had to drink bilge water or none, since yesterday morning. Travelled some 16 miles when we camped up with Wheeling Co. with whom we intend travelling to California. They tell us they have been waiting ten days for us; I think they flatter us. We now number 60 men good and true and if the Indians attack, as we fear, they will find they have not got "an ordering up hand."

Monday May 7th

Today we stopped in camp all day. Tightened up wagons, etc. Threw away all we thought we could do without. We have been quite busy and I am very tired. What wcn't men do for Gold.

Tuesday, May 8th

Our camp was on the move early this morning and as soon as we had eaten a hearty breakfast of coffee, bacon and bread, we were on the move. The road during the whole day very fine, over a vast prairie of fine grazing. I am of the opinion that if one could buy lands of the Indians, for they are the owners and occupy this beautiful country, one could soon make a handsome sum by raising stock here; water is to be found at convenient intervals and now and then we come to fine streams on the banks of which is some timber. The soil is quite rich and I doubt not some day this tract of country will be taken up for agricultural purposes. At night we encamped at a fine grove of timber with plenty of good water, having made about twenty miles. We hear of cholera today.

Thursday, May 10th

Moved at 6 o'clock this morning; got on finely; crossed three bad creeks today without accident. I waded through all of them leading mules by the head. Encamped at sundown.

Friday, May 11th

Made a start at 6 1/4 o'clock this morning. Made good time today though we had to cross several bad creeks and forded the "Big Blue" on the west bank of which we encamped. After supper assisted in drawing a seine for fish; we had a fishermans luck. The Big Blue is a lovely stream and is said to resemble the Clyde in Scotland. One of the Wheeling messes are supping of a fish caught since we halted.

Saturday, May 12th

As we had concluded not to move today, at an early hour I, in company with Horton, left camp on a hunting trip. We followed along the banks of the river for several hours and often scared up game but was not able to get a shot. Horton is good company and though we got no game, the excursion was a pleasant one. I have wished a thousand times today that Bill Rogers was with me; he is of a temperament to enjoy such trips and appreciate such scenes as one finds on this trip out west.

I being somewhat tired with running over the hills, turned in quite early and had just got into the arms of Morpheus when I was awakened by a call for Joe; when I got up I found Mr. Vance had traded away my wagon to an emigrant who had the misfortune to upset his wagon in making the ford and broke a wheel. Of course it was unloaded and the contents put into the remaining three wagons; the job lasted some two hours when I again turned in.

Sunday, May 13th

Rambled about during the morning, took a bath during the afternoon and hunted mules during the evening. A singular manner of spending the Sabbath, but one is forced to resort to all sorts of ways to amuse himself without books, society and companionable men. Besides there is a great amount of camp drudgery to be done which cannot be put off, and it is hardly policy to lay up much as the emigration is large and we may find grass short, and the nearer the foremost, the less will the grass be ear off.

Should this ever be read by anybody who has never taken this trip, he will say this is an apology for misspending the Sabbath. He is mistaken; for one here is forced to adapt himself to circumstances. When we left the states, we agreed to rest ourselves and teams on Sunday but it is impossible to do so as we are often caught on poor grass and perhaps poor water, and as likely it is Saturday night as any other time. I believe the trip has been made without travelling on Sunday, but it was under much more favorable circumstances than those by which we are surrounded this season.

Monday, May 14th

Left camp this morning at an early hour, still on the rolling prairies; scarcely any timber or water. Saw two graves today; they were new graves, and as I passed them I felt a gloomy feeling come over me. I learned they were Californians; their Golden dreams are ended and the low winds alone will murmur their eternal requiem.

Wednesday, May 16th

Today we have travelled over a bad, heavy road with pitches, bog holes and creeks all the way. Tonight I am very tired; water bad and wool gone. On the prairie today I noticed some northern "Live forever" growing very rank, also wild rose bushes in abundance. Crossed Big Sandy this P.M. and encamped four miles west of its banks; on its banks saw hickory and walnut trees.

Saturday, May 19th

This morning we threw away some dispensables to lighten loads; roads bad and mules weary. Encamped on the Republican Fork of the Blue. Tonight increased our watch for the first time, as our guide tells us we are in some danger of the Pawnees the greatest thieves in the world.

Monday, May 21st

Moved on 24 miles today. About noon Bryants train passed us a smart pace; his mules are heavily loaded and their backs sore. We reached the Platte River bluffs about sundown where we encamped without wood and with little water. The scene as we made the last bluff was truly sublime; we could see fine groves of timber away some five miles distant by the side of which the lingering sun shone upon the green grass and gently flowing river. I stopped for some time and gazed on this beautiful scene with almost uncontrollable admiration. The air is quite cold; with hot days and swampy camping places are I judge good ingredients for the compound of which fever and ague is manufactured.

Tuesday, May 22nd

Today we made 14 miles over bad roads. Our route after the first five miles lay along the Platte, a fine stream. We reached Fort Kearney about 3 O'clock where we made a halt. Here we again lightened our loads. This evening wrote mother a letter to send per express. This is a government express. Our encampment is a mile east of the fort; we are not allowed to near the fort, as Uncle Sam fears the emigrants animals will steal his grazing.

Wednesday, May 23rd

Moved at noon, passing the fort which is a dull dreary looking place. At the fort is a store where the traveller can pay a big price for poor goods. The fort is built of mud; I noticed a few sticks of timber lying about, but do not see where they could have been taken from. Tonight we are encamped on the Platte having travelled but 10 miles.

Friday, May 25th

Laid up till noon and then moved on 5 miles and finding good grass encamped again on the Platte. The river is a fine stream a mile or more in width, studded with beautiful islands covered with grass and timber. The largest of these is Grand Island 52 miles in length, finely watered, good grazing and well timbered: its elevation is such that it never is overflowed.

Sunday, May 27th

This morning our camp became suddenly excited by the sight of buffalo; they were on the north side of the river. Some attempts were made to form a party to hunt them, but either their morality or some other cause prevented. After dinner in company with four others took my rifle and started from camp in search of antelope; we found them quite plenty on a large prairie lying at the foot of a high bluff. I was unable to get near enough to make them fall. I shot at one but the graceful animal was out of sight in a second. Our fuel at camp is Buffalo chips.

Wednesday, May 30th

Surely the storm "is approached". At about 3 this morning father came to my wagon, the wind having blown down our tent, the rain pouring down in torrents. The storm continued all day. We have no fuel but buffalo chips; very cold and wet and 6 o'clock found me turned in half frozen.

Thursday, May 31st

The storm still continues and we moved at ten hoping to find grass and fuel. Our Indian guide came to camp this P.M. without Capt. Vance or Mr. Domilie; they left camp yesterday noon and during the afternoon killed a buffalo; a pony having given out in the chase, Vance and Domilie packed the meat and Isacc started in with the pony. V. and D. it is supposed have taken the wrong direction and lost on the prairie. It is now ten o'clock and they are not in; we are quite anxious concerning them.

While I am writing the moon is shining coldly down; no wood, no chips. We got supper by wild sage, which fills the air with a perfume not very pleasant to the olfactories.

Sunday, June 3rd

Early this morning started over the prairie in search of buffalo; rode some twenty miles following a westerly course; saw no buffalo but killed a large hare. On my return to camp my mule became fractious and in attempting to retail my seat, I lost my hare and as the mule did not stop his pranks for sometime I left it. I saw any quantity of white wolves; they were about the size of a sheep; also saw some antelopes but did not get a shot. I am a great hunter I discover.

Monday, June 4th.

5 o'clock found us on the move; road quite sandy with little grass by the way. Towards night we crossed a high ridge of bluffs and on descending on the opposite side came to Ash Hollow; this is a most romantic spot; on the one side rises up to the height of two hundred feet a wall of earth studded with granite rocks almost ready to come tumbling down, while on the other something striking the beholder with less awe but more beauty; a pretty shade of ash trees and around their trunks clings for support the vine of the wild grape with here and there a wild briar rose "wafting its fragrance in the desert air." I noticed with the rose a wild currant bush. Through the pass runs a clear "babbli" brook and its water is as cool as Old Tudor of Boston can call his ice. After passing the Hollow we again came to the river where we camped.

During the evening I visited the lodge of a party of Sioux Indians; they had several wigwams covered with deer skins. Near them was encamped some Frenchmen, trading with the Indians. I entered the tent of the trader conversing with him for some time, when in came a Big John Indian quite drunk. He soon took offence at Mr. Frenchman who put him out; the next thing I knew, in came John's messenger through the side of the tent in the form of an arrow.

Thursday, June 7th

We started without the Wheeling men this morning, their stock having been unable to keep up with us. Dr. McKensie was sent back to them. They say they must lay up and recruit their mules, but hope to meet us at Ft. Laramie where we intend stopping a few days. About ten A.M. came in sight of the Court House. This great natural curiosity is a high mound of earth some 500 feet and in the distance resembles a building built after the Gothic style; near it is a similar one of smaller size which I shall style the Jail, as jails seem to be necessary appendages for court houses. This earth judging from all about it is a part of a high bluff, the vacuum about having been produced by some convulsion of the earth or the elements. Towards night we crossed a fine stream called Big Creek. Tonight we are in sight of Chimney Rock.

This P.M. Dr. McK. has been to the summit of the Court House and describes the view from the summit as most beautiful. Encamped at half past five on the Platte.

Friday, June 8th

Made an early start; found bad roads; met Mormons from Salt Lake. During the P.M. visited Chimney Rock; its height some 6 or 8 hundred feet above the river with a spire on its top, having the unpoetical resemblance of a hay stack with a pole in the middle. Distance today 13 miles.

Saturday, June 9th

Shortly after taking up our line of march this morning, we entered a most lovely wild and romantic valley. On either side is piled up mountain high, huge ledges of granite rocks, and with a slight flight of fancy, one can imagine all styles of architecture applied to towers, castles, cathedrals, or every appearance of ancient ruins; in the valley a fine growth of grass covering a nice level bottom land extending to the bluffs forming the enclosure.

At night we had scarcely pitched our camp near a fine spring of good water, when there arose a tremendous thunder storm accompanied by considerable hail. The thunder rolling and cracking among the high peaks and bounding back with an awful roar, the quick lightnings flash, all rendered the scene grand and terrible, reminding one of the omnipotence of the Almighty; in a few moments nature was again smiling on poor mortals as serenely as ever, reminding them by God's sign in the sky that this temporary storm was for some wise purpose other than floods to destroy as those of olden times. During the storm three of our men and myself received a severe shock from the lightning, and at a neighboring camp an ox was killed and some forty more thrown down. Made 19 miles today.

Monday, June 11th

Still on the Platte. Nooned today at fine grove of timber. The air fragrant with the perfume of the wild rose. Saw several species of cactus; also saw the soap plant so much used by the Mexicans for washing; its bulb resembles that of an onion and it bears a flower. I saw large beds of wild onion; they have a flower looking like our White Violet. In many places saw quantities of pepper grass. Today I have seen any quantity of flowers of every shape and color, any of which would be an ornament to a New England garden. Encamped within 8 miles of the fort with neither wood or water.

Tuesday, June 12th

Reached Fort Laramie this morning at 9 o'clock where we found Capt. Vance, who has been in advance of the company for the purpose of buying mules, but has been unable to obtain them. The Fort is a square building made of adobes or sun burnt brick; it has a military air about it, though quite a rough affair. Such has been the rush of emigration that we are obliged to pay enormous prices for anything we want; for instance, for shoeing a mule we paid five dollars; our stop was short finding little to interest.



About noon we crossed the Laramie Fork of the Platte by fording; not deep, but we were forced to block up our wagon beds. After leaving the creek, rose high rough bluffs which we crossed to the river and encamped about three o'clock in good grass. Distance 14 miles. Overhauled our wagons and chatted over a camp fire till bed time and turned in. Had a nice shower during the night which was quite acceptable as it laid all the dust.

Wednesday, June 13th

At 6 o'clock leaving the bottom land on our right, we ascended high bluffs and once on the top, of course we had to descend again. The descent was quite difficult being through narrow, steep and rocky passes. While sitting here in camp on Bitter Cotton Wood Creek, I can see the Black Hills we have been dreading to meet for a long time; they are covered with the cedar tree and hard pine.

During the P.M. today I had a chase after a buffalo; did not get a shot, though the "critter" was killed and I ate a good sized piece of buffalo steak for my supper.

Thursday, June 14th

Entered the Black Hills over a nice road though up and down hill all the time; no grass and seldom any water is to be found. Made 22 miles and encamped on Horse Shoe Creek, when we were visited by a severe thunder storm accompanied by hail. These showers are most acceptable to emigrants as they all lay the dust.

Tuesday, June 19th

Made an early start. Made an attempt to find a ford this A.M. but after wading about the stream an hour or more, gave it up. Our route today lay over a sandy soil; we crossed several small creeks. Killed a rattlesnake today and saw a bear, several sage hens and an eagle; I judge the latter would measure 5 or 6 feet from tip to tip of wing. Arrived at the upper crossing and pitched our tents or rather camps, as we do not use our tents this week. At this point we are improving an opportunity of getting mules shod and the job is done by Mormons; they are, I imagine, making money California fashion, charging \$1.50 per shoe.

At sundown we drove our mules about three miles to the bluffs. We are now in a lovely spot, seven in number, sitting around a fire made from the sage bush. While I am writing the boys are, as usual, smoking, singing and chatting away the evening.

Since writing the above, our number has increased to twelve, five gents having come to our fire. They are strangers who have been to the summit of the bluffs; they tell us there is three feet of snow lying on the bluffs not more than four miles distant from our bivouac. While we are in a little valley covered with thrifty grass and plenty of refreshing, balmy air, they hastened to our fire used by us for cooking, to warm their shivering selves.

Sunday, June 24th

Our animals being on poor grass, after a council of the Company's members, we decided to move westward; the road quite sandy. Today I noticed for the first time several places literally covered with pearl-ash. I gathered some and am sure it differs very little, if any from the same article I have seen elsewhere.

This morning we reached the little stream called "Sweetwater River;" its waters are fine and abound with several species of the finny tribe. Some 3/4 of a mile from where we struck the stream, we came to the world famed Independent Rock. This rock, or stone mountain, is some 600 yards in length and 120 yards in width; its height about 100 feet; its top oval in shape and quite smooth as though worn by rain and weather. About the base of this huge natural specimen are several smaller stones, placed there, as it were, as neighbors, Giant and Pigmies.

Leaving Independent Rock, we travelled on  $5 \frac{1}{4}$  miles coming to Devils Gate. At this point, the river passes through, or between perpendicular rocks of some 4 or 5 hundred feet in height. I ascended to the highest peak, and can say that this sight will convince all travellers of the propriety of the appellation, Devils Gate; it certainly presents an awfully grand appearance. Directly under the high bluff forming one side of this gate, we pastured our mules on fine nutritious grass, good, because no traveller had attempted to drive mules over so dangerous a path to get them to it.

Monday, June 25th

Leaving Devils Gate we continued our journey over a sandy road, crossing a high ridge hedged in by high mountains, rocky and steep; at noon we again touched the Little Sweetwater. I must not forget to speak of the view of the snow capped mountains called the Wind River Mountains. I find no one who can give any information concerning them in our Company, but the view exceeds any scenery I have yet seen. Tonight we encamped with the Government train.

Wednesday, June 27th

Left camp at  $5 \frac{1}{2}$  o'clock and traveled 21 miles; forded Sweetwater three times today. For some days past we have been in sight of the Wind River Mountains; today the view is a fine one; they lift their snow-capped heads to the very clouds till both mountains and clouds are blended together. White with age, their hoary heads disdain looking down to our little world below.

The roads today are as hard as if McAdamized, tho' quite hilly. We see any quantity of prairie dogs; they are about the size of the N.E. Red squirrel and resemble them very much except they are more of a grey than red. I am at a loss to know why they have the canine attached to them in lieu of squirrel.

Thursday, June 28th

We left Sweetwater again this morning; had travelled about two miles when our wagon broke down; we were compelled to unload and after overcoming this slight difficulty we moved on ascending a high hill for some three miles; tho' so hilly, our road today has been fine and hard. Tonight we are again on the Sweetwater we have forded the river twice today; saw more antelopes and one elk. Our encampment is now within ten yards of a snow bank of 10 feet in depth; the grass along the snow is green and flowers bloom by the side of their bitterest enemy, ice; a contrast certainly.

Friday, June 29th

This morning took our final leave of the "Little Sweetwater" and at 8 o'clock arrived at and passed the long sought South Pass of the Rocky Mountains. I find myself much in error in regard to its appearance; supposing its ascents and descents rough, ragged and rocky, in lieu of which I could not have told the point said to be the Pass, had I not seen the waters of the Pacific Spring wending their way westward. The road through the Pass is as good a one as any eastern turnpike and hard and smooth as though McAdami. We also hailed Oregon as we left the Pass. We are now encamped about two miles west of Dry Sandy Creek, with neither wood or water and with very little grass. During today's drive I have counted 32 oxen dead by the way, having become tired out and left to the mercy of the wolves.

Saturday, June 30th

A short distance from our bivouac, we came to the forks of the road, one via Salt Lake and the other via Sublettes Cut Off. We decided on going the latter and soon came to Big Sand which we forded and encamped on the west bank at 10 A.M. After dinner, with others, I went up the stream in search of grass for our jaded animals; we found tolerable grass about two miles from camp in a grove of tall poplar trees; here we spent the P.M. Toward night in sauntering about the little stream, discovered and captured three bald eagles; I measured one; it was  $3 \frac{3}{4}$  feet from the tip one wing to the tip of the other and the bird was not yet fledged. Supped on bacon, crackers and water, and turned in quite early.

Sunday, July 1st

When I awoke this morning, the birds had commenced their songs, the sun was throwing its bright rays through the branches of the trees under whose shelter I have lodged so comfortably, and all nature seemed alive and cheerful; I felt so too; for none but an emigrant on this sorry trip knows so well how to appreciate a half days rest in a shady grove, so seldom his lot. In my pocket I had a fragment of Montgomery's Poems, and after a hasty meal of bread and bacon, I enjoyed reading for some time. I am and always was an admirer of his poems, telling such simplicity. His poems are not like Byrons, leaving one sad and discontented; but after reading them I am always more cheerful and happier, if not better.

In the P.M. our little mess (four in number) were visited by a slight thunder storm, a rare occurrence of late. At sundown we drove our animals to our wagons and by 9 P.M. we commenced our night drive across our first desert; road good; just about midnight we passed the Hay Stack, a huge pile of earth heaped up near the road; I have heard of this curiosity being mentioned by travellers, so give the appellation myself. During the after part of the night, we encountered a clay mud which retarded our progress. This mud is the result of a thunder storm mentioned yesterday which seems to have been more severe here than in the vicinity of Big Sandy. I drove the team till 3 A.M. and turned in; the air cold and some wind. Night drives I am decidedly opposed to.

Monday, July 2nd

We continued our travels till 4 A.M. and then made a halt for breakfast; this was soon disposed of and only for dinner and supper did we halt again till midnight. The whole route is a dry, dreary, desolate place; no vegetation except the wild sage, of which some 8 to 10 feet in height. The soil sand and gravel, road good. We passed several steep and rough precipices and great caution is necessary to the safe passage of teams. We reached the river about midnight and found a place where our thirsty animals could drink, and allowing them to do so I turned in with as good an appetite for sleep as I ever did. The day has been as fatiguing as any one out. We have encountered three smart showers with wind, thunder and lightning.

Wednesday, July 4th

Independence Day on the plains! The earth was never blessed by a sun more bright or a morning more lovely; the very birds seemed glad and breathed forth their grateful warblings so merrily, that our little encampment manifested a degree of enthusiasm not often known to members of a party similar to ours, on the plains. We resolved to commemorate the anniversary of our country's independence with as much festivity as possible tho' far removed from civilization and its comforts. Horton obtained from camp bread, bacon and coffee and to finish our dinner and to typify our revolutionary struggle, we waged war upon the mountain trout of which the river has plenty, and the Yankees having come off as usual, conquerors, we sat down on the ground to as good a dinner as we could expect here, tho' we might wish for better. The mules seem to be celebrating the day frisking about with lopped ears, more like young lambs than worn down beasts of burden.

We hear of late news from the states; that Canada has revolutionized and declared herself free from the Crown of England. Today we have fired no gun, but I have passed the day pleasantly and feel, after our rest, like going ahead again; the more so, as we hear the much dreaded cholera is raging fearfully and fatally among the rear trains, of which they say there is some 4000. Some of our company are anxious to begin packing; I cannot think it advisable.

Thursday, July 5th

Tending the animals all day; in the interim caught some fine trout and shot some small game. We are yet unable to cross the river; at this point the river is about the size of the Connecticut near Oxford or Haverhill, N.H. It runs very swift. Several mules drowned today; nine belonging to the Pittsburgh men.

Sunday, July 8th

Again the conscientious scruples of our company were set aside and we travelled today, having lost so much time for the last few days. Our way lay through a lovely valley; we soon crossed a high rough ridge and then came to another fine valley. Again ascending a ridge, we came to a grove of Balsam Fir trees; the descent from the summit of the ridge we found quite difficult. During today's drive we crossed Hams Fork, on the banks of which stream I noticed an abundance of wild flax, oats and rye. The stream was full of fine mountain trout; I saw some I opine would weigh two pounds. At our encampment we have fine wood, water and grass.

Monday, July 9th

Soon after our starting from camp this morning we came to Bear River, a fine stream of cold water as clear as crystal; along its banks grows a thick hedge of willows. Taking a northern course through the valley we come to Smiths Fork; this stream we crossed four times in a half hours drive. When on "terra firma" we rode over rocks rough and rugged, giving as I thought a fair sight of the Elephant. At this place we saw a great number of the Soshonee or Snake Indians; they are middle sized Indians, dress with some taste after the manner of most Indians, rather gaudy. We could trade only one article with them--tobacco. During the P.M. we travelled still down the valley, with scenery unsurpassed by any I have yet seen; on the one side a very wild and abrupt chain of bluffs green with a tall waving grass intermixed with wild flax with its pretty blue blossoms, and on the other side of the river a gentle slope from the high land to the stream with here and there a fine shade tree, making the whole a delightful panorama. The road over which we moved is as level as a trotting course. We pitched our camp on the river bank, a nice camp ground, though we were exceedingly annoyed by the mosquitoes, and the mules more than ourselves.

Tuesday, July 10th

Left camp this morning about 5 o'clock and have been crossing ridges and bluffs all day; towards evening we stopped on Bear River at Smiths Fort. Today I have seen several of the Snake tribe of Indians. After supper I visited the fort, situated on a small island of this river. Mr. Smith, the proprietor of this Fort, has an Indian squaw; an Indian girl for which girl he says he paid \$30.00, and one son by his squaw. He has a large lot of cattle, horses, and hogs, a cat and a dog. Mr. S. is a rough fellow, but lives like a prince in this far off place. He trades with the Indians, with whom he says he never has any trouble. I bought of him a finely dressed deer skin, price \$1.50. I am told Smith is better known as Peg Leg Smith, he having but one leg and uses a wooden one.

Thursday, July 12th

Our way this morning lay across a fine valley with roads like a turnpike. Passed the Soda Springs. The water at these Springs boils up from the earth strongly impregnated with carbonic acid. On leaving the river passed over a country said to have been visited by earthquakes or volcanoes. I think these speculations correct judging from what I see. At one point I descended some 50 or 60 feet below the surface of the ground, climbing down on the fragments of rock; a most dismal, cold, damp and lonely cave; the rock Basaltic. We also passed the Steamboat Springs.

The bubbling water, as forced from its source, produces a similar sound to that of a puffing steamboat; near by is a small whistle formed by the pressure of the water forced through a small cavity in a solid rock. I saw more Indians today, the Soshonees; gave them tobacco. They seemed to have some intelligence; were well formed and seem to be a good race.

Friday, July 13th

Travelled 21 miles today. Encamped at the base of the dividing ridge 'twixt the waters running to the sink of St. Mary's River and those flowing into the Pacific. At noon I visited an Indian Lodge; exchanged a tin cup for a pair of moccasins. The Indians had some fine ponies but would not sell or exchange. This P.M. passed through a fine grove of birch trees; they looked like our white birch of the East. While picketing our animals tonight three Soshonee Indians came to our camp with their squaws and papooses. We gave them bread and coffee of which they ate and drank as though they thought they ought to eat and drink all we gave them; after supper they wished to smoke the pipe of peace with us; we assented and they gave us letters directed to Fort Hall as an indication of their trustworthiness; they then built a fire near ours and soon fixed up a few boughs for shelter and left us for the night. One of them talked a little English.

Sunday, July 15th

Mosquitoes waging a furious battle all day; we are all resting, overhauling or washing.

Monday, July 16th

Left mosquito town before sunrise this morning and after travelling six miles crossing any quantity of mud holes arrived at Fort Hall. I find it like all trading posts on this route, built of adobes. The inhabitants are all busy selling furs to emigrants; I paid \$5.00 for a first rate Buffalo Robe. Encamped on Lewis' Fork of the Columbia after fording the Port Neuf a pretty stream of some 75 yds. in width.

Tuesday, July 17th

Our way today lay over a barren sage country; roads tolerable good but quite dusty. Encamped on the Fork of Snake River. Took a bath this evening. We passed today American Falls and Fall River; the falls are formed by petrified beaver traps, the flood wood, etc. Pretty old beaver traps I think.

Saturday, July 28th

Stood guard from 2 to 4 o'clock. The breaking of day on the plains is a scene and gives a feeling I never experienced elsewhere; no cock-crowing; no rumbling of carts over the pavement. All stillness; profound stillness; no objects springing up as day dawns to the vision; all is the sky above and the earth beneath. No breeze; no nothing, till all at once day comes, and anon Old Sol has come again to light the emigrant on his way.

This morning the air is quite cold. The dust rolls up assisted by a smart breeze in perfect clouds, almost blinding one. We occasionally leave the river today to avoid canyons and bends in the river; fine grass and roads all the way and I notice plenty of Red Top. I learn the Indians are becoming quite troublesome; today I heard of oxen being shot with arrows and so badly hurt that they were left as useless; this is supposed to be the object of the Indian in shooting them; they getting them for food as soon as the owner is gone and an opportunity offers for eating them. Some emigrants have revenged themselves by killing some Indians; I believe this is a bad plan for us to adopt. We double our watch tonight and all arms are kept in readiness for any danger.

Tuesday, July 31st

Owing to the late hour of camping last night, we did not start this A.M. till 9 o'clock. After going 10 miles our route lay through deep and in some places fearful looking canyons, rough, ragged and rocky sides, towering skywards and seeming at some points just about to tumble from their base burying everything beneath their ruins; the whole distance over a series of arid bluffs; no vegetation except the wild sage and grease wood, both of which seemed warring for their existence on this sterile spot. Over these bluffs the distance is 11 miles without water and after coming to a spring we found some grass. Tonight took a fine bath in the river and on the banks I saw the primrose in bloom. During the evening the wolves gave us quite a serenade.

August 5th

Dined on Snow Bank.

Friday, August 10th

Tied ropes to the wagons this morning and assisted the mules to get them up the sand hill which has been looking down on us all night. All day the country has had a most destitute and beggarly appearance; the dust almost suffocated one and the roads badly rutted; had our nooning on poor grass. At night by stopping some four miles from the river and driving the stock to the river, we were enabled to get good feed. Our boys all call this river Humbug River. I have found it very different from what I had anticipated. The water is highly impregnated with alkali. The temperature during the day hot and sultry and at night very cold.

Saturday, August 11th

As soon as our weary bodies and drowsy eyes could be brought to action, we left camp in search of better camping ground. We think of stopping here till we have somewhat recruited our stock and cut grass to carry us over the desert. We moved 2 1/2 miles where we again camped. The whole valley from 10 to 15 miles in length and width extending from bluff to bluff, is covered with a luxuriant growth of clover, herds grass, red top and in short with all sorts of nutritious growth. At night I visited our old friends, the Wheeling men.

Monday, August 13th

All hands made hay for the animals to eat while crossing the long drive. During the evening we were visited by Messrs. Goode, Woods and Baker of the Wheeling Co. Maj. Goode gave us pretty songs and was accompanied by Dr. Ames on the violin. The company separated at 10 o'clock, having passed a very agreeable day and particularly pleasant evening. After this I wrote to Mother, which letter goes by Mr. Sanders who forwards it to San Francisco for which place he starts in the morning. It was related of Daniel Webster when Secretary of State said, "Mr. President I will never vote one cent from the public treasury to place the Pacific Coast one inch nearer Boston than it is now."

After Dr. Whitman's efforts in behalf of that territory he again said, "It is safe to assert that our country owes it to Dr. Whitman and his associates missionaries that all of the territory west of the Rocky Mountains and south as far as the Columbia River is not now owned by England and held by the Hudson Bay Company."

Tuesday, August 14th

Our stock being in good trim, we left camp about 5 P.M. and after driving some twenty minutes one of my favorite mules dropped down dead from the effects of a snake bite. Poor old nag; he has done us much good service. I took it quite to heart but could do nothing for him except pull him to a quiet resting place off the road.

A drive till two at night brought us 5 miles west of the Sink of the Humbolt and 20 miles west of Green Valley over a fine road; here is the Sulphur Springs strongly impregnated with sulphur and very disagreeable to the taste; the animals do not drink it freely.

Wednesday, August 15th

Stayed up till 3 P.M. it being excessively hot all the while; lay under the wagon for shade. When the train moved I walked on in advance taking the right hand or old route to Truckee instead of Carson River. We arrived at the Boiling Springs at 3 A.M. having come to the most desolate country man can conceive of; utter desolation and no sign of anything either animal or vegetable except the bunches of wild sage or grease wood. In one place we found a small quantity of water, but so salty or briny I could not drink it; this was in a small pit sunk by some one who hoped by digging to quench his thirst in this out of the world place. The boiling springs are quite numerous; of a bluish clay one will find the soil surrounding them. The water is so hot as to elevate mercury to 205 of Fahrenheit standard of heat; it made tolerably good coffee, but was not palatable after cooling it to drink, without some coffee or tea to take its bad flavor away, or rather neutralize it. Our mules drank of this water but sparingly. On the whole I think the expression of one of Bryant's party was correct, "Hell is firing up and we had better be off."

Thursday, August 16th

We did not get off however till 9 A.M. having rested some six hours. This morning the air is quite cool compared with the last two days. We moved on some 15 miles through a similar country to that of yesterday, with beautiful roads. We next came to a heavy sand bank; here finding our mules almost exhausted, we ungeared our animals, put 10 mules to our cookery leaving the remaining two wagons and driving the remaining mules to the river. It fell to my lot to drive the wagon, father and Horton remaining with the wagons. I arrived with the team at Truckee about 8 o'clock. As I saw the cottonwoods rearing their heads along the banks of the stream, some two miles distant, I hailed the sight with as much joy as though I had got my pile in the mines and was homeward bound. The mules rushed into the river as soon as they reached it and drank till fairly forced to leave the water by whipping. The Truckee water I thought the best I ever tasted; at this point the stream is about 50 yards wide with gravel bottom and water so clear it answers well for a mirror by which to make our toilette.

Friday, August 17th

The first thing done this morning was to send water to father and Horton who stopped on the desert. I walked five miles to get a mule and then sent well filled kegs to them. In the P.M. bathed in the waters of the Truckee. At 8 P.M. the man came in with the mule from the wagons; I then rode the animal to grass again (5 miles, dark as pitch.) On my arrival there, I did not like to foot it back in the dark, so I lay down on the grass without a rag under or over me.

Saturday, August 18th

This morning took animals to the back wagons and brought them to the river, much to the relief of the Messrs. Merrill and Horton. We now consider ourselves over the "Great American Desert." Myself and in fact all of us are pretty well worn down and I am in hopes the members of the Company will conclude to rest here a short time, as I believe man and beast need repose.

Sunday, August 19th

After a regular washing and cleaning up, took a long sleep under a big tree, something we have not found for 500 miles. Dined on bean soup today, quite a rarity. Went to grazing ground in the afternoon and cut and packed grass to feed while crossing from Truckee River to Carson; we have decided to take this route. While I have been absent from camp, father has swapped wagons with an emigrant and now I have to assist in unloading and loading the wagon,--here goes. 11 1/2 P.M. The job is done and now I will try to get more rest,-- in the new wagon.

Monday, August 20th

Left camp at 7 A.M. for Carson River where we arrived about 8 P.M. nooning three hours, feeding our animals on our new made hay cut at Truckee; the way over a dry, barren and sandy plain; in some parts of the drive quite rough and rocky. Distance 25 miles. We find this river similar to that of Truckee or Salmon Trout. We are now over all the long drives and but 163 miles from the Gold Diggins.

Tuesday, August 21st

Stood guard from two till four this morning; then in company with Stoddard drove the animals 2 1/2 miles up the river, crossing a high sand bluff to a lovely valley, the river meandering its way through its centre, its banks lined with big cottonwood timber intermingled with which is the pretty weeping willow, and the whole bottom covered with a heavy growth of blue grass. We first built us a sort of bush house, next took a most refreshing bath in the clear stream near by and then passed the remaining portion of the day as best we could. We had a good dish of soup from camp; tonight no one having come to our relief, we have to guard the mules by ourselves.

THE GREAT AMERICAN DESERT. It spreads in undulating and treeless plains and desolate sandy wastes, wearisome to the eye from their extent and monotony, and which are supposed by geologists to have formed the ancient floors of the ocean countless ages since, where its primeval waves beat against the granite bases of the Rocky Mountains. Such is the nature of this immense wilderness in the far west which defies cultivation and the habitation of civilized life.

Wednesday, August 22nd

Drove our animals to camp at an early hour and our train was under way by 6 o'clock. Our drive was over a sandy ridge for some 12 miles and at one point, we had a fine view of the "Mirage", representing to all appearance a fine large lake and trees on its banks. We never reached its shores, but some of the company still believe the lake is there. Reached the river a little past noon and camped on the bottom land; grass poor and little of any sort.

Thursday, August 23rd

Upon unrolling myself from under my blanket this morning, the first object I saw was the sky high Sierra Nevada; its many peaks mingling with the clouds and lost to vision by their height above us, in the valley, and so white with snow we cannot distinguish where the mountains end and the clouds begin. The air this morning more balmy than heretofore and the sun shining so benignly on us, renders our view a pleasant one. Nooned on good grass. In the P.M. were visited by a refreshing shower; we heard the thunder roaring far over the mountain cliffs, echoing from peak to peak, striking me with an awe akin to fear and reverence. Crossed another 12 mile ridge with bad roads this P.M. At camp tonight, we have good grass, water and fuel.

Friday, August 25th

After a four hours drive this morning encamped on the river in as fine grass as I ever saw on our finest cultivated intervals at home. Bickham collected a quantity of Muscles from the river, of which our cook made a soup, but the muscles were so tough few of us cared for the dish. This evening Mr. Vanco and others returned from the mountains where they have been hunting; they bring some game and report they saw large numbers of antelope, grouse, wolves and hares, with plenty of signs of bears. The mountains enclosing the valley on either side are covered with heavy pine timber; they are very steep and the soil similar to that of the pine land in New Hampshire.



Saturday, August 26th

This morning followed the river some 15 miles, crossing several fine mountain streams whose waters rush down the steep ravines with tremendous force; it is really a luxury to have good wholesome water once more and to see such fine timber growing. After noon we made 10 miles encountering several bad mud holes. The ground is completely saturated with water from the brooks coming from the mountains and from the over-flow of boiling springs; we have come on to several large boilers as the boys call them. I have a bad headache tonight; perhaps caused by getting shockingly out of humor this afternoon. Contrary mules getting stuck in the mud and the like are of frequent occurrence, but this time worse than the very devil, so I got mad.

Sunday, August 27th

Arrived at Pass Creek Canyon about 9 o'clock, the entrance of which is a most lovely spot; high mountains on either side with a narrow pass between ornamented with a heavy growth of Norway pine and shrubbery of various kinds and colors; a fine mountain stream coursing its way through the rocks; all in all a romantic and wild pass in the mountains. We crossed the creek over a roughly constructed bridge built of logs and began working our way over huge rocks, stumps, etc. till 12 o'clock; we then came to a place we thought it necessary to use ropes in the descent of a short but steep hill. At this point the rocks are piled up on either side 10 or 12 feet in height and nearly perpendicular; after much exertion, we took our teams over in safety. I noticed here and there pines growing directly out of a soft rock or perhaps decayed granite. I am at a loss to know what nourishes these big trees where there is so little earth about them. I saw some raspberries on the creek, not yet ripe, but nearly so. At 5 o'clock we came up with a big ox train; now we think we have found the elephant. Here we ungeared our animals; there being no grass in the canyon, we were obliged to drive them to grass somewhere and return for the wagons in the morning; it being my night to stand guard, of course I was one of the party. We left and after much trouble lighted our camp fire at 10 o'clock, after pulling out three of our mules from mire holes with ropes. In the interim Worthington and Bickham got mired in a sort of Sulphur Springs, so deep neither found the bottom; of course, we all had a laugh and cracked our jokes over our half frozen companions. We ate a slice of raw bacon, some hard bread, sipped a little coffee, and turned in as tired a set of fellows as one can imagine.

Monday, August 28th

Early this morning, moved for better grass and grazed the animals for two or three hours; then drove them to the canyon again, where we lifted at wheels till we at last succeeded in getting through the roughest piece of road I ever saw and in season to camp before sundown three miles onward in a nice valley on the creek running through the canyon we have so long been dreading to see, yet wishing to pass.

Wednesday, August 30th

As soon as possible this morning, we commenced the getting of the empty wagons up the mountains; this occupied our attention till 1 P.M. The view from the summit sublime; looking to the North and East I see a succession of beautiful hills and valleys, the former from my location seem but small bluffs and the latter like small ravines, with here and there a flat or perhaps a small pool of water, which were I near them, presume would prove ponds and lakes. From here the whole South is absolutely hemmed in by huge peaks of mountains rising one above another and West nothing but a dense forest, while at my feet lays the lovely Red Lake we left this morning.

We find the way very difficult, yet all are forced to admire and revere the Author of such a vast amphitheatre of scenery; though so tired of the trip and its fatigues, such views as we have seen for the last few days, is compensation enough for all. The road to Lake Valley we found rough, but made it without much difficulty by sundown and encamped at the base of the dividing ridge 'twixt us and the long sought California.

Thursday, August 31st

Early this morning I was called on guard and in order to get an early start, aroused the camp at daybreak, we were moving at 6 o'clock and soon began our ascent over the highest mountain we have to cross on the trip. We reached the summit about half-past one P.M. While on the summit I still saw mountain upon mountain rising so high the eye could not discover their tops, so nicely blended with the clouds. We have a cool breeze today. Our way down the West side of this mountain we find extremely rough and rocky, making it very laborious for us as we were frequently obliged to lift our wagons about the rocks and other obstructions to prevent an upset, in the abrupt turns and windings in this natural or rather unnatural road. Our boys have some of them seen deer and antelope today; tracks and other signs about indicate an abundance of game in this Rock Valley, the place of our encampment tonight. Distance 10 miles. A person has visited camp tonight direct from the diggings; he reports favorable and says California is just "what she is cracked up to be".

Sunday, Sept. 3rd

Remained with the wagon all day. About noon I could no longer do without water; I sallied out in search of some when most fortunately I found some after a three hours search. Many teams passed today, most of which seem nearly worn out.

Tuesday Sept. 5th

Entered Pleasant Valley after driving three miles; this is a nice valley but lacks water. Game plenty, deer, hare and quails on all sides. Arrived at the Mormon diggings being the first on this route. On our arrival at this place we, without hardly knowing what we did, set up "shouts, hallos, etc." expressive of our joy at the conclusion of this, our long and tiresome journey across the plains. This P.M. Mr. Vance having expressed a wish to withdraw from the company, we consented and proceeded to the setting off to him his share of effects. I am sorry to see him leaving us; he has been a very efficient member of our company and though some seem dissatisfied with some of his measures, I am satisfied all he has done (which is much) has been with a view to the company's good and the comfort of its members. May he make a pile and return to his family again and live a long time with those he loves. Mr. Vance has his faults but all men have; all in all I think him one of nature's noblemen. God Bless Bill Vance.

After the division of our company property I went to Sacramento, where I sold four mules with wagon for \$1200.00. My first meal consisted of pork and beans for which I paid \$1.00, no extra dishes given. Our camp 52 miles away, I reached after one days walk, carrying a small package of tea weighing 7 lbs., a tin pail in which was a pie costing me \$1.00 and a small piece of salt pork.

During my stay in California I paid for a pair of heavy boots \$54.00, for a tin pan \$8.00, for a long handled shovel \$16.00 and the same amount for one pound of saleratus; for butter \$1.50 and 80¢ for potatoes.

I mined, kept a sort of ranch, at one time had forty boarders at \$10.00 a week with privilege of sleeping under the live oaks. I built of cobble stones an oven and sold bread at 50¢ a loaf and gave full weight. With two partners built the first bridge over the South Fork of the American River, a tributary of the Sacramento.

While in California I saw Sacramento once almost under water, once destroyed by fire and once visited by cholera.

My route home was by the Nicaragua Isthmus and on the Atlantic side was a passenger on the afterward famous Star of the West which attempted to provision Fort Sumpter at the breaking out of the war of the Rebellion. Landed at New York in good health, (thanks to a kind Providence) and a few hours later was among friends.

DIARY  
OF  
JOSEPH HENRY MERRILL  
OF  
A TRIP TO CALIFORNIA WITH HIS FATHER WHEN  
HE WAS ABOUT EIGHTEEN YEARS OLD.

State Historical Society of Missouri

1850

A BOY'S TRIP FROM MASSACHUSETTS TO CALIFORNIA.

Saturday, March 1, 1849

Left Boston this evening at 5 o'clock in the Norwich cars, having started for California. I have said good-bye so many times to-day I am half sick, or at least I have a feeling about me now I wish I was rid of. Nothing worthy of note occurred on the road until the cars arrived at McDonelsonville, when our engine was rendered useless by the breaking of a water pipe; this delayed us about one hour, much to the annoyance of the half frozen passengers. At "Allyn's Point" took the steamer Worcester; the night fine, the air chilly and sea quite rough.

I find myself in better spirits than I had anticipated. My friend Woodward left the boat at New London, saying "God Bless you Joe, Good-bye."

I believe my only regret at leaving home is that my going is not approved by Gate; but I hope to convince her in time that I am not wild.

Tuesday, March 6th.

I left New York City at 9 o'clock this morning via Jersey City R. R. The country seems low and level, the soil of a reddish clay. About 12 M. we passed a covered bridge of a mile in length; this is at the head of the Delaware River; the scenery at this point fine. Passed the former residence of General Moreau; he was banished by the French Government for some offence and afterwards joined the Russian Army, in which he had both legs shot off; his old stables, quite a number, are still to be seen. I learned this from a Baltimorean.

We arrived at the City of Philadelphia about 2 P.M., rode direct from the wharf to Baltimore Depot; dined at a restaurant. Left Philadelphia at 4 o'clock; quite rainy. Rode some hours along the Delaware; the whole distance we saw small crafts on the river and some of them drawing eight feet of water. Got on the boat which carried us to Baltimore; got a fine supper. Passed the spot where the famous prize fight twixt Hyer and Sullivan took place, but it being dark I discovered no traces of blood.

Arrived at Baltimore at 2 A.M., cold, drowsy, and hungry. Unable to procure lodgings, as everybody is coming home from Gen. Taylor's inauguration, I camped on a settee at the American House.

Wednesday, March 7th.

Left Baltimore this morning at 7 for Cumberland. Sky cloudy during the morning but the sun shone at about 11 A.M. Passed through a fine country of fine upland farms, though I thought I discovered a want of Yankee enterprise and industry in their down flat fences, etc. Arrived at Cumberland about 7 P.M. In today's travels we passed Harpers Ferry, a wild, rough, rocky looking spot, the river cutting through a high mountain, steep precipices on either side. At this place is a manufactory of government arms.

On my arrival at Cumberland, I supped immediately, engaged passage on board a stage coach and rode all night over a rough road and almost frozen. Had a blow-up with an outsider who could not stand the cold and declared he would ride inside altho' the seats were all occupied.

Thursday, March 8th

Morning found me still in a stage coach. Took no breakfast; rode over a hilly country all day, getting no dinner and walking up hard hills. Of course on arriving at Brownsville I ate a hearty supper, the getting up of which did credit to the landlord. As soon as tea was over, up comes the stage and I took another night ride; being much fatigued I slept nearly the whole night as well as I could in a stage.

Friday, March 9th

Still in that miserable old coach with a drunken driver. Arrived at Wheeling, Va. about 11 A.M. My first impressions of a southern city are decidedly in favor of short stops. If this is a sample of the south, I prefer a New England home. Everything looks old, black, gloomy and dingy and indeed the whole of the last two days travel indicates a want of enterprise.

During the afternoon engaged passage on board the steamer Connecticut and at 6 P.M. went floating down the "River of the Ohio". This is a most beautiful river, but on the whole does not meet my ideas of its beauty; but I have not seen much yet and will not pass sentence yet for I am nearly worn out for want of rest.

Friday, March 23rd.

Arrived at St. Louis this morning at the break of day. The view (I for a wonder being up) a fine one; one of the greatest business places in the west. The levee completely blocked up with drays, merchandise and people; it was confusion to perfection. On leaving the boat Mr. V. and self looked at a few lots of mules and after looking about us made a purchase of 11 at \$80. each.

This city affords little to travellers to admire; less than other western cities I have visited. Streets narrow, dirty and lumbered with all sorts of merchandise, etc.

Saturday, March 24th.

During the morning was on board the Jewess looking after our plunder. Quite unexpectedly came across Joshua Copp, Esq. of Burlington, Iowa, and wrote a line to brother Arthur by him.

After dinner started our mules for our trip to Independence via land route; found them very troublesome; drove seven miles and stopped at a Mr. Pennard's farm house. He told us "come in" meaning the yard; ordered us assistance from his "boys" (blacks) and received us very cordially. He told us he was a Swiss by birth and gave his whole history with now and then an amusing anecdote. We were glad to find ourselves in so good quarters for the old fellow is a true gent.

Saturday, April 7th.

Nothing of interest today except our arrival at St. Joe. This town like most of western ones is built on a high bluff; it contains more brick buildings than any I have noticed and is a place which gives credit to its inhabitants; I doubt not it must soon be a place of much business as it is much more preferable as a starting point for emigrants bound westward to that of Independence or St. Louis.

On coming along shore we were cheered by the thousand emigrants already arrived and about to start for the Gold Mines in California.

Shaking of hands, congratulatory exclamations and the like, together with the noise and bustle always attendant on the arrival of a steamer, made the scene one of enthusiasm to most, but only served to make me lonely and half homesick; had not the escape of one-half our mules on landing and a fruitless hunt till 9 in the evening in the rain kept my mind in another channel, I am sure there would have been no help for me here alone and unacquainted as I was; but no; I am in for it.

Tuesday, April 10th.

The town is filled with emigrants, all parts of the states well represented in numbers at least, if not otherwise. All seem anxious to make a commencement of their long march to the Pacific. I learn some trains have already left, though so early a start is thought to be very unwise by men who are judges of the matter.

Wednesday, April 25th.

Today completed the arrangements of wagons, guns, etc. We are now ready to leave camp "Washington". Dr. Lock gives our present camping place this name. I am getting to relish hard bread and bacon very well though I miss the cream in my coffee.

Thursday, April 26th.

Today brought our mules to camp; they are so fractious we had work to get them across the river; this occupied our attention most of the day.

Saturday, April 28th.

I have been hunting two lost mules all day; got lost about 10 o'clock and wandered about the open prairie for several hours. Everything to be seen was dry grass, no tree or shrub; one lost on a prairie with no landmarks to guide him is in a bad fix. Tho' I had no fears, yet I must say I had about as disagreeable feeling as I ever had in my life. On my return to camp, having found my way, and the mules, I found father badly hurt; he was assisting in breaking a mule; the animal got loose, ran directly over him bruising him about the neck, head and arms quite severely. Dr. Ames dressed his wounds and had scarcely finished when our fine Indian pony broke his picket and was off. The boys were soon after him, but returned late at night not having succeeded in catching him.

Thursday, May 3rd.

Moved on finely this morning. During the P.M. reached Wolf Creek; found this creek very bad crossing; playing about its banks was quite an encampment of Indians. We did not succeed in getting all our wagons across; we encamped on the west bank; our tent was hardly pitched when a severe thunder storm came on, so severe we were unable to get a supper, so we went to bed tired, gross and hungry.

Friday, May 4th.

When I awoke this morning I found myself lying in about 4 inches of water; it has rained nearly the whole night and is still raining. After a deal of trouble we managed to get us up a breakfast, which was only hard bread and coffee. About 11 o'clock managed to get our other wagons across the creek. Everybody in camp cross, Ego Idem.

Saturday, May 5th.

Our little train moved this morning about 9 o'clock; we traveled along slowly during the day, 13 miles over a fine prairie of gentle slopes covered with a fine growth of green grass; we could see nothing but one blue sky and the rolling plain, no tree, no shrub, no little streams, no timber, nothing. At sundown we were forced, owing to the condition of the animals, to encamp on a high ridge without water, except for the animals, and without wood. The roads to-day have been quite heavy; to drive long drives as we have been forced to, without nooning, has fagged our mules.

Sunday, May 6th.

Held a council this morning and decided to move on tho' it is Sunday. We have had to drink bilge water or none, since yesterday morning. Travelled some 16 miles when we camp up with Wheeling Co. with whom we intend travelling to California. They tell us they have been waiting ten days for us; I think they flatter us. We now number 60 men good and true and if the Indians attack, as we fear, they will find they have not got "an ordering up hand."

Monday, May 7th.

Today we stopped in camp all day. Tightened up wagons, etc. Threw away all we thought we could do without. We have been quite busy and I am very tired. What won't men do for Gold.

Tuesday, May 8th.

Our camp was on the move early this morning and as soon as we had eaten a hearty breakfast of coffee, bacon and bread, we were on the move. The road during the whole day very fine, over a vast prairie of fine grazing. I am of the opinion that if one could buy lands of the Indians, for they are the owners and occupy this beautiful country, one could soon make a handsome sum by raising stock here; water is to be found at convenient intervals and now and then we come to fine streams on the banks of which is some timber. The soil is quite rich and I doubt not some day this tract of country will be taken up for agricultural purposes. At night we encamped at a fine grove of timber with plenty of good water, having made about twenty miles. We hear of cholera today.

Thursday, May 10th.

Moved at 6 o'clock this morning; got on finely; crossed three bad creeks today without accident. I waded through all of them leading mules by the head. Encamped at sundown.

Friday, May 11th.

Made a start at 6 1/4 o'clock this morning. Made good time today though we had to cross several bad creeks and forded the "Big Blue" on the west bank of which we encamped. After supper assisted in drawing a seine for fish; we had a fishermans luck. The Big Blue is a lovely stream and is said to resemble the Clyde in Scotland. One of the Wheeling messes are supping on a fish caught since we halted.

Saturday, May 12th.

As we had concluded not to move today, at an early hour I, in company with Horton, left camp on a hunting trip.



We followed along the banks of the river for several hours and often scaped up game but was not able to get a shot. Horton is good company and though we got no game, the excursion was a pleasant one. I have wished a thousand times today that Bill Rogers was with me; he is of a temperament to enjoy such trips and appreciate such scenes as one finds on this trip out west.

I being somewhat tired with running over the hills, turned in quite early and had just got into the arms of Morpheus when I was awakened by a call for Joe; when I got up I found Mr. Vance had traded away my wagon to an emigrant who had the misfortune to upset his wagon in making the ford and broke a wheel. Of course it was unloaded and the contents put into the remaining three wagons; the job lasted some two hours when I again turned in.

Sunday, May 13th.

Rambled about during the morning, took a bath during the afternoon and hunted mules during the evening. A singular manner of spending the Sabbath, but one is forced to resort to all sorts of ways to amuse himself without books, society and companionable men. Besides there is a great amount of camp drudgery to be done which cannot be put off, and it is hardly policy to lay up much as the emigration is large and we may find grass short, and the nearer the foremost, the less will the grass be eat off. Should this ever be read by anybody who has never taken this trip, he will say this is an apology for misspending the Sabbath. He is mistaken; for one here is forced to adapt himself to circumstances. When we left the states, we agreed to rest ourselves and teams on Sunday but it is impossible to do so as we are often caught on poor grass and perhaps poor water, and as likely it is Saturday night as any other time. I believe the trip has been made without travelling on Sunday, but it was under much more favorable circumstances than those by which we are surrounded this season.

Monday, May 14th.

Left camp this morning at an early hour, still on the rolling prairies; scarcely any timber or water. Saw two graves today; they were new graves, and as I passed them I felt a gloomy feeling come over me. I learned they were Californians; their Golden dreams are ended and the low winds alone will murmur their eternal requiem.

Wednesday, May 16th.

Today we have travelled over a bad, heavy road with pitches, bog holes and creeks all the way. Tonight I am very tired; water bad and wood gone. On the prairie today I noticed some northern "Live forever" growing very rank, also wild rose bushes in abundance. Crossed Big Sandy this P.M. and encamped four miles west of its banks; on its banks saw hickory and walnut trees.

Saturday, May 19th.

This morning we threw away some dispensables to lighten loads; roads bad and mules weary. Encamped on the Republican Fork of the Blue. Tonight increased our watch for the first time, as our guide tells us we are in some danger of the Pawnees the greatest thieves in the world.

Monday, May 21st.

Moved on 24 miles today. About noon Bryants train passed us a smart pace; his mules are heavily loaded and their backs sore. We reached the Platte River bluffs about sundown where we encamped without wood and with little water. The scene as we made the last bluff was truly sublime; we could see fine groves of timber away some five miles distant by the side of which the lingering sun shone upon the green grass and gently flowing river. I stopped for some time and gazed on this beautiful scene with almost uncontrollable admiration. The air is quite cold; with hot days and swampy camping places are I judge good ingredients for the compound of which fever and ague is manufactured.

Tuesday, May 22nd.

Today we made 14 miles over bad roads. Our route after the first five miles lay along the Platte, a fine stream. We reached Fort Kearney about 3 o'clock where we made a halt. Here we again lightened our loads. This evening wrote mother a letter to send per express. This is a government express. Our encampment is a mile east of the fort; we are not allowed to near the fort, as Uncle Sam fears the emigrants animals will steal his grazing.

Wednesday, May 23rd.

Moved at noon, passing the fort which is a dull dreary looking place. At the fort is a store where the traveller can pay a big price for poor goods. The fort is built of mud; I noticed a few sticks of timber lying about, but do not see where they could have been taken from. Tonight we are encamped on the Platte having travelled but 10 miles.

Friday, May 25th.

Laid up till noon and then moved on 5 miles and finding good grass encamped again on the Platte. The river is a fine stream a mile or more in width, studded with beautiful islands covered with grass and timber. The largest of these is Grand Island 52 miles in length, finely watered, good grazing and well timbered; its elevation is such that it never is overflowed. Fremont recommends it as a suitable site for a Government Station. We are now looking out for the buffalo; I have seen several antelope.

Sunday, May 27th.

This morning our camp become suddenly excited by the sight of Buffalo; they were on the north side of the river. Some attempts were made to form a party to hunt them, but either their morality or some other cause prevented. After dinner in company with four others took my rifle and started from camp in search of antelope; we found them quite plenty on a large prairie lying at the foot of a high bluff. I was unable to get near enough to make them fall. I shot at one but the graceful animal was out of sight in a second. Our fuel at camp is Buffalo chips.

Wednesday, May 30th.

Surely the storm "is approached". At about 3 this morning father came to my wagon, the wind having blown down our tent, the rain pouring down in torrents. The storm continued all day. We have no fuel but buffalo chips; very cold and wet and 6 o'clock found me turned in half frozen.

Thursday, May 31st.

The storm still continues and we moved at ten hoping to find grass and fuel. Our Indian guide came to camp this P.M. without Capt. Vance or Mr. Domilie; they left camp yesterday noon and during the afternoon killed a buffalo; a pony having given out in the chase, Vance and Domilie packed the meat and Isaac started in with the pony. V. & D. it is supposed have taken the wrong direction and lost on the prairie. It is now ten o'clock and they are not in; we are quite anxious concerning them.

While I am writing the moon is shining coldly down; no wood, no chips. We got supper by wild sage, which fills the air with a perfume not very pleasant to the olfactories.

Sunday, June 3rd.

Early this morning started over the prairie in search of buffalo; rode some twenty miles following a westerly course; saw no buffalo but killed a large hare. On my return to camp my mule became fractious and in attempting to retain my seat, I lost my hare and as the mule did not stop his pranks for some time I left it. I saw any quantity of white wolves; they were about the size of a sheep; also saw some antelopes but did not get a shot. I am a great hunter I discover.

Monday, June 4th.

5 o'clock found us on the move; road quite sandy with little grass by the way. Towards night we crossed a high ridge of bluffs and on descending on the opposite side came to Ash Hollow; this is a most romantic spot; on the one side rises up to the height of two hundred feet a wall of earth studded with granite rocks almost ready to come tumbling down, while on the other something striking the beholder with less awe but more beauty; a pretty shade of ash trees and around their trunks clings for support the vine of the wild grape with here and there a wild briar rose "wafting its fragrance in the desert air." I noticed with the rose a wild currant bush. Through the pass runs a clear "babbling" brook and its water is as cool as Old Tudor of Boston can call his ice. After passing the Hollow we again came to the river where we camped.

During the evening I visited the lodge of a party of Sioux Indians; they had several wigwams covered with deerskins. Near them was encamped some frenchmen, trading with the Indians. I entered the tent of the trader conversing with him for some time, when in came a Big John Indian quite drunk. He soon took offence at Mr. Frenchman who put him out; the next thing I knew, in came John's messenger through the side of the tent in the form of an arrow.

Thursday, June 7th.

We started without the Wheeling men this morning, their stock having been unable to keep up with us. Dr. McKensie was sent back to them. They say they must lay up and recruit their mules, but hope to meet us at Ft. Laramie where we intend stopping a few days. About ten A.M. came in sight of the Court House. This great natural curiosity is a high mound of earth some 500 feet and in the distance resembles a building built after the Gothic style; near it is a similar one of smaller size which I shall style the Jail, as jails seem to be necessary appendages for court houses.

This earth judging from all about it is a part of a high bluff, the vacuum about having been produced by some convulsion of the earth or the elements. Towards night we crossed a fine stream called Big Creek. Tonight we are in sight of Chimney Rock.

This P.M. Dr. McK. has been to the summit of the Court House and describes the view from the summit as most beautiful. Encamped at half past five on the Platte.

Friday, June 8th.

Made an early start; found bad roads; met Mormons from Salt Lake. During the P.M. visited Chimney Rock; its height some 6 or 8 hundred feet above the river with a spire on its top, having the unpoetical resemblance of a hay stack with a pole in the middle. Distance today 13 miles.

Saturday, June 9th.

Shortly after taking up our line of march this morning, we entered a most lovely wild and romantic valley. On either side is piled up mountain high, huge ledges of granite rocks, and with a slight flight of fancy, one can imagine all styles of architecture applied to towers, castles, cathedrals, or every appearance of ancient ruins; in the valley a fine growth of grass covering a nice level bottom land extending to the bluffs forming the enclosure.

At night we had scarcely pitched our camp near a fine spring of good water, when there arose a tremendous thunder storm accompanied by considerable hail. The thunder rolling and cracking among the high peaks and bounding back with an awful roar, the quick lightnings flash, all rendered the scene grand and terrible, reminding one of the omnipotence of the Almighty; in a few moments nature was again smiling on poor mortals as serenely as ever, reminding them by Gods sign in the sky that this temporary storm was for some wise purpose other than floods to destroy as those of olden times. During the storm three of our men and myself received a severe shock from the lightning, and at a neighboring camp an ox was killed and some forty more thrown down. Made 19 miles today.

Monday, June 11th.

Still on the Platte. Mooned today at fine grove of timber. The air fragrant with the perfume of the wild rose. Saw several species of cactus; also saw the soap plant so much used by the Mexicans for washing; its bulb resembles that of an onion and it bears a flower. I saw large beds of wild onion; they have a flower looking like our White Violet. In many places saw quantities of pepper grass. Today I have seen any quantity of flowers of every shape and color, any of which would be an ornament to a New England garden. Encamped within 8 miles of the fort with neither wood or water.

Tuesday, June 12th.

Reached Fort Laramie this morning at 9 o'clock where we found Capt. Vance, who has been in advance of the company for the purpose of buying mules, but has been unable to obtain them. The Fort is a square building made of adobes or sun burnt brick; it has a military air about it, though quite a rough affair. Such has been the rush of emigration that we are obliged to pay enormous prices for any thing we want; for instance, for shoeing a mule we paid five dollars; our stop was short finding little to interest.

About noon we crossed the Laramie Fork of the Platte by fording; not deep, but we were forced to block up our wagon beds. After leaving the creek, rose high rough bluffs which we crossed to the river and encamped about three o'clock in good grass. Distance 14. miles. Overhauled our wagons and chatted over a camp fire till bed time and turned in. Had a nice shower during the night which was quite acceptable as it laid all the dust.

Wednesday, June 13th.

At 6 o'clock leaving the bottom land on our right, we ascended high bluffs and once on the top, of course we had to descend again. The descent was quite difficult being through narrow, steep and rocky passes. While sitting here in camp on Bitter Cotton Wood Creek, I can see the Black Hills we have been dreading to meet for a long time; they are covered with the cedar tree and hard pine.

During the P.M. today I had a chase after a buffalo; did not get a shot, though the "critter" was killed and I ate a good sized piece of buffalo steak for my supper.

Thursday, June 14th.

Entered the Black Hills over a nice road though up and down hill all the time; no grass and seldom any water is to be found. Made 22 miles and encamped on Horse Shoe Creek, when we were visited by a severe thunder storm accompanied by hail. These showers are most acceptable to emigrants as they all lay the dust.

Tuesday, June 19th.

Made an early start. Made an attempt to find a ford this A.M. but after wading about the stream an hour or more, gave it up. Our route today lay over a sandy soil; we crossed several small creeks. Killed a rattlesnake today and saw a bear, several sage hens and an eagle; I judge the latter would measure 5 or 6 feet from tip to tip of wing. Arrived at the upper crossing and pitched our tents or rather camps, as we do not use our tents this week. At this point we are improving an opportunity of getting mules shod and the job is done by Mormons; they are, I imagine, making money California fashion, charging \$1.50 per shoe.

At sundown we drove our mules about three miles to the bluffs. We are now in a lovely spot, seven in number, sitting around a fire made from the sage bush. While I am writing the boys are, as usual, smoking, singling and chatting away the evening.

Since writing the above, our number has increased to twelve, five gents having come to our fire. They are strangers who have been to the summit of the bluffs; they tell us there is three feet of snow lying on the bluffs not more than four miles distant from our bivouac. While we are in a little valley covered with thrifty grass and plenty of refreshing, balmy air, they hastened to our fire used by us for cooking, to warm their shivering selves.

Sunday, June 24th.

Our animals being on poor grass, after a council of the Company's members, we decided to move westward; the road quite sandy. Today I noticed for the first time several places literally covered with pearl-ash. I gathered some and am sure it differs very little, if any from the same article I have seen elsewhere.

This morning we reached the little stream called "Sweetwater River;" its waters are fine and abound with several species of the finny tribe.

Some 3/4 of a mile from where we struck the stream, we came to the world famed Independent Rock. This rock, or stone mountain, is some 600 yards in length and 120 yards in width; its height about 100 feet; its top oval in shape and quite smooth as though worn by rain and weather. About the base of this huge natural specimen are several smaller stones, placed there, as it were, as neighbors, Giant and Pigmies.

Leaving Independence Rock, we travelled on 5 1/4 miles coming to Devils Gate. At this point, the river passes through, or between perpendicular rocks of some 4 or 5 hundred feet in height. I ascended to the highest peak, and can say that this sight will convince all travellers of the propriety of the appellation, Devils Gate; it certainly presents an awfully grand appearance. Directly under the high bluff forming one side of this gate, we pastured our mules on fine nutritious grass, good, because no traveller had attempted to drive mules over so dangerous a path to get them to it.

Monday, June 25th.

Leaving Devils Gate we continued our journey over a sandy road, crossing a high ridge hedged in by high mountains, rocky and steep; at noon we again touched the Little Sweetwater. I must not forget to speak of the view of the snow capped mountains called the Wind River Mountains. I find no one who can give any information concerning them in our Company, but the view exceeds any scenery I have yet seen. Tonight we encamped with the Government train.

Wednesday, June 27th.

Left camp at 5 1/2 o'clock and traveled 21 miles; forded Sweetwater three times today. For some days past we have been in sight of the Wind River Mountains; today the view is a fine one; they lift their snow-capped heads to the very clouds till both mountains and clouds are blended together. White with age, their hoary heads disdain looking down to our little world below.

The roads today are as hard as if McAdamized, tho' quite hilly. We see any quantity of prairie dogs; they are about the size of the N.E. Red squirrel and resemble them very much except they are more of a grey than red. I am at a loss to know why they have the canine attached to them in lieu of squirrel.

Thursday, June 28th.

We left Sweetwater again this morning; had travelled about two miles when our wagon broke down; we were compelled to unload and after overcoming this slight difficulty we moved on ascending a high hill for some three miles; tho' so hilly, our road today has been fine and hard. Tonight we are again on the Sweetwater; we have forded the river twice today; saw more antelopes and one elk. Our encampment is now within ten yards of a snow bank of 10 feet in depth; the grass along the snow is green and flowers bloom by the side of their bitterest enemy, ice; a contrast certainly

Friday, June 29th.

This morning took our final leave of the "Little Sweetwater" and at 8 o'clock arrived at and passed the long sought South Pass of the Rocky Mountains. I find myself much in error in regard to its appearance; supposing its ascents and descents rough, ragged and rocky, in lieu of which I could not have told the point said to be the Pass, had I not seen the waters of the Pacific Springs wending their way westward.

The road through the Pass is as good a one as any eastern turn-pike and hard and smooth as though McAdamized. We also hailed Oregon as we left the Pass. We are now encamped about two miles west of Dry Sandy Creek, with neither wood or water and with very little grass. During today's drive I have counted 32 oxen dead by the way, having become tired out and left to the mercy of the wolves.

Saturday, June 30th.

A short distance from our bivouac, we came to the forks of the road, one via Salt Lake and the other via Sublettes Cut Off. We decided on going the latter and soon came to Big Sandy which we forded and encamped on the west bank at 10 A.M. After dinner, with others, I went up the stream in search of grass for our jaded animals; we found tolerable grass about two miles from camp in a grove of tall poplar trees; here we spent the P.M. Toward night in sauntering about the little stream, discovered and captured three bald eagles; I measured one; it was  $3 \frac{3}{4}$  feet from the tip of one wing to the tip of the other and the bird was not yet fledged. Supped on bacon, crackers and water, and turned in quite early.

Sunday, July 1st.

When I awoke this morning, the birds had commenced their songs, the sun was throwing its bright rays through the branches of the trees under whose shelter I have lodged so comfortably, and all nature seemed alive and cheerful; I felt so too; for none but an emigrant on this sorry trip knows so well how to appreciate a half days rest in a shady grove, so seldom his lot. In my pocket I had a fragment of Montgomery's Poems, and after a hasty meal of bread and bacon, I enjoyed reading for some time. I am and always was an admirer of his poems, telling such simplicity. His poems are not like Byrons, leaving one sad and discontented; but after reading them I am always more cheerful and happier, if not better.

In the P.M. our little mess (four in number) were visited by a slight thunder storm, a rare occurrence of late. At sundown we drove our animals to our wagons and by 9 P.M. we commenced our night drive across our first desert; road good; just about midnight we passed the Hay Stack, a high pile of earth heaped up near the road; I have heard of this curiosity being mentioned by travellers, so give the appellation myself. During the after part of the night, we encountered a clay mud which retarded our progress. This mud is the result of a thunder storm mentioned yesterday which seems to have been more severe here than in the vicinity of Big Sandy. I drove the team till 3 A.M. and turned in; the air cold and some wind. Night drives I am decidedly opposed to.

Monday, July 2nd.

We continued our travels till 4 A.M. and then made a halt for breakfast; this was soon disposed of and only for dinner and supper did we halt again till midnight. The whole route is a dry, dreary, desolate place; no vegetation except the wild sage, of which some 8 to 10 feet in height. The soil sand and gravel, road good. We passed several steep and rough precipices and great caution is necessary to the safe passage of teams. We reached the river about midnight and found a place where our thirsty animals could drink, and allowing them to do so I turned in with as good an appetite for sleep as I ever did.