

Sacramento City, California,  
Sept: 27<sup>th</sup> 1850

Dear Greenville:-

I was much disappointed, when I arrived here to learn that there were no letters in the office for me. I wrote Alex a few lines several days ago, which probably you will see. There is no pleasure in crossing the Plains, but if a man has good luck he can come much cheaper than he can by the Sathmus. I will send you a copy of my Journal from which you can form some idea of the Country, roads, and the life of an Emigrant. Early in May I made arrangements with John Mc Girk, Isaac Mc Girk, and John Mc Dowell to take an Ox-team to California, with some horses to ride, and on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of May they started with the wagons & team from a New Franklin, Howard Co. Mo. I continued up the River by Steam to St. Joseph where I arrived on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the same month.

St. Joseph, May 10<sup>th</sup> 1850.

Having purchased two good mules for the sum of \$250, I crossed the Missouri River and set out after my wagon, but before I had traveled 5 miles, one of my mules commenced kicking. I jumped off the one I was riding, and turned him loose. The other I tied fast with a rope to a tree and then I tried to catch the other which had on a bridle, saddle and

four blankets which cost me \$27.50, but I found it an impossibility for one man to catch him, as I returned to the place where I had tied the other and found he had broken the rope and made his escape in the brush and bushes; so in this way I was left entirely alone, and compelled to return on foot to St. Joseph to spend the night, and to get something to eat as the mule had taken off everything I had prepared to travel 150 miles.

May 21<sup>st</sup>  
Spent the day with five other men who I employed to search for my mules. We found one and returned to St. Joseph, and bought the necessary outfit to travel until I could overtake my wagon at the forks of the Independence & St. Joseph roads. I got in company with a gentleman from Hopkins County, Ky. by the name of David Cox, and having made R. Middleton, (a merchant of St. Joseph from whom I purchased the mule) my agent, to take possession of and sell the one which was lost, as soon as he could be found, we, at 4 o'clock in the evening, again set out for California, and encamped at the edge of the Missouri Bottom, 6 miles from St. Joseph in a hilly prairie.

May 22<sup>nd</sup>  
Passed the Indian Mission at 3 o'clock; saw about 100 acres of land in wheat, which is a rare specimen of civilization in this savage land of God's creation. Camped at the first branch beyond. Good wood, water, and grass + 25 = 82 miles.

May 23<sup>rd</sup>  
Passed a new dug grave and a large prairie destitute of timber or water. The only living thing we saw was green nutritious grasses + 20 = 52 miles.

May 24<sup>th</sup>

We have often times read of the joys of the Thirsty and weary traveller in a desert land when he arrived at a cool & gentle stream of pure water, but we never properly appreciated the sentiment until to day. We had traveled all day through a barren prairie destitute of water. At 4 o'clock we reached a small creek of pure water having its bottom covered with good grass + 21 = 73 miles.

May 25<sup>th</sup>

Passed two new dug graves. It is said both died with Cholera. Crossed several little creeks which supplied us with plenty of good water. There were also, a few small trees on each creek. Having lost my saddle mule and the other being unbroke I was compelled to walk the whole way from St. Joseph. My feet became blistered and very sore, so I purchased a horse from a returning emigrant, who had been on the plains for four weeks, and had travelled upwards of 700 miles from home. He said he had seen the Elephant and eaten his ears, and that he was now going home to Sally, his wife, and that he would stay with her in the States as long as he lived. + 30 = 103 miles.

May 26<sup>th</sup>

Left camp at 6 o'clock and arrived at Blue River at 11, crossed at 2, and came to the forks of the Independence road at 5, and camped at the 1<sup>st</sup> branch beyond at a good spring, and good grass, all around + 35 = 138 miles.

May 27<sup>th</sup>

All the girls being behind on the Independence Road

When our wagon rode back on that road to Blue River where I found St. Harnes, W. M. Cauley and several others from New Franklin, from whom I learned that our wagon was still behind 12 miles. I have travelled more than half the way from St. Joseph to this place alone. This is a deep turbulent little stream. I had to swim my horse 2 miles across yesterday, and then pay two dollars for the exquisite pleasure of riding over with my baggage on a raft. Whole trains have been rafting their wagons across at both places for the last three days. This place is said to be 190 miles from Independence, and 150 from St. Joseph.

Big Blue River May 28<sup>th</sup>

W. M. Kirk & Co came up to day with our wagon and all the company crossed the river before sundown & camped at the branch. We are now in the Pawnee station where good guards ought to be kept. Numerous herds of Elk and buffalo are apparent, but as yet we have seen none. St. Harnes and W. M. Cauley are only one day ahead of us, they started five days before our wagon +

May 29<sup>th</sup>

Made a noon camp at the first branch west of the junction of the Independence and St. Joseph roads. We are now altogether in good health and spirits and at the same place I arrived at on the 20<sup>th</sup> Inst. Camped in a wild prairie destitute of wood or water. No branch between here and our noon camp and none west of us under 8 miles. We packed a little brush on our horses 2 miles to make coffee. We all lived well and slept sound all

night without any guard. We are now only 12 miles west of where I camped on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 148 miles from St. Joseph.

May 30<sup>th</sup>

Made a noon halt on a little branch & camped at 5 o'clock on good grass. The soil here is rich and level but void of timber. The grasses cover the earth like wheat in some vast and almost boundless field in the Eastern States. We met some Indian Traders and Trappers who had been in the mountains all winter. They had twelve wagons with five yoke of Oxen to each, which were heavily laden with Beaver, Otter, Buffalo, and various kinds of skins. They left Fort Laramie on 20<sup>th</sup> April. They said they met some California emigrants in 3 days after leaving the Fort and that the road is literally lined with Emigrants from here to the said Fort, and that, <sup>some</sup> of those <sup>they</sup> met, some are now in California. + 18 = 166 miles.

May 31<sup>st</sup>

The Emigrants have had fine sport all day in chasing the Elk, Antelope & Buffalo, but they only killed one. We saw several Buffaloes following each other like Indians in single file with double quick time. They were the first wild ones I had ever seen. I have not seen an Indian since I left St. Joseph. The traders informed us that they were not allowed to go on the roads by orders from their chiefs for fear they would do something to cause the great number of whites to kill the whole Indian race. They live in the vicinity of the road wild

was properly matted. This would make a great farming country, if it only had timber enough to make fires & fences. Doubtless timber would soon grow in great abundance if the Indians could be prevented from setting the grass on fire in the spring of the year, but they fire the prairies every spring to make a good orange for Buffalo, so they may stay in their vicinity all summer. They kill them during summer and fall to subsist on during the ensuing winter + 21-187 miles.

June 1<sup>st</sup> 1850.

We met 40 or 50 U.S. Dragoons on their way to the settlement from Fort Kearney. We passed over some poor gravelly ground to day and made a noon halt on Little Blue River. The grass is almost all eaten out on its banks by the numerous herds of stock belonging to the present active, energetic emigration. The emigrants on this road to the California <sup>of the year</sup> region are from almost every state in the Union and are descendants of English, Irish, Dutch & French. We have seen many going along with their knapsacks on their backs, others with wheelbarrows, others with packed mules and horses, some in buggies & carriages & thousands with wagons and teams all in one conglomerate mass marching on towards the gold region of the west + 22-207 miles.

Sunday June 2<sup>d</sup>.

Having labored hard the last 6 days, we to day followed the illusory example of the maker of the heavens & the earth, by resting on the seventh day, but we did not all keep it holy, for while some of us were cooking & washing others were hunting & shooting buffalo. We started

alone, but our company was composed of 13 horses, 25 cows, 68 oxen and 39 men & 1 woman, which is about an average proportion of animals and women, to the men that are now on their way across the plains to California.

June 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Made a noon halt on the Little Blue, we saw 3 young ladies pass us while we were eating + 16-225 miles.

June 4<sup>th</sup>.

We had another thunder storm on us last night and the road has been very heavy and muddy all day. The road side is strewn with odorous wild flowers. We are still ascending a branch of Little Blue River + 21-246 miles.

June 5<sup>th</sup>.

Passed the last wood and water & drove on through a hard rain to the edge of the bottom of Platte River & camped in a wild prairie. No wood but plenty of rain. Saw the name of Cousin B. McLean written on the sign post, at the forks of the road, dated May 19<sup>th</sup> 1850 + 19-264 miles.

June 6<sup>th</sup>.

Made a noon halt on the west side of Fort Kearney passed the Fort at 2 o'clock and camped on the slough in the bottom of Platte River. Plenty of grass & water but no wood, of any kind, nearer than the river which lies about 3 miles north of us, and there is no wood on it except a few willows about two inches in diameter. Fort Kearney is situated in a low wet marshy place in the bottom about half way between

one river and the sand hills. The stables are built of prairie turf and some of the dwelling houses about 2 1/2 feet thick. The best looking houses are new common framed about 60 feet long & from 25 to 30 wide & two stories high. It is a poor port and a bad location + 18 = 282 miles.

June 8<sup>th</sup>

This morning our intention was to make an early start as we had laid in camp all day yesterday, but we were awoken by the groans of J. Biggs from Pettis Co. Mo. who had joined our company several days ago. He was taken violently ill with cholera about day break and died before 12 o'clock. He had his wife with him who returned with her brother late in the evening towards home + 8 = 290 miles.

Sunday June 9<sup>th</sup>

Having rested nearly two days we concluded to travel to day in violation of a rule which the Company had made not to leave camp on sabbath day. The most of the company to day joined a large company, and we are now travelling with only 3 wagons & 10 men which is enough for safety and we can travel much faster than large trains. At night we saw some emigrants at a distance in the bottom above us digging out some young wolves and our whole company thought they were Indians. Some of us being anxious for a sight, or fight or foot race with them, we loaded our guns & pistols and rode up to them, but lo, and behold they were as well dressed as any of us; We however assisted them in digging out and shooting all the wolves, and at the same time crying out at the top of our voices indians! indians!

We passed 13 fresh dug graves, seven of the emigrants which may died of cholera. The earth in Platte bottom appears to be strongly impregnated with carbonate of soda + 23 = 310 miles.

June 10<sup>th</sup>

We saw a large herd of Buffalo in the sand hills at the edge of this bottom. Numerous buffalo trails run across the road from the hills to the river. We have plenty good grass for our teams and antelope for us, but no wood to cook it with - used buffalo chips in place of wood. It is a good substitute. + 23 = 336 miles.

June 11<sup>th</sup>

We passed 25 fresh dug graves. They all died between the 5<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> of this month of cholera. Had Buffalo meat the first time + 21 = 357 miles.

June 12<sup>th</sup>

Passed across the edge of the sand hills & came to a good spring at the lower crossing of the Platte at 2 o'clock. The river being too high we continued up the south side of the river & camped in a bad place for grass + 21 = 378 miles.

June 13<sup>th</sup>

Platte bottom is from 5 to 8 miles wide running back to a range of sand hills. No streams run into the river from the south. The water must either run to Kansas River or sink in the sand hills long before it reaches the river bottoms. The river is from 1 to 2 miles wide & from 1 to 3 feet deep interspersed with numerous islands and sand bars. It is not and never can

is a good navigable stream, for it changes its channel as often as the wind blows. Its bottom and banks is nothing but white quick sands + 24 = 402 miles.

June 14<sup>th</sup>

Continued up the Platte, but little grass or wood, but plenty of buffalo chips, camped on the Platte with a saw 28 fresh graves + 19 = 421 miles.

June 15<sup>th</sup>

Came to the crossing of Platte River at 12 o'clock and crossed without difficulty. It is about 600 yards wide & very rapid. The water ran in the wagon bed nearly all across the ford. Came up with Dr. Hanni & Capt. M. Cauley & Co from Howard Co. Mo. & joined them + 23 = 444 miles.

June 16<sup>th</sup>

We left camp early this morning & soon afterward Isaac M<sup>ch</sup> Sick one of my own men from Howard Co. Mo. was taken very ill with cholera. We camped on the road side immediately two miles from any water and sent for Doctor Hanni who came in a few minutes and rendered all the medical aid in his power but all in vain, and at one o'clock at night he breathed his last. He was one of the best of young men & an excellent ox wagoner. We will all miss him very much + 8 = 452 miles.

Sunday June 17<sup>th</sup>

Soon after sunrise this morning we paid the last tribute of respect to the remains of our beloved comrade Isaac M<sup>ch</sup> Sick, and then came to ash Hollow & made a

noon camp. The evening was intolerable through sand. Camped close on the bank of the Platte where swarms of mosquitoes annoyed us all night and ran our horses all down the river 8 or 4 miles + 25 = 477 miles.

June 18<sup>th</sup>

We again caught up with M<sup>ch</sup> Cauley's train, crossed several dry, sandy creeks. This is a poor country producing but little good grass. Met two wagons returning with Mormons from the Salt Lake. Their teams were in good order which is a strong indication that the grass is better between here and the South Pass on the Rocky Mountains + 19 = 496 miles.

June 19<sup>th</sup>

We travelled 14 miles & made a noon halt about midway between the hills & the Platte grass in abundance for our stock & antelope for us. All eyes were attracted this evening by a large tall round rock glimmering in the west called the Court House Rock; our camp was 6 miles east of it on the Platte + 23.519 miles.

June 20<sup>th</sup>

Some of the most picturesque views that I ever saw present themselves to our view; the court house well is like some vast and grand decayed palace, chimney rock like an ancient cathedral with its dome, Round rock like a great tower, Bastle Rock like a strong fort with its bastions all conspire to cheer

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