

California

- 1 Friday, May 24.--All got our breakfasts by 5 o'clock, and reached the ford at the upper crossing in about an hour. Having made a mark last night I found that the river was falling and that we could cross without much difficulty. The river is about three quarters of a mile wide and about two feet deep, being at times up to our after axles while crossing with our wagons. Our wagons all passed safely over and were ready to march into the train by 7 o'clock. Here we filled our casks with water, it being twenty-three miles to the next watering place. The road here for five miles is over a high rolling prairie, with heavy sloughs; grass and other vegetation, thin and short. At 12 o'clock, having traveled some twelve miles and nooned on the open prairie, we watered our cattle and rested till 1 o'clock; we found no grass here whatever, the soil is very poor, and were soon on our way, we traveled some three hours when we arrived at the head of Ash Hollow, we descended into it down a steep precipice, some seventy-five feet, where our wagons had to be let down with ropes. We took all the steers out from the wagon but one yoke, then locked the hind wheels and went down very snugly. This Hollow descends into a valley of the north
- 22 fork of the Platte river, through a pass known as Ash Hollow; we traveled down the valley some 2½ miles, where we found a good spring of cold water, which was a great luxury to all, and at ½ past five o'clock we all got safe through the valley, when we arrived at the north fork of the Platte river, a stream in appearance as large as the Ohio opposite New Albany. Here we encamped for the night, found plenty of good wood and water, but no grass. I saw wild currant and gooseberry bushes near the mouth of the Hollow. Traveled to-day 23 miles over a rough road.

✓ Saturday, May 25.--We rolled out this morning at 3 o'clock, traveled three hours over a heavy sandy road, into which the wheels of our wagons sunk some eight or ten inches, passed on the road this morning some twelve wigwams of the Sioux tribe, the first we have seen since leaving the Minewah. 6 o'clock, found grass sufficient for our cattle, stopped and got our breakfast and grazed two hours. This morning it was so cold I had to put on my big blanket coat and yarn gloves, a severe wind blowing from the north and very cloudy; the clouds do not look more than fifty feet above our heads. These, however, soon broke away, and gave place to a broiling hot sun. While stopping for dinner, we were visited by some twelve Indians, the substance of whose remarks was ✓ "how-do-whiske," that is they want whiskey. At 4 o'clock arrived at an Indian village ✓ of some 250 inhabitants of the Sioux tribe. After traveling some three miles further, ✓ we encountered a violent sand storm, which the boys call a part of the elephant; we encamped for the night, formed our guard and turned our cattle loose with yokes on; the storm however soon passed over. It is in such storms as these that stampedes ✓ generally occur, though we managed to save our cattle without any difficulty. To-day traveled 16 miles.

- 23 Sunday, May 26.--Left our encampment this morning at 4 o'clock, found the roads considerably better than yesterday, caused by the heavy shower of rain last night, which made the sand more compact, we traveled some four hours then came to for the day on the banks of the north fork of the Platte on the south side. The Platte presents the same features as below the forks. Its width is not so great, but still a wider stream than the Ohio. To-day's travel 8 miles.

✓ Monday, May 27.--All safe in camp, and in fine spirits, and health. We were rolling out by 4 o'clock this morning when the wind commenced blowing from the north and turned suddenly very cold, which caused us to gather our blanket coats close around us; we traveled till seven o'clock, encamped for our breakfast. To-day we have been in sight, most of the time, of low scrubby pine on the high bluffs to our left, I suppose ten or twelve miles from the road. At 6 o'clock encamped for the night in sight ✓ of the Courthouse rock, which appears to be within three miles of you, but is really twelve. Traveled to-day 19 miles.

Tuesday, May 28.--Left camp this morning at 3 o'clock, traveled three hours, came to good water and halted to get our breakfast. At 8 o'clock we arrived opposite the Courthouse rock, about five miles distant. It has much the appearance at this distance of the courthouse at Louisville. At 4 o'clock camped for the night on the banks of the Platte, about two miles from the Chimney Rock. This remarkable curiosity has been in sight of us ever since yesterday at 12 o'clock. It derives its name from the resemblance it bears to a chimney. It is seven hundred feet in height, and in a clear day can be seen at a distance of forty miles. It is composed of soft white sand stone. The violent storms that have raged in this region, have worn it into this shape. The column that represents the chimney is crumbling away and fast disappearing. Thousands of persons who have passed here during the last year have engraved their names upon it. Soon after we encamped, darkness began to thicken around us, the elements had an angry appearance, the muttering thunder announced that a violent storm was approaching, and in about an hour the rain began to pour down in torrents, accompanied with a terrible wind from the north, so we locked both wheels

24 and all hands were called upon to tend the cattle lest there might be a stampede; in the course of five hours it cleared off and the moon was shining brightly. Traveled to-day 20 miles.

Wednesday, May 29.--We turned our cattle out to graze this morning at 2 o'clock, there being good grass and plenty of it, and hearing that we had to make twenty-two miles to-day without finding grass or water. We started by 6 o'clock, the roads this morning being very muddy and slippery after the hard rain last night. We find the roads strewn with "Flora sisters of the sod." Traveled to-day five hours found plenty of good grass, but no water, stopped to graze our cattle for two hours. Our oxen as well as ourselves, suffer much from the effects of buffalo gnats, which are very numerous in this country. After dinner we passed some ten ox teams under way who had started four days ahead of us from St. Joe. 6 o'clock arrived at the foot of Scott's bluff, it derives its name, as I have been informed by a trader who has been through here several times, from a noted mountaineer named Scott; he was seized with disease here and died, and was buried on the bluff. Here we found good grass but no water, and encamped for the night. Traveled to-day 24 miles.

Thursday, May 30.--Turned our cattle out at 2 o'clock to let them graze for a couple of hours. 4 o'clock we were under way in fine style. We stopped for breakfast at Robidoux's trading post, here we found a good spring of water, but grass scarce. We have been traveling up a deep valley for a number of miles after we had reached the extreme height of the bluffs, and from it we could see the first view of Laramie's peak, at a distance of 150 miles. As we descended the ridge we traveled over a barren country, broken by deep chasms and sloughs, hollowed out by the winds and water. 12 o'clock nooned about ten miles this side of the trading post, found poor grass and no water. When we passed the trading post this morning Mr. Jamison, a methodist preacher from Kentucky, who was accidentally shot by his own pistol, some time since was much worse and not expected to live, and I learn from a mule train that passed there about 10 o'clock, that he had died from the effects of the wound this morning. His family were all with him. 2 o'clock traveled some two hours and came to a ~~rapidly~~ running stream of water called Horse creek, here we watered our cattle and drove on some four miles, found good grass and turned our cattle out to graze. Here we cooked our suppers with buffalo chips. Supper over we traveled some two hours and camped for the night. Made to-day 23 miles over a good road.

Friday, May 31.--I was put on guard last night, from 12 till 4 and had orders by our captain to turn all hands out by 2 o'clock to make an early start. By 3 o'clock we were on our way rejoicing, and before the sun had risen we had left some 80 teams in our rear. At 6 o'clock we encamped on the south side of the north Platte, leaving it at Scott's bluff until we arrived here. The Platte river, which we have been ascending for a number of days, has dwindled down to any insignificant stream, it being

here not more than one hundred yards wide. Very warm day, and nothing to break the sun's rays but our wagons. 11 o'clock found good grass and turned our cattle out to graze for two hours. Passed many wagons abandoned and destroyed. 4 o'clock, encamped for the night on the banks of the north fork of the Platte, some four miles from Fort Laramie. To-day's travel 22 miles.

I here close my "inklings" of the past 18 days. You must excuse all errors, as I write seated upon a bucket, with a board on my knees, a candle in a lantern, with the wind blowing, and extremely cold.

Weaversville, Cal., Sept. 11th, 1850.

26 Saturday, June 1.--A clear sky and a pleasant morning. We were off by 4 o'clock, and after traveling for about an hour over a hilly road, came to a running stream of muddy water called Laramie river, about 100 yards wide, which we crossed with our teams, the water being up to the after axle. Fort Laramie lays on this stream, about one mile from its junction with the Platte. It is a great trading post, and has about twenty houses enclosed by a wall. It is very pleasantly located. The latitude of the Fort is $42^{\circ} 12' 13''$; longitude $104^{\circ} 11' 53''$; its altitude above the level of the ocean 4000 feet, and is in the midst of a beautiful plain. There are a number of mountain traders here, not rich, but having a fine prospect of accumulating fortunes. They are as keen on a trade as any Yankee wooden nutmeg or clock pedlar you may meet with in the States. I will give you some of their prices: Sugar 25 cents [per] lb., badon sides 18c, hams 25c, flour \$18 [per] cwt., loaf-bread 50 cts. [per] loaf, whiskey one dollar [per] quart, brandy \$18 [per] gallon, &c., &c. After leaving here we begin to cross the Black Hills, and find rough roads, high ridges, and generally a barren country. At 5 o'clock in the evening we encamped for the night on the North Fork of the Platte, where we leave it and do not again strike it for 80 miles. We traveled to-day 14 miles.

Sunday, June 2.--We left camp this morning at 4 o'clock and for three hours traveled over rough, rocky ridges. At 7 o'clock we encamped for breakfast, having plenty of good wood and water. At 11 o'clock we were within a few miles of Laramie's Peak, which has been visible for several days. The top of the Peak is covered with snow and presents a most beautiful appearance. At 4 o'clock this afternoon we met four gule teams from the Salt Lake, which had been out six weeks. They report plenty of grass, wood, and water all the way through. They met the first train of emigrants at the Valley. At 5 P. M., we encamped for the night on the side of a high bluff, having traveled this day 20 miles.

27 Monday, June 3.--We rolled out this morning at 3 o'clock, after a severe storm of rain and hail, making the road very slippery for our cattle. At noon we stopped some two hours in a deep valley where we found good grass and water. Here Mr. Burgange, of Louisville, caught up with our train. At 4 P. M., we were compelled to stop on account of the violence of a storm of wind, rain, and hail, the weather as cold as the month of January in the States. As soon as the violence of the storm subsided, we again proceeded to our present camp, as wet as drowned rats. The boys say this is a brush of the elephant's tail. We made 20 miles to-day over a rough road.

Tuesday, June 4.--Two months from home, sweet home, and all safe in camp, in fine health and spirits. The morning was cold enough to wrap ourselves up in our blankets. After partaking of a hearty breakfast we take our station in an ox train some three miles in length. At 10 o'clock we came to a stream of running water, still in view of the snow-capped Peak of Laramie, which looks within five miles of you, but is in reality fifty. At 4 o'clock we stopped for the night, cooking our supper with sage brush. Here we coupled our wagon sixteen inches shorter, which makes a difference in running equal to two yoke of cattle. Traveled to-day 19 miles over hills and rough roads.

Wednesday, June 5.--We gathered our blanket coats about us, and were off into train by 4 O'clock. This morning we came to a small stream of clear water called A La Prele. We also met a Mormon train five days out from the Great Salt Lake. Fouche-Bois is the name of a small river which we crossed, the current of which is very rapid. We again came to the North Fork of the Platte, traveled up it about five miles, and encamped for the night at Deer Creek, where we found wood and water, but no grass. To-day we made 22 miles over hilly roads.

Thursday, June 6.--Left our encampment at 3 O'clock and at 4 passed five wagons from New Albany in camp. At 7 we stopped for breakfast on the banks of the Platte, about twenty-five miles from the upper ferry, where we learn there are nine hundred wagons waiting to cross. The sun was oppressively hot, and we stopped at 1 o'clock at Crooked Muddy creek, a very difficult place to cross with a wagon.

28 We again stopped for the night on the banks of the Platte, having traveled 16 miles.

Friday, June 7.--We were on the road by 6 o'clock, having taken our breakfast before starting. At 10 A. M., we reached the ferry and found about two hundred wagons ahead of us. We waited till evening before it came to our turn. It requires but a very short time to cross. There are three boats constantly running, which take nothing but the wagons, leaving the animals to swim the river. The fare for ferrying a wagon is four dollars. At 3 o'clock we arrived over in safety, yoked up our cattle, traveled four miles further, found good grass, pitched our tents for the night, cooked our supper with wild sage and buffalo chips, having made sixteen miles. Having found, however, that we should have to go twenty-eight miles further before we should find water for our cattle, we concluded to make a short drive after night. The water on this part of our route, for some thirty miles, is strongly alkaline, and kills all the cattle that drink it.

Saturday, June 8.--After a night of sound sleep, we found ourselves on the road by 3 o'clock, passing some sixty teams. We found grass but no water, and the weather being very hot and the road dusty, our cattle suffered considerably. At 11 o'clock we reached a place called Rock Avenue, steep descent, and gave our cattle some water which we had brought with us from the Platte. The poor animals were almost ready to drop dead from fatigue and thirst. Our drive to-day has been over undulating plains, covered with a thick growth of wild sage, but containing no grass whatever. The soil and water of the country through which we are now traveling are impregnated with alkali, salt, and sulphur [sic], rendering water dangerous and unfit for use. I saw to-day sixteen skeletons of cattle that had died last year from drinking this alkaline water, all within two steps of one another. At 1 o'clock we arrived at a running stream of pure cold water, which was a cheering sight to both ourselves and cattle. After a heavy drag of seven hours over rocky roads and under a scorching sun, we all partook freely of the pure and welcome beverage. At 5 o'clock we encamped for the night on the summit of Prospect Hill. Here I caught the first glimpse of the Sweet Water Mountains. From here we can see a week's travel in advance of us, and the Sweet Water Mountains raising their bold, rocky faces at the distance of sixty miles. To-day we made 24 miles.

Sunday, June 9.--We rolled out this morning at 3 o'clock, and arrived at our present encampment at 2 P. M. We are now on the banks of the Sweet Water river, a small stream of clear water, twenty yards wide, with a very swift current. The country is quite barren and grass very short; no wood, even for culinary purposes, our substitute for which is wild sage and buffalo chips. Near this point are several small lakes, the water of which has evaporated, leaving deposits or incrustations of carbonate of soda. They resemble ponds of frozen water. Several trains of emigrants have here supplied themselves with saleratus for culinary purposes. Traveled to-day 16 miles.

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Monday, June 10.--Left our encampment this morning at 3 o'clock, and after an hour's travel came to the Independence Rock. This is the greatest curiosity I have seen on the route. It is composed of pure granite, covers at its base about one hundred acres, and is two hundred and fifty feet in height.--Several thousand names are engraved and painted on this rock. At 7 o'clock we rolled out in company--Richey and Woodfill, R. R. Stevens & Co., Burgange & Co., and Sawdon & Co., of Ky. We are in sight of the mountains on the left, covered with snow. Ten o'clock brought us to a point called the Devil's Gate, a remarkable fissure in the Rocky Mountain wall. Here the Sweet Water river passes between perpendicular rocks four hundred feet high. The fissure is about fifty feet in breadth, and the height of the walls from the top to the bottom is upwards of four hundred and fifty feet. The mountains at our present encampment, (just above the Gate, on the banks of the Sweet Water) are plainly to be seen, being covered with snow. We traveled to-day 10 miles over a good road.

Tuesday, June 11.--Troubled all last night with the jaw ache and this morning find my face swollen as big as a peck measure, but able to do duty at breakfast. Our journey this day was still in the valley of the Sweet Water, having traveled up it some fifty miles; the country is quite barren, though it is better here than we have seen since leaving Fort Laramie. Traveled 20 miles to-day on a loose, sandy road, and somewhat hilly. It is astonishing how ox teams can travel. They will pass now twenty miles per day with more ease than they would sixteen the day we left the Bluffs. Their feet have been very sore, but traveling in the hot sand has greatly improved them.

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Wednesday, June 12.--We were up and on our way by 5 o'clock this morning, and found our blanket coats very comfortable. At 10 we arrived at the second crossing of the Sweet Water river, and finding it too high to ford, we took our provisions out of our wagon, and stretching a rope across the river, we ferried our things across in a little less than no time. By 1 o'clock we had repaired our loss and got our dinners. After traveling about a mile up the bank of the river, we came to another crossing, where we again had to ferry. Here we were compelled to carry all our things by hand a quarter of a mile over a cliff of rocks and through a pass barely large enough for one person to rub through. We took the running gears of our wagon all apart, and ferried them up the river on our bed, by means of a long rope stretching some distance up the river; after which we carried them up by hand before the rocky pass. We got our things safely over by 6 o'clock, all of us pretty well tired out. In an hour we had all our goods re-packed, and traveled some five miles by moonlight to make up for lost time, having, by taking this course, cut off some eight miles of deep sandy road on the old route. Mr. Lindley and his train had crossed the river just before us, and after driving up to the pass and taking a view of the elephant, concluded to go back and take the old road. At 11 o'clock we encamped for the night in a large ravine, where we found good grass and water. Here we saw several Indian wigwams in the distance of the Snake and Crow tribes. Came to-day 18 miles.

Thursday, June 13.--We got our breakfast by 5 o'clock, and at 7 reached the fourth crossing of the Sweet Water river. Here we were blessed with a much better crossing than either of the others. We drove our teams in and found the river in fine style, the water being up to the beds of our wagon, but which having been wet the day before, were now perfectly tight. Here we leave the Sweet Water for twenty miles, in which distance there is no water; we therefore filled our kegs. We now descended a high hill from the river, Mr. Lindley's train being just in advance of us. At 5 in the evening we came to the fifth crossing of Sweet Water, which we forded without difficulty, the water being up to our axles. At 7 o'clock we encamped for the night in a deep ravine, the poorest place for grass we have found on the whole route. Traveled to-day 24 miles.

Friday, June 14.--We rolled out this morning by 6 o'clock, the weather being as cold as a January morning. In a couple of hours we again struck the Sweet Water, where we found tolerable grass, and turned our cattle out to graze. After having hitched up and traveling for about an hour we once more struck the Sweet Water, which seemed to haunt us as an evil genius. On leaving the river, we travel over miserable, rough, rocky roads, very dangerous to wagons. At 12 we passed Lindley nooning in a ravine, and in an hour after stopped ourselves. The weather to-day is very disagreeable, a violent cold wind blowing from the north. The mountains on our right, which I suppose to be some twenty miles distant, and which are about six thousand feet above the pass, and are covered with snow; and what is more astonishing is, that there is snow now in the valley, within view. Yesterday, while stopping at noon, I was on a bank of snow in the Sweet

32 Water valley from eight to twelve feet deep. We traveled on till 5 o'clock, and encamped for the night on the banks of a small stream of running water called Strawberry creek. We made 16 miles to-day.

Saturday, June 15.--Cold, with a violent wind blowing from the snowy mountains, rendering the atmosphere raw and uncomfortable. We all rose shivering from our slumbers this morning. We found ice to the thickness of half an inch in our water buckets. Ready for a start by 6 o'clock, and after traveling six miles, came to Sweet Water, which we forded and traveled up its valley till 11 o'clock, where, finding good grass, we stopped. At 1 we were again on our way, still descending the slope of the mountains, the air as cold as in the depth of winter at home. At 6 we halted, found good grass, and grazed our cattle. We are now in about two miles of the summit of the dividing ridge between the waters of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. It being a beautiful night, we concluded to go through the pass by moonlight. At 9 o'clock we arrived at the Pacific Springs, traveled through the pass for an hour over a good road, and encamped for the night at the Springs, having made to-day 19 miles.