

THE 1852 OVERLAND DIARY
OF
J. H. BERESFORD

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Independence, Missouri

Thursday, May 13th, 1852: We left Independence in Missouri with two ox teams for California, a company of nine persons. Teams all in good condition and all well. Traveled eleven miles and encamped on the Little Blue. Water, wood and grass very good, fine weather.

Friday, May 14: This day we traveled some two miles to the Big Blue and forded it at an excellent ford. 5 miles from this place we came to the line between the lands of the State of Missouri and the Indians. We are now on a beautiful high rolling prairie. Two miles from the line, we encamped and laid by for the day. An abundance of wood, water, and grass. Weather still fine.

Saturday, 15: Left our encampment and continued our journey of some sixteen miles. Encamped near a grove of timber two miles from the road on the bank of a small stream. This evening had a severe storm and a great deal of rain.

Sunday, 16th: Laid by all day.

Monday 17th: Started again on our journey. Traveled over a beautiful country but little on the road. Encamped on the bank of Bull Creek. In the evening our cattle ran off. Followed them about two miles and brought them back.

Tuesday, 18th: Started again on our journey. Two miles from our encampment, crossed Bull Creek and continued our journey over a beautiful prairie (crossing several small streams) to the Wakarusa, a considerable stream which we forded. At this place, there are a number of Indians who have comfortable houses and considerable farms. After crossing we traveled one mile through timber and then descended a high prairie ridge. Encamped to the left of the road. Excellent grass and water but no wood. Rained some this evening.

Wednesday, 19th: Continued our journey through a beautiful country. Traveled about 18 miles and encamped at five o'clock on the head waters of a small tributary of the Kansas. All are in good health. Water, wood and grass are good. The weather clear, the nights are very cold. Today met 15 wagons returning having been discouraged on account of so many going across the plains.

Thursday, 20th: Continued our journey 12 miles to the Kansas River. In this country there are a number of Indians. _____. The Indians are living in comfortable houses and farm considerable land. Crossed the Kansas on a flat boat and traveled 4 miles to

a large Slough of the river. Encamped. Water and grass good but very little wood. Went a-fishing and caught three fine fish. An appearance of rain.

Friday, 21st: It has rained almost all night preceding. Our wagon covers turn the water equal to a shingle roof with _____. This morning I did not get any breakfast till near ten o'clock. When it eased raining then we got up our cattle and started our journey. In 5 miles, came to Meission Creek, crossed on a bridge and traveled out onto the high prairie about 5 miles and encamped to the right of the road. Grass and water and wood plenty.

Saturday, 22nd: This morning an appearance of rain. Continued our journey. Roads vary bad. Traveled about 10 miles and encamped on a small creek. This evening the boys went a-fishing and caught a number of small fish. It has been cloudy all day but an appearance of clearing off in the evening. The grass, water and wood are very good.

Sunday, 23rd: Lay by all day and unloaded our wagons to air out things. Gathered a considerable quantity of goose berries and had some excellent pies. All are in good health. This day has been very warm.

Monday, 24th: Started on our journey. Crossed a small tributary of the Vermilion and 4 miles from there crossed the Vermilion and traveled 15 miles to Rock Creek, a beautiful stream of clear water. Crossed it and traveled 1 1/2 miles and encamped on a small spring branch. This evening Byres Wright and myself stopped back to (fish). I caught two fine cat fish and a large (gar?). All in good health. This day has been very fine, plenty of water, wood and grass.

Tuesday, 25th: Started on our journey. Traveled over a high broken prairie - roads very good - 10 miles, and stopped to noon. Byres and I started ahead to the Vermilion to fish. I caught one very fine fish. The wagons came up at five o'clock and crossed the stream and traveled 1 mile and encamped. Traveled about 18 miles today. Passed one new grave. Were told that four men died yesterday with Cholera at this place. We encamped on a small branch near the road. Water and grass are good but wood is rather scarce. There has been no rain today but there is a appearance of rain this evening.

Wednesday, 26th: This morning it commenced raining at daylight and rained hard for an hour. When it ceased and we got our breakfasts and started on our journey. Traveled 14 miles to the Blue which we forded and took wood and water with us intending to encamp on the hills. Traveled 5 miles and encamped in a prairie hollow. Grass good, wood and water rather scarce. We are now within 7 miles of the junction of Jo (St Jo?) and Independence Road.

Thursday, 27th: Started on our journey. Traveled 3 miles and came to the St. Jo. road. Saw a great many teams. 3 miles from this place we stopped and nooned.

Traveled six miles farther and encamped to the left of road on a little branch. Grass, water and wood plenty.

Friday, 28th: Started this morning at 6 o'clock. Traveled about twenty miles over an excellent road and encamped in the evening to the left of the road on a small _____. We saw a grave close to where we encamped, a man from Missouri who died the day before.

Monday, 31st: This morning started on our journey. Passed a great many wagons encamped and almost all the companies we passed had more or less sicknesses among them. This evening there was a lady buried near where we were encamped. Today, saw a gentleman from Pennsylvania who lost his wife a day ago and was driving his team and trying to amuse his child, a babe of four or five months old. Came to the Blue miles from where we encamped yesterday. Traveled up the same (The Blue) 18 miles and encamped near the creek. Water, wood, and grass good. Very warm today.

June 1st, 1852: Started once more on our journey. This day traveled ___ miles up the valley of the Blue. Passed ___ in the afternoon 78 wagons. At 5 o'clock, encamped on the bank of the Blue, twenty or twenty-two miles from where we started in the morning. The weather fine but warm. Grass, water and wood plenty.

Wednesday, 2nd: Continued our journey up the valley of the Blue several miles and left it. Traveled over high rolling prairies towards the Platte. Encamped at night without water or wood. Had a severe storm at night.

Thursday, 3rd: Continued our journey. In four miles came to the valley of the Platte. Traveled up the river to Fort Kearney. Passed the Fort some two miles - encamped. Water poor and wood hard to get. Weather fine.

Friday, 4th: This morning Mr. Knight returned to the Fort with some letters which we had written the last evening. Whilst the teams continued on up the river valley, stopped to noon some twelve miles from the Fort. We are now in sight of the Council Bluffs road. Some persons had discovered a ford at this place. Some of the immigrants are crossing over to the north side of the Platte. Went and examined the ford and concluded to cross as the emigration is not so large on the north as on the south. The ford is deep; had to block up our wagons near a foot. We crossed two wagons this evening. One of them came uncoupled in the river and the loading all got wet. We got it tied together again as well as we could and drove out. Encamped on the bank of the river too late to return for the other two. Teams grass is good, water plenty, no wood but what we brought with us. Weather is fine.

Saturday the 5th: (written up to _____?). Some of our men returned to bring the other two teams. Mr. Wright went with them. When about midway across the river he gave out and two of us went to him and assisted him out at nine o'clock. The teams returned with our last wagons all safe. Started from the bank of river. Traveled 6 miles

and encamped near a small creek at noon. In the evening there came up a thunder storm. When we yoked up and crossed the creek least water should rise and prevent our crossing of the river. George Bryes¹ was taken sick. Grass and wood good.

Sunday 6th: Lay by all day. Some little rain, cold damp wind. Byres is still very sick.

Monday 7th: Started on our journey. Byres continued to grow worse. Called a doctor to see him. Told us we must stop or the man would die. Found a camping place and stopped. Had traveled some four miles. Gave the medicine as directed. In the morning he got better. This day has been fine. Grass and wood plenty - water not very good.

Tuesday 8th: This morning our sick man is able to travel. This day has been fine. Traveled some 18 miles and encamped on the banks of the Platte. Plenty of grass, water and mosquitoes - no wood.

Wednesday 9th: Continued our journey up the Valley of the Platte River. Roads are excellent and the weather fine. Today, traveled some 21 miles. Encamped in the evening 1 mile from the River. Grass good - no wood but an abundance of buffalo chips.

Thursday the 10th: Continued our journey up the stream. Crossed a number of small streams and encamped in the evening near one of the finest springs of cold water I ever saw. Weather fine - grass bad fuel - buffalo chips.

Friday 11th: This morning started at 5 o'clock. Traveled over a fine road. Encamped near the river. Grass good and weather fine. Our sick man getting well.

Saturday 12th: Started again on our journey. Cross a number of small streams and some sandy roads. Encamped near a small spring branch. Grass very poor - weather fine.

Sunday 13th: Concluded to travel today as the grass is very poor. Started at 6 o'clock. Traveled 19 miles and crossed a number small streams. Encamped at 3 o'clock on Sandy Creek. Grass and water good. This evening has a thunder storm but not much rain.

Monday 14: Continued our journey. The roads are excellent and the weather fine. Traveled 24 miles and encamped on the banks of the Platte. Grass poor.

Tuesday 15th: This morning started half past five. Crossed Quick Sand Creek and traveled up the Platte some 18 miles. Came to low bluffs, crossed them and traveled 8 miles farther. Encamped near (no name given) creek. Grass good, water clear and cold weather fine. One of our men taken sick this afternoon.

¹ Author spells his companion's name as Bryes and Byres.

Wednesday 16th: Continued our journey. In six miles we came to Cobble Stone Bluffs from which we could see the Court House and Chimney Rock in the distance. Crossed over and traveled up the river. Encamped one mile from the river. Traveled 22 miles today. Grass good, no water, weather fine.

Thursday 17th: Started once more on our journey. Traveled 8 miles and crossed (low down by) bluffs one mile to the river. Traveled up the river 18 miles and encamped 3 miles above Chimney Rock near the river. Grass good. This evening we had a severe thunder storm and some hail.

Friday 18th: Today lay by. Our sick man is getting better. The weather is fine.

Saturday 19th: Pursued our journey. In 18 miles came opposite Scott's Bluff and at 7 o'clock encamped 1 mile from Cold Creek. Traveled 23 miles. Weather fine, grass indifferent.

Sunday 20th: Continued our journey. Traveled until 10 o'clock or some 12 miles and lay by on account of our sick man. Encamped near the River on excellent grass. The weather fine but very warm.

Monday 21st: Started once more on our journey. Our sick man not much better. Traveled on a good road 17 miles and stopped at 2 o'clock to water our cattle and get some dinner. Started again in an hour. Traveled 5 miles and encamped to the left of road near the river. Plenty of wood and water. Grass not very good. This day has been fine but the evening it commenced raining and from appearances will be a wet night.

Tuesday 22nd: Started early this morning as our sick man is anxious to get to the Fort. Arrived at the opposite to the Fort. Stopped and watered our cattle and left our sick man. Continued our journey 10 miles farther, most of the way through a mountain country to a dry creek. Grass good and wood plenty. Carried water one mile from an excellent spring. This day has been fine but rained in the night.

Wednesday 23rd: Started this morning at a half past five. Commenced raining directly after starting. Rained half the day. The roads very mountainous. In 8 miles came to the river and left it again. Stopped to noon and then pursued our journey. Encamped on a high prairie 1 mile West of Alder Springs. Grass not good. Traveled 18 miles to day. All well.

Thursday 24th, 1852: Started this morning. Traveled twenty-five minutes before six. Traveled over two small creeks. The roads are very good. Commenced raining directly after we started. Encamped two miles from the river. Grass plenty, no wood nor water.

Friday 25th: Started this morning at half past five. Traveled most of the time in sight of

the river and over some rough roads. Encamped in the evening on the hills two miles from the river where we found good grass in a small ravine. Went out a-hunting and killed a porcupine. No water or wood. Weather fine.

Saturday, June the 26th, 1852: This morning started at half passed (five). The road for five miles very rugged and mountainous. Descended to the river traveling in sight most of the way. Encamped on a dry creek two miles from the river. Excellent grass but not much water. Sage for fuel. Weather fine. Traveled 18 miles today.

Sunday 27th: Today lay-by to rest our cattle. Some of the boys went hunting to day and killed an antelope and brought it into camp. This day has been fine until evening when it rained a small shower.

Monday 28th of June, 1852: This morning got started at our usual time. The road tolerably good. Came to the river at 10 o'clock. Watered our cattle and continued our journey. Passed the lower ferry and traveled up the river. Encamped 1 mile from the river. Drove our cattle up on the hills 1 mile from camp. This day has been fine. Traveled 18 miles. All well.

Tuesday 29th: Continued our journey, most of the time in sight of the river. Passed the middle ferry at 10 o'clock. Came to the upper ferry. At 10 o'clock, watered our teams and filled up our kegs with water and left the Platte River for the last time. In 13 miles from river, encamped near a small lake. This day has been fine. Grass is very poor. Sage for fuel, water bad.

Wednesday 30th: Started this morning at half past five. Traveled over a fine road 16 miles to the wells. Watered our stock and crossed Prospect Hill and drove 3 miles off to the left of road to a small ravine where we found good (author missed a word here) and water. Stopped at five o'clock.

Thursday, July the first, 1852: Started this morning at half past five. A good road part of the way, part of the road sandy. Crossed Sage Creek and at 3 o'clock came to Independence Rock. 1 mile above this, cross the Sweet Water River. Encamped five miles above this place at the Devils Gate on the river. Drove our cattle (1) mile and a (half) south of the road. Grass poor, water and fuel plenty. Rained a little this evening.

Friday the 2nd: Started this morning at our usual time. Traveled near the river. Great part of the day. Some of the road very sandy. Encamped late in the evening on Cottonwood Creek, two miles south of the river. Drove our cattle two miles farther up the creek to good grass, fuel plenty. Carried water from the river. Traveled 24 miles today. Weather fine.

Saturday July the 3rd of 1852: Started early this morning. Six and 1/2 miles came to the river and forded it and in the next 2 miles, forded it twice more. Here, left the river for 7 miles. Passed the place where we spent our fourth of July, 1849 and came to the river. Forded it again and drove 3 miles up the river. Found good grass.

Encamped on the banks of the Sweet Water. Traveled 18 miles to day. Weather fine. All well.

Sunday July 4th, 1852: lay-by today to rest ourselves and cattle. It has been very windy all day. In the evening it rained some. The Wind River Mountains in sight - covered with everlasting snow. I have been quite unwell. The rest of the party are in good health.

Monday 5th: Started this morning at 6 o'clock. Part of the road today has been very sandy and a part very gravelly and hard on the cattle's feet. Three miles from where we started, came to the Ice Springs, a mushy piece of ground where ice may be found at any season of the year by digging from six inches to two feet below the surface. Fourteen miles from this place came to the river again. Forded it and passed over a high ridge, four miles to the river and South Pass at 1 o'clock and encamped at the Pacific Springs at 2 o'clock. Grass very poor. Water and fuel plenty. This day has been very cold and windy.

Thursday, July 8th: Started this morning at 1/2 past 5 o'clock. 9 miles from this, we crossed the Dry Sandy, took the Salt Lake road and in 8 miles came to the Little Sandy. Encamped and drove our cattle 3 miles to the bluffs to grass. Water and fuel plenty. Grass not very good. This day has been fine.

Friday 9th: Started this morning at six o'clock. In 8 1/2 miles we came to the Big Sandy which we crossed and continued our journey to the river again 17 miles from where we crossed it. Encamped on the banks of river. Drove our cattle to the hills. Plenty of bunch grass, water and fuel. This day has been fine.

Saturday 10th: This morning started at 5 o'clock so as to get to Green River before other teams. We left the Salt Lake road at this point and took a new route called the Kinney Cut-off which crosses Green River 10 miles above the Mormon Ferry and strikes the California road again near Blue River avoiding Sublette's desert. Got to the ferry at 3 o'clock. Crossed our teams and traveled up the river two miles and encamped near the river. Grass, water and wood plenty. This day has been fine.

Sunday the 11th: Lay-by today to rest our teams. Some of the boys went fishing and caught some fine fish. It rained a little this afternoon. All well.

Monday 12th: Started again on our journey. Traveled over an excellent road some 22 miles. Encamped on a high prairie ridge. Drove our cattle off to the right into a ravine. Grass and water good.

Tuesday 13th: This morning started again on our journey over a very hilly road for some miles. Came to the junction of Sublett's and Kinney's cutoffs. Traveled 17 miles and encamped at 3 o'clock on Hamms Fork of Green River. Went fishing and caught a number of fine trout. This evening had one of the hardest hail storms I ever saw. Grass, water and wood abundant.

Wednesday 14th: Started this morning at 7 o'clock. In 4 miles, came to mountain peak. Traveled over some of the most hilly roads today we have traveled over since leaving the States. Encamped within 10 miles of Bear River in the mountains. Grass and wood plenty and a spring of good water. This day has been fine.

Thursday 15th: Started this morning at 6 o'clock. In 5 miles came to a creek and in 9 miles more came to Smith's Fork of Bear River. Crossed it and continued our journey 7 miles and encamped on the banks of Bear River. Grass, water and wood plenty.

Friday 16th: This morning started at five o'clock. In 4 miles came to Thomas's Fork of Bear River. Crossed on a bridge and continued our journey over a very hilly road, 7 miles to the river again and then 7 miles to (Taller's) Creek. Took water and wood. Traveled 1 mile towards the bluffs. Encamped. Grass good.

Saturday 17th: This morning we started at 6 o'clock. Myself and a gentleman by the name of Sharp stopped back to fish. We fished until 1 o'clock and then overtook our teams at night 21 miles from where we started in the morning. Encamped on the banks of Bear River. Grass, water and wood plenty.

Sunday 18th: Lay-by to rest out cattle. The boys have caught a large number of small fish in the river today. The weather fine all week.

Monday 19th: Started this morning early. In 10 1/2 miles we came to the Soda Springs. Stopped a few minutes to see them and get a drink. Continued on our journey. In 4 miles came to the junction of Fort Hall and California roads and from thence to Mountain Willow Creek, 3 miles. Encamped at 7 o'clock. Grass and water and wood plenty.

Tuesday 20th: Started this morning at six. Our road lay over high hills rocky and rough crossing several small streams of good water. 7 miles to branch of Ponnak River and thence 3 miles to main river and thence 9 miles to Valley Marsh Creek where the teams encamped at 5 PM. Grass and water plenty. Fuel, wild sage. In the morning directly after the teams started, myself and two others left the teams and followed down Mountain Willow Creek some 4 miles to Ponnak River for the purpose of fishing. This stream is one of the most beautiful streams in the mountains and abounds in trout. We fished half the day and caught near 60 lbs of fish. There was 37 caught by the party. 29 of them had the good luck total. They would weigh from 1/2 to 2 lbs each. Over took our teams at sun down.

Wednesday 21st: This morning started at our usual time. Our road lay over a plain several miles and ascended a mountain ravine to the summit. 1/2 way down the west side came to spring of good water, 8 1/2 miles from where we started in the morning. Now crossed several small (streams) of good water. In 7 miles came to muddy Willow Creek. Water not very good - crossing bad and in 8 miles came to Gravel Creek. Encamped at dark. Grass and water good, fuel sage and hard to get..

Thursday 22d: This morning started a few minutes before 7 am. Road lay over the ridges and ravines for some distance and then gradually ascended a mountain 7 miles to the summit and one mile down the steepest and roughest road we have had on the rout and thence 17 miles over a good road to the first water, a number of springs and small creek. This is the longest stretch on the rout without water except the Humboldt Desert. Encamped at 9 PM. Grass plenty two miles north of the springs. Wild sage for fuel.

Friday 23d: This morning started at 8 o'clock . Road good. In 7 miles came to a spring. Watered our cattle and nooned. In 3 miles more, came to summit of mountain and spring on the west side of mountain and thence 6 miles down a ravine to another spring of good water. Encamped at the spring. Drove our cattle back into a ravine. Grass good, wood plenty.

Saturday 24th: Started this morning at 6 AM. Traveled down a small creek 9 miles to the valley of Raft River and thence 12 miles to the East Branch of Raft River over a dry dusty road. We camped 1 mile above the ford on the west side of the creek. Grass, water and wood abundant.

Sunday 25th: Lay-by today to rest our teams. It is very warm and thundering in the south-west. Will tell you this evening whether it rains or not. All are in good health. The sun has just gone down in glory behind the western hills. No rain.

Monday 26th: This morning started at 6 AM. In 7 miles came to the west branch of Raft River. Forded it and continued up the north side to a small branch of good water 3 miles from the ford. Nooned and continued our journey 5 miles further to the second ford of the river. Crossed back to the south side and left it. Encamped 2 miles miles from the ford. Grass, water and wood plenty. Myself and Mr. Wright went fishing in the afternoon and caught some 40 or 50 trout. We are all in good health. The weather is very fine.

Tuesday 27th: Continued our journey. In 7 miles came to a small creek and in 3 miles farther another. 2 miles farther a larger one. Nooned here and in 3 miles farther came to Mountain Creek, a small stream surrounded by rocks of every shape. In 5 miles farther came to junction of Salt Lake and California roads and 3 miles farther came to a small branch. Encamped late in the evening. Grass, water and wood plenty.

Wednesday the 28th: Started this morning at our usual time. In a few miles, commenced ascending Goose Creek range of mountains. Came to a spring of good water and a few miles farther another and 8 miles from where we stated, a small creek where we nooned. In 3 miles more, came to Goose Creek. Traveled up 1 mile and encamped. Grass, water and wood plenty.

Thursday 29th: Started this morning at our usual time. One head of our cattle missing. A party of our boys stayed back to look for it. Our road lay up the valley of the creek.

Stopped to noon at 11 AM. The boys came up with the last steer. We encamped some 17 miles from where we started in the morning at the forks of Goose Creek. Turned our cattle up the north fork of the creek. Grass abundant, wood and water plenty.

Friday the 30th: Started this morning at 6 AM. Continued our journey up the south fork of the creek. Crossed it twice. Road rough and rocky. Left the creek and struck grass at the highlands. 12 miles to Rock Springs in Thousand Spring Valley. Watered our teams and took on water for cooking purposes. Traveled 5 miles farther and encamped. Drove our cattle 1 mile east towards the bluffs where we found an abundance of bunch grass. This evening it rained some.

Saturday the 31st.: On the road this morning at 6 AM. In 21 miles came to some natural wells of good water. Watered our cattle and continued our journey some 7 1/2 miles to Warm Springs Valley. Our roads are as fine as any we have traveled over. Continued our journey up this valley without any good water until 12 PM we came to a collection of springs and an abundance of grass. Lay-by for the rest of the day. The boys went 2 miles to the bluffs for wood where they obtained a supply of dry cedar.

Sunday August 1st.: This day lay-by to rest our cattle and ourselves. Mr. Marshal and company (passed us) this morning though we did not know it until after he had passed. The weather is very warm. It rained a considerable shower last evening.

Monday 2nd: This morning we started at 6 AM. Traveled some 10 miles; passed a collection of hot springs and encamped 1 mile above them at a spring of cold sulphur water. Lay-by for the rest of the day. An abundance of excellent grass. We purposed laying-by a part of every day during this week as the grass is very fine and some of our cattle are tender footed.

Tuesday 3rd.: Started at our usual time. Traveled 7 miles to the head of the valley and an excellent spring of water here. We ascended the mountains and crossed over 2 1/2 miles (which) brought us to the valley on the west side and 6 miles more came to Canon Creek (sic). Encamped at 1 PM at a spring of good cold water and the best of grass. Lay-by for the rest of the day.

Wednesday 4th: Started this morning at six o'clock. Traveled down the valley some 3 miles. Came to the canon, one of the rockiest and roughest pieces of road yet found On the (route). Some six miles brought us to the valley of the Humboldt and good grass, It rained all forenoon. Encamped at 1 (PM). Lay-by for the rest of the day.

Thursday the 5th: Continued our journey down the valley. Encamped at 3 PM. Grass and water plenty.

Friday 6th, 1852: Continued our journey. In 3 or 4 miles came to a small creek. Crossed it and continued down the valley until noon when we encamped and lay-by for the rest of the day. An abundance of the best of grass, plenty of wood and water

Saturday 7th: Started this morning at 6 AM. Traveled down the river until noon. Stopped and nooned. Crossed the North Fork of Mary's River and continued our journey some 6 miles farther over rolling lands and encamped on the south side of the river. Grass, water and wood abundant.

Sunday the 8th: Lay-by to rest our teams.

Monday 9th: Started this morning at six AM. In two miles we recrossed the river to the north side and continued our journey over a good road in sight of the river. Encamped near the river. Grass and wood plenty.

(Diary ends here)