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TALES OF THE PIONEERS OF THE  
KANKAKEE

TAKEN FROM THE DIARY OF

HENRY S. BLOOM

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A series of articles arranged by Burt E. Burroughs  
and published in the Kankakee Daily Republic, Kankakee,  
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Typed by the Library from a copy of the newspaper  
articles in the possession of Ruby Loring Gissell,  
2754 Marshall Way, Sacramento, granddaughter of Henry  
S. Bloom. Original diary is in the possession of his  
three daughters, Mrs. Hilda Monty, Miss Inez Bloom and  
Mrs. Margaret B. Walkley, 169 South Wildwood Avenue,  
Kankakee, Illinois.

1935

This little book records faithfully without the solitary lapse of a day, impressions of the great west in 1850, before there was a railroad, when the thundering herd reigned supreme, when Indian villages moved free and untrammelled on the outskirts of the herds of buffalo, when the only white inhabitants were the hardy, pioneer-broken French coureur de bois.

One handles this little ragged specimen almost reverently. It seems like something with the human entity - its voice still tells a story of mingled hardships, adventure, romance, homesickness and hard times generally. This little book has the seal of nightly camp-fire upon it and bears the scars of adventurous days of travel in a country rough, new and unsettled. Where the trains today flash across this portion of the country bearing the traveler from the middle west to the Pacific, this book records that this trip with cattle and horses required FIVE MONTHS AND FIFTEEN DAYS to complete as far back as 80 years ago! The starting point of this trip was Joliet, Illinois. The objective, Greenwood, in Greenwood Valley, California, whither David Bloom, father of Henry Sterling Bloom had gone in 1849. Matteson on his return from California was elected

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BLOOM'S DIARY OF OVERLAND TRIP TO CALIFORNIA IN 1850.

Sunday, 7 - Arrived at Joliet at 11 o'clock. Very warm and rainy in the evening. Took a stage through the town and

MARCH, 1850 - PART ONE.

Saturday, 30 - Left home for California, Oh, how hard to leave the wife, children and sisters and the dear old mother, for it seems that I shall never see them again! Staid at the home of Henry Broee, (Joliet) the night of the 30th of March; paid him \$90 towards carrying me through to California.



## TALES OF THE PIONEERS ON THE KANKAKEE.

The interesting tale of the trials and adventures of a California gold seeker in 1850, as taken from the

diary of Henry S. Bloom.

Arranged by BURT E. Burroughs

Miss Edith Bloom placed in the hands of the writer the post-humous writing of her father, Henry S. Bloom, well remembered as one of the earliest of the pioneer families of Rockville. We are indebted to this staunch pioneer for many an interesting allusion to the past as it concerns Kankakee county and city. He was a close observer and interesting writer. Among these papers was a small, leather-covered pocket memorandum book, much thumbed and scarred, its pages yellowed by time, tattered and dog-eared, yet whose closely written in lead pencil still preserved wonderously clear and distinct the vital facts of a trip from the valley of the Illinois to the valley of the Sacramento, in distant California, as recorded by him. The starting point of this trip was Joliet, Illinois.

This little book proved to be a veritable diamond in the rough. It is a human interest document of unusual value. It records faithfully from day to day those things of interest in an overland trip of near to three thousand miles in a day when Fort Laramie epitomized the west, when Fort Bridger arose vaguely in the public mind as the spot near which the overland trail split, the right-hand trail leading to Oregon, the left-hand trail to the gold fields of distant California. It was a day when Salt Lake City, of the Mormons, seemed so remote from the center of civilization that there was, in the public mind, the comforting thought that we would never be bothered with them again, after the experience of Nauvee.

Monday, 30 - Left for St. Joe last night at 12 o'clock.

Sunday, 31 - Went from Wilmington to Lewis, four miles moving up the Missouri river; a very pleasant day and a very lovely road; above Ottawa; a very pleasant day and a very lovely road; passed Lexington, a fine place; oppressed with sad feelings.

Monday, 1 - On the Missouri; a man fell overboard and drowned; passed the Gasconade; passed Jefferson City

Monday, 1 - From Lewis to LaSalle on foot, 20 miles, and this afternoon a beautiful place.

then took passage on board the Robert Fulton, for St. Louis.

Tuesday, 2 - Passed Booneville and Lyden Rock this

Tuesday, 2 - On the Illinois river; a cold, dark, cloudy morning; hard frost last night; very cold weather for several days past. Peoria a very beautiful place; a great deal of business done there.

Friday, 12 - Passed Lexington; very cold.

Wednesday, 3 - On the Illinois river; cold and cloudy, and

Saturday, 15 - Everything froze hard last night. Feeling better.

Thursday, 4 - Came into St. Louis today at 10 o'clock, a.m.

Monday, 14 - Passed Leavenworth this morning; a very beautiful place, also Leavenworth, a fine looking town and fall

Friday, 5 - In St. Louis yet today; went out into the country; very cold now and raw; passed some beautiful scenery today, high bluffs with hardwood in bloom.

Saturday, 6 - In St. Louis; shipped on board the steamer

Monday, 15 - Arrived in St. Joseph today; stopped about Princeton for St. Joseph, cabin passage. Saw a number of old friends, among others Joel Matteson and William Gousgar, of very beautiful town.

Joliet. Went all through town with them in every direction.

Tuesday, 16 - Going upstream slightly river rising very fast; a cold stormy day; passed Indian Butte on the west side of the river; met large quantities of ice this afternoon.

Sunday, 7 - Attended the Catholic cathedral this morning

Monday, 17 - Cold and cloudy; more Indian villages on and again in the evening. Took a stroll thru the city this

evening by gaslight. Saw considerable of the beautiful, curious and strange.

Monday, 8 - Visited the old Spanish fort today and the old

Catholic burying ground.



Tuesday, 9 - Left for St. Joe last night at 12 o'clock; moving up the Missouri river today, a very sandy, muddy stream. Passed Washington, a very pretty place.

Wednesday, 10 - On the Missouri; a man fell overboard and drowned; passed the Gasconage; most sick; passed Jefferson City this afternoon a beautiful place.

Thursday, 11 - Passed Booneville and Apron Rock this morning; hard frost last night; very cold weather for several days past.

Friday, 12 - Passed Lexington; very cold.

Saturday, 13 - Everything froze hard last night. Feeling better.

Sunday, 14 - Passed Leavenworth this morning; a very beautiful place, also Westport, a fine looking town and full of business; very cold now and raw; passed some beautiful scenery today, high bluffs with boxwood in bloom.

Monday, 15 - Arrived in St. Joseph today; stopped about four hours and then left for Fort Kearney. St. Joseph is a very beautiful town.

Tuesday, 16 - Going upstream slowly river rising very fast; a cold stormy day; passed Indian huts on the west side of the river; met large quantities of ice this afternoon.

Wednesday, 17 - Cold and cloudy; more Indian villages on the west side of the river.

Thursday, 18 - Got to Fort Kearney this afternoon; staid on the bank all night and such, another time deliver me from;

a very beautiful place; cold and cloudy; north wind; a time!

a time!

Friday, 19 - Left Fort Kearney and travelled as far as Keg Creek on foot, 24 miles. Cold and cloudy with north wind; grass just starting so that you can see it; a travelling companion with me by the name of Johnathan Waltham.

Saturday, 20 - Got into Kanesville today, stopped a while at trading post on the way from Fort Kearney; distance 45 miles; cold and cloudy. The first time in this region. Clear and warm.

Sunday, 21 - In Kanesville today and I guess its one of the places we read about. I have seen a great deal of human nature here in all its phases. Men in deep galleys; were anxious to

Monday, 22 - Went from Kanesville to the old trading post. Cold as ever, north wind; this is a cursed place.

Tuesday, 23 - Staid at the post last night and it was one of the nights of drunken rows. A beautiful clear day; saw VanDerKarr and Denny today. For California.

Wednesday 24 - Clear, beautiful and warm; camped at an in the Mormon Church at Mosquito Creek with W. G. Lanfear's company. Very dry weather. What like home to be here; attended the Mormon

Thursday 25 - At the same place, warm and some cloudy.

Friday 26 - At the old church yet; mostly pleasant.

Saturday 27 - Left the church today and moved towards the upper ferry; camped five miles above the town; cold and cloudy, little rain. home; good news; came back to Adamses.

Sunday 28 - Went down to town and from there on down to Adamses with Israel VanDerKarr, five miles below town.



Monday 29 - Went up to town and back. Warm, high wind.

Tuesday 30 - At the Adamses all day; cold north wind; wrote two letters home. No gardens made, no plowing done and no grass as yet.

MAY, 1850

Wednesday 1 - In Kanessville, and about the bluffs saw some wild flowers for the first time in this region. Clear and warm.

Thursday 2 - Staid in town last night; went out east today, most to Silver Creek; high rolling land, one can see forever and no timber. Streams ran in deep gulleys; more anxious to see my wife today than at any time since I left home; warm and cloudy, rain tonight.

Friday 3 - Cold, cloudy day with high wind in and about town; a gloomy time; heard nothing from Bowen yet; saw Abram

Saturday 4 - Went up to Council Point; saw Van Horn in town today bound for California.

Saturday 4 - A beautiful morning froze again last night.

Sunday 5 - At Adamses last night and today. Clear and cold. Seems somewhat like home to be here; attended the Mormon Church here today; the house was full and crowded; met some

Sunday 5 - In camp at Council Point; wrote a letter home; very fine people.

Monday 6 - A beautiful, pleasant morning; froze again last night; went up to Adamses a while; went down to the trading post in the afternoon. Got a

Tuesday 7 - Removed from Council Point to Kanessville; letter from home; good news; came back to Adamses.

Tuesday 7 - Cold again today; wrote two letters home to my wife and brother.

Wednesday 8 - Got frightened at a whirlwind on the road, jumped and broke the chain they drew by and away they went to kill; nothing hurt of any consequence.



Wednesday 8 - Came into town this morning and found Bowen; he came in day before yesterday; clouding up this afternoon.

Thursday 9 - Went up to Indian Mill four miles above town, in the forenoon; in the afternoon we removed to Council Point, and camped. A pretty place five miles from Kanesville; warm today.

Friday 10 - In camp at Council Point, in the timber; warm, pleasant weather, somewhat sultry, seems like spring. The blackbird's musical song is heard on every side, with which is mingled the mournful cadence of the dove. The gooseberry bushes are in blossom, any quantity of them and the ground is decked with violets. There is not a flower, in freckle leaf or stain but owns the power Divine that made it. Bowen has gone after bacon.

Saturday 11 - Went up to Kanesville and back; my last visit to that town. A clear, hot day; froze ice last night in our camp at Council Point. Awakened this morning by the songs of numerous spring birds among others, the blackbird, the thrush, the martin, the peewee, the dove and the musical boblink.

Sunday 12 - In camp at Council Point; wrote a letter home; hot day; south wind. Two steam boats at the landing in sight. Went up to Adamses a while today.

Monday 13 - Removed from Council Point up to Kanesville and from thence down to Mosquito Creek, and there encamped, miles from the town. Clear, hot day. Our leaders ran down today; got frightened at a whirlwind on the road, jumped and broke the chain they drewed by and away they went to kill; nothing hurt of any consequence. Our camp is at a small stream of running water, a good spring close by.



Tuesday 14 - Very hot in the morning in camp; yet a very pleasant place. A large plum thicket nearby in full bloom, the first I have seen this spring. It reminds me very strongly of the pleasant scenes of home, far away. Went down to the river in the afternoon and tried my luck at fishing. Caught nothing but disappointed. The river is very wide at this place; saw a long train of emigrants with their wagons in the distance (on the Indian side) winding over the ridges and bluffs, the commencement of their long and arduous journey across the plains. All possessed a bright hope and great anticipations of the future in that land of gold. But who can tell what the reality will be? One of our horses strayed this afternoon, not found tonight - one of the studs. Pitched our camp on the

Wednesday, 15 - Clear, hot day; south wind. Found our lost horse this afternoon on a sand-bar in the Missouri river about a mile from this shore. Got a skiff from the ferry above, came down and got a rope, crossed over to the bar and got the horse, and made him swim to the opposite side and brought him back by the ferry. Crossed the river four times today - better luck than we expected. In camp on the east side of the Elkhorn river;

Thursday 16 - In camp today; nothing occurred of any moment. High west wind, clear and hot. Had fish for supper, first rate; the first I have had this spring. Platte river for miles above

Friday 17 - Left our camp on Mosquito Creek this morning, crossed the Missouri in the forenoon and moved out seven miles onto the plain and camped. Our company is called the Carroll Company and consists of 21 wagons, 77 men and 77 horses, two families, two women and two girls. Our camp is on a small stream of running water., a good spring close by, and a few

trees, enough for firewood. The prospect after we had ascended the bluffs back from the Missouri river, was beautiful and grand. Before us stretched the mighty plains that reached from the Missouri to the Rocky Mountains, all clothed in the freshest green. Clear and warm. On guard tonight.

Saturday 18 - Stuck camp at 7 o'clock a.m. and traveled as far as the Elkhorn river. The country passed over today is quite undulating, with very rich soil of a chocolate color; one vast, boundless prairie, stretching out on every side, dotted now and then with a few trees or a little grove, presenting some pleasant views. Crossed two streams today, bridged, steep banks, the best road I ever traveled. Pitched our camp on the bank of the river in sight of the Platte. Midnight finds me master of the guard from now on until morning. Our camp is comparatively still; a lonely night, the moon nearly down;

nothing save the whippoorwill's song and the tread of the guard. The Sabbath morning dawning upon us for the first time in Indian land. level country, good roads, foggy in the afternoon, cloudy,

Sunday 19 - In camp on the east side of the Elkhorn river; hot day, south wind. Went down to the Platte river; ascended a high bluff on the north side and had a splendid view of the surrounding country; could see the Platte river for miles above and below and could trace the course of the Elkhorn a long distance by the scattering timber on its banks. Plenty of wood here. B. F. Ankney, our captain.

Monday 20 - Left our encampment this morning, ferried across our wagons; took our horses through the stream; traveled up the



bank of the Platte about 20 miles and camped on the prairie not far from timber. Grass not very good here; feed for animals good for most of the way; roads today hard to travel on account of last night's rain. Crossed one bad slough; country passed over today almost perfectly flat; excellent soil; high, rolling land on the south side of the river; in sight of the Elkhorn timber and bluffs on the east side all day; a little timber along the banks and on the islands of the Platte. Passed in sight of a Pawnee Indian village on the south bank of the Platte this afternoon; saw lots of squaws digging roots along the bank of the river; other Indians begging, naked and dirty as usual. Saw a wild pea in blossom today; a thunder shower last night, rained all night; considerable wind; prospect of more rain tonight. The Plate river, where we travelled alongside it today, is wide and turbid and very sandy.

Tuesday 21 - Travelled 21 miles today along the banks of the Platte and ended by camping on the west bank of Shell Creek. Flat, level country, good roads, foggy in the afternoon, cloudy, east wind. Saw but few Indians today. A beautiful piece of land between Shell Creek and the river. There are encamped 100 teams, horses and oxen, and about 400 men and 700 animals. This nomadic life must be, I think, something like that led by the wandering tribes of Asia, who take their all with them when they move.

Wednesday 22 - Left our camp on Shell Creek and travelled as far as the Loup Fork which we crossed after night, ferried, a bad stream to ferry. Quicksand, full of holes and bars and

continually changing, very rapid, turbid. Helped to ferry 25 wagons, had to wade about halfway of the stream, about 25 rods wide, got through and into camp at dark, a tremendous storm, kept it up all night, Passed over some of the most splended country I ever saw - the Platte bottoms - perfectly level and from four to six miles wide. Rich land, sandy soil, from three to four feet deep, Rained a little the night before, cleared off before noon. Crossed the Loup Fork near its mouth, in sight of the Platte, considerable timber, we made 25 miles.

Thursday 23 - Got a late start this morning, travelled 8 miles up the south bank of the Loup, level road, hard wheeling, in consequence of last night's rain, east wind, warm, cloudy. Splendid country, feed getting good, timber on the river.

Friday 24 - Left our encampment at six o'clock this morning and travelled 20 miles or more and camped within 100 rods of the river Loup. Travelled up the bank of the river until about 3 o'clock, high, sandy bluffs to the left of us, the river to the right, and high, rolling land beyond. Left the river bottom about 3 o'clock and mounted the bluff's and travelled three hours over beautiful land, similar to the prairies of Illinois, very smooth, gently sloping to the river. Our camp tonight is on a bluff that overlooks the river bottom, the river and the flats beyond to the opposite bluff. Sunset, one of the most lovely scenes I ever saw. The whole country as far as the eye can see in the freshest green, with now and then a scattering clump of timber along the river to vary the scene. Saw no today, 13 miles distant, for the purpose of getting water. We have passed no timber since yesterday morning, country passed over yesterday afternoon and night poor, sandy, with one exception of about 3 miles which was splendid. Left our camp