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JOURNAL  
OF THE WALWORTH COUNTY  
MUTUAL MINING COMPANY,  
COMMENCING  
MARCH THE 20th, 1849.

BY  
DAVID BRAINARD,  
DELAVAN, WISCONSIN.

(via Santa Fe trail)

Matter Collection

[not in Platte River Road (Kantorian)]

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J. J. Phoenix to Dr. Schafer, Sept. 30, 1935. Copy from  
letter in office files.

"David Brainard was the son of Brainards of the Brainard family from York State and Connecticut. He had received a fair education. Upon his return from the California adventure he had considerably more money than when he started, lived in Delavan for a short time, and then succumbed to wanderlust and went into the pinneries of this state, where he attached himself to various outfits in the capacity of cook and bookkeeper. He wandered from an advanced logging camp one day in mid-winter, and was later found frozen to death in a deserted shack."

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The Walworth County Mining Company left Delavan, (Wis.) March 20th, '49, at 3 o'clock p.m., on an expedition to the gold mines of California. The Company consisted of 12 persons. E. P. Conrick of Darien was elected the general director of the company, Wm. Wyley Sect., H. P. Phillips Treas. The rest of the company consisted of D. Linus, S. Phoenix, W. A. Phoenix, H. Hoerring, D. Manning and myself of Delavan, Wm. Cavanaugh, Smith, Evans of Darien. Although we left our homes and friends there that were dear to us, yet we were all in good spirits and pleasant anticipations of final success buoyed up our spirits under our undertaking. Our teams were oxen, 3 yoke to a waggon. The provisions consisted of bacon, flour, rice, beans, dried beef, coffee, sugar, tea, &c. Each waggon was furnished with one stove and cooking utensils, boots, blankets, guns, pistols, chains, ox bows, powder, lead, and other things too numerous to mention filled out the load.

Soon we were on our march. The roads were not very good at this season of the year and we made only five miles this afternoon, and about dark arrived at the residence of Mr. R. Weed on the east edge of Rock Prairie. Here we were hospitably received and furnished a good supper, for which we are indebted, and we shall remember with gratitude, and instead of sleeping in our wagons as was our intention, we rested our weary limbs on feather beds. The weather during the day has been rather showery, but warm. This even the sky is clear and the wind in the north and blows rather cool.

March 21. Today our road lay almost entirely across Rock Prairie, on the west side of which is Rock River with the beautiful village of Janesville situated on its shores, mostly on its east bank. Here we stopped for the night at the Hotel; we made today 15 miles. The wind has been directly west and rather cool.

Thursday morning. Oxen all broke out and gone; found them with little trouble. Having some purchases to make here, we did not get started till noon. Here the other waggon joined us, and also Mr. Conrick, our director, left us on account of ill health, thinking that he could not survive the journey. He resigned in favor of Mr. D. Linus who probably will be elected in his place. About three miles out, we stopped for dinner for the first time. It consisted of nice boiled ham, and bread, pie and cake, with no water. It was a sumptuous repast. We called this place Hazel Squat. Now started again. The morning was rather lowery and cool. About ten o'clock it commenced snowing, wind in the north-east. It continued to snow until night and we were obliged to put on our India rubbers, which, by-the-by, did not answer a very good purpose, for the driving snow soon wet it through. We stopped for the night at the Spring Valley House where we found our Elk Horn friends. We were hale fellows well met, sure. California was all the go. In the morning, every man had his shooting-iron in order, armed and equipped. About ten o'clock we left this place in the snow and mud. Wind in the north. After we had proceeded about half a mile, the boys had a regular shooting at mark. Although all of our men were good marksmen, yet but two made good shots, - Wm. Phoenix and Hoerring. Today the roads were tremendous bad; we had to double our teams several times. In the afternoon we passed a most beautiful prairie, the



finest, I believe, I ever saw. There was not an undulation upon it. It bore the name of Sand Prairie. Sugar River glided along in its natural beauty, which cannot be surpassed. Soon after crossing this stream we came to Decatur and put up at the public house kept by J. Clark, and a very accommodatng man, too. Here Mr. Pollard and Moore from Big Foot, Walworth County, came up with us and will remain with us. We were glad to have his company as he is a fine man. After supper we had a great time. We all felt first rate and ready to have a time. In the first place, a general smoke and then a melodious sing. It was enough to charm a savage. What a pity that we were not born blind. But the best is yet. Mr. Lord, an old acquaintance keeping shop, came in with his accordion and struck up some lively airs which so animated us, that we were perfectly loose for about two hours, then we retired for the night. The next morning was the Sabbath, and it was necessary for us to travel, and about sunset we arrived at Monroe, the county seat of Green County. We camped a little out of the village by a little grove called by us, "Horse Head". The wind during the day had been west, with a pleasant sun.

Monday, March 27. Left Monroe about ten o'clock; a very fine day. This day we came to Wiota, the first mining town that we have come to, and a bad looking place. We camped on a beautiful green, had a first rate supper of griddle cakes and warm sugar. Afterwards a game of ball. The day was quite warm.

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Wednesday, the sun rose as fine as I ever saw, and its bright rays cheered our ambitious spirits to new activity. We traveled today across a large prairie, now and then a house at a distance. We traveled today farther than we intended, for the reason we could not get feed for our teams. Toward night, C. Matteson and myself put out from the teams to find the "arrangements"; and mighty tired we were before we found them, which we did at Gratiot's Grove, a fine place too. We all took supper with Mine Host, Mr. Southwick, and a good one it was. We slept in our wagons as usual.

Another morning has dawned upon us, and prospects are favorable for a fine day. Just as we were starting, H. P. Phillips came up with us. We were all happy to see him. By him we received letters from our friends in Delavan. Our road today has been very romantic, principally through the mining region. Wm. Hyley and myself took an excursion under ground this afternoon. We came to where a shaft had been sunk to a depth of 70 feet perpendicular. Our guide was a miner. The descent was by a ladder. We followed him to the bottom and lighting three candles, one for each of us, we proceeded to explore the mine. The passage was narrow and crooked, and in some places very low. Sometimes we were obliged to get on our knees as we passed along. Our guide would explain the different appearances of the mine to us. After we had gone about 300 yards, we came where a man was at work digging the ore, which appeared in veins about two inches in breadth. We could have descended fifty feet farther if we had chosen. But we were satisfied with our experience, and after gathering some specimens of the mineral, we told our guide we would return to "day light". By the time we reached the top of the ladder, we were completely exhausted. We were informed that \$170,000 worth of mineral had been taken from this lead. To one that had never been in such an excavation it was rather frightful to see the immense surface of earth that was supported by only a few stones and gravel, and we

under that same insupportable weight! The sight was grand and beautiful. The sparkling metal, winding passages, and the pale light of the candles added a peculiar feeling to our already excited imaginations. Still, I was satisfied with the undertaking, but was equally glad when I was again upon the surface of the earth. After giving our guide a bit each, and thanking him for his trouble, we proceeded to overtake the rest of our company. We did so just as they were entering the city of Galena, Illinois. This is the most romantic place that I have ever seen. It is built on the banks of the Le Fevre river, which runs between high and rugged banks. One has to look twice to see some of the houses situated on their summits. This place was settled by the French nearly fifty years since. The population now is between seven and nine thousand. The principal street, and I may say, the only one, runs on the bank of the river a long distance. There are some very good buildings, to say nothing of the miserable huts and grogeries. Owing to our business, we were obliged to stop here two nights, and we were mighty glad when we were ready to leave here. Mr. Pollard and Moore left us and went down the river in a steamboat.

Saturday morning, and we are again on the move California-wards. We only made six miles this day, and camped in sight of Mississippi, the Father of Waters. The day has been fine, with plenty of wind.

April 1st. Another Sabbath sun has <sup>risen</sup> upon us, and it becomes necessary for us to proceed on our journey. About noon we crossed the great dividing line of Wisconsin and Iowa. The river where we crossed was nearly a mile over. It was a horse-boat, and very good. We were nearly three hours in getting over. Now we are across, we have just started for CALIFORNIA. Our road runs near the banks of the river, and through a fine farming country.

Tonight we camped by the banks of Spruce Creek. The day has been pleasant, wind nearly west.

Monday, Apr. 2nd. Resolved to make more progress today. About noon left the river and the prairie. I had forgot to mention that this morning we passed a small village on the banks of the river called Belle Vue, once the rendezvous of horse thieves and robbers. I was in the house where they were assailed and driven forth by the citizens. Some six lives were lost by each party; this exterminated them, and now a respectable class of people occupy the place.

We took our lunch this noon at Don Potter of bread and milk served up by two of the right kind of girls. They were very sociable, yet not bold; formerly from the south. I thought of taking up my residence here and not going to California, but was dissuaded from the notion by the company. Tonight we camped near the residence of Capt. Silsby, who is about starting with his family for California. The rain is falling quite fast and we concluded to go into a schoolhouse for the night. We took bread and milk for our supper, as the rain prevented building a fire in our stoves. As today was election throughout the states, we concluded we would not be exempt from voting for something, and it was motioned that we elect a Director for the company. A chairman was elected and the meeting proceeded to ballot. At the first balloting C. Matteson received 9 votes out of ten and declared unanimously elected. It was farther voted that each one receive his ten dollars from the treasurer and that the extra ten paid by Conrick should be used to pay ferriage for the company. The meeting then adjourned to bed.



Wednesday Morning. It still continues to rain. Concluded to stay today. In the afternoon the rain ceased.

Thursday morning, we were on our way again. About noon we passed through Andrew, the County seat of Jackson Co. This evening we camped on the banks of the Maquoketa; this is an Indian name signifying Great Bear. This evening it commenced raining again and continued most of the next day.

Friday, Apr. 6. Looked rather dubious, nothing dry to get breakfast with and two miles from a tavern. Concluded to push ahead, although the roads were almost impassable. In passing through a slough our wagons became fast and we were obliged to work some time to get them out of the mud. Finally we were safe at the Eagle Hotel in Maquoketa, kept by Daniel Rhodes, and if hospitality was ever shown and needed, it was at this time. We were shown into the best sitting room and had the best the House could afford. Many were making preparations to go to the "Promised Land".

Saturday; put out again; prospects for a fair day, but bad roads awaited us. Such a mud-hole I never saw as we were in today, wagons up to the hubs, and each person digging and prying. It was almost impossible to step on account of the mire. We were about an hour and a half getting out. Today made about six miles, and camped near Mr. Burlisson's.

Sunday morning, Apr. 8. Concluded to stop for the day, if not longer. Each one spent the day as they saw fit. This afternoon H. P. and myself agreed to get supper together, and a sumptuous one it was; baked duck and fricasseed chicken, potatoes, griddle cakes and maple molasses, crackers, tea and coffee, besides the knick-knicks. The evening we spent in singing songs and hymns.

Monday morning again. Shall not leave here today on account of rain and high water. All hands are bound to visit a cave about four miles from camp. Matteson, Phillips, S. Phoenix, A. Phoenix, Manning, Hoerring, Nylex, ~~Linus~~ and myself; each one had his hunting equipage, except myself. We had not gone but a short distance when it commenced raining and we took shelter in a cooper shop. Some were for going back, but only one did so; that was S. Phoenix. Our road lay through a rugged part of the country. After traveling about a mile, we crossed the south branch of the Maquoketa on a flat-boat. Here Linus turned back. The rest proceeded on, the rain and wind, nothing daunted. After four miles of travel, we came to a small shanty where we made some inquiries and hired a boy to take lights and guide us through the cave. Soon we were at its mouth. I had never before realized half what I had read or imagined of similar places. The extent of the mouth, as near as I could judge, was one hundred feet high and one hundred and fifty broad. After striking a fire, we each took a candle and entered the yawning cavity. A stream of pure <sup>water</sup> was running through this dark cavern, which obliged us to keep near each side of the rock. Its height was more than sufficient for us to stand upright, and in some places the upper part had the appearance of a large rotunda. We here sung "Oh! [Old] Susannah", and such a reverberation I never before heard. Our voices sounded like the "rushing of many waters". Leaving this archway we came to a pond of water extending across the passage; and we were obliged to retrace our steps. A short distance from the entrance was a natural bridge or arch, perfectly formed. The height of the arch was about fifty feet, and about the same in breadth and width. Under this broad archway we took our lunch and drank the limpid water running at our feet. To the place where we had been in, was about three hundred feet and the depth under ground nearly two hundred. Before returning to the other end of the cave, our guide showed us a place under

a rock, projecting fifty feet in width, and sixty long. Under this was a sandy floor. This we called the "Ball-room" and the "Polka". The appearance of the rock overhead was like icicles and presented a curious appearance. We broke off several specimens for future use. We now relighted our candles and entered the other opening. This passage was narrower and more contracted; it had the appearance of cells guarded by small archways. The rocks in this part presented a different aspect. In some places they looked like honeycomb. Numerous bats were hanging over our heads in perfect security. A large panther was killed in this part of the cave about two years since. After getting some more specimens, we turned our steps homeward. This cave is the resort of parties of pleasure during the summer from all parts of the country. It is called Burt's Cave; for what reason, I cannot learn. We took a more circuitous route to camp, and while the rest were looking for game, I meditated upon what I had seen. The works of Nature have always <sup>been</sup> sufficient for wonder and admiration, but I was never before struck with such wonder. The smallest object in the created world should fill us with ~~the~~ amazement at the wisdom of some being in thus forming so perfectly all we behold, but the grand and mighty works which I had beheld, excited in me a still greater love for the sublime and picturesque.

Apr. 11, Wednesday morning. Day fine. Once more on our march. The roads were very bad. Nothing worthy of note happened till Sunday, when we were obliged to burn our boxes on account of the mud, which was so bad that nine yoke of oxen could not draw the wagons. Matteson and myself were directed to go ahead and make arrangements. About eight miles from where we had left the company, we came to Lyn Grove, where we found part of the Madison Company; Count Haraszthey and family, Mr. Rheiner, his partner, and three hired men. Part of their company had gone on, one of which was V. Leamen,

an old friend of ours. The Count informed us that he thought it best to go to St. Joseph, as the feed to the Bluffs was very scarce. After traveling about four weeks through a variety of country and some very pretty villages, and over any quantity of mud, we arrived at St. Joseph May 15, in the afternoon. We camped about one mile from the village. The feed was very scarce. About 2000 teams had already crossed the Missouri here besides the pack-mules. It was estimated that ten thousand wagons were on the prairie. It was necessary for us to stop a couple of days here to make purchases and ~~up~~ pack our loads.

St. Joseph is situated on the east bank of the Missouri River. Its population is about 1500. Business has been very lively since California immigration commenced. Steamboats run up here from St. Louis. The cholera was raging to some extent, and was making sad havoc among the Californians that had crossed the river. Many Californians were selling their goods at auction, and packing mules, or going home. An affray took place here between a Californian and a Constable, in which the latter thought the former had wounded him dangerously. The populace thought the officer to blame. He was having his trial when we left. D. Manning left us here and will return home.

Friday afternoon we left for Fort Leavenworth, 30 miles down the river. Made about six miles this afternoon, and camped in the timber.

Saturday, May 19. Started bright and early in order to get feed for our cattle. I had forgotten to mention that the part ~~of~~ of our company that we expected to find in the town, had gone on, on account of the cholera; probably shall not see them till we get through. This evening camped by a small creek and turned our cattle in a pasture. This evening a meeting was called to appoint a committee to draft resolutions and by-laws for the company. C. Matteson was chair-



Wm. D. Nyley Sect. The chairman appointed for this committee, Gen'l Haraszthey, Col. Haraszthey, T. Sutherland, Nyley and W. A. Phoenix, and the chairman was added. The committee were to report at the next camp. The meeting then adjourned.

Sunday, May 20. Rather windy. Clouds betoken rain. Left camp about seven o'clock. This afternoon we passed through the village of Weston, on the Missouri. Here a severe thunder-storm came upon us and accompanied us to camp, about two miles from town, at the ferry.

Monday morning, May 21. Commenced getting our oxen across the river, and did not get through till night.

Tuesday, May 22. About noon, wagons were all across. Now we are ready for a start, sure. We have crossed the great dividing line of the white man and the Indian. This afternoon we passed Fort Leavenworth on the west bank of the Missouri. A large number of soldiers are stationed here. I should think several millions of dollars had been expended by the United States in the fort and the necessary buildings. I saw only four pieces of artillery here, - brass, an immense number of wagons and 7000 mules. The location is most beautiful, just trees enough to make a beautiful shade. All the buildings were neatly whitewashed, which contrasted beautifully with the green earth and hanging foliage. No place since I left home looked so pleasant. We camped about a mile from this delightful place. At nine o'clock we heard the soldiers beat the evening tattoo- I listened till the last notes of the bugle sounded on my ear.

Wednesday morning, May 23. Did not get a very early start. About thirty wagons passed this morning returning to the fort. They belonged to the U.S. Had been camping. More were going to load their teams. They were bound for Bear River.

We passed many wagons which had camped on account of the cholera. Many were sick, some dying and others dead. This evening our by-laws were adopted and officers elected. A. Haraszthey, Capt., S. A. Phoenix, 1st Lieut., H. P. Phillip 2nd Lieut., and Wm. A. Phoenix wagon-master.

Thursday, May 24. Passed many more teams today in the same condition of those that we passed the day before. This evening the guard was called out according to the alphabet. It was my turn with another one; my watch came on at twelve. Such a night I never experienced; not for fear, but the thunder rolled continuous and the whole heavens were enveloped in one sheet of flame. ~~My~~ The wind seemed to vie with the contending elements and the rain came in torrents, seemingly to quench the infuriated elements.

Friday, May 25. Nothing occurred today worth notice.

Saturday, May 26. Crossed the Kansas River today and camped on the high prairie.

Sunday, May 27. Passed the U.S. troops today in camp. They were waiting for Gen. Broc Elder Reed was in this company. He came to our wagons this noon. It seemed almost like being at home to see an old friend. They intend to overtake us. We passed some beautiful groves on the prairie today, and the handsomest prairie that I ever saw.

Monday, May 28. Our roads lay across the prairie today. Saw many trains.

Tuesday, May 29. Nothing unusual occurred today. Made 20 miles; camped on the prairie.

Wednesday, May 30. Made 18 miles.

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Thursday, May 31: made 16 miles. Crossed 101, a beautiful stream, called so from its being that distance from old Fort Osage on the Missouri. Camped on another stream this evening in the rain. Traveled 15 miles today.

Friday, June 1st. Passed two graves today of emigrants who had died of cholera. Saw many Indians today of the Kansas tribe. They appeared quite friendly and wanted to swap moccasins for meal and powder. At evening camped at Pleasant Valley. A fine grove of timber skirted the banks of a rapid stream of clear water with gravel bottom. As soon as we stopped, about 30 Indians came among us dressed in regular Indian costume. Their heads were shaven with the exception of a tuft which was braided. Their faces were painted red. Near sunset the chief made his appearance, attended by his interpreter. He was very gaudy with feathers and skins and little bells. He said he was friendly with the whites and liked them. After giving them their supper, they left us, and a good ride. We made about 15 miles today.

Saturday, June 2nd. Today we camped about noon about one mile from Council Grove. Just before reaching the grove, we passed the grave of a white man who had been murdered by an Osage Indian. A circular pile of stone marked his resting place, and from between the crevices of the rock the ivy shot forth, and a long pole lay leaned mournfully. When I viewed this simple grave, my mind turned toward the grand monuments in our large cities which have been reared by the wealthy, and which are daily leveled to the ground to make room for other improvements. The Indian and hunter both pass by this place, and would not disturb a stone for worlds.

Council Grove is a trading post. We remained in camp till Monday, June 4. Sunday, the Kansas Indians passed on their hunting excursion for buffalo. We made some trades with

them for robes. Made 17 miles today. Two miles from Dearward Springs.

Tuesday, June 5. Made 20 miles across a barren prairie. Saw plenty of antelope but did not get any. Passed this afternoon the lost spring and camped without wood and no running water. Cooked with Buffalo chips for the first time.

Wednesday, June 6. After traveling seven miles crossed Cottonwood Forks. Here we took wood and water. The large cottonwoods waved majestically. Made this day 17 miles, and camped on the broad prairie with only water for our cattle.

Thursday, June 7. Started as usual at seven o'clock. The same broad expanse was before us. Not a tree nor shrub for our weary eyes to rest upon. At noon, stopped at Little Turkey, a small, muddy stream with no timber. Camped tonight by a turbid pool of water, not fit to drink. We were lucky in having wood and water sufficient for night and in the morning. Traveled 19 miles today.

Friday, June 8. About ten o'clock saw a buffalo at a distance for the first time, about twelve in number. Several horsemen immediately put out on chase. "Buffalo! Buffalo! Hurrah for buffalo!" resounded the whole length of the train. The Doctor was the first out, then followed Nyley S. Phoenix and Griffith. In about an hour we saw two of them making toward the team driving a buffalo. He came within ten rods of the wagons, when the whole company met him and gave a full broadside. Phoenix had shot previously, the ball passing through the lights, which alone would have killed him. It was a large bull and completely tired out. This was the first one that most of us had ever seen, and such an excitement I never saw. If we had found a gold mine there could not have been a greater commotion. Some with an ax, others with knives and hatchets commenced a general slaughter, all anxio



Thursday, June 12. Saw thousands of buffalo each side of the road. Our hunters were all out giving them chase. Killed a large bull near the road. Took as much as we chose. This afternoon we met a train of nine wagons from the mountains near Fort Laramie. They were a trading company, and been out a year, and were now on their return without the loss of a man. Their loading consisted of robes entirely, numbering seven thousand. Camped on Ash Creek, having traveled 19 miles.

Wednesday morning, June 13. This forenoon killed another buffalo. Camped at noon on the Pawnee Forks, a narrow stream with high banks. Spent the afternoon at this place. This evening the Missouri team came up with us and camped near us. Made six miles today.

Thursday, June 14. At seven o'clock, ready for a start. We kept the river road on account of the water, although it was about 15 miles farther. Camped this evening near the river, having made 19 miles. Noticed this evening near the river a saline encrustation in small crystals.

Friday, June 15. On our march a little earlier than usual. Another buffalo killed today, some distance from the road. Did not get any. As I was walking on the banks of the river, I saw a blossom the large thistle; the flower was a beautiful white and sweet-scented. Camped this evening as usual on the bank of the river. No wood. Made 25 miles today.

Saturday, June 16. Made an early start. About ten o'clock we descried two Indians approaching, the first that we had seen since we had left the Kansas tribe. They belonged to the Arrapahoes, whose tents appeared scattered on the opposite shore. They said they were friendly. Quite a number followed us some distance. Their horses were very fine and beautiful. We camped near the Comanches this evening, having made 20 miles. This tribe is considered one of the most powerful and warlike that

to get the best piece. One was for the tongue, another a ham, a third, the heart, a fourth, a chunk of fat, another, a piece of the hide. Not a single portion remained untouched. I was satisfied to get a shank for a dish of soup. Its weight was estimated about 1200 pounds. A description of the buffalo is unnecessary. We left his carcass for the prowling wolves. While we were stopping at noon, the Doctor came in, his pony completely jaded out, having after a severe battle killed two. This evening we had a feast upon the noble beast which but a short time before was as free as air, and roaming over his own native ground. He died as noble as he had lived. He stood like a brave hero till the last, and when he received the fatal shot, he fell, not a green escaped, - he was dead. This meat was very fine-flavored. Today made 15 miles. Camped on the Little Arkansas. Within a few days we have noticed some very beautiful flowers; the morning and evening primrose, the yellow lily.

Saturday, June 9. Saw no game today. Noticed the beautiful sea-rose in great abundance. Camped on the little Cory creek, a mere brook, with a few scattering trees. Made 17 miles this day.

Sunday morning, June 10. A slight shower this morning. Did not get a very early start. Saw today the prickly pear in great abundance. It bears a beautiful orange flower. Also passed the burroughs of the prairie dogs. They are about the size of a rabbit, of a reddish color, head somewhat like a dog and make a noise like a small pup. Several were killed. Saw some buffalo this afternoon. Camped within five miles of the Arkansas River with no wood, poor water for cattle and plenty of buffalo chips.

Monday, June 11. Nothing occurred worth mentioning. Saw plenty of buffalo. At noon came to the Arkansas; called Camp Osage. Here we took a bath, baited our cattle and ourselves and passed on. Camped on Walnut Creek, having made 15 miles