

7/18/84

These two papers were sent to me,  
Jane Worley Peak, in the winter of 1983,  
by a distant cousin, Edna Worley  
Anderson, the granddaughter of Andrew  
Jackson Worley (the J.J. Worley referred to  
in the paper). A.J. Worley was the brother  
of my great-grandfather William J. Worley, who  
stayed in Keokuk. The two brothers were born in  
Harrison County, Ohio, and went to Iowa  
in 1849 or 1850. They were in the Keokuk,  
Iowa, census in 1850. A.J. Worley's  
wife's name was Hannah Creighbaum. I  
suppose Josiah Creighbaum was her  
brother.

To

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DIARY OF LUVINA CREIGHBAUM BRYANT  
CROSSING THE PLAINS IN 1862

On the 22nd of April 1862, our company of 12 wagons started from Keokuk, Iowa on the long journey across the plains to California. We bid farewell to friends and neighbors and our dear old homes and started early in the morning. We traveled in covered wagons drawn by ox and cow teams.

The children and young people were happy and delighted with the trip. The ride in the covered wagons meant only sunshine and pleasure to them. They thought only of the lunch of the roast chicken, boiled ham and rice cakes with which each wagon was well supplied, but the older ones realized the difficulties and perils of the trip.

We had our first trouble pulling through the mud of early spring. Often the teams completely mired in the mud. And it was miserable to unhitch the team from one wagon to pull another out of the mire. Many times the wagons had to be unloaded and only part of the burden taken over the bad places at a time. This meant much unloading and reloading of the wagons. And a loss of time and energy. After many repetitions of the same thing, we resumed our journey as though nothing had happened.

The first day, a very tiresome one indeed, showed us it would take a great deal of patience as well as time to cross the plains in a wagon drawn by ox team. When at last our days drive was ended, and we were all glad to find a camping place for the night. Soon fires were started and kettles, frying pans, and coffee pots were handed out of the wagons and the women went cheerfully about cooking. While they were cooking, the children romped and played. The men unyoked the cows and

oxen and fed them corn and hay.

After supper we washed the dishes, milked the cows and oxen and made down the beds. Then we all sat down around the campfire and talked of the days travels---sang some of the new war songs, but we were all so tired that we soon went to bed with the feeling that we were a long way from home and had really only traveled ten miles.

After a goodnight's sleep we all arose at daylight and soon were cooking breakfast, feeding the cattle, tearing down the tents, loading up the wagons and preparing for another day's journey.

After the cows had been milked, they were yoked and hitched to the wagons. The milk was strained into a churn and a tight lid was fastened on and the churn placed in front of the wagon. In the evening we had butter for the supper, churned by the motion of the wagon.

We had better luck the 2nd day and traveled further. We now passed through villages and farms that were unfamiliar to us. The people were no longer acquaintances. We passed through Altuma, at that time it was a small town. The farming country here was not very thickly settled. But the prospects looked good. There was plenty of corn, fat hogs and hundreds of chickens. We could get all the eggs we wanted for 5¢ and 6¢ a doz. We managed to camp near farm houses on evenings while we were passing through the settlement.

Day by day we traveled on. Each day there was something new to be seen. We had been on the road one week when we arrived at the Des Moines River where we laid by to rest our teams.

We crossed over the Des Moines River, here at Des Moines City--traveling through the country, we made another stop at another village called Knotville. There we supplied ourselves

with fresh meats and eggs which we were very badly in need of. We all enjoyed the camp fires of evenings and still remembered the boys in blue and our conversation was often of them and we wondered what each day had brought them.

Always we were eager to reach a town where we could get news of the war. Also drop a few lines to our relatives and friends we were leaving farther behind. Each day the roads were getting better. And the days were getting longer. We were making better progress.

It was only occasionally now, that we passed a lone ranch with a family living on it. They were always glad to see us and treated us with much kindness and respect.

Each town we passed through was of great interest, of course. It meant getting supplies. Then there was a Post Office where we could mail our letters, even though we received none from home. We were glad for news from the battles.

When we came to Council Bluffs, the last place where we could replenish our provisions. All laid in a supply of flour, bacon, sugar, coffee, beans, and soap. Here we found a good many wagons waiting to form into a company; it was not safe to travel any farther in small companys on account of the Indians. After a rest, working and cleaning the wagons and getting new supplies, we crossed the Missouri River in Nebraska, where we saw our first Indians. These were friendly and peaceable. They came close up to the wagons and wanted to talk to us; but the children and some of the older people, who had never seen Indians before were frightened by the hideous things.

We had now formed a company of 22 wagons and we started on bidding farewell to all communication and civilization. All in a line we marched across the wide plains. We could see the dust of pilgrims far behind us, as on we traveled day by

day, week by week, month by month. Always when the day was ended and we drove into camp, we were tired and dusty, but we soon rested and went to work. We prepared supper and made safe the camp for the night. Our men drove the wagons in a circle; laying the tongue of each wagon up, so as to make a solid wall of wagons to keep the Indians out of camp. They put the tents up inside the corral and then drove the cattle out to grass. We watched them while they grazed, then brought them in and kept watch over them all night. The camp-fires were kept burning and the men took turns guarding the stock.

The Indians generally visited us at noon and evening. We always gave them something to eat and treated them kindly. Therefore had very little trouble with them. We occasionally passed through a settlement where houses were made of sod; out of blocks about 12 inches square. Their fences were also made of sod. We passed through a village of about 40 houses built of sod. This we learned was a French Colony, the settlers appeared content and happy. Their houses were neat and clean and they were kind and friendly to us.

We had reached the North Platte. We traveled a long way on this river. The way was hard and tiresome and dusty and hot. Our teams were standing up well. The road ahead was now lined with empty and wrecked wagons and the remains of dead cattle and horses. It was even quite difficult to find a camping place where there were not dead animals.

When we first started, our ox and cow teams were often passed by people driving fine horses. Some young ladies laughed at us as they drove by in a fine carriage; but their pleasant times were soon coming to an end.

One morning we came to a camp, a man and woman left alone in the wilderness. One of their horses was dead. Their wagon

was sitting by the side of the road with a few things in it. They had thrown all their trunks and clothing away to lighten their load. But they had traveled too fast in the start, to stand the long way and now they were suffering for it. They had one horse tied to the wagon and had eaten their breakfast. The woman was giving the horse some strong black coffee. She had tears in her eyes. She said she wanted to save "poor old Cooley". Their company had left them and their teams so weak they could hardly get along with their burdens. What should we do? We had all we could carry. Our teams were getting poor; but we could not leave them to the mercy of the Indians. We finally decided to repack our wagons. We left out everything that we could spare and packed their beds and provisions in our wagons. And the man and woman walked.

We did not travel long before one morning old Cooley was not able to stand. Some of the men gave him a tap in the forehead and we went on and left him by the side of the road. The little woman shed a few tears over him before leaving him there. A few days later we overtook the company which had stopped to bury one of its members. A woman had died while eating her breakfast. She was a large healthy woman and had cooked breakfast for four men. We had a Dr. in our company who pronounced her death due to heart failure. Her sad husband was left to make the journey alone. This was the first death we had witnessed and we felt very sorry to bury and leave her alone. Yet we soon became accustomed to seeing lonely graves by the roadside. Some times they were small and some times larger. We thought of those who had laid their dear ones there and the grief they must have felt as they were forced to move onward. Yet we went on trusting in God that our bones would not be left on the wide desolate plains. We had now reached Laramie, Wyo. The soldiers shook hands with



us. They made us very welcome. We camped there until noon. Among their supplies were onions and we were glad of the chance to buy them at 25¢ per pound. The onions were so strong they burned our stomachs, but we ate them as though they were sweet for we were starving for vegetables.

The soldiers here informed us about the mines at Auburn and we decided to change our route from California to Oregon. They gave us a guide of all the roads to Oregon, which told us where to camp. It proved to be a great help to us and we felt much encouraged by what the soldiers had told us.

While we were in the Black Hills we passed the once fine carriage--now worn out and left by the side of the road. This was the same fine carriage that had passed us 100 miles back. The horses had died and the smart young ladies and their parents had gone on in the same way.

The Black Hills were a lonely place to travel. The days were all alike. The teams were giving out and our people were growing tired. The Indians were lurking around and watching to take advantage of us. They did no further harm than kill one of our oxen one morning. We were ready to start. Not a man said a word. We hitched up our teams as if nothing had happened and just started down the road. The Indians began immediately to skin the ox.

We trudged along, taking it patiently, knowing that time must pass and many a weary mile we had no really bad luck; only hard times. We were all enjoying good health.

We camped near another company one day at noon that was having trouble. One of their men was accidentally killed. He and another man had gone out hunting a long way from camp up in the hills where he was accidentally shot. He left a wife and two small children and an aged mother--a helpless family to continue the journey alone. Yet they reached the

Auburn mines by the kindly help of friends.

Our people had begun to get tired and quarrellsome; quarrelling often ended in fighting. Single men who had no teams and had put their provisions in with families had a hard time of it when trouble arose. There was a division of food and single man left one wagon to join another. One morning a young man and old man had a disagreement over a piece of bacon, which they were dividing. The young man paid for the bacon, but the dispute arose. Then a fight. The old man knocked the young man down. That settled it; he kept the bacon.

It was very common for our men to get dissatisfied with the company. Men who had teams would pull-out and join some other company. Or sometimes try it alone. Always, they camped near a company. Such was the case of two men who left their own company and traveled this way. They had been neighbors and friends in Illinois. But had left their families there, traveling across the plains to make their fortune. But now so far away from home, patience had given out, evil thoughts led to evil actions which proved the end of the lives of each.

Our company traveled not very far behind them. Those in our head wagon, saw one of the men jump out of his wagon and run behind it. They heard the report of a gun. The man hurriedly took a spade and dug a hole in the ground into which he threw the body so hastily that he left the feet sticking out of the ground. He then climbed in the wagon and drove rapidly away; but there was no getting away. His old company was not far behind ours. They soon drove up. Men with guns went ahead and soon caught up with him. The murdered man was decently buried. In the meantime, the man was held prisoner. He was held for several days. On day he was tried and found guilty. There were a number of witnesses to the murder and it was decided he must pay the penalty with his



life. When he was informed of his fate, he acknowledged his guilt and confessed that they had quarreled. He said his friend has taken advantage of him. He begged for an opportunity to write to his family and to the family of his friend, confessing all to them. We made a coffin for him and dug a grave for him in as decent a way and respectable as we were able. He looked at his coffin and grave, knowing that soon his spirit would be beyond this life from which no traveler returns. He knelt by his coffin and prayed. We treated the prisoner with respect and kindness. We gave him plenty of time to write and make peace with his creator---all. This was denied his friend. A blindfold was placed over his eyes and nine men marched him out a distance from camp and at a given sign, the nine men fired at him. There was one fatal gun that did the deed. There were 200 present. Many tears were shed on behalf of the poor families far away in their homes, innocent of the fate of the husbands and fathers. We quickly buried him and started on our way feeling that we would never witness so terrible a thing again. The letters were mailed at the first opportunity.

Our time was not all passed in gloom. We had many amusements and entertainments. The young people were usually happy. We had a fortune-teller in our company and of an evening after supper, we forgot our weariness. We had our fortunes told around the campfire which was very amusing to the young people. Then they all enjoyed singing before they went to bed.

Then we fell in company with a minister and had preaching occasionally. Walking became a common thing for men, women and children. The young men and women would walk for miles. They enjoyed it more than the older ones. They became better acquainted and there were many lovers and also many marriages while we were traveling on.

We were now in the Rocky Mts. We found it a hard rough road. Some days we would travel through snow and then some days we would gather wild flowers. We passed over the Rockies without any trouble. Soon we came to the Green River, a small river, but too big to ford. We had to take our wagons apart and use the bed of the wagons for a boat to cross. First a man swam across, taking with him a rope. The rope was fastened on each side, then drawn taut. The wheels of the wagons and other parts of the outfit, were placed in the boat and ferried across. The cattle swam across the river. This river was very swift and this made crossing more troublesome. After crossing, the wagons were put together again and we were ready once more to start on.

We were traveling now with great difficulty. We went a distance up the Bear River. The road here was very dry and dusty and we had to endure the continually burning sun all day long. It was very difficult to get water to drink and to water the stock. Sometimes we had to carry water. We filled kegs and took the water with us.

We came on down the Snake River into Boise Valley. There were no settlers there then. Only a rancher or two, but no families. There was a very beautiful valley with high waving grass. Some of the emigrants wanted to stop here; but provisions were getting low and others were bound for the Powder River Valley and the Auburn mines. So on we went. We found very good roads now. We crossed the Oyhee River. One day we were having a nice sociable walk, all barefooted for our shoes had worn out long ago. We overtook the ladies who had begun their journey in the fine carriage and who had laughed at us and our ox teams. They had walked after their horses had died. They were also barefoot and ragged and were now friendly and as common as anyone. They told us all about their bad luck.

They said they were going to Portland.

We soon reached the Burnt River and it was a beautiful stream. The water was clear and the bottom of the river was covered with small rocks. We all enjoyed wading across the cool clear stream. We crossed it several times that day and at night we camped on its banks.

The next night we reached the Powder River where Baker is now located. It was dark when we arrived there. Soon we made camp for the night. In the morning we decided to stop here. Some concluded that this would be a good place to take up ranches. Others decided to go on to the Auburn mines. Some of our party went to Portland and some to the Willamette Valley. There were already settlers in the Powder River Valley and they were glad to have us. We too were glad to find a place to make our homes for we were very tired of traveling. This was the 20th day of September, 1862.

This is a copy of the diary of Lavina Creighbaum Bryant who was about 21 years old when she crossed the plains. She was the daughter of Jacob Creighbaum and Nancy Durbin Creighbaum. They were living in Columbus, Ohio shortly before beginning their trip. Lavina died about 1903. She had this diary published in the Magazine Section of the Sunday Oregonian in the summer of 1936. Her son "Bud" U.S. Bryant, daughters Cora Wheeler and Maude Kratz lived in the Portland area and in the Willamette Valley. Her mother Nancy Durbin Creighbaum, died at her home in Corvallis in 1884.