Overland to California with the Pioneer Line

THE GOLD RUSH DIARY OF BERNARD J. REID

Edited by Mary McDougall Gordon

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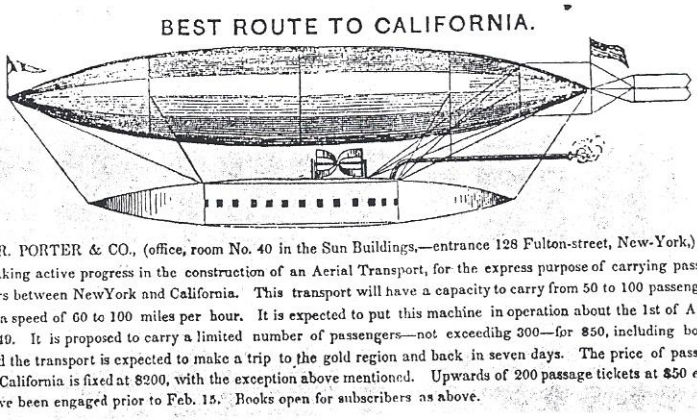


Rufus Porter's "aerial locomotive," as advertised in a promotional circular, 1849. *Courtesy: Bancroft Library.*

travel assumed an "expensive dimension." Transient trading posts, blacksmiths' shops, and gambling "lodges" sprang up in anticipation of an exceptional season. Traders raised their prices at the infrequent government forts and well-established outposts as hapless emigrants clamored for goods and services. Rival ferry operators competed for profits at dangerous river crossings.[25]

The most breathtaking scheme for overland service was passage by "aerial locomotive," initiated by Rufus Porter, a versatile if eccentric inventor who in 1845 had founded *Scientific American*. Porter's proposed airship was a balloon driven by steam-powered propellers (a model on exhibit in New York City looked somewhat like a future dirigible). His company allegedly sold 200 tickets for the maiden flight to California at a special rate of 50 dollars each, including meals served with wines. But Porter abandoned his scheme—in order, he announced, to prepare for the Second Coming.[26]

More conservative ventures were advertised in Missouri papers early in 1849. A number of promoters from St. Louis and towns along the Missouri River announced plans to take passengers overland by wagon for prices ranging from 100 to 300

ment in the surveyor general's office, and when I decided to go to California he proposed to accompany me and we agreed to travel together and join our fortunes in California. In purchasing our outfit every article of personal wear was got in duplicate, which gave us at first the appearance of twin brothers. The pony was to be used in common on the "ride and tie" or rather day-about plan.[12] We had a small medicine chest suitably filled under his directions for emergencies. He too procured an army rifle and ammunition. Each of us had a pair of heavy Mackinaw blankets, a broad rimmed soft fur hat and an india rubber cloak and india rubber leggins. We took with us many other articles that we supposed would be necessary or useful on such a trip, including an assortment of reading matter.

An enterprising St. Louis man named Tooke advertised that he would give lessons in the art of smelting gold and silver to prospective emigrants, representing that a knowledge of the process would be of great value in the mines. I became one of his many pupils, paid my fee, heard his lectures, got a booklet with his formulas and purchased of him a copper basin for washing gold dust and a cast-iron mould weighing about four pounds for casting gold ingots of the size and value of $1000 each. I cannot help laughing still at this bit of preliminary experience. So unnecessary to a gold miner was the process that no part of it was ever put in use by any of his pupils. My ingot mould was thrown away in Sweetwater valley, and the poor indian that happened to find it must have been sorely puzzled to divine its purpose. It would be a capital weapon for two persons to kill a bear with,—one to hold the bear, the other to knock him on the head. The copper basin was much too small for gold washing, and with some other *relicta* [relics] of the journey was sold at auction for a song after my arrival at San Francisco.

On the 28th of April we embarked on a steamer for Independence, reaching it on the fourth day.[13] I rode Don to the wharf

[12] Reid means that he and Brewster will take turns riding the pony; one will ride one day, the other the next.

[13] Reid identifies the steamboat as the *Sacramento* in a phrase crossed out in his journal (p. 7) and in the diary entry for June 21, above. The boat arrived in St. Joseph, Missouri, sometime between May 5 and May 9. See Barry, *Beginning of the West*, p. 847. Reid probably arrived in Independence on May 4, since the receipt for his passage money (preserved in the Reid Papers) is dated there on May 5.

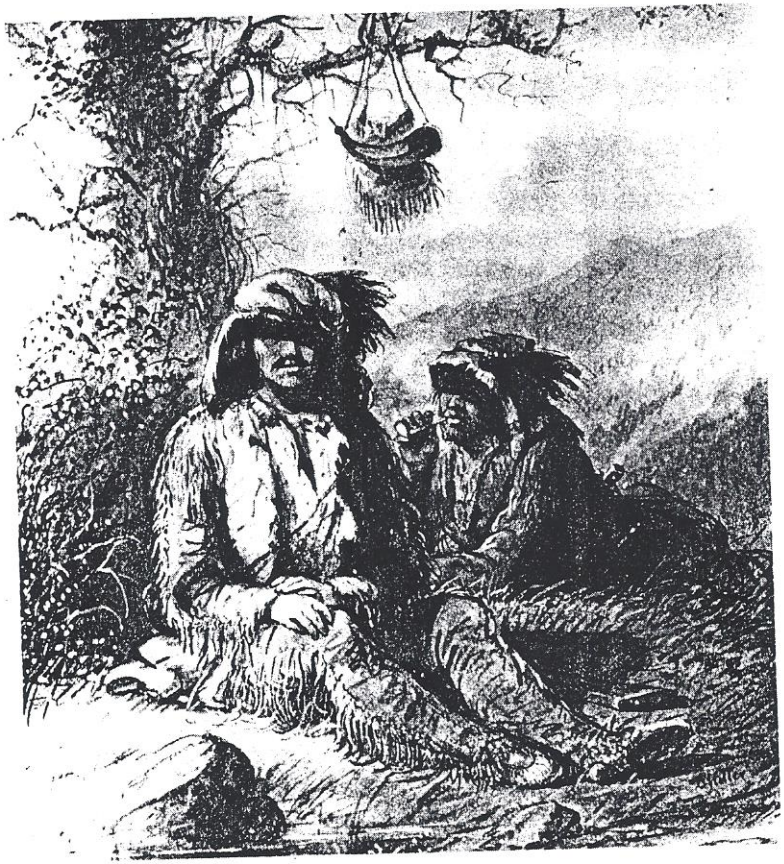
where, dismounting, I gave the bridle rein to a deck-hand and went up the passengers' gangway to the main deck, from which I watched the process of loading up. I then noticed that the deck-hands had trouble with Don. He objected to being led or driven over the planks leading to the lower deck. When they began to use blows to make him move I called out to stop, and that I would take charge of him. Going ashore, I threw the rein over his neck, sprang into the saddle and spoke to him, when he walked the plank at once as if he had been used to it all his life.

On the steamer I made the acquaintance of Dr. Sylvanus M. E. Goheen, a prominent physician of Belleville, Illinois, and his brother, Rev. Davis Goheen, of the same place, who were going in our train to California,—the latter on account of ill health. I found them to be men of superior minds and agreeable manners and I counted much on the pleasure of their companionship on our long journey. We put up at the same hotel in Independence, preparatory to our going into camp about eight miles out on the prairie, near the line of Kansas territory.

Just before our departure from St. Louis the newspapers contained accounts of the outbreak of Asiatic cholera at New Orleans, but it had not reached our city.[14] On the first evening at the hotel in Independence, as Brewster and I were in the parlor, a local physican came in and asked if we belonged to the Pioneer Train. On learning that we did he said he had just come from the room of a Mr. Beadles, a newspaper man from Iowa, who was one of our passengers and who had an acute attack of cholera, with no one to attend him. He asked whether we would go to his room and take care of him in his (the doctor's) absence. I had a vivid recollection as a boy of the ravages of the cholera when it visited this country in 1832, and had shared in the dread it then inspired even at a distance.[15] But now when brought face

[14] Reid is mistaken. There were 38 deaths from cholera in St. Louis as early as January 1849, and the Catholic archbishop allowed his flock to eat meat on Friday because physicians recommended abstinence from fish and vegetables. Deaths slowly increased, and cholera became an epidemic in the city by June, when one-tenth of the population died. The cause of Asiatic cholera, from bacteria, was unknown until 1883. Death frequently occurred only hours after an attack. See *Missouri Republican*, Jan. 1, 3, 1849; S. P. Lalumière to Bernard Reid, June 28, 1849; Rosenberg, *Cholera Years*, pp. 115, 135. Holliday, in *The World Rushed In* (p. 476, n. 114), estimates that 1,500 died from cholera in frontier camps and on the trail to Fort Laramie in 1849.

[15] For the epidemic of 1832, when Reid was nine years old [illegible]



This famous watercolor was painted by Alfred Jacob Miller in 1837. "Black" Harris, the noted mountain man hired as the Pioneer Line's overland guide, is seated in the foreground. *Courtesy: Walters Art Gallery.*

were to traverse and his experience in surmounting such difficulties as we were sure to encounter, would have been of incalculable value to us.

*At our camp we found a scene of bustle and activity in the preparations for weighing anchor and setting sail with our "prairie schooners" and other craft on the wide prairie ocean we were about to cross. Several days elapsed before the train was fully or-

* Note: First encampment was 8 miles out from Independence, MO, on the Santa Fe Trail (see page 27 and also footnote 24 on page 34.

to face with it, I felt no fear of it, and we went together to the sick man's room and nursed him till about midnight, when he died. We were then about retiring to get some sleep when Dr. Goheen came to ask us to assist him in caring for his brother, the minister, who had the cholera. We went at once to his room and remained, rendering such help as we could, till day break, when the patient died. After assisting the Doctor in laying out the remains we got breakfast and went to our room to get some needed rest. We slept till noon, and at dinner were told that Black Harris, a noted Rocky Mountain hunter and trapper, who had been engaged as guide for our train, was lying sick with cholera, in a room near the hotel. Our dinner over, we went to his room and remained with him about two hours, when he died.[16] Thus in the short space of 18 hours, we had waited at the death beds of three members of our train, victims of the epidemic that had broken out so suddenly among the emigrants and the people of Independence. Dr. Goheen gave up his trip and took his brother's remains back to Belleville. He went to California in 1850 and died at Placerville in January 1851 of symptoms resembling cholera. His widow survives and resides in Minneapolis.[17] In the death of Black Harris our train suffered an irreparable loss, as his intimate knowledge of the regions we

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Cholera Years, chap. 1. Reid's recollection that Robert Beadles was a passenger is puzzling, since a man by that name was listed as a member of the crew from Orange County, Virginia, in the *Missouri Republican*, May 17, 1849. According to that newspaper (Dec. 24, 1849) a Robert "Reedles" died on May 9. Reid lists Beadles's death in the margin of his passenger list, in the Reid Papers, and Searls notes that Beadles, a teamster known as "California Bob," died on May 15; see Searls, May 15, and the list of men who died in Searls's published diary, p. 64.

[16] Reid's recollection of the sequence of deaths is faulty; "Black" Harris was the first of the three to die. See Reid's letter (signed "Gerald") in the Independence *Daily Union*, May 14, 1849, reprinted in Hafen, ed., *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade*, IV, 117. Cf. Searls, May 24: "This trail was first laid out by 'Black' Harris our intended guide who unfortunately for us died in Independence of Cholera, just before our departure." Harris's death was indeed a great loss to the Pioneer Line. He had been a monumental figure in the fur trade and had served as a guide for a number of earlier trains on their way to Oregon.

[17] In preparation for expanding his diary into a narrative journal, Reid wrote to the editor of the Belleville *Advocate*, requesting information on the Goheens; he remembered their last name and their home town in Illinois. He received many replies, including one from Dr. Goheen's widow. The Goheen correspondence is in Folder 79, Reid Papers. Reid's letter was first published in the *Advocate* on January 20, 1904.

ganized and equipped, but on the 8th of May orders were given to strike tents and begin to move.[18]

Our wagons were new and well-built, and were brought from St. Louis by steamer, hauled out to camp and arranged as a "corral" or oval enclosure, with a roped gap or gate at one end, into which the mules could be driven for protection in case of an attack by Indians, and for "catching up" and harnessing at every start of the train. There were twenty good spring wagons with square tops, some covered with white canvas, others with black or green oil cloth, and each seated for six passengers. The "lazy-backs" were hinged and could be let down flat, making, with the seats, a bed on which three could sleep in the shelter. Tents were provided for the other passengers and train men, but on account of their great weight and trouble they were discarded before reaching the mountains, and then those who could not find shelter in the wagons had to sleep under them or under the sky as a canopy. There were 22 freight and baggage wagons with the usual hooped covers, all loaded to their full capacity and drawn by six mules, and some of the heavier ones by eight. The passenger wagons were to be drawn by four mules each. One of the spring wagons was for the proprietors and their staff. The others were numbered and a mess assigned to each. There were eleven messes of six each, three of five, three of seven and two of nine, according to a list that I made soon after we started, a copy of which is appended in a note.[19] Some of the names were given me at second hand, some of them not complete and others probably mis-spelled. There was at least one passenger at the start—Tiffany, of New York, whose name was omitted from my list. As far as practicable the passengers were permitted to group them-

[18] The date was actually May 9. Searls wrote in his diary on May 9 that it was "the day appointed for our final departure," but harnessing proved difficult, the train traveled only two miles, and several additional baggage wagons had not arrived. Thomas Turner was in Lexington, Missouri, on May 8 buying extra wagons, according to the *Missouri Republican*, May 13, 14, 1849. Searls's entry on May 15 makes it clear that the train started in earnest on that day. The Pioneer Line originally projected April 26 as the departure date; see *Missouri Republican*, April 16, 1849.

[19] The typed copy appended to the 1904 journal is missing, but Reid's original passenger list, in his hand, is in the Reid Papers. Passengers are listed under their carriage numbers, the dead men's names are boxed, and additional names of the dead are written in the margin. See p. 186.

* Second campsite was 2 miles beyond Rice's campground or ten miles southwest of Independence in vicinity of present-day 80th Terr. and James A. Reed Road. May 9-15, 1849. Ch. The Beginning of the West, page 861.

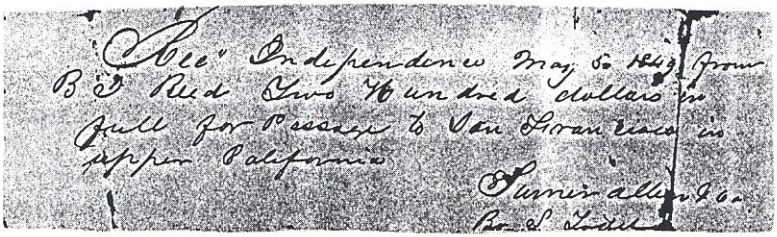
selves into messes based on acquaintanceship, or supposed congeniality. The nine in [carriage] Number 8 were all seafaring men from the coast of Maine. Each freight wagon, or "prairie schooner," had blazoned on its white cover a name presumably suggested by the fancy of its driver. I remember only these four: Prairie Bird, Tempest, Albatross and "*Have You Saw the Elephant?*"[20] As matters turned out this last legend, notwithstanding its bad grammar, was the most appropriate and prophetic of all.

There were in the corral about 300 mules, which, after hitching up the requisite number for the wagons, left a herd of about sixty to be driven loose as a reserve to draw from as occasion might arise, to relieve any that might become galled or jaded at their work. But the proprietors, unfortunately for us, instead of buying mules "best adapted for the trip" as their prospectus promised, had purchased at a cheaper rate young and soft mules that had never been broken to harness. The result was that, owing to the heavy loads and frequent spring rains, the wagons often sank to the hubs in the soft prairie, and the unseasoned mules soon began to show shoulder galls and exhaustion. Then to intensify the wrong done us, before we got a hundred miles on our way the proprietors, through greed to double their gains, decided to start a second train, and as a nucleus of it they detached three or four of our wagons and most of our loose mules; and Allen, who was with us to that point, left us there under Turner's control, and went back with the confiscated mules and wagons to organize the new train.[21]

Todd and Cunningham were the principal lieutenants to Captain Turner, and he had besides a commissary, two principal wagon masters, (Moses Mallerson and Robert Green), a wagon maker, a harness maker, a farrier, and the requisite number of teamsters and herders, some of these last being Mexican vaqueros skilled in throwing the riata or lasso, but this accomplish-

[20] In general "to see the elephant" meant to face a severe hazard or to gain experience through ordeals. The expression was used as early as 1834, but it became popular during the gold rush.

[21] The Pioneer Line had decided to organize a new train weeks before leaving Independence. Neither Reid's nor Searls's diary mentions Allen's presence at the start of the trip or the loss of some wagons and mules. The company's second train apparently left late in June. See *Missouri Republican*, March 21, April 5, June 1, 21, 1849; Barry, *Beginning of the West*, pp. 875–76.



Bernard Reid's receipt for his passage money is signed by S. Todd, one of the Pioneer Line's "principal lieutenants." Note that the destination on the "ticket" is San Francisco. *Courtesy: Archives, Univ. of Santa Clara.*

ment was by no means confined to the Mexicans. Each passenger mess was to drive its own team. Passengers and crew all told made a total of 161 souls in the train at the start.[22]

No pen can adequately describe our start. Half-a-dozen circuses combined in one would have been tame in comparison. Not one of our 300 mules (except an old bell mule, the leader of the herd), had ever had a bit in its mouth or a collar on its neck. To initiate them, one by one, into their new degree, by the ceremonial of being bridled and harnessed, proved to be a "riding of the goat" of the roughest kind. The mules had not been consulted about it when brought from their native heath, Kentucky, and they soon made it manifest that they had not given their consent to the ceremony.[23] I do not mean to imply that when the time came they were "kickers" in the literal sense. They had so many other ways of objecting to the process that they seemed to have reserved that particular mule trait for later stages of their

[22] Lell H. Woolley recalled (at the age of eighty-eight) that 150 passengers were on the train; a passing emigrant, James Lyne, estimated the total number of men at over 200; and the published list named 125 passengers, and some of the crew. Reid's total count is certainly conservative, since he listed only 120 passengers. After cross-checking lists and entries in Reid's and Searls's diaries, my count is approximately 131 passengers. Since the crew numbered at least 40, the total number of men with the train was at least 170. See passenger lists in the *Missouri Republican*, May 17, 1849, and in the Reid Papers; Lyne to Henry Lyne, May 22; Woolley, p. 3.

[23] Searls and Woolley also mention trouble with the mules; see Searls, May 9, 11, 15, and Woolley, p. 3. For a discussion of emigrants' problems with mules, see Potter's introduction to Geiger and Bryarly, pp. 35–36; and Mattes, *Great Platte River Road*, pp. 38–39. Cf. Webster, May 26, 27; Wistar, pp. 44, 51.

experience. In a strategical point of view they made the mistake of permitting themselves to be inveigled into following the old bell mule into the corral. Had they clung to the native liberty of the open prairie they might never have come under the yoke that proved in the sequel to be so galling. The corral formed an amphitheatre of about two-thirds of an acre. All hands were piped to their respective posts, the gap through which the herd entered was strongly roped behind them, and the fun began. A vaquero would single out a victim and throw his lasso. If it missed, it sent the whole herd galloping around the arena. If it caught, the galloping went on the same, or faster if possible, with the vaquero and his assistants, on the shorter "interior lines," tugging at the lasso with all their might, to make their "catch" heave-to, or, failing in that, to lasso his feet and throw him broadside, when half-a-dozen of them would pounce on to him to stop his struggling and force a bit into his mouth and a collar over his head. That accomplished, he would be taken to the nearest wagon wheel, firmly haltered there, and then harnessed ready for hitching to a wagon. Meantime other train men were catching, as catch could, other candidates for the degree, and going through a similar process with them. Many of them were very hard to catch, and when caught, to handle. It was a sight to see their wild leaps and contortions to baffle their captors. And who could blame their natural brute instinct to preserve their liberty? From the carriage tops and other points of vantage the passengers looked down for hours upon the exciting contest, and from time to time cheers rent the welkin—sometimes for the man and sometimes for the mule—whenever some feat of special agility or daring on either side was recognized. Towards the last, when the arena was well nigh cleared, Mose Mallerson, the wagon master, a young man of great nerve and splendid physique, was giving chase to a particular mule that had been very hard to conquer. Time after time he had shaken loose from his tormentors and set them at defiance. Then all at once Mose sprang at him like a tiger, clasped his arms around his neck, seized his ear with his teeth, and letting go his arms, held on to his ear with his teeth alone. The startled animal ran like lightning with Mose's body streaming through the air like a ship's pennant in a high wind,—and so they went, mule and man,

round and round the ring—the spectators cheering wildly—till at last, completely conquered, the mule stopped in its mad career, and submitted to be bridled and harnessed without further protest.

At last mules enough to man all the wagons were harnessed. Tents had been struck and loaded up, and all was ready for the move. One by one the wagons started, but not without dissent on the part of many mules whose in-born talent for kicking developed suddenly when the whips cracked. These little episodes caused many interruptions in the order of march, but no serious damage was done unless it was to the tender heels of the kickers. So much time was consumed in the circus performances that the sun was setting in the west before the last wagon had left camp; and at the same time the leading wagon in the procession wheeled into its place in a new corral to form our camp for the night—only one mile from our starting point.

Next morning the performance of yesterday was repeated on a milder scale, and so on from day to day until a better understanding between man and mule came to exist, and "catching up" became a tame and commonplace affair.

Our larder was supplied at first with a good variety of provisions for the journey, such as sea biscuit, flour, pinole (a sweetened meal made of parched corn), bacon in the shape of hams, shoulders and "side-meat,"[2] salt fish, cheese, beans, coffee, sugar, tea, salt, molasses, dried apples and dried peaches. Each carriage had a cooking and table service on a plain scale, stored in the box attached to the rear of the wagon bed. Every fifth day, army fashion, the commissary dealt out to each mess its allotment of rations according to the number of mouths to be fed, and the passengers took turns in cooking or arranged for that among themselves. While our first bill of fare lasted we lived on the fat of the land, but this liberal menu did not last very long.

By our trail it was about a hundred miles to the Kansas river at a ferry kept by civilized indians, not far from where the city of Topeka now stands.[24] After passing, not far from our starting

[24] This lower ferry, operated by the Papin brothers, was about 13 miles east of a second (upper) ferry near present-day Rossville, Kansas. Allowing for the first campground's location 8 miles from Independence on the Santa Fe Trail, Searls's figure for the distance from Independence to the Kansas ferry adds up to some 96 miles; guidebooks gave the distance as 100 miles.

* Second campsite was two miles further or 10 miles from Independence, MO. from May 9 to May 15, 1849.

point, the boundary between Missouri and the territory of Kansas, the country was uninhabited except by a few indians and half-breeds occupying huts and tilling small farms here and there at long intervals between the Missouri line and the Kansas river. The whole distance was over a prairie, mostly a dead level, but in some places undulating, with an occasional small water course skirted by a border of timber. Waukarusa creek was the largest stream we had to ford before reaching the river.[25] A tree or a grove of trees where there was no water was a rare sight. On one of the vast plateaus we crossed was the "Lone Elm," a prominent landmark standing like a solitary sentinel in the great treeless waste. How it came to sprout and grow by itself, or to survive the destruction of storm or fire that overwhelmed its companions, if it ever had any, leaving no trace of them whatever, is a question which history or science can probably never solve.[26]

I kept no diary until May 24th, but a week earlier I made the following brief notes of that day's events on a slip of paper, evidently intending to enter them more at length in my diary when opened:

"Thursday May 17th. Leave two carriages with two men to die of cholera. I remain awhile. Lone Elm. Kentuckian. News from back. Snipe. Snakes. Flowers. Peas. Santa Fe trail. Indian homes and spring. Camp at five o'clock two miles off on the Oregon trail. At dark the two carriages came up. The two men were buried together at the last camp."[27]

Excerpts from the day's entry in the diary of Reid's fellow passenger Niles Searls augment Reid's notes: "Two miles from our encampment was passed the 'Lone Elm.'. . . At one o'clock we reached the point

[25] According to Searls, the train started in earnest on May 15, as noted above, and crossed the Wakarusa (not Waukarusa), near present-day Lawrence, Kansas, on May 19, in pouring rain. Because of the river's steep banks, the crossing was difficult. The train traveled only four miles on that day.

[26] The Lone Elm was on Cedar Creek, about 40 miles along the trail. The Pioneer Line reached the spot on May 17. Most diarists on this route noted the tree, near present-day Olathe, Kansas, but it disappeared during the gold rush. See Mattes, *Great Platte River Road*, p. 137.

[27] Reid inserted the notes he made on May 17 in the first page of the copy he made of his 1849 diary. The wording is slightly different from the above quotation, but the meaning is unchanged. The two men who died were passengers Oliver Trowbridge (Canada) and William Millen; the latter's residence was listed as Indiana in the *Missouri Republican*, May 17, 1849, but Searls (p. 64) believed he was from Connecticut.

where the Oregon trail diverges from the Santa Fe road. Following the latter a short distance, we reached Cow Creek, upon which is the residence of a Mr. Rogers, . . . whose wife . . . was a half-breed.[28] Near the house was an excellent spring. . . . Those who had been left in the morning with the sick came in at a late hour, after having performed the last duty towards them required here on earth. They died a little before five this evening and both within a period of five minutes, and were buried in one grave on the ground where we had encamped the preceding night."

For some reason, Reid did not include another brief entry written on a slip of paper on May 18, which he inserted in the first page of the copy he made of the original overland diary. The entry is as follows: "Start at 8. I rode around by the Indian Spring. Scoured the timber of Santa Fe creek for game. Saw none. Shot at mark. Initials. Santa Fe creek fork at 1. Overtake train a mile further and exchange places with Brewster."

It is to be regretted that I did not then note the names of the two sick passengers. At least two other passengers had previously died of cholera since leaving our first camp. Whenever a passenger died on the way I kept a record of it crudely by drawing an ink line around his name on my list; and even after I began my diary I did not always make any other record of his death. Hence, while my list shows all who died on the way (while I was with the train), it does not give dates or causes of death, and my diary does so in a few instances only. Nearly one-half of those who died were victims of cholera, and most of the others of scurvy on the last half of the journey. I *italicise* on the printed list the names of those who died on the way while I was with the train.[29]

[28] The Mr. Rogers who cultivated a farm was a Shawnee. According to Theodore Talbot, a diarist of 1843, all his sons were named after U.S. presidents. See Mattes, *Great Platte River Road*, p. 138. The Oregon Trail followed the Santa Fe Trail for 45 miles before diverging to the north.

[29] Reid did note the deaths of Trowbridge and Millen in the margin of his passenger list, as well as that of Captain Gillespie of St. Louis, one of Turner's staff, who died at the first campground. Passengers McDonald and Swift, both physicians, cared for Trowbridge and Millen. No record can be found of the other two passengers' deaths. On his passenger list Reid noted that 24 men died (not 18, as he recalled in his "California Gold Rush Letter," p. 225), including the three who died in Independence. Niles Searls listed 17 dead, and the *Missouri Republican*, 15. David McCollum estimated the number as one-sixth of the "total," Dr. Robert McDonald recalled that 42 died, and an emigrant from Mississippi reported that deaths were "numerous," falsely stating that the dead were thrown out on the prairie without burial. From cross-checking lists in the sources below and en-

Captain Turner and his staff had saddle horses and so had several passengers, among them Tiffany, Winslow, Mulford, Dr. Steele and two or three others. An Italian from St. Louis, named Lamalfa, had a wagon with four horses, with an outfit for business in California. He was not of our train, but travelled with us for company and protection.

At one of our earlier camps where there was some timber I went apart some distance to shoot at mark with my pepper-box revolver. Pinning a paper target to a tree I stepped off twenty paces towards the camp, turned and fired. While examining the score after firing, I held the revolver muzzle downwards. This, without my knowing it, caused one of the bullets to roll down the unevenly bored barrel and lodge in the muzzle, thus leaving an air-space between powder and ball. Going back to my base I fired again at the same target. Almost instantly Mr. Tiffany came galloping up from directly behind me, nearly running me down with his horse, and angrily demanding *why I shot at him.* I assured him I had not, and pointed to the tree I had fired at in the opposite direction. Still fuming with anger he said he knew better, and that the bullet had almost grazed his face. I wondered if he was crazy, but a look at my smoking revolver solved the mystery. The explosion of the powder in the air-space between powder and ball had burst off a longitudinal strip of the cylinder in such manner as to hurl it directly backwards, nearly killing or wounding Mr. Tiffany, who was now profuse in his apologies for having charged me with felonious shooting.[30] I soon after threw away the worthless cylinder, but kept the butt, which I afterwards wore for awhile in the mines, projecting

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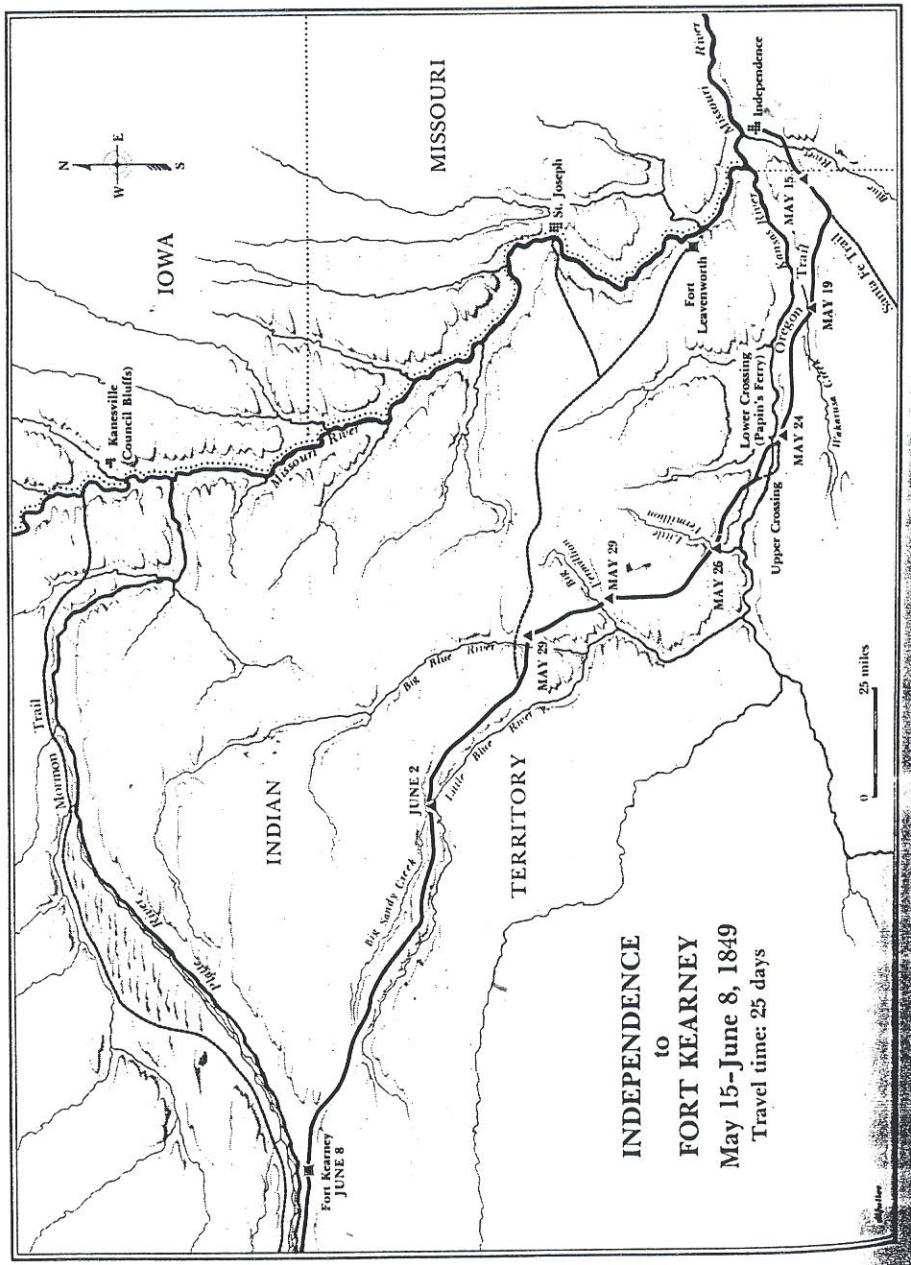
tries in the Reid and Searls diaries, my count is 22, excluding the three who died in Independence. See lists of the dead in the *Missouri Republican*, Aug. 12, Dec. 24, 1849, and in the Reid Papers; Barry, *Beginning of the West*, p. 862; *Missouri Republican*, July 4, 1849, letter from "Rambler" (Dr. Augustus Heslep of St. Louis); Searls, May 15, 17, and p. 64; Bidlack, ed., *Letters Home*, p. 35; McDonald, *McDonald Overland Narrative*, p. 63; and Unruh, *The Plains Across*, p. 436, n. 60.

[30] Such accidents, often fatal, were fairly common on the trail. In practicing shooting at a mark Reid followed other greenhorn emigrants unused to firearms. Cf. Johnson, April 29; Long, May 9; and Sedgley, July 2. Searls, on June 4, wrote that he practiced with other passengers and only one was a good shot. Reid noted that Tiffany came from New York, but Pardon Dexter Tiffany, born in Maine, was a lawyer from St. Louis.



Searls, whose messmate, Charles Sinclair, has been sick with cholera since May 21, writes: "Far from home, and the friends he loves, . . . his case seems truly distressing. Charlie [Mulford] has been all attention to him since his first attack and . . . has done everything in his power to smooth our new companion's pathway to the grave. I shall take his [Mulford's] place tonight in watching over his, apparently dying, pillow."

Monday, May 28. Started early. Rode the pony. Kentucky train got the start. I passed all and advanced alone, passing grave of Roush, of Illinois.[9] 15 miles to a clear, rapid creek. Fished, read, bathed and slept till 5 o'clock. Train had camped at noon, and were delayed. They came at last late in the evening, and crossing the creek without difficulty, camped on the west bank. Grave of Woodson, Ky.

Tuesday, May 29. Had a pleasant day's drive of 15 miles to the Big Vermillion. Passed grave of Ingraham, Tenn. Vermillion very steep on the east side but otherwise not difficult to ford. Encamped on prairie on west bank. Grave of James H. Marshall, of St. Louis, with cross,—died in 1844,—surmounting a beautiful and commanding eminence,—at sunset against the sky. Passed three spring branches with running water. Brewster and I stood guard the third watch—from 1 to 3. Considerable disaffection brewing.[10] My watch stopped.

Wednesday, May 30. Left [carriages] Nos. 17 and 19 with Sinclair expected to die. Rode the pony. Heavy rain. Overtook the train which had got ahead of me, at a little winding stream skirted with timber. Difficult crossing after the shower. Rode on over high prairie ridges to the Big Blue. While the train was crossing Brewster and I went in search of Alcove Spring.[11] Fine

[9] The gravestone of Henry Roush, in Union Township, Pottawattomie County, Kansas, is in one piece today. See Barry, *Beginning of the West*, p. 845.

[10] Cf. an undated letter from a Mormon, Almon W. Babbitt, printed in the St. Joseph *Gazette*, Oct. 19, 1849: "I met the Pioneer company . . . this side of Independence. They were getting along very slow, and the passengers generally dissatisfied with their fare." On July 20, 1849, the *Gazette* had printed an undated letter from "Dr. Price," who wrote that the passengers were "much dissatisfied." As early as May 17 Dr. Augustus Heslep, who spent the day with the Pioneer Line near the Lone Elm, wrote that he feared the train would pursue "a troublesome voyage"; *Missouri Republican*, June 6, 1849.

[11] Alcove Spring had been named in 1846 by the overlander Edwin Bryant, who thought it "one of the most romantic spots" he ever saw. Reid is using Bryant's diary of his 1846 trip as a guidebook. See Bryant, May 27, 1846; and Reid, Journal, p. 24.

from my belt as a make-believe piece of armor to conform to the prevailing custom of going armed.

The Kansas River bottom was handsomely timbered, and the ferrying process was slow on account of the number of our vehicles and the width of the stream—about 250 yards. We crossed on May 23d [May 22] and camped about a mile beyond on the prairie.

Searls, May 22: "Reached the ferry of the Kansas this morning and were fortunate in finding an opportunity to commence crossing our wagons immediately. The Ferry is owned by two half-breed Indians. . . . Collected around the bank were quite a number of Indians of the Pottawatomie tribe, dressed in their usual grotesque costume and painted or daubed with vermillion. The rear of the train reached the northern bank about sunset and proceeding two miles we encamped on a beautiful plain."

Searls, May 23: "The baggage needing to be overhauled and repacked, we shall remain in our present position till tomorrow."

The indians of the vicinity are the civilized remnants of the Pottawatomies, Delawares and some other tribes transplanted here when the white man crowded them out of their hunting grounds in the middle states. Near the ferry was a Methodist mission and school.[31]

[31] The Indians were removed west of the Mississippi (from the Old Northwest) by the Chicago Treaty of 1833; cf. Searls, May 22. For the Methodist Episcopal mission, which had closed in 1846, see Bryant, May 19, 1846; Paden, *Wake of the Prairie Schooner*, p. 39; and Barry, *Beginning of the West*, p. 800.