

TRAIL DIARIES - 1846

April 18, 1846 Saturday:

Edwin Bryant, R.T. Jacob, and R. Ewing left Louisville for California

April 26, 1846, Sunday:

Virgle Pringle (St. Louis) left Hickory Grove Farm for California

April 28, Tuesday:

Pringle passed Camden (Ray County, along Missouri River)

April 28 & 29 & May 1:

Pringle: At M. Brown's repairing wagons....

May 1, Friday:

Bryant: Arrived in Independence...town is situated about six miles from the river....for some years the principal outfitting point for the Santa Fe traders....houses around the square are constructed of brick, but the majority of the buildings are frames...Ox teams seem to be esteemed as preferable...Accordingly I purchased three yokes of oxen, which it was believed would be a team sufficiently powerful for the transportation of our baggage and provisions. The average price paid per yoke was \$21.67, which was considered cheap...We engaged a man, who had spent some time in the Rocky Mountains as a servant of the trading and trapping companies, for our driver and cook, and the cattle to be placed under his charge to be educated.

May 2, Saturday:

Pringle: Left M. Brown's & went 6 miles and encamped in Missouri bottom about one mile from the ferry...6 miles

May 3, Sunday:

Bryant: It rained heavily and incessantly the whole day of the 3d, and the unpaved streets of the town were so muddy and so much inundated with water, that walking about was quite out of the question. We therefore confined ourselves to our room in the hotel

Pringle: Came to a ferry soon in the morning and found the crossing slow. Occupied the day in getting wagons across. The day showery. Encamped at a vacant house on the south bank.

May 4, Monday:

Bryant: ...additional purchases were made and arrangements completed, with the exception of some fixtures to our wagon, with duplicate axletrees, ox-bows, etc.

May 5, Tuesday:

Bryant: The beauties of the spring are now unfolding themselves....Our wagon, which has been in the hands of the smith for several days for the purpose of adapting it in all respects to our journey, we expected would be ready this morning...I found but little done...The smith his excuses as usual

in such cases...(I) determined not to leave the spot until I saw the work finished. This was done about three o'clock. Our ox-team, which had been kept in readiness for several hours, was immediately attached to the wagon, and our luggage placed in it with all dispatch, and at four o'clock the wagon and team, under the guidance of Brownell the driver, left the town...Business detained me a short time..I did not overtake the wagon, until...about a mile from its starting point, where I found it firmly and immoveably stalled in the mud...The oxen being untutored and unmanageable, could not prevailed upon to unite their strength...with the aid of Curry, McKinstry, and Nuttall, we endeavored...assist the oxen...our exertions were in vain. Fortunately a negro man with well trained yoke of oxen came...hitching his team to ours the wagon was immediately drawn out of the mud...

Proceeding a mile farther, I determined to encamp for the night, it being nearly sunset, on a small stream which crossed the road. Having selected the site of our camp in a grove near a log house, the wagon, driven by Brownell, soon came up, but attempting to cross a causeway thrown over the stream, the wheels ran off one side, and we were stalled a second time...Finally...a Santa Fe teamster and his oxen, who came down the road during our labors to extricate the wagon. A Mr. Ross, of Independence, passing at the time, acted as master-teamster on the occasion...The oxen seemed willing to obey him...We ascended a small elevation and encamped for the night.

During the process of cooking supper, it commenced raining and blowing with great violence....The rain came down so copiously....our fire was extinguished....culinary operations were suspended until nearly 10 o'clock....We ate standing, with the rain falling, and our clothing completely saturated with water

Jacob and myself made our bed...McKinstry and Brownell, under the wagon..Curry and Nuttall under a tree.... about 2 o'clock in the morning..the rain began falling in torrents..with peals of crashing thunder and flashes of lightning....Not withstanding, we rested pretty well. Distance two miles.

Pringle: Got under headway for Blue Mill's. Went ahead with my wagons and commenced loading in my flour for which I pay \$2.00 for S(upper). fine and \$1.75 for fine. The first accident happened this day that has befallen us on our trip. The wagon in which Mrs. James Brown and family were, was overturned and Mrs. B. badly hurt and one of the children slightly. The oxen taking fright by a drove of mules. All much alarmed for Mrs. Brown....about 12 miles

May 6, Wednesday:

Bryant: The atmosphere was clear and calm, and thousands of birds were chanting their matin hymn, rendering the grove musical with their melodies.

Three Santa Fe wagons which passed our camp last night during the storm, were stalled in the road just beyond us. We purchased some corn for our oxen at the log-dwelling near by, which they devoured with a good appetite, having eaten nothing for about eighteen hours....Just as we were starting, one of our best oxen having become entangled in the rope by which he was tied, was thrown to the ground with great force, and after struggling some time he rolled up his eyes, which became fixed, and he manifested all the symptoms of death by a broken neck, or some fatal injury...I was about to start back to town to purchase another animal, when he very calmly and deliberately rose upon his legs and began to feed upon the corn....

As we approached what is called the Blue Prairie, the road became much drier and less difficult. The vast prairie itself soon opened before us in all its grandeur and beauty.

Among the flowers which spangle the waves of the ocean of luxuriant vegetation, were wild pink-verbena, and wild indigo, with a bean-like blossom. The larkspur, and myriads of smaller flowers, ornament the velvety carpet of grass. Having alighted from my horse to gather some fine specimens of these flowers, when I carelessly remounting, encumbered with my gun and several other articles, the saddle turned, and my horse becoming restive or alarmed, threw me with great violence to the ground. my wrist and both shoulders were much injured, and my right side was

severely bruised.

At two o'clock we reached our encampment, composed of the wagons of Colonel Russell and the family of Mr. West, of Calloway county, Mo. and some others. They were emigrating to California. The wagons numbered about fifteen....Mrs. West, a lady of seventy, and her daughter, Mrs. Campbell, were knitting..Mr. West...seventy-five years of age....His four sons and son-in-law, Major Campbell...determined to emigrate to California, (Mr. and Mrs. West) resolved to accompany them.

A log-house, the residence of a Mr. Milliron,....was situated about half a mile from our encampment. We visited the house soon after our encampment. The family, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. M. and several sons and daughters, have resided here, on the outskirts of civilization, four years.

....About five o'clock, P.M., a very black and threatening cloud, which had been gathering for some hours in the west, rose over us, and discharged with the copiousness of a water-spout.

.... good supper...was prepared for us...of which we did ample justice....at the supper table I met a traveller named O'Bryant.

....The capacity of the log-house in which we had taken lodgings for the night, was confined to two small rooms; and of men, women and children, there were some fifteen persons to be accommodated.

Pringle: Laid by this day on account of Mrs. Brown. Completed taking in our flour. The weather still showery. The Blue Mills is the best water mills I have seen in the state. Make flour that passes the Boston market, to which they often freight.....231 miles (from starting place)

May 7, Thursday:

Bryant: The rain fell almost incessantly during the night....We resumed our march in the rain, at 9 o'clock, accompanied by Colonel Russell and his wagon, the other wagons encamped where we found them. We travelled about four miles to a small creek which is called "Blue Creek," and finding the waters so much swollen by the late heavy rains, that it was not fordable, we encamped in a narrow, timbered bottom, a hundred yards from the stream. About twelve o'clock the dark clouds...cleared away, and the sun shone out warm and bright...we dried our drenched clothing....

We sounded the creek this evening, but found the depth of water too great for fording. We consequently resolved to encamp for the night, and pitched our tent for the first time....Distance four miles.

Pringle: Set sail for Independence, 8 miles from our encampment, at which place we arrived at 2 o'clock. Finished our outfit and encamped 4 miles beyond Independence. All things in good order. Our teams doing well and not overloaded...12 miles

May 8, Friday:

Bryant: The creek had fallen several feet during the night, and, much to our gratification, was now fordable....At 9 o'clock we resumed our march. Forging the creek, and crossing the timbered bottom of the stream over a very deep and muddy road, we entered the magnificent prairie beyond the Missouri line..

Pringle: This day the weather was fine, the first for nearly a week. Went 12 miles to the Blue and encamped, it being too high to cross. Another wagon capsized at the encampment, a family from Pennsylvania. No injury to person or property. The country is very different from any I have ever seen, it being prairie, quite rolling, or broken, and rocks in ledges. The soil good, interspersed with springs and patches of small timber...12 miles....255 miles

May 12, Tuesday:

Meek-Reed: Left Independence on the 12th, went about 4 miles and camped

May 13, Wednesday:

Meek-Reed: Next day travelled about 16 miles in the rain, bad roads and rainy night

May 14-15, Thursday & Friday:

Meek-Reed: Camped at "Heart Grove" Jackson County near the Indian line twenty two miles from Independence on the Big Blue

May 16, Saturday:

Meek-Reed: from thir we camped on the head of the Rull (Bull) Creek twenty miles from Big Blue

May 30 Saturday:

William Henry Glasgow: Left Independence ...about 10 o'clock with our wagons 19 in number & Mr. Ferguson with his 4. The first day we got but 3 miles from town with half our wagons the other half we left in devious & sundry mudholes strung along for a mile behind.

May 31 Sunday:

Glasgow: On Sunday morning we started and got pretty well until dark overtook us at Mr. Barnes's place, 8 miles from town, where we encamped and placed our animals all in his pasture. It commenced pouring down rain soon after dark...

June 1 Monday:

Glasgow:...the roads were so slippy & muddy that we could not stir, about 12 oclck however I rode over the road for 4 miles selecting the good places to cross the mud holes and...

June 2 Tuesday:

Glasgow: Tuesday morning we got an early start and were getting on splendidly when we crossed a mud hole we broke both of the hounds off the front axletree and were compelled to encamp in the prairie to put in new ones. This night it rained as fast as Water could possibly fall..

June 3 Wednesday:

Glasgow:...it cleared up a little on Wednesday morning and we started to try to cross the big blue river before the rains can raise the river but in half a mile we came to a hill which is so soft & slippy that our animals could not drag a waggon up it & the rain came down faster than I ever saw it before. So we were compelled to encamp again within half a mile of our old camp of the night before. We (as we did yesterday) turned our mules (112 in the mud in n") & oxen (186 in n") out to graze upon the prairie and it continued to rain splendidly all day....we are encamped half a mile ofthe big blue river....

....We are now busy cutting down trees and filling up mud holes with them to enable us to cross the river as soon as the water gets down low enough not to run into the waggon beds. You can form no idea of the roads we have here we scarcely crossed a mud hole since we left Independence without hitching 11 to 12 yoke of oxen to each waggon and as our oxen were all foolish we have had a sweet time of it as you may judge by time (6 days) we have been getting 16 miles 2 1/2 miles a day....

A man has just come up from the creek & says it is falling a little so that if we have no more rain on Saturday or Sunday we will be able to get across. It is 4 miles from this to the last house and the state line.

June 9, Tuesday:

Susan Magoffin: We went into Independence; there we stayed one night only at Mr. Noland's Hotel

June 10, Wednesday:

Magoffin: I did considerable business, some shopping....next I arranged my trunk "plunder-basket), etc. And after dinner we left the little village of I(Independence) for the residence of Mr. Barns, a gentleman some ten miles this side of that place. Here we procured a night's lodging preparatory to a final departure. They were very kind to us. Mrs. Barns claims a relationship with me through the Harts; be it so I can't tell. (Her grandmothers was Susannah Hart Shelby).

June 11, Thursday:

Magoffin: On Thursday morning we left Mr. B's at an early hour. They had us up by day-light, gave us breakfast almost as soon, and by 7 o'clock we were on the road. Now the prairie life begins! Our mules soon left "the settlement" this morning. Our mules travel well and we jogged on a rapid pace to 10 o'clock, when we came up with the waggons. They were encamped just at the edge of the last woods. As we proceeded from this thick woods of oaks and scrubby undergrowth my eyes were unable to satiate their longing for a sight of the wide spreading plains. The hot sun, or rather the wind blew roughly, compelled me to seek shelter with my friends, the carriage & a thick veil.

All of our waggons were here, and those of two or three others of the traders. (Among them, Col. Owens.)Don Gabriel Valdez, his tent some three miles off, but notwithstanding we must go there. So we left the waggons and rode over, sending an express ahead to tell the gentleman we would dine with him. At 12 o'clock we arrived there

Fourteen big waggons with two yoke, one dearborn with two mules, our own carriage with two more mules and two more men on mules driving the loose stock, consisting of nine and a half yoke of oxen, our riding horses two, and three mules, with Mr. hall, the superintendent of the waggons, together we number twenty men, three are our tent servants (Mexicans), Jane, my attendant, two horses, nine mules, some two hundred oxen, and last though not least our dog Ring..(a gray hound)..a nice watch for our tent door.

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Pringle came from Connecticut to St. Louis in 1825, where the family started a literary society.

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