

Merrill J. Mather collection

DIARY
KEPT BY
BRYAN DENNIS
OF HIS
OVERLAND JOURNEY TO CALIFORNIA
IN 1850

Iowa City to Black Fork, Wyoming

Books 1 and 2

Recopied from typescript owned
by Mrs Helen Remley, Santa Fe,
New Mexico

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DIARY KEPT BY BRYAN DENNIS OF HIS
OVERLAND JOURNEY TO CALIFORNIA IN

1850

FIRST BOOK

Page 1.

Monday Morning, April 15th, 1850. 6 o'clock

We left our neat little cot and happy fireside and bade farewell to our dear friends. We left them with hearts overflowing with sorrow, yet we started to the Golden Eldorado with stout hearts and with a firm determination to conquer or die.

In the evening we had a foretaste of the "Elephant". Got into a mire hole. Took out our loads, pulled out our wagon, loaded up in a few minutes, and were cheerily on our way. Camped over night on Little Bear Creek.

Tuesday Morning

Went on the road early. Nothing of interest occurred during the day. Cold. Put up early 6 miles from Talbotts Grove with Mr. Venett. (sic)
Talbot's Grove is a splendid grove of timber, affording timber for making a large settlement. Land of good quality, quite rolling. We found corn worth \$1.00 per bushel.

Wednesday Morning, 10 minutes past 6.

Wind blowing a strong norther. Cold as Iceland. Californians had better beat home by their own firesides until a better prospect

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appears. We started with light hearts looking ahead to the Golden Eldorado. Camped on the south bank of Skunk, of North Skunk. Travelled 25 miles, roads very fine. This stream is about mountainous, rather broken here. We had a light foretaste of the Rocky Mountains.

Page 3. We had to use the pack horses. We packed our loads on our backs up the steepest hill in Iowa.

Four o'clock.

We got swamped here, had to resort to the packing system. Our horses were swamped in the worst sort of way, I tell you. Got our load out. Took the longest rope, 175 feet long, got a shovel, hitched on old Toby and Bill and pulled it ashore. Were soon on our way rejoicing. Camped on South Skunk in the evening. (Camped three miles west of South Skunk.)

Friday Morning.

Left our camp early. Got swamped three miles from camp. Unloaded,

Page 4. Hitched on to the end of tongue and drew out, and were soon on our way feeling nothing discouraged at the bad fortune we had met with.

Friday Noon.

Our Bill, horse, has taken quite lame. We got as far as Mc-Mitchel's. Concluded to lie by till horse got better and able to travel. Here we have to pay \$1.50 per bushel for corn. This is 105 miles from the city. Here is the junction of the two roads from Burlington and Iowa City. Timber is very scarce. Soil is rich, and rather broken until last five miles when it has been rather heavy and country undulating.

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The sloughs are the worst we have seen in Iowa. McMitchel has the best stand for a tavern I have seen in the state and Mr. Mitchel, the proprietor, is a gentleman, but the hardest case on the route is Parker on the South Sknuk, whose soul is too small for even Satan to take notice of. He lets him pass and will until the Californians pass their final judgment on him.

Sunday, the 21st. of April.

Quite cool, very little appearance of grass. We have lain by today. Spent the day quite pleasantly. Our horse is getting better. We shall be able to start in the morning.

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Monday Morning, the 22nd of April, 1850.

Weather cool. Overcoats quite comfortable. The wind from the northwest and blowing a perfect hurricane. We shall leave here this morning. Came in sight of Des Moines 2 o'clock in P.M. It is quite a respectable looking place for the age of the place. Crossed over a fine looking stream and is over 200 yards wide below the forks. I have often heard of the Des Moines country as being the finest country in the state, but the scarcity of timber will prevent it from becoming very extensively settled.

Page 7.

Abe Teneyck and company are with us and we hope to continue with them through to the Bluffs. I took my gun and strolled down the river 1 mile in quest of game, saw nothing. Here the river swiftly and majestically glides to nothing, and to the southeast. Crossed two streams and two ferries. One across the Des Moines and the other

Page 8. across the Raccoon. The two ferries are not fifty yards apart, 85¢ for crossing both streams. Corn is worth \$1.25 to \$1.50 per bushel. The town is situated directly in the forks of the two streams and does not make a very pleasing appearance.

Page 12. A few rods from our camp is a section corner of Township 36 West of and 75 North making one hundred and seventy-four miles West of Muscatine and South of Home.

The roads now are excellent but very crooked. There is scarcely any timber. What timber there is, is entirely confined to the streams, and they are few and wide apart. We find no grass worth mentioning. Once in awhile we see a prairie chicken and a pigeon. When we get one it makes us a most excellent dish of soup.

Thursday, April 25th, 1850

Page 13. We are out of bed but not much refreshed from our night's sleep. We had to confine ourselves to our wagons for the night. It appears that the devil or ~~some~~ other evil spirit got hold of our Indian pony and "Bill" and they kept up a continuous biting, pawing, and snorting the whole night long, depriving us of any refreshing sleep. We promised them a stake in the prairie and the lariat rope hereafter.

The sun shining in splendor animating and reanimating all creation. The prairie chickens with their plaintive lay, the black-birds whistling in the willows that deck the little rivulet on which we are encamped. We will soon be on our way, not the least discouraged, to the mountains. At noon, travelled 15 miles. Left at 2 o'clock,

Page 14. camped in the prairie 10 miles from Watawah. Hauled our wood. The country in general is not worth a passing notice. Rough and destitute of timber.

We parted with Mr. Hench and company. Mr. Hench concluded to return home. The company stopped to prepare victals to take him home.

We pushed ahead. We have been two days on the prairie, without seeing timber to make a half dozen good farms, and this is on Middle River of Naktowah. Crossed East Nodowa 10 o'clock.

Friday Morning, April 26th.

Twelve o'clock. Taking our dinner near a prairie slough. Quite warm and cheery. The Nodowa flows into the Missouri.

Friday Evening, 4 o'clock.

Camped on West Nodowa 30 miles from Middle River. Here we came up with friends, Mr. N. C. Butler, Joseph Hemphill and company, all in high glee. The country is almost destitute of timber. Country generally rolling, soil good. Here are 28 California teams put up over night.

Quite an appearance for rain. This day has brought forward the grass, so that the prairie begins to look green. There is a swale growth here. We are camped in the only timber for twenty-five miles.

We left early Saturday 27th of April and took our journey into the endless prairie. Crossed the only timber for twenty-five miles. Crossed East Nishnabotna one o'clock. This a beautiful stream.

Page 16. Little timber is to be seen. The prairie is rolling and beautiful. On the west side of river, the Indians have lived and raised corn; buried their dead, left, sought a new home farther in the western wilds.

Today we have been swamped three times. Got out with but little difficulty.

We are camped this evening in a most lovely spot on a little creek five miles west of Nishnabotna. Nothing in the shape of timber but a few boxwood, plum, and crabapple. We had a little grass for our horses, which was quite a treat. Here the flowers are bursting

Page 17. out in all their beauty, which made us think we are in the Garden of Eden.

We are on the waters leading into the Great Missouri.

Sunday Morning, April 28th, 1850.

Cold as blizzard. Wind in North-west and cloudy. All well and in good spirits. We travel today from necessity. We are out of feed and must get out to the Settlement where we can obtain it.

The distance we have travelled through the prairie without a house or any settler is set down as 60 miles, that is on a straight line, but the way we have travelled is not less than 80 miles. For half the distance a little north of West, thence from Middle River to Nishnabotna the road a good portion of the way is west of Southand the crookedest road we have travelled. Crossed West Nishnabotna 26 times.

This Evening we camped on Silver Creek. This is a very fine road, nearly as good as macadamized road with the exception of the sloughs and the needed macadam. Mount Scott has a beautiful sileration (silhouette?). The Mormons have a settlement on Silver
Page 18. Creek, also at Indian Town on East Nishnabotna.

They have the finest wheat here I have ever seen in the West.
Monday Morning April 29th.

We are 16 miles from the Bluffs (Council). We press forward, anxious to see the great rendezvous for the Mormon, California and Oregon emigrants.

Two O'clock

I met with Cousin Warren Snow. It was quite pleasant to meet one's friends especially in a strange country. Heard of Uncle Elisha Vorhis. All well and doing first rate. They are living at Canesville.

Page 19. It is a Mormon settlement, some four or five miles long and is situated in a deep ravine one mile from the Missouri.

We arrived at Canesville about 2 o'clock after travelling and lying by on the road fourteen and a half days. Had a fine time. Got through without much difficulty.

Found the City (Iowa) company and camped with them in a deep ravine one mile west of town. This is properly called the Bluffs. Here hills upon hills are piled and have quite a mountainous appearance.

Page 20. Tuesday April 30th, 1850.

We have been in the town purchasing feed. The way they put the price is beyond all conscientious scruples. Wheat demands the sum of \$2.00 and \$2.50. Quick sales. Corn \$2.00 and \$2.50. Oats \$1.50 to \$2.00. Hard living but considerably better than on the plains. Wednesday, May 1, 1850.

This morning we had ice one-fourth inch thick. Grass very poor. In fact no grazing here. The company is all in good spirits. Thursday, May 2nd, 1850.

Cold and the wind in the Northwest. Canesville at this time is a shaving place. Mormons shave Californians and Californians shave one another. In the evening we had a fine rain.

Page 21 Friday, May 3rd.

Wind the north-east. Quite cool. Very expensive living here, but the backwardness of the season compels us to remain here, or run the risk of losing our teams.

Marshall Myers drilled the company. Marched them through the camp a few times. Inspected the arms. Found all in order and fully equipped. Dismissed us till we crossed the Missouri. The company will number 80 to 90 men. Men who are determined to go forward or die in the attempt.

Saturday, May 4th, 1850.

Left camp for the river and camped on the bank of the Missouri in the evening 9 miles from Canesville at the town of St. Francis. Here we lay over. (Sunday May 5th, 1850) until late in the evening

Page 22 when three or four teams crossed over the river and the remainder of the city company crossed over Monday the 6th. Here is the Mission. The Missioners live in grand style. Excellent school here. We saw three or four Indian boys who were well dressed. We travelled 8 miles and camped on Little Papeah.

Tuesday, May 7th, 1850.

Quite cold. Left camp early in the morning. Division A. 1 in the lead. Travelled 4 miles. Crossed the Big Papeah. We had to repair the bridge, and let the wagons down on it with ropes. The country is fine, but entirely destitute of timber. Travelled 20 miles.

Page 23. crossed the Elk Horn of the Platte. Camped on the west bank of the stream. Here we had a taste of California. Let our wagons on the boat by hand, and drew them out in the same way, and started on our way. Travelled near the bank of the Platte. Here the stream is three-fourths to a mile wide, quite shallow, full of sand bars here. Best grass we have seen. Went about 25 miles. Camped at a small lake one mile from the river. Grazing rather poor.

2 o'clock.

We saw quite a number of Pawnees. Their village was in sight on the south side of the Platte nearly three miles from our train. The Indians built their village by setting posts, then weaving the spaces closing with brush. Then covering the whole with dirt in the shape of potato hills.

Thursday, May 8th, 1850.

Travelled about 15 miles. One-half past 11 o'clock. Took our "Grub" on the bank of the Platte after making 16 miles. The country from the mouth of the Platte to this point is a level sandy plain. On the North side of the Platte, we made 9 miles in the afternoon, and camped on a small lake in the ravine. Here we found plenty good grazing and our horses filled themselves finely.

When we leave the Loop Fork we shall then travel to the South West until we strike the Platte. We have travelled up the Loop Fork for 25 miles.

There is considerable dissension in the Company, and I fear that there will be many divisions, yet I hope for the best. There is nothing like union. Where there is union there is strength, which is highly necessary in an Indian country.

Near the camp, I found several large blocks of chalk, and some specimens of slate, but of an inferior quality. The land here is of a very poor quality.

We have been travelling on the bottom lands, which average about one mile wide. Then come the sand hills, which are from 30 to 150 feet high.

The boys brought in a deer which made us quite a treat. We were hungry for something fresh.

Monday, May 13th, 1850.

Quite cool. I was out early grazing my horses. The weather is very cool nights. Grass short and we must find it so for some time,

until the weather gets warmer. After we left the Loop Fork one mile we ascended the table land. We found a vast level plain. There is no timber worth mentioning. 9 o'clock we left the main road. Travelled about two miles, when we had the worst swamping; mireing horses plunging, men hollering. Unhitched, pulled out, hitched on the harness, left the wheels and pulled him ahead the swamp, $2\frac{1}{2}$ rods wide. Men cursing. Here we like to have had a fit. A little interference soon settled the matter and we were soon on our way to California. May 13th, 1850. 11 o'clock.

Came to a small stream. Here Indians have had a hunting camp. Some 50 or 60 of Wickieups. No timber. From the appearances the Indians have killed a large number of buffaloes. Excellent water and good grass. Here again have some trouble in crossing the streams. 3 o'clock. We had a most glorious chase after a buffalo cow, horsemen and footmen. John Bandoe gave her a dead shot, after running her about a mile and a half. The way we fell about her was curious. We skinned her in short order. Then the way we cut and carved her to pieces was not slow, I tell you. Packed her on horses and travelled 7 miles, being rather tired from our chase and of travelling 18 miles today. We undertook to make a short-cut, but I fear we have made nothing.

9 o'clock. We came on the Platte. Here are several cedar trees.

BOOK 2

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Thursday Morning, May 16th, 1850.

The weather warm during the day. We shall start forward at half past six o'clock.

4 o'clock.

Camped on a small stream running into the Platte from the North West. Our general direction today a little South of West. We have made 26 miles. Country generally good, but destitute of timber.

We passed through several dog towns today. (prairie.) They have chosen dry and ineligible situations. We passed through one town 3 miles long and 1 mile wide where there was a burrow to every square rod. I have as yet not seen any being in the rear of the train this evening.

The dissensions in the company are louder. Threaten dissolution soon and yet we hope their fiery dispositions may become more softened and the company get along amicably.

To pass the dull time took a squirrel hunt.

Friday Morning, May 17, 1850.

All is well through the camp. There is quite an appearance of rain. We have had snow twice since we left. We have today passed 12 trains. In all 150 wagons. We get as much venison and buffalo as we are able to consume. We have had some hard slough but still have made 25 miles and camped by a slough and used buffalo chips to cook by.

Here the grass is very short. We have been in sight of trains on the south side of the range wending our way to California.

We have crossed several small streams today. Water plenty in them. Wood is scarce. In fact we have nothing but willow brush.

Saturday, May 18th.

We left our camp at 7 o'clock. The bottom lands are level and are 4 to 8 miles wide. On the south side they appear to be quite narrow.

We are at a small island laying in a stock of wood to last us 50 miles. We have to wade to the island. At this island we saw a most lovely sight. Three ladies on horseback gracefully guiding their quiet steeds on the prairie. We have camped in the prairie by a slough. Dug a well. Found pretty good water at 3 feet and had tolerably good grazing.

Made 14 miles by 2 o'clock.. The boys brought in three antelopes and we are feasting on the wild game of the prairie.

We have killed three buffaloes. They are hardly worth killing, quite poor. If we were to judge by the signs, we have seen near to 100 up to today that have been burned to death by the prairie fires. One boy in hunting saw 15 in one sink hole, where they probably had fled for protection.

This evening a vote was taken whether we should lay by till morning. Decided in the affirmative.

Sunday Morning, May 19th, 1850.

This is a most lovely morning. All is still and quiet. No sound strikes my ear, but the song of the many spring birds. We are constantly in the sight of hundreds of teams. On both sides of the Platte there is timber, box elder.

We had quite an interesting sermon and an attentive congregation. Lots are Californians travelling. Some are lying still and observing the Sabbath.

Monday Morning, May 20th, 1850.

We left camp early. We have found the roads very sandy and the travelling heavy. Here the country is poor. The rocks are piled up without any regularity. The rain that falls sinks into the sand beds. There is plenty of game in this region of country. Buffalo chips are plenty. The whole face of the country is covered with them. We have made 23 miles today.

Tuesday, the 21st of May.

Camped early having made $13\frac{1}{2}$ miles to Pawnee Spring at the head of Pawnee Swamp. Here is the best spring I have ever seen pouring out of the sand bluffs. At this point water is poor. We have hard roads today. The country today is very poor. We have seen herds of buffaloes. The bluffs are covered with them. We would have fine sport but they are poor and not worth killing.

We passed two graves, one died this spring the other last.

We are getting along finely and made 27 miles. Three buffaloes brought into camp this evening.

Wednesday, May 22nd, 1850.

We left camp at 6 for the purpose of passing 4 trains that camped near us. We got along pretty well but had some pretty hard pulling in crossing the sand bluffs. Made $22\frac{1}{2}$ miles and camped on a small river near the Platte, crossing two miles of the deepest sand I have seen. Hundreds of buffaloes constantly in sight.

Thursday, May 23rd, 1850.

We fared pretty well for grass, during the day until 3 o'clock when the grass was not sufficient for our teams. We kept pushing forward in the hope of finding good feed, but found none. Reached the bluffs after making 30 miles. We have crossed several beautiful streams affording an abundance of water and some of the best springs I have ever seen.

We have passed through some heavy sand today making the very worst time we have done at any time since we left home. At the Cedar Bluffs and on the south side of the river and on the north side of the Platte opposite the Bluffs comes in a creek 10 feet wide, shallow and of strong current.

We left camp at daybreak. Pushed on nearly two miles for good grass. Turned out our horses, got breakfast and again pushed on. Some of our company not leaving the camp, we therefore drove ahead and left them. Whilst we were grazing, they left camp, caught up and passed us.

Ten miles from camp we had a very steep hill of sand to climb $\frac{1}{2}$ spoke deep. Here we had $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of heavy sand. We found plenty of water during the day but little grass.

In the evening camped on Castle Rock Creek. We passed one grave today. The country at this time is barren and desolate and will probably remain so. We saw some Indians today of the Sioux tribe. The company will get together again after making 23 miles.

Saturday, May 25th, 1850.

We left camp at 7 o'clock. Pretty good roads. No grass until 3 o'clock when we stopped for the Sabbath. We are camped within 5 rods of a grave. The name of the person occupying this lonely cemetery of the dead is James Walker of Illinois. Died May 23rd, 1850.

We passed one grave today. A lady died last year. We were in sight of two Indian towns on the south side of the Platte. We saw a few of the Indians. They are stout, robust and quite good looking. Appear cleanly and are quite friendly. We have but little fire wood tonight. Our company by the by will burn a wagon tonight. Fire wood costs at least fifty dollars per cord.

The Linn County Company are camped close by. They gave us a splendid serenade. They came into camp. We had some most excellent singing accompanied with the banjo. After the singing the men felt like walking 20 miles and concluded to have a French ⁴ and Cotillion, so formed a ring and chose their partners from the fair sex, but for man took man and the way the prairie grass suffered was a sight.

There would have been dust in the eyes too, but for a shower in the afternoon.

Sunday, May 26th, 1850.

After calling a meeting the company decided that it would be actually necessary and expedient for us to travel owing to the great amount of emigration behind us forcing them forward to the top of their speed, passing all they could and firing the prairie and destroying the feed.

Crab Creek, we crossed $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles from camp and ten miles from our morning camp we crossed Cobbs Hills. Here is some romantic scenery. There are many singular shapes, some appearing like the ruins of ancient castles, towers and pyramids. This is a sandy and barren country. Generally we have camped on the bank of the Platte. After making 20 miles, we are in sight of the Court House and Chimney Rock.

Monday Evening, May 27th, 1850.

We are camped this evening opposite the celebrated Chimney Rock. It is situated 5 miles south of us, and has quite an imposing appearance. It is said to be 250 feet in height and can be seen 35 or 40 miles away. The Chimney is situated on a large mound and looks as if it might be 50 feet in height. The Court House does not deserve the flattering encomiums given it by Bryant. This is a barren and desolate country. We have made 23 miles and camped here in the meridian of the Chimney Rock. Cold and rainy. We had considerable grass during the day.

Tuesday, May 28th, 1850.

We left camp at 7 o'clock and travelled in sight of Chimney Rock 27 miles. Scott's Bluffs and country around here is some of the most splendid scenery I have ever seen. The Bluffs are between 2 and 3 hundred feet high and present a very imposing appearance. These bluffs are covered with a very imposing appearance. There Bluffs are covered with cedars with their beautiful green foilage. Grass rather poor.

Wednesday, 29th.

We left camp at one half past six, travelled on in sight of Scott's Bluffs. We came in sight of Laramie Peak, which is to be seen in the west at a distance of 150 miles. We can see snow in the north-east at noon today. Grass poor. Camped this evening on the Platte after making 25 miles. Had scarcely any grazing. The split from the company came up and camped with us, 22 teams of us together which will probably continue on.

Thursday, 30th, 1850.

Left camp at half past six o'clock. Pushed forward to Fort Laramie which we shall make early this evening. Reached the Ferry at the Fort at 4 o'clock. We are passing through a sandy and desolate country. No timber and has many sandy roads. We made 22 miles this day.

Friday, 31st, 1850

We ferried the river in the evening, camped on the south bank of

the Platte. We paid \$1.00 per wagon. Ferried over in safety. Fort Laramie is located one and one-half miles from the Ferry on the Laramie River. Uncle Sam does business in a fine style. They have excellent buildings: two stores. 175 soldiers here on duty.

Saturday, 1st day of June.

We left camp at daylight. We have seen a vast amount of property thrown away. We passed three graves today. Died 1849 in July.

We are in the Black Hills. We did not expect to find grass, but are happily disappointed. We have rain and have had every day for last four days. This evening it poured down in torrents. There is some of the most beautiful scenery in the Black Hills region from their being covered with pine and cedar. It is short and bushy.

In the highest hills, the Platte has cut canyons through the rocks 250 feet perpendicularly.

We are in sight of a chain of mountains running from Laramie's Peak southwest and they are covered with snow. We have made 24 miles today.

Sunday, 2nd of June, 1850.

We left camp at 7 o'clock. We travel today from necessity. Hundreds are on the road who are pushing ahead with the expectation that grass will be scarce and first come, the first served.

We travelled today with 4 o'clock finding a good camp ground. We laid by for the balance of the day, after making 20 miles.

We passed some splendid scenery. We had the greatest hail storm I ever witnessed. There being scarcely any wind, we found hail averaged size of a ball.

We are camped on the bank of the Platte. It is 250 or 300 yards wide, and not fordable at this time.

We met 3 teams from Salt Lake. They report grass is good ahead. We therefore cheerily push forward. This is a rocky country. We went after night with torch in hand to view one of the most beautiful and majestic sights. We tramped to the river one mile from our camp. The river has cut its way through the rocks to the depth of 300 feet perpendicular. This certainly has been one mighty freak of nature. As you advance into the canon you are struck with astonishment at the increased height of the bluffs which rise to the height of 500 feet upward on both sides of the river. This deep chasm is cut through the rocks for the distance of nearly two miles.

Monday Morning, June 3rd.

We left camp at 6 o'clock. We have had the best roads I have ever seen, equal to any Macadam road, slightly ascending or descending. We have very good grass. What there is of it. It is a kind of bunch grass and is now seeding and will be ripe and up in five or six weeks. We have been in the sage country for the last 3 days. It looks quite natural and is principally confined to the bottom lands.

We are camped on the Lafontonian emptying into the Platte from the south. Some little timber, cottonwood, box-elder and willow.

We travelled 23 miles today. We travelled one mile in the rain. Quite cool. Hail storm to the north of us. It fell to depth of 5 to 6 inches.

We had an election at the camp by our company, for the purpose of electing officers for the company. Ely Myers was chosen by acclamation, as also Mr. Sessions and Lucas who were elected for the term of 1 month.

Tuesday Morning.

I am at this time one mile from camp grazing our horses on a dry creek in the Black Hills. We left the camp at 7 o'clock, struck down the Le-Bout about one and a half miles, came out among the Red Hills. These hills are a very singular formation. The earth and stone are a dark red color. Found miles of another formation. Rocks may be seen bearing some resemblance to loaf sugar after being exposed to the atmosphere becomes soft. It has a little acrid taste, also a mound of solid rock 150 feet high resembling a sugar load.

We are camped on Lapvele Creek. Plenty of water and grass, not much timber but sufficient for camping. Near this stream on the south is a range of very high hills of solid rock lying layers nearly perpendicular, a little inclined to the south and of a reddish cast, on the north inclined to the south, white. Wood and water at several points along the road. Today we have found the best of grass by leaving the road one mile. Two and a half miles from our camp is a natural bridge across the creek some 20 to 30 miles.

Wednesday Morning.

We left camp at 7 o'clock. Passed several small streams today. Came on to the Platte at 2 o'clock. Travelled near it and camped on its bank. Crossed Deer Creek. A beautiful creek 40 feet wide and very rapid. Here is the most timber we have seen for several days, cotton-wood. About $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles west and 2 from the road is an extensive coal bed. Also some iron ore.

We have made 25 miles today and 7 miles west of Deer Creek. Have rather poor grass tonight. Had splendid grass today at noon.

Thursday, June 6th, 1850.

We left camp at half past six o'clock. Drove to the Ferry. Here are two companies waiting. Five boats and charging \$4.00 per wagon and 25¢ per horse. This made 16 hundred dollars. The 7th day of the month.

The Platte is quite a different stream from the Laramie. Deep, narrow and swift. We have found tolerable grass today. We have had good roads. Our loads are getting light and our horses doing well. The days are warm and nights cold.

Our boys found an extensive coal bed today 5 miles from the camp, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the road.

This is a barren and desolate country, mountains of stone lay piled in hideous shapes. We have made 22 miles. After camping, the boys went to get a taste of snow, which lay in sight on the mountains hills. They followed up the stream on which we were camped to

the distance of 7 or 8 miles supposing the distance not more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles. This is the wildest stream they had even seen pouring over cataracts of from 100 to 300 feet raging and foaming on its course.

Friday, 7th of June.

We crossed the Platte. Paid \$5.25, excellent Ferry. The cross from 100 to 400 teams per day. We have passed through a barren desolate country. Grass poor and water not fit to drink, for the distance of 18 to 20 miles.

We are camped on a small spring branch called the Sulphur Spring after making 26 miles today. We crossed the Silkali swamp 22 miles from the Ferry near which lie the skulls of ten head of cattle. Near hear are coal beds.

Saturday, 8th.

Left camp $\frac{1}{2}$ of 4 o'clock. Pushed on in search of grass. At 7 o'clock we found pretty good grass and the best of water $\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the road and 4 miles west of the mine. At spring the country is so poor it is destitute of grass, that we are mostly compelled to use the eastern method of grazing, that is to hold our horses by the hind legs and let them down into the spaces between the sage to get the grass.

This evening we are camped on the Sweet Water, 8 rods wide, 2 feet deep. Excellent water, poor grass and no wood. Near our camp is the celebrated Independence Rock. It is a smooth rock 250 to 300 feet high, covers several acres of ground. We passed several alkali

swamps completely encrusted with saleratus at the surface. It is fine and soft one inch deep. It is finely crystalized and I believe is good as the best manufactured saleratus. It is white as snow, and in very large quantities.

This country is a desert mostly but here is a good spot of grass near the foot of mountains where the spring comes gushing out from among the rocks moistening the earth. Excellent water.

Independence Rock is the most singular structure I have ever seen. It is of an oval shape, is $\frac{1}{2}$ mile long, 30 rods wide at the base. The rock is similar to the Lost Rock of Iowa. (Supposedly Red Rock near Des Moines.)

I stood on the top and could see 300 teams moving and in camps. This is a large registry. Thousands of names are registered on this rock, 200 in fact. Every conspicuous place some gentlemen of note have placed their M.D.F.R. or other title. Made 22 miles.
Sunday Morning, 9 o'clock.

We are lying by today resting ourselves and teams. We are getting along finely. We are 1 month ahead of the Friends from the City last year.

Monday, June 10th, 1850.

We have left camp at 7 o'clock. Place our names on Independence Rock.. Passed on to the Devil's Gate. This is a passage out through the solid rock by the Sweet Water to the depth of four hundred feet perpendicular and seventy feet wide. The bottom lands along the

Sweet Water are on an average of 2 miles wide. Very sandy and poor grass is short on the bottom lands. On the hills it is longer, though it is very scattering. It is bunch grass mixed through with sage. The mountains are increasing in height and are of solid rock with a few cedars clinging to the rocks.

We are camped at the foot of a mountain near 600 feet in height and nearly perpendicular. We have made 25 miles today. We passed two graves. Persons died last year in July. An emigrant out hunting came across an Indian who shot an arrow from some secluded spot which missed its aim. The Indian left his hiding place to cut off the escape of the emigrant who made for the sage spot. Hid in the sage. The Indian soon showed himself and was shot by the emigrant. The Indians probably will not find him. He made two bounds into the air and fell dead on his own soil. What the consequences may be do not know.

I caught a glimpse of the Wind River snowy mountains today. We have seen none (Indians) in travelling the last 400 miles. They keep out in the mountains for fear of catching the smallpox and cholera. The ox teams are a great annoyance to the horse teams. They travel slowly but make it up in time, push ahead.

Tuesday, June 11th, 1850.

We left camp in fine order 21 wagons in train. The road crowded full of horses and mule teams. The country is poorest country I have ever seen. Destitute or nearly so of vegetation with the exception of

northerly. We are camped on Quaquanap Creek after making 18 miles. sage, grass wood. We have been in full sight of the Wind River, chain Roads solid but rather stony and dangerous to heavy loaded wagons. of the Rocky Mountains covered with perpetual snow. We have seen Emigrants coming through 2 weeks later must suffer. Our horses are snow for 180 miles. We have seen the heaviest kind of land for 15 falling off fast. Three men sick in our train. miles. We have followed up the Sweet Water River and are camped on Friday Morning, June 14.

its bank after making 21 miles. Sunderland and Wright have gone out

One and one half miles from camp grazing our teams. We found to the mountains hunting. The timber is excellent on the top. Pine what we call pretty good grass in the mountain slough and among the and cedar here. We have a small spot of first rate grass 1 mile from rocks. That growing among the rocks is more nutritious than the camp.

slough grass and far better than the grass in Iowa, Illinois or Missouri.

Wednesday, June 12th, 1850.

Very cold this morning yet the sun is rising in the far East

Good pass and comfortable. The Sweet Water River is 80 feet wide. bidding fair for a pleasant day. A sage brush fire is very com-

Current strong. Camped on the Sweet Water after making 22 miles. We fortable this morning and overcasts not out of place. We leave camp travelled 18 miles without grass or water. The grass here is the at 7 o'clock and intend camping near the celebrated Pacific Spring poorest I have ever seen, scattering on the hills and bottom lands. where the water rolls onward over mountain, hill and dale into the The alkali seen, is making us afraid to use it, the grass on the Great Pacific ocean.

bottom is thickly set, but short and low. We have seen 5 dead

We camped this evening one mile east of the Pacific Springs. animals yesterday and today.

We have first rate grass. The water is now flowing westward. This Thursday, June 13th, 1850.

is the coldest climate I have ever felt. Rain and snow. We have had

Cold and windy. Left camp at 7 o'clock. Solid roads. We have the best road climbing.

arrived at the top of the Devil's Back of the Wind River Mountains.

There are the first cottonwood and willow trees we have seen The ascent has been quite gradual. We are nearly on the level with worth mentioning for several days. This is quite a rapid stream and the snow. We have better grass today than yesterday. We pass daily is from 350 to 400 feet wide. Here are two ferries. Price \$5.00 5 or 6 wagons thrown away. At this point the mountains do not appear per wagon and \$1.00 per horse. This country the poorest and barren, as high as I expected to find them. I suppose the ascent is so gravelly soil and destitute of everything except greasewood, sage, gradual. Cold this morning. Snowing on the mountain top to the

now and then a bunch of grass. The cluster of cottonwood and willow make it look beautiful with their green foilage.

Here is an immense quantity of alkali. Emigrants ought to be very careful to water their horses and cattle before turning them loose. The river water is pretty good.

Tuesday, 18th of June.

We again resumed our march at half past five down this river to the Lowe Ferry one mile below our camp. Here at the ferry are two boats kept by two French traders having their Indian wives and having wickieups covered with dressed buffalo skins. We got over cheaper than expected. \$3.00 per wagon and 50¢ per horse. We managed the boats ourselves. Cost the company one hundred seven dollars. Got across in safety. Left the Ferry at 2. Passed down the river 5 miles and camped here. The boys caught what they called salmon trout. A beautiful and fine flavored fish.

Extremely cold. Ice in our bucket, one quarter inch thick.

Several in our company are sick with fever. This is a poor company.

We are in full sight of the Uintah chain of mountains in the southwest covered with the perpetual snow.

Wednesday, June 19th, 1850.

We again took up our line of March at 7 o'clock. We left the river. Ascended on other table lands. We found some grass on the uplands. Crossed the Ham's Fork at 4 O'clock. Here we see a portion

of the Elephant, streams being high and no ferry. Some packed their loads across on their horses. Others raised their beds, placed their loads on top, got along in this way.

Find camp on Black Fork one and one-half miles from Ham's Fork on the Green River.

Pretty good grass. Desolate and barren country. Made 22 miles over pretty good roads.

Thursday, 20th June, 1850.

We again resumed our line of march up the Black Fork. Quite pleasant, yesterday in after part of the day and this morning.

We have passed through a rather better country than usual. Grass in places looks fine. The country through which we pass represents many singular features. Among the most striking is a mound on the Fork of Black's Fork 15 miles from the forks of Black and Ham's Forks. There are a great many singular Buttes on the road, all being apparently on a ledge with their sides washed into singular shapes resembling pillars perpendicular walls.

Camped two miles from Ft. Bridger. It is located on Black Fork on a level bottom land.

Friday, June 21st, 1850.

We again resumed our line of march at 7 o'clock. Travelled over a portion of rough country. Crossed the north branch of Black River Fork, and camped on the mountains five miles from the stream near a snow bank which we use to cook with. We have had first rate grass

today. Made 20 miles. After crossing branch of Black Fork we cross a ridge one mile from camp and descend into a ravine. In the rocks are several good springs. Near the head of the ravine is the best water I have drunk since leaving home. In ten rods is a mineral spring.

Took a grizzly bear hunt, travelling some 5 or 6 miles from road. Got into camp late, tired without getting a grizzly.

DIARY
KEPT BY
BRYAN DENNIS OF HIS
OVERLAND JOURNEY TO CALIFORNIA
IN 1850

Iowa city to Black Fork, Wyoming

Books 1 and 2

Recopied from typescript
~~Typescript of original~~ owned
by Mrs Helen Remley, Santa Fe,
New Mexico

DIARY KEPT BY BRYAN DENNIS OF HIS
OVERLAND JOURNEY TO CALIFORNIA IN
1850

FIRST BOOK

Page 1.

Monday Morning, April 15th, 1850. 6 o'clock.

We left our neat little cot and happy fireside and bade farewell to our dear friends. We left them with hearts overflowing with sorrow, yet we started to the Golden Eldorado with stout hearts and with a firm determination to conquer or die.

In the evening we had a foretaste of the "Elephant". Got into a mire hole. Took out our loads, pulled out our wagon, loaded up in a few minutes, and were cheerily on our way. Camped over night on Little Bear Creek.

Tuesday Morning.

Went on the road early. Nothing of interest occurred during the

Page 2. day. Cold. Put up early 6 miles from Talbotts Grove with Mr. Venett. Talbott's Grove is a splendid grove of timber, affording timber for making a large settlement. Land of good quality, quite rolling. We found corn worth \$1.00 per bushel.

Wednesday Morning, 10 minutes past 6.

Wind blowing a strong norther. Cold as Iceland. Californians had better beat home by their own firesides until a better prospect

appears. We started with light hearts looking ahead to the Golden Eldorado. Camped on the south bank of Skunk, of North Skunk. Travelled 25 miles, roads very fine. This stream is about mountainous, rather broken here. We had a slight foretaste of the Rocky Mountains.

Page 3. We had to use the pack horses. We packed our loads on our backs up the steepest hill in Iowa.

Four o'clock.

We got swamped here, had to resort to the packing system. Our horses were swamped in the worst sort of a way, I tell you. Got our load out. Took the longest rope, 175 feet long, got a shovel, hitched on old Toby and Bill and pulled it ashore. Were soon on our way rejoicing. Camped on South Skunk in the evening. (Camped three miles west of South Skunk.)

Friday Morning.

Left our camp early. Got swamped three miles from camp. Unloaded,

Page 4. Hitched on to the end of tongue and drew out, and were soon on our way feeling nothing discouraged at the bad fortune we had met with.

Friday Noon.

Our Bill, horse, has taken quite lame. We got as far as Mc-Mitchel's. Concluded to lie by till horse got better and able to travel. Here we have to pay \$1.50 per bushel for corn. This is 105 miles from the city. Here is the junction of the two roads from Burlington and Iowa City. Timber is very scarce. Soil is rich, and rather broken until last five miles when it has been rather heavy and country undulating.

Page 5.

The sloughs are the worst we have seen in Iowa. McMitchel has the best stand for a tavern I have seen in the state and Mr. Mitchel, the proprietor, is a gentleman, but the hardest case on the route is Parker on the South Sknuk, whose soul is too small for even Satan to take notice of. He lets him pass and will until the Californians pass their final judgment on him.

Sunday, the 21st. of April.

Quite cool, very little appearance of grass. We have lain by today. Spent the day quite pleasantly. Our horse is getting better. We shall be able to start in the morning.

Page 6. Monday Morning, the 22nd of April, 1850.

Weather cool. Overcoats quite comfortable. The wind from the northwest and blowing a perfect hurricane. We shall leave here this morning. Came in sight of Des Moines 2 o'clock in P.M. It is quite a respectable looking place for the age of the place. Crossed over a fine looking stream and is over 200 yards wide below the forks. I have often heard of the Des Moines country as being the finest country in the state, but the scarcity of timber will prevent it from becoming very extensively settled.

Page 7.

Abe Teneyok and company are with us and we hope to continue with them through to the Bluffs. I took my gun and strolled down the river 1 mile in quest of game, saw nothing. Here the river swiftly and majestically glides to nothing, and to the southeast. Crossed two streams and two ferries. One across the Des Moines and the other

Page 8. across the Raccoon. The two ferries are not fifty yards apart, 85¢ for crossing both streams. Corn is worth \$1.25 to \$1.50 per bushel. The town is situated directly in the forks of the two streams and does not make a very pleasing appearance.

Page 12. A few rods from our camp is a section corner of Township 36 West of and 75 North making one hundred and seventy-four miles West of Muscatine and South of Home.

The roads now are excellent but very crooked. There is scarcely any timber. What timber there is, is entirely confined to the streams, and they are few and wide apart. We find no grass worth mentioning. Once in awhile we see a prairie chicken and a pigeon. When we get one it makes us a most excellent dish of soup.

Thursday, April 25th, 1850

Page 13. We are out of bed but not much refreshed from our night's sleep. We had to confine ourselves to our wagons for the night. It appears that the devil or some other evil spirit got hold of our Indian pony and "Bill" and they kept up a continuous biting, pawing, and snorting the whole night long, depriving us of any refreshing sleep. We promised them a stake in the prairie and the lariat rope hereafter.

The sun shining in splendor animating and reanimating all creation. The prairie chickens with their plaintive lay, the black-birds whistling in the willows that deck the little rivulet on which we are encamped. We will soon be on our way, not the least discouraged, to the mountains. At noon, travelled 15 miles. Left at 2 o'clock,

Page 14. camped in the prairie 10 miles from Watawah. Hauled our wood. The country in general is not worth a passing notice. Rough and destitute of timber.

We parted with Mr. Hench and company. Mr. Hench concluded to return home. The company stopped to prepare victals to take him home.

We pushed ahead. We have been two days on the prairie, without seeing timber to make a half dozen good farms, and this is on Middle River of Naktowah. Crossed East Nodowa 10 o'clock.

Friday Morning, April 26th.

Page 15. Twelve o'clock. Taking our dinner near a prairie slough. Quite warm and cheery. The Nodowa flows into the Missouri.

Friday Evening, 4 o'clock.

Camped on West Nodowa 30 miles from Middle River. Here we came up with friends, Mr. N. C. Butler, Joseph Hemphill and company, all in high glee. The country is almost destitute of timber. Country generally rolling, soil good. Here are 28 California teams put up over night.

Quite an appearance for rain. This day has brought forward the grass, so that the prairie begins to look green. There is a swale growth here. We are camped in the only timber for twenty-five miles.

We left early Saturday 27th of April and took our journey into the endless prairie. Crossed the only timber for twenty-five miles. Crossed East Nishnabotna one o'clock.. This a beautiful stream.

Page 16. Little timber is to be seen. The prairie is rolling and beautiful.

On the west side of river, the Indians have lived and raised corn; buried their dead, left, sought a new home farther in the western wilds.

Today we have been swamped three times. Got out with but little difficulty.

We are camped this evening in a most lovely spot on a little creek five miles west of Nishnabotna. Nothing in the shape of timber but a few boxwood, plum, and crabapple. We had a little grass for our horses, which was quite a treat. Here the flowers are bursting

Page 17. out in all their beauty, which made us think we are in the Garden of Eden.

We are on the waters leading into the great Missouri.

Sunday Morning, April 28th, 1850.

Cold as blizzard. Wind in North-west and cloudy. All well and in good spirits. We travel today from necessity. We are out of feed and must get out to the Settlement where we can obtain it.

The distance we have travelled through the prairie without a house or any settler is set down as 60 miles, that is on a straight line, but the way we have travelled is not less than 80 miles. For half the distance a little north of West, thence from Middle River to Nishnabotna the road a good portion of the way is west of South and the crookedest road we have travelled. Crossed West Nishnabotna 26 times.

This Evening we camped on Silver Creek. This is a very fine road, nearly as good as macadamized road with the exception of the sloughs and the needed macadam. Mount Scott has a beautiful sileration (silhouette?). The Mormons have a settlement on Silver
Page 18. Creek, also at Indian Town on East Nishnabotna.

They have the finest wheat here I have ever seen in the West.
Monday Morning April 29th.

We are 16 miles from the Bluffs (Council). We press forward, anxious to see the great rendezvous for the Mormon, Californian and Oregon emigrants.

Two o'clock.

I met with Cousin Warren Snow. It was quite pleasant to meet one's friends especially in a strange country. Heard of Uncle Elisha Vorhis. All well and doing first rate. They are living at Canesville.
Page 19. It is a Mormon settlement, some four or five miles long and is situated in a deep ravine one mile from the Missouri.

We arrived at Canesville about 2 o'clock after travelling and lying by on the road fourteen and a half days. Had a fine time. Got through without much difficulty.

Found the City (Iowa) company and camped with them in a deep ravine one mile west of town. This is properly called the Bluffs. Here hills upon hills are piled and have quite a mountainous appearance.

Page 20. Tuesday April 30th, 1850.

We have been in the town purchasing feed. The way they put the price is beyond all conscientious scruples. Wheat demands the sum of \$2.00 and \$2.50. Quick sales. Corn \$2.00 and \$2.50. Oats \$1.50 to \$2.00. Hard living but considerably better than on the plains.
Wednesday, May 1, 1850.

This morning we had ice one-fourth inch thick. Grass very poor. In fact no grazing here. The company is all in good spirits.
Thursday, May 2nd, 1850.

Cold and the wind in the Northwest. Canesville at this time is a shaving place. Mormons shave Californians and Californians shave one another. In the evening we had a fine rain.

21 Friday, May 3rd.

Wind the north-east. Quite cool. Very expensive living here, but the backwardness of the season compels us to remain here, or run the risk of losing our teams.

Marshall Myers drilled the company. Marched them through the camp a few times. Inspected the arms. Found all in order and fully equipped. Dismissed us till we crossed the Missouri. The company will number 80 to 90 men. Men who are determined to go forward or die in the attempt.

Saturday, May 4th, 1850.

Left camp for the river and camped on the bank of the Missouri in the evening 9 miles from Canesville at the town of St. Francis. Here we lay over, (Sunday May 5th, 1850) until late in the evening

Page 22 when three or four teams crossed over the river and the remainder of the city company crossed over Monday the 6th. Here is the Mission. The Missioners live in grand style. Excellent school here. We saw three or four Indian boys who were well dressed. We travelled 8 miles and camped on Little Papeah.

Tuesday, May 7th, 1850.

Quite cold. Left camp early in the morning. Division A. 1 in the lead. Travelled 4 miles. Crossed the Big Papeah. We had to repair the bridge, and let the wagons down on it with ropes. The country is fine, but entirely destitute of timber. Travelled 20 miles,

Page 23. crossed the Elk Horn of the Platte. Camped on the west bank of the stream. Here we had a taste of California. Let our wagons on the boat by hand, and drew them out in the same way, and started on our way. Travelled near the bank of the Platte. Here the stream is three-fourths to a mile wide, quite shallow, full of sand bars here. Best grass we have seen. Went about 25 miles. Camped at a small lake one mile from the river. Grazing rather poor.

2 o'clock.

We saw quite a number of Pawnees. Their village was in sight on the south side of the Platte nearly three miles from our train. The Indians built their village by setting posts, then weaving the spaces closing with brush. Then covering the whole with dirt in the shape of potato hills.

Thursday, May 8th, 1850.

Travelled about 15 miles. One-half past 11 o'clock. Took our "Grub" on the bank of the Platte after making 16 miles. The country from the mouth of the Platte to this point is a level sandy plain. On the North side of the Platte, we made 9 miles in the afternoon, and camped on a small lake in the ravine. Here we found plenty good grazing and our horses filled themselves finely.

When we leave the Loop Fork we shall then travel to the South West until we strike the Platte. We have travelled up the Loop Fork for 25 miles.

There is considerable dissension in the Company, and I fear that there will be many divisions, yet I hope for the best. There is nothing like union. Where there is union there is strength, which is highly necessary in an Indian country.

Near the camp, I found several large blocks of chalk, and some specimens of slate, but of an inferior quality. The land here is of a very poor quality.

We have been travelling on the bottom lands, which average about one mile wide. Then come the sand hills, which are from 30 to 150 feet high.

The boys brought in a deer which made us quite a treat. We were hungry for something fresh.

Monday, May 13th, 1850.

Quite cool. I was out early grazing my horses. The weather is very cool nights. Grass short and we must find it so for some time,

until the weather gets warmer. After we left the Loop Fork one mile we ascended the table land. We found a vast level plain. There is no timber worth mentioning. 9 o'clock we left the main road. Travelled about two miles, when we had the worst swamping; mireing horses plunging, men hollering. Unhitched, pulled out, hitched on the harness, left the wheels and pulled him ahead the swamp, $2\frac{1}{2}$ rods wide. Men cursing. Here we like to have had a fit. A little interference soon settled the matter and we were soon on our way to California. May 13th, 1850. 11 o'clock.

Came to a small stream. Here Indians have had a hunting camp. Some 50 or 60 of Wickieups. No timber. From the appearances the Indians have killed a large number of buffaloes. Excellent water and good grass. Here again have some trouble in crossing the streams. 3 o'clock. We had a most glorious chase after a Buffalo cow, horsemen and footmen. John Bando gave her a dead shot, after running her about a mile and a half. The way we fell about her was curious. We skinned her in short order. Then the way we cut and carved her to pieces was not slow, I tell you. Packed her on horses and travelled 7 miles, being rather tired from our chase and of travelling 18 miles today. We undertook to make a short-cut, but I fear we have made nothing.

9 o'clock. We came on the Platte. Here are several cedar trees.

BOOK 2

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Thursday Morning, May 16th, 1850.

The weather warm during the day. We shall start forward at half past six o'clock.

4 o'clock.

Camped on a small stream running into the Platte from the North West. Our general direction today a little South of West. We have made 26 miles. Country generally good, but destitute of timber.

We passed through several dog towns today. (prairie.) They have chosen dry and ineligible situations. We passed through one town 3 miles long and 1 mile wide where there was a burrow to every square rod. I have as yet not seen any being in the rear of the train this evening.

The dissensions in the company are louder. Threaten dissolution soon and yet we hope their fiery dispositions may become more softened and the company get along amicably.

To pass the dull time took a squirrel hunt.

Friday Morning, May 17, 1850.

All is well through the camp. There is quite an appearance of rain. We have had snow twice since we left. We have today passed 12 trains. In all 150 wagons. We get as much venison and buffalo as we are able to consume. We have had some hard slough but still have made 25 miles and camped by a slough and used buffalo chips to cook by.

Here the grass is very short. We have been in sight of trains on the south side of the range wending our way to California.

We have crossed several small streams today. Water plenty in them. Wood is scarce. In fact we have nothing but willow brush. Saturday, May 18th.

We left our camp at 7 o'clock. The bottom lands are level and are 4 to 8 miles wide. On the south side they appear to be quite narrow.

We are at a small island laying in a stock of wood to last us 50 miles. We have to wade to the island. At this island we saw a most lovely sight. Three ~~ladies~~ on horseback gracefully guiding their quiet steeds on the prairie. We have camped in the prairie by a slough. Dug a well. Found pretty good water at 3 feet and had tolerably good grazing.

Made 14 miles by 2 o'clock.. The boys brought in three antelopes and we are feasting on the wild game of the prairie.

We have killed three buffaloes. They are hardly worth killing, quite poor. If we were to judge by the signs, we have seen near to 100 up to today that have been burned to death by the prairie fires. One boy in hunting saw 15 in one sink hole, where they probably had fled for protection.

This evening a vote was taken whether we should lay by till morning. Decided in the affirmative.

Sunday Morning, May 19th, 1850.

This is a most lovely morning. All is still and quiet. No sound strikes my ear, but the song of the many spring birds. We are constantly in the sight of hundreds of teams. On both sides of the Platte there is timber, box elder.

We had quite an interesting sermon and an attentive congregation. Lots are Californians travelling. Some are lying still and observing the Sabbath.

Monday Morning, May 20th, 1850.

We left camp early. We have found the roads very sandy and the travelling heavy. Here the country is poor. The rocks are piled up without any regularity. The rain that falls sinks into the sand beds. There is plenty of game in this region of country. Buffalo chips are plenty. The whole face of the country is covered with them. We have made 23 miles today.

Tuesday, the 21st of May.

Camped early having made 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles to Pawnee Spring at the head of Pawnee Swamp. Here is the best spring I have ever seen pouring out of the sand bluffs. At this point water is poor. We have hard roads today. The country today is very poor. We have seen herds of buffaloes. The bluffs are covered with them. We would have fine sport but they are poor and not worth killing.

We passed two graves, one died this spring the other last.

We are getting along finely and made 27 miles. Three buffaloes brought into camp this evening.

Wednesday, May 22nd, 1850.

We left camp at 6 for the purpose of passing 4 trains that camped near us. We got along pretty well but had some pretty hard pulling in crossing the sand bluffs. Made $22\frac{1}{2}$ miles and camped on a small river near the Platte, crossing two miles of the deepest sand I have seen. Hundreds of buffaloes constantly in sight.

Thursday, May 23rd, 1850.

We fared pretty well for grass, during the day until 3 o'clock when the grass was not sufficient for our teams. We kept pushing forward in the hope of finding good feed, but found none. Reached the bluffs after making 30 miles. We have crossed several beautiful streams affording an abundance of water and some of the best springs I have ever seen.

We have passed through some heavy sand today making the very worst time we have done at any time since we left home. At the Cedar Bluffs and on the south side of the river and on the north side of the Platte opposite the Bluffs comes in a creek 10 feet wide, shallow and of strong current.

Friday Morning, May 24th, 1850.

We left camp at daybreak. Pushed on nearly two miles for good grass. Turned out our horses, got breakfast and again pushed on. Some of our company not leaving the camp, we therefore drove ahead and left them. Whilst we were grazing, they left camp, caught up and passed us.

Ten miles from camp we had a very steep hill of sand to climb $\frac{1}{2}$ spoke deep. Here we had $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of heavy sand. We found plenty of water during the day but little grass.

In the evening camped on Castle Rock Creek. We passed one grave today. The country at this time is barren and desolate and will probably remain so. We saw some Indians today of the Sioux tribe. The company will get together again after making 23 miles.
Saturday, May 25th, 1850.

We left camp at 7 o'clock. Pretty good roads. No grass until 3 o'clock when we stopped for the Sabbath. We are camped within 5 rods of a grave. The name of the person occupying this lonely cemetery of the dead is James Walker of Illinois. Died May 23rd, 1850.

We passed one grave today. A lady died last year. We were in sight of two Indian towns on the south side of the Platte. We saw a few of the Indians. They are stout, robust and quite good looking. Appear cleanly and are quite friendly. We have but little fire wood tonight. Our company by the by will burn a wagon tonight. Fire wood costs at least fifty dollars per cord.

The Linn County Company are camped close by. They gave us a splendid serenade. They came into camp. We had some most excellent singing accompanied with the banjo. After the singing the men felt like walking 20 miles and concluded to have a French 4 and Cotillion, so formed a ring and chose their partners from the fair sex, but for man took man and the way the prairie grass suffered was a sight.

There would have been dust in the eyes too, but for a shower in the afternoon.

Sunday, May 26th, 1850.

After calling a meeting the company decided that it would be actually necessary and expedient for us to travel owing to the great amount of emigration behind us forcing them forward to the top of their speed, passing all they could and firing the prairie and destroying the feed.

Crab Creek, we crossed $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles from camp and ten miles from our morning camp we crossed Cobbs Hills. Here is some romantic scenery. There are many singular shapes, some appearing like the ruins of ancient castles, towers and pyramids. This is a sandy and barren country. Generally we have camped on the bank of the Platte. After making 20 miles, we are in sight of the Court House and Chimney Rock.

Monday Evening, May 27th, 1850.

We are camped this evening opposite the celebrated Chimney Rock. It is situated 5 miles south of us, and has quite an imposing appearance. It is said to be 250 feet in height and can be seen 35 or 40 miles away. The Chimney is situated on a large mound and looks as if it might be 50 feet in height. The Court House does not deserve the flattering eponiums given it by Bryant. This is a barren and desolate country. We have made 23 miles and camped here in the meridian of the Chimney Rock. Cold and rainy. We had considerable grass during the day.

Tuesday, May 28th, 1850.

We left camp at 7 o'clock and travelled in sight of Chimney Rock 27 miles. Scott's Bluffs and country around here is some of the most splendid scenery I have ever seen. The Bluffs are between 2 and 3 hundred feet high and present a very imposing appearance. These Bluffs are covered with a very imposing appearance. There Bluffs are covered with cedars with their beautiful green foilage. Grass rather poor.

Wednesday, 29th.

We left camp at one half past six, travelled on in sight of Scott's Bluffs. We came in sight of Laramie Peak, which is to be seen in the west at a distance of 150 miles. We can see snow in the north-east at noon today. Grass poor. Camped this evening on the Platte after making 25 miles. Had scarcely any grazing. The split from the company came up and camped with us, 22 teams of us together which will probably continue on.

Thursday, 30th, 1850.

Left camp at half past six o'clock. Pushed forward to Fort Laramie which we shall make early this evening. Reached the Ferry at the Fort at 4 o'clock. We are passing through a sandy and desolate country. No timber and has many sandy roads. We made 22 miles this day.

Friday, 31st, 1850

We ferried the river in the evening, camped on the south bank of

the Platte. We paid \$1.00 per wagon. Ferried over in safety. Fort Laramie is located one and one-half miles from the Ferry on the Laramie River. Uncle Sam does business in a fine style. They have excellent buildings: two stores. 175 soldiers here on duty.

Saturday, 1st day of June.

We left camp at daylight. We have seen a vast amount of property thrown away. We passed three graves today. Died 1849 in July.

We are in the Black Hills. We did not expect to find grass, but are happily disappointed. We have rain and have had every day for last four days. This evening it poured down in torrents. There is some of the most beautiful scenery in the Black Hills region from their being covered with pine and cedar. It is short and bushy!

In the highest hills, the Platte has cut canyons through the rocks 250 feet perpendicularly.

We are in sight of a chain of mountains running from Laramie's Peak southwest and they are covered with snow. We have made 24 miles today.

Sunday, 2nd of June, 1850

We left camp at 7 o'clock. We travel today from necessity. Hundreds are on the road who are pushing ahead with the expectation that grass will be scarce and first come, the first served.

We travelled today with 4 o'clock finding a good camp ground. We laid by for the balance of the day, after making 20 miles.

We passed some splendid scenery. We had the greatest hail storm I ever witnessed. There being scarcely any wind, we found hail averaged size of a ball.

We are camped on the bank of the Platte. It is 250 or 300 yards wide, and not fordable at this time.

We met 3 teams from Salt Lake. They report grass is good ahead. We therefore cheerily push forward. This is a rocky country. We ^{after} went/night with torch in hand to view one of the most beautiful and majestic sights. We tramped to the river one mile from our camp. The river has cut its way through the rocks to the depth of 300 feet perpendicular. This certainly has been one mighty freak of nature. As you advance into the canon you are struck with astonishment at the increased height of the bluffs which rise to the height of 500 feet upward on both sides of the river. This deep chasm is cut through the rocks for the distance of nearly two miles.

Monday Morning, June 3rd.

We left camp at 6 o'clock. We have had the best roads I have ever seen, equal to any Macadam road, slightly ascending ~~xx~~ or descending. We have very good grass. What there is of it. It is a kind of bunch grass and is now seeding and will be ripe and up in five or six weeks. We have been in the sage country for the last 3 days. It looks quite natural and is principally confined to the bottom lands.

We are camped on the Lafontonian emptying into the Platte from the south. Some little timber, cottonwood, box-elder and willow.

We travelled 23 miles today. We travelled one mile in the rain. Quite cool. Hail storm to the north of us. It fell to depth of 5 to 6 inches.

We had an election at the camp by our company, for the purpose of electing officers for the company. Ely Myers was chosen by acclamation, as also Mr. Sessions and Lucas who were elected for the term of 1 month.

Tuesday Morning.

I am at this time one mile from camp grazing our horses on a dry creek in the Black Hills. We left the camp at 7 o'clock, struck down the Le-Bout about one and a half miles, came out among the Red Hills. These hills are a very singular formation. The earth and stone are a dark red color. Found miles of another formation. Rocks may be seen bearing some resemblance to loaf sugar after being exposed to the atmosphere becomes soft. It has a little acrid taste, also a mound of solid rock 150 feet high resembling a sugar load.

We are camped on Lapvele Creek. Plenty of water and grass, not much timber but sufficient for camping. Near this stream on the south is a range of very high hills of solid rock lying layers nearly perpendicular, a little inclined to the south and of a reddish cast, on the north inclined to the south, white. Wood and water at several points along the road. Today we have found the best of grass by leaving the road one mile. Two and a half miles from our camp is a natural bridge across the creek some 20 to 30 miles.

Wednesday Morning.

We left camp at 7 o'clock. Passed several small streams today. Came on to the Platte at 2 o'clock. Travelled near it and camped on its bank. Crossed Deer Creek. A beautiful creek 40 feet wide and very rapid. Here is the most timber we have seen for several days, cotton-wood. About $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles west and 2 from the road is an extensive coal bed. Also some iron ore.

We have made 25 miles today and 7 miles west of Deer Creek. Have rather poor grass tonight. Had splendid grass today at noon.

Thursday, June 6th, 1850.

We left camp at half past six o'clock. Drove to the Ferry. Here are two companies waiting. Five boats and charging \$4.00 per wagon and 25¢ per horse. This made 16 hundred dollars.

The 7th day of the month.

The Platte is quite a different stream from the Laramie. Deep, narrow and swift. We have found tolerable grass today. We have had good roads. Our loads are getting light and our horses doing well. The days are warm and nights cold.

Our boys found an extensive coal bed today 5 miles from the camp, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the road.

This is a barren and desolate country, mountains of stone lay piled in hideous shapes. We have made 22 miles. After camping, the boys went to get a taste of snow, which lay in sight on the mountains hills. They followed up the stream on which we were camped to the

the distance of 7 or 8 miles supposing the distance not more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles. This is the wildest stream they had even seen pouring over cataracts of from 100 to 300 feet raging and foaming on its course.

Friday, 7th of June.

We crossed the Platte. Paid \$5.25, excellent Ferry. The cross from 100 to 400 teams per day. We have passed through a barren desolate country. Grass poor and water not fit to drink, for the distance of 18 to 20 miles.

We are camped on a small spring branch called the Sulphur Spring after making 26 miles today. We crossed the Silkali swamp 22 miles from the Ferry near which lie the skulls of ten head of cattle. Near here are coal beds.

Saturday, 8th.

Left camp $\frac{1}{2}$ of 4 o'clock. Pushed on in search of grass. At 7 o'clock we found pretty good grass and the best of water $\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the road and 4 miles west of the mine. At spring the country is so poor it is destitute of grass, that we are mostly compelled to use the eastern method of grazing, that is to hold our horses by the hind legs and let them down into the spaces between the sage to get the grass.

This evening we are camped on the Sweet Water, 8 rods wide, 2 feet deep. Excellent water, poor grass and no wood. Near our camp is the celebrated Independence Rock. It is a smooth rock 250 to 300 feet high, covers several acres of ground. We passed several alkali

swamps completely encrusted with saleratus at the surface. It is fine and soft one inch deep. It is finely crystalized and I believe is good as the best manufactured saleratus. It is white as snow, and in very large quantities.

This country is a desert mostly but here is a good spot of grass near the foot of mountains where the spring comes gushing out from among the rocks moistening the earth. Excellent water.

Independence Rock is the most singular structure I have ever seen. It is of an oval shape, is $\frac{1}{2}$ mile long, 30 rods wide at the base. The rock is similar to the Lost Rock of Iowa. (Supposedly Red Rock near Des Moines.)

I stood on the top and could see 300 teams moving and in camps. This is a large registry. Thousands of names are registered on this rock, 200 in fact. Every conspicuous place some gentlemen of note have placed their M.D.F.R. or other title. Made 22 miles.
Sunday Morning, 9 o'clock.

We are lying by today resting ourselves and teams. We are getting along finely. We are 1 month ahead of the Friends from the City last year.

Monday, June 10th, 1850.

We have left camp at 7 o'clock. Place our names on Independence Rock.. Passed on to the Devil's Gate. This is a passage out through the solid rock by the Sweet Water to the depth of four hundred feet perpendicular and seventy feet wide. The bottom lands along the

Sweet Water are on an average of 2 miles wide. Very sandy and poor grass is short on the bottom lands. On the hills it is longer, though it is very scattering. It is bunch grass mixed through with sage. The mountains are increasing in height and are of solid rock with a few cedars clinging to the rocks.

We are camped at the foot of a mountain near 600 feet in height and nearly perpendicular. We have made 25 miles today. We passed two graves. Persons died last year in July. An emigrant out hunting came across an Indian who shot an arrow from some secluded spot which missed its aim. The Indian left his hiding place to cut off the escape of the emigrant who made for the sage spot. Hid in the sage. The Indian soon showed himself and was shot by the emigrant. The Indians probably will not find him. He made two bounds into the air and fell dead on his own soil. What the consequences may be do not know.

I caught a glimpse of the Wind River snowy mountains today. We have seen noe (Indians) in travelling the last 400 miles. They keep out in the mountains for fear of catching the smallpox and cholera. The ox teams are a great annoyance to the horse teams. They travel slowly but make it up in time, push ahead.

Tuesday, June 11th, 1850.

We left camp in fine order 21 wagons in train. The road crowded full of horses and mule teams. The country is poorest country I have ever seen. Destitute or nearly so of vegetation with the exception of

sage, grass wood. We have been in full sight of the Wind River, chain of the Rocky Mountains covered with perpetual snow. We have seen snow for 180 miles. We have seen the heaviest kind of land for 15 miles. We have followed up the Sweet Water River and are camped on its bank after making 21 miles. Sunderland and Wright have gone out to the mountains hunting. The timber is excellent on the top. Pine and cedar here. We have a small spot of first rate grass 1 mile from camp.

Wednesday, June 12th, 1850.

Good pass and comfortable. The Sweet Water River is 60 feet wide. Current strong. Camped on the Sweet Water after making 22 miles. We travelled 18 miles without grass or water. The grass here is the poorest I have ever seen, scattering on the hills and bottom lands. The alkali seen, is making us afraid to use it, the grass on the bottom is thickly set, but short and low. We have seen 5 dead animals yesterday and today.

Thursday, June 13th, 1850.

Cold and windy. Left camp at 7 o'clock. Solid roads. We have arrived at the top of the Devil's Back of the Wind River Mountains. The ascent has been quite gradual. We are nearly on the level with the snow. We have better grass today than yesterday. We pass daily 5 or 6 wagons thrown away. At this point the mountains do not appear as high as I expected to find them. I suppose the ascent is so gradual. Cold this morning. Snowing on the mountain top to the

northwest. We are camped on Quaquenas Creek after making 16 miles. Roads solid but rather stony and dangerous to heavy loaded wagons. Emigrants coming through 2 weeks later must suffer. Our horses are falling off fast. Three men sick in our train.

Friday Morning, June 14.

One and one half miles from camp grazing our teams. We found what we call pretty good grass in the mountain slough and among the rocks. That growing among the rocks is more nutritious than the slough grass and far better than the grass in Iowa, Illinois or Missouri.

Very gold this morning yet the sun is rising in the far East bidding fair for a pleasant day. A sage brush fire is very comfortable this morning and overcoats not out of place. We leave camp at 7 o'clock and intend camping near the celebrated Pacific Spring where the water rolls onward over mountain, hill and dale into the great Pacific ocean.

We camped this evening one miles east of the Pacific Springs. We have first rate grass. The water is now flowing westward. This is the coldest climate I have ever felt. Rain and snow. We have had the best road climbing.

There are the first cottonwood and willow trees we have seen north mentioning for several days. This is quite a rapid stream and is from 350 to 400 feet wide. Here are two ferries. Price \$5.00 per wagon and \$1.00 per horse. This country the poorest and barren, gravelly soil and destitute of everything except greasewood, sage,

now and then a bunch of grass. The cluster of cottonwood and willow make it look beautiful with their green foliage.

Here is an immense quantity of alkali. Emigrants ought to be very careful to water their horses and cattle before turning them loose. The river water is pretty good.

Tuesday, 18th of June.

We again resumed our march at half past five down this river to the Lowe Ferry one mile below our camp. Here at the ferry are two boats kept by two French traders having their Indian wives and having wickieups covered with dressed buffalo skins. We got over cheaper than expected. \$3.00 per wagon and 50¢ per horse. We managed the boats ourselves. Cost the company one hundred seven dollars. Got across in safety. Left the Ferry at 2. Passed down the river 5 miles and camped here. The boys caught what they called salmon trout. A beautiful and fine flavored fish.

Extremely cold. Ice in our bucket, one quarter inch thick.

Several in our company are sick with fever. This is a poor company.

We are in full sight of the Uintah chain of mountains in the southwest covered with the perpetual snow.

Wednesday, June 19th, 1860.

We again took up our line of march at 7 o'clock. We left the river. Ascended on other table lands. We found some grass on the uplands. Crossed the Ham's Fork at 4 o'clock. Here we see a portion

of the Elephant, streams being high and no ferry. Some packed their loads across on their horses. Others raised their beds, placed their loads on top, got along in this way.

Find camp on Black Fort one and one-half miles from Ham's Fork on the Green River.

Pretty good grass. Desolate and barren country. Made 22 miles over pretty good roads.

Thursday, 20th June, 1850.

We again resumed our line of march up the Black Fork. Quite pleasant, yesterday in after part of the day and this morning.

We have passed through a rather better country than usual. Grass in places looks fine. The country through which we pass represents many singular features. Among the most striking is a mound on the Fork of Black's Fork 15 miles from the forks of Black and Ham's Forks. There are a great many singular Buttes on the road, all being apparently on a ledge with their sides washed into singular shapes resembling pillars perpendicular walls.

Camped two miles from Ft. Bridger. It is located on Black Fork on a level bottom land.

Friday, June 21st, 1850.

We again resumed our line of march at 7 o'clock. Travelled over a portion of rough country. Crossed the north branch of Black River Fork, and camped on the mountains five miles from the stream near a snow bank which we use to cook with. We have had first rate grass

today. Made 20 miles. After crossing branch of Black Fork we cross a ridge one mile from camp and descend into a ravine. In the rocks are several good springs. Near the head of the ravine is the best water I have drunk since leaving home. In ten rods is a mineral spring.

Took a grizzly bear hunt, travelling some 5 or 6 miles from road. Got into camp late, tired without getting a grizzly.

