

Across the Plains

19 Leaving our letters in the P. O. went on some 10 or 12 ms. [and] stoped for the night, there was no wood, [and] was not likely to be fore some distance according to the guides. (May 27--44th day) The grass being poor, [and] no wood, [and] believing that it was better on the north side, [and] I guess our cattle thought so too, for they all got into the river last night [and] started to swim across, but after a while they give it up [and] come out. We concluded to cross the river at the first ford we came to. We had proceded some 4 or 5 ms. up the river; when we saw several waggons standing on the bank, [and] the men watching something in the water; we soon saw there was a waggon [and] team fording the river, we could hardly descerne the team which was nearly under the water, and the waggon looked like a little boat, it was preceeded by two men on horseback, who rode side by side, surveying out the ford [and] marking it by sticking up little sticks in the sand; we watched them till they were safely across, [and] the pilots had returned, but there was a board stuck up here which informed us that the ford was safe, [and] that a large train had passed the day before. I felt a little nervous when we were about to cross, for the river here is all of one mile [and] a half wide, [and] a more foaming mading river I never saw, [and] its banks being very low, [and] the water the color of soapsuds you cannot see the bottom where it is not more than six inches deep, consequently looks as deep as the Missouri when it is bank full, [and] the many islands [and] bars which obstruct this swift current makes and awful noise, you cannot make a person hear you, when you are in the river, at 5 yds. distant; and I call this one of the greatest adventures on the whole route,

[FOOTNOTE BY EDWARD E. AYER - Our train arrived opposite and about three miles down the river from Fort Kearny about June 10th, 1860. I volunteered to go across the river to get the mail from the train if they would let me ride one of the horses I was driving. I got into a deep hole going across and came near being drowned but got out and across and returned with the mail for the outfit. I autoed down the north shore of the Platte returning from California in 1916. . . . From Kearny on to the end of this journal we followed the exact route of this train. From end of this journal we went to Salt Lake and then the Simpson?route running south of Salt Lake and the sink of the Carson River and up that to Carson River past Fort Churchilll which they were building in 1860 and on to Carson City where I left the train and went on to Silver City and went to work in a quartz mine. Was 18 years [and] ~~and~~ ~~high~~ 8½ months old.]

20 for from the quicksands giving away under the waggon wheels, there is danger of up-setting, which would be a very great disaster indeed. Blocking up our waggon bed, we started in, for our cattle do not mind mud, or water, the men with their coats, hats, [and] boots off, with a kerchief around their heads, with whip in hand, into the Platte river we go; but we are only one team in 20 that is now in the river, making a line from bank to bank; we were about 2 hours in crossing, [and] I do not think our team pulled as hard [and] for so long a time on the road, at any place; for our waggon was heavy loaded with about 15 hundred lbs, [and] the wheels sunk in the sand about 6 inches most of the way, but we did not stop but once, for fear the waggon would get fast in the yielding sands for there were 2 or 3 teams stuck, when we crossed, 2 were mule teams, their feet being so small they sank in the sands [and] could not pull out; but when we got across, one of the men who traveled with us, went back [and] pulled out one team; but there was no one anxious to go in a second time. There being abundance of grass here, we turned out our cattle after they had rested a little, but there was know [no] wood, so after changing their clothes, [and] passing around the brandy freely; we hiched up an went on some 4 miles farther (sic) up the river, [and] encamped in a beautiful place, on the bank of a stream called Elm creek,<sup>11</sup>(Elm Creek, a northern affluent of the Platte River, west of Fort Kearny, in the present Dawson Co., Nebr.)

under the shade of two large elm trees; here was good grass, plenty of the best of wood, [and] some water for the creek was very low, [and] as the sun was 3 hours high or more, some went out a hunting while the old Dr<sup>2</sup> (<sup>2</sup>The doctor's name is nowhere revealed. Beth was one of her sons.) Beth [and] I went to cooking, we soon had the best of a fire, cooked some meat [and] beans, stewed some apples [and] peaches, boiled some rice, [and] baked buiscuit, [and] fried some crulls, [and] as I had a glass pickle jar full of sour milk, [and] plenty of salaratus, I had as fine cakes as if I had been at home; [and] when they returned in the evening we had a general feast; for we had had no wood to cook with before for several days, the men had seen plenty of game but the time did not permit of their pursuing it, saw also deer Elk and buffalo tracks. (May 28--45th day) We started out, but I would gladly have stayed today, rested [and] cooked some more, for the guides said we would have no more wood for 200 ms. [and] we must now take to "picking up chips."<sup>3</sup> (<sup>3</sup>Buffalo chips, the dried dung of the American bison.) When a few miles out we came to a very bad slue, deep [and] muddy, it would be a fortune to some one to bridge it, it could be easily done, for it is not wide [and] the timber could be had on Elm creek which is but a few miles back, [and] any one would rather pay a reasonable toll, than to pull his team (cattle) so hard. Saw several head of stalk (i. e., stock) which had give out, one old cow by the road with a paper pined on her head, it stated that she had been left to die, but if anyone choose, they might have her, but requested that they would not abuse her as she had been one of the best of cows, she looked so pittiful, [and] it called up so many associations in my mind that

- 21 it affected me to tears. Drove on and encamped; turned out the cattle [and] put up the tent, then for a fire, no wood, but chips in abundance, no alternative, soon had a large pile of them, [and] set fire to them, whenthey immediately blazed up [and] burned like dry bark, it was laughable to see the boys jump around it, particularly Beth [and] saying it "wooled them" bad. On saying that I feared the dust would get in the meat, as it was frying, George said he would as soon have his broiled as any way, so laughing, [and] jokeing we forgot our antipathies to the fire some said it had improved all the supper, even the coffee. (May 29--46th day) Hear of people killing buffalo, the ground is strewed with their bones. Passed a prairie dog town,<sup>1</sup> (<sup>1</sup>The species Cynomys Ludovicianus, whose burrow-towns were common east of the Rocky Mountains.) killed two, that we might have a near view of them; they resemble both the squirrel [and] puppy, teeth feet and tail like the squirrel their shape is more like that of a puppy; their color is redish grey, their size about twice that of a fox squirrel, some pronounce them good to eat, they bark nearly like a little puppy but their note is quicker [and] more like a squirrel, as we first came in sight, they commenced barking [and] running ffrom hole to hole, [and] it is believed that they are all connected by subteraneous passages, which is probably the case, for they are not but a few feet apart, and on the near approach of any one, they will "disappear in a twinkling," [and] appear as if they turn a summerset right down into their hole. They set up straight on their hind feet when they bark, [and] they are so near the color of the sand that you can hardly see them, unless in motion. Shot a young hare, which made us a fine dinner. The water along here is very poor; the river water is said to be the healthiest, but it is warm, [and] muddy.

(May 30--47th day) The road is along the bank of the river, which is very straight, [and] on each side of which, are high sandhills or bluffs from 2 to 10 ms. distant from the river, it is the same the whole way, [and] you can see no father (sic) on either side than these miniature mountains, for they present in many places a beautiful outline; (May 31--48th day) the scenery along the river is very monotonous [and] the weather is quite warm, [and] the diarhia prevails to some extent among the emigrants, we are all slightly affected it is no~~u~~ doubt owing to the quality of the water, for most of it, is impregnated more or less with ~~alk~~ alkali. (June 1--49th day) One of our company quite sick to-day. The grass is very good along here, looks like a meadow. Saw four buffalo feeding near the bluffs, some 3 ms. distant, 2 of our party, [and]

another man, want in persuit; this man killed one of them, [and] they brought what they could to the waggons, [and] left the remainder of it to the wolves. We came on [and] encamped to the right, on the west bank of a beautiful stream, I think called Buffalo creek,<sup>2</sup> (<sup>2</sup>Buffalo Creek, a northern affluent of the Platte River, In Nebraska.) we made some soup from the marrow bone of our fresh meat, which I think an epicure would have called good, and eating this with boiled rice helped us very much. Here is signs of game in abundance, elk, deer, buffalo, antelope, hare, [etc.].

<sup>x</sup> [FOOTNOTE BY EDWARD E. AYER - We were along here about June 12th to 15th and during the whole trip across the plains we did not see a single

22 (June 2--50th day) The bluffs in this place approach the river, [and] the road passes over them for 6 ms, the sand is from 6 to 15 inches in depth, it being very warm, [and] such hard pulling that our cattle lolled their tongues out for breath; we stoped when we came down to the river, [and] nooned. Passed on, saw a train which was stoped [and] digging a grave for a woman, who had died this morning, having been taken sick only last night; she leaves a husband [and] 2 small children, this is sad at any time, but much more so here. On a little father (sic), an old man was suddenly taken with the cholera, by drinking a draught of cold water from a spring, the Dr. stoped with him an hour or two, but thought he would not live; I never heard from him again.

(June 3--51st day) Had a fine shower of rain last night, which has/the dust, [and] the road is level, [and] it is fine traveling to-day, nooned opposite Cedar Bluffs,<sup>1</sup> (<sup>1</sup>Perhaps near Cedar Point, Keith Co., Neb.) which are on the south side of the river, [and] the little dwarf cedars which grow upon them, are all the trees that I have seen for many miles, [and] shall ~~ng~~ see again very soon.

(June 4--52d day) Passed where they were burying a man; scarce a day but some one is left on these plains, to return to their mother dust; may the Lord pity,[and] bless the widows [and] orphans, who are left behind.

(June 5--53d day) Nooned nearly opposite Castle Bluffs,<sup>2</sup> (<sup>2</sup>Not definitely located, but perhaps in Keigh Co., Neb., between the North Platte and South Platte Rivers.) here we were joined by 2 teams, a man [and] his family, [and] his widowed sister with her family, she was going only to Salt Lake, they had 5 or 6 cows which gave milk, they gave me an excellent one to milk, for they had more than they could well tend to, [and] we were willing that they should travel with us, which they did to the end of our journey.

(June 6--54th day) Most of the soil here is very barren, the wild sage sets in here it is very small, not much wood about this. Came in sight of Courthouse<sup>3</sup> (<sup>3</sup>Courthouse Rock, a huge mass of sand and clay, near Pumpkin Creek, in Cheyenne County, Neb. There is a good description of it in Delano's Life on the Plains (1854), p. 69-70) and Chimney<sup>4</sup> (<sup>4</sup>Chimney Rock, near the western boundary of Cheyenne County, Neb. Its height, in 1832, as given by Captain Bonneville, was 175 yards. -- Irving's The Rocky Mountains. Phila., 1837, vol. 1 p. 45. It has become greatly reduced in height by erosion.--Chittenden's Hist. of American Fur Trade, vol. 1, p. 467. For a description and view in 1842, see Fremont's Report. Washington, 1845 p. 38.) rocks some 30 or 40 miles distant, they have a beautiful appearance. Passed some bluffs on our right which presented a very singular [and] picturesque appearance, resembling ruined wall [and] buildings. A few miles onward to the left we found good camping. In a tent near by was a man very sick, the Dr. went [and] stayed with him till morning (July 7--55th day), when he died, leaving a wife [and] one child, they put him in his narrow bed [and] left him there to sleep (rest) alone. Traveled about 25 ms. [and] encamped on the bank of the river opposite Chimney Rock, which appeared to us to be very near the other bank of the river but I am told it is 3 ms. distant

[and] that is why it did not look larger to me, but I knew it was much larger than it seemed to be there, for when we were 10 ms distant it did not appear any smaller [and] not much

[FOOTNOTE BY EDWARD E. AYER - A man by the name of Dunn who was Father's partner in their store on Bigfoot-Prairie from 1847 to 1850 died with colera near Chimney Rock in 1852 ]

23 farther off. There was a man very sick in a tent near by, supposed to be cholera.

(June 8--56th) A fine cool breeze from the mountains makes it very pleasant. Passed a large prairie dog town it was about 2 ms long by one broad, they kept up a wonderful barking, [and] running from house to house, but disappeared on our approach [and] kept perfectly still, until we got a little passed, when they would jump up, [and] stand as straight [and] bark with all their might, [and] no doubt they were saying some very hard things against us, for the boys shot several of them, although I beg(g)ed them not to hurt them, for it is pitiful to see them when one is wounded or killed outside, [and] cannot get into his hole; others will rush out, [and] drag him in, when they will commence barking with all their might, [and] directly the whole town join in, as if they had been informed, [and] understood that one of their number was wounded or dead. If there were any of these little animals in Ireland, we might easily account for their legends of Fairies, Elfs [etc.]. And I think if their habits were thouroughly studied, that they would be found to possess wonderful powers of instinct.

(June 9--57th day) Came in sight of Laramie Peak,<sup>1</sup> (<sup>1</sup>Laramie Peak, the highest point of the Laramie Mountains of Wyoming, altitude 9020 feet.) its dark outline resting against the clouds had a sublime appearance. Passed where they were diging a grave for a girl 12 years old; how hard it must be to leave ones children on these desolate plains, but "God will watch over all their dust till He shall bid it rise." (June 10--58th day) Today [and] yesterday the roads very sandy [and] in some places hilly, had a small shower of rain, turned down to the river, nearly 2 miles from the road, found excellent wood, which had been drifted there by the river in high water. [and] likewise fine grass. We are about 5 ms. from Ft. Laramie?<sup>2</sup> (<sup>2</sup>Fort Laramie, at the confluence of the North Platte and Laramie Rivers, Wyoming, was named after Joseph Laramé (or La Ramie), a trapper who lost his life here in 1821. Near by was an earlier station of the American Fur Company, known successively as Fort William and Fort John. A near view, as seen in 1842 by Fremont, is in his Report. Washington, 1845, opp. p. 40. The federal government bought out the trading company in 1849 and Fort Laramie became a military station; a birdseye view of the latter year is in H. H. Bancroft's Works, vol. 25, p. 690. For a full history of the fort, see Coutant's Hist. of Wyoming, vol. 1, p. 296-329.) Near by where we nooned to-day, there was 2 dead indians in the top of a cottonwood tree.<sup>3</sup> (<sup>3</sup>One of the many mortuary customs of the Indians, known as tree-burial.) this being their manner of disposing of their dead. They were wraped in well dressed buffalo hides, [and] then lashed to several small poles, which were fastened to the limbs of the tree, it was a very singular sight, they must have been there some time, as I found a part of an old rusty knife, which had probably been one of the many things which had been hung on the tree, such as, knife, bow [and] arrow, [and] whatever he might have possessed. (June 11--59th day) We started out in the morning for town, reached it about 9 o'clock or rather opposite the place, we halted a little while, one of the company rode over [and] put some letters in the P. O. This is quite a place, several fine buildings, nestled here among the hills, it looks like a rose in the wilderness. There were several indian lodges not far from the road, [and] plenty of indians. Taking a last look of the town we departed on our journey.

24 We now turned to the right [and] commenced ascending the black hills<sup>1</sup> (<sup>1</sup>So called

from their having a dark appearance in the distance by reason of the small cedars which grow upon them.--Original note The name Black Hills was used collectively to denote all of the ranges in the region of the Laramie Mountains, which are situate in the southwest corner of Wyoming and form a curvilinear or semi-circular range, of which the lower part has now the restricted name of Black Hills. Cf. Delano's Life on the Plains, p. 80-81, 111, for an interesting, contemporary topographical description.) the scenery is wild & magnificent, the contrast was delightful, we encamped in a most romantic spot, where not far distant a fine spring of cold water rushed out of the mountain; this was refreshing, and our cattle climbed (sic) the hills to feed upon the rich seeded grasses which grow in bunches on their sides. The ground is covered with the richest profusion, & variety of flowers, but all were strange to me, except the wild rose which was the only one which was sweet scented. (June 12--60th day) The roads here are smooth & excellent, but hilly, & in some places very steep, it is so hard that it is bad on the cattles feet, & waggons. Passed where they were digging a grave for a woman, who had died that morning, leaving a husband & 2 small children. She rests in a lovely spot, in sight, & opposite Laramie Peak, & surrounded with hills. Came to a good spring of water, & encamped quite early. Two of our men went out hunting, & succeeded in killing an antelope, & a mountain hare; we soon took their jackets off, & another such a broiling, boiling & roasting you never saw, there being more than our company wanted, we let our nearest neighbors have 2 quarters. We staid here until the next day noon, it being sunday. (June 13.--61st day\* We drove about 10 ms. & encamped in the midst of volcanic hills, no water, not much grass, the soil is thin, the ground is covered with cactus, or prickley pear, the blossom of which is very beautiful of different colors, some pink, some yellow & some red. Here the earth has felt a shock at no very distant period, & by a convulsive throe, these enormous piles of volcanic rocks were upheaved; I went out and climbed upon the top of one of these mountains of red stone sat down, & looked with wonder about, & thought of the dreadful scene which it must have once presented. Then came the question, what has caused the earth to be to its center shook? Sin! the very rocks seemed to reverberate, Sin has caused them to be upheaved that they may be eternal monuments of the curse & fall of man; viewing these symbols of divine wrath, I felt humbled; I took a small stone & wrote upon a flat rock beside me, Remember me in mercy O lord. I shall never forget this wild scene, & my thoughts & reflections there.

(June 14--62d day) Roads being good, we traveled about 24 ms. to-day, returned to the river, encamped, it is quite small here, but runs faster than ever, the water is not much better, Mountains in the distance on both sides of the river, with small cedars & pines growing upon them.

25 Roads rocky & hilly, came to the river at noon (June 15--63d day), where there was a grove of cottonwood trees, here were several indians incamped, & a frenchman who kept a few articles to sell, the principle article was whiskey, which he sold at 12 dollars per gallon, or 25 cts a drink, there were several indian families, I went round to their lodges, saw one old indian 106 years old, he shook hands with us, smiled, appeared well, but he looked very aged; two fine looking young squaws were seated at the door of the tent, embroidering a deer skin to make a coat, they showed me one they had already made, & I must say that nicer work with a needle I never saw, or any thing more beautiful, it looked like sattin, & was finely ornamented with various colored beads. These two girls probably were this old mans descendants of the 3d or 4th generation.

(June 16--64th day) Roads very hilly, sandy, & dusty, quite warm weather, nights cool, light showers occasionally. We bought a cow to-day to work with our odd steer; gave 16 dollars & a half; some of the rest of the company bought 3 or 4, for people trade all along the road selling brandy, hardbread, flour, bacon, sugar &c, for most of those packing now are out of provisions, & b(u)y of the waggons, or get their meals

at the tents. People do not charge very high for whatever they have to spare, for they do not ~~like~~ like to haul it. (June 17--65th day) The roads still sandy; we are about 100 ms. above Ft. Laramie saw a horned frog<sup>1</sup> (<sup>1</sup>Not a frog, but a lizard, genus Phrynosoma) which appears to be the link between the toad and the terapin, or mud turtle; it is about the size of a small toad, his body very flat & round, light colored but specked with red & black specs; has two knots, or horns on his head, a short peaked tail, & crawls around very lively, but does not jump, like a frog or toad. Where we nooned today, as we started out, we saw some men on the opposite side of the river chasing a buffalo, which on coming to the river, plunged in, & made for our side; the men gathered their guns, ran for the bank, stationed themselves by some trees, the buffalo coming to a sandbar in the middle of the river, halted a while, & those on the other shore, poured out upon him a shower of bullets. I looked for him to fall every moment, but they overshot him, for their balls struck the water on this side; a dog was sent into the river, he made for the buffalo, & seizing him by the tail, he made for our shore & as he neared it, the dog still hanging to his tail, & swimming, as he rose upon the bank, he commenced to gallop away, when several guns were discharged at him, he halted, one lead entered the seat of life, the red blood spouted from his side; an ounce & a half ball from Georges double barrel shot gun, had done the deed; he walked on a little farther to some water, went into it, fell down, struggled & died in a few minutes. Twenty men with as many knives in as many minutes, had him in pieces ready for the stewkettle. One old mountaineer made choice of a delicate part, observing that no one would probably quarrel with him for his (part) piece. He was a fine male buffalo, eight years old (judging from his horns) hair short, &

26 nearly black. I never saw a more noble looking animal, his eye looked green & fiery in death, such strength did his enormous neck, & great muscles exhibit, that all wished they had a team like him. All repaired to their tents, to have a feast, we drove down to the river, where there was plenty of grass & wood, & encamped for the remainder of the day; we jerked most of our meat,<sup>1</sup> (<sup>1</sup>Refers to the process of cutting meat into long strips and preserving it by drying in the open air or over a fire.) baked, boiled & fried some; it was fine beef, some said that it was better than any beef they had ever eat. In the morning (June 18--66th day) we renewed our journey, quite refreshed. Passed the ferry<sup>2</sup> (<sup>2</sup>As to these early ferries kept by French Canadians, etc., see Coutant's Hist. of Wyoming, vol. 1, p. 365-367.) of the north fork of the Platte river; it is kept by some french, & indians, they have 3 boats well fixed with ropes & pullies, & cross with ease, and expedition, they charge 5 dollars per waggon, 50 cts for every animal, & person; this is a heavy tax on the emigration, besides, this vast amount of money is in a manner thrown away, if the general government would take possession of or build ferries on the principal streams on this route & the prices be reduced one half or more; it would be a little something in Uncle Sams pocket, & remove an obstruction, I might have said destruction, because property, & even lives are lost, by trying to swim their teams across for as small as the sum may seem, many have not got it, for they have probably laid out all their money for their outfit, for most of those who go by land, are perhaps not able to go by water, but let the case be as it may, no one let him have ever so much money, likes to have it extorted from him. There is no reason why a ferry should not be kept here at a reasonable rate, for ferriage. On the high bluffs, on the south side of the river, is plenty of excellent pine, & cedar timber, as the gunwales of their boats show, for they said they got them there, & provisions for a few men, could be had at a reasonable rate, of the emigrant. (June 19--67th day) Fine roads this morning, we came to the top of a hill, where we had a view of the Sweet water mountains,<sup>3</sup> (<sup>3</sup>Granite Mountains seem to be meant.) distant some 40 miles, we turned down to the right, & encamped in a beautiful little valley, good grass but the water, what little there was, is charged with alkali but there is no better anywhere near; a great many camped here (sic) to-night, it had the appearance of a large town, & in a tent near by ours, they were fiddling & dancing, hearly all night; this was the first dancing I had seen on the plains, although I had seen some choose partners on the steamboat, for the first sett on the plains, but there had been so much sickness on the Platte, that perhaps they were re-

joicing that they had left it. (June 20--68th day) We passed on over a sandy barren country, where even sage cannot grow, but a still hardier shrub called greese wood<sup>4</sup> (<sup>4</sup>Greasewood, a low shrub prevalent in saline localities of the West and of various genera.) abounds here, it is good for nothing to burn, & I cannot think of any use it is, unless, for the rabbits to hide behind. Quite warm, cool breeze from the mountains; we crossed greese wood creek,<sup>5</sup> (<sup>5</sup>Greasewood Creek, an affluent of the Sweetwater River.) went

27 down some 2 ms, & encamped, not very good grass, I have been told that it is better 5 or 6 miles farther down, where it empties into Sweet water.<sup>1</sup> (<sup>1</sup>This river rises in the Wind River Mountains and is a western affluent of the North Platte River. For the roads and fords in this region, see Delano, p. 104-105.)

(June 21--69th day) We saw several antelope, 2 of our men went in pursuit, killed a young one; came across a human skeleton, brought the skull bone to the waggon, I think it was an indians skull. We soon came in sight of Independence Rock,<sup>2</sup> (<sup>2</sup>Independence Rock is said to have received its name from the circumstance of a party ascending it on July 4th and celebrating there Independence Day. It is an isolated mass of gray granite in length about 1950 feet, and in height about 120 feet, according to Fremont's observation in 1842, at which time he marked a large cross thereon, a fact which was introduced adversely against him during his presidential campaign in 1856. Fremont speaks of the many names inscribed on the rock.--Fremont's Report. Washington, 1845, p. 72. On account of these names it has been called a "tombstone" and Father De Smet named it "the great register of the desert." Joel Palmer, in 1845, described it as follows: "Portions of it are covered with inscriptions of the names of travelers, with the dates of their arrival -- some carved, some in black paint, and others in red." -- Journal, in Thwaites's "Early Western Travels," vol. 30, p. 67. For other descriptions, see Delano, p. 98; Chittenden, vol. 1, p. 471-472.) it did not look at all like I had formed an idea, & at a distance, it has no very imposing appearance; but as we approached it, its magnitude was then striking, & beautiful, it is an enormous mass of solid blocks of granite, it is so large that its highth seems inconsiderable, until you climb upon it, which you can easily do, at least I did, but when I reached the low place in the middle, I took off my shoes, for in passing around the side to go up to the top, there is some danger of slipping, which would presipitate you to the bottom. There are thousands of names of persons upon this rock, which have been placed there from year to year, by those who think, "there is something in a name" & many beautiful flowers growing in the crevices I have one which I gathered here near the top of the rock it is a kind of Lilly a beautiful flower. We nooned here, & then went on crossed sweet water,<sup>3</sup> (<sup>3</sup>Sweetwater River.) which I had supposed from its name to be the best water in the world, but it has more alkali in it, than the Platte, it is not so muddy, but the water is nearly the same here, Some 6 or 8 miles onward, we came to what is called the Devil's Gate.<sup>4</sup> (<sup>4</sup>Described by Fremont, in 1842, as follows: "Devil's Gate, where the Sweet Water cuts through the point of granite ridge. The length of the passage is about three hundred yards and the width thirty-five yards. The walls of rock are vertical, and about four hundred feet in height." -- Report. Washington, 1845, p. 57, where a picture of it is also given. For other descriptions, see Palmer's Journal, in Thwaites's "Early Western Travels," vol. 30, p. 67-68; Delano, p. 99-100; Chittenden, vol. 1, p.473-474)

[FOOTNOTE BY EDWARD E. AYER -- I carved my name Ed. E. Ayer Hewcred(?), Ills on this rock in June 1860  
Edward E. Ayer]

it is a deep chasam, or gap in the mountain, which has been rent assunder for the passage of Sweet Water river, the opening is not wide, but the rocks on each side are perpendicular, & of great highth some 400 ft., the road passes a little to the right, where there is a nataral pass through the mountain, but we could hear the river roaring, & chafing, through its narrow rocky channel; a person who has curiosity, & nerve enough, may climb & look over the brink of this yawning gulf. Some of our men went

up part way, but said that satisfied their curiosity. We passed here a trading post, they kept quite an assortment of goods, which were all brought from St. Louis, their (sic) enormous waggons serving as a kind of shop, & store house; they said they had brought 60 hundred to the waggon from St. Louis; they had recruited their teams, some of them were fat, for the grass here is excellent; they offered them for sale, one of our company bought 3 yoke, for from 45, to 60 dollars per  
 28 yoke. This is a romantic place, & a good place for a post, for there is abundance of grass, & water; & some considerable pine & cedar timber on the mountains. We followed up the stream two or 3 ms & encamped, where the mountains were of naked rocks, without the least vegetation upon them, I now saw how appropriate the name, stony or rocky was applied to them. We passed an alkali pond this morning & gathered up a panful of the salaratus, which looks like frozen snow, forming a crust around the edge of the water; I tried some of it, in some bread; it made it quite light, but gave it a bitter taste.

(June 22--70th day) The roads very sandy; while we were nooning, there was a severe hailstorm, but it had nearly expended itself, before it reached us, but as we proceeded, we found the hail in places 2 or 3 inches deep, & they were so large, that it had trimed up the sage brush completely; it lay on the ground in shady places till the next day, we encamped for the night on the river, very good grass, but there was alkali all over the ground, we tried to keep our cattle from it as much as we could, but they got a little, which affected them some, but we gave them some fat bacon, which is said to be good for them. Great sign of buffalo here, also saw one today galloping away through a gap<sup>1</sup> (Delano, p. 104-105, refers to the "gap" or "gloomy gorge.") in the mountains. (June 23--71st day) Today we passed through a narrow defile in the mountains, where we were compeled to ford the river 3 times,<sup>2</sup> (The place known as the Three Crossings.) in less than two miles, we had to block up our waggon bed several inches; it is a very bad place, there is a way to go around, but I am told that it is about 10 ms. & very sandy. There were goose berry bushes here by the road side, this was the first fruit we had seen; we gathered some of the green berries, stewed them for supper, found them delicious. We soon emerged into an open plain, where the main chain of the Rocky mountains appeared in the distance; Crossed Sweet Water again, went up a few miles & encamped; not very good grass, plenty of alkali, & some of the largest kind of sage, we soon had a good fire, for the nights are getting cool here in the mountains, & after supper we were seated around it, some sitting on yokes, & some on buffalo heads; & they do not make a bad seat; and some are used for writing upon, & then setting them up by the side of the road, generally informing the passerby, that Mr. A. B. Sc. passed such a day, all well Sc. Saw some written in '49 \$150, & though penciled was not yet effaced, we frequently find a buffalo head stuck up with a notice, that there is a spring in such & such a place; nearly all the skulls & shoulder blades along the road, are more or less written upon. Loyd he wrote a moralizing epitaph upon a very large old skull, stating that this animal had fulfilled the laws of nature, & that his head, still served as a seat to the weary traveler.

(June 24--72d day) Had a shower last evening, quite cool, have to wrap up to keep warm, good roads, except 3 or 4 this morning, passed the ice springs; here are great quantities of alkali, & saltpeter, which kills  
 29 the stalk (stock) which stop here, for we saw more dead cattle to-day, than we have seen before on the route. We did not stop to dig for ice,<sup>1</sup> (The ice is found here by digging down some 18 or 20 inches below the surface.--Original note.) for we were cold enough without it. Passed on crossed Sweet Water twice, & encamped on the same, found tolerable grass. There was a trading post at the head of this little valey, which we ~~found~~ passed in the morning. (June 25--73d day) The roads to-day hilly & rocky, weather cold, had a sprinkle of snow & hail; as we reached the top of a high ridge we had a fine view of the wind range of mountains<sup>2</sup> (The Wind River Mountains, a range of the Rocky Mountains, running northwest and southeast, in Fremont County, Wyo., and of which Fremont Peak, of 13,790 feet, is the highest altitude. It was the ultimate limit of Fremont's expedition of 1842, and he presents a view of these mountains in his Report. Washington, 1845, opp. p. 66. This range was earlier described,

e. g. in Irving's The Rocky Mountains. Phila., 1837, vol. 1, p. 62-63.) a little to our right, these are the highest peaks of these mountains, which we have been so long gradually ascending, nothing that I had before seen of mountain scenery, was half so beautiful, for the white snow lying upon the dark blue ground, looked like pictures of silver; no painting can give that delicate tint, of light & shade, & it continually varied, as the light of the sun shown upon it, or when it was obscured by clouds. We passed a bank of snow, and an ice spring, so called from its water being as cold as ice could make it. It was excellent water but the weather was rather to cold to have made much of a relish for it. We went on to Strawberry creek<sup>3</sup> (<sup>3</sup>Strawberry Creek, in Fremont County, Wyo.) & encamped, good grass, & the water of this beautiful stream, is excellent. George had a severe chill, this evening, and a high fever, he was sick a day or two. We are about 15 ms. from the South Pass, we are hardly half way.<sup>4</sup> (<sup>4</sup>These words are scored out in the original manuscript.) I felt tired & weary. O the luxury of a house, a house! I felt what some one expressed, who had traveled this long & tedious journey, that, "it tries the soul." I would have given all my interest in California, to have been seated around my own fireside, surrounded by friend & relation. That this journey is tiresome, no one will doubt, that it is perilous, the deaths of many testify, and the heart has a thousand misgivings, & the mind is tortured with anxiety, & often as I passed the fresh made graves, I have glanced at the side boards of the waggon, not knowing how soon it might serve as a coffin for some one of us; but thanks for the kind care of Providence we were favored more than some others.

(June 26--74th day) We proceeded onward, crossed Sweet Water for the last time,<sup>5</sup> (<sup>5</sup>See on this last crossing, Delano, p. 113; Chittenden, vol. 1, chap. 26.) here it is a real mountain torrent, we soon arrived at the summit, or Pass<sup>6</sup> (<sup>6</sup>The South Pass, "the most celebrated pass in the entire length of the Continental Divide" and where "the traveler, though only half-way to his destination, felt that he could see the beginning of the end."--Chittenden, vol. 1, p. 475. It is in Fremont County, Wyo. Delano, p. 115, describes it. Gold was discovered here and it became a great gold-mining center, for which see Coutant's Hist. of Wyoming, vol. 1, chap. XLIII.) of the Rocky Mountains, this has more the appearance of a plain, for it is some 5 ms across, & nearly 30 ms wide from north to south. The road is sandy, & some rocky, but not steep in no place here. We traveled about 25 ms to-day, & encamped below the Pacific Springs<sup>1</sup> (<sup>1</sup>The Pacific Springs empty into Pacific Creek, an affluent of the Big Sandy River, in Fremont County, Wyo. Here is the first water that is met flowing into the Pacific Ocean. Cf. Delano, p. 115. Chittenden, vol. 1, p 476, locates it as 952 miles on the Oregon Trail.) poor place to camp, for where there is any grass, it is so miry that it is dangerous for stock to go, 2 or 3 of ours got in the mire & a good many others, they were got out, but with much difficulty. We now consider ourselves about half way, but the "tug of war" is yet to come. We have now bid adieu to the waters, which make their way into the Atalantic, & now we drink of the waters which flow into the Pacific. Our faithful team still looks well, they, nor we, have not yet suffered only fatigue, they have generally had plenty of grass & water, but according to the guides we may suffer for both, but hope to find it better than some have represented. More than half of the cattle on the road have the hollow horn,<sup>2</sup> (<sup>2</sup>A cattle disease through which the core of the horn is lost.) the man who is traveling with us has lost, several head & there are two or three more which will not go much farther.<sup>3</sup> (<sup>3</sup>Here her journal ends. It was written in the Sierra Nevada Mountains.)

Lodisa Frizzell  
Across the Plains  
 New York, 1915  
 (Newberry Microfilm 2 - 24)