

HARVEY H. JONES

Diary (portion)

May 9 - September 8, 1854

Transcribed

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HARVEY H. JONES
DIARY
1854

[Transcription does not include trip from Wisconsin to Council Bluffs]

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Went to St. Mary's to cross the river the next morning. Cattle ran off in the night, took until noon to find them. Crossed the Missouri. Drove 7 miles, camped on a small Creek. Traveled about 15 miles, camped at noon on Papao Creek a very miry stream. Camped at night in the head of a hollow. Traveled about 12 miles, camped at noon on Elkhorn River, a rapid muddy stream about 150 feet wide. We struck Platte Valley at this place. Crossed some fine country to day.

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May 9

Traveled 12 miles. Camped on Platte River, a wide, sandy, roily stream without much bank. Ferried Elkhorn River.

May 10

Traveled 18 miles. Camped by a small lake. A very very windy dust day.

May 11

Traveled 17 miles. Camped between Platte & a small lake. Saw some Pawnee Indians cross Platte with some Emigrants horses they stole.

May 12

Traveled 7 miles. Camped on Loupfork River. Rained.

May 13

Traveled 12 miles. Ferried Loupfork River a stream like Elkhorn excepting larger. Camped on a small lake or slough.

May 14

Sunday. Lay by.

May 15

Traveled 14 miles. Camped on Loupfork vally.

May 16

Traveled 12 miles. Camped on Loupfork River. A very stormy night and day. Our tent blew down, the rain fell in torrents & wind blew a hurricane.

May 17

Traveled 12 miles. Camped in Loupfork Valley.

May 18

Traveled 20 miles over a very hilly & sandy road. Struck Platte Vally. Saw an ox dying that the Indians had shot. Camped on a small creek.

May 19

Traveled 15 miles. Crossed some very bad sloughs. Camped on Prairie Creek.

May 20

Made a bridge across Prairie Creek, drove 7 miles & camped on the same.

May 21

Lay by. Rained.

May 22

Traveled 15 miles. Camped on Wood River.

May 23

Traveled 8 miles, made a bridge across Wood River & crossed it.

May 24

Traveled over the ridge[sic?] from Wood River to Platte about 18 miles. Camped on Elm Creek. Hot & dusty.

May 25

Traveled 12 miles. Camped on Buffalo Creek. Very poor water. The last good wood for a long distance, say 250 miles.

May 26

Traveled 11 miles. Camped by a marsh.

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May 27

Traveled 18 miles. Camped near the foot of the bluffs ½ mile from the Platte.

May 28

Traveled 16 miles oversome high sandy bluffs, then over 11 miles of low ground, some bad sloughs, crossed Skunk Creek. Camped near a marsh.

May 29

Traveled 12 miles. Crossed Carrion, roads very muddy. Camped on Platte. A terrible storm in the evening.

May 30

Lay by to gather wood, there being none for 200 miles ahead and nothing but willow bushes here. Saw the first prairie dogs.

May 31

Lay by until nearly night, then drove 6 miles. Dreadful muddy roads. A hard storm in the morning about daybreak.

June 1

Traveled 16 miles. Crossed North Bluff Fork. Heavy sandy roads, very bad a few miles after we crossed the river.

June 2

Traveled 22 miles over bad sandy roads.

June 3

Traveled 19 miles over a very muddy sloughy road. Saw the first rocks & cedars.

June 4

Traveled 16 miles. Passed, in the morning over a sandy bluff, steep ascent, then over a hard, gravelly road, very hard on cattles feet. Saw the first sage plant.

June 5

Traveled 20 miles over a barren country, very windy & dusty. Camped on Platte. Saw the first alkali water.

June 6

Traveled 22 miles. Crossed Crab Creek. Came in sight of Chimney Rock. Crossed Cobble Hills, Camped on Platte.

June 7

Traveled 18 miles over a sandy road. Camped on Platte a little below Chimney Rock. Alkali water very plenty.

June 8

Traveled 20 miles passed Chimney Rock, the greatest natural curiosity I ever saw. Camped near Scott's Bluff on Platte.

June 9

Traveled 11 miles. Camped on Spring Creek, a clear cold stream but no Trout that I could find.

June 10

Traveled 16 miles. Camped on Platte at the first wood for about 200 miles.

June 11

Intended to lie by but dare not on account of being among alkali. Started for Rawhide Creek to camp but found it dry. Had to go to Platte River. Traveled 18 miles.

June 12

Lay be. Plenty of wild currants but too green to use.

June 13

Traveled 15 miles. Stopped a few hours at Fort Laramie. Camped on a side hill about a mile from Platte.

June 14

Traveled 13 miles over hilly stony road. Camped on a bluff. Plenty of pine & cedar timber along here.

June 15

Traveled 15 miles rough roads in forenoon, very good in the afternoon. Camped in bed of hollow without wood or water.

June 16

Traveled 13 miles. Some rough places. A great deal of volcanic eruption along here. Heard robins sing, the first in Nebraska. Camped on Platte.

June 17

Traveled 15 miles over a very barren country. Saw some martin birds. Camped on Platte. Poor feed.

June 18

Traveled 15 miles over a very rough country. The earth has been all torn to pieces volcanoes[sic]. Camped on Platte. Poor feed along here.

June 19

Traveled 12 miles very good roads. Camped on a bluff near Platte. Thin grass on the sandy bluffs.

June 20

Traveled 12 miles very sandy roads. Camped on Platte.

June 21

Lay by. Very warm.

June 22

Traveled 15 miles. Very sandy roads after we passed Platte bridge. Camped on Platte for the last time.

June 23

Traveled 12 miles. Took the new road that leads 7 miles farther up Platte, found it a very bad road. Left Platte for Sweet Water. Camped without water.

June 24

Traveled 18 miles. Crossed two alkali streams. Nooned at Willow Springs. Camped on a small Creek. Very bad roads on cattles feet. A hot dusty day.

June 25

Traveled 12 miles. Nooned on Sweet Water then drove 5 miles off the road to lay by, went north of road & found good grass & a good spring of good cold water.

June 26

Lay by.

June 27

Traveled 12 miles, pass Independence rock, Devil's Gate a great natural curiosity. Sweet Water passes through a deep narrow gorge between two mountains. Camped on Sweet Water. Some of cattle drank alkali water. Had to feed them pork.

June 28

Traveled 18 miles over a very gritty hard road. Camped on a bluff without water.

June 29

Traveled 13 miles over a very sandy road, hard pulling. Came in sight of the Rocky Mountains about noon, their snowy peaks looked very cold in mid-summer. Camped on a ridge without feed or water.

June 30

Crossed a 14 mile desert, a bad road on cattles feet. Passed some bad alkali water. Camped on Sweet Water. Good feed a few miles below the road.

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July 1

Traveled 12 miles, forded Sweet Water 5 times. Camped on S. Water where road leaves it.

July 2

Lay by.

July 3

Started at noon after bidding McKinney's folk good by. Drove 12 miles, camped on Strawberry creek. Saw some green straw berries. Roads very hilly & rough.

July 4

Traveled 12 miles, crossed Sweet Water. Camped near the summit without water. A cold freezing night.

July 5

Traveled 12 miles crossed the summit, passed the Pacific Springs. There are poor, miry springs. Nooned on Pacific Creek. Team ran off with my wife. Camped on a hill without water.

July 6

Traveled 17 miles. Passed the junction of California & Oregon roads. Camped on Little Sandy.

July 7

Traveled 12 miles. Camped on Big Sandy 6 miles above the ford. Good feed.

July 8

Lay by. Coupled my big wagon shorter.

July 9

Started across Green River Desert, west to the ten mile Spring, found good grass about 8 miles from the Spring and nooned. It is a clear cold sulphur spring. Stopped about 2 hours, then hitched up & drove all night.

July 10

Arrived at Green River about 6 A.M. Ferried the River, drove 4 miles. Camped on a small creek. A dreadful hilly road the last 20 miles on the desert.

July 11

Traveled 12 miles. Camped on Little Bear or Aspen creek, Good feed.

July 12

Traveled 15 miles. Passed over a high mountain. Descended two bad hills, ate snow. Caught a mess of trout. Camped on a small creek.

July 13

Started at noon. Traveled 8 miles. Passed over a high mountain. Found a patch of ripe strawberries. Camped on Harises Fork.

July 14

Traveled 12 miles crossed one of the Bear River mountains. Descent very bad. Country improves, grass more plenty. Plenty of flax[?]. Camped by a spring.

July 15

Traveled 15 miles. Crossed the other mountain also Smiths Fork of the Bear River. Camped on Bear River.

July 16

Lay by. Caught fine lot of fish. Joined with Yantis train.

July 17

Traveled 9 miles. Crossed Thomas' Fork. A man sick in train. Camped by a Spring.

July 18

Traveled 17 miles. Road bad in forenoon. Country getting very good. No prickly pears. Camped on a large brook.

July 19

Traveled 13 miles. Camped by a spring in the mouth of a canon.

July 20

Traveled 16 miles. Camped as[sic] Soda Springs, they are numerous & but few of them have any visible outlet, the water in most of them is warm & will ferment when mixed with acid & makes a good wholesome drink.

July 21

Traveled 21 miles. Passed a great deal of alkali. Lost a cow by drinking alkali. Camped on a creek.

July 22

Traveled 14 miles. Forded creek & camped by a springbrook.

July 23

Traveled 16 miles over a very rough road. Struck the head water of the Columbia River. Lost a horse, suppose he was snake bit. Camped by a creek.

July 24

Traveled 17 miles. Took the upper road called "Jeffries Cutoff." Roads very sandy & [?] a few miles. Camped on Snake River.

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July 25

Traveled 1 mile Ferried Snake River. Camped on its northern shore.

July 26

Traveled 12 miles Camped by a fine spring

July 27

Lay by until 4 P.M. then started across a 28 miles desert. Drove 8 miles then camped without water & much grass.

July 28

Drove 20 miles Camped by a little spring at the foot of a mountain. one of the Three Butts.

July 29

Traveled 8 miles Camped at Jordon River, a very rapid stream forcing its way through a country

that has been all torn to pieces by Volcanoes & it finally sinks.

July 30

Traveled 5 miles to where the road leaves the River. Lost an ox named Joe. Sage brush & volcanic eruption very abundant here. Very barren country.

July 31

Traveled 20 miles without water. Camped by smal[sic] brook in handsome valley.

August 1

Lay by on account of sickness of Mr. Arnold Marsh.

August 2

Lay by Mr. Marsh died. He was from Fondulac Co, Wis a highly respected young man. He was poisoned by opening an ox that died very suddenly. He was traveling with Mr. Yantis of Missouri.

August 3

Traveled 12 miles over a very mountainous road. A vast sight of volcanic eruption. Camped on a small creek.

August 4

Traveled 12 miles. Camped on a small creek.

August 5

Traveled 14 miles. Left the volcanic eruption about noon. The roads & country improve very much. Camped on Trout creek.

August 6

Traveled 10 miles. Camped on a small creek.

August 7

Traveled 10 miles. Camped on Lick creek. A fine farming country. Plenty of game & fish.

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August 8

Traveled 14 miles. Camped on a small creek.

August 9

Traveled 16 miles over a fine country., Excellent grass. Camped by a small creek.

August 10

Traveled 15 miles. Camped by a spring.

August 11

Traveled 16 miles over a rough road. Camped by a creek.

August 12
Lay by.

August 13
Traveled 15 miles over a mountainous road. Camped on Horse creek.

August 14
Traveled 12 miles over a mountainous road. Camped on a creek.

August 15
Traveled 11 miles over a rough road. Saw a great many dead cattle. Camped by a brook.

August 16
Traveled 20 miles without watering our cattle, over rough roads. Camped on Boise River.

August 17
Traveled 16 miles. The country is poor along here. Camped on Boise River.

August 18
Traveled 12 miles. Plenty of game & fish along here. Camped on Boise River.

August 19
Traveled 12 miles. The Indians stole a cow as we were passing through some high rushes.
Camped on Boise River.

August 20
Started back to find the cow. Six men with me all on mules & horses. We met young Grant soon after we started. He said he had not seen the cow, he had passed one wagon a few miles back & that she might be with them. We met the wagon, the cow was not with them, the proprietor was Alfred Masticon a man who had traveled with Mr. Yantis on the fore part of the journey. We told him that the Indians acted very bold & saucy along here & that we thought he was presumptuous to be traveling by himself. We told him he had better hurry on and overtake our train, that we thought he could do it that night if he hurried.

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We met Mr. Masticon about 5 miles before we reached the place where the cow was stolen. We had previously appointed Mr. Yantis captain of our little band. Soon after we passed Mr. Masticon, the road leaves the river, passes over a ridge & then down into the valley again. As we were going down the hill into the valley I saw some wagons a few miles up the River. I pointed them out to the rest of the company. One other man saw them. The rest of the company could not see them & said they guessed we were mistaken. I told them I was certain I saw some wagons coming toward us & presumed they were Mr. Ward's train that Mr. Masticon had told us was behind. We thought we saw a creature away down on the valley. We went toward it until

we saw it was a black stump. We then commenced hunting for the tracks of the packers[no previous mention of them] where they had gone from their camping place to the road believing that they had killed the cow. We soon found where their horses had been feeding through the night. Mr. Yantis soon halloed from a thicket of willows "here Jones is the remains of your cow." From the appearance of things the packers & Indians had killed the cow & jerked the meat & what they could not eat the packers had taken with them. There were two or three bony pieces left over the fire, the entrails, hide & head were thrown into a

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pond of water nearby. We were all sorry then that we had not searched the Packer's budgets. I took the largest piece of meat & told them I would take it to camp. As we were going down across the valley toward the road I saw the wagons again, the remainder of the company saw them this time. They were standing still & we thought they were moving although it was about two oclock. Mr. Yantis said he would be glad to see Mr. Ward & he would go & see him & we might wait at the ford[?] until he came up. Another man said he would go with Mr. Yantis. They turned their horses & rode in a hurry up the valley towards the wagons, while we rode slowly across the valley towards the road. The wagons were correlled in the road on a small ridge. We had reached the road & followed it a short distance when I heard some person halloo behind us. I looked around & saw Mr. Yantis & the other man riding toward us at full gallop, motioning to us to come to them. We knew that something was the matter & rode towards them as fast as possible. They told us that the cattle & wagons were all huddled up together[,] that the Indians were riding around them whooping & halloeing and shouting at them, & we might possibly save some of their lives if we would hurry. We rode toards the wagons as fast as our animals could carry us. When we got nearly to them, we saw the Indians driving two of the wagons down the hill into the willows. We feared we

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were too late. About that time the mule that I was riding fell down & threw me 12 or 15 feet headlong into the dust. I was not hurt by the fall. Mr. Yantis helped me fix on my saddle. We rode up within rifle shot of the wagons in the bushes. An Indian rode out of the bushes, towards us in a very daring manner. My. Yantis dropped behind some bushes & slipped up close to the Indian, before the Indian saw him. He shot at the Indian. The Indian appeared to be severly wounded, wheeled his horse & dashed into the bushes. Several of our men shot at the Indians & the Indians shot at us. One ball passed close by my head. A young man, a few feet to my right received two balls almost at the same time. He staggered back a few feet & fell. I asked him if he was badly hurt, he said "Do not leave me." I saw he was dying. He was a fine respectable young man, his name was Ames. He was the eldest son & main dependence of a poor widow. They were going to the Willamette Valley. When the man fell, three of our Company mounted their horses & left the remaing three of us to fight the Indians alone. We halloed to them to come back & not leave us but they rode out of shooting distance & stopped. I told the two men that we could do no good by staying there, & that I would not stay. I mounted my mule & rode to the two wagons on the hill, the whole company followed me. An awful sight met our eyes, dead & wounded Indians & whites were lying promiscuously scattered on the ground around the wagons. There was a wounded Frenchman sitting by a

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wagon, he could talk as strong & rational as ever he could. He begged of us to take him along with us. We told him we could not take him since he was not able to ride a horse, he then begged

of us to give him some water, but we had none to give him. Mr. Ward's youngest son was also wounded and sitting up by a wagon. When Mr. Yantis approached him he reached out his hand & shook hands with him & said "Mr. Yantis we have been lying by waiting for you, we thought you were behind." He said he thought he could ride on horseback & some agreed to take him with us. When we attacked the Indians by the wagons in the bushes we could hear the women screaming. I thought at the time that the Indians were torturing them or they were calling to us to release them. I was afraid both. The horse that the young man rode, who was killed was left with his body & fell a prey to the Indians. There were 4 or 5 yoke of oxen hitched together standing by the wagon on the hill. Bedding, clothing, provisions, broken guns &c were scattered over the ground. Some of the men were dead & some dying. I saw three young men lying together, two were dead, the other was breathing. He heard me speak, opened his death struck eyes & looked wishfully in my face. I imagined he wanted to ask me to help him, but had not strength to talk. We did not see any women or small children, they had been taken into the bushes. It was nearly night & we knew that we could not whip fifty Indians (the wounded boy said he thought there were about that number) & so we left the field of battle & started at a lively walk

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for our wagons. We did not hurry our horses when we left for two reasons, one was that our animals could not stand it to be ridden fast, & the other was, the Indians would think we were afraid of them & follow us. Riding gave the wounded boy great pain, the loss of blood made him very thirsty. We had to stop several times & give him drink. We kept a sharp lookout in every thicket we passed through expecting the Indians would ambush us. I had the dysentery very bad that day & was unfit for such a trip. I took the wounded boy on behind me when we first started from the battle ground but I soon found I was too weak to take him as he hung very heavily on me & so I got Mr. Neily a very large stout man to take him. About dark we came up to Mr. Masticon's wagon. He had given up overtaking our train that day & camped for the night. The wounded boy we had with us was a nephew of Mr. Masticon. Ward's wife was Masticon's Sister. He also had another sister in the train. He wept like a child when he learned the fate of his sisters. Mrs. Masticon fixed a good comfortable bed for her little nephew in her wagon. She gave me a good cup of hot coffee which revived me very much. We told Mr. Masticon we would help him hitch up his team & go on & overtake our train, that night, as we thought he was not safe there. Soon after we got started with Mr. Mastison we saw a great light back at the battle ground. We knew the Indians were burning the wagons & we feared the women & children also. We did not get to our train until about 2 o'clock A.M. The captain promised

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as we left in the morning, that he would not drive far that day but he drove all day hard & did not stop until he got to Ft. Boise. There was a sort of quack doctor in our train, he dressed the boy's wounds. He was wounded in his side with an arrow & had his head badly bruised with a club or something of the kind, but he soon got able to be about. We wanted now if possible to raise a force sufficient to get the women & children from the Indians should they be alive. There were two large trains about one day ahead of us, Noble & Ball. A young man that belonged at the Ferry at Ft. Boise went on & got some help from those trains.

August 21

We correlled our wagons near the Fort & made preparations to go the next day & fight the

Traveled 15 miles & camped on Malheur River. Our train now numbered 19 wagons & upwards of 30 Able bodied men.

August 25

Traveled 20 miles. Camped on a brook.

August 26

Traveled 2 miles. Camped on Snake River for the last time.

August 27

Traveled 12 miles over a mountainous road. Camped on Burnt River. Saw plenty of sumack[sic].

August 28

Traveled 15 miles. A small band of Nez Perces Indians overtook us & brought a letter from the ferryman at Fort Boise stating that one of Ward's sons had come to the Fort with an arrow in his side. He had escaped from the wagons during the fight & had found his way to the Fort. He had 19

suffered a great deal from his wounds & hunger. Camped on a small brook. Roads rough.

August 29

Traveled 12 miles. Camped on a small creek. Lost the Barr, heifer[sic].

August 30

Traveled 14 miles 5 miles after we passed the water, had no water that night but good grass.

August 31

Traveled 11 miles. Camped on a branch of Powder River in a beautiful valley.

Sept. 1

Traveled 13 miles. Camped on the West branch of Powder River. Some of our train killed a black bear.

Sept. 2

Traveled 13 miles. Camped on a small brook near a beautiful pine & fir grove.

Sept. 3

Traveled 8 miles. Camped in Grand Ronde valley as handsome a valley as I ever saw, it is nearly round & it is 20 miles in diameter. Heard a sermon by the Rev. Mr. Rourk. Rained.

Sept. 4

Traveled across to where the road leaves the valley. Camped by a small brook. Bought some potatoes. Rained.

Sept. 5.

Traveled 12 miles over a mountainous road, soil & timber good. Camped on Grand Ronde

River.

Sept. 6

Traveled 18 miles over a stony mountainous road, good timber but poor soil. Met an army of 26 regulars & 40 volunteers going to fight the Snake Indians. Camped on a small creek.

Sept. 7

Traveled 18 miles. Road & soil both a little better. Camped on the Umatilla River.

Sept. 8

Bid the Oregon part of our train good-by. Took the right hand road leading to Washington Territory. Traveled 10 miles. Camped on Wild Horse Creek. A beautiful country rich & productive.

Indians.

August 22

We succeeded in raising a mounted band of 20 men well armed & still had enough left to guard the wagons.

I stayed with my family as my wife was unwilling to have me go. Old Mr. Grant from Soda Springs with his family & some Indians came riding up in the evening. When we saw them in the distance we thought they were Indians coming to fight us. We had all preparations for a battle but were gladly fooled to find it otherwise.

August 23

Early in the morning the little army returned. They gave us a salute of guns as they rode up. Every one ran to to[sic] hear the news. They said they did not find any of the Indians, they had gone to the mountains. They had

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murdered the women & children in a most cruel manner. They found young Miss Ward where we left the Indians in the bushes. She was a beautiful & highly respected young lady 16 years old. The Indians had, from appearances tried to commit rape upon her & she had resisted. She had become angry & killed her by running irons up her wom[rest of word cut off] they had left an iron in her. They had started with old Mrs. Ward & her three youngest children & Mrs. White to cross Boise River to their encampment. They killed Mrs. White before they got there by cutting & pounding her & then threw her into a pond hole. Mrs. White was on her way to her husband in Oregon. Old Mrs. Ward & her three children they took to their camp & had a War dance over them, they built a fire & took the children by their hair & held them in the fire before their mother's eyes. The Indians had burned off as much of the lower part of the children as they could without burning their own hands & left the remainder lying there. They had murdered old Mrs. Ward in a slow & cruel manner by cutting & burning her. She expected to be confined in about a month, she was the mother of a large family. The murdered Frenchman had crawled several rods from the wagons but was dead when they found him. The rest of the men were lying where we left them, their pockets had been rifled, otherwise they had not been molested, excepting that the Indians had emptied the feather beds on the ground & set fire to the feathers & as some of the bodies were under the feathers they got blackened by the fire.

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The Indians had partly burned three of the wagons & left the others uninjured. Our men buried the bodies as well as they could, they had nothing to dig with but a small fire shovel. They found & buried nine men, three women & three children. As soon as the returned volunteers had told their tale & eaten the breakfast we commenced crossing Snake River. We swam our cattle & ferried our wagons. It is a wide dangerous stream to swim cattle across, but ours all got across safe. About 4. o'clock P.M. a large band of Nez Percs[sic] Indians came to salute the fort. There were painted very nicely & rode handsome horses. They rode around the fort & as many of our wagons as had not crossed the River, in single file yelling with all their strength & firing guns. They looked very nice & gave a good salute for a band of savages.

August 24