

. CROSSING THE PLAINS IN 1850.

DIARY OF REV. T. W. HINDS

MAY 1, 1850. WEDNESDAY.

Left Farmington (Southeastern Iowa), having with me besides my wife and family consisting of three children (Alfred, Amelia and William); four persons, named respectively James Thomas, Alexander Hastings, Caleb Booth and George Gardiner. Crossed the Des Moines River at Farmington after dinner and proceeded about four miles and a half, where we obtained hay for the cattle. Had for the purpose of our trip to California two wagons with

Rev. T.W. Hinds. Crossing the plains, 1850.
Original lent by Leland F. Hinds, Santa Cruz.

\$11.00, bacon sides 7½, shoulders 5½. Charges for repairs exorbitant. Situated on a small run of water, with a good many houses, but all log houses. Stocks now very low. Some cattle sold for \$60.00 and \$70.00. Started about 5 o'clock and went some 7 or 8 miles to the bottom this side of the Missouri River. Some 40 teams camped there. Mitchell would not join Charles Davis' company because of the girl with Shepard.

MAY 22, 1850. WEDNESDAY.

Remained in camp till a company was formed. Charles Davis proceeded with his company of about 20 wagons. All busy writing home.

Joined a company on the understanding that we were to remain in camp on Sunday. Proceeded after dinner to the Missouri River to cross, but found so many before us that we could not cross during the day. Had a number of Indians among us (Pawnee). Had to watch the cattle at night lest they would stray away.

MAY 23, 1850, THURSDAY.

Severe storm during the night, accompanied with very heavy thunder, which scattered the cattle a good deal. The wind during the morning was so high that we could not get over the river, but had to wait till the afternoon. All Mormons about here, among whom are a great

many English. Saw the remains of
a great many huts on the other side
of the river formerly occupied by
Hormons. After dinner Beckly came
up, his party having joined another
and organized. Crossed in the even
about 5 o'clock and proceeded about
6 miles to a small creek, where we
camped for the night.

MAY 24, 1850. FRIDAY.

Started at 6 o'clock, before
another company camping close by
and which crossed the Missouri Riv-
er the day before. Crossed the
Pappio 12 miles and went to the
Elk Horn River 5 further. This we
also crossed and then camped 2 1/2
miles beyond on a creek. Just by

was Charley Davis' company. The scenery as you descend the hills to the Elk Horn is perfectly enchanting. The river flows at your feet, clothed on both sides with luxuriant trees which were just appearing in all their greenness. Beyond lies the plains, extending for hundreds of miles and in the distance at 12 miles distance is the Platte River, again fringed with trees. I stopped the mare to gaze on the scene and being alone, being in advance of the teams, drank in with throbbing pulse the glorious scene. So this, thought I, is the abode of the wild man, and in such a scene as this is witnessed their

Indian propensities, and here, in this beautiful place, we have to feel less secure and beware of their acts. At the ferry we saw the chief of the Pawnee nation, one who was the friend of the white man, and some years ago saved Fremont from some of his brother men. So said the ferryman and so said he. May have been so. He was rather tall, blind of one eye and better clothed than usual. He had, too, a sword which they said was given to him by Fremont at the time above referred to. We gave him some money on the supposition that his story was true. Across the Elk Horn we had to swim our cattle, but it was a

narrow stream, and it was done with very little trouble, and the wagons, for each of which they charged \$1.25, were crossed on the boat. At supper, were visited by a number of Indians, men and boys. They had a buffalo robe thrown around their body and some a blanket. They begged for victuals and corn for seed and carried sticks on which to stick the pieces of bacon that might be given them. What they could carry, they took home. Victuals not portable they eat. We all gave them something and they sat around our camp fires to pick up all they could. Some dough was given them and this they baked in

the frying pan with great readiness. They seemed to enjoy all that was handed them and drank with great relish the fat left after frying. They were armed with bows and arrows. They signified that their village was close by. Some of us finished the night by fishing by moonlight, but were not successful.

MAY 25, 1850. SATURDAY.

Charley Davis' company rolled out early, I suppose to get the start. Had the same Indians again at breakfast. Went forward on horseback and was the first to get to the Platte River. The Platte River is in parts very wide, with numerous sand banks. The water is

very muddy, like that of the Missouri River, but it is not so good as even that. We found a small slough a little beyond, the water of which was partly clear. Had with us, among others, the head chief of the "Souss" branch of the Pawnee Indians. Gave the Indians corn on shooting with their arrows at a mark. I gave them also a camp kettle full of beans which were a little sour. Held a meeting for choosing officers. Griffin was elected Captain, Benning Orderly Sergeant, Thomas Wagon Master. The company, composed of 15 wagons, was called the "Split Log" Company, from the name by which one of the

company who had four wagons was known, he having, when he first came to the country, built a house of split logs. His name was Mitchell and he was from Missouri. Hinds and Ellis were appointed a committee to draw up a constitution. Went on and passed some small lakes and camped on a small creek. The constitution having been submitted to a meeting was adopted, but one rule that we should rest on the Sabbath could not be carried, but there was a respectable minority. The cattle have now to be guarded and guards were appointed for the night. A severe storm in the night. Traveled 16 miles.

MAY 26, 1850. SUNDAY.

Proceeded 8 miles to where the road joins the river and thence 2 miles to Shell Creek. Wild onions and artichokes abundant. Saw snakes and a viper, also an Indian grave a little off the road. Had some difficulty in crossing Shell Creek on account of the high stage of water. Fortunately a company had built a small bridge, that is had placed on one another a number of logs the day before, but the water was nearly up to the top and was still rising. We therefore cut down a quantity of brush wood and then we dragged over the wagons by hand, the cattle swimming. We

got all safely over, though it was rather hazardous work, and then camped on the stream. A good many Indians visited us, to some of whom I gave some tobacco and with one of whom I smoked a pipe. We found a Sabbath spent in traveling a very uncomfortable day. We wanted to read and to worship God.

MAY 27, 1850. MONDAY.

Found that four of the Indians had sufficient confidence in our Captain as to confide to his care for the night their arms and other things and that in the morning they brought him a quantity of wood.

For this, however, they got from him a good breakfast, which I sup-

pose they expected. Just as we were going to have breakfast a severe storm came on, which delayed us so that we did not start till late. The road bad on account of the rain, the water in places extending across the road and to some distance on both sides and nearly knee deep. Passed a company of seven teams. Went forward a few miles and found a good camping place, where we stopped.

MAY 23, 1850. TUESDAY.

Traveled about 3 miles to the south fork of the Platte River, where we were charged \$1.25 for the privilege of using our own rope and crossing ourselves. We

had
that [unclear] and through this
pass to the shore over a quicksand.
The cattle had to be swam. We
were delayed some time as Davis'
company had camped there and crossed
first. Camped about 6 miles further
by the side of the South Fork. Had
a meeting to appoint a committee to
draw up some by-laws. Appointed
Messrs. Hinds, Mitchell, Lawrence,
Harland and Ellis. Sat up till
quarter past ten baking bread.

MAY 29, 1850. WEDNESDAY.

Rose a little after 4 o'clock
(This is generally the time for
rising now) and started at 6 o'-
clock. While walking, the com-

mittee conferred with the Captain and Orderly Sergeant as to what by-laws were wanted. Some of the committee thought there ought to be some and some penalties were desired. Others and myself thought we did not need any, that the fewer the laws the better, and were entirely opposed to penalties. The end was that new by-laws were made. It is surprising how quarrelsome people are on this route. From the constant wear and tear of mind and body, the least thing excites them. It is the same as far as I can learn in all the wagons. Every one thinks he does too much and that the others do too little. Between the wagons,

however, there is a very good state of feeling and we work together very harmoniously.. Had some wild onions. The prairie was in blossom. The road very good. I find that at the bridge over Shell Creek the Indians made a small horse company pay \$2.00 for some brush wood they cut down to mend the bridge, part of it having been either washed away or else carried away by the Indians.. Two of our company, too, were threatened by them and had demanded of them some money and a coat. The two who had remained to fish had by them their horses and so got away out of the savages making a horrid yell. Proceeded

28 miles and camped one-half mile from the South Fork. The reason why we went so far was that during the latter part of the drive there was no water till we arrived at the place where we stopped.

MAY 30, 1850. THURSDAY.

Went 20 miles and had to camp where there was no wood, so there were no fires that night. We boiled our water with alcohol. Saw a dead antelope which the company before us had killed.

MAY 31, 1850. FRIDAY.

The road was very sandy. Went north about 9 miles to see a village of prairie dogs. Their bark

is similar to the chirp of a bird,
their color is rather brighter than
that of a mouse. Their claws are
the same as those of a squirrel.
Their tail has no more hair than
the rest of the body. They are about
the size of a large squirrel. Two
or three of them were killed, but
they were difficult to get at. They
burrow in the ground to a great
depth and at the least alarm run
into them. Saw the prickly pear
----? ----? ----? and a good many
small ----? trees in the open prairie.
Saw the bleached bones of the buffalo
and also traces of their having been
here recently. Overtook the company
just before dinner. We have seen

the last few days a good many wells,
but most of them were dry. The
country very sandy and barren.
Traveled this day 25 miles.

JUNE 1, 1850. SATURDAY.

Some of the company went after
some antelopes, but they were
shy that they could not get near
them. Went 17 miles and camped
rather early. Heard the prairie
wolves at night. Camped on the
Platte River by turning off.

JUNE 2, 1850. SUNDAY.

Remained in camp. Most of the
company washing and baking, but not
ourselves. Rawlings came on from
his company to see if they could

join us. In his company are also
Cooks, Joshua Fountain, Weniger,
Kelly and Mr. Stevens. Saw a hare
which one of the company had shot.
Found that the Indians at the bad
bridge over the Shell Creek were
making the companies pay them money
and a man who came on with Rawlings
they made give up his shirt.

JUNE 3, 1850. MONDAY.

Found ten stray oxen with ours.
Do not belong to a company a little
behind us. Supposed to belong to
some forward company. They are to
be taken on. When we had proceed-
ed about half a mile the loose
horses galloped by the wagons and
frightened the oxen belonging to

the second wagon before us, which ran off, and the consequence was that every wagon before them also started off. Fortunately the wagon before us was kept from running and so our two wagons with two behind us were stopped. The result of the runaway was one ox killed by sticking one of his horns in the ground and breaking his neck, two or three a little hurt from being knocked down by a wagon, and one man's knee sprained through jumping out. It was resolved that in the future the horses should not run loose and that the cattle should be driven before. We have cause to be thankful that it was our turn to be

where we were or there is no knowing what accident might have happened to us. I find that this and other things happening to the company are making them more careful. So it is that we learn by experience. A man from a forward company has claimed the stray cattle and is on the hunt of some 12 more. We passed a grave today. The man died last spring of that dreadful disease, cholera, perhaps leaving behind him a beloved wife and children, anxiously looking forward to a future meeting. If they now meet, it will be in a future state. This makes five graves seen since we left home.. There is a great deal of sameness in the road

we are now pursuing. On the right is the open prairie, on the left is the Platte at from one to two miles distance. The dead ox makes one here and we saw three or four in Iowa. Of horses we have seen three since leaving the Missouri River and six or eight were seen in Iowa. Storms are very frequent along the Platte, attended with lightning and thunder. They have been of short continuance and have most frequently been in the night or very early in the morning. In the afternoon a very severe storm set in and it rained all the even and part of the night. We proceeded, however, and turned off to camp on the Platte.

The only wood to be got for fuel was willow, and to make a fire with this when soaked with wet and it raining all the time was sufficient work for the most patient philosopher. We tried our utmost efforts for a couple of hours, almost giving it up in despair, but at last we succeeded in getting up not a fire but something like one. We then, long after dark, managed to get a little hot coffee for supper, and our supper we took standing in the rain with the wet running off our hats into the plate. I had either the patience or foolhardiness to bake some bread and I wondered what my friends accustomed to their comforts would have

thought if they had seen me, who used to be so fond of being comfortable, doing such a work at such a time. At last the fire and my indifference both failed and, very wet, I went to bed, after wiping off all the water that had run down my neck.

JUNE 4, 1850. TUESDAY.

The first thing I heard when awakened a little after 4 o'clock was the rain pattering on the cover of the wagon and dripping into it, and I contemplated another scene of contention with difficulty, but fortunately I obtained a piece of board of one of the company about a foot long and six inches wide, and this

was a famous thing to start the fire with when cut into chips, and after a time the rain left off. These, with a determination to have a hot breakfast, enabled us to accomplish the task, and we had a very capital breakfast, though on the wet ground and the rain still sprinkling a little. By the by, let every one intending to go to California be careful as to how the rain is to be kept out of the wagon and off his person. I thought I was very well provided, but the person from whom I got the oiled covers and my oiled suit of clothes greatly deceived me, for they were worth next to nothing. Passed through a paririe dog village.

extending the main part of it over two miles and the outskirts several more. The size was such that we supposed it must be the metropolis either of their kingdom or republic, whichever it was. Came up to a company camping, which had lost two lads about sixteen, who went out the day before to hunt. A number of men were just starting out to look after them. They had also lost a number of oxen two days before, some of which they had recovered, and which had run off more than twenty miles back. While we were stopping to get our dinner, down came a horse wagon which was among us. They had fastened two horses

one to each of the hind wheels, and these pulling broke one of the spindles of the axle tree. We made a hole with a three inch auger and put in a piece of an ox bow and this seemed to answer very well. Tonight a stick will be looked for to repair it. At the same time there was another runaway. A small company passed us while we were camping and they had only just got by when four of their teams set off. They ran some distance over the prairie, but were stopped without any damage being done. Of course we had to look to our teams. Just after dinner it commenced raining and hailing, with thunder and light-

ning, and continued during the rest of the day and night. While it was light, we were kept constantly at work wiping up the water that came in, but still we could do but little, and bed and bedding were soon very wet. I tried to cook some supper though it rained so hard, but could get only a little and went to bed wet through. Went about 15 miles.

JUNE 5, 1850. WEDNESDAY.

Still raining very hard.

Obliged to remain in camp. Was busy baking bread, twelve hours of which were in the rain. Had biscuits to cook. Made myself very ill and was obliged to go to bed after getting supper ready. In

consequence of the rain we remained in camp all day. In the night previous our cattle, which were lying down, all at once got up and ran at full speed, knocking down one of the guard, but were afterwards stopped.

JUNE 6, 1850. THURSDAY.

Proceeded about 5 miles to Buffalo Creek, where, from the heavy rains, the water was so deep we could not get through. We therefore bridged it, the doing of which and pulling over the wagons took us three hours. The ground and road covered with water. Hard pulling for the cattle. Came to a slough, where the depth of water was such as to prevent

our getting over, and we had to go up the slough over a mile to cross.

While waiting at the slough, two teams ran away again, but we succeeded in stopping them. While at the creek three men came up from across the Platte, whose company had lost a hundred head of cattle. They said that there were on their side of the river three hundred head of stray cattle, also that the grass was very much cropped and poor, that on this side it was better than any they had seen. Camped 15 miles further, without wood. Found eight strays.

JUNE 7, 1850. FRIDAY.

Went 23 miles. Met several

men from forward companies who have lost a number of oxen, one company sixty, another thirty-six. Found another stray. Saw one ox and one horse dead, also several buffaloes. Our company has killed a buffalo, but being covered with sores, they left it. Turned off the road to camp on the Platte. Two men in camp on the hunt of lost cattle. Got a prairie chicken.

JUNE 8, 1850. SATURDAY.

Found on getting up that seven of the strays were lost. Found again several miles off. Crossed the worst place as yet passed over for cattle to run away--so say the men from the forward companies.

Passed over some sandy bluffs a little higher up than the junction of the North and South Fork of the Platte, from which place there is a very fine view. You see in the distance the bluffs on the other side of the South Fork, below which are a few trees. Along the fork and immediately below is a very wide bend of the North Fork, dotted with some fifty or sixty islands covered with grass only and others with trees. Went by a company which had lost a good many oxen. All the strays with us except one belonged to them and were given up. Rain at night. Traveled 23 miles.

JUNE 9, 1850. SUNDAY.

Traveled 21 miles. Came up with Davis' company. Camped on the river, expecting to find wood for baking some bread the next morning, but were disappointed and compelled to enter on 200 miles where there is no timber with scarcely any bread, but most have crackers. Found some small willow.

JUNE 10, 1850. MONDAY.

• Traveled 21 1/2 miles.

JUNE 11, 1850. TUESDAY.

Traveled 21 1/2 miles. Had some buffalo meat. Pretty good.

JUNE 12, 1850. WEDNESDAY.

Traveled 20 miles. Camped a

little from the river.

JUNE 13, 1850. THURSDAY.

Went to the lone tree to dinner. A great many teams on the other side of the river. Buffalo chips make a very good fire. Ill with severe cold on the chest and general debility. Obligated to keep in the wagon. Country very desolate looking, but some pretty flowers on the plains. Traveled 20 miles. Camped on the river. Saw a large herd of buffalo. Saw two Indians of the Sioux nation whose camp was on the other side of the river.

JUNE 14, 1850. FRIDAY.

Traveled 20 1/2 miles to Crab

Creek, where we camped.

JUNE 15, 1850. SATURDAY.

Rather better today. Meeting to decide whether we should rest on the Sabbath (next day.) Decided to rest. Camped on the river. Travelled 19 miles.

JUNE 16, 1850. SUNDAY.

As it was a very warm day, took the provisions out of the wagons to dry, some being a little damaged with the rain. At noon a meeting was held and it was decided to go on, because another company was close behind. Had to put everything up again. Too bad. Instead of it being a day of rest, it was

a day of work. Traveled 12 miles.
Camped near the river.

JUNE 17, 1850. MONDAY.

Came to Chimney Rock. Went up on one of the bluffs and had a splendid view of the bluffs on the south side of the river from Chimney Rock to Scotts Bluffs. Many flowers, also prickly pears. Traveled 24 miles. Camped near the river.

JUNE 18, 1850. TUESDAY.

Passed Scotts Bluffs. Perfectly enchanted with the prospect. The high bluffs resemble walled towers on the continent of Europe. To view the different scenes along

the river repays one for the hardships of the way. Camped near the river. Cholera very bad on the other side of the river further back. Some turning back. Teams there very thick. Traveled 20 miles.

JUNE 19, 1850. WEDNESDAY.

A great many old rags, being worn out clothes. Iron, from the breaking down of teams and stoves. Traveled 20 miles.

JUNE 20, 1850. THURSDAY.

The Captain and Mr. Mitchell went on to the Fort. Camped 3 miles below the ferry. Could not cross as the ferry boat was lost and the new one not quite finished. Tra-

veled 12 miles.

JUNE 21, 1850. FRIDAY.

Remained in camp as the boat was not ready.

JUNE 22, 1850. SATURDAY.

Walked to the Fort, the ferry, and then, crossing, carried some iron to Fort Larimie for shoes. Others took charcoal which we had made. This was to make some ox shoes and nails. Building some houses. At the store the charges were most exhorbitant, sugar 75¢, coffee 50¢, flour 25¢. A set of shoes and nails, without putting on, \$6.00. Cholera very bad on the road from St. Joseph. A great many

deaths. About 35,000 people had passed. Walked back from the Fort. Company moved 3 miles to the ferry, as the wagons were beginning to cross, Sam Beckley, also Henshaw and Swan. Began to cross at between 11 and 12 o'clock at night. Charge \$2.00, though previous to the building of the new boat it was \$1.00. The government twelve months ago purchased twenty miles square of land on which the Fort stands.

JUNE 23, 1850. SUNDAY.

Traveled 14 miles to the Warm Springs, where we camped. Saw one grave.

JUNE 24, 1850. MONDAY.

Passed three graves, three dead oxen and one mule. Splendid views along the hills, affording great pleasure. In the morning had a great deal of difficulty in collecting the oxen, they had wandered off so far. Road lined with emigrants. Hills and roads covered with stones. Traveled 22 miles.

JUNE 25, 1850. TUESDAY.

Ascended some hills. Found the road a succession of hills and hollows. Lofty mountains to the left. Traveled 26 miles. Camped on the La Bonte River. Saw some seventeen graves.