

Journal

28th. We traveled up the south Fork about eight miles, when we left the river and crossed the dividing ridge between the two forks to the north branch of the Platte. The country is barren and sandy, with no grass. We saw several antelope, and had one or two good chases for them, but did not get any. 22 miles.

22 29th. We were compelled to ascend the bluffs to-day and travel 15 miles without water. Three buffalo came running towards our train to-day, and threatened to run through the train, but turned their course when within about 20 rods of us. Col. Sublet shot two bullets through one of them from his double shooter but did not bring him down. Litwiller afterwards killed a bull. We stopped four hours after we got to the river to get in the meat. It was excellent, with the exception of having a strong flavor of musk. It will supply our whole train for a week, besides leaving enough for 40 men. We have found great quantities of wagons, irons, chains and other property thrown away, on the road to-day. Abundance of buffalo, antelope and wolves are seen now. 24 miles.

30th. We got an early start this morning, and reached Ash Hollow about noon, where we found some trees growing, which were welcome to our sight. The road from the upper ford on the South Fork, comes in at Ash Hollow. Camped early and found plenty of grass, with thousands of horses cattle and mules feeding upon it. An old Frenchman with a party of Yanktaw Indians, is camped near us, trading with the emigrants. We have passed several good springs of water to-day. The Bluffs here are mostly limestone, with a few cedar trees growing upon them; back of this they have been mostly sand bluffs. We find alkali every day now. 22 miles.

31st. We had a heavy shower last night, a perfect deluge, but it was needed, for the country was very dry. We have passed several Indian villages to-day, belonging to the Yanktaw Sioux. One village had about forty lodges in it. The Sioux are a noble race and very friendly, and appear to be as much civilized as their neighbors near the settlement, that is they know how to beg to perfection. They lately had a fight with the Pawnees, in which they were victorious, and took a great many ponies, which are now feeding around the wigwams. One of them came in with a pony loaded with buffalo meat while I was in their wigwam. I saw some Indian burials to-day. They bury on a platform raised from the ground, on poles about eight feet high. The poles are set up in the form of a pyramid, and are fastened together at the top, where also is hung the medicine bag of the chief. The body is wrapped in buffalo robes, and a cloth made of bark, enclosing also a quantity of buffalo meat, and other provisions to last him on his journey to the spirit land, and his arrows to shoot with on the way. When all the preparation is complete, the body is laid upon the platform, to moulder or dry up as may be, in the sun, until the robes get off when the ravens may finish it. This one that I went to see to-day, smelt so bad that I could not approach very near to it without holding my nose, and then it was very offensive. It was a chief who had been killed in the recent fight with the Pawnees.

June 1st. We had more rain last night. Passed several springs to-day, and saw some scattering trees on the bluffs. We now find great quantities of lizards; they are small, being about three inches long, and very sprightly and active little things, and the boys have much fun in chasing them. We passed some more Sioux and Chienns wigwams to-day; or as the Indians themselves pronounce it, Link. We had a heavy wind-squall in the afternoon, with some rain. Country still barren, with but little grass. We camped at night in sight of the famous Chimney Rock; this rock is quite a curiosity. It is composed of soft sand stone. It is about one hundred and twenty paces around it at the base, and about as high as Bunker's Hill monument, and looks very much like it at a distance. It can be seen at a distance of thirty or forty miles. We travelled oneday and a half after we came in sight of it, before we came opposite to it. It is

said by the French traders to have been much higher than at present, but is wearing away every year by the action of the elements. The Court House and county buildings are also in sight from our camping ground to-night. They are a group of sandstone bluffs, resembling the objects

- 23 which they are named from, and are curiosities worth seeing. They are about twenty miles from us, perhaps more, but they look as if they were not three miles distant. All distances here are deceptive, the eye readily taking in objects at a distance of twenty or thirty miles, the atmosphere being so clear. 25 miles.

2d. Sunday. Laid over to-day, to air our loads and rest our teams.--All the wagons but Litwilers and mess left us to-day, being anxious to get along. We shall probably overtake them at St. Laring, which is about ninety miles from this place. The weather is pleasant and warm with a fair chance for grass. Fuller and J. Ingalls undertook to go to Court House Rock this afternoon, which looks to be but a few miles from us, but after traveling about twelve miles they thought it looked quite as far as when they started, and they turned back; they got into the camp about eleven o'clock at night.

3d. Drove twenty-five miles, and passed the Chimney Rock. We camped about two miles back from the river on the bottom, and about four miles from a large bluff resembling the fortification which we named Fort Whitney, from its white appearance. Several of the boys went out on a wild goose chase to the bluffs for wood, there being a few straggling cedars in sight which appeared to be not over two miles distant; they started about four P. M. and got back at ten o'clock at night pretty well fatigued, with no fuel, being unable to reach the cedars. 25 miles.

4th. Had a heavy rain last night, and got a late start, but drove thirty miles and caught up with the rest of our company who left us on Sunday. We passed Rob- adove's trading post, at Scott's bluffs and camped about two miles from it at a spring of clear cold water gushing out of a rock.--This ought to be called the Rock of Horeb, situated as it is in a desert land. Our road to-day led back from the river, and we have had a scarcity of water for our horses.

We have had a dry, hot day, with great scarcity of grass. The country is getting more barren. Found an indifferent camping ground. 25 miles.

6th. Passed another French trading post to-day with its usual accompaniment of Indian wigwams. Litwiler swapped horses with an old Indian who took a fancy to his horse because it was white, and his squaw wanted it, he said. We reached Fort Laramie about four o'clock, P. M.; forded the Laramie river, and camped about two miles from the fort on the bluff, the authorities at the Fort prohibiting emigrants from camping in the valley. 26 miles.

7th. Remained this day at the camping ground to write home, there being a post office at the Fort. There are a great many wagons left at this point by many taking to packing. Thousands of dollars worth of property being thrown away, but anything we wish to buy, we have to pay double price for. Fort Laramie is situated at the junction of the Laramie and Platte rivers, and surrounded by high bluffs, being at the base of the Black Hills. It is 630 miles from St. Joseph, and 500 from Council Bluffs. The fort is built mostly of adobies, or unburnt brick, and resembles Fort Kearney. The garrison consists of about 300 men at this time.--The Council Bluffs road comes in at this place, and the soldiers have a ferry across the Platte by which they make considerable money out of the

- 24 emigrants, which I understand goes into a fund to buy a library for the garrison. The officers have built a hand saw-mill near the fort, although there is no timber nearer than the Black Hills, some 10 miles distant from the fort.

8th. Struck our tents this morning and started on the Black Hills road. The majority of the teams have gone up the Platte bottoms. We have found good grass today, abundance of good buffalo grass, the best we have had, Passed the Warm Spring, 14 miles from the fort; saw a flock of mountain sheep, but they were so wild that we could not get a shot at them. Saw an antelope--had a grand chase for him, but he eluded us and got away. We camped at night at a beautiful stream of water in a romantic valley, with plenty of wood and water. One of Loyd's men shot a sage hen, which is a species of grouse somewhat larger than a prairie hen. The flesh of the sage hen is excellent savory eating. We are now in the sage country; it resembles our cultivated sage, but is more bitter, and grows about two feet high; also great abundance of prickly pear, the ground being sometimes covered for acres in one bed. The prickly pear covers the ground here to that extent that we are frequently compelled to clear away with our spades space to erect our tents, it not being particularly agreeable to the seat of honor to sit down on the long sharp thorns. This must be a healthy country, although a barren cold one, being constantly in sight of snow, which can be seen at all times in the year.

26 miles.

9th. The road this morning led up the valley of the creek about six miles, then struck across to another creek eight miles; after leaving the creek we found a spring of good water; five miles from this spring we came to Horse Creek. Here were great numbers camped, being just seventeen miles to the next water, with but little grass on the route. The latter part of the day's drive has been rough and sandy. We passed two men on the creek making pack saddles. They had given away their wagons and thrown away their other property. Wagons, harness, stoves, and all kinds of property we find strewn along the road now. We had a tremendous hail storm this afternoon. The hail fell two inches deep, some of the pieces of which were an inch in diameter. Many who were exposed had their lips and cheeks cut through by the hail. The storm beat our tents down, and we had to crawl under the wagons for shelter from its fury. We got up our tents again after the storm passed over, but had to sleep in three inches depth of mud through the night.

20 miles.

10th. We were camped last night opposite Laramie's Peak, distant about 10 miles. We first saw the Peak at a distance of 70 miles. It is always covered with snow, which makes it a prominent object. We reached La Pointe Creek about noon. Have had a hilly road to-day and poor grass.

26 miles.

11th. Camped last night at the Red Stone Quarries. Here we found the most beautiful, pure specimens of white free stone. It was soft and could be cut readily with a knife. The real free stone is equally soft when it first comes out of the quarry. We have had muddy roads to-day, and a very barren country to travel through, with but little grass. Passed Pearl Creek, where we had another severe hail storm. Saw a fine horse that had been left behind to-day. His feet had become injured for want of shoes.

22 miles.

25 12th. We saw a good vein of coal to-day, about ten inches thick. It was on the bank of the Platte river, where the water had washed the bank away. I examined it, and found it of good quality. A camp near us lost twenty-six horses and one mule last night, by a stampede. We have heard to-day that they have found sixteen of the horses, and mule. Country barren, and grass poor. Passed the Deer Creek to-day, which is a beautiful stream, with cotton wood trees growing on its banks. Fuller and Ingalls caught a mess of small fish out of it.

22 miles.

13th. Reached the Upper Platte ferry about noon. We found four boats, two belonging to the Mormons, and two to a St. Louis company. The charge for crossing is four dollars per wagon, and 50 cents for a horse or mule. The celebrated Kit Carson is here with a drove of horses and mules for sale. I did not see him, he being out on the hills with stock.--The country is very barren here, the Black Hills reaching

down within a few miles of the river, and covered with snow. Crossed the river and camped on a barren hill-side without grass, which was the best spot that we could find.
15 miles.

14th. To-day's drive has been over a desert bearing nothing but wild sage, and crickets which cover the ground, and seem to get as fat as it if they had something to eat. They were so numerous that we could not step without crushing some of them. Passed an alkali spring and pond 12 miles from the ferry; also the Willow Springs, 28 miles from the river. Found good water at the Willow Springs, but no grass. Camped on Prospect Hill in full view of the lofty snow capped Peaks of the Rocky Mountains, and have had a very cold, windy day to drive, with sandy road.
30 miles.

15th. Very cold day; have to wear our overcoats and mittens. Rained all night and forenoon, with a right smart chance of a snow storm. After the snow storm had blown out we had one of the most splendid views of the Rocky Mountains that the mind could conceive. They were clothed with pure white snow from base to summit, gigantic specimens of Nature's monuments. Passed some small creeks to-day furnishing some good water; also several alkali lakes and swamps. Thousands of wagon loads of pure saleratus and pearlash could be got here. The crusting over some of the swamps readily supported a man walking upon it. We gathered some for use and found it much stronger than the manufactured article, but think it contains some poisonous property, as the bread made of it affected us disagreeably. I should advise all to observe caution in using it. Passed the Independence Rock, which is a huge mass of granite covered with the names of thousands who have gone before us. Crossed the Sweet Water river, which is about 10 rods wide, and three feet deep at the ford, and camped one mile from the crossing.
24 miles.

Sunday. 16th. Moved our camp up to the foot of the mountain where we found a good spring of water and some grass. We are now fairly in the Rocky Mountains, and a ragged looking country it is. Huge piles of granite reared upon each other, covered with snow renders the prospect picturesque, but cheerless. Weather cold and windy.

26 17th. Passed the Devil's gate, a narrow chasm in the rock, said to be about four hundred feet deep, through which the Sweet Water runs. It resembles the dells on the Wisconsin river. Have had a sandy road and poor grass. Bought a light wagon and harness this evening for 10 dollars. Saw several heavy wagons that had been left on the road, owing to the sand. 25 miles.

18th. Crossed the Sweet Water three times to-day. Got in with a train of ox wagons which hindered us so much that we turned out and camped at 3 o'clock, P. M. Found good grass at camp, but have had sandy roads and no grass on the drive. Left our heavy wagon, for the good of other comers, who will probably burn it. Ice made last night half an inch in thickness.

19th. Started at half past three o'clock this morning, and ~~passed~~ passed all the ox trains in their camp ground, the Sweet Water, four miles from camp, from which crossing we will have 16 miles to travel without water or grass. Saw several dead oxen along the 16 miles, which were killed by alkali.--Crossed the Sweet Water again--passed one tent on the river of a man and his wife, the man down with the mountain fever. Roads sandy and grass poor. We overtook the balance of our company, who left us last Sunday, again to-day. This is the second time they have left us, and we have overtaken them within three days afterwards, which shows pretty conclusively, I think, that nothing is gained by driving Sundays.
28 miles.

20th. Got up into the region of snow to-day, and have passed several snow banks alongside of the road in the ravines. Road better, but no grass to speak of. We passed the 10 wagons to-day which left us on the Platte because we would not drive on

Sunday. They had had four days start of us at Ft. Laramie. When we passed them they had 14 men down with the mountain fever. Crossed a branch of the Sweet Water and the Willow Creek, and camped about a mile from the latter. We passed to-day a grave made yesterday of a man found with his throat cut. He had in his hand when found, a jack knife, and near him was found a scanty supply of provisions. He had committed suicide. It was evident that he was a foot packer, and had probably become depressed by his journey and the gloomy prospect of his not being able to get through his long journey with his slender supply of provisions. Poor fellow; he had become discouraged in prosecuting one long journey, and had entered upon another longer journey, with, perhaps less preparation than upon the first. His name was not known. 20 miles.

21st. We lost our horses this morning, which hindered us some time, but we succeeded in finding them again. We crossed the Sweet Water for the last time; 10 miles from the crossing is the summit of the Rocky mountains at the South Pass, which we reached at noon. It is known by two conical shaped mounds or hills, about 60 feet high. No one would ever suspect this to be the summit, the country is so level, and the ascent of the whole distance is so gradual. Three miles from the summit we reached the Pacific Springs, one of the heads of the Colorado river of the Gulf of California. Camped at the springs over night, found plenty of grass, but the swamps are very miry. At this place the California Express mail stops to take letters back to the States for the emigrants.--The price of sending back a letter is 50 cents. The other 10 wagons came up to-night and camped with us. They have two more men down with the fever, making 16 in all. They intend going the Salt Lake route from here, but we shall go the Sublett cut-off. 17 miles.