

*North Side
of Platte*

HISTORICAL REPRINTS

OVERLAND FROM INDIANA TO OREGON THE DINWIDDIE JOURNAL

Edited by MARGARET BOOTH

Sources of Northwest History No. 2

STATE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA
MISSOULA

General Editor: PAUL C. PHILLIPS

Reprinted from the Historical Section of THE FRONTIER, a Magazine of the Northwest,
published at the State University of Montana, Missoula. Vol. VIII, No. 2, March, 1928.

OVERLAND FROM INDIANA TO OREGON

The Dinwiddie Journal

FOREWORD

This diary of an early overland trip from Indiana to Oregon is typed from the original written in a blank book (board covers, leather back). The book was found among the effects of the late William Sweeney of Hebron, Indiana, and was loaned by Mrs. Sweeney to a kinsman, Mr. Oscar Dinwiddie of Lowell, Indiana. It is thought to have been written by either David or John Dinwiddie, who were cousins of Oscar Dinwiddie's father, John W. Dinwiddie. The copy was made by the Gary (Indiana) public library to which it was loaned for this purpose in January, 1923, and is one belonging to the State Library of Oregon, loaned to me by the librarian, Miss Cornelia Marvin. The diary has been edited by Miss Margaret Booth, graduate student in history at the State University of Montana, under the supervision of Professor Paul C. Phillips. The original diary contains entries for every day of the journey but there are so many repetitions of purely routine activities and weather conditions that only those entries have been selected which give a picturesque account of the country and which are necessary to make the route clear. The footnotes have purposely been made as brief and simple as possible. Spelling, save where confusion might arise, has been left as in the manuscript. Periods have been put in for ease of reading.

H. G. MERRIAM.

TRAVEL ON THE OREGON TRAIL

The Oregon Trail from Independence, Missouri, to Oregon City, covered a distance of approximately two thousand miles. Although it was the longest single road in history no conscious effort had been made to build it; it was developed by the travel of great numbers of fur traders, gold miners, and home seekers for whom it furnished the most natural highway to the Northwest.

The first frontiersmen to use the trail were the Astorians, who journeyed overland from St. Louis in 1810 in the services of John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company. Their route, both on the outgoing and return trips, corresponded in many sections to what later became definitely known as the Oregon Trail.

To the trappers and traders of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company is accredited the discovery of South Pass, probably in 1823, which became the greatest landmark on the trail. Situated at the edge of the plains it served as the definite entrance to the Oregon country. Between 1832 and 1836 Bonneville and Wyeth, as independent traders, made several journeys over parts of the trail.

It was not until the decline of the fur trade and the emigration of permanent settlers to the Northwest that the trail was used consistently and in its entire length. The dispute between Great Britain and the United States over the Northwest boundary gave rise to a rapid influx of immigrants between 1840 and 1846. The many wagon caravans moving to Oregon in those years wore the trail so deep that guides were no longer necessary, even through the more difficult sections. At this time numerous bypaths and cut-offs were made in an effort to shorten the journey. After the boundary question was settled travel over the trail was considerably slackened for a time, but in 1849 great numbers again passed over it as far as Fort Hull on their way to the gold fields of California.

Emigration over the trail reached its highest point in 1852, after the passage of the donation land law. No definite records of numbers have been kept, but in that year, the year before the present journal was written, they must have been well up into the thousands.

A number of journals of trips over the Oregon Trail have been published. The earliest one is that kept by Nathaniel J. Wyeth on his first and second expeditions to the Columbia in 1832 and 1834. John Wyeth, his nephew, who accompanied him on his first expedition, also kept a journal of the trip. John K. Townsend, a member of the second expedition, wrote his *Narrative of a Journey Across the Rocky Mountains* from daily notes made during the trip. This work, which appeared in 1839, was a valuable contribution to the knowledge of a trail still in its infancy.

Thomas J. Farnham kept an extensive record of his journey to Oregon in 1839. However, as his route was over the Santa Fe Trail as far as Fort Bent he did not strike the Oregon Trail until he reached Ham's Fork. Father de Smet followed the trail as far as Walla Walla in 1841 and in his *Letters and Sketches* has recorded interestingly his impressions, with especial reference to the manners and customs of the Indians.

Joseph Williams wrote a *Narrative of a Tour from the State of Indiana to Oregon Territory in the Years 1841-42*, which has only recently been published. It is brief but throws interesting light on conditions in the Northwest. The work which furnishes the best source for the conditions of the trail during the period of heavy emigration is Joel Palmer's *Journal of Travels over the Rocky Mountains*, in 1845. This is one of the very few which describes the trail in its entire length.

Some journals were written during the Californian gold rush by persons traveling along the Oregon Trail as far as the California Cut-offs, but there apparently are none excepting the Dinwiddie Journal written in these later years of emigration dealing with the trail to Oregon City.

MARGARET BOOTH.

Cost of the Trip [\$] 368.04

Traveling expences to the Mississippi....	69.95
Traveling expences to the Bluff City....	57.51
Other expences	14.85
Outfit at Bluff City.....	84.51
Ferriage across the Missouri River.....	24.60
Do—across the Elk Horn.....	12.00
Do—across the Loup fork of Platte.....	9.00
Bridge across the Sweet Water.....	6.00
Do—Green River	1.62
Bridge at Thomas fork Bear River.....	1.00
Bridge at port Neuff50
Ferry at port Neuff	2.00
Big Sandy, one hundred pounds of flour	10.00
At Owyhee one hundred and ten pounds	
of flour	22.00
One hundred pounds of flour at fall river	25.00
Ferriage across Fall Fiver.....	6.00
Box	10.00

[April, May. To and Across the Missouri]

[The party had left Porter County, Indiana, March 15th, 1853. Traveling overland they crossed the Mississippi at New Boston, Illinois, and continued almost directly west across the state of Iowa to the Missouri River.]

Sabath 1st of May, In the morning raining, but cleared off about nine o'clock, cool all day, passed a grove of young timber, the first passed for twenty five miles, then passed over a small stream with a house upon the bank of it, then passed over ary [?] rolling prairie to Nishonbotna river it is about five rods wide with swift current and stony bottom, it is on the head waters of it.

Monday 2nd, Ferried over our wagons, and drove our cattle through it, there is several small groves along the stream it being fifteen miles back to any timber that we passed, there are several families living along the stream, some of them farm considerable. Corn is selling for two dollars per bushel. This place is called Indian town by the Indians having a town there. In about half a mile crossed a small stream, passed over a small stream, passed over some high land part timber part prairie to another creek high banks and about one mile deep channel, bridged, then open prairie again, passed over

¹ This crossing was near the present city of Council Bluffs, Iowa.
² This river, flowing from the north, joins the Platte a few miles from its mouth.
³ Probably the writer now joins the completed family party.

a small creek in about seven miles bridged, came to timber in about nine miles, making sixteen miles between groves, a beautiful day but cool, the wind blowing from the north, grass very poor indeed for this time of spring, still traveling on a divide and good roads, the grove is called Mount Scott it is considerable of a grove but the timber poor, there are some fine farms about it, after passing it crossed a small stream and turned down it about half a mile and camped on account of so many camping along the road, had good grass, and a first rate place to camp . . .

Saturday 7th Started on went to the upper ferry road runs through among the bluffs, but a good road, Sabath, went on to the ferry, [of the Missouri River] the river bottom being about five miles wide, but the road good to the ferry, a commodious steamboat.

Monday 9th, Crossed the Missouri had to pay five dollars per wagon, and one yoke of oxen or pair of horses, and forty cents per head for all other stock, the river is narrow but runs very swift and is muddy,¹ after crossing traveled over very rolling prairie for some distance camped at Paped Creek it is narrow but deep with elm and buroak timber, a very narrow bridge over the river.

Tuesday 10th Traveled over rolling prairie to Elkhorn river,² a large bottom on the west side some eight miles wide, went up about four miles passed over some of the handsomest kinds of prairie and good soil, not much timber, passed some large new mounds, one quite high.

Wednesday 11th Crossed over early in the morning, ferried waggon and horses, waggon at three dollars each, horses at one dollar each, it is a narrow stream but deep and runs very swiftly, it is about ten rods wide, after crossing kept up the stream through the river flat, which is very wide, some eight or ten miles. Traveled up the stream some twelve miles all the way through flat bottom land, then turned off toward the Platte River. Still over flat land some five miles to a small grove where there was a large number of emigrants encamped, Wilsons and Dinwiddie³ was encamped here. Held a meeting and made arrangements for our journey across the plains of the west.

[May. In Nebraska]

Thursday 12 Started on our train consisting of eleven waggons and eighteen men and thirty two in all, traveled up the Platte bottoms all day not coming to the river, the bottom being some eight or ten miles wide, the flats are quite sandy and a good looking soil.

Friday 13th Started on crossed over a bad sleugh. Still traveling on the flats, about noon crossed a small creek, called Shell creek, it is a deep stream but has a bride over it, some timber along it, in the evening came to the Platte river, the Platte is a very fine stream with dry banks and rapid current. Camped on the bank of it at a small grove on an island. Saturday 14th Traveled over pretty much flats, some distance from the river. About noon had a most tremendous storm but not much rain, it lasted but a short time so bad, but the wind continued very high all after noon. Came to Loup fork about two o'clock. A great number of waggons waiting to cross [until] the wind would fall, as it was impossible to ferry the wind being so high. It was truly diverting to see the races after hats some times two or three going at once, some of them went for miles it being very level and they could be seen for a great way, quite a number lost their hats. Winds from the south continued to blow all night. The Loup fork is considerable of a stream, very quick sandy in the bottom and full of bars and holes, high banks on the east side and the west a flat bed of sand and deep.

Sabath 15th Ferried over on account of getting our turn, there being such a crowd of teams waiting to cross. They charged three dollars per waggon for ferrying across, and one dollar for each horse. The stream runs very rapidly (forded our stock across water not deep but hard crossing) very muddy with the sand washing. Travelled up through the west side through rather flat land, principally bottom, camped about forty rods from the stream, some four miles from the ferry saw some hundreds of Indians passing by going to hunt Buffalo. Quite a number, stopped at our camp they appeared very friendly, all begged something . . .

Tuesday 17th Camped without wood cut up

⁴ At this place the party came upon the regular Oregon Trail.

an ox yoke, made very good fire wood saw a herd of buffalo a great distance off.

Wednesday 18th Cold all day the wind blowing from the north. Still following up within a few miles of the stream. Some considerable of wet road and some sand bluffs. Could see the teams going up on the other side of the ford. Camped tonight without wood, but good grass but no scarcity of water, I assure you for the ground is thoroughly soaked. This day we passed eleven graves, but none of this years emigration.

Thursday 19th Fair, warm and pleasant. sun shineing brightly, passed over some eight or ten miles of sand bluffs, pretty good roads on account of so much rain, the sand being wet. Then passed over seven miles of flat land, the road soft, and some very bad places. Crossed creek it is some fifteen feet wide not very bad crossing, but middling deep. Crossed several buffalo roads, some of them have some twenty paths about two feet a part and pretty straight, they looked like old corn rows but not so wide, they being roads that they used to travel to water. Camped without wood, had to take a cold supper. Passed a newly dugged grave, the head board being marked W. W. Lane . . .

Friday 20th Started pretty early, in about three miles came to Prairie Creek, deep stream high banks, stopped and built a bridge across it, crossed over it first rate it being a first rate bridge. Passed on several miles and came to a small stream narrow but deep on account of the rains, raised our waggon boxes upon our feed boxes and crossed over. Camped.

Saturday 21st Passed on several miles and came to Wood river. Had to lash two of our waggon boxes together and ferry over, after stretching a rope across it, we tied a rope long enough to reach across the stream to each end of the boxes and pulled it back and forth, could take over a waggon load at a time and a waggon the next load, and soon encamped on the West bank . . .

Friday 27th Traveled over good roads, a great many teams crossing the platte at the upper end of Grand Island.⁴ Passed by a grave marked died 26 May, 1853 it is about one mile and a half wide but no[t] deep, some pretty land along here weather dull and

cloudy, camped on the platte near an island. Plenty of wood tonight . . .

Tuesday 31st Had a very hard storm this evening, with plenty of hail, some as large as hens eggs had hard work to keep our cattle and horses from running off the time of the storm (the wolves killed a cow not far from camp that had been left). Faired off about sunset I suppose for another storm

[June. Through Nebraska Into Wyoming]

Monday 6th [of June] About a miles travel brought us to crab creek, it is a very pretty stream runs rapidly and clear water, good crossing. After crossing had good roads to [till] we struck the bluffs, the land high and dry, from the bluffs on the right hand chimney rock may be seen past some very curiously formed bluff[s], nine miles from the creek brought us to a very curiously formed mound of clay, a singular place about one mile farther over clay bluffs brought us to the far famed Ancient Bluff Ruins. They are a very singular looking place they resemble ancient fortifications, castles, towers, etc., in ruins. Some of them looks magnificent and sublime. After passing by had very good roads, after coming some ten miles farther, camped on the bank of the river—a very fine day and beautiful night. Passed by a dog city, dogs and owls inhabit together, the dogs are a yellow color the owl is a small bird keeps near the holes.

Tuesday 7th Started about six o'clock had good roads past the court house rock⁵ a very singular looking place, it has the appearance of a splendid courthouse with a cupalo on it in the centre, and has a pillar not far off of the appearance of a light-house all standing on a nice elevated situation. After passing it a few miles camped nearly opposite to chimney rock,⁶ it is a singular looking structure, we passed by being some six or seven miles from it, it being on the south side of the river but by looking through a telescope it could be seen very

distinctly, it is a great mass of hard clayey substance, quite large at the base and narrows up to [till] it gets small, the chimney runs up from the centre like a light house in form to a considerable height which makes it look splendid, it appears to be decaying very fast as it is falling off in great scales, Ere long the great conical shaft will disappear from the gaze of man . . .

Wednesday 8th Camped near the river, opposite to a very high bluff, of very peculiar shape, one resembling a great block of buildings, one resembling the capitol at Washington, they are called capitol hills, or Scotts Bluffs from a company of trappers leaving a sick man by the name of Scott near these bluffs, a skeleton being afterward found among the bluffs they were called Scotts bluffs.⁷ Saw an antelope today, he ran swiftly. . . .

Friday 10th Passed by two trading posts one of them I suppose was of the British Nation by the red flag spread to the breeze the other was Indians of the Nesperse tribe trading among the Sues [Sioux] Tribe, the first Indians we had seen for upward of 400 miles, Sold them two of our cattle that had failed. . . .

Saturday 11th Had a fine day but warm. About 2 miles brought us to Raw hide creek, had very sandy roads for some distance. Passed by quite a number of Indian Wigwams, a number of children came out to the roadside. Passed a grocery and likewise a trading post. Camped about noon for to writ some letters and shoe our horses and some oxen. Grass poor along the river, took our cattle back among the bluffs. . . .

Sabath 12th A number of Indians came into camp today, they are a fine looking set of fellows, stout, robust, broadshouldered men, they are of the Sue tribe they appeared very friendly. . . .

Monday 13th Traveled over dry smooth roads very good, passed a number of Indian encampments. Passed about 2 miles from Laramie,⁸ some fine buildings situated on flat land, with high hills on each side. In

the forks of the stream after passing some distance passed an Indian town, about 100 tents, had a great many horses among them. Still keep up along the stream [which] runs very rapidly, and very muddy, Fine day, pleasant breeze, high broken bluffs on each side of the stream. About two o'clock left the river and took up among the black hills, they are a broken country. We traveled along the ravines principally. Camped among them. Had no water, pretty good grass, had a blow with hail and rain. The Indians had bright fires burning on the tops of several of the hills. . . .

Thursday 16th We have passed Laramie peak at last, something white on the top supposed to be snow, been one week in sight of it . . .

Friday 17th Passed among some very singular formed bluffs, grease wood begins to appear, it is a bush with very green leaves, and very thorny, wild Sage plenty, it is a scrubby dwarfy bush, somewhat resembling the common sage. Came to the river about noon, good roads all afternoon, crossed a small creek, and passed some most beautiful springs, water good, camped near the river, at the mouth of dry creek, drove our stock back among the bluffs . . .

Tuesday 21st Traveled up the river, passed the bridge,⁹ a great many teams crossing, after passing some distance had a long hill to ascend, very sandy and heavy. Came to the river kept up near it, four miles brought us to the upper ferry, after this the emigrants are all on the north side of the river. After passing a short distance there are forks in the road, we took the left hand road passed over some bluffs,¹⁰ but pretty good roads. Camped on the bank of the river, good grass on the bluffs, the river getting narrow.

Wednesday 22nd Left the river, for the last time, for we will see the Platte no more . . . Passed over a very barren country, crossed a small stream where we left the

river, very strongly impregnated with alkali, bad crossing. About six miles brought us to the Avanea rock a narrow defile through which the road passes, high ledges of rocks to the right. Two miles more brought us to Alkali Creek and springs, which are numerous, soft bottom, high bluffs on each side. Four miles brought us to clear spring creek a beautiful little stream, good water. Three miles brought us to Willow spring west of the road. Next we crossed prospect hill from which we had a fine view of the adjacent country, and the range of Sweet river mountains. Six miles from Willow spring brought us to Harper creek, south of the road, a beautiful stream of pure stream water . . .

Thursday 23rd Very frosty this morning and cold, about two miles brought us to the creek again south of the road, three miles brought us to greasewood creek a very handsome stream of good water. Six miles brought us to Saleratus lake,¹¹ around which are numerous alkali springs, water not fit for man or beast, here we begin to enter among the Sweet water mountains, here they are all sand. Four miles brought us to Sweet [water] river¹² and Independence rock¹³ which is a great curiosity on the north side of Sweet water, it is huge mass of granite some six or seven hundred yards long and one hundred to one hundred and fifty yards wide, it is entirely bare laying upon the top of the ground on level ground in the valley, it is a beautiful rock. Here we crossed on a bridge, paid two dollars per waggon and ran them over ourselves by hand, and swam our stock. Six miles brought us to Devil's gate—this is a curiosity worthy of the traveller's notice, the rocks are 400 feet high and perpendicular through which sweet water forces its way, it runs with velocity, close along side is a gap quite level through which the road passes, the mountains along here are solid rock and very high. In a short distance crossed a very pretty creek. The last ten miles before we reached the river was prin-

Crab Cr
Below
Broadwater
on high pt.

Court House
Rock
Chimney Rock

No hole
found for it

Bluffs

Trading Post

Rawhide
Cr

Trading Post

Sugar Egg

Av Rock

Sweet River

Bridge

⁹ Up to this time the road had been along the southern bank of the river.
¹⁰ Doubtless the Red Buttes.

¹¹ Sometimes known as Soda or as Alkali Lake.

¹² A branch of the North Platte which rises in the Wind River mountains. It was probably so named because it is the only stream for miles around which is not strongly alkaline. One story of its naming is that a pack mule, laden with sugar, was lost there by one of the early journeyers.

¹³ A famous landmark and camping place 838 miles from Independence. It received its name from a party of Americans who camped within its site on the fourth of July sometime before 1830. The word "Independence" is inscribed in prominent letters in the surface of the rock. Father de Smet called it "the great register of the desert" because of the many names of campers carved upon it.

Handing home
cipally heavy sand. Camped near the river, no timber and poor grass, beautiful day, and fine night, cool. Passed a trading post, a very fine hewed log house built in a square three sides being built. I would suppose it was 120 feet long and covered with ground, quite a number of french about here. . . .

As per
Pac Sp
Thursday 30th A very heavy frost this morning five miles brought us to Ford No. 9 Sweet water¹⁴ it is about three rods wide, two feet deep, clear water, swift current. After leaving here nothing but sand and sage, good roads, passed a number of snow banks, one mountain covered with snow off to the right of the road. Ten miles of gradual ascent brought us to the summit called the South Pass,¹⁵ a very handsome view of the mountains on each side, passed over the summit about two o'clock . . . the ridge between the waters of the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans, it is about latitude 42° 18' 50" Long. 108° 40' the precise summit is difficult to ascertain—three miles brought us to Pacific Springs good water, very swampy around them and along the stream. Two miles brought us to Pacific Creek crossing. . . .

[July. Over the Divide, Into Utah and Idaho]

Friday 1st July, cold this morning, rained some had very good roads today, the country is a perfect desert, nothing but sand and sage. Nine miles brought us to Dry Sandy Creek, water not good for stock. Six miles brought us to the Junction of the Great Salt Lake and Fort Hall roads, the left hand road leads to the city of the great salt lake; the right to Fort Hall and the Cut offs.¹⁶ Some fine prospects of the country, four miles farther brought us to Little Sandy creek. . . .

Sabbath 3rd Can see the Wind River range of mountains covered with snow as far as the eye can discern. Some French trading posts a short distance below where we are camped. Sold some powder for one dollar

¹⁴ This is the last crossing of the Sweetwater; the trail had taken the travelers almost to its source.

¹⁵ This famous pass, about 960 miles from Independence, marks the definite entrance to the Oregon country.

¹⁶ Sublette's Cut-off went almost directly west from Little Sandy creek to Bear river. The party did not take this cut-off, probably because of the long stretches without water. Instead they took the customary trail, which made a loop to the south with Fort Bridger as the southernmost point. They did not proceed as far as Fort Bridger, however, but followed up the valley of Ham's Fork of the Green River, in this way saving themselves about sixty miles.

per pound—they have some good horses, they have about one hundred. . . .

Monday 4th We are in the desert, but still our patriotic feelings remain and we feel as though we can spend our anniversary of the birth of our nation as well in feeling in the wilderness as in the city. . . .

Tuesday 5th Five miles farther over rough roads brought us to Green river, a very handsome stream. About one mile below where we first came to it is the ferry, we found ten boats there—the stream at the ferry is about one hundred yds across it, it has a very rapid current, it is some twelve or fifteen deep, and is a dangerous stream to cross. Ferried our waggons across at eight dollars per waggon and our horses at fifty cents each, had some trouble in swimming some of them, and had to ferry some of them at fifty cents each, left some on the east side all night, we arrived at the ferry in time to ferry over, having travelled over fifty miles in two days. . . .

Saturday 9th Beautiful morning, some Indians in camp a little after sunrise. Started, kept up near the mountain, in some two miles passed several great springs pouring out of the side of the mountain and rippling down the side of the mountain over the pebbles, forming a beautiful brook. About one mile farther brought us to the ford of Ham's fork of Green river, it is a beautiful stream, about five rods wide, two and one-half feet deep, clear water, swift current, good crossing. One mile brought us to the foot of the mountain, one of the Bear river Range, two miles brought us to the summit, it is a long tedious ascent, some places very steep, but generally smooth rout. After gaining the summit had good roads for some distance, some pine or spruce along the side of the mountains, snow banks around the mountains, begin to have some grass on them. . . .

Tuesday 12th We reached Thomas [or Thompson's] fork of Bear river, in about seventeen miles Smith's fork, the valley having fine grass and a quantity of blue flax,

high mountains rise on each side, some timber on the tops of them, Thomas fork has a good bridge across it, which we paid fifty cents per waggon, over 31,000 [sic] head of cattle, and 4 waggons. . . .

Friday 15th Fine pleasant morning, about five miles brought us to Black mud run, water not good, deep ravine, bad crossing, muddy in the bottom. Along here Horn's Guide says seventeen miles without good water, but along in several places the river is convenient for watering and camping. About eight miles over good roads brought us to the far famed Soda Springs,¹⁷ they are a curiosity worthy of the travellers notice, there are several large mounds made by the water encrusting and forming a substance similar to rock (at the spring is a blacksmith shop), there is a number of places where the water has ceased to flow, others boils to the top but does not run out, others are some two feet below the surface of the rock. The best spring for use is off to the right, about sixty rods from the road on the bank of a creek, it boils like a pot furiously, but does not rise to the top by about two feet, it is pretty good soda water. Some of them are clear water, others are a red colour, flowing within a few feet of each other. After leaving the springs we crossed a very pretty creek of clear looking water, but said in some of the guides to be poisonous water, here is a large cedar grove in the bottom of the creek and river. After crossing the creek we passed several trading establishments and a blacksmith shop, after passing some eighty rods is a great boiling soda spring a few feet from the edge of the water in Bear river. In a few rods we crossed small creek having a very rapid current, and some falls. Off to the left on a point projecting into the river is the famous Steamboat Spring so named from its resemblance to the escape pipe of a steam engine, discharging water in jets, this spring seems to be decreasing in volume; a few years ago, it is said to throw a column of water to the height of five or six feet, now it does not exceed two feet, near it is an aperture in the rock through which escapes a column of

gas. Six miles from Soda Springs brought us to the forks of the road, passed over some rocky road, here the left goes to California and the right to Oregon, they part in a pretty level place, the left is called Myer's cut off, we took the right for Oregon. After leaving the river at the point near the steamboat spring which one can see distinctly from the road, we found no good water for nine miles, the first water is not very good came to a small run crossing the road, camped about three miles before coming to the run, good grass all along here, no water.

Saturday 16th About three miles brought us to the run, about half a mile farther brought us to a beautiful spring to the left of the road, it sends a column of water forth, forming a fine stream, a good place to camp. Here we passed over a beautiful tract of country, good soil and grass but bearing the unmistakable evidence of having been a great volcanic region, several old craters is still to be seen, the rocks bearing the marks of fire, some of them perfect cinders, great ledges of rocks appear to have been bursted and blown asunder, by some mighty volcanic action, the traveller must be struck with admiration in passing through this part—about fourteen miles over good road up Port Neuff valley brought us to Port Neuff creek. . . .

Tuesday 19th Still kept down the stream, [Portneuf Creek] some six miles, and crossed, had good roads, after crossing had some twelve miles without water, it being a perfect sage plain, for a short distance after leaving the creek good grass. About twelve miles from the crossing brought us to Port Neuff River, it is a fine stream here we ferried over at one dollar per wagon and swam our cattle. . . . We left Fort Hall¹⁸ to the right eight miles, no travel through it on account of the high water washing the road away, the new road is a cut off and saves some fifteen miles. . . .

[July. Following the Snake River]

Thursday 21st About five miles brought us to the [Snake] river, here the banks are high and dry, and the current becomes rapid,

¹⁷ At the upper bend of Bear River. Also known as Bear Springs. Here the trail left the Bear River and struck off in a northwesterly direction into the valley of the Portneuf River, a water of the Columbia which joins the Snake River near Fort Hall.

¹⁸ Fort Hall was a Hudson's Bay Co. post on the Snake River. It had been built by Wyeth, an independent fur trader, as a supply station for emigrants in 1834, and was later sold to the British company. It had always been an important stopping-place on the Oregon Trail.

above this for a great ways it is a very sluggish stream, and has very low marshey flats along it, after a short distance it widens to quite a width, with a smooth surface, then it begins to narrow with high banks on each side, and in a few rods we came to the American falls, they are a very beautiful cascade and present to the eye a sight grand and sublime, the water falls in a few rods about forty feet, over rocks making a great noise. The falls on Snake river are named from the following melancholy incident: a party of American trappers, returning from the mountains in days long ago, a floating leisurely along in their canoes, were not aware of their proximity to the falls until they were within the eddies and whirlpools beyond recovery. All were carried over the precipice, and but one survived to tell the tale. . . .

Saturday 23rd Crossed this morning, it is about two rods wide, three feet deep, had to raise our wagon boxes. After crossing the road forks the left hand goes to northern California and southern Oregon, no travel upon it this season, we took the right. Fifteen miles brought us to Marsh creek, no water, for the last fifteen miles and very little grass, it being one extended sage plain, as far as eye could carry it was a leaden coulered sombre . . .

Sabath 24th Laying by, beautiful day, very rich bottom land along the stream, covered with wild rye, which the cattle and horses eat well, found blue goose berries, they are an excellent fruit, had preaching by the Reverend David Thompson had quite an audience to hear him . . .

Monday 25th Sage, Sage, nothing but Sage, seems one endless Sage plain, here we camped, poor grass myriads of grasshoppers, river a very handsome stream, very sandy bank . . .

Saturday 30th Crossed the creek [Warm Spring] near its junction, travelled near the river, along here a mighty rushing torrent. In two miles we passed a warm spring to the right of the road, before coming to it descended a very steep rocky hill, dangerous for waggons being broken. Three miles to Bannack Creek, a beautiful stream, about two rods wide, eighteen inches deep, clear

water, swift current, good crossing, after crossing passed a very high bluff of lava and cinder, a regular volcanic eruption. About three miles brought us opposite to the springs, they are a predigious body of water pouring from the rocks, from the hight of from fifty to three feet, and falls in the river below with a great noise, for about half a mile it is almost one entire sheet of water pouring from the rocks. A short distance farther down the river is a subterranean river rushing from the rocks, and dashing down into the waters below. Along here the surface of the river is smooth and placid. About four miles brought us to the Salmon falls, they are a great series of falls, the water descends about six hundred feet in about seven miles, it rushes over the rocks furiously, the salmon can ascend no higher and great numbers are caught by natives in the river below. Just above the first falls, the French, Creoles and Indians have a ferry, they charged four dollars per wagon for crossing, a great many emigrants were crossing and going down the north side of the river, grass is said to be better on the north side. We camped just below the first falls, found grass about two miles out among the mountains, it had been eat by the Indians' horses close by, we kept the south side, caught some fine salmon fish this evening. . . .

Wednesday 3rd [of August] About two miles brought us to where we left the river, here the river passes between high mountains, we turned to the left, passing round a high sand mountain, heavy sand roads, sand and sage, one endless looking sage plain. In five miles we reach the river again, here we camped, turned our stock across a branch of the river, onto a large island good grass but some alkali pools on it, had to guard our stock from them, pleasant day. Quite a number of Indians along here, a number of them camp, poor looking creatures, several entirely naked, excepting their clouts, the others having old cloths given to them by the emigrants, or thrown away by them . . .

Friday 5th Saw a great number of cattle lying dead along the road today, most certainly died from the effects of alkali that they got back on the river flats . . .

[Middle of August. In Oregon]

Tuesday 16th Staid in camp to about six o'clock in the evening, started on traveled sixteen miles in the night on account of having no water on the road, kept us to pretty near day break, good roads, but very dusty, very warm to day. Came to Malheur River, stopped till day light, near the stream . . .

Friday 19th Three miles to Snake River, here we stopped and grazed, here the River turnes to the right among high rough looking hills, and we bid farewell to Snake River as we see it no more.¹⁹ . . .

Sabath 21st Lay bye, beautiful day, a large flock of crows passed by the first we have seen since we came on the plains, ducks and other birds appear, which we have not seen for some two hundred miles back, saw no game since we came on Snake River . . .

Monday 22nd This morning left four oxen dead from the effects of eating a poisonous vine. Left the river, kept up a small creek about two miles, crossing six times, it runs down a narrow ravine, after leaving it passed over a high steep hill, in one mile came to a spring, to the left of the road, passed over another ridge, three miles over good roads brought us to a brook of fine water, following it down came to Burnt River again in two miles, followed up the valley three miles, the bottom is of considerable extent and well covered with grass. Passed the grave of one James D. Smith Died August 20th, from Warren County, Illinois. Turn to the right and bid farewell to Burnt River, and leave one of the most picturesque regions I ever beheld, that crystal stream meandering among high and rugged mountains. We followed up the creek about three miles and camped, had good road, plenty of fuel, water and grass, grass very dry . . .

Wednesday 24th Followed up the brook about one mile, then turned to the left up a ravine high bluffs on each side, gradual ascent to the top of the hill, then had hilly road for some distance. Came to a sage plain, very dusty roads, mountains to the left is covered with timber, high mountains

¹⁹ They left the Snake River a short distance above old Fort Boise, Idaho.

²⁰ The Nez Perces were the most advanced of any of the Northwestern tribes. Until the Nez Perce War of 1877 they were habitually friendly with the whites.

²¹ The Grande Ronde Valley played an important part in the history of the Northwest. In the fur-trading days it was a favorite rendezvous for the trappers, and during the days of early emigration it was important as a camping-place and as the point where the trail started over the Blue Mountains.

to the west, had some stony road. Came to a flat sage and greasewood plain traveled some two miles came to a ravine no water, came about two farther over flat land to a fine stream of water, by the left hand road after crossing the ravine. Camped on the bank good water. The valley is very large and covered with excellent grass of various varieties, clover is abundant, and a grass resembling timothy, good place to camp, on the south west the blue mountains rise in majestic splendor, they are covered with timber, some snow on the tops of them . . .

[Nez Perces Indians]

Friday 26th Passed over a very stony mountain. Five miles brought us to the brow of the mountain here we had a long steep and very rocky descent, the worst we have had, to Grande Ronde Valley one mile. Turned down the stream about one mile and camped at a little grove, where some Indian families reside, they were very friendly and were gratified to have us to camp there, they can talk English well. A number of Indians in the valley trading, have a large number of fine horses and cattle to trade they are fine smart looking Indians, they are of the Nez Perces (Pierced Noses) Indians,²⁰ the valley is about 20 or 25 miles in extent, high mountains enclose it on every side, through the middle of the valley flows Grande Ronde River, from South west to North west. Its banks lined with cottonwood, balm of gilead, elder, cherry and willow, many spring brooks coming down from the mountain several small creeks course through it and empty themselves into the river their courses marked frequent clumps of green trees, part of the mountains covered with dark forests. Verily this is a place to please the eye of a farmer the soil is of an excellent quality, producing an abundant crop of grass of different varieties, among the rest I noticed clover, a species of timothy, bunch grass, and flax, the valley contains an area of about four or five hundred square miles of tillable land, and will one day contain a heavy population.²¹ Timber may be procured from

the mountains with little trouble, the valley belongs to the Nez Percés Indians, their country extends north to the Columbia River, on that River they principally reside.

Saturday 27th Traveled across the valley and camped at the foot of the mountain, the mountain here is covered with pine timber, it is eight miles across it, here is a small creek—here was several hundred Indians [Nez Percés] that came in for the purpose of trading, they had a great many fine horses to sell, they had Potatoes, peas and some apples to trade but asked high prices for them, these Indians have made considerable advance toward civilization, and seem anxious to learn the customs and manners of the whites.

Monday 29th Ascended the mountain which was long and steep, some places rocky, passed through fine pine timber. Near the top of the first mountain passed a grave of a man that was found murdered on the 27th August, he had been shot near the right eye the ball coming out of the back of the head—by the description given on a paper put upon a tree, it is supposed that he was coming from Oregon to meet some of his friends. His horse was found about three hundred yards from where he was lying. After passing the summit descended into a valley had a steep descent, passed over a ravine and then ascended a very steep hard mountain, it is covered with large lofty pines . . .

Tuesday 30th This morning after crossing the stream ascended a long and tedious ascent, we now traveled alternately through pine groves and over rocky ridges. After coming about eight or nine miles ascended a very steep ascent, we are now upon the main ridge of the blue mountains, Altitude 5400 feet, I presume these mountains take their name from their dark blue appearance being densely timbered with pine timber, which being ever green gives the forest a sombre appearance, besides the limbs of the trees are all draped with long festoons of dark coloured moss or mistletoe. Fire on some of the mountains. We have a rough road today, about eleven miles from the river. There is water to the left of the road, the water is reached by following down a

ravine to the left one fourth of a mile, at the place, is a low rocky ridge on the right of the road, on the left is a small opening. About nine miles brought us what is called Lees encampment, the Rev. Jason Lee after spending some time as a missionary in Oregon, started for the states but was detained some time by some accident which I cannot relate²² . . .

[September. To the Columbia]

Thursday 1st of September In about half a mile we passed a small grove where there is some fine springs, here the road forks we took the left a new one, the right hand one leads to Umatilla river and then up it, the road to Walla Walla crosses the river here. We traveled over a beautiful valley of land, in about four miles we came to the junction with the river road. Crossed a small stream about one mile after starting, kept down near the river about four miles farther and then left the stream by turning to the left up a ravine, easy ascent, crossed some high land, came to the river again in three miles, where we crossed. In about two miles we camped, found grass on the bluffs. Had fine roads today, the very best kind, the valley along the River is a beautiful tract of country, but timber some distance off, some timber along the stream, but of a poor quality. Saw a great many Indians today, they all appear on horseback, are very friendly, and carry no arms with them they are of the Cayuse tribe great many of them talk English well. They have potatoes, peas, water melons to trade . . .

Friday 2nd Passed over a ridge of high land, then down the bottom to the crossing of the Umatilla, the river has a large channel here but the water all sinks, and we crossed on a bed of gravel and pebble stones, for which the stream is famous all along. On the west bank is the United States Agency,²³ a very neat looking frame house painted white, it looked cheering, as we had not seen a frame house since we left Fort Laramie. There had passed the agency up to this morning of emigrants three thousand six hundred, of waggons seven hundred and eighty, and of stock ten thousand three hundred.

Here we leave the Umatilla and strike out on one seeming endless prairie as there is no timber of any kind to be seen in any direction, prairie rolling, soil sand, roads good, plenty of grass along the road . . .

Sabbath 4th Mount Hood and Mt. St. Helen appear in the distance in the western horizon in magnificent splendor, their snowy tops reaching to appearance the skies, they are distant about one hundred and fifty miles, they appear but a short distance off . . .

Tuesday 6th Left the valley, started up a ravine, in about one mile came to the summit had an easy ascent, about one mile farther brought us to the junction of the roads. Traveled over very rolling broken and barren prairie, very little grass, about twelve miles over hilly, but good roads brought us to a valley. Here was water standing in pools, a heavy rain having fallen recently. Followed down the valley about six miles to the forks of the road, the right hand road leads to a spring at the foot of the bluff about half a mile off, here the road forks again, the right leads over the bluffs to John Days River,²⁴ six miles—the left hand road runs down the valley and joins the other road in a short distance. We took the left hand road followed down the valley and two miles from the forks of the road to Rock Creek, and camped . . .

Friday 9th Started up a ravine, had long ascent traveled over very rolling prairie, to the Columbia River which we reached in about four miles, the land along the River is of first rate soil producing a heavy herbage, the Columbia is a noble stream, walled in by lofty escarpments of black volcanic rocks. The road then follows down the river to the crossing of the Deshutes river, three miles, the road some sandy. Reached Deshutes or Fall River about ten o'clock, here is two new hewed log houses with shingled roofs. Kept us to pretty nigh sunset to get ferried over, some fifteen teams in before us, paid three dollars per waggon for crossing. Camped on the west bank, had waggons that had been left for fire wood, found grass on the mountain about one mile off—Deshutes or Fall River is a very rapid stream, ferry just below the falls, the river is about one

hundred and fifty yards wide. Forded our horses and cattle some distance below the ferry, water not very deep, but swift . . .

Saturday 10th We leave the Columbia, considerable of a water fall here.²⁵ . . .

[The Great Snow Peaks of Oregon]

Tuesday 13th Had another hill to ascend from the valley then had pretty good roads to another creek six miles. Here is a fine little stream good grass, here we camped. To day dull and smoky, could not get a view of the mountain scenery as the country ahead appears to be covered with a dense forest, in the evening got a view of Mount Hood, but was soon obscured by clouds again . . .

Wednesday 14th Still very dull looking this morning, Mount Hood still obscured by stormy looking clouds. In the afternoon commenced raining, rained slowly but steadily, mild temperature, still in camp, a great number of emigrants coming up. Rained considerable through the night.

Saturday 17th Still cloudy and looks very rainy like, still very stormy looking in the mountains, about noon the black clouds began to roll off—in the evening it cleared off, beautiful night, Mount Hood appeared by moonlight distinctly.

Sabbath 18th Beautiful clear morning sun shines upon the mountains this morning presenting a beautiful appearance, Mount Hood presents a splendid appearance, being luminous with new fallen snow, Mount Jefferson to the south and Mount St. Helen and Mount Ranier to the north, of the four snowy peaks it is said that neither of them has been ascended to the summit by man, the two last named are volcanic mountains, the last eruption was in Mount Ranier in 1840 by which the entire top was blown off and the ashes and cinders scattered over the country, had a fine view of the mountains, they are covered with a dense forest. Raised camp, descended a rocky hill to the creek and then ascended another as rocky, had good roads but some rocky to a small creek three miles and Barlow's gate, here we camped as there is no grass farther on, took our stock about one

²² Jason and Daniel Lee established what was the first mission (Methodist) in the Northwest in the Willamette Valley, 1834.

²³ Located where the trail turns toward the John Day River. Sometimes known as Fort Henrietta.

²⁴ Named for John Day, one of the Astorians.

²⁵ Near The Dalles of the Columbia the trail turns to the south and around Mount Hood to Oregon City.

and a half miles south to grass. A handsome little valley along the stream, covered with large trees.

Monday 19th Commenced the ascent of the long dreaded Cascade Range passed over pretty fair road to rock creek here we found dreadful rocky crossing exceeding any place for roughness that we had seen or crossed. After traveling some distance had to descend a dreadful hill to the sandy Deshutes. Passed through a dense forest of large and exceedingly tall timber, of different varieties, it consisted of white, yellow and pitch pine, spruce, balsam, hemlock, fir, cedar, etc. with an undergrowth of vine maple, alder, and laurel. Crossing the sandy fork of Deshutes the road leads up the valley, crossing it some eleven times before reaching the summit, had good road some eight or nine miles after crossing the first time. Camped about six after crossing it the first time, had alder brush for our stock . . .

Wednesday 21st Had muddy road for some distance came to the first part of Laurel hill here we let part of our waggon down with ropes snubbing around trees and stumps, a large pile of timber at the foot having been drawn down behind waggons. About one mile farther brought us to the second part of Laurel hill, here is some going down hill, a very steep and rocky ascent broke a wagon tongue which made us late, had to leave four of our waggons on the side of the mountain till morning fastening

with ropes to trees. Along here is very large and lofty timber . . .

Saturday 24th Still wet this morning. Twelve of our cattle gone this morning hunted till about noon, when he concluded it was better for the train to go on through leaving one waggon and four men to hunt up the cattle. Now came the tug through among brush and briers, water and mud, over mountains and almost everywhere. This evening found seven about dark and got them to camp . . .

Wednesday 28th Started about noon, traveled through timber part of the time and part through openings crossing several fine small streams, road hilly. Came to Clackamas river²⁶ it is a most beautiful stream, clear as crystal, swift current, stony bottom, dry banks. Came some three miles and camped . . .

Thursday 29th Traveled over a broken country part timber and the rest openings, some hard hills to ascend, camped at a small creek.

Friday 30th Traveled over rolling country to small creek here is a fine bottom about two miles farther brought us to Molalley River, it is a fine stream of beautiful clear water, after crossing it some distance camped on the prairie, here is fine grass.

Saturday 1st day of October, the train started on for Linn Country, the writer remained herding cattle on the prairie, to recruit them some before driving them any farther.

²⁶ Rising in the Cascades, the Clackamas River flows northwest and into the Willamette. At the junction of the two Oregon City was located.