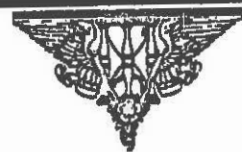


Pioneering  
on  
The Plains

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Journey To Mexico  
in 1848

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The Overland Trip  
to California

Printed Not Published

## Preface

In explanation it should be mentioned that the following letters and diary were with few exceptions written by four brothers, Alexander, William, John and Samuel F. McCoy. Alexander was a civil engineer, John was a merchant and Santa Fe trader settling with an older brother William in Independence, Mo., in 1836, and Samuel was a lawyer and the youngest of three brothers.

By a fortunate accident the letters written by John A. Johnson to his wife from Independence and the gold mines of California were given the editor of this Journal by Mr. Johnson's son, Eben N. Johnson of Appleton, who kindly consented to their incorporation in this record. John A. Johnson was also a young lawyer from Ohio who went to California in quest of gold and health, he being threatened with consumption.

The record was submitted to the late Reuben G. Thwaites of the Wisconsin Historical Society who stated that the record was an invaluable account of overland travel and advised its publication.

This advice from a historian of Mr. Thwaites' reputation is largely responsible for the printing, not publication, of this account in the limited form of a pamphlet.

It is believed that the self revelations which the letters and diary contain go far toward refuting the too prevalent notion that the Argonauts of '49 were godless, irreligious or immoral.

With the writers frankly unafraid to show their principles and inmost convictions in this manner it is evident that there was about them, even on the western plains, a strong Christian atmosphere.



merchand'st Mexico, he in company with a few other traders eluded the soldiers and escaped across the Mexican border.

When Doniphan some time later captured Chihuahua McGoffin was carried as a prisoner to Durango by the defeated Mexican governor but eventually was released.

His long residence in the country made him thoroughly familiar with Mexican modes of procedure and enabled him to be of immense assistance to all Americans caught in a tangle similar to ours.

## Preparation for The Overland Journey to California in 1849

Cincinnati, Ohio  
9 P. M.

We are yet at Cincinnati having been detained to get up a part of our outfit, and having been detained till Saturday, we thought we would remain over the Sabbath. All of us but Sharp and Caldwell will leave for St. Louis on Monday on the steamer "The Belle of the West". Sharp and Caldwell will follow about Wednesday or Thursday with our wagons, tents, harness, etc. As Frank will not start till tomorrow I embrace the present opportunity of adding another word to the hasty communication placed in his hands the other evening.

I have taken a great deal of pains to get up something to send you and the children as mementoes, not of one that never expects to see you again but of one who anticipates a long separation from those he most dearly loves, his wife and children. I hope, nay, I know, they will be acceptable—particularly yours. Yesterday we had our Daguerrotypes taken at \$1.50 to send back to our wives. I had mine taken first for you in plain duds and then for Sarah in full California rig at her request. My first likeness was not very good but my last one, for Sarah, was pronounced the prettiest and most perfect, all things considered, of the whole. I was not satisfied that Sarah's should take the premium so I had mine taken over again which is pronounced to be a very good likeness. This I had framed and handed to Frank. Still every one of the Company and others seemed most to admire Sarah's. This morning I slipped off to the Daguerrotype Gallery and had my likeness taken and set in the Gold Breast-Pin sent you. In thinking it over I remembered that you had often said you would like my miniature in a Breast-Pin. The pin cost me \$4.00 including the miniature but this I do not gudge and should not if it was \$20, although everything is high and we have no more money than is barely sufficient. When I returned my miniature in pin was greatly admired and pronounced the best of my likenesses and the most appropriate. Boren and Smith went immediately and got each a pin in miniature exactly like mine. But I know it is not necessary for me to send you presents to ensure an affectionate remembrance but it does me good to thus give expression to the indelible love we mutually bear each other. I send Lucy one book and mark and our love and two primers to Theodore.

Give my love to the children and write me at Independence, Missouri.

P. S.—I got me a new revolving pistol that will shoot six times in ten seconds and knife and dirk and hatchet. Sarah's likeness shows all except the hatchet and that does not show very plain as it does not hang so as to show it plain.

St. Louis, Mo.  
March 16, 1849

We have just arrived at St. Louis and amid the hurry and the bustle of a large town and a busy day with us I take time simply to inform you of our safe arrival at this point in good health. We shall be able to get all we want here but at higher rates generally than was anticipated. I can-



not take time to write you at length. Tomorrow we take a boat for Independence and will purchase our mules on the way up. After our arrival at Independence I will have more leisure and then will embrace the first opportunity of writing you at length, giving you a little history of our journey and country so far, incidents, thoughts, feelings, etc., etc.

Do not fail to write me at Independence, Missouri, immediately and at least twice, as directed before; as we shall probably not leave that place before the 25th of April. It seems as if there was a long absence before us and my heart feels for you; but bear up under it with a noble spirit and our meeting will be the more happy—probably the happiest hour of our lives. For although we thought nothing could excel our first love and early attachment yet with me as time passes it seems as it was to learn more and more truly to love and value each other's happiness. And a separation like the present is calculated to call out every dormant feeling and exhibit it in its true colors. Love to the children and all.

Independence  
Missouri  
March 23rd, 1849

My Dear Wife:

I am now on the extreme frontier of the United States being only 12 miles from the Indian Territory. We arrived here safely on yesterday. And I now embrace the first opportunity to inform you of our safe arrival. We are now at the last and only turning point in our journey; when the fainthearted and doubting can turn back if they choose; but this line passed the only course is onward to the end. But we have none such in our Company that we know of. If Sharp and Caldwell come up with our wagons from Cincinnati as is expected daily, we shall be in full force.

We had to run the gauntlet in reaching this place, as there was cholera in St. Louis at the time and on the Ohio River we passed one boat at Cairo (where Samuel wished us to write) that had one dead of cholera on board. Our boats stopped at the same landing and we spoke from deck to deck; but we are now entirely out of reach in a very healthy and beautiful town. We are boarding this week in a private family at \$2.25 per week for one week, when we intend camping out until it will be safe to start out on our journey, which will not be before one month from this time and perhaps six weeks. This seems like a long time but we shall occupy the time very profitably in buying up and training our teams and accustoming ourselves to camping out. We now sleep on the floor with nothing but our blankets, all in one room.

We now think of going with oxen instead of mules as they are much better liked here than mules for that purpose; for several reasons, the principal of which are that there is not so much danger of oxen running away and the Indians will not steal them as they care nothing for an ox but they will steal a mule wherever they can catch him. Oxen will probably require some fifteen days more on the road but what is that compared with the safety of an oxteam? It is not regarded as anything here. In fact it is going to be a longer journey any way we can fix it than we anticipated before we left. You know we talked of sixty days but that we find is on packed mules and that with very good luck, while with wagons it will require with mules or oxen from 90 to 120 days. But we have no thoughts of going with pack-mules, as with wagons we can carry provisions for nine months and can sleep in our wagons in rough weather. There are not more than 300 Californians here yet and they are nearly all camped out from 2 to 8 miles from town. We were greatly surprised to find William Pettibone and his Sandusky Company here, camping out about 8 miles from town. They had changed their minds and concluded to take the South Pass route with the rest of us. There are a great many going from Missouri, mostly with oxen. How many will go to California in all cannot yet be known, but it will be large. There

will be plenty of company over and little or no danger is anticipated except in the giving out of teams and here is another great reason with us for taking oxen.—Oxen will perform the journey but nearly all the American mules in Missouri are 3 years old and under and are not regarded as safe for the journey; and many of the Spanish mules (the only other kind, being such as are got from Mexico in the Santa Fe trade), are broken down with previous hard service, and hence are not fit for such a trip. And many of the inexperienced and thoughtless have come in and hastily bought up mule-teams, composed to a greater or less extent of such mules. And the only suffering anticipated is from this source.

I find that the mails are very irregular between this place and Lower Sandusky; sometimes taking a month or more to get a letter from one place to the other, owing to bad roads and other irregularities. From this you will see that although we shall be here some four or six weeks I am not certain as I shall get one word in answer to this letter until I reach California. My only hope is that you will faithfully observe my request made in my letter from Cincinnati in which I shall hear from you at least twice before I leave Independence. It seems hard that we cannot have the comparatively poor consolation of holding sweet converse together on paper while I seem yet to be as it were within speaking distance. But if this be hard what will it be when we shall have left the frontier; after which unless we meet some returning trains or special mail (as there is a probability that we shall) you will not hear from me for 5 or 6 months. But that shall not hinder but rather stimulate me in talking to you from Independence often, freely and at length as long as I remain and if I have not the pleasure of your reply I shall at least have the satisfaction, great to me, of knowing that I am thereby ministering to your comfort. I hope that in return you will think of me and the extreme gratification it will afford me to find on my arrival in California about 12 letters from you in answer to this and others I shall write, written regularly half monthly by which I can sit down and read up the news—regularly from week to week, from the time I left and recorded at the time,—and not so much the news as your thoughts and feelings thus communicated to one I know to be the only object of earthly solicitude to you. If I find this I shall be more than compensated for all I am now doing and shall do for you before leaving.

I feel more than ever, now that we are separated for so long a time that you and the children are all that I do or can love in this world or was made or intended to be loved by me. The love of other kindred in comparison with this sinks into insignificance, nay, is forgotten. I can only remember you. I have no care or anxious thought for others and I feel that you look upon me in the same light. My time and energies shall all be devoted to the advancement of your temporal and spiritual interests. And if I thought I was endangering our interests in a hazardous enterprise I should even now turn back from it. But as we expressed to each other our views and feelings the Sabbath evening before we left; so it seems to me now; that if God did not approve my course and desires He would not in His providence, seemingly, so have favored me in all my plans look-to and embracing the object of my present pursuit. Oh, let us more heartily commit all our ways into His hands and let it be our great object to become more subservient to His Will. I feel afraid sometimes that my affections are placed too strongly on you to be pleasing in the sight of a jealous God. But then I think He has placed these emotions in our breasts and has intimated that for the sake of his wife a man is justified in leaving his Father and Mother, etc. I have and do now often think of what has passed between us and the feelings you manifested in speaking of or alluding to a subject, (not necessary here



to mention), which had the effect to fix more firmly in your mind than ever that it was to me you could only look for real friendship and support. We will then continue to cherish unrestrained that ardent feeling of attachment to each other, which originally springing up involuntarily in our hearts has at length ripened into a plant of such vigorous growth. And while we are providentially called upon to submit to a temporary separation, let us do so cheerfully, looking forward to the time when we shall God willing, be permitted to meet again. I cannot write you as freely, as familiarly a letter as this to be submitted to the inspection of any other person. And in most of my letters I would like and shall say some things suited only to your ears and for this reason and as I cannot write as often to Father or Mother or Sarah or other friends, I want you to so inform them and at my request to mark and read to them such portions of my letters as are of general interest and such as you see proper. Tell them this that I may be excused from unnecessary labor and expense.

I have so far seen no place in which I would locate. I have seen many pleasant locations but for me they do not possess the requisite qualifications,—a temperature best adapted to weak lungs. A climate of this kind I think it is my duty to find as I have broken up my business (and residence I might say) in Lower Sandusky. This upper and western part of Missouri is very beautiful and a very rich country. But the curse of Slavery is upon it and as I said, is in other respects not the best adapted to my health. And as we shall leave Lower Sandusky it will make no difference where or how far we go. The difficulty is in giving up what has been to us a home and friends but this accomplished it makes little difference, so far as distance is concerned where we select a new home and form or make new friends. Let us only think of the many years' happiness we may yet be permitted to spend in each other's society, provided the right location is obtained. Can we not be happy together in California or any other country that will afford me a greater number of years or days than any other, all other things being sufficiently adapted. I think we can.

I want you to live as economically as possible until you see how I succeed. For if I should fail in realizing anything in California, which is certainly possible, however improbable, we would need everything that would be left to effect our removal elsewhere. The more I think of it the more I am satisfied that I did right in selling our farm. And it seems to me that Providence has at least designed to afford us the opportunity of getting out of L. Sandusky.

I want you to be particular in writing,—as to yourself, the children Father and Mother—your removal to Belleville and how you are suited there, how you get along in every respect, etc., etc. If you get this in time to answer me here by the 25th of April (by which time we shall probably leave) do so; but that I may be sure to get the substance of the same only repeat the essential part in your first letter addressed to me at San Francisco. Tell Lucy and Theodore that although a great way off their Papa thinks of them every day and wonders if they are good children and mind what their Mama tells them. Kiss Eben and the baby for me. I know not whether to call him Samuel or not. When you write tell me what you think of my likeness sent you and Sarah.

It is almost useless to write. I cannot say what I feel or write as I would speak if present, so much that all I have now written seems entirely inadequate to communicate to your mind a fair expression of my feelings; and yet I would on no consideration forego this imperfect mode of communing with you. You may readily supply what is missing and take a part for the whole.

If you should hear of the loss by Fremont of all his men in crossing

the mountains for California be not alarmed. He determined to cross in mid-winter and by an entirely new track and the snow six feet deep, withal, the severity of last winter's cold weather overtook them in the mountains and some half of his men perished after wandering about some time. Fremont is a bold and daring adventurer and undertaking such an expedition in the dead of winter was at that time regarded as hazardous in the extreme.

I must again, before I close, ask you to be faithful in writing me regularly according to my request. You can find time to do it if you think so and are determined to do it. If no other time offers, write when all others have gone to bed. Why, if you feel as anxious about it as I do you would sit up 2-3 of the night every two weeks. I promise myself you will be the most punctual of any of our wives. You need give yourself no fears but that I shall write often enough.

How does Mary take and how does she get along at home? Tell me how you and Mother get along and when they leave for home; I have little doubt but what we shall have opportunity of writing back to the States while on our way out, as we shall certainly meet some one coming back; and there will be some mail arrangements, probably.

You will see by the time it is going to take us that you will not hear from me from California for a month or two longer than we anticipated but we shall not be so soon gone. So that you will hear from me often from Independence. This letter goes out by Tuesday's mail, (March 27th) —I must take my leave. Goodbye,

My Dear Almira:

I cannot forbear embracing the quiet of the Sabbath afternoon to send you a few lines. You will see by the date and caption that we are still in Independence. Yesterday afternoon we moved two miles out of town and commenced camping out, taking with us some ham, hard bread, coffee, sugar, pepper and salt. Last night we lay in our tents for the first time. I experienced no injury, not the least. I took no cold and I feel every way very well except the richness of the food creates a little nausea at the stomach, but I will soon overcome that. We have had very favorable weather ever since we arrived and if the present prospect continues we may be able to start by the 15th of this month. We gave up the idea of buying oxen on more mature deliberation and we have now purchased the very best mules the country can afford, taking such as are well broken and gentle and of sufficient age to stand the journey and none others. We had to pay more for such mules but we thought it was poor economy to start such a journey with cheap mules. Every one admits our mules to be among the best and if any mules stand it ours will.

I am very sorry to find letters so long in reaching this place from Lower Sandusky, 15 days, one just received. I fear I shall have to leave Independence without hearing from you more than once and that a short letter, perhaps promising a longer one the next time, while I shall have to travel over the plains and mountains three months, hoping to find the longer letter when I reach California. I hope this may not be so, as I am sure it would be if you knew how much I desire to hear from you.

But as I said before, I shall do my part, trusting that you will do yours. I am satisfied that the journey is not going to be as unpleasant as I at first supposed.

This town is full of men who have been on and to Santa Fe repeatedly and they like it and seem to regard it as pleasure excursion. We shall not be as long with the mules as we would have been with oxen. This you will like better, I think.

Our Company are all well. In writing to me always mention the

Independence  
Missouri  
Two miles out  
Encamped  
April 1st, 1849



health of all the other members of our company's families,—or any other items that would be of interest to any member of the Company, as far as you can. We have all agreed to do this; so that when one receives a letter all to a certain extent will hear from home. And this will sometimes be of great advantage as some letters may miscarry or be delayed, while among us all we shall be receiving letters constantly. You need not think of answering this letter to Independence, as I shall in all probability be gone before your reply could reach me.

It would no doubt be interesting to hear how we manage matters in camp, as to cooking, etc., but I cannot take up room or time to go into that now. We have got us a light sheet iron stove that will boil pot victuals, fry meat, boil coffee, and bake a loaf of bread or pan of biscuit. All of us seem to understand cooking as well as our wives and all are anxious to try their hands. We have on the whole a very pleasant company and nothing has occurred so far to mar our harmony and I presume nothing will. Many jolly companies are here camping out all around the town, waiting for grass, and when we go we shall have plenty of company. Let all the family who wish read this letter. Give my respects to friends and love to the children and self. I shall write you once or twice more before leaving this place.

Independence  
Missouri  
April 8th, 1849  
My Dear Wife:

I received yours of the 15th ult on last Wednesday (4th inst.) and right glad was I to hear from you. We all, except Tyler and Stuber, received our first letters and first intelligence from home, by the same mail, having been just a month from home. We had pleasant times in the camp the rest of that day. I was glad to see your sheet filled (and how could you stop short of that), and you seem to think you have given me a long letter but I guess when you receive my letter of the 25 ult. of eight pages you will no longer boast of a letter of three pages, although that passed for a pretty long letter and was very refreshing to my spirits. If you can scarcely wait one week for a letter from me, how do you suppose I can wait patiently two weeks for a letter from you and the children? Unless you suppose I care less about home and think less of them than you do of me. But this you do not think. Then let me hear from you regularly every two weeks while I am gone and oftener when anything special of interest to me occurs. When I get to California I shall be from one to two hundred miles from the Post Office and shall have to go or send at great expense for my letters; and to be disappointed at such times would be too bad; bear this in mind and always have a letter at San Francisco for me when I go or send. I told our Company I should get a letter from you at Independence on the 5th inst. I got it on the 4th. May it always be one day in advance. I like the tone and spirit of your letter. I can heartily sympathize with you in the feelings you experienced following my departure and with you anxiously look forward to that most joyous day, the hour of our meeting, the Lord willing.

We have now been in camp eight days and I have not felt more hearty or better for two years past than I do now. I have not taken or had the least symptoms of cold in that time and the sickly feeling the first day produced by so free a use of meat has entirely left me. I was some annoyed by a cold about two weeks after I left home; that has now entirely left me and I expect no more danger from camping out. We had one night that was a pretty good test,—warm in the evening, rained and blew hard all night and turned cold with a little snow towards morning.

There are now 1100 Californians in Independence, 700 of whom are camping like ourselves and there are 600 at St. Joseph, a place about 75 miles above this, and this number will probably be doubled by others who

Independence  
April 15, 1849

are yet to arrive and then a good many will go from different parts of Missouri. But if recent accounts from the mines can be relied on there is enough for us all. We have just received news that Gold has been discovered more abundant still and silver still more abundant.

But you may safely dismiss all fears as to my ability to stand the journey. I can sleep soundly all night and get a good night's rest and I feel well and active and am increasing in strength every day. We have very fine camping ground within 10 to 15 rods of a good spring of water and 1 and ½ miles from town. Some of us are in town every day. We have purchased meat for our outfit, consisting in part of 750 pounds of side meat smoked, 1000 lbs. navy (hard) bread, 600 lbs. flour, 200 lbs. coffee, 100 lbs. rice, 360 of sugar, 8 bushels dried apples and peaches in equal proportions, 12 lbs. tea, salt, pepper, etc., etc.; well supplied for nine months after we leave Independence. And we have heard from Glenn and he has shipped a large quantity of tools and iron for mining purposes. The Company are all well and have answered their letters. I intended to have got weighed before I wrote you again and let you know if there was any difference. I will do so however before I leave. I imagine I have increased in weight and they say I look much improved in appearance as to health. I shall take every pains you may be sure in making myself comfortable and safe for this journey. The weather is very favorable and if it continues we shall not be here more than a week or two longer. I will write you again before leaving. Everything goes on harmoniously in Camp. Stuber is a very acceptable member of our Company and so is George Tyler. By Stuber I learn that Phillip spent his nights at his grocery in political discussion but never drank a drop or spent any money. He says he and Dr. Castletown would talk till a late hour and he had often to send them off that he might get to bed. This makes me think more of Phillip. Stuber thinks Phillip will get married before long.

I think you had better go and see your friends as often as you can so as not to seem to be much regardless of home. I think you will feel better and the time will pass more pleasantly away.

As to our returning little is or can be known at present. We shall be controlled by circumstances, however we may have talked at home, Smith and Boren included. I shall try and do what is for the best.

As to the robbery or theft in Cincinnati;—while we were all out of our room witnessing the departure of a boat, some one broke open Stevenson's trunk, found no money and took nothing, and then broke open Gallagher's and took \$60. No clue to the theft. The landlord made up \$15 and Gallagher lost \$45. There were no other losses of moment. I have only room to subscribe myself.

My love to yourself doubled, trebled, shaken down and running over and with this sentiment I will begin and end all my letters, as well as my life.

Fidelity to each other everywhere and under all circumstances. Always write me long letters; write regularly. Write particulars; do not be afraid to speak the language of the heart. Write so long as there is a nook or corner to stick in a word. Tell me where you trade.

Yours of the 28th ult. received three days ago. I was glad to hear from you so soon again. I am only sorry now that I did not tell you to write me weekly until I left this place, as I should in that case have received word from home oftener. I am glad you anticipated your time and the hope that you will do so again is my only encouragement to look for an answer to my St. Louis letter. I now begin to think I may possibly get your answer to my first letter from Independence written March 25th. From a note from Mr. Stark on the back of your last letter I am led to



believe that my St. Louis letter was received at his office at the time he mailed you last. Mr. Smith has just received his wife's answer to his St. Louis letter. We are all well, very well, myself particularly and I would not say it if it were not true. You know I do not believe in any deception of the kind.

We are yet in Camp, nearly in readiness to depart; the want of sufficient grass only now detaining us. That is not yet sufficient and we cannot yet fix the day of our departure with certainty but will probably leave the last of this or the first of next week, although we may not get away even then. I will write you once more from Independence and that on the day previous to our departure.

It gratifies me that you are so well pleased with your pin. You know I can always hit it when I try and take time to think what will suit you and be appropriate. It cost me \$4.00 after paying \$3.00 for the first two,—the one in plain dress for you and Sarah's in full r'g, and when it was known that I should need all my money as everything was costing us more than we anticipated. For instance, I had to pay \$22 for a good revolving pistol. But I thought I owed you that much and more and no expenditure has afforded me greater satisfaction than that. Nothing that I can do to afford you satisfaction and enjoyment while I am gone shall I fail to do, as it is little than I can do, at best, to compensate you for the sacrifices you have so freely made for my or our sakes, or to enable you to while away the long and lonesome hours. I am sorry, not disappointed, to hear that you feel very lonesome in your new home and unnatural mode of living. You ask if I feel as you do. I answer, "Very much the same" as you may ere this have discovered from the tenor of my letters, and yet there is necessarily a difference,—you being shut in doors with even less opportunities for visiting and receiving company, with the same daily routine of duty, with the children and everything to remind you of me; while to me new and strange scenes are daily presenting themselves, with new employments constantly engrossing my time, with plenty of good lively company and such glittering and exciting prospects ahead. So that while I am by these means kept in a good measure from that lonesome and tedious state of mind. Yet over all this, my mind and heart's desires are constantly breaking and running back, with longing desire for "home" and all its sweets. Yes, "Home, Sweet Home" is the all absorbing subject of my thoughts, particularly on the Sabbath and such other times as I am less engaged. And it is the love of wife and children, my dear companions, that has led me in this way to sacrifice as it were, for a time, wife and children and self—for had I none to feel or provide for but myself, I might feel like seeking a living accompanied by fewer dangers and difficulties and care less for prolonging life as less would depend upon its existence. But what a happy and fortunate condition is the marriage relation devised by Infinite Wisdom and Goodness for man! It seems to me the very consummation of earthly bliss as it affords such objects of love and attachment as nothing else could, and without which it seems to me the world would prove inadequate to furnish a sufficient amount of rational enjoyment. But these reflections and feelings, with me, only stimulate my spirits and stir me up to greater exertion and would lead me to make still greater sacrifices if need be to promote our temporal welfare and happiness by adding to the number of our days and increasing our means. And I hope and trust that you will be moved to bear up under it in like manner with a noble fortitude and cheerful spirit. I know you will.

I perceive I have already answered most of your inquiries in my last letter. In acknowledging the receipt of my letters give the date, as I am writing so many I shall not otherwise know whether they are all received or not, nor will I know to which letter you allude,—as in your

last letter I do not know certainly which letter you allude to by saying that my second letter is received. I wrote one or two letters from Cincinnati, one from St. Louis March 17th, one from this place March 25, one April 1st and one April 8th. I can only say in reference to Mr. Bradish's papers that if they are not in some pigeon hole to the book case with other papers they are in the lowest pigeon hole to the extreme left by themselves where I always kept them. I may have filed away some tax receipts and other receipts but I think not. Mr. Watson will find them in the book case somewhere. If Mr. Watson should move away it is my wish that he leave with you my books and office furniture, a list of which you will find in his receipt among the papers I left with you. I cannot tell you, my Dear, how long I shall be absent. I shall try and do what is best and withal rest assured I shall return as soon as it is possible, consistently with the accomplishment of my object. That I must not lose sight of; it would be unmanly, nay childish and unprofitable to look back having put your hand to the plough. Our last accounts here from California are very encouraging and entirely confirmatory of previous accounts. Some letters have just been received here from citizens gone to California, one of which is published in a paper sent by Mr. Stevenson to Mary. You can get that and read it. The writer is well known here having gone from Independence and is a truthful man and they say every confidence can be placed in his statements. Large numbers are daily congregating here from all parts of the Union. It is impossible as yet to estimate the number that will go from this and neighboring towns by the South Pass but they will be large. There are some 1500 here now, and about as many more at neighboring points. It seems as if we were spending more time here than necessary but we came in a very lucky time to avoid the Cholera, which is now raging in St. Louis and at all other points of note, I suppose down the river to New Orleans; and every boat that now arrives from St. Louis has cholera on board and more or less die on every one of them. One boat lost as many as eight and some passengers that have been landed have died of Cholera afterwards, but not many, not more than two or three. But it does not spread to any that have not been exposed on the river or at St. Louis. Independence is some three miles from the river and mostly out of reach of the river influence and not a place liable to Cholera; and if it were or if the Cholera should reach it we could any day move our Camp 8 or 10 miles out of town or even more. Give yourself no uneasiness on this account, nor think that I am keeping anything back. I only desired to give you a true representation of things concerning us without suppression; and this I shall always do, let others do as they may. You may rest assured of this.

Monday  
April 10th

We have this day packed our wagons and have only a few things to get. We have also divided our teams. Stevenson and myself and Stuber go together and take a gentle well broke team. Smith, Boren and Tyler go together and take all the wild mules as George has no fears and is a good teamster. Caldwell, Sharp and Gallagher go together, taking a gentle team. We find that our wagons are not going to be overloaded and we can lodge in them with all ease, when necessary. We have got along so far without the least difficulty in the division of wagons and the division of loads and teams, and that being the worst part I anticipate no difference. It requires a little forbearance to get along with ——— and a good deal to get along with ———. The latter is very passionate and the other man, you know, is a little jealous and cannot well take a joke, and, jokes you know are always abundant in a company of men off from home on an expedition like this of ours. But with him it almost always turns out seriously and such persons are always most likely to be



made the butt of all the jokes. But it is well for him that Loveland is along as he proves a very fine subject for sport. Loveland goes into our wagons by turns. I think I told you before that our Company was divided into two Messes for cooking and eating now and until we reach California; 1st Smith, Boren, Stevenson, Tyler and myself. 2nd, Caldwell, Sharp, Gallagher and Stuber and Loveland. Stuber is one of the most shrewd, pleasant, industrious and agreeable men in our company,—all like him. We are well pleased get him in our wagon. Tyler is a good industrious clever fellow and I should have been satisfied with him as he is a good horseman and would restrain himself some in our company. Grosvenor is also a very fine industrious boy and I should have no objection to him. Stuber is neither vulgar nor sulky.

The Sandusky Company were very anxious that we should go with them but they had changed their minds so often and were so anxious to get off sooner than anybody thought advisable, that we declined going with them. They were to start on Monday last but put it off till last Saturday. We also liked our guide better than theirs. The man who conducts our Company is Jas. Headspeth, a very competent and noted guide. He has been out with Fremont. The number of our travelling Company I cannot give exactly but we shall have some thirty wagons and about 75 to 100 men. We have just heard indirectly from our guide, Mr. Headspeth, that he will certainly leave the last of this week. This may be so. I will write you, however, as I said before the day we start but it will be a shorter letter than usual, only to advise you of the precise day of our departure and such other particulars as I cannot give now. This I expect is my last letter of any length that you will receive from me at Independence. And I can hardly close it and yet I have said all that occurs to me that will be of interest to you. You ask me if I have money enough. Hardly enough. I paid in to the Company what was required of me but I had to borrow \$25 of Stuber for Stevenson. We shall now get along as we shall want no money after we start and if we do, Stuber has a surplus with him and so has Smith. I tell you it costs us all more than we expected. When we completed the purchase of our mules they stood us as follows: 2 at \$90 each; 1 at \$50; 6 at \$80; 2 at \$70 each; 3 at \$60 each and \$44 for one pony. But I tell you we have got the finest and best mules the country affords; the average price of good common mules is \$65. The \$90 mules are said to be the best span of mules sold in Independence. They are a heavy span of grays, well matched and well broke and can be relied on. These have fallen to my team. As I wish to get my letter to the Post Office tonight must close and can only say, give my love to the children and tell them to be patient and the time will come around after a while when I shall return. Respects to all.

My Dear Wife:

When I wrote you last (April 15th) I supposed that in my next (this) letter I should be able to inform you of the exact day of our departure and which would probably be my last letter to you from this place. And had I deferred writing for three or four days I might have been able to do so; but as I had made up my mind to write you every week while we remained at Independence—and as the day of departure has been deferred in consequence of cold weather for the week past I have concluded to write you today again. This I do not only because I feel inclined to do so by own feelings, but I know that every time you hear from me comforts and sustains you and I find in me a strong desire to do all and everything I can to enable you to while away the time most pleasantly and judging you by myself, I think nothing rejoices you more than to find a letter in the Post Office from me, and that it makes no difference whether it contains any new and important thing or not; but that its

chief charm is in its being a letter from one who fills the whole circle of your affections. I very much regret that I did not desire you to write me weekly while at Independence and until you were certain that your letters would no longer reach me at this place, as two weeks seems a long time to be without word from home. I am glad you have not so far confined yourself to my request but have written oftener. I hope you will continue to do so hereafter all the while I am gone. I begin to think once a week will be much better and more satisfactory rule than two. I suggest this for your consideration.

We have had very cold and unpleasant weather for five or six days past which has very much retarded the grass growth and consequently we shall not leave tomorrow as was at one time anticipated but shall probably leave by the 30th inst. If the weather is favorable (as it has been yesterday and today and will probably continue so) we shall certainly not leave before the 27th or 28th. We find here prevailing among all the hunters and pilots the same superstitious notion that prevails so universally among all the old Salts or Sea Captains that Sunday is the most favorable day to leave port or start on a long and adventurous voyage or journey. Hence nearly all of them are bent on starting on Sunday. Many object to this and consequently the day of departure is publicly announced for Saturday or Monday, Saturday as a compromise day or Monday to suit all, for as but little progress is made the first day, any who wish can start Monday and overtake those who start Sunday. This last was the case, I believe, with the Sandusky City Company, who left on Monday the 16th inst. I hope that you will not be disturbed that we start no sooner. It was a little hard for me to make up my mind to wait patiently 15 or 20 days longer than we expected to, when we left home. But I have done so and I am not now the least impatient and I shall make it my object in this letter to bring you to the same conclusion before I have done. And first we found that in Lower Sandusky ourselves and others knew little about a "journey over the plains" as it is called here, while here it is as familiar to almost every one as is with us at home a trip to New York and not much more thought of, as it is difficult to find a business man of long standing who has not himself been to Santa Fe and there are hundreds who have been to San Francisco. Now we have found that among the many important things to be attended to, are two main ones—first, food for our animals on the way and, second, to guard with sleepless vigilance against our animals being lost by running away from fright or being stolen away by the Indians. More than three-fourths of the disasters incident to the plains are found to result from a neglect of these two things. It was our object first to obtain the very best and safest kind of a team, and, having done that, as we believe, it is now our object to take the best course to preserve and sustain them; as our lives depend on the lives of our animals. Oxen and mules are the only beasts of draught or burden ever employed for the journey and, here by way of explanation, one word as to our having first talked of taking oxen. Here, as everywhere else, men talk and advise as their interest may happen to lead them and every other man you meet in Independence has either oxen or either mules to sell and some both and they that have neither have the interest of some friend to promote who has them to sell. So you will see that it was no easy matter for us to determine in less than a week, after the most diligent inquiry which, all things considered, were the best, oxen or mules. We have decided in favor of mules. After all that can be said in favor of oxen only one thing can be said in favor of the ox,—and that is that it is not so liable to run away or be stolen by the Indians, while the mules will perform the journey a little quicker, will subsist on less, endure warm weather better and go longer without water, while a little increase of watchfulness will guard against



Indian Stampedes. But it is not enough to have good mule teams. They must have a sufficiency of grass (new grass) to live on and perform the day's journey, and if in our anxiety to get under way we start one week too soon our mules will fall away in the week more than can be regained in four weeks afterward on good grass, and they very often get so sore as to require rest for a week or two in which time they will be passed by those who start one week or even two weeks later. So says every man here of any knowledge on the subject, and further that mules that are reduced so in the start are very apt to give out entirely unless they can lay by for five or six weeks, and how can this be done in safety. Now these are rules to be observed on all, even ordinary, occasions but how much more so at a time like this where probably 3000 to 5000 persons with about as many mules or oxen will be passing nearly the same beaten track within about three weeks time of each other at the furthest, and most of them (in the start at least) within a week's time, and that too when the grass has just begun to grow and of course cannot be plenty. Now it is natural and safe to divide these emigrating parties into three classes so far as regards the supply of grass. 1st, The first who leave just in time to get enough, none others having gone before, and they not being so numerous as to require large quantities of grass. 2nd, Those who rush after hurried in greater number and who being thrown so close upon the heels of the first will for a time at least see their animals suffering and falling away for the want of sufficient sustenance. And 3rd, Those who do not start until there is plenty of grass which will probably be in 6, or 8 or 10 days after the second class leave and not over 3 weeks after the first class leave. The Sandusky City Company hope to be of the fortunate few who compose the first class. We desired to go with them but could not make up our minds to run a risk which all, (save themselves), thought unnecessary and venturesome; for how narrow must appear to any the chance of hitting the precise point of time when the grass is barely sufficient and before the masses shall begin to crowd in. The 2nd class are now leaving and will be for two or three days and perhaps more (we cannot tell to a fraction or none would err). And the 3rd class will leave on or after the first of May to 10th of May.

By an individual who has just visited our camp we learn that the guide for our train requires us to be in readiness on Monday morning, the 30th. He leaves his residence on Sunday and calls that his starting point but will not reach our encampment before Monday. We made up our minds to give up the idea of being in the first train over, not only for the reasons above, but on the first train will of necessity devolve the burden of cutting down many rough places for the wagons and bridging many of the streams and those who follow will be saved this trouble. But do not imagine that in waiting two weeks after the first trains we expect to reach California that length of time after them; we hope, or rather fear, we shall pass on the road many who start before us. But if in this we have erred and those who go before find plenty of grass and no cause of delay on that account, as we certainly hope they may, we shall be on the way, and even now are cheering ourselves up with the reflection that the most of us are leaving our families and interests more dear to us than all the Gold in California and on this account we do not incur any avoidable risk in a journey where of necessity there are risks enough to encounter; while if there be gold in such quantities in California, two weeks will make little or no difference but if there be not and the adventure should prove a failure (which we certainly hope it will not) we can only grin and mortification will rest most lightly upon those who, not rushing forward so eagerly at great risk or privation, took it more coolly and made the journey at a time when they could do so with the most ease and pleasure as well as safety to themselves and animals. I

have gone into this subject at length in order, before we leave, to satisfy you that in this particular we have acted wisely. And as I have probably dwelt longer on this point and been more particular than any other member of our Company, although Smith, Boren, Stevenson and others are now writing and all will probably write before we leave (but all do not write or dwell alike on the same subjects) I would suggest that you take some pains to read to your "California friends" such portions of this communication as are of general interest to you all for really I believe we begin to feel quite an interest in each other's wives as well as our own and this we may the more freely confess as under present circumstances it will not be likely to give rise to any jealousy. I will further say that I have read these portions of my letter to some of the principal members of our Company and, concurring with me in the truth of the statements and reasons as given, it is their desire also that you do this. And, here in connection with this subject, I will add that Benjamin Headspeth, our guide, is considered one of the very best. He is the Headspeth that accompanied Fremont—was with him some six years.

We moved last Friday to present encampment, a very fine one, 9 miles from Independence on the Santa Fe Road from which place I am now writing. Here water, wood, corn and wild grass are abundant, which furnishes us with an opportunity of trying our hand at cooking. We have, as I said before, several excellent cooks in our Company. Some crack on making one thing and some another and really we get along very well in this respect. Today each mess made a pot-ple; I had the honor of officiating for our mess; it was good of course.

Our wagons are now all packed and our mules apportioned to each wagon and we shall this week enjoy a little leisure for the first time. I will tell you how I have fixed myself for lodging. Instead of a Buffalo robe, which will spoil by the way if it gets wet, Stevenson and myself have made us a good mattress and pillow to be laid in our wagon; the load only fills it to within about six inches of the top of the box. Over the load we have laid a light board of pine and on this floor we spread our mattress, which with our blankets, makes a first rate bed. I made the mattress and prepared and filled it with corn husks in one day and laid on it that night for the first time. Stuber, Tyler, Gallagher and Loveland pitch a tent and lodge in that, leaving but two of us to sleep in each wagon, so we are not crowded; they prefer doing this. If we should desire at any time to sleep on the ground we have an India rubber spread to lay under our mattress on the ground to keep out the wet and all dampness. We are now all fixed to our mind and it so happened that each got the thing he desired.

You say I must always speak of my health. It continues good. I have not yet taken the least cold since we commenced camping out, now three weeks, and, in that time we have experienced all kinds of weather worse for me than any between this and California. Last week was very changeable, cold, disagreeable weather, rainy with very cold nights and very windy, so that it seemed to me that if I could stand that I need not fear anything ahead. From present indications I have strong reason to hope that the journey will prove beneficial to my health. I have increased a pound or two in weight since I left home by one scale and more by another, but I will set it down at the smallest increase. In your next letter tell me how you get along for wood and water; how your money holds out and who calls on you, who are your best neighbors. I now expect to get an answer from my St. Louis letter and from my first from this place. By a note on the back of your last letter received, made by Mr. Stark or Charles Green and also by Mrs. Boren's letter of the 24th inst., I learn that my St. Louis letter was received March 26th. On the eve of my departure I will drop you a line by which you will learn how



Independence  
Missouri  
April 23, 1849

many of your letters will have been received by me before leaving. I intended and may this week write to Mr. White. Remember me to him and his wife lest I do not find time to write him as I have some engagements to fill which may prevent it. All our Company are well and in good spirits. Here on the verge of an almost boundless prairie, although some 1300 miles from home, it appears to me as if I had not yet taken my leave of home; and in view of our speedy departure I am daily looking forward to it as the time when I am to bid you farewell. I will not promise any more short letters as in my last I intimated that this would probably be a short one. But really I do not know how to write you a short letter, the end of my sheet being the only limit. And I now feel as if I had a thousand things to say and yet it seems as if I had nothing further in particular to communicate. I see and hear a great deal that I might write and might possibly afford you a moment's entertainment and I might in this way fill sheets purely of the descriptive. But really it does seem to me that time and paper occupied in giving you a description of the country in detail, of wild goose hunts, etc., etc., is not what you want to hear or will afford you any satisfaction, in the second perusal, as I suppose you read my letters several times of course. Your last I have read through regularly three times and generally glanced over parts of it five or six times; and so of your first. What is here not set down you can easily supply. You know what is in my heart and you can take the thought for the word. I shall not add anything further but if I think of anything I have omitted I will insert it in my next.

My Dear Wife:

I have just come in on horseback eight miles from the country where we are encamped, through the rain to mail the enclosed letter, written yesterday, and to get one from you as I told our Company I looked for a letter this morning and not before. They were almost ready in advance to laugh at the failure of my prediction after I had taken so much pains to come to town eight miles in the rain, when no other would, although Smith would have come had it not rained. But my presentiment for the second time has proved true as I have the extreme pleasure of acknowledging the receipt of your letter of the 5th, being the third letter I have received. I shall not stop to answer it,—that I shall do before I leave the last of the week, to be closed Monday morning next when we shall without doubt leave for California. But to one thing I will reply as I failed to advert it in this letter although I did in my last (not yet received by you), anticipating your anxiety. I allude to the Cholera. I knew you would of course be filled with fear lest it should make its appearance here. So without consulting the rest of the Company (for I feared they would disapprove the design) I gave you a true statement of the matter as it existed here and I do not know now whether any others alluded to it in their letters. But you know very well the principle upon which I have always professed to act in such cases,—never to keep back but let the worst be known. I believe less pain and injury on the whole results from this course than from its opposite. Since my last writing I believe not a case of Cholera or anything that resembles it has occurred this side of the landing (3 miles from Independence on the river; we are 8 miles out of Independence and southwest). Only two or three cases of Cholera (and that not in an aggravated form) have occurred here and they were imported from St. Louis. It has been all along on the Missouri River on the boats leaving St. Louis but it does not spread into the country. We are safe.

I have just taken out of the Post Office a letter for J. M. Smith and Isaac Sharp and have put into the Post Office with yours letters for Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Boren, Mrs. Stevenson, Mrs. Caldwell and Mrs. Loveland. In

Encampment  
Eight Miles  
S. E. of  
Independence  
Missouri  
April 29, 1849

my next I shall give you some news, perfectly reliable touching the Gold in California. It was this moment received and is credited by every citizen. It is from Governor Boggs and corroborates all and more than has yet been heard. "Gold ahead." Goodbye. Yours in Love.  
Horeb

My Dear Wife:

As stated in my last I received your very affectionate letter just as I put mine into the Post Office but had not time then to answer it fully. I will now proceed to do and as you will discover from the density of my lines intend to say all I can in this one and not all I could if I had room. I am sorry you lament so hard as you do in the first part of your letter and yet I am glad to hear you express your feelings without reserve. I hope you will always do so without regard to the effect it may have on me, and I will do the same. I understand you however; it is not so much because you would have things different from what they are, as a desire to pour out your whole soul before one who you know can and does sympathize with you in your present bereavement, and by so doing hope to receive or experience some relief, if not real pleasure in easing your mind and heart for a while, a short time, of the burden or a portion of it that presses upon it with such a crushing load. And honestly I do not know as I am sorry to see you manifesting some such feeling; as it is what I should expect from such a true hearted wife as you have ever been to me. And it is after all but a transcript of my own feelings and it is only a sense of duty, with a strong prospect ahead of adding something to our temporal happiness and, superadded still more, the exciting prospect of a joyful meeting, that enables me to bear up under it with seemingly less anxiety. I cannot but be struck with the similarity of thought and expression of which we have often spoken as marking the operation of each mind, while enjoying personally each other's society; and, which even now while so widely separated, is plainly manifested in our correspondence. You, no doubt, will have marked this with pleasure and need not that I should call your attention to it, and yet I cannot forbear mentioning an instance or two. In your last letter you say it appears as if I had not left for California, as long as I remained at Independence, while I had penned the same sentiment in my last written before the receipt of yours. So again, in thinking over what would be most acceptable to the children from me, in my power to give. I thought if I were to enclose each in yours a letter, nothing would gratify them more; and I accordingly did so in mine of the 1st or 8th inst., while before this was received by you but was on the way, you made the same request. I am happy in being so fortunate as to anticipate your wishes; I hope I shall always be able to do so, and I hope I have already done so in other instances not here enumerated. I think I have in one other to which you allude also. After I had long been writing you long and particular letters on every subject and in answer to every anticipated inquiry, I received yours of the 28th full of inquiries already answered and nearly at your door, and, indeed, you informed me you were looking daily for that very thing. It may appear to others who are not capable, or in circumstances to sympathize with us that too much time is spent and too much paper occupied by me in my letters to you, but that shall not make any difference with me. Indeed, (although I say it strictly confidential) the rest of the wives at home are indebted to my example for both the frequency and the length of their letters. For when I commenced writing home they all laughed at the idea of writing so often and such long letters but I kept on in my own course and it was not a week before they all had fallen in with my practice and were anxious not to be outdone, particularly Stevenson.



I could not possibly write or get a letter off to you but what all must write. When I commenced enclosing two sheets ——— (and I don't know but others) did the same and even this morning when he was writing at my elbow discovered that I was writing this double lined, he seemed to regret very much that he had not commenced his in the same manner and I presume he will end it so. But this does not disturb me; I shall write as often and in such form and manner as I like best and if they keep up with me they must work for it. But it is not very agreeable to have persons pecking and inquiring as to how you do a thing so as to copy your example.

I find I am going to get a good deal of matter into my letter with this form of writing and as this is my last letter (as I shall retain it and add to it daily till we leave) from Independence, and probably the last that you will receive from me until you receive one from me at San Francisco, I have much to say and it is my endeavor to write you a letter that will in some good degree satisfy you for the long silence that will follow; for I will not mislead you on any account and unpleasant as it may be, it is nevertheless true, that you will not hear from me after I leave anything like as soon as we expected when I left home. Look at it:—We cannot start so early—to a month or two and we shall be longer making the journey. I do not know how it has been with you but here we are having a very backward spring, although it bid fair for two weeks after we left home; but for the last two weeks or so we have had, intermingled, pleasant and much cold disagreeable weather so that the grass has made very little headway in that time, and even now when I am writing it is so cold as to require overcoats sitting in the wagons closely covered and fastened up at each end. Tomorrow morning was the time fixed when I wrote you last. A cold day afterward deferred it till day after tomorrow or the day following; and this cold snap (yesterday and today) may occasion a further postponement of a day or so. But suppose we start the first of May; it is not safe to calculate on less than 100 days in going (good luck may take us through in 80 but poor luck may keep us 120 days on the road) and that would carry us to the 10th of August; it would then be ten days at least before we could send down and get a letter into the Post Office at San Francisco and it will take the letters, say, 45 days by way of New York at least before it would reach you, which would carry it to the 5th of October before you can again hear a word from me. This to me is one of my greatest hardships and I know it is to you. How can one under such circumstances cut short the last lingering word? Farewell; I cannot.

I was in town yesterday and had there been a regular mail I should have expected your answer to my first Independence letter (this is my 6th); I hope yet to receive it ere we leave when my hopes and expectations, as regards letters from you at this place will be fully realized; but then I shall not hear from you again until the 20th of August,—and this is my greatest hardship. But I shall cheer myself with the prospect of a happier day ahead, no, not happier,—but the very happiest, the day when I shall be permitted to grasp you and the children in my fond embrace, with or without gold as you say, death having made no inroad upon our number. And although dangers do stand in the way,—more than ordinary,—I will not like you permit myself to fear that "this is too much happiness to expect in this world" but trust and believe that just such a day the Lord holds in reserve for us, undeserving as we are.

But I must pass from this most enchanting part of my letter to particulars and in answer more in detail to your letter. You want to know the truth as I have it in reference to the stories of robberies and murders in California. Such stories, my Dear, while they are no doubt based on some foundation are nevertheless always exaggerated beyond

measure; especially when they have to travel the rounds so far and pass through so many hands. And there are reasons why it is natural that we should look for such reports and exaggerations from California. I cannot take time to detail them here. I hope your good sense will detect them. Suffice it to say that the whole world is full of conjectures and speculations as to the result of things in California, while many too impatient for their predictions to be fulfilled put in circulation stories and letters calculated, if not intended to be magnified into just such ones as you hear. I have not heard of these particular stories to which you allude but I have seen publications that are false without a doubt and bear too much the marks of falsehood on their face. It is getting to be next to impossible to know what to believe,—when people suffer themselves to be misled by contradicting statements and begin to doubt what they before know, as it were, to be truth,—strange things will be done and strange things be said. Two men, perfectly honest, may, in writing about a place or state of things, give us an entirely different view of it just as they may happen to be looking at one or the other side of the picture at the time or may happen to feel or be displeased at the time. I could if I were disposed draw a very black picture of the state of things in Independence at this time. I could speak of Drunkenness to excess, of men being robbed and stripped of their all in gambling houses and other places kept up for the purpose; of fights and men being daily shot in the public streets growing out of quarrells and jealousies while the public authorities seemed to be indifferent or unwilling to interfere; of the ravages of Cholera among the Californian emigrants, many of them turning back, etc., etc., until your blood would chill and you would tremble to have me here a single day; and all this would have some foundation in truth while it would be in reality a very partial statement calculated to mislead the public mind. And I sometimes fear you will hear and see just such stories afloat. But they will be false, all false. There is just enough material for evil disposed and careless persons and hasty writers to get such reports abroad while there is and has been no such general evil or danger to be apprehended here. So of California. So it will be of routs murders and encounters by the way. But be not disturbed or moved by anything until the whole truth you know. Why, Mrs Sharp has just written that there is a rumor going the rounds with you that I have "sloped" with all the funds of the Company and that the Company had disbanded and was going home! Now, who can imagine such a falsehood could get afloat and yet it only requires a few minutes use of a light and worthless lying, evil disposed tongue,—evil disposed either towards me, the Company generally or the objects we are pursuing.

You ask me, "What are your prospects?" I answer, "Good." We have our health, good outfit, good teams that will go through if any go and the news of the abundance of Gold fully and perfectly confirmed if it never was there before. As I stated in my last, two of the very best most honest, reliable men this country or state produces and who left for the mines last year have just written home for the first time and one of them is an ex-Governor of Missouri and they fully confirm all former statements of the abundance of Gold and further that provisions are now cheap. Gov. Boggs, the ex-governor, says there are no poor in California and need not be, that the poorest count their Gold by thousands and he advises his two sons in business here to quit all however much they are making and come to California; speaks of his two little boys picking up 20 pounds of gold (about \$4000) in a few days, etc. This is the substance. The fullest reliance is placed in the letter by every citizen. This tends to stimulate us just as we are about to launch forth on the almost boundless prairie, while the news comes a little too late for those



who would now take the field against us for a speedy passage. Gov. Boggs' son refuses to have the letter published but this is the substance as given by those who saw it. I saw and conversed with an old and reputable inhabitant who heard it read and I heard the Presbyterian Minister say full confidence might be placed in its statements. But again; our prospects are good, better than others, in another particular. When the teams come to show themselves it appears over  $\frac{1}{2}$  if not quite  $\frac{3}{4}$  of them are ox-teams, and it is conceded that the mules will make the best time into three or four weeks consequently we shall be among the first that arrive and mules will be in greater demand than oxen, being fewer in numbers, so that if we could not make anything by digging we could turn around and come home with the money for which we sold our teams; but you need not fear or expect this; we shall get some I will warrant you and enough to pay us for the trip. I have been cooking and am warm and nervous and fear you will be troubled to read my writing. But my hand will steady pretty soon but I cannot wait for it. We are perfecting our organization every day and I can tell you one thing in it that will greatly rejoice you. Yesterday our mess consisting of Smith, Boren, Stevenson, Tyler and myself proposed that that if I would act as Cook on the road over I would be relieved from every other kind of work and further that I need not stand guard at night. I said I would do it and it was unanimously agreed to; so that I need not harness or touch a mule, or do any other work on the road save preparing the food, which to me, you know, will not be burdensome as I have rather a natural taste for that kind of work and they all think so; in fact, no bread has been made but by myself since we encamped, whether I was cook for the day or not, and although others can cook very well I think they concede to me the palm. One week ago today I undertook to make a pot-pie; they opposed it, some of them thought it would be a failure but I succeeded admirably well as they all admitted and most of our Mess are pretty particular and know when a thing is right. Today I prepared a very good, no, I will say, a very excellent dinner (or rather supper) for we eat but two regular meals a day, consisting of newly baked bread, the best I ever made, beans and bacon boiled, stewed peaches and apples mixed, tea and molasses and had to dine with us Lawyer Pinney from Newark who is going over and he said it was the best dinner he had eaten in Camp and he ate as if he thought so. But the beauty of my berth is, that I can walk, ride in the wagon or on a mule all day as I please and after supper go to bed and sleep all night while others have to watch or stand guard two hours every other night and are consequently more exposed to danger if there be any dangers at any time from the Indians. I entered upon my duties today. I stood guard last night two hours for the first time and I suppose the last time at my option to accommodate some one. We commenced standing guard two nights ago and will keep it up till we reach California. We watch now to protect our mules from straying or breaking loose.

You ask me if I am homesick. I cannot say that I am in the same sense in which that word is generally used and understood. Yet I think none the less of home and would give anything to see you and spend an hour or two with you if I could or it were among things possible. But I have no wish or desire to turn back; indeed I would not now be compelled to return without accomplishing my object for a large sum of money and so feel all our Company; but if you can scare up a lot of fellows who think or talk more of their wives and children than do ours I should like to see them. I am very sorry that Samuel has not received any of our letters; I fear he will get homesick and discouraged, poor fellow. Yesterday I wrote him a long letter and directed it to Napoleon. You must write him often and tell him how I have written

him. I am a little afraid of him on account of the Cholera which is no doubt raging all along the river. There continues to be a case of Cholera now and then in all in Independence brought by some one up the river. There have been three deaths in a Kentucky Company camped on the edge of town since I last wrote you. There have now, as I have learned, yesterday been over seven deaths by Cholera in Independence in all and eight at Kansas at the mouth of the Kansas river, but it does not spread in town nor extend into the country. It would be next to impossible, if not impossible, for so many men to come daily to this place from St. Louis where they have the Cholera and none of them take it. Many have died on board the boats from St. Louis to this place; not a boat has come up the river for some two weeks but what one or more died of Cholera and most of them Californians, of course, as nine-tenths of the passengers up the river are Californians. There were eight deaths positively on board of one boat on her way up. It was most fortunate and providential truly, that we came as early as we did for we could not now pass St. Louis or up the Missouri river in safety. And there is no doubt but what the Cholera was in St. Louis at the time we passed through; but it was kept, or attempted to be kept a secret and had not spread much.

Since our arrival Doct Anderson and son, Lewis, have appeared and added themselves to the list. Kelly, the Tinner, formerly worked with Pease, you will remember, passed through L. Sandusky about the time we were nearly ready to leave and was going the Southern route by the Isthmus with two or three others; a few days ago they too made their appearance at Independence. He went as far as New Orleans, found that the Cholera was raging and the Isthmus and passage from Panama was all blocked up and some were waiting for passage and he turned around and determined to go the Overland route and is accordingly here and has brought oxen. Orin Roberts, Pease and others were boasting that Kelly was the right kind of a man to put it through, that he would be there and back again, if he could make nothing, before we reached California. Whereas the prospect now is, that we shall beat him and his Company some 3 or 4 weeks into California and maybe two months for some are beginning to think and believe that they have been misled and that it will probably take the ox-teams 150 days while the mules will probably require but 90. This may be so.

A correspondent of the St. Louis Republican was here getting a list of all the Companies and the names of each person going to California and we paid for and directed the number of his papers containing the list to be sent us at L. Sandusky to be taken out, of course, by our families and friends. The paper published in Independence is doing the same thing and in the course of a month will have his list complete and we have ordered numbers of his papers to be sent in the same manner. Yours will be directed to me at L. Sandusky. You will of course get all the papers addressed to me; if Mr. Watson should take them out, as he certainly would not now, he would see that you got them; these papers, the last particularly will give you a pretty good idea of the number of California emigrants going Overland this spring. We shall be gone before it is published. I have during the past week written to Father Johnson and directed my letter to Grange Co. I have also written to Sarah, to Russell Peabody and C. G. McCulloch. I shall write to Chauncey Pettibone before I leave if I can, as I promised to do so. And then I believe I have filled all my engagements to write from Independence.

— is the same jealous, petulant fellow and requires a good deal of petting to get along smoothly but the Company all understand him pretty well and do all they can to promote peace and harmony. There has been a great deal of jarring and contention among the different



Companies in consequence of coming here without any definite or binding organization before leaving home and some Companies have all split up, a part returning home and the rest forming a new company or attaching themselves to others. A good many accidents have occurred by the careless use of firearms. One man was killed and two or three others have been wounded; two or three others were shot at a purpose, in affrays, wounded but not killed. Two or three flat fights have taken place and any quantity of Californians have lost all their money in a couple of gambling houses kept up in Town and have been compelled to turn back on that account and some others have been more or less injured by mules in breaking them. But from all these we have entirely escaped and by care and prudence we may still hope to escape all such difficulties. We have also enjoyed and do now all enjoy unusual good health.

We have just heard that the Sandusky City Company have gone 50 miles beyond the Kansas river and stopped for want of grass and had to send back to Kansas river for corn for their animals and further that they had lost by some means five of their mules, leaving them only eleven head of mules and horses. If this report be true it but proves that we acted wisely in refusing to accompany them so early and that they had better remained where they were until grass was sufficient; we are within a half mile of their old camping ground. The Kansas River is a 100 miles from here. It will no doubt be interesting for you to know something of the characteristics of the Indians through whom we must pass as we have learned them since our arrival. We shall have to pass through some twenty or more tribes, all of whom are friendly to the Whites except three or four; but they will all steal when they have a chance, whether friendly or not, and hence the necessity of a constant guard from the start till we get through. It was no doubt by theft that the Sanduskians lost their mules if the story be true. But with a sufficient number we are more and more satisfied and so are all that no danger will be apprehended even from the hostile tribes. Our Company is going to be large enough; the only danger is that it will be too large as a great many are trying to crowd into Mr. Headspeth's company as he is understood to be an excellent and prudent guide; but I had rather go in a company too large than too small; a company too large can be separated for a distance or divided but for a company too small there is no remedy.

I believe I have now answered or alluded to all that is contained in your letter seeking any reply and I will lay aside my sheet till I can write you more definitely as to the precise time of starting.

This morning some of us are going into Town expecting to get letters and if there be none will probably deposit our letters in the Post Office as we shall receive no other mail from the East before we start as it comes tri-weekly only. I shall feel disappointed if not sad if I have to leave without an answer to my first Independence letter written 25th ult. I have set my heart on getting one more kind word from you before I leave and I know not how to be denied. It is now settled that tomorrow morning we break up our present encampment and move up to the main road in readiness to fall in the next morning with the main train that will then overtake us. So date our departure May 2nd, 1849. We have spoken to a friend of ours who will leave Saturday, May 5th, and will overtake us at the Kansas to bring us any letters that may arrive for us up to that time; so that if I should not get your letter this morning I shall expect it by Mr. McCoy, our friend alluded to, as he will get Wednesday and Friday evenings' mails.

The boys have the horses nearly harnessed ready for a start to town

and I must bring my letter to a close. And I know not, my Dearest Wife, how to do it; it seems like bidding you farewell a second time. I remember, O I remember with mingled joy and pain our parting scene. It is now fully painted before my mind and while I delight to dwell upon it and would even now rejoice at the opportunity to repeat it, yet again it seems as if I could not endure it. I cannot, my dear, extend to you my hand or embrace you in my arms but I can extend to you my heart and embrace you in the arms of undying love as freely, nay, more freely. And if I cannot drop the parting tear upon your neck and feel the throbbing of the truest of hearts beating in unison with my own, I can at least with swelling heart bedew these lines with the silent falling tear, knowing that when they meet the eye of her for whom they were penned they will open the same fountain of love anew and move to the utmost a heart that knows how to feel for me and will follow me through all my windings and stand ready to receive me when, the Lord willing, I shall again be restored to the bosom of my family. And this is a sovereign balm for all my pain or the privations I may be called on to endure. But I cannot bring myself to feel that I am taking my last adieu. I have faith to believe that you and I shall spend many a happy day together yet, happier than any we have yet enjoyed and with these feelings I am pushing myself off upon the wide extended plains and it will be more than meat to me a part of the time at least. Take it cheerfully, my dear; do not give yourself too much anxiety about me. I am well and my health improving and have every reasonable prospect of a safe journey. Only be sure to write me often; you cannot write too often. Remember me to the children. Speak consolingly to them and when you write give me every particular as to how you are getting along. I shall take the earliest opportunity of sending you some money whether you need it or not. O, one thing more, I had almost forgotten to mention. July and August are warm and the most sickly months in California and I think it not good policy to hasten into the country just at that time. So I am not anxious about hurrying through. It is a great undertaking and let us take time to do it right and at the right time. The fall will be the best time for us to commence operations. I am sure you will feel more reconciled with this view. We must consult our health and safety as we go along as well as look for the shortest trip.

P. S. I have just been to the Post Office but found no letter from you. I am sorry to be compelled to leave without my expected letter, but I suppose the fault is not yours but the irregularity of the mails. Good bye, my dearest wife.

My Dear Wife:

I concluded not to put my letter into the Post Office yesterday when at town as the mail would not leave till tonight and I did not know what might turn up in a day and as we would not leave till tomorrow morning I would take my letter back to camp, break it open and fill up this last page with a lamentation, for not receiving a letter in answer to my first Independence letter written March 28th. A month and six days has now passed since I wrote that letter in which I requested an immediate reply—an answer to that by due course of mail has now been due at least six days, and yet no reply appears. Yesterday Mr. Boren received a letter from his wife in answer to his first letter from Independence written the same day mine was, and is the only one of our Company that has been so fortunate as to have his wishes gratified in that particular. Smith, Boren, Stevenson and myself at least wrote home March 25th. According to appointment the rest of our travelling company arrived here tonight and encamped with us ready for a start in the morning and our wagons are all repacked in readiness to depart by tomorrow's light

Monday  
Morning  
April 30, 1849

In Camp  
8 miles S. W. of  
Independence  
9 a. m.  
May 1st, 1849



and everything is all right and everything I could desire I have received except a letter from you, so much desired on the eve of my departure and calculated upon with so much certainty. You can hardly imagine how differently I should feel and how much more cheerfully I could have left this spot had I only the pleasure of the perusal of the letter I know has long been on the way and which I may now probably never receive. The next mail comes in tomorrow night and I have been thinking of holding on till Thursday morning for this mail and by Thursday night I could overtake the Company, travelling as far in one day as they would in two. This I may do. But I am not certain as we shall start in the morning as it is now raining very hard and will probably be very wet and slippery tomorrow and the roads very heavy. If we were travelling we should not stop for any kind of weather but we like a good day to start and, then, we are not anxious to start in the morning as the weather has been very cold for three days past and the grass has not grown and is not sufficient yet; but we have brought enough corn to take with us to last ten days when we expect grass will answer. But we still would rather see it before leaving. It is not so cold tonight and we are having a warm rain which will very much aid vegetation if it comes off warm afterwards. I find that we shall have probably an opportunity of getting letters back from Ft. Laramie, about 800 or 900 miles out. A friend of ours, William McCoy, who settled at Independence in 1830, coming from Chillicothe, Ohio, says he has a contract to deliver Government supplies for the Army at that point and that his train on their return will bring back all letters to the States. They cannot tell how soon they will be able to return but you will probably hear from us sooner in this way if they attend to it than from California. He also says we can have the same opportunity of writing from Bear River in the Rocky Mountains but it is doubtful if the train that goes to Bear River will return this season; so you need not look for a letter from that point. But there is a very strong probability that we shall have an opportunity of sending back letters by meeting returning parties from California. Stevenson has not yet received any reply to his St. Louis letter and feels very bad about it. I did my first washing today; it went off very well. I washed for Stevenson and myself, about a dozen pieces. I shall not send this letter till morning and will leave room to add anything important. Boren is writing a reply to his wife's letter and will go to the Post Office in the morning if we leave tomorrow. Some 1800 government soldiers will leave St. Joseph May 10 for Bear River, and being but a few days behind us we could in case of serious opposition on the part of the Indians find relief by halting a few days or falling back. We anticipate no such necessity but I mention it for your satisfaction.

May 2nd, 1849

We are hitching up to start. Boren goes to the Post Office. If I get your letter by tomorrow's mail it will be acknowledged.  
In haste, Your Loving Husband, and Adieu.

Independence  
Missouri  
Thursday  
Morning  
May 3rd, 1849

My Company left Camp yesterday morning on their way to the "gold diggings", while I came back to visit the Post Office this morning and bring up the Mail. I have received a letter myself and one for Mr. Johnson at whose request I drop you this line acknowledging the reception of the same, and for your further satisfaction would say that Mr. Johnson left in good health, fine spirits and full of "golden dreams." The Company will proceed to the extreme frontier on the line of this state, bordering on civilization, at which place I will overtake them today about tea time, I hope when Mr. Johnson, whose turn it is to be Cook, will have something good to eat. He is decidedly the best Cook in Camp. He goes about it rather awkwardly but really I don't think his wife can

Lone Elm  
40 Miles from  
Independence  
May 3rd, 1849

beat him at making bread. I wish you could see how he looks just now, not having shaved for some time. He presents quite a Savage appearance, looks fierce enough to frighten an Indian into fits. But in that respect we are all alike. Mr. Johnson, laying all fun aside, has enjoyed better and more uniform good health and looks better (notwithstanding the long beard) than I have ever seen him before during my whole acquaintance. Remember me to my acquaintances and friends and accept my best wishes for yourself.

Yours truly,  
L. E. B.

I have hit upon a plan by which I shall be enabled to send you a letter whenever an opportunity offers and I think I shall keep posted up a record of our progress, connected with the most important incidents by the way in the form of a diary, not in my memorandum book but on loose sheets of paper and these whenever I meet anybody I can enclose to you in a wrapper or letter envelope in five minutes—whereas I might meet many opportunities of sending but could not write for want of time as with the person returning our own train could not halt long enough to offer me or any person of us a chance to write a letter. With that view I now commence my Diary in the following form:

May 2nd, 12:00 M.—Took our journey for California a little behind our train, at 12 M. Boren and Gallagher remained behind to find, if possible, our pony which had escaped by slipping its bridle;—Moved on rather briskly till near sundown when we found we had probably passed the portion of our train for which we were looking by their encamping off the road somewhere, and also found that through ignorance of the way we had gone 3 miles beyond the last camping ground and were 15 miles short of the next. No wood and usually no water but in looking about we found some passable water in a small hollow—concluded to camp. did so, and in 25 minutes had our coffee and tea boiled and our meat fried in good style with nothing but dry prairie grass and weeds with which we fed our stove. This attested to, to our full satisfaction, the great value of our cooking stoves although most of the old Santa Fe traders in Independence considered them an encumbrance and of no real value. But where we camped with perfect comfort they would have thought it impossible unless they had wood with them, brought perhaps 3 miles, as they often draw it a great ways farther.

May 3rd—Took breakfast and Boren and Gallagher being still behind (it was expected that Boren would remain at Independence to bring up the mail), we started on and travelled 15 miles through the rain and over very bad roads to the "Lone Elm", which we reached at 2 o'clock P. M. and put up for the day, our mules being tired and exhausted.

May 4th—Rainy morning with cool N. W. wind. Held on till 10 A. M. and Boren and Gallagher and balance of train still being behind we started on, with about 150 others who had encamped at the same place and travelled 15 to 18 miles and encamped. Good water and grass. It rained incessantly all day and all of us wet. My feet were as wet as they could be. Our India Rubber coats do some good but do not meet our expectations as they will not turn rain all day. Near our Encampment was a young man from Newark, Ohio, by the name of Henry J. Beeney, who had been run over by a wagon and he died in the evening and was buried next morning. We all assisted in his burial. He left a dependent mother who was strongly opposed to his going. The reflections of the occasion were peculiarly solemn. Experienced no injury from the extreme exposure of the day.

May 5th—Learning that Headspeth's train had taken another road



parallel with ours, we started on at 2:00 P. M., first intending to await Boren and Gallagher's arrival; travelled 8 or 10 miles and encamped for the night—weather pleasant and the scenery most beautiful and enchanting. No man can find any idea of these western plains from the best description. He must see them for himself.

May 6th—Hurried on in rain and over very bad roads 12 miles to the junction of the two roads where we expected to meet Boren and Gallagher with Headspeth's train;—encamped in a very pleasant spot, good water and plenty of grass. At dusk Boren, to our great joy, came up, alone and reported that they had found the pony and that Gallagher was some 10 miles back with Headspeth's and that he had just one letter for the Company and but one, and as he took it from his pocket all was anxiety and suspense; but I rested in the strong belief that the prize was mine; and when the suspense was ended by it being handed to me, I threw up my old Beaver and let the prairie winds take it. It was from my wife and was all I expected or could hope for I knew she would not disappoint me, although I was compelled to leave Independence without it. Yet I know the 11th hour would bring it,—and it was even more acceptable on the plains 5 days out than it could have been at Independence.

May 7th—Sharp started back to meet Headspeth and bring up Gallagher and we moved on 12 miles and encamped, expecting Headspeth to overtake us tonight. Sharp and Gallagher arrived. Company now all together without loss or accident so far—in good health and spirits.

May 8th—Fox and Titus and Headspeth's train up with us on road together, within 15 or 20 miles of the Kansas river. See a team ahead returning from the river—has been out to carry corn for the emigrant. Concluded to enclose this sheet lest I should not have another opportunity.

My Dear Wife: Receive this hasty note as the best I can do now and I know it will be acceptable. I will answer your letter from the Kansas River.

My Dear Wife:

I received your most affectionate and very excellent letter of April 14th by Mr. Boren. I am now done with my lamentations. You have done, as I know you would, but your letter came high missing me. I directed Mr. Boren to drop you a line acknowledging the receipt of your letter if he got one as there were doubts of my getting a letter back to you from the way. As I wrote you 15 miles back and as we all have work to do (as we are about to cross the River) I shall not be lengthy. We have now travelled about 110 miles, (we cross the Kansas a good ways above its mouth)—no accidents—all well. We shall here or within a short distance, organize into a travelling Company and push on at a little more rapid rate. At first good policy requires that we should travel slow. Our mules work first rate and hold out well. We shall evidently not travel the oxen. Grass is more abundant than we expected; we shall get along well enough on that score. We have had no confirmation of the report that the Sandusky City Company had lost a part of their mules and I presume it is not true. We cannot rely with any certainty upon the truth of anything we hear us having transpired 5 miles ahead and how can you expect to get a true version of anything that is said to transpire here on the way or in California. Trust them not. I say honestly, my dear, be not speedily moved or troubled about any unfavorable news you may hear of us. Why, take the story of our Companies having broken up on account of my absconding with the funds as an instance. We hear all kinds of bug-bear stories about Indian depredations but when we come a little closer to the scene of action we can hear

nothing of it. So be prepared to hear anything and everything concerning us and others,—and believe that after all it will turn out untrue and that you will see me again, having survived all the disasters, shipwrecks and Cholera of which you have heard. I hope however that the press will not fill your ears with so much eagerness with such stuff by publishing every rumor that comes to them, as it were, on the wings of winds. One thing I think I can say I know and that is that we can at least get enough gold dust in a short time if we get to California (as I doubt not we shall) to pay us our expenses home next fall. And if we cannot make anything more or better, you may expect to see me about New Year's day next. If however it will be for our advantage to remain longer you will of course be willing under such circumstances to endure the pain of a protracted separation a little longer. Do not, my Dear, grieve so hard. I am sorry to hear you give vent to your worst apprehensions so freely. I know you have better hopes. But I can and do sympathize, deeply sympathize with you. I now feel satisfied with your diligence in writing me and my expectations have been fully met. Rest assured that every opportunity will be embraced by me to keep you advised of our progress.

We have just crossed the Kansas in safety and spread out before us is the boundless, rolling prairie, hill or elevations appearing one after another in the blue and smoky distance like the waves of the ocean, with only here and there a narrow strip of timber marking the watercourses and often are even out of sight of these. It is a pleasant day and the prospects before us seems inviting enough especially after jading ourselves and animals over 110 miles of the worst road between Independence and San Francisco and about as bad a road as the Black Swamp in places. We are not yet in full force as part of our train cross at the lower ferry. We will go out today about five miles and will intersect the balance of our train. I have given up the office of Chief Cook and take my turn with the rest and my portion of other duties. I had rather do so as it is more slavish work than I had anticipated and by far the hardest post to occupy. I found I was working all the time during our halts while others at least were a portion of the time resting. I could not get time to write a letter or a note,—as for guarding, my turn will not come oftener than once in two and perhaps three nights and then only two hours at a time with some eight or ten others. It sometimes seems as if it were impossible for me to look upon or regard any other place as home except the "old homestead" and it does not appear as if we had parted with it and you almost make me homesick in your touching allusions to it, particularly the removal of some of our favorite shrubbery. But this, my Dear, is more the effect of the pleasing associations connected with them than in the shrubbery itself. Wherever you and I dwell together with our little ones, there we will find just as pretty and as lovely snowballs and roses as we planted at the "Old Homestead."

I know you will husband your resources as that is all the poor excuse of a Husband you now have. My health is perfectly good and I flatter myself that I can already perceive an improvement; in fact I am the only one almost that has not complained a single day.

I want you at their request to call on Mrs. Caldwell and say that Mr. Caldwell is well and has not time to write by this opportunity but will embrace the next and also on Mrs. Boren and say that Mr. Boren is doing all he can in preparing a letter but fears he will not be able to embrace the present opportunity. They and all the members of the Company are well. Mr. Sharp has not felt well for a day or two but is getting better. Mr. Stevenson is also preparing a letter to transmit and Mr. Sharp also writes home. I hope you will not fail in getting my letter. We have been fortunate so far in getting each other's letters. I hope our good luck

Kansas River  
May 10th, 1849



From  
Fort Kearney  
on the  
Platte River  
May 23rd, 1849  
12 M.

will continue. You will see what I mean by a short letter, what I promised you in the outset,—but to write what I desired, or rather to write at all I had to pass on with the Company two miles and a half to their stopping place and then return to this little village (Indians of course) on the river. Some white men trade here. Give my love to the children and kiss them for me. Goodbye.

My Dear Wife;

I embrace a moment's opportunity to send you a line while our mules are baiting. We arrived last night on the Platte over 300 miles from Independence without accident or loss either to ourselves or animals. No one is sick or unwell although we have nearly all had a slight touch of diarrhea incident to the commencement of a journey on the Plains. We have separated from that part of our travelling Company from Missouri leaving only ourselves and the Seneca and Tiffin boys, 13 in all. They were jealous of us and we did not like them. We consequently travel much faster and more agreeably as fewer delays occur and we are all from the same neighborhood. The only thing counted foolish here is to be caught in a large train of 50 to 100 men; from 15 to 30 men are counted all-sufficient and most companies have split all up into small parties. Some are going with one wagon and 4 and 5 men. There are scores of parties of 8 to 10 men. But the road is literally filled for two weeks travel either way and the only trouble with us is to get out of the way or pass others. We could camp every night with as strong a force as we desired. We have not seen an Indian since we entered this country (that is the Hostile Indians) and we have travelled in it some 200 miles and have nearly passed through the country of the Pawnees, the most dangerous of any. The road is as plain and more travelled than the Maumee and Western Reserve Road. Many more are going overland to California than I expected. From all accounts at least 10 000 of them are on the way,—say, 2000 ahead of us and the balance behind us. We will pass all the ox-teams before we reach the mountains and all the poor mule teams. We have not heard from the Sandusky City Company except that on the 28th of April they were 150 miles out. Grass is now sufficient and looks as if we might have started a week earlier than we did. But we cannot yet tell as we have scarcely commenced our journey.

My health is good. I had a slight cold for a few days but have entirely recovered from it. We can whenever we wish increase our number if necessary and will do so. This is a most splendid country, filled with the most beautiful scenery, but it is more valuable to look at than to occupy, as wood and water are generally deficient.

I wish, my Dear, I had time to write you a letter but I have not. Accept this as all I can do for you now.

Your Most Affectionate Husband



The Diary of  
**Samuel H. McCoy**  
of Chillicothe, Ohio

Outlining the Overland Journey to California by the  
Death Route in 1849

Saturday  
May 19, 1849

Taking brother John's outfit, with which he had just returned from Mexico over the Santa Fe route, I left Independence after breakfast at eight o'clock, in company with brother Alexander. He had started from home (Chillicothe, Ohio,) early in April and with a large company left Cincinnati on April 19th to travel overland to the California gold mines.

The road, leading out at first on the Santa Fe trail, was familiar to me in every respect and, while not a stranger to travelling on the plains, this present effort exceeds in danger and distance all previous journeying. While riding along I was much occupied with thoughts of the far away home, of the separations on earth, and the shadow of events to come, pressing down on a frame weakened by sickness, darkened the beauty of the day and of the landscape.

The main company had gone ahead jubilant and with high hope. There was nothing therefore to help me shake off this depression. Bitter it is to part with friends, but bitterer far to go forth on a hazardous quest not knowing whether those I leave behind will be in the land of the living on our return, if indeed we ourselves will ever, escaping the dangers, return to the States. Yet we know that there is One who careth for us and I strove to commend them and myself to His fatherly protection. May God guard and keep us all.

The determination to add one more to the number of those going to California, while hastily made, was not a rash one. Brother William's freighting for the Government would have kept me employed for six or eight months, but I felt that the amount of money thus to be made would not be sufficient to justify me in embarking with him in his enterprise. I further saw no prospect of rapidly bettering myself in the States, whereas, if nothing better results I can secure a clerkship in San Francisco. The gold seekers, as a rule, will not admit the possibility of failure and each man is positive that he will not return empty handed. As to this I am somewhat sceptical and, touching myself, rather indifferent. The adventurous nature of the trip has its fascination and will, after the journey is over add much to experience.

Alex has quite a company of his own and, with those under his command, has attached himself to an excellent guide, Hedspeth, who has crossed the plains for many years and who has a force of his own to guard us from hostile Indians.

As to sickness, we have a great advantage in that we have with us Dr. Thompson, formerly of Chillicothe, O. As to my outfit I am well provided, my own knowledge of what is required being supplemented by William's and Jerry's experience. I have a light wagon drawn by four mules, loaded with flour, bacon, sugar, rice, coffee, etc., etc., sufficient



Sabbath  
May 20th

for a year or eighteen months. In addition, I have one of the best animals to ride, fleet, gentle and able to stand the journey, and clothing of the warmest and most serviceable kind. I do not feel any ill effects from exposure, for I have never experienced better health than when out on the prairies, and am I not under the care of a kind and benevolent God, wherever I am, Who doeth all things well. The greatest difficulty I have had in this whole matter is the fear that it may not meet with my parents' concurrence. However, I will endeavor to follow out the instructions I am convinced they would give me, and, hard and difficult as it is to go forth without seeing them in Chillicothe once more, we have the assurance of meeting again under better auspices.

At noon I stopped at the Blue River and lunched and then, riding rapidly, overtook the mule wagon twenty miles out from Independence, and rode in it the rest of the day, being unable to sit longer in the saddle on account of the indisposition from which I had suffered all day and which left me very weak. What a contrast now and a few months back in outward appearance! Then my garb in no wise differed from that of others, but now, mounted on a mule and accoutered like a mountaineer, bristling with deadly weapons, conspicuous in my armament being my trusted Colt's revolving pistol.

We all camped for the night at Lone Elm.

Started at sunrise with the train, after commending myself to His care, Who alone can protect us. We travelled five miles and stopped for breakfast and then pushed forward.

We passed today over a lovely country of the same character as that traversed yesterday. How beautiful are the prairies! An expanse of green grass, boundless as the ocean, their appearance varied and even picturesque, interspersed with woodland or solitary clumps of trees, giving them a diversified aspect. The ground is now covered with bright and beautiful flowers of many hues. How can it be said that the prairies are monotonous! In their vastness how impressive; in their solitude how deeply touching the mind, reaching the heart and leading the thought up to contemplation of the Great Originator!

We had some trouble at Coon Creek in attempting a crossing and were forced to unload our wagons, losing so much time in the process that we were compelled to noon on the creek. Later, as we were about to move forward, a violent thunderstorm came up, which necessitated our spending the night there. I kept the first watch and afterward, despite the storm, slept comfortably, cared for by Him, who sleepeth not. On the whole, it has been an unprofitable Sabbath and I shall travel no more on the Sabbath Day. May the sins of this day be pardoned.

Monday  
May 21st

Rose early and broke camp at an early hour in the forenoon. The wind was high and the sky cloudy. The roads were bad until we left the Wakarusa creek bottoms, and from then on we travelled through a beautiful country, although during the morning the scenery was much the same as that to which I have been accustomed. We passed on to a high ridge and from it had a surpassingly lovely view. The country crossed in the afternoon was entirely new to me. In front as far as the eye could reach an illimitable expanse of green stretching far away; nearly at our feet a small stream, skirted with timber, wound its tortuous way and shone through the foliage like a silver band of rippling sunshine. In the background, was the road we had travelled over, stretching back through the billows of grass and leading our minds irresistibly to thoughts of those we had left behind. Early in the afternoon encountered a violent thunderstorm and all were thoroughly drenched. But as in our boyhood

Tuesday  
May 22nd

days, after swimming, the warm sunshine performed a good part in drying us off.

Camped at evening with Lewis Jones, Esp. The night was quiet and we settled down to sleep but one of the guards, new to the prairies, gave the alarm and roused all hands. Investigation proved he had been frightened by the yelping of wolves, and he was soundly jeered by the company for confusing the yelp of a wolf with an Indian war-cry.

Settling down again we found the wind had risen and turned very cold, making our fur robes decidedly comfortable. There is a feeling of satisfaction when one is, as I am tonight, with friends, when the future looms darkly forbidding.

Rose before daylight and cooked a hasty breakfast in the dark by the camp-fire in order to start our journey before sunrise. Early as we were we passed many teams bound on their toilsome pilgrimage,—to some, if not most of us, it may be the road to death. But such dismal thoughts were quickly dispelled by the cheery greetings and especially by the bright loveliness of the delightfully cool morning. The wind was northwest and grew colder as the day advanced. We camped for an hour at noon after which we began the descent, crossing Shawaukunk creek with great difficulty and only after much trouble. Dark overtook us when we were a mile beyond the crossing and we camped down for the night. Am still unwell. As I jot this down by the uncertain light of the camp-fire I am struck by the weird picture before and around us. Camp-fires are blazing or smouldering here and there and dusky figures move from group to group as the incidents of the day are recounted and the hopes of the future are painted in colors more or less roseate. Some of the men are lying down trying to sleep, while others stand around in the ruddy glare of the fire. With most of us the sense of strangeness is beginning to wear off and we are beginning to adjust ourselves to our novel situation. As it is my turn to stand guard tonight I shall turn in early.

Wednesday  
May 23

After standing my watch I wrapped myself in my blankets and was soon fast asleep but was rudely awakened by a false alarm given by one of the morning watch, who thought the rustling of the grass betokened the coming of Indians. After the camp had soundly berated him we sought to sleep again, but a thunderstorm routed us all out early in the morning. All got up tired and sleepy, but the tremendous peals of thunder and flashes of lightning rendered further effort at sleep useless. So we started off over roads wet and slippery making the travelling heavy and bad.

We passed the Baptist Mission to the Pottawottamies, which presented a motley frontier scene with its few log houses built on the banks of a small stream. The Pottawottamies are partially civilized and the Mission, we were told, is making gratifying progress. I here conversed with an Indian lad, who being unable to speak English, conversed with me by signs in which language he was very skillful and most expressive. He told me that he was a Pawnee and that his tribe was brave and strong, and often hostile to the whites.

After crossing several small streams we reached and camped on the banks of the Kaw (Kansas) river. It rained during the night and stormed continuously. I lost my ring given me by ———, a very dear friend, who will ever be remembered despite the loss of this memento.

Thursday  
May 24th

Rose at daylight and drove down to the Kaw Ferry and crossed it and found the most of the Company who had preceded me had encamped. All were apparently glad to see us. The river seemed to be nearly a third of a mile wide and the banks were clay and sand. The belated letters which we brought with us were distributed and eagerly read and the



news passed around concerning "the folks at home."

The weather was bright and the warm sunshine seemed to bathe the heart with gladness. But later in the day the wind rose high. We continued on for three miles in the afternoon and camped about sundown on the top of a high prairie ridge. Scarcely had we made our preparations for the night when a severe thunderstorm, which had come up rapidly, broke on us. The thunder and lightning were incessant and grandly beautiful. The river scenery was exceedingly diversified this morning.

Friday  
May 25th

As we decided to remain camped here for the day I took my mule and made a wide circuit of several miles, partly scouting for game but mainly to enjoy the fresh morning air. Returning I spent some time re-arranging my effects, drying out and fastening the ropes tighter. The constant travel tumbles things about considerable. I stood the first watch and as it was a lovely night the time passed most pleasantly.

Saturday  
May 26th

I woke before daylight and found the fires nearly burnt out. After replenishing them had breakfast and we made an early start. The travelling was bad. We camped early in the afternoon for the Sabbath. The night again was lovely.

Sabbath  
May 27th

The morning dawned clear and cold and we remained in camp all day. There is something delightful as well as becoming in the soft stillness that prevades everything on this holy day,—the very brightness of Nature seeming in unison with the spirit of the day. But this very quiet and the calm which lies over the camp causes the mind to recur to the loved ones at home who are also enjoying the Sabbath rest. May He Who established this day have them in His holy keeping.

Read much in the Scriptures this day. Shall strive more earnestly to do good to those about me.

Monday  
May 28th

It was a calm, clear and beautiful morning when we made our start a little after sunrise. As far as the eye could see was roll upon roll of the prairie, the ridges carpeted with green, till the vastness and stillness lead the mind to the contemplation of Him Who has thus far led me safely on my way. We travelled until noon over the prairie, with its rich productive soil. In the afternoon we reached and crossed the Little Vermillion, and in effecting a passage we all became wet through. Owing to trouble with my wagon I fell behind the others and it was dark when I rode into camp. But they had saved supper for me, after which I went early to bed.

Tuesday  
May 29th

Shortly after starting this morning I broke an axle-tree, and in mending the wagon and making necessary repairs was detained until late in the afternoon. As there was no danger the Company went forward but by travelling rapidly I managed to overtake them and came into camp before dark. Fortunately I had taken the precaution before leaving Independence to provide for just such breakage and the extra pieces came in right handy.

As it was my turn to stand watch I was late in getting to bed. The night passed without incident or happening, and I had ample time to envy the men in their sound sleep.

Wednesday  
May 30th

While we were travelling today a thunder-storm came up and its violence forced us to stop for a time. We proceeded after the storm had partly subsided until we came to Rock Creek. It continued raining as we made our camp and on into the night. Is still raining as I write.

Thursday  
May 31st

Becoming impatient at the slowness of the Company I started on and travelled in advance of the train, with its many ox-teams. I was deeply impressed by the beauty of the scenery. We travelled over highlands,—ridge after ridge until we reached the Big Vermillion. We passed a short distance through the bottoms, which are nearly a mile wide and fringed with timber. Am feeling unwell tonight, suffering from the ailment incident to travel on the plains.

Friday  
June 1st

Being unwell and weak was confined to the wagon. Having gone six miles from our previous camp we reached and crossed a small stream and travelled on to the Big Blue, a clear and rapid stream with gravelly bottom,—banks lined with bushes and trees. The landscape around was dotted with hills, highlands and valleys and wild flowers were abundant.

When the company stopped for the night, angry discussion arose among the men and there was much fault found by one and another. Friction is unavoidable and grumblers can easily find material for complaint.

Saturday  
June 2nd

Travelled all morning on the dividing ridge, bearing N.N.W. Wood and water were scarce and only to be found at some distance from the road. Ten miles beyond the Blue the St. Joe Trace joined ours. We nooned at Wolf Creek, a small stream with limestone banks, then travelled on until sundown when we camped for the Sabbath, one and a quarter miles from the road.

Sabbath  
June 3rd

Rose soon after sunrise; spent the day encamped off the road. In walking beyond the camp found some clusters of beautiful roses. Read much during the day and thought of those near and dear to me.

How needful it is to seek the aid of the All-Powerful in their behalf, as in my own. O may I feel the importance of this more and more.

The rest of the Company have travelled on and in the distance we saw numerous companies wending their way forward,—which relieved us of any fear of Indians, although we are in Pawnee country.

Monday  
June 4th

Rose at 3:00 A. M. and started forward and passed Jones' Company on the way. Nooned at Wyeth's Creek after crossing it. It is small but the crossing was troublesome on account of its rocky bottom and the many big boulders. Then we travelled on over a rolling prairie until sundown when we camped on Sandy creek. We estimated that Alex and I had made 28 miles, and his experience as a government surveyor on the Missouri prairie in 1843 ought to make his estimates accurate. Notwithstanding the Company had travelled all day yesterday while we were in camp, we caught up with them by nightfall. Prayer and provender hinder no man Am confirmed in the resolution to keep the Sabbath.

Tuesday  
June 5th

Started at sunrise and travelled over a high ridge in the morning. The soil here was poorer than we have yet struck. We nooned by a pool of water by the roadside. In the afternoon we crossed several small streams and pulled into camp at sundown, with men and animals all very tired.

Wednesday  
June 6th

Unwell and weak today, but kept up with the Company. Passing over a very broken country, we skirted the Little Blue and nooned on the banks of the river. A rumor was brought into camp that the Pawnees were out in great force and had committed some depredations and attacked parties of emigrants. It was deemed best for us to take the necessary precautions and we immediately encamped. In company with



two others I was thrown out as an advance guard as we travelled and after we had encamped. But we saw nothing to excite alarm and the only incident of note occurring during the night was a violent storm which broke in fury on us. Many of the men professed great disappointment that we were not disturbed by the Pawnees, but the more experienced amongst us were well satisfied with the result.

Thursday  
June 7th

Started our journey this morning at five o'clock and travelled in the bottoms and over the ridges along the Blue. The day was cloudy and warm. There was much talk of the Indians and our exposure to their attacks, but talk only, for while Pawnees, supposedly, were visible in the distance they made no attempt to approach us.

Friday  
June 8th

Thinking to avoid the heat we started today at 2:00 A. M., and travelled, still skirting the Blue and crossing several small streams. Noon on the banks of the Blue. I was detained by an accident behind the train and compelled to walk several hours in order to overtake it. Soon after encamping the Company was again thrown into excitement by an alarm of Indians, who had been loitering around in the hope, possibly, of catching some of us unawares. Why they failed to attack me when I was delayed I know not, for they had full opportunity. But as I was unaware of their proximity the walk was an enjoyable relief from the continual riding.

Saturday  
June 9th

Started at 2:00 A. M. and travelled until we stopped for breakfast. In the morning we met a party of Laramie traders en route to the States and exchanged greetings with them. They seemed eager to receive such information as we could impart and in turn furnished us with items of interest regarding the route ahead and the emigrants they had passed.

Travelled today on the divide between the Blue and the Platte rivers and finally came to the banks of the Platte where we camped, 10 miles from Ft. Kearney. Our journey from one river to the other occupied a little less time than we had estimated, eight days.

Sabbath  
June 10th

Another Sabbath dawned, clear, cool and pleasant, as befitting a day of rest. Everything indicated a profitable day, but like the morning cloud, or as the early dew, the good impressions, with which the day began, quickly passed away. Absence of grazing for the animals compelled us to hitch and travel ten miles to good grass. Dissatisfaction among the men is on the increase and Hedspeth comes in for much criticism despite his previous experience on the plains. The men are anxious to travel faster than would be consistent with the safety of their animals. Those with mule teams chafe under the slow progress demanded by the ox-teams.

I escaped from the dispute and took refuge some distance from the camp and spent the time in reading and meditation. Mine iniquities are great and my feet had well nigh slipped but Thou sustained me.

Monday  
June 11th

Wakened by a violent thunderstorm. The wind blew a gale and the lightning was incessant and the thunder rolled in deafening peals; rain mingled with hail rendered the prospect of travel unpleasant and we remained in camp, which brought the dissatisfaction to a head and after more or less angry argument it was decided to divide the Company, as the split seemed irreconcilable. Separation seemed to be the only solution and without it peace and friendship are impossible. We commenced here the use of "bois de vache" or buffalo chips, wood being scarce. These chips are abundant now and make a very intense fire, serving our purpose quite well.

Tuesday  
June 12th

The difficulty in securing grazing sufficient for so large a Company's need, together with the friction developed by bringing uncongenial people into such close companionship, renders the break-up into smaller parties a sensible course. The try-out of unseasonable travellers seems now to be at an end.

Wednesday  
June 13th

As Alexander and I could not travel with either division without offending our friends in both divisions we passed out from the Company at 9 A. M., with our own wagons. Parting with those with whom we had travelled the past three weeks reminded me of the sadness with which I parted with my friends at Independence. We made good headway and kept on until night when we camped alone with one mule wagon belonging to the Pioneer train. We thought we had made thirty miles today, but more likely it was twenty. A terrific thunderstorm came up after dark and continued all night,—the severest storm we have thus far experienced. Splitting up of companies apparently had taken place among other trains for we passed numerous small parties, some no larger than ours.

Thursday  
June 14th

We rose early and were soon on our way, the roads were very bad and heavy pulling. At noon we came in sight of Jones' Company's camp. In the afternoon we overtook them and we travelled on together until night, when we all went into camp at sunset. Talked late into the night and renewed old ties.

Friday  
June 15th

Our travel today was along the Platte, a wide, turbid, swift stream. As we advanced the bluffs became more and more rugged and the soil more sandy. Our route ran in close to the river. The day was cool and pleasant.

We were fortunate enough to secure several deer which were brought into camp and divided among all. Something of a pleasant variation to thus add to our diet this venison.

The distance today was, probably, 20 miles.

Saturday  
June 16th

Rose before sunrise and after breakfast took up our journey, travelling still along the Platte, when we camped at noon at a spot bordering on the river. The wind was high and from the southeast.

Sabbath  
June 17th

Rose at our usual time and in the forenoon had our first sight of buffalo. Great excitement prevailed in the camp. Everyone wanted to go out and shoot some; so every horse and mule was requisitioned; powder and shot distributed among the men who were chosen as hunters. The train was delayed until they could bring the meat and cook it. The herd numbered some fifty or sixty head. As they advanced the hunters opened fire and several animals fell to the ground and were soon despatched. The rest took to flight with the hunters after them until we had killed more than our immediate needs required. In the butchering process the hide was quickly stripped off and preserved for future use; choice cuts and steaks were hurriedly placed on the fire and in our impatience to begin the feast were frequently snatched away before thoroughly cooked. Cooking and eating was the order of the day and all were in high good humor. Portions were saved against future need and we reluctantly started forward, travelling until we had made some eighteen miles when we camped for the day. The wind today was high and from the south.

The day was clear and the wind still high and southerly. Wood and water and grass being scarce, yielding to the Captain's opinion we trav-



elled on all day until night. Saw several gangs of buffalo moving toward the river but did not molest them.

We skirted the South Fork of the Platte, the valley becoming narrower, the ridges and bluffs smaller and more undulating than on the Main Platte. Tonight is clear, cold and dry and I shall sleep on the ground wrapped in blankets. Not at all satisfied with spending the day in travel, but felt it imperative to do so.

Monday  
June 18th

The wind still continues high and the sky clear. Our course is bending toward the river, the soil is sandy and vegetation is scarce and sparse near the highlands. In the sloughs it is rank and luxuriant, as also near the river. We crossed the South Fork at a ford where the depth ranged from six inches to three feet and the river a mile wide. The current was swift, the water muddy and the bottom sandy. But we effected the crossing without difficulty and by 2 P. M. all the wagons were safely over. We camped on the opposite bank for the remainder of the day and spent the time washing up and readjusting the effects in the wagons. The wind continues still to be very high.

Tuesday  
June 19th

The day dawned cloudy but later the sky cleared off. We started a little before sunrise and travelled up the valley of the South Fork until noon, when, bearing to the right, we crossed over a high undulating ridge and thence to the North Fork. A severe storm overtaking us we encamped for the night. The country we passed through today was more sterile and vegetation was more sparse than any I have yet seen. We saw several prairie dog villages and during the noon halt I examined one. This inoffensive little animal, resembling a fox-squirrel, brownish red in color, feeds on roots and grass. In digging his burrow he casts up quite a mound of dirt, conical in shape, in the top of which is the entrance. I probed down perpendicularly into a burrow at least two feet when the passage seemed to slope away to a greater depth. It was both amusing and interesting to watch their sentinels sound the alarm when I approached and scamper to their mounds and finally with much chattering disappear into their burrows. Although said to be good for food I made no effort to kill one, finding it of greater interest to note their curious ways in the limited time at my disposal.

I also found, strangely enough, black sand in the bluffs. Our noon halt was 12 miles from the South Fork crossing. In the afternoon we crossed over the North Fork and went into camp. Weather threatening as we made ready for the night.

Wednesday  
June 20th

Last night the weather was squally and we were willing enough to remain in camp until noon. It is now a month since I left home. What changes may have occurred! One or more may have been stricken down! Ignorance, like hope deferred, maketh the heart sick. In the afternoon we caught up and started on, travelling through the same character of country as yesterday. The afternoon was clear and warm, but tonight it is growing cool. Camped about sunset.

Thursday  
June 21st

Started at sunrise and traveled steadily till the close of the day, and then camped down on high ground. The roads were alternately hard and sandy. Nothing of note occurred during the day, and we were glad to pull into camp.

Friday  
June 22nd

Started again at sunrise and travelled until noon, when we nooned on the river bank. Early this morning, while riding carelessly along the roadside, my mule made an unexpected jump to one side and I was thrown to the ground, much to the amusement of the company until they dis-

Saturday  
June 23rd

covered I was somewhat hurt by the fall. It was a narrow escape from serious injury, wonderfully attesting the mercy and goodness of God.

After four hours nooning we caught up again and travelled forward about a half mile and encamped for the night in a lovely spot in a ravine, where the water was pure and the surrounding hills shut us in on all sides.

Sunday  
June 24th

Spent the morning in camp, washing up, and resting,—both of which were much needed. In the afternoon we caught up and moved a short distance, passing through Ash Hollow, and camped again on the river bank.

Made a very early start before sunrise this morning and kept on travelling until 9 A. M. when we went into camp all day. Late in the evening we made some five or six miles and camped for the night. The mosquitoes were most troublesome to both animals and the men.

Monday  
June 25th

Rose early this morning and travelled on as we did yesterday until 9 A. M., to avoid the heat of the day, and nooned until 4 P. M. The vegetation is sparse and the grass very poor; the soil arid and sandy making travelling heavy. The ridges, some three or four miles from the river were covered with pine-growth. The mosquitoes are very troublesome, as indeed they have been for several nights past and writing is almost impossible.

Tuesday  
June 26th

Started again before sunrise this morning. Our manner of travelling the same as yesterday except that we continued on until 10 A. M., when we nooned. We had today our first view of Chimney Rock, Court House and Laramie's Peaks, the last appearing as a small white cloud rising over the western horizon. We travelled on until we were opposite the Court House, where we encamped for the night. The evening has turned stormy, and there is much thunder and lightning.

Wednesday  
June 27th

We resumed our course about 7 A. M. and travelled until noon, when we camped about half a mile from Chimney Rock, which is a conical shaped rock on which rests a column, said to be over three hundred feet high and which by a slight stretch of imagination may be said to resemble a chimney. According to old plainsmen it could formerly be seen as far away as Ash Creek. It is, assuredly, an interesting curiosity of Nature, majestic in its solitude, overlooking the vast plains that surround it.

We travelled seven miles beyond it and camped for the night.

Court House Rock, or McFarlan's Castle, rises in quadrangular form three hundred feet or more into the air. Like Chimney Rock it commands a broad view of the country round.

Thursday  
June 28th

Caught up early this morning and travelled until 9 A. M. stopping where the trail leaves the river and ascends the bluffs.

Late in the afternoon we started on again, and travelled through a valley, or artificial basin, where fancy had an opportunity to revel on food of the daintiest kind, not often afforded even along this picturesque route. The bluffs on both sides took on the most fantastic shapes,—castles, bastions, fortifications and walled cities, and princely palaces. These scenic deceptions were much heightened in their effect by moonlight which shone brilliantly on us as we passed along. The most prosaic amongst us were loth to hurry forward. This locality, where the bluffs crowd toward the river, is called Scott's Bluffs, from the fact that a trapper of that name was deserted by his companions, who left him with-



out ammunition and supplies, in their eagerness to catch up with a party ahead. Scott's skeleton was found later nearly forty miles from where he was deserted, he by some shift having made his way hither until death relieved him of his sufferings. It was a relief to turn from thoughts of what misery he must have endured to contemplate the grand and imposing spectacle of Nature which had reared this mimic city among the solitudes of the desert. This varied enchanted basin offers inaccessible homes for the mountain sheep, and as rumor says, for the grizzly bear as well. We were content to meet this latter only in imagination, for in such surroundings one could conjure up fears enough over the mere thought.

We encamped for the night at 10 P. M.

Friday  
June 29th

Before daylight we started on and, leaving this valley of enchantment ascended the bluffs. Half way up we found a spring of delicious water, of which we drank most eagerly. Ascending a high hill we saw from its heights Laramie's Peak grandly looming up in the distance. We nooned at the foot of a ridge and at 2 P. M. started on again travelling until sunset when we reached and camped on the west side of Horse Creek. As we pulled into the place selected for our camp we started up some elk, and some of us started out hunting. Before dark we were fortunate enough to secure not only several elk, but deer and antelope also, with which we hurried back to camp, and our supper became a banquet-feast.

Saturday  
June 30th

We started at sunrise and travelled for eight or ten miles, when we nooned on the North Fork of the Platte. In the afternoon we made six or eight miles more and camped at sunset, again on the banks of the Platte. Close at hand we found a fine sulphur spring, of a character to remind me of the one at home.

Sunday  
July 1st

Remained in camp at the same place the greater part of the day and I took occasion to climb the bluffs, whence I had a fine view of the landscape. Toward evening we started and made eight or ten miles, with a strong gale blowing which raised clouds of dust, rendering the day's travel very disagreeable, although the roads were remarkably fine. En-route we passed a dismantled fort. It was quite dark when we encamped for the night, and we ceased to look for water of which we had great need. The animals feel its loss quite as much as do the men.

Monday  
July 2nd

Started on our way this morning a little before sunrise over roads remarkably firm and good. As the day advanced the weather became very warm. We came to the banks of Laramie's Fork and nooned, and later, being in sight of the Fort we crossed the stream and after some delay at the Fort, we came out into the hills a few miles and camped. The hills where we are now are high and desolate looking. Cactus abundant. The roads today were very steep. The wind was high, making travelling in stifling dust exceedingly unpleasant. Fort Laramie is our first sight of civilized dwellings since leaving the frontier, and the place was more interesting to us than we were to the inhabitants. Sent letters home.

Dear Mary:

I promised to write you again and now to fulfill my promise. You have studied geography enough by this time to know where to find Platte River that empties into the Missouri River. Away above the forks of it you will see a small fork on the North Fork of the Platte called Laramie's Forks. This is where I am now. In passing over the country from Independence we have seen a long and extensive body of land without any

trees but plenty of grass with beautiful flowers (and rare plants) of all colors, purple, orange, blue, white yellow and red. And then we have seen, chased and killed buffaloes. You have in your geography a picture of them. It looks very much like what you see in reality. In passing along the road we have come across the prairie dog. It lives in a hole in the ground with an owl and a rattlesnake. There is always quite a number of them together. A week or two ago I was walking along when I came across one of their villages and I laid down on the ground to watch them. After a little they would come to the mouth of their holes and finding all quiet they would commence barking and visiting each other but as soon as I would rise up they would dive into their holes as quick as a flash almost. They are about the size of a large squirrel and when cooked well they eat very well, tasting like a squirrel or a rabbit. Then we have seen elk, black tailed deer, antelopes and a larger rabbit than we have at home, together with wolves, prairie ground squirrels, etc., etc.

I would like to have a chance of sending you some things that I could have got and to send to your mother some of the prettiest flowers and rarest plants that I have ever seen. You must be a good girl, obey your parents, love grandpa and grandma. When I come back I may bring you something that you will like. You must not forget your

Uncle Sam.

Tuesday  
July 3rd

Travelled today over a hilly country, passing numerous ravines and hollows. Ten miles from the Fort we found a warm spring, and camped for the night on a high ridge. In the hollows the roads were gravelly and full of pebbles; on the ridges hard and compact.

Wednesday  
July 4th

Early this morning we descended into the valley close to the Platte and camped for the day on account of the serious sickness of one of our party. The day has been warm. Cactus and sage abound.

How the memory of the past is freshened by the recurrence of these mileposts on the road of Time, as some calls these festival days observed by a whole nation. Friends and relations as well as past events are recalled to mind. The morning being clear, orders were given to start. But we were reluctant to leave. No one stirred and we lazily reclined in the shade of the wagons the greater part of the day. Marching orders, accordingly, were rescinded and the proposed celebration of the day was postponed on account of sickness, and I thus escaped making a speech, as suggested.

After supper we removed the cattle 3 or 4 miles from camp to better grass, and finding good grass we guarded them under trees all night. The night was truly beautiful and my thoughts were far away from present scenes, thinking of those I loved and desiring their happiness. Yet ever and anon I was recalled to our surroundings and yielded to the spell of the vast and the profound stillness of the night, which was broken only by the restlessness of the cattle and the low moaning of the night wind among the hills.

Thursday  
July 5th

We started early and our course today led us over a sandy and barren country. We nooned by a canon near to where the Platte forces its way through the mountains by a narrow cleft. The day was warm and clear, and we camped for the night at the foot of a ridge on the river.

Friday  
July 6th

Early this morning we were again upon our way and followed a route that led us along a high ridge. We here first saw the distant peaks of the Rocky Mountains. The road was compact and hard. Toward evening we descended the hill and camped on the banks of a small stream, but we found no grass for the stock, although wood was abundant. The weather has been clear and cool.



Saturday  
July 7th

Resuming our journey this morning we soon entered a desolate region, apparently volcanic in character, where the scenery was truly picturesque. Disrupted and torn strata of rock, of volcanic origin, frowned on us from one ridge whilst on another ridge the rock lay in regular order in closest neighborhood. Conical hills 20 to 60 feet in height, composed of masses of rock, thrown together as it were at random, added greatly to the scenic effect. In a basin, or crater, we found pinks of a delicate purple color, which gave a pleasing touch to the otherwise rugged landscape.

In the afternoon we ranged along a ridge of rocks, set on edge as it were, in upright strata of different colors, harmonizing very beautifully.

Sabbath  
July 8th

Caught up early and travelled a few miles over a hilly and broken country, desolate in character, and camped on a small stream 6 miles from the Platte. Being on the night guard I was sent out two miles from the wagons to watch the cattle and so was enabled to spend the day better than I have for some time past, but, alas, how differently from what I should.

Monday  
July 9th

Resumed our course at sunrise and made about 13 miles when we nooned on the banks of a fine stream. Our travel today was over a rolling country, much less broken than that traversed for several days past.

In the afternoon we crossed the stream and ascended the ridge, camping at 10 P. M. on the banks of the Platte.

Tuesday  
July 10th

Travelled some considerable distance today over a country less broken than any we have passed through for some time past, and camped about sunset. On our left we had a range of mountains and the swift stream rushed along with petulant murmur.

We passed through several ravines during the day where the descent was steep, and very rough, where we had to exercise great care to prevent the wagons from overturning. These bad and difficult places constituted the only events of the day, and gave a foretaste of what we have still to encounter. But none of the party but feel confident as to the final issue.

Wednesday  
July 11th

We remained in camp nearly all day on the banks of the Platte, where the grass was good, in order to recuperate our stock. The rest enabled us to try our luck fishing and hunting, with the result that we had some fine fish and wild geese for supper, a most welcome addition to our diet.

Thursday  
July 12th

We started again at 8:00 A. M. and travelled for 5 or six miles when we reached the Mormon Ferry and, after some delay in arranging our effects, we were ferried over. The Mormons in charge were accommodating and willing to favor us in all ways, contrary to the reports we had heard concerning their suspicious and churlish character.

During the hour we stopped to get ready a disagreement between our driver and Alex and me forced us to discharge him and I took the reins myself. While the wagon was being ferried over the river I swam the mules to the other side, hitched up and drove off. Our course of travel then led us over the bluffs and through the sand for some eight or ten miles, where the hauling proved very heavy. A little after dark we camped on the ridge two miles from the river, which I think we will leave at this point. Unhitched and after a light supper was glad to get to bed, the day's strain having made me feel very tired. There was a pleasant breeze all day, greatly alleviating the discomfort of the heavy pulling through the sand.

Friday  
July 13

Wakened at daylight and gathered up my mules preparatory to starting on, when I learned that it was the intention of the party to remain in camp until afternoon. But we started at 10 A. M. and on our way we passed by a lake of mineral water (alkali) and camped for the night without wood or water, proving the unwisdom of the morning's delay. The country traversed was dry,—very arid, but the weather was cool and most pleasant.

Saturday  
July 14th

Started early this morning on our way, and passed into a region that truly was desolate indeed, nothing but wild sage. Saw many indications of extinct volcanoes. Camped at last at the well known Willow Spring, the water of which was pure and cold.

Here were buried many Mormons who died while crossing the plains in '46, whose graves we took occasion to visit, though but faintly to be seen. In driving our stock about two miles from camp I had a fine view—truly most magnificent—of the mountains, with their high peaks towering toward heaven.

Sabbath  
July 15th

Starting early we travelled until noon travelling over ridges and through ravines, and finding water and grass good, halted on the banks of a small creek. In the afternoon we went a little distance and camped for the night on the same creek. My thoughts during the day, and especially this evening, have dwelt much on home and God. "My meditations of Him and His mercy have been sweet."

Monday  
July 16th

We had travelled but a short distance this morning when we reached the Sweetwater where we camped down for the night.

Tuesday  
July 17th

We started on this morning at 7 A. M. and following up the Sweetwater over a very sandy road, nooned at Independence Rock, a solid and isolated granite mass about three hundred yards from the Sweetwater, covering an area of several acres and rising into the air perhaps two hundred feet. On it were written or carved the names of many immigrants desirous of notoriety. But reflecting on our innate desire for immortality I asked myself whether this was all vanity unmixed with an unconscious craving after perpetuity on the part of the writers. The Rock owes its name, it is said, to the fact that a party of trappers under the leadership of one Thorp once spent the Fourth of July at this place. We found the grass to be very poor and scant, and a number of dead oxen, lying all around, lost by parties ahead of us, who had overtaken their teams. We may beat others out in the last stages of the journey, as our stock is in fair condition. The Sweetwater seems to be about 300 feet wide at this point, and we camped for the night on its banks.

Wednesday  
July 18th

Started early this morning and came to the Devil's Gate, a cleft in the mountains, where the water forcing its way through a narrow passage, dashes and rushes with foamy spray over the rocky barriers. We nooned a mile beyond on the Sweetwater. In the afternoon we left Jones' Company and, with seven wagons, passed on ahead for ten miles and camped. Again found parting with these new found friends and acquaintances a bitter portion, for they had been pleasant travelling companions. But the grazing is not sufficient to accommodate the cattle of our joint companies, so we separated amicably.

Thursday  
July 19th

Started this morning about 7 A. M. and, travelling over a very sandy road, nooned on the banks of the Sweetwater, along which we had been coursing. Saw today the white peaks of some high mountain in the dis-



tance. The country was arid and sandy, with the odious sage the only vegetation. Thought much today of—and home.

Friday  
July 20th

Started this morning at 6 o'clock; forded the river three times and camped early, having made only 9 or 10 miles. Saw the Wind River Mts. covered with snow in the distance. The hills here are covered with rocks, in the flats nothing but sand. In the forenoon we encountered a violent storm, which delayed our progress.

Saturday  
July 21st

Travelled for several hours over a desolate country,—the uplands were dry and sandy, the lowlands covered with saleratus, the region alkaline. Passed by an ice spring close to the road and had a little rain which has left the evening cool and pleasant. We forded the Sweetwater twice today, making an easy crossing.

Sunday  
July 22nd

Intended remaining encamped all day but late in the day concluded it better to move on a few miles, which we did, stopping for the night at 3 P. M., on a small stream. The day was cool and this evening it is unpleasantly cool. Let my meditations of Thee be evermore my food.

Monday  
July 23rd

The country traversed today was high but the roads were good and firm. The day was cool and cloudy and we nooned on the banks of the Sweetwater, which we forded for the last time. Saw patches of snow and ice here and there by the roadside. We ascended gradually until we neared the culminating point, and camped on the Sweetwater, two miles to the right of the road. The evening was cold and yet we were somewhat annoyed with mosquitoes.

Tuesday  
July 24th

There was ice and frost this morning and we spent the day in camp resting up. The ice was a quarter of an inch thick. We are encamped in a beautiful valley, a lovely sheltered place, which has been a good protection from the strong wind. The grass is exceptionally good, the water pure and abundant. On all sides of us the rocks are bare and naked ledges lift themselves high into the air; a silvery streamlet winds its serpentine path at our feet, while in the distance, towering over all the landscape are the ever-abiding snows on the mountains, making a veritable vision of beauty. Wrote a dear friend and enclosed a flower from yonder summit, which I climbed and where I had a fine view. "May happiness be thine." I also have written my Mother, telling her how much the delights of the previous winter had been enjoyed, the memories of which pleasantly remain. But tonight I am weary and sad, wondering what changes may have come to them, or what sorrow will be revealed when we hear again from home.

Wednesday  
July 25th

We started at 6 A. M. from the banks of the last stream we shall meet which flows into the Atlantic waters, the Sweetwater, and struck the road just after it commences the descent, which is gradual. The waters no longer will flow in the direction of home though my thoughts will always travel thither. I have felt melancholy all day, perhaps as a result of crossing the Divide. Three miles from South Pass we came to Pacific Springs, and thence to the Little Sandy, a distance of 19 miles. We passed over an undulating country and sandy roads. The wind being high we travelled in clouds of dust. Close to our right were snowy mountains as well as far off in the distance. To the left of us also, as far the eye could reach, was the same sublime vision of grandeur. I was unwell today and much depressed in spirit. Can I not forget those from whom I am parted? Yet would I if I could? The crossing of this

divide seems to mark definitely the point of departure and to accentuate the fact of our having left home behind us.

Thursday  
July 26th

We started at 5:00 A. M. this morning and travelled over the same kind of country as yesterday till we reached the Big Sandy, a distance of eight or nine miles, and camped for the day on its banks. We sent our stock several miles from camp under a guard for grass preparatory to striking across the desert to Green River. Before camping we caught up with Courtney's train, and travelled with it, making a very pleasant variation in the monotony of the journey. Today was very warm.

Friday  
July 27th

We remained in camp at the same place where we had spent the night until 4 P. M., when the stock was brought in and we started across the desert. It was very windy and the roads were extremely dusty, rendering travelling most unpleasant for animals as well as men. We travelled all night over the desert without stopping to rest until noon

Saturday  
July 28th

today, when we reached Green River and encamped, making about forty miles this stretch. By using Sublette's Cutoff we have saved two days' travelling. The roads last night led us over a level country, but this morning they wound around over steep ascents and down into deep ravines. It was intolerably dusty and the wind drove the dust into our faces with blinding force, almost stifling us as well. The day being warm the mules and oxen were badly fatigued. Friday night was a beautiful night and while driving I found it easy to center my thoughts on home and friends.

Sunday  
July 29th

We remained in camp until noon when we caught up and forded the Green River, a beautiful stream, which empties into the Colorado River. Pardon my neglect of Thee, O God, and look upon me with favor.

Monday  
July 30th

Travelled 9 miles today when we came to Fontanelle's Fork, a small tributary of the Green River, where we camped. The roads were hilly and very dusty and the animals show the effects of the journey.

Tuesday  
July 31st

Started early and made what we thought was a good day's travel,—some 14 miles,—over steep mountain roads and nooned in a small valley near to a soda spring, whose water was cold and pure. I then passed on in company with one wagon some 5 or 6 miles and camped. The roads were dusty and rough. We passed over two steep mountains and the wagons were often in danger of upsetting. I was thrown out but was mercifully preserved from harm. We passed several springs of water, cold as ice and pure as crystal, which tempted us to stop and rest. Close to the road we saw small patches of snow.

Wednesday  
August 1st

Started early this morning and travelled over a hilly country and camped for the day on Ham's Fork, where the grass and water were good and abundant. Close to our camp was that a French trader with his two squaws. In the afternoon I paid them a visit and was invited to take supper with them. I accepted, notwithstanding their dirty appearance, and they gave me much information as to the roads ahead. The squaws cooked supper and set before us a mixture of grouse and squirrel, the latter having the appearance of a rat. The mess was not very clean but I managed to eat some of it and thus gave no offense to their hospitality. The day was clear and pleasant.

Thursday  
August 2nd

Soon after starting this morning we left the valley and ascended a high steep mountain. After passing several similar mountains, we mounted