

Incidents of Travel

[Mr. Udell left Davis County, Iowa on May 1st, 1850, in company with Mr. Geo. Gregg, and his two sons, Oliver and Henry Udell, bound for California.]

- 16 31st. Traveled thirty-two miles most of the way four miles off the river; we forded Buffalo creek, and had another bad crossing.

I would advise all emigrants not to drink from those wells of which there are so many dug on these plains. They are so saturated with saleratus that if freely drank of they will cause malignant diseases. I have traveled over the plains three times and have always drank the river water in preference to these wells. The springs at the foot of these bluffs are clear and healthy.

June 1st. It was very rainy and dark. We only traveled twelve miles.

2d. Sunday. This day we should have rested out of respect to the laws of God. Our horses, too, needed refreshment, but the great majority voted against stopping, and we were compelled to go on. Traveled twenty-two miles.

3d. To-day, we traveled about twenty-six miles. For the past three days we have had plenty of water and grass, but no wood except willow brush. There are a great many Buffaloes, Deer, Antelopes, Wolves, and Hares in this section.

4th. The day has been very stormy and cold—we have traveled only fourteen or fifteen miles. It is very uncomfortable to sleep upon the ground, such rainy cold nights. Were we at home we would think it certain death to sleep so, but here we enjoy good health. To-day one of our company cut up a valuable wagon for fuel; we have been

- 17 several days without any wood except a little green willow brush, and that would not burn.

5th. We traveled to-day some twenty-three miles. The country about here is mostly barren sand banks, except the river bottoms, or flats;—these produce our grass. We have seen a number of buffalo carcasses on the road, which have been shot by emigrants.

6th. The roads are rather bad; they are muddy in places, and run through deep sand bluffs where there is no mud. We find many springs of good water, and plenty of grass, but no wood. The weather being warm we burned buffalo chips.

7th. This day we traveled twenty-five miles;—grass poor and dry—but water good.

8th. Traveled twenty-five miles, and passed thirty-six wigwams belonging to Sioux Indians. They are a very strong, warlike race, and commonly live in small towns. We have no wood, but plenty of water.

9th. Sunday. To day our company consented to rest. By permission I preached to them, and there being some skeptics with us, I presented to their minds some of the evidences of the authenticity of the holy scriptures, and of a future state of existence, and closed with a few remarks upon the necessity of preparing for a future state.

10th. This day we traveled twenty-three miles. Found good grass and water, but no wood. Passed Bluff Ruins, a stupendous mass of gray rocks that derives its name from the architectural beauty into which the rocks are thrown. The angular projections of stone rising two hundred feet, give it a lofty appearance. I ascended its

summit and obtained a view of the magnificent scene before me—the winding river with its many green islands, the broad green flats variegated with brilliant-hued flowers, the high mountains covered with cedar and evergreens, and the road on either side at the foot of the ruins literally covered with the teams of California emigrants as far as the eye could reach above and below.

18 11th. This day we traveled twenty-five miles. Passed Chimney Rock—which is a lofty rock one hundred feet high, and shaped like a common chimney. Formation is of soft stone, as is that of most of the rocks on this course. It is situated on the south side of the river. To-day we found grass, wood and water.

12th. Came fifteen miles to Scott's Bluffs, lying on the opposite side of the river. These bluffs present a noble appearance of several forts connected together; the rugged mountains rising boldly behind them, give them the semblance of being fortified as were the castles of former ages. The formation of these rocks is their chief beauty. The front, as seen from this side of the river, is nearly perpendicular, and composed of all colors—bright red, purple, gray, white and blue, which give it a picturesque appearance.

13th. This day we traveled twenty-five miles. Found the road good, except the last five miles, which were deep and sandy. We have come three hundred miles and have seen only one small grove of timber. Are still on the Platte River, five hundred miles from the Missouri.

14th. To-day we came twelve miles to Fort Laramie. This fort is situated on the junction of the Laramie and Platte rivers and is protected on every side but the east, by mountains. It is constructed in a rude manner, merely for a defence against the Indians; but the buildings around it are very good. There is a company of soldiers stationed here. The land around the fort is susceptible of cultivation and the mountains are well timbered. Here commence what are called the Black Hills; in reality, the Rocky Mountains. From this place we travel in the mountains all the way to California.

15th. Sent across the river to the officers of the fort, to learn whether we could pass over to the south side, they sent us word that we could not. But some of our company determined to make the attempt, so we constructed a ferry-boat of a wagon box and ferried our wagon and goods across. We had considerable difficulty in getting our horses across this dangerous, swift running stream. I
19 would advise all travelers who are on the north side of this river to keep that side, as it will save two dangerous crossings and three days travel.

16th. We traveled twelve miles.

17th. We traveled thirty miles among the Black Hills and passed many singularly shaped mountains and rocks. Here we found plenty of good springs and grass.

18th. Nineteen miles more through the high hills on a smooth road. These Black Hills are thinly timbered with yellow, or pitch pine, which furnishes travelers with good fuel. To day we passed Laramie Peak, a bold, rugged mountain, rising far above the lofty hills that surround it. The circumference is about thirty miles. Its altitude was taken by Professor Pratt of Salt Lake city, and was found to be seven thousand feet above the level of the sea. The summit is covered with perpetual snow. A dispute arose in our company as to whether there was snow or white sand on this peak, . . .