

Friday Apl 6th. This Morning as I lay in my berth I was awakend by the cry of some person to "put out the fires quick". As I heard no sound of steam I was convinced there could be no danger from that cause and I laid still for some ½ hour longer. Upon getting up I found there had been a hole burnt through one of the Boilers—the result of negligence on the part of the Engineer, and which will detain us here 2 or 3 days unless some Boat should pass by on which we may procure passage. This is most unfortunate as the provender for my Mules is just gone and there is none to be procured near us unless we feed them on Cottonwood Bark of which there is plenty and which it is said they will eat rather than starve. Took a walk over the Cliffs after Breakfast, and discover'd the wigwam of an Indian pleasantly situated in a little valley at which we stoppd and procured about 1½ Bushels Corn, sheldd which Cost us \$1.00. The sides of the wigwam were formed of Matting made of rushes and the roof was covered with large peices [sic] of Bark piled over each other there were 2. or 3 squaws and a number of children there and they all appeard quite shy and somewhat displeas'd at our intrusion on their domain. The word "Dollar" however which they all understood soon set matters right and the old Indian shouldered the sack of corn which we bought and accompanied us to the Boat. Finding our provender diserting us we had made efforts to procure some at all the landings, but neither Hay Corn or Oats Could we find except at 1 place where an old Man gave us a Bucketfull of Ears, and at Kansas where "Mercure" procured ½ Bushel of Ears for which he paid the very reasonable price of 2.00 per Bushel. Took a walk this afternoon to the summit of a Bluff near the river from which we had a very extensive view of the surrounding country. Here from the pinnacle of the Bluff at the base of which rushes the mighty Missouri winding its tortuous course through the dreary wilderness, we look to the west and as far as the Eye can reach over a succession of hills and valleys forest and Mountains, and we cannot help feeling impress'd with the wild and melancholy beauty of the scene. We are at this point over 800 miles from the mouth of the river and some idea of its magnitude may be

⁵"Me" Berrien's partner, is mentioned only briefly in the diary. As implied later, the diarist had apparently made an arrangement of convenience, not of confidence.

formed when we consider that it is navigable for 2500 miles farther for Boats of the size and class of the one we are on at present. While I was at the Bluffs sitting at the foot of a tree a little Indian Boy came to me with a Bow and Arrow in his hand. I first discovered him at the foot of the hill no doubt attracted there to view the steamer. As soon as he saw me he came directly to me and with a smile on his features greeted me in Indian fashion. I tried to converse with him but could only make myself understood by signs. In this manner I discoverd he was a member of the family whose wigwam I visited in the morning. He wandered about near me for some time practising with his arrows up on the woodpeckers on the neighboring trees. At last he came and sat down near me motionless and silent. I had been writing in my memorandum Book and had fallen into a reverie, my mind was far away from the scene before me employ'd with the remembrances of other lands which though not possessing perhaps the same degree of Beauty and sublimity of scenery were still infinitely more endeared to me by early associations and cherished remembrances [sic], when the Indian boy touched me on the knee with his arrow and directed my attention to the river from the farthest distance of which I saw a steamer turning round a point and slowly stemming the turbid waters of the rushing Missouri. Shortly after the Bell of our Boat rang and I took my leave of the Indian Boy leaving him seated at the foot of a tree. The steamer in sight proved to be the Mary (we passd her the first night out from St Louis) and having no other resource we took passage on her, the Captain of our Boat shipping our freight and refunding our passage money in proportion to the distance travelled. We found this Boat too, very much crowded with Californians and of course being the last comers our accomodations were extremely poor. She is also a much slower Boat than the one we left not being able to make more than 4 miles an hour. We travell'd along slowly untill 10 o'clock when we stoppd at a woodyard and tied up for the night.

Apl 7th Resumed our journey about 4 o'clock the next morning and after very tedious and slow progress reached St Joseph at ½ past 4 in the afternoon. This is a very pretty place and contains some very beautiful and substantial houses built of Brick and considering that 5 years ago there was not

½ a dozen houses here its progress is beyond all conception.* Commenced unloading our waggons immediately on our arrival but as they were distributed all over the vessel we made very slow progress and I did not succeed in landing my waggon untill after 12 at night. I stored my freight as soon as we landed and took my mules to a stable. I was obliged to stay on the wharf all night to guard my waggon my partner having deserted me early in the evening preferring his own comfort to a cheerless and uncomfortable watch on the shore. Next morning, obtained assistance from our Belleville friends, harnessed our mules and drove to their camp about a mile from the landing. Saw Col Jarrot this morning. He was engaged in crossing his waggons over the river to a camp about 4 miles out on the opposite side. Since they have been here Jarrot's Co have passed a law prohibiting the admission of any more persons in their Company without the consent of a majority of the members, so that before I can be admitted the company must meet and a vote be taken.† I do not anticipate much opposition to our admission still I will try to prepare for the worst.

* St. Joseph had originally been founded by the trader-trapper, Joseph Robidoux. It began as a fur trading post in 1803, the year of the momentous Louisiana Purchase. Much later, after he had formally laid out plans for his city, Robidoux honored the site by naming it for his patron saint. Berrien arrived during the month when emigrant activity was at its peak. No sensible emigrant would plan on anything less than a four-month crossing, and to have departed from this advanced outfitting depot after the middle of May would have been courting disaster, for sometimes the deadly Sierra Nevada snowfall began in early September. Irene D. Paden, *The Wake of the Prairie Schooner* (New York, 1943), 54.

† By 1849, St. Joseph could claim more than "fifteen hundred inhabitants, eighteen stores, two pork-packing establishments, two steam sawmills, two flour mills, two 'mechanic shops,' three churches, two newspapers, several saloons, a courthouse, and a triweekly stage. . . ." Walker D. Wyman, "The Outfitting Posts," *Rushing for Gold*, ed. John Walton Caughy (Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association, *Special Publication*, No. 1; Berkeley and Los Angeles, Calif., 1949), 18.

‡ The pre-gold-rush caravans had been composed of farmers with an eye on the rich soil of Oregon. The Argonauts of '49, however, often included large numbers of mechanics and city-dwellers. The men would form themselves into a company not unlike a county militia company, elect a commander or "captain," and draw up rules providing for their common welfare. Sections from one such pact included:

"Whereas we are about to leave the frontier, and travel over Indian Territory, exposed to their treachery, and knowing their long and abiding hatred of the whites; also many other privations to meet with. We consider it necessary to form ourselves into a Company for

Apl 9th Spent the day in camp on the Banks of the Black Snake, a little stream that runs through the town. I busied myself in making Side Boards for my waggon and various other preparations for the trip. The Bellevillians with whom I am staying are very gentlemanly and kind and my first taste of camp life is very agreeable. Bacon fried and boiled Eggs Potatoes, Beans and Bean Soup Biscuit coffee and tea compose our fare and it is as good as any person can wish.

Apl 10 Still in camp made tent poles and pins this day and have but little more to do in the way of preparations During the night and the previous one it rained very hard but our double waggon cover resisted the wet weather admirably we sleep in our waggon and find it quite comfortable

Apl 11th Are busy in making preparations to cross the river to join the Company on the other side but will not cross today as the river has risen six feet within the last 2 days and is dangerous to cross on account of the drift The Ferry Boat is an old flat Boat which the passengers have to row across themselves and is an unweildy and unmanageable affair. Wrote a letter home this day and put it in the post office I was unable to write home before leaving St Louis as I had but one day to prepare and perfect all my arrangements and my time has been so completely occupied up to this time that I have been constrained to defer writing untill now. I regret this the more as I had promised to write and in this case had intended to perform. This afternoon went to St Joseph and bought some few articles necessary for my journey, for which as usual here I paid extravagant prices. The St Joseph people act upon the principle of charging ex-

the purpose of protecting each other and our property, during our journey to California.

Therefore Resolved, That there shall be one selected from the Company, suitable and capable to act as Captain or Leader.

Resolved, That we, as men, pledge ourselves to assist each other through all the misfortunes that may befall us on our long and dangerous journey.

Resolved, That the Christian Sabbath shall be observed, except when absolutely necessary to travel.

Resolved, That there shall be a sufficient guard appointed each night regularly, by the Captain.

Resolved, That in case of member's dying, the Company shall give him a decent burial." Quoted in Lorenzo Sawyer, *Way Sketches: Containing Incidents of Travel Across the Plains From St. Joseph to California in 1850 . . .*, ed. Edward Eberstadt (New York, 1926), 19n.

travagant rates for all the Emigrant requires being sensible they will not get another chance to take advantages of their necessities. No Emigrant having once experienced this as I have will ever again subject himself to their hospitality.*

April 12th Commenced raining in the morning and continued to rain all day and nearly all night. busied myself in preparations for crossing the river. We purpose crossing at the upper Ferry about 4 miles above St Joseph. The river is quite narrow at that place and there are eddies on both sides so that it is quite easy to land, rained very hard during this night, and very uncomfortable in Camp.

13th Apl. Harness'd up our mules this morning and drove to the landing to get my provisions which were left in store at that place. one of my Mules is a wild stubborn little fellow who has never been broken and I have had some difficulty in putting him in harness but by the aid of a nose stick I have succeeded in cooling him down pretty well and I think he will prove to be as good a mule as I have. For the information of those who do not know what a nose stick is I will here state that it is nothing more than a short stick with a peice of rope spliced in one end. The loop of the rope is to be placed round the upper lip of the animal and by the aid of the stick twisted tight. By means of this simple instrument no matter how vicious or stubborn they may be [they] are easily conquered and made perfectly gentle. You can hold the most stubborn and fiery mule perfectly still with one hand and after the first struggle may handle every limb of their body rub them all over and crawl under their belly if you choose without their daring to lift a foot. I was perfectly astonished at the power of this instrument and wish that the knowledge of its power was generally known. After getting our provisions in the waggon I started for the upper ferry whither our Belleville friends had already gone but about a quarter of a mile out of town I stuck in a mud hole and had to procure a yoke of cattle to draw us out. I was driving but 2

* Emigrant Berrien had only just begun to encounter the results of high demand and short supply. Word of the high prices which the merchants asked for "good American mules" may well have caused Berrien to assume the troublesome burden of hauling his own mules from St. Louis. Walker D. Wyman (ed.), *California Emigrant Letters* (New York, 1902), 34-35.

mules at the time as I wish'd to cool down my fiery little mule with a heavy load and get him well broke to his harness. The road was very bad however owing to the rain of the night previous so after getting out of our mud hole I put the 2 other mules before which made our team more than sufficient for any obstacles we were likely to encounter and we drove along in fine style soon overtaking our friends who had upwards of $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour the start of us. We arrived at the Ferry about 3 O'clock but as there were some teams before us we could not cross until next day so we campd on the bank of the river for the night. I fortunately had some 2 Bushels of corn with me so I gave my mules a good supper and after getting my own we wrappd ourselves in our blankets and turned in for the night. A cold piercing frosty wind was blowing from the north and we slept very uncomfortably in our waggon.

Apl 14th on getting up in the morning we found ice in our Bucket $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch thick which is rather a poor prospect for early grass. After getting our Breakfast we commenced crossing the [Missouri] river and succeeded in getting our waggons and teams over about 10 o'clock⁹ after which we were obliged to cut our way through the woods about 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the camp of Col Jarrot¹⁰ at the foot of the Bluff. We arrived at camp about 3 o'clock in the afternoon and after greeting the company assembled there we proceeded to unharness the mules and picket them out for the night. We are now in the Indian territory but we see very few of them

⁹ So heavy had the westbound traffic become by the late spring of '49 that bottlenecks occurred at most river crossings. At St. Joseph wagons often waited several days, notwithstanding the fact that four ferries were operated in the vicinity. These craft were supplemented by steamboats which on occasion would serve as a ferry for a fee of \$5.00 to \$10.00 per wagon. By the middle of May, 2,850 wagons had paid ferrriage at St. Joseph; above the town another 1,500 had crossed. Wyman, "Outfitting Posts," *Rushing for Gold*, ed. Caughey, 20.

¹⁰ Since most of the wagon trains were identified by the name of the captain, Berrien's associates would be considered as members of the Jarrot Company. The duties of the captain were to direct the order of march, to set the starting and halting time, to select the evening camp site, detail night guards, and generally to adjudicate any company controversy. Rules governing the organization often contained a provision specifying that the undersigned would "bind himself to abide in all cases by the orders and decisions of the captain." A captain might have such support in writing, but if by his poor judgment he lost the confidence of company members, a new captain would be chosen to replace him.