

DRAFT

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2

Clayton, Illinois to St. Joseph, Missouri

April 4 to May 7, 1850

Marion Cty [County], Mo, April 7th A D 1850

Dear Father

We at last got on the road and in good spirits and health The day we left Mr. Fruits we went to Mr. Cadwell's But he thought that it would be useless to go to the river as the wind was blowing very hard & it was very disagreeable So we stayed there that day and made us a tent frame all in good style The next morning we went to the river but the wind was so high that we could not cross So we crossed next morning about ten o'clock which was Saturday⁶⁰

We got about three miles past Palmyra Corn scarce and hay do We paid 50 cts a bushel for corn We started from there this morning to get corn & hay We have now found corn plenty at 35 cts per bushel We are now about 3 1/2 miles west of Warren on the Shelbyville Road We got here about 3 o'clock The road has been very muddy in places The oxen all does pretty well

Corn will be generally between 40 & 75 cts per bushel and hay from 40 to \$1.00 per hundred lbs I think we will get along quite safe It takes about 50 lbs hay to do all the oxen We shall

⁶⁰ James and David Lee Campbell left Mr. Fruits April 4 according to these calculations. The cover of James Campbell's diary says, "left home March 28, 1850." After leaving the Campbell homestead in Clayton, James either traveled with or met his brother, David Lee, near his home in Payson, Illinois. At some point between March 28 and April 4 Barney Springer and James Marion Hickerson joined them. Martha, David Lee's wife, likely stayed with her parents during David Lee's absence.

*still debating
between
foot notes
& end
notes.*

DRAFT

s[t]art and get through Shelbyville tomorrow It is 13 miles from here We forgot to say that we got stuck before we got to the river but it was soon out We have had nothing like sticking since

I believe we have nothing more of interest Yes they people here says it is 200 miles to St. Joseph

We say to all farewell

D. L. & J. Campbell

PS Send word down to Elizabeth that all is well Tell her to be contented and she will hear from James in a few days⁶¹

Monday 8th 2 o'clock

2 PS We are near Shelbyville The road is tole[r]able good I have just met Esquire Beebe He says corn is from 30 to 50 cts a bushele untill we get within 50 miles of St. Joseph then 1.50 per bushel

Tell Elizabeth to write soon & you also

Linnaeus [Linneus], Linn County, Mo, April 13th AD 1850

Dear Father &c

We have got about 125 miles from Quincy We have got along better than I expected We have all been quite well and have enjoyed ourselves very well The following a sort of a journal

Saturday, April 6th: Cross the river; s[t]ayed over nigh[t] at Dearborn west of Palmyra; corn 50 cts

Sunday, 7: Stayed 3 miles west from Warren

Monday, 8th: Stayed near Shelbyville at Jacobs; corn 35 cts

Tuesday, 9th: Stayed at Mr. Griffons; corn 30 cts

Wed, 10th: Stayed at Bloomington; corn 40 cts; hay 60 per cwt

Thursday, 11th: Stayed at the Charitin River; corn 40 cts

Friday, 12th: Stayed Mr. Hacklets; corn 40 cts; hay 1.00 per cwt

Saturday: Stayed at Linnaeus; corn 50 cts

⁶¹ Elizabeth Campbell, from clues in subsequent letters, lived with her parents, the Bradneys, in Brown County, Illinois, during her husband's absence. She also spent time with her father-in-law, David McCord Campbell, near Clayton, Illinois.

The people of this country are the greatest cheats I have ever seen. Almost every man has tried to make us believe that there is any corn ahead short of \$1.00 per bushel when at the same time we often find it within one mile of the same place. In fact we cannot believe a word they say. We have generally got hay at from 25 cts to 50 cts per cwt. 50 lbs make a pretty good feed. We have spent about \$17 thus far which leaves us about one hundred dollars in all the company⁶². From the best information I can get I think it is likely that corn is worth from 50 to 75 cts at St. Joseph.

Sunday morning

We are in this town & did not intend to stay here all day but we have to pay too much for corn and it is snowing. So we will go on till we come to corn & hay and stay a few days. We have been in company with a mule team from Monroe County, this state, for several days. They are very friendly. They have 8 mules to one wagon. One of them and me are going to ride off the road to find a place to stay.

more space
Livingston Cty [County], Mo, April 19th 1850

Dear Father

James & I are well. Better than usual. I am in a great hurry. The mail is waiting. At Bloomington I got in company with a mule team headed by Robr Blackburn. I have been with him ever since.

Corn has been scarce for several days so Mr. Blackburn left the road 8 miles and put up at his Uncles. He brought us with him and we got here last Tuesday noon. They are as kind as Mr. Kimmans. We have plenty of hay given to us for nothing. Corn cost me 50 cts. I have bought 20 bushels. There is scarcely any corn here. It generally sells at 75 cts to \$1.00.

We have been very lucky as all civile men may be. We will stay here till Monday. If the weather is bad we we will stay longer. We are within 75 miles of St. Joseph. We will take corn with us to feed on. Our team is of the best quality. Although the weather is cold the grass is growing so that we will be able to get along very well.

We will not stop long in St. Joseph. We may possibly go up on this side of the river to Old Ft. Carney to cross. Don't know certain. Write to St. Joseph and Old Ft. Carney in case we should go there.

⁶² "The company" at this point on the journey consisted of David Lee Campbell, age 26, his brother James, 24, Barney Springer, and James Marion Hickerson. Barney Springer and James Hickerson are mentioned often in the Campbell's letters, though details of their association are never fully disclosed. The 1850 Federal Census for Melrose Township, Adams County, Illinois, lists James M. Hickerson, a 19-year-old laborer, at home with his parents, Plesant and Elizabeth Hickerson. The Hickersons were within three households of David Lee and Martha Campbell. XX p. 331. Neither Springer nor Hickerson were listed in the 1860 Adams County Census.

I will write again in a day or two in full We are in good spirits putting our trust in God who is able to deliver us at all times Pray for us continually

Be easy Write soon Tell Elizabeth to write James wants to hear

Farewell

DL & J Campbell

We are between the east & west fork of Grand⁶³

St. Joseph, Mo, Monday, [April] 29th AD 1850

Dear Father

James and I are well and enjoying ourselves reasonably well I wrote to you at from Levingston County at Mr. Blackburns where we stayed from Tuesday the 16th untill Wednesday the 24th of April We were as well treated at Mr. Blackburns as we could desire He furnished us with hay, a comfortable house, done our washing and baked bread enough to last to this place--and never charged us one cent When we left there we had bought corn and he give us hay enough to last three days We got within 7 miles of this place Saturday where we bought a little corn at a dollar a bushel We had paid that price on Friday Having no corn we drove into St. Joseph on Sunday morning

We this day passed Mr. Craig, Roberts &c from about Payson They were all well and in good spirits except ~~that was not there~~ some of E. L. Craig's men who turned back They turned back before they got within one hundred miles of St. Joseph Mr. Robert Blackburn, a man who had been with us for some time, took a mules team and ~~drove~~ rode into town on Saturday where he met a Mr. Williams who was interested in his company Williams had procured tickets some days before for Blackburn to cross And though the ferry was very much crowded Williams managed to get us both a cross the river the same evening⁶⁴ So you see we are now ~~we are~~ out of the United States James and myself have been over in St. Jo most of the day getting what little things we wanted though one thing with another things are very dear here

But the town and the people & country &c

Taking the last first I will say that the country from the Mississippi to the town of Linnaeus is but very little account There it begins to get better but more broken After we crossed Grand River we found some very good country but there is often very large quarries of stone out in the prairie

⁶³ Probably between Grand and Thompson Rivers.

⁶⁴ Crossing the muddy Missouri was no easy task. With thousands outfitting and anxious to jump off, it is fortunate the Campbells were able to cross without obstacle or incident.

which is a very unusual sight to an Illinoian There is but little corn or anything else along the road People say that it was very wet last year but near St. Jo the country looks nearly as rich as it does in Illinois but more broken

St. Jo
The town of St. Joseph has bout three times as many houses as ~~they~~ Columbus and but few good ones There is a good deal of business doing here and things are about twice as high as in Quincy And if you do not stand right over your things and look both ways they will be stole from you They have stole one of our pick axes We now keep one fellow on top of our goods all the time We have got a long tolerable well as yet

May 1st, Wednesday

I wrote the above on Monday but we were on the shore where we had no grass So we moved three miles yesterday and camped, stretched our tent, unloaded our wagon, and went back to town to buy corn & flower Corn is very scarce but we managed to get hold of twenty five bushels for which we paid for 20 bu \$1.00 per bushel and 5 bu \$1.20 per bushel So we think we have plenty to do us The grass in this bottom in places is sufficient for cattle to live on where we are now camped The cattle are feeding on rushes They are from one to four feet high and as thick as oats

James has just started out to the bluff where we can get grass and better water than we have here It is two miles farther from town We will probably go out tomorrow We are going into town this evening to get some few little things

Now the people I suppose you have heard that there is fifty thousand people here Well we were told that before we came into town, as well as the awful ravages of the cholera, small pox, starvation and the like But when we got here we could not find the people and was glad that we could neither see nor hear of sickness of any kind but some few drunk men

On Sunday night there was a man died in his wagon in town of delirium tremens [tremors] He had his empty bottle by his side This is the only death that I have heard of It is very healthy here

From the information I can get there has been about two thousand persons here this spring and seven or 8 hundred of them have started on the plains But I have heard that those that started some two weeks since are suffering for the want of grass Most that are going now are horses and mule teams Some of the oxen and horses here are in miserable order on account of the owners having run out of money before the bottoms were good for grasing There is plenty of room in the bottom here for all⁶⁵

Another word about the people of St. Joseph They are the greatest liars & scoundrals that I have met with for some time They go in for the money at all hazards but they have got all out

⁶⁵ Peter Cook, an emigrant diarist encamped near St. Joseph the same week as the Campbells, estimated in his recollection that there were 10,000 camped waiting for springtime.

of me that they will get out of me if no bad luck happens me⁶⁶

As to money matters we will have about thirty dollars to start with but I have had to keep my self stirring to save as much as possible. But now we are about through buying (all but tar) and have plenty to do us as we will have no chance to spend after we leave this

I don't want you to tell Pemp and Waddell anything about how we are doindg [doing] in as much as I don't think they done right by me when I started. They went to the river with us and we heard some very unfavorable accounts about feed. So I asked them to make up our expense money to \$120 but they could not be persuaded that we could make use of it in any way at all so I left them. We have had to throw away their ox bows and make new ones for them as their oxens necks were very sore. And Old Ball & Lion would pull as much as both of theirs. But the oxen are doing very well now and I think we will be among the formost teams on the road. We do not expect to leave here for a week at any rate till we think the grass has a good start on the plains. We will haul a little corn a long for a few days

We over took Roses & Taylor a few days before we got to town and I expect we will go in company with them. However we are nearly done looking round and tomorrow we will begin to lookout for a company. I will write again before we start and I think from every appearance that we will be apt to get along well

I have not had a letter from you yet but I expect that there is some at the office though. It is so much crowded that a man can scarcely get to the office. I received a letter from Mr. Fruit and he said that he had heard from you and you were all well. Our company can are all doing very well

Dear Father, Mother, Brothers and Sisters, we are not alone. Our Father in Heave has been with and blessed us so that our path has been quite smoothe. And by you and us putting our trust in him we will find him ever ready to help in time of need. Write to Sacramento

Farewell

D. L. & J. Campbell

Send word to Elizabeth James will write before we leave. We seen Grove Walker yesterday. He will start this week. Bill Chapman has gone on

Nebraska District, Monday, May 6th AD 1850

Dear Father, Mother, Brother & Sisters

⁶⁶ Diarists in St. Joseph the same week as the Campbells echoed their opinions of the populace of St. Joseph: Hamden Cagwin wrote, "a severe lyric on St. Joe and her swindlers." Eleazar Ingalls thought St. Joseph was "the greatest place for gambling and all other rascality." And William Rothwell wrote about seeing the monster "broadside at St. Joe."

We are still in good health I am in better health than I have been for a year and I think that I will in all probability soon be entirely well We have now got over the worst part of the road and have not found it as difficult as we expected What difficulties there are come one at a time so that we do not find them hard as one would think The thing that has given us most trouble has been the bad reports we heard before we came to town But generally when we come to the worst place all had vanished

I expect we will start from here on the 8th of this month There has been teams starting ever since we came here and some went four weeks ago but they have suffered by it There has been several men gone from here out 20 or 30 miles and they say that the grass is sufficient for cattle to live on when they don't work If we start day after tomorrow we will take about ten days feed with us

We do not know certain what company we will go with But we are going to go this evening to attend a meeting of emigrants and they have invited us to join them They are mostly professors of religion and all temperate moral men And I think likely we will go but I will tell you how it comes out

We are now camped six miles from St. Joseph at the bluff on a beautiful stream of clear water where our cattle are doing well on grass and rushes If you will look on the map at the word Buchanan near the last *a* on that [s]mall neck I think you will have our location It is a nice place to camp and the people are generally civil and friendly About St. Joseph There is a rough crowd of gamblers and drunkards but many of them will have to go back, they having lost all their money

Our cattle do not eat much corn the last few days so we will have plenty of corn to take along for ten days without buying I made a mistake about my cows in the letter I wrote the other day At should have been one gallon each per day They have mended very fast since & now give from three to four gallons a day

Tuesday, May 7th

I[t] rained last night and spit snow this morning and wound up by raining but it has now the appearance of clearing off The grass looks better since the rain and I think that we need not fear much to start as there is several good bottoms to feed on, on either side of the road

James & myself attended a meeting of emigrants last night They are mostly from Pike and Fulton Counties, Illinois Their constitution is pretty tight They prohibit gambling, drinking, quarling, fighting, carrying loaded guns except by the guard and resolve to keep the Sabbath day by resting and attending worship when convenient

There is a Mr. Johnson, a lawyer & senator from Fulton along, and several men who have the appearance of respectability And I think that it is not very hard to find out men here for they generally show out immediately far as their morals are concerned

I have joined them and I expect will start tomorrow We will not travel for several days The company will be known by the name of "The Mutual Protection Company of California Emigrants"⁶⁷

James and me are going into town today to look for letters and send these on We are getting long first rate and have a great deal of encouragement about gold ahead Our oxen do well except one that has a sore neck but he is about well It is one of the oxen that Waddell put in But don't say any thing to Waddell and Pemberton how we are doing for I have written them a letter giving them some hints that they may take to themselves

I have written 5 letters to you and Thomas and four to Marth and Mr. Fruit I and don't think of any more to write just now Only to say to Mother not to work too hard but to take care of yourself And so of the rest

I believe that I have not told you that while I was at Mr. Blackburn's I had iron hinges made and hung the hind gate of my wagon and fixed it with shelves so that we have a nice press for our cooking things And we hold up the hind gate with strap at the sides which makes a nice table that inables us to pack our load in befor[e] And it does much better and is more convenient

We will send money back as soon as we get it Be couragous and don't pay any attention to people's mischievous stories for the seem to take gre[at] delig[ht] in vexing one a[n]other I want you all to put your trust in the Lord for he can and will take care of us at all times We have enjoyed ourselves quite well since we left home I commit all things into His hands and am contented

As to sickness here I have not seen a sick man here ex with a cold People are very health and I have not seen a man in real trouble but what he would swear Believing that we will all live in the narrow path that leads to life and finally meet to bless each other in the flesh

We bid you all farewell

D. L. & J. Campbell

⁶⁷ Wagon trains were sometimes listed in frontier newspapers, though not nearly as frequent as researchers and genealogists would like. The May 15 edition of the *Frontier Guardian* interestingly lists a company of 21 men called the "Mutual Protection Company, No. 1" that departed St. Joseph May 6. The Campbells were not listed with this company, nor was their particular company, "The Mutual Protection Company of California Emigrants" enumerated. Louis J. Rasmussen, *California Wagon Train Lists*, (Colma, Ca.: San Francisco Historic Records, 1994), 119.

Nebraska District to South Pass

May 8, 1850 to June 30, 1850

entries from the diary
will be set in a
different typeface;
the diary is integrated
chronologically
w/letters.

{At the bluff, 4 graves A.D. 1849}

James Campbell started for Callifornia May 8 1850⁶⁸

First day: traveled 20 miles; wood & water {May the 8 saw 3 graves A.D. 1849} {saw 2 graves 1850}

2d day: 15 miles {May the 9 saw 1 grave A.D. 1849}

3 day: land good; no timber for 18 m; scrase [scarce] then water plenty {May the 10 saw 2 graves

⁶⁸ Other diarists left from St. Joseph on or around the time of the Campbells. David Hopper admits it is often difficult to pinpoint exact jumping-off dates because not all diarists described their stay in St. Joseph or recorded details of their departure. Writers may have simply referred to the event in a letter some weeks or months later. Another difficulty is that many diarists crossed the Missouri River, but then camped for some time on the west side (as did the Campbells), or proceeded slowly and intermittently for quite some distance--sometimes as far as the Little Blue River. It should also be acknowledged that with the mass of humanity moving west in the summer of 1850 there was a great deal of fluidity with respect to the relative movement of individual diarists.

Taking these factors into account, the following dates approximate diarists who departed the first two weeks of May, 1850, according to Hopper: Thomas Woodward, May 3; Peter Cook, May 5; Lorenzo Sawyer, May 6; Lorenzo Sawyer, May 6; Eleazar S. Ingalls, May 7; Morris Sleight, John W. Watts, and Andrew H. Gilmore, May 8; Peramus Ames, William Lampton, William Rothwell, and J. J. Scheller, May 9; Hamden A. Cagwin and Joseph Price, May 10; John B. Hill, May 11; Joseph C. Kiser, May 12; and Milo S. Baker and Dr. Andrew J. Griffith, May 14.

DRAFT

A.D. 1849}⁶⁹

Plains, May [10th] AD 1850

Dear Father

We are well and on our journey in good spirits Grass is plenty, more than we had any idea of finding

We are forty five miles from St. Joseph We are in a civle company from Fulton and other counties in Ill

The offices are

James Johnson, Captain
David L. Campbell, Presiding officer in camps
J. Johnson, Secretary

Every thing is doing better than you have and expectation of It is six am and a man is passing for St. Joseph He will overtake us We have sent by him for letters Do you send word to Marth & Elizabeth

Farewell

D. L. & J. Campbell

I was a minute writing as you can see

May 11: started and went 4 miles; found water 11 m further; drove 1 mile from the rode north and camped till over Sunday {saw 1 grave A.D. 1849}

[Sunday, May 12 not listed]

Monday, May 13: traveled 15 m to the Nemmahaw River, a butiful stream of water and plenty of wood

May the 14: traveled 11 m to Little Nemmahaw, a nother butiful stream of water and plenty of

⁶⁹ The rolling prairie landscape of the United States mid-west had few trees in 1850. Trees were found only along small streams of water, the routes followed by emigrants. Natural prairie grasses, some of which grew ten feet tall, absorbed precipitation readily. As time progressed and settlers began to till the ancient prairie sod under for pasture, water run off and soil erosion increased. Many of these same streams, today, therefore, are much wider and deeper. Jacqueline Lewin and Marilyn Taylor, *The St. Joe Road*, (St. Joseph: The St. Joseph Museum, 1992), 21-26.

wood; grass scarce {from May the 8 till May 14, I saw 14 dead horses and mules}

May 14th AD 1850

Dear Father

We are well I sent a few lines back to you the other day by a man who was going to St. Jo to get his wagon mended I also sent by him for letters He arrived this evening with a letter from you dated April 24th We were very glad to hear from you so far from home but we do not get discouraged because we do not hear oftener We made up our minds before we left home to bear it with fortitud[e]

We are now 115 miles as we suppose from St. Jo We stayed last night at the Nemiha River It is a beautiful little stream We have had tolerable plenty of grass all along Our cattle have mended considerable since we left St. Jo We have about six bushels of corn yet We feed a little along to keep them from taking sick They are doing fine

We have seen 14 dead horses since we left St. Jo They are passing us more or less every day but I think we will be to California as soon as they will We have worked our cows in the lede since we left the river and they are first rate They pull as true as oxen They give plenty of milk, say from 2 to 4 gallons per day As to Mother wanting to see us in camp an hour we would like to see her very much But as to cooking viz beaking bread &c we can turn it off quick, clean and of first rate quality Hickreson is first rate at washing &c & so we all can be if we try

I expect you hear some miserable stories at home But in all sincerity I ask you not to give yourself trouble about them for there is 20 falshoods to one truth told where people think they can do mischief

We lay by last Sunday We have an excellent company of civle men I wrote to you that James Johnson, our captain, was a senator from Fulton I was mistaken He was only a lawyer that lived in Vermont, Fulton Cty You see I believed that story too soon Still I am well pleased

I will send this letter if by a man going back who started to soon and injured his team He is camped near this Brother James sent one back yesterday to Elizabeth

It is now late at night and I must close I will try to write every opportunity and be more full about the country &c I have writen to Martha I want you to go and see her

Farewell

D. L. & J. Campbell

May the 15: traveled 23 m; camped 1 m off[f] the rode; wood and water {saw 6 dead horses}
{saw one grave A.D. 1849}

May the 16th: drove 15 m to the Big Blu River; crossed that night; camped on the bluff⁷⁰

May 17: traveled 17 m {saw one dead stear} {saw 2 dead horses}⁷¹

May 18th: traveled 24 m {saw 1 dead mule} {saw 4 graves A.D. 1849} {saw 2 graves 1850, one died this day, the other shot him self accdentily through the head on the 14th of May, age 21}⁷²

Sunday, May 19th: lay by; no wood; burnt weeds; grass good; water warm but plenty

May 20th: crossed some creeks; travel 17 mi {saw 2 graves A.D. 1849}

May 21st: traveled 18 m; crossed some creeks {saw 1 dead horse}

May 22nd: went up Little Plat Blu River 16 m {saw one dead stear} {saw 2 dead horses} {saw 3 graves A.D. 1849} {saw one grave 1850}⁷³

May 23rd: still traveled up Little Plat Blu 18 m {saw 2 dead horses/mules}

May 24: Left Plat Blu; travel 18 m {saw one dead horse} {saw 1 grave A.D. 1849}

Saturday, 25: traveled 24 {saw one dead horse} {saw one grave A.D. 1849}

Sunday, May 26: lay layed by {saw one dead horse}

Platte River, May 26th AD 1850

Dear Father

⁷⁰ Diarist James Bennett, who reached the Big Blue River twelve days later on May 28 wrote, "This stream favorable at ordinary times, we now found very much swollen. About fifty wagons were already collected on the bank and several companies were occupied in crossing on rudely constructed rafts ..."

⁷¹ It was in this vicinity that the St. Joe and Independence Roads converged and turned north to the Platte River Valley in present-day Nebraska. Though James and David Lee did not describe the scene, many diarists wrote about the area crowded with white canvas-topped wagons as far as the eye could see. Jaqueline Lewin and Marilyn Taylor, *The St. Joe Road*, (St. Joseph: St. Joseph Museum, 1992), 47-49.

⁷² On May 24 James B. Persinger also remarked in his diary about the grave of this young man who accidentally shot himself.

⁷³ James B. Persinger's description of the Little Blue: "I think we passed not less than five hundred to eight hundred encamped in the bottom of the Lit Blue River We do not corss this stream but travel up it near it for sixty miles Its course is east ... west It is from twenty to thirty feet wide ... has from three to four feet of running water This I take to be its standing depth An abundance of fine fish in it A beautiful strip of cottonwod trees shade it cool the channel it banks of this smooth flowing stream"

James & myself are well We arrived here yesterday about 2 o'clock I wrote a few lines to you Friday & sent them back but as I have a little more time to write particulars I will write again I have written 3 letters to you since we left St Jo This makes 4 But I do not know whether you received them or not

We are now within 8 miles of Ft Kearney We are near the head of Grand Island and only a ford of the river runs this way It is about 50 yards wide and a little over knee deep It is very muddy water though we have good water by digging down about 2 1/2 feet where there is quick sand The water is very pleasand There is no wood on this side of the river so we get some of the boys to cross and cut wood and raft it over

We left St Joseph on the 8th of this month The first day the road was very hilly but no mud Since then it has generally been only a little roling and the roads have been better than any roads I ever seen The prairie is generally very good and rich soil We have had some of the best kind of water and generally tolerable plenty though there is some scarce places We have crossed 2 rivers viz Nemahaw, Big Blue & traveled up the side of Little Blue for three days They all have beautiful clear water though the timber through this country is very scarce, only sufficient for camping purposes It grows down in the hollows scattering along the little branches

When I wrote to you the other day I said we had traveled as we suppose 240 miles though it was guess work and I have since understood by men who do know that it is 325 miles to Ft Kearney & we are within 8 miles of it We will get there Monday⁷⁴ We have had rather a hard time to get grass along the road yet we have kept our cattle up to what they were when they left St Jo We have traveled very fast though we do not push them The load is very light for our team so that they can go as fast as they can walk I passed several traders teams that have come from Ft. Larimie They say that there is not many ox teams before us and that the horse teams have to travle very slow and their horses are getting poor We have rather out traveled most of the ox teams and we spare no pains to take the best of care of them It is the opinion of several persons that I have seen who are through last year that our teams are in much better condition than the teams were last year And they think that we travel a fifth faster than they traveled last year They think that we will be able to go through in 75 days from this place We have got along first rate this far and I hold my own very well

A few days ago I had a sore throught but it is well now It was caused by a slight cold James is begining to gain flesh and I think he is more fleshy than I have seen him for some years I think that I have mended some in flesh I know that I can stand more without hurting me than I could for years past and I am in hopes that my throat will finally get well

Broth[er] James and I have not rode in the wagon one hundred yards since we left home At first we were pretty tired but now we think nothing of it The ground was quite dry untill last Sunday night We had a delightful rain which has started the grass finely We now have plenty We

⁷⁴ Diarist Elder Peter L. Branstetter wrote on May 15 when he passed Ft. Kearney, "I make it two hundred and ninety-five miles from St. Joseph to Fort Kearney, but it has been surveyed and the survey makes it three hundred and one miles."

had some corn untill last Friday when we sold the last peck for 50 cts

The emigrants are in the very best of health - We have seen a considerable number of graves made last year and but 3 this year One of them shot himself by accident There is nobody sick that I hear of We have seen a great many dead horse & mules and 2 dead oxen So from all appearances I would not be surprised if we arrived in California among the first Yet they often pass us but some of the horses are getting very poor and I don't think they will hold out long We have seen no Indians since we left the Mission 35 miles from St Jo⁷⁵ Yet we keep a strict guard We have been in the country of the buffalo & antelope about a week We had a little buffalo beef the other day and it tastes equal to beef We will soon be where they are plenty but we will be cautious about eating when we kill a great many

I have at two or three different times seen men from Caloway County, Mo, who were acquainted with Uncle Givens & the Wests⁷⁶ They say that the Wests have a great deal of money and that Uncle Thomas was to be back to Missouri this spring and that he was worth about \$30,000.00/100 if he comes back I don't know but it would be very well for you to go and see him And if it was convenient to have that land matter settled this fall and we will square it when we get back but say nothing of where it comes from⁷⁷

We arrived here noon yesterday and we washed up everything we had and baked bread enough for some time We are all doing quite well except one of our mess who likes to work things into his stomach better than all most any other labor It is Jas H but say nothing about it to any body I think we can work him We have some of the Hunsakers & McClintocks from below Liberty in our company And some of their mess is not very moral men and a little lazy so that I expect they will have to leave the company soon or mend their ways Most of the men do first rate and are very attentive to business Our cows are first rate leaders and walk as fast as any oxen They give about as much milk as we can eat We could get a big price for them but we expect to keep them All our cattle are mending and doing well

I will write every opportunity I shall put this in the letter box at Ft. Kearney You must [write]

⁷⁵ The St. Joe Road lead travelers northwest out of the Wolf River Valley to the Iowa, Sac and Fox Presbyterian Mission. The stone and brick building built in 1846 near the Great Nemeha sub-agent's headquarters served as a school for Native American children. The mission, preserved near present-day Highland, Kansas, houses the Native American Heritage Museum. It is owned and operated by the Kansas State Historical Society. Diarist Joel Cook wrote on April 26 when the reached the Mission, "Here we saw the Otoe Chief and his son and a number of the tribe." Anthony J. Becker, *The Biography of a Country Town: U.S.A.* (XX: Spencer-Walker Press, Inc. 1954), 165-179.

⁷⁶ The Givens' and Wests' were relatives of James and David Lee through their mother, Jane Campbell. Jane's sister Elizabeth "Betsey" Campbell married William R. Givens on 12 November or July, 1829, XX in Muhlenberg County, Kentucky. Several members of this Campbell family emigrated to Calloway County, Missouri, in 1831. Jane's brother Thomas married Martha West, daughter of Thomas West, on September 25, 1839. The Wests described here were likely Martha's parents.

⁷⁷ This "land matter" may allude to one of the reasons the brothers decided to try their luck in California.