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FROM WAUPUN TO SACRAMENTO IN 1849:

The Gold Rush Journal of Edwin Hillyer

Edited by JOHN O. HOLZHUETER

IN TERMS of present-day communications, the California Gold Rush of 1849 was a long time aborning. On January 24, 1848, James Wilson Marshall discovered gold while building a sawmill for John Sutter on the south fork of the American River. Not until four days later—on January 28—did Marshall become excited enough to tell his employer. Sutter, fearing the disruptive consequences of a gold rush, was dismayed, and beginning in March his fears were realized. Many of Sutter's employees quit to devote full time to digging and panning gold, and a San Francisco paper printed a short notice about the discovery.

It remained for a profiteer, however, to launch the rush in earnest. Sam Brannan, who owned a store near Sutter's Fort, planned to let others dig while he traded merchandise for dust. He visited San Francisco one day in May with a bottle of gold dust, walking through the city, waving the bottle, and broadcasting the news. Within a few weeks, San Francisco was all but deserted. The rush was on. Sutter's land was overrun—as he had anticipated—and his once immense holdings were lost; he was reduced to surviving on a California pension. Sam Brannan continued to make shrewd use of Gold Rush opportunities, and became one of California's most respected and wealthiest citizens.

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1849 Council Bluffs - May 10 4* - Mattes

Sacramento

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ocean journey instead, either sailing around the Horn or traversing the isthmus of Panama. Ocean journeys could take six to nine months; an overland trip as long as half a year. Men from the South often took the Santa Fe Trail or floated down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico, trekked across Mexico, and sailed to San Francisco, usually from Acapulco.

Compared to the migrations of earlier years, that of 1849 was gigantic. Fifty persons took the north trails for every individual who traveled them in 1848. Estimates of the number of emigrants vary between 20,000 and 50,000, with a conservative modern guess at 21,500. Thus, 1849 was not a year in which the lonely wagon train wended its way across a deserted prairie, endangered by Indians. Indeed, some diarists described strings of wagons six miles long. Thanks to extremely wet weather, grass grew plentifully for draft animals, in contrast to some years. But the rain made the roads miry and the going heavy, and a violent storm in the valley of the Platte on May 29 scattered some livestock and ruined some supplies. Other hardships included accidents, drownings, and disease, which together claimed an estimated 750 lives. Disease reached epidemic proportions at times. A cholera outbreak in the United States hit especially hard in the crowded jumping-off camps, and several varieties of "mountain fever" and intestinal complaints blamed on alkali were fatal to some. Indians were less a threat than popularly imagined. Indian slayings in 1849 probably accounted for no more than a dozen deaths.

What manner of man made the journey and what were his motivations? The author of this journal believed that a fair cross section of humanity was represented, with the majority being men of good will. He also believed that the emigrants, like himself, were lured by gold. But, attributing to others his own altruistic motives, he maintained that there was "no selfishness" involved. However, no one who reads Gold Rush material can fail to note the high sense of adventure with which it is permeated. There is something undeniably romantic about the argonauts and their Eldorado—a variety of romance that is at once intensely personal and yet universal: personal because the wagon trains were made up of rugged, independent men, each with a mission; universal

because the movement seemed to epitomize a national fervor, with each emigrant vicariously fulfilling the nation's lust for adventure and gold. The forty-niners themselves may well have been too close to the event to sense the flavor of the Gold Rush that they willed to their descendants in the form of diaries and letters. More than a hundred such diaries have been found, and several associations have been formed to trace faithfully the routes of the various trails, indicating that, today at least, the mania for gold holds less appeal than the drama of questing for it.

WISCONSIN'S reaction to the Gold Rush can be considered typical of the national experience. Nearly every community outfitted a contingent for the West—from cities like Milwaukee, Racine, Madison, and Janesville to villages and towns like Shullsburg, Delavan, Jefferson, Wiota, and Beetown. Nearly one-fourth of the population in Wisconsin's lead-mining region departed for the new fields, and some Wisconsin miners even followed the gold trail to Australia when the quest extended outside California in the 1850's. Among leading Wisconsinites who succumbed to gold fever were William S. Hamilton, James R. Vineyard, Hans C. Heg, Count Agoston Haraszthy, and Lucius Fairchild. But most of the Wisconsin emigrants were young men from the rank and file, men who had not yet made their marks, men like Edwin Hillyer, a twenty-three-year-old storekeeper, and his eight companions from Waupun: A. D. Allis, Dr. John Barker, Frank Carter, E. S. Howland, E. J. Marvin, Ben Pierce, and two men whose surnames alone have survived, Wheeler and Merwin.

The Waupun group elected to travel overland to the gold fields from Independence, planning to arrive in Missouri in April in order to be ready when the prairie had sprouted enough grass to support their oxen and mules. Along the way, however, the Waupun men changed their minds and decided to leave from Council Bluffs, where they joined a train of sixty-five men and thirty-five wagons. The ensuing journey was marked by accident, disease, and death, as well as light, humorous moments. Several members of the train be-

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came ill and had rather bad accidents. One man, not from Waupun, was killed by Indians about 135 miles from the starting point, with the trip scarcely under way. But another man, after nearly drowning with his horse, convulsed the onlooking crowd by saying, "Boys, boys, don't he make a fine raft?"

The man who recorded the journey was Edwin Hillyer, a native of Ohio who came to Wisconsin in 1847 to help his brother, Joseph Talcott Hillyer, operate a general store in Waupun. The Hillyer brothers were born to the tradition of the westward movement and to storekeeping as well. Their parents, Daniel and Charity (Loomis) Hillyer, moved from Granby, Connecticut, to primitive Portage County, Ohio, in 1815, and were among the first settlers in Atwater, Ohio. They operated an inn and general store, and Daniel Hillyer surveyed other Ohio counties as they were settled. Edwin, the youngest of six Hillyer children, was born September 30, 1825, and was educated in schools at Farmington and Twinsburg, Ohio. His education, both at home and in school, inculcated in him a love for books and a devotion to the Congregationalist church and temperance—traits which he exhibited throughout his life. Hillyer's abilities and education thus marked him as an individual a cut above the average forty-niner. He was enough of a leader to be elected colonel of his wagon train; yet he was brash enough at the time to write that he expected little trouble from the men because "I was very careful to be right." His love of books and language was exhibited in the quality of his journal: clear, understandable, interesting prose, albeit with occasional lapses in spelling and grammar. He was devoted enough to his God to insist that his wagon train observe Sundays as a day of rest for both man and beast, and also for observing the sabbath with hymns and contemplation. This streak of righteousness also exhibited itself in a disapproval of gambling, and in later life he became president of the Wisconsin Temperance Alliance.

Despite his sober inclinations, Hillyer was not above a good time, and he grasped business opportunities where he found them. He enjoyed dancing and he loved conversation and made friends rather easily on his trip, even to the point of being able to borrow money from

complete strangers. He was adventuresome enough to undertake the strenuous journey and to leave behind his twenty-one-year-old bride of ten months without knowing when, or if, he would see her again. Hillyer insisted that he visited California because of the financial opportunities to be found there and because he wanted to make a fortune for his wife and hoped for family. It was the reaction of a "boy," Mrs. Hillyer said later. Boyish as his enthusiasm may have been, Hillyer was serious in his desire to do the best thing for his wife and was well on his way towards mature manhood.

Mrs. Hillyer was born Angeline Hannah Coe in Randolph, Ohio, on July 7, 1827, and was married to Hillyer on April 4, 1848. She bore the wrench of departure with fortitude, much as women accept the departures of men going off to war. Mrs. Hillyer shared with her husband a love of church and literature and an abhorrence of liquor, gambling, and the coarse things of life.

THE DIARY of Edwin Hillyer is an interesting addition to the lore of the Gold Rush for several reasons. It details an Indian slaying—one of the few chronicled by an 1849 emigrant; it records a route taken by a minority of forty-niners; and because Hillyer wrote vividly, with an eye to explaining things to his family back in Ohio, it provides sufficient detail to make the journey fresh and exciting. But most importantly, the journal demonstrates how a young man gained maturity and a measure of wisdom while crossing the plains in 1849.

The Hillyer journal was given to the Historical Society in 1961 by Forrest C. Middleton of Madison, who purchased it at auction. Another copy is in the hands of a great-grandson, Frederick Ford of Bayport, Minnesota. Hillyer revised the journal and had it typewritten in 1903, titling it "A trip from Waupun, Wisconsin, Via Cleveland, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Council Bluffs and Salt Lake to California, in 1849 by Team and the Return Via Acapulco, City of Mexico, Vera Cruz, New Orleans, Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, and the Lakes to Wisconsin in 1851-1852." The 1903 version, however, concludes with Hillyer's arrival in Sacramento. The original diary has



Society's Iconographic Collection

Wedding portrait of Edwin and Angeline Hillyer, taken in 1848.

not been found. In the interests of space, some repetitious portions have been deleted, where indicated by ellipses. Unusual spellings employed by Hillyer have been retained, but typing errors appearing in the 1903 manuscript have been corrected.

Editor's Note: Material in the introduction and conclusion has been drawn from the 1860 manuscript census for Dodge and Fond du Lac counties and from newspapers and other printed sources, including: George R. Stewart, *The California Trail: An Epic With Many Heroes* (New York, 1962); Ralph K. Andrist, *The California Gold Rush* (New York, 1961); Reuben Cole Shaw (Milo Milton Quaipe, ed.), *Across the Plains in Forty-Nine* (Chicago, 1948); *The History of Dodge County, Wisconsin* (Chicago, 1880); *History of Portage County, Ohio* (Chicago, 1885); Edwin Hillyer, "An Historical Sketch of the Early Days of Waupun, Wis." (Waupun, 1901); Angeline Coe Hillyer (ed.) and Arthur Hillyer Ford (comp.), *Souvenirs of the Hillyer Golden Wedding, At Waupun Wisconsin* (Waupun, 1898); and the *Waupun Leader*, December 16, 1908.

IN the Spring of 1849—as one of the company of gold seekers—I started with my wife to make the journey from Wisconsin to Ohio where my wife was to remain with her father, whilst I got rich in the land of gold. We left Waupun in one of the Stage Company's Mud Wagons. It was cold and disagreeable but we reached Milwaukee in safety. In leaving Milwaukee we were put into a stage on runners drawn by four horses. The snow was soft and slushy, and the runners cut in almost . . . to the solid earth below. Our first experience was a turn over of the stage. Fortunately the snow was drifted and soft. The top of the stage was somewhat broken. My wife was the only lady passenger. Beside the road were large piles of cord wood. We men (for there were nine) crawled out and helped my wife out and onto a pile of the wood and those piles of wood were our only dry spots after we removed the snow. We were probably an hour in getting the horses up and stage righted, and small breaks mended. We had not gotten very warm during the time, but we hurried in and were off toward Chicago. On our way and before we reached Chicago we turned over five times, but none were hurt and all were good natured and could eat a good meal when we got a chance.

The stage got stalled in the mud a few times on the way and one time in the night when we were asleep. We slept until the break of day and looking out into the quiet morning we found that we were stranded in the mud without team or driver and not a building near. The wheels of the stage were up to the hubs in mud and frozen in. No one grumbling or swearing, but we all got as comfortably fixed as we could and we men resumed our slumbers. About sunrise we began to hear sounds of returning life, and a slight motion to our palace on wheels. Most of the passengers were out in the mud by this time and we found four yoke of oxen, big and strong, being hitched to our stage, and soon by big words, and cracking whips we began to move (for I had remained aboard the stage with my wife). The movement was slow but sure and about nine o'clock and making about

three miles an hour we reached a way side inn, and a breakfast inviting us. Oh! didn't we eat. This pleasure was soon over and we were away again, through the mud for Chicago.

This was a fair example of our roads, until we struck the sands of Michigan, when they improved. The Maumee Swamp through which we passed between Adrian and Toledo was not a good representation of the Garden of Eden, as described to us. It seemed to rain everywhere. The swamps, the lakes, the streams were all full to overflowing and the great mass of ice was lifted and broken into immense cakes and started on their way down the Maumee river toward the Lake. We reached Toledo. The river was a roaring flood. The warehouses along it were all destroyed. . . . At breakfast we learned that the only bridge was gone, and not a plank remaining. Our stage carried the mail, and if possible must go forward. We went with it to the river, but that raging stream was full of floating cakes of ice, many of them 30 or 40 feet square and two and one half feet thick turning round and round as they floated and ground together on their downward way, sometimes crashing together and throwing the water into the air and then again a space of open water between the cakes of ice. The mail must go. A large stout yawl boat was procured with two strong boatmen to row, and one with a boat-hook to ward off the ice cakes, but they were slow to start. The mail was loaded in and piled well in the stern and after much persuasion they took my wife and myself in. I was careful to seat her on the mail sacks so that her face was toward the stern of the boat, whilst I sat on sacks a little higher looking ahead. In looking up the stream quite a space of clear water was seen. We pulled out for the other shore (whether to land or eternity none knew) and past many small cakes of ice, but before we reached the middle of the stream which now was a mile or more wide, the boatmen had to head up stream, to avoid the immense cakes of ice coming down, and it was quite a while before they could find an opening through which the boat could pass toward the opposite shore. At one time it seemed as though we should be crushed between those floating tons of ice, but a way was opened and by the strong arms of our

boatman some of the floating mass was turned one way and some another and our boat passed with many a scrape on her sides. It was a perilous time and if those immense cakes of ice had changed their course only a few inches and come closer together our boat would have been like a cockle shell in the hands of a giant. But the strong arms of the rowers and the dextrous use of the boat hook saved us more than once from being sunk in mid-stream. My wife was brave through it all giving never a sound. . . .

We had to row up stream some distance, but at last we came to a large opening of water and the man with the hook cried out, "We have struck it, we are safe." A point of land which projected had piled up the ice as it struck the shore and changed the course of the floating ice and gave us a clear space towards the shore. No time was lost by the boatmen in turning towards the land, and a sigh of relief went up as they for a moment ceased their efforts.

The current carried us down some distance but soon the boat came to land and the rope was seized by willing hands and we were safe. There were hurrahs of men and women watching us on both shores.

Our boatmen were almost done up, but it had been an awful strain on their minds and nerves. My wife and myself were both white. . . . My wife uttered not a word indicating fear and but four words of any kind—but once or twice as we passed through a narrow channel among the floating ice, she asked me, "Is there any danger?" With great assurance not to alarm her I answered, "No, no danger." But when we landed I trembled most in the knees and said thank God we are safe on shore. I had not thought for a moment that our boatmen had had any fear. . . . [But] the Stage Company offered those men fifty dollars if they would return and carry the West bound mail, but their reply was, "This Stage Company has not money enough to hire us to do so, as long as the ice runs as it does now."

We were soon on board another stage on our way, and soon had our full compliment of passengers, but none of our former companions. Our roads in the sands were quite good, but we struck the clay soil. Oh! my how the mud rolled up and how often the fence rails



A view of Cincinnati from the Hill back of Newport Barracks, copied from Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion, vol. 4, 1853.

came into play to pry us out, but this exercise had become common. At last we reached Cleveland and then home. We had been on the road over two weeks—night and day—and during all of that time my wife had not uttered a complaint. We slept sitting in our seats, nodding as the stage moved and some even snored. It was hard at first, but necessity kept us at it, and we became hardened. . . .

I REMAINED in Atwater until [Tuesday] the 20th. day of March 1849, and then with my brother D[aniel] W[ells] we in a heavy carriage started in the rain for Wellsville on the Ohio River. My wife was to remain with her father [Almon Buel Coe] during my absence. Our trip to Wellsville was a hard one with mud almost up to the hubs of our carriage. Snow and rain on a clay soil does not tend to make good roads. We got the full benefit. Bidding my brother good-bye, I took the Steamer *New England No. 2*. Alone and in a steamer's bunk I naturally got slightly homesick. Well most of you know how it is. Arriving at Cincinnati at 12 at night I really slept until breakfast, then took a tramp through the city. In the museum, among many other curiosities gathered from all over the world, was a representation of Hell, and all its horrors as is pictured from our pulpits and Sunday Schools. As the show has been suppressed by law, as too awful for eyes to behold, I will tell you a little about it. In the distance were

the bars of Hell, confining the writhing, snarling horrible creatures, made to represent devils, with forked tongues, fiery eyes, with harsh, loud, discordant voices. The forked tongues flashed out lightning with groans and reached out skinny arms towards groups of woe-begone mortals, just beyond their reach. Sudden darkness surrounded us all. The thunder rolled, demons shrieked and groaned and chattered. The feeling was depressing and as we left, the recollection was not pleasant. I pity those who have helped the human mind to conjure up such a scene and to suppose a loving God would create such a place of literal fire to punish His created children. I was allowed to escape.

I took a look at the city from Observatory Hill, and the view was grand. City and Country were blended in one. Fair buildings and beautiful vineyards, and the city below with its miles of river front, steamers and flat boats tied up its entire length. . . . Leaving Cincinnati after dark on our safe river steamer *Ohio* we found ourselves in Louisville, Ky., in the morning. Many of the passengers on board are also bound for California, full of hope and many homesick like myself. It is really beginning to appear like spring. The forest trees showing leaf, and peach trees showing blossom.

This has been Sunday [March 25], and strange as it may seem there was no gambling on the steamer, which was so common on all other days and nights.

Arrived at St. Louis at 11 o'clock, passing Jefferson Barracks which is a beautiful spot.¹ Just such a place as Uncle Sam mostly selects. Then we came to the Arsenal, another beauty.

I only stopped at St. Louis some eight hours, but made good use of my time. The craft on which I now sail is the *Algoma* for St. Josephs, and my couch was the floor. All the passengers are bound for California and gold. In the late morning the Clerk gave me the key to a room for a nap. After the nap I was just selfish enough to keep it although there were three or four who claimed it.

The Missouri is the worst river for navigation there is in the United States. It is a moving mass of quick sand. Its waters are never clear from its source to the Gulf. And its muddy water after mixing with the clear water of the Mississippi shows itself until it runs miles into the Gulf. Its banks are sandy loam and they cave in and bring its trees into the current, and floating down, their roots become imbedded in the sands and their bodies towards the top float and after a time become pointed and partly out of sight below the current, and become what the boatmen call snags, or snake heads. In the day time the pilot becomes expert in dodging them but at night they are dangerous and they, with the changeable current caused by the moving quick sand, make its navigation to be dreaded. Scores of boats have been sunk in it. In the short distance we have navigated it we have passed three boats aground and one with her shaft broken and one that had burst her steam pipes killing three or four, and there is hardly an hour that we do not see wrecks of boats.

We finally landed at Way's Landing,² and took a hack for Independence, a small county seat town on the south or west side of the Missouri. This is the point where I expected to

¹ Jefferson Barracks, founded on July 10, 1826, is on the west bank of the Mississippi River below St. Louis. Until October 23, 1826, it was called Camp Adams. From April 24, 1871, to October 1, 1894, it was used by the Ordnance Department, after which it is served as a military post. Francis Paul Prucha, *A Guide to the Military Posts of the United States, 1789-1895* (Madison, 1964), 81.

² Possibly Wayne City, a hamlet which existed near Independence on the Missouri River. Independence is about three miles from the Missouri.

meet my company from Waupun. I found no company, neither any letters, and I must wait. I soon found a good boarding house and settled down.

I remained here from March 31st. to April 14th., going to the Post Office often, but never a letter did I get until the morning of the 14th. Then I got two. One from father and one from Dr. Barker. Barker says the company is going to Council Bluffs,³ and wants me to meet them there, and bring a part of their outfit of provisions. In looking the town over and consulting with others I concluded to go to St. Josephs before purchasing. My father's letter gave me great joy as it told of my wife and how he had learned to love her, but I got no letter from her. And now [it will] be months before I do hear in California. You bet I was glad to get their letters, but I wanted more.

Independence is the point where the Santa Fe trail starts out from the river, and winds over the immense prairies and mountain passes, away to the silver mines in Mexico, and their freight consists of supplies such as blankets, clothing, Whiskey and tools. And their return loads are hides, buffalo robes, and silver. Tons of the latter.

Their wagons are similar to what we call in Ohio "Pennsylvania Arks." These are drawn by six or eight mules or six or eight yoke of cattle. The drivers clad mostly in dressed deer skins and they can swear to perfection. I do not know but what they can equal the mate on a river steam boat when unloading and loading at wharves. Only one is at cattle and mules and the other at deck hands, white or black.

There were assembled at and around Independence, several thousand men on their way for the gold fields, waiting for the grass to be sufficient to support their teams, as when they leave here there are no taverns, or supply stations, until they reach California. There are a few cases of Cholera among the emigrants. This seems to be sure death, and yet there is no panic. They are not going to die, but go to California.

³ For narrative purposes, the last five sentences in this paragraph were transposed from later in the journal.

I have spent my time here looking around town and visiting camps about it, and strike all kinds of men, but as a rule fine intelligent men. Ambitious men and no drones, apparently. In talking with them I find some as homesick as I have been, and yet they are going through, if breath holds out. . . .

As I talk with these different groups, I find men of all kinds of dispositions and characters. The great majority are young and ambitious men, and some of them are very sick for home. One man about 35 this morning was thinking of his home and wife and the tears were running down his cheeks, and he moaned, "I want to see my wife." Poor fellow, I pitied him. The more I knew of the company from Milwaukee the more I liked them, and it is the same with the other groups.

It is hard for us all to linger here, as our fingers itch to be handling the gold on the other side of the mountains. We cannot force the grass to grow any faster, but we can wait. Nothing to do and plenty of time to do it in. . . . Met in lodge with the I. O. O. F. last night, and had a pleasant time.

In some of the companies they have their little disagreements, but as a rule they soon settle, and they agree again. No mail. Moulded 100 bullets for my "Pepper Box" last night.

One of the main amusements is breaking in mules. They have big ears, small heads, and rapid action in their hind legs. One wants to keep at the right end of the beast. I find that gambling was not all done on the steamers. My spunk about not getting mail will help on my way to the western land. . . .

On [setting out for St. Joseph], I find the same boat that I first came on. We soon landed at Kansas [City], a small burg on the west shore and north of the Kansas river. . . . Our next stop was at St. Josephs. Here I made my purchases, and took them with me. This town now has about 1,200 inhabitants, and about as many boys on the way for the gold diggings. There have been seven died of cholera on this up trip. I was taken [ill] in the night but providentially fainted on a seat in the wheel house, and the escaping steam started the perspiration, and I was saved. I felt its effects for several days.

Our boat was only billed for Belview⁴ where we arrived at 1:00 o'clock, and found it only a

landing with a wharf boat, and a few dwellings, and our Bluffs were still eight miles beyond, and as far as we can learn no town at all, not even a wharf boat.

But our captain went on and we soon hauled in to a post, and were at the Bluffs. It consists of a few log huts built by the Mormons the spring before, as a rest station, in fitting out for their long march up the Platte river and to Salt Lake, the place selected by them for their home of rest away from their persecutions. . . . Their report was so favorable, that almost the whole of the people of the Latter Day Saints were coming after.

My provisions were landed and to show how wealthy I was, I must admit that I had to borrow money of a stranger to pay my freight. But my face was good for it, and I was thankful. Later I learned that he also was a California pilgrim, waiting for his company.

The Captain of our boat, as an advertisement, went up the river to a small town, and invited citizens, and especially women, to a dance that evening, and of course they all came. Then he steamed up to another landing and invited as before, and by this time had a goodly company and with three violins it was made lively until the rising of the sun. The captain served a good supper about midnight, and at sunrise we bade good-bye to residents there and began our downward voyage, letting off guests as points were reached. We were landed safely. Some of the guests had got pretty full and were slightly silly. Too bad.

We all enjoyed the trip and the dance, and gave thanks to the Captain for the pleasure. After getting breakfast I went up to Kanesville . . . [Council Bluffs]⁵ to the Post Office, but found no mail. This is a Mormon town and three of its elders or apostles remain here, and have many spiritual wives or handmaids, some as high as fifteen, and all apparently happy and contented.

⁴ Bellevue, Nebraska. An early settlement on the Missouri River and now a suburb south of Omaha.
⁵ Kanesville became Council Bluffs in 1853. Although the Mormons were not the first settlers there, they named the settlement Kanesville in honor of a non-Mormon friend of the colony, Thomas L. Kane, a correspondent for Eastern newspapers. *History of Pottawattamie County, Iowa* (Chicago, 1883), 77, 86, 98.

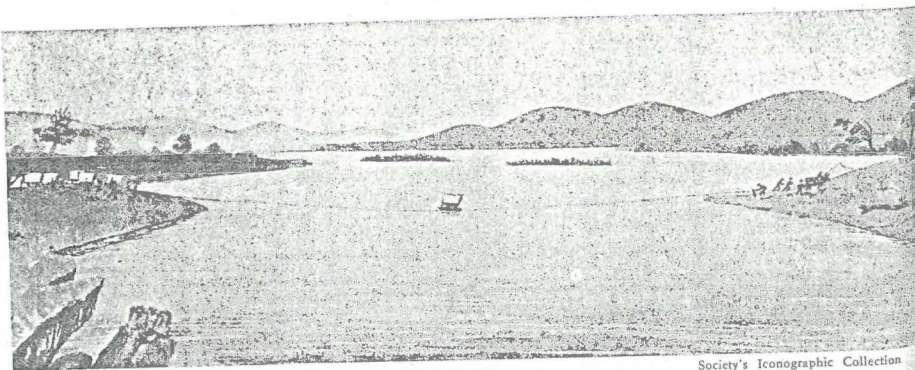
I think I was really getting homesick, but begin to think now that I will hire out to some company, which is about ready to start West to do something, but no thought comes over me of turning back. Health good, and Disposition good, and "Forward the Motto."

THIS waiting, waiting is hard and discouraging work, even if there is no work about it. No mail. No boys. Time hangs heavy. The men waiting have commenced constructing a ferry, and it is an original one. I will describe it. The first things are two large cotton wood trees about fifteen to twenty feet long. These had to be hollowed out and made into canoes by ax, adz and fire. But it must be done so as to float our wagons across the river and this is the whole plan. These two big canoes side by side are to be covered over with plank about twelve feet long hewed out with axes, and fastened on top of a floor. Near each end long poles are run out on each side, and at the outside ends joined by strong boards. These are to keep it from tipping over. This done the craft is complete. It sat nicely on the water. A board was made so that it could be raised and lowered. A long hawser was to be attached to the end of the boat and the other end to a point on the shore, a smaller line was

attached to the other end of the boat. Not built for speed or beauty, but to carry wagons across. . . .

A wagon was loaded on and the ropes fastened at each end, taut and the ends of the hawsers made fast on the opposite and upper side of the river and the other in the hands of strong men. The board on the other side was dropped into the water, and the boat pushed from shore. The current striking it swung the craft with one end fast to the other shore, towards and below the opposite bank, where the hawser was fastened. The result was that it worked well from the start, and the raft safely came ashore where it was intended, and the men soon made a good landing for wagons. The return trip was also made safely and successfully, by using the rope fastened on the other bank.

On this primitive raft or boat our wagons were to be carried over, and teams to be made to swim the river. A horse and rider with a lariat around the horns of an ox, in advance and leading, entered the river. The teams loose and without incumbrance were forced to enter the water after him. Then the game "follow your leader" began. It required activity and good lungs to persuade the animals to enter the water, but they could wade for some



A wagon train being ferried across a river. This and subsequent sketches are from a series of fifty drawings made by an unknown artist in the summer of 1849 and acquired by the Society in 1926.

distance, and when they had to they could swim, and the deep water was not wide, and this venture was successfully accomplished. . . .

I went over on the ferry (for so it is named), and found a good road on the other side. The point where the Mormon log huts are built is named Traders Point, and on a point below on the opposite side of the river, and above where the Platte river enters the Missouri, is located an Indian Missionary Station and school, which I visited and [where I] was well received by Mr. E. McKinney, the Missionary, and his assistants.⁶ These young ladies looked very nice to us.

The school appeared prosperous, and apparently improving. They read and sang for us in their native language. Some of their voices were fine.

This is also the Indian Agency under charge of Major [John] Miller, Indian Agent. Our trip and return was a pleasant and agreeable one.

A company from Watertown is in camp here, and waiting for grass. We became good friends, and they have offered to take me with them if my company does not come and not charge me a cent. Is that not kind?

I went to Kaneshville and there not finding my company, [I] hired a horse and took the back trail to look for the boys.

This is [Monday] April 30th., [and] coming to Silver Creek, I remained all night. Just beyond I had to swim my horse across the Mishriebotany [West Nishnabotna River] and go across myself on a foot bridge, but soon after I was rewarded by meeting Dr. Barker, Carter and Pierce. I was glad and so were they. They report the company about one day behind and so they will soon come up. I turned around and headed for Kaneshville again, but not alone.

[Sunday] May 6th. I slept last night on the ground under a tent, and nearly froze. I

⁶Traders Point, an Iowa settlement, was across the river from Bellevue. Map, "Region of the Mormon Encampments of the Missouri River, 1846-7 (Iowa and Nebraska)," in Manuscripts Library, State Historical Society of Wisconsin. A Presbyterian mission school for Oto and Omaha Indians was conducted by Edward McKinney on a site that was near Bellevue. U. S. Department of War, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1847-1848* (Ex. Doc. No. 1, no. 1, Washington, 1848), p. 437.

thought this rather hard but must come to it. Again we swam the Mishriebotany. Here there were several teams waiting. To go forward they had to swim their teams, and they had to back everything across on the foot bridge, and then hitch a rope to the end of the tongue of a wagon and so pull them all across. . . . There are several women along with this crowd, and also three old bachelors from Racine who have taken in a young English lady who started with her sister and brother-in-law, and having some difficulty they set her and her effects out on the open prairie, and left her. Big world. These men took her on, and will take her to the Bluffs. She wants to go through with some one, and she will go.

Again camped at Silver Creek, and Barker and myself got the privilege of sleeping on a man's floor. We had a stick of wood for a pillow and slept fine. I spent the most of one day in wringing the water out of my clothes that came through from Waupun, having been wet in crossing the last river. Nothing ruined.

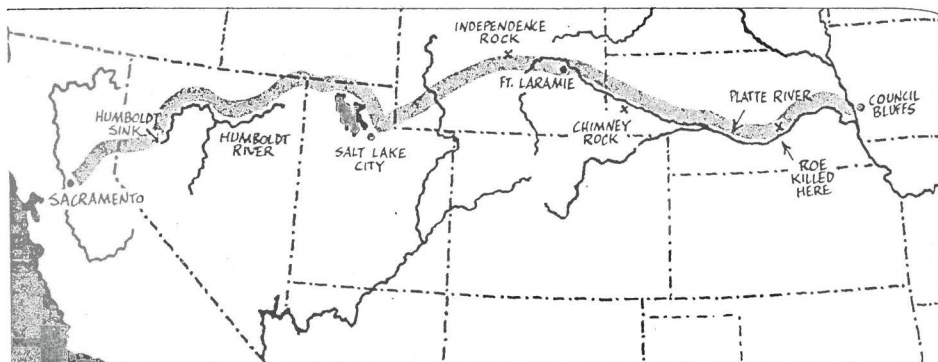
Spent all day yesterday and to-day drying my clothes and am now as good as new. Barker was blue to-day and came very near giving up and going south, but now all is bright again.

On the 8th. and 9th. of May we re-organized, drew up a constitution and by-laws.⁷ As organized now, we have 23 wagons, and sixty five men, and all well armed with one gun each, and one and two revolvers and a bowie knife. Pretty hard crowd to attack.⁸ In re-organizing I was chosen Colonel, a Mr. Major as Lieutenant Colonel, Dr. Scovill as Major, and Brown as Adjutant. Force of circumstances the only bond, but we were going into the treeless wilderness, and the hunting ground of the wild Indians, and self protection was a pretty good bond.

We were never to leave the train without a permit. A continuous guard was to be kept up, night and day. So on [Thursday] the 10th.

⁷Nearly every group organized itself in this fashion, with constitutions often resembling the Constitution of the United States. George R. Stewart, *The California Trail: An Epic With Many Heroes* (New York, 1962), 224.

⁸Most emigrants overloaded themselves with firearms and knives, and before long many weapons were discarded along the trail, usually mangled to keep them out of Indian hands. Stewart, *The California Trail*, 229.



Map by Paul H. Hass

of May we were awakened at day light, prepared breakfast, and a little after sunrise, we began to cross. We have crossed 18 wagons. Many of the teams were forced to swim the river. A few got into the quick sand but were all gotten out but one ox who had his hind legs broken and had to be killed.

There were about 5,000 Indians encamped here awaiting payment.⁹ Their camp is below our landing and by keeping up a good guard, we were not molested, but about 5 o'clock they became very much excited, and a great commotion was observed. Their tribes are the Otoes, Omahas, and Winnebagoes, and are sworn enemies of the Sioux. Report said the Sioux had killed one of their squaws and burned their wigwams at the Elkhorn [River]. The warriors were dancing the war dance and mounting their ponies in haste. Pandemonium let loose. They are now passing our camp, and howling "death to the Sioux." Some of the men were anxious to hurry out and see the fight, but were held in check. Our corral was hardly large enough to hold our cattle, and we had to chain the rest to our wagons.

The Indians kept up their war dance with all the horrible noises, nearly all night; and such howling. Oh! My. Some of the men were very much excited, but I persuaded them to tend to their own knitting. I went to bed in my wagon after seeing that my guards were all tending to their duties. I slept finely amid all the whooping and howling.

On [Saturday] the 12th, the order was given

out to start on our trip next day. At 7 o'clock the horn sounded, and teams were brought in, and all but two yoke of Carter's team were reported. A detail was sent out and soon returned with the missing cattle, and we were then drawn up in line ready for a start. Every man was to carry his gun except the teamster, and his gun was to be in the front end of his wagon, quickly reached. And further every man had his revolver and knife in his belt, ready to defend ourselves. . . . But we were young and energetic, and after gold. . . .¹⁰

MAY 13th. We have passed over a beautiful country. High rolling prairie, and as pretty a farming country as the sun ever shone on. In passing along the line and finding every man by his wagon with arms ready for use in case of necessity, I found all in good heart. I was at the head of the long procession about 11 o'clock, and after getting to the top of a hill you never saw a prettier sight. The country was beautiful and I could see a long distance in every direction. I could see back over our trail, for you must remember that there are no laid out roads, and we are following up the Mormon trail.

⁹ Federal payment for land cessions.

¹⁰ The Waupun party was among the first to leave from Council Bluffs but was not at the forefront of emigrants. By April 30 at least one group was 200 miles along, having left from Independence. Stewart, *The California Trail*, 224-225.

From where I stood I could see every man and team on the trail. Some heads were bowed and probably thinking of home, but most were stepping off briskly, with heads erect and all looking to the west, and probably calculating who they were going to make happy with the gold they were going to dig. This is ambition.

What a country if there were only groves of timber along the way. Camped on the old Mormon camp ground. Beautiful spot, but we had to "tote," as the missionary says, our water a long distance. The feed is excellent and as we are the second company out [from Council Bluffs], it is plenty. All went off nicely and with one or two exceptions, with no hitch. Sixty three men, and all used to being their own bosses, were not easy to breaking in to obeying another one man [or] leader. But there is no other way. One must lead and others must follow. I had some who found it hard to submit, but the majority were with me, as I was very careful to be right, so the majority enforced rules.

. . . In our train of twenty three wagons, we had only one mule team, to a light spring wagon. All the rest were drawn by oxen, mostly, if not all, by three yoke of cattle. When I had selected a camping spot, I took my place in front of the line, and as all the drivers were instructed to "follow their leader," keeping well to the outside of the track, I struck with my eye a circle, and moved around to near the entrance. When the first wagon stopped the second team drove just inside the first wagon, and as close to it as possible until the wagons were near together. This was kept up until the last wagon was opposite the first, and so we had a nice circle. Each team was un-yoked and with a guard, previously selected, were ready for their suppers. Chains were then hitched from wheel to wheel, and the corral was complete. The light wagon was always left for the front opening. Then the important man for the occasion stepped to the front, as Cook, and the coffee pot and frying pan put in an appearance. Other men came with brush, limbs (if to be had) and fires were lighted. Water pails were soon in demand, and [were] returned as soon as they could be filled. Golly how good the coffee and bacon smelled.

In selecting a camping ground the first things were good feed and water. This was always to be thought of. One of the first things was to be always ready for an attack by Indians. Our guards were always well armed, and even cattle can be taught by sound to soon rally, and return to camp. This was our rule: Whenever we wanted them to return to camp, our horn was blown and as it was heard the guards made all the noise they could, and with all their ability rushed the cattle towards the corral.

It is wonderful how quickly these cattle learned what that horn meant. In a few days of this training, as soon as the horn sounded every one of them would stop eating and lifting their heads would start on a run for camp, seeming to know that it was necessary, and must be done. We kept this up until Salt Lake was reached. Our teams were never left alone and during the whole trip [to Salt Lake] we never lost an animal.

One of the men always seems to be trying to make trouble. It seems to be natural to him, and he has to be gingerly handled. He is older than I am, and has not been used to having anyone over him. But I think that I can manage him. I shirk no duty and he must not. His wagon mates are with me and we can hold him straight.

We have seen no Indians since we left the river, but we have killed several rattle snakes. As I was getting into my wagon to-day my big knife slipped out of its sheath, point upward, and I came down on it and cut quite a gash through my clothes and into my leg. I soaked it with whiskey and bound it up with my handkerchief. It pained me when I tried to walk and began to swell, and I soon concluded that I had better ride. I gave the command up to my lieutenant, and took it easy.

This night we camped on the Papeys¹¹ which is on rather low ground. Plenty of wood and water and fair grazing. Put seven men on guard, as the lay of the ground was not as good as we generally select, and it is not good policy

¹¹ The Papee Creek was eighteen miles from Council Bluffs and nine miles from the Elkhorn River, according to an 1848 guidebook. William Clayton, *The Latter-Day Saints' Emigrants' Guide* (Salt Lake City, n.d. facsimile edition), 5.

to go into these low places on account of the Indians. It rained nearly all night and the clouds and rain added to the darkness. Some of those on guard, in imagination, heard Indians, and were sure that they were going to be attacked. The sun coming up cleared away the mist, and also the Indians.

We reached the Elkhorn at 1:30 and found it running full banks, and a swift current. Here a raft had to be constructed of dry cotton wood poles, gathered up and down the stream. Many hands soon procured the material. Building rafts was a new business to most of us, but it must be done, and it was done—by pinning the small poles to the stringers, and then doubling them the other way, then lashing the corners and middle stringers with ropes, the raft was done, and without a load it floated nicely. An Indian was hired to swim the stream and carry a small cord. He fastened this cord to his body and plunged in. The current was rapid and carried him some distance down stream, but he was strong and a good swimmer and he made it all right. He then drew the cord up and secured the hawser, and then went up to the tree selected as a hitching post, and made it all secure. This end toward California, and we at the other. There were strong rings on the hawser, with a strong rope attached long enough to reach the raft, otherwise it was arranged same as the one at the Missouri river, and was worked in the same way, and all our wagons were carried over safely.

The last one was not put far enough on to the raft, and it sunk the near end deep into the water, and it made us hold our breath for fear, but it went over and when it reached the bank we were happy. The horn was sounded and the cattle rushed in and were forced to follow their leader into the water, and were all soon safely over and in good feed. The mules swam behind the raft and swam well. The last trip of the raft carried the last of the company over, and we soon had our corral in shape for the night, and were tired, hungry mortals ready for supper as soon as it could be cooked. I cook for my mess. We expect to live high, [with] bacon and flap-jacks for breakfast. Flap-jacks and bacon for dinner, and repeat for supper. On Sunday we get beans, and try to have some to carry over. For

a change we have boiled rice, and when we get time, stewed dried fruit in small quantities. We have a great treat when we get fresh meat of any kind, and fry it in fat.

It is something new for some of the men to receive and obey orders. They will soon learn the importance of having a head and obeying promptly. Even the buffaloes have a leader and follow him.

Our trail is mostly in the bottom lands and rains have made the ground soft and in consequence the roads are very bad. It did not rain on us last night. Have crossed one creek on which was an old bridge. This we repaired and it carried us safely across. One of our company has the mumps, and so is not very happy.

Stopped at noon to let our teams graze, and in the afternoon made good progress. At night we are camped on sandy soil which makes it pleasant. Got our corral formed in good order and our cattle out in good feed, and fires burning ready to prepare a good meal for hungry men. John (Dr. Barker) and myself cooking for our separate messes at the same fire. Who'd a thunk it, three months ago that they would see John and Ed away out on the plains, in their rough garments, cooking over a bush fire? Bacon and pan cakes and coffee, 1,000 miles from no where. A doctor and a Colonel frying bacon by the same fire. Carter, always cheerful, was sitting by a neighboring fire chattering, when by some accident a camp kettle of boiling water was turned over onto his feet, and scalded him badly, and he is now in much pain. A good, willing and cheerful man, suffering. One moment between joy and sorrow.

It has been cloudy all day and is now rather chilly. I take my regular turn on guard, and so others cannot say, "He is Colonel and so shirks."

Made about nineteen miles over good roads and are now camped on the Platte river. From the flood wood scattered along, should say that some day it was deeply under water. This gives us wood for cooking, and as there is but little timber it comes in very handy. Feed is good.

I am writing in my journal seated on the sand, with the bottom of a bucket for a table. My room is not contracted, for all the boundless heavens surround me. No habitation of



Society's Iconographic Collection

"Where we now camp in a few years will be trained by the hand of the White man and the wily savage will no longer proul upon its soil."

man in sight or within miles of us, and no telling how distant are women.

As I sit here I can but think about the home and those I have left. I am not doing this for fun or from selfishness, but for the hope that I can secure more gold with which to give them more than the comforts of life. There is no selfishness mixed in it.

The prairie over which we are traveling is beautiful to look upon, and rich in verdure and decked with beautiful flowers, giving out their fragrance and their brilliant colors, to cheer the senses of man. We tread upon them, not thinking that we are crushing out their hearts. . . .

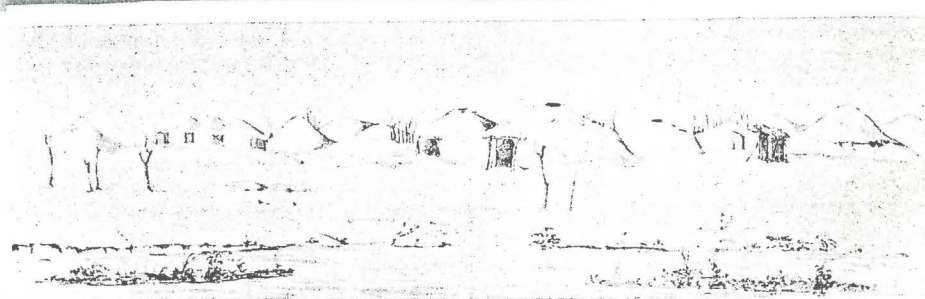
. . . [Wednesday] May 16th., seated on the sand. Where we now camp in a few years will be trained by the hand of the white man and the wily savage will no longer proul upon its soil. But where will the poor red man find a home free from the intrusion of the whites. Where rest? His hunting ground is almost deserted by game, and why? The white man has been there. . . . This is the justice the red man receives.

SOME of us get very tired through the day, and when night comes, are glad to lie down to sleep in almost any position or place. Let the thunders roll, and the lightning flash, and

the rain fall, so it does not too much of it strike us, we sleep on. Yet when we are among so many wild Indians and at all times sleeping on our arms, any sudden noise will startle us. It is then that the cry of the guards, as they pace their stations and, as is our rule, call out the half hour, does calm the nerves. "Half past twelve and all is well," or as a German says it, "All yite," soothes the mind, and dreams, if we have any, are more pleasant.

We break camp about eight o'clock, as a rule, the leading team of yesterday being the rear team to-day. We are now traveling up the valley of the Platte River, and have the river in sight, on which at times, there are small groves of timber. The small streams we have to cross are very crooked, with swift currents. In crossing one to-day our ox teams all went over safely, but the last team which was the mule team and light wagon. They, by going too far down the stream, got into trouble and came near being drowned, but were at last got safely to shore.

We are now encamped about two miles from the Platte River, and on the opposite shore, there is a large train encamped, but it is so far off that we cannot tell who they are. This has been a fine day for traveling and we have made about nineteen miles. We have seen antelope to-day. I was some distance ahead of the train



Society's Iconographic Collection

A Pawnee village.

with my Lieutenant Colonel to select a camp, and we saw some distance ahead of us five deer feeding, but they soon saw us, and raising their white flags they left us in quick time.

We found fine grass but no water, and here we will go into camp. On the next morning the train on the opposite side of the river got under way before us, but we resolved that when we had good feed we would give our teams plenty of time to eat, for on them we depended for our transportation. We made twenty one miles to-day and are now ninety-eight miles from the Missouri River.

This prairie is very beautiful to look at with good soil, beautiful flowers, that would gladden the eye of those we have left, but we cannot present them a bouquet for their table. "Peter, do not talk such things, or you will make me more homesick than I am."

It rained very hard last night and the lightning was very vivid. . . . It seemed as though one flash after another ran completely around our corral on the chains, connecting one wheel with another. . . .

I stood on guard from 11 till 2, and nearly all the time the heavens were one continuous blaze, and peal succeeded peal without cessation. At one moment all would be in blaze of light, then more than mid night darkness would succeed. I was sometimes completely blinded, and would think that the light would never, never come. It was indeed a terrible night. . . . "Twelve o'clock and all is well," rings out and goes around the circle of guards. Welcome sound to all as they stand or lie with every nerve strained to its utmost tension, even if asleep. Two o'clock and the relief comes, and we poor wet mortals turn in.

It kept this up until nearly noon the next day. Only made nine miles to-day fording one

stream.¹² Here we found a paper pinned to a tree, saying that there were some ninety teams ahead of us, dated several days before. This was good news to us.

I added my mite to this giving our number and etc. and pinned it below. We have passed near the old pioneer ford, and also the Pawnee Village, or the remains of one, which was destroyed in 1846.¹³ It was a large village and from the ruins I should think that some of the buildings are as much as fifty feet in diameter, as they are always built round. This is the mode of construction. First are set up croches of sufficient height, then poles are set up close together, to keep out the dirt. This makes a complete wall. Then on this wall other poles are placed forming a complete arch. Near each building are one or more wells or holes for burying corn. This hole at the top is about 16 inches across, and it continues for this size about four feet, when it flares, and becomes about the shape of a large bottle or demijohn. The walls are made tight and even by packing solid and smooth with some kind of substance unknown to me, but is surely a safe receptacle for grain, and when covered will be difficult to find. This is the first town that I ever saw in ruins, and it assists me in understanding a city in ruins. Wild beasts now inhabit it.

Some of the men went ahead to examine more closely and killed a large white wolf with a club. We have seen a great deal of game to-day, but it was too far away to be of use to us.

¹² Probably Beaver Creek, 104 miles from Council Bluffs. Clayton, *Emigrants' Guide*, 6.

¹³ The Old Pawnee Village was 114 miles from Council Bluffs. *Ibid.*, 6.

We passed an old mission, or where it was once located [on Plum Creek], and two of the buildings still stand apparently never completed. All the rest have been destroyed by fire. Traces of their old corn fields can still be seen, and we are camped on an old battle ground on a beautiful prairie, at the West side of the [Loup] river, and skulls and human bones lie scattered all over the ground. This battle was between the Pawnees and Sioux, and many brave warriors were slain and their scalps worn by their foes. . . .

To-day is Sunday [May 20] and I did not think it best to travel, but when I so notified the company I found much opposition, and I thought best to take a vote, and when the votes were counted behold it was a tie, and I had to decide it. I decided that Sunday was a good day for resting, and we were going to do so.

It was fortunate for us that we had good feed, wood and water. One man who was always on the off side tried to make trouble and to lead off a part of the company; but they stuck to me, and even his partners would not budge. So Sunday was to be Sunday even on the plains. To make it as pleasant as I could I cooked a kettle of beans for my mess, and we did have a good dinner. I encouraged them all to wash their clothes and mend them, and then take a bath. This we did after finding an excellent bathing place. We did this by relays, and when through we all felt fine. Many, besides their mending, wrote letters home, so to have them ready if an opportunity offered to send them. I was invited out to tea, and had a potato-soup which was indeed a luxury.

All felt so well that all but my "thorn" were glad that we had not traveled that day, and then resolved that we would not travel on Sunday. So we kept to it until we broke up at Salt Lake. Our experience was that our teams would do more work in a week to rest one day in seven, and were able to endure more.

In the evening we got together, and with Dr. Barker for a leader we sang many old familiar hymns. They brought back many happy thoughts of home and dear ones.

I have sent ten men ahead to find a ford over the Loup Fork of the Platte. The feed is not as good as common to-day. Coming to

a small patch of good grass we came to a halt and turned the cattle onto it. One of my men, a doctor from Ft. Atkinson, is about used up with homesickness. I wish I could describe the different characters we have with us; what a picture it would be.

I think my two chums and myself get along with as little friction as any mess in our train, but gold is what we are all after and we must all go through. We have not had a sharp word between us yet, and hope we shall not have. We have the best team in the company, and we take the best care of them, and hardly ever strike them a blow, and can go where any other team can.

Arrived on the 21st. of May at the Loup Ford, but the party sent ahead had not returned and we thought it best not to try to cross here to-day, and so after supper, with some four others, went to see if we could find another ford. Here the river is about half a mile wide, and we went in sometimes, up to our middle, then again it was very shallow. The bottom is quick sand and if a person stands long in one place it is doubtful if he ever gets out, as the sand keeps going out from under his feet. If a wagon stops it would be very difficult for it to be started again, for every moment the team and wagon have been sinking, and the sand closing over. This makes it important for us to know just where we are to drive as we dare not stop when once under way.

It rained considerable last night and turned cold. I was chilly after getting wet and this morning it was colder than ever; so cold that I do not think it practicable to cross the river until it gets warmer.

The pressure to keep moving to the front is great, and so we went down to the river to try to find another ford, and went nearly through without going over my knees, but then it got deeper as we seemed to strike a channel, and we then concluded to try to follow the one taken by the company that preceded us.

The man sounded the horn accordingly, and we went back to the river to begin staking out the way, as we must not stop when once started. On reaching the river we saw a large force of Indian warriors [probably Sioux] on the opposite side of the river in full war dress. Heads dressed with feathers, faces paint-

ed. All were armed and mounted on ponies, and coming from all directions. They appeared to be friendly to us, and displayed the stars and stripes. Their manner of approach also indicated to me that we were not the objects of their hunt. Seeing this we immediately returned to camp. The cattle were all in the corral, but the mules had not been brought in and the man that was with them was so frightened that he left them and broke for the camp.

THE INDIANS were dressed very gaudily in all the paraphernalia of war fare. I have read descriptions and seen pictures, but none of them could exceed this sight. It is not to be wondered at that some of the men's hearts went pit-a-pat. One of their chiefs turned towards our camp with another of the head men, on a full trot, and with one of our men, I went out to meet them. They shook hands with me and many others, showing in every possible way that they were friendly, and then rode off in the same rapid manner. The man who was out with the mules stopped [them] and was not going to let [them] pass. I saw him and ordered him to let [them] pass, which after some hesitation he did. One man, a little soft in the head, thought they were going to drive off the mules, and fired at them, but did not hit either, which was fortunate. I sent out men for the mules, and they soon brought them in, and behold one of them was shot under the eye. This is what became of the young man's bullet. I then assembled the men and had the roll called, and a captain put over every ten men. This showed three men missing and one of them was Dr. Barker, but he soon appeared almost out of breath from running. I heard three reports of a gun in the direction from which he came.

He told his story, which was this. Mr. Roe, Mr. Guynand and himself were out hunting and were some distance apart in a ravine. The Doctor saw the Indians coming and hallooed to Roe, who was some distance off. But they were upon him almost instantly. He dropped his gun and extended his hand which they grasped and shook heartily. They only took from him a red neck-tie and left. He lost no time in making for the camp, and the Indians galloped in the direction where Roe was, and I think came upon him unawares. The doctor

heard shots in his direction and looked back and from what he saw thinks that Roe fired his revolver upon them, for they turned back and formed a circle around him and dismounted. Then there was a scuffle, then a mounting and away. This is all that he can tell, but he supposes that Roe is killed. The other man has returned very much frightened, but not injured. The Indians appeared to be in council and mighty soon it was formed.

I immediately sent out a man with a flag of truce, but before he reached them they were gone and he did not succeed in finding them. I had hard work to keep some of the foolish ones from following them, but by using strong words and persuasive ones I stopped it and they now thank me for it. I stationed a strong guard around the camp and ordered the rest not to make any display at arms, but to keep cool and have their arms where they could get them readily, and under no circumstances to leave the camp without permission.

The man with the flag of truce is seen in the distance returning. I then sent out a guard with Mr. Nutt as captain, and with Dr. Barker as guide, to search for Mr. Roe. They have returned, bringing with them the dead body of our comrade. A spear had pierced his heart killing him instantly, and as he lay on the ground [the Indians] had struck him twice across the mouth with a hatchet, the gashes crossing. They also crossed his hands on his breast. By both of these signs they indicated that they were satisfied. It casts a gloom over us all, as we look upon his mangled body. It is supposed by us all that when he saw these Indians mounted, and in war array coming from the direction of our camp, he probably thought that they had destroyed our camp, and murdered all his companions. A man must think quick under such circumstances, and he doubtless had only a moment until he fired, killing one of them, and then they took their revenge. He was an awful sight, as we looked upon him. He was a man that was liked by all, and we shall miss him as the days go by. It certainly left many sad hearts. But we must go forward. We selected for his burial spot a bluff of peculiar shape. It was nearly perpendicular on three sides with a square place on top of about twenty feet. Then on the remaining side sloped gradually toward the

plain. We dug his grave on this spot. We had no material for a coffin.

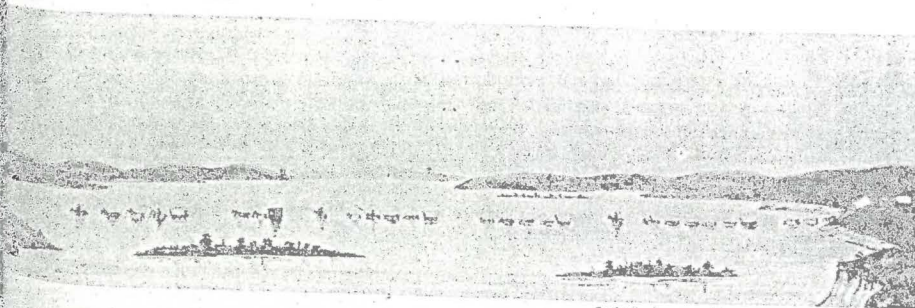
In digging the grave we left steps at each side for poles to rest on. We could only wrap him in a blanket, and so he was lowered into his grave. I made a short address and a brother offered a prayer. Then we covered his remains, with poles resting on these steps, and a cross bar in the middle, and these covered with brush to keep the dirt out, and then when the grave was nearly full, we gathered rocks and covered all. This made a slight mound and was to protect it from wild beasts. Who shall be the next to be taken? With sad hearts we moved back to camp. Dr. Barker was in a very critical position, and but for his good judgment and cool head, he might have been one more to be left under this sod, for the wolves, and cyotes, to howl over.

We have moved our camp onto higher ground, and expect to cross the river in the morning. This is [Wednesday] the 23rd. of May. Last night our reliefs of guard were eight and part of them were placed some distance out. The guard was alert but we were not disturbed. When the horn sounded for a start, we sent out ten men to scour the bushes on the river bottom, and ten to scour as an advance guard. We had taken special pains to see where the Indians had crossed, and the men had cut poles with some brush on, and as they advanced stuck them in the sand, and they were fortunate to strike a good fording place and soon shouted back, "All right, come on."

We doubled our teams and on each wagon as it started we had eight yoke of cattle, and three drivers, for when we once entered the river we could not stop or all would sink in the quick sand. We soon had a wagon on the road with its big team, and without any mishap they were soon safe on the other shore and ready to return. The water in the deepest places did not quite come up to the wagon bed. Soon we had several wagons on the road at a time, and by 11:30 we were all safe across.

None of us were wet for we had all disrobed before we started, and when we struck the other shore we were soon in our right minds again, and clothes. The guards were called in and within half an hour, we with sad hearts left the river that had proved so disastrous to us. We could see the mound on which our murdered companion lay. . . .

We are in camp to-night on a high sand bluff, and have had a sandy road all day. We have no wood or water except what we brought with us, and the feed is not as good as we would like; but it is the best we can do. Before retiring we gave out orders to march at the first sounding of the horn, and move on until we found feed and water. We started out before the sun rose. We were badly disappointed by not finding water and feed where we expected, but we still kept up courage. It was hard on our teams. After resting a while at 8 o'clock we went on slowly over the same kinds of bluffs, and then came again to the plains or river bottoms. What joy when we



Fording the Platte, a dangerous operation, since once started the wagons had to keep moving or run the risk of sinking into quicksand.

came to a small stream of good water, and good feed along it, and you may believe that we were not long in getting into our corral, and turning out our teams into the grass. They fairly laughed as they ate and drank, and we poor mortals soon had our coffee steeping.

In two hours we were again on our way and all much happier than before. We have forded two streams to-day at one of which [probably Prairie Creek] we had hard work, as the banks had to be cut down, and the stream's bed was soft, but with this exception we had good roads and splendid feed on all sides. Near the last stream where we camped after crossing is another grave. Lonely grave.

25th. of May we camped on a rise about one half mile from the grave, and I had quite a time scrubbing out my kitchen and its utensils, and then I baked bread. Yes I made and baked bread. Had hardly got through before it began to rain again. The guard had been set and we, who were not on the detail, were glad to crawl into our wagons, and how the rain did fall and the thunder roll and the lightning came in one continuous flash, with peal on peal of thunder. If the other storm that I described was terrible, this was more terrible. What gave this new terror was the expectation of an attack from the Indians. Most of the men slept with their arms on or in their hands. One of the guards was so frightened that he left his post, and got into the corral, but was soon taken out by his captain of the guard. Many could not sleep. How one is relieved in such a night as this in hearing the cry go about the camp as the thunder rolls, "Half past twelve and all is well."

When one cannot sleep is just the point where homesickness begins. I slept fine through it all, even if the rain did beat in some. At the sound of the rising horn I was up and had my breakfast under way, and we were ready to start at seven.

It was a very cold morning; with two overcoats on I was not warm. It was also cold yesterday. The rain kept up until noon. We are now 2,000 feet above the level of the sea.

Howland was one of the number who could not sleep, and now he intends to return home from the head of Grand Isle.¹⁵ He is sure he shall lose his life if he goes on. But we are

all changeable creatures. I was on guard the first watch, and the rule that we adopted, that is the calling out of the time every half hour, is a great relief to over-strained nerves, especially when lying in constant fear of an attack. The moon shone during my watch but the wind kept on blowing, and it remains cold. We had a drizzly morning, and the rain had left the roads bad.

There is a great deal of water on the ground, and we did not start out until late. Since dinner we have had better roads, and have made about twenty miles to-day.

WE ARE NOW camped near Grand Island, and across it we can see several camps of those who have come up from Independence and St. Josephs. I had supposed that our trails came together at the head of the island, but they did not. It made many happy faces to see them at the distance, and relieved many fearful hearts. I began a letter to my wife to-day, which I shall keep on writing until I get a chance to send.

On Sunday morning May 27th., not finding the grass as good as we expected, we concluded to move on, until we got to the end of the timber and to good feed. There we shall go into camp for Sunday, and bake and wash.

Game is very plenty, elk, antelope and deer, and as we have a detail out every day we have plenty of fresh meats, and from the way my mess eats I am sure that they like my cooking.

For more than twenty miles we have been passing through one continuous prairie-dog town, and their city extends as far as the eye can reach on both sides. They are not of the nature of a dog. Living on grass, the only way they resemble dogs is in their bark. We had plenty of their music last night. This animal burrows in the ground, bringing the dirt to the top, and this makes a little mound around each hole. At the least alarm they rush to their mounds, and sitting up survey the danger, and if anything unusual appears, out of sight they go in an instant. But if all is quiet, they re-

¹⁵ Grand Island is the body of land about fifty miles long that is formed by a branch of the Platte River, dividing from the Platte near Kearney, Nebraska, and re-entering it near Chapman, Nebraska.

appear as quickly and begin to bark to show, I suppose, that they are not afraid.

One curious thing about these animals is their sociability, as they choose for their companions the little owls and snakes of all kinds. On an alarm being given they all seem to understand it, and scamper off at once for their city or refuge. It is one of the conundrums: what are these animals good for to man or beast? As far as we know they live on grass and roots.

Made about twenty miles yesterday, and twenty-two miles to-day. Traveled over the same level prairie, but have had bad roads. Got better acquainted with Mr. Jacobs than ever before. He is a religious man and true blue. I like such men. It is almost one continuous train on the opposite side of the river.

Five of the cows strayed and I sent a man back after them, but he was chased by Indians and left the cows. On the morning of the 29th., I sent back men to look for the cows, and left ten men at our camping place; then I set the train in motion. About noon we halted for feed and were discussing the point whether it were not best to send back more men, when they hove in sight with the cows. They report fifty Indians in the neighborhood, whom they thought were intending to intercept and cut them off from the camp, but they formed in two lines abreast and were ready to receive them. They kept a bold front and marched double quick. Seeing this, the Indians soon disappeared over the bluffs. They are safe in camp. We got under way at 3:00 o'clock and were glad that we were all together again and nothing lost.

Now what is the excitement? Look, there is a herd of buffaloes. The chase commences. The mules in advance with their owners. I had hard work to keep enough with the train to drive the teams. Then the crack of the rifles. We only got one and the boys soon had that dressed. It was a large bull, and not very fat at that.

When we went into camp we had fires built and soon the odor of the buffalo steaks began to greet our nostrils and our appetites, and good teeth pronounced it fine. This was one of the times when the mule team came in handy in bringing in the game. None went hungry to bed. I was on guard again last night and of

course the rain came down in sheets.¹⁶ It cleared off before sun rise, but we had wet wood and poor fires, and so, poor breakfasts. It began to rain about noon, and we went into camp near the timber. It is quite chilly. Dr. Winsloy, of Ft. Atkinson, went out for an elk with one of his mules. His hooting frightened the mule, which took the back track. With the other mule he overtook him about three miles beyond our last camping place. The doctor was gone so long that we became worried about him and sent two men out on ponies to hunt him. They came onto him and we were all glad to welcome him. I made a fine soup for my mess and now feel that I shall never want anything more to eat.

Camped on Carom Creek which is very high. In the morning we crossed it safely by raising our wagon boxes up to the top of the wagon stakes and lashing the boxes to them.¹⁷ We are now camped near the timber and intend staying here to wash, bake, and rest.

There are quite a number of Indians with us and more still coming. 3:00 o'clock. Have had a council with them. Made them some presents and smoked the pipe of peace. . . .

The chief had his head men come into the corral, and formed them into a half circle. Then I, with my head men (braves), sat on each side of the chief. After giving them our presents, we smoked the pipe of peace all around twice, all from the same pipe. This was a large pipe made of wood with a long stem. It was filled with what they called Kinikinick. This is composed of the bark of shrubs and roots and then dried and made fine in the hands, and is rather pleasant, as you smoke it. No tobacco in it. After this the chief divided the presents among the men, reserving two pants to himself. Then he left them and went out of the circle, and soon the balance went out.

I am now writing with the chief by my side. After washing my clothes and [having] come

¹⁶ The severe storm of May 29, 1849. Stewart, *The California Trail*, 227.

¹⁷ Carom Creek does not appear in Clayton's guide book. Wagon stakes were attached independently to the frame of the wagon in a variety of ways, and the wagon "box" or body rested on the frame, inside the stakes, so it could be raised.

back to camp I found one of the braves, by order of the chief, keeping guard and every time he came around he fired off his old flint lock and this he loaded whilst on the march. This made all the Indians stand back. Their object was soon manifest. The braves formed into a half circle and the chief came to me and by signs and words told me that they were hungry, and asked if I would give them something to eat. I soon gathered enough to feed them and they *were* hungry. The chief saw that it was equally divided. He gave to his head braves, and they to the warriors. When they were satisfied, we had a general time of hand shaking and they marched away.

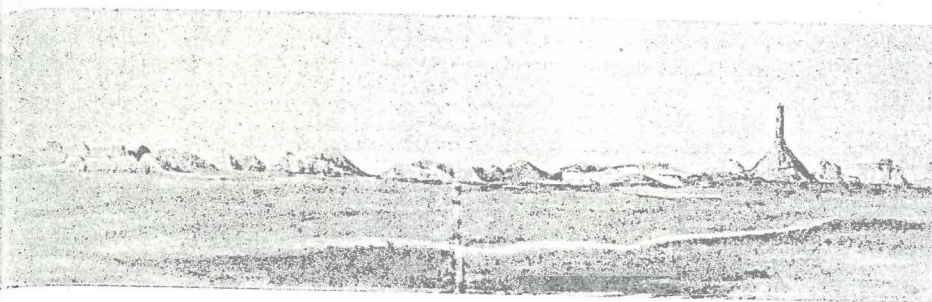
The next morning we started early and when opposite to where they had camped, we saw them all in motion. The chief and his warriors, both old and young, came up to us and from the chief I learned that he would accompany us on our journey. We could see their train moving around the bluffs north of us. It was a curious sight. We were accompanied by their braves, whilst their squaws were seen in the distance. By my side walked the old chief, and he soon called a guard and they would not let any other Indians approach me. We could not make much headway in talking, and neither of us understood the other's sign language. It seems curious to me to be escorted through a country by its king, and at the same time his braves may take a liking to our scalps. I am in no fear, for I think this chief is friendly.

They have seen trains across the river, and have left us for their own camp. We can see their wigwams in the distance, and a large village it is. In passing by their village, the squaws came out to visit us, and a prettier lot of squaws I never saw. They were dressed in all their ornaments and their waists (what they had) and their skirts were of deer skins tanned to be very white and soft, trimmed with fringe cut of the same material, and then decorated with beads, and porcupine quills. The younger ones are not so dark, or smoked as the older ones, and were really quite pretty. We were as much of a curiosity to them, as they were to us. It is supposed that there are about 5,000 Indians in this tribe of Siouxs, moving off to their summer hunting grounds.

We certainly made them our friends. The chief offered me his prettiest daughter for a wife, in exchange for a small pony. Her dresses were worth more than the pony. She was willing to go along with me as my wife, but I had one, and had to refuse the exchange.

I WAS ON GUARD in the morning watch. Some buffaloes made their appearance and some crossed the river. They made a great noise in the water. This is June 3rd., Sunday, our rest day. About one hour after the sun rose we saw six buffaloes crossing the river, on the same side of the creek where the Indians were camped. The Indians on their ponies were soon in full chase, and quickly had them all down. Their method is to ride up to the side of a buffalo that is detached and with one thrust with their spear or firing an arrow just back of the fore-shoulder, strike the heart. All is over in a minute. I wish I could picture the scene. It would be splendid. I was fairly charmed. There was some crossed on the side of the creek where our camp was, and my men with two Indians gave chase, and soon had one. He had been shot through but the Indians gave it the finishing wound. He had it dressed in a short time and was liberal in the distribution of the meat for he cut away all the best cuts of meat, and gave to me and my men all they would take, and fine steak it was. But during the time we were getting our steaks, the other Indians were in pursuit of the herd and we can see the buffaloes drop, as they kill them.

The boys say there must have been as many as 2,000 in the herd that crossed the river. On both sides of the creek and in sight of our camp we could count eleven dead ones. The Indians were still in full chase when they passed out of our sight. We had already killed five antelope, which are fine eating, and we were living on the top shelf. Fried, boiled, stewed, soup-stews with dumplings (but no onions). The meat not used, of the buffalo and antelope, was cut into long narrow strips, and these were hung up in every available place, without salt, to cure in the dry air. Our wagons looked as though decorated. When cured this meat is good, and is called "jerked meat" and will keep as long as hungry men will leave it alone.



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Chimney Rock, an eagerly awaited landmark on the Western Trail.

It is a very exciting sport, hunting buffaloes. About noon a buffalo was seen coming over the bluff (evidently a stray) towards our cattle. Seeing him the men must give chase, and instead of coming into our herd he made for the bluffs, and freedom. It is so exciting that men, not having hard military training, cannot be kept from the chase, or under control.

My men were all reported before sun down. We are camped beside a splendid spring of clear cold water which forms, of itself, quite a creek. Having nothing stronger, we are all cold water men. Had a beautiful moon light night, one fit for dreams of homes and loved ones. Is it to be wondered at that many of us get blue or homesick, when we have time to think? Well we do. It is pleasant over head but the roads are soft and wheeling bad. We are in plain sight of the trains on the other side of the river. Two of my men went over to interview them and get news, if any. On returning they report that there have passed Ash Hollow 2,350 teams, and to lighten their loads they have been throwing away their bacon, lead and everything that they can spare. In some cases they abandon one wagon, and use both teams on the other. This makes it look dark for us, when we strike into their trail. We keep to our old motto, "Use good feed when we have it." Teams, like men, do not do well on an empty stomach.

To-night is our election of officers and I have positively refused to serve longer as colonel. A Mr. Johnson was elected in my place, and I feel relieved, for it was a responsible place, and I can say that I have served faithfully, and successfully, and not a man or team has dropped out. But I am afraid that this will not continue, for to-day some of them

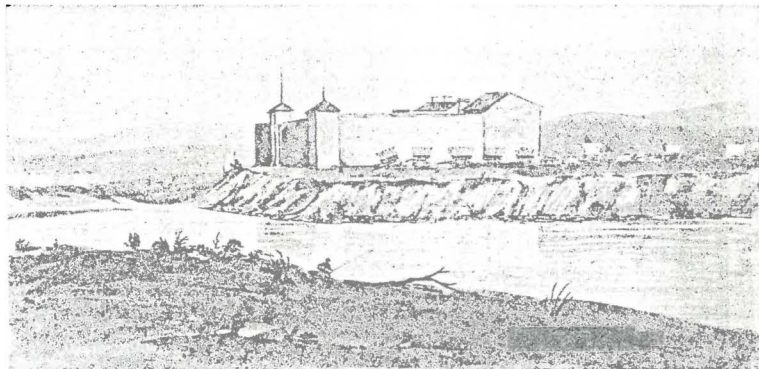
left the train and went ahead, but came in again when we went into camp.¹⁷

We made twenty five miles and have passed over three hundred teams, on the opposite side of the river. They are strung along as far as the eye can reach in every direction, up and down the river. The scenery has been more varied, which makes the time pass pleasanter. On our right are the high bluffs, on the left the Platte. We have just passed what is called the "Bluff Ruins," on account of their resemblance to old ruins of towns.¹⁸ Some of them are very precipitous and stand up at least 150 feet from the plains. Some of us climbed to the top of one of them. The top is composed of hard rock, say 300 feet across and perhaps more. It is a little ragged, but not rough.

In the center of one large rock is a place about eleven inches across and deep, rather flaring in the center, and at the top perfectly round, which was filled with as good cool water as I want. After we had all drunk all we wanted, we dipped it all out to see if it would fill in again. It did fill and ran in quite fast. Just at the end are a few old cedar trees standing on the side, with their tops about even with the rocks and in one is an eagles' nest with their young in it, which we could easily have gotten. But we did not disturb them. In looking up we could just see the old eagles circling around watching their young ones.

¹⁷ Such separations were very common among wagon trains, and they increased in frequency as the going became more rough. Stewart, *The California Trail*, 238-239.

¹⁸ Near Finley, Nebraska, about thirty-three miles from famed Chimney Rock, which is on the south side of the Platte. Clayton, *Emigrants' Guide*, 11.



Society's Iconographic Collection

Fort Laramie as it appeared on June 24, 1849.

This is [Friday] the 8th. of June and we have passed on the south side of the river, "Chimney Rock." It is a grand sight, rising from the base at a gradual taper for about 60 feet, then perpendicular for 40 feet, then there is a straight jog, then about 65 feet [of] it runs up almost perpendicular. . . . The scenery is quite romantic around it, but my head is quite big with a headache. Made over twenty five miles.

Our camp was about half way between "Chimney Rock," and Scott's Bluff. This bluff rises at least 250 feet, and is large and grand. It makes one think of a wind mill. Have had fine feed and water. We are now about 14 miles from Ft. Laramie.²⁰

We arrived opposite Ft. Laramie at 2 o'clock [Monday, June 11] and found the river very high and not fordable. Mr. Williams made one attempt to swim it but failed, but after resting a while tried it again, and when nearly across, he got into a whirlpool, and came very near drowning. He cried for help, but it was impossible to assist him and we expected every minute to see him sink to rise no more. But

²⁰ Hillyer's geography is unclear. Clayton (pp. 11-12) found Ft. Laramie about fifty miles from Scotts-bluff. Hillyer may have written two days' entries at one time and have confused them when he prepared the journal in 1903.

fortune favored him. A current struck him and he was carried out of the whirling water and he soon made the shore. Then there was a glad and joyful shout. "He is safe." After resting a while he went to the fort, which is some distance away. He arranged for the boat. We had to get it down and back, and pay one dollar for each wagon for its use. Concluded not to get the boat down until the next morning. Some rowed over in a small boat, and report many teams passing, but we are in the first quarter. Have had Laramie Peak in sight all day. It looks like a great black cloud in the distance.

Have good feed. June 12th., got the boat down early, and a little before noon had the ropes stretched and ready for crossing. I went out with Mr. Snell to see if we could not get up on this side, but we found that the trail winds over the high bluffs. This takes us a long ways around. On our trip we saw a large grey wolf, but did not kill him, for our gun would not go off. One life saved. Saw a large yellow rattle snake. This species is very large, spiteful and poisonous.

On our return we began to cross. When we had one wagon over, the Salt Lake mail came up, and as they appear a fine lot of men, we crossed them over without delay. They had been after us four days, and say that we have not traveled every thing on the road; they also

report 2,000 teams on this side of the river following us, and that they have passed over 3,000 teams on the other side between this and Grand Island. Thank God we are in the lead.²¹

At 3:00 o'clock we had all the wagons across and swam the cattle safely. With a long and strong pull we got the boat back to the fort. The buildings of the fort are constructed of sun dried bricks and are built inside of the usual wooden posts driven in the ground.

The old original fort was near the ford, but is all in ruins. Trains are camped all around us.

Started at day light to find better feed, and passed, I should think, twenty camps. Saw many things thrown away, such as bacon, stoves, and in fact everything that they could possibly do without. We find wagons every few miles. This looks hard and is discouraging. Only 550 miles of the 1,950 and even now abandoning wagons and provisions in the mad rush to get ahead.²²

We always stop when we strike good feed. The scenery has been quite romantic, and it is much pleasanter than the dead level plains. Our roads are fine except one bad hill.

Made about 26 miles. Passed the U. S. troops. The mail is with us yet, but leaves us in the morning and we have been putting in time writing letters. I wrote several besides one long one to my wife. Daylight found us on the road, and we have scouts out looking for grass. After about four miles good feed was reported, and we drove off to where it was located. Giving the teams a good meal and rest, we went back to the trail.

The U. S. troops came up to us, and have been with us all day. Have passed many teams,

²¹ Hillyer's party was indeed in the front half of the caravan's main body. Although a few wagons were far ahead of them, the Wisconsin emigrants reached the point opposite Fort Kearney, Nebraska, about May 25, only a week later than the first big wave of wagons. The majority of the wagons passed Fort Kearney in the fortnight between May 18 and June 2. Stewart, *The California Trail*, 231.

²² Fort Laramie was one of the places along the trail especially used for jettisoning useless articles. The urge to speed ahead was not the only reason for discarding cargo. Many persons lost mules or oxen and had to make wagon loads light enough for the remaining beasts to pull. Stewart, *The California Trail*, 237-238.

and back of us as far as the eye can see is one continuous string of wagons. On both sides of the trail are high precipitous bluffs. The scenery is fine. On ascending the hill we can see for miles and miles, and here the imagination can form almost anything. At the east we can look into the sunny valleys and in the west we can see the ragged peaks of the mountains, whose heads rise above the clouds and are heavy with dark clouds pierced by the thunder bolts of heaven. How strong the contrast; one is all light, the other blackness of darkness. But in man are often seen stranger contrasts. Part of our company fell off, and among them Barker, Carter, Pierce, Hinkley and Wheeler. The colonel resigned his office and says that he can do nothing with them. Some of the cattle are getting foot sore on account of the alkali in the soil. One wagon in the train before us was upset, and in the wagon were a woman and child. The top was smashed but fortunately no one was hurt.

Having good feed we let our teams fill themselves. What will teams do that come after us? Our journey to-day was over a rough road. We camped on a small stream [probably Deer Creek], and drove our teams about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile up it, and secured good grass. Left our cattle out all night with a guard of six. They had no trouble and we started early. Nothing new except that we traveled all this Sunday [June 17], and it will do us no good or our teams.

ON THE 18th., we arrived at the ferry and find ninety wagons ahead of us, and we have to take our turns.²³ So we formed a corral and then drove our cattle out into the bluffs where we found pretty good feed. We are all tired and need rest. A good many have come and gone in this camp since we came. Trains are continually passing on both sides of the stream.

²³ At this point, emigrants crossed the Platte River for the last time and headed southwest for the Sweetwater River. In 1847, Mormons established a ferry on the Platte about two miles west of Casper, Wyoming. A toll bridge also was in operation. Leander V. Loomis (Edgar M. Ledyard, ed.), *A Journal of the Birmingham Emigrating Company* (Salt Lake City, 1926), 39.

A family train is camped near us. I slept finely last night and kept it up until late. Had a fine breakfast of buffalo steak. About 10 o'clock I started out with a canteen of water under each arm and one man's dinner in my hand, to find our boys and the teams. I started out at a good round pace, for I thought they would all be very thirsty. I traveled for an hour and it seemed that I was no nearer the mountains than when I started. I kept it up until I was nearly exhausted, and had to stop and rest. I started again and after going over one mountain and another, took up a ravine which showed some cattle tracks and at 3 o'clock I came upon them. I had mistaken the ravine and had traveled many miles before I crossed it.

The trees that form our camp near the bluff looked like little shrubs, but were two feet through or more. I remained with the guard and cattle all night, and slept on the ground, soothed by the howling wolves into sweet slumbers, some 700 miles from all civilization, and miles from all mankind, with only four companions. But even under such conditions the weary body will rest. A little after light we

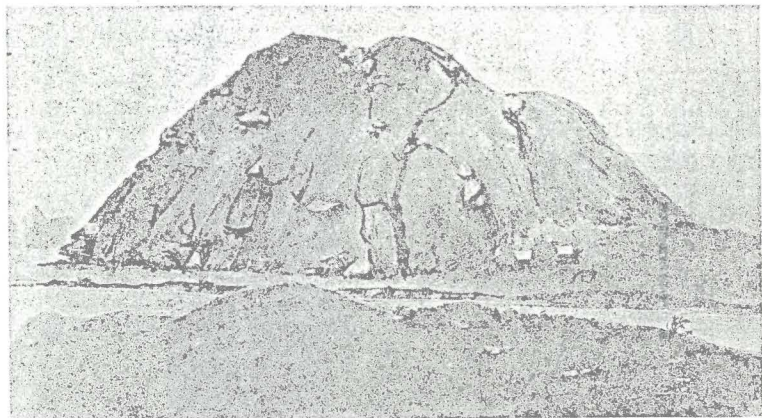
started the cattle up, and when they had a good breakfast, [we] started for the camp. Our wagons had nearly all been crossed. We had much difficulty in making our cattle take to the water, and swim across. Some of them would not and we had to drive them up the stream three miles before we could make them cross. This delay made the day short, but we traveled about twenty miles.

A man was supposed to have been murdered near the ferry, as he had a ball through the eye. On his belt was the name Brown. Several had been drowned at the several ferries.

There is but little sickness among the emigrants, for the great number on the road.

[Thursday] June 21st. When we camped last night it looked like a village. There were so many emigrants and some were fiddling, some dancing and others singing, and all appeared happy. Music helps.

The guard sent out with the cattle slept too long and they got mixed with the others, and we had trouble in separating them. We made about 24 miles and went into camp a half mile off the trail. Dr. Barker has not yet come up. Last night had a good place to camp, and



Independence Rock, on the Sweetwater River.

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had good feed, and this always makes us feel well. We are now stopping at Independence Rock, which is worthy noting. It is an isolated rock of granite, and I should judge it to be 400 feet long, 100 feet through, and over 100 feet high, and not easy to be ascended. It has two high peaks, one near each end. In going up from the south side, there is a small cave and in it is a spring. On this rock there are many names cut and painted, some taking great risks to get their names the highest. Its being isolated is the one thing that makes it so noticeable.²³

A little over five miles from this is the Devil's Gate, where the Sweet Water comes through the Rocky Mountains. The train had to swing around so as to keep in the plains, until it again strikes the river. I could not pass without examining it closely. I went in at the east end, and when about half way through, it burst upon us in all its magnificence. The rocks rise nearly 400 feet perpendicularly, on each side and at their base rushes the Sweet Water River. Its swift, rushing, roaring waters lashed into foam, as they are forced on their way to seek the level beyond, are very grand.

We went into the gorge as far as we could go, and the distance seemed almost endless, as we looked for their tops. In the midst of these waters is a large rock on which we could get, and we did get there, and I sat and mused and looked at the lofty battlements above, and the mad dashing water around. The sight was grand. We then went back as we could not advance on the banks and took a trail over the mountains [Devil's Gate].²⁴ The ascent was difficult. . . . There was one place on the top where it seemed as though we might lie down and look over. So I was the one to go first, and this was the way it was to be done. I was to lie on my face and one of the men was to clasp my ankle, and so to the next. The last one of the string was to be safely anchored.

Heading the string I did get so I could look down, but one sight satisfied me, and I called

²³ Independence Rock is on the Sweetwater River and was one of the most noted landmarks on the trail. Loomis, *Journal*, 42.

²⁴ Emigrants frequently climbed Devil's Gate. Stewart, *California Trail*, 257.



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Devil's Gate, "as grand as Niagara Falls."

out, "Hold on," and worked my way back. It was an awful backing out. The sight was grand but not worth the risk, and none of the others would venture. From where I was it seemed as if in the ages long past the water had split the mountains apart, as the walls on each side if brought together would fit perfectly. The rock on which I crawled projected over and the one on the other [side] was apparently just broken off. When I got back I had to lie down for a while to get the dizzy out.

We must get down. We found it very difficult and steep, and if a person should make a misstep, he would be precipitated into the abyss below. In some places you have to slide and slip your feet before you. One place is ten feet perpendicular, and this distance we had to drop, after being helped down as far as our mates could help us, and the ledge upon which we had to drop was very narrow. In one place I had to turn my face to the wall of granite. I worked myself down as well as I could, and then dropped. I was fortunate enough to catch and keep my upright position. I dare not turn around for it was a chasm below. Closing my eyes I got the dizzy feeling allayed and could take a look around. If I had struck an inch further out, I should not have written



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Men bracing a wagon as it descends a declivity.

this. Near by I found a safe place to stand and when the other boys dropped, I could reach out and catch hold of them. So we all got down that place safely. . . . It was a grand sight as we looked at it from below. In many respects it is as grand as Niagara Falls. . . .

Soon after coming to the plain below, we struck the trail and our company. Before going into camp near Devil's Gate, we passed one of the alkali lakes. The water in these lakes is impregnated with alkali [so] that nothing can drink it, and on the ground where it recedes or is evaporated by the sun you can gather the crust in flakes, and it is almost pure saleratus. Mixing this with grease makes soft soap. We tried it and it was sharp enough to remove even the dust of the plains as we washed hands and faces in the river water near the camp.

Here near these rocks we were fortunate enough to find good feed. The grandeur of this scene is of a different cast from that of Niagara. There the mighty current is precipitated over an awful gulf into the depths below, with an everlasting roar and above is

ever seen the bow of God. But here rises into the heavens above one majestic column of solid granite on each side of the river towering 400 feet above the water below, which is onward in its never ceasing course. It stands as firm as the rock of ages, and no one can see it and not be alive to its awful grandeur. . . .

The Ft. Atkinson company intends to remain here for a time but we shall continue our journey. We now number only seven wagons, less than one third our original number. We again camped on the river, passed the ice springs, where you can get plenty of ice at all seasons of the year by digging, but it carried so much alkali that we dared not use it for drinking.²⁵ One man found a piece of hard soap when he was digging, and he declares it was formed there, but I doubt it. The mountains now in sight are covered with eternal snow as with a blanket.

²⁵ Also known as Ice Slough. Ice could be found by digging through a foot or two of muck. Clayton *Emigrants' Guide* 15; Stewart, *California Trail*, 132

On [Tuesday] the 26th. after passing up the river bottom, crossed over a spur of the mountain and our road was very rocky and dangerous for wagons, but we are safely over them. We had plenty of cold snow water, but feed was poor. We have reached a branch of the Sweet Water and have good grazing. Heard from Barker, Carter and Pierce, and they are about two days behind us.

On the 27th. we left the Sweet Water and passed over the dividing ridge of the South Pass, and are now camped on the Pacific Creek which flows into the Pacific Ocean.²⁶ We now begin to go down stream. We are now 7,085 feet above the ocean. Not good air for a foot race. I am sorry for those coming behind, as the grass is getting scarcer and the teams wearing out. But we are over half way to the mines and have had good luck, thanks to Him who rules all things. We have decided to leave the main trail and take to the Salt Lake route.²⁷

The company has split again and now there are but four wagons in it. Only made twenty two miles and are now camped on Little Sandy. On the 29th. only traveled eight miles, when on striking Big Sandy and good feed, we went into camp. On [Sunday] the 1st. of July, about 10 o'clock, we arrived at Big Green River, but could not cross. Drove our cattle down the river, crossing a big miry place. About 5 o'clock we went after the cattle.

On the 2nd. of July we crossed and at 10 o'clock we were all safely over. Here the Ft. Atkinson boys came up and will travel with

²⁶ South Pass was the providential cut through the mountains only a few miles from where the trail left the Sweetwater. The pass marks the Continental Divide, and just beyond it flows aptly-named Pacific Creek. Stewart, *California Trail*, 132-133; Loomis, *Journal*, 51-52; Clayton, *Emigrants' Guide*, 16.

²⁷ Fifteen miles beyond Pacific Creek, the Mormon Trail divided from the usual California Trail. Travelers who chose to head "straight" west took Sublette's Cutoff, which traversed about forty-five miles of desert-like country. Then they headed for Ft. Hall, the Snake River, Goose Creek, and the Humboldt River, making a loop to the north around Great Salt Lake. About one-third of the emigrants stuck to the Mormon Trail, which took them about five days longer than the Sublette Cutoff. The Salt Lake City, then angled west to reach the Humboldt River. See map in Loomis, *Journal*; Stewart, *California Trail*, 135, 194, 244-248.

us. Coming to good grass we stopped, as is our practice, and gave our teams good feed and rest. Near us was a new grave, as was reported, "found drowned June 30th."

Had to camp without water. Allis was sick and I had to drive all day, with a roaring headache. The ferryman says there is a good road by Salt Lake, and report says, "Gold is plenty in California." Green River is a deep and rapid stream.²⁸

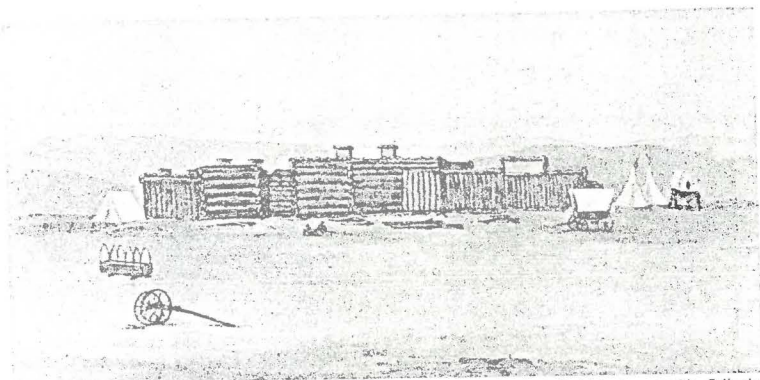
July 4th., was awakened by a discharge of small arms, but no booming of cannon. Not much like our fourths in the East. Met some men from Salt Lake to-day, and they say there is a good wagon road from the Lake and plenty of grass and timber, and what is also good news, if true, that their boys got from one hundred to one hundred and fifty dollars a day. Doubt it. Camped about two miles from Ft. Bridger, which is composed of four big houses with an enclosure for horses. It was built and is occupied by Mr. Bridger who has lived in the mountains for twenty years. His business is trading with the Indians. The country we have passed over has been up and down hill all day and some of them are very rough and steep. See but few emigrants. Mr. Bridger says this route by Salt Lake is about 160 miles shorter than the other and a better road.²⁹

I left the train on a borrowed mule Saturday night [July 7] after they had crossed Bear River. This is an 80 mile ride on mule back, and it touches in a new spot. But I made it in a little over two days, and at 5 o'clock I arrived in this wonderful city of Salt Lake.³⁰ I will mention one of the incidents on the trip. I was riding down the mountains and my mule was so small that my feet were not far from the ground. All of a sudden the mule hit a

²⁸ Leaving the Green River, the trail crossed overland for about fifteen miles until it reached Black's Fork, a tributary of the Green. Traveling southwest, emigrants crossed the Fork several times on their way to Fort Bridger. Clayton, *Emigrants' Guide*, 17.

²⁹ It was to Bridger's financial advantage to persuade emigrants that his route was better than the other. Each had its advantages and disadvantages. Stewart, *California Trail*, 135, 194, 244-248.

³⁰ By leaving the wagon train, Hillyer eliminated numerous fordings and a rather difficult stretch of road for wagons. Clayton, *Emigrants' Guide*, 18-20.



Society's Iconographic Collection

Fort Bridger.

small stone and [in his] stumbling, the girl of my saddle broke, and I found myself on my back with the saddle some rods down the mountain. I was not laughing when I sat up, but I think the mule was, for he stood there at the other end of the lariat not in the least excited or in a hurry. We soon joined forces and with strings in the boy's pocket repaired damages, and for a while we walked on in company. It was a lucky overturning. Some bruised spots but no broken bones. No other adventure on the way, but it will take some days before my lacerated feelings will become quiet.

I soon found a boarding place in a smallish home with a man and three wives and children. I had been here but a short time when I found Mr. Evans sick. I sat up with him and did what I could for him, and I am happy to say that my company was good for him, and in a few days he was out. One of our party, Jacob Rappelgee, died here a few days ago. He was from Milwaukee. The road over the hill is very bad and so down into this valley, and such dust. The city is pleasantly situated in a valley surrounded by mountains, and is finely watered by mountain streams which they turn by canals from their course, and so on to each side of the streets, and by "cut offs" turn into their gardens. This water is fine, soft and sweet. The valley is capable of

sustaining a large population. They now number about 8,000. They appear to be a happy people.

I have slept most of the time I could get since I came, and am not rested yet. Went out to the warm sulphur spring where it comes out of the mountains, and is a little above blood heat. Just where it comes out, the city has built a dam, making a pool large enough so that 25 or 30 people can bathe at one time. The stream is quite large and, running in at one side of the pool, runs out at the other, keeping it always clean. The men can use it five days in the week, and the women two. The water is so impregnated with sulphur that you cannot use soap in bathing. If you do you have to use other water to get it off. Stay in long enough and your pores will all be cleaned out, and you will feel like a new man. This warm spring is one mile from the city, and one mile beyond is the hot spring. This water is so hot, as it comes out of the mountain, that it will cook anything placed in it. The vegetation is all killed that it touches. The teams got in about 11 o'clock and all well.²²

²² The teams probably trailed Hillyer by two or three days, arriving in Salt Lake City between July 11 and 14.

Had an introduction to President [Brigham] Young, and I like him very much. I also was introduced to several of their Bishops and had a strong invitation to join their church, by them and several ladies, but [I] declined until better acquainted with their doctrines.

July 17th., have traded our teams for pack horses, and started for California again, and in good spirits.²³ Dr. Barker and his party got in last Saturday [July 14]. Last night we had a good dance on a puncheon floor.²⁴ I like the people very much, and should like to live among them. We are now 1,070 miles from the Missouri River and 4,300 feet above the level of the sea, in a valley with high mountains entirely surrounding it. Having changed our cattle for pack horses makes our management entirely different, and almost every one is for himself. Our mess is an exception and Allis, Marvin, and myself still travel together.

The first day we made about 15 miles, and altogether about fifty miles since we left Salt Lake City. Most of the company are still using the wagons for shelter. No houses in sight.

On the 20th. we crossed Bear River, which here is very deep, but we crossed safely. Some of us filled our canteens, and others deferred it until we reached Mud Creek [Malade River?]. This creek they found to be salt water, and their empty canteens were still empty, and from here we had a desert of twenty miles to cross and no water, and the sun came down blazing hot.²⁵ My canteen of water did not hold out long for I could not refuse a companion a drink when he asked for it.

When almost half way across this plain, some of the men left all, and went ahead saying, "We can never get the stock through." But Allis and myself stayed with the stock, saying we will not forsake them, and if we go

through, they will be with us. Our pack horse got his pack loose, and strung things about promiscuously, and it cost us three fourths of an hour to catch and pack him again. About 5 o'clock we saw McClosky coming back with some water, and those who could raised a shout. My tongue was swollen and clove to the roof of my mouth so that I could not speak. He soon came up, but what a disappointment, when we found the water to be brackish. But it was cool and we all drank and drove on, and soon reached [the water]. When our animals snuffed it in the air they made a quick time and drank as I never saw animals drink before.

We have overtaken the boys who had started out one day before us. They had found a cooler spring, though it was also brackish. We had no alternative but to stay here all night and the more we drank the more thirsty we became. In sleep we forgot all about it and were glad.

We have been on the old Ft. Hall road for four days, and have passed many teams, and among them some of my old company.²⁶ All are well and I learn by cards strung up along the road that some of them are six days ahead. I have been unwell ever since I was at the salt springs, and yesterday I had to give up. Marvin and Allis stayed with me, but no others. I am very weak but with a good constitution and pluck, I was able to resume my journey the next day. I was homesick, you may imagine.

Six hundred miles away from civilization, with but two acquaintances and not a cover for my head except the heavens above, and no way to travel except on horse back. I was very weak but we made thirty two miles. Ten miles of the last of the journey we had no

²³ The Salt Lake Cutoff rejoined the California Trail near Cathedral Rocks or City of Rocks, near Almo and Moulton, Idaho. Beyond the Rocks was Junction Valley. Hillyer calls the trail the Fort Hall trail because it led from Fort Hall to California—the route taken by the majority of emigrants. The trail followed Goose Creek for several miles, then crossed several other streams and springs, including Thousand Spring Creek, before it reached the Humboldt headwaters. Hillyer calls the Humboldt River by its earlier name, Mary's River, not to be confused with a present-day Humboldt tributary of the same name. Loomis, *Journal*, 74, 79, 178-179.

²⁴ Such exchanges in Salt Lake City were common and one of the reasons for choosing that route. Many emigrants merely acquired fresh oxen and did not switch their wagon loads to pack horses, as Hillyer did. Stewart, *California Trail*, 246.

²⁵ A puncheon floor was constructed from the slab cuts of logs, the bark side down and the top side smoothed for an inexpensive floor.

²⁶ Probably the stretch between the Bear River and Blue Springs, with water and grass of "poor quality." Loomis, *Journal*, 178.

water over a hilly road, but here we struck the head waters of the Mary's [Humboldt] River and went into camp.

The next day we traveled thirty miles, down Mary's River and had excellent feed all the way. Passed many teams and about ten o'clock came up with the boys who were laying up for the day, and we remained with them. Our horses had good grass and they and myself feel better.

Heard of Mr. Moody of Cincinnati, whom we met on the road, with a fine four mule team, and now has to foot it. There are a great many who are footing it and carrying their provisions. This is not a pleasant way of getting through the world, but hardship is a common thing on this journey.

My horse stumbled and threw me off, but [I] only bruised my hip a little. My horse is lame. Marvin trades horses often. Our pack horse has given out and now I have to foot it. We left him in as good feed as we could find, and said good bye old horse. You may depend that the hours grow darker daily, and we have 400 miles yet to make. Camped near a mule train. Came up with the boys not long after sunrise, but they asked us to take breakfast with them and we did not refuse. Allis and I have one horse each, and we change about; as one is needed for a pack horse we take turns in riding the other. Tried to make a bargain with a "Dodge Family," in all eleven men, to board us for the balance of the trip, but did not succeed.

On [Friday] the 3rd. of August we came up to a train and found Marvin. His horse had given out and he had given his mule to be taken through. We left him with them and this leaves Allis and myself alone. We arranged with the "Dodge Family" to take all the traps we could spare through for us. This left us a blanket apiece, a tin cup each, and a frying pan. We had a little bacon, coffee, sugar and flour, and lots of pluck, which was light. On the 5th. we overtook the Michigan boys and they made us stay with them until Monday, and we all feel better. Before leaving them we bought a pack horse. Up to noon we had made twenty miles, but found feed quite scarce. Then made ten miles, but could find but little grazing. [With] no feed and poor water [we] do not tend to sleep and the morn-

ing finds us all tired and hungry. Roads are heavy. Met a man returning who reports no grass after thirty miles for sixty five miles, and but one place where we can get water. This report was not encouraging.

Our horses have had but little grass for two days, and not much prospect for any for some days to come. We foot it beside them and relieve them all we can. Dark times. Camped on the river but not a spear of grass and all the horses could get was to browse the willows, and they were pretty well browsed.

We have made seventeen miles and gave our horses a chance at the willows again.

Every face is long, and I fear that many will be longer before they get through. I foot it most of the way and expect before I get through to carry my provisions. Towards night we struck off from the trail and went about five miles, and saw a happy sight, plenty of good grass. Even the horses laughed. Here we expect to stay several days. We had to carry the grass about two hundred yards on our backs, as the ground between the camp and it was soft and miry, and the horses could not get to it. We also brought out a lot to cure and carry with us on our way across the desert.³⁶

It was hard tough work, but must be done. There are as many as 200 teams camped here recruiting and coming and going all the time. We keep securing grass. Bought some hard biscuit, and are getting ready for an advance.

On the 10th. the Michigan boys got in, also Pierce. He left Carter with a team and passed Dr. Barker on Bear River. He reports an immense crowd of teams. We started at 2 o'clock at night and traveled by the light of the moon, and arrived at the "Sink" at 9 o'clock in the morning.

I walked all the way and blistered my feet so that I had to lay up for repairs. Mary's, Humboldt's or Ogden's river when we first struck it was a very pretty stream, having a firm bed. But as you go down it, it becomes muddy and the water poor, and it gets worse as you go down until it spreads over the sur-

³⁶ Emigrants' guides recommended halting at Big Meadows or Lassen's Meadows near the Humboldt Sink in order to acquire grass for crossing the desert. Loomis, *Journal*, 180; Stewart, *California Trail*, 138.

face, and finally disappears as a stream. It is so with the grass. At first pretty good, then better, and then worse.

The [Humboldt] valley is from three to twenty miles wide and but little part of it produces grass, or any kind of vegetation except wild sage, or grease wood, and this is all you have for feed except willows.

If I had time I would be sick. Started [crossing the Sink] yesterday at four o'clock A.M. and kept it up until two, when we turned out and gave our horses hay. I was tired and spread my robe on the sand and was soon asleep. Many teams passed but they did not disturb me. After an hour we again started and came to a Hot Spring. Here we halted. The water of the spring is very hot. It is not good to use this water even for tea or coffee as its effects are debilitating.³⁷

We traveled from daylight until two o'clock over very heavy roads. The road is lined on both sides with dead oxen, horses and mules, also abandoned wagons and almost everything else. Bedding, blankets, clothing, etc., etc. It is impossible for some to go through with their wagons, and they have to turn out and leave them, and drive their teams before them to water, and then return for their wagons, and many never come back. We have passed a good many left in this way. I can give no idea of the suffering here, but after one starts he must go ahead or die. The faces all wear a woe begone look, and seem as though hope had fled. I am thankful that I am across that dreadful desert. When we were miles from the [Truckee] river and the stock almost perishing for water, and [it] seemed as though they could never take another step, the smell of the water would seem to be borne to them and they would raise their heads, open their tired eyes, and seem to have new life, and make for the river. The nearer they came the faster they would walk, and when they reached

³⁷ Fifteen miles from the start of the Sink, hot springs were encountered. Then came the Forty Mile Desert, which usually was crossed during the cool hours. Travelers had a choice in crossing the desert: they could either go west to the Truckee River or go southwest to the Carson River—a longer journey. About 7,000 emigrants, including Hillyer, chose the Truckee River route, which was not as arduous. Stewart, *California Trail*, 138-139, 265-281, 292.

the river no power could keep them out of the stream, and sometimes they would drink until they floated. I have seen men who seemed to have lost all reason, rush to the water and, lying flat, drink until they could not rise. I am thankful that we are safe across it, for we and our animals were nearly exhausted, and could not have gone much further. We were so much better off than many others that we are truly thankful.

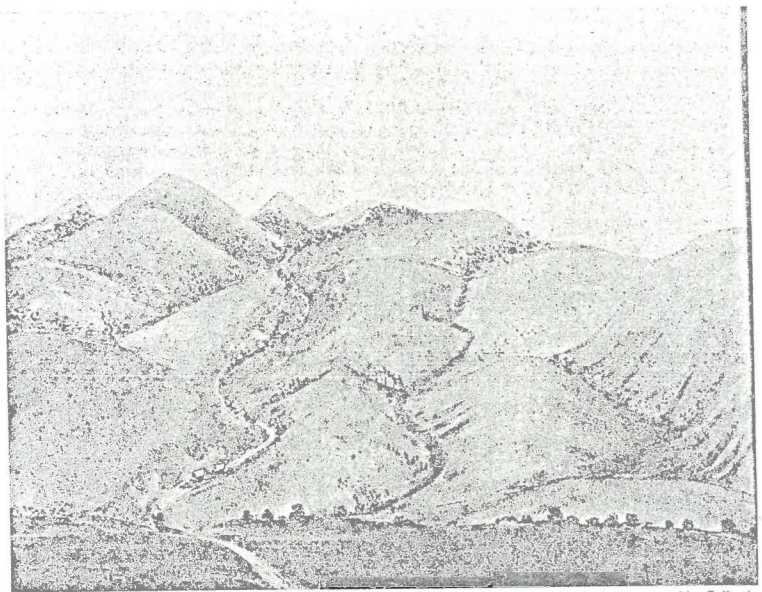
What will become of those behind? We hear that many are dying, even after they get across. We have passed graves every day.

WE arrived at Truckee River at two o'clock [Sunday] August 12th. and glad we were. This sight of running water and green trees was fascinating indeed. Many are camped here and how changed is their appearance from yesterday.

We went up the river a short distance and found a little fresh grass. On the 13th. of August we started late and have crossed the river several times. It has a very stony bed and a swift current running from point to point of rocks, and this is the reason we have to cross so often for we cannot go around the bends. We got across finely with one exception. Mr. Skinner, a young man, when about half way across was leading a poor pack horse, which fell down broadside. Skinner coolly dismounted from his horse into the swift current, the water coming up to his middle, and began pulling the horse towards the shore by the lariat. The first sound he made was to cry out, "Boys, boys, don't he make a fine raft?" It was so different from what most would have said and he was up to his waist in the water, that it caused a general laugh. We soon went into camp and he dried out his traps. Having good grass, water and wood, we all felt finely.

Yes, with trees, grass and even birds, . . . the heart is made glad. . . .

Our journey was still down the river, crossing it often. We crossed the river twenty seven times and on the sixteenth we struck the foot of the mountains, and into beautiful pine forests. It is charming. I am happy as I look up to the tops of the majestic pines, pointing towards heaven with their slender tops, whilst beneath my feet is spread a rich carpet of



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Wagons descending the Bear River Mountains, August, 1849.

green, and in my ears sounds the rush of many waters, whose course is downward to the mighty ocean, and birds are singing in the shades. . . .

We are now camped in a beautiful valley, with a fine spring of cold water, and we rejoice to see our poor animals so happy cropping the grasses. Where we struck the Truckee River there is but little timber or grass, as the bottoms are narrow, but as we go down they become wider and trees larger, and verdure luxuriant. Then we lose it.

On the 17th, we began to travel over spurs of the mountains, and then into little valleys, rich in grass and water, and yet the roads have been very rough, almost too rough for a horse to travel over without any load, and then to think of getting wagons over them, and it seems almost impossible, but we still see them pushing ahead. . . . We have wound our way up the mountains at least 30 miles and are now in a pleasant valley, with good grass and water and magnificent pines. Have passed many teams, some of them letting their wagons down on the opposite side of the mountain

with big ropes, one end around the axle, and the other around a tree, letting the rope out as they could manage the wagon in front, and in some places almost perpendicular. Some of the boys suggested that we had better "lock our horses" to get them down safely. Going down, which says we shall soon be in the mining country. Grass is scarce on this side.

On Saturday the 19th, arrived at some of the diggings, and concluded to try our luck. Went to a store (tent) and found my face good for all we wanted. Secured our supplies, and started the next morning for our camp, packing our tools and provisions on our backs. Took the wrong trail and did not reach our camp . . . until noon, and a tired set of boys we were. I cooked for a mess of six, and helped make a rocker [mining device], which took us two days.

After working a few days at mining I concluded that I would like to do something else. I decided to make for the city and try my fortune there. We sold our rocker for forty dollars and I had half an ounce in dust. Allis took our supplies and assumed our debt. Three

of my chums offered, if I would stay and cook, that I need do nothing else. Too good to last, and I declined.

On [Sunday] the 26th. of August I started for the city. The country to-day has been mountainous but as we neared Johnson's ranch it became less broken and before we quite reached there it ended in rolling prairie. From the mountains we leave the pines, and then the timber is mostly oaks, which are more scattered and short, but have very long limbs, thickly covered with leaves making splendid shade.

We did not reach Johnson's until 10 o'clock at night.⁸⁸ We remained here all day, and find many teams recruiting. We are now in Sacramento valley and expect soon to see the city. It is very hot in the middle of the day, but the evenings are delightful. How soundly one can sleep in this night air.

I have neglected my journal since I left Johnson's ranch, but there has nothing occurred since that is worth mentioning.

I remained in Sacramento over a week. Howland was there at work at ten dollars a day. Pierce also came in but soon left for the mines. Carter came in on foot, having lost everything. Marvin has not been heard from, or Barker, Wheeler, or Hinkley, since I left them in the Black Hills.

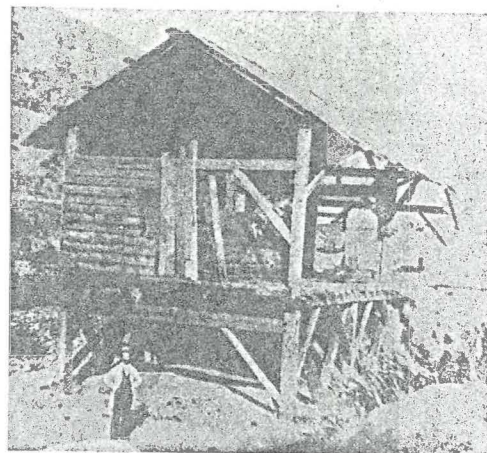
Sacramento . . . is a cloth city, built by nailing cloth on to the poles for both roof and sides, and dirt floors except in some aristocratic saloon or store. Not even a frame building in all the city, at this writing. Lumber is worth fifty cents a foot.

I close my journal sailing down the [Sacramento] river in a schooner, as a steamer has never yet paddled on its waters. I send this to my father and say good bye to all traveling companions, on the plains. May we meet again.

⁸⁸ Johnson's Ranch, about forty miles north of Sacramento or Sutter's Fort, was considered the end of the journey. It was on the Bear River, near Wheatland, California. Stewart, *California Trail*, 173-175, 186, 189.

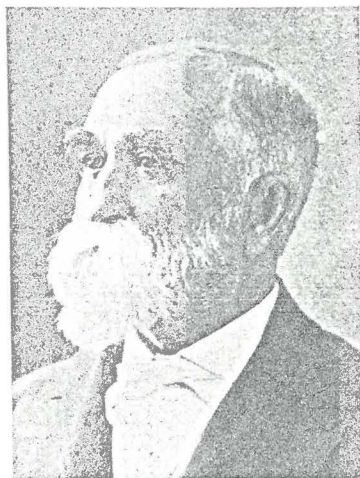
LITTLE is known about Hillyer's California adventures after he left Sacramento. For a time, he operated a packet boat express between San Francisco and Sacramento, proving that he put to good use the practical knowledge he had gained during the arduous trip. Like Sam Brannan, he mined gold from the miners. Later, however, he became part owner of a mine at Syracuse Bar. In 1851, Hillyer divested himself of his California holdings and returned to Ohio. He recalled that he had not made the fortune he sought, but it is obvious that he had earned a wealth of experience.

Mrs. Hillyer was simultaneously shocked and delighted when her husband appeared unannounced at the door in Ohio. He was a "bronzed and bearded stranger," she wrote, and his "hirsute ornament" was the talk of Portage County. But she adored her husband and when he returned to Wisconsin, she tarried only briefly in Ohio before joining him. Hillyer also had to make the acquaintance of a



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Where it all began. Sutter's Mill, where on January 24, 1848, James Marshall (standing in foreground) discovered gold.



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Edwin Hillyer, photographed in Waupun in 1878, at the time of the Hillyers' golden wedding anniversary.

baby daughter, Edna, who had been born during his absence. The couple later had four more children, and three of the five reached adulthood: Mrs. Edna Hillyer Ford of Waupun; Henry L. P. Hillyer of Topeka, Kansas; and Professor Homer Winthrop Hillyer, who was a professor of chemistry at the University of Wisconsin and later was associated with an industrial firm in Buffalo, New York.

Back in Waupun, Hillyer put to use his California-won business acumen. He rejoined his brother in the general store, but soon sold his share in order to subsidize and build the first railroad between Waupun and Horicon. Then he helped establish the Dodge County Insurance Company and later he became a loan agent for the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company. He extended his financial dealings to Iowa, where he operated a 1,100-acre farm in the midst of the fertile corn belt in Grundy County.

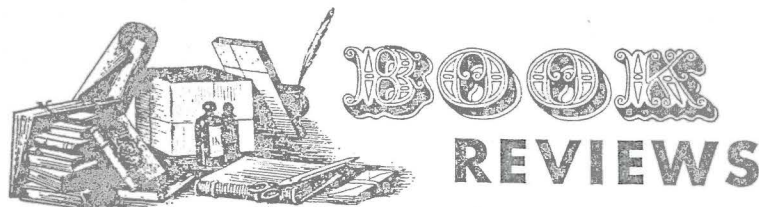
Hillyer also had a strong sense of public duty. In November, 1852, at the age of twenty-seven, he stood for election to the assembly from Dodge County and won the seat—a tri-

bute to his new-found maturity. He also served as deputy warden of the state prison at Waupun, and he was one of the founders of the Waupun library, which he served as librarian for many years, operating the library out of his office. During the Civil War, he enlisted as a captain in Company K of the 10th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry.

Hillyer was not the only forty-niner who returned to Waupun. In 1901, he wrote that all of the nine argonauts eventually came back to Dodge County. In 1860, A. D. Allis, thirty-one, was a neighbor of Hillyer's and owner of a prosperous wagon works. Hillyer recalled that Allis eventually moved to Minnesota. Francis Carter, thirty-two, a fanning mill owner in Waupun, may well have been the Frank Carter of Hillyer's narrative. No trace has been found of the other six men.

In his declining years, Hillyer devoted much of his time to historical pursuits. He wrote a series of local historical sketches for a Waupun newspaper, and in 1903 he prepared his Gold Rush journal. Five years later, in December, 1908, he died while vacationing in St. Petersburg, Florida.

EDITOR'S NOTE: In addition to the Hillyer diary and other published Gold Rush manuscripts owned by the Manuscripts Library of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, the Society owns several unpublished manuscripts. A partial listing may be found in Joseph Schafer (ed.), *California Letters of Lucius Fairchild* (Madison, 1931), 200-203. Among later acquisitions are: Winslow Blake journal, March 23-August 25, 1852, overland from Jefferson, Wisconsin, to California; David Brainard, "Journal of the Walworth County Mutual Mining Company, Commencing March 20, 1849, and Ending Jan. 1, 1851," overland from Delavan, Wisconsin, to California, typewritten copy only; Samuel Chadwick diary, 1852, overland from Dane County, Wisconsin, to California, typewritten and original copies, including list of expenses; Joseph C. Kiser papers, March-September, 1850, overland from West Liberty, Ohio, to California, and return via Panama, December 1, 1850, several letters and sketchy diary; David Knapp Pangborn diary, May 27, 1850-November 22, 1873, ocean voyage from New York via Panama to California, typewritten copy, more complete than the edited version in *American Historical Review*, IX: 1 (October, 1903), 104-115; Charles G. Schneider diary, April 15, 1852-December 21, 1856, in German, overland from Milwaukee to California, typewritten translation and original, including lists of expenses; and William Turner diary, March-August, 1850, overland from Walworth County, Wisconsin, to California, typewritten copy only.



The Revival of Fur Trade History: A Review Article

By ALICE E. SMITH

THE YEARS SINCE the close of World War II have seen a revived interest in the study of the French in America. In the October, 1962, issue of the *William and Mary Quarterly*, under the title of "The Old Regime in America," John C. Rule notes the present-day absorption of scholars in the subject. He places them in three groups: those in France who are concentrating on the study of imperial administration and policy, both at home and in the colonies; those in the United States and Britain, who, in their search for the key to the triumph of Great Britain in the New World, turn their attention to the weaknesses of her chief rival; and a school of writers in French Canada who have been hard at work exploring the domestic history of New France and who, despite instances of obvious partisanship, have produced "some of the most impressive works being published in North America."

The French & British in the Old Northwest: A Bibliographical Guide to Archive and Manuscript Sources. By HENRY PUTNEY BEERS. (Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1964. Pp. iv, 297. \$11.50.)

The French in North America: A Bibliographical Guide to French Archives, Reproductions, and Research Missions. By HENRY PUTNEY BEERS. (Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1957. Pp. xi, 413. \$12.50.)

The French in the Mississippi Valley. Edited by JOHN FRANCIS McDERMOTT. (University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1965. Pp. ix, 247. \$6.75.)

This ferment of activity demonstrates that the subject of France in America is still a profitable field of research. Needs and opportunities for renewed investigation with particular emphasis on the region of the Upper Great Lakes and the Mississippi Valley are set forth in two recent guides to source materials produced by a Washington historian and bibliographer, Henry P. Beers. The volumes are *The French in North America: A Bibliographical Guide to French Archives, Reproductions, and Research Missions* and *The French & British in the Old Northwest: A Bibliographical Guide to Archive and Manuscript Sources*. As the titles suggest, these are as much historiography as bibliography. Far more comprehensive than the standard guide to sources, the first of the Beers books presents a history of the activities of American and Canadian institutions, historians, and others who were connected with the procurement of reproductions in any and all forms from French official and unofficial collections and of the documentary compilations that resulted therefrom.

The second, broadly speaking, is a historical account of the acquisition, preservation, and publication by Americans and Canadians of original official records relating to the French and the British through the eighteenth century. But it goes farther, describing governmental and land-grant systems and church organizations, and includes records of ecclesiastical organizations, trading and land companies, and traders, in each instance pointing out the extent, the forms, and locations of the records under discussion. With these guides in hand, the scholar can determine what authority or agency may have created records pertinent to his research and can locate repro-