

NATHAN LODGE was born in Loudoun County, Virginia, August 26, 1788; and in childhood was taken by his parents to Concord, Pennsylvania, where in early manhood, he embraced the only hope of eternal life. He was received into the traveling connection of the Baltimore Conference March 17, 1810, and was sent to Allegheny Circuit—formerly (may be afterwards) Moorefield Circuit—in Hardy County. He was presiding elder in Winchester District in 1814; and in 1815, traveled Berkeley Circuit, where on the 27th of November, about ten o'clock in the morning, he finished his course, changing his cross for the crown. His great work was more manifest in the last year of his life, where, on Berkeley Circuit he labored on in sight of eternity to the end. His last sermon was at the funeral of a member of his congregation, at Shepherdstown. At its close he said: "Let us pray once more for the people of Shepherdstown." It was his last prayer in public. A hearer said: "Lodge is ready, and he will soon be gone." Soon thereafter there was passed to his congregation the solemn announcement, "*Lodge is dead,*" and following it were many weeping hearts. He was buried in Jefferson County. It is said no one living knows the spot.

To these names others might be added had we space in this paper.

CLOSING OBSERVATION

Thus it was as elsewhere, Methodism has been a great missionary and evangelistic system. The central idea of it all has been, and now is, to reach the lowly, the ignorant, and the poor, as well as the intelligent and the rich. Her heralds have ever felt it a pleasure to visit the hovels, garrets, and slums in order to minister to the temporal and spiritual needs of the poor and unfortunate. In the ranks stood the itinerants, presiding elders, local preachers, and laymen, who toiled and labored a hundred years ago in this West Virginia wildness and as we contemplate the work they achieved, we are ready to exclaim in astonishment and gratitude; "What hath God wrought!"

West Virginia Forty-Niners

By C. H. AMBLER

The number of West Virginia Forty-niners cannot be determined, but it must have been considerable. For years prior to 1849 present West Virginia was the natal land from which immigrants went into the regions beyond, even the Trans-Mississippi West, with more or less regularity and in large numbers.¹ Among those sojourning in Arkansas and Texas was the later General Isaac Harding Duval of Brooke County, who in 1849 led one of the first companies of emigrants to reach California over the North Texas-Gila River Route.² There were doubtless other West Virginians who reached El Dorado by that and other approaches.³

Among the latter was Benjamin Hoffman of Shepherdstown in present West Virginia, who on March 27, 1849, as a member of a company of eighty men, left Charles Town, Jefferson County, and arrived at Sacramento, California, in September of that year. At the outset of this journey Hoffman "determined . . . to make a note of each day's travels, in this little book (his *Diary*)."⁴ In this determination he was moved by the conviction that his "little book" might make interesting reading for future generations. Enamored of this idea and the fatalism of the day, he expressed the hope that, in case he fell "by the way, . . .

¹ This migration continued until well after the Civil War. Among those going west at that time were many Methodists who thus expressed their disapproval of the Democratic regime which began in West Virginia in 1870 and continued during a quarter century.

² General Duval's *Memoirs* give an account of life in Arkansas and Texas from 1838 to 1849.

³ James A. Payne, a Kanawha steamboat captain, made the overland journey to California and recorded his experiences in a memoir entitled "Saint Louis to San Francisco . . . an account of a Journey across the Plains in 1850." See *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. IX, p. 445.

⁴ As "prepared" by T. J. Hoffman, son of Benjamin Hoffman, this *Diary* was published in the *Shepherdstown Register* (Weekly, Shepherdstown, West Virginia) for January 31—February 4, 1901. This source was supplemented by *Recollections of a Forty-niner* by Edward W. McIlhenny, a member of the company. This work is a 212 page volume published in Kansas City, Missouri (1908). It deals almost entirely with life and conditions in California.

someone more fortunate" would complete and preserve his record, and that it would "eventually" reach the land of his birth.

After little more than a year in California, in which he recorded no items in his *Diary*, Hoffman suffered from nostalgia. He was then planning, "ere many months shall have passed away," to return to Virginia, there to live and die. His decision not again to attempt an overland journey of more than 2,000 miles,⁶ is significant. Although it would take him "many miles around," he hoped to return instead by "some good ship," which might indicate also that he had been more prosperous than his *Diary* reveals.

It was at that time, October 15, 1850, that Hoffman made a final entry in his *Diary* and expressed another wish regarding it. In case the Ruler of the Universe decreed that he "should never reach his native State," he requested "whosoever he or she may be into whose hands this little book may fall, . . . to be kind enough to send it to the postmaster at Shepherdstown, Jefferson County, (West) Virginia." The remaining space was then used to append the names of those of his company "who survived the perils and hardships of that terrible journey across the continent."⁷

Before leaving Jefferson County the group of which Hoffman was a member constituted itself a joint stock

⁶ As stated by Hoffman in his *Diary*, his company traveled a total of 2,105 miles.

⁷ Not including officers, the company was made up of the following persons:

Allen, James R.	Fagan, Daniel	Moore, John, Jr.
Barley, Richard	Ferrell, Milton	Moore, Henry H.
Bender, Jacob	Gallaher, John	Moore, Thomas C.
Blakemore, R. M.	Garnhart, John H.	Murphy, John H.
Boley, John L.	Gelger, Vincent E.	Purcell, John
Bowers, John Wm.	Gittings, Charles F.	Riely, Edwin A.
Bradley, Thornton C.	Harrison, Ham. C.	Rissler, Wm.
Burrell, Walter J.	Hayden, Charles	Rohrer, Ellsha
Clevenger, Asa	Hoffman, Benj.	Roland, John T.
Cockrell, Daniel	Hopper, Edward	Seevers, Benj. F.
Comegys, Geo. W.	Hubbert, Noble T.	Simpson, Francis R.
Conway, Hugh	Humphrey, J. Thomas	Showman, P. B.
Crebs, James S.	Humphreys, Dr. J. D.	Showers, John S.
Cunningham, Charles	Locke, Ellsha	Slagle, Charles S.
Cunningham, George	Lupton, John M.	Strider, Isaac Keys
Cunningham, James	Mackaran, Wm. H.	Strider, Jesse A.
Daughtery, Enos	Manning, Jas. M.	Stonebraker, G. C.
Davidson, James	Marmaduke, A. J.	Tavener, Newton
Davidson, Samuel	McCurdy, James	Thomas, Charles G.
Daniel, Joseph C.	McIlhenny, Edward W.	Wagner, Andrew
Daniel, Daniel	Miller, Andrew R.	Walpert, John C.
Daniel, W.	Miller, Morgan	Washington, Lawrence F.
Edwards, Jacob H.	Milton, W. Talliferro	Washington, Thomas
Engle, Joseph	Moore, James H.	Young, Joseph C.

company, into the treasury of which each of the eighty members paid \$300. Benjamin F. Washington was elected president, and Edward M. Asquith was elected treasurer. Other elected officers were Robert H. Keeling, Smith Crane, and Joseph E. N. Lewis, first, second, and third commanders, respectively; Nathaniel (Nat) Seevers, quartermaster; J. Harrison Kelly, secretary; and Dr. Wake Bryarly of Baltimore, Maryland, surgeon. Despite much quarreling along the way and the death en route of five members,⁷ the company held together under this arrangement until it reached Sacramento. There it disbanded and divided the unexpended funds equally among the remaining members.

Soon thereafter "lots of our boys," including Hoffman were "dead broke." As a consequence they "got together . . . in small parties" of six each and began earnestly to hunt for gold. Of those in Hoffman's party, which had sub-divided into two equal groups, Joseph McCurdy "took sick and died the first winter" and William Rissler "got sick and went to San Francisco." This left Hoffman to work his claim alone, in which he met with "fair success."

As Hoffman failed to record regularly the happenings of the first six weeks of the journey, they will be summarized as part of this introduction to his more or less complete daily records of the remaining weeks. These will be given verbatim, except the necessary editing to indicate the sequence of events.

After three days, the company on March 30 reached Pittsburgh, where on the following day, it took the "Niagara" for Cincinnati. After a night there, it continued by steamboat and arrived at St. Louis, April 7. "Having taken in" that city for three days, the company continued by way of Missouri River. On April 19 it "encamped" at St. Joseph, more familiarly known as "St. Joe," the "real starting

⁷ These persons were Thomas F. Washington, Joseph C. Young, W. Talliferro, James Davidson, and Newton Tavener.

point," where it got the necessary supplies and rest for an "earnest resumption of the journey."⁸

After an eighteen day "layover" the company on May 7 pitched its tents "on the south side of the Missouri River, in Indian Territory." There it remained for three days, at the end of which it made "a general move for the Territory of California." Saturday, May 12, it passed "the Indian missionary agency,"⁹ where, because of trouble among the men, they were on the point of "breaking up." This was prevented through the influence of "Mr. Smith," the guide. May 28, they arrived at Fort Kearney in Nebraska Territory,¹⁰ about 320 miles from St. Joe.

Here, following a great deal of quarreling and "getting along in the roughest manner imaginable," the luggage load of the company was lightened. This was accomplished at "great sacrifice," but it was necessary in order to expedite the advance. Thus relieved, the company came on June 2 to a point on Platte River about 400 miles from St. Joe, where

⁸ For most Forty-niners going by the "California Trail," Fort Kearney, established in 1848 by W. P. Woodbury, was the "real starting point." It was used as an emigrant stopping place until 1871. *Dictionary of American History*, Vol. III, p. 200. For still others, the "real starting point" was Independence, Missouri; for others it was Fort Leavenworth in present Kansas; and for still others it was Council Bluffs in present Iowa.

⁹ From St. Joseph the Virginia company followed the then popular Oregon Trail to Fort Kearney in Nebraska Territory at the southern point of the great bend in the Platte River, and continued thence over the same route to the mouth of Raft River in present Idaho near Pocatello. Intermediate stretches lay along the Platte over present U. S. 30 to North Platte, home of the late William Cody, better known as "Buffalo Bill." Leaving present U. S. 30 at or near North Platte, the company coursed North Platte River on the south side through a picturesque region of western Nebraska into present Wyoming. Thence the route continued along the North Platte through Fort Laramie, Old La Bonté Stage Station, and Caspar to the headwaters of that stream. By way of mountain passes to the northeast of present Pathfinder Reservoir it reached the headwaters of Stillwater River which it followed by Independence Rock and through Devil's Gate to or near South Pass, the "gateway to Oregon."

Instead of following the Oregon Trail across Green River in a southwestward direction to Fort Bridger at a point on present U. S. 30, as did most emigrants taking that route, the Virginians used the Sublette Cut-off, or the "Dry Drive." In this way they saved five days and, having picked up the Oregon Trail some distance northwest of Fort Bridger, they continued in a northwesterly direction into present Idaho by Soda Springs to Fort Hall on Snake River. From this point their course was southwestward along Snake River to the mouth of Raft River, where they abandoned the Oregon Trail which continued thence over present U. S. 30 through Fort Boise, Idaho, and present Baker, La Grande and Pendleton, Oregon, to Umatilla on the Columbia River. See Federal Writers' Project, *The Oregon Trail* and road maps for the states traversed.

The company continued by way of Raft, Goose Creek, and Martin's Fork valleys into the Humboldt Valley. Thence by way of the Truckee River, it reached the Sierra Nevada Mountains which it crossed by way of the Donner cabins into central California. See Laustford W. Hastings, *The Emigrants Guide to Oregon and California* (1845); J. M. Shively, *Routes and Distances to Oregon and California* (1846); and Owen C. Coy, *The Great Trek* (1931); Edwin Bryant, *What I Saw in California* (1848); Federal Writers' Project, *The Oregon Trail* (1939).

¹⁰ The area west of Missouri was at this time Indian territory, in which both the Catholics and Methodists maintained missions. Coy, *The Great Trek*, p. 127.

¹¹ See note 8.

it again stopped for rest. Two days later Hoffman began to make somewhat regular notations of the daily experiences of the company, which will be reproduced as indicated above.

June, 1849

Monday, 4. We crossed the Platte river. It is about one mile in width, though not more than 2 feet 5 inches deep.

Tuesday, 5. We met 2,000 Indians. They were of the Sioux tribe, and appeared to be very friendly. Our men traded with them for ponies, buffalo meat, moccasins, &c. We also killed a young buffalo today, the first one, although we have seen numbers of them. The principal game in these regions are the buffalo, antelope, deer and some elk.

Friday, 8. We passed Castle Bluffs. These are tall peaks which appeared in the distance like many houses.

Sunday, 10. We passed Castle Palace, a large rock 450 or 500 feet in height, and appearing at a distance like a large mansion house. It is generally called Castle Court House.¹² We also had the most awful hail-storm this evening I have ever witnessed. The plains were a perfect sheet of fire, while the thunder rolled, the wind howled, and the hail fell in great masses, which made it dangerous for man and beast.

Monday, 11. We passed Chimney Rock,¹³ 25 miles from Castle Palace. This rock is over 200 feet high. I visited this place myself.

Tuesday, 12. We passed Scott's Bluffs.¹⁴ From this point we have the first view of the Rocky Mountains, but are yet about 260 miles off. Only the tallest peaks are visible.

Thursday, 14. We crossed the Laramie Fork,¹⁵ a narrow but deep and very rapid stream. We also passed Fort Laramie¹⁶ today. We are now 670 miles from St. Joe (St. Joseph), 350 miles from Fort Childs,¹⁷ and about one-third of the distance to the Pacific Coast.

¹² Court House Rock, near present Bridgeport, Nebraska, is part of a strange geological structure located at the point "where the Platte cuts through the highlands into the plains." It is about 300 feet high and its walls closely resemble masonry. W. J. Ghent, *The Road to Oregon*, p. 131-132; Hiram M. Chittenden, *American Fur Trade*, Vol. I, p. 467; Coy, *The Great Trek*, p. 135.

¹³ Chimney Rock is a "strange conformation" about ten miles west of present Bridgeport, Nebraska. Ghent, *The Road to Oregon*, p. 132; Chittenden, *Fur Trade*, Vol. I, p. 467; *The Oregon Trail*, p. 211.

¹⁴ Scott's Bluffs are about 32 miles from present Bridgeport, Nebraska. They encroached so close upon the river that the trail was forced to leave it for a short distance. Ghent, *The Road to Oregon*, pp. 131-132. For origin of the name Scott's Bluffs, see Chittenden, *Fur Trade*, Vol. I, pp. 467-468; Coy, *The Great Trek*, p. 136.

¹⁵ Laramie Fork empties into North Platte River.

¹⁶ Fort Laramie, first called Fort William, was located on Laramie Fork about 700 miles from Independence, Missouri. It was built in 1834 by William Sublette and Robert Campbell, fur traders operating out of St. Louis, Missouri, for the purpose of contacting Sioux and Cheyenne Indians. The American Fur Company purchased the fort in 1836 and changed its name to Fort John. In 1841 it replaced its log stockade with adobe walls. In June, 1849, the Federal Government purchased the post which had already become a favorite way station for emigrants going to California. *Dictionary of American History*, Vol. II, p. 245; Hastings, *Emigrants Guide*, pp. 136-137; Chittenden, *Fur Trade*, Vol. I, p. 469; Coy, *The Great Trek*, pp. 139-140; *The Oregon Trail*, pp. 170-172.

¹⁷ Fort Kearney was sometimes called Fort Childs. Albert Watkins, "History of Fort Kearney," in Nebraska State Historical Society, *Collections*, Vol. XVI, p. 242; *The Oregon Trail*, pp. 68-70.

Friday, 15. We entered the Black Hills¹⁸ and find grass to be very scarce and water also. These hills extend about 140 miles. A great deal of suffering is expected, ere we pass through them, by man as well as beast. According to Bryant's calculations,¹⁹ it is 300 miles from Fort Laramie to the South Pass in the Rocky Mountains. Whether we shall live to reach it no one knows. The hills are now covered with bacon, flour and provisions of every kind, wagons and cooking utensils of every sort, that emigrants have thrown away, having packed their animals with a part of their supplies and gone on.

Saturday, 16. We passed the Warm Spring.²⁰ It is a very strange stream. The water is about milk warm. The next curiosity that draws the attention of the wayworn traveler is Laramie Peak, 6,500 feet above sea level and 2,000 feet above Fort Laramie. It presents a beautiful and picturesque sight.

Sunday, 17. We laid by to rest ourselves and animals, as both were much fatigued. We killed a fine buffalo today.

Monday, 18. We started by daylight and traveled 18 miles to breakfast. We halted on the Lebonfi Creek. This is the most delightful spot that we have yet seen. Had a fine rest in a splendid grove perfumed with roses and various other flowers, with which this romantic and solitary place abounds.

Tuesday, 19. A beautiful morning. The sun rose in all its splendor and brilliancy, with a pleasant breeze from the west. We made a fine journey today.

Wednesday, 20. We crossed the northern branch of the river Platte, using our sheet iron wagon-bed to ferry our goods and wagons over. We crossed at the mouth of Deer Creek,²¹ about 30 miles below the regular Mormon ferry, in order to cut off as many teams as possible. There are 150 ahead of us now. When we were at Fort Childs there were 300 ahead of us. There have been several men drowned while crossing at this place. The stream is about 150 yards wide and very deep and rapid. Fortunately we all got over safe, and with our goods, &c., while many lost their goods and cattle.

Thursday, 21; Friday, 22; Saturday, 23. We traveled through a waste and barren country, although it abounds with many fine springs, some of them strong of sulphur. The surrounding hills abound with stone coal, and the low or level places are covered with soda, or saleratus.

¹⁸ "Black Hills," was the name sometimes given to the plateau or tableland between Laramie and North Platte rivers, described by Chittenden, as "the mountainous country." They were foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Chittenden, *Fur Trade*, Vol. I, p. 469; Coy, *The Great Trek*, pp. 140-141.

¹⁹ This reference is doubtless to Edwin Bryant, *What I Saw in California*, published in New York in 1848. Caughey, *California*, p. 626.

²⁰ Warm Spring, or Big Spring, was about 13 miles from Fort Laramie. Ghent, *Road to Oregon*, p. 135; Chittenden, *Fur Trade*, Vol. I, pp. 469-470.

²¹ Deer Creek is the largest southern affluent of the Platte between Laramie and Platte rivers. Its mouth was a famous camping place on the Oregon Trail. Ben G. Thwaites, *Early Western Travels*, Vol. XXX, p. 65, note 40; Chittenden, *Fur Trade*, Vol. I, p. 470.

Sunday, 24. The country presents a little better or brighter prospect. The hills look something greener. We arrived this evening at Sweetwater river, and encamped for the night.

Monday, 25. We made an early start and crossed the river at Independence Rock.²² This is a tremendous rock on the roadside. I suppose it is a mile or more in circumference, and extends to a great height. It is covered with the names of travelers, some dated as far back as 1842. We traveled five miles and recrossed the river at a place called Devil's Gate,²³ where the river runs through a great mountain of rock about a half mile in length and quite a narrow channel. It looks as though it has been the work of art. The sides are cut nearly perpendicular from four to five hundred feet in height. The object in recrossing the river was to shun the sandy roads and dust and also to get away from the number of wagons. The sand is from 6 to 10 inches deep, and almost hot enough to cook eggs. We have now a much better road and better grass, we have passed many high mountains of rocks of a reddish cast. They are called the buttes of the Rocky Mountains. There is also plenty of granite in this section of the country.

Tuesday, 26 and Wednesday, 27. We traveled a rough and mountainous country with a heavy track and sandy road, crossing the Sweet Water two or three times. It runs very crooked and winds through the mountains. At one place we had a great deal of difficulty, as it came very near swimming our mules. Snow had made its appearance on the highest mountains the past day or two.

Thursday, 28. We took up the line of march, at an early hour, and traveled until 9 o'clock, when we halted to graze and rest our mules, as we have a 16 mile stretch to make in order to find a suitable place to encamp and over a dreadful hilly road. We met with a party of trappers today, who say that it will be impossible for us ever to reach California as the grass gets shorter and shorter every day and will give out entirely in 500 miles farther. They say also that there are teams 300 miles ahead of us that will not get through. This has thrown a gloom over all of us, as we have not now more provisions than will last us through, providing we have nothing to stop us.

Friday, 29. During this day we came through the South Pass,²⁴ which is 19 miles in length, and found plenty of snow in the ravines, which no doubt has been lying there for centuries past. The mountains are completely capped with snow. The scenery is grand at this. We encamped

²² Independence Rock, a granite boulder on the north bank of Sweetwater River in present Wyoming, was a famous landmark on the Oregon Trail. *Dictionary of American History*, Vol. III, p. 86; Chittenden, *Fur Trade*, Vol. I, pp. 470-473; *The Oregon Trail*, pp. 188-189.

²³ Devil's Gate, sometimes known as Hell Gate, five miles west of Independence Rock, was one of the most singular freaks of nature on the Oregon Trail. Coy, *The Great Trek*, p. 143; *The Oregon Trail*, p. 189.

²⁴ South Pass, probably discovered by Etienne Provost about 1823, is "the celebrated pass in the entire length of the Continental Divide." Here the first saw waters flowing westward to the Pacific. Chittenden, *Fur Trade*, Vol. I, p. 476; *The Oregon Trail*, p. 194.

this evening at the Pacific Spring. This is the first stream that flows into the Pacific Ocean.

Saturday, 30. We started on our long and toilsome journey with renewed vigor, as we can look back on the Rocky Mountains. The Pacific Spring is said to be one-half the distance from Fort Independence to California. We traveled about six miles, when the road turns off to Salt Lake, the great Mormon settlement.²⁶ About one-half of the emigrants are taking this route. We are taking the route by Fort Hall. We came 20 miles this morning and stopped for dinner on the Little Sandy River. In the evening we traveled six miles further to the Big Sandy River,²⁹ on the route that is called Sublette's Cut-Off.²⁷ It saves five days travel, though there is a distance of 50 miles without grass or water. We are now in the Oregon territory.

July, 1849

Sunday, 1. Today we laid by until two o'clock for the purpose of refreshing ourselves and mules for the 60 mile stretch which is just before us. At that hour we started and traveled until 1 o'clock next morning.

Monday, 2. We moved by daylight and reached Green river at 9 o'clock. This country is generally barren and sandy, part of it very mountainous.

Tuesday, 3. Last night was a cold, frosty night. Ice froze to a considerable thickness. We ferried our teams across the river today. This stream is about the size of the North Branch of the Platte, but much more difficult to cross. It runs nearly north and south and empties into the Colorado or Red River, thence into the Gulf of California. The whole day was spent in crossing. We drowned one of our mules while swimming it over. This is the first one that we have lost since we have been on our journey.

Wednesday, 4. We spent the glorious fourth on the western bank of Green river, in a beautiful valley, shaded by cotton trees. We enjoyed ourselves under the delightful shade of the trees. We fired our cannon several times which made echoes and re-echoes resound through the neighboring hills, which reminded us of home and the endearments of civilization. We also hired out our boats to emigrants today at \$5 per

²⁶ After their expulsion from Nauvoo, Illinois, in February, 1846, the Mormons, a religious sect founded by Joseph Smith, took a westerly route along a well-beaten trail through what is now Iowa. Moving almost due westward, they crossed Missouri River into Nebraska Territory, where they remained during the winter of 1846-47. Under the leadership of Brigham Young they moved westward in April, 1847, along the north bank of the Platte River to Fort Laramie. There they continued their journey over the Oregon Trail to Fort Bridger in present Wyoming. Thence through Echo Canyon and East Canyon they crossed Big and Little mountains and the Wasatch Range and through Emigration Canyon into the Valley of Great Salt Lake, where they founded Salt Lake City. From that center their settlements radiated in all directions. *Dictionary of American History*, Vol. IV, 24-26, and Vol. V, p. 19.

²⁹ The Oregon Trail followed the Big Sandy almost its entire length. Thwaites, *Early Western Travels*, Vol. XXI, p. 187, note 36; Chittenden, *Fur Trade*, Vol. I, p. 476.

²⁷ Sublette's Cut-off, or the "Dry Drive," as it was called "On account of the long stretch of waterless country between Big Sandy and Green rivers, was a nearcut to avoid going to Fort Bridger." It traversed a waterless 50-mile stretch. Chittenden, *Fur Trade*, Vol. I, pp. 476-478, and *The Oregon Trail*, pp. 101, 196.

team for crossing. The regular ferry charges \$10. We made \$175 by the operation.

Thursday, 5. We got underway about 9 o'clock, and traveled over a rough, hilly country, and crossed a considerable stream called twelve mile creek.

Friday, 6. We passed over a very mountainous country, a part of it covered with snow.

Saturday, 7. The country continues hilly with some snow, though the grass is getting to be very good. We passed some timber today, which is the first of any consequence that I have seen since I left the Missouri line. It is the aspen tree. There are some excellent springs in this region. We met with a party of Indians today of that Snake tribe. The face of the country looks better than usual. The sod appears to be rich. We crossed a large creek this evening and encamped on the eastern bank of the Bear river.

Sunday, 8. We got under way at an early hour, and traveled until noon. Crossing Bear river, a considerable stream, we put up for the remainder of the day in a beautiful valley. We caught a fine bunch of fish this evening.

Monday, 9. We sent three men ahead to Fort Hall,²⁸ ninety miles distant, to inquire of the prospects ahead and also to try and purchase some flour and horses, if possible. We met with a serious loss today. Mr. W. T. Milton, in attempting to swim Camises fork, quite a small stream, was drowned.

Mr. Milton was a resident of Jefferson County, Va., and was a useful member in our company. Thus we were obliged to bury another of our comrades in this wild and almost unknown region. Only another mound is raised to catch the eye of the wayworn traveler. I know that I have seen at least one hundred graves while travelling this waste and barren route in the past fifteen hundred miles. Oh, what will man not endure in order to get the filthy lucre, gold! We buried comrade Milton in the most decent manner possible. Peace to his ashes.

Tuesday, 10. We made a brisk travel today, over a splendid road, up a beautiful valley, enclosed on both sides with uninterrupted hills. The grass is at least two feet high, with several small streams of pure water running through it. It is a delightful spot.

Wednesday, 11. We started at one o'clock in the morning and reached the Soda Springs²⁹ little after sunrise, 14 miles distant. This water, with

²⁸ Fort Hall, located on the left bank of Snake River near its junction with Portneuf River, was in present Idaho. It was built in 1834 by Nathaniel J. Wyeth and named for Henry Hall, one of Wyeth's financial backers. In 1837 it was purchased by the Hudson Bay Company which used it as a trading post until 1855 when it was abandoned. Meanwhile, it had been a favorite stopping and trading post for Oregon and California emigrants. *Dictionary of American History*, Vol. III, p. 6; Chittenden, *Fur Trade*, Vol. I, pp. 479-480; Coy, *The Great Trek*, pp. 156-159; *The Oregon Trail*, pp. 202-204.

²⁹ The Soda Springs, six crystal clear pools, about seven feet in diameter, are on the northwest side of Bear River. They were natural gas formations and emitted a noise "resembling the boiling of immense cauldrons." It was here that the main trail to California left the Oregon Trail. Thwaites, *Early Western Travels*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 296; Chittenden, *Fur Trade*, Vol. I, p. 479.

the addition of a little sugar and vinegar, is equal to the best soda. There are also several boiling springs at this place, and the steamboat spring is certainly a curiosity. It has constant puffing, like the exhaust of a large steamboat. In addition to these there are several poisonous springs here, which are said to be instant death to anything that drinks from them. There is now or has been a burning mountain at this place. The gases issue out so strong that it takes ones breath if they get too close. We remained here until two o'clock in the evening, viewing the different curiosities, when we again pursued our journey. We traveled 17 miles more and encamped for the night, making 31 miles today.

Thursday, 12. Last night was extremely cold. Ice froze in our camp kettles to the thickness of an inch. It reminded me of a December morning in Virginia. We got on our way about 7 o'clock. Passed some Indian wigwams today and some very large and excellent springs.

Friday, 13. We made an early start, as usual, and traveled over a very heavy road and encamped at the big spring six miles east of Fort Hall. The three men that were sent ahead returned this evening. They succeeded in purchasing 700 weight of flour at 8 cents a pound. As to information as to the road on to Fort Sutter, they gained none.

Saturday, 14. We arrived at Fort Hall, after much difficulty in crossing sluices and mire. Fort Hall is situated on the bank of the Snake river. The distance from here to Fort Sutter³⁰ is estimated to be from six to eight hundred miles. We traveled about three miles further and crossed Portneuf river, and encamped for the rest of the day on the southwestern bank. This is the most delightful stream that I have ever beheld. A fine gravel bottom, with water as clear as a crystal. I saw fish in this river fully ten feet long. We rigged up a small seine, but only caught some small trout and fall fish.

Sunday, 15. This morning we pursued our journey at an early hour and crossed Snake or Shawnee river,³¹ and traveled down it the remainder of the day, through a barren country covered with chaparral.

Monday, 16. We passed the great American falls³² on the Shawnee river. These falls can be heard for a long distance, the water pitching over great precipices some 25 or 30 feet high. We pursued our course down the river, enclosed on both sides with great pyramids of rocks. We found the wild currant growing in abundance here. We crossed Beaver creek in the evening, with several high dams on it, said to have been built by beavers. These dams are ten or twelve feet high. We now leave the Shawnee to see it no more. Wending our way through the mountains, passing the Oregon trail, which turns off to the right and appears to be a good deal traveled this summer, we encamped on Cano creek, having made 30 miles.

³⁰ Sutter's Fort was near the junction of American and Sacramento rivers in the California gold field.

³¹ Snake River is a south branch of the Columbia. For a description of the Snake and its tributaries see Chittenden, *Fur Trade*, Vol. 1, pp. 783-785.

³² Great American Falls are on Snake River in a horse-shoe form. Coy, *The Great Trek*, p. 160.

Tuesday, 17. We remained in camp until eleven o'clock to repair the axle of one of our wagons. We have now but fourteen left; we traveled about 13 miles and encamped for the night on the same creek.

Wednesday, 18. We made a daylight start on our long and toilsome journey. The country continued barren and parched by the heating rays of the noonday sun. It never rains here in the summer season, and the dust is eight or ten inches deep, which makes it very disagreeable to the wayworn traveler. We encamped this evening on Swamp Creek.³³

Thursday, 19. We traveled along a beautiful valley between the Eutaw mountains. We are at a loss to know where to find water, as Mr. Smith, our guide, has never traveled this route before. His guideship was at an end when the Oregon trail turned off. This afternoon we passed some of the highest peaks of rocks that I have yet seen. Some of them supposed to be 600 feet high. They present a magnificent sight. The Mormon City, or Salt Lake road, that leads at the South Pass, intersected our trail today, 100 miles this side of Fort Hall.

Friday, 20. We traveled over the most mountainous country that we have yet passed. In many places we were obliged to let our wagons down with ropes. Notwithstanding, the soil appears to be of good quality, and there is an abundance of grass in these mountains. We came to a fine creek today, called Goose creek, and caught some fine trout out of it. We traveled ten miles further on and encamped for the night.

Saturday, 21. We continued our course up the creek until the middle of the day, when we again took to the mountains. We had a shower of rain today, the first for six weeks. We made 24 miles and encamped in the Warm Spring valley.

Sunday, 22. We pursued our course down the valley in the burning sun for about 16 miles without water, when we became so thirsty and fatigued that we were obliged to halt and dig for water. We found some brackish sulphur which tasted fairly well to a thirsty man. There is nothing grows in this valley but wild sage and chaparrals. We remained here two hours, and then marched on about five miles farther, when unexpectedly we came to pretty good grass and water. We remained at this spot until two o'clock.

Monday, 23. We today put our train in motion and traveled 10 miles farther and encamped for the night. This afternoon we passed hot spring. The water flows out so hot that you cannot bear your hand in it, and, strange to say, not more than fifteen or twenty yards from it there is a spring the water from which is as cold as any ice water. This valley is thirty-seven miles in length.

Tuesday, 24. We marched off at an early hour, and crossed during the day a range of high mountains which form the eastern rim of the great

³³ This is present March Creek, an affluent of Lewis River. Thwaites, *Early Travels*, Vol. XXX, p. 91, note 72.

basin. We crossed the California trail today and reached a fine stream called Martin's Fork. We traveled down this branch about 12 miles and encamped for the night. The grass is plentiful and splendid on this stream.

Wednesday, 25. We continued our course down a beautiful valley and encamped on the same stream that we did last night.

Thursday, 26. We pursued our journey down the valley and crossed another stream. This and Martin's fork are eastern branches of the St. Mary or Humboldt river. It is hemmed in on every side by mountains, and therefore has no outlet. It flows west about three hundred miles and sinks. This is the principal stream in the Great Basin,³⁴ and our trail follows it to the end. This after we crossed some ridges of hills, but frequently touched the stream, which flows very crooked at this place.

Friday, 27. We crossed a ridge of mountains, 12 miles in length, and were much disappointed, not thinking it to be more than three or four miles until we would come to the river again. This was by far the hardest day's travel we have had on the route, having made 12 miles before we reached the hills; so we made 24 miles today without grass or water.

Saturday, 28. We crossed a ridge of hills 20 miles in length. Fortunately we found some water about the centre of this stretch, when we halted to refresh ourselves and animals. We then again traveled on and reached the river about dark.

Sunday, 29. We made a short journey, as we had no grass last night, following the river. We encamped early this evening with pretty good grass.

Monday, 30. We remained in camp for the purpose of recruiting our mules a little, as they are getting very weak. We were obliged to leave one of our wagons today so that we would have more mules to put to the balance of them. There were five deer brought into camp today, shot by our men. Deer are plentiful along this, the Humboldt river. We also caught some fine trout, which were very palatable.

Tuesday, 31. We put our train in motion at any early hour and traveled until 10 o'clock, when we laid up until 5 in the afternoon. The sun is so hot in the middle of the day that it is almost impossible for us to travel. At that hour we again pursued our journey until 11 o'clock at night, when we encamped with scarcely any grass.

August, 1849

Wednesday, 1. We started at sunrise this morning and traveled down the river, over a barren country. The grass is completely parched by

³⁴ The Great Basin is an area of about 200,000 square miles comprising portions of California, Oregon, Utah, and most of Nevada. Its most salient hydrographic feature is Great Salt Lake. Chittenden, *Fur Trade*, Vol. II, pp. 792-798 and Coy, *The Great Trek*, p. 157, map.

the burning rays of the noonday sun. We saw a signal fire this evening on the mountain from our camp.

Thursday, 2. We continued our course along the St. Mary's. Nature seems to have destined this river for some such purpose, forming fine places for keeping stock in the great bends which it makes. I have no doubt the grass was very good in the commencement of the season. There were five mules and two horses stolen from a neighboring camp last night by the Indians, who are very troublesome along this river. We traveled until 11 o'clock tonight and encamped.

Friday, 3. We traveled all day without any grass. Our animals can scarcely get along for weakness. Fortunately late in the evening we found some little.

Saturday, 4. We crossed the river in order to shun the sand, which is at least a foot deep, and found it impossible to get through it. We are also compelled to do the most of our traveling after night. The sun is so very hot that one cannot stand it in the heat of the day.

Sunday, 5. We laid in camp until three o'clock today, for the purpose of ascertaining the amount of flour on hand. Find it to be only thirty pounds to a man which will not last more than fifteen or twenty days at the furthest. At that hour we put the train in motion, recrossed the river and traveled over a sandy desert for fifteen miles, we reached the river at 10 o'clock at night, and encamped.

Monday, 6. We started early this morning and pursued nearly a northern direction over a perfect desert without any vegetation whatever. This evening the road turns due south. We encamp tonight without any grass.

Tuesday, 7. The country continues barren and sandy. We have now been forty-eight hours with little or no grass and no prospects of finding any shortly. It certainly is a gloomy time with all of us, as our animals can scarcely get along and our provisions are getting very scarce.

Wednesday, 8. This evening we drove seven miles from the road and found plenty of grass. This place has just been discovered. We had a shocking accident in camp this evening. Comrade James Davidson shot himself accidentally. He lived only a few hours afterward. Mr. Davidson was a resident of Frederick County, Va., and just in the prime of life. His loss is very much regretted by all. We buried Mr. Davidson in the most respectable manner possible in this solitary country. We thought as we raised his mound that earth never seemed so dear. We leave him to sleep in peace until awakened by Jehovah's call.

Thursday, 9; Friday, 10; Saturday, 11. Until one o'clock, we laid by at this place to recruit ourselves and animals, and also to make some hay to feed us over a desert said to be sixty five miles in length. At one o'clock Saturday evening we took the line of march again and passed the sink of St. Mary's river. This I have mentioned before. It scatters far

and wide among the rushes and slinks to be seen no more. We traveled 22 miles this evening and encamped at the Sulphur Spring. This is decidedly the strongest sulphur that I have ever tasted.

Sunday, 12. We left camp at an early hour and traveled ten miles to breakfast. We suffer very much for water at this time. After we had eaten breakfast we pursued our journey and encamped at the hot springs. This water is boiling hot and we use it for tea and coffee. By dipping it up and cooling it we make out to drink it. We have to cool it for the stock. We can cook here very conveniently without fire or fuel.

Monday, 13. We started at one o'clock this morning and made an effort to get through the desert today. We traveled about ten miles when our teams all gave up and left us in the burning sand without any water and nearly all famished. This is indeed a trying time. We remained here until late in the evening, when we made another effort. By double-teaming we succeeded in getting a part of the wagons over this end of the route. It is very heavy sand which is burning hot, and there has been great destruction of property for those who have preceded us through this desert. Dead mules are lying around us by the hundreds. By getting a part of our teams through we have been more fortunate. We encamp this evening on Truckee river, which is a beautiful clear stream of good water, shaded by cotton trees. We have now plenty of good water, wood for fuel and an abundance of grass.

Tuesday, 14. This day was spent in getting the balance of our wagons over.

Wednesday, 15. All of our wagons are now safe in camp. After giving our mules a good rest we resumed our toilsome journey, but made little headway, only traveling about 6 miles and crossing the river five times. This river is not more than thirty yards wide, but has a very rapid current and a rough, rocky bottom, which makes it difficult fording. We were obliged to encamp tonight without grass. We fed our animals on willow bushes.

Thursday, 16. Started early this morning and traveled a few miles, when we found a little grass and halted two hours to graze our mules, after which we went a little further and encamped for the night. We made 9 miles and crossed the river seven times.

Friday, 17. We resumed our winding course early as usual, and made some eight miles, when we halted for breakfast. The long-dreaded Sierra Nevada mountains made their first appearance this morning. They are completely capped with snow. After resting a few hours we took up the line of march, made about fifteen miles, and crossed the river ten times. We encamp tonight in a splendid valley covered with fine grass. This valley is about five miles in length and two or three in width.

Saturday, 18. We remained in camp this morning waiting for the carriage that we left behind to procure some flour and bacon, our bacon

being entirely exhausted and we have very little flour on hand. In the evening we moved about three miles further up the valley and encamped for the night. The carriage has not yet arrived.

Sunday, 19. The carriage came up this morning and we resumed our course through a hilly and rocky country, making about sixteen miles and crossing the river four times. Several of our mules were swept away by the current, but fortunately they were all rescued.

Monday, 20. We started at daybreak this morning and crossed the river again, making twenty-seven times in a distance of about thirty miles. About noon today we reached the base of the Sierra Nevada mountains. These mountains are clothed with fine timber, pines, firs and cedar trees. Pine trees can be found here eighteen feet in circumference, and fifty or sixty feet without a limb. The cedars are also very large. We traveled six or seven miles over the mountains, then halted for breakfast in a little valley surrounded on every side by mountains of a tremendous height, where we remained until three o'clock in the evening, when we again marched on a few miles farther and halted for the night.

Tuesday, 21. We broke camp very early this morning and crossed a high range of mountains. The road runs southwest today. Yesterday we traveled nearly northwest. Crossed a pleasant little brook of excellent water, a tributary of the Truckee river. Passed over another range of hills and came into a splendid valley through which flows a fine stream of excellent water. This also is a tributary of the Truckee river. Here we stopped to graze and refresh our animals and ourselves. Three men were sent ahead today to Johnson settlement and Fort Sutter to find out the situation and to make arrangements about provisions. After dinner we resumed our march and arrived at the Donner cabins this evening, the place where the Donner party perished in 1846.²⁵ It is truly an appalling sight. The ground is all scattered with human bones.

It may not be improper for me here to state that a party of emigrants consisting of men, women and children led by George Donner started for California in the year 1846. They attempted to make a cut-off, were lost in the mountains, were caught in the snow, and nearly all of them perished. God save our party from a like fate.

Wednesday, 22. This day was spent in crossing the highest peak of the Sierra Nevada mountains. We passed Truckee river. This river begins with a lake and empties into Lake Pyramid.²⁶ We passed up some of the highest precipices of rocks, that were almost impossible. We were

²⁵ The Donner party was a group of 87 men, women and children under the command of George Donner, which against advice of others, separated itself from a larger company and attempted to reach California in 1846 by the so-called Hastings Cut-Off around the southern end of Great Salt Lake. They were caught in the snows of the Sierra Nevadas, and more than half of their number perished before help arrived. The survivors were reduced to cannibalism in what is generally considered "one of the most tragic episodes in the annals of the westward movement." Dan B. Clark, *The West in American History* (New York, 1937) p. 479.

²⁶ Lake Pyramid is one of several lakes along the eastern base of Sierra Nevada Mountains, which have no outlet to the ocean. Chittenden, *Fur Trade* p. 11, p. 797.

obliged to double-team and pull up with ropes. The first emigrants drew up their wagons with a windlass. We all arrived safe at the top a little before sundown. The road down is not quite so bad. We were after night in getting into camp.

Thursday, 23. We remained in camp until 2 o'clock p. m. to rest from our hard labors on yesterday. At that hour we started again and made about seven miles over a terrible road, passing what is called Seven Lakes on the top of a very high mountain.

Friday, 24. We pursued our rugged course this morning, winding and twisting about through the mountains and over great cliffs of rock all day. Night came on and caught us on top of a great precipice. We were obliged to tie our mules to the wagon wheels until morning. We made only five miles and were busy all day.

Saturday, 25. We managed to get our mules down one at a time, after which we attached ropes to the wagons and by using trees as snubbing posts we all got down in safety. We then traveled on, jumping from rock to rock, and from crag to crag, passing up some tremendous high and rocky place, requiring all hands to the wagons in order to get them up. We made some eight miles today.

Sunday, 26. Wearied and worn, we still persevered on our toilsome journey this morning, traveling about three miles, when we came to another tremendous high and rocky mountain. We gained the top of it after repeated trials, and found just room enough for our wagons to stand on it. To look down it seems almost bottomless. We are all out of heart and almost ready to give up. But after holding a consultation, we again picked up courage and made another effort to pass on. By taking out the mules and using the ropes as before, going from one tree to another until we reached the bottom, which was fully half a mile, the whole day was spent in getting down. Fortunately about night the wagons were all safely in the valley below, without accident of any sort. This is a beautiful little valley, about two miles in length and one half mile in width, covered with fine grass and a pure stream of water running through the centre of it. It is called Bear Valley. We encamped near the center of it for the night.

Monday, 27. We today lay by to rest from our hard labors of the past three days. I have been rambling through the mountains today and found raspberries and gooseberries growing here in abundance. They are now fully ripe and they taste very nice to a tired and hungry man. The oak trees have also made their appearance, with their majestic tops almost piercing the clouds. They bring to one's mind the memories of home, sweet home, and the endearments of civilization. We have shot several fine deer the past week. They are plentiful, as are also bears and elks.

Tuesday, 28. We started before daylight this morning, in order to get ahead of the wagons, that have been much in the way. The road has

been a little better today. We have made thirteen miles and camped for the night without a particle of grass, feeding on oak bushes.

Wednesday, 29. We resumed our march again this morning, but had not proceeded far when we came to the brink of the worst mountain that we have yet encountered, quite a half mile down and almost perpendicular. We were obliged to cut down large trees and attached them to the wagons. By this means we got down without accident. We passed the first gold diggers today. Some of the teams had failed and the men went to mining and were meeting with good success. We marched all day without feed, making fourteen miles, and feeding on bushes again to-night.

Thursday, 30. Started again this morning, having a very steep mountain to ascend, which we got up with much difficulty, moving by inches until the summit was reached. We here held a consultation as to what we should do in regard to our progress. Our provisions are all gone and our teams completely played out. After a great deal of wrangling it was decided to discard one half of the wagons and take the mules and the other half and proceed. We made about five miles and halted.

Friday, 31. We proceeded this morning, leaving several mules through the day, that could not travel further.

September, 1849

Saturday, 1. Made another effort today, after having traveled twelve miles yesterday with practically no food for man or beast, and by bringing all the energy and courage which both men and beast possessed, and putting same into action, we succeeded in making a march of sixteen miles, reaching the first, or Johnston's settlement,⁷⁷ in the territory of California, about night, where both man and beast were well fed and taken care of.

After a few days of much needed rest, we proceeded to Sacramento, and from there to San Francisco. Thus ended a long and toilsome journey of over four months from St. Joseph, Missouri, to the city of San Francisco in the territory of California, a distance of 2,105 miles.

⁷⁷This was perhaps Johnson's Ranch at the intersection of the California Trail with Bear River. Coy, p. 193, map.