

James Kay Diary - 1850
Excerpt

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On the morning the 2nd Oct

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we set out for St Jo. 14 miles - at which place was to be the terminus of our trip - having rode about 8 miles over a hilly country & well timbered, we beheld way over across the prairie the city of St Jo - on the right lay the celebrated Black Snake Hills & to the left the bottom & River itself - Entering St Jo we quartered at the City Hotel - after renovating ourselves from dust & we set out to hunt acquaintances.

Found at _____ store JB Kercheval & Sam Kercheval - dined at the City Hall & soon left for the residence of J.B. Kercheval, 4 miles in the country - found all well & glad to see us Next day visited our old friend M^s. Kercheval & took tea & spent the afternoon very pleasantly - on the 4th went into St Jo - became acquainted with several merchants - St Jo has about 20 stores & is growing rapidly - property is high as well as rents - the river is very low & but few boats are running - The Savannah arrived on the 4th & left for Council Bluffs - 150 miles above - 6th Oct-

St. Louis brought but little freight & reports water enough to pass over the principal bars. The country around St Jo is prairie but quite broken tho not so much but can all be cultivated - as already large farms & fine roads are to be seen abounding as far as the eye can reach, and from the number of waggons going to & from St Joe even at this dull season of the year, is easily determined that it is destined to be a place of great commercial business -

The building improvements in the country are not good - most of the farmers being of little means & entire new comers, they must have time to gather from the product of the soil that will enable them to throw around them the comfort of life.

The buildings of St Jo are mostly brick & some of a **tarty** character while others are apparently reared upon the emergency of the times - a Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist & Catholic compose the list of churches - Society is yet apparently in its infancy and can only be improved as the citizens grow in age & become more adapted to the customs & climate of a country so new - There seems to be no spirt of loaferism about town, all seem to be disposed to work for a living - yet lamentable to tell there is a great want of a predominating spirit in the Temperance Cause - a score of doggeries & groceries are yet infesting the town while even the merchant almost unanimously keep liquor to "treat" the customers & thus by 7 to their detriment add gain to his pocket -

The citizens general look inteligent and are somewhat alive to the interest of the rising generation by way of schools, both weekly and Sabbath -

St Jo presents an imposing appearance as you approach it from below on the river - It Courthouse on Public Square is the most elevated building on any - being on a very high hill at the outskirts of

the town - its huffing steam mills both for manufacture of grain & sawing lumber, serve to keep up a lively emotion to which added the throng of waggons from the country & the continual chinking of the Black Smith, carpenter, _____ makes one feel that he was amidst an industrious & enterprising community - The streets are yet of dirt only, and of course in a dry time very dusty - some of them are yet to be graded - Indians from the neighboring tribes may be seen every day lazily strolling along the streets or lying on the bleak bluffs by the river side as if they paid but little heed how the world glided now, and as if they thought their only star of hope had set & their ancient race had only to extirpated and swallowed up by the approach of the white man....