

T H E  
MANUSCRIPT JOURNAL AND LETTERS  
OF  
T H O M A S C. L E W I S  
IN DESCRIPTION OF  
HIS TRIP ACROSS THE PLAINS  
FROM  
OHIO TO CALIFORNIA  
IN  
1852.

With Details of  
Adventures and Experiences on the Way;  
Accounts of the Gold Fields; Life in the Mines;  
Conditions at the Settlements; and the  
Return Homeward Voyage in 1853.

1852 - 1853.

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[Letter to his Wife]

April 27th, 1852.

Dear Wife:-

We have arrived safe at St. Joseph, not without a great deal of uneasiness of mind. It is very dangerous traveling up the Missouri River. We got on to a good boat at Cincinnati. Very civil officers and good treatment (the Steam Boat Midas). We had in general a very civil set of passengers.

We got up to St. Joseph yesterday about 10 o'clock. Got all our freight out of the boat, hitched up, started out of town, went about 5 miles on our way out, to camp for about a week or ten days. We are to[o] soon for the grass, it is not any more forward here than when we left home.

I should have wrote yesterday, was too busy and no room on the wharf to do any thing but to move off as soon as possible. I have seen some of the Portsmouth boys, 2 or 3 of them is gone back. The weather is still very cold, heavy frost. Yesterday morning cool but fine this morning. I may write again before we go. (I have nothing more particular to write).

We enjoy good health, hoping that you enjoy the same blessing. The same Providence watches over us all, and you are not forgotten in my prayers, hoping that you and us may be blessed with health and strength of body and mind and that we may see each other and enjoy the blessing of each others society in health and strength the remainder of our lives. I hope none of you murmurs or repines at our absence. Although our present situation is not as at home, yet we cannot say that we have regretted our undertaking or journey. I hope that we do not go in our own strength but looking unto God for strength and his

care and Protection on our Journey, and a Blessing on our undertaking, hoping that his blessing and Father's Protection may be on us all.

Give our respects to all friends. I wrote to you from St. Louis. I hope you got it. May the Blessing of the Allmighty be upon us all is the prayer of your Affectionate Husband.

Thos. C. Lewis.

I do not know but we shall start on the road tomorrow. In town today, no letter. Write to me to Fort Larime[Laramie] on the California [route]. In a week or ten days after write to Fort Hall. It is sent out by government. Or you may write to me at Sacramento, California. I will tell them to send from here after me.

To: Mrs. Nancy A. Lewis,  
Portsmouth,  
Scioto County, Ohio.

APRIL 28th

Went back to St. Jo. for the balance of our provisions. Bacon, ham - 10 cts; good flour  $2\frac{1}{2}$  cts lb.; great skimmers at St. Jo. Plain quarters with pillars for 20 cts. Went back to camp intending to stop 6 or 8 days but got in with a company who was going on the next day. Loaded up in the evening for a start.

APRIL 29th

Started up early to the ferry. Had to wait for our turn. Wind raised in the afternoon, could [not] get over, had to wait till next morning.

APRIL 30th

Got over the River the first trip, 50 cts for each wagon, 25 cts for each span. Did not get up with some of our company. Traveled the first day in Bateman's company who went with us from Cincinnati. (I forgot to say that we got good & civil treatment on the St. Boat Midas. Capt. Hooper very civil & obliging. The clerk and steward done everything they could to accommodate the passengers). Bateman's wagon had to stop early to put in some false spokes in 1 of the wheels. Started early the next morning.

MAY 1st

Went about 40 rods when it broke down at Wolf Creek. They went back to St. Jo. to get it fitted, and we on our journey got to Buffalo Creek. Here the Indians have a bridge. They lift a toll of fifty cents from each team, 10 cts for a horse. Passed the Indian Mission. They have a good farm. Came to another small bridge (both very rude and

rough in construction). The Indians asked 25 cts pr team. Saw the Indian chief McInosh on the Missouri River. Had a letter from the Indian Agent recommending the emigrants to pay him 25 cts for each team traveling through their territory. Camped at night. Good water but wood scarce. About 10 wagons at camp, sick man in one of them. He died the next morning. Sabbath Day was buried by the road side. John Bubo, of Dayton, Ohio.

SABBATH - MAY 2nd

Stopped and rested the Sabbath Day. Fine weather.

MAY 3rd

Started early. Good roads. Plenty of water, wood scarce. Wind very high.

MAY 4th

Fine looking rolling prairie. Good day's travel.

MAY 5th

Good traveling, in sight of trains all day.

MAY 6th

Heavy rain with hail & high wind. Very

cold. Late start, stopped early on the east side of the Big Blue. Heavy dew fell.

MAY 7th

Fine morning. Early start. Got to the Big Blue. It had raised in the night. Ferried over. Charged \$3 for each wagon, 25 cts for each stock, 25 passengers. Got 25 cts for helping 2 wagons over. Stopped on top of the prairie. Bad water, no wood, good grass. Camps on 3 sides of us. The dogs got fighting at one of them. It was supposed that one of the dogs came down to our camp and frightened our stock. They broke loose by pulling up their pickets (or stakes) out of the ground and started off at full speed. Two mules, one horse, with one of Mr. Connel's horses of Peoria County, Illinois, who is in company. We followed them about 1 mile. It was very dark, about 10 at night, was afraid we would get lost, got back to camp trusting to the Almighty to order all things for our good.

MAY 8th

Got up early, started in quest of our team. Found them nearly 1 mile off grazing at their leisure coming towards the camp with their long ropes to them.

I was not forgetful to render thanks for the mercy showed to us. If we had lost our team we should have had to stop until we could get some persons or other to hitch teams to our wagons. Started early, threatening rain, it came down about 1 hour after we started in torrents with high winds. About 30 wagons on the road camped on the Little Blue about  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 1 p.m. for the Sabbath. Made a good fire, dried our cloth[e]s, got dinner. Good place to stop, but poor grass. Very hungry, good health.

SABBATH - MAY 9th

Fine day but cold. Great many wagons passed today.

MAY 10th

Fine morning. Got 1 horse shoe put on, \$1.00. Got a fair start. Great storm up about 8 o'clock, heavy rain & hail, very cold. Stopped for 3 hours, bad roads. Cold at night.

MAY 11th

Fine day. Roads got good when dry.

MAY 12th

Rain part of the day. Slow traveling.

MAY 13th

Fine in the morning. Blowed very hard at noon with clouds. Very cold at night. Poor grass.

MAY 14th

Fine day, good traveling. Had to raise our wagon bed on to the hooks to cross a creek. Camped at night, no water. The first warm day we have had.

MAY 15th

Rain in the morning, got fine and warm, good traveling. Crossed the dividing ridge at noon, got down to the Platt Prairie. Drove down to the river Platt, thought we were going to get plenty of wood but when we got up to it, it was on an Island, the river high, we could not get it. Camped about 6 miles of Fort Carney[Ft. Kearney]. The wind blew very hard all night, shaking our wagons [so] that if they were on a plain surface they would travel on with the force of the wind. Got very cold in the night.

SABBATH - MAY 16th

Morning very cold and piercing. Had to stay in our wagon wrapped up in blankets to keep warm. Five of the wagons went about 8 miles, 1 of them broke an axle the day before. Connel and us stayed.

[Letter to his Wife]

River Platte, Indian Territory,  
May 16th 1852.

Dear Wife:-

I am now writing to you in our wagon wrapped up in blankets to keep warm. We are within 6 miles of Fort Ke[a]rney on the River Platt. I wrote to you from St. Louis & from St. Joseph but got none from you. We did not stay but  $1\frac{1}{2}$  days at St. Joseph. I lost the Portsmouth boys there. I saw some of them. They were 4 miles out of town. I took the wrong road to find them, went  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles up to a ferry that crossed the Missouri River. There fell in with a company. Stopped about 2 days, crossed over into the Indian Territory entered the Plains. It was fine to look at. Good traveling. Lost 2 wagons out of our company - they broke their wagons. It has been very cold since we left home. We have got along very well so far. Our healths is good and we eat very h[e]arty, sleep very comfortably in our wagon. A great many travelers sleep on the ground. There is a great many persons a walking, carrying what provision and clothing they can with them. It keeps us very busy all the time to keep up with the company in cooking & tending to our team.

The scenery and view along the road is beautiful but of little value as yet but for grass. Some times we can see the white top wagons as far as the eye will carry you before and behind, some times there is 20 or 30 wagons in a string or line, some men pulling hand carts.

It is not as comfortable here as at home, but we have had no cause of regretting our journey so far. If we should get along the balance of the journey as well, we shall feel truly thankful to Him who leads us in pastures green and by the still waters, for truly it is

pastures that is green, as far as you can see, sometimes not a stick or tree to be seen.

I should like to hear from you very much but believing that you put your trust and confidence in the same God, trusting that he will order all things for our good, and will restore us in health, peace and prosperity to enjoy the blessing of each others society, let us look to the Almighty for his blessing to be upon us for He only is our strength and our Deliverer, hoping that he will bless us with health and strength in our separation until we are once more united.

Tell Mr. Tracy that the person he enquired for is not worth anything. He has been keeping a livery stable for his brother, he's going to California this spring. I did [not] get the information in time to put it in the letter I sent from St. Joseph.

I recommend you and us to Him who has promised to hear our petitions and grant us our requests. I write today for the company may not stop at the fort tomorrow long enough for me to write & may the blessing of the Almighty be upon you all and on us, at all times. My blessing to you all.

I shall still write to you every opportunity. I mail this at the fort. Give my respects to all friends whilst I remain,

Your Affectionate Husband & Father,

Thos. C. Lewis.

Monday morning, 17th. Very cold with black frost. Fine looking morning, we shall soon start. It is not as comfortable here as at home, but we have no cause to murmur or complain. Good health and appetite, feel fresh but a little cold this morning. I still have you all in mind nearly at all times, especially morning & evening. We are stopping