

# Overland In 1846

DIARIES AND LETTERS

OF THE CALIFORNIA-OREGON TRAIL

Volume II



EDITED BY

DALE MORGAN

THE TALISMAN PRESS

GEORGETOWN, CALIF. 1963

---

---

## *The Shively Guide*

---

---

ROUTE  
AND  
DISTANCES  
TO  
OREGON AND CALIFORNIA,  
WITH A DESCRIPTION OF  
WATERING-PLACES, CROSSINGS, DANGEROUS  
INDIANS, &c. &c.  
BY J. M. SHIVELY.  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
WM. GREER, PRINTER  
1846.

THE  
ROAD TO OREGON AND CALIFORNIA,  
ACROSS THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

When the emigrants start to the sun-down diggings of Oregon, they should not fancy that they are doing some great thing, and that they need military array, officers, non-commissioned officers, &c: all this is folly. They will quarrel, and try to enforce non-essential duties. till the company will divide and subdivide, the whole way to Oregon. When you start over these wide plains, let no one leave dependent on his best friend for any thing; for if you do, you will certainly have a blow-out before you get far. I would advise all young men who have no families to have nothing to do with the wagons nor stock. Buy two horses and two good mules in your own neighborhood; for if you depend upon getting animals on the frontier, you will have to pay very high for them; make your way to Independence with your provisions—such as cannot be obtained at Independence; here get pair-fleashes [parfleches] for your pack-mules, enough of flour and bacon to season it, to last you to Fort Hall; proceed to the Spanish encampment, twenty miles on the Santa Fe road, and swap your horses for Indian horses, and be not too particular; for the shabbiest Shawnee pony you can pick up will answer your purpose better than the finest horse you can take from the stable. Thus equipped, 25 or more, with a riding horse and pack-mule to change every day, the trip can be made in 70 or 80 days. Take with you plenty of horse-shoes and nails, a hammer and clincher, and keep your animals shod. If any

of your animals give out, leave them, for your time is of more value than all your horses; and be assured that soon as you arrive in the settlements you will find profitable employment. Go well armed, and never let your guns get out of order; and, to avoid accident, carry them without caps. Take no tents with you, nor any thing of weight that you can dispense with. It will be necessary to keep watch nearly all the way, particularly through the Pawnee country; that is, from the crossing of Big Blue to the crossing of South Platte. The Sioux will not likely molest you in any way; let your watches be divided so as to fall equally on each; but, should any one refuse to bear his part, the best mode of punishment is for some one to fill his place without grumbling. Should you discover danger from Indians, travel at the top of the speed of your animals, till you get through their territory, when you can stop and recruit your animals. You should take with you an iron pan, the handle so jointed as to fold up; a kind of knife, fork, and spoon, that all shut in one handle—such knives are common in all hardware stores. In addition to this, you will need a fire-proof iron kettle, to make tea, coffee, boil rice, make soup, &c.; a tin pan, quart cup and a butcher knife, will about complete your kitchen; delay no time to kill game, unless it comes in your way, which will frequently happen along the road from the time you strike the Platte till you reach Fort Hall. At the Kansas crossings you will find a ferry; if the Platte should be high, make a bull-boat, which is made in the following manner: procure two buffalo skins, sew them together water-tight; then get willow poles and make a frame; over which stretch your skins, and your boat is done. Should Green river be high, you will find plenty of dead cotton wood to make a raft: no other water courses will be in your way. Wagons and stock had better cross Snake river, on account of grass; those on horseback had better keep down on the south side.

Those who emigrate with families, and consequently, wagons, stock, etc., cannot expect to accomplish the journey in less than four months, under the most favorable circumstances; and, in order that they be prepared in the best possible manner, first buy a light strong wagon, made of the best seasoned materials; for, if the timbers be not well seasoned, your wagon will fall to pieces when you get to the dry, arid plains of the mountains; let the bed of your wagon be made of maple if you can get it, and let the side and end boards be one wide board, without cracks; let them so project the sides and ends of the bottom of the bed as to turn off the water from the bottom. Next, let your wagon sheet be either linen or Osaburg, well oiled or painted, and fixed to fasten well down the sides; let the bed be straight, procure wooden boxes of half or three-quarter inch pine boards, of the same convenient height, and let them fit tight in the bed of your wagon. In these boxes



place your provisions, clothing, ammunition, and whatever articles you choose to take along; close the boxes by hinges or otherwise, and on them is a comfortable place for women and children to ride through the day, secure from dust or rain, and a place to sleep at night for a small family. Take as much tea, coffee, sugar and spices as you please; but above all take plenty of flour and well cured side bacon to last you through if you can. Let each man and lad be provided with five or six hickory shirts, one or two pair of buckskin pantaloons, a buckskin coat or hunting shirt, two very wide brimmed hats, wide enough to keep the mouth from the sun. For the want of such hat thousands suffer nearly all the way to Oregon, with their lips ulcerated, caused by sunburn. Take enough of coarse shoes or boots to last you through—three or four pair a-piece will be sufficient—moccasins will not protect your feet against the large plains of prickly pear along the road. However much help your wives and daughters have been to you at home, they can do but little for you here—herding stock, through either dew, dust, or rain, breaking brush, swimming rivers, attacking grizzly bears or savage Indians, is all out of their line of business. All they can do, is to cook for camps, etceteras, &c.; nor need they have any wearing apparel, other than their ordinary clothing at home.

Thus equipped, let your team be light oxen from three to five years old,—and if you take horses for servitude along the road, trade for Indian horses in the Shawnee nation before you start over the plains; mules will serve you well, if you can get them.—Proceed on your way to the Spanish encampment, as before directed, and here your journey across the plains must commence. You should be ready to take up your march as early as the first of April; and if there is no grass, carry enough of feed for your animals to last you to the crossing of the Kansas, which is 102 miles from Independence; here you will find the grass quite high. See before you start that you have forgotten nothing; and if you have much money, buy some Indian trade, such as small beads of different colors, cotton handkerchiefs, cheap red ribands, mocasin awls, &c.

All equipped, move on in companies of not less than twenty, nor more than fifty wagons together. You will leave this early, and travel in haste until you reach the Platte, for the reason that the district of country along the Kansas has many creeks putting into it, which are swollen to very great depth, by the hardest rains I ever seen. Should you take the advice above, you will have passed over the districts of those tumbling floods before they commence. I will instance that the emigration of '43 arrived at a small stream, not more than a foot deep; they struck camp without crossing; it raised in the night, and they were there seventeen days before they could get across.

Keep your guns in good order, but never have caps on them unless

you are going to shoot; when you come in from your hunt, be sure to take your cap off before you put your gun in the wagon. There are many graves along the road, occasioned by the accidental discharge of guns being put away with caps on; flint locks are always dangerous, and should never be taken along.—Forty miles from Independence, take the right hand road, which is the long road to Oregon—there is wood and water plenty,—so you can camp where you please. When you arrive at the crossings of the Kansas, if it be past fording, there is a ferry there; or, if you choose, caulk and pitch some of your wagon beds, made as before described, and you have a ferry of your own. When you get across, it will be necessary to set a watch at night—and this watch should be kept up nearly the whole way—for where there are no Indians, a guard is necessary to keep the stock out of camp. You will find your cattle, horses and mules will often take fright at night, and run into camp with great fury; this is no particular sign of Indians, and is an occurrence you will often witness. Form a circle or square with your wagons at night, by running the tongue of each hinder wagon between the hind wheel and bed of the wagon before, alternately; chain them together, and you have a secure breast-work against attack by Indians, as well as a secure place to cook, sleep, &c.

Your road to the Platte passes along the north side of the Kansas, some distance from the river, crossing many of its tributaries; 202 miles from the crossings of Kansas—wood and water any where—you will come to the river Platte. There the whole face of nature begins to change; the earth in many places is crested with salt—the few springs you meet with are impregnated with mixed minerals—the pools are many of them poisonous—and the emigrants should be careful, and use only the water of the river; for I know of but two good springs from the head of Blue to the north spring branches of Sweet Water; one is at Scott's bluff on North Platte—the other the well known Willow Springs, between the crossings of North Platte and Sweet Water. You will have several camps to make along this river, without wood; but there is plenty of buffalo dung, which is a good substitute for wood. 184 miles will bring you to the forks; you keep up the South Fork 75 miles to the crossings—(plenty of buffalo and antelope)—if it is past fording, off with some of your best wagon beds, and in less than two hours you will have a very good ferry boat. When you are across the river, fill your kegs with water—for there is none fit to drink 'till you reach the North fork, a distance of 20 miles, 143 miles up North Platte to Fort Larima, up a valley similar to the South fork, (thousands of buffalo.) You are now through the Pawnee country, and must look out for the Sioux; and when you get to Larima, make as little delay as possible, for fear the Indians molest



you.

You are now 640 miles from Independence, and it is discouraging to tell you that you have not yet travelled one-third of the long road to Oregon. Be off from Larima 12 miles to a spring at the foot of the Black Hills; about 4 days will take you through these dreary hills; and you again come to North Platte. Keep up the stream to the red butes, cross and fill your kegs,—for it is 20 miles to any water fit to drink,—fill your kegs again at the Willow Springs. 20 miles will bring you to the Independence rock on Sweet Water—830; here, a little to your right, is a great basin of Salaratus, white as snow; fill your bags with it—it is very good for use, and quite scarce in Oregon—up Sweet Water one hundred and two miles, where you leave it. Your next camp, seventeen miles, will be at a spring in the mountain pass, which runs towards the Pacific; fifteen miles brings you to Little Sandy. The road here turns down south, and the traveller must lose at least 100 miles by keeping it to Bridger's fort; here, on Sandy, let your animals rest a few days. Get on your horse and ride back on the road, far enough to get a view of the country westward. You will see a blue mountain in the distance, straight on your course; that mountain is on Bear river, near your track; take a pocket compass and a small party, and see if you can get through with the wagons. I was one of the company that made the road to Bridger's, and opposed it all I could. There is no use in going that way; they have no provisions, nor anything else that you want. Should you fail to find a route for wagons to Bear river, keep down Sandy along the wagon road, 65 miles, to Green river; cross it, as before instructed; keep down Green river 6 miles, and fill your kegs, and cross over to Ham's fork, 16 miles; up Ham and Black's fork, 38 miles, to Bridger; you are now 1059 miles from Independence; fill your kegs; it is 12 miles to Muddy, but the water is salt.

18 miles, another camp on Muddy.

16 miles, another camp on Muddy.

12 miles, a good spring at the foot of the mountain, 5 miles from Bear river.

5 miles brings you to Bear river; keep down Bear river 94 miles to the Soda Springs, (1221 miles,) where you must stop a day or two and enjoy the luxury of those exhilarating Springs. There are in the vicinity a great many of these springs; the best of all of them you will find at the foot of the mountain, one mile and a half from the camping ground on the river; it is situated one hundred yards from a lone cedar tree at the foot of the mountain. It is cool, resuscitating, and exceedingly delicious.

Leave the Soda Springs early in the morning, and when you go down the river about 4 miles, fill your kegs, as you cannot get to the water

here, you leave the river. Six miles below, opposite the great Sheep mountain [Sheep Rock], you leave Bear river, from which it is 12 miles to a little branch of good water, but no wood; 6 miles farther to Portniff [Portneuf] creek, one of the tributaries of Snake river, from which it is 48 miles to Fort Hall (1278 miles.) Here you will have an opportunity of buying provisions, swapping cattle for horses, and will receive many acts of kindness from Captain [Richard] Grant, the superintendent of the Fort. Here you must hire an Indian to pilot you at the crossings of Snake river, it being dangerous if not perfectly understood.

Fort Hall is situated in a large fertile valley on Snake river; you will not travel far, however, 'till the gloom of desolation will spread around you, grass very scarce, water and wood plenty. 160 miles below Fort Hall, you will come to the Salmon Falls, where you will find a great many Indians fishing; you can buy the fish very cheap, but you need not lay in any supply, as you will have opportunities of trading for them the balance of your journey. Two days below, you come to the crossing where you must follow the instruction of your Indian guide; when you are across Snake river, all you will gain is good grass for your animals—there not being a sufficient quantity for a large band of stock on the south side, from the crossings of Snake river.

It is 70 miles to Bosie [Boise] river, where you will again get fine salmon,—(45 miles crossing Bosie river to Fort Bosie, 1574 miles)—on Snake river. Here you recross Snake river by ferry. All across, your first camp 12 miles to the Mallair [Malheur] river. Here I wish to remark that, when I left the settlement, a well known mountain man, Black Harris, in company with Dr. [Elijah] White, was about to start to look out a road across the Cascade mountain, by keeping up the Mallair and crossing over a depression in the mountain to the head waters of the Santyam [Santiam], the eastern branch of Wilhamet [Willamette]. If they have succeeded, they have shortened the road for the emigrant at least 300 miles. It would land him just where he wants to be, for the land north of the mouth of the Santyam is nearly all taken up. Another important benefit to be derived is, that there would be no Indians along this way to molest the emigrant; but if the road has not been opened, we must take the old track. And here let me put the emigrant on his guard—for, from this camp to the Dallis [Dalles], a distance of 320 miles, you will be surrounded with swarms of the most mischievous Indians that ever disgraced the human form. They are now hostile, and you must have your guns in good plight, and travel in large companies; keep them from your camps, one and all. Here for the first time, on the long road, you must set a rigid guard over your camp and stock. 130 miles brings you to the fertile



valley of the Grand Round; water, wood, and an abundance of grass all the way. Here you may meet with some friendly Indians of the Skyuse tribe—but watch them close.

From the Grand Round, it is 70 miles to Dr. Whitman's Mission, over the blue mountain, which is not bad. This is a very fertile country, and the Indians raise a quantity of corn, wheat, peas, and the finest potatoes you have ever seen. They have thousands of horses, which are always very fat, they are a treacherous Indian, and retain an unbroken hatred for the white man. From Dr. Whitman's to Wala-wala is 25 miles—here you strike the Columbia, and many would do well to go the balance of the journey by water, were it not for the Indians. I would advise all to keep down the river by land to the Dallis mission, 120 miles; here you can repose yourself and family in comparative security. Here you take your wagons to pieces, and take all by water except your stock, which is driven across the Cascade mountain.

Fifty miles below the Dallis is the Cascade falls, on the Columbia; you here make a portage, and find a schooner ready to take you to the falls of Wilhamet. Fort Vancouver is 40 miles below the Cascades. It is a pleasant sight, after months of toil through the wilderness, to see the ships in the harbor, the carts, drays and hammers, and a general stir of business throughout the vicinity of the place. Should any of you be in need of provision or clothing, you can here obtain them. The chief factors of this place, Dr. John McLaughlin and James Douglass, are universally beloved, and well deserve the gratitude of all nations for their hospitable kindness to all whomsoever come under their notice, regardless of birth or country.

From Vancouver to the Wilhamet falls is 30 miles; here is a town [Oregon City] of considerable size, (500 inhabitants;) it is very expensive living here. Be off to the country, and take a fresh bag of flour and your family with you, and find a location to suit you—then go to work; a little labor will seed you a fine field of wheat, and this same land that you locate, in a few years will make you rich beyond doubt.

The country is not settled south of the Santyam. The farther you go south, the better the country is. There have been many projects for settling the rich valleys of the Unquair [Umpqua] and Clamet [Klamath], but none have been put into execution. This is unquestionably the most desirable part of the territory. With a soil scarcely surpassed, and a climate much milder than the Columbia, it offers but one barrier to the happiest abode of man; this barrier is the Indians who live on these rivers. It is thought that if a settlement would locate there, that could raise 100 well armed men with a small fort, would meet with success; such a settlement would be of great benefit to all

the settlers in Oregon, as well as California; for, at present, none can pass without the loss of their stock and probable death to themselves.

But I did not set out to give a history of the country, nor its resources. The only design is, that you be fitted out in a proper manner, and have your pilot in your pocket. I have carefully warned the emigrant to fill his keg with water at all those places where it is requisite; and though there are many unforeseen difficulties to beset you, be of good cheer—you will find a country in Oregon that will fill your desires, and repay you for all your toil. Lieut. Wilkes has given the only impartial account of the Oregon country that I have seen. I should recommend it to your perusal.

#### ROUTE TO CALIFORNIA.

The emigrant to California travels the same route to Oregon, from Independence to the river Casua [Raft River]. 60 miles below Fort Hall, keep up the Cesua three days, where cross over a southwest course three days to Goose creek—up Goose creek three days; thence a southwest course six days (distressing bad road,) to Mary's [Humboldt] river—down Mary's river 250 miles to its sink (a small lake.)

Along this river keep your guns in order, and sleep on your trail ropes, for the arrows of death are pointed at you from every Gulch, and without the strictest care you will lose your animals, if not your lives. This is the most sterile desert on the Continent of America, for a distance of 350 miles; not a tree nor shrub, except the hated sage and greewood, can be seen. The water is all strongly tainted with mixed minerals, and hundreds of lakes in winter are now dry, and form a crest at bottom as white as snow. The water, before evaporated, is like lye—the white pearlash at bottom is of the same nature, and is used in California for making soap. Here you will see hundreds of Indians destitute of a particle of clothing, living on snails, crickets, worms, and grass, (where there are any.) They are the last link in the chain of human beings. They occupy the country from Mary's river to Snake river. They dig holes in the ground to shelter them from the storms of winter, and must lie in a partial torpid state 'till spring, when they leave their burrow, and wander over the wide plains of desolation, without the means of killing the few antelope that are thinly dispersed over their unparalleled barren country.

But to proceed, I left you at the sink of Mary's river,—take a due west course 50 miles to the foot of the Cascade [Sierra Nevada] mountains. This mountain is a smasher, being 2000 feet higher than the Rocky Mountains; you cannot expect to cross it without difficulty; and if you are as late as November, you will be much troubled with snow; and, as there is no trail which you will be able to follow, keep your course west as well as you can. When you cross over the division

of the great mountain, you will be on one of the tributaries of the Sacramento; follow it down to its mouth, and you will turn out your animals at Captain Sutter's Fort in California, and rest from the toil of your long journey. From the eastern foot of the Cascade mountains to the Fort, it is 110 miles.

The reader need not be disheartened by reading a description of the expansive desolation along the road; for in California, as in Oregon, the country along the sea is very fertile, and the plains produce an abundance of oats and clover spontaneously. Cattle and horses are so easily raised here, that they are only prized for their hides—consequently, they are diminishing. But we hope that when a few more of our citizens get settled there, they will put a stop to killing stock merely for their hides. Seek a good location for your farm, and stick to it. The Spaniards may molest you—but be firm, and soon the destiny of California will be governed by yourselves.

#### DISTANCE FROM INDEPENDENCE TO ASTORIA.

From Independence to the Crossings of Kansas, .....	102	miles.
Crossings of Blue, .....	83	
Platte River, .....	119	
Crossings of South Platte, .....	163	
To North Fork, .....	20	
To Fort Larima, .....	153	640
From Larima to cross'g of North fork of the Platte, .....	140	
To Independence Rock on Sweet Water, .....	50	830
Fort Bridger, .....	229	
Bear River, .....	68	
Soda Springs, .....	94	
To Fort Hall, .....	57	1278
Salmon Falls, .....	160	
Crossings of Snake river, .....	22	
To crossings of Bosie river, .....	69	
Fort Bosie, .....	45	
Dr. Whitman's Mission, .....	190	
Fort Walawala, .....	25	
Dallis Mission, .....	120	
Cascade Falls, on the Columbia, .....	50	
Fort Vancouver, .....	41	
Astoria, .....	90	2117

— — — — —  
 In preparation by the author a concise description of the Oregon and California Countries, climate, soil, natural productions, together with a map of the same.

a number of other papers, obviously including the *Independence Western Expositor*.

17. Edwin Bryant, after a visit from Webb at Independence three weeks later, had another tall tale respecting California to set down in his journal. A man who had lived in that favored country 250 years became tired of life and traveled into a foreign country, where he soon took sick and died. "In his will, however, he required his heir and executor, upon pain of disinheritance, to transport his remains to his own country and there entomb them. This requisition was faithfully complied with. His body was interred with great pomp and ceremony in his own cemetery, and prayers were rehearsed in all the churches for the rest of his soul. He was happy, it was supposed, in heaven, where, for a long series of years, he had prayed to be; and his heir was happy that he was there. But what a disappointment! Being brought back and interred in California soil, with the health-breathing California zephyrs rustling over his grave, the energies of life were immediately restored to his inanimate corpse! Herculean strength was imparted to his frame, and bursting the prison-walls of death, he appeared before his chapfallen heir reinvested with all the vigor and beauty of early manhood! He submitted to his fate and determined to live his appointed time. Stories similar to the foregoing, although absurd, and so intended to be, no doubt leave their impressions upon the minds of many, predisposed to rove in search of adventure and Eldorados."

18. For Selim Woodworth see Index; he was going via Oregon, not to Monterey direct.

19. This notice of Curry's forthcoming tour was well received by other newspapers; and the *Reveille* promoted the letters by "Laon" as one of the feast of good things to be expected by subscribers to its next volume.

20. So was noted the departure from Springfield of the Donner Party, George and Jacob Donner and James Frazier Reed each with three wagons.

21. *Weekly Reveille*, St. Louis, May 4, 1846.

22. Edwin Bryant's literary purpose in making the overland journey in 1846 was well-heralded before he left the frontier, during his stay in California, and after his return. No one has ever been disappointed in the result.

23. For those who crossed at Iowa Point, see Nicholas Carriger's diary in Volume I. This northerly point of departure, just below the future Nebraska-Kansas line, is referred to in some of the reports that follow as at the mouth of the Nishnabotna.

24. At the time this report was written, April 26, the main body of the Mormons had got as far across Iowa as Garden Grove, on the west bank of the Grand River, and in almost unremitting rain, making