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Overland In 1846

DIARIES AND LETTERS

OF THE CALIFORNIA-OREGON TRAIL

Volume I

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EDITED BY

DALE MORGAN

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into the unknown toward California, choosing to stay with the established trail to Oregon. But 31 men, one woman, and her infant child accepted the risks and turned down Bear River.

That through many vicissitudes the Bartleson party reached California is something of a miracle. They descended the Bear to the Great Salt Lake, rounded the northern and western edge of the Salt Desert to Pilot Peak, and succeeded in getting their wagons across Silver Zone Pass to Gosiute Valley. At the base of the Pequop Mountains they had to abandon the wagons — thereby furnishing firewood for some emigrants of 1846 — and pack the rest of the distance to California. With some difficulty they found their way to the Humboldt. From the sink of that desert river they rode south through the deserts to the Walker River, and after much trouble, in a half-starved condition, crossed the Sierra in the vicinity of Sonora Pass. One of the party, James John, became separated from the others, though he eventually reached Sutter's; the rest got to the haven of Dr. John Marsh's rancho at the foot of Mt. Diablo on November 4.

After a fashion the Bartleson party had proved that it was possible to reach California overland. That was the word carried back to Missouri in the summer of 1842 by a small party which included Bartleson himself—and more to the point, since Bartleson had had his fill of far countries, also included Joseph Chiles. This returning party took a southern route via New Mexico, hence did not encounter the small emigration of 1842 which had Oregon as its destination.

That emigration left the Missouri frontier captained by Dr. Elijah White, newly-appointed subagent for the Oregon Indians, but characteristically the company soon deposed White and elected in his place a 23-year-old Ohio lawyer, Lansford W. Hastings, of whom a great deal will be said hereafter. From Oregon Hastings traveled south to California in 1843, following the trail fur traders had beaten out during the previous decade, then

in 1844, full of ideas, went home to write a book.

Meanwhile the trickle of emigration had become a swelling tide. In 1843 the "Great Migration" took the trail to Oregon, and among the Oregonians traveled a few professed Californians, among whom Joseph Chiles was the moving figure. West of Fort Laramie, Chiles fell in with Joseph R. Walker, who had gone to California and back as Captain Bonneville's lieutenant in 1833-1834, and Chiles engaged Walker to guide the greater part of his company to the Valley of California, hoping he could find a way across the Sierra for their wagons. Chiles himself, with a small party which notably included P. B. Reading, undertook to reconnoiter another route. He kept to the Oregon Trail as far as Fort Boise, then struck off to the west, up the Malheur River and on to the waters of the Sacramento. The route was a difficult one, never again traveled by California emigrants, but it brought Chiles safely to Sutter's the second week of November. Walker had a rough time conducting the wagons south to Walker's Pass; he finally abandoned the wagons short of the summit, and it was near the end of the year before he shepherded his charges into the settlements.

The emigration of 1844, again very large, principally had Oregon as its objective. But a small group who have come down in history as the Stephens-Townsend-Murphy party, mostly from Jackson County, Missouri, were avowed Californians. They were fortunate in having chosen Council Bluffs as their starting point, for the torrential rains of 1844 which flooded the country farther south and subjected the emigrants out of Independence and St. Joseph to interminable delay, scarcely hindered travel on the trails north of the Platte. This little company, with some emigrants making for Oregon, has the distinction of having opened across the Green River Valley what became known as the Greenwood Cutoff, named for Caleb Greenwood, traveling with his sons in the company. This cutoff, distinguished by a "dry drive" from

show himself in the Willamette portion of this country; now talks of returning to the states; has in company with him a Spaniard; I wish they were far away from this mission. It is not easy to calculate the depravity of many of the emigrants to this country. I give Mr. Bonney rather of a plain talk about the emigrants hanging about this mission and tell him our business as a mission is with the natives and we do not want any traffic with the whites; he leaves with his Spaniard; but I fear he will be back again.

"Mr. Galligher is also here after cattle which were left by the emigrants last year; he is afraid to leave with his herds lest Bonny and his Spaniard should pursue him and rob him; but as Bonny is now gone, possibly Mr. G. may conclude to go soon At night Mr. Burn appears³⁴

"Monday, 11. A beautiful fine morning; while nature is smiling in her loveliness, lo, Mr. Bonny appears in sight; the more we hear and see of this man, the more we are convinced that wherever he appears, depravity in some of its aggravated forms may be feared.

"Tuesday, 12. We are having pleasant, warm weather. Ther. in the shade, 76. These families are annoyed with

³⁴The *Oregon Spectator*, February 19, 1846, contains a paragraph: "Hugh Burns, Esq., informs us that himself and party will leave early in March next, for the United States. Their route will be across the Rocky mountains by way of the South Pass. Persons wishing to send east by the party, would do well to avail themselves of this opportunity." It would seem that Burns did not make the trip, for the *Spectator* of November 26 reports a meeting Burns attended in his own home on October 3. At the time of the original story, the *Spectator* explained that the Postmaster General had contracted with Burns to carry the mail for one trip only, from Oregon City to Weston, Missouri, he to receive 25 per cent on the amount of postage the department received for the letters. Since only fifty cents could be charged for a single sheet, it may be that there was no money in such transport of the mail. Burns gave up the project or he hired someone in his place: postal historians may be interested to inquire into the details.

Mr. Bonny.

"Wednesday, 13. Most beautiful weather. Thermometer in shade 80. Poor Bonny has just started for the states. Doubtful! Doubtful!"³⁵

To say the least, Gary gave Wales B. Bonney a bad press! But this was a view from the Columbia of the three separate parties which started homeward from Oregon this spring; developments in connection with the Applegate Cutoff, a new southern road to Oregon, are to be considered hereafter.

The first party to leave was that whose fortunes are described by Joel Palmer. A second company is known to us mostly from mentions in the diaries of those west-bound on the trail, its arrival on the frontier noted in the Missouri newspapers, as seen in Volume II; this party seemingly left Oregon City April 18 and The Dalles about May 1, reaching St. Joseph August 1. The name of only one of the party, B. Genois, has been ascertained unless Gary's "Mr. Hockerman" was among their number. Bonney made a much greater impression upon the emigrants who kept diaries or wrote letters home. He left The Dalles on May 13, as Gary recorded, and after remarkable adventures reached Independence on September 30. Much more will be said of him in these pages.

Joel Palmer declares that he himself set out for the States from Oregon City on March 5, 1846, a week after a party of seven which he and his companions expected to overtake at Whitman's missionary station. He reached the Dalles on March 14, finding five of the party in advance, and on the 28th arrived at Waiilatpu. After a visit to Henry Harmon Spalding's missionary station on the Clearwater, on April 17 Palmer's party got under way, consisting of 18 persons having 51 horses and mules.

³⁵These extracts come from Charles Henry Carey, ed., "*Diary of Reverend George Gary*," *Oregon Historical Society Quarterly*, September, 1923, vol. 24, pp. 302-311.

Not without adventures en route, the party reached Fort Boise April 29 and Fort Hall May 14. On the 16th, Palmer relates, they arrived at the Soda Springs, and two days later they met about 600 lodges of Snake Indians moving from Bear River to the Snake. On the 23rd the party reached Green River, "taking the northern route." Crossing Green River on May 24 and South Pass on the 26th, they moved on down the Sweetwater to camp about four miles east of Independence Rock on May 30. "Soon after encamping it commenced raining, which turned to snow, and in the morning we had about five inches of snow upon us. We were uncomfortably situated, as we could procure but little fuel, and had no means of sheltering ourselves from the 'peltings of the pitiless storm.' Our horses too fared poorly." On the 31st they remained in camp. "By noon the snow had disappeared, and we succeeded in finding a few dry cedar trees, built a fire, and dried our effects. We had an abundance of buffalo marrow-bones, tongues, and other choice pieces, on which we feasted. We saw large droves of mountain sheep, or big-horn, and thousands of antelope."

June 2 brought the returning Oregonians to the North Platte, found too high to cross. Next day they succeeded in finding a ford, and on June 4 the party went on to Deer Creek, some thirty miles. "On the way we saw a band of Indians whom we supposed to be of the Crow nation, and as they are generally for fight, we prepared to give them a warm reception; but it seemed that they were as fearful of us, as we were of them. They were soon out of sight. After traveling about five miles, we saw them drawn up into line two miles from the road. As they were at a respectful distance, we did not molest them. We however kept a sharp look out, and at night were cautious in selecting camp ground." On June 5 Palmer's party "traveled about fifteen miles and encamped on Mike's-head creek [probably a corruption of Mark Head's Creek, now La Prele Creek]. Here we found two

trappers, who had been out about three weeks. They accompanied us to Fort Laramie, which we reached on the 8th of June. In the morning H. Smith, one of our party, in catching a mule was thrown, and his shoulder dislocated. We attempted to set it, but could not succeed. He traveled on to the fort, but in great misery. We remained here until the afternoon of the 10th. Mr. Smith's shoulder was so much injured that he could not travel. He concluded to remain at the fort a few days; three men were to stay with him, and the rest of us had made arrangements for starting, when a company of Oregon emigrants came in sight. We awaited their arrival, and had the gratification of hearing from the States, it being the first news we had received since leaving our homes. A part of us remained a few hours to give them opportunity of writing to their friends; while five of the party took the road

"We continued for a distance of two hundred miles meeting companies of from six to forty wagons, until the number reached five hundred and forty-one wagons, and averaging about five souls to each wagon. They were generally in good health and fine spirits. Two hundred and twelve wagons were bound for California; but I have since learned that many of those who had designed to go to California had changed their destination and were going to Oregon.

"At Ash hollow we met a company who had lost many of their cattle and horses; but they were still going on. A short distance below the forks of Platte, we met a company of forty-one wagons, under the command of a Mr. Smith, which company had lost about one hundred and fifty head of cattle; they were encamped, and parties were out hunting cattle. We remained with them a short time, and then passed on. This was on the 18th of June."

Palmer goes on to relate the killing by the Pawnees of Edward Trimble, one of Smith's company, as recounted in greater detail in Volume II. Here we shall note that Palmer goes on to say:

"Mr. Trimble had left a wife and four children. She had sent by the party a request that we might come back, and allow her and family to travel with us to the U. States. We accordingly all took the road to the company's camp, (driving the cattle) which we reached at day-break on the morning of the 20th June. Here we remained until the afternoon. By the persuasion of her friends, Mrs. Trimble concluded to continue her journey to Oregon. But there were four families who had lost so many of their cattle, that they were unable to proceed on their journey. They had four wagons, and only five yoke of cattle, and some of them were very small. They wished us to travel with them through the Pawnee country, as the Pawnees were the perpetrators of the act which had caused them so much difficulty. We accordingly traveled with them until the 30th, when we left them, and resumed our journey towards home.

"On the morning of the 21st we were joined by Mr. Smith, and the three men who had been left at the fort. We traveled on rapidly day and night, barely giving our animals time to rest. The weather was becoming warm; the flies and mosquitoes were very annoying. We arrived at the Mission or Agency [for the Iowa, Sac', and Fox Indians] on the morning of the 6th of July. Here are extensive farms, and a most delightful country. The first view of cultivated fields, and marks of civilization, brought simultaneous shouts from the whole party. Our troubles and toils were all forgotten."

Next morning Joel Palmer, Hiram Smith, and their companions reached St. Joseph, where their arrival created the splash in the newspapers reflected in Volume II. In his narrative Palmer says: "We had been so long among savages, that we resembled them much in appearance; but when attired in new apparel, and shaved as became white men, we hardly knew each other. We had been long in each other's company; had undergone hardships and privations together; had passed through many

dangers, relying upon each other for aid and protection. Attachments had grown up, which when we were about to separate were sensibly felt; but as we were yet separated from our families, where still stronger ties were felt, each one took his course, and in a few hours our party was scattered, and each traveling in a different direction."

6.

Prior to 1845 the Cascade Mountains had been for Oregon emigrants almost as much of a barrier as the Sierra Nevada farther south. Wagons were brought over the Blue Mountains to the Columbia as early as 1840, but they could be taken no further down the river than The Dalles; it was necessary to carry them the rest of the way by water, which was slow, hazardous, and often expensive. These conditions were discussed by Jesse Applegate in a series of contributions to the *Oregon Spectator* published over the signature "X" between January and April, 1847. Applegate embarked upon this literary labor, as he wrote his brother Lisbon the following October, in consequence of the furious abuse and injurious slanders occasioned by the disasters on the Applegate Cutoff in the fall of 1846 to which we will soon be giving attention.

In the first of these articles, printed in the *Spectator* for January 21, Applegate discussed the history of earlier emigrations, disregarding anything that happened before he himself migrated to the Willamette. The emigrants of 1843, he wrote:

were the first who traveled with wagons below Fort Hall—of these a part reached the Dalles of the Columbia in the month of November—others left their wagons and animals at Wallawalla, and a few remained at Dr. Whitman's Mission through the winter.

When we consider the scarcity of grass and water along most of the route, the dangerous crossings of Snake river, and the making of the road for so great a distance, over wide plains of sage and sand, and almost impassable mountains, that they

try. Malaria had always been endemic in the Mississippi Valley. What it might mean if a man need not drag through half of every year, alternately pinched with the chills or dizzy with fever, while the burying ground was continually enlarged by levies made upon his family, is now beyond our comprehension, though the diaries and letters printed in these two volumes are more than eloquent.

In these circumstances the emigration of 1846 began its movement toward the frontier. We see in Volume II how Independence and St. Joseph, in particular, argued their superior facilities to emigrants who must equip themselves before launching out upon the trail. We also see in Volume I, through the diaries written by specific emigrants, how preparations advanced.

The overland travelers of 1846 best tell their own story, and it is not proposed to deprive them of the privilege. But because only a few diaries have yet come to light, and because these report the overland emigration in rather spotty fashion, some gaps must be filled in. Especially do these gaps exist in relation to the front-running emigration to Oregon.

William E. Taylor, traveling with Larkin Stanley and John Craig, ended up in California; but in a measure his diary reflects the westward advance of those who left the frontier bound for Oregon. These advance companies constituted almost half of the emigration to the Columbia and most of them passed Fort Hall before Jesse Applegate arrived with news of his southern road, so that they reached Oregon City over the new Barlow Road across the Cascades. No diary by a member of this portion of the Oregon emigration has yet come to light—hopefully, publication of this book will bring to view just such a document. But in the library of the Oregon Historical Society are some reminiscences by John R. McBride

⁴¹The Thomas R. McBride MS. in the Oregon Historical Society collections is in three parts, typewritten and with handwritten emenda-

which greatly enlarge our understanding of the 1846 emigration.⁴¹

McBride relates that on April 16 his father's party, consisting of about 22 wagons conveying a dozen families and employees, crossed the Missouri at St. Joseph, intending to go forward "some eighty miles into the Indian Territory to a point where we should strike the old wagon road made by the fur traders from Independence, Missouri, to the West." On reaching the common meeting ground, about April 20, they found on hand about 100 wagons, including their own. "These were joined in a short time by a number of men who had passed the River at Iowa Point in Andrew County, Missouri, with numbers from Holt and Andrew counties, so that before we reached the Big Blue. . . . our train comprised one hundred and thirty wagons and teams, moved by oxen, with large herds of horned cattle and horses, and one small flock of sheep."

This train organized, McBride says, by choosing as its captain "John Brown, a prominent citizen residing for many years in Platte County, Missouri"—probably a mistaken reference to Elam Brown.⁴² Several candidates were suggested for the command, "among them one Jonathan Keeney, who had once been a mountaineer in the employment of the American Fur Company. His experience with the Indians was thought to qualify him for the duties of the command, and he was strongly urged for the choice by his friends. William J. Martin, of Platte County, had made the entire trip to Oregon and California in 1843, and returned. . . in 1844. His friends strongly supported him. But he had had some experience with the fickleness of emigrants on the plains, and declined, knowing full well that it entailed much responsibility and little honor."

At the Big Blue, McBride recalled, the company was

tions; it was written after the completion of the Pacific Railroad, but the exact date of composition is not clear.

⁴²For Elam Brown consult the Index.

trail companion, and immediately began to make notes we are glad to have. On April 16: "Passed Midshipman Woodward is here (St. Louis), on his way with dispatches to Columbia River. He has a wild plan of raising a body of men, and *taking Santa Fe*." Again, on April 25: "I have seen a strange variety of characters—Dixon, the non-entity—Ewing, the impulsive, unobserving ardent Kentuckian, who lays open his character to everyone, and sees nothing of those about him—the quiet, sedate, and manly Jacob(s), his companion. These two are going to California." (They were then in company with Edwin Bryant.) Parkman boarded the steamer *Radnor* on April 28, and next was observing, "On board the boat are a party of Baltimoreans [also observed by Bryant],—flash genteel—very showily attired in 'genteel undress,' though bound for California. They make a great noise at table, and are waited on by the Negroes with great attention and admiration. Also a vulgar New Yorker, with the moustache and the air of a Frenchman, bound for Santa Fe. . . . A young man on board from St. Louis, bound for Santa Fe, has one brother on the Atlantic and another on the Pacific, and a third on the Mississippi, while he is going to the [Rio Grande] del Norte. So much for American wandering." On May 2, in cameo: "The landing at Independence—the storehouses—the Santa Fe waggons—the groups of piratical-looking Mexicans, employees of the Santa Fe traders, with their broad, peaked hats—the men with their rifles seated on a log, ready for Oregon. Among the waggons behind, some of the Mexicans were encamped. The Baltimoreans got shamefully drunk, and one of them, an exquisite in full dress, tumbled into the water." On May 5: "The emigrants, encamped at some distance, are choosing officers. W.[oodworth] seems to be making a fool of himself. We have joined Chandler's party. Bought an excellent horse, for which I paid too much."

In his published narrative Parkman elaborated all these notes, saying for example, "I rode to Westport with that

singular character, Lieutenant Woodworth, who is a great busybody, and ambitious of taking command among the emigrants. He told me that great dissensions prevailed in their camp—that no organization had taken place, no regular meetings had been held, though this was to be done on Saturday and Sunday [May 8-9], and the column to get under way on Monday.

"Woodworth paraded a revolver in his belt, which he insisted was necessary—and it may have been a prudent precaution, for this place seemed full of desperadoes—all arms were loaded, as I had occasion to observe. Life is held in little esteem. This place, Westport, is the extreme frontier, and bears all its characteristics.

"As we rode home we met a man itching for Oregon but restrained by his wife. At McGee's at Westport there was a restless fellow who had wandered westwards from New York in search of work, which he had not found; and now he was for Oregon, working his passage as he could not supply himself with provisions."

Parkman also elaborated upon his diary concerning his own traveling arrangements with "Captain Chandler of the British army, who with his brother and Mr. Romaine, an English gentleman, was bound on a hunting expedition across the continent. I had seen the captain and his companions at St. Louis. They had now been for some time at Westport, making preparations for their departure and waiting for a reinforcement, since they were too few in number to attempt it alone. They might, it is true, have joined some of the parties of emigrants who were on the point of setting out for Oregon and California; but they professed great disinclination to have any connection with the 'Kentucky fellows.'

"The captain now urged it upon us that we should join forces and proceed to the mountains in company. Feeling no greater partiality for the society of the emigrants than they did, we thought the arrangement a good one and consented to it. . . ." These companions had a hunter named

Sorel, a surly-looking Canadian, and a muleteer Wright, "an American ruffian from St. Louis," while Parkman and Shaw had employed a mountain man of experience and distinction, Henry Chatillon, and also one Deslouriers.

Parkman left Westport on May 9, not taking the trail out the Kansas River followed by the emigrants leaving from Independence or Westport; he soon crossed the river to ride north to Fort Leavenworth, where his "English friends" were waiting. It was from Fort Leavenworth that he wrote his mother on May 12: "We arrived at this place day before yesterday, riding up, with our whole equipment from Westport. Our tent is pitched under the fort close by that of our English friends. We are a little in advance of the main body of the caravan, which will shortly arrive and follow on our track. Our companions are Captain Chaunley, of the British army, and his brother and Mr. Romain. They are all men most excellently fitted for companions on such a journey, as they have all travelled very extensively and Romain has been on this route before—in 1841 [when he went as far as Green River with Father De Smet and the Bartleson party]. We find them exceedingly intelligent and agreeable and consider ourselves very fortunate in meeting with such a party, and so avoiding the necessity of too close contact with a very different sort of men who compose the trading parties. Our own *engages*, Henry Chatillon and Delorier are as good as can be found anywhere on the frontier. Chatillon, in particular, is everything that could be wished. . . . I hear that two or three men intend to accompany the Oregon emigrants—with whom we do not come at all in contact—part of the way on their route, and then return. If this is true, we may have an opportunity of sending letters."

Parkman and Chandler broke up camp at Fort Leavenworth on May 13, and after some difficulty made their way to the emigrant road west from St. Joseph. They had been taken in by prevalent rumor that a vast body of Mor-

mons had crossed the Missouri at St. Joseph, and Parkman's diary for some days referred to the encampments of these Mormons, until it dawned on him that the emigrants ahead were simply the St. Joseph division of the emigration—with which William E. Taylor and John R. McBride were traveling. A few wagons would leave St. Joseph later on the trail, but the greater part of the emigration now was thronging out of Independence. Not until late on May 23 did Parkman see emigrant wagons. Next day his diary says (and it should be compared with Virgil Pringle's diary):

"We have struck upon the old Oregon Trail, just beyond the Big Blue, about seven days from the Platte. The waggons we saw were part of an emigrant party, under a man named Keatley [Keithley]. They encamped about a mile from us behind a swell in the prairie. The Capt. paid them a visit, and reported that the women were damned ugly. Kearsley and another man came to see us in the morning. We had advanced a few miles when we saw a long line of specks upon the level edge of the prairie; and when we approached, we discerned about twenty waggons, followed by a crowd of cattle. This was the advance party—the rest were at the Big Blue, where they were delayed by a woman in child-bed. They stopped a few miles farther to breakfast, where we passed them. They were from the western states. Kearsley had complained of want of subordination among his party, who were not very amenable to discipline or the regulations they themselves had made. Romaine stayed behind to get his horse shod, and witnessed a grand break-up among them. The Capt. threw up his authority, such was the hurly-burly—women crying—men disputing—some for delay—some for hurry—some afraid of the Inds. Four waggons joined us—Romaine urged them, and thereby offended us. Kearsley is of the party."

In his book, which has a much lengthier account of these events, Parkman says that ten men, one woman, and one

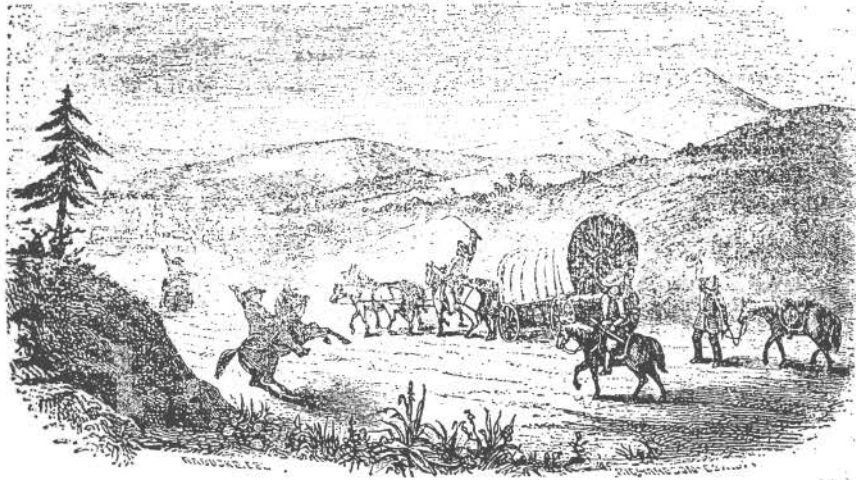
but dont forget to take plenty to eat," or when Tamsen Donner serenely writes her sister as she prepares to leave Independence, "I am willing to go & have no doubt it will be an advantage to our children & to us." But these same letters correct ideas we may have entertained that the 1846 emigration is a thing apart, shadowed from the beginning by the wings of disaster.

How many people went West in 1846? Even with all the contemporary records gathered into these pages, no one can be sure. The usual reckoning was in terms of wagons, of which the most authoritative account doubtless was that supplied to the *St. Louis Gazette* by Joel Palmer arriving on the frontier in August; he gave the total as 541, and since the rule of thumb was five emigrants to the wagon, a total Oregon and California emigration of some 2,700 souls is indicated. Not all those wagons got through; four at least came back to the States; the 19 wagons of the Mississippi Saints rolled south to Pueblo; and others were traded or abandoned. The only exact count is for travel over the Barlow Road, which totaled 152 wagons. A few emigrants who took the old Oregon Trail wintered at Whitman's missionary station in preference to crossing the Cascades, five families in all. From 90 to 100 wagons seem to have traveled the Applegate Cutoff. Altogether, the Oregon emigration of 1846 may have totaled 1,100 to 1,200 souls. The California emigration in the end may not have been very much larger, say 1,500 men, women, and children. We learn that 256 wagons crossed the Missouri at St. Joseph or points higher up. Most of these left early in the season, save for the 40 wagons (more or less) of the Smith company in which Edward Trimble was killed. The emigration out of Independence and Westport was evidently larger, though not very much so—perhaps 280 wagons in all.

This latter emigration has been reported in the literature down to the present; the Taylor and Carriger diaries

printed herein help to correct the imbalance. Although it has not been possible to incorporate into the present work full summaries of the separately published narratives by such travelers out of Independence as Edwin Bryant, J. Quinn Thornton, and Heinrich Lienhard, pertinent material being extracted primarily in the form of notes, Bryant and Thornton traveled a good part of the time with our diarists George McKinstry, Hiram Miller, and James Frazier Reed, and we are not deprived of their point of view. Lienhard, originally a member of the George Harlan train captained by Josiah Morin, afterward of the G. D. Dickenson company, and finally of the Jacob D. Hoppe party, was in the same sector of the emigration at the beginning, and later he traveled in the same dust cloud with our diarist James Mathers, and our mapmaker T. H. Jefferson. All who find the present work interesting are urged, nevertheless, to read Bryant, Thornton, and Lienhard. They will come back to the diaries and letters which make up these two volumes with a lively new appreciation, and surely will join in the hope that discoveries are yet to be made, opening up further frontiers in the world of 1846.

DALE L. MORGAN



“The California Trail”

Diary of William E. Taylor

With a Letter by John Craig

It is rare good fortune that we should have two different accounts of the first company to bring wagons across the Sierra in 1846. The eight-man Craig & Stanley party was overtaken near the Sink of the Humboldt by the William H. Russell pack party which has Edwin Bryant as its chronicler, and was preceded over the mountains by those packers. But these eight men have a place all their own in the 1846 emigration.

Since John Craig himself describes the circumstances which led him, with Larkin Stanley, to embark upon the western trails in the spring of 1846, and since the Introduction has set the stage generally, we shall note here only that the Craig & Stanley party always was at the forefront of the emigration, from the time it left the frontier—originally as members of the company under

William J. Martin which started from the St. Joseph area and for the most part ended up in Oregon. The names of only four of the eight men are known—Craig and Stanley, W. E. Taylor, and Israel Brockman. The name of the latter is preserved solely in a document found in the Jacob R. Snyder Collection, Society of California Pioneers. (On March 15, 1847 at City of Angeles, Brockman addressed His Excellency Col. J C Fremont to explain that he was under the necessity of applying for his discharge from the California Battalion; he hoped this discharge would be granted for the reason that Mr. Stanley, deceased, and himself owned a wagon and team and other property, which Mr. Craig, Stanley’s administrator, could not dispose of without his consent; as Mr. Craig was going to the States the ensuing season and wanted to take the proceeds of Stanley’s estate to his family, Brockman thought it necessary that he should repair to the upper country to dispose of Stanley’s property.)

The circumstances of Stanley’s death are brought out on a later page. Concerning his partner, John Craig, little more is known than he himself records in the letter to George Boosinger here printed in association with W. E. Taylor’s diary. The *California Star*, April 10, 1847, contains a notice: “We are requested by Mr. John Craig to state, that he is now forming a company to return to the United States this Spring by the overland route. The company will rendezvous at Fort Sacramento, and start as soon as the mountains can be crossed. An invitation is extended to all who wish to return to the United States by land, to join the company. They will probably start about the first of May.” Craig’s passage eastward—at first in company with the mountain man Miles Goodyear—is recorded in a variety of contemporary records quoted in the Notes. His letter shows that he safely arrived at his home in Ray County, Missouri, with his diary in his pocket. But thereafter he and his diary vanish from history. It is to be hoped that this publication of Craig’s letter re-

specting his two-year odyssey in the West may serve to bring to light more information about him.

W. E. Taylor remained in California, and to this fact we owe both the preservation of his diary—ultimately given by a descendant to Sutter's Fort Historical Monument—and a biographical record. An obituary printed in the Downieville *Mountain Messenger*, July 29, 1905, relates that he was a native of Tennessee, aged 85 years, 1 month and 6 days at the time of his death on July 26, 1905; he was therefore born on June 20, 1820. He must have removed to Missouri at a comparatively early age, for among his papers is a certificate signed by Garret McDowell, Colonel of the 84th Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 7th Division, Missouri Militia: "Know ye that I . . . Have appointed William E. Taylor, Marshall of said Regiment hereby authorizing & empowering him to discharge the duties of Said office according to Laws Given under my hand the 20th Sept., 1844."

Taylor's laconic diary carries on the chronicle of his life as he traveled from Missouri to California. This record ends on reaching Johnson's Ranch on September 13, but several notations among the end pages of the diary reveal that he went on to Sonoma (he was in fact, one of the Sonoma garrison the ensuing fall and winter):

"Oct the 14 1846 Sonoma
Doct Edward Bail Dr to
Mr [?] Ed Guy[?] money Loaned \$600
Oct 15 Samuel Kelsey To Dr
money Loaned 2.00
W H Scott Dr to one pea Jacket \$10 00
To 1 dollar Cash Loaned 1 00
The above acct is paid
Dec the 2 1846

Two letters are preserved, addressed to Taylor at Sonoma. The first is dated Yerba Buena, March 15th 1847:

Dear Sir.

I have received your note by which I am informed that nothing new has happened at home. Mr Scott had told me at his arrival here that new attempts had been made by the instigations of Green and Berreyesa to attack again my house and property. So I was somewhat frightened on account of the diffidence that inspires to me the ill intention of Green and weakness of Nash. All persons of some respectability learned with surprise and indignation the slanderous act attempted by the tou latter to stirp me of my house and property, and I have no doubt that I will obtain an order from General Karny to arrest so horrible transgression.

I thank you for your good care and efficacy and pray you to continue them until my return which will be about 3 or 4 weeks.

Do me the favor write to me by every opportunity, and let me know the state of things. I place my property under your care, and my servants under your orders.

I am very sorry for the death of Refugio, I did not believe that the could heal.

Excuse my bad English, present my best respects to Madame Taylor and believe me your truly friend and obed^t Serv^t

VR PRUDON.

P. S. American Store Shop Hiland from Sandwich Iland anchored yesterday evening 19 days navagation no news.—We shall leave for Monterrey to morrow on board Ship Vandalia.

* * *

The second of these letters, addressed "Mr W^m E Taylor Sonoma U. C.," is of special interest in that it refers to another of our diarists, Nicholas Carriger:

U S Ship Warren
Monterey Mar: 28th 1847

Dear Sir

I am Sorry to inform you that there is no prospect of

Gaylords getting his discharge at present. All those men whose times have expired were transferred to the Savannah & consequently our complement is shut.

We expect to sail tomorrow for San Pedro to bring up some of Col Fremonts men & will probably take them to San Francisco when we return perhaps the period of our departure for home will be known Gaylord may then either get his discharge or be transferred to some other vessel to be discharged when his time expires

If we return to San Francisco I shall be pleased to see you on board

Be pleased to present my respects to Mrs Tayler Mr Griffiths family Mr Carrager & Powell & others,
Your Friend & Obt Servt
WM L MAURY

These letters have been quoted in full, among other reasons because they complete the slender record of Taylor's life afforded by his papers. Both, it will be noted, refer to a Mrs. Taylor. According to an obituary reprinted in the Downieville *Mountain Messenger*, February 6, 1904, from the *Nevada County Morning Miner*, she died at Downieville on January 30, 1904, of "asthma and la grippe." "Her maiden name was Nancy Griffiths and she was born in North Carolina seventy-three years ago [on June 15, 1830]. When a mere child she removed with her parents to Missouri, where they resided for about eight years. In 1845 the family came to California and settled in Sonoma County. On December 13, 1846, she was united in marriage to W. E. Taylor. After a few years in Sonoma they removed to Napa Valley and later to Indian Valley, where they resided until nine years ago, when Mr. and Mrs. Taylor took up their residence in Downieville. On December 13, 1896, they celebrated their golden wedding in Downieville. She leaves to mourn her death an aged husband, six sons, George F., Ross L. and John Taylor of Downieville; Dr. R. L. Taylor of San Francisco; James Taylor of this city

and William Taylor of Idaho; two daughters, Mrs. M. E. Gott of Goodyear Bar and Mrs. William Mawer of Lassen county, besides a number of grandchildren, among whom is Mrs. W. R. Sharkey of this Nevada, and a wide circle of friends . . . She was highly esteemed for her many noble qualities and was possessed of a kindly and generous disposition . . ."

Taylor's own obituary, previously mentioned, adds that he died after an illness of several weeks, from old age and other infirmities. "His first residence in the State was in Sonoma county, and after residing there a great many years he removed to Plumas county, where [he] lived until about ten years ago when he came to Downieville. . . . During his residence in Sonoma county Mr. Taylor held several public offices, one being the first superintendent of public schools of that county. He also served as under sheriff for several years of Napa county."

Thus the record of William E. Taylor's life in the long perspective provided by his death. But in taking up his diary, we turn back through the years to find him a young man, three months short of his twenty-sixth birthday, with the great experiences of life yet before him.



THE TAYLOR DIARY

Monday April the 20th 1846 We this day lef home for Oregon and proceeded 5 [15?] miles to Elk horn¹ whare we got some work done on our waggon Our company consisting of Craig Shreve and myself

Tuesday, the 21. We Left at 10 O'clock and Standlly's wagon Broak 2 miles from Elk horn whare we continued [?] all night

Wed. 22. Left at 12 O'clock after having finished [?] all the repares our waggon proceeded about 3 [?] miles This day one of our Crowd (Shreve) took his [illegible: leave?] Mr Lad Joined us.²

Th. 23. went 12 miles

Friday 24. passed plattsburg travailed 12 miles

- Sat. 25. traveled 20 miles
 Sund. 26. got to St. Josephs, traveled 3 miles
 Monday 27 Tuesday 28 we remained at St. Josephs
 Wen. 29 we Left St. Josephs went to parrots ferry
 5 miles above town.³ Weather fair wind high
 Th 30 Remained in Camp Wind prevents us from
 Crossing
 May 1 Crossed over the river which was very hig for
 the season we find an abundance of grass for the oxen
 2 Remained in camp
 3. Struck our tents and proceeded to wolf River whare
 we had some difficulty in getting over went 14 mils
 4. Started Early passed the Iowa Agency,⁴ distance
 25 [miles]
 5 Left camp Early traveld 15 miles
 6 We overtook 18 waggons at the Nemihaw River
 crossed over found [~~deleted: 7~~] 6 wagons encamped
 making 27 waggons and 50 men.⁵ A view from the prairie
 hills of this Little River is very sublime and beautiful it
 Surpasses any thing I have yet seen
 7 we traveled about 20 miles the road verry undulating
 and the Land of the Richest kind Scarcely any timber or
 Water Some symptoms of discord in camp owing to all
 not being preasant at the Election of officers⁶
 8 we travel^d over Level wet prairie 18 ms
 9 we traveld 2½ miles Crossed one fork of the Blue.⁷
 Staid all day found we were wrong
 10 Changed our course Crossed over the other fork
 of Blue came to Independence trail⁸ we are ahead of
 all distance 16 miles
 11 traveled 14 miles Camped in a small grove on a
 tributary of Blue
 12 Camped on Horse Creek⁹ 7 miles
 13 Travailed 7 miles Camped on Blue
 14 Camped on Sandy a tributary of the Blue after
 travling 20 miles
 15 Camped on the blue 16 miles verry warm The
 Mercury stands 76 at noon in the shade

- 16 traveld up Blue 16 miles Stanley killed a deer Mer-
 cury Stood at 86 at noon in the shade
 17 traveled 4 miles
 18 we went But 2 miles owing to the indisposition of
 Mrs Munkerass who brough an increase in to the emigra-
 tion
 19 travailed 8 miles
 20 traveled 16 up Blue
 21 arrived at the Nebraska,¹⁰ travailed 17 miles
 22 to day we saw a party of pawnees some hunters
 quite friendly distance 18 miles
 23 traveld 8 miles
 24 traveld 20 miles Saw and killed some Buffalo
 25 traveled 18 miles thousands of Buffalo
 26 Traveled 18 A sevier h[a]il storm in the Evning.
 27 " 16 miles quite Cool Mercury at 57
 28 " 23 another hail Storm Reached the South fork
 of platt
 the 29 traveled 16 miles first used the excrement of
 the Buffalo for fuel
 30 Crossed the South fork which is one mill wide with
 an average depth of 18 inches¹¹ dis. 12 miles this evening
 we had the most sevier storm I ever saw
 31 Lay by all day owing to incessant Rain and in-
 tense Cold with Some Snow Tem. 48 Fah[renheit]
 June the first today there was quit a snow storm
 passed over to the Ash hollow¹² distance 25 miles Tem.
 38 deg. Fah.
 2nd Staid here all day
 3 went 10 miles Camped out of the Rain Tem. 57
 deg
 4 travelled 20 miles Saw wild horses
 5 traveled 20 miles. Came in sight of Castle Rock
 also the Chimney Rock Crossed Sandy¹³
 6 passed the Chimney Rock dist. 25 miles
 7 passed Scotts Bluff¹⁴ Beautiful Scenry dist 18 miles
 8 Company divided¹⁵ distance 19 miles
 9 Travelled 15 miles Temp. 90 deg of Fah.

10 Went 7 miles came to Laramie.¹⁶ Tem. 100 deg of Fah.

11 Lay By. mercury at 100 Fah.

12 travelled 20 miles through the Black hills Camped on the Bitter Cotton Wood a Smal Stream¹⁷

13 Came 20 miles camped on horse Shoe Creek¹⁸

14 camped on Butte creek¹⁹ distance 20 miles

15 camped on Black Creek dist 20 miles Red Rock²⁰

16 travelled 18 miles camped on deer creek²¹

17 traveled 16 miles Tem 90 deg of Fah.

18 Came to the Crossing of platt not fordable met some Return emigrants²² Tem. 81 deg. of Fah.

19 Remained trying to cross our Cattle

20 Do Do 16 more waggons Came up

21 got all over Rafted the waggons Swam the Cattle

22 passed the Red Butt[e]s dist 12 miles a good Spring²³

23 Came to the Willow Spring²⁴ distance 20 miles

24 20 miles Braught us to the Rock Independence²⁵

25 Passed the Kenion on Sweet water²⁶ saw mountain sheep travelled 16 miles

26 Went 18 miles, passed a party of men.²⁷

27 traveled 25 miles Thousands of buffalo

28 Lay By all day

29 Traveled 20 miles a plain view of the wind River mountains Covered with snow Bad roads Some Sick

30 Came to the South Pass at 16 miles

July the 1 23 [~~deleted~~: 16] miles Braught us to Little Sandy extremely sterile country in sight of eternal snow on the Bear River mountain²⁸

2 Broak a waggon a man sick dist 10 miles Camped on Big Seany [Sandy] Mr L W Hastings visited our camp²⁹

3rd travelled 18 miles Tem. 29 deg. of Fah.

4 crossed the colorado of the west a stream of 40 Rods wide 2 feet deep³⁰ dis. 16 miles

5 traveled 15 miles camped on Blacks Fork³¹ near half the company confined by sickness³²

6 traveled 2 miles Lay By on account of the sick Tem 90 deg. of Fah.

7 Lay By Sick get worse Mr. S Sublett & three others staid with us they ware from California³³ Wrote home By them. Tem. 105

8 We Left the main croud with 7 waggons travelled 16 miles some Rain

9 16 miles Braught us to Bridger Shoshone in abundance Mr Joseph Walker et al from California³⁴

10 Lay By Indians visited us in great numbers

11 traveled 18 miles Cam[p]ed on muddy³⁵ a bad camp

12 traveled 18 miles Camped at a good Spring

13 Crossed the Bear River mountain Rain 25 miles

14 16 miles Brought us to Smiths fork³⁶

15 traveled 22 verr[y] Bad Roads hard Rain

16 traveled 14 miles more Rain

17 21 Braught us to the Soda Spring³⁷

18 Lay By Rain thunder and Lightning

19 Left our company with our 2 waggons alon never shall I forget the deep Regret at a Leaving our friends³⁸ passed the old Crater traveled 12 miles

20 our oxen sensible of the impropriety of Leaving their as well as our friends Left camp and ware overtaken 3 miles from the Soda Spring so that we only got to portneif River³⁹ 7 miles

21 traveled 22 miles Crossed divers streams

22 traveled 21 to the Blue Spring 5 miles from fort Hall⁴⁰

23 passed Ft hall traveled 14 miles to portneiffe River.

24 traveled 18 mils passed the American falls of Snake or Saptin River.⁴¹

25 travelled 18 miles to Casua⁴² Bad Road

26 Left the Oregon Road traveled 22 miles up the casua or Raft River good Road

27 traveled up casua 18 miles Rain Lightning and thunder

- 28 20 miles Braught us to a good Spring Road Bad
Crossed over to goose creek⁴³ [*deleted*: 10 miles]
- 29 we came 10 miles
- 30 travelled 15 miles
- 31 we came 18 miles Tem. 30 deg. Fah. morning
August the 1 traveled 17 miles
- 2 passed a verry hot Spring 20 miles Struck the head
of Marys River⁴⁴
- 3 met Black harriis and applegate who had Been to
view a new Road to oregon and designed meeting the
emigrants to turn them into it⁴⁵ travelled 20 miles Tem
88 of Fah.
- 4 Traveled 17 miles down Marys Rive. Tem 90
- 5 This day we came 20 miles sevral diggers⁴⁶
- 6 passed sevral Remarkabley hot Springs⁴⁷ 20 miles
- 7 Came 14 miles
- 8 " 17 " hot Springs⁴⁸
- 9 " 16 "
- 10 " 20 miles quit steril[e]
- 11 " 23 miles " "
- 12 " 18 miles Natural Soap⁴⁹
- 13 " 18 miles Salaeratus visited by Large party
of Indians
- 14 Travelled 22 miles (Rain Lightning
- 15 " 20 miles. divergence of new oregon
road⁵⁰
- 16 " 20 " Extreme Sterility
17. " 25 " to day we Suffered for water
as the Road Left the River for 14 miles⁵¹ Rain
- 18 Lay By Joined By Col. Russell of Mo. & 8 others
packing⁵² Tem. 42 morning 96 noon
19. 20 miles Braught us to the Sink of Marys Riv⁵³
Vegetation entirely disappear water verry bad
- 20 traveled all day and all night passed some Boiling
Springs quite salt distance 40 miles making 60 miles
that 8 of us had 12 gallons of Water Extreme suffering
Reached Trucky⁵⁴
- 21 Lay by all day Tem 100 of Fah.

- 22 Entered the Siera Nevada or Cascade mts. up
Trucky vally 15 miles⁵⁵ Tem 87 deg of Fah.
- 23 Traveled 18 miles Bad Road
- 24 " 10 miles came to timber Tem 94 deg
Fah
- 25 Crossed a spur of the mts⁵⁶ 12 miles Tem 84.
- 26 travelled 12 miles good Road Tem 32.
- 27 " 8 miles Trucky Lake⁵⁷ Tem 30
- 28 travelled 1 mile up the worst mountain that wag-
gons ever crossed⁵⁸ sevier frost Tem 28
- 29 got up the mts. Distance 2 miles
- 30 travelled 3 miles Lay by the Ballance of day
- 31 " 15 miles on top of the mt. Bad Road Tem
22 at day Light & 60 at Sun down
- Sept 1 travelled 7 miles Bad Bad Road Bear sign
Tem. 40 deg morn
- 2 traveled 7 miles of distressing Road
- 3rd " 8 miles ove if possable worse Road.
- 4 Lay by to Rest our oxen
- 5 travled 16 miles principally upon the top of a high
Spur of the mountain our Oxen are worn nearly out we
have but three that are able to Render service and we
have as steep a hill befor us as we have Left behind us
Heaven only knows how we are to get Along Our Oxen
are almost perishing for food and nothing grows in this
hateful valley that will sustain life.⁵⁹
- 6 Lay by to day as yestardys Long drive has well
nigh done for the oxen. We cut down Oak Bushes and
trees, for them to Brows on, or such of them, as are able
to Stand on their feet.
- 7 the indians drove off two of Mr. Stanley's ablest
Oxen; tho' we succeeded in Recapturing one of them We
unloaded our waggons and packed the Load near a mile
on our horses We then took four of the best yoaks of
Oxen and put to the empty waggons with a man at each
wheel and by such exertions as I have seldom saw used
we got the wagons up one at a time and proceeded about
5 miles⁶⁰ grass verry Scarce and dry Our oxen are as

near gone as I ever saw oxen to be driven at all

8 This morning we found that the Indians had taken off another one of Stanley's oxen, it was seen by following the trail that they had taken him up a steep hill and carefully Covered Evry track for the distance of a mile he was taken probably whilst I was on guard. I do not know how he managed to affect this Roguery it must have been very Sly W[e] travelled 11 miles and Stopped at a Small patch of dry grass and no water for the Cattle or horses

9 we traveled 3 miles and Stopped for the day at a Little grass and a hole of water one of Mr. Craigs Best oxen has gave out; the hills have got much Smaller and the Rocks are not so much in the way as on any part of the Road Since we Struck the waters of Trucky River

10 Lay by all day our oxen are so near worn out and our provisions are getting scarce

11 Started on slow went about 6 miles today we had to Leave an ox on the Road

12 we traveled 7 miles and Stopt we are in five miles of the first settlement today we left another ox we have but two oxen to our waggon

13 We this morning got into the Valley and stoped at Cap. W^m. Johnsons Whare we ware Recieved in the most Kind and hospitable manner⁶¹ We made several trades Bought a beef swaped our broak down oxen for fresh ons this day our company Lay by and so for several days distance 5 miles

So Ends my Diary

The Roads from St Joseph to Nimahaw is over Extensive prairies high dry rolling hills with an abundance of wood on the Little Streams (which are numers) for all purposes There are some deer on the Nimehaw tho they are quite scarce; the grass on this part of the Road is good any whare.

From Nimahaw to Blue is some thing like that part Back to the States the timber is not so plenty nor the

water so good tho there is quite a sufficiency of Both I saw some Antelopes on the Little Blue. The Road up Blue is generally on the Second Bottom through a most luxurient growth of Grass and Rushes together with other vegetation common in the States Over this part of the Road there is the greatest abundance of timber and water any place for all ordinary purposes from Blue to platt a distance of 20 miles you pass over high dry prairie neither wood or water Upon arrivin on the Nebraska things ware quite a different appearance the Road Strikes the River about the middle of the grand Island which is sixty miles Long and thickly covered with Cotton wood and willows; on the Banks of the stream you some times find willow in quantaties quite sufficient for fuel when this is not the cass the traveler is obliged as a substitute to use the dried Excrement of Buffaloes which By the by is no bad makeshift At about 4 or 5 days travel up the River the travler usually finds Buffalo in great quantaties I hav saw thousands at a Sight however easily others may have taken them I found that it cost us a great deal of trouble

Antelopes are verry numerous and whare they have not been much hunted are easily killed; the best way is to extend your hankerchief on your gun rod and Remain as still as you can This seems to excite their curiosity they will approach near enough for you to kill them with a pistol I knew them to be shot by men from their tent doors; they are found in greater or Less quantaties on all portion of the road after you strike the prairies; the hungry traveler may rely more certainly upon them for a supply than any other game that meets with. Deer are scarce on any part of this Rout. we have killed only two on the entire Journey Black tailed deer are verry numerous on the Cascade Mountains tho they are verry wild Wolvs are also numerous they are of all colours and sizes from the size of the Largest Mastiffs down to the smalles Fiste dog they have frequently been known to attack and kill the Lagargest Buffalo I Saw fifteen

George Donner.

Baylis Williams, with half-sister Eliza, hired man and girl for the Reeds.

In addition, Sutter's two California Indians, *Luis* [or *Lewis*] and *Salvador*, who had accompanied Stanton across the mountains with provisions died with Stanton as members of the Snowshoe Party. In all, thirty-nine died among the eighty-seven who set out from Fort Bridger on the Hastings Cutoff, with Luis and Salvador swelling the death toll to forty-one; the name of the aged Sarah Keyes, who died at the crossing of the Big Blue River in Kansas, is not usually included in the accounting.

Notes

DIARY OF WILLIAM E. TAYLOR AND LETTER OF JOHN CRAIG

1. Elk Horn, later renamed Crab Orchard, was a village 9 miles northwest of Richmond, Ray County, Missouri.

2. Apparently "Mr. Lad" was John W. Ladd, who went on to Oregon. As seen in Volume II, the *Oregon Spectator* of October 29, 1846, speaking of those entering the Willamette Valley by the Barlow Road, says, "Mr. J. W. Ladd's wagon was at the head of the line, and arrived in this city on the 13th of last month. . . ."

3. The *St. Joseph Gazette*, April 3, 1846, contains a "Ferry Notice" by Evan Parrott, dated St. Joseph, March 27, 1846: "The shortest road to Wolf River, the Iowa Sub-Agency &c, by crossing at PARROTT'S FERRY, four miles above St. Joseph. A good lot for the safe keeping of animals immediately at the landing. Rates of Ferrage established by law."

4. What Taylor calls the Iowa Agency was properly the Great Nemaha Subagency, created in April, 1837, for the Iowas, Sacs, and Foxes, who had just ceded their lands east of the Missouri. The Iowas technically had a reservation of their own, north of that jointly occupied by the Sacs and Foxes. These "twin preserves," lying north of Wolf River, were formally surveyed in the summer of 1838. The Presbyterians, who in 1835 had opened a work among the Iowas, moved in the fall of 1837 across the Missouri, thereafter embracing all three tribes. For details, see Louise Barry, "Kansas Before 1854: a Revised Annals," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, Spring, Summer, Autumn, 1963, vol. 29, *passim*.

5. In view of what Taylor says here, evidently there were three wagons, including Ladd's, in the Craig & Stanley party at this time. Presumably we can think of the full company of 27 wagons as Captain Martin's company—thus far, at least.

6. Concerning the "discord" over the election of officers, see the comments by John R. McBride, quoted in the Introduction.

7. Apparently Taylor's company camped on the Big (Black) Vermilion, supposing it to be the Big Blue, then discovered their mistake.

8. Having crossed the Big Blue proper near Marysville, Kansas, Taylor soon struck the emigrant road from Independence.

9. Horse Creek would seem to be the present Walnut Creek, northwest of Fairbury, Nebraska. The next stream mentioned, the Sandy, is still so called.

10. The Nebraska or Platte River was reached near the head of

Seen Several hundred waggons belonging to the last mentioned people but as they was traveling up the north Side of Platt river and we down the South with a wide river having quick Sand in its bed between us. We of course had no conversation with them. But this I know that they will be compeld to winter at the lake no odds how much they may dislike the country as when I Seen them on platt they had yet Six hundred miles to travel before they would reach the lake and nine hundred miles from the Lake to the valley of California. So that before they could [*Here the extant letter breaks off.*]



“Antelope”

Diary of Nicholas Carriger

Nicholas Carriger provides the best possible introduction to his diary, with an autobiography written for H. H. Bancroft in 1874 and some biographical information furnished for the *History of Sonoma County* published at San Francisco by Alley, Bowen & Co. in 1880. He was born March 30, 1816, on the Walnut Grove farm in Carter County, Tennessee. After being educated in the town of Elizabeth, on June 26, 1835, he enlisted in the First Tennessee Mounted Volunteers for a year's service. Most of the regiment was engaged in the Seminole War, but he himself was stationed the greater part of the time on “the ground occupied by the Charekee nation.”

After receiving his honorable discharge, Carriger returned home to engage in milling and distilling, then was associated with his father in manufacturing iron and hardware. In November, 1840, he emigrated to Warren

County, Missouri, but soon moved to Jackson County. After a year in that quarter, Carriger moved to St. Joseph, or Robidoux Landing, as it was then called, then settled in Holt County. But this was "a place too gloomy for my taste; therefore I left without delay and settled definitively in Andrew county Miss. where I purchased *one hundred and Sixty acres of land*. I fenced my land, built a house upon it; and when I had already cleared many an acre; the rumor of the fertility of California, brought on the wings of fame, made me feel displeased with my farm; and without consulting with any person; I sold it to a broker for the paltry sum of *five hundred Dollars*, less than the amount I had invested in lumber for my house—"

In later life Carriger remembered that he had set out for California, but his diary is titled, "Journal of an Orrigon Trip," which indicates that he had another destination in mind on leaving Missouri. The 1880 sketch says that he had been occupied in cultivating hemp, tobacco, and cereals, but on April 27, 1846, "started from Round Prairie for California, and was joined at Oregon City, Holt county, by Captain Grieg, their number being further augmented on the journey by the addition of Major Cooper, the Indian agent at Council Bluffs." The 1874 autobiography relates: "Having sold my house on the 24th of April 1846 on the 27th day of same month I started for California, crossed the Missouri river at Thompson and Hayman's ferry, the last settlement of the white people the other side of the Rocky Mountains; myself and party employed ten days in crossing over our wagons and stock—Our little party left Missouri under command of Captⁿ Gregg, but we were afterwards joined by a large party under command of major Steven [Stephen] Cooper, (afterwards one of the framers of the constitution of the state of California) . . ."

On September 29, 1842, in Andrew County, Carriger had married Mary Ann Wardlow, a native of Highland County, Ohio, and they had two young children, one born

in July, 1843, the other in January, 1845; a third would be born along the way. Also members of the overland party were his father, Christian Carriger, and his mother, his brother-in-law, John Lewis, and others. A list of "Names" preserved with Carriger's diary presumably lists the male adults of the party: Samuel Davis, Samuel Cook, John B. Davis, Redwood Easton, Frederick De Rooche, Mahlon Brock, Joseph Davis, Isaac Wilson, William Taylor, Abijah Carey, [] Milburn, Christian Carriger, Daniel Carriger, David W. Cook, Nicholas Carriger, Thomas Spriggs, Joseph O'Donnell, John Lewis, John L. Tanner, Burlington Acres, Ezekiel Stewart, Charles Stewart, and Joseph Wardlow.

As is brought out in the Notes, Carriger records travel by a somewhat different route from the Missouri River to the head of Grand Island on the Platte—the general route, in fact, which came to be known a year or two afterward as the "Old Fort Kearny" road. If this route had been used by emigrants prior to 1846, no records have come to light, which makes the Carriger diary so much the more interesting. The road was used by many from 1849, but in 1846 wagons may have been attempting it for the first time.

In his autobiography Carriger writes: "in company with Cooper and his party we passed the Pawnees villages, where fifty Pawnees chiefs, mounted on splendid horses came forward to meet us, and had a long talk with Captⁿ Gregg and major Cooper; the words that passed between our chiefs and Pawnees warriors I cannot repeat, for while the talk was taking place, I was standing by my team talking to my young wife. This much however I know, that on the ending of the conference, major Cooper gave Pawnees chiefs several presents of dry goods and a fat steer which the indians killed on the spot, and eat after broiling it over the fire—After travelling several days, one of our party, a brother in law of mine, lost three of his oxens and in the morning could not resume his march at the bidding of major Cooper; who devoid of humane feel-

ings, started, leaving Mr Lewis behind; however Lewis was not left altogether alone, for nine wagons stood by him, and with the assistance of his friends was enabled to rig his team and keep on travelling; as Lewis and his friends travelled faster than [than] the party under major Cooper we overtook him again at Soda Springs, and travelled in his company until we reached fort Hall—We crossed Mary's river (now Humboldt) which at that season was entirely dry, and water was to be had only in deep pools—at the sink of Mary's river the digger Indians drove away six of our oxen; we immediately the loss was discovered, armed ourselves to the teeth and gave pursuit, but all to no purpose, for we failed to overtake our vily foe, and recovered only the hides of two oxen which we found slaughtered in the reeds: while we were pursuing the cattle thieves, some indians that had watched our movements stole three of our best horses; a loss which we felt most seriously and regretted very sincerely.

“After the loss of our stock, with down cast countenances, we kept on travelling, keeping a sharp look out at night, fearing another visit of the red men, who while professing friendship towards ‘melican man’ is still more friendly to his goods and chattels which he never hesitated to appropriate to his own use whenever he could do so without incurring the risk of being detected.

“After a week of painful travelling we came to the river Truckee, which we had to cross thirty eight times before we arrived at the base of the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada—the Sierra Nevada being very steep and our cattle very poor our pilot Mr Greenwood, who had already informed us that we had arrived in California; advised us to follow the counsel of our fellow traveller Mr Judson Green, who had proposed to make a roller, and fasten chains to the wagons, and pull them over the mountain with the help of twelve yokes of oxen: I consider it needless to say that Mr Green's plan worked admirably, and in a few days the whole of our party was safely placed on top on the mountain—After climbing the steep moun-

tain we kept on travelling without meeting any accidents, till the evening of the 26th of september 1846 when I had the misfortune of loosing my father and sister in law, both having been called to their long home about at the same hour; and strange at [as] it may seem the same hour in which my respected father expired, my beloved wife gave birth to a lively little girl—may could I have exclaimed with the french poet Labure

un âme montant dans la celeste esere

un autre on y descendit—

yet unabated by so sad a calamity I placed the dead bodies of my relatives in a wagon, handsomely decorated with black crape, and at night having reached the fords of the Yuba river I there dug two graves and consigned their beloved remains to mother earth—while I was engaged in paying the last tribute to the dead, that I held so dear, my oxen strayed and ate poisoned weed; such unheard of piece of gluttonry cost my oxen their lives, and deprived me of their services; and were it not that my cows did their work; and nobly and with a good will pulled the teams, I would have been compelled to travel on foot; but a kind and benign Providence had her eyes on me and mine, and with her assistance I reached Joh[n]son's ranch situated in Bear river; where by trading I again rigged my team; and kept on on my journey.

“After leaving Missouri I never found a stream requiring ferrying, until I reached Sacramento River, at a place now called Fremont; where, we, being then worn out and weary, stopped at a ranch belonging to William Gordon; who also owned a mill in which he ground wheat and corn by means of stones turned by hand; in justice to Mr Gordon I will here state that he treated me and my party with great kindness, did everything in his power so as to make us feel at home, and abstained from driving any hard bargains, a thing quite unusual in those days, except with the natives Californians that were always ready to extend a friendly hand to the needy emigrant—Having recruited our strength at Gordon's, we proceeded to Woolscale's

[William Wolfskill's] ranch where we got everything we paid for at a good round sum: from Woolscale's farm we went to Napa Valley where we stopped at the flour mill of Mr Yont [George Yount]; said mill was run with an over-shot wheel and turned out excellent flour, by way of remark I will observe that Mr Yont is or was an excellent man, a good citizen, kind to every body, well liked by white men and indians, and always ready to extend the hand of friendship to the new comers; in fact he was, what may be called a kind father to every poor man; from Napa we camped west of Sonoma creek—

“Shortly after camping, and while our women were preparing our evening meal, ladies Vallejo and Leese, desirous of forming our acquaintance paid us a visit, in which they displayed the liveliest interest in everything that concerned us; as neither of the ladies spoke the american tongue; and none of our party understood the Spanish language; I cannot, with any degree of certainty, repeat the conversation which took place between us; yet judging by the affectionate manner in which they petted and caressed our children, and the quantity of sweet meats they gave them, I may, without fear of being contradicted, state, that, the interview was quite agreeable to both parties—After camping two days in Sonoma, one fine morning, as we were about bidding adieu to our fellow travellers, (kind and affectionate friends that during four months had shared our pleasures and our sorrows, had helped us to hurrah when a stately buffalo fell under the unerring shot of Mr Lewis, and had mourned with us when the vily digger stole Brandywine, Gerry, Pike, Brindle, John, and Wash (name of our six oxen stolen from us by the digger indians at the sink of Mary's river) our journey was ended, and part we must: The men stood side by side with roeful countenances feeling kind queer at the prospective separation; while the women holding one corner of their aprons in close proximity to their eyes, wept tears of sorrow, that taken together with the loud cries of our children presented a scene of real and unfeigned voe)

captain Salvador Vallejo, in his undressed uniform came to us followed by three stalwart indians, one groaning under a heavy load of flour, one carrying a basket of sugar, and the other holding a basket of chocolate; the Capitain, by means of an interpreter asked us if we were in need of any of the articles his servants carried; and expressed his willingness and readiness to serve us to the full extent of his ability: on taking farewell from us, he added ‘near by I have thousand cows, if any of you wishes fresh meat, go and kill as many animals [as] you need for your daily support’ Captain Salvador Vallejo observed the same conduct towards every other emigrants camped in the vicinity of Sonoma; years have gone by since then, the then gallant captain is now a worn out old man, stricken by sorrow and grief; his many miles of pasture land have passed into strange hands; his then loving and beautiful bride miss Luz Carrillo a descendant of the noble race of the Carrillos, that have filled Peru, Mexico and California with their noble deeds, has been called to her long home, his children have married and settled in far off counties; his moveable property sold to defray the expenses of many law suits, that were decided against him, yet his dauntless spirit is unabated, even if his bodily strength has decayed; and is now living [h]is young days over again, in the person of his beautiful and intelligent niece, miss Lulu Vallejo a lively brunette of seventeen springs, daughter of General Mariano Vallejo, a girl of refined taste, that reciprocates the tender caresses of her fond uncle. . . .”

Carriger's later experiences must be passed over briefly. Lieutenant Revere persuaded him to enter into service with the U. S. Navy; for six months he carried the mails between Sonoma and San Rafael, and occasionally he was sent to the site of Benicia with other marines “to watch the movements of the Spaniards and keep them from crossing over to the north side of the bay.” The Sonoma garrison, he relates, “kept up a defiant demeanor, and upheld with dignity the name of citizens of the United

States: as a proof of my assertion I will here state that a[s] soon as we heard that the Bonner [Donner] party had been frozen on the east side of the Sierra Nevada, we started to relieve the sufferers and I am most happy to record, that a few of the victims were saved [by] the arrival of our party."

He settled in Sonoma, after the discovery of gold mined successfully at Kelsey's Diggings, then with his gold dust bought a farm from General Vallejo, on which he settled in July, 1849. His farm eventually became one of the showplaces of Sonoma County, of which he in turn became one of the prominent citizens. Carriger died on June 30, 1885.



THE CARRIGER DIARY

Set out from Andrew County Round prairie¹ Monday
27th April 1846 Crossed the Noddiway and strake [?] Tent
28th Travelled to Davises Creek²
29th reached Thompsons; Hameys Ferry³ about 5 miles
30 rested boat not ready
May 1 rested boat not ready but brought up
2nd & 3rd got ready and Crossed one Waggon
4th & 5th Crossed 12 Waggon & Teams and 40 head loose Cattle
6th We lay at Camp fare well at the base of the bluffs waiting for the Company to Cross
7th 8th 9th & 10th Still waiting for Company
11th set out across the bluffs into the Prairie about 3 miles where we again encamped and lay by the 12th⁴
12th our numbers have increased to 31 Waggon and are still Waiting for more to Cross
13th and 14th this day Joseph Blanton died and his family went bak set out with fifty Waggon from our Camp on Honey Creek and Travelled about 12 miles to a Water of the big Ome Haw [Great Nemaha]⁵

15 Travelled about 5 miles and encamped on Water of the Big Ome haw

16th travelled about 6 miles and Camped on a Water of the big Omehaw

[17th] 8 miles and Camped on big O [*this entry interlined*]

17th [18th] Traveled 20 miles & Camped [*word or two eroded from bottom of page*] travelling

May 19 [*corrected from 18*] Traveled 10 miles & Camped on the head of little Nimmihaw

20th [*corrected from 19th*] lay by on account of rain

21st travelled to [*deleted: big Nemihaw*]- a branch of the saline [Salt Creek] 8 miles

22nd Crossed by a bridge 15 miles to the head of [*deleted: big nimihaw*] of Saline⁶

23 traveled 8 miles to a branch of the blue Earth [Big Blue]

24 lay by on account of storm and rain and had two horses stolen by the Indians

[*Torn: 25*] Joined by Major Cooper⁷ & Traveled 10 miles

26 Travveled 15 miles to a water of the saline

27 Travelled 12 miles to a Water of the Saline

28 Cooper separated from us and six of our Waggon With him

29 Travelled 20 miles to big platt

30 Travelled 10 miles up platt

June 1 travelled 15 miles to near the Pawney Village⁸

2 travelled 10 [?] miles

3 Cooper again joined us and passed by the Pawny Villge where we were met by about 50 Warriors who held a talk with Cooper & Gregg We travelled 10 miles and in the evening gave the Indians some triffling presents and an ox which they killed and ate⁹

4th Travelled up platt 20 miles and Cooper again left us in the evening and nine [*torn: more?*] Waggon with him this reduced our numbers to 37 Waggon on this day We overset one Waggon with a family some of

which were slightly hurt and one lady fell and the Wheels run over her legs hurt her badly and had a marriage at night Parson Stewart officiating

5th This day travelled 15 miles to the Independence road¹⁰

6 this day travelled 9 miles one boy fell and two wheels run over one leg and the other foot and ankle nearly Cutting the leg off breaking the bone, so it injuring the other foot and Ankle and We encamped for the day

7 lay in Camp and mr [?] Ellis Cow ran away

8 Travelled this day 20 miles

9 Traveled 16 Miles and Killed one Antelope

10 Traveled 15 Miles

11 traveled 15 miles

12 Traveled 12 miles found 9 Work steers and have them in the Teams and left my Bell Cow on the Road this day seven Waggons left us leaving us With 30 Wag this day we killed 2 Buffaloes

13 Traveled 12 miles

14 this Day lay in Camp and Cut off the thigh of the boy and he died in the hands of the Operator Frederic Derusha¹¹ were overtaken by an Oregon Company of 20 Waggons and our Company again split up and left our Company 26 Waggons strong this Company kept up the south side of River and we had [have?] heard nothing more of them since there are two Companies Close behind us and three before us not far ahead¹²

15th this day traveled 15 miles

16th this day travelled 25 miles to the Crossing of plat¹³

17th Crossed plat and travelled up the River 10 miles to where the road turns over the bluffs

18 Crossed the bluffs part of this road passes over a high table land We found the road Very heavy traveling through the sand and Bluff hills for near five miles when We reached the River in all 18 miles This day Eli Grigery [?] died in sight of the spring¹⁴

19th this day We are detained in burrying him on the

right side of the road on a bench of the bluff near a rock near four feet high at the Cedar Creek¹⁵

20th this day We travelled 25 Miles passed Col Russels & Boggsses biag [?] Company of 40 Waggons¹⁶ after a hard run of half a day

21 this day [Redwood] Easton's Wife died after We encamped and had Travelled 25 miles and [torn: word or two lost] now in sight of the Chimney

22nd We burried Mrs Easton on the West side of our encampment and north side of the road on the second bank of the river not far from Castle rock from this we Travelled 10 [18?] miles passing the Chimney Rock about 3 miles where we Camped

23rd Travelled this day 18 miles in the Valley along the scotts bluffs and encamped in 2 mile of the uper end of the Valey

24th this day We Traveled 25 miles Crossing horse Creek¹⁷ at 14 miles Easton lost his work oxen from our encampment

25th this day stokes one of our Company broke one wheel of his Waggon near a Trading house¹⁸ & brought it to the fort and sold the Waggon for 4 pair Moccasons and the Owners Came for the 9 Oxen and we Travelled 20 miles that was 8 miles to the fort Crossing the River at the fort¹⁹

26th Travelled 12 miles to bitter Water

27 Travelled 12 miles to a large Creek

28 travelled 15 miles over a bad road to a large Creek

29th [corrected from 30th] [deleted: lay by] travelled 12 miles to a large Creek

30 lay by

July 1st travelled 15 miles

2 travelled 9 miles to a Creek and Davisvisses [?] left us with 9 Waggons and we have 18 left

3 July this day We travelled 12 miles Crossing a big Creek and Camped on Platt River & Stuart left his black oxen and Campbells & Crabtrees California Company²⁰ We left Camped 4 miles[s] behind on the Creek

- 4 We reached the Crossing of platt 15 miles and found three Companies encamped above us²¹
- 5 We Crossed the river and traveled 6 miles passing the three Companies
- 6th We traveled 12 miles to the muddy Spring and three Companies passed us at the Spring²²
- 7 We travelled to the Willow Spring 15 miles
- 8 We travelled to the Sweet Water near Independance Rock 18 miles
- 9 We travelled 18 miles up sweet Water.
- 10th We travelled 18 miles over a sandy road up sweet Water
- 11th We travelled 18 miles up sweet Water
- 12th We travelled 7 miles up sweet Water
- 13th we travelled 20 Crossing sweet Water
- 14 We travelled 20 miles Crossing a mountain to a Creek of sweet water²³
- 15 we travelled [*deleted*: 7] 6 miles to Sweetwater
- 16 We travelled 20 miles Crossing the divide to a dry Creek of sandy²⁴
- 17 We travelled 15 miles Crossing little sandy at 8 miles thence to Big Sandy 7 miles
- July 18th We lay by preparing to Crossing the Cut off to Green river a distance of 40 miles Without Wood or Water²⁵ set out on the Journey at 3 A m and landed on Green River the distance aforesaid at 3 O'clock of the 19th it being 24 hours drive
- 20th We Travelled 8 miles down Green River over a Very bad road to black Creek²⁶
- 21 from thence 17 miles Crossing a mountain to a small Creek²⁷
- 22 from thence across a mountain spur 6 miles to a large Creek²⁸
- from thence 23rd 19 [9?] miles to a small stream Crossing a Very bad mountain²⁹
- 24 [*corrected from 23rd*] from thence 8 miles Crossing a mountain to Bear river [*deleted*: 25 thence 4 miles to bear]

25 [*corrected from 26*] from thence 12 miles to a trading house on bear River near a large Creek³⁰

26th [*corrected from 27*] from thence down the river 17 miles to a Creek in a Valley passing a Trading house on the river³¹

27th [*corrected from 28*] thence up [down] the Valley and Crossing a spur of the mountain 20 miles to the river³²

28th To the soda springs 6 miles

29th To a Creek in the Valley 7 [?] miles³³

30th from thence 15 miles Crossing a mountain to a Creek in a Valley³⁴ and lost Jerry one of my steers & Wardlaw lost one of his

31st from thence down the Valley 10 miles on a Creek and Camped by ourselves³⁵

August 1st from thence down the Valley 15 miles passing Fort Hall to a sulphur spring³⁶

2nd from thence down the plains 6 miles to Lewises [Snake] River

3 & 4th We rested at the river

5 from thence 6 miles Crossing the River to a lake [slough]

6th from thence down Snake River 14 miles to a small Creek

7th from thence 10 miles over a Very bad road Crossing 2 Creeks to the river

8th from thence up the [*deleted*: Creek] Crossing the Cassia Creek 10 [?] miles to the Creek a very good road³⁷

9th from thence 15 miles up the Creek a very good Road to the Creek again

10th from thence up and across the Creek 15 miles to a Very good spring and good road³⁸

11th from thence up the Creek Crossing a divide to another Creek 12 miles near some warm springs³⁹ a good road

12th from thence 18 miles Crossing 3 divides to a small Creek a branch of Goose Creek⁴⁰ bad road

August 13th from thence Crossing the divide to Goose Creek 10 miles⁴¹ a good road

14th from thence up Goose Creek 15 miles this day John Lewises son William Died and We buried him in the road near the Creek⁴²

15th from thence up the Creek and Crossing a Very rough divide of Iron Ore & stone 25 miles to a Cold spring in a Valley⁴³

16th from thence up the Valley Crossing a divide to the horse spring⁴⁴ 13 miles a good road

17th from thence up the Valley passing the hot springs at 10 miles these are situated in a beautiful Valley 40 miles long and from 3 to five Wide and near the head of the Valley⁴⁵ in all this day 18 miles

18th Crossing a divide into a Valley on a Creek a water of St. Marys river⁴⁶ 10 miles

19th Down the Creek Crossing it 9 times and passing through a gorge of the mountain a very rough road passing some hot springs 6 miles to a good spring⁴⁷

20th from thence down the Creek a good road 16 miles to where the Creek was dry⁴⁸

21st from thence down the Creek 15 miles a good road but Very dusty & frost for three mornings

22nd from thence down the St Marys Crossing 2 ridges and the sal a ratus fork 17 miles⁴⁹ this morning John [~~deleted~~: Lewises] Chisman son [~~deleted~~: William] Martin died of [~~deleted~~: Worms or Croop] and we buried him in the road at the foot of the second ridge on the west side of the saint Marys⁵⁰ a dusty road

23rd from thence down the river 17 miles Crossing the river⁵¹ road Very Dusty

24 from thence down the river 10 miles

25th from thence across the mountain 20 miles a Very rough road⁵²

26th from thence down the river 12 miles Very Dusty road and passed part of Van der pools Company⁵³ they have three in Camps sick and not expected to live they also informed us of Beechams death who had been one of Greggs Company and passed on in his pack Company till his death⁵⁴

27th from thence down the river 8 miles

28th from thence down the river 16 miles

29th from thence down the river 8 miles

August 30 from thence down the river 12 miles a good road

31st from thence down the river and over a Very bad ridge 18 miles—⁵⁵

Sept 1 from thence down the river 16 miles passing some hot springs that were near the Camp⁵⁶

2nd from thence down the river and over a Very bad sand hill 18 miles passing Scotts and Dearborns battle Ground with the diggers⁵⁷

3rd from thence Down the river 16 miles

4th from thence down the river 12 miles to the forks of the road⁵⁸ & from thence Down the river 8 miles in all 20

5th from thence down the river over a [~~deleted~~: high] Table land heavy road 15 miles

6 from thence down the river 10 miles

7th from thence Down the river a sandy road to near the lake⁵⁹ 14 miles

8th from thence to the Sinks 16 miles a sandy road here the Indians drove off 6 head of our Work Oxen and We gave Chaes and found two of them Killed in a reed & rush patch and suppose the rest were used like wise⁶⁰

9th from thence We set out at one O Cl over a sandy route 20 miles to the boiling springs at 2 O'Clock from thence 20 miles to Truckeys river 8 miles Very heavy sand no grass or good water

10th We reached the river in the evening our Work Cattle much tired and several gave out from fatigue Hunger and thirst and We lost three horses in the night through Carelessness of the drivers⁶¹

11th we lay on the banks of the rivers to rest ourselves & recruit our Cattle [~~deleted~~: after C] Crossing the [desert]

12 thence up the river crossing the river 5 times [in] 13 miles a sandy road

13th thence up the river 8 miles Crossing it 6 times this day a Very rough road

14th lay by on account of the sickness of Mrs. Wardlaw

15th thence up the river 8 miles Crossing it 6 times a Very rough road.

16th thence up the river 9 miles this morning Mrs. Wardlaw had a son born who died in a few minutes after birth⁶² We Crossed the river 4 times and had a Very bad road

17 thence Crossing the river 4 times then up the river 16 miles verry bad road

18 thence crossing the river and mountain 16 miles to wind river⁶³

19 thence to John Greenwoods Creek⁶⁴ 9 miles verry good road

20 crossing a small hill thence a goo[d] [road] to the foot of the mountain 12 miles⁶⁵

21 up the mountain distressing bad 8 miles to the foot of the high California mountain and got 8 waggons

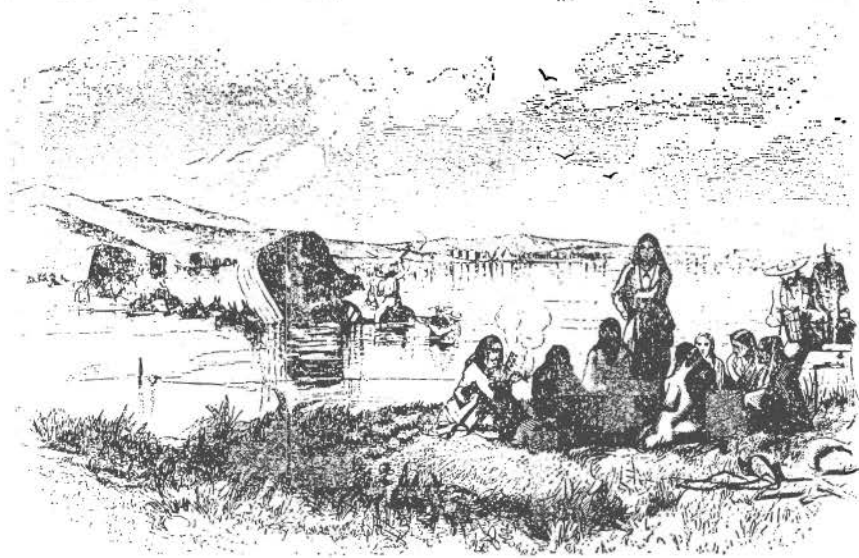
22 we we made a roller and fasened chans to gether and pulled [?] the wagons up withe 12 yoke oxen on the top and the same at the bottom⁶⁶

23 halling wag[on]s

24 we traviled 8 miles to the lake⁶⁷ distrissing bad road

25 laid by

26 Christain Carriger died of Slow fever on the same day Joseph wordlaws wife died the same day⁶⁸



"Crossing the Platte"

Diary of Virgil Pringle

Through the diaries of William E. Taylor and Nicholas Carriger we have shared the experiences of those who chose northerly points of departure from the Missouri River. Now, with the diary of Virgil K. Pringle, we turn farther south to observe the earliest departures from the Independence area.

The Oregon-bound emigrants, of whom Pringle was one, have had much less attention than those with California as their destination, except as J. Quinn Thornton has laid siege to scholars. Thornton traveled with one of the rearmost Oregon companies, most of the time in rather close proximity to the company in which the Donner Party traveled. Virgil Pringle's diary is consequently all the more welcome in documenting the experiences of those who were ahead of Thornton on the trail. Like Thornton,

were accompanied by Mr. Miles Goodyear, a mountaineer, as far as this point, where Mr. Goodyear learning from us that the Oregon emigration was earlier than usual, and that they, instead of coming by way of Bridger's had taken a more northern route, concluded to go down Bear River, and intersect them for the purposes of trade." On July 11 Pratt remarked further, "Mr. Craig and three others proceeded on their journey for the States. Mr. Goodyear and two Indians went down Bear River. . . ."

72. The family migration which followed upon the heels of the Pioneers is remembered in Mormon history as the "second company" of 1847. They reached the Valley of the Great Salt Lake in late September and early October. Interesting is the intimation that some of the Mormons expected to go on to "California proper."

DIARY OF NICHOLAS CARRIGER

1. The Nodaway River forms the boundary between Andrew and Holt counties.

2. Davis Creek, still so called, flows into Mill Creek about 3 miles south of present Oregon, Holt County.

3. I have not identified what Carriger calls in his diary "Thompsons; Hameys Ferry," and in his autobiography "Thompson and Hayman's ferry." It was located at Iowa Point, a short distance below the present Kansas-Nebraska boundary, where Cedar and Mill creeks reach the Missouri.

4. This camp of May 6-10 was evidently on present Cedar Creek, by Carriger called Honey Creek.

5. The route Carriger was taking, which he is the first emigrant to describe, made for the Platte essentially by the Burlington Railroad's Kansas City, Atchison and Columbus line as far as Lincoln, thence on to Bellwood near the mouth of the Loup Fork by the Union Pacific's branch line. Carriger would seem to have camped on May 18 near the future Nebraska line, then made successive camps on the Nemaha south and southwest of Falls City, and west of Salem; near Elk Creek and St. Mary on the North Fork of the Nemaha, near Adams, and on May 22 near Roca on Salt Creek. The 23rd brought him to Middle Creek at present Lincoln; which he rightly calls "a branch of the blue Earth [Big Blue River]"; and he then went on to the Platte past Valparaiso, Brainerd and David City (Oak Creek being the stream he mentions on May 26 and 27).

6. Curious is this allusion to a bridge. Constructed by these emigrants of 1846?

7. Major Stephen Cooper's announced intention of going to California may be found in Volume II, as reprinted from the St. Joseph

Gazette of March 13, 1846. He was born in 1797, moved to Missouri from Kentucky in 1807, and was active in the Santa Fe trade in the 1820's, an Indian subagent at Council Bluffs in the 1840's, and a member of Abert's detachment of Fremont's Third Expedition of 1845. In the 1870's and 1880's, after a varied life in California, he gave out sundry reminiscences of his Western experiences which are not uniformly accurate. One of these, printed in Oakland, 1888, at the behest of his grandchildren as *Sketches from the Life of Maj. Stephen Cooper*, says in part:

"In the spring of 1846 I started with my family for California; was at the head of seven wagons, three of these my own. We soon fell in with a large train of thirty-five wagons, bound for Oregon. We camped together two nights; the second morning at daylight there was a flag flying on one of our wagons with large, conspicuous letters, 'Bound for California.' This got up great excitement, and the Oregonians threatened to shoot the flag down. I said to them, 'Bring out your brave men and shoot down some old woman's flag if you want to.' This made them ashamed of themselves.

"We soon rolled out and twenty-one of the Oregon wagons fell in with us, making twenty-eight wagons in my train, which I brought to California. Through my influence at least sixty-five wagons came to California that had started for Oregon. . . ."

Cooper died at the age of 91 on May 16, 1890, at Winters, California. Apparently on July 4 Carriger saw Cooper for the last time on the 1846 journey.

8. The "Pawney Village" Carriger mentions on June 1 had been a well-known abiding place of the Chausis or Grand Pawnees for twenty years; it was situated opposite present Clarks, about 10 miles northeast of Central City.

9. Compare Carriger's account of this council with the Pawnees in his autobiography, quoted in the introductory sketch.

10. The junction with the Independence-St. Joseph road was a few miles east of the site of Fort Kearny, selected by Lieutenant D. P. Woodbury in the fall of 1847. Edwin Bryant seemingly adds to the history of the company in which Carriger had been traveling when he says on June 9, the day after arriving on the banks of the Platte by the Independence road: "A sort of post-office communication is frequently established by the emigrant companies. The information which they desire to communicate is sometimes written upon the skulls of buffaloes,—sometimes upon small strips of smooth plans,—and at others a stake or stick being driven into the ground, and split at the top, a manuscript note is inserted in it. These are conspicuously placed at the side of the trail, and are seen and read by succeeding companies. One of the last-described notices we saw this morning. It purported to be written by the captain of a company from Platte