

1858
Not in Mattes
Augustus Voorhees
Santa Fe trail to
Pike's Peak
to Colo

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The Voorhees Diary of the Lawrence Party's Trip to Pike's Peak, 1858

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[There is presented herewith a recently acquired and very important document of Colorado history. It is perhaps the only diary extant detailing a trip to the region of present Colorado in the summer of 1858. Some of the '58ers later wrote important reminiscences, but discrepancies among these only emphasize the value of a contemporary record such as the one here published.]

Two prospecting companies, famous in Colorado history, made the journey to the Pike's Peak country to search for gold during the summer of 1858. The first was made up of Georgians and of Cherokee Indians and is known as the "Russell Party." It journeyed up the Arkansas River and reached present Colorado in May. Some two weeks behind the Russell Party came a group of Kansans from Lawrence and vicinity. This has come to be known as the "Lawrence Party." To this group, Augustus Voorhees attached himself.

Voorhees came of German-Dutch stock and was born in New York State on December 14, 1828. He moved to Wisconsin in 1846, and to Kansas, ten years later. Here he engaged in farming and in coal mining. He joined the Lawrence Party enroute to the Colorado region and his diary gives us the itinerary of that journey. In the fall of 1858, he returned to Eastern Kansas with other members of the Lawrence Party. He enlisted in the Fifth Kansas Cavalry during the Civil War and served for three years; after which he returned to Wisconsin. In 1890, he removed to Kansas and resided there until his death in 1905. He was the father of seven children—four of whom are living today.

The diary here published was located and procured for the State Historical Society of Colorado by Elmer R. Burkey, who is working on the Society's Professional Project under the FERA. The diary was generously given to the Society for permanent preservation by the children of Voorhees. It is written with ink on worn and yellow sheets of paper, eight by ten inches in size. The journal is faithfully reproduced.]

A. Voorhees's Journal, kept on his journey to the Rocky Mountains in search of gold in 1858. left the Coal bank may 31, started on foot, overtook the train at bluff Creek, walked 35 miles.¹

June 1 left Camp with 10 waggons; drove to Council Grove² 15 miles, found some very fine streams today but little timber and fine prairie. Council grove is built in a mud hole but 10 or 15 houses. Saw two buffalo Calves today. the guard fell asleep and the Cattle ran into the woods, road quite rough with many flint stones on the banks of the ravines.

June 2 Drove to Diamond springs³ which is the best I have seen in Kansas. it throws out five barrells of watter to the minute. it is Clear and Cold, but little timber there.

J. 3 to lost spring 15 miles it is on the prairie, no timber in sight, found none today, prairie very fine, saw two or three antelope, met a party of soldiers returning from Mexico escorting a party of officers and their families home.

June 4 our Cattle ran or were driven off by the indians this morning, found them in a hollow five miles off, Drove 16 miles to the Cotton wood⁴ found no timber today but little on the Cotton wood but fine prairie, another team Came into the train today.

J. 5 remained in Camp today. Captain holmes Came in today. We now have 9 nine ox teams 2 horse teams and one mule team⁵

¹The main body of the Lawrence Party had set out from Lawrence, seventy-one miles northeast of Bluff Creek. J. C. Smiley in his *History of Denver*, 185, follows F. M. Cobb (manuscript in State Historical Society Library) in saying that the party left Lawrence on May 19th. In *Wilder's Annals*, 236, it is reported that twenty men left Lawrence May 21, 1858. W. B. Parsons, in an article appearing in the *Kansas Magazine*, I, 562 (June, 1872), says that a party of forty-two men left Lawrence on the morning of May 21, 1858. The *Herald of Freedom* of May 29, 1858, says that a party left Lawrence on May 24th, and were to be joined by others at Council Grove. W. J. Boyer, in his letter of February 8, 1899 (manuscript in the State Historical Society Library), says that the party set out on May 28th. The log of the road from Lawrence to Bluff Creek, as given by William B. Parsons, one of the Lawrence Party, is as follows: Lawrence Creek, 16; to 110 Mile Creek, 16; to Bluff Creek, 21.—William B. Parsons, *et al.* (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1859), 44.

The "Coal bank," place of beginning of Voorhees' journey, was eight miles northeast of Burlingame and apparently at or in the vicinity of present Carbondale, Osage County.

²This famous station was so named because of the council with the Osage Indians held here in August, 1825. At this grove, the westernmost with hardwood timber, the traveler usually laid in a supply of extra ox bows, axletrees, etc.

³Discovered on August 11, 1825, by Benjamin Jones, a hunter with the Government surveyors of the Santa Fe Trail, and named by George C. Sibley. See Sibley's account of the incident in *Turquoise Trail*, 113. Parsons, *op. cit.*, says the Santa Fe Mail Company had a station at this point.

⁴Mr Parsons reports a trading post at Cottonwood Creek.—W. B. Parsons, *The New Gold Mines of Western Kansas*. A. E. Raymond reached this point April 29, 1859, and records in his diary (manuscript in State Historical Society of Colorado Library): "Here is a U. S. Mail Station. There is but one house here."

⁵F. M. Cobb, *op. cit.*, says that Ross Hutchings and John Easter had a pair of mules.

50 head of Cattle 46 men two women and one Child⁶ eight loose horses. the boys Caught a few small fish today, fine water in the Cotton wood.

J. 6 Drove 24 miles to turkey Creek found no wood. Saw lots of antelope and buffalo carcasses, fine prairie.

7 Drove 21 miles to the little arkansas saw several herd of buffalo, one was killed, got but little meat, it was to far from the road. but little timber on the river and but little watter, the banks are quite high. they are building a bridge here, the timber is Cotton wood and box elder.

8 Drove 15 miles to little Cow Creek saw thousands of buffalo, one Came up the opposite bank of the river this morning, it met the mail train and Crossed over. a horseman put after him and killed him. I went off the road and killed a Cow but she was to poor to eat. Camped on the east bank of the Creek.

⁶The women were Mrs. James H. Holmes and Mrs. Robert Middleton. The child belonged to the Middletons. The Middletons and two men had joined the party at Dragoon Creek, some six miles west of Burlingame. They were on their way from Illinois to Utah and had been turned aside by the prospect of a Mormon War.—W. B. Parsons, in *Kansas Magazine*, I, 554.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Will C. Ferril, then Curator of the State Historical Society of Colorado, Mr. J. T. Younker wrote a letter from Aransas Pass, Texas, under date of October 14, 1898, in which he gives the following:

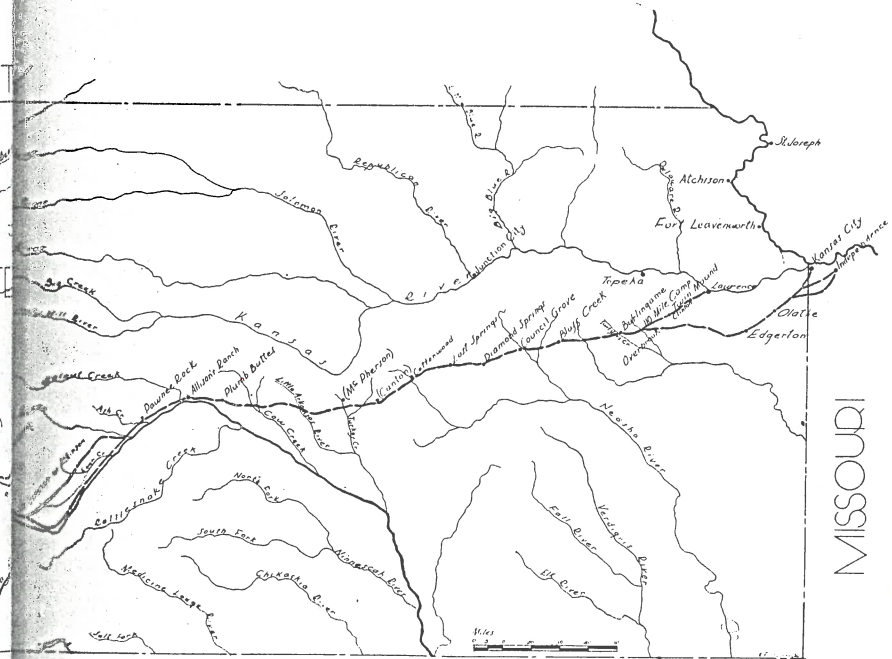
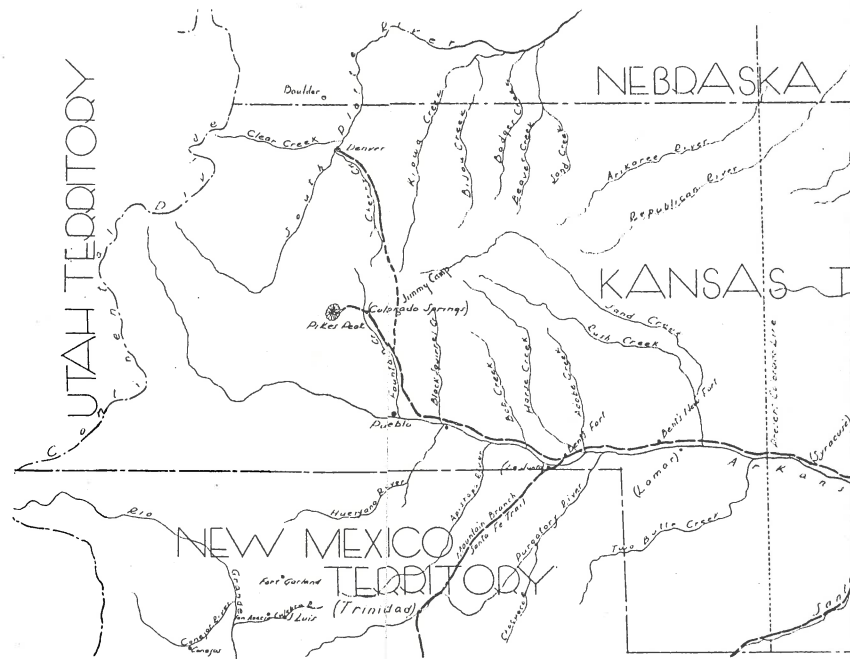
"List of members of the Lawrence, Kansas, party of '58ers.

I give the list in part in messes:

1st wagon & mess—	J. H. Tierney (Elected Captain)	William Prentiss,
	Peter M. Halsey,	William McAllister.
2 " " "	George W. Smith (Captain of the night guard),	William Parsons, A. J. Bowen, Robert Peebles.
3 " " "	John Easter, Roswell Hutchins,	William Mills.
4 " " "	Jack C. Turner, "Pap" Maywood,	(Christian name not known).
5 " " "	George Peck, John D. Miller,	Augustus Voorhees, William Copley.
6 " " "	Charles Nichols, Adnah French,	John A. Churchill, Charles Runyon, _____ Cross.
7 " " "	Josiah Hinman, J. T. Younker,	Howard Hunt, William Boyer.
8 " " "	A. F. Bercaw, A. C. Wright,	F. M. Cobb, "Nick" William Smith.
9 " " "	Robert Middleton, Wife and Child	and two young men—names unknown to me.
10 " " "	Charles [James H.] Holmes—(first name may not be correct) and wife and Albert Archibald.	
11 " " "	William Regan, Joseph Brown,	William Hartley, James White, Giles Blood, _____ McKay and William Chadsey.

"Note. The latter persons may not all have been in one mess. [If they were in two wagons, as is possible, the number of wagons would then tally with the number (12) given by Voorhees.] McKay's first name unknown to me—my recollection is that our party muster roll all told was 47, including recruits on the way. If correct this list is two names short counting the two unknown young men with Middleton. J. T. Younker."

[A list prepared by John Easter and J. D. Miller on October 5, 1898, while visiting the rooms of the State Historical Society of Colorado, gives the following names in addition to the Younker list: "Mark Wright, _____ Blackman, Old man Spaulding and two young men." J. C. Smiley in his *History of Denver*, 186, lists George Howard as a member of the party. Mr. Younker in a letter of October 25, 1898, to J. D. Miller, asks: "Who was the fellow we called 'Coon Skin'? Was he not still another accession to our party?" W. J. Boyer, in a letter of February 8, 1899, says that there were forty-eight members in the party and tells of an eccentric person whom they "dubbed 'Coon Skin' by reason of his cap," and who from some soft white rock obtained near Pike's Peak carved a pipe and gave it to Mr. Boyer. This pipe and the letters here referred to are in possession of the State Historical Society of Colorado.]



MAP SHOWING THE ROUTE TAKEN BY THE PARTY OF GOLDSEEKERS IN 1858.

9 it rained last night looked rainy drove one mile to big cow [Creek]. Camped on the east bank on the bottom. it rained all the after noon and all night. some of the boys went out hunting, killed one buffalo, ten miles from Camp, one man got lost in the rain, did not Come in that night.

10 moved Camp up on the hill out of the water, the Creek raised 12 feet last night. put a rope across, and drew our Clothes over, and 8 of us swam over, and then went to hunt our lost man, did not find him. I killed another Cow one other one was killed but were so far from Camp that we did not get any meat, but the touns water fell 3 feet today.

11 water still to high to Cross, did not hunt today. yesterday there Came a herd of buffalo near our Camp and the Cattle followed them 5 miles before they stopped. there Came 7 araphoes and one kaw to our Camp today. they brought a letter from our lost man, who turned up at a Camp of hunters 18 miles ahead of us; gave them some Coffee and Crackers.

12 left Camp and fixed a new Crossing one mile above and got over at noon. eat dinner and Drove 13 miles to plumb buttes, which is a high sand bluff, Coverd with scrubby plumb sprouts.

think there is no water there in dry weather. the boys killed 4 buffalo this afternoon near the road.

13 left Camp at 4 o'clock and drove to the big bend 7 miles and got breakfast. no timber but small brush then drove to the wanut and Camped at Allison's trading post⁷ and stoped for sunday; had a Call from some Cheyenneys and arapahoes who are Camped up the river; saw seven tame buffaloes.

14 the mail met us this morning.⁸ Drove to pawne fork 25 miles. passed the indian village of two hundred lodges and 800 warriors, Cheyennes arapohahoes with some Camanches and apaches about 2000 men women and Children. they Came out in swarmes to beg and trade mockasins and buffalo robes. I bought a pair of mockasins for my old neck handkerchief. [John D.] miller

⁷David Kellogg reached this point October 1, 1858. He records in his diary: "Bill Allison, a one-armed plainsman, has a stockade here and trades with the Indians."—"Across the Plains in 1858, Diary of Daniel [David] Kellogg" in *The Trail* (Denver, Colorado), Vol. V, number 7.

Raymond, *op. cit.*, reports that Allison's Ranch was "built of Poles enclosed with Sod. The roof is nearly flat one story high. The Stone Walls and Sods enclose about an Acre of Land. This affords a strong protection against Indians. Here is a Mail Station, Store, Tavern, Corn & Hay, etc."—Raymond's diary, *op. cit.*, May 5, 1859.

⁸This was the mail running monthly between Independence and Santa Fe.—L. R. Hafen, *The Overland Mail*, 73.