

**The Journal of  
James G. Bennett  
1853-4**

*The following is the first part of a journal which was written by my great-great grandfather, **James G. Bennett**. It describes in remarkable detail, his voyage from a small farm in eastern Indiana to the brand new state of California. James Bennett was born in 1831 in Merom, Indiana. After concluding his journey, he returned home, then married **Ann Elizabeth Fitch** in 1857. James and Ann raised a family of seven children. One of their daughters was **Martha Virginia Bennett**, who was born in 1865 and who married **Eli McPherron** in 1885. Eli and Martha had a large family and their second child was a daughter named **Rhoda**, who was born in 1889. Rhoda married **John Pearson** in 1914. Rhoda died shortly after giving birth to a second daughter in 1918. That daughter, **Lois Edna Pearson** was my mother.*

*Copies of James Bennett's journal were handed down to various members of the family and a type-written copy was passed on to my mother by her aunt, **Edna McPherron Cliver** in the early 1980's. The part of the journal that we have is an amazing account which started in September of 1853 when James was 22 years old. The last entry was made the following June in the wilderness of the Wyoming Territory. I have unsuccessfully sought the present possessor of the document and more importantly a copy of the last half. It is possible that there never was a last half but there was said to be a note in the back of the diary that mentioned "Rush Creek, Plumas County, California, July 23, 1855." Perhaps James Bennett's journal is not a great work of American Literature but it is a wonderful first hand account of an important part of the creation of our country. The writer was obviously far from being an ignorant farm boy and we should all be proud of the treasure that he left us.*

*Jim Morriss  
2005*

**INCIDENTS OF TRAVEL AND CURIOSITIES TO BE SEEN**  
**ON A JOURNEY TO CALIFORNIA**

by James Bennett, Merom, Indiana

On the fifth of September, 1853, I bade adieu to my mother, brother and sister whom I left in tears -- to the scenes of my childhood and early youth -- to friends and relations with whom I had held sweet counsel -- and at the age of twenty-two years I launched for the third time upon the wide cold and cheerless world, to be a stranger in strange land, I had twice previously left, but never so as I did this time. Although I did not expect to be absent longer than a year, I had a presentiment that our separation would be of greater length than at any other period. My feelings quite overcame me and I wept like a child -- the first tears I had shed for years. But why should we not weep when we are parting with a mother perhaps for the last time -- for who can supply the place of a mother's tenderness. And yet how heedless are we when in her presence of all her anxieties and kindnesses. But when we are deprived of her society by death or otherwise, when the coldness of the world comes withering to our hearts, when we experience hardships, how hard it is to find true sympathy -- how few love us for ourselves -- how few will befriend us in our misfortunes -- then it is that we appreciate a mother's love and care.

I departed with my mother's blessing and hers and my sister's miniatures, in return left my own likeness and a promise to write frequently, keep good company, and whether I have kept my promises the sequel will show.

I cordially recommend that no person should leave their home without the daguerreotype of one or more of their friends to act as a silent monitor. My mother followed me to where my horse was waiting me. As I mounted she said, "James, do not think I oppose your going, but you know what a mother is."

I departed with a heavy heart and arrived in the evening at Mr. Calvin Johnson's, whom I was to accompany to the far west.

The next day was spent in preparing for the journey. On the sixth the cavalcade started, consisting of nine persons, an ox and horse, wagon, and sixty head of stock (cattle).

The company consisted of Mr. J, and a wife, son, and two daughters, besides a Mr. E. Lester, Mr. Stephen Carrithers, a little boy named Pridemore and myself.

At 3 p.m. we crossed the Wabash which we forded. There those friends and acquaintances who had accompanied us had returned. Stopping on the west bank of the river we took a little refreshment and a farewell look at dear old Indiana. Continuing down the river to the village of York, Illinois and turning to the westward, we traveled three miles and then encamped in true emigrant style -- pitched our tent and built a fire by a log by which our supper was soon cooked. Mr. and Mrs. J. -- were strict Presbyterians, yet they were eminently sociable and cheerful, being true specimens of the pioneers of Indiana, Alfred, their son, was a wild, careless youth, yet not without some amiable qualities, Their daughters, Elisabeth and Mary (the former perhaps eighteen, the latter thirteen years of age) were amiable, sociable, unaffected, genially-raised girls, such as with whom it does the soul good to commune.

Mr. Lester was a man of about thirty-five years who was traveling with us for the purpose of looking at the western country with a view of selecting a location for his future residence.

Stephen Carrithers was perhaps about the age at which a man receives appellation of "bachelor," but he having been married and deprived of his companion by death, we never applied the well deserved title, for he possessed all the other qualities of a bachelor. Little Will (as the boy was called) was a friendless outcast of perhaps six summers.

Of myself I will just say that it was my intention to go out upon the frontier and winter and in case of Nebraska Territory being ceded by the Indians -- to explore a portion of it and choose a place of settlement for myself and a number of friends and acquaintances. The country through which we passed for some days was generally level or slightly undulating being extensive prairies divided by strips of timber thickly set with undergrowth. But on approaching Springfield the land in places is somewhat hilly, but where the city stands is level plain. There was a general sameness of scenery throughout our entire journey across the state of Illinois. Incidents worthy of recording were of rare occurrence, but we did not lack means of enjoyment.

There was a horse \_\_\_\_\_ for the accomodation of the girls, who each rode on horseback a portion of each day. Stephen and Elisabeth came to terms of intimacy and I contented myself by making myself agreeable to Mary, who although so young was nearly the size and possessed many of the accomplishments of womanhood, and by presenting her with wild flowers and plums from the forest and peaches and apples from the orchards bordering the road, which from their great abundance was not to be considered an illegality, and various other little offices too tedious to mention.

Thus we journeyed pleasantly along. Our Sundays (for we did not travel upon that day) were spent in singing and writing letters back to our friends we left behind us. The third week of travel we arrived at Warsaw upon the Mississippi River which we crossed without accident, although Alfred and I were obliged to remain in Warsaw with the care of the stock, as we had only time to cross the wagon before night set in. We put up at the City Hotel. After supper I took up a newspaper in which I read a paragraph that blighted my hopes for the present and changed my plans. The purport was that the Indians had refused to cede Nebraska on such terms, as the government would accede to. I determined to proceed however, and at sunrise we crossed the Father of Waters, and were again on our way.

We landed at Alexandria, Missouri, immediately below the mouth of the DesMoines River and continued upon the dividing ridge between that and Fox River, encamping in a skirt of timber upon beyond at the edge of the "rolling prairie", for which Missouri and Iowa are so remarkable.

Next day being the Sabbath nothing of note transpired. However Alfred was taken with a slight illness which continued several days.

On the following day we crossed the Iowa line within the limits of Van Buren County, and on the next day we came near being sent to our dread account. On coming to an orchard loaded with fruit Mr. Lester thought it no harm to pick up a few apples while Mr. Johnson and I drove the stock along and arrived opposite the house just at the moment the good woman of the house discovered the depredator in the very act of pocketing the choice fruit. She sallied forth upon the piazza and while girding herself about with her apron strings let forth such a volley of imprecations as I had never heard fall from the lips of woman. "You Indianians are the meanest people that travel this road," said she in a voice that rent the air, "and if my husband was at home he would shoot that man down as he would a dog."

Mr. Johnson in a composed tone assured her that it would be but a just punishment for so enormous a crime. Here I put in a few words which heightened her anger to the highest pitch of frenzy. "The gun is loaded -- I can shoot!" she exclaimed, almost suffocated with rage, "and I'll do it too."

Seeing it was no longer safe to remain and leaving a piece of money upon the gate-post and the enraged woman to calm her agitation as best she could, we retired from the scene of action nearly bursting our sides with laughter. We continued on through Apanoos, Davis, and Wayne Counties without anything occurring worth recording.

The country is beautifully diversified with level and "rolling" prairies, skirted with timber. The tops of the trees are only to be soon shooting up from the ravines. After a journey of thirty days we arrived at about the center of Decatur County where the eldest son of Mr. Johnson was living. He had emigrated here a year previous and had raised a crop of corn and cut abundance of hay. Here it was determined they should stop for the winter at least. I took a slight survey of the country in the vicinity. The surface is very uneven, there being scarcely forty acres of level land to be found in a body. The timber consisted in oak, hickory, and basswood, very scarce and all the best of it "taken up". I determined to go farther if I "fared worse".

Mr. Lester came to the conclusion in a few days that he would return to Indiana and abandon the idea of settling in a new country. But Mr. Johnson was pleased with the idea of having his children all around him and the prospect of getting a home for them all, as land was yet cheap here.

Stephen was pleased with the country and (as I guessed) with Elisabeth, for it was plain to be seen that there was something more than mere friendship between them. The engaged board with the family. And such was the state of affairs when on the fourth day after our arrival Mr. Johnson set out for Alexandria to purchase a supply of groceries, accompanied by Mr. Lester on his return home. After bidding them farewell and receiving from Mr. Johnson an invitation to tarry as long as I thought proper, I returned to the house, packed up some of my most portable things and prepared for a fourth launch among strangers.

My firmness was again put to the test when I came to take leave of those who had shown me such marked friendship and respect. Mrs. Johnson kindly offered me a place in the family if I chose to remain during the winter And Mary -- what name is like unto that -- there is a march in the sound -- expressed in a modest manner a desire that I would remain. In brief I have never received greater marks of kindness than from this family.

But ambition prevails. I mounted my horse and started, feeling more lonely than when I left home. The same evening I came upon some emigrants who had just stopped for the night whom I engaged to haul my dunnage and furnish me victuals as long as we journeyed the same way.

The face of the country became more level. After leaving Mr. Johnson, I kept a northern direction for a few miles. When I intersected the Mormon Trail I turned up in a northeast direction, passed into Clarke County. The road here turns to the west. I traveled with this family four days over an almost level plain, broken only by an occasional ravine and rapid stream of clear, cold water. On the 16th of October we stopped at the house of James N, Sprague for the

night. This was about fifteen miles south of the Mormon Trail and in the center of Adams County.

From the favorable accounts given by our host of the country I consented to stop a few days. The next day my fellow travelers continued on their way and I, accompanied by Mr. Sprague, took a survey of the surrounding country. The surface was somewhat broken here. On the \_\_\_\_\_ bottoms there is the finest oak, black walnut, hickory, cotton and basswood timber I have ever seen in the state. The soil is good and the hills slope gradually for half a mile towards the river.

I was so much pleased with this locality I took the numbers of a quarter section of land and Mr. Sprague, having business at Council Bluffs, I accompanied him and at Indiantown at the end of the first Day's travel, we stopped at the house of Mr. Bradshaw with whom I soon scraped acquaintance. He had lived in Hoosierdom and had known some of my kindred. He engaged me to do a small job of carpentering on my return. The surface of the country becomes more broken as we approach the Missouri River. Council Bluffs City is situated on either side of Indian Creek where it enters the Missouri bottom. It is built in a narrow valley surrounded on three sides, hills two hundred feet high. It is approached from the east by passing up a narrow ravine nearly to its head, then crossing a ridge into the head of another ravine. Following it down it curves to the north and terminates in Madison Street, from which Broadway" starts at a right angle, and runs down the stream winding along with it, leaving room for a string of stores and shops between it, extends to the western extremity of the city. It is the principal street, indeed almost the only one and it poorly deserves its name.

The city contains fifteen hundred inhabitants and owing to this being the principal starting point for the emigrants to California, Oregon, and Utah, as well as a depot for as large scope of country in this vicinity, there is more business done here than in any place of its size in the west. While there I preempted the land alluded to with the intention (in case Nebraska was not purchased) of purchasing and improving it.

On my return I employed with Mr. Bradshaw. I lived with him until the 29th of December, when my love of traveling again in fire dominated and I engaged my passage with a traveler to Glenwood. He however continued as far as Sydney, Fremont County, Nothing of importance occurred. After a stay of an hour in Sydney, I started on foot down the St. Joseph Road, traversed about six miles and stopped with a Mr. C. Next morning I started early. The weather had become extremely cold. I traveled about a mile and entered what is called McKissacks Grove, the largest body of timber I had seen in the west, I continued five miles farther and stopped at Mr. Farmer's, the Postmaster for the vicinity. There I had an opportunity of reading the paper and informing myself of the current news. The statements relative to Nebraska were so contradictory I soon grew careless upon this point. While staying here I had my ears badly frozen, an accident that had never befallen me before.

At this period there was a man of the name of Andrew Jackson, who had just returned from California, stopped with Mr. Farmer one night. He gave a favorable account of the country and as he intended to return with a herd of stock, he offered me ten dollars per month and I consented to go with him.

I accompanied him to his residence in Oregon, Missouri, where I remained until the 23d of April, when we started upon the long and wearisome journey across the plains. The train

consisted of thirty- one persons, six wagons, two carriages, thirty head of horses and mules, and five hundred of cattle. The company hails from almost every state in the union. There was Mr. & Mrs. J --, two children and two sisters, one sixteen, the other two years younger; also a brother of Mrs. J --, named Hugh Fennel, and a brother of Mr. J --, Christian name Wilson; a half-brother named Alex W. Rodgers and wife, a little girl of twelve years and four younger children; likewise a young woman of the name of Mary Sebastain. There were seventeen of us "hired" men when we started.

The following are their names and residences: George Holbrook & Wells, Pennsylvania; James Raymond (alias Picayune), New York; Francis W. Dana (Frank), Boston, Mass.; Henry Compton (Hank), Alva S. Larkins, Michigan; Charlos Rusco (Charlie), Dacon\*, Amos Thornton, Lawson P. Reed (Buckeye), Ohio; William Wilson (Bill), and George Ginn, Missouri; Mayberry Way (May), Iowa; James Bailey (Jim), Kentucky; John Henry, Indiana; James Bo Roberts (Brooks), Tennessee; and I answered to the name of Bennett. (\*The Christian names of Dacon & Wells I never learned. The names enclosed within the parentheses are nicknames.) The train started from near" Oregon, Holt County, Missouri, and continued at the east side of the \_\_\_\_\_River to Council Bluffs, Potawatamic County, Iowa. At Glenwood, Mills County, we took in two more Hoosiers named Benj. F. Ward and Gilbert Perry (Ben & Gill) and nothing else of import occurred until after a journey of two weeks, we encamped near Council Bluff City. The country through which we passed was the counterpart of that last described.

There was the place of outfitting. The majority of the boys supplied themselves with India rubber coats and overalls, colts Alens (?) or dueling pistols, finishing off with a huge knife at their belt. I did not see the necessity of all this. It so turned out that the only use they applied their pistols was to shoot ground squirrels and prairie dogs. Their knives served them very well at mealtime however.

I should have said before that for reasons too tedious to mention, it was determined to divide the company into 3 messes. Each mess had a separate tent, stove, and other cooking utensils. Mr. Jackson's tent was made of duck canvas and rendered conspicuous by bearing the following inscription: A. P. Jackson, Holt County, Missouri, together with representations of the Masonic emblem painted "black on white" on quite an extensive scale. Mr. Rodgers' tent was of the same material but without "note or comment". The "boys' tent", as the other one was called, was not of as fine a texture but as luck would have it, it turned the rain the best of any. The "boys" mess numbered 14, having taken in another Indianan here named Wm. Fleak. He received the familiar name of "Bill Cook" from his being appointed to assist me in the culinary art, I having been elected "chief cook and bottle washer" for the boys' mess before starting.

After being delayed several days owing to the throng at the ferry we effected a crossing on the seventh and eighth of May without accident. We were now in Nebraska Territory, that "promised land" of which I had heard and read so many conflicting accounts that the very name had become irksome, although I left home with an Intention of seeking a residence here among the pioneers. Though the lands had been purchased of the Indians, I felt no desire to stop, so disgusted had I become with the intrigue and villainy of those who were most actively engaged in its organization.

The surface as far as the eye could see was undulating. The bluffs south of where we were encamped rose two hundred feet above the river though of gradual ascent and were covered with timber. There were some stunted oaks on the- sand ridge where we encamped. But to the west a

sea of "rolling prairie" spread itself to view as far as the eye could react. It was not my duty (being cook) to stand guard, but the most of the men were much fatigued with the exertion consequent upon crossing the river, so I volunteered to expose myself to the dangers of an Indian Country. The cattle had been driven about 3 miles west of the camp and left in charge of the day guard. John and Bill were chosen to accompany me. We were all mounted on horses. In addition each of my comrades carried a colt revolver. I armed myself with my watch to tell how time wore on, a tin trumpet to sound in case of a stampede, and a canteen of water. Each of us also wore an Indian rubber coat or cloak. Thus caparisoned we took charge of stock for the night. It was in the bend of a small stream (name unknown) with high banks which guarded three sides. To the south was a neck of land three hundred yards wide. Here we were stationed, Bill at the west side, John in the center, and I at the opposite end. We were instructed to ride to and from each other and also to notice that none of the stock escaped by crossing the stream, and to beware of Indians stealing them. The night was cool and cloudy, but not very dark. It however appeared a long one. We had but little to do except when an animal crossed the stream at a certain ford at the east side of our picket. The night wore on and no Indians, no "stampede". My canteen was repeatedly emptied and replenished by the party during the night. At the rise of the morning star, I started to camp to rouse the day guard, leaving John & Bill with the stock. I arrived at camp at dawn of day, finding all asleep. I sounded the trumpet and waked the sluggards. When the day guard had started, I turned in to take a nap before breakfast. It was the rule for the guards to stand all night and be exempted from all duty next day, but on the following day it was their duty to go out at dawn and relieve the night guard, and stay with the herd until breakfast was over at camp and men were sent to start the stock. Then they were at liberty to return to camp for refreshment.

There were nineteen of us who stood guard. The four owners thought they had enough to do to boss the business. And as there were from two to four put out a time, making a night and a day guard to each once a week upon an average.

The next day, May 9th, about .10 o'clock the train began the journey in earnest. The road was not very plain here, but it could be distinctly seen ascending gradually for several miles, coming upon a dividing ridge in the "rolling prairie" Here the "upper Ferry" road and also that from the St. Mary's ferry joined ours. It now assumed the appearance of a much frequented thoroughfare in the states.

On this eventful day, I was mounted upon a large grey horse and rode forward of the herd. It appears I was quite a conspicuous personage, for I was accosted as the "boss" by a stranger. But "appearances deceive". I informed him that I was merely a "hired man", and pointing to a man of medium size, of dark complexion, wearing a slouched hat, and riding a small mule, I said "There is the boss."

We traveled but 8 miles the first day. Encamped upon the west bank of Little Pappaea Creek, a small stream with high banks and difficult crossing. The tenth we crossed Big Pappaea Creek upon a bridge, it being about 20 feet wide-and very deep, and encamped upon the west bank, half a mile above the crossing. Nothing of note transpired during the day, but in the night we were alarmed by the firing of a pistol and a cry of "Injuns!" May, being on guard, declared he had seen either an Indian or white man at which he had fired. But as nothing of the kind could be seen or heard we were soon again seeking repose. The remainder of the night passed without further interruption. At 9:00 the train was again in motion.

After traveling ten or fifteen miles we turned off to the right of the road and pitched our tents at the head of a small brook. Just after nightfall, we were joined by several of the party who had gone back in pursuit of cattle that had broken away from us at the ferry. This was the first night we were all together since we started. There was no wood here. Fortunately, however, we had put a little in the wagons that morning, and by burning some of our empty boxes, succeeded in cooking supper and breakfast. Nothing of note occurred while here except that Holbrook, passing too near the heels of a cow that was tied to a wagon, who showed him her "cloven foot". In return he let forth a volley of oaths. When he had exhausted his fund of imprecations, he procured a whip and gave her a foretaste of "Lynch Law".

On the 11th at an early hour we were on our way. The route, lying for several miles upon a winding ridge when the country spread out into a level plain extending to Elk Horn River on the west, terminated in a precipitous bluff, above which the tops of trees shot up giving the place a lovely appearance. On the right of the road near where it descends, the hill is a mound six feet high and thirty paces around the base. It is evidently the grave of an Indian Chief, There are several ordinary graves close around it. All of them have the appearance of being within two years past. To raise this mound the sod has been removed for 20 feet in every direction. Descending a slope of about one-fourth of a mile, we came to the Elk Horn. The stream is nine rods wide, six feet deep, with quicksand banks, which are thinly set with cotton willow trees. The bluffs are on the side next. They are covered with stunted oak and hickory timber. Crossing the wagons at Jackson & Company's Ferry we drove the stock down the river to Sarpy & Company's ferry and swam them across. When all were over safe and sound, the teams coupled up and providing ourselves with some wood, (for it is a custom among emigrants to take in wood when ever they can as some of the best camping places are destitute of that necessary article) we were again in motion. On emerging from the strip of timber that skirted the river, Platte Valley stretched far away to the southwest as far as the eye could reach. In that direction could be seen nothing but a level plain and a winding stretch of timber at a distance of perhaps ten miles pointing on the meanderings of the river. The valley is covered with luxuriant grass and flowers of every tint to relieve the tedium of the scene. There also grew here two species of mint, wild onions, numberless weeds, and plants which in my ignorance of Botany, I was unable to call by name.

The road here turned to the west running almost due west until it joins the Platte River, where we arrived next day at noon, having encamped upon a small lake four miles from Elk Horn. Platte river is the most singular stream in the world. It consists of hundreds of channels from ten feet to a mile wide, forming innumerable islands, varying in size from a small sand bar to fifty miles in extent. Indeed for 500 miles up from the mouth there is no place where the whole stream can be seen at once. The banks are from \_ to \_ feet high, the bed of a mass of moving sand. It is not miry, but if a wagon be allowed to stop for any length of time, the sand will wash from under it and it will disappear altogether. Its depth here varies from one to five feet and if it flowed in one channel, there would be perhaps three more wide current rapids and the water turbid from the quantity of sand it contained. All the largest islands are thickly covered with cottonwood and willows. The country here to some seems uninteresting, but one who is inclined may see something to admire every day. Various are the atmosphere phenomena observable upon the plains. The most wonderful is to be seen here. It is the mirage or false ponds. It is generally seen in the lowest places and only when the sun shines, and resembles lakes of water in the distance reflecting the shadow of trees that may come within range, appearing of many times their magnitude.

Those ponds appear to recede as you approach, never being able to get nearer than what you suppose to be half a mile of them. There are conflicting opinions respecting the cause of this elusive phenomena. It is most generally believed to be occasioned by the reflection of the sun upon a vapor arising from the decayed vegetation, but I am of a different opinion. For if this was the cause, why could not the same be seen upon any prairie? I believe it to be caused by a vapor arising from the alkaline substance deposited in the earth of which this region abounds. The proof I have to sustain me in this belief will be seen in the future. I shall be obliged owing to my limits to omit the notice of all our camping places in order to give greater prominence to what (to me) seems to be more important matters.

Our route lay up the Platte for several days touching it at several places. Nothing of importance occurred or was seen until we arrived opposite the new Pawnee Village located in 1847, having been derived from their old towns on Soup Fork by the Sioux who are (at this time - 1854) waging a war of extermination against the Pawnees. The new villages are situated upon a bluff 200 feet high on the south side of Platte. The extent of the villages could not be determined, as only the tops of some of the huts were to be seen over the brow of the hill. The principal channel flows at the base of the bluff forming a crescent. This is the only place I know of within 500 miles of its mouth where the river touches the bluffs. On the north side of the river opposite is a large grove of cottonwood timber and some willows next to the river near which is a mound with a grave upon it apparently made in '49 or '50. Leaving the river here we drove 6 or 8 miles, camped upon an elevated plain half a mile north of the road and also of a semicircular lake. The rain was descending in torrents and continued showering all night. John Wells and I were on guard here and had a disagreeable time of it. The night was chilly and the cattle were in constant motion all night. At dawn, we were relieved by the day guards. When the train started, I turned in to a wagon to take a snooze.

Of this day's travel I can give no account except that I was told we had passed an Indian grave to the north of the road similar to the one noticed east of Elk Horn. On the following day all arrived at Loup Fork 18 rods wide, 5 feet deep, low sandy banks and bottoms. Some cottonwood and willows here. Crossed the wagons at Jackson & Co's ferry for the consideration of \$3.50 per wagon and the boat only took them halfway across owing to the shallowness of the water on the west side of the river. On the west bank is an extensive sand bar having deep holes of water in it into one of which a little boy of Mr. Rodgers fell and would have drowned but for the timely aid of one of the men who was near. Took dinner here and again pursued our way, having traveled about 100 miles since crossing the Missouri. Our route now lay up Loup Fork. The remainder of the day and the one following we traveled for the most part upon the level bottom, occasionally crossing some low hills that approached the river. The bottoms were covered with knobs from six inches to two feet high. The weather was disagreeable having hard rains and turbulent winds. The following day we left Loup fork for a time and traveled up on the high land between that stream and Platte. In the afternoon there was a violent thunder storm. The horse with Mr. Jackson's carriage became so frightened that the women were afraid to remain in it. Sarah and Isabella (Mrs. Jackson's sisters) came into the wagon I was driving. The rain descended in bucketsful. But we traveled, on until near night when we encamped upon Loup Fork. The rain ceased at nightfall.

The next day we again left the river and traveled up on the high land. This day we met 2 Indians of the Sioux tribe. They were well mounted and armed. Each rode a good horse, on an Indian saddle and carried a rifle, a lance, and a rawhide shield. They were in search of the Pawnees against whom they are waging a war of extermination. Nothing of weight occurred until

night. We encamped upon the Loup Fork for the last time. The next day we turned to the southwest and traveled through low sandy knobs. About noon our road found that of the upper ford. There we began to see the skulls and horns of the buffalo, some of which appeared to have been recently killed. We encamped that night on a small stream called Wolf Run. I was on guard that night. I was requested and consented to carry a "shooting stick" with me. However I had no occasion to use it. We were again in the valley of the Platte. The following day we crossed Prairie Creek which was the worst stream to cross in the whole journey, also crossed Wood River on a bridge. Encamped a mile down the river where we remained the following day. During the first night we laid here, May aroused the camp with the cry of "Stampede". The cattle were indeed frightened but the guardsmen managed to keep them in hearing distance of camp. The alarm appeared to have been given in the direction of the river, and some of the more chivalrous armed themselves and went reconnoitering in that direction. After firing a few random shots they returned and reported that a man had plunged into and swam the river, and that they fired at him while running down the opposite bank. There is a trading post at the bridge, also a Post office bearing the ever recurring name of Nebraska. The company stated that they had a charter from Government to establish a hospital here, but with out exception they wore a suspicious-looking set of fellows. The American flag floats above one of their canvas tents. Although there was about twenty of them, besides plowing a few furrows and building a pole bridge of about fifty feet in length for crossing for which they charged one dollar a wagon, they had nothing.

Wood River is about 15 yds. wide and four feet deep. It is skirted with some box-elder and ash timber, but there is nothing to be seen that might be termed a tree. Here appears to have been a favorite haunt of the beaver. Trees of six inches diameter had been felled by them. The chips until closely examined would be taken for those made by an axe. The second night of our sojourn here our slumbers were interrupted by a strange horse that came bolting into camp with an ox yoke fastened to his neck by a long rope. The horse was caught and tied to the wagons and in the morning the owner came for him. Although the rain was descending in torrents the train was early in motion. We did not follow the road here but aimed for a point of timber on the Platte. The country had undergone quite a change in a day or two. The surface was generally level except circular depressions from two to several yards in diameter said to be made by the wallowing of the buffaloes in the wet season. A species of grass resembling blue grass and known as buffalo grass, prickly pears and cactus began to appear in great abundance. Also the mineral substance known as alkali was to be seen in places rendering the ground white from its great abundance.

The rain ceased about noon. We traveled until about 9 o'clock at night to reach a good camping place. I found by experience that there was no advantage in being cook. For, in addition to my other duties, I had for several days been required to drive team. I was unwell on this occasion and tired, having driven the lead team and been obliged to walk all day. I therefore made my bed and turn in without getting supper. This caused some dissatisfaction, as some were disposed to insinuate that I did so to avoid the work, I told them to enjoy their own opinion. However some of the "boys" helped Bill through with the supper. The next morning I resigned my office as "chief cook of the boys' mess" and was appointed principal engineer of a team of five yoke of horned horses and exulting in my promotion I sailed up Platte at the rate of fifteen miles a day. May was appointed to succeed me as head cook.

We were now traveling directly up the river touching it occasionally. There was nothing interesting occurred or to be seen for several days. Our route lay through a low wet district dominated by the Pawnee Swamp. At the head of the swamp is the Wolf Shrine at the foot of the

“Sand Hills” boiling up in the bottom of a pool two yards across. The water is cool and pleasant to the taste. The road here runs along the foot and over or rather through the spurs of the “Sand Hill” for the road has in some places worn and washed down 20 feet. There the prairie dogs of which such marvelous stories are told begin to appear. They are about the size of the common grown squirrel, but do not bear the least resemblance of the canine species in physical structure, habits, or in the tone of their bark, for they make a kind of a squeaking yelping noise which some fancy resembles the bark of the terrier. Their structure is almost the counterpart of the gray squirrel. They, however, as it is reported, burrow in the ground. The burrowing owl and rattlesnake often in conjunction with them occupy the same den. It has been asserted that their towns are regularly laid out. If this is the case I have never seen any of their towns. They do indeed have their dens arranged in clusters. Paths can be traced from one to another, yet I have yet to see one of their streets, deserving the name of Broadway. Fire here becomes scarce. Indeed for two hundred miles there is no timber upon the north side of the Platte. There is however a little stunted cedar to be found north of the Concience Bluff runs two or three miles from the road. It is a custom among emigrants to stop at the “last timber” and do up some cooking and also to take some wood aboard the wagons. But for this precaution they have to depend upon wild sage for cooking. This singular shrub here first makes its appearance. It resembles somewhat the garden sage in appearance but the smell and taste are widely different. The stock is the most curious feature of it. The annulations unlike those of all other kinds of timber instead of being circular extend directly through the stem or trunk presenting the appearance of log of wood with a large slab split off opposite sides leaving the growth exposed to view and the bark on the two remaining sides. It sometimes grows 6 feet high and furnishes a good substitute for other fuel even when green, but when in this state, the victuals cooked thereby is likely to become impregnated with the smoke which renders it unpalatable. Yet when dry no better fuel is needed. Notwithstanding the barrenness of the country, it gradually assumes a more interesting aspect. The river as it were draws the bluffs nearer to its banks, the islands become smaller, the banks are higher, and the waters are confined to fewer channels and flows with a more rapid current. The hills themselves appear to raise their heads higher and become more peaked. But the first object of curiosity embracing natural scenery is the Ancient Bluff Ruins about 300 miles from the Missouri River. They are situated on the north side of and about one-fourth mile from the Platte. They resemble ruins of castles fortifications and extend several miles up and down the river and vary in height from 50 to 300 feet. Those ruins have doubtless been formed by the wash and decaying of ages acting upon detached portions of the main bluffs for nearly all ruins may be seen from the riverside. However some of them so nearly resemble the works of art that one is almost led to believe that those places now inhabited by the prairie dog, burrowing owl and rattlesnake, once teemed with life and happiness. This desert place may have once blossomed as the rose.

At this period of our journey, rains were less frequent. However what we lost in moisture we made up in matt for the dust at times was almost intolerable, yet the night we encamped opposite Ft. John it rained almost incessantly. I was on guard here, as it appeared I always was on such nights as this. It was as dark as pitch and the herd was unusually restless. The wolves were howling, prairie dogs yelping, every bird and insect capable of making a noise joined in the concert, yet these all combined was not as terrifying as that which I was soon to witness.

About midnight while riding around the herd my mule stopped suddenly and looking ahead I saw at a few feet distance a white object. I spurred the animal to make him approach it, but in vain. He refused to advance one step. This surprised me and as I gazed intently at it I discovered that it increased and diminished in magnitude. At this I felt what little courage I possessed fast

oozing away, but I rallied myself, dismounted, and approached. When quite near, I extended and placed my foot on, or rather in, a puddle of alkali water. I stooped down and examined it minutely to see if I had imagined the worst of it. I could distinctly see a white phosphorescent vapor arising from the pool which the wind occasionally lashed about in the manner it would have done a flame. This accounted for the variations in its appearance and also confirmed the opinion I had formed, namely, that the Mirage or False Ponds is occasioned by a vapor arising from the alkaline substances deposited in the earth. I may not be correct, but shall entertain this belief until otherwise convinced.

One-horse trading posts were becoming numerous, which were generally surrounded with Indian huts. The Indians, though on good terms with the French traders who almost invariably had one or more squaws for wives, were somewhat disposed to treat emigrants with insolence. One morning owing to a dissatisfaction in regard to the amount of day guarding required of them, Thornton, Dacon & Buckeye left the train and started ahead of the wagons on foot. They had not proceeded far ere they met three Indians, one of which presented a written paper, a thing very common among the Indians of the plains. These generally consisted of a recommendation from some trader giving the name, rank and reputation (which is always unsullied) of the bearer, ending by assuring emigrants that they might with perfect safety trade with him, and allow him to enter their tents.

The boys passed them without paying any attention to their diploma, which so enraged one of the Indians that he made a blow at Buckeye with his tomahawk, but missing him, passed along without showing further violence. However they were so alarmed (not one of them being armed) that they slackened their pace and when the train overtook them, traveled with it the remainder of the day. That night after a long consultation among the bosses, it was decided that they might again come into the train on certain conditions, which were to do all that had been required of them, and in the future receive no pay. These terms, although disgraceful, were accepted. For here, money would not buy any kind of food except dried buffalo meat. The traders merely kept dressed deer skins and moccasins to sell and bought lame cattle. The roads continued to be sandy. The country was a barren waste. Besides a scanty supply of grass in places on the river, barely enough to support the stock, wild sage, cactus and prickly pears which grew in disgusting luxuriance (the latter two species almost covering face of the earth) no other sign of vegetation was to be seen.

Our appetites being whetted by vigorous exercise in the open air, the quantities of food we were wont to devour would astonish a Comanche. It is allowed that persons on average eat double the amount upon the plains that they did before starting. And their sleep may be likened unto that which knows no awakening. "Ye wallowers in luxury, you loungers upon beds of down, who fare sumptuously every day, are clothed in purple and fine linen, and at night seek repose upon a soft feather bed (surrounded by curtains to prevent the least possibility of your taking cold) know not what it is to have a good appetite, neither have you known what it is to enjoy sound sleep in all your lives." Here Morphene may be hailed as "nature's sweet restorer". I would not exchange the simple fare of the emigrant, the warm sand for my bed, a blanket for my covering with a canvas tent for housing, for the luxury and ease of a prince as far as enjoyment in these respects is concerned.

The next curiosity that came in view was the "Chimney Rock" which was discerned at the distance of 20 miles. When it was first to be seen it resembled a small pillar or tombstone. The top of the spire only could be seen shooting up from the broad level valley of the Platte, which

stretched far away to the west until the sky appeared to meet it. We passed Convent or Court House Rock, However, long before the former, which is higher and of greater magnitude, yet from its position it is not noted at so great a distance. It is situated upon the south side of the river several miles distant from it. It is about four hundred feet high and occupies several acres of ground. Two or three sides are almost perpendicular. On one side it may be ascended. Viewed from different sides it presents as many different shapes, at one time resembling a huge court house, a convent, or such like structures. At another a store house with a notched or offsetting front. It appears to be square in form and is said to be composed of hard granite. I cannot give the particulars as I only saw it across the river at 15 miles distance when the nearest to it "Chimney Rock" about 20 miles farther up the river and also on the south side and four miles from the Platte is one of the greater "sights" to be seen upon the Plains. The ground appears to rise gradually from the river to the foot of the bluffs. Chimney Rock appears to have once been a detached peak of the main bluffs and from the influence of the elements of ages has been reduced to its present appearance which at a distance of twenty miles bears the unpoetical description of a hay-stack with a pole in it. But on a nearer approach its dimensions become apparent. From a large mound of soft decaying stone which is about 100 feet high and forms the base shoots up the spire to the additional height of 75 feet of round form and general smoothness, bearing a mean diameter of about 20 feet. This appears destitute of vegetation and is of yellowish color.

Scotts Bluff on the same side of the river and about 20 miles farther to the west is an isolated rock of immense magnitude separated from the main hills by a chasm or cleft wide enough that wagons may pass through it. The sides rise perpendicular to the height of about 300 feet. There are a number of singular looking bluffs in this vicinity. The scenery was becoming more interesting. The river was dotted over with innumerable small islands. They as well as the banks being destitute of timber were all distinctly to be seen dividing the Platte into hundreds of channels so much so as to render it impossible to ascertain the main one. The banks however were higher, the current more rapid, the general width of the stream somewhat diminished yet nearly a mile wide. The bluff approach nearer its banks and assume a more peaked, rugged and mountain-like aspect. One day while traveling along here I looked behind me, as did a certain woman of old and beheld -- not a shower of fire descending upon the doomed cities of the Plains, but merely a water-spout similar to those seen at sea of which we have heard such marvelous accounts. It appeared to be about ten miles distant. The water rose in a solid column and although so seemed as large as the trunk of the largest tree as it approached the clouds (which appeared to lower themselves for the purpose of drinking up the muddy waters of the Platte) the column enlarged and at last dissolved into vapor and mingled with the clouds.

Little else of Importance occurred until we encamped near some stony bluffs (a few miles below Fort Laramie) which were memorable from the fact that this was the only place since our starting that reverberation of sound could be heard. There grew upon the bluffs some stunted pine and cedar also some cottonwood upon the banks of Platte. We laid by a day here and were visited by a half dozen Indians, their leader having a written recommendation stating that he was "friendly to the whites", was a "chief", and a "big man with his tribe". They were of the Sioux tribe. One of them had killed thirteen Pawnees, a register of which he kept upon the handle of his tomahawk. Mr. J-- gave them some bacon and crackers and it was-amusing to observe with what accuracy it was divided by the "Chief", sharing it equally among them all. The next day being the 12th of June we passed the fort which is beautifully situated on the south of Platte immediately above the confluence of Laramie's Fork, about 600 miles from the Missouri River. It is built upon the point of land between the two streams consisting of several extensive buildings and presents a sightly appearance. Immediately opposite on the North of Platte we saw two Indians

that had been entered after the mode of the Meandans. They were wrapped in blankets and placed among the branches of a cottonwood tree. Traveling up the bank of the river a few miles and then left it, ascending a long and gradually rising hill we began to wind among the Black Hills so called perhaps partly from the dark color of the stones and soil that cover their surface or from the stunted cedars growing upon them which at a distance appear almost as black as ebony. We entered at the foot of a small rotund valley almost surrounded by hills 200 feet high. The valley is large enough for one or two farms and is strikingly beautiful. Passing out at the Northwest and up a narrow canyon or ravine some few miles and encamped among crazy freaks and deep gorges of the Black Hills on the Wind River of the Rocky Mountains.

We drove the stock up a ravine that put in from the right of the main one. In some places the passages were so narrow that but one animal could go through at a time and at others it widened out into little vales covered with finest grass. In one of these the cattle were left in charge of six men. There was occasionally a pine or cedar tree of some considerable size to be seen but the majority of the timber was fit only for fuel. The soil where there was any to be found was black and apparently rich. From here our route lay up a long stony hill. Then down a very steep and difficult one crossing a small stream and up another hill, then over a high and almost level country studded with a few scattering pines adding materially to the beauty of the scenery which was delightful. Far away to the southwest was seen Laramie's Peak the top of which at times was enveloped in clouds. On the north side of it could be seen shots of snow. After two days travel over the Black Hills we again came to the Platte. The river is not more than one-fourth mile wide, but it is deep, the current rapid, the banks are generally high. The bluffs or mountains in some places approach to the water's edge. The river is here skirted by scattering cottonwood trees but it no longer appears to be the great Platte, as its islands had disappeared and its broad valley narrowed down to a mile in width. After about three days travel upon the river without any occurrence worthy of note we again left it and traveled upon the high barren undulating land for two days. On the second day we passed quite a respectable string of houses built of logs and all covered by the same roof occupied by French traders. They have built a bridge across Platte and here the roads of the South and North side of Platte join. From here California, Oregon and Utah emigrants travel the same road until beyond the South Pass. The main road joins the river again a few miles above the bridge where it swoops around a reddish bluff crossing over the high point of land and down into a wide bottom encamped upon the river a mile below where we first joined it. Here we remained the following day sunning our clothing and provisions. Meanwhile an old wagon that Mr. J- had bought the day previous was fitted up to servo as a "cook wagon" for the boys' mess receiving the name of the "Kitchen". I was requested by Mr. J. to again take upon myself the responsibilities of chief cook and dish washer for the boys mess. I reluctantly consented and next morning with four yokes of honed horses hitched to the Kitchen I launched upon the plains of the far west exulting in the additional honor shown me. For a mile we traveled the same road by which we came in. Joining the main road we were again on our way. The river presents the same appearance except it is narrower and the banks higher than where last spoken of. Alkali lakes or ponds were becoming numerous requiring great care on the part of herdsmen to prevent great loss of stock by drinking from them.