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Article Title: A Round Trip to the Montana Mines: The 1866 Travel Journal of Gurdon P Lester

Full Citation: Charles W Martin, ed, "A Round Trip to the Montana Mines: The 1866 Travel Journal of Gurdon P Lester," *Nebraska History* 46 (1965): 273-313

URL of article: <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/NH1965GPLester.pdf>

Date: 6/09/2016

Article Summary: Lester's journal recorded his experiences travelling by stage coach on the Platte River overland route following severe Indian attacks. He returned on Missouri River boats when passenger traffic was at its height.

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Cataloging Information:

Names: Gurdon P Lester, Henry R Foot, Pierre Chouteau

Place Names: Fort Kearny, Nebraska; Denver, Colorado; Salt Lake City, Utah; Helena, Montana; Fort Benton and Virginia City, Montana

Keywords: Gurdon P Lester, Union Pacific Railroad, Holliday line [Ben Holliday's Overland Stage Line], Mackinaws, American Fur Company, Northwestern Fur Company, *Luella*, *Jennie Brown*

Photographs / Images: emigrants in Echo Canyon, Utah; Fort Benton levee; Mackinaw boat *Montana*; wagon train in Helena, Montana; early street scene in Virginia City, Montana



Emigrants in Echo Canyon, Utah (Photograph by Charles Carter, Salt Lake City).

A ROUND TRIP TO THE MONTANA MINES:
THE 1866 TRAVEL JOURNAL OF
GURDON P. LESTER

EDITED BY
CHARLES W. MARTIN

NEBRASKA has been a part of two trails to the west; the Missouri River trail and the Platte River trail.

The Missouri River has been the route of Indian migrations for centuries. In turn it was used by the fur traders, the explorers, the soldiers, the gold seekers, and lastly the emigrants and land seekers. The river, although wild and mighty, was the actual trail itself as all of these people passed up and down the river by boat. The time of heaviest passenger traffic on the upper Missouri was from 1864 to 1868.

The Platte River trail was an overland route and was also successively used by Indians, fur traders, explorers, soldiers, gold seekers, and land seekers. It continued to be

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a trail of oxen, horses, mules, wagons and stage coaches until the completion of the Union Pacific Railroad in 1869.

The following diary gives a description of both these routes in the year 1866. It was written by a man of keen observation, a good sense of humor and one who could say a lot with few words. The diary is historically interesting because it is one of the very few diaries written by one who traveled by stage coach and also by boat. The year 1866 was interesting as he traveled along the Platte River following severe Indian attacks and down the Missouri River at the height of the passenger traffic.

He gives a fine report of the stage stations on the Overland trail and of the trials and tribulations confronting the stage coach traveler. Equally interesting is his description of the problems and dangers of steamboating on the Missouri. There are no entries for the weeks spent in the mining region.

Very little is known of Gurdon P. Lester. We do not know where he was born or what he did for a living or where he died. He apparently lived in Iowa most of his life but he is known to have done a lot of traveling.

Another of his diaries shows he went in a wagon train in 1860 to the Colorado gold fields. Dissatisfied with their prospects, he traveled on west to California. How long he stayed there and when he came back is not known. He was living in northeast Iowa in 1866 as he left from there to go to the Montana gold fields. In 1887 he also traveled by wagon through southeastern Nebraska, northeastern Kansas, northwestern Missouri and western Iowa looking at farm land. A short diary tells of this expedition.

Mr. Charles H. D. Smith, a rural mail carrier of Cherokee, Iowa, is the owner of the diaries. He obtained them from Mr. Lester's son Gary, a man in his nineties, living in Sioux City. Gary had received them from his father. He told Mr. Smith that there was no one left in their family. Shortly after Mr. Smith received the diaries, Gary Lester died.

This spring, Miss Mildred Goosman, Associate Curator of the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha, gave a talk at Cherokee, Iowa on the Maximilian-Bodmer Collection. Charles Smith at that time loaned the diaries to the Joslyn, where they are exhibited in the "Life on the Prairies" display. Lester's original spelling and wording has been retained.

May 31st 1866

Today in company with Henry R. Foot I started from Lodomillo Iowa for Helena Montana Territory. Started from home at 6 A. M. and reached Manchester at 10 A. M. Took passage on the Dubuque and Sioux City R. R. to Farley Junction: Changed cars and took passage on the Dubuque South Western R. R. to Cedar Rapids. Reached the Rapids at 6 P. M. and put up at the Central House. Here I found a friend Charlie Stearns and had quite a sociable chat. This afternoon it rained very hard with heavy thunder and lightning

June 1st Took passage on the Chicago and North Western Iowa Division road as far as Boon on the Des Moines river a distance of one hundred and twenty five (125) miles. Reached Boon at 1:30 P. M. and immediately took coach for Omaha City Neb. Ter. a distance of 140 miles

Rain and Sunshine is the order of the weather today. Our coach load consisted of six passengers two of them being ladies. We took supper at Buffalo Grove

2nd Breakfasted at Clyde Station after riding all night. Supper at a station on Nishnabotany river. Rain again as usual and roads very slippery.

3rd Reached Council Bluffs at 3 o'clock in the morning and was nearly dead for want of sleep. We put up at the Pacific House¹ and was compelled to remain there until 4 P. M. of the same day, it being Sunday and couldn't cross the river until that hour. Council Bluffs is county seat of Potowotome Count Iowa and

¹The Pacific House was a three story hotel built in 1853, of yellow painted brick, by Samuel S. Bayless, prominent early figure of both Council Bluffs and Omaha. It was located on Broadway facing Pearl Street. Genevieve Powlison Mauk, "The Council Bluffs Story," *The Palimpsest* (State Historical Society of Iowa), Vol. XLII, No. 9 Sept. 1961, pp. 401-402.

lays four miles from the Missouri river. Council Bluffs is a place of some 3,000 inhabitants.

At 4 o'clock afternoon we again mounted the North Western coach for Omaha² and arrived at the wharf just in time to see the steam ferry Lizzie Bailiss³ cast off lines and make for the Nebraska shore.

We waited about an hour whe[n] the charming Lizzie again touched the Iowa shore when coach and all hands rushed on board. Lizzie didn't keep us long until she landed us on Nebraska's fair shore to snuff the pure air of the howling city of Omaha. Here we put up at the Farnham House⁴ and remained until the morning of the

4th Went down to the office of the Overland Stage⁵ and secured seats for Virginia City Montana Territory at the *moderate* (?) sum of \$350, allowing us to carry 25 pounds of baggage. As we couldnot start until the evening of the 6th we put in our time running around and viewing the city, but not until we secured a new boarding place on Herney St. between 13th and 14th Sts. with Mrs. Annis who made herself notorious for her much talking and continual fretting at the servant girl Wrote a letter to my bro. J. N. Lester and also one to a lady friend, Miss Lucinda Foot of Ohio. Again

² The stage between Council Bluffs and Omaha was a four-horse coach. "A coach leaves each place at 8:30 A. M. every day and on return trip will leave Omaha City at 3:20 P. M., and Council Bluffs at 4 P. M. (Sunday excepted)." Apparently there was only one trip on Sunday, it leaving Council Bluffs at 4 P. M. *Omaha Daily Herald*, October 1, 1865.

³ At the time of Lester's trip, the *Lizzie Bayless* had just returned from St. Joseph, where she had "been thoroughly repaired and otherwise improved." Charlie Rustin was its captain and D. W. Shull was pilot. *Omaha Weekly Republican*, Friday, June 1, 1866; *Omaha Weekly Herald*, Friday, June 8, 1866.

⁴ The Farnam House, J. C. Higby, proprietor, was located between 14th and 15th Streets, at 228 and 230 Harney Street. Charles Collins, *Collins' Omaha City Directory, July 4th, 1868* (Omaha: *Omaha Daily Herald*, 1868), pp. 103, 198.

⁵ "Overland Stage Line—Ben Holladay, Proprietor. Carrying the great through mails between the Atlantic and Pacific States. Coaches leave Omaha every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 8 P. M. for all the principal points in Colorado, Utah, Nevada, Idaho, Montana, California and Oregon.

Fare from Omaha to Denver reduced to One hundred and Fifty Dollars.

Through tickets for sale in the office under the Herndon House. Geo. M. Loyd, Agent." *Omaha Daily Herald*, October 1, 1865.

it rains and the streets flooded with water Notwithstanding the bad weather the streets are thronged with emigrants destined for Colorado, Montana, Idaho, Nevada, California and Oregon, stopping here a few days only, some to buy teams and wagons, others to buy provisions mining tools etc. As I now write a long train is filing along Farnham St. bound for Oregon and California. What a mixed medley of animals and things one sees in looking over a train of emigrants just starting out on a tour across the plains. It is altogether useless to attempt to mention or enumerate the sorts and kinds which some consider necessary for a fully equipped train to have to make a journey across the Great American Desert to the Territories and the Pacific States. One sheet of fools cap would be altogether inadequate for the business, were it written in a hand as fine as nonperil

5th Took a stroll down to the Union Pacific Rail Road machine shop and also down to the Missouri river. The river is very high and still on the rise. The whole surface of the river is covered with drift-wood bound for the gulf. The river being at a high rising stage, boats assend as high as Ft. Benton loaded with passengers provisions, machinery and mining implements bound for the Montana mines. Today is cold and rainy, and it is dangerous for a person to step out for fear of getting swamped in this Nebraska mud. Did I own a quarter section of land here I wouldn't have a regiment of soldiers travel over it short of the price of the land, for they would certainly carry it all off on their feet. I like Nebraska in a⁶

6th The weather is clear and pleasant, and quite warm Henry & self took a walk up to the State Capitol and

⁶ Lester drew a picture of a horn to finish this sentence. "In a horn" was a mid-nineteenth century slang expression indicating that the speaker meant exactly the reverse of whatever he had said. Sir William Craigie and James Hulbert, eds., *A Dictionary of American English*, Vol. III (Chicago, 1942) p. 1275.

viewed its surroundings.⁷ Then tramped off South of the city and had a feast of strawberries. After dinner we laid in a supply of dried beef crackers, and balona sausage to have for a lunch between this point and Denver. At 8 P. M. we took seats in the Overland Mail coach and start for Ft. Kearny where we expect to lay over until Sunday the 10th. Our comrades in coach were Whiting, Chase, Squares,⁸ Harry Creighton, John Creighton,⁹ the two latter bound for Salt Lake on telegraph business.

The roads are very bad and the consequence is we get along very slow. The weather through the day was very pleasant, but the storm is holding its wrath to make the night more hideous. About midnight the storm came with all its fury and rained and hailed as it does in no other place in these United States for the space of two hours. We struck Platt Bottom about the break of day and found the roads still worse if possible than back on the hills.

We crossed the Elk Horn river on a rickety old

⁷ "The second territorial capitol . . . , erected in 1857-58, located on Capitol Hill between 20th and 22nd Streets, Dodge and Davenport Streets, was a handsome structure of brick with a colonnade extending around it. . . . The entire colonnade was later removed as being unsafe. . . . The legislature continued to meet in this building until 1867, when the capital was moved to the village of Lancaster, renamed Lincoln." Central High School is now located on the site. *Nebraska: A Guide to the Cornhusker State*, Federal Writers Project, (New York, 1939) pp. 234-235.

⁸ This should probably be Squires. There was a Charles E. Squires living in Omaha at that time. He was with the United States Quartermasters Department.

⁹ These perhaps were the brothers Edward and John Creighton of telegraph fame. On July 17, 1866 both Edward and John Creighton were in Salt Lake City to direct crews in planting the first pole on a Western Union Line to connect Salt Lake City with Virginia City, Montana. However, there was a Harry Creighton, a cousin of John and Edward. He was said to have had "large experience in Montana and other mining countries." Barbara Sorensen, "A King and Prince Among Pioneers—Edward and John A. Creighton," M. A. thesis, Creighton University, Omaha 1961 p. 96; *Omaha Weekly Republican* (June 10, 1876) p. 3.

bridge¹⁰ which has long since been condemned and ought to be abandoned. Still it carried us safe over, therefore I will not speak very disrespectful of a bridge that carried safe over so wicked and depraved a set as our coach load consisted of. Every man was "armed to the teeth" as the old saying is, and every passenger but Henry and myself, was beautifully equipped with whiskey. One can readily imagin the sort of company we were compelled to ride with as far as Ft. Kearny.

7th We took breakfast this morning at Shell Creek station.¹¹ We passed through Columbus¹² about 4 P. M. and took on three more passengers bound for Kearny. Crossed the Loop Fork at Columbus on a pontoon bridge.¹³

The Union Pacific R. R.¹⁴ is completed out to the westward of Omaha about 130 miles, and graded as far west as Kearny. Hands are employed laying track at the rate of one mile a day. At night we have our storm again accompanied with fierce thundered and lightning which casts a gloom over everything.

¹⁰ In 1859, E. H. N. Patterson traveled west to Colorado on this same route. He wrote in his diary as follows:

Thursday, April 28—"Our route up the Platte leads us along the line of the Great Military Road, and judging from the bridges we have crossed today, government has performed a good work in their construction, for they are built of the best of materials and in the most substantial manner. . . ."

Friday, April 29—"Started at seven o'clock, and descended the bluff to Elkhorn River, one mile distant, which we crossed on a fine bridge."

LeRoy R. Hafen, ed., *Overland Routes to the Goldfields 1859*, (Glendale, California 1942) pp. 106 and 107.

¹¹ Shell Creek Station was located on the farm of Isaac Albertson in what is now Colfax County. He platted the town of Buchanan April 27, 1856, on the east bank of Shell Creek where the Union Pacific railroad now crosses the stream. The few inhabitants finally moved to the budding town of Schuyler. David Anderson, "The Early Settlements of the Platte Valley," *Nebraska State Historical Society Collections*, Vol. 16, p. 197.

¹² Columbus was founded in 1856 and named after Columbus, Ohio. The town developed as a supply point on the Mormon Trail and as a stop on the Union Pacific Railroad.

¹³ The pontoon bridge was built in 1863 as a toll bridge to replace the former ferry boat. A. T. Andreas, *History of Nebraska*, (Chicago, 1882) p. 1269.

¹⁴ On July 10, 1865 the Union Pacific Railroad laid the first rail, thought to be at Seventh and Chicago Streets, Omaha. It would be located just in front of the Union Pacific Shops and almost beneath the viaduct which carries Abbott Drive over the railroad yards. Alfred R. Sorenson, *The Story of Omaha* (Omaha, 1923), p. 289.

8th Took breakfast at Lambs Station¹⁵ and paid the moderate sum of \$1.50. We reached the crossing of Platte about 3 P. M. forded one channel, and nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ mile wide, the other we ferried and waded a distance of 2 miles and landed 3 miles above Kearny Station,¹⁶ where we found a lumber wagon in readiness to convey us down to the Station. After supper I availed myself of the opportunity of going to bed after spending 48 hours and riding a distance of 200 miles in a covered but uncomfortably crowded coach.

9th I awoke this morning at the ringing of the breakfast bell and was fully convinced that it was far more pleasant to spend the night in bed than in a stage coach. After grub Henry and I walked up to the Ft.¹⁷ — $\frac{1}{2}$ mile distant and viewed the fort and its surroundings. The flag was lowered to half mast and half hour guns were being fired from sunrise until 7 o'clock in veneration of Lieut. Gen. Winfield Scott.¹⁸

¹⁵ "At Wood River crossing Pap Lamb, well known along the Platte valley, was operating a ranch and stage station . . . and he drove to the next station west." Anderson, *op. cit.* p. 197.

¹⁶ The Fort Kearny stage station in 1866 was a beehive of activity. The heavy Concord coaches, drawn by six horse teams, and spilling over with passengers and mail, rolled in daily from Atchison, Omaha, Nebraska City, Denver, Salt Lake City and California. Less than 40 rods to the west of Fort Kearny were the buildings of the stage station. They were used for an office, eating station, storehouse, barn, stable, etc. Here the stage company's routes from Omaha and Nebraska City terminated, and its passengers from thence westward had to be transferred to the "through" stages from Atchison. They many times were compelled to wait for days before they could get a seat because those going from Atchison, the starting point of the "Overland" line, had precedence over all others taken on at the way points. Frank A. Root & Wm. E. Connelley, *The Overland Stage to California* (Columbus, Ohio, 1950) p. 205-206.

¹⁷ This fort was established in May 1848 on the south bank of the Platte River south-east of "present Kearney, Nebraska, to protect emigrants on the Oregon Trail. The post was first called Fort Childs, but on January 31, 1849, it was officially designated Fort Kearny. The troops were withdrawn from the fort on May 17, 1871." Francis Paul Prucha, *Guide to the Military Posts of the United States*, (Madison 1964), p. 82.

¹⁸ General Winfield Scott was born in Virginia. He was Captain of First Artillery May 3, 1808. He advanced to Major General and was Commander-in-Chief of the army from July 5, 1841 to November 1, 1861 when he was retired. He died May 29, 1866. Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army* (Washington D. C., 1903), p. 870.

I saw Maj. Majors¹⁹ the commander of the post and his under officers on dress parade. At 2 o'clock a national salute was fired to announce the arrival of Maj. Gen. Pope²⁰ and staff together with a large escort of dragoons and infantry. Here I saw a little of soldier life, which please to deliver me from. Today the wind blows very hard and the air is filled with sand and gravel. Yesterday was the first day since leaving home that it has not rained but the indications are good for rain within the next 10 hours. Since our arrival on the south side of the Platt we find ourselves on the same road we traversed in the spring of '60 while on our journey to Pike's Peak. The road is lined with emigrants and freight teams headed for the mountains while others are going East to Omaha Plattsmouth, St. Jo and Ft. Atchison after freight to take west. About 10 o'clock in the night it commenced raining and poured down in perfect torrents all night. Owing to the heavy rains the coaches are all behind time. At noon today, the Ft. Atchison coach arrived and when she went out there was nine (9) inside and four (4) on top, the latter occupying a pretty "posish" for the long rainy night.

10th I was awakened early this morning by bed-bugs gnawing on my delicate frame to say nothing about the myriad of fleas that were cantering over me in their playful manner the whole night. It is raining in perfect torrents and the Platt bottoms look like one vast sea of water. I have always flattered myself that I had seen it rain in the Atlantic and in California during my five years stay there, but I am now free to confess that I never saw it rain in torrents until my second visit to the Platt river plains. It not only rains but literally pours down for hours at a time. We expected to of got off on todays coach but it was crowded to its utmost capacity, consequently we are obliged to lay over until there are vacant seats and when that

¹⁹ Thomas J. Majors "was mustered in as first lieutenant of Company C, 1st Regiment, Nebraska Volunteers, June 15, 1861. He was then twenty-four years old. He was promoted captain January 5, 1862, and major May 1, 1864. Major Majors was mustered out of the service July 1, 1866." Eugene F. Ware, *The Indian War of 1864* (New York, 1960) p. 471.

²⁰ John Pope graduated from U. S. Military Academy on July 1, 1842. On July 14, 1862 he became a brigadier general. He became a major general October 26, 1882 and retired from the army March 16, 1886. He died September 23, 1892. Heitman, *op. cit.*, p. 798.

will be it is impossible to tell but we are in hopes that it will not be longer than tomorrow noon. While we are compelled to lay here our expenses are \$4.00 per day and then the time drags away so slowly. The two days we have already been here seem longer than a week would were I at home or among friends. The trials and agravations incident to such a trip as this are very great, and our journey—as I may say—is but just begun. Still I feel inspired with a hope that I will eventually succeed and be amply rewarded for all my privation and perplexities, and safely return to enjoy the bliss that home and friends impart.

11th Today we waited with all patience we were master of for the coach, but alas! no coach came from the East at all. What detains it no one here knows. Yesterday there came from Omaha four (4) more passengers going west but are compelled to lay over here for want of an opportunity to go westwards.

There was quite a row over at the Sutler store this afternoon, between the soldiers of the post and some citizens of the Stage station which resulted very disastrously to the citizens. Whiskey was the prime cause of all the difficulty just as it always is in nine cases out of ten. The result was that all the citizens came out badly beat and cut up and some nearly "kilt" while the soldiers came out of the battle with but one or two wounded and that slightly. My observation and experience tells me to not interfere with soldiers under any circumstances, and more especially when they are under the influence of liquor. It is worthy of notice and remark to say that it didn't rain today, but the wind blew sufficiently hard to make all amends for that short coming.

12th Today Tuesday at 12 o'clock we find ourselves in no more flattering prospects than we have for the past three days. Today there came up a chartered coach occupied by two New York City gents bound for California. They were young fellows not more than twenty-five years and paid \$4,000 for the exclusive right of the coach from Atchison to Virginia City Nevada. They had beds so arranged as to spread them down or take them up at pleasure. They had a full armament of guns, pistols, and knives to say nothing of the cigars and liquors *absolutely* necessary for such a pleasure excursion.

Again the rain falls in huge, thick and fast drops. It is impossible to foretell the weather even two hours ahead. At 6 A. M. this morning a thick fog covered the whole face of the country, at 10 a scalding hot sun, and at 12 noon a very heavy thunder storm.

One chief topic of conversation for the last few days has been the treaty going on between the Government on the one part and the Siouxs, Chyennes and Arapayhoes on the other.²¹ Today the news come and from what source no one can tell, that the treaty has broke up in a big row, because the Government wouldn't concede to them such grounds and privileges as they (the Indians) saw fit to demand. The bruised and wounded of yesterdays row are quite convalescent today, and hopes are entertained that they are not hurt as bad as was at first supposed. Today we saw some dark objects far to the South that those who are best acquainted call buffalos. Although they are five or six miles off we can see them distinctly or enough so as to know they are of the bouvine specie. Freight, freight, freight, nothing but one continual string of freight teams "from dewy morn till dusky eve" bound for the West "Ho! westward the star of Empire takes its way." Who wouldn't go to the beautiful west. It must certainly be him, "Who's not spunk enough to travel beyong his native cot.

But stop in that old village, where Pa and Ma do stay. And know nothing of the beauties of the wild west country."

What a source of satisfaction it would be to me to hear from home, but in all probability it will be two months yet before any intelgence from home will reach me. Still I console myself with the belief that they are all well, and shall until I know to the contrary. Night comes and goes but todays stage (proper) does not arrive until about 4 o'clock on the morning of the

²¹ The Indian Bureau sent a peace commission under E. B. Taylor to Fort Laramie to negotiate a new treaty with the Sioux, which would allow safe passage along the Bozeman Trail. The peace commission was in session with the Indians from June 1 to June 15, 1866. Colonel Carrington's troops arrived at Fort Laramie in the midst of the negotiations. Learning that these troops were to establish a series of forts along the Bozeman Trail, most of the Sioux tribes followed their chief Red Cloud and left in anger. LeRoy R. Hafen and Francis Marion Young, *Fort Laramie*, (Glendale, 1938), pp. 345-346.

13th Our spirits are up and our pulse beats high for there is seats for three more passengers by taking seats on the outside of the coach. The weather is fair this morning with a cool stiff breeze from the west. At this writing we are at Plum Creek station²² waiting for dinner and everything looks promising for a pleasant trip to Denver. We reached Ft. McPherson²³ at 10 in the evening. Took supper at Cottonwood Spring²⁴ at 11.

14th Took breakfast at Alkali²⁵ about 10 miles west of Ft.

²² This station 36 miles west of Fort Kearny was an important home station having a telegraph office and a store on the premises. It was in the heart of the buffalo region. It was located about 10 miles southeast of Lexington, Nebraska in the southwest corner of Sec 8, T 8N, R 20W. ["The Pony Express: Across Nebraska from St. Joseph to Fort Laramie" Merrill Mattes and Paul Henderson], *Nebraska History*, Vol 41, No 2, (June 1960) p. 101.

²³ This post was established on September 18, 1863, at Cottonwood Springs southeast of North Platte, Nebraska. The post was named Cantonment McKean on September 27, 1863, then successively renamed Post at Cottonwood Springs, Fort Cottonwood and finally on February 26, 1866, Fort McPherson. The post was abandoned in April 1880. Louis Holmes, *Fort McPherson*, (Lincoln, 1963) pp. 2, 3, 23, 61.

²⁴ This two story ranch was built by Charles McDonald. It consisted of a store and ranch, stage station and a blacksmith shop. Sir Richard Burton spent the night here in 1860. In the morning, he says, "we proceeded by means of an 'eye-opener,' which even the abstemious judge could not decline, and the use of the skillet, to prepare for a breakfast composed of various abominations, especially cakes of flour and grease, molasses and dirt, disposed in pretty equal parts." It was one of the most important stage stations being midway between Fort Kearny and Julesburg.

This station was just east of Fort McPherson so Gurdon Lester would have reached it before arriving at Fort McPherson. His remark of arriving at Fort McPherson at 10 P. M. and then having dinner at 11 P. M. at Cottonwood Springs is confusing unless they retraced their route. Mattes and Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 103-104.

²⁵ Alkali Lake Stage Station was located about ten miles east of the present town of Ogallala, Nebraska. The station was raided on October 28, 1865, the Indians destroying considerable property and killing four men. General Herman H. Heath led troops in pursuit, eventually killing twenty-nine of the raiders. James Vincent Frederick, *Ben Holladay, The Stage Coach King* (Glendale, 1940) pp. 221, 290.

Heath.²⁶ We reached Ft. Sedgwick²⁷ better known as Julesburg²⁸ about 7 P. M. Took supper and rolled out again at 8, and was 10 hours driving 40 miles. The roads was very sandy and to drive fast was death to every passenger as well as the horses.

15th Stopped and took breakfast at Riverside Station,²⁹

²⁶ We can find no reference to this post. It might have been Elkhorn Station, fourteen or fifteen miles east of Alkali Station at O'Fallon's Bluffs. It is known that Elkhorn Station had a detachment of troops stationed there and it might have been referred to locally as Fort Heath.

It might have been named for General H. H. Heath of the 7th Iowa Cavalry (see above note). Or it might have been named after his son Lieutenant George W. Heath. According to the official records, Lieutenant Heath was accidentally killed at Cottonwood Springs on March 21, 1864. Holmes, *op. cit.*, p. 18, 22.

²⁷ This post, "called Camp Rankin, was established on the south bank of the South Platte River opposite the mouth of Lodgepole Creek, on May 19, 1864. On September 27, 1865, the name was changed to Fort Sedgewick, and on May 31, 1871 the troops were withdrawn." Prucha, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-107.

²⁸ Julesburg was one of the most important points along the trail. Altogether there were four different towns bearing the name. The original town, established in 1864 and taking its name from Jules Beni's trading post, was about ½ mile from Fort Sedgwick. It was completely destroyed during the Indian raid of 1865. The second, which sprang up following the destruction of the first and was abandoned in 1867, was located approximately 3½ miles east of Fort Sedgwick. It is the one referred to here. Mattes and Henderson, *op. cit.* pp. 106-107.

²⁹ This was probably Valley Stage Station, a home station and located south of the South Platte River opposite Sterling, Colorado. Margaret Long, *The Smoky Hill Trail* (Denver 1943), p. 160.

Dinner at Ft. Wicked.³⁰ Supper at Living Springs.³¹

16th This morning at ten we reached Denver City and put up at the Planters House.³² At 6 o'clock in the evening the coach started with five through passengers and three way. From Denver to Salt Lake they run hacks instead of coaches.

17th This morning Sunday we took breakfast at La Porte³³ on Cach La Poudre river. Here two of our through passengers were compelled to stop to attend to some business, which makes it all the better for us as there is but three of us now left in the hack. At Park Station we met the Eastern bound hack 5 days out from Salt Lake. They report everything all quiet and pleasant on the road. Now we are in the foothills of Rocky Mountains again and everything looks as natural as though it were but yesterday that I passed through here. The feed on the plains is excellent, better than I

³⁰ This was Godfrey Ranch, a famous overland stage station. It was one of the few places that withstood the Indian uprising of 1864. It was named for the bitter defense made by Holon Godfrey. It is located about 19 miles east of Brush, Colorado.

Bayard Taylor left Denver to return east in July, 1866. He writes, "At four o'clock in the morning, as daylight was creeping up under the clouds, we halted at a singular station. A wall of adobes three feet thick and six in height, pierced with loop-holes for musketry, confronted us. . . . Over the main entrance was the inscription 'Fort Wicked.' Entering the fortress, we found a long adobe cabin, one part of which was occupied as a store, well stocked with groceries, canned provisions and liquors. A bearded man, with a good-natured but determined air, asked us if we would stop for breakfast. It was Mr. Godfrey himself, the builder and defender of the fort, which is known all along the Platte as 'Godfrey's Ranch.' Here, last fall, he, his wife and 'another man,' withstood a siege of two days by three hundred Indians, who finally retreated after losing seventeen of their number. . . . The stable and corral are defended by similar intrenchments." Long, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-192.

³¹ Living Springs Stage Station was located on the Fort Morgan cut off to Denver. It was situated on the east bank of Wolf Creek being on the NE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec 15, T 2S, R 62W. "There are living springs, pools of clear water, in the dry bed of Comanche Creek a short distance southeast of the station site. They undoubtedly gave the stage station its name." *Ibid.*, p. 187.

³² This hotel was located at the corner of Blake and Sixteenth Streets. It was a two story frame structure but in 1863 it was considered the only 1st class hotel in the city. It was the headquarters for the Overland Stages. Root & Connelley, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

³³ La Porte was located 6 miles northwest of Fort Collins, Colorado. This place had been a trading post for French trappers as long ago as 1828. Long, *op. cit.*, pp. 218-219.

ever saw it in '60. We took dinner at Virginia Dale³⁴ and it was the best grub we have had since we left the Missouri river. We crossed the summit of the Black Hills³⁵ just at sun set and a more magnificent sight I never saw. We could look far to the left and see the snowy range shrouded with perpetual snow. We saw an abundance of game such as antelope, deer and prairie dogs.

18th We took breakfast at Coopers Creek³⁶ and had Elk steak for meat which was A No. 1 bet you. The roads since leaving the Black Hills has been very rough and rocky and we feel as though we were about shook to pieces. We reached Meadisin Bow³⁷ river at 12:30 noon and have got to go 40 miles farther before we can get any refreshments. Today it is quite cool riding as one might naturally suppose, for we are surrounded with snow on all sides. At no greater altitude than we are I am told that on the 15th of last month the snow was 4 feet deep on the level. As the snow is now melting the creeks are all very high.

Since we've crossed the Black Hills, mules have been our stage stock with but few exceptions, and as we draw up to a station the stock tender walks out on a snail pace and drives in the stock that is out grazing, puts them into a corral lasso them and after about an hour or two hours delay we are again on the way for another 10 or 15 mile drive, and then the same thing is enacted right over again. About 2 o'clock

³⁴ Virginia Dale Station was built in 1862. It was established by Joseph A. (Jack) Slade and named for his wife. It was located in the NW $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec 33, T 12N, R 71W. Long, *op. cit.*, 222-223.

³⁵ Known as the Black Hills from the dark green evergreens clothing them. They are not to be confused with the Black Hills of South Dakota and the northeast corner of Wyoming to which the name was later restricted. Georgia Willis Read & Ruth Gaines, ed., *Gold Rush*, 2 Vol. (New York, 1944) pp. 482-483.

³⁶ Cooper Creek Stage Station was 61 miles from Virginia Dale. This station was located about 14 miles southeast of McFadden, Wyoming. It was originally operated by a family named Cassidy. Maurine Carley, compiler, "Overland Stage Trail—Trek No. 1." *Annals of Wyoming*, Wyoming State Historical Society Vol. 33, no. 1, April 1961, p. 74, 89, 90, 91.

³⁷ Medicine Bow Station on the river of the same name was 28 miles from Cooper Creek and 8 miles from Fort Halleck. *Ibid*, 95-96, Root and Connelley *op. cit.*, end map.

P. M. we passed Ft. Hallock³⁸ which is situated on a little creek at the base of Medicine Bow Butte. We reached North Platte³⁹ about 7 o'clock in the afternoon. Took supper and was compelled to lay over until morning. The three passengers, Henry Wing and myself took lodging in the coach, and had a very good nights rest, the first since leaving Ft. Kearny. We was aroused about 2 o'clock in the morning, had to leave our good bed and cross the river on an old rope ferry. After a considerable delay we got off and reached Sage Creek⁴⁰ a little after sun rise.

19th Here we had another time of running down wild horses and lost not less than one hour and a half. Nine miles further on we reached Pine Grove Station⁴¹ where but a few days ago a shooting effray came off. But one man was shot and he was the first to draw weapons. One ball entered the left eye and came out forward of the right ear, the other shot taking effect in the right breast. He was alive when I saw him and will probably get well. All the boys at these stations keep themselves well supplied with wild game such as bear, elk, deer and antelope. The country from North Platte to Green river, a distance of nearly 200 miles, will be a dreary desolate waste producing little but wild sage and greasewood. We didn't get any breakfast until nearly 3 P. M. and another as hungry a set of mortals would be hard to find.

³⁸ Here was located Elk Mountain Stage Station, 36 miles northwest from Cooper Creek. Fort Halleck was established July 20, 1863 and was abandoned July 4, 1866. It was built by Company A of 11th Volunteer Ohio Cavalry to protect travelers on the trail. In 1865 there were a number of Indian attacks along the route near Fort Halleck. It preceded Ft. Halleck, Nevada (1867-86.) Prucha, *op. cit.*, p. 77; Root and Connelley, *op. cit.*, and map.

³⁹ North Platte Stage Station was 30 miles west on the trail from Fort Halleck. It was located about 5 or 6 miles north of Saratoga, Wyoming. It was a resting place for emigrants, with good grass and water for their stock. Carley, *op. cit.* p. 99.

⁴⁰ This station was 14 miles west of North Platte Station. It was built of aspen and pine logs, with a sod roof. The station was burned three times by the Ute Indians. Maurine Carley, comp., "Overland Stage trail—Trek No. 2" *Annals of Wyoming*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (April 1961) p. 199.

⁴¹ Pine Grove was 10 miles west of Sage Creek Station and was a home station. The station consisted of a building with a number of rooms which included sleeping quarters for women, a kitchen and dining room. Other buildings were the blacksmith shop, a bunkhouse for men and a barn. It was abandoned for a time during Indian attacks in 1865. *Ibid.*, p. 201.

We crossed the summit of the Rocky Mountains through Bridger Pass⁴² about 2 in the afternoon. We reached Dug Spring Station⁴³ 40 miles west of Sulphur⁴⁴ about midnight. The stock was all out in the sand hills and couldn't be found so we were obliged to lay there until 5 in the morning.

20th This morning at (9) nine we breakfasted at La Clede Station.⁴⁵ Had biscuit, butter, sorghum, dried peaches, antelop-steak, and coffee for our repast, all for \$1.50. Now we are on the celebrated Bitter Creek, noted for it's bearanness, bad water and alkali dust. Coal is found here in great quantities. We took dinner at Point of Rocks,⁴⁶ and a great old dinner it was. The cook—an Irish Bidy was fat—plump and greasy and one would judge from outward appearances that *soap* had long since been bloted out of her vocabulary.

At this post we got rid of a drunken driver, and took another on, more cruel to animals and drove with greater wrecklessness and desperation if possible than the one we had before him. If I ever rode in fear it was from Point of Rocks to Green River a distance of 50 miles. When within about 5 miles of Green River the King bolt broke and the mules and fore wheels of the coach went on, while the passengers and coach were dumped in the bed of Bitter Creek. We reached

⁴² Bridgers Pass was named after its discoverer, Jim Bridger. It was four miles west of Pine Grove Station. Bridger Stage Station was located just west of the pass itself. *Ibid*, pp. 203-204.

⁴³ Dug Spring Station was located 36 miles west of Sulphur Spring Station. It was sometimes known as Barrel Springs or as Wild Rose Station. *Ibid*, p. 209.

⁴⁴ Sulphur Spring Station was 10 miles west of Bridger Stage Station. In August 1863 the first large scale battle was fought here by Indians in an attempt to halt migration westward along this trail. A wagon train had halted to fill water casks when it was attacked. A detachment of troops under Major Morse guarding the station, rushed to the rescue. The major reported there were 29 white men, women and children killed; 17 severely wounded; and 10 less critically wounded. It was estimated about 90 Indians had been killed and about the same number wounded. On June 16, 1865, one hundred Indians raided Sulphur Springs and made away with the stock. *Ibid*, pp. 205-207.

⁴⁵ LaCledé Station was 15 miles west of Dug Spring Station. LaCledé was built of native brown sandstone and was constructed to act as a fort. It consisted of barracks, a corral and a gun tower. *Ibid*, pp. 209-210.

⁴⁶ Point of Rocks was 40 miles west along the trail from LaCledé Station. It was a home station and was located at the modern town of Point of Rocks, Wyoming. *Ibid*, pp. 212-213.

Green River⁴⁷ at 2 o'clock in the night ferried across onto the West Shore and laid there until morning.

- 21st Took our regular morning rations and at 7 o'clock we changed our baggage into another coach and rolled again over the hills towards the Wasatch Mts. and Millersville. We ferried Black's Fork at what is known as "Lone Tree."⁴⁸ Between Black's Fork and Millersville, I found some of the most beautiful specimens of agate that I ever saw.

We took dinner at Millersville⁴⁹ 12 miles East of Ft. Bridger⁵⁰ and drove to Bear River⁵¹ and put up for the night as the driver was afraid to cross the river until day light the river being very high and the bridge very poor. Today we saw some Indians the first since leaving Omaha but they were all friendly and well disposed and had no inclination to meddle with us.

- 22nd Left Bear River Station at 5 this morning and drove to Yellow Creek⁵² where we had to lay two hours to hunt for stage stock. Here we saw a man with his family—a wife and three children—footing it through to the States. Two of the children had to be carried and the oldest a boy of four years old was obliged to walk. They were dirty, lousy ragged and such squalid poverty I never before saw. They were from Silver Creek near Salt Lake and had lived with the Mormans for the last ten years. He was not a Mormon and the result was they would steal from him as fast as he

⁴⁷ Green River was 42½ miles west along the trail from Point of Rocks. It was also a home station. It was located at the modern city of Green River, Wyoming. Maurine Carley, "Overland Stage Trail—Trek No. 3," *Annals of Wyoming*, Vol. 34, No. 2, Oct. 1962, pp. 241-244.

⁴⁸ Lone Tree Station was 12 miles west of Green River, Wyoming. *Ibid*, p. 244.

⁴⁹ Millersville was 40 miles west of Lone Tree Station. It was located 13 miles east of Fort Bridger, Wyoming. *Ibid*, p. 249.

⁵⁰ Fort Bridger, originally James Bridger's "frontier trading post located on Black's Fork of the Green River in the southwest corner of the present state of Wyoming, was rebuilt as a United States military post in the summer of 1858, by the troops sent to settle the Mormon trouble. The post was occupied until November 6, 1890." Maurine Carley, comp., "Oregon Trail Trek No. Nine." *Annals of Wyoming*, Vol. 31 No. 2 (October 1959) p. 220-225.

⁵¹ Bear River Stage Station is now the Myers Ranch. It was located on Bear River about 9 miles south of Evanston, Wyoming. *Ibid*, p. 225.

⁵² Yellow Creek station was 9 miles west of Bear River Station. *Ibid*, p. 214.

could gather any thing together, or at least that was his story for it. Their whole outfit consisted of a frying-pan—coffee pot a little sack of flour and not to exceed two pounds of bacon, and their cloths and bedding was of the most scanty kind. When I see such destitution, degradation and poverty I rejoice within myself that I enjoy that blessed freedom which single life imparts: and have no little ones to beg for bread.

We passed through Echo Canon and the road was the most dangerous of any we had passed over before, but the scenery was grand beyond discription. No tourist can discribe it, no artist can pencil it. The eye must see it to form the least conception of it's grandure. It was in this canon that Brigham Young erected such formiabile defenses to repel the United States⁵³ troops in 1857 when they were out on what was then termed the "Mormon Expedition." We reached Weber River⁵⁴ at (12) noon,—took dinner and waited until 5 P. M. for a stage to take us on to Salt Lake a distance of 50 miles. After we got started all felt confident that we would reach the City before morning. But we only drove to the second station when in commenced raining and there we remained until day light the next morning.

23rd We started at the break of day from Wasatch Station and crossed over the summit of the Wasatch mountains. The roads were very slippery and sidling and we were compelled for our own safty to walk a good portion of the time until we got over the range.

⁵³ In the fall of 1857 United States soldiers moved west to subdue the Mormons. The troops arrived at Fort Bridger in November only to find the Mormons had left the place a blazing ruin. The Mormons retreated to strong entrenchments in Echo Canyon.

In the spring emissaries patched things up and the troops moved unopposed into Salt Lake Valley to establish Camp Floyd, later succeeded by Camp Douglas. Merrill J. Mattes, *Indians, Infants and Infantry, Andrew and Elizabeth Burt on the Frontier*, (Denver 1960) p. 59.

⁵⁴ Pronounced WEE-ber, this station was located $\frac{1}{2}$ mile south-east of present Echo, Utah, and it was originally built in 1853. *Utah, A Guide to the State*. American Guide Series. (New York, 1941). pp. 356-357.

We passed through Silver Creek canon⁵⁵ where the road was the worst we had yet seen, but nothing in comparison to what we found while passing through Parley's canon⁵⁶ down into Salt Lake valley. I looked upon it after our passing over the road, that the storm was an interposition of Providence for had we attempted to of made the passage in the night our destruction would of been inevitable, as the night was very dark, the roads crooked and sidling, and then to add still greater horror to the scene there was a howling river just below dashing and foaming over rocks which to of fallen into, or plunged into by the upsetting of a coach, would been certain death. But we had day light to make the frightful decent of the Wasatch mountains and miracuously escaped all dangers that was strown along our pathway. We stoped at Mountain Dell⁵⁷ and took breakfast with a lady of the Mormon persuasion. We joged along after breakfast and reached Great Salt Lake City the "City of the Saints" about 10 in the morning, and put up at the Salt Lake House.⁵⁸ We remained in the City until the next day at 10 o'clock.

While in the city I met a few of my old acquaintances who took pleasure in showing me the beauties of the place. Strawberries harvest was at its highth, and I reveled in strawberries and ice-cream to my hearts content.

24th Sunday amongst the Saints in the city. Every-

⁵⁵ On June 26, 1867, William H. Jackson recorded in his diary, "In going down Silver Creek Canon Sam took the horses around by another road to avoid tolls. Caught up with us again just as we crossed the Weber." Jackson was traveling from west to east, driving a herd of horses from California to Nebraska; the previous year he had traveled through the region, going west. LeRoy R. and Ann W. Hafen, ed., *The Diaries of William Henry Jackson, Frontier Photographer*. Vol. X, The Far West and Rockies Historical Series, 1820-1875. (Glendale, 1959) pp. 181.

⁵⁶ This canyon, next north of Mills Creek, through which U. S. 30 now runs, replaced the original Emigration Canyon—the route by which the original Mormon group entered the Salt Lake Valley. This new route eliminated many steep grades and provided better forage for animals. *Ibid*, pp. 180n; p. 91n; Charles Kelly, "Gold Seekers on the Hastings Cutoff," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XX, No. 1 (Jan. 1952) p. 13.

⁵⁷ Mountain Dell was located about 14 miles east from Salt Lake City. Root and Connelley, *op. cit.*, end map.

⁵⁸ Salt Lake House was a noted Mormon hostelry. Andrew F. Rolle, ed., *The Road to Virginia City—Diary of James Knox Polk Miller*, (Norman, Oklahoma 1960) p. 33.

thing is as quiet as a grave yard among the Mormons. The hour of starting arrives . . . Eleven passengers in and on a Concord coach go thundering through the streets at a 10 mile gait on their way to Virginia City Montana.⁵⁹ Our road passed along near the shore of Great Salt Lake and through several nice Mormon town. We had a very good opportunity of seeing the desert beauties while they were going to and from church. We stoped at Ogden City and took supper, and had as good entertainment as one could wish. We traveled all night and reached Bear River⁶⁰ in good time for breakfast on the

25th Our repast was rather light, but the price we had to pay for it—\$2.00—made up for all the deficiency. Here we change our coach for an old rickty hack which would be an imposition upon the traveling public to ask six persons to ride in, but we were compeled to take ten (10) inside and three on top. Our suffering had already been great, but now they were ten fold greater. Peace, comfort and luxuries from this time on are strangers to us all. It is little that we get to eat, and what we do get we have to pay the exorbitant price of \$2.00 a meal.

26th Nothing worthy of note came under my observation today for I can think of nothing only the misery we are in and the manner in which we are knocked and jamed about. We came through Portneuf Canon and saw the identical place where on the night of the 13th July 1864; eight (8) highwaymen actaked the coach and killed all but one passenger and robbed the coach of \$65,000. It is a fit place for highwaymen and desperadoes, and after a person has seen the place and knows it's history it would be impossible for a person of ordinary nerve to pass it without feeling a little

⁵⁹ Ben Holladay started running stage coaches from Salt Lake City to Virginia City, Montana July 1, 1864 and took over most of the business from competitors. He sold out to Wells Fargo Co. in 1866. Root and Connelley, *op. cit.*, p. 55 and 580.

⁶⁰ Bear River starts in NE Utah, runs north into Wyoming (see fn 51), cuts west into Utah, then back into Wyoming, goes west into Idaho, and then turns south, running back into Utah into Salt Lake. Lester thus crossed this river twice in his travels.

timid or a slight sense of insecurity.⁶¹

27th Again we cross the Rocky mountains.—The summit onto the eastern slope. The last twenty-four hours travel has been remarkable for its canons. We passed through Beaver, Black Tail, and several smaller ones that are not name, or that I didn't hear the name of. Stinking-water canon we came throug in the night, and reached Prices Ranch at the mouth of the canon about 3 o'clock in the morning when we laid over about four hours, and took breakfast.

28th Today at 3:30 P. M. we reached the far famed town of Virginia City Montana⁶² Territory and put up at the Delevan House.⁶³ Virginia is not what I expected it in some respects. There is a great many vacant houses, which look as though business was on the decline. The most of buildings of this place are log and look as though they were rather hastily constructed. Many are leaving every day and rushing to Helena which is about 120 miles distant. Merchandise and provisions are cheaper here than I expected to find them, at least 25%.

There is some mining still going on in Alder Gulch and as near as I can learn what few claims are being worked pay moderately well. The wages for common laborers is \$6.00 per day and hands are scarce at that for every body rushes off on a stampede gait for the new mines that are being discovered from time to time.

29th This morning I expected to take the coach for Helena, but failed to make connections in consequence of oversleeping, as I had not had any rest since leaving Salt Lake. Morphius took hold of me firmly and held

⁶¹ According to Thomas J. Dimsdale this robbery occurred July 13, 1865 instead of 1864. The overland coach from Virginia City heading for Salt Lake City was held up by eight desperadoes. Four passengers died immediately and a fifth died later of injuries. Two other passengers survived, one being injured. The driver of the stage was not injured. He later was implicated in the robbery and hanged in Denver. Prof. Thos. J. Dimsdale, *The Vigilantes of Montana*, (Norman, Okla. 1953) p. 252.

⁶² In May 1863, one of the greatest discoveries of gold was made at Alder Gulch and Virginia City was started.

Within two years the population along this gulch reached 10,000. Virginia City, the first incorporated town in Montana, became its second capital from 1865-1876. It is estimated that \$120,000,000 in gold was taken out of Alder Gulch. Rolle, ed., *op. cit.*, 77n.

⁶³ Delevan House—see illustration, 304.

me in his fond embrace until a late hour in the morning, consequently I remain here longer than I expected. I took a ramble through the mining claims today, and find that the character of the diggings differ very much from those of Cal.

There seems to be no indications of any "*wash*" in many places, nothing only a '*slide*' or '*rush*' from the mountains above. The gold also looks as though it came only a short distance, as it is rough, rugged, and of a coarse nature generally. The quartz around Virginia is reported to be very rich, and what little I have seen look very well, but I judge it to be assorted rock. The country around Virginia is of a mountainous character although the mountains are not very high. The farming country is quite extensive but very little done in that line as yet. Irrigation is necessary for crops and vegetables to do well.

Timber is *scarce* in the vicinity of the city, and fire wood is no small item in house keeping.

Lumber is worth 7 or 8 cents a foot and very scarce at that price. The inhabitants of this Territory are very unsettled in regard to in regard to business, as there is but few that I can find that like the country, and intend to make it there permanent home. All have come here expecting but a few years at the most and all the improvements of the country are but temporary.

30th This morning at 3 o'clock we took the Holliday line for Helena and made the drive of 120 miles in 12 hours. The road is very rough in many places, and a 10 mile gale bid fair for a smash up; but we met with no mishap, only to have one of the "*swing*" horses fall and be run over by the coach and nearly killed. We got the "*cayuse*" up at last, and the driver "pounded him on the back" until we reached the station which was about 5 miles distance.

There is three line of coaches running between Virginia City and Helena and the opposition is very strong. The fare had been \$25.00 and opposition had run so high as to bring fare down to \$5.00 and some made the trip for \$2.50.

We reached Helena⁶⁴ at 3 P. M., the place we had looked for with great impatience for days,—the place of our destination.

Helena is very unlike Virginia, for here all is bustle and confusion. The streets are thronged with freight teams from Salt Lake, Cal., Oregon and Ft. Benton. The side walks are crowded with "pilgrims," "tenderfeet," "Selfrisers," "webfeet"—and natives all looking for some friend to lone them a stake, or to give them a "show" in some business. Building is going on brisk, and things assume altogether a different appearance when compared with Virginia.

July 1st Today is Sunday in the mines and everything is as quiet as a —, I like to of said grave yard—but a general training, or a Methodist camp meeting would come nearer to expressing it.

Business houses of all kinds are open, and everything is more lively on Sunday than any other day of the week. Auctions sales are all the rage, and stock of all kinds sell very low.

Aug. 22nd Left Helena in a lumber wagon bound for Ft. Benton. We camped on a branch of Silver Creek⁶⁵ and had rather of a wet camp as it rained quite hard all night.

23rd We camped at the Spring near Dearborn river where there is not a stick of wood, but an abundance of "buffalo-chips."

24th Crossed the Dearborn⁶⁶ early in the morning and

⁶⁴ Gold was first discovered at the Helena site on July 14, 1864 by four prospectors known as "The Georgians." They called the gulch Last Chance Gulch, because it was the last place in which they would prospect before returning to Virginia City for supplies. By 1869 more than \$17,000,000 in gold had been taken out of the surrounding area. Muriel Sibell Wolle, *Montana Pay Dirt, A Guide to the Mining Camps of the Treasure State*, (Denver, 1963) pp. 68-70.

⁶⁵ Silver Creek was called Willow Creek on the map made by Captain Mullan while he was constructing the wagon road. The later maps after 1870 show this as Willow Creek. The Mullan Road was constructed 1858-1861 by Captain John Mullan, from Fort Benton to Fort Walla Walla, a distance of 624 miles. Frank W. Hakola, ed., *Frontier Omnibus* (Missoula, Montana 1962) p. 232n.

⁶⁶ The Dearborn River had to be ferried. When Herman Francis Reinhart ferried it in 1866, the cost was \$3.00. Doyce B. Nunis, Jr., ed., *The Golden Frontier, The Recollections of Herman Francis Reinhart, 1851-1869* (Austin, 1962) p. 254.

camped on Sun river, near the place where men were murdered but a few days before.

25th We forded Sun river just below the old Government farm⁶⁷ and drove about 30 miles and stoped an took supper at the Alkali Springs and then drove a few miles and camped on the open plain far from any water or timber. Here we had a terrific thunder storm, which made some of the boys squat in low places for personal safety. By day light all was fair and we was again on our way to Ft. Benton the head of navigation on the Missouri river where we expect to embark for the States.

26th Today is Sunday, but in a country like this, Sunday is no more respected than any other day of the week, and therefore we are traveling. About noon we reached Buffalo Spa. and all of us nearly choked to death. Here there was plenty of water but it was so strongly impregnated with alkali that we couldn't drink it so we let the mules rest a little while and then shoved on to the fort which is about 6 miles.

We reached Benton at 4 o'clock being a trifle over four days making the drive of 120 miles. We thought we made good time as we had thirteen men and their baggage and provisions, and but three mules to haul us. The most of the way the rout is destitute of timber and after leaving Sun river there is no water for 60 miles and not a stick of wood. After leaving Helena we traveled in the mountains for about 50 miles and then struck an open plain which has some day been the hearing grounds of thousands of buffalos as their bones and other indications show.

Ft. Benton since the discovery of the northern gold mines has become quite a point to ship to and

⁶⁷ The Sun River was the Medicine River of Lewis and Clark. It falls into the Missouri from the west immediately above the series of falls on the latter, at the city of Great Falls. In 1866 Herman Reinhardt paid \$2.50 to ferry over here. The Old Government farm was a government agency maintained for the Blackfeet Indians. *Idem*; Hakola *op. cit.*, p. 232n.

from. But before the gold was discovered Ft. Benton⁶⁸ was nothing only a trading post for the Northwestern Fur company. There is now three business houses one eating or boarding house and 15 or 20 cabins occupied by French half breeds, trappers and their squaws—the latter of which is very numerous. I stayed in Benton a little over two days and that was two days longer than I wanted to stay as it was a dreary desolate looking place to one who has no interest there. And as for timber, there is none nearer than 25 miles and that is in an Easterly direction in the Mountains across the river. The river at Benton is quite narrow and at this season of year is very shallow, so much so that the steamer we expected to find at Benton had left some two weeks before we reached it, and dropped down to Cow's Island⁶⁹ some 200 miles below, in order to get over some bad rapids before the water become to low for navigation.

One thing that is carried on to some considerable extent in Benton, is "Mackinaw" building. Nothing is to be seen, heard or talked of only "mackinaw" from daylight until dark.⁷⁰ If a load of passengers come into the place, they have the greatest of attention paid to them and urgent appeals made to them to go down on this mackinaw or that one, or some splendid one that is now on the stocks but will sail in a few. I think there was at least twenty different men came to me and wanted I should take passage with them. But as

⁶⁸ Fort Benton of the American Fur Company (formerly Fort Lewis) was built in 1850 by Major Alexander Culbertson. It was below the Great Falls of the Missouri at the confluence of that river and the Teton River. It was the last navigable port on the upper Missouri and as such became the river capital of traffic for goods being shipped to the Montana mines. Numis, *op. cit.*, p. 252n.

⁶⁹ Cow Island is 198 miles below Fort Benton. Above Cow Island the river traveled over a rocky terrain and consisted of a series of drops which form rapids. William E. Lass, *Steamboating on the Upper Missouri* (Lincoln, 1962), pp. 1, 177.

⁷⁰ "Mackinaws were flat-bottomed craft constructed of cut lumber and they had pointed bows, squared sterns, and low gunwales. They ranged from forty to seventy-five feet in length, from eight to twelve feet in breadth, and had a draft of six to nine inches. This boat, used by French voyageurs in the Lake Superior region and named after the Straits of Mackinac, was first introduced to the Missouri River early in the nineteenth century. Mackinaws were ordinarily manned by five or six men, all of whom were rowers save the steersman, who handled the rudder from the stern and commanded the boat. The rowers were supposed to keep the boat in the strongest current and deepest channel; they depended upon the velocity of the current for their speed." *Ibid.*, p. 53.

I and my three friends, Downhouer, Beiman and Curtiss was going down on the Steamer *Luella*,⁷¹ I concluded to go with them, Mackinaw chaps—in a horn.

As we take deck passage we necessarily have to board ourselves and we lay in accordingly for fifteen days trip. Our "outfit" consists of Flour, bacon, coffee, sugar, oysters, caned fruits of various kinds viz., Peaches strawberries blackberries whortleberries, quinces, damsons and various other kinds to numerous to mention and say nothing about the sardines, and "vinegar" that we took along. As the steamer is at Cow Island we have to go dow(n) to her in an open boat of the Mackinaw specie.

Accordingly twenty-six passengers of us set sail on the

29th for the steamer that is 200 miles below. Our boat has 4 oars and a rudder and the men all take turns at the oars, except a gentleman by the name of Hough and myself who acts as pilot and steersman. We made the trip between Benton and Cow Island in 24 running hours all safe and sound but badly mixed with water as the rain came down in copious showers and we were obliged to sit and take it and flatter ourselves that it was nothing but a shower anyway. The scenery along on the upper Missouri is picturesque and grand,—far beyond discription. The game we found in great abundance, such as deer, antelope, sheep, bear, and wolves. The latter in great abundance and very bold and impudent they were too, and nights they used to serenade us with their sweetest songs.

⁷¹ Captain Grant Marsh was master of the *Luella*. She was the first boat of which he had ever been in command. The *Luella* under Captain Marsh left St. Louis on the 18th of April [1866] with a cabinful of passengers and 113 tons of freight, chiefly mining machinery and staple groceries. On June 17 she arrived at Fort Benton. During the summer the *Luella* conveyed goods from Fort Union to Fort Benton.

Joseph Mills Hanson, in his book *Conquest of the Missouri* based upon the recollections of Captain Marsh states "It was now late in August and the *Luella* was the only boat left at Benton, for never before had one dared stay until so late in the season." He says she finally left Benton on September 2nd 1866 with "230 miners and \$1,250,000 in gold dust, the most valuable cargo of treasure ever carried down the Missouri River." Lester's diary shows that the *Luella* had moved 250 miles down the river to Cow Island long before this. Joseph Mills Hanson *The Conquest of the Missouri* (Chicago, 1916), pp. 70, 72, 77, 80.

Sept. 3 The steamer started from Cow Island and dropped down four miles there to wait for some more passengers that are coming down the river. Before she landed, she struck a bar and got off after two hours hard sparing.

4th We started in good season in the morning and run very nice until about 10—o'clock when we struck a sand bar and laid there until night before we got afloat again.

5th Today everything has gone lovely and we have made about 100 miles. The river is very crooked, full of snags and very difficult to navigate.

6th Today we made a very good run and grounded some less than a dozen of times. We tied up at a trading post of the Northwestern Fur Co. called Ft. Hawley.⁷²

Here there was a plenty of Indians of the Crow tribe and many of the passengers and deck hands took exquisite pleasure in fondling the squaws, and paid them in blankets, beads, thread ec.

7th Started early and grounded at 10 o'clock where we stay the rest of the night without getting over the bar.

8th This morning all were ordered to go ashore and walk, to lighten up the steamer so as to get over the bar. After all were ashore she run onto the bar and after two hours sparing she made the riffle and then took us aboard again. The weather is very cold and chilly and the wind blows hard from the North almost daily and often throws us onto sand-bars, which takes

⁷² In 1865, the U. S. government refused to renew any of Chouteau's licenses to trade with Indian agencies or military posts because of his Southern sympathies, and Chouteau withdrew from the river trade. In March 1865, Charles Chouteau, who had recently succeeded his father as manager of the company sold the posts and goods of Pierre Chouteau, Jr. & Co. to James Hubbell and Alpheus Hawley. Hubbell and Hawley with two other men reorganized the company as the Northwestern Fur Company on March 23, 1865. For 5 years the company maintained five trading posts, including Fort Hawley, in Dakota and Montana.

Fort Hawley was situated in the bottom under the bluffs on the south side of the Missouri River, just about 20 miles above the Musselshell. Lucille M. Kane, "New Light on the Northwestern Fur Company," *Minnesota History* Winter 1955, p. 325. Elliot Coues, ed., *Forty Years a Fur Trader on the Upper Missouri—The Personal Narrative of Charles Larpenteur* (N. Y., 1898), p. 366, 375.

hours to get off. We grounded several times during the day and had to do some considerable sparing. We struck shore about 5 o'clock to take on wood and lay up for the night. A heavy body of timber skirted the river and the hunters betook themselves to the woods in search of game, which we found in great abundance, and had the pleasure of bringing down three large bull elk. For about two hours or more the excitement ran high as everybody that could raise a shot-gun, revolver, or gun of any kind was out to take a hand in the sport which was huge sport, "bet you," and did not die out until long after dark; and when all were in bed they could not refrain from talking of the exploits of some, and the awkwardness of others until long after midnight.

- 9th Today our travel has been slow making not to exceed 30 miles. Mackinaws pass us every day, and glide along smoothly, while we spend two-thirds of our time getting wood, hunting chanel and sparing off sand bars.
- 10th Nothing worthy of note ocured today, but we have our usual amount of sounding and sparing. We tied up for the night at the mouth of Milk river and had to remove driftwood and rocks in order to make the passage through a slough the next morning.
- 11th Started early as usual and traveled slower than usual as we had to back down throug a very narrow passage. The wind blew very hard and made it difficult to keep in the channel.

A considerable fun was had this morning in shooting at an elk that had swam the river and was unable to raise the bank after reaching the shore. There was at least 25 shots fired at him before any of them took effect. After he was killed, a boat was lowered and the elk brought on board.

About 8 o'clock this morning the cry was given of man "overboard." The same had often been given before in order to create a little sensation, but this time it proved to true. A Frenchman—deck passenger—was standing on the guards, when he lost his ballance and

fell overboard.⁷³ Every effort was made to rescue him but all to no purpose. Yawls and skiffs were sent out to search for him but the body could not be found after six hours dilligent search, and it was left to bleach upon the sands or be the prey of the wolf or coyote. After the boat tied up for the night all skied for the timber to hunt, and two got lost and was obliged to take refuge in trees to save themselves from wolves and bears and were compelled to remain there until morning. The boys killed a nice elk this evening the fattest one that has yet been killed.

12th The weather is fair and things open well for a good days run as the Captain says there is good river ahead. The boat stoped to wood and every body rushes out to hunt as usual. The steamer started and after running a few miles they found that three men were left behind, and in waiting for them we lost two hours. We are now in the midst of the greatest game country that I ever saw. Buffalo, elk, deer, antelope, bear, wolf, beaver, in fact everything that inhabits the western wilds is found here in great abundance.

Buffalo and elk we see in heards by the thousand. There has been some pretty shooting today at buffalo as they stood on the shore or were coming down to drink. We also killed one wolf that attempted to swim the river just ahead of the steamer. The boat stoped to wood just at evening, when everybody lent a hand and we was delayed only a few moments. We tied up for the night about dark after running 125 miles. This has been the best days traveling we have done since coming on the steamer. All are anxious to reach Ft. Union as many are out of grub and depend upon the charity of others for their subsistence.

13th We got quite an early start this morning and hope to reach Ft. Union this evening, which we can do, should we have as good river as yesterday. But no one can tell what a day may bring forth or what the river may be any farther than can be seen ahead.

⁷³ Hanson tells of this drowning a little differently. He states when the *Luella* reached the mouth of Milk River, 347 miles below Benton, she ran aground on a sandbar. A passenger named McClellan while watching the crew engaged in dislodging her, accidentally fell overboard. Although the water was barely two feet deep, the current was swift. He was carried off his feet, and so heavy was his treasure belt that he was dragged down and drowned. His body was never recovered. Hanson, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

The river is wide in many places and the consequences is that the water is shallow and the channel difficult to find. About 10 o'clock the wind blew us onto a snag, and broke one of the rudders, and we had to lay up until 4 o'clock before starting again. After we got under way we run about 20 miles and tied up for the night. The nights are cold and windy and many of the deck passengers suffer with cold for the want of sufficient bedding. For several days we have been North of the 48 parallel of latitude.

14th Everything went lovely and we reached Ft. Union about 11 o'clock. Ft. Union⁷⁴ is a trading post of the N. W. F. Co. and was erected in 1831. It is a splendid fortification and was erected at a great expense. The steamer layed up at the Fort about six hours in order to let those trade and get provis. that were in need of them. After leaving Ft. Union we run down to Ft. Buford⁷⁵ a military post formerly called Ft. Williams, which has one company, Co. 13th U. S. Regulars, commanded by Col. Rankin⁷⁶ where we laid all night.

I went up to the quarters which lays back from the river about one half mile. Here we hear startling accounts of Indians making attacks upon mackinaws, of which some are captured and the passengers killed and scalped and their bodys horribly mutilated.

Several citizens employed around the forts have been killed within the last week.

⁷⁴Fort Union was constructed in 1828 by the American Fur Company. It became the leading fur trading post on the upper Missouri. The fort, situated about 3 miles above the mouth of the Yellowstone River, "was garrisoned as a military post from 1864 to 1865 when the army abandoned it." Prucha, *op. cit.*, p. 113; Ray H. Mattison, "The Military Frontier on the Upper Missouri," *Nebraska History*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Sept. 1956), p. 169.

⁷⁵Fort Buford was established on June 13, 1866, on the left bank of the Missouri River near the mouth of the Yellowstone as part of a plan for a chain of military posts between Fort Leavenworth and the Columbia River. The post played an active part in settling Indian troubles and in establishing the Indians upon reservations. It was occupied continuously until its abandonment in 1895. Prucha, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

⁷⁶William Galloway Rankin of Pennsylvania, appointed from Washington Territory to U. S. Military Academy. Captain of the 13th Infantry May 14, 1861; transferred to the 31st Infantry Sept. 21, 1866; brevetted Lieutenant Colonel March 18, 1865, and honorably discharged at his own request Dec. 31, 1870. Heitman, *op. cit.*, pp. 815-816.

The commander of the post gave us warning of the Indians depredations and also instructions how to proceed. The Capt of the steamer at once ordered defences put up around the pilot house and engineers department.

While laying at Bufort 14 passengers that had got enough of Mackinaw took passage on the steamer. We also took on two Crees (*good Ingins*) that had come up from Ft. Berthold to Bufort to bring up the mail. Our boat is now about as full as is comfortable both on deck and in cabin.

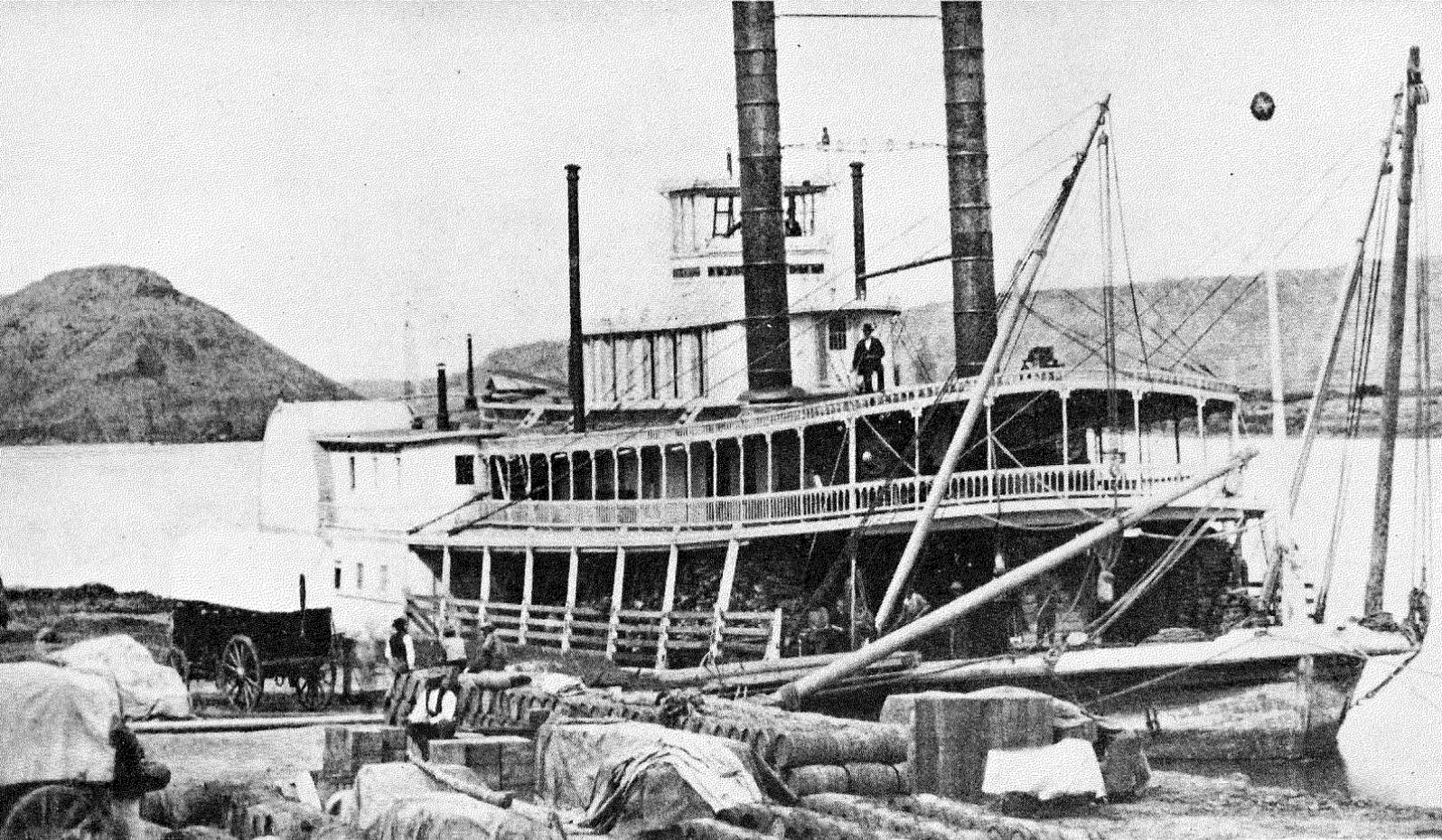
We are now at the mouth of the Yellowstone which affords about as much water as the Missouri and we flatter ourselves that our "sparring"⁷⁷ "turning on the nigger,"⁷⁸ "starter," "sloper," "backer" and the like that we have been hearing for more than two weeks is now at an end. We hope so at least.

15th We didn't leave the fort until late this morning and only made a short run, not to exceed 10 miles. The wind sprang up about 2 o'clock and would blow us onto the shore and sand bars in spite of all we could do, so we necessarily had to lay up for the day. In consequence of the hostility of the Indians every precaution is taken for the safety of the boat and passengers. When the boat stops to wood, the passengers are requested to stand guard around them to protect them from Indians

16th This morning every one got up shivering and commenting upon the cold night they had just got through.

⁷⁷ The practice of sparring "a boat over an obstructing shoal was a common one in the old steamboating days on the Missouri. The spars were long, heavy timbers resembling telegraph poles, and a set of them, two in number, were always carried on the sides of the boat near the bow ready for use. When she became lodged on a bar, the spars were raised and set in the river bottom, like posts, their tops inclined somewhat toward the bow. Above the line of the deck each was rigged with a tackle block over which a manilla cable was passed, one end being fastened to the gunwale of the boat and the other end wound around the capstan. As the capstan was turned and the paddle-wheel revolved, the boat was thus lifted and pushed forward. Then the spars were re-set farther ahead and the process repeated until the boat was at last literally lifted over the bar." This process was called, "grasshoppering." Hanson, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-87.

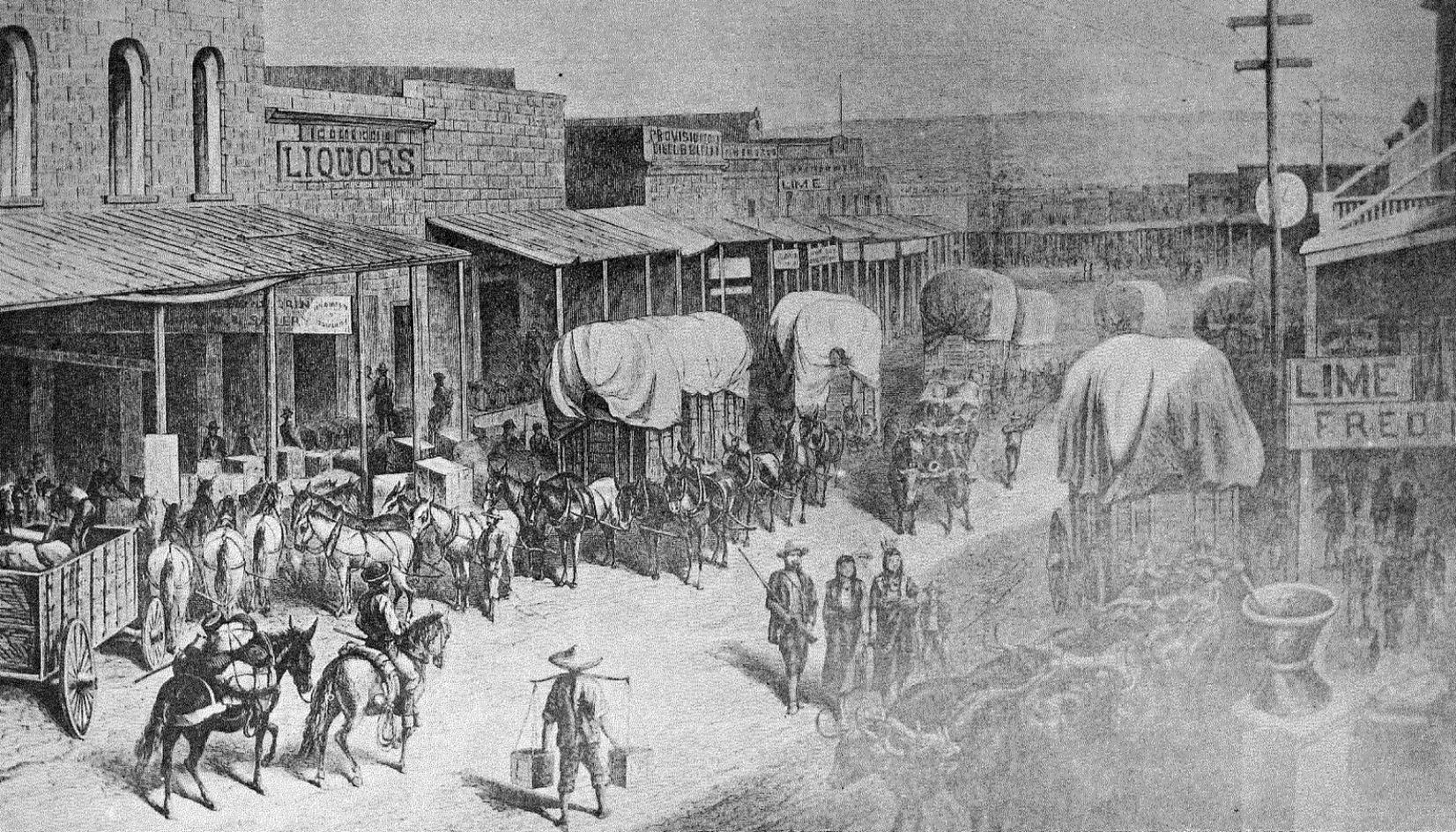
⁷⁸ This term refers to the capstan which was often used for pulling steamers over snags and shallows.



Fort Benton levee (Photograph courtesy of the Montana Historical Society).



Mackinaw boat, *Montana*, at Fort Benton (Photograph
courtesy of the Montana Historical Society)



Wagon Train in Helena, Montana (Harpers Weekly 1878).



Early street scene in Virginia City, Montana (Photograph courtesy of Montana Historical Society)

We have run by several deserted or captured Mackinaws and what has become of the men that were in them, we know not, but suppose them to be killed and scalped by Indians.

The day has been very cold and cloudy, but all were in pretty good spirits as we have been making pretty good time in getting towards civilization and the land of plenty.

About 4 o'clock we had quite an Indian scare. We was running along very fine where the river was narrow when the wind sprang up pretty lively and run as onto a bar. Just at that time several Indians made their appearance on the bluff directly over us. Our "red skins" that we had on board stepped out and commenced talking to them, but what the conversation was that passed between them none of us knew, as no one on board understood the language, but the inference that we drew was that war would soon commence as our Indians sprang to their guns and motioned us to do the same which we all did, and showed a bold front, which saved us from being fired into as many think. The savages on shore only remained in sight a moment and we only remained on the bar about one half hour.⁷⁹

We camped quite a distance from timber; and kept up a strong guard during the night.

⁷⁹ Joseph Mills Hanson in *Conquest of the Missouri* also reports this incident although somewhat differently. He writes, "Almost immediately after leaving Captain Rankin's camp, and when only eleven miles from it, she [the *Luella*] again went aground at the mouth of White Earth River. At this point the winding Missouri approaches the high bluffs bounding its valley on the north, and runs for a distance directly at their base. No sooner had the boat struck than a party of Indians who had probably been following her in the hope of finding a favorable opportunity of attack, appeared on the crest of the bluff and opened a hot fire upon her. They were almost directly above and commanded her decks completely. The crew, who had commenced setting spars along the sides for the purpose of "grasshoppering" her over the bar, were driven from their work and forced to take refuge under cover. It was impossible to move her without sparring, and Captain Marsh ordered the passengers, all of whom were well armed, to the upper or "Texas" deck to engage the Indians and keep them back from the edge of the bluff while the crew worked. Their efforts were successful and though now and then a warrior crept near enough to fire, the crew was not seriously hampered, and the boat was eventually freed from her unpleasant predicament without loss of life." Hanson, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

Nothing more was seen of the indians and we flatter ourselves that we are to large, and to strong a craft for any ordinary band of "red skins."

17th About 10 o'clock we stoped to wood, and found a nice grove of wild plums, which all pitched into regardless of indians, bears being left behind or anything of the kind. Everybody had wild plum "on the brain," and was determined to get their fill which they did to their hearts content.

We was running very fine until about 3 o'clock when we grounded on a bar and spared for about an hour before we were afloat. We made Ft. Berthold⁸⁰ about 6 o'clock in the evening and there we found the "Jennie Brown,"⁸¹ and when the Luella passengers saw a steamer laying at the wharf, such a cheer went up as has not been heard for many a day, and will not for many a day to come. The way we have been getting along since leaving Cow Island was very discouraging to all. No one knew the condition of the river, and we lived between hope and fear from day to day—didn't know whether we would be successful and get to civilization, or strand upon a sand bar and have to appeal to the savages for mercy and protection. But when we saw the "Jennie Brown" a side wheel steamer and knew she had come up with freight and drew more water than we required for our speed, comfort, and safety, then and not till then, was all doubt removed. The Jennie Brown had come up loaded with stores for the N. W. F. Co. and arrived at Berthold this morning, and intends starting back on the morrow and reports the river *low*, but no difficulty to encounter with light draft boats. Ft. Berthold is situated on the left bank of the river 20 miles below the mouth of Little Missouri river and is a trading, also military post, and at this time has one company. There is an Indian

⁸⁰ Fort Berthold, located about 105 miles above Bismarck, North Dakota, was an American Fur Company trading post. The original Fort Berthold was erected in 1845. In 1862 it was abandoned, and the company occupied Fort Atkinson nearby which was renamed Fort Berthold. "In 1864 troops were sent to protect the trading post. . . . In 1865 a military post was formally established there. The post was abandoned in 1867." Mattison, *op. cit.*, p. 169; Prucha, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

⁸¹ In 1867 Charles Larpenteur came up the Missouri River from St. Louis on the *Jennie Brown*. He was enroute to Ft. Union. Coues, *op. cit.*, p. 388.

village⁸² at the post, which has about 3,000 inhabitants Crees and Groovns, and when we landed and went on shore, the shaking hands that followed beat anything that I ever before experienced in that line. My right hand was shook until my arm ached from the effects of it, and I was heartily glad when the exercise of "pump handling" had come to a close. All hands—myself included—went up into the town and the sport that followed was of a gay old sort. The Crees and Grovonts had had a fight with a band of Siouxs and killed several of the latter, and were just in the highth of their rejoicing over there great success. They were dancing whooping, "Making Medicine" and going through with various other maneuvers that I couldn't understand.

I went into a great many of their wigwams, and saw their weapons of war and the scalps they had taken from other tribes. But very few of them could speak English, but their actions were all friendly and could we of understood their language or even their signs and motions—as they talk a great deal by signs even among themselves—it would of been very interesting to us. They are the most inconsistant beggars that I ever saw, and have a great penchant for coffee, sugar, tobacco, matches, &c. Their dancing was great

⁸² ". . . Like-a-Fishhook Village lies along the old river channel immediately above Second Fort Berthold. . . . The name of the village was derived from the peculiar shape of the old river channel at this point.

For many years the three affiliated tribes (the Arikara, Mandan and Gros Ventre) were concentrated in this village. Originally these tribes led a separate existence. All were greatly reduced in numbers as the result of the smallpox epidemic in 1837. The continued raids of the Sioux finally forced the three tribes to unite for survival. In the early 1840's the Gros Ventres, who lived on the Knife River, moved upon the bluff and settled on the site of the village. They were later joined by the Mandans from near Fort Clark. Both of these tribes assisted the American Fur Company in erecting Fort Berthold for their protection. The continued attacks of the Sioux also compelled the Arikara in about 1862-1863 to abandon their villages near Fort Clark and join the Mandans and Gros Ventres at Like-a-Fishhook Village.

The village was subject to many attacks by the Sioux. The Indian Service pointed out that unless the Federal government interfered, the three tribes would be exterminated. During the early 1860's the raids of the Sioux on the village increased. The condition of the Fort Berthold Indians did not materially improve after the arrival of troops." Ray H. Mattison, "Report on Historic Sites in the Garrison Reservoir Area, Missouri River," *North Dakota History*, Vol. 22, No. 142 (Jan.-Apr. 1955), pp. 34-36.

sport for the most of the boys and some proposed engaging a partner and join in the guidy dance. I remained in the village until nearly midnight, when I returned to the boat well pleased with my nights entertainment.

18th Our craft started some earlier than usual this morning in order to get ahead of the "Jennie Brown" which we did in fine style and our captain say he intends to "keep the 'inside-track' if the kettles will only hold together."

Today we have done the best traveling since embarking on board the *Luella*. We passed several Mackinaws today and also took on some more passengers that had got tired of a mackinaw life.

19th We reached Ft. Rice,⁸³ a Military and Trading post about 10 o'clock. It is situated on a high eminence on the right bank of the river, eight miles above the mouth of Cannon Ball river, and is a strong fort and built at great cost to the Government. Three companies of infantry and one of cavalry are stationed there and are commanded by Col. Whistler.⁸⁴

We laid over at Rice 5 hours to take on stores and provision, then steamed out and run about 30 miles, tied up and took on wood.

20th This morning the weather is very cold and the deck of the steamer is covered with ice and if none are froze to death it will not be for the want of cold enough weather to do the business.

This morning about 10 o'clock we met the steamer

⁸³ "Fort Rice was established by General Alfred Sully on July 7, 1864, as a supply base for his operations against the Sioux. It was located on the right bank of the Missouri River, about ten miles north of the mouth of the Cannonball River. The fort was abandoned on November 25, 1878." Prucha, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-102.

⁸⁴ Joseph Nelson Garland Whistler was born in Wisconsin. He attended West Point from September 1, 1842 to July 1, 1846 and served in the War with Mexico 1846-1848. He served on frontier duty at Fort Rice, Dakota from January 1866 to July 1867. He retired from active service October 19, 1886 and died April 20, 1899. Heitman, *op. cit.*, p. 1026.

"Miner"⁸⁵ owned by the N. W. F. Co. bound up the river with freight for Fts. Rice, Berthold, Bufort, Union, Hawly, Camp Cook⁸⁶ and Benton and intends going up as far as she can, which will be about Ft. Union.

Our boat exchanged charts with the *Miner*, and after a little steamer and river "Medicine," we parted. In the afternoon the *Jennie Brown* passed us while we was laying at the bank wooding and in about an hour after we passed her while she was taking on wood. Shortly after meeting the *Miner* there was a rumor on the *Luella* that there had been nine cases of cholera on the *Miner* eight of which proved fatal. The passengers of the *Luella* was so indignant to think the *Miner* would tolerate our passengers on board their boat or theirs to come onto the *Luella*, that many expressed themselves in language that would not be altogether agreeable to the *Miner* Captain's ear had he of heard them. But whether there had been any cholera on board the *Miner* or not I could not positively find out.

21st This morning *Jennie Brown* passed us while we were stuck on a sand bar, and about an hour later we passed her in the same predicament she did us. About 10 o'clock we took on 26 Mackinaw passengers two of them ladies. Our rival boat ran by us again and probably will stay ahead unless she meets with some bad luck, as she is a faster boat than ours and is not so heavily loaded.

We were obliged to lay up on account of wind about 5 hours. The wind blew so strong that it would

⁸⁵ The steamboat *Miner*, a small boat weighing 299 tons, was one of four boats that plied four years in the mountain trade to Fort Benton. It was owned by Captain Alpheus Hawley, one of the organizers of the Northwestern Fur Company. In 1872 Hawley sold the boat to Dr. W. A. Burleigh, a prominent Yankton politician and former territorial delegate to Congress. William J. Petersen, "Steamboating on the Missouri River," *Nebraska History*, Vol. XXXV, No. 4, (Dec. 1954) p. 270.

⁸⁶ Major William Clinton, 13th U. S. Infantry, established Camp Cooke on July 11, 1866. During 1867-1868, four companies, comprising an average of 428 officers and men, were stationed there. The post was in a very isolated spot and served no useful purpose. The army abandoned it in 1870 and moved the stores to Fort Benton. It was located on the south bank of the Missouri River at the mouth of the Judith River. Prucha, *op. cit.*, p. 68; Mattison "Military Frontier," *op. cit.*, p. 170.

take us ashore inspite of all that could be done. After the wind went down we run about 20 miles and tied up for the night. Here we found an abundance of wood that the Indians had cut last winter for their ponies to gnaw the bark off, and we took on about 15 cords. All hands took quite a lively interest in packing it aboard and by 9 o'clock the wood was all on, which pleased the deck hands very much, as it would of taken them alone until near morning, to of done the work.

22nd This morning it was much warmer than has been for some time but before night it turned cold again as before. We run into the bank this afternoon stern foremost, and broke three bucket arms and carried away one rudder, which delayed us several hours and knocked us out of reaching Ft. Sully⁸⁷ as we expected.

We picked up one of the Jennie Brown passengers this afternoon that had been out hunting and got left. He reports the "Jennie" as in a bad condition, as she had a big hole stove in her stearn which took six pair of blankets to close it. The river has been very bad today, wide, shallow, and difficult to navigate. It rained a little this afternoon and the indications are good for a fine equinoctial storm.

23rd We reached Ft. Sully about 11 o'clock and in consequence of a large bar opposite the Ft.—didn't land, but sent a yawl ashore with the mail and one of my partners over and bought a little grub or a few days rations, as we are only 480 miles from Sioux City.

We had some pretty hard sparing today, rather more than usual, but passed the Jennie Brown while she was laying at Sully. We met the "Molly Dosier"⁸⁸ bound up for Sully with Government stores.

24th The weather opens finer this morning than we could expect. Now we begin to find wood cut and "banked" and all are in hopes we will make better time and get to the States sometime before Christmas.

⁸⁷ Fort Sully, established in September, 1863, as a result of the Sioux uprising, was first located on the east bank of the Missouri River about three miles below Pierre, South Dakota. This location was abandoned on July 25, 1866, when the garrison was moved to a new site about twenty-five miles above Pierre. The troops were withdrawn on October 20, 1894, although a few men remained until November 30 to wind up the affairs of the post. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁸⁸ The *Mollie Dozier* is reported to have made its owners \$50,100 in profits for the year 1866. Lass, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

25th We ran past Crow Creek Agency⁸⁹ today and tied up near Big Cedar Island.⁹⁰ The journey is becoming so monotonous that I can hardly find anything that is new, and am obliged to repeat an oft told tale.

We are encouraged a little, and think we are getting some nearer the White settlements for occasionally we see a hut that is inhabited by whites.

26th We were obliged to lay by on account of high winds and lost about 6 hours run. At night we had a grand concert, everything was so dull, we thought to change the scene and so we had a little vocal music on the top of it which was relished by everyone present, and it had quite a tendency to draw the natives around us. We would exchange sports with them occasionally, and they would dance for us and then we would sing for them.

27th Randall⁹¹ is reached at 10 A. M. and a grand stampede is made for the sutler and comisary department. Here we find a plenty of vegetables, eggs, butter &c. &c., and the miners throw their sacks, and boxes over the counter at the clerks and call for eggs by the dozen regardless of the price—in fact they don't ask the price,— they want such articles as they call for and will have them, cost what they may. After regaling ourselves in such luxuries as melons the steamer again starts down stream. The evenings are beautiful and this evening we change the exercises a little and have a sparing exhibition or a few lessons in manly art.

A ring is formed seconds are chosen, a referee appointed, and a fight is introduced according to the rules of the ring. Johnny Call, and Bill Carter are the

⁸⁹ The Crow Creek Agency was established in 1863, the result of the Federal Government's policy to transport Sioux and Winnebago Indians from Minnesota to the mouth of Crow Creek in the Dakota Territory after the Sioux rebellion in 1862. Merrill J. Mattes, "Report on Historic Sites in the Fort Randall Reservoir Area," *South Dakota Historical Collections*, Vol. XXIV (1949), pp. 558-559.

⁹⁰ "According to Chittenden in 1809 Manuel Lisa of the Missouri Fur Company left a party to establish a post at Cedar Island, among the Sioux." Big Cedar Island was 6.4 miles above Fort Randall. That this island is the site of Lisa's post "is purely conjectural." *Ibid.*, pp. 522-523.

⁹¹ "Fort Randall was established on June 26, 1856, on the right bank of the Missouri River as a base of supplies for posts on the upper Missouri and for protection of settlers against hostile Indians. The troops were withdrawn on December 6, 1892." Prucha, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

champions, and Mat Williams and myself the seconds and Hod Roberts the referee. The fight lasted about 30 minutes and was won by the illustrious champion Johnny Call, he claiming a foul from his antagonist Carter. No money exchanged hands, but the betting ran high mostly in favor of Call as he was ambidextrous as well as scienced and fought with a great deal of judgment.

28th This morning the Jenny Brown ran by us while we were lying at the bank and this is the last time I saw her. We met the steamer "Sun Set"⁹² bound for Ft. Randall with Government stores. We tied up for the night only 10 miles from Sioux City by land and 55 miles by the river, several of the passengers are going to walk over to the city tonight in order to secure seats in the stages as quite a number of passengers are calculating to get off at Sioux City and Stage across the country to the cars.

29th We reached Sioux City at 11 o'clock, and I took up my baggage and blankets and bid the "fast, splendid and light draft steamer Luella" a kind good morning after being on the river 32 days, feeling very much like a caged bird set free. The boys all felt like indulging in a little recreation, after being so long shut out from civilized community, and they all partook—some largely—of those invigorating beverages which make us all think we are boys again. After spending about 3 hours with the boys but not without some degree of reluctance. About 25 of the steamer passengers got off at Sioux City, some to remain there and others to take their several ways across the country.

30th This morning after taking a bath and divesting myself of my *lousy* garments, I went to church accompanied by one of my steamer comrades Mr. Beaver. That evening I took the stage for Correctionville 40 miles east of the city where we arrived about 7 o'clock the next morning and took breakfast in the country once more. I put up with Mr. Kilhauff where I remained three days spending my time looking at the country.

Oct. 5th I took passage by the N. W. S. Co. from Sioux City to New Jefferson, a distance of 150 miles. I left

⁹² "In 1867 the *Sunset* collided with another steamer below Brownville, Nebraska and sank." Lass, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

Sioux City at 9 in the morning, reached Smithland at sundown and arrived at Denison in time for breakfast the next morning. We reached Carrolton at 3 P. M. and took dinner and arrived at Jefferson at 9 in the evening and put up at the Fremont House.