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Article Summary: Leonard Whiting Gilchrist's 1866 steamboat voyage up the Missouri River to Fort Benton, Montana Territory, is recounted in his journal. This journal covers the period between May 12, 1866, when he left Nebraska City, until June 28, 1866, two days before the *Agnes* arrived in Fort Benton.

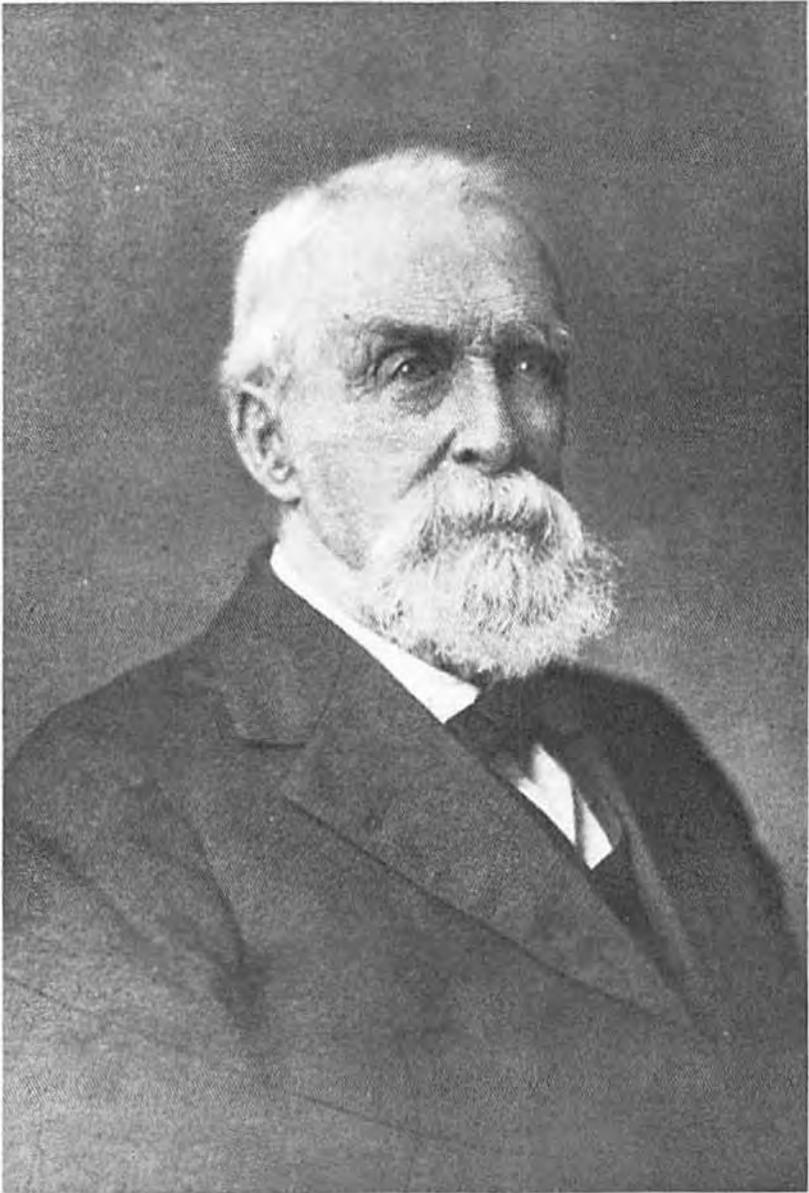
Cataloging Information:

Names:[Note full names are listed where available...many passengers are listed only by surname and are listed the same way here.] Leonard Whiting Gilchrist, Ora Jeanette Gilchrist, James Gilchrist, Nancy Gilchrist, J Cecil Kent, Captain J B Merrill (Murrill), General William T Sherman, Mr Auble, Mr Ashcroft, Walter A Burleigh, Doctor Heale, Mr Green, Mr Hopkins, Mr Blake, General S R Curtis, Mr Albrecht, Mr Wiseman, Mr Green, Alexander Majors, Mr Sturges, General Alfred Sully, Lt Colonel John Pattee

Place Names: Please see the map in the illustrations for the significant place names listed.

Steamships: *Agnes*, *Lexington*, *Marion*, *Jennie Lewis*, *Mary McDonald*, *Gallatin*, *Ben Johnson*, *Deer Lodge*, *Sunset*, *Cora*, *Lilly Martin*, *St John*, *Dora*, *General Grant*, *Mollie Dozier*, *Waverly*, *Ontario*, *Tom Stephens*, *Huntsville*, *Luella*

Photographs / Images: Leonard W Gilchrist; Route of Leonard W Gilchrist's 1866 steamboat voyage up the Missouri River to Fort Benton, Montana Territory; Akara chiefs, Fort Berthold, Dakota Territory, about 1872; Indian dwellings near Fort Berthold about 1870 (two photos); Fort Benton levee, from Hiram M Chittenden's *History of Early Steamboat Navigation on the Missouri River*.



Leonard W. Gilchrist

THE MISSOURI RIVER JOURNAL OF LEONARD W. GILCHRIST, 1866

Edited by James E. Potter

INTRODUCTION

Leonard Whiting Gilchrist's 1866 steamboat voyage up the Missouri River to Fort Benton, Montana Territory, was but one of a series of adventures which characterized his life. At the age of 17, he left Goffstown, New Hampshire, where he was born in 1831, to go to sea on a voyage to the Sandwich Islands. In 1850, Gilchrist arrived in California and went to the gold fields where he made his home at Columbia. He returned in 1863 to New Hampshire by sea, breaking his voyage by a Central American crossing at Nicaragua.

July, 1863, found Gilchrist in Nebraska City, Nebraska Territory, where he worked at odd jobs until taking passage for Fort Benton on board the *Agnes* in May, 1866. During the trip he kept the journal which appears below. He remained at Fort Benton only briefly, building flatboats for emigrants and miners who were returning down the Missouri River from the gold fields. Gilchrist himself returned by flatboat to St. Joseph, Missouri, in the fall of 1866.

During the next several years Gilchrist was involved in a variety of Nebraska ventures, including a sawmill at Nebraska City, 1867-1868, and a Saunders County homestead, which he sold in 1885 to become a partner in a ranch near Alliance. While living at Alliance, Gilchrist was elected to the Nebraska Legislature, serving in 1889. He resigned to become a member of the State Board of Transportation. In 1892 he moved to Wahoo, Nebraska, where he went into semi-retirement.

When gold was discovered in Alaska in 1900, Gilchrist's wanderlust returned. He spent the next two years in Alaska and California, part of the time working as a carpenter. He finally

returned to Wahoo, where he died on April 9, 1919, at the age of 87. He left two children, Ora Jeanette, and James. His wife Nancy, whom he married in 1880, had died in 1891.¹

When Gilchrist's daughter Ora, died in 1973, the conservator of her estate, the Rev. J. Cecil Kent then living at Mead, Nebraska, discovered this journal among the family papers. Recognizing its value for Nebraska and Missouri River history, he deposited it at the State Archives.

Leonard Gilchrist's journal spans the period between May 12, 1866, when he left Nebraska City, until June 28, 1866, two days before the *Agnes* arrived in Fort Benton. Toward the end of the journal, the entries become irregular and it ends somewhat abruptly, perhaps indicating that Gilchrist became too involved in other activities to keep up his writing. The account has been published in its entirety with punctuation added for clarity. The spelling is Gilchrist's.

THE JOURNAL

On Board Steamboat Agnes. Sunday, May 13, 1866

I propose to write an account of my journey from Nebraska City to Fort Benton, Commencing at Neb. City. I missed the Boat and had to hire a team to bring [me] through ahead of the Boat at Platsmouth or Omaha. We left Neb. City, John and I, with a good span of horses and as we left, his employer told him not to drive too fast. I thought to myself I could convince him it was for his advantage to drive pretty fast. As soon as we were under way, I told the driver if he would land me in Platsmouth ahead of the *Agnes* I would give him an extra 5.00. I had no occasion to do anything but caution him from that time forward for the only thing I was afraid of was that he would smack something and thereby defeat me. I occassionally praised his driving which had one merit that pleased me much and that was a good lively gait. I occassionally gave him a little bourbon just to steady his nerves and make the thing move along satisfactorily. Away we bounced and rattled till I began to think if we did not overhaul the boat at Platsmouth the team would not be good to take us through to Omaha.

One O'clock came and we were 5 miles from the landing and I felt sure we were going to head the steamer. In 20 minutes we were at the Landing and the steamer *Agnes* just about one half mile below. I took off my baggage, paid the driver, and getting a long stick tied my scarf to it and signalled the boat to come to the

landing. She came up, slid out her plank and I went on board. Soon we were up where the Platte River discharges its waters into the Missouri. There is quite a visible difference between the Missouri below and above where the Plat joins its waters to the big muddy. About dark we passed the Council Bluffs Landing. Run till 9 o'clock when we tied up till daylight should come. I propose to write up one day the account of the day before so what I have jotted down today should really have been under the date of the 12th.

Monday, May 14th, 1866

Early yesterday morning our steamer was under weigh and before I had made my appearance on deck we were at the landing at Omaha City, Cap[itol] of Neb. Territory. I had heard a great deal about Omaha as compared with Nebraska City and I must own up that in Omaha my expectations were in no measure realized. I took a stroll over the town and saw little to convince me that Omaha is a town where much overland freighting is done. I looked all over the town for corralls of waggons such as can be seen on any small street in Neb. City and my long, and I came near saying fruitless, search was rewarded with the sight of one corrall of waggons, 13 in number. Omaha has very respectible side walks for a country town, has a few fine residences and a few stores, and has the State House or the Territorial House. This is situated back of the settled portion of the town and from it there is quite a fine view, taking [in] Council Bluffs, a thriving town in Iowa on the other side of the Missouri River.

I had the pleasure of looking at a locomotive which was engaged in carrying out rails on the pilot. They claim that they are laying about 1 1/4 miles of iron per day.² It may be so but I don't believe it. We stay at Omaha till 12 O'clock when the *Agnes* blew her whistle, the plank was drawn in, her wheel began to flutter, and we were again on our way to Fort Benton. We run till about 8 in the eve. when we tied up to the bank and lay there till this morning. [In the] Meantime they took on board quite a quantity of driftwood that lay on the bank. One man wanted 6.50 per cord for his wood yesterday. Capt. Murrill³ told him he did not want any at that price and pushed off.

Tuesday, May 15, 1866

Yesterday we made a little more than 60 miles along the tortuous line of [the] Missouri. The river is, has been thickly set with wicked-looking Snags. In many places so thick that it seemed

almost doubtful if we could get through. We got along fine and have but a few more miles of bad river, bad on account of Snags. From here to Sioux City there is plenty of snags. Tomorrow with good luck we will get to Sioux City which will be about 1/3 of the distance from St. Louis to Fort Benton.⁴

The country along the river is much the same as it has been, broad bottom lands on both sides of the River. Timber has not been as plenty today as yesterday, all cottonwood or elm. Saw quite a number of white people and a few indians. Passed the *Leadora* bound down River at 6 o'clock in the evg. We lay tied up to the bank about two hours on account of the wind blowing so hard as to make the boat unmanageable. The wind lulled at Sunset and we went on our way till about 9 o'clock when we tied up for the night.

Wednesday, May 15 [16], 1866

Ran along fine today. Arrived at Sioux City about 3 o'clock p.m. Put off considerable freight and took on nearly as much more. Had the pleasure of seeing Gen. Sherman and shaking hands with him. He looks much like his pictures, only appears a little older. He is not a very dressy individual. His staff put on some large sized style and sport some pretty good jewelry. Sioux City is a town of 2500 inhabitants and does a fair trade at present judging from appearances. They fired a shotted salute in honor of the distinguished guest. He is a very sociable sort of an old chap and talks right along. He told me that they were going to build a road from Fort Larimie to Virginia City this summer, that they were already on their weigh.⁵ We stay at Sioux City till about 6 O'clock when we again started on our way for the mountains.

Thursday, May 16th [17], 1866

Last night we left Sioux City about 4 p.m. [The] Big Sioux River empties into the Missouri about 1/2 mile above the city. The Sioux is a clear stream and is, I should estimate, 65-70 yds. wide at its mouth. We ran along some 10 miles when we tied up for the night. Two of our passengers lay over night at Sioux City and are to meet us at Plants Landing. The distance round is some 35 miles while the distance across is only 5 miles. When we arrived at the landing, they had not made their appearance. We took on board a lot of wood and still they did not come. The whistle of the steamer was blown loud and long telling them of the danger of being left. In about 3/4 of an hour they came up much blown from the quick time they had been making after hearing the whistle. At Plants

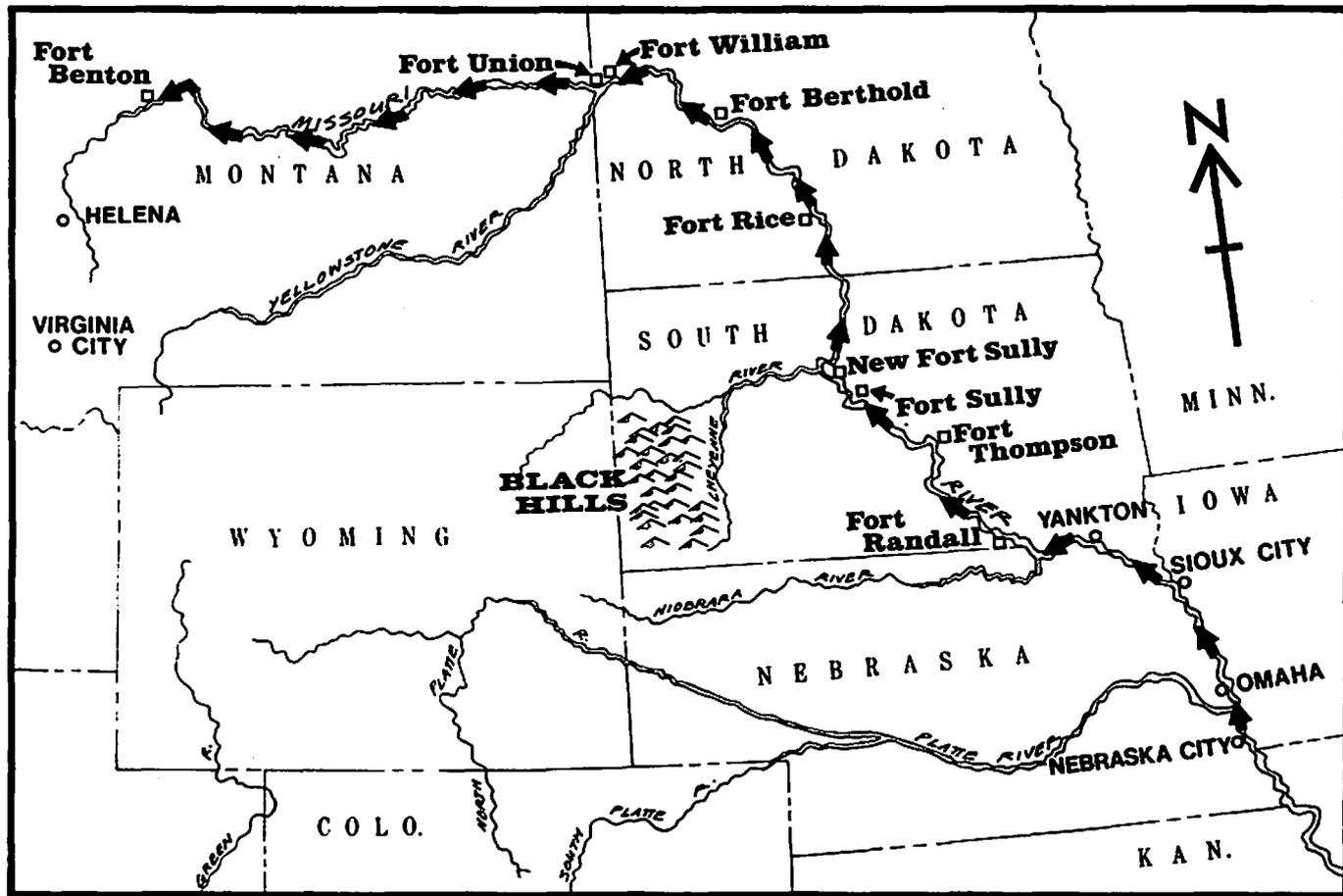
Landing there was quite a number of white men [and] several half-breed boys and girls. Saw one old squaw who was peddling moccasins. She asked the modest sum of 3.00 per pair. They were wrought with beads in some fanciful patterns.

There is no particular change in the River scenery. We occasionally get sight of slate along the banks. It does not continue long in any one place. The deposits along the river grow more sandy as we ascend the River. Saw some of the heaviest cottonwood growth today [we] have seen on the trip, saw some cottonwoods at least 7 feet in diameter. [The] Missouri is less muddy. It's still a good way from a clear stream. As we go along on our journey we have incontestable evidence that we are going out on the frontier. Yesterday nearly all the men and all the boys and women wore moccasins and a few of the men wore buckskin pants. The most of the men wore long hair and patched trousers, while some of the boys kept a flag of truce flying on the quarterdeck. We are now in the territories, Dacotah on one side and Nebraska on the Other. Tomorrow we will have Dacotah on both sides of the river as Nebraska does not run up the Missouri further than 50 miles from Sioux City.⁶

Find plenty of wood thus far on the banks cut and its owners eager for sale a general thing. There are a great many French amongst the few settlers along the banks of the big muddy. Have one sick man on board. [He] Was attacked yesterday morning with a very violent headache. We applied to our German Physician who did nothing for him but said he would give him some medicine after the pain had let up a little. He seemed almost crazy with pain and I told him that I thought he would get some relief by soaking his feet in warm water. After soaking them for some three fourths of an hour, he commenced sweating and was soon much relieved. [He] Soon went to sleep. Notwithstanding our German friend considers him dangerous, I am inclined to think he will come out all right. Can see that we are getting north faster than the season, the grass is not more than half as high here as it was at Neb. City when I left there.

Friday, May 17 [18], 1866

Today we made Vermillion River about 11 O'clock and at that point, we were some 4 hours finding the right chanel. There are two Islands and three chanel. We first tried the center chanel, then the South one where we found shallow water. Got stuck on the sand and had to spar off.⁷ Got back into good water and then took the North branch, when we got through all right. The town of



Route of Leonard W. Gilchrist's 1866 steamboat voyage up the Missouri River to Fort Benton, Montana Territory.

Vermillion consists of several small houses, none of them rejoicing in a coat of paint from all appearances. I don't think it will damage the future prospects of real estate in that town to say that there is no great demand for corner lots or water front lots. Vermillion River is a small clear stream coming in on the East side of the Missouri River.

After leaving the town of Vermillion River, we had a strong head wind against which it was about as much as we could do to get along. We ran against a little sand bar that made the boat quiver. We soon got under weigh again and made slow time on acct. of the heavy wind with which we had to contend. Just at night we again found a sand bar that stopped our progress. We tried the Channel in three different places, finally fell back and tied up for the night. The deck hands and roustabouts were set to cutting wood. The Capt. with 4 men, took four men and went out to hunt for the channel. Several passengers took their guns and went on shore.

Others took their hooks and went fishing, myself amongst the latter. I went up the bank about 1/4 mile above where the steamer lay and tried my luck under the lee of a drift pile. I found plenty of biters but not of the kind I desired. Nary a fish bite while the number of mosquitos who bit were too many for comfort. I fought mosquitos for half an hour and got no nibbles at my tempting beefstake I baited my hook with. At this time my patience becoming nearly exhausted and the mosquitos having got their fill, I retreated in good order feeling that I must have lost at least a pint of blood. I felt also as though my hands and face had been tattooed with mosquito bills and made up my mind not to again soon present my face as a cushion for these penetrating chaps to stick their bills in. I think if [I] get some such placard as you can see in many citties, "Stick no bills here," that those pestiferous borers would probably have some respect and stay away.

The timber on the bottoms changes some. [I] Notice considerable ash, hackberry and a little oak. Expect we will have to cut our wood. There are around Vermillion quite a number of houses. Saw one field with a heard of 23 cattle in it. Took in wood at one landing belonging to a Frenchman. His clothes have more colors than Joseph's coat. They were patched in all imaginable shapes and in some prominent places. Before I wake up I suppose I will be off again up river as the Capt. has found the road. The hunters killed nothing. So much for [the] stomach. Has been very warm today, making thick clothing an encumbrance.

Saturday, May 18 [19], 1866

Have had strong winds today. Soon after dinner, we had to tie up to the bank. The wind just drove us ashore and all we had to do was to wait till it ceased. We had no one on board who could command the tempest to be still. Took in wood just below. The owner of the wood said he kept [a] hotel. "Who stops with you?" inquired one of our inquisitive passengers. "Somebody most every night," responded the Frenchman in very broken English. He told us there were plenty of Elk on the bottom and plenty of Buffaloes back some 20 miles from the river. Have not seen any indians yesterday nor today. Have quite a change in the atmosphere from yesterday, quite cool making heavy clothing quite a good institution. Will get to Yankton today if we have good luck.

Passed the mouth of James River today about 4 O'clock. This is a small stream not more than 20 yds. wide and is very clear. [It] Is said by the pilots to be a fine stream for fish. Our sick man, Mr. Auble is much better. [He] Has been out and taken his seat at the table. The hills along the banks of the River today have been covered with a fine growth of grass some 3 inches in height. At one point we could not see any bluffs which is the first occurrence of the kind since I left Neb. City. On the south side is fine rolling prairie while on the North side bottom land. If there are any hills on that side, they are beyond the reach of the eye.

Have noticed that we are carrying 140 lbs. of steam as per Mr. Ashcroft's guage which is attached to the steampipe. This is more than she is allowed to carry. Her limit is 125 lbs. as per Inspectors certificate. I was mistaken with regard to getting out of Neb. Territory, we still have Neb. Ter. on the South bank of the River. Will probably get into Dacotah tomorrow sometime. In about three days, will get to Fort Randall. As I close the account for today, four of the passengers are playing dominos while 3 men are looking on and apparently taking a deep interest in the game. Two are playing chequers, 4 are reading, and someone in the pantry is drumming at a great rate on a board table or something with his knuckles. The bell taps once and the strong full voice of the deck hand heaving the lead rings out "8 and a half, 9 feet, mark twain," quarter less twain, no bottom" which is caught and repeated by another deck hand on the hurricane deck so to make certain that the pilot can hear. We have run in three feet of water several times. When we get out some 40 tons of coal(?) we will still be 8 inches lighter. It is now half past 5 O'clock and I will close for the day.

Sunday, May 20, 1866

Yesterday soon after writing we got in sight of Yancton. Yancton is on the North or East bank of the Missouri and is of course in Dacotah Territory. There are about 25 houses in the town. The country round is fine and [I] could see several farms well fenced and good houses on them. Have not seen any fruit trees. We took a wrong chanel just before getting to town and lost some 3/4 of an hour. Had to spar across to get into good water. Arrived opposite Yancton about 9 O'clock, tied up on the bank on the other side from the town. Have quite a little moon now and could see the gas lights of Yancton very plain. Long before I was up this morning, we steamed away from this famous city of the frontier. Today we passed the residence of Mr. Burleigh, delgate to congress from Dacotah Territory.⁸

He has a fine farm under fence and also owns one half [of] Bonhomme Island which is some 10 miles in length [and] is said to be the largest island in the Missouri River. The channel runs along the north side of the Island. Have seen a good many settlements all along the banks of the River today. Many of them have fine houses or at least comfortable ones and considerable stock, mostly cattle. Have seen several indians today. have had fine-looking country to look at all day. Gentle undulating hills on either bank of the River with here and there a limestone bluff to break the monotony. They are just plowing and the soil looks black and strong and will, I have no doubt, yield large return to its owners or cultivators for there is none of this land yet in the market. Our indians are evidently somewhat civilized as they have trowsers, [and] soldiers blouses. One gay chap had on a caloco shirt. [We] will probably get to the mouth of the Niobrarah River.

Monday, May 21, 1866

Last night about sundown, we arrived at the mouth of the Niobrarah River and of course, the N.W. corner of Nebraska Territory. As we passed the mouth of the stream we could see indians running over the hills and quite a number could be seen standing along the banks. We soon discovered the scret of their prescence. They had wood to sell. As we were in want of that commodity, they found in us a ready customer. At the first pile [we] found about 1 1/2 cords and here there were assembled at least 20 indians, more squaws and children than bucks. Their wood was soon on board and more indians coming up, pointing up River, say "heap, heap," pointing or motioning with the hand and

head the direction. A few indians stay on board while we run up to find their wood. Found as many as four different piles.

The indians are the Pontahs [Poncas]. One of them, a tall, thin stately-looking old chap with wide nostrils and heavy wrinkled face had a huge pipe made from some red material that seemed as heavy as Iron ore. It was bright red and looked as much like a tomahawk as it did like a pipe. He begged tobacco, in fact they all begged tobacco. Some of the squaws with their papooses on their backs begged tobacco for their papoose. They would say, "papoose hungry for tobacco." Heard none of them asking for whiskey. We tied up for the night when we took in the last of the wood which was Cedar, red, and was splendid wood. Early this morning we were under weigh. About 10 O'clock we passed the Yancton Agency. Here there are encamped about 500 indians and some efforts are being made to teach agriculture to the Red Skins.

Of the 500 who must live there, we only saw some 5 Squaws hacking away with something like a mattock. I supposed them to be planting corn. They have about 150 acres of land fenced here. There are several white men residing here. One came down and hailed us and wanted to know how much freight, how many passengers, where our destination, all of which questions were quickly answered by Capt. Murrill. They have a round block house about 50 ft. in circumference. [It] Has a large dome in the center which rises higher than the main part and is pierced with loopholes. Saw one piece of artillery. They have a steam sawmill here.

About 1 1/2 O'clock made Fort Randall.⁹ Landed, went up to the Fort and deposited some letters in the P.(ost) O.(ffice) Enquired for papers. Said they had not got any. This fort is on the south bank of the River. There are 3 co.s of troops here, 2 of the U.S. Volunteers, the 4th [regt.] and a co of the 7th Iowa Cav. [They] Have in all about 150 men. Mailed our letters and were soon off again. Towards eve., [the] wind blew so as to make the boat unmanageable and we tied up for the night just above an encampment of soldiers who were encamped on an Island. They came up on the *Lexington* who left them here and has gone down to get some freight that she was obliged to throw off so she could get over the Sandbars. She came back and is to take the troops higher up. Whilst we lay tied up on account of the high wind, the crew were employed in cutting and bringing on board wood. There is little indication of calm. Presume we will have to lay here till morning.

Tuesday, May 22, 1866

We lay all night where we tied up. Wind blew until after daylight this morning. Before I was up we were off. Last evening we had the pleasure of the co. of Capt. ————— of the 13th U.S. Regular army. He is here in command of a company of men and one Doct. Heale, a Dr. from Ohio, who by the way looked about as much like a large-sized boy as he did like a Doc. of Surgery. They staid late playing Euchre and Seven-up for amusement. Today saw some antelope, the first seen on the trip. Shores of the River are hilly and broken now and a little bluffy. Land not near as rich as it looked yesterday. Very little of level or bottom Land. At 11 O'clock, 45 minutes, we passed the Steamboat *Marion*. Soon made a landing at a wood yard on Cedar Island. Found some whitemen here. They have squaws for wives and half breeds for children. One of them is a sharp chap as he wanted to make a bargain with the Capt. to sell him some Cedar posts when the boat returned. Wooded up and again started up stream. Got into a piece of the River where we had at least 10 miles of the River at one sight. [It] Is the greatest stretch I have seen at any one time since I came on board.

About 3 O'clock sighted another steamer ahead. Supposed to be the *Jennie Lewis*. Will catch her by night if we have good luck. Saw one place on the east bank of the River as smoothly paved with round cobble rock as if it had been done by a first class workman and beaten down by numerous drives over its surface. It was about 10 by 15 feet. Have not seen these round rocks but two or three times before. This is an indication that we are approaching a harder foundation. The country through which we have passed today on either bank of the River must be very dry. Have not [seen] a single stream running into the Mo. today. Nothing in shape of a little creek or rivulet however so small. Noticed some deep-cut tracts leading down the side hills to the River bank. Was told these are trails made by the buffalo coming down to drink. Have passed two considerable Islands and lots of little sand bars that just raise their heads out of the water. [A] Few of them are covered with [a] heavy growth of timber.

Wednesday, May 23, 1866

Last night about 6 O'clock [we] passed the *Jennie Lewis* bound for Fort Rice with troops. Soon after passing her, we launched on a bar [and] had to back off. The *Jennie Lewis* run in ahead, got fast. We swung over to the South bank, caught on a bar, had to spar off.

Tried again for the channel, this time succeeded. *Jennie Lewis* backed out, took our track and came through all right. When we tied up for the night, the *Jennie Lewis* was out of sight and [we] have not seen her since. About 10 O'clock saw another steamer ahead which proved to be the *Mary McDonald*. She was taking out cargo to get her light so that she could get over the bar. We were told as we came along by them that there was but 3 feet, 7 inches of water on the bar. Sounded all the way across and 4 ft. on one side and 5 1/2 on the other was the poorest water we found.

A little after dinner sighted the *Gallatin* and in a short time overhauled her. She was tied up to the bank and I think was intending to cut wood. She did not have any in sight. This has been quite a field day for steamboats. [The] Country through which we have passed has been very peculiar and must be one in which there is little or no water. All day long I looked for some little stream making into the river from the hills but was not rewarded with the sight of a single instance. Passed White River today, a stream of 25 to 30 yds. in width. Took in wood at two indian stations, got some good dry wood. They were Sioux, one white man amongst them. [He] Is about 20 and no doubt is a deserter from the army.

Saw one Sioux, a young buck about 25 who said he was Gen. Sully's Scout last year on the Devil's Lake expedition.¹⁰ He seemed to have a very exalted opinion of Gen. S. Said he gave him two nice ponies, "mighty good." Said some indians stole them two days ago. He wanted to know, "how soon Gen. Sully was come back?" He smoked a cigar with a good deal of gusto and did his swearing in the most approved style. The white man said he was a mighty mean indian and would steal anything he could get his hands on. With good luck will get to Fort Thompson tomorrow. Saw an antelope close down to the bank of the River. Several shots were fired at him. He stood fire very well, got tired after a time, and retreated in good order.

Thursday, May 24, 1866

About 8 O'clock [we] landed at Fort Thompson. Here there are several lodges of Sioux indians, I should think about 75. We put out some freight and started along. Crow Creek comes to the Mo. just below Fort Thompson. We were told that there was a big bend in the River and that it was only 2 1/2 to 3 miles across. Several proposed to take guns and go across and see if we could not get some game. Messrs. Green from Rode Island, Hopkins from Ohio, Blake from Mass., two boys from St. Louis, and a

german and myself were the party. At 5 minutes to 9 O'clock we got off the steamer and started across. I proposed we should scatter out at least $3/4$ of a mile wide. [I] Took the left wing and bore off South S. west. Soon discovered that everybody was swinging my way.

After travelling some distance I was convinced there was no game there as we saw no sign of any kind. I then in co. with Mr. Green and Hopkins took a northwest course till we got into a line running due west from the point where we left the boat. The rest of the party had all run down South and were out of sight amongst the high range of hills that run in a Northwest direction. We held on our course till we had got some two miles from where we landed the top of a high barren bench, perhaps 150 ft. perpendicular above the bed of the River. Taking out our compass we concluded to run across to the top of a certain high ridge. Started on our course.

At our right lay a long ravine where we thot we might get a little water [on] acct. of we began to feel quite thirsty. Turned off a little to the right and went down and looked for water. Found the bed of the creek perfectly dry. [It] Looked so dry that one might almost think there never was any thing of the fluid kind in that part of the country. Turned again a little to the left and up the South side of this dry ravine. Soon discovered one of the boys and the German coming across the hills away to our left. Blake and the other boy no where to be seen. We then all started to cross the creek and then take up the backbone of ridge to what we supposed was the top of this divide on the cut off. I was the first one to cross the creek and accidentally discovered a little hole of water in the bed of the creek. This was a welcome guest to 5 thirsty souls. After drinking twice each we started on our way up the hill.

When we got to the top of the hill which, when down in the valley bellow we thot the highest, we still had another to climb. When we got up we saw Blake and the other boy away on the other side at least 2 miles away, Blake coming ahead and the boy trailing behind. We lay down on the grass, the wind blowing quite strong from the S.W. [and] waited until they got within some half mile of us. They came up on a divide parrallel to and South of this one we were on so we moved on. Had to make a raise of three more benches before we got to the top of divide between the Big Bends. There is a broad platteau not less than 3 miles wide and running South as far as the eye could see. This platteau is covered with grass, thin and of recent growth.

There is not a tree, shrub, or bush to be seen on its whole surface. Found some places where there had been water standing. Now all dried up. Saw 4 antelope just about the center of the plain. When we first saw them they were some $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile off. We saw that they saw us so we all sat down and Mr. Hopkins signalled the wild gazelles with a Red pocket handkerchief tied to a ram rod. They came right towards us for at least half a mile and I was sure they would come within a good rifle shot. In this I was mistaken for when they got within 400 yds they commenced bearing off and I thot were going to circle round us. I thot they would run near enough so that we could get a shot. In about two minutes all that could be seen was a little bunch of dust in the blue distance. That was all the Antelope we saw on the trip in crossing this plain.

As we neared the western side of it one of the boys discovered a hole of water. This was quite a godsend for we were all very dry and hungry and could not eat our lunch because we had no water. The hole was about 4 by 6 feet and 1 foot deep and was considerable seasoned up with Green slime. We drank some of [it]. Hopkins objected at first but after seeing the rest of us pitch in, drank some to. In a few minutes after finding the water, we got sight of the Missouri. We saw a steamboat lying tied up to the bank. Made her out to be the *Ned Lacy*. She was tied up to the bank waiting, as we supposed for the wind to go down. Got down to the bank of the River about 3 O'clock tired and thirsty and not game enough amongst us to hurt us in packing it. As we came down the hill, [we] saw one fresh Buffalo track. We were ahead of the *Agnes*, could not see her anywhere.

Found a nice pool of clear, cool water close down to the bank of the River to which we did ample justice. After washing our heated faces and resting our tired limbs, I took a turn down the bottom thinking I might possibly find some Elk. Went down about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile, the whole length of the timber, saw nothing but a little Rabbitt. Went back, found the rest of the party resting themselves in the shade, lying round loose on logs and brush and anything that would keep them up from the moist sand. I got some brush and lay down and fell asleep for a short time. Soon heard the whistle of the *Agnes*. All hands jumped up and went down on the bank of the River so that we could be seen. She blew her whistle again and I said that was for us to come down. She was then at least a mile down stream. The party outvoted me and we did not stir. The *Agnes* made a landing and blew her whistle again with an

energy that left no doubt as to what it meant. I lead off and in a few minutes was on board and was soon followed by the rest of the party.

If that section of Dacotah through which we passed today is a fair sample of the whole territory, I would not give a great deal for six Dacotahs. The soil is poor, there is no wood, no water, two very essential elements to make good country. It is pretty country to look at, no finer scenery of Rolling country could be found than that through which we passed. It seemed like an Ocean of gently rounded hills look[ing] in any direction. No tree to prove that it was dry land. One thing, you could change position a hundred times and the hills looked just the same, as much like each other as are the heaving billows of the big deep. This cutoff across the big Bend, in my opinion, can't be less than 6 miles. We were told it was less than 3. The boys, Mr. Scott's boys,¹¹ one of the proprietors of the boat, were very tired, and have concluded that they won't go any more cutoffs very soon. Left at Dark and passed the *Ned Lacy* tied up to the bank. [She] Has on board troops bound for Fort Rice. [We] Will probably reach Fort Sully tomorrow night.¹²

Friday, May 25, 1866

Nothing of interest occurred today. Saw the same or exactly similar hills that we saw yesterday. Hills still barren with a few strips of fine land along the bank of the river. Sometime this evening we ought to get to Fort Sully. Sully is on the north bank of the River as is the spot where a great Indian Council is to be held this spring. There is a large well-wooded Island opposite Sully. We are now going along its western bounds. This Island was favored by the American Fur Co. before the days of Forts. Had quite a little excitement on board today. Saw some animals at least two miles away on the slopes feeding. They were called Buffalo by several. Glasses were appealed to. It was soon decided that they were no Buffalo. Doc. and ———— got into quite a dispute and both talked very loud. They talked a little like fighting but neither made any serious demonstrations and they both are enjoying good health.

Saturday, May 26, 1866

Last night at dark we tied up at Fort Sully on the opposite side of the River from the Fort.¹³ About 9 O'clock, 8 of us took the yawl boat and went over to deliver some mail and see if we could get some for the boat. Pulled across the River, found some Indians at the landing, left our boat in charge of one of the deck hands and

went down to the fort. It was quite cloudy and as it had been raining some in the afternoon, was quite muddy traveling. We found the post some 3/4 of a mile from the landing. Went to the big gate where a soldier was pacing back and forward. Hailed him, told him who we were and what we wanted. He opened the gates and a soldier offered i to pilot us to the Col.s office where the P.[ost] O.[ffice] of the fort is located. We found the Col. and his associates apparently glad to see us although we were entire strangers to him.¹⁴ They have very little news of the outside world. Found no letters for anyone on the Steamer *Agnes*.

Fort Sully is a square log fort about 200 feet on a side and, I should think, about 20 feet in hight. It would be a very formidable place for red skins to capture. There are stationed here now, some 150 troops, 4th U.S. Volunteers. Gen. Curtis arrived here last night. They are going to hold a big council here this spring.¹⁵ There are now encamped arround the Fort something upwards of 5,000 indians being representations of all the various branches of Sioux except the Santees. They are waiting for the steamer *Ben Johnson* which is to bring up the indian goods that are to be distributed amongst the various redskin tribes that are here to get what little plunder they can and then to kill all white men they can find.

Met today a common row boat that had come 1600 miles from Fort Benton in their little open boat. There were 7 men. They looked [as] tough and ragged as any one would wish to see. They gave an account of unusual high water on the Yellowstone River this spring causing great loss of cattle and goods, Drowning a great many buffalo, Deer, and Elk. Stopped on the banks of the river which had been the site of an old trading post, now all rotted down and taken away. There was nothing left but a few old pieces of _____, a chimney, a few bake ovens made of clay and a big door with heavy hinges, which must have been the gate to the entrance to the post.¹⁶

Today we have a new phenomonon on the hills, had a little yesterday, that is boulders. Have not seen any yet so as to tell what they are but presume them to be granite. Many of the hills are thickly covered with them. Very little timber, none, only along the bottoms and on islands. Now and then a narrow strip following a dry ravine back for a short distance into the hills. No streams putting in, dry, dry. Commenced reading Lewis and Clark expedition today, they came here 63 years ago.¹⁷

Sunday, May 28, 1866

About noon passed the big Cheyenne River. This stream comes in from the South and is about 110 yds. wide at its mouth. Have had it very cold today, thermometer only 9 degrees above freezing. Overcoats are quite a luxury and a coal stove would be a comforter that would be well patronized if we had one. We sat around all day with our overcoats on. The mouth of the Cheyenne River is called halfway to Fort Benton from St. Louis. [The] Country through which we have passed is much the same as heretofore. On the South bank there are clay bluffs and hills that come close down to the River's edge and to appearances, their bases must be undermined by the water and they have slid and are constantly sliding down into the River and are dissolved and passed off in a soluble condition through the long channel of the big Muddy. Hills thickly covered with boulders are still quite plenty[ful], particularly on the north bank of the river.

Monday, May 29th, 1866

This morning while we were getting wood, a Steamer came in sight bound down stream. She proved to be the *Deer Lodge*. She is one of the boats that went through early. She is only 7 days from Fort Benton. She was 59 days from St. Louis to Ft. B. Had on no Passengers. We had some mail for some of her officers. She did not stop more than 5 minutes when away she went down stream.¹⁸ She is built expressly for this upper Missouri trade and is considered one of the best boats in the trade. Learned from her that the *Sunset* is but a short distance ahead of us. Today has been very pleasant, a little cool. Have seen two lots of antelope today, they are still wild, running when they are a mile away. Have a falling River at present. Have had a little rise which some thought might be the June rise. This fall would indicate that we had not yet struck the June rise yet. Some of the hands on the *Deer Lodge* said we would meet plenty of high water soon.

Tuesday, May 30, 1866

No more beautiful day than this could any one ever wish to see in any country. Clear and just warm enough to make everything agreeable. Beautiful spring-like atmosphere. We landed this morning to cut wood in an ash grove. We here found the remains of an Indian encampment. There must have been a large number of them as there was plenty [of] camping fires. The ground was strewed with hides of antelope and some scraps of buffalo. There

was also plenty of cottonwood brush with the bark all stripped off. The Indians feed their horses on cottonwood limbs in the winter season. Several of the boats passengers went out in quest of game. Saw some antelope. One of Mr. Scotts boys fired at them with a double barrell gun. Did them no harm and sent them a flying over the hills. We spent about 2 1/2 hours wooding up, then started.

Before starting, the steamer *Cora* came down River. We had some mail for her. She reported high water above here. She left Fort Benton last Thursday. Had on board quite a number of Passengers, evidently miners. Passed the mouth of Moreau River today. Just above on the South bank of the Missouri we saw dozens of antelope. I think in a space of a mile square we saw at least two hundred. We wanted the capt. to let us go ashore but did not get his consent. [He] Said after we caught up with the *Lilly Martin* we would go a hunting. [We] Are out of fresh meat. Have plenty of potatoes. On the whole our fare is as good as could be expected. Think some of trying the antelope tonight. Think we might possibly get some by taking out a lantern to attract their attention. Will get near to Grand River tonight.

Wednesday, May 31, 1866

So far as the weather is concerned today has been a duplicate of yesterday. [The] Country through which we have passed very much like what we have been passing through for the last 4 or 5 days. Hills on the North bank, or I might say East bank as the river at this time has allmost a due North course, are covered with all kinds of granite boulders. [They] Are also covered with fine grass. Have seen large herds of antelope today. Mr. Wiseman shot one that was swimming the River just ahead of us. He fired five shots before bringing him to. An antelope swimming is not a very large mark to shoot at. They are poor swimmers and show but little besides their head above water. This gives us a little fresh meat, a taste for each. Landed at a cottonwood grove and took in some wood.

There was good antelope hunting, three of the passengers started across the point to meet the boat. They reported the country as perfectly alive with them. That in attempting to get up to some you were almost sure to scare up others. Wood has been more plenty today than yesterday. Passed the mouth of Grand River today. Soon after passing, the Steamboat *St. John* came down River, had on board several passengers, among them several



Arikara chiefs. Fort Berthold, Dakota Territory, about 1872.

ladies. She was the first boat to Benton this year, beating the *Deer Lodge* 50 minutes. It is now 8 o'clock and I am writing in the cabin of the *Agnes* without any light. Have daylight now till 9 o'clock at night.

Friday, June 1, 1866

Day before yesterday passed the steamers *Cora* and *Dora*, both on the return from their Fort Benton trip. Today met the *St. Johns* also bound for St. Louis. She had on a lot of soldiers discharged. The *Mary McDonald* passed us this morning while we were wooding up. We passed her before night. We again stopped for wood at the mouth of Cannon Ball River, named from stone having a very close resemblance to large cannon balls found on the Missouri near its mouth. They are found in what our scientific passengers call farrugginiss [ferruginous] Sandstone. (The Cannon Ball river is about 50 yds wide. Saw an antelope swimming in the river just above where it joins the Mo. [The] Water is clear in comparison with the waters of the Muddy. About 5 p.m. we landed at a woodyard just below Ft. Rice. The *Mary McDonald* lay there discharging freight. We did not stop at the Fort. The fort consists of a square stockade about 14 feet high with high blockhouses on each corner. [It] Is, I should think 200 feet on a side. [It] Is built within 50 yards of the bank of the River. Outside the stockade there are several log cabins. Saw one which we supposed to be an Ice house. They have a saw mill, I suppose belonging to the gov.[ernment]

There are a few indians around the Fort. On the same side of the River and on the opposite bank there is, I should say, 120 lodges. The whole plain for a considerable distance is covered with wigwams, ponies, and Indians. As we came along, some of the young and curious came running down on the bank of the river to take a look at us. They were dressed in a varied costume, some with their blankets and leggins, some had on blue pants from U.S. clothing depot. Saw no guns. Presume they have them. Last year, just above the Fort, these same Indians fired into the Steamboat *Gen. Grant*, killed 1 man and wounded 3 more. The mate was killed.¹⁹ The place where they made their attack was just the kind of a place for an indian. The bluffs are about 60 feet high and all most perpendicular and the channell runs close in shore. [We] Have plenty of water and a strong current to contend with. Can see to read at 9 o'clock without the aid of artificial light.

June 7, 1866

Have been neglecting writing up my journal lately. Since writing have been on two hunts for antelope. On the first, I succeeded in killing an antelope. [It] Was the only one killed by a party of Eight. It weighed about 80 lbs. Killed it some three miles from the River. It proved quite heavy ere we got it back to the boat. Mr. Blake, Albrecht, and I carried it. Yesterday we stopped at Fort Berthold where we mailed letters. Fort Berthold is an old post. Here close by the fort there is a large indian village. They are of several different tribes and have comparatively fine habitations for Indians. They are called by the whites, tepees.

They are circular and outside look like a coal pit. They have an entrance large enough to walk through standing upright, the frame is constructed of poles. The poles are covered with brush or small willows laid side wise on the Tepee. Then a little grass, then a covering of earth to the depth of 1 1/2 feet, I should say. As it rarely ever rains here there is no danger from water from drenching showers. They have an apperture at the top from 2-3 feet square for the smoke to go out and the light to come in. They are usually about 40 feet in diameter and will accommodate from 30-50 indians.²⁰ The various tribes are remnants of the Rees, [Arikara] Grovons [Grosventres] and a few disaffected Sioux.

Monday, 10th June, 1866

For the last 3 days we have had decidedly rough stormy weather. Heavy S.E. winds accompanied at times with a heavy fall of rain, something unusual for this climate. We have on board an old French Pilot who went up here 35 years ago. He says it is unusual for it to rain here in the boating season. Have as yet seen no buffalo of any account, only a few scattering ones. Yesterday saw the *Mary McDonald*, also the *Mollie Dozier* bound down stream. She had her guard broken off on her starboard bows, must have come in contact with some rough old snag. She had on a few passengers, among them a big Indian, rolled up in their buffalo skins. The weather has been very cold for the middle of June. [The] Country through which we have passed has been much the same as heretofore. Bluffy hills close to the River and back of them rolling prairies. At the mouth of Knive River there is some very fine country. It is also a great Buffalo crossing. Last year there were a great number of Indians here drying buffalo meat. This season there was neither Buffalo or Indians.

Night before last, we lay at the mouth of White Earth River. Are now about 109 miles from the mouth of the Yellowstone. Have

occasionally lively discussion among the cabin passengers upon various subjects, all of which are fully discussed. The carpenter of the Boat is heavy in debate and has advanced many new ideas. He is a decidedly original genius. Goes it principally upon what he has seen, heard, smelt, tasted, and felt. He laid it down as an inescapable maxim that "man knows nothing but from the five sensation points." The other eve., a heavy discussion took place on minerology. "Squar" took the position that stones grow and maintained his position with good vigor, Putting hors du combat all his short sighted contestants by statements and arguments that no eloquence could check or knowledge assail.

Wednesday, June 13, 1866

Yesterday I had my first buffalo hunt which resulted in a signal failure. As we were running along, three bulls were discovered some two miles ahead. The Capt. allowed three to go on shore, Wiseman, Green, and myself. The buffalo were laying on a little swale near to the hight of land and about one mile from the River. To get up to them without frightening them, to do this we had to climb over several sharp peaks getting up to the top and then carefully looking over to see if they had changed position. When we had made the top of the second rise, we discovered that they were moving, coming down a ravine and a little towards us. When they passed a high mound, we shot forward at our best speed calculating to keep the hill between us and the game. While the Bisons were going round the South side, we were winding round the North side at the same time getting towards the top. We cautiously ascended to the top and they could no where be seen. [We] Saw where they had gone down into the bed of the ravine.

We soon discovered them behind a deep bank taking things very quietly. Mr. Wiseman and I were within about 50 feet of them. I then retreated and went up the hill so that when they ran up the ravine that I could get a shot at them. Wiseman shot at them. They were deceived with the echo of his rifle among the hills and came directly towards Wiseman and a little towards me. I fired and this changed their course. They did not see me, running up the hill and also a little up the Ravine. They came up within 50 yds. of me and I was doing my best emptying a Henry Riffle. I repeatedly hit them making their woolly sides smoke.²¹ They soon took a turn down the hill a little but still following up the Ravine. I then ran across some hills and came in ahead of them on the ravine. Got within about 150 yds. when they came along. I again



Indian dwellings near Fort Berthold about 1870.



opened my battery. I hit one of them twice the last time, laming him very bad but not enough to bring him to. Mr. Wiseman came up and fired several shots at long range Doing no good. Green got no shot. We watched them for a long time. I was sure I had given one of them enough to kill him but he ran over the hill and for ought I know he may be running yet.

We are now about 48° 20' north latitude or as far North as we will get this trip. Weather is very cool and windy. Are now lying by cutting wood and waiting for the wind to "lay." Day before yesterday passed the *Waverly* bound for St. Louis. Last night about half past 9 passed the *Ontario* also bound for St. Louis. The country is a complete duplicate of what it has been for the last 800 miles. Dacotah Territory is a very regular country. It is poor all alike. Has been very windy this afternoon, accompanied with rain and we have been tied up to the bank of the river. We are within 10 miles of Fort Union.

June 15, 1866

Yesterday about 10 o'clock we made old Fort William, Just below the mouth of the Yellowstone River. This is an old abandoned fort of the N.W. Fur Co. The roof is gone and there is nothing left but the adobe walls. A co. of soldiers are now encamped there and are going to construct a fort. They have a full outfit, sawmills, teams, lumber, and etc.²² About 1 mile above the old fort, the Yellowstone joins the Missouri. At the confluence, the Yellowstone is broad and shallow with quite a number of sandbars showing their heads. There is a log house and stockade on the point of land between the two Rivers. The Yellowstone is at least twice as wide as the Missouri at this point, although there is a much larger volume of water in the latter. 5 Miles above the junction of the two rivers is Fort Union. This Fort was built by Pierre Chouteau for the purpose of carrying on trade with the indians. [It] Was built some 35 years ago.²³

There is quite a tribe of indians who live around the Fort, Crows. This Fort is about 250 feet square. The stockade is about 20 feet high made of cottonwood timber set up endwise. On diagonal corners, there is a square stone tower, with loopholes. From these towers all four sides of the Fort can be raked. They have two cannon on the corners opposite the Towers. The towers are built of stone laid in mortar. One of them is a little cracked but still with its 3 foot thick walls would be an ugly thing to capture. There are quite a number of white men arround this fort. Was told

that 10,000 dollars worth of furs would be sent from this fort this season. The Indians are a lousy, filthy set of human dogs. Saw one who I was told was chief. He was very respectably dressed for an Indian. Had on pants, coat, and shirt, and a cap. Has on his neck suspended by a double brass-linked chain, a large silver-worked medal with the likeness of James Buchanan on one side. A white man who lives at the fort told me he [the chief] was about 72 yrs. of age. From the variation of complexion that could be observed, it was evident that amalgamation is practised here very successfully.

The country here is rolling, some fine land. Corn will grow here so tis said, but I have seen none growing yet. Thomas Campbell, a man in the employ of the North western fur co. got on the boat and is going up the River with us. I give the boat 20 days from Fort Union to Fort Benton. Passed the *Mary McDonald* going down stream about 5 miles below the mouth of the Yellowstone.

Not Dated

Today at noon we are three days from [beyond] Union. Are now on a sand bar just above dry point. There are three boats here, *Sunset*, *Lillie Martin*, and *Agnes*. As I write, we are trying to spar over. We tried to run over last night but did not find the necessary amount of water. The *Sunset* put off over 30 tons of freight just below the bar. Went above and put off a like amount and came down last night and has now got her freight below the bar on and is lying along side of us trying to get over the bar.²⁴ The *Iron City* passed down this morning. At the time there were four boats in sight. Saw Mr. Arthur Smith²⁵ of Nebraska City on board the *Sunset*. [He] Thinks it rather a tedious trip.

Have seen no Buffalo of any account. Saw about a dozzin yesterday morning, a long way from the River. Yesterday, a party of hunters crossed a band but came in without any game. Weather is much warmer. Is quite respectable summer weather. Plenty of wood between Union and here. More than between Union and Berthold. Have the same barren gray hills along the River that we have had for the last several hundred miles. Yesterday we saw one of the finest bottoms that I have seen on the upper Mo. It was opposite Dry Point. It extended for some three miles from the River, level and must be fertile soil. Are now about 175 miles from Union. [The] Country back of the river is rolling prairies, destitute of timber and scarce of water.

All along the River we see evidences of the very high water, as many islands and bars are covered with ————— some of

them as high as 3 feet. The trees are marked and scarred for 4 ft. from the ground up. All agree that the River has never been so high since the country has been inhabited by white men. Mr. Campbell says the Indians also say that they have never known so high water. Passengers on the *Sunset* and *Lillie Martin* rejoice in being fed on Buffalo meat. Through the generosity of the *Lillie Martin* we had a little Buffalo meat for Breakfast. Quite a rarity being the first Buffalo meat many of the passengers had ever tasted, myself being included in that list.

Saturday, June 23, 1866

My journal has been much neglected of late. Since writing before, I have been on another Buffalo hunt. Seven of us started about 2 O'clock in the morning to cross a point while the boat ran round. We travelled nearly an hour through thick timber with plenty of small underbrush before it was light enough to see to shoot. We came to a long narrow lake that disputed our way. We followed the left hand bank for nearly a mile [and] found a place where we could cross through a patch of willows. We bent down the willows and by getting several of them under our feet at one time, we kept ourselves from sinking into the mud and soon got across. Crossing quite an open space covered with fine grass dotted here and there with scattering trees, we came to a thick belt of underbrush through which we found it difficult to thread our way.

Just as we got through we saw some black-tailed Deer. They probably heard us going through the brush as they ran off at the top of their speed almost as soon as we showed our head. Travelled half a mile farther and then we came to the foot hills. Here we spread out and commenced a forward movement. Had not gone more than half a mile when the man on my left discovered a Buffalo. We all stopped a second or two to look at him and then bowing our heads low, cautiously moved towards him. He was moving from the bottom apparently going to the hills and coming obliquely in our direction. We pushed forward and when we were within 150 yards of him, we discovered a dry lake a little ahead of us. Crawling along almost on our knees we soon got into it. Here we were entirely out of sight. Going across we cautiously raised our heads on the other side of the bank and there stood Monsieur Bison in all his native majesty. And a majestic chap he was.

He was apparently soliliquizing to himself entirely unaware that danger was near. Four of us in an instant after we were up the bank of the lake were ready to fire. One of the boys counted in a

low voice not intended for the ear of the beast, "one, two, three." The four rifles gave scarcely more than one report which without any doubt gave a sudden turn to Msr. Bisons reflections. He responded with a shake of his great wooly head, a nervous wiggle of his stumpy tail, at the same time executing a forward movement in double quick. As we were all armed with repeating rifles, we had a chance to give him a shot as he retreated. He ran towards the rim for a short distance as though nothing was the matter. Shortly he commenced to falter going slower and very unsteady in his gait. [He] Went a few yards further and lay down.

Two of the boys went close up and one of them commenced shooting at him with his revolver. He came to his feet and charged at them but not very furiously as he was very weak. Another of the boys going close up took deliberate aim and tumbled him for good. He was a huge fellow and with his long shaggy mane and hair all over his head he looked like some cullion species of Lion. We butchered him and took his carcass on the steamer.

About noon of the same day, when we were within 10 miles of the mouth of Milk River [The wind] Blew so hard that we were unable to proceed and lay tied up to the bank from that time till daylight the next morning. We went on to Milk River getting there about 8 o'clock. Here we got a lot of good wood. Milk River is about 50 yds. wide coming in on the North. After getting our wood we steamed up 5 miles to Fort Smith, a fort of the Fur Co.²⁶ Here Mr. Campbell left us. At Fort Smith, there is quite a camp of Crows. Saw among them some of the finest specimens of Indians I have ever seen. One Indian attracted my attention. He was about 6 feet 2 inches, quite advanced in life, still very straight. He was a muscular-made old fellow and had a number of scars which showed he had been a brave and he still looked as though he could be a dangerous enemy. I pointed to a bad scar on his right arm, then imitating the motions of one in shooting a bow and arrow. He bowed his head at the same time ejaculating "Sioux, Sioux." There are only a few here, probably two hundred in all.

The country South of the River here is inhabited by the Santees, a branch of the Sioux family. Two men were lost at the mouth of Milk River from the steamboat *Tom Stephens*. They hunted for them two days [and] not finding them went on her way. They have not been heard of and probably never will. The first point above Milk River of note is Dry Fork. This is now a little stream of perhaps 10 yds. wide while in the spring by the marks left, it must be 400 yds in width. After leaving dry fork, you come to that

country called the "bad lands" and at least they are very appropriately named. These "Badlands" are very hilly and are as barren as they are hilly. The hills are very sharp and there is scarcely any vegetation to be seen on them. Today we see what we are told is pine on the distant hills. At Dry Fork, the *Grant* lost three men last year, killed by the Sioux, also had one wounded.

The next point is Round Bute which is about 135 miles from Milk River. This Bute is probably 400 ft. high and is about one mile from the River. All the way from Dry Fork to the mouth of the Mussleshell River which is about 100 miles from Round Bute, the Bad lands continue, though a finer River no man ever saw. There are narrow bottoms all along thickly covered with cottonwood and a little scattering ash. There is plenty of wood, though dry wood such as steamboats want is at times scarce. We landed at the Mouth of Mussleshell river yesterday or as it is termed, Kirchival City. This point has been selected by some as the proper head of navigation on the Missouri or the point that can be approached after the June rise is over. There is some dispute between this and the Yellowstone.

At this time, there are some 7 wt. men there, they have built two log cabbins and squatted on the town site. If this point should prove the point of course, these men will make their pile sure. I do not like the looks as well as at Fort Union or Yellowstone. We are having a fine stage of water. Have not had any trouble since we left the bar just above Dry Fork. [The] River has raised two feet in the last few days. [I] Think now there is no question but we will go through to Benton. Think we will get through in a week from tomorrow. Benton varies, according to the different authorities on board, from 430 miles to 350 [from here]. The bad lands still continue although they are not so bad as they are below the Musscleshell. Here they grow quite a quantity of scrubby pine, two varieties. Saw also some spruce. Still see alkali springs along on both banks of the River. Some say that there is so much alkalai in the Musscleshell and Milk Rivers as to make them unfit for use.

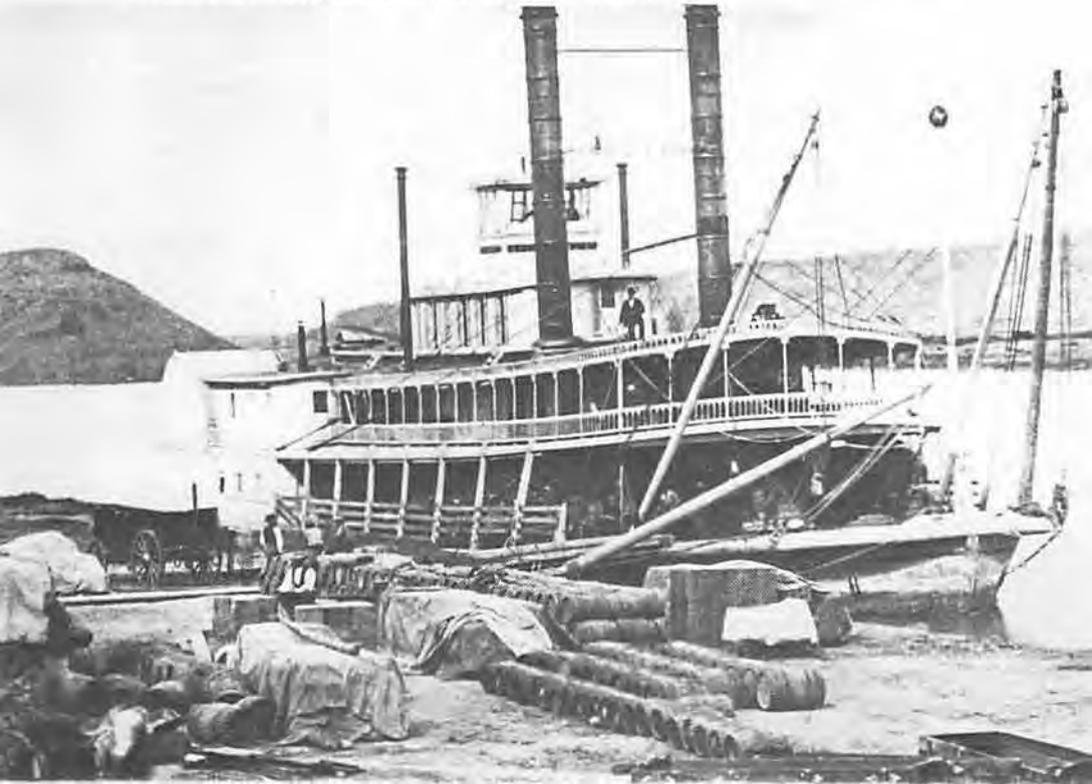
Last night just at darkness saw a large camp of Crows some two or three hundred. This morning passed another camp of some 300. One of the braves came along the bank and the Capt. launched the boat and took him on. He seemed to want to shake hands with everybody. He was well fed, carried up the River some 4 or 5 miles, and then landed with the privilege of walking back. While on board, he went up in the pilot house. The captain

presented him with a cigar which he smoked very gracefully. As he left the Capt. gave him one to give to his chief. He was evidently very much satisfied with his treatment on the *Agnes*. He showed his appreciation by a broad grin, setting down on his haunches a[nd] steadily watching us as we left him. Have not seen a great many buffalo. See Antelope and Deer now and then. There is plenty of timber at the mouth of the Musscleshell.

Tuesday, June 26, 1866

Last Sunday we spent mostly in wooding up. While we were wooding, the *Huntsville* lay alongside taking in wood. A little before noon, the *Luella* came down River. She also hauled along shore and commenced taking in wood. Went on board and found Alexander Majors on a trip of observation about the location of a town on the head of navigation at a low stage of water. He is going down as far as Union. Yesterday we made Cow Island about 8 am. This is as far as boats got up last year with two or three exceptions. Goods were waggoned to Benton, distance by Land, 90 miles. Just above the Island we found the current very strong. After dinner we came to a rapid bend where it was a question whether we were

Fort Benton levee. From Hiram M. Chittenden's History of Early Steamboat Navigation on the Missouri River.



going ahead or back. We lost our hold and floated back perhaps 100 feet. She got hold again and after half an hours heavy tugging we succeeded in getting round and immediately tied up [to] the bank where we lay till about sundown when the wind which had been blowing strong in our face lulled and we again went on our way.

Just as we got to Cow Island, the *Lillie Martin* came in sight and just as she came in sight we ran out of sight of the *Huntsville* which has kept our Comp.[any] for several days. While lying tied up, we visited the *Lillie Martin* who lay a few hundred yds. above us. The crews of both boats were employed in gathering up the scanty wood that is here to be found. There is no wood now except the pine and spruce and that does not grow near the River bank. The cottonwood and ash have almost disappeared. Have seen a few cottonwood but no ash for the last 100 miles. Early this morning we came to another Rapids. *Lillie Martin* just ahead. Capt. took out the long boat, put in two long lines tied together, towed them upstream above the Rapids then the mate with 6 men shot across the river, landing on a little point of land that runs down between the bluff and bank of the River.

The mate planted a log in the ground, made fast and went downstream, paying out his line which he had coiled up in the boat as he floated down. He did not follow the Capt.s directions and by so doing got his line inside of the *Lilly Martin* or between her and the shore when he should have come outside. The *Lilly* carried up a line over the top of a high point and got her hauser down and commenced pulling up before we could get our lines arranged. In pulling up, the *Lilly* got entangled in our line and cut it to bits clear through. Thus we had to do all our work over again before we could get over the rapids.²⁷

In due time we got ready and in 20 minutes we were over the trouble and in water that we could make good time in. We are yet in the "Bad Lands" and bad enough they are. They are nothing but piles of clay, so thoroughly impregnated with alkali that no vegetation flourishes on any of them, save here and there a clump of scrubby pines in a ravine, a few branches of greasewood near their bases accompanied by a few prickly pears or cactus. The hills are very sharp and some of them are as near as I can estimate 400 feet in hight. Saw indications of coal along the bank of the river at short intervals. We are having a very good stage of water and with good luck will make Fort Benton next Sunday.

Saw yesterday a flock of what we were told were mountain sheep. They are a very different animal from the mountain sheep of the Sierra Nevadas being much smaller. Saw a few antelope, no Buffalo in the last few days. Since we left Dry Fork this side of Milk River, the country through which we have passed gives no evidence of volcanic disturbances, the layers or stratas all with a few slight exceptions being found in a horizontal position. There is considerable sandstone and a little Gruss.²⁸

Wednesday, June 27th, 1866

Yesterday, after writing we came to Daphans [Dauphin's] Rapids. Put a line on shore and the passengers and crew took hold and by half an hours hard pulling we succeeded in getting round. Struck another Rapid about 3 miles above. For a time it looked as though the current would be too strong for us. After going back once and then getting a little nearer the right bank, the boat weathered the point. In two miles we came to another rapid. Ran up into the swift water but could not run over. Dropped back by the right bank put out a line, and hauled her over with the nigger.²⁹ Soon after getting over we tied up for the night. About two miles above us lay the *Lillie Martin*.

We ran along quite well, about noon sat. we came to Drowned Mans Rapids. This is the swiftest water between Benton and St. Louis. Ran in on the left bank got out a line, the passengers assisting the crew in dragging the line up stream. Hauled the line up, made fast to a "dead man." The steamer swung out into the stream and stood up against the current. She ran ahead of the line till her bow was just in the center of the rapids but then she stood and quivered. We hauled in on the line till that began to draw pretty hard and she began to come ahead. For half an hour she came slowly along. The quick and strong escape of steam showed that the engines were laboring with all their strength while [the] line attached to the capstan had all the strain it could stand.

Soon she got up into an eddy when it was discovered that the dead man was not far up stream. The nigger got out of order and for a time it looked a matter of great uncertainty about her going over. She swung her head out into the current which caught her with great force and seemed as though something must yield. Lucky for the *Agnes* everything stood and after a time the capstan was set agoing and the *Agnes* again stood upstream. In a few minutes she was up beyond the swift water. I sat on the bank

watching her. When we got on board it was 11 o'clock. About a mile above the Rapids we tied up for the night.

Thursday, June 28, 1866

Today we have had a good deal of swift water to contend with and at one point had to warp over. There has been a decided change in the formation of the country. The clay hills have given out and we now have any quantity of sandstone bluffs. They are not as high as the hills of the clay formation have been. They are cut into all imaginable shapes. Yesterday we passed a point called steamboat Rock. This is a block of Sandstone standing at right angles with the River and about 200 yds from the bank and is a very good representation of a Steamboat. It stands with the bows toward you as you first meet it coming up the River with its smokestacks, escape pipes, Pilot house, and in very good shape and proper position.

The most thing of notice is Hole-in-the-Wall. Before describing this I must note that through the sandstone there are perpendicular stratas of a dark black rock which is much harder than the sandstone. Being harder of course, it does not wash by the action of time as fast as the Sandstone. That wearing away leaves this strata which is in some places as thin as 18 inches and rarely seems thicker than 5 feet, sticking up above everything and looking like a high thick wall. Some of these walls run at right angles with the River and when they cross the Sandstone is broken down while this harder rock stands up in bold defiance against the assaults of the elements. The hole in the wall is a hole through one of these immense walls where it comes close down to the bank of the river. Mr. Sturges(?) says the rock is micaphosform. This hole is about 10 feet in diameter and can be distinctly seen 4 miles up the River.

Wood has got to be very scarce. Can get but little in a place and the places where it can be found are by no means numerous. [The] Weather has been a little warmer. Yesterday while they were wooding-up I took a rifle and went back from the River some 2 1/2 miles. At that point I got to the hight of land and had a fine view of the country, gently rolling prairies with good grass. I also got a good view of the Little Rocky Mountains as they are termed, on the North bank of the Missouri, distant about 40 miles. Also saw a chain of Mts. in a S.W. course on the South side of the River. The most Southern of these mounts., I suppose must be [the]

Judith mountains while the Northern ones, I take must be some of the Rocky Mountain Chain. Have plenty of water and are now sure of our trip to Benton by water.³⁰

NOTES

1. Charles Perky, ed., *Past and Present of Saunders County, Nebraska*, II (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1915), 10-14.
2. The Union Pacific Railroad was then building westward across Nebraska.
3. A newspaper ad in the files of the Missouri Historical Society, dated April 19, 1867, announces a trip by the *Agnes* to Fort Benton. The captain is identified as J.B. Merrill.
4. The total distance from the mouth of the Missouri above St. Louis to Ft. Benton was given variously from 2,285 miles to more than 3,000 miles depending on whether the many meanders of the river were measured. William E. Lass, *Steamboating on the Upper Missouri* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), 1-2.
5. William Tecumseh Sherman, the Civil War hero, had been appointed to command the Military Division of the Mississippi which included the upper Missouri Region. In May, 1866, he made an inspection trip which took him through Kansas and Nebraska and up the Missouri to Sioux City. Robert G. Athearn, *William Tecumseh Sherman and the Settlement of the West*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), 45-50.
6. Incorrect. Gilchrist acknowledges his error in a later entry.
7. Sparring-off was a technique whereby two large poles or spars were lowered on each side of the bow of the boat. These then served to lift the vessel up and pull it forward. It was effective only in areas where the sand bars were loose and easily shifted. Lass, *Steamboating*, 12-13.
8. Walter A. Burleigh, (1820-1896) was agent to the Yankton Sioux, 1861-65, and delegate to Congress from Dakota Territory, 1865-1869. Doane Robinson, *History of South Dakota* (Aberdeen: Bowen and Company, 1904), I, 969.
9. For information on Ft. Randall and the other upper Missouri military and fur-trading posts, the best source is Robert G. Athearn, *Forts of the Upper Missouri* [Englewood, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Incorporated, 1967].
10. This was General Alfred Sully's third consecutive campaign against the Sioux in the Upper Missouri region. Athearn, *Forts*, 184-185.
11. Queries to a number of sources, including Professor William E. Lass and the Missouri Historical Society, failed to reveal any information about the *Agnes* or her owners.
12. In view of the unsettled relations between the military and the Indian tribes of the Upper Missouri, the passengers' nonchalant excursions away from the river to hunt are somewhat surprising. Several times during the mid-1860's, steamboats or wood-gathering parties were attacked and some persons were killed. The danger from Indians was ever-present. See Lass, *Steamboating*, 48. Gilchrist himself later refers to attacks on steamboats which occurred in 1865.
13. This was old Fort Sully, established 1863, and soon to be abandoned in favor of new Fort Sully some 30 miles upriver. Steven Hoekman, "The History of Fort Sully," *South Dakota Historical Collections*, 26, 236-241.
14. Lieutenant Colonel John Pattee was in command at Fort Sully. Athearn, *Forts*, 217.
15. In the fall of 1865 and the summer of 1866, the so-called Northwest Treaty Commission met with the Upper Missouri River tribes to make or renew treaties. The commissioners were Newton Edmunds, S. R. Curtis, Orrin Guernsey, and Henry W. Reed. Their report is found in *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the Year 1866*, 168-176.
16. Probably the site of Fort Pierre, American Fur Company post, 1832-1855 and U.S. Army Post, 1855-1857. Athearn, *Forts*, 39-50.
17. Incorrect. Lewis and Clark passed there in 1804, 62 years previously.

18. The *Deer Lodge* was built especially for the Upper Missouri and was the only vessel to make two trips to Fort Benton in 1866. Such a feat was unusual, since the navigation season on the upper river lasted only from mid-March to late June. Lass, *Steamboating*, 44.

19. This incident involved the *St. Johns* rather than the *Gen. Grant*. See Lass, *Steamboating*, 48. Later in his journal, Gilchrist refers to a similar attack on the *Gen Grant*.

20. These are earth lodges rather than tipis.

21. Gilchrist's Henry rifle, though a repeater, was less than adequate as a buffalo gun. Its 44 calibre rimfire cartridge lacked power.

22. This would be Fort Buford, then under construction by Captain William Rankin and troops of the 13th Infantry Regiment. Athearn, *Fort*, 227.

23. Fort Union was the famous American Fur Company post established 1828-1832 five miles above the mouth of the Yellowstone River.

24. Double-tripping, as it was called, involved removing part of the cargo to lighten the boat and then proceeding upstream beyond the sandbar to put off the remainder of the cargo. The steamer then returned to pick up the first half of the cargo. Lass, *Steamboating*, 13.

25. A biographical sketch of Smith appears in R. E. Dale, *Otoe County Pioneers*, (Lincoln: 1965), 2366-2367. Possibly he had gone to Fort Benton as a gold-seeker.

26. The Montana Historical Society has been unable to locate any reference to Fort Smith. As Gilchrist indicates, it was likely a fur-trading post.

27. This was known as warping. The procedure consisted of tying a line to a tree or "deadman" and pulling the boat forward with a small auxiliary engine colloquially called the "nigger." Lass, *Steamboating*, 12.

28. The dictionary defines Gruss as a rock that is finely granulated but not decomposed by weathering.

29. See note 27.

30. The *Agnes* arrived at Fort Benton on June 30, 1866. "List of Steamboat Arrivals at Ft. Benton," *Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana* (Helena: Rocky Mountain Publishing Co., 1876), I, 319.