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Article Title: The Diary of William H Woodhams, 1852-1854: The Great American Deserts or Around and Across

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Article Summary: Woodhams first sailed from New York around South America to California, then returned home to Michigan by the Nicaragua route. In 1854 he went overland to California, passing through Nebraska. His illustrated travel diaries provide lively descriptions of the colorful people he met and the combination of adventure and boredom that he experienced.

Cataloging Information:

Names: William H Woodhams, Alfred Woodhams, Joseph Chart, Obediah Chart, Oliver Aubrey, Elizabeth and George Anderson, Jane Blondell, Captain Robert McCormick, Jim Beckwith, Ben Lawson

Place Names: San Francisco, Oakland, Elizabethtown, Redwood City, Rancho de las Pulgas, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Mission San Josef (Mission of San José), Sacramento and Marysville, California; Soda Springs, Idaho; Kalamazoo and Plainwell, Michigan; St. Joseph, Missouri; Fort Kearny, Ash Hollow, Courthouse Rock and Chimney Rock, Nebraska; Barnegat Light, New Jersey; Troy, New York; Fort Laramie, Devil's Gate, and Independence Rock, Wyoming; Tierra del Fuego, Argentina; Falkland Islands; Fort San Carlos, San Juan del Sud and San Juan del Norte, Nicaragua

Keywords: William H Woodhams, Alfred Woodhams, Joseph Chart, Elizabeth and George Anderson, Captain Robert McCormick, *Green Point*, Nicaragua Steamship Company, *Cortez*, *Star of the West*, Truckee route, Beckwith route

Photographs / Images: William H Woodhams; map of the travels of Woodhams, 1852-1854; sketches by Woodhams: clipper ship, sailor disguised as Neptune, Rancho de las Pulgas, Truckee River, Fort San Carlos, Court House, Ash Hollow, Chimney Rock, Scott's Bluff, Fort Laramie, Platte River bluffs; George H Baker's sketch of Ash Hollow; map of Nebraska route used by Woodhams in 1854



William H. Woodhams about 1860.

THE DIARY OF WILLIAM H. WOODHAMS,
1852 - 1854:
The Great Deserts or Around and Across

Edited by Charles W. Martin

INTRODUCTION

Author William H. Woodhams was born in England on February 6, 1829, at Croydon, a suburb south of London. He traveled to Michigan about 1844-1845 when 15 or 16 and located land on the Kalamazoo River 12 miles north of the city of Kalamazoo, which he felt would make an excellent farm. He hastened back to England, told his father about the land, and induced the family to immigrate to Michigan in the summer of 1846. Their farm later became part of the town of Plainwell.

William started his diary during a sea voyage to California. On October 24, 1852, he sailed from New York around South America on the barque *Green Point* with his sister, her husband, two aunts and several uncles, who were all headed to California to settle there. William apparently was going along to look over the country, to discuss business, and just to enjoy the excitement of traveling.

They arrived in San Francisco March 11, 1853, after a voyage of four and one-half months. On December 16, 1853, William and his cousin Alfred were on their way back to Michigan by way of Nicaragua and New York, stopping in Troy, New York, before returning to William's home in Michigan. They arrived February 5, 1854, but William stayed home only two months before he was again off for California, this time with horses to sell. He traveled the overland route with Alfred and another cousin named Joseph Chart. They left Michigan on March 8, 1854, and reached the California gold fields at Elizabethtown four and one-half months later on July 22. After a few days they pushed on and arrived in the Santa Clara valley on August 11. On February 9, 1855, William again embarked in San Francisco for home. He arrived in New York March 5 where his diary ends.

We know from family records that one month later on April 2, 1855, he married Ann Hopkins in Troy, New York. Eventually he and his family moved to California. He died in Oakland, December 31, 1891.

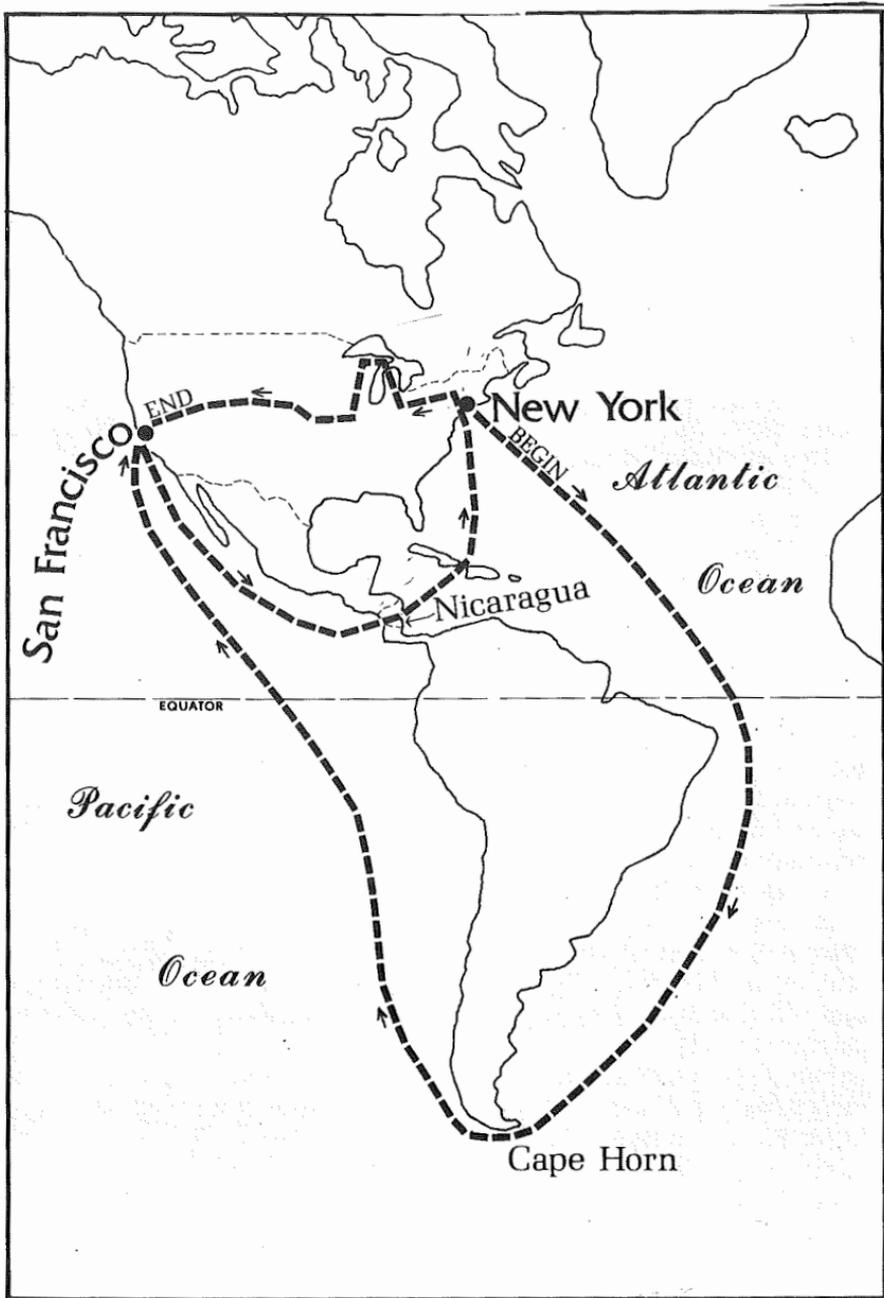
His diary is important for several reasons. First, the sea voyage is different from most voyages of the time. The diaries of most people heading for California in the 1850s tell of overcrowded ships, poor food, bad water, and many deaths. William went in a new sailing vessel with few passengers, who soon settled into the routine of their strange new lives. But the transition from normal activity to almost complete idleness was taxing. William read, fished, made a chess set, drew pictures, whittled, shot at birds, and wrote in his diary every day. Practical jokes were constantly hatched to pass the time. William experienced all varieties of weather; 100 degrees heat to blowing snow; quiet weather that becalmed the ocean, to gales that produced terrific storms; clear skies to heavy fogs.

The diary also gives an excellent description of the Nicaragua route, a crossing from the Atlantic to the Pacific used by the Spaniards since the early 16th century as an alternative to the Panama route, which had suffered from frequent raids by British freebooters. With the disintegration of Spain's American colonies, the Nicaragua route lapsed into disuse. By February, 1849, the route was once more used by California goldseekers, but lack of steamship facilities halted its traffic. Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt inaugurated steamship service from the US to Nicaragua in 1851. In April, 1853, Vanderbilt sold the operations to the Nicaragua Steamship Company, which was operating the line when William returned on it.

The diary is important because of its description of an overland journey in 1854, a year that few traveled overland to California. From 1849 to 1853 there were between 20,000 and 55,000 travelers on the trail each year. But George Stewart in *The California Trail* estimates that in 1854 only about 12,000 persons crossed. Merrill Mattes in *The Great Platte River Road* lists only 16 diaries, letters or recollections for that year. William's description of the Beckwith route in California is one of the few describing this variant of the California trail.

Woodham's ability to write a crisp, interesting narrative of the trips, his delightful sense of humor, and his talent for illustrating his diary add to the value of this journal.

The diary has come down through the family and is now in the possession of William H. Woodhams, Mattawan, Michigan, great-grandson of diary-keeper William H. Woodhams. It is by his consent that we have been able to publish it. We also wish to thank Robert E. Woodhams, Kalamazoo, Michigan, grandson of the diarist's younger brother, for bringing the diary to our attention and for furnishing family information. The spelling and style are essentially those of the diarist. Woodhams' penchant for run-on sentences without capitalization has made it necessary to add considerable punctuation to aid the reader.—C.W.M.



William Woodhams started his diary during a voyage from New York to California around South America (1852-1853) and continued it during a return trip via Nicaragua (1853-1854), an overland journey to California (1854), and return to New York by sea (not shown on map).

THE JOURNAL

Sunday, October 24, 1852, at sea

At last we have left the Babel of New York, after pretty well measuring the length of all the principal streets in it, while the ship took in her cargo, walking all day and sleeping on board at night.

We sailed (or rather were towed down the bay) on Wednesday afternoon from our berth on Dover street wharf the opposite side of which lay the new Clipper ship *Contest*, she is to sail in two weeks for San Francisco, wonder which will get there first. She is of a peculiar build, being very broad across her deck by the foremast, yet with sharp bows and a gradual taper to her stern; our Captain thinks she will go a voyage to the bottom.

As we were being towed down the bay, there was a sort of ripple just enough to lift the bows so as it could be felt. George came to me with much wonder in his face, saying "how the boat moves." I told him to wait until we got out side and were left to shift for ourselves without the assistance of that little smoky fellow ahead. "Will she rock more than this when we get to sea?" he asked in evident consternation and an anxious expression on his face that spoke of an uncomfortable sensation somewhere below it, but I will leave him to his "pheelings" and introduce to my book the personages that I have to be with for a few months. We had plenty of time to get acquainted the tedious weeks we were in New York waiting the sailing of the new, fast sailing clipper barque *Green Point*, so she was described by the handbill. New she certainly is, fast sailing she may be when in good order and the heavy load off her decks, but now she draws two feet too much water, at least astern, but every thing aloft is like a Mid shipman's chest—everything uppermost and nothing on hand, to use the expression of the first mate. Clipper built she is not, but is long and narrow and will ride like a duck with a decent load; her spars are very tall; she carries sky sails.

First, of course, comes the skipper, captain, or master, according to the place he may sail from, but old man of every ship afloat no matter if he is not thirty. Well ours is Captain Robert McCormick, an Irishman by birth, but with not the slightest symptom of brogue clinging to him, but it is evident he has not lost the taste for it yet by the choice of a wife, an ignorant lowbred woman with the underjaw of a bull dog and the brogue of a Dublin street beggar. He is rather amusing; habits of command have made him as imperious and egotistical as an old schoolmaster but without his intelligence; the pope is a fool to him for infallibility; and he advances his opinions upon philosophy, history, religion, and every other subject broached without mercy or scarcely knowing what he is talking of.

Yesterday he gave me a special piece of information on the Gunpowder plot,¹ to wit, that the plot was divulged by the sister of Lord Hastings, wife of Lord Stanley, to save Lord H——, who was implicated. I, of course, was truly grateful and a "lettle" bored, for it took him at least fifteen minutes to get it out. He is a freemason and has an insane crochet in his head that none but that order understand the Bible, so in his benevolence he favors us with some novel expositions of Sacred Wit once in a while, or asks what we suppose to be the meaning of Sundry passages, and when we tell him our interpretation gives a horse laugh and afterwards is silent, unkindly leaving us in our benighted ignorance. Opposite his seat at the cabin table is a faded piece of needlework in a frame, being some six or seven verses (by some smitten fair that could write original "pomes") in high praise of "McCormick bold and true." This he contemplates with immense satisfaction; alongside hangs a German silver speaking trumpet with an inscription of the hifaluten fashion in praise of his great gallantry and resolution at some terrible time or other, and with these testimonials to his immense superiority he walks the deck no ordinary mortal.

The first mate, Mr. Bartlett, . . . an Englishman, has been well educated when a child, entered the English Royal navy as a Middy, rose to be master's mate, and left the service in disgust, as he had no great friends to assist his promotion, so of course he did not get higher. He is smart, gentlemanly, and quiet, and master of his business, almost as simple minded as far as knowledge of the world goes aside from the surroundings of a ship as "Capen Cuttle" [character in Dickens' *Dombey and Son*] himself.

The second mate is a Prussian, a big burly fellow. He can spin a good yarn not characterized by very strict adherence to the truth, as far as I can judge.²

The only other first Cabin passenger besides our own party is a New York boy, son of the harbor master there. Stephen Glover is a boy of seventeen, tall, exceedingly well formed except having one of the most villainous faces and heads that could find a mate in some Phrenological museum between the murderer's department and that of the monkeys; these last his face strikingly resembles; his disposition corresponds; he is restless, active, smart, vain, and without the first particle of common sense. He will be the butt for all the mischievous spirit on board; the mate has begun already.

The rest of cabin are the captain's wife[s] servant, an Irish old maid, and her charge, the captain's child little Jane, a sprightly little thing two years old; O. Chart and wife;³ Oliver Aubrey wife and child;⁴ G. Anderson and wife;⁵ and myself make the complement. There are two families passengers in the second cabin, and 5 in the steerage.

The steam tug left as soon as we were fairly out of the Narrows, and we tumbled out into an ugly cross sea that soon began to show its effects on almost every one on board the vessel, even the old sea goers, the steward and stewardess. Even the first mate looks quite ghostly. I passed the time between this and Wednesday I scarcely know how. I never was more sick since I can remember. One night, the roughest, I passed sitting in Mr. Chart's stateroom drinking ice water to cool my burning fever. Another night a heavy sea broke over us, stove one of the quarter boats, and came down the skylight, and the deck was a foot deep in water with my trunks sloshing from one side to the other, but I was too sick to get after them. We all huddle round the table looking like a set of spooks, all white and ghostly except George, and he is yellow.

One consolation in our affliction is that the wind has been in our favor. Even the gale of Friday drove us on our way rapidly; yesterday it was sullen and windy; today the sun breaks out at intervals as if he were afraid we should have too much of a good thing; there is a brig in sight.

October 25, 1852, Lat. 32° 20'' N, Long. 54° 57'' W

Fair today, but the sea rough, making some of us sick again. George & Lib look awful, and no doubt feel so. For my part I have an indistinct impression that some one has driven an iron bolt through my temples and riveted it very tight at each end. The wind is lulling a little hope the sea will go down. Talk of the glories of the ocean sea sickness dispel them.

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October 30, 1852, Lat. 28° 29'' N, Long. 45° 13'' W

Rather more pleasant and we feel better; interesting this is to be so dependent on wind and weather for feeling well or ill, and the monotony of this sort of existence is rather unbearable. Our meal times are the greatest and most interesting events of each day.

We are close hauled on the wind and so do not make much headway. I have been reading the *Reveries of a Bachelor*⁶ to George and Lib; wonder why no one ever thought far enough to put down the crazy dreams of boyhood into plain English before.

Sunday, October 31, 1852, Lat. 27° 33'' N

A bright day, calm and fair, very warm; a day or two now will bring us into the tropics. Myself brother and sister, now the only sick ones, feel better today because it is so still; a ship in sight, the first we have seen for some days.

Monday, November 1, 1852

Very warm and dead calm. The vessel has been surrounded by

dolphins and rudder fish. All of us tried our luck at catching them, but they scorned our baits until the captain took a line and hooked a dolphin, I had heard of the beautiful appearance this fish presented when dying, but I had never heard of the equally beautiful appearance they present in the water. They are then of a lustrous blue, like spring steel. When taken from the water, they change to a bright straw color, then to a silvery white with black spots. We feel better to day but are dreading the next rough weather. Our dolphin showed great beauty at table this evening.

Wednesday, November 3, 1852, Lat. 27° 24'' N

Yesterday going on our course all day with a strong breeze, great numbers of porpoises round the bows. The second mate harpooned one, and we ate his liver. It was exactly like that of a hog and very good. Some of the meat was cooked, and by hungry men might have been well liked. A barque in sight supposed to be the *Salem* of Salem. Four dolphins taken to day, two of them on Glover's line, but he did not happen to be aft when they got fast, so for some time nobody would tell him that he was the lucky personage, and when they did the captain persuaded him that the ladies were fooling him.

Thursday, November 4, 1852, Lat. 27° 34'' N, Long. 43° 7'' W

Very calm all day, George and Lib both better, a breeze is springing up, and we are slowly proceeding on our course. The mate has been spinning some yarns to night. He is a good mimic.

Friday, November 5, Lat. 27° 9'' N, Long. 41° 56'' W

Very fair and calm going 4-1/2 knots fore and foretop, main and main top studding sails set. It is very warm and as there is no awning on deck we have to keep below in the middle of the day.

To day was the birthday of the captain's little Jennie, so he called us down into the cabin [to indulge] in a glass of London Porter. At dinner he was amusing himself by pouring molasses down the child's throat. Glover chanced to see the operation. It moved him to roar, "What a shame, it will destroy the tone of the child's stomach," with all the authority of Astley Cooper and the air of one that cannot be disputed. The chief mate who sat opposite said nothing but fixed his iron visage into a look of the most intense horror and alarm, and keeping his eyes on Glover backed slowly away from the table.

Saturday, November 6, 1852, Lat. 27° 14'' N, Long. 40° 37'' W

Very calm to day. This is slow business. George and I study Watts on the mind in the morning and sing in the afternoon. A grand discussion with the captain at dinner on the conjugal relation.

Sunday, November 7, 1852, Lat. 24° 30'' N, Long. 39° 23'' W

Frequent showers with little gusts of wind, but it is right. We make 8

1/2 knots. We all seem gloomy to day—the effect of this weather probably. The mate has just roused an immense flame of indignation in Mr. Glover's bosom by calling him a grass lion.

Monday, November 8, 1852, Lat. 22° 19'' N, Long. 38° 14'' W

Fair to day, wind northwest. A thrasher some 25 feet long amused us by playing around the vessel for some time. Mr. Chart caught a bonito this morning—they are likely an overgrown bass. Grand fight between the young ones to day. The Captain and his wife are talking of Forest the actor,⁷ he says he is the greatest living tradition [tragedian], equal to Mr. Partington of excellent memory.

We have 22 sails set to day. Glover going up before the rest after dinner, saw a fish on his hook, and being so nearsighted, was in high glee and hauled in his line with a will. Found a red herring on the hook, put there by some of the second cabin passengers. He looked round, saw no one in sight, and dashed it into the sea, but at supper the mate and captain gravely took him to task for wasting good food.

Tuesday, November 9, 1852, Lat. 20° 54'' N, Long 29° 25'' W

Very still and fair, sea calm. Numbers of Portuguese men of war floating around the ship; these creatures are about 6 inches long with a body like a mass of colored jelly with long membranes hanging down below. They hoist a tiny membranous sail and on calm days float gently along the surface, but candor obliges me to say that with all their brilliant beauty they are very unavailable to any one attempting to handle them, producing the same effect as an exaggerated dose of sting nettle. At sundown a little squall of wind and rain came up with the wind from the east—our introduction to the N.E. trade winds.

The orders, "Haul down the fore and main A gallant thin sails, and maintop there! Go aloft and furl the mainsky sail before you come down," and "There Antideluvian [to the ship's boy] coil these ropes" were given by the mate, who came into the waist rejoicing that those d——d flying kites were down and only plain sail on.

Wednesday, November 10, 1852, Lat. 19° 30'' N, Long. 37° 5'' W

Calm and fair. There is a monstrous fat Swedish woman in the second cabin. She strips to her chemise and a remarkably short skirt and goes forward to the forecabin where there is a hog's head. She tumbles in, and her husband pours salt water over her, and back she comes laughing and shaking the water from her long yellow hair looking like a jolly old mermaid amid the laughter of the men and the indignation of the ladies.

George went into the mate's cabin to day and saw a large chunk of gingerbread put there by Ann, the servant of Mrs. McCormack, who has taken quite a fancy to him. We were sitting on deck in the evening and the ladies were teasing Bartlett about Ann, and George told the

gingerbread story. Mrs. Chart slipped away from the group down into his cabin and back without observation, then calling us all around her commenced sharing out, to Bartlett among the rest. "What is this?" he asked, pulling it to his nose, for it was too dark to see. "Oh!" said he, "This smells like mine," then set up a blubbering that would have done credit to a schoolboy and telling the ladies they had the weather tack on him but there was time enough for plenty of cruising before we get to San Francisco.

Thursday, November 11, 1852, Lat. 17° 38" N,

A strong breeze to day making the sea very rough, and George and wife and myself sick as usual. We are full in the trade winds now.

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Tuesday, November 16, 1852, Lat. 7° 4" N, Long. 39° 59" W

Stiff breeze all day, heavy rain this evening made 7-1/2 knots all day. Poor Glover, after being teased almost to crazy, hid himself, and the ladies hunted for him for some time, fearing that he had thrown himself over board. I knew too well his aversion to cold water to feel at all uneasy.

Wednesday, November 17, 1852, Lat. 6° 26" N, Long. 29° 2" W

This morning the Captain found in his quadrant case a document purporting to be the will of Stephen Glover, stating that he intended to commit suicide. Then [he] went on to dispose of his personal property in various ways; his share of the provisions on board was to go to the ladies in the first cabin, his pistol to the mate, and his linen clean and unclean to Jane Blondell. This precious document the Captain read after dinner, as far as Jane Blondell, but no more was heard for shouts of laughter at Steve and the document, for all knew his "penchant" for Jane, who is a cozy lass of sixteen, and with the rest of her father's family are passengers in the second cabin.

The weather has been very variable to day, sometimes going at 9 knots, and now it is quite calm with little gusty squalls coming up very often. We are out of the trade winds into what sailors call horse latitudes. This is the most lovely evening since we left port, brilliant moonlight, a soft-breeze and the ever varying flecks of light on the dark water. The soft easy motion of the vessel as we glide along at 6 1/2 knots seems to gladden all on board and groups are clustered around all parts of the vessel, with laughter, music, and yarn telling in full blast.

Thursday, November 18, 1852, Lat. 5° 10" N, Long. 28° 18" W

Occasional squalls to day, but generally calm and warm. George and I contrive to murder time with singing, reading, and sundry whittlings when we are well enough. A fracas matrimonial between the

Captain and wife. The effects of these operations is rather amusing. The old man will not come to meals for the rest of the day but takes his on deck; when the mate misses him from the head of the table, he asks if there has been another scratching match.

Friday, November 19, 1852, Lat. 3° 35'' N, 28° 36'' W

Fine, with stiff breeze, but not on our course, the wind nearly ahead. I have been washing this morning and rubbed the skin off my fingers. I shall be very glad to hand the job over to the legitimate performers of such work if we ever get ashore again. Ther[mometer] 101 Far [Fahrenheit].

The old man has got over his sulky fit, has been lecturing very learnedly on Marryat's novels,⁸ and is now mystifying himself and the audience by mixing up the stories of Midshipman Easy, and the Pirate with the history of Paul Jones.

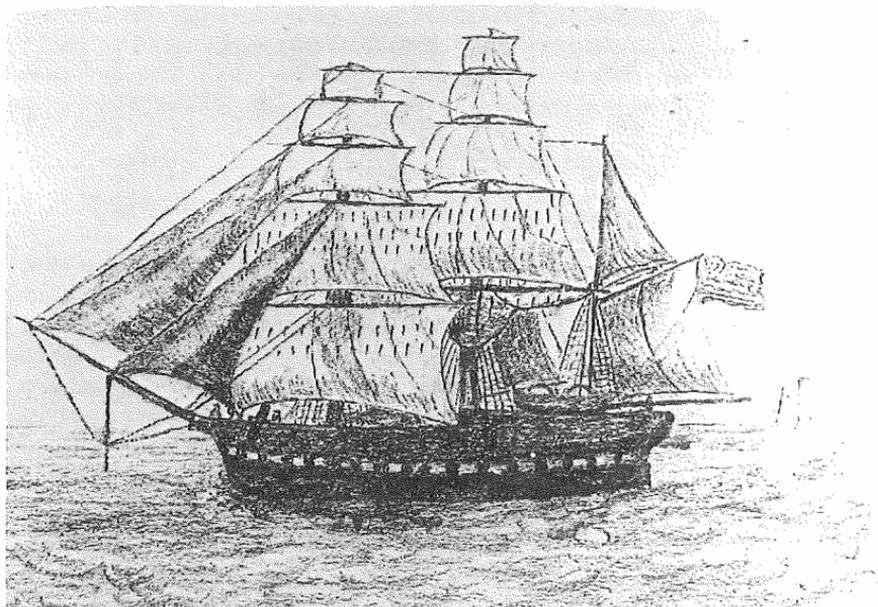
Saturday, November 20, 1852, Lat. 2° 32'' N, Long. 29° 00'' W

Very calm and very warm. I have just seen the ascent of the boy to the maintruck for the first time. He is a little fellow from Bristol, England, and this is his first voyage before the mast. He turned very red when told by the second mate to slush the main mast from the main truck down. He took his grease, slung the bucket around his neck, and went rapidly to the main truck and was soon astride the sky sail yard. On his way up he stopped on the maintop sail yard, then his courage seemed to fail as there are not any ratlines (or what we should call rope ladders) and nothing but two parallel ropes to shin up. He looked down on deck where George and I stood watching him, seeming to take fresh courage from our silent sympathy [and] started again. Poor little fellow, his is a hard life. He says he has not a relative in the world, but he is merry and good looking and always ready to oblige.

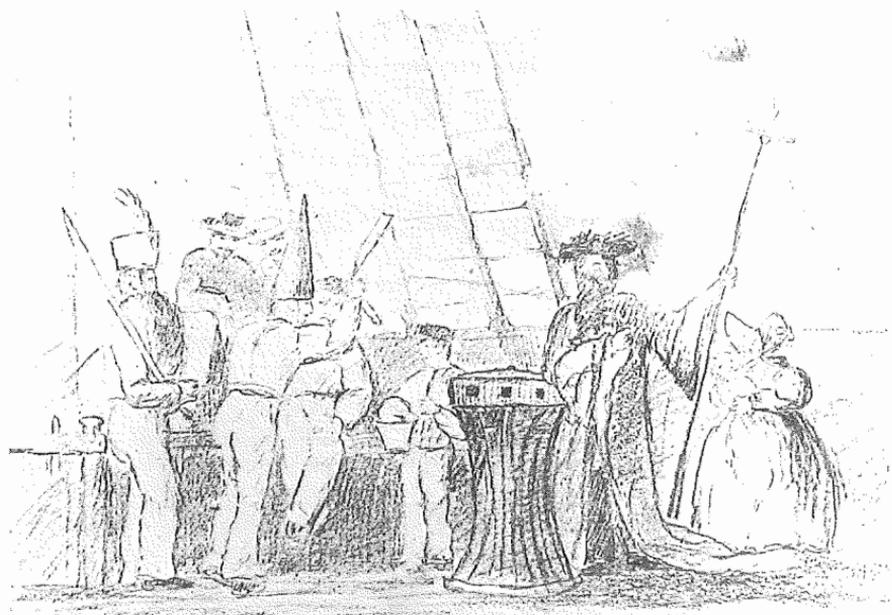
Sunday, November 21, 1852, Lat. 00° 54'' N, Long. 29° 05'' W

This morning about 5 o'clock the wind shifted from S.E. to N.W. and drove us through the water at a great rate for a few minutes. It was Bartlett's watch; he thought he would let her drive, when there came a puff of wind and rain that carried away the fore t gallant sail and jibs in a crack and then was over.

Bartlett brought . . . down a flying fish that was blown on board, for me to preserve the wings. They are pretty little creatures and seem to have more than their share of enemies—the gulls persecute them above and the dolphins below. They are about 10 inches long with unusually large eyes that have not the usual fishy stare. They are bright blue on the back and white below, and where they rise in flocks they look like snow birds.



Clipper of the type on which Woodhams embarked at New York for California in 1852. . . (Below) Sailor disguised as Neptune (with trident) initiated first-time crossers of the equator.



We are near the Equator, and Glover and some of the steerage passengers are in great fear lest Neptune should visit us. The rocky islets Venedo San Pedro are in sight.⁹ Away here in midocean, they rise about 40 feet above the water level.

Monday, November 22, 1852, noon, Lat. 00° 35'' N, Long. 29° 39'' W

A stiff breeze all day with a rough sea. We crossed the Equator in the night and the unshaved felt relieved, hoping that Old Neptune would not pay us a visit.¹⁰ But George and I knew that preparations were making to receive him, so about six o'clock or sundown the second mate roused the ship with the cry of fire with all his 5-lung power; and in the twilight, the sea under the lee of the vessel seemed on fire. A voice like small thunder roared from some unknown depths, "Who are you? Where are you from?" The old man answered the hail at the top of his throat (he would have made a good Bull of Bashan¹¹): "Barque *Green Point* for San Francisco," the voice roared along the ship's side. The blaze went with it and vanished at our stern.

As we were looking after the light, we heard a great hubbub in the waist. All started forward and met on the gangway from the main to the poop deck, a group of beings that looked as though they had just started from the bottom of old ocean; first came a giant of a fellow with a black mask and enormous black beard in an uncouth dress and a long wooden sword, then came Old Neptune in a cocked hat and painted mask a beard of oakum reaching to his waist a long green train, a trident in his hand with a fish on it completed his rig; behind him came his barber another giant in a sailcloth hat about 2 feet high masked with the rest he was attended by his clerk; a little fellow withered and dried up in a striped dress, masked too he had two razors one about four feet and the other about one foot long. There were several other attendants among them, one was Neptune's wife principally remarkable for her obesity, bustle, and baby.

The old sea god gave his log book to the second mate, shook hands with the captain, then stood by in an attitude while the mate read Neptune's articles of the sea, then read a list of the vessels that had crossed the line lately and that he had visited coming last to the *Green Point* and after reading the names of the officers and crew proceeded to call the first of those that had never crossed the line before.

The first call was the carpenter. He was seized by the gen'd'armes (the fellow with the sword) and marched to the leeward side the vessel where just aft the main mast was a huge bath rigged from a spare studding sail, with two or three half-naked sailers with buckets of salt water ready to dash over the victims. The barber after solemnly sharpening his razor on a strop of equal proportions seated Chips on the boom that held up the sail. The barber's clerk proceeded to apply the lather with a paint brush full of soap suds. The barber asked with a

solemn voice, "Have you ever crossed the line before?" As he said "No," the brush accidentally slipped into his mouth, the barber shaved him with the wooden razor, then with a sudden motion he was tumbled into the sail and held there until several buckets of cold water were dashed over him. Then dripping wet, eyes nose and mouth smarting from the soap he was allowed to crawl out of the bath and sneak away below.

George came after Chips, then Mr. Aubrey, then myself. They were very mild with me, principally because I was passive in their hands, except as to the matter of answering their unnecessary inquiry as to my crossing the line before, so I pressed my lips air tight, as a woman when she is told "not to tell" and shook my head like a subject of the palsy.

Glover came next, he had made valorous threats of shooting and otherwise doing grievous bodily injury to any one that should touch him with soapy intentions, but as he saw the preparations his valor wavered and he begged the Captain to let him hide in his stateroom. He got into trouble directly Neptune and train came on deck by rushing up to Mrs. Nep and pulling aside the baby's head gear so as to see its face for which indignity he was visited by a slap from the side of the wooden sword that raised him some three feet from the deck. The hands disliking him would have given him rough usage had not the mate given special orders to the contrary beforehand. As it was they frightened him enough for two years to come and did all they dared before they let him go—eight or nine more followed rapidly, then the whole masked crew went into the after cabin, nominally to pay their respects to the ladies, really to get a bottle of brandy from the captain. Another stream of fire floated along the lee side and danced away astern and while we were looking after it Neptune and train disappeared, but the light was visible for nearly an hour. The game was ended, the play played out, and we are all sons of the sea. The brilliant beauty of the moonlight added to the wild Saturnalia or rather "Nep-tunalia."

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Wednesday, November 24, 1852, Lat. 4° 55" S, Long. 30° 53" W

The wind changed a few points in our favor last night about eleven and we have made 8 knots. Ever since to day at noon we were in the same latitude of Cape San Roque.¹² Ther. 100.

Thursday, November 25, 1852, Lat. 7° 47" S, Long. 31° 32" W

Getting along to day at 8-1/2 knots with the wind E. I have been forward watching our barque cut her way through the dense blue water. It takes little effort of the imagination to fancy her a thing of life with her snowy wings all spread graceful, rounded, motionless as marble diminishing from the immense mainsail to the tiny skysail that seems to mingle with the blue above. The [sea] dashes the foam from

her bows, and when a larger wave than usual meets her, a column of spray is sent into the air and on she bounds as if determined to drive away all obstacles.

In the evening Glover was crowing and boasting of his prowess in the art pugilistic. The second mate told him that the boy would whip him, who is younger and half a head shorter. Glover was almost in a fit with indignation, and began dancing and sparring round the boy, who sat on the maindeck quietly enough, until his John Bull nature began to boil up and looking up to Robinson said, "Zhall I vight him zur?" "Yes," said the mate adding, "and if you beat him boy I'll give you a new flannel shirt." They joined issue forthwith, and at the second round Glover was laid out on the deck, picked up by the mate and laid up in ordinary on a hen coop, crying and quite tame. The Captain heard of it and gave Glover a grand blow up and Robinson took it too, but he took it quite philosophically coming forward after his joliation saying it was worth a dozen blow ups to see the fun.

Friday, November 26, 1852, Lat. 10° 38" S

Fine. Made 6 knots all day.

Saturday, November 27, 1852, Lat. 13° 23" S, Long. 33° 09" W

Cloudy. A squall this morning interrupted our fine progress, by what the old man called killing the wind. Another scratching match has lasted two days. A waterspout in sight this morning.

Sunday, November 28, 1852, Lat. 15° 57" S, Long. 34° 01" W

Very still, made 7-1/2 knots in the morning, the breeze died away by noon. Sunday is a dull day here, the old man always examines his charts or reads some of the Ned Buntline's yarns, 2/3rds of which he takes for genuine truth.¹³

Monday, November 29, 1852, Lat. 17° 29" S, Long. 34° 31" W

Calm, a barque in sight. She had no sails set when we first saw her but soon she spread her wings and was off. The Captain thinks she is a slaver. Two more soon appeared on the horizon. We soon neared them; they were sperm whalers lying to for night with a fore top sail and spencer set.

Towards evening the breeze freshened and with studding sails we went gliding along all night about 6-1/2 knots. The moon rose about 10 o'clock and I never saw so grand a sight. Eastward lay a black bank of clouds as dense as a wall of jet; directly over where the moon was rising the cloud was tipped with a narrow edge of silver as bright as it was narrow and this for some time was the only sign that she had risen, but the cloud bank was immovable and when the moon was near the edge the cloud opened enough to show the whole of the "full

orbed moon," giving the whole the appearance of an eye and eyebrow of light set in jet.

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Wednesday, December 1, 1852, Lat. 22° 04'' S, Long. 36° 22'' W

This morning at breakfast some one asked if there was not danger in eating the dolphin that was smoking on the table, as it had been found that some of them were impregnated with copper. I said I thought that if it were so the copper would be soon tasted if vinegar was eaten with the fish.¹⁴ The old man put on a peculiarly sage countenance and gratuitously gave his piece of information, "that vinegar was often used to [with] arsenic and other acids" to ignite them into small particles!! Yesterday there were great quantities of decayed seaweed floating about, decayed by its long voyage from its native rock. I asked him what it was. He said, "Sea weed in a mature state." We passed under the sun to day and over the Tropic of Capricorn. Wind right aft. We are in the same latitude as Rio [de] Janeiro.

Thursday, December 2, 1852, Lat. 24° 42'' S, Long. 37° 33'' W

We have been going 8 knots all night with main top gallant and royal studding sails set fore and aft and the lower studding set. The mate was telling a story about his boyhood to day. He was apprenticed on board a British merchantman. There was another boy on board apprentice too. The first mate of the ship had a valuable pistol that had been loaded so long that he felt rather suspicious about firing it off. The other boy was one of the daredevil sort and offered to fire it, so stooping down behind the bulwark he stuck his hand over and pulled away several times all to no purpose, until Bartlett said he would get a coal from the galley and touch it off, and did so at a moment when the other was not quite prepared. So down went the pistol to the depths below. Bartlett stood laughing himself black in the face to see the other's look of alarm and position with his hand over the bulwarks yet. The mate, hearing the report, came aft and seeing the tableaux presented by the boys smelt a rat and shouted, "D-n you, what are you doing? Can't you draw in your hand?" Then [he] came at them with a rope's end. Bartlett took refuge in the maintop and the other took the flogging.

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Saturday, December 4, 1852, Lat. 28° 48'' S, Long. 40° 08'' W

Heavy thunder storm last night followed by a fine breeze this morning but died away to almost a dead calm. The ocean is as smooth as glass; 4 different sorts of birds flying round the ship all afternoon: the garnet, black, and white bull, and our constant attendant, Mother Carey's Chicken or Stormy Petrel. This evening it is rainy, wet, and dismal.

Sunday, December 5, 1852, Lat. 30° 24'' S, Long. 40° 53'' W

This morning it was wet and chilly but cleared off toward noon with a fine breeze. Right after a great number of porpoises, of late unusual visitors have been playing round the bows. The second mate tried to harpoon one but without success.

We are beginning to get more reconciled to our mode of life as we get better. George and I read in Milton's *Paradise Lost* before breakfast. Afterwards for 2 mortal hours dig at arithmetic; then I draw until noon, so the day passes pretty rapidly. We make sage comments on our reading of course. 4 bells have just struck just church time ashore, they are singing "Arlington" on deck. It brings home to mind.

Monday, December 6, 1852, Lat. 32° 59'' S, Long. 42° 22'' W

Going finely all day several black gulls flying round the ship. I do not take any special liking to the brutes, for they are of a dirty black color, with a white rim round each eye, giving them the appearance of wearing spectacles. They fly round the stern with an expression decidedly Jesuitical.

A barque hove in sight about 2 o'clock. About 5 she passed to leeward within 1/2 a mile, as the stars and stripes floated from our gaff, and the red flag of England fluttered to her's. A squall is coming up and the stevsails are coming in.

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Wednesday, December 8, 1852, Lat. 37° 04'' S, 44° 48'' W

Came off quite calm last night, and has continued so all day. We saw an albatross for the first time. A squall has been threatening all afternoon. About 5 it came with misty rain I was on deck busily employed in watching the working the ship by the crew. They swarm in the rigging like monkeys in the trees. One after another, sternsails and royals came in, and the wind began in real earnest. The crew were reefing the maintopsail on the extreme end of the yard (the point of honor) was the second mate. When he came down the shrouds, it was on the full run. He is the beau ideal of a handsome sailor and the largest man on board.

The albatross[es] displayed their strength of wing in the squall, dashing up against the wind without apparent effort, then sailing round with heads on one side as though they had raised the muss and were watching the effects. It is quite cold now.

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Friday, December 10, 1852, Lat. 39° 48'' S, Long. 45° 52'' W

Calm as a mill pond all day; square rigged vessel in sight. Porpoises, blackfish, and whales playing round in every direction. It has been almost a luxury to live here to day, something to watch and gape at. All of us seem just about idle enough for that and not much else.

Saturday, December 11, 1852, Lat. 40° 16'' S, Long. 46° 17'' W

This morning I was awakened by a great powwow in the cabin and the report of pistol shots. I did not know but some tragedy was in progress, but it seems there was a number of albatrosses holding jubilee over the cook's slush that he had just thrown overboard. One of the hands had lowered a hook and caught one, and the old man had opened the stern windows and was firing at them with his pistols; he chanced to hit one and so proud was he of his feat that he ordered the quarter boat lowered. The sea was calm as a mill pond, and after quite a chase they caught the poor bird. The largest of the two measured ten feet from tip to tip of the extended wings.

The whaler that has been in sight for the last 36 hours came astern within a quarter of a mile, showed the stars and stripes and fell to leeward. A breeze sprung up about noon and we are making 5 knots.

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Sunday, December 12, 1852, Lat. 41° 50'' S, Long. 47° 00'' W

The wind shifted dead ahead about 11 o'clock last night and blew heavily so that it was necessary to reduce sail down to close reefed topsails. The wind sunk away this morning, and there has been scarcely any since but a heavy head sea that kept us lopping from the crest of one wave to the trough of another in a manner that had a very decided effect on our stomachs.

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Tuesday, December 14, 1852, Lat. 44° 54'' S, Long. 50° 19'' W

Last night quite a thunder storm came up lasting 3/4 of an hour. A stiff breeze sprung up at daybreak and increased until 10 o'clock, when the t-gallant sails were taken in [and] the topsails reefed. Gale increased until noon, when the foresail split and the remnant was taken in. All the afternoon we have been under storm sails. The row in the cabin is refreshing.

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Thursday, December 16, 1852, Lat. 46° 35'' S, Long. 50° 19'' W

The gale continued blowing great guns and rousing up such a sea as I do not want to be upon again. About 10 o'clock it began to decrease and has done so since. At noon they bent a new fore top sail, at 4 set the main and foresails. There is but little wind now and that dead ahead.

This record of all the actual events that occurred during this 60 hours blow gives but faint idea of the reality. I shall never forget the howl and shriek of the storm through our rigging, the wild and angry sea lifting its hydra head to the wind and from the crest of every wave was caught a dash of spray that, torn into thin mist, cut like hail stones against the face of any one on deck.

Friday, December 17, 1852, Long. 51° 8'' W

Calm all night, wind rose in the morning, under close reefed top sails all day. This is beginning to smell [of] Cape Horn in a hurry.

Saturday, December 18, 1852, Lat. 48° 10'' S, Long. 50° 39'' W

Rough all day, wind howling round more favorably towards evening, and the sea going down. In the middle watch last night, the man at the helm spoke to Robinson, the second mate, asking him what that man was doing aloft. The officer said there was no one that he had sent. "Why sir there is a man on the main top sail yard, don't you see him sir?" I saw him go aloft. He is going out to the end of the yard, and now said he in an excited tone, "He is overboard." The mate could see nothing; but to satisfy the man [he] went into the forecabin, found the starboard watch all right, and rest of his watch were in the house with the steerage passengers, and Glover and I were in our beds. In short, every thing was right but nothing could convince the man that he was mistaken. He saw something, he said, go up the main shrouds to the main top sail yard, go out to the end, and go off as plain as he could see Robinson, but he was not sorry as it was a sure sign of good luck, and we should have a quick passage. I wish the spook had given some better proof than just going through the performance he did.

Sunday, December 19, 1852, Lat. 48° 37'' S, Long. 52° 45'' W

Fair wind but increasing all day. We are making 10 knots, but rather fear it will increase to a gale. It is chilly, disagreeable on deck, and lonely in the cabin, for every one seems to keep [in] their state rooms. George and Lib are seasick. I have been looking over my old letters, for lack of new ones. I suppose I know them all by rote almost.

Monday, December 20, 1852, Lat. 49° 49'' S, Long. 54° 52'' W

The wind decreased in the night and the reefs were shaken out of the top sails with a chorus that might have been heard half way to Staten Land. We have made but little to day, but it is pleasant to see the royals set again. The sun rises soon after three and sets at 1/2 past eight. The rest are all on deck enjoying the fine evening except the old man and his wife. They are sitting at this table; he has his feet on it and is leaning back in his chair, perusing one of the "yellow kiver" literature. He is a sublime spectacle.

Tuesday, December 21, 1852, Lat. 50° 08'' S, Long. 55° 23'' W

A dead calm all night and until noon to day. It is too cold to be on deck. The young ones are yelling solos at the interval of not more than ten seconds. The captain's wife singing in the style of a forty-lung-power street singer with a cold in the head, and the rest all chattering, make an incarnation of din that makes any thing like study impos-

sible, so I took my accordian and added to the general row.

At noon a breeze sprung up from the N.N.W. and skysails, and fore t gallant studding sail was set. First time the flying kites have been set since the gale. Some barnacles were found on sea weed so the old man expatiated on their transmogrification into birds perfectly to his own satisfaction, but scarecely convincing me though I did not try to get any other notion into his skull for fear it wouldn't hold.

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Thursday, December 23, 1852, Lat. 53° 02'' S, Long. 61° 05'' W

Wind in the night blowing fresh and fair. Made 10 knots all night, very foggy. In the morning we were running 9 knots through mist and rain, when one of the passengers sung out "Land Ho!" and a rocky coast, upright as a castle wall, loomed grimly through the mist with the breakers dashing half way to the top of the cliffs [and] appeared right ahead, and then came a row. The old man roared like a hungry lion. The men did not let the decks freeze to their feet, got the vessel close hauled to the wind, and soon left it astern, and when at a respectful distance went on our course. Had we been in the night nothing could have saved us and none would have survived to tell the loss of the *Green Point*. The land was one of the Falkland isles¹⁵ and the captain was supposing him self 60 miles to the eastward of it.

When after weeks of tedious weariness
 "Land ho!" is shouted, how the pulses bound
 And the eyes strain to see through storm & mist
 Even a rocky, tempest, beaten shore.
 All cold and cheerless looming through the mist
 The iron shore appears, the breakers beat
 In clouds of snow white foam half to the top
 Of the tall cliffs, around whose head
 The strong winged Albatross in triumph wheels
 Yet it is land,
 And to the weary sea worn voyager
 It speaks of far off now more valued shores
 It speaks of home and scenes that now exist
 To him but as a dream, a dream indeed
 Of love and happiness, but far too far away

Another island in sight this afternoon similar to the first. We are making 9 knots.

Friday, December 24, 1852, Lat. 54° 36'' S, Long. 65° 04'' W

Very calm, only making 3 knots. Snow fell in the middle of the day. If this is the state of atmosphere on the longest day of the year, I do not wish to be here at the other end of the year. We have it light from 2

in the morning until 10 at night, enough of day for the most industriously disposed.

Quite a change as produced at breakfast by the captain's child raising Cain until her father could bear it no longer, so as a settler he proceeded to administer a thorough spanking, but the mother in her anxiety to protect the little blue legs held her hand over them forgetting that a knife was in it. [As a] consequence, the old bear cut his paw to the bone. Didn't he look in a happy frame of mind. After it, now he will have a sulky time, so mote [might] it be. We had a regular powwow in the evening, playing all sorts of games; got the second mate down from deck and made him tumble round like a bear in a net.

Christmas Day, 1852, Lat. 55° 05'' S, Long. 65° 10'' W

Calm and still, quite chilly. Fore t gallant and lower studding sails set. Making 5 knots. Land on the starboard bow, the Cape St. John's Staten Land; the mountains inland seem covered with snow, sweet climate that must be.¹⁶ We were all cutting up until midnight.

Sunday, December 26, 1852, Lat. 56° 07'' S, Long. 67° 45'' W

Sea very smooth with fine breeze. Making 6 knots. The mountains of Tierra del Fuego in sight this morning, and two brigs this afternoon. The old man is dirty, sick, and surly. I have no idea water has touched his face in two weeks. He was lecturing very learnedly about the ancient Egyptians to day. What with Masonry and cheap novels, the few brains that he has are in a muddled state.

Monday, December 27, 1852, Lat. 57° 29'' S, Long. 67° 20'' W

Sea rough, wind ahead making a short disagreeable sea. One of the barks that we saw yesterday has kept in sight all day. After dinner a hail storm came up, and after it had passed a bark was discovered bearing down on us under close reefed topsails, evidently taking it easy. We thought he was going to speak us, but like an uncivil brute as he was, instead of running along side as he might have done, he lazily shook out his main t gallant sail and kept off. The old man has washed his face.

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Wednesday, December 29, 1852, Lat. 58° 05'' S, Long. 70° 22'' W

Wind changeable all night and morning till it has got round ahead and has been blowing a gale ever since with a heavy sea. We are after close reefed topsails. Lib fell this evening across the cabin into Mr. Chart's state room, hurt herself considerably. It does not get dark now. Though the sun goes down, the redness does not leave the west until it [that is the sun] is up again.

Thursday, December 30, 1852, Lat. 57° 45'' S, Long. 70° 17'' W

Wind lulled in the night. In the morning it was dead calm with a

heavy swell. A fair wind came up this afternoon. We are under royals and fore t gallant studding sails. One brig is in sight yet. We are very anxious to get back to the tropics; it is too cold to be on deck and too much row below to be there with any comfort, and when it is rough George and I feel sea sick. Lib is better though still stiff and sore from her fall.

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Monday, January 3, 1853, Lat. 58° 19'' S, Long. 80° 09'' W

Quite rough all night. We are under double reefed topsails to day, not on account of wind, as there is only a light N.W. breeze, but right in our teeth, but there is a heavy head swell.

A page from the mate's log would be quite as interesting as this, as everything has been on the dismal order for the last few days. The old man has been as surly as a bear with dyspepsia for the last two weeks, but is recovering health and temper now. The proof is that he is now engaged in putting the small end of his pipe into his little girl's mouth, and then blowing in the bowl so as to fill her mouth with smoke; all his playfulness is of the ponderous and slow kind, and the intensely complacent smirk that succeeds any effort of his wit makes his face bear a striking resemblance to the puckered part of a hide of sole leather; it is precisely the same color. The chief mate has had such sore eyes that he has been unable to go on deck, and having to stand his watch has been the cause of his unusual display of amiability. The second mate caught an albatross to day that measured 9 1/2 feet from tip to tip of his wings.

Tuesday, January 4, 1853, Lat. 58° 55'' S, Long. 79° 46'' W

We shall stand a chance to get a piece of the South pole for a top gallant mast if this confounded Nor Wester continues much longer. Another unlucky albatross taken to day measuring 10 feet. Under close reefed topsails all day, not because of the wind as because we cannot make any headway. This evening a large black gull was taken. It measured 7 feet from tip to tip of wings. The body is not larger than a large duck, but it is a graceful creature.

Wednesday, January 5, 1853, Lat. 59° 34'' S, Long. 83° 12'' W

Rained like mad all the morning without a breath of wind; after dinner it rose to 5 knot breeze, and for a novelty fair. Glover has been popping away at the albatross, with an old duelling pistol for several days, of course without effect (except to send a stray bullet sputtering over the waves), as he is quite near sighted. After the birds he was persuaded to shoot at a block of wood towing astern as a float to a fish line. He fired, and when the block was hauled up found a ball in it; it had been jammed in previously by George and the Captain. He fired 4 times, 3 times with the same result, the last time to decide a pretended

bet between George and the second mate of a new hat. He is quite delirious with his success.

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Saturday, January 8, 1853, Lat. 59° 19'' S, Long. 80° 26'' W

Wind fair this morning, but came out ahead this afternoon. A large ship sighted ahead under a cloud of sail, studding sails fore and aft and every where, showed the stars and stripes and some signal, but the old man could not make it out; reefed top sails this afternoon, rained, wind chopped round fair again.

Sunday, January 9, 1853, Lat. 59° 34'' S, Long. 81° 43'' W

A tremendous gale came up last night in the middle watch, struck her before any sail could be got in. The second mate was on deck and came down to call the captain, but all he could get was a grunt. He was in a drunken sleep; his wife and him had spent the evening drinking brandy so the second mate had it all to himself. The storm made the vessel shiver as if it had an ague fit, but the hands worked like a set of madmen, and made all snug. It has blown all day, shipped a sea a little while ago that seemed to settle the vessel several feet in the water. Aubry with his child in his arms [and] the first and second mates stood [stayed] in my cabin. When the sea struck her, the shock pitched them all in a heap, scared the young one awfully, and she squalled enough to drown the noise of the storm for some time. The glass is rising this evening, and the wind going down a little.

Monday, January 10, 1853, Lat. 55° 02'' S

Wind moderating all day, nearly still this evening. Whittled a set of chessmen and learnt all the moves.

Tuesday, January 11, 1853, Lat. 53° 28'' S

We have actually had 24 hours fair wind, the first time we have had it so long in 18 days, but it has come round ahead again. The ship put about, a rain squall coming up that may change it. If we had only had any sort of decent wind, we should have been up with the Equator by this time. A large clipper passed us this morning, booming along 11 or 12 knots on her homeward course. A large Albatross caught to day.

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Monday, January 17, 1853, Lat. 44° 43'' S, Long. 87° 28'' W

Fine breeze all day. Making 8 knots. The second mate harpooned a black and white porpoise to day of a species peculiar to these latitudes. His liver done ample justice to by the folks in the cabin; guess the commoners got some of the meat. Mr. Glover said something to day which made it necessary for me to turn him out of our cabin. When I took hold of him, he drew his nails down my face leaving seven or eight furrows; that of course made it necessary for me to pitch him on

a chest and weigh him out a dozen cuffs of the head with hearty good will till he yelled all sorts of murder.

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Thursday, January 20, 1853, Lat. 39° 28'' S, Long. 92° 6'' W

The Pacific seems resolved to act up to its name. The old man has been lecturing very learnedly at supper about the English orders of nobility, undertaking to tell the times that their order and titles were made; he has proved to every body's satisfaction that he knows nothing about it. The wind has hauled a little ahead so that the flying kites are hauled down, but we are making 5 knots without a motion of the vessel that is perceptible.

Friday, January 21, 1853, Lat. 37° 32'' S, Long. 92° 36'' W

Calm and warm enough to be pleasant, making 4 or 5 knots all day. A barque has just passed to windward, running down before the wind, with studding sails set everywhere. We are not on our course, only making N. instead of N.N.W. But this Pacific sailing is the most sensible sort of sea going I have experienced, gliding along with the surface as smooth as a mountain lake under a summer sun, and yet we make tolerable headway. A courting match between Ann the servant, an old, old maid and Irish at that, and Robinson the second mate is something of a romance, but it is rather stale.

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Monday, January 24, 1853, Lat. 33° 52'' S, Long. 94° 43'' S

Calm sea, with fine breeze, making 5 knots all day. Early this morning saw a sail standing across our bows, but we evidently gained on her as she seemed to make little headway. When we were about 5 or 6 miles from her she hove too right on our course, and soon we came up to her. She was a pretty little barque of 200 tons, a whaler. When within hail our old Captain hailed "ship ahoy" through his trumpet, a man sprang into one of her quarter boats and waved his arms as signal that he heard us. "How long are you out?" was the next question that went hoarsely over the waves from the throat and trumpet of our skipper. "Five months sir," was the answer back. "Send your boat aboard and I will give you papers three months old." "Aye aye sir."

The mainsail was hauled up and in a little while a beautiful boat shot out from under her lee quarter and came skipping over the waves, propelled by twelve brawny arms that seemed to make her jump from one tiny wave to another. The boat soon rounded gracefully to under our lee quarter and her steersman a fine athletic looking man sprang up the shrouds, introducing himself as Capt. Jenkins of the barque *Henry H. Crapo* of New Bedford. We filled away on our course, the whaler following a mile or so to leeward. Our visitor stayed all day, having a great time with the ladies, and towards evening got into his beautiful boat and went back to his ship.

Tuesday, January 25, 1853, Lat. 32° 35'' S, Long. 91° 25'' W

Dead calm all day, the ocean as smooth as glass. Two sharks came round the vessel; one of them 9 1/2 feet long was deluded by a piece of pork lowered by the second mate, [who was] induced to bring it on deck very much against his will; it was of the large blue species supposed to be the swiftest fish alive.

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Thursday, January 27, 1853, Lat. 28° 15'' S, Long. 93° 34'' W

Breeze the same all night and this morning but dying away this evening with signs of squally weather; lower studding sails set. A sail bound S. passed just in sight this morning. We are getting most horridly uneasy.

Friday, January 28, 1853, Lat. 26° 18'' S, Long. 94° 34'' W

Showers this morning; wind shifting suddenly from S.E. to S.W. and back S.E. this afternoon. Great row this morning. We all took breakfast in my cabin as the Captain's wife took a notion to add to the ship's company, to the great delight of her amiable spouse, who has been as amiable as a grizzly bear sunning itself all day. I have been washing and am very tired and have a nice headache, just enough to make one savage.

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Monday, January 31, 1853, Lat. 20° 07'' S, Long. 97° 26'' W

Booming along at 9 knots since last evening. Plenty of flying fish. Again to day we saw the bird known as the boatswain or tropic bird; they are about the size of a pidgeon, quite white with two long slender feathers so slender that they cannot be seen but [when] quite near at hand. We are in the S.E. trades now and every day adds to our uneasiness. We talk of little else but the probable time of our arrival; no reading, music, or anything else can rivet our attention from the all absorbing idea: when shall we arrive?

Tuesday, February 1, 1853, Lat. 18° 03'' S, Long. 98° 00'' W

Weather as yesterday. We get duller and more so every day; walk backwards and forwards past each other a dozen times without speaking for we are fairly talked dry. To day we pass under the sun. Ther. [mometer] 90 deg.

Wednesday, February 2, 1853

Wind, weather, and ther. do [ditto, 90 degrees].

Thursday, February 3, 1853, Lat. 14° 03'' S, Long. 103° 28'' W

Weather do. Chips¹⁷ wrote an epistle filled with most excruciating love to Jane Blondell, signed Glover's name to it, then poked it in their cabin window after dark. Jane came on deck with it and let every one see it; she accused me and Bartlett of the trick.

Friday, February 4, 1853, Lat. 12° 26'' S, Long. 104° 53'' W

Fine weather but scarcely enough wind. It is not so hot on this side as was on the other. Ther. stands at 92 and we are nearly under the sun, but it is delicious weather, almost a luxury to breathe the pure warm air.

Saturday, February 5, 1853, Lat. 10° 30'' S, Long. 106° 36'' W

All just the same as yesterday. I will put down the routine of a sailor's life, for the benefit of any one who may read this. Beginning at 8 o'clock in the morning, though this is not the beginning of the nautical day which always begins at noon, the crew is divided into larboard and starboard watches. The 1st mate stands with the starboard watch and the captain with the other or is supposed to do so but that is always left to the second mate.

Suppose the starboard watch came on at 8 o'clock or 8 bells. They stay on till 8 bells again which will be noon (the bell rings one more stroke every 1/2 hour). Then the second mate with the larboard watch comes on deck again until 8 bells or 4 o'clock. On some ships the whole crew are kept on deck all day, as there is always enough to do, but the system on our ship called watch and watch is much better liked by the men as it gives them time to wash and mend their clothes. After 4 o'clock come two short watches called the dog watches, one lasting from 4 to 6 and the other from 6 to 8. The object of these short changes is to prevent the same watch always standing at the same recurring intervals. The night watches are the same as the day, the 12 hours from 8 to 8 being divided into three 4 hour watches, when either one or the other of the half the crew is up and dressed but in the night only the man at the wheel, the officer, and the lookout forward, are awake. The others stow themselves away in the house or any other snug place on deck, not being allowed to go below.

The trick at the wheel, as it is called, lasts two hours and in bad weather is often the most dreaded of the sailor's life, especially if the ship steers hard, but this thing steers like a whale boat, and it is only fun to steer her in the worst weather.

Tuesday, February 8, 1853, Lat. 5° 05'' S, Long. 111° 22'' W

It is about time we were at our journey's end; the children fight and quarrel like Kilkenny cats, the parents take sides, and sour looks abound. Some one stole the second mate's watch as he lay asleep in his cabin; the men's chests and the steerage passengers were searched, but it was not found.

Wednesday, February 9, 1853, Lat. 2° 39'' S, Long. 112° 40'' W

Stiff breeze and fine as usual. Found a letter under my plate at dinner addressed to Glover, purporting to come from Jane Blondell, and he was fool enough to think it real.

Thursday, February 10, 1853, Lat. 00° 14'' N, Long. 113° 34'' W

Wind changed to N.E. At 10 o'clock this morning crossed the Equator; weather beautiful.

.....

Sunday, February 13, 1853, Lat. 6° 52'' N, Long. 115° 30'' W

Rain fell in sheets last night. Wind came out into N.E. trades. We are going 4 knots with a very rough sea. A large school of porpoises played round our bows some time, and the second mate and several others were on the forecandle trying to harpoon one, when the captain who was sitting by the man at the wheel thought it would be a brilliant joke to drench them all. So, ordering the man to let her go off and then bringing her up to the wind again, he shipped a sea that drenched every one on deck from the forecandle to the capstan—to his intense delight. This evening sail is reduced to t gallant and reefed topsails.

.....

Thursday, February 17, 1853, Lat. 15° 26'' N, Long. 123° 34'' W

Wind changed dead ahead, rather damping our hopes of a speedy arrival; we are beating off N.W. by N. This evening one of the men, a Scotchman named Douglas, who has been for some time ugly and refractory, refused to obey the repeated commands of all the officers to come aft. They (that is the two mates), went to fetch him, he came out with a gutta percha cane and struck at the mate, who struck him down with a slung shot. Then they brought him aft bleeding like a stuck hog. Just as he came on the quarter deck, Uncle Chart came up and seeing the wounded man asked in a very authoritative tone what the matter was. The old fool of a captain was in a towering passion, and told him to "go below and mind his own business." Uncle said he "should when he choosed to do so and not before." More words of an uncomfortable nature ensued. Mr. Chart does not speak to the captain any more or go to table with him. The wounded man was taken down into my cabin to have his wounds dressed by the captain, who gave him a long lecture and not so roughly as might have been expected. Everything that I see of sea life on this quiet ship disgusts me more with sea life. Human nature is too variable an article to stand the hard jostlings and frettings of the close confinement of shipboard.

Friday, February 18, 1853, Lat. 16° 45'' N, Long. 124° 48'' W

Weather as yesterday. Douglas came aft to day to go to work but was so weak that the captain excused him for 24 hours.

Saturday, February 19, 1853, Lat. 18° 45'' N, Long. 126° 22'' W

Weather the same. Douglas returned to duty to day, owning he had been wrong.

Sunday, February 20, 1853, Lat. 20° 13'' N, Long. 127° 09'' W

The wind has been hauling a little aft all the morning. At noon the welcome order was given "Check in the main yard." Hope to be in next Sunday. The first dolphin we have taken on the Pacific side we ate for breakfast.

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Friday, February 25, 1853, Lat. 28° 13'' N, Long. 125° 55'' W

Last night in the mate's watch the wind died away to a calm but left a very heavy swell. A puff of wind struck the vessel and careened her over so as to almost lay her on beam end, but presently with a shudder she righted. Had a fine breeze all day, but the swell is so heavy we have not made more than 4 1/2 knots.

A squid washed on board. These creatures are of all sizes. Their head is furnished with long arms covered with suckers; these arms have their base in a circle round the mouth which is a little hard beak exactly like a parrot's. Very large eyes and a fleshy triangular tail complete them.

.....

Wednesday, March 2, 1853, Lat. 34° 32'' N, Long. 127° 08'' W

Head wind blowing steadily. Bright and clear; with every prospect it will last. This morning Glover amused himself by catching five or six large black gulls with a hook and line and put the poor birds into a cask where they were tearing each other with their long sharp bills. While he was busy catching some more, I came on deck and found them and quickly hove them overboard. He was so mad he was almost the color of a white man. It is getting quite cold; a ship in sight in the evening.

.....

Wednesday, March 9, 1853, Lat. 37° 30'' N

Wind fair and strong all day. Going 7 knots. Saw a large ship bound out. Hope to see land in the morning. The old man sent down the second mate with an alarm of "breakers ahead!" to scare us from our domino playing. Away flew all the party on deck except myself, I distrusted the look of the man's face—there was not enough alarm in it.

Thursday, March 10, 1853, Lat. 37° 44'' N

On deck this morning just as day peeped. A heavy bank of clouds lay eastward. As the sun rose. . . they lifted and there sat the golden hills or rather mountains of California. After gazing long enough to assure myself that it was land I ran below. "George, get up; there is the land." His polite rejoinder was, "Go to thunder." "Peek out of your port hole then," and [I] left him to his reflections, then went to

Aubrey's door with the alarm. "Ah! go away you're fooling." "No it's true." "Wait a minute," then said the mercurial Frenchman. "I'll be with you." And on deck we went again. Oh how beautiful that solid range of mountains, green as the Emerald Isle, looked to our sea worn vision and we gazed and gazed till our eyes ached with straining. All the morning we ran up the coast. Sometimes we could see the cattle on the hills with the glass. About noon a pilot boat was seen, and when we came up from dinner she was rounding too under our stern. About 3 we ran into the Golden Gate, the entrance to the most magnificent harbor in the world, the Bay of San Francisco. Slowly stemming the heavy tide setting out, we moved up the bay and anchored off the city at 5 o'clock.

[William and brother-in-law George Anderson disembarked the day they arrived in San Francisco and located a cabin to house the group. Its exact location or the manner in which it was purchased or rented is unknown.]

Saturday, March 12, 1853

San Francisco, Presidio.¹⁸ Yesterday got up to the dock about noon. I went to the P.O., then George and I started for this place. How we enjoyed our walk on the fresh spring grass, but when we came to the cabin that was to be our habitation nestled down the door and looked in, then looked at each other, then in again, and felt as helpless as though we had just been deprived of legs and arms. There was a rickety table in the centre covered with the remains of a meal, a stove, several bunks around the wall, an open door on the farther side the room; and we supposed there was a floor to hold the dirt up that we could see, and a stout one at that.

We tucked our pants into our boots and stepped in, looked into the open door. There were two little rooms about 6 x 8 that from all appearance had contained several calves. We stared and looked and turned up our noses, and put for the fresh air again, formed a council of war composed of two, and our deliberations lasted so long that by the time we had come to the conclusion to find a spade and hoe, the carriage had arrived with the rest, and if the womenkind didn't curse men up hill and down for a set of nasty, dirty . . . (and a string of adjectives as long as our main mast) brutes but the whole troop of us have worked like beavers to day and got things quite bright and we are all tired enough with the unaccustomed exertion.

The *Green Point* discharged her cargo, shipped a new crew, and left for the Manilla Isles for a cargo of guano. Just as she cleared with her cargo she was run into and cut in two by the *John Stuart* clipper ship; went down in 10 minutes no lives were lost.

June 20, 1853

Feeling the spirit of location strong upon me, I saddled uncle's fine grey and started to visit Mr. and Mrs. Anderson at the Rancho las Pulgas, 30 miles from here.¹⁹ After leaving the city by the Mission plank road, two miles brought me to the Mission Dolores,²⁰ of which there is little of its old Spanish state remaining. The long low building stretching away from the church is now a tavern and dignified by the name of the Mission Hotel, the old church with its wall 4 feet thick and clay pillars, and in the gable niches with old cracked bells that have not been rung for this many a day. Then came a choice of roads, all seeming to be right, and as I did not know which to choose I followed the newly erected line of telegraph poles²¹ over a long stretch of sand hills covered with innumerable flowers in all the beauty they can attain in this even climate, though in truth an overcoat would have been no bad company from the cold winds and fogs that ever and anon rolled up the valleys from the Pacific which lay like another sky at their feet. There is one peculiarity about San Francisco and the vicinity. All through the dry season, though it may be quite clear at sea, a strong wind sets in shore from about 10 in the morning until late at night, so that there is never any hot weather near the city.

To return to the telegraph poles (which as yet were guiltless of bearing news), they were a source of great wonderment to the natives when they were first put up: they thought "los Americanos" had been stricken with a wonderfully pious streak to be at the pains of putting up such a string of crosses. I stuck to them until I came to the last one, then I took a survey but could see no road. There was a house at the bottom of the long sand hill I was on and that I found to be a tavern, the 12 mile house.²² After that came a long level plain with the bay on the left the country rising to the right into the coast range of mountains. Cantered along merrily to San Mateo.²³ Here were the first trees of any size I had yet seen in Cal., large fragrant bay trees growing like the trees in a park in England and filling the air to overpowering with their perfume, great bushy live oaks, laurels, and others that I did not know, but all so beautiful that I could scarcely believe nature was the sole planter of this beautiful park. But now it was night, and I must push on for I had seven miles to go but the road was good and soon I came in sight of a light peeping between the trees, and pushing grey along I soon hailed at the door "Green Points ahoy there" and out they tumbled.²⁴

June 21, 1853

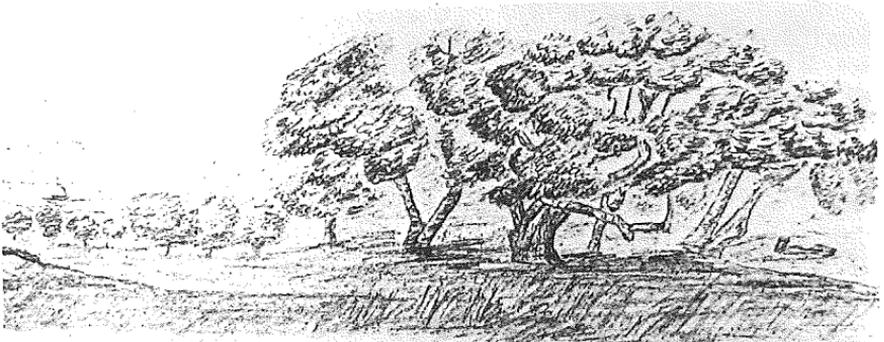
Next morning George was going over the hills to look up some cattle, and I must go with him; so he brought me a sulky looking mule about three feet high with my high peaked saddle already on, [and]

told me to jump aboard, which I did feeling very guilty. Then he handed me a coil of lariat with the instruction that the only way to start the little brute was to wind it smartly around under the little wretch, all of which I obeyed. Found myself in a motion very like one would feel in a rocking chair on a frightened cow's back. My whole care was to keep flogging for I was certain that if the motion stopped the beastie would disappear backwards from under me, so on we went, George on a crazy Mexican pony, over the squirrel holes, of which the ground is full, making very dangerous riding. But the air was fresh, just warm enough to be pleasant and fragrant with the odors of the green bay tree, and on we went among scenes that each half mile was a study for a day. Little valleys where the oats grew so rank that I could not reach the tops from the back of my mule; the sides fragrant with unnumbered flowers. Sometimes we followed up the beds of streams every where shaded by the overhanging laurel and bay, where the crystal water would burst out from under some old tree, run a little way, and hide again. One little meadow I shall never forget. It was formed by a brook, making nearly a complete circle round it, making a dense foliage in every direction with a back ground of yellow hills, and the meadow itself was covered with hay cocks. On the edge of the brook I found wild roses, and honey suckles. On our way home we passed a singular group of rocks partly covered with laurel, looking as though it might be the ruins of the old castle that this beautiful park-like country surrounded. By the time we had arrived at home again I was heartily sick of mule riding. There was not a step to be moved without the application of the lariat and the feeling of going over forward is rather back breaking; on the whole I prefer a horse.

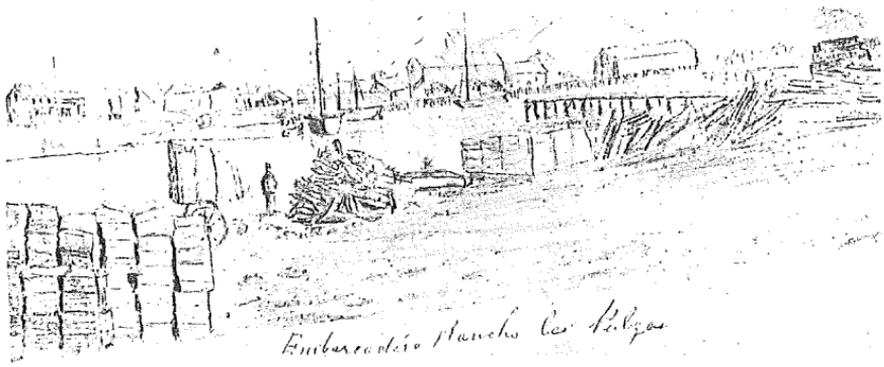
After dinner I started for Santa Clara to find a first cousin of my father's. After riding through the same parklike scenery 6 or 7 miles, came to the San Francisquito creek, and I had to pay the man* 2/1 [two shillings, one pence] for the privilege of crossing a bridge not two rods long. Then the road was cut in a straight line for 1/2 a mile through dense chapparal; after this the valley begins to grow wider and the timber more scattered—a dead level valley for 20 miles and then we enter the cleared part of the Santa Clara valley. It was a prairie but is now covered with a dense growth of mustard from 6 to 7 feet high, the pollen from the flowers gilding me from head to foot. It may well be called the golden valley for such in truth it is in color. After some 1/2 hour's ride through this mustard, the home-like place of my cousin glinted through the trees, and is the most home-like place I have seen in California.²⁵

Don Josef, as the natives call him, came in here three years ago and

*This man was murdered a few weeks afterward; his murderer was never discovered. It was supposed he was shot in a dispute about the toll, as it was illegal.



Rancho de las Pulgas with Monte Diablo in the distance across the bay



Embarcadero Rancho de las Pulgas



Woodhams' California sketches: Rancho de las Pulgas (top), near San Francisco, 1853. . . Wharf at Rancho de las Pulgas. . . Truckee River, 1854.

by dint of money and untiring labor has made a nice home. His land is the richest I have ever seen, the barley was as high as my head, and the wheat higher and the mustard two feet above that. The wheat averaged over 60 bushels per acre last year, and in spite of ground squirrels and mustard it looks as though there would be as much or more this year.

As my cousin was going the next day to the mountains for rails and wanted to talk on family affairs, he wished me to go with him. All the fence on his farm has been hauled a distance of 25 miles. The mountains are the only places in California where any timber grow; on the coast ranges as they are called grow the Redwoods that furnish all the lower country with lumber.

Our way for some 10 miles was the way I had come; then the road went south out of the valley into a more rolling country more picturesque than the valley getting wilder as we ascended towards the mountains, where the timber is to be procured. The team was four-mule, three of them as fat as aldermen and as lazy and tiresome. One of the leaders alone seemed to go as though he was not only ready but willing, and by his locomotive engine style of getting over the ground did all that one long-eared brute could do to redeem the vile character that justly belongs to his race.

We found the rails in a ravine. That gave us all the afternoon's employment to get a hundred rails out to the wagon road.

Then turning out our mules, we lay down near the foot of one of the most remarkable old trees I ever saw. It was a large oak, very large, and dead with every twig remaining on it and covered with long grey moss, every twig full of it, giving the whole the appearance of the most venerable old age. Near us was a rail pen covered with a few boards, the camp of two men engaged in making rails. In one corner I found a much tattered volume of selections from Byron, so I lay down and by the light of the campfire read far into the night, with roar of the Pacific softened to almost a murmur for the accompaniment to the lines "Roll on thou dark and deep blue ocean." We went back on the same route, and back to S. Francisco the next day.

San Francisco, December 15, 1853.

I have been up country again for the last three weeks—sometime at the Rancho las Pulgas, sometime at Santa Clara. While there rode over to San Josef. Verily these old Padres that founded these missions of San Josef²⁶ (pronounced Hozaa) and Santa Clara²⁷ had good taste. Their churches and mission grounds are in the wide beautiful valley surrounded by the richest land in the world. Each mission had a large orchard surrounded by high adobe walls. At the front of the church is a large green, while the buildings form a square round it; they are all about alike.

The Pueblo or village of San Josef is about 1 league from Santa Clara, and the reverend fathers made a road or rather caused it to be made between the places with a double row of willow trees on each side to shade them from the ill-mannered sun that did not see the distinction between their holiness and the poor Indians, scorching one as vigorously as the other. This road called the Alameda is one of the pleasantest rides I ever saw. Just before it enters Pueblo, it crosses the little river Guadaloupe, the only stream in the valley that runs all the dry season. Though the mountains on either side are full of beautiful streams that run into the valley, not one of them crosses it save in the wet season, all soaking away before they have gone far into the valley.

Pueblo San Josef is quite a bustling place with more natives living there than any other place I have been in yet, though they are not the bustling persons by any means. To lounge in the sun wrapped in their ponchos seems the cap sheaf of their ambition. The mission San Josef is three leagues from Santa Clara [and] four, from Pueblo San Jose. There is nothing remarkable about it.

Among other excursions my cousin Alfred and myself went up into the Santa Cruz gap to hunt, over canons, creeks (one we crossed 21 times), mountains, rocks, and logs, through fogs, bogs, and bushes; after all, only seeing three blacktailed deer on the farther side of a huge ravine, and they did not approve of closer acquaintance. First night camped under a large oak very comfortable the first part of the night; the latter part not so much so, as it poured with rain, and we amused the long hours by building a roaring fire and drying one side as the other got wet. The next day the fog was so thick we could not see five rods at times, but hunt we would, so we scrambled over all the roughest places surely that ever were left to hold the world together, getting lost in the deep ravines and dense fog and by the merest accident striking the Santa Cruz trail. That night we spent in a little Cabin on the top of the mountains, nearly smoked to death for three mortal hours, until a tremendous storm of wind and rain came up, soon putting out the fire and nearly tumbling the rickety place about our ears. In the morning we left for the valley again, with 7 brace of quails and some grey squirrels.

As soon as I had concluded my business at Santa Clara, my cousin²⁸ and self returned to San Francisco and are here awaiting the sailing of the Steamship *Cortez*,²⁹ actually going home.

December 17, 1853

Steamship *Cortez* at sea. Again on the beautiful Pacific. It is as placid and calm as it was last winter. What a changeable life I have led for the last 18 months; it seems scarcely possible that I am going home but so it is.

We have been in sight of the coast all day, a bold rocky shore with

the coast range mingling with the horizon. What a motley group this floating monster contains; how many are on board with blasted hopes, how many with hearts elated at the prospect of again being with those they love. If all the hearts here could be laid bare, the sight would scarcely be much like this serene ocean.

Sunday, December 18

The ocean is as smooth as a piece of glass and the old *Cortez* is cutting her arrowy course along the blue mirror.

Monday, December 19, 1853

Calm and fair off the isle Seras this eve. I wonder if there was ever a more mixed multitude on the deck of any craft afloat than can be seen on the hurricane deck of our ship, sore eyed, one eyed, blind, lame, deformed, half crazed, their nationality as varied as their looks: Dutch, Spanish, Irish, English, French, Jews, all have their representatives. Then there are very respectable men in solemn cravats, old fogies looking rather under the weather, undisguised rowdies, gamblers, "pikes"³⁰ from old "Mizzoury," a species of biped wolf. Shabby genteel men, dandies and such like nuisances, and a few women looking very much out of place make up the group.

Wednesday, December 21, 1853

Yesterday we lay too in order to give some provision to a whaleship. Her boat ran under our stern and a quarter of beef was cast overboard to them. How tiresome must be their life, forever roaming the wastes of ocean secluded from the rest of the world and subject to the caprice of one man; such a life can be but little better than prison.

Smoke! Smoke! Smoke! is the sole pastime of nine tenths of the people on board pacing the deck with pipe, meerchaum, cigar or cigarita, in an everlasting puff. It would seem as though the idea was to out smoke the smoke stack. I should scarce like to travel in the wake of this smoky crowd until some days had passed since our smoky advent. I cannot at all realize that I may so soon be at home, the 19 or 20 days yet to come seem to be as long as the years I had allotted for my stay in Cal.

Friday, December 23, 1853

Yesterday crossed the Gulf of California; it is very still and warm to day. In sight of land all day.

What oddities there are on board of the "genus homo." Once it would have afforded me great delight to watch and listen to them but I weary of them now. After all there is but little difference in the creative man individually, all fools differing only in the way we make it manifest. I feel too lazy to rejoice in the near prospect of home; this enervating air I suppose is the cause. I would not live in a hot climate

for any price unless I wished to throw away life in a voluptuous dream.

Saturday, December 24, 1853

This afternoon passed a large French ship becalmed; this afternoon passed Acapulco, Mexico. We have been running down the coast all day and do not doubt that it is Mexico from the state of heat we feel.

Christmas Day, December 25, 1853

It is fine and calm, and as much so as it was last Christmas when I stood on the deck of the ill-fated *Green Point* looking at the inhospitable shores of Cape St. John's Staten Land with the snowy mountains of Tierra del Fuego far in the distance, but the difference in the state of the thermometer is much to my taste. We are running across the foot of the Gulf of Tehuantepec and there is more motion to day than since we have been out, making the "pikes" that never smelt blue water before cast up their accounts rapidly.

Sunday, December 26, 1853

Last night a little wind got up a great row among the passengers. There was a short chopping sea, a sea struck the larboard bow so as to make the old craft tremble a little. A general shout ensued, "She's struck," and away went half the passengers on deck and with their fright and sickness kept Alf and I awake all night. To day has been very fine. We hope to have but two more days on the *Cortez*.

Tuesday, December 27, 1853

Every body very busy picking up. We hope to be in early to morrow morning; if it were only N.Y. instead of San Juan del Sud. The sea is a little rough and as usual gives me the headache. I have only become acquainted with one of the passengers. His name is Gulick; he is the son of a missionary on the Sandwich Islands and was born there and is making his first trip to civilization. He has curious notions of things, and his conversation is quite amusing.

Wednesday, December 28, 1853

This morning made San Juan del Sud; it is a pretty little bend in the shore entirely unprotected from the wind or surf. The shores are low and bushy soon rising into the range of hills that divide the ocean from Lake Nicaragua and above all towers Mt. Ometepe thousands of feet above its watery base in the middle of Lake Nicaragua.

About noon we let go the anchor and soon went ashore in a small boat. As we got close to shore the boat was surrounded by a swarm of black arms and faces, all eager to carry us through the surf. I busied myself in rapping the knuckles of such as clawed my luggage and watching the manuevers of the rest. One thumping big fellow chose a youngster of 16 or 17 to carry him ashore dry-shod, but he had chosen

a donkey that couldn't go and the result was a squish [splash] down into the water of rider, ridden, and luggage. I took a hint and, packing my luggage on one half-naked rascal, bestrode the shoulders of the tallest one in the crowd and was carted ashore high and dry.

Now came the tug of war to wade through the deep sand to the Transit office under the burning sun, and to force our way among a crowd of natives, ponies, and mules, the natives grasping us at every step shouting, "Hombre! hombre! mucho bueno cavello." Oh! mucho bueno, showing some poor brute of a mule or pony that the mere sight of one would think would give a carrion crow a fit of dyspepsia. Such a pair fell to our lot and the native that owned them had actually to hold them steady by bracing himself against them to keep them from falling while we mounted, which we did as carefully as possible.

With cautious speed we left San Juan for Virgin Bay, hoping rather than expecting that the unfortunate beasts we bestrode would not fall down on the road and leave us to lug our valises and blankets on our own backs. I verily believe that the black genius I rode ashore was the strongest beast of burden I found on the isthmus. But after all the poor beasts performed admirably by letting them take their time, and not rush them through as the majority of the crowd did, seeming to think that their lives depended upon their getting into Virgin Bay first. We had plenty of objects of interest on the road: the groups of lazy bright-eyed half-naked natives, some of them more than half; the luxuriant vegetation of a tropical clime gleaming with parrots, parraquets, and great gorgeous macaws, flitting from one tree to another; the singular catci, that wind around the trunks and limbs of the trees looking like rough green snakes.

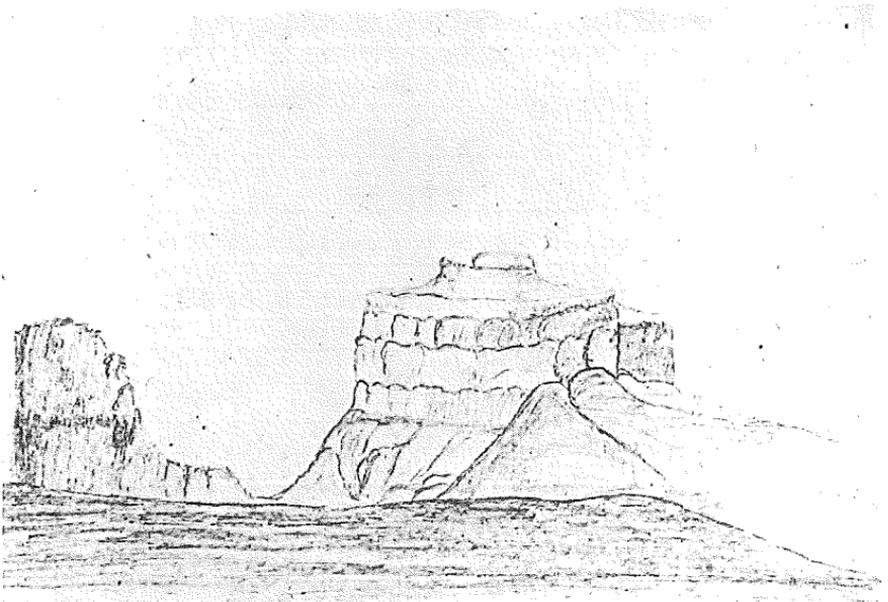
The gourd trees and all the varied wonders of a tropical clime made the twelve miles quite too short, and it was dark as we entered Virgin Bay, a little street of adobe buildings covered with thatch all "hotels" save the "mark" [?]¹—they look more like barns. [On] each side of the street are stalls kept by native women, dressed or rather undressed after their fashion in full flowing skirts, a funny little chemise made by tacking two pieces of transparent muslin together at two corners and poking the head through the slit, just enough to keep off the flies, and showing more beautifully formed busts—bronze in hue though they be—than are exhibited in the dress circle of our opera houses.

There is no humbug about these bright-eyed women of Nicaragua. Their dress is suited to their climate, and their brilliant eyes, pearly teeth, clear bronze skins, and often regular features, make them quite attractive, especially combined with the soft Spanish tongue that they use with such persuasive accents, and their motions are all grace. After drinking three or four cups of excellent chocolate made on the instant



Fort San Carlos

Fort San Carlos, Nicaragua, 1853. . .(Below) Court House Rock was visited by Woodhams during his 1854 overland trip to California.



by one of these señoritas (didn't I envy Alf his knowledge of the soft Spanish), we went on an iron lighter to the lake steamer, *Ometepe*. (This lighter was the one that capsized some few months after, when so many lives were lost. Almost all that were saved were taken ashore by the women swimming out, and back, with them through the surf.)³¹

Thursday, December 29, 1853

Dull and cloudy this morning. The wind blew some last night, raising short chopping waves that scared a party of "pikes" out of the few senses nature had given them.

On a clear day this Lake Nicaragua must be a scene of perfect beauty, dotted as it is with little islands clad in deepest green. Behind us Mt. Ometepe towers into the clouds literally, for we cannot see the summit. About 9 o'clock we entered the San Juan river, which is merely the outlet of Lake Nicaragua.

Our steamer stopped at the outlet of the lake to allow the stately officials of Fort San Carlos to come on board and give us our permit. The said fort I could not discover for some time but finally seeing a sort of wall or high hedge of vegetation at the top of the hill above the huts on the lake shore I concluded the fort might possibly be found under that mass of rank undergrowth and so it proved. The river winds through a tangled swamp that nothing but an alligator can get through with no sign of life save once in a while an alligator would plunge out of the edge of the swamp into the river and a beautiful white stork, but there were flowers to any amount. From this sort of scenery there was no change until we arrived at Castillo rapids; we left the lake steamer after coming so 20 miles down the river and got into another smaller boat to Castillo rapids.

When we got to Castillo Viego we went ashore and walked around the rapids, then got aboard a sort of water omnibus, a long narrow boat with a huge stern wheel and very small draught of water. On this machine we glided along through a dense forest with all sorts of floral beauties on the river brink, coconut trees lifting their tall slender shafts among trees that more nearly resembled the forest trees of northern climes, while ever and anon would burst a cry of "see the monkeys," and these spiteful caricatures of humanity would be seen flinging themselves from one tree top to another. I think the long-tailed monkey of Central America the most disgusting of the whole filthy monkey tribe. The gorgeous crimson macaw and beautifully colored parrots would be seen often darting among the vivid green of the foliage. Every little while we would see a native clearing, generally not as much as one acre; it would be simply impossible to keep a large farm clear in this region where vegetation is so rank. These patches were covered with bananas, plantain, and a few papaya trees and these

with a few goats will support the indolent natives in this perpetual summer.

As soon as it grew quite dark, our long-gear'd boat was made fast to some trees on the bank, and amid the silence of this dense forest we hoped to get some sleep. Last night we spent on the hurricane deck of the Lake boat *Ometepe* but we were to be disappointed for a gang of choice spirits from the region of "pike" proceeded to their usual wolfish employment of "making night hideous" and well did they succeed, for every conceivable hoot, yell, and howl that could issue from human—hold on! I mean Missourian—throats kept us awake that long night.

Friday, December 30, 1853

This morning at first peep of light we were on our way again. The river now widened rapidly and along its banks, like ill looking brutes as they are, lay plenty of alligators sweetly reposing on the mud. Every time the boat was within any sort of hope of pistol ball travelling so far a continued cracking of revolvers was kept up, generally without discomposing their repose, but sometimes a stray ball would rattle on their coats of mail, and with a shuffle and plunge they would disappear.

About 9 o'clock we ran alongside the steamship *Star of the West*, but did not go aboard then, then alongside the *Daniel Webster*³² for N. Orleans, and our delightful "camaradas," the "Pikes," were taken on board. We Northerners were taken ashore and spent the day in Greytown or San Juan del Norte. It is the least interesting place we have seen on the isthmus. The greater part of the population are foreign gougers, and the Mosquito Indians are not at all like the inhabitants of Nicaragua.

It was rainy almost all day, and between showers we wandered about the place looking at the pretty little sensitive plant growing as commonly as white clover does with us, seeing nothing remarkable except a wild cat that natives had caught in a log pen. It was a beautiful creature precisely like the common house cat except in size being about 3 times as large. Among other productions of the country were some long, lean, black lizards very much such looking objects as I have seen in *Pilgrim's Progress* where Christian crosses the Valley of the shadow of Death. A great deal longer, almost as lean, and nearly as black were half a dozen old women washing in a little lagoon. I had no idea that an old woman could look quite so repulsive. We had been warned to keep out of the river and lagoon on account of the alligators, but no alligator would ever have made a dinner of these old cronies, with the slightest regard to his digestion. If I were to describe these naked wretches just as they were I should get little credit.

About four o'clock we went on board the *Star of the West*.³³ The

other passengers arrived about 11 o'clock with the treasure and we weighed anchor.

Saturday, December 31, 1853

At sea, fair weather, making good way. We like this ship better than the *Cortez*. Perhaps the great difference is the Missourians are gone, and we do not have the felicity of dining with the long "pike" with five young pikes, like five stairs, and "all the image of their dad" at table. The "old un" would grasp with his great hairy paws bread, meat, potatoes, pudding or whatever came within reach, once in a while roaring to one of the boys not so swinish as the rest, to "browse in Cicero."

January 1, 1854

Another year commenced, and I am at sea again. One year ago I was tumbling off Cape Horn; now I am in the gulf of Mexico. And so the years pass, the expectations of one year rarely fulfilled in the next. Which changes I shall find at home, how many that I hoped to greet are mouldering back to dust again.

January 4, 1854

The sea has been rough for the last few days, and I as usual have had a severe headache in consequence. To day there is no improvement as the weather is still foul. The mail steamship *George Law*³⁴ has been in sight the last two days. We have been racing with her ever since she hove in sight. (This is the vessel that under the name of *Central America* has caused us such grief.) Passed a brig to day under double reefed topsails. The air feels quite chilly; we are in the Gulf stream.

We count every hour now that keeps us from those we so much wish to see and how much too rapidly will the time pass that we spend with them. San Francisco and its busy scenes have passed from sight for a time. I do not like the idea of leaving California entirely, still less can I think of leaving Mich[igan]. I think all day and dream all night of scenes I may so soon be in—

January 6, 1854

For the last two days I have had my usual sea companion, but we are making such excellent progress that I grin and bear it with all the philosophy I can muster. We are off Cape Hatteras. The sea was very rough last night, and the wind is light to day; the fore and fore top yards were sent down this morning. The *George Law*, whom we supposed in by this time, hove in sight on our starboard bow, apparently waiting for us to come up with him. When we did so he ran across our bows and went on his course again, the third time he has done so since we first saw him. We have to keep in the lower regions now, it is growing so cold.

January 7, 1854

The sea very calm last night. In the morning snow fell thickly; this afternoon it is clear and cold. Barnegat light is in sight. How strange it is to be so calm and yet so close to N.Y. when the thought of its only being a possibility a few weeks since, made my heart bound, and my head dizzy and now I lie quietly in my berth and do not even attempt to go on deck.

I believe the Americans, "los Yankees" I mean, may challenge the world for equals in the art of swearing. There is a constant fire of oaths here all day long, and at midnight some genius amuses himself by barking like a little terrier dog. We expect to anchor to night, which we did beating the *G. Law* by half an hour.

Troy, New York, January 27, 1854

While we were in N.Y., we—that is Alfred and I—called on our relatives there and in Brooklyn. Went to the Crystal palace; the building is very beautiful but was disappointed with the interior.

Canada West, January 31, 1854

On my way home I have seen the falls again, but just a glimpse caught on the thread of bridge that stretches across the chasm. And I am in Queen Victoria's dominions again after an interval of eight years. What queer changes have taken place in my ideas political in that time so that now, though I strive to remember the sensation, I cannot even make that approach to loyalty. Perhaps "I was to the manner born"; certain it is I was never overburdened with reverence.

February 1, 1854

M. C. R. R.³⁵ Soon to be in Kalamazoo but it seems long since I was there. The changes I shall find in persons and things will not altogether suit my fancy, I fear.

February 5, 1854

Home again—It is Sunday and I am in my old seat in church, but do not feel as though I had any right there, my time to stay is so short.

Grand Rapids, February 6, 1854

This is my 25th birthday, but I cannot make it seem a reality. What a year of change has the last year been; who may tell what is coming one may prove.

Grave Yard Gun plain,³⁶ February 24, 1854.

I have just called on a doubly bereaved friend, and now stand the only living among the silent congregation of the dead. If they could rise from their deep slumber, how familiar would most appear. How strange it seems to see the names of those I knew so well on the headstones. Strength and youth and beauty and goodness all had their

representatives among the resting ones of this snow clad slope. What part of this spot is reserved for me, or shall I wandering in distant climes lay down alone? Vanity of vanities saith the preacher, all is vanity!

March 8, 1854

Again I have left home for the west, again for the shores of the Pacific. We have stopped to night at White Pidgeon Prairie,³⁷ have had a fine day, but—hang it—something needs be pleasant. Confound all partings except with creditors.

March 12, 1854

Somewhere in the deep timbered land in Indiana. We are staying over the Sabbath with a queer old Baptist deacon. I could not understand why—Baptist though he was—that he did not attend even a Methodist meeting when there was none of his own and the schoolhouse was on his farm—but the worthy old Hoosier was wise above his generation. I went and found the schoolhouse crammed full of Hoosiers that I afterwards found were not so much collected to hear the serman as to see a newly joined pair that had had ministerial license to quarrel for the remainder of their lives, which they doubtless will do as the scrawney bride was some 10 years older than her loving spouse. When all had stared their fill, a gaunt old Hoosier undoubled himself a joint at a time out of his corner, and before he was straitened out [he] began to wail a most dolorous canticle through his nose. One or two women struck up the same words but with an entire indifference to the tune. This cat concert was succeeded by a solo from a long man, with long straight black hair hanging down his long neck to his shoulders. He was happily unapproachable. No bold spinet durst so much as utter one accompanying croak. By the time this precious performance was through with, the preacher arrived in a vast bustle, as he was only an hour behind. Beyond a bullet head with hair in the extreme of fright and a cavernous mouth at the bottom of a small face, there was nothing remarkable in the man until he began to preach and then did each “particular hair” on my pate stand on end and the cold shivers ran down my back for a few minutes and then the little wretched preacher jumped and roared and pounded and stormed until he fairly gasped for breath and the atmosphere of the little room seemed red hot; and happening to get a glimpse at Joey doubled up on a low seat with his face hidden behind his hands, every muscle quivering with suppressed laughter, I could not sit any longer but bolted for the noble old woods.

Fulton, Indiana

We have travelled over a desolate looking country to day, nearly all swamp. About noon we arrived at the city of Rochester³⁸ where there

is a great amount of ground and very little city. To night I have the headache. I seem to like this nomad life; I fear I shall learn to like it too well. I have two companions, Alfred Woodhams and Joseph Chart, and have hired a scalawag that we call Josh to go through with us.

Delphi, Indiana, March 16, 1854

To day we have travelled 36 miles along the banks of the Wabash over horrible roads.

Oxford, Indiana

Yesterday Joseph and Alfred went up the Wabash to buy horses, as sheep are not to be procured at any rate.³⁹ Passed through Lafayette yesterday. It is the finest city I have seen as far as size and bustle is concerned since I left Detroit. Very sensibly, we forgot our blankets at the house where we stayed over night and for our pains I had to ride over a wet prairie, or in Mich. we should call it a marsh and a miserable wet thing at that. I hope my fate will never be to live on a prairie. . . .

Sunday, March 18, 1854

Been travelling all this morning. We are baiting our horses in a grove. My money has given out and I have to push on to Bloomington, Ill., to wait till the boys come up. Yesterday it blew so hard that as soon as we came to a grove called Milford⁴⁰ with some half dozen houses. . . [we] put up for the rest of the day, for it was not possible to travel. Another blessing of these prairies, they are precisely like the ocean.

Bloomington, Indiana, Monday, March 19, 1854

To day we have travelled 35 miles across the prairies. One of our horses was taken sick about 4 miles from here, and I am in the stable watching the brute. Our man Josh is amusing himself by telling the Dutch ostler all sorts of the most incredible lies by way of pastime. I don't much fancy waiting here till the boys come up but needs must—

Tuesday, March 20, 1854

It has been trying all day to rain, and I have been stowed away in the house writing letters. I wish I could get some. The sick horse is better, and in memory of the danger he has gone through Josh has christened him Santa Anna.

This is a scattered bustling city. The country around is very thinly settled and nearly all prairie. I am all impatience to get on and so passes our lives—get on get on—and we finish by tumbling into the narrow cell where these clay carcasses get on no more.

March 22, 1854

Waiting yet. I am tired of this tavern life, though I have contrived to

while away the hours to pretty good satisfaction over Dick's Christian philosopher. How well he unfolds the mysteries of creation, and who following him as a guide from one flashing sun to the tiny specks almost beyond our keenest ken at the confines of creation is not compelled to say great and marvellous are thy works, Father of all good.

March 24, 1854

In Bloomington yet. I have been reading Dick until my eyes complain, but it is good to feel something of the majesty of the Creation shown so grandly in the works of his fingers. It has been lonely enough here so far, but to day at noon just as Josh saddled Cap for me to go off after the boys, they came in to town with nine horses.

Sunday, March 25, 1854

This morning Joseph and I went to the little Episcopal church here, heard an excellent sermon. To day I resolved to banish the thoughts that have perplexed me during the week and have felt the good of so doing. I feel a serenity of mind that proves how good it is to keep holy the Sabbath day.

Bernadotte, Illinois,⁴¹ Wednesday, March 29, 1854

A heavy snow storm commenced last night, and our horses had no place of shelter. To day it is changed to rain and kept steadily at it; to night we have better quarters at a tavern for our beasts; the snow is 4 inches deep beside the muddy substratum.

Thursday, March 30, 1854

In the same place yet; the weather has improved a little. What nuisances these little country villages are; every one knows all the rest and their ideas seem to be on a par with the size of their place. I tramped the wood all the afternoon with a gun to while away the time. One solitary pidgeon was all my trophies.

Macomb, Illinois⁴² March 31, 1854

We have travelled 23 miles to day over a prairie in the teeth of a wild storm of wind accompanied with rain, hail, or snow, and sometimes by way of change, all three. I rode one horse and led the four wildest we have and Joey the other, and when we got to Macomb it was as much as we could do to get off our horses. So to night I have the headache and the blues, and the wind howls and bellows, that alone would make me feel gloomy, a relic of old sea life. What a poor exchange is this crowded barroom reeking with tobacco and blasphemy for the comforts of home or Troy.

Carthage, Illinois,⁴³ Sunday

Yesterday we travelled 24 miles. It was cold and windy; we are laying over to day. Went to the Methodist meeting this morning; heard a

good sermon from a perfect duck of a man. This evening attended O. L. Pres. meeting and by mistake blundered in and sat down on the women's side. I had no thought that any society bearing the respectable name of Presbyterian would sanction such a Barbarism as dividing the congregation.

Monday, April 4, 1854 [Dates are incorrect for April 3-15]

To day came as far as Warsaw⁴⁴ on the Mississippi river but could not cross as the wind was so high that the ferryman was afraid. We have camped in a barn and sleep on the hay.

Tuesday, April 5, 1854

Raining like mad, a regular Irish hurricane straight up and down. Heigho! I am at last on the banks of the so called Father of waters, a broad, muddy, sluggish stream. In my ideas the name is not appropriate, as but few of the rivers of my acquaintance bear the marks of such dirty parentage. Let me live by the bright Kalamazoo, and the Father of waters may run dry for me; it is on too large a scale, too much like a big city. It is a vile receptacle for all the filth of the surrounding country.

This way of travelling is not half so unpleasant and tiresome as by sea, as there is something to look at, but the care of the whole seems to rest on my shoulders. Evening, the rain has ceased and we have been taking a long stroll on the banks of the river admiring the beautiful crystalized quartz there in abundance.

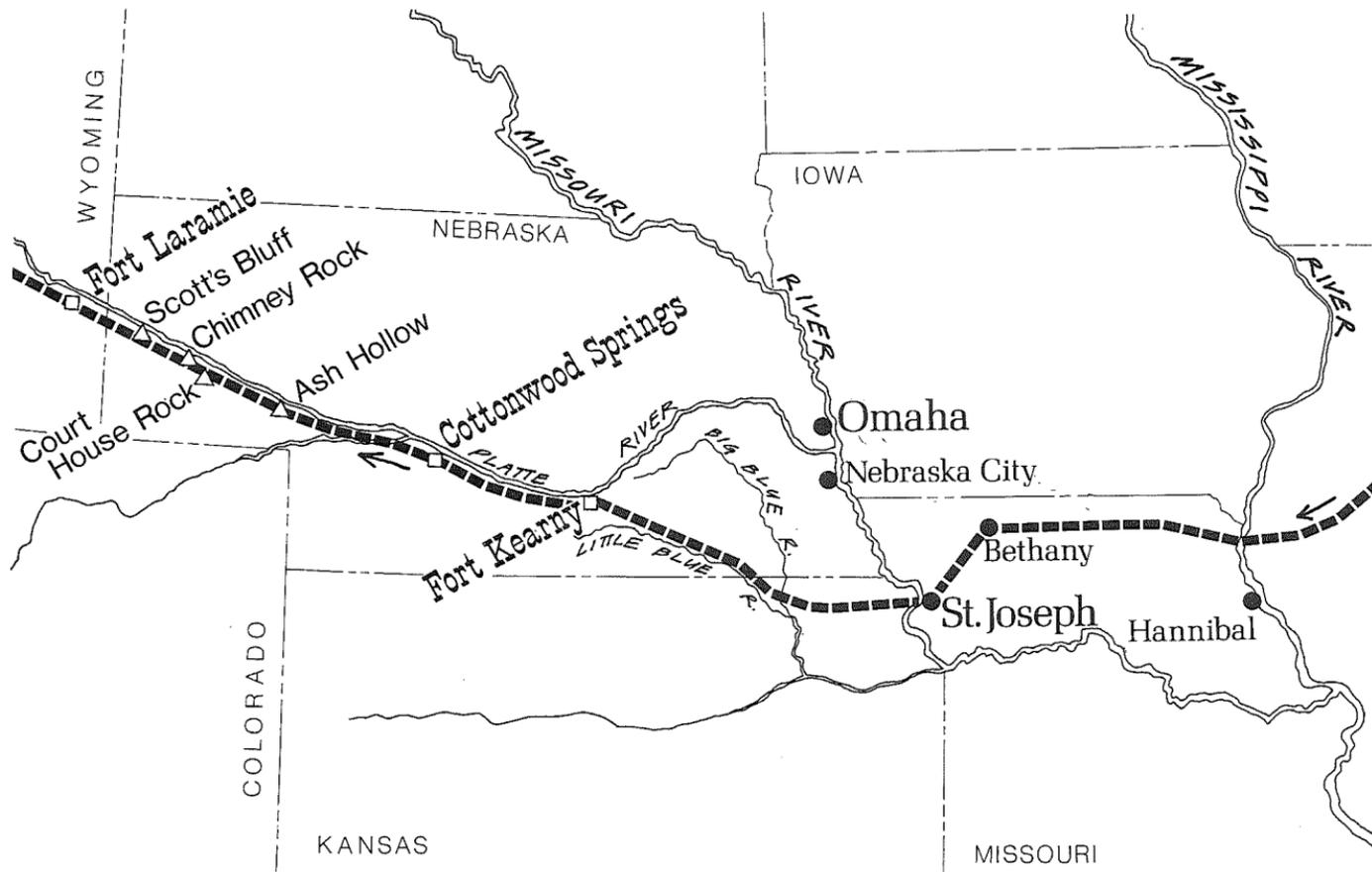
Wednesday, April 6, 1854

Crossed the Mississippi this morning on the ricketty old steam ferry, so crazy a concern that its owner was in a great state of perturbation lest our spirited horses should take a fancy to get too much on one side the old craft and capsizе her; he looked quite relieved when he ran on to the bank.

We have travelled some 18 miles over a low flat swampy country, the soil very rich but there seems to be no signs of improvement or energy in the people. Every house has a dark cloud of negroes hanging round it; there is one staying at the same house [we] are staying, but he will be free in a few months by the will of his deceased mistress.

Thursday, April 7, 1854

We have come 23 miles to day and have camped for night on a little island on the prairie, the first time of our trying to camp out. It has been a beautiful day, the boys have gone to sleep and I am standing guard. We shot some prairie hens on our road to day, and several rabbits that seem to abound on these little islands, and it made a decided improvement on the fare of bacon and corn so universal in this region.



*Woodhams' overland route from Michigan to California to 1854 followed the Little Blue and Platte Rivers through Nebraska. Map adapted from Merrill Mattes' *The Great Platte River Road* (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1969).*

Friday, April 8, 1854

We have only made about 15 miles to day; been very warm all day. To night we have encamped near some busy groves where we found several rabbits.

Hargraves Mills, Saturday, April 9, 1854

To day we have made 18 miles and are now camped on the banks of the Charidon river,⁴⁵ a miserable little wretch of a river but quite a stream for this country. It has been very warm all day, and ourselves and teams suffered for want of water. This country is badly watered; the wells are very deep and dry up in dry seasons, and the natives use the water of the sloughs or water courses on the prairies, which seldom dry up although they are quite stagnant. The natives insist that it is very wholesome and good, but to my vitiated taste the coffee colored stuff has too strong a flavor of mud and dead grass to be pleasant. One thing we have not learned—the Missouri art of diluting it with whiskey.

We travelled to this place, though it was some six miles farther than we had intended, in the insane hope of getting some flour, as none of us had ever been guilty of dreaming of a mile without flour, but all kinds of “shiftlessness” seem possible in Missouri. They had not seen wheat for months, and we had to hire the miller’s wife to fabricate a supply of corn dodger as we thought it beyond our skill, as it came very near being beyond my skill to devour as it seems to me to be nothing more or less than baked chicken food, but hunger is rich sauce.

Sunday, April 11, 1854

In the same place to day. The weather is showery with peeps of sunshine, true April weather. The old lady Hargrave is an innocent old genius with an everlasting tongue, and apparently delighted to get a “Yankee” (as we are all called here) to exercise it upon. She favored me with an account of the marvellous proficiency of her “gal,” a strapping animal of 18 or 19 years. She knows the spellin’ book from eend to eend, has been in ’rithmetic this three winters, and last winter commenced jography, quoth the dame, entirely out of breath; I did not know very well what verbal answer to get up, so contented myself with listening earnestly and at the wind up called all the admiration I could muster into my face and gazed at the “gal,” who had been in the room all the time. All at once the old lady broke out in a fresh spat. She had caught sight of a specimen ring upon my finger, rushing to it and catching my hand, at which I began to feel skittish. “Is that gold?” she shouted. “I never see such a big un afore.” And then I had to give the history of the unlucky trinket, from its mine bed to the present day, under a severe fire of cross examination from the good wife.

Wednesday, April 13, 1854

For the last two days we have travelled over high rolling prairie with scattered timber along the watercourses, but no water now in them. Settlers are very scarce. At one house we stopped to purchase, if we could, food for man or beast, but the woman was a "know nothing," had it the natural way—did not know how far it was to a village, did not know County or town she lived in, and we had to travel 30 miles each day to find enough for ourselves and horses. People seem too poor to keep themselves, and yet they have one of the most fertile countries on the globe.

To day we have only made 15 miles, but the grass does not start much yet, and there is not any use hurrying until it does. We have encamped to night just in the edge of the woods just by a settler's house and have been whiling away the afternoon by shooting at a mark. We get our meals in the house. The man has just buried his wife, and so sorrowful a family I never saw, but unlike Missourians generally, they are still and quiet. The eldest is a girl of 16, slender and neat and large brown mournful eyes that fill and the lip trembles every time the mother is mentioned. The boys are quite crazy about her, poor child. She has a hard prospect, the care of 4 or 5 little children.

Thursday, April 14, 1854

A wet dreary afternoon and we have stopped at a dreary little place called Bethany.⁴⁶ I have been looking over the St. Louis papers, but they always sicken me with their vile proslavery filth; we Northerners have much to be thankful for in not living where the demon of slavery gives full vent to every abomination of the human mind. We have made 18 miles to day, but these Missouri miles are as endless as the blue homespun coats and ironrust pants of the natives; the prairie rolls are just about like the waves of Cape Horn solidified into black mud.

Friday, April 15, 1854

This heavy rain will be quite acceptable to the country, for they have had none for 8 months, but for us it makes bad roads, raises the rivers, and Missouri is guiltless of bridges, and performs various other disagreeables. I do not believe there is half a dozen good books in this place, and the hoglike "pikes" grub on from year to year knowing and believing nothing that they do not find in their contemptible papers and all that they swallow as though it were gospel—or rather whiskey.

Sunday

We are staying over to day with a long old bachelor from Indiana [who] strayed away there with two long old maid sisters whom he will persist in calling the girls, when they have certainly been women for 30 years; but they are kind as they are odd and prim, and one of them a

great angler and tells immense fish stories of the number of "peerch" she catches in the "slues" every spring.

St. Joseph, Missouri,⁴⁷ Tuesday, April 18, 1854

To day Al and I have come down to see how things look on the borders of civilization. Our teams are 17 miles from here staying at the house of a Methodist preacher who keeps tavern, rather a queer conjunction. We found letters waiting us here, not at all to our sorrow. This is the largest and most bustling place we have seen in M-o [Missouri], but it is principally settled by eastern men. We have beautiful weather in the day, but the nights are so cold the grass does not start much.

Wednesday, April 19, 1854

Last night we returned from St. Jo to the tavern where our teams are. This morning a splendid horse belonging to Newman and Tannehill's train from Kalamazoo died; first, too much grain, and then too much physic finished him in two hours. He was said to be worth \$1,000 and is the second they have lost already.

Thursday, April 20, 1854

Very warm and showery. I think we will leave our tavern keeping preacher tomorrow. This afternoon he came home from a funeral, "burning a beautiful kiln," and wound up the solemnities of the day by treating every one that would drink with him. He is more or less "blue" every day and is a minister in the M-E [Methodist Episcopal] church in good standing.

April 22, 1854

Came to St. Jo yesterday; the day was excessively warm as is to day. More letters. I have been unwell since I have been here with headache and colic.

April 26, 1854

Here yet. It does seem as though grass would never grow, and I have been sick ever since I have been here, and that and having all our outfit to select and get together has well nigh worn me out. We shall be glad enough to get on the plains, where the outlay of money will not be so constant, for among our other trouble is shortness of cash—

April 28, 1854

Crossed the rapid, roaring, and rily Missouri, the nastiest stream in this world, I think, and we have taken leave of civilization though it had a rather dubious representative in the sovereign state of Missouri. We had to wait two or three hours at the river side to get our horses on the old river boat that served as a ferry, and I had six frightened horses to take care of amid steam and smoke, and the jamming and crowding

of two hundred cattle and mules. While I was holding my scared horses who were terrified out of their senses by the engines and furnaces on the main deck like all Western boats, a pack of mules backed down on to me and one villainous white brute, all but crushed the breath out of my body, while his interesting owner sat on the companion way without making any reply to my appeals for help. I suppose the fool was afraid of his precious carcass. Presently the pressure slacked a little and seeing a handy stick of firewood at my feet, I commenced running "a muck" among Messrs. Mulas, and found that they could feel some round the bases' of their ears, all other parts seeming quite destitute of sensation. Mr. proprietor, as soon as he saw me get the firewood, vanished and I saw his face no more, though the engineer kept up a heavy fire of oaths at his cowardice as long as I could hear him.

After we had hauled our heavily loaded wagon out of the heavy quicksand on the river bank, we passed through a very heavy piece of timber over an execrable road for 6 miles, then emerged on the prairie and travelled so[me] 10 miles to find camp for the night. No sooner had we stripped the harness from our horses and fastened their lariats than they took a scare at something real or imaginary, and away they flew over the prairie like a tornado, leaving us staring at one another and asking "what started the brutes?" And then I sent off the boys off after them, staying to cook supper. Soon after sundown Joseph and Josh came back with all but three. They had run some three miles and were stopped by a large camp at the foot of some hills where they could not well get any farther. Two of them made back for St. Joe, with Alf in close pursuit. About 9 o'clock he came in with them; they had run some 9 miles. A sweet introduction this has been to the plains.

Saturday, April 29, 1854

Our bad luck did not desert us as long as we remained at that camping place. Joe and Josh hitched up the lead horses and started in, leaving Alf and I to follow with the wagon. When we were ready to start, not a horse would budge, all mad at being left alone. We fussed with them awhile, and then I started on afoot to overtake the boys. Luckily Josh had stopped, suspecting something wrong, so I sent him back to the rescue. About 11 o'clock we crossed a bridge over Wolf creek. The bridge was built and is owned by the Sac and Fox Indians,⁴⁸ and their old chief receives the toll for crossing and keeps a small guard of painted and mounted warriors. They were the first Indians I had ever seen in their own dress with plumes and warpaint, but the ferocious look they are said to have I did not see; they looked more like actors in a circus than the "noble" Indian that so much romancing has been made over. The old chief was the only one of the gang that had any sort of dignity. He, misunderstanding something I had said about toll,

touched me gently on the breast, saying "Me Sac and Fox, this my bridge."

To night we are encamped by a little clear stream with some apology for grass on its banks.

Sunday, April 30, 1854

Last night as Joe and I were on guard the horses stampeded again; about half past ten, six of them got loose. The lariats held the remainder. The night was excessively dark and it was useless to follow them, so we waited impatiently for sunrise. Then Joey and I started after them. They had taken the emigrant trail westward three miles as far as the Iowa Mission,⁴⁹ and we fancied we could discover traces of their lariats dragging beyond that, for the ground was as hard as mid-summer and the fragments of rope were all we had to track by. So on the road we went some 6 or 7 miles and rambled as many more over the boundless prairie before making up our minds they were not west of the Mission. Back to the Mission and on a bye road going out of the Mission to the northwest found their tracks going north toward the Missouri river. We followed the tracks some miles to the tops of some high bluffs overlooking a low prairie; on the farther side about 1 1/2 miles off we saw them standing in the edge of the woods. While we looked, two men came out of the woods and we could just distinguish one of them mounting one of the cream colored span. The "Indians have got them," we both exclaimed at once, and spurring our tired animals down the slope we dashed across the prairie through the tall dead weeds and grass, not able to see until we were close up on them, and then we were quite relieved to find that instead of a fight, all we had to do was to lead a horse apiece back to camp. Alfred had walked down to the Mission to make inquiries, and a young white man told him that he had heard the Indians speak of some horses in the river bottoms, and offered to go with him. Al took one of the remaining horses and started, followed by some mounted Indians, who discovering his errand tried to outrun him so as to get to the horses first, but Al's large horse was too much for their ponies. Al got there first and found them all tied up to trees and bushes; we have now no doubt that the Indians started them in the first place, as we found the lariat of the first horse that started cut close to the stake which was thoughtlessly driven close to a clump of bush near the edge of the creek, and just before they started a dog belonging to a Gull Prairie train close to us barked violently. Well, it was [lucky] for the person that cut the horse loose that he was not 10 minutes sooner as I had been sitting by that horse with a double barrel gun heavily loaded with buck shot.

May 1, 1854

On the road again; passed the Iowa mission and over two toll bridges kept by Indians. We passed them yesterday in our chase for

the horses but so early in the morning that there was no one there. On our way back an Indian as far as dress made one, rose from the ground where he had been lying with half a dozen more, stepped up to us with, "Gentlemen, I want ten cents from each of you." I never saw so magnificently handsome a man—tall, straight, well proportioned, with glossy curling hair, hanging in curls to his shoulders, rich olive complexion and features, statuesque in beauty; he was absolutely perfect so far as person was concerned. We talked some time and all his manner, language, and every thing about him but his dress, bespoke one educated in the most refined society. What can he be doing here?

We have travelled all day over rolling prairie. About noon it began to rain, and kept it up, or rather down, all the afternoon. We have encamped on a little creek, with scarcely any grass, but we have travelled 26 miles and there is no chance of water for the next 18 so we have no choice. The rain ceased about 8 o'clock; the wind shifted N.E. and bit-ter cold all night. Joey and I are on guard, and all we can do is to keep going from one frightened horse to the other every few minutes though we feel almost dead for want of sleep.

May 2, 1854

To night we are encamped on the banks of the big Nemaha,⁵⁰ a pretty stream skirted by groves of oak. The prairie we have travelled over to day has been very rolling. We have made 30 miles; too long a drive short as the grass is now. We have passed two graves on the road to day; they look very lonely away on the broad prairie. I would almost as soon be buried at sea as here on this boundless plain where friends could never have the poor satisfaction of knowing my last resting place. We have seen several prairie wolves to day; they seem to be the same as the coyote of California.

This is a pretty spot but thieves are plentiful. Yesterday we met a man that had lost every horse he had. The boys are watering the horses. I am writing by candlelight, but I take the first watch and must not stay stowed away in the wagon any longer.

May 3, 1854

We have made about 25 miles to day over rolling prairie with little strips of oak timber in the valleys. It was cold in the morning; toward afternoon it was warmer. We are encamped at Elm Creek, nearly dry now except some water in the deepest holes. We had fixed us a soft nest on a bed of dry grass and were snoozing away with all the zest that the chance to sleep gives after a short allowance, when it began to rain and kept it up the rest of the night, though tolerably warm.

May 4, 1854

Encamped to night on Big Blue river⁵¹ which we forded just at sun-

down. It is the first stream of any considerable size we have seen since we left the Missouri. This stream runs through a beautiful valley with scattering timber. This is a pretty spot. The boys are trying to catch some fish, Al is cooking supper, and I am perched up here in the wagon writing with one hand and hold[ing] a candle with the other. We have seen plenty of wolves to day and large droves of blackbirds with yellow heads. I shot some snipes, and they are going the way of all such flesh in the spiders [skillets].

I had the first watch to night, and my thoughts like those of thousands of others in the same circumstances went off roaming far from the present scenes. [The following poem-song may not be original with Woodhams.]

Bright moon beams bathe the plain
 With silver light.
 And I must watch again
 The fleeting night.

Chorus:

The moonlight is o'er the plain.
 Springtime is come again.
 Far away love, away love,
 From thee I sadly stray.

The grey wolf howls afar,
 Startling the night.
 Night birds discordant jar
 Tells of their flight.

The herd bells tinkle clear
 In the still air.
 And all is peaceful here,
 Serene and fair.

The crickets song is shrill
 'Mid dewdrops bright.
 My sleeping comrades still,
 Their breathing light.

Do their thoughts homeward tend
 On fancy's wings.
 My waking thoughts will blend.
 With long loved things.

Home is not on the plains,
 Though fair they be.
 Home and its loved again
 I long to see.

And thus my thoughts will stray
Far from these wilds.
Dear scenes far far away
Where lives love's smile.

May 5, 1854

Left Big Blue early this morning. On the cottonwood branch we met a large party of Kaw and Osage Indians, mounted, dressed off in plumes and warpaint. Almost all had guns; bows and arrows and lances made up for the rest. They were waiting on the side of the trail as we passed them. They gazed at our white and cream horses with wistful eyes; we were quite alone and they might have made mince-ment of us if it had pleased them. There seemed to be between 70 and 80 of them. Soon after we had passed them, we met three coming toward the main body at full speed. I sung out to know where they were going in such a hurry. They shook their lances and yelled back without stopping; in a few rods farther we saw an Indian laying flat on his face, dead, with three others looking at him; he was shot through the heart by an emigrant that was driving a cow behind the rest of his train, and this and three other Indians stopped him and took away his cow and demanded his money. He gave lead with the effect we saw but did not recover his cow.

We soon overtook several other trains who were waiting. I never saw so much excitement got up in so short a time. The whole band came galloping back to where the dead one lay and a man who was watching them through a telescope sung out, "Here they come!" And out came rifles, guns, pistols and knives of every sort, and over one hundred men were ready to give them a warm reception. One old mountain man in a greasy suit of buck-skin crept out of the wagon where he had been sleeping when the alarm was given, and carefully proceeding to load an old rifle almost as long as himself, spoke up to this effect, "Byes, if ye have to shute, think ye're shutin' at prairie chicken," and crawled in to his wagon again to resume his nap; our Indians however seemed to think "discretion the better part of valor" packed up the dead one, and disappeared over a roll in the prairie. We have camped to night on a nasty little creek with no feed for our horses.

May 6, 1854

We have made 35 miles to day and camped on dry Sandy Creek, with no grass, as the prairie for many miles before camping had been burnt over so recently as to destroy the young grass. The road has been excellent all day excepting sundry sharp pitches up and down into watercourses; the prairie was composed of sharp gravel. This afternoon we heard from some men that had been back after cattle, that the emigrants had a brush with the band of Indians we met on the cot-

tonwood branch, and that two whites and eight Indians were killed.⁵² Rather dubious, we think.

Sunday, May 7, 1854

Left our barren encampment this morning for the Little Blue river some 10 miles. We found a little grass, but not good. Our horses are growing poor; our grain is nearly gone, and there is so little grass. We are very watchful to night; there are two other Mich. companies encamped with us and we have two on guard. It does not look much like home scenes to see the wagons close together, the tents near them, and the guards with their guns tramping their watch. This river is the favorite resort of the Pawnee Indians, the most thievish tribe on the route.

Monday, May 8, 1854

Again encamped on the Little Blue. Travelled all day over a first-rate road except occasional steep pitches. The wind has blown a heavy gale all day, and a dirty looking set we were when we drove down to our camping ground. The dust has blown so directly in our faces all day that we could not look forward at all except through glasses.

Last night just before it was quite dark, three men came to the top of the bank under which we were encamped and peered cautiously down at us. By their voices we judged them to be Indians. As soon as they saw a stir in our camp, they left, going toward a large encampment of Dutch emigrants some half mile away on the prairie, so Joe and I took our guns and started for their camp to see if any of them had been down to the river about that time. Their guard saw us coming in the clear moonlight, and the whole gang of them huddled together cocking their revolvers for our reception. My bidding them good evening dispelled their alarm. "We tought you was Indians," said one of them. The dutch blockheads might have known that Indians would not have come up in the broad moonlight as we did; none of them however had been away from their camp so were none the wiser, besides running the risk of getting half a dozen balls scattered around us.

Joey was on guard in the night; after the moon was down he was on the ridge of the hill so that he could see up a little valley that made into the hollow we were in. As he lay looking up the valley, he saw some dark object very slowly moving down towards the camp. He watched, and the more he did so, the more he thought that a Pawnee was trying to stampede our nags so he brought his rifle to bear, took a long sight as well as he could, then concluded to wait until it came abreast of him, when he could see it was a yearling strayed away from the trains we had visited.

Tuesday, May 9, 1854

Encamped again on the Little Blue. We camped early on account of the wind blowing worst than it did yesterday. We made the best use we could of the clear water to wash some of our clothes, for we probably shall not see much clear water again for some time.

Wednesday, May 10, 1854

Left Little Blue this morning for the Platte River valley. Travelled all day over a high rolling prairie; no wood or water fit to use. Saw plenty of wolves, and passed many graves. One had a nice marble head stone with a woman's name on it.⁵³ It stood on the top of a little sandhill, and strange enough was that sad evidence of civilization here in the wilderness, the more so as it bore a woman's name. Bad enough for man to be buried in this wild region, but a woman's place seems peculiarly in the comforts of home and friends. One head board we saw told the occupant below had been killed by lightning.

Just at dusk a wolf came somewhat nearer than any before, so I took down the rifle for my first shot at the "varmint," but he was so far off that the sights covered him up. The boys stood right behind me, and though I raised as if to shoot over him, they said the ball fell short in a direct line between Mr. wolf and ourselves, so deceiving is distance on these prairies, and far off as he was, we could see his ears.

We are encamped by the Platte a wide, shallow, dirty stream, so muddy that a pailful of water standing over night will deposit an inch of mud by morning. Grass is pretty good but wood there is none, and for the first time we use "bois de vache" or "buffalo chips."

Thursday, May 11, 1854

Encamped early this afternoon on the Platte. We passed Fort Kearny,⁵⁴ and left letters for home. The fort is merely a collection of wooden buildings, with a force of 80 men to guard 400 miles of the worst road on the route so far as Indians are concerned, but government has more important ends in view than protecting a few thousand emigrants. This afternoon has been very cold, and there is no wood, but nevertheless I concocted of flour and dried apples what the boys were kind enough to call dumplings and to devour enough of to have given a city horse a fit of dyspepsia, especially as their dryness was moistened with a suspicious liquid looking like bad soup, but the boys called it sauce. The real sauce was the keen air of the plains which transformed the most fastidious appetite into one that would do credit to a wolf.

Friday, May 12, 1854

How rapidly the days pass, and if they were all to be like this one has been, I should wish them to hurry up. It commenced raining about three this morning and has done so almost ever since, and now, after

an interval just long enough to get supper, has set to again. We have travelled all day and are encamped on a small creek. Fuel is green willow brush; grass is poor. This valley of the Platte is the gathering place of storms, or seems to be.

Saturday, May 13, 1854

All day we have travelled along the level valley of the Platte with the road as good as could be wished for, but an exceedingly cold wind from the N.N.W., the finish to our yesterday's storm, . . . lasted nearly all night making our horses very troublesome. We are encamped by a bunch of willow brush that gives us all the fuel we have; grass is very poor.

Sunday, May 14, 1854

Left camp in hopes of better feed. The wolves ran into our camp this morning as soon as we left it to pick up the scraps around the fire. We are encamped on a little slow creek making into the Platte, but the water is clear for this valley. . . . compared with the liquid mud of the Platte. This valley must be the birthplace of storms. To day has been the first tolerably comfortable day we have spent in it, and it has rained at intervals all day. To day it thunders in every direction. I take the second watch and must turn in on the pile of valises and bag of shelled corn that forms my bed, though the prospect of not being disturbed before 12 is rather doubtful, as there is every appearance of a storm.

Monday, May 15, 1854

The storm we anticipated did not disappoint us. About 10 I was awakened by the wind blowing a hurricane. I jumped from the wagon and looked at a scene that for wild grandeur I never saw equalled. All the prairie east of us was on fire, the fierce wind fanning the flame into a wall of fire that cast a lurid red light on the heavy black clouds rolling up from the west against the wind, and every instant the heavens from the center to the horizon was split by the vivid lightning, and the heavy thunder rolled above the roaring of the fire and wind. Presently the deluge fell, and we had to grope in the black pall of darkness that fell with it for our frightened horses and holding as many as we could turn our backs to the pelting storm, "donkey fashion," and take it. Fortunately the rain was soon over.

To night we are encamped by a little creek⁵⁵ that has been dammed up by beaver. There is a large pond of several acres just above us; there are two dams, one long one in the pond and another farther down the creek five feet high, built of mud and willow brush. It seems perfectly tight and does not wash at all. It has been a nasty misty day and to night the rain is pouring down in torrents. We have shot three varieties of ducks on the pond.

Tuesday, May 16, 1854

We are in the same place yet. Last night a storm of wind and rain came up that blew over the tents belonging to the trains that are with us. I expected our wagon top would go every minute for some hoursThe storm abated somewhat towards sunrise but kept on until noon, when the rain ceased, but the wind has kept up all day.

This afternoon the boys have been off with the horses in search of better grass, which they found on the other side the creek, and I have been cooking. It is awkward work enough at any time, even if things were convenient, but out here on these plains with the wind blowing an Irish hurricane right up and down and the fuel green willow brush and the smoke bound to get in one's eyes, make [it] altogether a job not to be wished for. This afternoon there has been a slight variety in the exercises, made by two of the boys in the other train getting into a scratching match but beyond a pair of clawed faces nothing came of it.

Wednesday, May 17, 1854

This has been the first fine day we have seen on the Platte river. We traveled all the morning over an almost desert prairie. Great numbers of antelope were in sight, so Joey and I [got] our guns and started after them, following a wounded one until we were quite satisfied that his locomotive faculties were in good order. On our way over the hills we found a prairie dog village; these little wretches are about the size of an ordinary rat, of a bright fawn color with a short tail pertinaciously stuck over their backs. They belong to the gnawing order Rodentia, and how they live is a mystery to me for their villages seem as bare as a road. On a sandy cliff I found a beautiful variety of dwarf sweet pea with a beautiful scent. We are encamped tonight on a branch of the South fork of Platte,⁵⁶ the large grey wolves have just commenced a serenade, hope the brutes will not scare our horses.

Thursday, May 18, 1854

Another pleasant day. I took the rifle but had only one ball and that in the gun. . . .started over the hills in the hope of seeing antelope or rather of getting a shot at them, for they were to be seen at all times, but I tramped over the hills in vain. When I was on the top of one hill they would keep on the top of the next range beyond. As I was going down into a little ravine, an enormous hare started from almost under my feet and as suddenly stopped by the ball from my rifle. It was as much as I wanted to lug to the road. I had got ahead of the train, so I lay down in the grass and amused myself by tolling a beautiful antelope within gun shot by putting my handkerchief on my ramrod and waving it at intervals. The beautiful creature would dance toward me, then stand motionless then run off, then back again, going

through as many coquetish motions as a young miss in a ball room, and I had no ball. Unsentimental as it may seem, I should have very gladly seen him stretched by the side of the hare instead of dancing round me as he was, but who can think of sentiment that has been living on bacon five or six weeks.

The first thing I saw of the trains they appeared as if walking in the air at a few feet about the earth occasioned by the mirage which is so common that we scarcely notice it. I have seen it when it appeared precisely as though the antelopes were skipping around in a lake. We are encamped by the river with tolerable feed for our horses but bad water and fuel.

Friday, May 19, 1854

This has been the first warm day since we have been on the plains. I took the rifle and tried to slay a vagabond wolf or two; drove one into the river but could not get near enough.

About 11 o'clock we arrived at the upper ford of South Fork of Platte,⁵⁷ and the leader of the other trains and myself rode across and back and then piloted the teams safely through. It was a hard job; we had to fix our eyes on a given point on the opposite shores and keep our animals headed for that place and the teams followed us. The current is very rapid, the bottoms an ever shifting quick sand rendering it impossible to stop or rather impossible to go on after once stopped. The river was some 1/2 mile across, and the teams had to draw with all their might to keep the wagon from going down stream. On this side the river was an encampment of Sioux Indians; the papooses ran out to us begging for tobacco and matches.

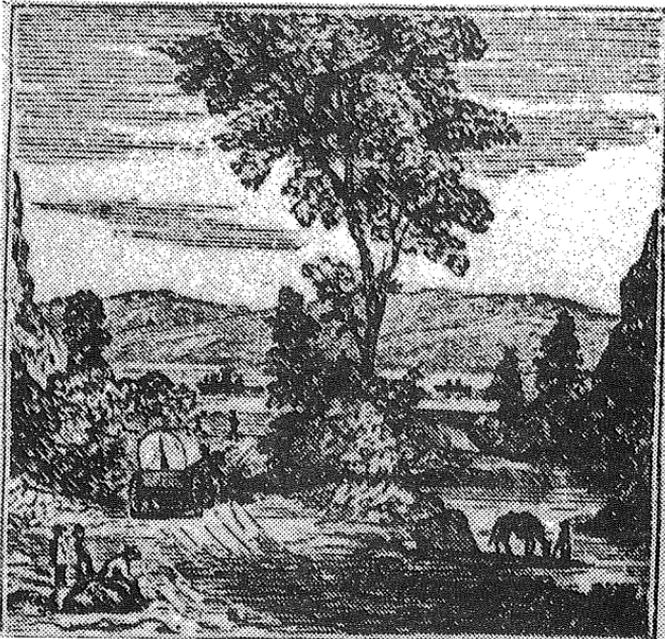
We have travelled over a high rolling prairie this afternoon. Saw two of the large grey wolves, or buffalo rangers as they are called by the trappers; just before sundown we descended in Ash Hollow,⁵⁸ the worst hill or rather series of hills on the route so far, and travelled through the most singularly rugged and broken country for an hour. A few broken scrubby looking trees, ash and cedar, grow out of the sides of the bluff. The place looks as though it must have shaken into its present form by a tremendous earthquake. We are encamped on the N. Fork of Platte near a large Sioux village. (This is the village recently destroyed by U.S. troops under Gen. Harney.)⁵⁹ We did not get encamped until 1/2 past 10. The sketch does not give any idea of the roughness of the place, as it is the part where the valley opens to the Platte river near our camp.

Saturday, May 20, 1854

Left Ash Hollow and travelled along the river bank, most of the way under high rocky bluffs. We have had the worst road today since we left the Missouri river bottoms, ridges of deep sand making very hard wheeling. The bluffs near us to night have resumed their usual



Woodhams' drawing of the mouth of Ash Hollow (which he passed in 1854) may have been influenced by a similar sketch by George H. Baker (below), published in the guide book Hutchings Panoramic Scenes-Crossing the Plains (Placerville, California: J. H. Hutchings, n.d.). Woodhams' other sketches may have been similarly influenced.



appearance of smooth round hills instead of the wild architectural appearances they have presented all the morning. We are encamped on Lone Elm creek—no wonder the Platte is so muddy as it receives all the washings of this vast region of sand and marl. I must cease writing as I have the second watch to take and must get what little sleep I can. [See page 37 for Woodhams' sketch.]

Sunday, May 21, 1854

Only 17 miles to day. Stopped this afternoon on the banks of a large rapid creek with poor grass, but the best we could find; no wood and little of other fuel. The little imps called sand flies and mosquitoes have tormented us this afternoon. It has been so still and warm some of our horses heads are badly swollen, but to night the wind is blowing a gale and thunder with vivid lightening playing in the distance. I am sitting here expecting to be called by the guard to help hold the horses. There has been any amount of beautiful flowers on the road, most of them almost all flower and very small leaves and roots. I have tried to dry some of the most beautiful, but they are so juicy I fear they will not preserve any of their delicate beauty. Joey shot a large rattlesnake to day.

Monday, May 22, 1854

Rarely does the valley of the Platte promise a storm without fulfilling it. About 10 o'clock the rain fell in sheets, filling the pockets of my overcoat and my boots in about two minutes as I stood holding on to some of the most frightened of our horses; but it only lasted about 30 minutes, and half drowned and weary we crawled back to the wagons, About noon we were at the nearest point to Courthouse rock⁶⁰ some 10 miles distant from the trail but it does not appear more than three miles distant. I took this rude sketch of it. It looks very singular standing away there all alone on the broad prairie.

Encamped this evening on Platte. A party of Sioux came down to our camp to visit or rather to see what we had to spare, though they did not beg. I had no remnants [and] was washing up the dishes, so I tumbled the greasy water into the kettle with the tea leaves, and when it boiled served out a half pint of the mixture, well sweetened to each of them, knowing that if it had been half liquid grease it would not trouble their leather gizzards. They had brought a pretty looking squaw with them to hold their ponies. I made signs to them to let her come into the camp and sent one of the big lazy hounds to hold the ponies. I gave her a cup of pot luck. As she bent forward to take it, she covered her eyes with her left hand for an instant, then with a grateful smile that showed a set of teeth like tiny pearls she turned away and swallowed [swallowed] the potion. To make amends to my own conscience for having given her such a dose, though she enjoyed well enough, I gave her a handful of sugar. Womanlike, she carefully

secured it in a corner of her blanket for the papoose in her lodge. Poor squaws! If some of our women's rights howlers had a year of Indian life, it would teach them a world of content.

Tuesday, May 23, 1854

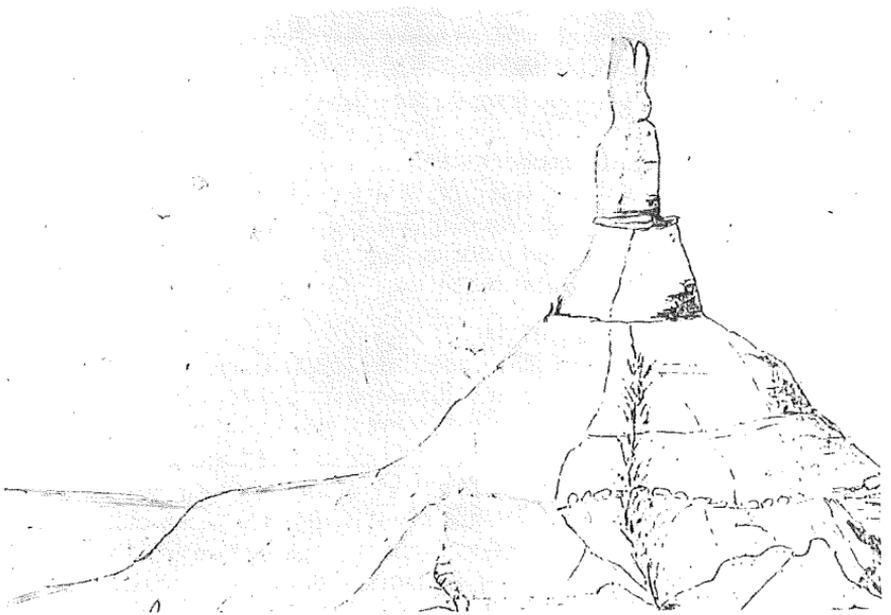
Passed Chimney Rock⁶¹ this morning. This singular freak of nature can be seen between 50 and 60 miles. It is a shaft of hard sandy marl. The bluffs along here assume the most singularly interesting forms. I have seen pictures of the ruins of Luxor and Thebes; if they were swelled to 10 times this size (I mean the ruins not the pictures) would very much resemble this region. One could easily imagine them to be the ruins of some mighty Babylon the Great builded by the Giants before the flood, so much do the walls of perpendicular rock with their terraces dotted with dwarf pine and cedars resemble architectural remains; and as the traveller wearies his eyes in gazing, he can scarcely persuade himself that the finger of the storm, alone has traced in playful mood these walls of grace and beauty. As we approached Scott's Bluffs⁶² I could not divest myself of the idea that we were about to enter some city of the olden time, the narrow gap we passed through with its towering perpendicular walls rising between two and three hundred feet like a gateway for a race of colossal beings, but language cannot describe the wonders and beauties of this region.

With a young man belonging to one of the other trains, I attempted to climb to the top of the tremendous tower, on the right of the gap, by way of the slanting ground seen on the right of the sketch, but the wall on the top. . . was perpendicular. We scabbled up to the top of the wall and found it only about 1 1/2 feet thick and crumbling, and there dwindled to the size of hand baskets were our wagons creeping round the base of the cliffs. I shall not soon forget the sensation, the slip of a few feet of crumbling wall would have sent us through the thin air almost to our wagons. The road through the pass is very rough, and we did not get camped till dark; in sight of our camp there are the corpses of two Sioux elevated on four posts about eight feet high and painted red; the bodies are enclosed in blankets of the same color. It is 10 o'clock and I have been up since 1/2 past 12 last night.

Wednesday, May 24, 1854

To day we have passed over an uninteresting country, that seems to be the home of myriads of black gnats, perfect little imps. They have made some of our party look as though they had the small pox, and the lee side of the horses heads are badly swollen. We are camped on the Platte river bottoms with the best feed we have had yet.

As we came down on the bottom Joseph just missed putting his foot on a rattlesnake. The creature was bound to crawl in some of the ground squirrel holes, and there was never a stick or stone in sight, so



Chimney Rock and Scott's Bluff (below) were visited by Woodhams in 1854.



Scott's Bluff near the Platte river

I had to keep kicking him along till he stood on the defensive when I shot him with my pistol. Alfred went down to the river to bathe, stripped and soused in. Josh followed and had half undressed when he caught sight of a rattlesnake coiled up within a foot of Al's clothing who of course had not seen him. Josh stared with wild eyes at the "varmint" so uncomfortably close to his bare legs and feet, but after all the snake was the only sufferer. This is a lovely evening and the men are squatted round our campfire listening to Josh, who is screaming some ballad about "my poor pollee" at the top of his voice. I stowed away in the wagon as usual.

Thursday, May 25, 1854

May nearly gone. How short the time seems since we started. We have travelled all day until after sundown over a succession of gravelly rolls, barren, miserable country. Several Sioux visited us when we were camped for noon begging for "Cocosh" or bacon. Just before we forded the Laramie fork of Platte we passed the last resting place of an Indian that had recently shot himself. He was in an old wagon-box set on posts eight or nine feet high; the box was covered with red blankets. I fancy this mode of interment is adopted to secure the bodies from the badgers that dig up every one, or rather eat up every body that is put underground. Of all the numbers of whites that have been buried by the side of the trail, scarcely any traces of their graves remain, these vile beasts digging down to them and devouring the bodies.

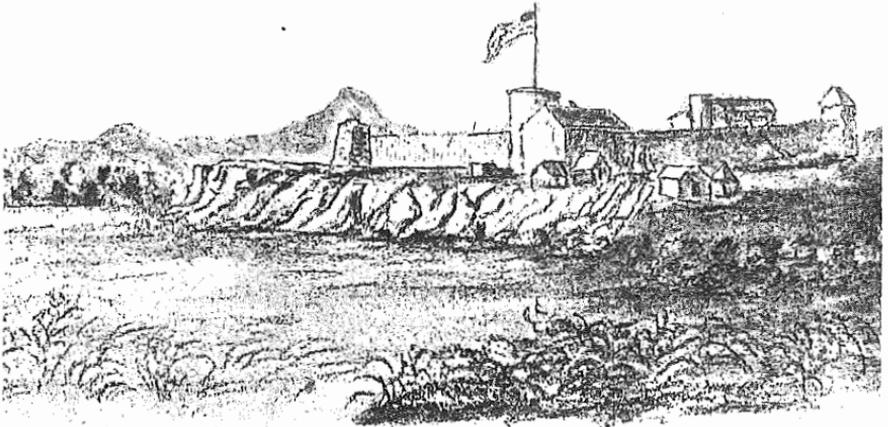
We passed the fort⁶³ near sundown; it is a little off the road and is merely a collection of adobe buildings. Every thing is in the greatest disorder. The officers are more engaged in gouging the emigrants than in protecting them from the Indians. We are encamped on the river bank, plenty of good driftwood but little grass.

Friday, May 26, 1854

Early this morning I went back to the fort to take letters for some of the boys and to get a crystal for my watch so I did not overtake the train until near noon, poking along alone over the black hills which we enter soon after leaving Fort Laramie. The scenery among these hills is at times fine, but the steep hills make hard travelling. It is up or down all day. About 2 o'clock an eclipse of the sun commenced and lasted till four. Camp on a hill side; grass poor, wood plenty.

Saturday, May 27, 1854

Travelled but a short distance this morning before we crossed the Horseshoe creek. ⁶⁴Found such good feed, wood, and water on it that we lay over for the rest of the day, fearing we may not fare so well for some time to come. This is the prettiest spot we have seen in many days. Our camp is on an island formed by two creeks and surrounded



Fort Laramie and Laramie Peak

Fort Laramie and Laramie Peak, Wyoming, 1854. . . (Below) Bluffs along the south fork of the Platte River, probably in central Wyoming.



High bluffs, South Fork Platte river

by groves. The grass is as high as the tops of our boots and excellent quality. Two heavy storms have passed, one to the north and the other south.

Sunday, May 28, 1854

Left the Horseshoe creek this morning; on over a rolling prairie 6 miles to a place where the Platte river leaves its course over the level valley and makes a rush at a mountain range dividing it by a fearful chasm $\frac{3}{4}$ mile long.⁶⁵ Mudgett, the owner of one of the trains we were in company with, has been across twice before, and said the canon had been passed by some few travellers so we concluded to try our luck. So in we went creeping up and down the face of the cliff wherever we could find foothold. On the opposite side the tremendous wall was overhanging; on our side it rose abruptly from the river. Then there was a sort of sloping shelf, then rose abruptly again and in some places hanging over heads. Sometimes we had to crawl on our hands and knees, at others cling along by the dwarfed cedars—rather a job with a rifle in my hands. Several times Mudgett sat down swearing he would go no farther, but he was unarmed and dared not venture back alone, and I was bound to go through, so on we went. He was a large, heavy man and did not seem to like the idea of the splash he would make in the river below. It did look rather dubious, seething and tumbling away down below us no one could tell how far, but the worst job of all was at the end where he had to scabble along a sharply slanting bank of loose gravel that at every step went plashing into the water. When we did get through we sat down pretty well tired out and gazed back into the horrid gap and along the perilous path we had trod, and but for the fact we had just passed we would willingly have sworn that no creature without wings could pass it. We afterwards heard that one unlucky man in attempting to make the passage alone was never heard of again. I am not sorry that I have passed, but I do not think anything on earth could induce me to pass it again.

All the afternoon we travelled over high rolling prairie. This afternoon we were in the nearest point to Laramie Peak.⁶⁶ It is covered with snow one-fourth of its height, the summit is 6,000 feet above the level of the sea and has been visible for many days.

Just before camping we came to the Labonte river.⁶⁷ On its banks were a band of Sioux Indians; they have quite a village. We camped on the opposite side from them. The grass was poor but plenty of wood and water. A Sioux chief with a small band of Indians came into camp to day at noon on a begging excursion. He produced some certificates of his being a great friend to the whites, signed by no one knows whom, and introduced himself by saying with infinite complacency me "big Captain me Big Crow" and went on to beg for bacon or powder. Savages are the same all the world over. It does very well in

novels to write of the "noble Indians," but the whole root, branch and generation of them are just like all other heathens—only civil from fear. Give them one chance of mastery and they will not fail to display the treachery of their nature. The big grey wolves are giving a free concert and Alf is snoring the base.

Monday, May 29, 1854

Left the Labonte early this morning, not so early however as to prevent our having a visitor in the person of the old chief of the Indian village on the other side, who came with his old one-eyed squaw on the undignified errand of getting all the rusty ends of bacon we might have to spare.

This is the roughest days travelling we have had yet. Many of the hills where they are washed are of a deep red⁶⁸ like the old fashioned Dutch brick; many of them resembled enormous clumps of brick ready to be burned. In one ravine we passed a pile of rocks in the shape of a sugar loaf 70 or 80 feet looking precisely as though human agency had been employed to raise the pile, but hills of the most extraordinary shape are to be seen at every turn of the road along these black hills. As I was riding off the road this afternoon in search of camping place, I saw four buffalo in a little ravine about 1/4 of a mile away. As soon as they saw me they started on the lumbering gallop that seems peculiar to them.

We overtook a train that were stopped on the Labonte by the Indians there, who threw a buffalo robe in the center of the road, demanding that it should be filled with provisions before the train could pass; and about thirty Indians stepped out into the road to enforce the demand, but a few blows from the terrible Missouri whips soon sent them to the right about. We are encamped on the little deer Creek, a shallow clear stream in a pretty valley; good camping ground, but the skies threaten rain.

Tuesday, May 30, 1854

Again we were not disappointed; a tremendous storm came up about 10 o'clock, hail and rain falling in sheets, so that in a few minutes the wagon stood up to the forward hubs in ice and water, and we had to paddle from one horse to another, through the water with the hail floating on it. Being in a valley with such steep hills gave us more than our share of water.

I never suffered from the cold as I did last night. The storm only lasted 1/2 an hour but then the wind blew keen and piercing from the N.W. Joseph and I stood guard till 1/2 past 12, soaked through, so cold that we had to keep up an incessant tramp and so sleepy that we would fall asleep as we walked and only woke when we stumbled. . . . When time came to relieve guard, it was so bitter cold we could not

sleep. When we got up this morning all our cooking utensils were under a foot of water with a sheet of ice 1/2 inch thick on top and a sweet task I had to fish them out. About 10 o'clock we arrived on the banks of the Platte after travelling 53 miles away from it. Among the Black hills on the opposite bank was a Crow village of some 50 lodges. Travelled up the river all day. The boys found two human skulls, one evidently the skull of a white man with a round hole very scientifically placed in the top of the head and probably the cause of death as the edges of the fracture were discolored as though by blood.

There has been a great deal of alkali along the road this afternoon. While I was asleep in the wagon this afternoon, we passed a Cheyenne village said to contain 1,000 inhabitants. We are encamped on a little piece of bottom land under shelter of high banks, and very glad are we of their shelter as the wind has been bitter cold ever since the storm of last night.

Wednesday, May 31, 1854

After travelling some six or eight miles we came to the bridge over the North Fork of Platte River,⁶⁹ crossed over to the north side and travelled over bad sand hills all the morning. On the south side of the river the snow was glittering on the hill tops and in the ravines that were only exposed to the north. In the afternoon we took our leave of the muddy Platte and travelled over high rolling prairie with nothing in the shape of water but what was strongly charged with alkali, and had to camp at night without any for our teams or for ourselves so we had to rest supperless. The grass was pretty good. I have forgotten to say before that a young man⁷⁰ has joined our train from one of the others, the owner's horses giving out.

Thursday, June 1, 1854

Left camp this morning before sunrise for Willow springs to get water for our horses. Went on to the head of Fish run to get dinner and breakfast together; poor grass for the teams. We travelled all the afternoon over an alkaline sandy desert, passed several alkaline lakes so impregnated with saleratus that it lay in a crust all round their margin. In one place I cut into the bed where it was a foot thick. Wagons come here from Salt Lake to collect it for use.

We encamped for night on the banks of the Sweetwater river after fording it near Independence rock.⁷¹ This rock is a granite boulder 400 feet high and 400 rods long, about 50 rods wide, very much the shape of an ordinary baker's loaf, differing only from the other rocky mountains near it by the regularity of its form. They are all of naked granite rising from a barren sandy plain. Nothing on it but scattering clusters of wild sage. There is scarcely any feed for our tired horses to night; it seems very hard after a drive of 40 miles to have nothing for them, but it cannot be helped.

Friday, June 2, 1854

Left Independence rock, and travelled up the Sweetwater. Overtook Newman and Tannehill's train from Kalamazoo. They have been quite unfortunate. I left the road to look at the cleft in the mountain made by the Sweetwater river. It is a chasm whose walls rise perpendicularly 400 feet. It is some 50 rods through and not over 100 feet wide, easily passed when the river is low, and in spite of its grim name, the Devil's Gate⁷² is not to be compared to the canon on the Platte. We encamped early on a pretty little flat with but poor grass. In the evening a negro came over to our camp begging us to take him, as the Kalamazoo train had turned him off, and he was scared to death of the Indians.

Saturday, June 3, 1854

The Kalamazoo boys took back the negro this morning, much to our relief. The plains is the place to show out a person's real disposition. Camped for noon on a little bottom by the river but there was more alkali than grass. There has been a very cold N.N.W. wind for several days, and in fact there has not been any weather since we have been out that has been anything like warm. This afternoon we travelled over a sandy desert, very hard for the teams. While Mudgett and I were hunting camp, we got the first sight of the Wind river chain of mountains covered with eternal snows. We have had to camp by an alkali marsh, a dirty looking hole, where by digging two feet ice may be obtained at all seasons of the year.⁷³ We did not try the experiment, the state of the thermometer above ground making us very credulous as to the small amount of caloric below. Our poor horses are turned out on a barren sand hill. Nothing on it but a few bunches of rushy grass and sage brush, a hard look-out after so long a drive, but no help for it as usual.

Sunday, June 4, 1854

Left our barren sand hill for the river again, which we reached after 13 miles travel over a bad road. At noon after fording the Sweetwater twice, we found some little grass. The weather was very pleasant all the morning, but now a storm started out of the mountain peaks but divided to the right and left of us, making it very cold. This afternoon travelled over a very hilly road, sometimes on the tops of the bluffs and sometimes in the river bottoms below. Camped to night in a very pretty place near a spring of crystal water with tolerable feed. We are alone, as I refused to go on with Mudgett past all the good feed and not camp until after sundown, so on he went with his train alone.

Monday, June 5, 1854

I stood the second watch last night and was busily engaged in trying to coax a pair of refractory wet boots on by the camp fire soon after

Al had called me, when I noticed old Turk very uneasy walking about and growling. Presently he ran off a few steps and I saw two of the large grey wolves close to him. They were getting acquainted with each other. Soon the old dog started back to me. One of them followed up to close pistol shot. I put my hand to my belt, and for the first time on the road I had forgotten them, and they were in the wagon. I slipped to the wagon for the rifle, but they took leave and I could not see them far in the pale moonlight.

We have travelled all day over the spurs of the Rocky Mountains, the roughest road we have had yet. Snow was lying in the ravines. In one ravine I went out on a bank of snow 20 feet deep. In a few paces from it gathered a fine edible mushroom. We camped on a little creek of the purest water running through a deep ravine but poor grass. Our horses stampeded but did not run far as the wild sage caught their lariats.

Tuesday, June 6, 1854

This morning we crossed the Sweetwater for the last time. Travelled over a high plain covered with wild sage all the morning. About 11 o'clock went through the South Pass.⁷⁴ It is an undulating plain several miles in width with the Wind river Mountains on the right, their glittering snowy peaks stretching as far as eye could reach into the northern horizon. On the left were the rugged Rocky mountains. At noon we crossed Pacific creek; this little stream is the first we have seen that makes its way into the Pacific ocean. The spring is 7,000 feet above the ocean level. Travelled all the afternoon over a barren sage plain and stopped on Dry Sandy Creek to deliberate as to the most likely place to be grass for our hungry animals; finally concluded to follow the advice of our guide book and followed the creek to its head 4 miles from the trail and found pretty good grass.⁷⁵

Wednesday, June 7, 1854

Our beasts are luxuriating in the best feed they have had for some time, but though they are having a day of rest, it seems we are not. Joey and Alfred have been busy shoeing the horses, and I have been making and baking a meat pie out of antelope meat we bought of some traders yesterday on the Sweetwater. I don't believe Job ever had cooking to do on the plains. I wonder how he would have stood that, especially if smoke hurt his eyes as it does mine. My unlucky pie certainly looked as though it had been in the vent pipe of a gas house for a time, but there is not a vestige of its dark proportions left—thanks to a plains appetite. This afternoon some apple pies are underweight [underway], and I doubt not will be eagerly devoured.

(Evening) The horses are taking it easy. I took the rifle and tired myself by wandering over the barren sand hills and saw nothing larger than a prairie dog.

Thursday, June 8, 1854

Left early this morning for the emigrant trail. Soon after we saw the road again, a fine large buck antelope crossed just ahead of us and ran up in the sand hills, Joe and I took the rifles, crept round the hills, and got within twelve rods of him standing in the sage brush. Joe pulled away at him but his gun was sulky. I was close behind him but could not see the creature, so I handed him my gun, which was very small, but the antelope was some 25 rods away now and Joey had the buck ague and missed. The antelope stopped, after running again, to look for us. I loaded, lay down, and fired but he was too far off for my light ball to reach him, and we plodded on after the train in no sweet temper. Stopped at noon on little Sandy Creek. Two large grey wolves came and peered over the top of the bluff at us, but they are beyond reach of our guns. Travelled all afternoon over a barren sandy plain with little but bunches of sage brush to be seen on it.

The road for Salt Lake City⁷⁶ divided from ours on the west side little Sandy Creek, which it follows for some distance—We are encamped on Big Sandy creek, quite a little river. The grass is very poor. Up in the bank above us are stones that have evidently been the trunks of trees at some time. They vary from 10 inches to 2 feet through, and every grain in the wood is perfectly preserved. One of them, broken about 3 feet long, has evidently been partially decayed before it was petrified.

Friday, June 9, 1854

Started this morning for a drive of 41 1/2 miles⁷⁷ over a sage plain with sometimes a little grass and no water. We have just stopped for noon to let the horses bite and rest a little. A cold misty rain has come on that threatens to last all day. I never remember such cold weather as it has been ever since we left Missouri, I mean for this time of year. I think likely the great altitude of these regions has somewhat to do with it.

(Evening) Just as we were ready to start at noon an old fellow rode up on a pony, and he looked so queer that our horses were scared at him. On his head was a high-peaked fox skin cap, long white beard and mustache, white pants and a U.S. military overcoat and a brogue redolent of the Emerald Isle. The cattle drovers call him Santa Claus.

The rain did not last long, but all the afternoon we were dodging heavy showers, luckily escaping most of them. One passed just ahead of us, leaving the ground white with monstrous hailstones. We had some very bad ravines to cross as we neared the Green river valley and a very bad hill to descend into it. Then we had some 4 miles to travel for feed after dark, poor stuff at that. We have come 45 miles to day and did not camp until 1/2 past ten.

Saturday, June 10, 1854

We did not hurry about starting today after our long drive yesterday, but our horses did not seem as tired as we expected, owing I supposed to its being so cool yesterday. . . . We have not seen any other than cool weather since we left Missouri.

About 10 o'clock we started for the ferry over the Green river.⁷⁸ All these mountain rivers are deep and very rapid currents, but the Green river is the worst of all. More lives and property have been lost on it than on any river on the route. There is now an excellent ferry in all respects except price, which we thought rather wild even for the plains—\$12 for 20 minutes work for two men seems rather over paying. The Green river valley runs between perpendicular limestone and marl bluffs washed by the action of the storms into all sorts of fantastic shapes almost as architectural in appearance as those on the North fork of Platte river. We went on over a mountainous road about 10 miles and camped on a branch of the Green river, a rapid mountain torrent.⁷⁹ I take the first watch and amuse myself by baking apple pies.

Sunday, June 11, 1854

One of our horses was brought up by Josh with a bad cut in his shoulder, some of his handiwork probably. He is a passionate fool. We have been travelling all the morning over barren mountains with once in a while a stream. Stopped for noon near the mountain spring;⁸⁰ found a little patch of excellent grass on the hillside, but soft ground. Josh took fancy to give one of the horses several unnecessary blows with a club; result, a grand blow up from Al and I, which relieved him of considerable water in the head.

We have been alone with no trains in sight since crossing Green river. There is a Missourian, that crossed the forty mile desert with us, camped close to us the last two nights. He is packing through alone and seems rather fearful. All the afternoon we travelled over high mountains and down steep ravines with mudholes that the bottoms had given out—such roads that if we had not known they had been travelled we would have thought impassible. We are encamped in a little basin in the hills with good bunch grass, and a spring of as pure water as ever issued from Mother earth. There is a large bank of snow on the mountain just above us and in every ravine near.

Monday, June 12, 1854

Started for Ham's fork of Green river,⁸¹ which we reached after going up a mountain two miles and then down the same distance. This stream is very rapid and now up to a horse's mid-sides so that we had to raise our wagon box to the top of the stakes and after nearly capsizing into the torrent managed to get over everything right side up.

Old Bess, my good mare, stayed on the other side until the rest had got over. I intended to go back with her to our last night's camping ground for a lost lariat, but while I was getting the saddle to put on her, she started down the bank until she happened to get on a place that was washed under. The sod gave way, and down she went out of sight, but she rose again and shaking the water from her ears she swam up the fierce current until she found bottom, then emerged on the other side, so I had to take one of the others back.

This afternoon we ascended a very steep mountain, 1 1/2 miles. Just as we got to the top, a violent thunderstorm with wind and hail came up, and we had to turn broad side on and take it for half an hour with the pleasant prospect of every gust of wind taking us over the nearly perpendicular side of the mountain. On over a mountainous road, wet and slippery, until camping time, then stopped for night on a side hill with plenty of good grass, pine wood, and snow water. Passed the graves of three women this afternoon.

Tuesday, June 13, 1854

Left camp early this morning, travelling over a very mountainous country, ascents and descents of over a mile at a stretch. Passed through a thicket of spruce fir, the most timber we have seen since we left Missouri. About 10 o'clock we entered the Bear river valley,⁸² where we rested a while on the best of feed, and close by the graves of two women. We followed the valley all afternoon, feed excellent all the way. At night left the road for the foot of the mountain and camped by an excellent spring but had to fetch our wood some distance. While hunting for camping place, I had quite a chase after a large skunk. Drove him to the edge of the river, then knocked him in with a pistol ball. Three Snake Indians came into camp with mountain trout to trade for bread. I gave them a pint of biscuit dust for three large mountain trout, certainly the most delicious fish that swim. Frank was taken quite sick to day with mountain fever.

Wednesday, June 14, 1854

Followed the valley all the morning to Thomas' fork, then on to Smith's fork, where we got more trout of the Indians.⁸³ Then followed the trail over the mountains nine miles, a drizzly rain making the worst road we have had yet still worse. The rain has continued all the afternoon and is now pouring down in torrents; rather hard for Frank who is no better. We have made such provision as we can against the pelting storm by piling cottonwood and willow brush the windward side of the wagon and must grin and bear it.

Thursday, June 15, 1854

The rain poured all night and kept it up with such good will this morning that we did not attempt a start. While the rain was pouring

down the hardest, the confounded horses must stampede and make us trail after them three or four miles through wet grass up to our knees.

Afternoon the rain cleared off and Joe and I took the rifles and went up stream to kill some ducks. Josh had shot a large grey one in the morning and leaving Al to make a pot pie of that we paddled around the wet river bottoms where the mosquitoes were too thick to breathe with the mouth open and near the size of a jack snipe and after all only got one duck whose head I knocked off with a ball. We might have carried home more game as we came across a huge essence peddler,⁸⁴ who was so busily engaged in digging beetles that he was not aware of our proximity until he received a hint to that effect from my pistol. But we preferred our companions should trust to our veracity as to the amount of game killed than to give them. . . [odorous] proof of it.

Just as the pot pie had gone to the shades, a large pelican lighted down in the river near us. Joe took his rifle and crept through some willows and fired at him. The poor brute tried to fly but could not rise. Just as he set himself straight on the water again, a leaded messenger from my rifle over-set his centre of gravity. He floated down stream some distance and lodged against the opposite bank, but Turk brought the great bird across the heavy current for us—a hard job. His wings spread 9 feet and from the point of his bill to his tail was 5 feet.

Friday, June 16, 1854

The sun rose this morning clear and bright and we left our shelter of wagon and cottonwood boughs, following up the river several miles with excellent grass the whole distance, then the road, leaving the level valley, passed over the bluffs 8 or 10 miles. Just as we were going to camp a provoking shower came up, making every thing wet and cold; made 27 miles.

Saturday, June 17, 1854

I woke up this morning after about 3 hours sleep to find everything white with hoar frost and a sensation decidedly cool. After 6 or 7 miles travel we arrived at Soda Springs,⁸⁵ the greatest curiosities I have seen yet on the route. The first spring is off the road to the right and is a little round caldron in the rock clear as crystal, about 3 feet in diameter, with the pure soda water boiling and bubbling with the escaping gas, and when I stooped over to fill my canteen I incautiously breathed through my nostrils and felt all that tingling sensation in the nostrils, only in a much more violent degree that is known to the lovers of soda water. The taste of these singlar waters is far more agreeable than any manufactured, unsweetened soda water that I ever tasted, so sparkling and pure are they. Near this spring is a mound of scaly rock

some 40 feet high with a spring of water on the top that is constantly flowing in small waves down the sides; the stone is doubtless deposited by the waters. A Shoosone [Shoshone] Indian that went to guide me to the first spring seemed highly delighted with a specimen ring I wore and seemed to know its worth, calling it "gold, gold." Almost every Indian wears some kind of brass or copper rings on their fingers. There are several other springs of the same nature a little way up the road, one large one close by the Bear river, called the steam-boat springs, as it used to emit periodically puffs of vapor like a high pressure steamboat, with a noise that could be heard 1/2 a mile. . . . The Indians have stopped the pipe at the bottom of the caldron with stone so the noisy discharge is stopped, but still the pure soda water boils up, fresh from dame Nature's laboratory down in the deep, deep recesses of the mountain's foundations, where no dirty fingered druggist may mix his vile abominations. All fresh and sparkling come the waters, harmonizing with the beautiful scenery around a watering place provided by nature. How long will it be before steam will make this beautiful spot as well known as Saratoga?

There is a trading post here. I went in to buy a pair of moccasins. No one was in the store but a woman. I thought she was Canadian French, but she spoke English too well for that, I thought. After a little conversation I asked, "Where are you from?" A deep blush dyed her brown cheek and her answer came in low tones, "I was born here." She was a Shoosone or Snake Indian, the wife of the trader, an old Scotchman. No white woman could have a sweeter voice and gentler manners than this woman. She and her little girls were beautifully clean, the children two of the prettiest curly headed little brownies I ever saw, something the complexion of an Italian, and in any other country but the U.S. would be called beautiful, but here the prejudice against any other shade but that produced by French chalk is so great that no beauty of feature or clearness of complexion, if it be brown, can be termed beautiful.

There are several groves of cedar near the springs, and on the mountains near the river which winds along in the valley below looking like a silver ribbon. And the snow-clad mountains on the other side the river make this one of the most beautiful places in the route. Stopped for noon near the springs. In the afternoon followed up the valley to the Junction of the old Fort Hall road,⁸⁶ then ascended a high mountain, leaving the Bear river which here turns abruptly to the south. Then descending a long ravine, very narrow steep and stony, to the Mountain Willow Creek, crossed it and went on to the next stream where we camped about 7 o'clock. Just as we turned out, it commenced raining and threatened to keep it up for the night, so as usual in such cases we fenced in the windward side of the wagon with willow brush and are ready to take it until day.

Sunday, June 18, 1854

The rain continued all night so we did not get started until nine this morning. Our road took the course of the stream we had encamped on about 3 miles and then suddenly turned to the left over a little fall of 14 or 15 feet, making a pretty scene fringed as the stream was by willows and winding round the base of a high mountain. While I stood admiring the fall, a real live Yankee rode up and commenced speculating as to the value of the place for a mill seat when the Pacific R.R. should be completed, and the charm was broken at once.

A few miles farther on—while I had got some distance behind the wagon talking to Dr. Cook once of Otsego, Mich.—Alfred, guided by a board giving notice of a 25 mile cut off and seeing some trains turn off the old road on to the new one, followed suit. The road had evidently been travelled very little. I was vexed when I saw where he had gone, for I have little faith in very new roads, and so far I see no reason to change my opinion. We have travelled all this afternoon over an execrable country, short sharp ravines, deep bogs, marshy streams, diversified by stretches of sage plain, with the mud six inches deep, made so by a tremendous thunderstorm lasting about an hour. At noon camped for an hour in a ravine with poor feed.

In the afternoon we discovered the reason of the guide board being put up; there was a stream to cross on the road that was not fordable.⁸⁷ A willow toll bridge had been put up by the rascally traders that infest the plains. There were several other trains with us, and their leaders stopped on the ridge of the hill till we came up. We were all in a sweet temper and agreed that if the toll keeper was not very moderate in his demands that we would pitch him off his bridge into the river, so when we got down to the bridge, I asked the fellow what he paid people for coming that road? He looked rather puzzled, and looking round at the rest as they stood grouped together, wet, tired and surly with hands on their pistols, he gave the soft answer that turned away wrath and was so very moderate in his demands as to give us no excuse for a row.

Monday, June 19, 1854

The remainder of the road was rather better to the junction with the old trail at Gravel Creek. We found the trains that had kept the old trail had arrived two hours ahead of us and were just hitching up after noon. This afternoon we passed up a ravine 7 miles long with the sides so steep that a man could not climb up and only wide enough for one team to pass, but the ascent was gentle and the road was smooth to the top of the mountain. Then came the descent of 1 1/2 mile through a stony ravine, with just room enough to pass between monstrous rocks, by far the worst place we have seen yet. Encamped in a large valley at the foot of a mountain covered with white cedar. Plenty of good grass, no water, and mosquitoes in clouds.

Tuesday, June 20, 1854

All day we have been ascending and descending canons in the mountains; to night we are encamped in a ravine on a patch of good grass, with a little brawling stream running down the gulch. The sides are very steep and lofty. This morning I was taken with the mountain fever, the same as Frank has had. He has quite recovered.

Thursday, June 22, 1854

All day yesterday I was quite sick with the fever. In the morning we crossed Raft River and its tributaries,⁸⁸ camped at night on a little creek with tolerable feed. To day old Santa Claus passed us. We saw the old nuisance at Gravel creek with his unfortunate pony's back cut to the bone by the saddle. He was staying to rest him, as he could go no farther, but he is poking along the road again. I remember now seeing him at Fort Laramie. The boys jaw him about his "ponee," but he rode slowly by neither turning his head right or left or showing that he heard them, not even when we fired a pistol to scare him.

At noon we encamped near the so-called Monumental rocks.⁸⁹ They are a cluster of rocks forming a sort of semi-circle. They rise to a great height and are of a light grey color and look like the ruins of some enormous structure. They are situated in an amphitheatre of mountains, with snow capped summits. The rocks themselves rise out of a little plain covered with velvet sod. A small stream issues from their base and glitters along down the valley. A sort of thin mist hangs in the air, giving a dreamy appearance to the whole scene; and yesterday's fever has just made me feel languid enough to be content to . . . enjoy the scene without a wish to destroy the illusion by getting a nearer view.

All the afternoon we travelled along the same valley among rocks of the most singular shapes, some rising to great heights like the spires of churches, others of a more tower like appearance. Encamped on a sage plain near a little creek with tolerable grass. I felt so much better this afternoon and evening that I got the boys to bring me a pail of water for a good wash in the warm sunshine, but I felt better than I was, for all I made out was to faint and Joey caught me just as I was falling.

Friday, June 23, 1854

Crossed the dividing ridge between Raft river and Goose Creek, a very rough road.⁹⁰ Goose creek valley presents a singular appearance, the hills rising out of the flat valley in such fantastic shapes, some of them having perfectly flat tops, some of them with perpendicular sides, with ledges of rock jutting out of them and scattering dwarf cedars dotting the ledges. Old Santa Claus is along to day for the boys to laugh at. My fever has left me but I am very weak and cannot write

much. We have made but a short distance this afternoon on account of some of our horses getting foot sore. This afternoon we have had to pay \$2.50 per lb. for horseshoe nails, and Joe and Al are very busy shoeing, and the horses are luxuriating in white clover a foot high.

Saturday, June 24, 1854

Travelled up the Goose creek valley all the morning until it narrowed into a stony ravine with no grass but plenty of salt and alkali on the ground, which our fools of horses are determined [to] lick at every chance. Old Santa Claus threatened to get a warrant for the man with the white hat (Joe) when we get to Carson valley. Our road has been hilly and stony this afternoon. About 5 o'clock arrived at Rock Springs, a beautiful stream issuing from under a huge pile of rocks. The water is somewhat warm but good. We have scarcely any grass to night.

Sunday, June 25, 1854

Left our barren encampment before sunrise to find grass for our horses. Drove 4 or 5 miles and found a small patch by a nice little stream, so stopped and got breakfast. Several Snake Indians came up begging, so we gave them some of the rusty ends of bacon. Down it went, alone and uncooked. While they were squatted round our fire, one of them got Joseph's knife and pushed it into the ground to hide it. He must have done so with his toes for his hands were studiously displayed outside his buffalo robe, but I missed the knife when I was washing up and began to look round for it. The thief was very innocently looking in another direction, so one of the others quietly poked the dirt off the handle with his ramrod, and then pointed out the thief. Frank pointed to the knife, then to our guns and gave him a gentle hint to leave, which he was not slow to take but kept his head turned over his shoulder as long as he was within rifle shot.

Followed Spring valley all day. It is a miserable place, very little grass and the ground covered with alkali. The Hot spring valley joins it and is equally bad. Camped early near the Hot Springs. They are a collection of nasty sloughs, bubbling and stinking with strong mineral water above blood heat.

Monday, June 26, 1854

Followed Hot spring valley to its head. Found old Santa Claus at the head of the valley at a trading post. What business has a man so old and stupid wandering about these mountains? He is getting childish from age and his long life as a soldier has made him brutal. Passed on over some long but not steep hills, then over a long stretch of barren sage plain with nothing attractive about it except some flowers that were very beautiful. Encamped at the foot of the Humboldt Mts., their snowy peaks almost piercing the blue ether above.

To my fancy there is something superior to earth in the look of these glittering peaks. They are so far removed from the clamor and dirt of this lower world, so inaccessible, pure, and distant they seem. The same sensation comes over me in gazing on them that I have felt at sea in a heavy gale when the waves rolled as high as the gallant mast head and the fierce wind was cutting little scuds of foam from the tip of each rolling monster. Man seems impotent to manage either.

Tuesday, June 27, 1854

Last night we had just turned in when Al routed us out again with the pleasant news that one of the horses was alkalied. The valley we were encamped in was full of alkali and the brute had enough to make him convulsed and to make his throat swell. We gave him tartaric acid and he is better this morning. One of our greys was affected the same way but is better now. It seems as if the curse extended to the city of the plain had been breathed over this region for the last 18 miles. We have come to the Humboldt or Mary's river. There has been no water fit for man or beast, the ground covered with alkali stinking like an old leach in some places little pools of alkali water black as ink, in other streams clear as crystal to the eye, but the taste detected enough of the poison to forbid our thirsty animals a draught. The Humboldt is a small stream here not over 2 rods wide, clear and full of trout, but like all trout very hard to catch. After paying \$2 for the privilege of crossing a bridge made of poles and willow brush, we crossed the wished for but dreaded Humboldt and camped by the edge of the river.

Wednesday, June 28, 1854

Travelling down the valley of the Humboldt all day. In the morning crossed the North Fork of Humboldt. After crossing, our road lay for miles through beds of alkali perfectly white and puddles of black alkali water. The river is very high now and most of the grass is under water or grows out of it, making it very difficult to find camping places. We have good grass to night but a miry place and did not find that until very late. Our flour is very low, and I fear we shall be out before we reach another trading post.

Thursday, June 29, 1854

This morning we harnessed up very early to pass a horse train just before us. They have kept just ahead the last two days getting all the best camps. We started before them, but had to cross a bad slough to get to the road. In we went; down went horses, down went the nigh wheels to the hubs, and we had to paddle round in the soft alkaline mud and water for half an hour before we could get clear. While we were fussing about getting some ducks Al had shot, a party of Diggers came up gabbling round looking at our guns and arms. They are smaller than the other tribes and very inferior in appearance.

We arrived at the head of Humboldt valley this morning about 11

o'clock. The river now cuts its way through deep canons in the mountains, and we have to leave the smooth valley road and climb the mountains as we cannot cut through them. I saw a patch of flowers this afternoon in a little ravine that would have delighted the eyes of some of my lady friends. There were so many varieties and all so beautiful. The road was very rough and steep over the mountains. After descending the other side, we came to a creek of good water; at its outlet we found the best camp ground we have had on Humboldt. More Indian visitors to night, in fact we rarely camp now without some. They seem very poor, no horses, no lodges, but little clothing. They subsist on a little ground squirrel that they poke out of their holes by slender willow wands. They are Shoshonies. I bought a horn bow and quiver from one of them; he was clad in great splendor, i.e. in a gaudy Glengarry bonnet for which he gave a pony, a scarlet blanket coat, and leggings. Altogether he was or felt very fine.

Friday, June 30, 1854

Left our nice camp for the mountain over an execrable road, stony, steep and crooked. About 11 o'clock we came to some small springs of good water where we stopped for noon.

(Afternoon) Followed down a rough and stony ravine several miles, emerging on a barren plain with a little stream of good water. Camped under a bluff, but the low land was covered with water and the hard land with alkali.

Saturday, July 1, 1854

Another month of our toilsome journey over; hope it will end before the month does. Travelled all the morning along a large barren valley with good road though very dusty, and the dust on the Humboldt will penetrate anywhere; it is so fine and rises in such clouds. And monstrous piratical flies too added to our torments by lancing our beasts until their bellies were covered with blood. Rested for noon on stony creek with first rate clover. On over a stony road to rock point where we should have stopped. Instead of doing so, we pushed on over an alkali plain 5 miles, where we expected to find water and grass. Water enough there was, but it was the high water of the river risen high over the alkali beds and quite brown. The grass was not to be got at, at any rate, so on we went until 10 o'clock and had to stop on a large plain covered with alkali and a few stunted bushes. Fed our horses about a quart of corn each and lay down on the sand with our blankets over our heads to keep off the clouds of mosquitoes that kept us from sleeping by their ceaseless hum. Tired as we were, of course, we had no supper, as we had neither wood or water.

Sunday, July 2, 1854

Started at peep o'dawn to get to some place where we could feed our selves and horses. Travelled 18 miles before we came to any place

where there was any feed. Just at sunrise an unfortunate hare popped up out of the sage brush in range of my gun and of course was too valuable a morsel to be neglected even on Sunday. We did not arrive at the bend of the river where good water could be procured until noon, and about 10 o'clock found some coarse grass, looking like wheat and as high as our heads, making 24 hours that our animals had not eaten and much longer for us. I cannot write any more to night for the simple reason I cannot see to write for sleep. My pen goes on its own hook.

Monday, July 4, 1854 [The diarist has evidently skipped a day.]

I could write but little yesterday as the pen would fall from my hand. I passed most of the afternoon in cooking. We devoured the hare at the first meal, some ducks at the third. At this place we found some wild red currants,⁹¹ about as sour as acetic acid but to us quite eatable, and a nest of duck eggs. They were quite a luxury. . . . The last of them are now in a pudding that would puzzle a French cook to give a name to.

We started early yesterday after leaving our wagon top behind as we thought we were out of the reach of rainy weather. We passed two nice cold springs but very foolishly neglected filling our canteens and dearly we paid for it. Over a mountain road all the morning. Found a little grass at noon on the top of the mountain but no water. Descended on to a sandy plain, deep sand, dry and dusty. All the afternoon dragged wearily along under the burning sun, the dust nearly choking us and mocked by the glitter of the snowy peaks on the other side the Humboldt. About dark we reached Sand hill creek, ordinarily a small stream, but now raised by the backwater of the Humboldt to such a height that we had to raise our wagon box to the top of the stakes in order to ford it. The creek water was quite brown with alkali, but to see the repeated draughts we took of it a spectator might have thought it pure nectar. There was little but salt grass for our horses except such as we cut out of the water for them. I should have found it very difficult to believe any one who had told me a year ago when I was in San Francisco that this 4th I should be plodding along the valley of the Humboldt. This morning we found some feed that is worth while. The mosquitoes fairly swarmed this evening, keeping us wide awake.

Tuesday, July 5, 1854

Started over the sand hills before sunrise and only drove until 9 o'clock on account of the dust and heat. The boys have been asleep all day, and I have watched the horses and now at 5 p.m. we are hitching up for a night tramp.

Wednesday, July 6, 1854

All night we rolled over a dusty plain, stone and clay and no vegetation. I curled up in the wagon asleep except when my head bumped

against the side of the wagon box by some maliciously big stone. It was tedious travelling, but I think the animals stood it better than in the burning sun, though we made a drive of 40 miles and did not camp until 9 o'clock, as we could not find feed, and when we did it was very poor. The best grass is all under water, and that means in these regions growing in bottomless slimy mud. I have spent most of the day watching the horses and wading in the soft slippery mud to cut them grass. The other boys are in a state of happy unconsciousness as to this world and its cares under the shade of the wagon fast asleep. I could be the same at one half minutes notice. So far I had written and was fast asleep pen in hand. I do not know how long I slept but am now effectively awakened by a long chase after our tiresome horses who are determined to wander off after a little wire salt grass that grows wherever the ground is saturated with alkali though they have to wade through a slough to get to it.

Well did the old English map makers mark down the vast region between Little Blue river [in Nebraska] and the Sierra Nevada as the Great American Desert, for with the exception of the Bear River valley, I would not give one county in Mich. for the whole of it, though it now rejoices in the titles of Nebraska, Utah, and Nevada territories. This valley of the Humboldt seems as if smitten by the hand of some avenging angel. Just along the edges of the river is generally a strip of grass, sometimes a mile wide, often none at all. The hard land rising gradually toward the mountains is covered by stunted wild sage or greasewood, and where that does not grow patches of white alkali emit their peculiar and detestable odour. All great nuisances have some saving traits and this contemptible valley is full of hares in the wild sage and ducks in the river. One of the latter unfortunate specimens went to pot early this afternoon and his bubbling is better music than Jenny Lind's would be to us hungry wretches. The boys are performing a snoring chorus but I must soon rout them.

Thursday, July 7, 1854

All night we rolled along over a very rough road, with a keen cold wind blowing that would insinuate itself under my blankets. We have found pretty good campground by the river bank under a high bluff, where the horses could get their own grass. I have kept lonely watch all day fighting the fools of horses away from an alkali marsh where they were determined to feed.

July 8, 1854

I woke up this morning to look out over the big meadows,⁹² a large grassy plain now a marsh by the overflowing Humboldt, but there is plenty of grass. We have collected our grass for the desert here. I was asked the modest price of \$30 per cwt. for flour this morning. An ox train had left a cook stove near our camp ground this morning, and

for the first time since I have been out, I have cooked without anathematizing the smoke in all sorts of ways. The mosquitoes are stabbing my feet thro the holes in my boots, and buzzing round my ears in swarms, Alf is making all sorts of hideous discords on my accordeon, and I can not very well endure either, so I'll stop.

July 9, 1854

Left the Big Meadows for the sink of Humboldt; reached the mysterious lake early in the morning. The sink seems to be two lakes, one somewhat higher than the other, connected by a short natural canal running through a high ridge. There is quite a strong current in the stream. We stopped awhile by the first lake on a little patch of tall grass about 15 rods long and 1 wide, I believe the only green vegetation for miles round, and while Alf was hunting camp, cooked breakfast with some dead weeds, for there was no other fuel. We passed over the dividing ridge between the lakes and stopped on the edge of the second. There was no fuel, so of course no cooking could be done, and all the feed was a little short grass every blade of which shone with crystal salt.

We started for the desert about 4 p.m., following up the edge of the sink for 7 or 8 miles over a filthy plain, hard and bare, just dry mud stinking of alkali and half-rotten half-dry carcasses which almost touched each other all the way along this doleful road. The under half of each carcass rots away and the upper half dries so there they lie, a horrid bas relief on the dry mud, for I have no doubt that in winter this valley is covered with shallow water from the base of the mountains on either side of it. When we arrived at the head of the sink, we left the trail and went down to the water's edge to take in our water for the desert and eat a bite. Stirring tartaric acid into every pail of water, we watered our horses and our selves, wading out into the warm greasy feeling water up to our armpits and dipping it up from below, as the nearer you get to the shore the more the water is impregnated with the alkali. For the last 150 miles, the water had been very smooth and slippery to our taste. On account of the soda, it seemed to weaken our horses much more than ourselves, making them very thin. No doubt the large quantities of bacon devoured by us neutralized in some measure the effects of the poison, and all I wonder at is if we are not rather soapy inside.

Monday, July 10, 1854

After we had eaten a little, the first since morning, we made our final start for the desert. We had debated all day the merits of the two routes, Carson or Truckee across the Sierra Nevada,⁹³ and had finally decided for the Carson route but lost the track by leaving the road for the edge of the sink and wandered about over a miserable plain until we found a well marked wagon track. So far as we could see by the

moonlight, and feeling sure we were on the Carson route [we] went on. I pitched into the wagon for a sleep as I had been up all day while the boys slept, and we rumbled on all night over a gravelly desert but a first rate road, stopping once in the night to feed out the grass we had cut in the Big Meadows. I did not wake again till near sunrise, when Alf sung out to know if I did not want to see the hot springs. The boys had seen their tall column of steam rising in the level desert ever since day light some miles before we got to them. The largest spring is a deep caldron in the rock, nearly circular, about 30 feet in diameter and 12 or 14 feet deep, the boiling water clear as crystal, scalding hot. The emigrants have piled all sorts of trash into the spring, principally iron-work, work of wagons which have been burned here. One large U.S. army wagon was thrown in entire[ly]. There are many small springs near the large one, all caldrons in the solid rock. They have no visible outlet, are very clear and intolerably stinking, the water said to be very poisonous, a thing we did not doubt. The smell was enough to spoil its character for any sensitive noses. The ground or rock has a hollow sound near the springs, and there are cracks with the steam escaping out of them and the rumbling water below plainly heard. The comforting idea did not fail to present itself that we might chance to tread on some thin spot and find ourselves going down, into some inferno below to make a sort of broth for the devil of this desert who no doubt does his cooking here. One would think the iron soup he has had for the last few years must [have] acted as a violent tonic to his digestion. These springs too assured us that we were on the Truckee instead of the Carson route.

After crossing a filthy ditch with a little alkali water crawling along in the bottom, we came to a smooth plain evidently under water part of the year, smooth and white as a winter-clad prairie, the whiteness caused by a thin crust of alkali. From a little distance it looked precisely as though we were going into a lake surrounded by the black mountains that make a background to the desert in every direction. I do not believe there is on this earth a more dismal scene of nature's handiwork than this valley, the black mountains, the grizzling looking valley dotted by carcasses in ghostly bas relief, no living thing visible save now and then a vulture winging his noiseless way over this valley of the shadow of death, which—covered with carcasses though it is—will not afford him a meal until more emigration shall leave its dead.

This alkali plain was some 10 miles across. Then, going up a hill, we found ourselves on a sandy plain, not very deep sand, but to our tired selves and more tired horses, it seemed deep and unending. The sun had risen and was high in the heaven when we got on the sand. The dust flew in clouds, and we plodded wearily on, stopping every few

minutes to bestow half a dozen blows on our poor tired animals that lagged the worst, some of them reeling as they went. When we were fearful of their falling down, we would stir a little flour in about two quarts of water, and then they would go on with fresh life.

About noon we saw the cool and rapid Truckee river glittering in the sunbeams, which seem to have no power to warm its clear current, it is so near its source in the snow capped mountains. Never did anything look so beautiful to our dust begrimed weary eyes as this cool river, and to lay [lie] under its willows and cottonwoods in the green shade we had not seen for months and to drink and bathe seemed happiness enough for one afternoon, our horses feeding stupidly around, looking stupid and uncomfortable from drinking too much water. . . I believe they would have killed themselves if we had allowed them. We encamped near the trading post in good feed. There was two or three other trains that had arrived before us but only two had gone ahead of us.

In the evening we had plenty of visitors, Piote [Paiute] Indians and drove quite a brisk trade with them for trout, giving powder and lead in exchange. After supper I took my accordeon out to pass away a few minutes and was speedily surrounded with a wild looking audience, red and white, more than I wanted. We were a wild looking set, the half naked Piotes squatting by the edge of the thicket as close to the fire as they could get; the bearded whites all armed, most of us ragged and our clothes as dirty as only a tramp over the desert can make them, just such a looking gang as any one with money in his pockets would give a wide berth if he came across them in civilized countries. The Piotes asked leave to stay with us during the night, and as they were in my estimation full as decent as our white neighbors, and as our chamber was large and airy and there was no fear of the pale lamp over head going out, we consented. They devoured all the bacon rinds, fish bones, heads, and some remnants of slapjacks that we gave them. Then pulling off their scanty rags they lay down as close as possible and pulled their rags over them and so long as I watched did not stir all night. They seem a merry harmless race with very effeminate expression of countenance. They were highly delighted with the bow and arrows I had bought of the Snake Indian, and for the first time in my life I got the reputation of a warrior, as nothing I could say would disabuse their stupid heads of the idea that I had killed the Indian from whom I had purchased them.

Tuesday, July 11, 1854

We left our encampment by the trading post and travelled 6 or 8 miles over some very bad hills, long and stony, and encamped again on a little strip of bottom with poor feed on our side the river, splendid grass on the other, but the river is so rapid we dare not attempt to

cross. Last night we were rejoicing in the prospect of getting all our horses through, but to night there seems a certainty of losing one. One of our match[ed] greys is seized with the fatal swelled neck so common in these mountains and so far as I have heard incurable.

This beautiful river suggests the hydropathic treatment so we led Cap to the river side and commenced dashing water, the cool water, against the swelling which was principally around the glands of the throat. In a little while we could see that the swelling was moving down the neck. This encouraged us, and we continued for 2 hours to throw on the water, Joe and I in turn. The swelling is not nearly so hard to night but is there yet, and Cap is tied to the wagon with a wet cloth round his neck, covered by a blanket. As fast as the cloth gets dry we throw water on the neck for a few minutes and bind it up again. This seems harsh physic, but cold water and starvation are our only means, and they shall have a thorough trial though we do not expect to save him. He has been quite a pet horse and we hate to lose him.

The smell of roasted apples came to my nose as I was writing this, and I find my stewed apples are boiled dry. So much for doing two things at once. The mountain ranges along this river are very high, and the feed is poor so far.

Wednesday, July 12, 1854

Moved 4 or 5 miles this morning and encamped in a romantic gorge between lofty mountains. The strip of bottom we are on is very narrow with tall cottonwood. I tried to make a sketch of it, but the most I could make out was to fall asleep, pencil and paper in hand, and so Alf found me. The other boys sleep half the time in the day, and I feel sleepier than usual as we had to be up so many times during the night to attend our sick horse in addition to the sensation of utter weariness we all feel after our toilsome tramp over the desert and down the Humboldt. Contrary to our expectations our pet horse is yet alive and we have some hope of him, as he has outlived the time it usually takes to kill them with this fatal disease.

It has been very warm to day, and the shade of these tall trees is very grateful to our dust wearied vision. We had not seen a green tree for hundreds of miles until we saw this river. Barren mountains, wide sage plains, valleys covered with alkali made up all the scenery we have seen of late. The difference here is very slight. A few cottonwoods at intervals along the edge of the Truckee is all there is to give life to the scene.

A thunder shower has been rumbling about in the mountain tops all the afternoon, but we have only had a slight scud of rain, but the heavy masses of cloud rolling about cast a shade of lurid yellow light on everything, making the wild mountain pass look more savage and making us feel gloomy.

Thursday, July 13, 1854

Left our pleasant camp at 5 o'clock this morning. Passed over some very bad hills. Sometimes travelled along the river bottoms where we saw hay that would cut 2 1/2 tons to the acre easy. Camped about 11 o'clock in splendid feed, too good I fear for our weak horses. A little way from us lies a fine horse killed by the swelled neck; our sick horse is in a fair way to recover. We have been alone all day, but to night there are two confounded cattle trains just come up. Their stock is dying very fast with a sort of congestion of the lungs. I have been busy this afternoon washing my dirty clothes. The water of this river is as soft as it is pure and so cold that to us it seems almost life giving. Any one to know the luxury of clean clothes should cross the plains. We have not been able to wash before for the last 3 weeks travelling so fast down the Humboldt.

Friday, July 14, 1854

Started this morning over some bad roads, mountainous, stony and very bad for our foot sore horses. On such a road 5 or 6 miles, then the road forked, one to the right over a bad mountain and down a worse canon, the other down a bad descent to the river bank. This seemed the most travelled, and guided by some evil genius we took it and crossed the river with the most rapid current I ever felt up to the wagon box, and [it was] all our horses could do to stand against it.

There appeared to be quite an old road after crossing the river [as] we descended two bad hills. The road then wound round the base of another, where it was just possible to take a wagon along without being capsized into a deep slough on the lower side. The road then followed a level valley several miles by the edge of a marsh; we noticed where several teams had turned around. The road now was very slight. We kept on until all trace of it was lost in an alkali marsh that looked so like the sink of Humboldt that we were scared and retraced our steps to the slough. The flag of a trading post was in sight on the right road, but there was this precious slough to be passed and the rapid Truckee to ford again before we could get there. The bank of the slough was very steep and the water up to our armpits. We loosened the horses and swam them across one at a time. Then taking the things from the wagon that water would spoil, we carried them across on our heads. Then pushing the wagon down the bank, we towed that to the edge so we could get a rope. . . fastened it to the end of the tongue and with a team dragged [it] out of the mud, dressed our selves, loaded up, started for the trading post. One of our boys, Frank, was not with us to help us. He started in advance of the teams, and we expected to find him at the trading post.

The sun was nearly down, and we hurried across a meadow to the river opposite the trading post. Alf went across on horseback to see

about crossing, found the river deep, wide and very rapid, so he borrowed lariats enough from the trains encamped there to reach across. Leaving one end on the north side he came back and took off our leaders from the wagon and fastened the lariat to the end of the tongue. Men enough took hold of the other end to tow us across, the water coming in over the top of the box and wetting everything we had. It was just dusk. We had travelled all day, crossed the terrible Truckee twice, and crossed one bad slough and encamped eight miles from where we started. Frank had been to the trading post, and had gone on up the river.

Saturday, July 15, 1854

Left the trading post this morning, intending to take the Downieville road but could not find it, so took the old Beckwith route.⁹⁴ Travelled all the morning over stony hills but not very bad; camped for noon by a little run with first rate clover pasture. In sight was a dirty looking lake with a large herd of antelope on its edge. In the afternoon crossed a succession of hills and dells to a lake, the greater part of which was dry. The road ran for 1/2 a mile across the bed of the lake, smooth white clay glistening in the sunshine, looking just like a sheet of water at a little distance. Leaving this we passed over another hill and descended into a beautiful valley. On one side were lofty mountains covered to their tops with dark pines except in a few places where lay white patches of snow surrounded by the dark pines, looking so pure that one could fancy it to be the resting place of an angel sent to earth for awhile. Camped in the best of clover pasture. Have heard nothing of our missing man yet.

Sunday, July 16, 1854

Frank came into camp just as we were at breakfast. He went back to the trading post, and from thence followed us; he had a hungry time. We followed the valley we encamped in all the morning over an excellent road. Stopped for noon on the summit of the Sierra Nevada by a spring and a patch of good grass. The ascent to the Sierra summit was so gentle that we should not have known we were on it had not some traders told us of it as they passed us. This afternoon we descended a slope of two miles into a pretty valley, and we were across the Sierra Nevada—that is, the main chain of it. About 4 o'clock we came to the frame of the house and a good corral,⁹⁵ beautiful clover pasture, and a pretty little stream, and after supper we lay down for the first time without a guard, our horses safe in the corral, and the only thing that disturbed us was to get up in the night to wash one of the horses that was taken with swelled neck.

Monday, July 17, 1854

All the morning we followed up the valley. It bears the grim name of "Grizzly valley." It is the prettiest spot we have been in for some

time, the tall dark pines covering the mountains, making a dark frame to the fertile valley covered with the best of feed with the headwaters of Feather river winding through it; as we approached the head of the valley, we saw a house standing under the shade of giant pines. Below in the meadow the haycocks studding the meadow told us we had at last reached the abode of civilized man. Sure enough, here lives old Jim Beckwith,⁹⁶ the discoverer of the route and a pretty spot he has chosen, entirely out of the world. But for all that he seems pretty well aware of all that is going on in it and is quite a politician. I bought some tea of him, exchanged books, and went on.

(1863—This man is the one who was for years chief of the Crow nation. See *Harper's Magazine*. He was living there with his Indian wives.) [This paragraph was added later by the diarist.—C.W.M.]

In the afternoon we drove through groves of pine alternating with strips of meadow covered with the richest feed. We camped on the bottom land of the Feather river, and soon had a rousing fire of pitch pine and a couple of sage hens in the pot. The nights are quite cool in this region, the grass being covered with hoar frost every morning.

Tuesday, July 18, 1854

On over the same sort of country along beautiful vallies covered with rich feed. We came to the conclusion to stay a few days to recruit our horses. About 10 o'clock we came to a fine meadow covered with rich feed with two corrals ready built for us. We unhitched our teams, told Josh & Frank our intentions of staying a few days and that we should not need them any longer. They had 20 or 30 miles to walk into American valley, a prospect not at all to their taste, as the backs of our horses had often proved. They began to raise some objections. I told them, of course, we could not hinder their stopping with us but that the chances for their getting anything to eat was better in the valley than with us. On that hint they sloped, much to our relief.

Wednesday, July 19, 1854

We had a glorious time sleeping last night, our horses safe in the corral, and we on a fragrant bed of pitch pine brush. This pine is not like any I have ever seen. It is full of pitch, grows to gigantic size, bears edible nuts in its monstrous cones, and makes glorious fires these chilly nights.

After breakfast Joe and I took the guns. He went one way, I another. I followed an Indian trail to a sunny meadow and then in the insane idea that a deer might pass along by or one run over me, I grew to the root of some shady trees and was invisible for two or three hours. I did not see anything larger than a small bird, except a couple of Indians who went by me with noiseless step without seeing me. One reason perhaps that I saw nothing else might have been that my eyes were shut; in fact I was fast asleep most the time.

When I got back to camp, Alf had a cupful of strawberries of which we made immediate inward application. I do not think we shall stay here long; our horses seem as though they would as soon run as not. We have been exceeding fortunate so far. There seems to be no wild animals around here, save wolves. Plenty of old deer tracks but no new ones; they seem all gone now.

Thursday, July 20, 1854

This has been a dull day. I have spent the greater part of it in endeavoring to make a formidable array of figures assume the shape I wished.

Friday, July 21, 1854

Left our pretty valley this morning. Before we left, two Indians and five squaws came into camp, traded a little pocket comb for two quartz headed arrows. Went on up to pleasant valley for an hour or two with no more exciting incident than having one of our fools of horses get into a deep water hole beside the road, giving us quite a bad job to get him out.

Then came a long tug up one of the spurs of the Sierra Nevada. It took a long time to ascend, it was so steep, but that proved child's play to the descent. That proved the cap sheaf of our mountain experience. In the first place it was quite steep enough to look down, much less to take a wagon down. Then it was about ankle deep in fine dust and loose stones from the size of swan shot to a good sized meeting house. The dust was pungent and fine as high dried Scott snuff and flew in clouds, making us look as though we had emerged from a snuff mill. We had three such pitches to descend, which we did by locking all four of our wagon wheels, the leaders taken off and put on behind fastened to the hind axletree so as to hold back. And so we scrambled down, only throwing one of the horses down once and running the wagon on to him, but it is over now and we are encamped in a pretty little valley near the first rancho in California. My supper is getting cold, myself ditto, and daylight is almost gone.

Saturday, July 22, 1854

We are at least in the veritable "gold diggings," where the root of all evil grows in its native soil. We have taken up most of the day in ascending and descending a mountain. Just after leaving Elizabethtown,⁹⁷ a place of 6 or 7 houses, we passed a number of human made hog holes but saw no one at work. It seemed to be a sort of banyan day with them. They all seemed to be round the two or three drinking holes in Elizabethtown. We have encamped in a little valley in a little patch of good grass. Two long miners have just come up and are spinning yarns we find it difficult to believe.

Sunday, July 23, 1854

We shall have to stop awhile to recruit our horses, and Alf thinks he will try mining awhile. This afternoon Alf and I went to the grocery down the valley for his overcoat which he left there in the morning. I gave a glance at the various groups engaged in gambling, picked up a paper and sat down on a barrel anxious to see the news from the outer world, as we of course had heard nothing since we left Missouri. While busily engaged, a young man stepped up and asked me if my name was not Woodhams. I looked up and recognized a face I had not seen in years, but I could not speak, his name and now I cannot tell how I knew him, as there was not a particle of his boyish looks about him.⁹⁸ He has not heard from home for three years until now. He has been in California since forty nine and has been quite unfortunate, getting his leg broken, and losing all he owned. Any amount of questions passed between us till late in the evening.

Monday, July 24, 1854

I have been wandering with Ben up to a ranch which a hungry looking Wolverine [Michigander] recommended so strongly for our horses that I was suspicious there was nothing there, and so it proved. On our way we passed a party of Celestials mining in the bottom of a creek. The gold in the bottom of their cradles looked quite tempting as it lay mixed with the clean black sand. On asking them how it paid, true to a Chinaman's instinct, they all began to lie at once: "No shabbee," "No Pay," "Six littee, one man," and so on. I would like the metal, but not the damp performance to get it. In the afternoon I went with Ben to his claim, saw him wash out a few pans full of dirt to try the surface. A few shining specks showed the "color," as the miners say. Then we adjourned to the land of knives & forks where I did ample justice to the first meal I had eaten at table for months, and Ben spent the evening with us in camp.

Tuesday, July 25, 1854

To day has been a lazy one. Went up the canon and washed out a few little pans of dirt out of an old hole where some prospector had been before us. Five or six little glittering specks or, in the miner phrase, the color rewarded our curiosity. If I had some tools, I would dig a little for amusement.

Thursday, July 27, 1854

Another hot day, principally taken up by fussing over the same horse that was sick last with this swelling that is so fatal in the mountains. I fear it will never leave here, and he is our best horse. Almost all the other horses are swollen some.

Friday, July 28, 1854

My anxiety is over; our noble horse died at noon. \$600 out, besides the nuisance of losing so good a beast.

Saturday, July 29, 1854

This morning I saddled my good mare Bess for a ride into the mountains to where Alf is at work. Followed up a pretty little mountain stream for some time, then ascended the divide between Snake Lake and Soda Bar.⁹⁹ Soda Bar is nothing but a huge deposit of rocks sand and gravel in the gorge cut through between the mountains by the Feather river. The mountains on the west side rise almost perpendicularly from the water to a great height; on the east there is a trail which zigzags down the side of the mountain. There are two or three little soda springs bubbling up out of a bed of iron ore at the foot of the mountain, and being very thirsty I drank heartily. The result was that I became so savagely hungry that I forgot all about finding Alf and started for camp.

If the descent into Soda Bar was bad, the ascent was far worse. The sun poured down upon us as we toiled up the steep mountain side, the sweat literally running in streams from my good mare, and we had to stop and puff at every turn of the trail, which was very rough and rocky and where a mistep might have led to a disagreeable tumble. Not a breath of air was to be felt until we arrived at the summit, and there it swept along cool and refreshing. Did not reach camp until sundown almost starved, not so much from simply being without dinner as from the appetising effect of the iron impregnated soda water.

Sunday, July 30, 1854

Alf came down from the mountain early this morning. After dinner we went down to the ranch, found Ben Lawson very busy at the card table. When we went in was winning fast, but soon he began to lose and continued doing so as long as I stayed. A gambler's mania is the most pitiable and disgusting thing I know of. Our dead horse became such a nuisance from the smell being blown down upon us that we went up to where he lay and piling him all over with limbs from the splendid pitch pines we soon reduced his huge frame [by fire] to a shapeless mass and abated the nuisance.

Monday, July 31, 1854

We thought we were very smart in getting rid of a bad smell last night, but nightfall had no sooner come than a perfect storm of howls assailed our ears from grey wolves and coyotes. Sleep we could not. The smell of the burning horse must have attracted all the vermin within many miles to judge by the inferno they produced. At last with a faint hope of scaring them away I took the gun and, groping my way in the dense blackness of the pine forest where the howls were thickest, I tried to see something like a wolf to fire at. But I could not have seen one the length of my gun, so I fired it once or twice, and after the echoes had died away the silence was almost startling and poked along back to camp congratulating myself I had scared the brutes away. But

by the time I had lain down the pow wow began again, and as if to make up for their scare and consequent silence, they kept it up with redoubled vigor for the rest of the night.

We made another start this morning for the Santa Clara valley. As we passed the ranch, I called Ben Lawson out and bade him good bye. He seems decidedly home sick, a thing that he says has never occurred to him before until he saw me. We went on over a good road about 4 miles, then came a mountain that certainly was no molehill. There was three tremendous pitches to climb, but with patience and time we gained the summit, and by a series of gentle descents got into a lovely valley where we are now encamped. The sun has just set, and the lofty mountain west of us reveals his huge proportions with startling vividness against the clear sky, which is beautifully rose tinted. Joey is driving up the horses; Alf is discoursing to a swarthy Mexican¹⁰⁰ in his own liquid Spanish. It is getting cool and one of the horses are sick.

August 1, 1854

Another month commenced and we have not finished our journey yet. Travelled all day through thick forests of hemlock and oaks over hilly country with no feed. Our poor beasts have had to climb along over the hills with nothing to eat and when sundown overtook us we had come 40 miles. One of the horses ate some poisonous weed that affected him just as if he was alkeliéd; there was nothing but weed for them, and but few of them.

August 2, 1854

Left our miserable stopping place before sunrise, went on six miles, then went off the road a mile and a half for feed of the most wretched description. Have been detained all day by a sick horse which we shall probably lose.

This evening we were visited by a large party of Indians. They were in a state of great delight over the bow and arrow I got of the Snake, offering me 12 dollars for it. One squaw had collected a big handful of great green grasshoppers which she carefully wrapped in some large dock leaves as a delicate morsel for supper. On my playing the accordeon, one of the men took out a little bundle of rags from his dress and unwinding it produced a jews harp with which he proceeded to make music. One of the squaws—the grasshopper one—was young and passably good looking and except a couple of bunches of grass was guiltless of clothing.

August 3, 1854

Not away yet, our sick horse no better. This is tiresome work, stopping so near the end of our journey and not able to go on.

August 4, 1854

I finished the sufferings of our sick horse this morning with a ball

from my pistol. We started once more over the foot hills of the Sieras; the roads get better as we get down the country. We went through what had been the village of Bidwell's Bar.¹⁰¹ Now it is a heap of smoking ruins. From thence to a little place called Wyandot.¹⁰² These places are supported entirely by the mining operations, for the country is as arid and barren as the dessert. Camped on a miserable feed.

August 5, 1854

Started for Marysville with good road at noon. Got leave to turn our horses into some barley; it was the first grain they had tasted for many weeks. We dared not let them stay long, but hitched up and plodded on our dusty road to Marysville,¹⁰³ where we arrived about 4 o'clock. This is a busy little place, but they had just had quite an extensive fire here too. We went on eight miles to Feather creek where was some grass. We are now in the valley of the Sacramento and there is a very noticable improvement in the productiveness of the country.

August 6, 1854

Started for Sacramento over a dead level plain, very dusty and hot. Arrived there about noon. It is a much prettier city than San Francisco. Only stayed there an hour or two, as we felt decidedly out of place among men that sported "biled rags" and where the alarming aperition [apparition] of womankind was to be seen at every turning of the streets. We of course (ragged in the extreme, unshaven and unshorn, knives and pistols at our belts) were rather wild looking even for California.

August 11, 1854

Santa Clara valley. Our journey is ended at least for some of us. After we left Sacramento we dragged wearily along to Stockton. . . . Had to swim the Mokelumne river, as we had not money enough to pay for the ferry boat. Paid our last shilling to cross the San Joaquin river and through Livermore pass[ed] into Santa Clara valley, where we arrived about 10 o'clock all worn out and glad enough to rest.

Friday, February 9, 1855

Steamship *Cortez* at sea.

Sunday, March 5, 1855

Arrived in New York to night after just such a passage as that of one year ago. Came up again on the Steamship *Star of the West*.

1868

Joseph Chart my companion in these wanderings was lost in his homeward passage in the steamship *Central America*, which foundered in a gale within two days sail of New York in 1856. The *Star of the West* was the vessel afterwards fired upon by the Charleston rebels and was the outbreaking of the late war.

NOTES

1. The Gunpowder Plot was a conspiracy prepared by Robert Catesby to blow up King James I and both houses of Parliament on November 5, 1605, and in the resulting confusion establish a Catholic government. The plot was discovered and many of the conspirators were hanged.

2. Later William reports that the second mate was a Mr. Robinson.

3. O. Chart and his wife were aunt and uncle to William Woodhams. Obediah Chart, born in 1806, was a younger brother of William's mother, Elizabeth Chart Woodhams. Chart and his wife, Mrs. Phebe Wilcox, married in September, 1852, in Plainfield, near Plainwell, Michigan. They intended to live in California.

4. Oliver Aubrey and wife Katherine Chart, also aunt and uncle to William, married about 1840 in Rochester, New York. Katherine, born in 1819, was a younger sister to William's mother and to his uncle, Obediah Chart. The baby, Maria, died in California at the age of seven. The Aubreys were also moving to California.

5. George Anderson and his wife, Elizabeth (Lib) Woodhams Anderson, were married June 25, 1852, in Plainfield, Michigan. Elizabeth, born May 1, 1833, was a younger sister of William. They planned to live in California; however in 1859 they returned to Michigan.

6. The popular *Reveries of a Bachelor* was written by Donald G. Mitchell in 1850.

7. Forrest, a tragedian appeared chiefly in Shakespearian roles during the 1820s-1840s.

8. Captain Marryat was a writer of popular sea stories.

9. St. Peter and St. Paul Rocks are about 600 miles northeast of the eastern tip of Brazil.

10. Then, as now, a crossing of the equator was a time for entertainment at the expense of landlubbers who crossed for the first time. Father Neptune initiated each neophyte.

11. Bashan, northernmost part of the Transjordanian heights, lies just east of the Sea of Galilee. Bashan long had a reputation for its grain and cattle.

12. Cabo de Sao Roque is near Natal on the eastern tip of Brazil.

13. Ned Buntline was a pen name of Edward Zane Carroll Judson, who early began to write exaggerated tales of romance and adventure. His earliest stories were sea adventures. Later he wrote wild west tales, many with Buffalo Bill as the hero.

14. E. J. Barra wrote in *Tale of Two Oceans* (San Francisco: privately printed, 1893): "The Captain. . . handed him a silver half dollar and told him [cook] to let it remain in the frying pan while the fish was cooking. . . After the fish was fried the cook returned the half dollar to the Captain, and it had become as black as a piece of coal. . . Captain Blanchard. . . explained that the bottom of the ocean over which they were passing contained a great deal of copper, and that the seaweed on which the dolphin fed had become impregnated with verdigris given off by the copper ore, thus rendering the flesh poisonous." Oscar Lewis, *Sea Routes to the Gold Fields* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1949).

15. The Falkland Islands, administered by Great Britain, are east of the southern tip of Argentina.

16. They are now going "round the Horn" of South America via the Strait of Le Maire between Staten Island and Tierra del Fuego. The time it took to round the Horn varied from a week to a month. Due to head winds and bad weather it took the *Green Point* about 18 days.

17. Chips was the ship's carpenter.

18. William stayed in California March 11-December 17, 1853. During this time the diary is sketchy. On March 11, the day they landed in San Francisco, he and brother-in-law George Anderson made their way to a cabin that was to be their habitation. It must have been located in the immediate vicinity of San Francisco.

19. William says he saddled his uncle's horse to start south to visit George and

Elizabeth Anderson at the Rancho de las Pulgas 30 miles away. This would indicate that he must have started from or near San Francisco, where an uncle, Obediah Chart, was living.

20. Mission Dolores, the mission of San Francisco de Asis, was established by the Franciscans in October, 1776. It acquired the popular name of Dolores from a nearby lake and stream which the Spaniards had named "Nuestra Senora de los Dolores" (Our Lady of Sorrows).

21. The first inter-city telegraph line in California was completed between San Francisco and San Jose by the California State Telegraph Company on October 15, 1853.

22. Twelve Mile House was on the Butterfield Stage Line. Charles Outland in *Stagecoaching on El Camino Road* says it was located at the southwest corner of Telegraph and Cummings roads. Leroy Hafen states it was also known as Clark's Station and was located in T3, R5 of Section 20.

23. San Mateo had its beginning in 1849 in Nicholas De Peyster's roadhouse.

24. William has now arrived at the new ranch of sister and brother-in-law Elizabeth and George Anderson near present Redwood City. The Rancho de las Pulgas was a land grant made to Don Jose Dario Arguello prior to 1800. William sketched the Embarcadero de las Pulgas, a wharf around which Redwood City developed.

25. Family records state that this place was known as the Roble Alto Farm and was located near Santa Clara. William called on the cousins of his father, Joseph and Ann Woodhams and their son Alfred R. Woodhams.

26. The Mission of San Jose de Guadalupe, about 20 miles northeast of San Jose, was established in 1797 by Franciscans. The church was destroyed by an earthquake in 1868.

27. The Mission of Santa Clara de Asis was founded in January, 1877. The present church, a reproduction of the original, was built in 1926 on the grounds of the University of Santa Clara.

28. William's second cousin, Alfred R. Woodhams, returned to Michigan with him and in 1854 was one of three cousins who came back to California by the overland route.

29. The steamship *Cortez*, constructed in 1852, was a "double engine steamer" of 1800 tons owned by the Nicaragua Steamship Company at the time William sailed from San Francisco December 16, 1853. Ernest A. Wiltsee, *Gold Rush Steamers of the Pacific* (Quarterman Publications). David Folkman, *The Nicaragua River* (University of Utah Press).

30. Large numbers of people from Pike County, Missouri, and from Pike County, Illinois, directly across the Mississippi River from each other, went west to California in 1849. The impression of others on the trail was that these Pike County travelers were a rough type, always ready to fight. Eventually all Missourians in the west were called "Pikes" or "Pikers."

31. The newspaper *Alta California* of March 27, 1854, reported that when the launch, which had about 70 passengers, was halfway between the shore and the steamer, a wave struck the starboard side. "They [the passengers] thoughtlessly rushed to leeward to escape being wet with the spray, which carried the launch over causing the waves to dash over the side of the boat." The bodies of 19 passengers were washed ashore. Wiltsee, *Gold Rush Steamers of the Pacific*.

32. The steamer *Daniel Webster*, owned by the Nicaragua Steamship Company, was operated between San Juan del Norte and New Orleans.

33. The steamer *Star of the West*, owned by the Nicaragua Steamship Company, was operated between San Juan del Norte and New York City.

34. The *George Law*, owned by the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, was operated between Aspinwall, Panama, and New York City. William's note, inserted in his diary on January 1, 1858, refers to the September 12, 1857, sinking of the *George Law* (renamed the *Central America*) near Havana, Cuba, during a severe storm. Wiltsee, *Gold Rush Steamers of the Pacific*.

35. M.C.R.R. stands for Michigan Central Railroad.

36. Gun Plain Graveyard, now known as Woodside Cemetery, is in Gun Plain Township, Allegan County, about a mile north of present Plainwell, Michigan. It was used in the 1830s-1850s by pioneers settling the Gun Prairie. Letter of Robert E. Woodhams, July 8, 1978.

37. White Pigeon Prairie is south of Three Rivers, Michigan, near the Indiana border. William has three companions on this journey: Alfred R. Woodhams, Joseph Chart, and a hired helper named Josh.

38. Rochester, Indiana, is on highway 31 between Plymouth and Logansport.

39. Oxford, Indiana, is about 20 miles northwest of Lafayette. William had intended to drive sheep to California, but not being able to obtain any, took extra horses instead.

40. Milford, Illinois, is on state highway 1 north of Danville.

41. Bernadotte, Illinois, is located on the Spoon River about 9 miles west of Lewistown and 20 miles east of Macomb.

42. Macomb, Illinois, is located on U.S. highways 136 and 67.

43. Carthage, Illinois, is 27 miles west of Macomb on U.S. highway 136.

44. Warsaw, Illinois, is 11 miles west of Carthage on U.S. highway 136 on the east bank of the Mississippi River directly across from Keokuk, Iowa.

45. The Chariton River. They are traveling roughly along the route of U.S. highway 136.

46. Bethany is located in northwest Missouri on U.S. highway 136 and interstate highway 35.

47. St. Joseph, Missouri, was a major jumping-off place for the route west. Its major importance as a crossing point of the Missouri River was in 1849 and 1850. Merrill Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road* (Lincoln, Nebraska: State Historical Society, 1969).

48. William appears to be using a guide book written by P. L. Platt and N. Slater *Traveler's Guide Across the Plains upon the Overland Route to California* (San Francisco: 1852). This guide book reports of Wolf Creek: "This stream is small, with a deep channel and steep banks, formerly bad to cross, but now improved by bridging and digging down the banks, so as to make it quite passable." The bridge, operated by the Sac and Fox Indians, was located a few miles east of the Presbyterian mission.

49. The Iowa Mission was established by the Presbyterians in 1837 for the Iowa and the Sac and Fox Indians. Discontinued about 1863, it was 1¼ miles east of present Highland, Kansas.

50. The Big Nemaha River ford was located in the SE¼ of T1S, R12E in Nemaha County, Kansas, north of Seneca near the Nebraska border.

51. The Big Blue River ford was located at present Marysville, Kansas. The three cousins were lucky to find the river low enough to easily ford as the Big Blue carries high water during the spring run-off. On May 22 Patrick Henry Murphy reported his train paid \$5.00 per wagon for ferrying.

52. Indians were becoming restive with continuous streams of emigrants passing through their country. Patrick Henry Murphy, who was in a wagon train going through this area about three weeks later, wrote on May 31, 1854: "We started this morning, and five miles from camp, there were about five hundred Indian warriors; met a woman on horseback that the Indians chased and stopped their wagon; they stopped us and we were going to fight them; we were all arranged with our guns and pistols; and being surrounded by the Indians, we compromised by giving them a little sugar and flour; they took a bowie knife from a man that belonged to another train." Diary of Patrick H. Murphy, California State Library. Donated by Dr. William R. Murphy.

53. William was coming from the highlands into the Platte River valley when he saw the grave of Susan Hail. Local legend reports that upon her death June 2, 1852, her grief-stricken husband left the wagon train and went back to St. Joseph. Here he purchased a tombstone, had it engraved, and then brought it back in a wheelbarrow. William Woodhams' report of a marble tombstone on a woman's grave at this spot

could give some credence to the Susan Hail legend. The grave is located about 4 miles northwest of Kenesaw, Nebraska in Adams County, Section 18, T8N, R12W.

54. The Fort Kearny site, chosen by Lieutenant Daniel P. Woodbury, Corps of Engineers, in 1847, was purchased from the Pawnee for \$2,000 in trade goods. Construction was begun in June, 1848. First called Post at Grand Island, it was soon referred to as Fort Childs and was designated Fort Kearny in December, 1848. Abandoned in 1871, it is now a state park 6 miles southeast of Kearney, Nebraska.

55. They are probably camped at Cottonwood Springs. In 1859 Charles McDonald of Tennessee built a road ranche here, which later became a pony express and stage station. In 1863 a military fort was built just to the west of the creek. First known as Fort McKean, the name was changed to Fort Cottonwood in May, 1864. In 1866 it became Fort McPherson. The fort was abandoned in 1887. Location is about 5 miles south of Maxwell.

56. This is probably Fremont Slough on the south side of the South Platte River between Hershey and North Platte, Nebraska.

57. There were three major fords across the South Platte River over a spread of 45 miles: lower, middle, and upper crossings or fords. The lower ford was a few miles west of North Platte in the vicinity of Fremont Springs opposite Hershey. The middle ford was east of Ogallala. Upper ford was approximately 4 miles west of Brule and was the most used of the fords. Merrill Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*.

58. Ash Hollow, located on U.S. highway 26 just south of Lewellen, was a favorite camp spot on the trail with good water, grass and wood. It is now a state park. Windlass Hill still bears evidence of the trail where it came down the steep slopes into Ash Hollow.

59. William's note, added several years later, refers to the attack of General Harney's troops on Chief Little Thunder's Brule Sioux on September 3, 1855. For a detailed description of the Battle of Ash Hollow (more properly of Blue Water, as it occurred about 6 miles northwest of Ash Hollow on Blue Creek), see *The Great Platte River Road* by Merrill Mattes.

60. Court House Rock, south of Bridgeport, was the first of a chain of picturesque bluffs along the North Platte River. By 1849 the rock was known as "The Courthouse" because of a fancied resemblance to the old courthouse in St. Louis.

61. Chimney Rock is a slender column upon a broad conical base or mound standing apart from the principal ridge which bounds the North Platte valley on the south bank. Emigrants gave more diary space to this landmark than to any other along the trail. Chimney Rock, owned by the Nebraska State Historical Society, is about 3 1/2 miles southwest of Bayard.

62. Scott's Bluff was named for Hiram Scott, a field commander of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. On his return to St. Louis from the 1828 fur traders' rendezvous, he fell ill and was abandoned at the base of this bluff. William and his companions went through Mitchell Pass at Scott's Bluff, which became the main route for most of the emigrants headed west after 1850. It is the route followed by present state highway 92 that leads to Scott's Bluff National Monument 2 1/2 miles west of Gering.

63. This was the location of a fur trading post since 1834 when Robert Campbell built Fort William. In 1841 this post was replaced by the American Fur Company's Fort John. In 1849 the trading post was sold to the United States government to be used as a military post and Fort Laramie was built. A portion of the old adobe fur traders' post was standing until 1862, when it was demolished and the adobe used to construct the powder magazine building. The fort, a National Historic Site, is about 11 miles east of Guernsey, Wyoming.

64. Horseshoe Creek, a popular campsite on the old trail, later became the site of a pony express and stage station. The crossing is about 3 miles south of Glendo, Wyoming.

65. This chasm was also mentioned in the journal of P. V. Crawford, who traveled

to Oregon in 1851. P. V. Crawford, "Journal of a Trip Across the Plains, 1851," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, XXV (March, 1924), 136-169.

66. Laramie Peak is 10,274 feet above sea level. On a clear day it could first be seen by emigrants near Scott's Bluff, 100 miles to the east.

67. The crossing of LaBonte Creek was about 11 miles south of present Douglas, Wyoming.

68. Northwest of LaBonte Creek the trail came to Wagonhound Creek, where the soil and rocks are of a red brick color.

69. This was apparently Reshaw's Bridge at the upper crossing of the North Platte River. A wood bridge spanning the river at present day Evansville, Wyoming, it was built by John Richard (Reshaw) in 1852 and operated as a toll bridge until the spring of 1865 when Richard sold his interests at the site. Aubrey L. Haines, *Historic Sites Along the Oregon Trail* (Denver: US Department of Interior, 1973).

70. The young man that joined them was called Frank.

71. Independence Rock, one of the great landmarks of the trail, was covered with names of emigrants. The large oblong mass, over 1,900 feet long, 850 feet wide, and about 128 feet high, lies near the Sweetwater River, making it a favorite stopping place for travelers. It is located 60 miles southwest of Casper on Wyoming highway 220. Haines, *Historic Sites Along the Oregon Trail*.

72. Devil's Gate, another major landmark of the trail, is about 5 miles southwest of Independence Rock. It is a narrow cleft, 370 feet deep, 1,500 feet long, and as narrow as 50 feet in some places, by which the Sweetwater River breaks through a ridge. Haines, *Historic Sites Along the Oregon Trail*.

73. Called "Ice Springs" or "Ice Slough," it is a marshy area where water froze beneath the tundra-like covering of turf. It remained frozen throughout the summer because of the insulating effects of its cover.

74. South Pass was the crossing of the continental divide. Note the similarity of William Woodhams' description to the following taken from the Platt and Slater guide: "This pass is a slightly undulating plain between mountains several miles apart." It is about 32 miles northeast of Farson, Wyoming, on state highway 28.

75. Platt and Slater guide book reports, "Good grass may be found 4 miles upstream."

76. The Salt Lake City Road was also the original Oregon Trail, which went southwest to Fort Bridger, then headed northwest over Muddy Gap and Bear River Divide to the Bear River valley. The Sublette Cut-off began to be used in 1849 and soon became the main artery to the west.

77. William is quoting the distance of 41 1/2 miles from Platt and Slater's guide: "You now have to travel over an almost barren desert, with very little grass and no water to Green River—41 1/2 miles." Joseph Ware's *The Emigrants' Guide to California* (1849) reports the distance 35 miles. Andrew Child in *Overland Route to California* (1852) states the distance is 54 miles. Hosea B. Horn in *Horn's Overland Guide* (1852) sets the mileage at 49 miles. John Steele's *Traveler's Companion* (1854) says 53 miles.

78. William's statement with regard to the hazards of this crossing of the Green River was probably prompted by Platt and Slater's guide: "This stream is very difficult to cross, either by ferrying or fording. Many lives and much property have been lost here."

79. This branch would be Fontenelle Creek, which flows into the Green River about 15 miles south of LaBarge, Wyoming.

80. The mountain spring, according to Platt and Slater's *Guide*, was 11 1/4 miles from the ford of Fontenelle Creek or 20 miles from Green River ferry. Therefore this probably would be Emigrant Spring in the south 1/2 of Section 2, T22N, R115W.

81. Ham's Fork of the Green River would have been crossed about 9 miles northwest of Kemmerer, Wyoming.

82. Bear River valley would have been entered about 3 or 4 miles south of Cokeville, Wyoming.

83. Here William got his rivers reversed. The trail crossed Smith's Fork first; then about 15 miles farther he would have crossed Thomas' Fork.

84. By "essence peddler," William means a skunk.

85. These springs are located at the present city of Soda Springs, Idaho.

86. About 6 miles west of the Soda Springs, the Bear River, which William had been following for the last 50 miles, turns abruptly south to flow into the Great Salt Lake. At this point there was a split in the trail. The original road angled northwest to Fort Hall and down the Snake River for about 50 miles to the crossing of the Raft River. At the crossing, about 2 miles south of present Yale, the road forked. The road to Oregon continued west following the Snake River. The road to California headed south following the Raft River. In 1849 Benoni M. Hudspeth and J. J. Myers pioneered a cut-off to California. It headed west at the bend of the Bear River and joined the original road to California in the Raft River valley just west of present Malta. This new route was sometimes called Hudspeth's cut-off or Myers' cut-off. For maps see "Route of the Oregon Trail in Idaho" (Idaho Department of Highways, May, 1963).

87. This creek was probably Marsh Creek and the bridge somewhere near Arimo, Idaho.

88. After crossing Raft River, William would have continued west up Cassia Creek where the Hudspeth Cut-off rejoins the old California road just west of Malta, Idaho.

89. William was going through an area of strange formations of soft granite. William calls it Monumental Rocks. The area, also called "The Silent City of Rocks," was located just west of Almo, Idaho.

90. William was now in northeast Nevada. His trail would lead him up Goose Creek, up Little Goose Creek, south to Rock Springs Creek, and along Thousand Springs valley. The road would then cut across to the Humboldt River near Wells, Nevada.

91. "About 12 to 14 miles from the place where the road rounded the elbow of the river and started on its southward course, there was a stretch of bottomland where, in favorable years, the wagons might follow the stream, but where most of the emigrants missed the turning because it was less traveled. The fortunate few found dark red cranberrylike fruit growing profusely on tall thorny bushes with pale green leaves. Both E. P. Howell and Alzono Delano enjoyed them in '49 and Caroline Richardson made inroads on the bushes in '52. 'In addition to our usual traveling fare,' wrote Mr. Delano, 'with an excellent cup of coffee we had a delicious pie, made of a nameless (to me) fruit, with grows in abundance along the river in this part of the valley.'" Irene Paden, *The Wake of the Prairie Schooner* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1944).

92. The "Big Meadows" is located at Lovelock, Nevada. This famous desert oasis made possible the crossing of the Forty-mile Desert.

93. From the sink of the Humboldt River there was a choice of routes across the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The most direct route to the northern mines turned west at the sink and headed across 40 miles of alkali desert to the Truckee River. The second route went south, crossing the same desert, for about the same number of miles to the Carson River. This Carson River road was the more direct one to Placerville and Caloma as well as to the southern mines. Owen Cochran Coy, *The Great Trek* (Los Angeles: Powell Publishing Company, 1931).

94. The Beckwith Route was pioneered by mountain man Jim Beckwith or Beckwourth, born in Virginia in 1798 of a planter father and a black mother. He became a mountain man and lived with the Crow Indians for many years. In California in 1851 while searching for gold Jim explored the Sierras between the middle fork of the Feather River and the Truckee River and helped direct the first emigrant wagons through. In 1852 Jim took up a land claim in a valley on the route from Beckwourth Pass and built a hotel and store to cater to emigrants. The town and valley bear his name. The next year Jim moved to his ranch at the lower end of the valley. Thomas Bonner, a former newspaperman, wrote his biography. Beckwith died in 1866. Arthur Clark, *Mountain Men and the Fur Trade*, VI. Thomas H. Hunt and Robert V. H.

Adams, *Ghost Trails to California* (American West Publishing Company).

95. These ruins could possibly be the combined hotel and store built by Jim Beckwourth in 1852 about 2½ miles west of the present town of Beckwourth. *Historic Spots in California* (Stanford University Press, 1966).

96. This is the log cabin built by Jim Beckwourth in 1853 on the Ramelli Ranch at Walker Mine Road and Highway 70. Hunt and Adams, *Historic Spots in California*.

97. "Miners flocked to Elizabethtown in 1852 in search of gold. There being only one unmarried lady in the new camp, Elizabeth Stark, the chivalrous miners named the new town in her honor. It was a large camp in 1853. By 1855 the surrounding gulches were exhausted and Elizabethtown began to decline." Highway 70 passes through the Elizabethtown area two miles north of Quincy. Hunt and Adams, *Historic Spots in California*.

98. The man's name was Ben Lawson.

99. Soda Bar was on the east branch of the north fork of Feather River.

100. The Mexican might have been one of two Mexicans who in 1850 set up an early camp in Meadow Valley, later known as Spanish Ranch. Directly above the settlement towers Spanish Peak. Spanish Ranch is ¼ mile north of the old Oroville-Quincy road and about 6 miles west of Quincy. Hunt and Adams, *Historic Spots in California*.

101. Gold was discovered here by John Bidwell on July 4, 1848. By 1853 three daily stages ran to Bidwell's Bar from Marysville. The mines became exhausted and the village died out. The location is now under Lake Oroville, near Oroville, California. Hunt and Adams, *Historic Spots in California*.

102. Wyandotte was named after a company of Wyandotte Indians who mined there in 1850. It reached its greatest prosperity in 1852 and 1853. Wyandotte today is a center of the orange and olive industries and the old mining ditches are used for irrigation. Hunt and Adams, *Historic Spots in California*.

103. Marysville was on land originally owned by Captain John Sutter. The town was laid out in January, 1850, and named for Mary Murphy Covillaud, member of the Donner Party. Marysville became the head of navigation on the Feather River and a trade center for the northern mines.

ABOUT THE DIARY'S EDITOR

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