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Article Title: The 1864 Overland Trail: Five Letters from Jonathan Blanchard

Full Citation: Robert H Keller Jr, "The 1864 Overland Trail: Five Letters from Jonathan Blanchard," *Nebraska History* 63 (1982): 71-86

URL of article: <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/NH1982Blanchard.pdf>

Date: 4/23/2014

Article Summary: Blanchard's letters express familiar themes of westward expansion: the gold rush, emigrants seeking wealth in new lands, native people retreating before them. His lively accounts reveal that conditions on the trails had changed radically since the first migrations of the 1840s.

#### Cataloging Information:

Names: Jonathan Blanchard, Bob McMinn, Jim Bridger

Place Names: Omaha and Fort Kearny, Nebraska; Fort Laramie, Wyoming; Bridger's cut-off, Wyoming and Nevada; Virginia City, Nevada

Rivers: Platte River, Little Horn River, Big Horn River, Yellow Stone River

Keywords: American Home Missionary Society, Wheaton College, World Anti-Slavery Convention, *Christian Era*, wild sage, greasewood

Photographs / Images: detail from the title page of *The Home Missionary*; the Rev Jonathan Blanchard about 1866; bird's eye view of Omaha, 1868; Fort Kearny parade ground, 1864

# The 1864 Overland Trail: Five Letters from Jonathan Blanchard

BY ROBERT H. KELLER JR.

## INTRODUCTION

During the spring of 1864, Jonathan Blanchard, president of Wheaton College in Illinois, set out to explore the Far West for the American Home Missionary Society, an ecumenical organization dedicated to promoting Christianity on the American frontier. Blanchard traveled through Nebraska over the Oregon Trail, turned north in Wyoming to reach the Montana and Idaho gold fields, and then went south to Salt Lake City before returning home. As he traveled, Blanchard corresponded with his wife in Illinois who passed the letters on to the AHMS. Four of the five letters which followed were published in the Society's *Home Missionary* magazine, 1864-1865.

Blanchard's two letters of June 21, 1864, are reproduced from the original manuscripts and the other three selections are taken from the magazine. One letter has been edited to remove lengthy observations about Montana politics and the need for missionaries among the white population; the other four letters are complete. A purpose in publishing this correspondence is to reveal, through the eyes of an intelligent and articulate observer, conditions on the overland trails of the mid-1860s, conditions which in many ways had changed radically since the first migrations of the 1840s.<sup>1</sup>

Jonathan Blanchard (1811-1892), an activist clergyman and social reformer, graduated from Middlebury College, Vermont, at age 21. He taught for several years before attending Andover and Lane Theological Seminaries. Following ordination (1838), Blanchard became the pastor of the 6th Presbyterian Church of Cincinnati, commencing a ministry which would include outspoken advocacy of temperance and abolition. In 1843 he attended the World Anti-Slavery Con-

vention in London which elected him as its vice-president for the United States. These activities, in addition to his anti-Masonic sentiments, led to conflict with conservative pro-slavery elements in the Presbyterian Church and in the mid-1840s he resigned from that denomination to become a Congregationalist. This shift notwithstanding, Blanchard was elected president of the New School Presbyterian Knox College in 1845, a post which he held until 1857. Three years after leaving Knox and after rejecting offers from five schools, Blanchard became president of the newly founded Wheaton College in Illinois. He held this office until succeeded by his son, Charles A. Blanchard, in 1882.

During his career Jonathan Blanchard was founder and editor of several magazines and periodicals, including the *Herald and Presbyter* (Cincinnati), the *Christian Era* (Galesburg, Ill.), and the *Christian Cynosure* (Wheaton). He published four books: *A Debate on Slavery* (1846), *Memoir of Rev. Levi Spencer* (1856), *Shall Christians Join Secret Societies?* (1867), and *Freemasonry Illustrated* (1879). In 1881 the American Party nominated him as its candidate for the President of the United States. Blanchard was also a leader in the International Order of Odd Fellows, his manual of instruction and ritual being reprinted by that body as late as 1930.

The exact reason for Jonathan Blanchard's 1864 journey to Idaho while president of Wheaton College is unclear, nor is the trip mentioned by his biographers. The AHMS letters indicate that he planned to examine the vast increase in western emigration, and he may have intended to found a new college in Montana. Like many eastern Christians, Blanchard had been alarmed by reports from the high plains and Rockies describing a lack of Christian faith and civilization in frontier settlements.<sup>2</sup> His 1864 journey fully confirmed these fears.

Blanchard traveled along the Platte River with a wagon train, pushing west toward the newly discovered gold fields at Alder Gulch, Bannack, Virginia City and in the Big Horns, bonanzas which attracted thousands from both the eastern and western states. The miners' arrival on lands reserved for the Cheyenne and Sioux would culminate a decade of growing Indian-white hostility and result in the plains war of the mid-60s, temporarily closing the Bozeman Trail. Blanchard's

description of the gold rush, of emigrants seeking wealth in new lands, and of native people retreating before them, expressed familiar themes in westward expansion. He perceived a God-ordained destiny and historic movement, he described "gold fever," and he confronted a new vision of land and nature—immense, desolate and hostile. His letters also reflected an apprehension which Josiah Strong in *Our Country* and Francis Parkman in the later editions of *The Oregon Trail* voiced: that the great western wilderness, the free spaces of plain and mountain, would someday disappear beneath a tide of humans. Whatever his misgivings, Blanchard's goal remained clear: beyond the fate of Indian tribes and the pathos of emigrant failure, he proclaims his hope that Idaho and North America would yet become "Christ's precious Kingdom."

See: *Dictionary of American Biography*; Rufus Blanchard, *History of DuPage County, Illinois*; Matthew Spinka, *A History of Illinois Congregational and Christian Churches*; William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier: The Presbyterians*; and Colin B. Goodykoontz, *Home Missions on the American Frontier*.

## THE LETTERS

Platte river, May 24, 1864<sup>3</sup>

We are here, 200 miles beyond the Missouri; and as the telegraph crosses the Platte at this place,<sup>4</sup> we expect tomorrow to start on this side for Laramie, 325 miles, through bluffs and brush, without a ranch, and of course exposed to attacks of Indians, who have just killed ten United States soldiers, a little above us.<sup>5</sup>

The emigration is enormous. Wisconsin and Northern Illinois and Iowa are largely represented; and a sprinkling of good men are among them. But copperheads<sup>6</sup> from Southern Illinois, and Missouri are here, in large force. Five Missourians are in the fort opposite here, who conspired and killed a man on the road, to get away his handsome wife. The soldiers say they are to be hung. There is but one company now in the fort here. Two companies, they say, have been sent on, toward the mountains. To these the ten scouts belonged who were killed.

Rumors of the most extravagant kind are in circula-

tion—that 1,500, some say, 3,000 or 4,000 Indians are moving to resist this tide of emigration which is to dislodge them from their mountain fastnesses in the Idaho country, the last lair that these poor wild human creatures have on earth. They may kill a few hundreds of us, but that will neither change nor alter the result.

One is struck with the power of christian civilization and habits of obedience to law. Thousands on thousands meet, camp, and move along these routes without mutual molestation, and with a smaller per cent of crime than is found in the States!

So far, we have seen *no* new graves, and only two or three made last year; and only three or four dead animals. We shall soon see more. I am to ford the Platte and mail this at the fort. We have blessing at our meals and tent meetings on the Sabbath. Grace and peace be with you.

[J. Blanchard]

*For the Christian Era—<sup>7</sup>*  
*My Dear Wife,*

Red Butes<sup>8</sup> 150 miles  
above Ft. Laramie June 21/64

We are here near Bridger's cut-off,<sup>9</sup> a new and shorter route opened some 4 or 5 weeks since to the Gold mines on the Big Horn river—which is only 130 miles hence—Some 500 wagons have already gone on this route & one or two hundred more have taken one shorter still, some 8 miles back. We are thus promised to be taken to the gold diggings in 8 or 10 days by a man who has been in this Country 8 years. The crowd are all in high spirits at the prospect. Bridger<sup>10</sup> took this route to avoid Indians a[s] it passes through neutral ground between tribes. The other man (Boseman)<sup>11</sup> more venturesom, goes right through the best armed and most hostile tribes.<sup>12</sup> By this cut-off we save 4 or 5 hundred miles at least! We have thus far, laid by, every Sabbath. We have never harnessed a mule but once on that day & that was to go two or three miles to grass—He admitted leading a horse to water permitted driving mules to feed.<sup>13</sup>

And God has been over us by his pillar of cloud by day & shielded us by night. All our Californians say that the Platte

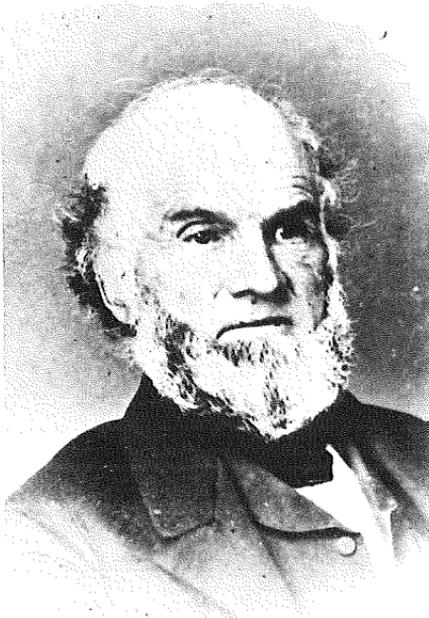
valley was fearfully hot & subject to fearful storms the years they went through—we have had neither! The days have been cool & the showers (we have had several) have come *on the Sabbath* or at night while we were in camp, so that we have only laid by one short forenoon for rain & no shower has equalled an ordinary Illinois thunderstorm! This the more amazes me as when a boy I read in Lewis and Clark's travels in this country that they encountered frequent hail-storms which knocked men to the Earth & cut them so that all parties out would come in "bleeding freely"!<sup>14</sup> And as all that had passed the valley had the same dread I am simple enough to believe that your's and the children's prayers have been heard and answered.<sup>15</sup> Mr. Turley<sup>16</sup> of Council Bluffs told me the prevalent wind was west so that he was for days unable to see his leaders in the team he drives. We have had scarce one hour when the dust was not blown one or the other of the train & no cases of sore eyes. And as I eat and sleep well & endure immense fatigue every day I should be one of the most ungrateful of men if I did & do not strive to do something for Christ here. —

As we are lying here today waiting for all our teams to come to take the cut-off with us I shall write at large & send it when I can.

*The Country*—From a few miles this side Omaha on the Missouri River to this place we have travelled all the way 650 miles by the Platte River which loses in sand & by Evaporation as much as it receives from its tributaries and for 500 miles you can scarcely see a particle of difference in the wonderful stream. It is fed by mountain streams while the snow melts and Job's descrip of the dark winter streams of Mt. Lebanon in Palestine is good for these.<sup>17</sup> You travel from Omaha 350 miles before you see one living spring from the road, that spring would turn a common mill. We have, I judged crossed the sand-beds of 50 or an hundred streams half as large as the Connecticut whose channels were perfectly dry, and yet it was early June. They tell us the Platte itself is lost in sands for hundreds of miles together in mid-summer! The result is that the whole country with small exceptions near Omaha in Nebraska & in the river bottoms is half a desert. Every mountain is an Ebal & every bluff is a Gilboa. The earth where we have travelled for hundreds of miles resembles what is called *hard*



*Detail from the title page of The Home Missionary, published by American Home Missionary Society, for which Jonathan Blanchard worked.*



*The Reverend Jonathan Blanchard, about 1866. Courtesy Wheaton (Illinois) College.*

pan in Illinois, if that hard pan had been baked. Its color is a whitish yellowish dirt-color, and pulverizes in the road just like yellow earth under an old chimney or where a fire has been built out-doors. But this blows off & leaves for hundreds of miles a hard smooth road over which the heaviest wagon rolls as if on a house-floor—the best natural road on the whole globe. But most of the bluffs and mountains are mere heaps of sand and baked clay, hateful & horrid to the sight except when seen in the blue distance & through semi-mirage which makes them resemble castles, walled and buttressed, court houses, churches, pinnacles, etc. etc. of every glorious and fantastic form—But go near them & all their glories vanish. Not one green tree or shrub ever is seen on them for hundreds of miles—nothing but walls & minarets of baked clay cropping out of sand!

*The Flowers*—And yet ascend one of these desolate and bald bluffs and flowers continue to bloom there, as also all along these horrid plains, like virtues amid the poverty and desolation of drunkard's home. After awhile small stunted cedars<sup>18</sup> cling to the sides & summits of black hills: then the wild sage and grease wood send their huge and spongy roots through the deep sand.

But among them the tall clear-blue lark spur, plenty of flowers with leaves like the Geranium—a sweet little border-flower with red \_\_\_\_\_ [unclear] which has followed us all the way, wild pinks looking like those in our garden—soap weed with its tall and jaunty blossoms; but above and beyond all, the “Rocky mountain rose” & a pale white mountain lily: these with a multitude more bloom and breathe out their sweet fragrance along this horrid soil!

*Birds*—The birds are few and far between. I did not see or hear a robin or blue-bird or meadow sparrow for the first 300 miles this side Omaha & when some sang to us from the cotton woods they seemed like spirits from an enchanted grove. However, troops of bawling blackbirds<sup>19</sup> followed us for a hundred or two of miles for the grain left at encampments. These finally disappear & no voice salutes you but that of the Ubiquitous Lark whose note is somewhat changed in these solitudes.

I saw however two king birds<sup>20</sup> about fifty miles back lit on the sage brush. And now that we are come where snow-spots

can be seen on the mountains and some green slopes and valleys below, now and then a choir of wood birds is heard, making the heart glad.

*The Emigration*—Such is the region over which two thousand six hundred wagons had preceded to Fort Laramie, averaging four horses mules or oxen & 3 men to each. If an equal number have come up on the road south of the Platte, and about the same from California & the West—nearly eight thousand wagons, 24 thousand men with a sprinkling of women and children; and 32 thousand cattle have already preceded us; two thirds to Idaho—the rest to Colorado, California, Nevada & Oregon. It is guessed that 3/4's of the year's Emigration are yet to come: and if so the whole will foot up to 130 or 140 thousand people.<sup>21</sup> But the route will breed pestilence with dead animals before such a number can get through. We have seen but few and have lost none—but we have seen enough to know what must be with those who follow the track we left almost destitute of grass. Multitudes of the Emigrants have crossed these plains & are crossing now, some to regain what they before lost, others to make more than they then made, and all for *gold, gold gold!* For the hope of this they toil as no farmer toils. Day after day, they trudge on with sand in their eyes, sand in their hair, neck, bosoms, boots, stockings, hat, clothing, victuals, drink, bedclothes (their bed is sand) and all with the diligence, though with less patience, than camels over an Arabian desert! Thousands to certain disappointment but each hoping it will not be he. But

*The Indians—*

*“Each busy triflin deems himself alone*

*Framers many a purpose & God works his own.”*

So the poor Indian must fade and disappear before this human avalanche. We have come through the territory of the Pawnees & Sioux and have seen many lodges but most of them of mixed extraction, mostly with the French! If the Indians had capacity to understand this invasion of their last retreat on earth: or if they could unite to defend it in any considerable numbers, hundreds of trains, cattle, provisions & all would be their easy prey, for few trains travel a hundred miles without bursting [?] and moving on in fragments! But they do not. We have passed but two graves of men killed by Indians & these deaths were the result of quarrels about stock. A[t] Kearney &

Laramie (the two forts to protect us) was our principal danger. Our poor [post?] soldiers & white traders get their squaws—give them whiskey, get their ponies—the Indian ideas are violated—they quarrel—kill a ruffian or two—and our troops turn them out and shoot them down—There are exceptions. There are cases of stealing, but these are almost always near the ranches owned and occupied by whites and half-breeds.

It is said however that the hostile tribes are yet to be passed and, in war Indians are of course devils incarnate. But so far as we can learn, they are disposed to use well all who use them well.

*The Emigrants*—These I will try to describe hereafter. West Missouri sends her full share & they are of well ascertained character since Kansas. I will close now with the one comforting thought that Christ died for every one of them, and there are enough of Christians and men of sound morals going to (I hope) lay the foundation of Christ's precious kingdom in Idaho—

Please see that Dr. Badger<sup>22</sup> has a copy of the *Era* containing this letter from  
 Ever your affectionate husband  
 J. Blanchard

Red Buttes 150 miles above Fort  
 Laramie on Platte River June 21/64

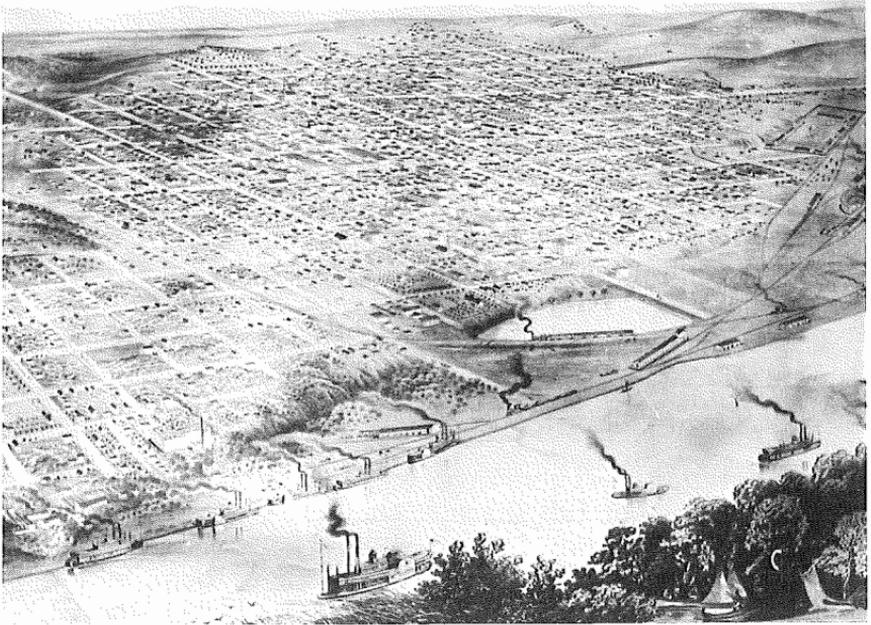
Rev. Milton Badger DD

*Beloved Brethren*

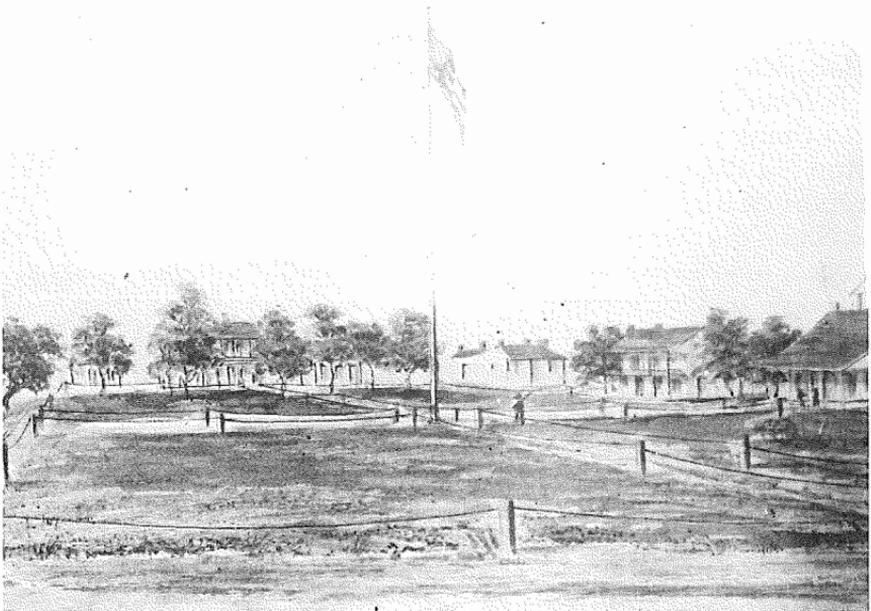
I thank you and the committee for the vote conveyed by Mr. Roy.<sup>23</sup> I did not see Rev. Gaylord of Omaha but heard a good report of him.<sup>24</sup>

Since that time I have seen only Emigrants and Indians except a half day at Fort Laramie, where all the inhabitants are in some way connected with the U.S. Government.

I have sent to the *Christian Era* a loose estimate of the Emigration to Idaho this year based on the wagon census taken by order of our government at Fort Laramie. But there can scarcely be an approach to accuracy in such things. Probably from 150-200 thousand persons from all quarters will visit Idaho this year. But the return stampede is already begun and when that is well under way a thousand people will disappear almost as so many swallows from a fence.



*Bird's eye view of Omaha, 1868. . . .(Below) Fort Kearny parade ground, 1864.*



The *permanent population* of Idaho must depend upon mining and agriculture and as I am at this writing 130 miles from the nearest mines worked, viz. on the Big Horn River, I can only give a remote guess at either of these sources. Letters which you have seen give all the information there is. The men of our train however, several miles back, took up buckets of sand from the Platte river & washed them & found gold in minute quantities in every handful. This fine gold either washes down from the sources of the Platte or from the Mountain gulches along its shores. In either case these mountains must have plenty of gold. We have also seen iron, with some appearances of coal; and red mineral paint of a beautiful color abounds. As to agriculture, I have not seen grass which a scythe could reach enough to cut a ton of hay, from Omaha to this place 650 miles; and nothing but the discovery of mines can cause this bald and desolate region to be populated for the next hundred years.

In some portions of Idaho they say there [are?] rich valleys and abundant grass which is possible. I shall know when I see it.

What American Christians do for the wretched Indians must be done quickly. We meet a process of these poor creatures 6 or 7 miles this side of Laramie going down to the Fort: carrying one dead Indian and another badly wounded. They quarrelled with two ranchmen about stock, killed one and wounded another. They returned to kill the wounded men & our soldiers shot them. Their squaws took their ponies, papooses, tent equipment, dead & wounded and moved slowly towards the Fort. A sadder company I never saw.

These poor creatures gaze on the passing multitude of Emigrants, beg "bread" & trinkets of us probably not realizing that their last earthly dwelling place must soon be wiped out by these waves of white population. More anon.

Ever yours in Christ  
[J. Blanchard]

Big Horn river, 140 miles from  
Platte Bridge, July 1, 1864<sup>25</sup>

*Major Bridger*—Major Bridger is an old resident in these wilds. He built Fort Bridger and sold it to the United States.

He married a woman of the Snake tribe, by whom he had daughters. His wife is dead and his children are in Jackson county, Missouri, obtaining an education. One of them married an officer in the United States Army, lately. You will see by the map, that we are passing into Idaho by a short cut, going northeast from the Platte river by the Big Horn and Wind river mountains.<sup>26</sup> Major Bridger started on this new route early last May with a large company of emigrants.

*A Border Character*—When we came near the cut-off, we met a man named Bob McMinn, from West Port, Jackson county, Mo., offering himself as guide over the new route. He is very cross-eyed, dark as an Indian, among whom he has been trading for some eight years—though now but twenty three years old. Many weaker men are now members of Congress. He is quiet, agile as a cat, makes a very fair speech to the crowd, and is altogether a wonderful man. He has been a sutler's clerk at Laramie, was recently clerk at Sweetwater, under another sutler, Col. Ward, and was probably sent to lead us this way, as a runner for ferries owned by his employers, Col. Ward and others, who own the Platte Bridge and are amassing enormous fortunes out of the emigrants.<sup>27</sup> It is such men who get up books like that which Campbell has written of Idaho,<sup>28</sup> and thus produce a stampede for gold, such as now pours over these horrible deserts.

*A Hateful Desert*—I am very glad I came; not only because my health is good, but because I could never have conceived of the country that we have just passed over, unless I had seen it with my own eyes. I can convey no idea of it on paper. A mere waste of sand would be a prairie to it. Along the whole 140 miles of this "cut-off," with a single exception or two, the water has been impregnated with alkali and a dozen other plagues. Every where mountains of sand surround you. There is no timber and next to no wood; no grass, except in the little narrow gulches, where water has run when the snow was melting, and some sparse blades of blue grass among the wild-sage and greasewood shrubs, whose bluish and green color at first relieves the barren blank and blistered look of the soil, but you soon become more weary of them than of desolation itself. There is something sublime in a vast solitude. But the wild-sage is a shrub with a stem and root, spongy, porous, and dry as an old grape vine; its leaves are like the common sage-plant

in looks, but the taste and smell is a dry, bitter, pungent, and hateful odor, as if common sage were dried and pounded up with puff-balls and aloes. The greasewood is green and looks a little like a cedar bush, but smells like a cake of damaged tallow! The land is exactly as Illinois would be if all hilly and mountainous, and the soil of the whole State had been taken off down to the hardpan. Such is the whole face of the country, in simple unexaggerated description. It can never be cultivated anymore than the Sahara.

But there is, here and there, an oasis. We came, 120 miles, to the *Little Horne* river; which we reached by crossing mountains such as I never dreamed of seeing traveled by teams. We went on ridges that were just wide enough for a single wagon to pass, the wind blowing half a gale, where, if a wagon upset, it would roll down thousands of feet, where the head grew giddy by merely *looking*. The brakes were put on—wheels tied fast with ropes—and men let the wagons down the steps, by ropes from behind.

*"The River"*—We came, at length, to the "river." No water was running, but it stood in dirty pools. Here and there, weeping out of the sand bed, a spring was found, and the filtered water flowed on a little way—a mile or two, perhaps—and then was lost again. But it was beautiful to see how the thirsty vegetation seized on and improved these watered spots. Wild rye, looking for all the world just like the rye in our fields at home, red-top or fox-tail grass, a wild Hungarian grass, and something which looked like barley.<sup>29</sup> These with the merry notes of robins, kingbirds, and the ubiquitous lark, seemed to put us into the heart of New England; but one glance at the everlasting sage and grease brush on the surrounding slopes promptly corrected the illusion.

*The Big Horn—The Valleys—The Mountains*—The Big Horn is a clearer stream than the Platte but equally rapid. Charley caught us a fine pike for breakfast, and others got other sorts of fish. A little ferry boat takes our wagons over, at \$5 each. Our mules and horses swam—all but four of them. One of the four, I rode across the stream lower down, at what was thought a ford. Wet and tired, but all safe, we got across. We hear of Bridger's band ahead, on the Stinking-water and Yellow Stone, where they are said to be prospecting; and we hear of 2,000 warriors assembling to drive them out. The

mountain gulches and valleys below, which the snow streams keep green, are the cellars and kitchens of these poor tribes; and they feel as we should to find them in other hands. There is one relief to this horrid voyage. The solemn grandeur of the everlasting snow on mountain ridges, in sight for the last week or two, pays one for long travel. Blue with distance, dark and purple with shade and sunlight! Grandeur is tame before their sublimity. Their white masses on their blue background resemble real clouds, and mingle earth and heaven.

[J. Blanchard]

*Virginia City*<sup>30</sup>— . . . We came in by a new route, by the Yellow Stone River and Big Horn and Wind River Mountains. The whole region bears the marks of gold deposits. . . . From the Platte to the British possessions, some 1500 to 2000 miles, this is the case, and holes are already dug for almost the whole distance. But tens of thousands will dig, and will find their labor like that of the children who used to dig for a pan of money where the rainbow strikes the earth. A few will continue to get fortunes. Meantime, "the love of money is the root of all evil." Avarice is everywhere hard, withered, and grasping. But it is dreadful here. . . . Other leads will be opened, and hosts of sham leads will, as usual, be cried into reputation, to swindle the credulous. Claim-gambling is almost equal to gambling with cards. And

"*Lo, the poor Indian*"—His herds and flocks, buffalo, elk, deer, and antelope are driven off from their valley grazing grounds, and they feel as we should to find strangers in our kitchens and cellars. The streams and valleys are their kitchens and cellars. Congress runs territorial lines over and around their hunting grounds without first extinguishing their titles by treaty. White men rush in to "prospect" and "ranch" and oxen are now lowing by the thousand along the wide meadows of the Gallatin, where, a year and a half ago, the buffalo and elk grazed unmolested, till the still arrow brought them down. The Indians strike like despair. They are burning the mail stations, and driving the stock, and hastening every way their utter extinction as tribes.

Still, prompt and vigorous christian effort, aided outside, perhaps, by the hand of the government, may do something, and if slavery and polygamy shall give way to the constitution

of society, as ordained by God, a remnant of the Indians may yet be saved, and hail the day, or their descendants may, when the eagle of liberty shall build in these summits where now, all around me, the ravens are cawing to their sooty and ill-omened broods. . . .<sup>31</sup>

## NOTES

1. See John D. Unruh Jr., *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979).

2. See Horace Bushnell, *Barbarism the First Danger: A Discourse for Home Missions* (New York: American Home Missionary Society, 1847).

3. Published in the *Home Missionary* (August, 1864), 103-104.

4. Fort Kearny, Nebraska. Blanchard is on the north side of the river.

5. Eugene Ware in *The Indian War of 1864* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1960), 139, refers to the story of ten soldiers killed at Turkey Creek as an exaggerated rumor.

6. Northerners sympathetic with the South.

7. *The Christian Era* was founded by Blanchard while he was president of Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois. There are no listings for the *Era* in Illinois union catalogs.

This and the following letter were written to Blanchard's wife and to the Reverend Milton Badger of the American Home Missionary Society respectively. The first was published in the *Home Missionary* for November, 1864, 172-174, and the second is unpublished. Both letters are reproduced from original manuscripts in the American Home Missionary Society Archives, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, Louisiana. These files contain many letters, reports and other documents from the Society's effort to evangelize the nineteenth century frontier. The original letters bear red-ink editorial markings and additions which have been disregarded here in an effort to publish Blanchard's writings exactly as he composed them, with spelling and punctuation uncorrected. The correspondence is located under "Wyoming, 1864-1893," AHMS files.

8. Approximately 10 miles southwest of present-day Casper, Wyoming, the Red Buttes are on the North Platte River near Bessemer Bend where the river was forded and left by wagon trains.

9. This route went north from the North Platte River along the western slope of the Big Horn Mountains, across Bridger Pass into Virginia City, Montana.

10. Jim Bridger, who was then 60 years old and who had explored the Far West for over 40 years.

11. John H. Bozeman. Earlier that spring Bozeman had been attacked by the Sioux 100 miles north of Fort Laramie; following his escape, Bozeman again crossed Indian country, this time by night, and between the Yellowstone and Gallatin rivers he discovered the mountain pass which today bears his name. In 1864 he was conducting a caravan over this route.

12. Bozeman's daring led to his death on the Yellowstone River in 1867.

13. This is a badly damaged section of the manuscript; several words have been obliterated by an inkspot.

14. June 29, 1805, near the Great Falls.

15. Blanchard had twelve children. In a later letter Blanchard would complain that

"eternal drought seems to be the law" on the plains making permanent settlement impossible. *Home Missionary* (January, 1865), 212.

16. The name is unclear.

17. Job 6:15-16.

18. Junipers.

19. Brewer's blackbirds.

20. Western kingbirds.

21. Population on the Oregon Trail is difficult to determine, but Blanchard's estimates are excessive. Idaho's total population in 1864 was approximately 25,000, an increase of 4,000 over the previous year. See Rodman Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West: 1848-1880* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), 40-41, 143. Merrill Mattes estimated the overland migration, 1841-1866, to be 350,000. See *The Great Platte River Road* (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1969).

22. Milton Badger was a corresponding secretary for the American Home Missionary Society in 1864.

23. There is no mention of Roy in AHMS reports.

24. The Rev. Reuben Gaylord of the First Congregational Church, Omaha, 1864.

25. Published in the *Home Missionary* (November, 1864), 174-176.

26. Blanchard is actually headed northwest. Idaho in 1864 still included Western Montana.

27. A "runner" would intercept wagon trains and seek to convince emigrants to use a particular ferry. Blanchard is correct about the large fortunes made through ferry and bridge tolls. See Unruh, *The Plains Across*, chapters 7-8. Colonel Ward is Seth E. Ward, sutler at Fort Laramie, 1857-1871. There is no mention of a Bob McMinn in the standard overland and state histories of the region.

28. John L. Campbell. *Idaho: Six Months in the New Gold Diggings, The Emigrant's Guide Overland*. . . . (New York: J. L. Campbell, 1864).

29. "Hungarian grass" is a form of millet; the other grass names are accurate.

30. From several undated letters published in the *Home Missionary* (January, 1865), 211-214. Most of the material described the mining camps, violence committed, and the need for Christian missions. A short selection follows.

31. Blanchard's views here embody the joining of evangelical religion and personal empathy with social concern which had produced abolitionism and which would in a few years launch a new crusade for reform of relations with Indian tribes, culminating in Ulysses S. Grant's unique "Peace Policy" of 1869. See William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakening and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Sandra Sizer, "Politics and Apolitical Religion: The Great Urban Revivals of the Late Nineteenth Century," *Church History*, XLVIII (March, 1979), 81-98; and Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy in Crisis: Christian Reformers and the Indian, 1865-1900* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976).