



The Diary of James Mason, Ohio to California, 1850

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Article Summary: This article reproduces a journal from the second year of the California Gold Rush. Mason's party followed the Oregon-California Trail west. He prospected until 1851 and reported some success. (The journal entries are extremely brief and sometimes illegible.)

Cataloging Information:

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THE DIARY OF JAMES MASON, OHIO TO CALIFORNIA, 1850

EDITED BY JAMES C. OLSON

THOUGH emigration to the gold fields of California was much heavier in 1850 than it had been in 1849, the second year of the California Gold Rush has been much less publicized than the first. Likewise, despite the increase in emigration, there appear to have been fewer journals kept in 1850 than in 1849. Merrill J. Mattes, Regional Historian of the National Park Service, Region Two, Omaha, who has been gathering information on the subject since 1935, has accounted for "over 100" diaries kept in 1849, and only sixty-eight for 1850. By way of explanation, he suggests: "It is possible that by this time some of the glamour had worn off and folks were less inclined to view their journey as a heroic adventure, to be recorded for posterity."¹

The journal published herewith was kept by James Mason, about whom virtually nothing is known except that

¹ Merrill J. Mattes, ed., "Joseph Rhodes and the California Gold Rush of 1850," *Annals of Wyoming*, XXIII (January, 1951), 52-53. Mr. Mattes informs me that the only addition since this article was written is Charles Kelly, ed., "The Journal of Robert Chalmers, April 17-September 1, 1850," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, XX (January, 1952), 31-55. This and the journal published herewith bring Mr. Mattes' list to seventy.

he was born in Ireland,² and was a member of the Cambridge-California Mining Company No. 2, organized in Cambridge, Ohio, March 18, 1850.³ Many Ohioans were afflicted with the gold fever, and the heavy emigration begun in 1849 was continued in 1850⁴—indeed, Mason's company was the second to go out from Cambridge, an earlier one having been organized on March 13, 1849.⁵ The constitution of the Cambridge-California Mining Company No. 2 provided that the members should pledge themselves to "stick together like brothers," and maintain the organization until California had been reached, at which time the company would be dissolved and the property divided among the members.⁶ As will be apparent from Mason's diary, however, this happy state of affairs did not prevail, and the company, after reorganizing on May 27 just west of Fort Kearny, dissolved on June 20 at Deer Creek, near the present town of Glenrock, Wyoming.

The company left Cambridge on April 8, 1850, lodging the first night in Bradshaw's tavern in Fairview.⁷ While there, according to a notation in the back of his diary, Mason paid the company \$25.00. The next two days were spent in Wheeling, West Virginia, awaiting a boat to take them down the Ohio River, and there, apparently, the party definitely decided to follow the overland route to the gold fields, rather than the Nicaragua route.⁸ They boarded a steamboat at Wheeling the evening of the 10th, journeying down the Ohio to St. Louis, where they took a boat up the Missouri, arriving

² Wayne Knox, Ansley, Nebraska, to the author, n.d.

³ William G. Wolfe, *Stories of Guernsey County, Ohio: History of an Average Ohio County* (Cambridge, Ohio, 1942), p. 696. This information was supplied me by Mrs. S. Winifred Smith, Assistant Editor, The Ohio State Archeological and Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio.

⁴ For a discussion of Ohioans in the gold rush, see M. Robert Thomas, "The Impact of the California Gold Rush on Ohio and Ohioans" (Ms. Thesis, Ohio State University, 1949), part of which was published as "Buckeye Argonauts," *The Ohio State Archeological and Historical Quarterly*, LIX (July, 1950), 256-269.

⁵ Wolfe, *op. cit.*, p. 696.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Mason's Diary, April 8, 1850; Wolfe, *op. cit.*, p. 696.

⁸ Wolfe, *op. cit.*, p. 696.

at Kansas or Westport the evening of the 24th. At Kansas, Mason paid the company \$115.00, and was given credit for \$25.00. He also paid \$10.00 for a horse, and \$6.25 on oxen; he was given credit in the amount of \$12.00 for an ox and \$3.00 for a pony.⁹

The company left its camp near the Kansas landing on April 30 and followed the well-established Oregon-California trail. Mason and his associates appear to have been highly conservative in their choice of routes, and generally avoided the cutoffs which attracted so many of the impatient Argonauts. Nevertheless, they moved steadily along, and arrived at Hangtown on September 14, and on the 25th, Mason reached the Rough and Ready Mine and "went prospecting." A few entries for 1851 indicate that Mason stuck it out in the diggings at least well into that year. A degree of success is indicated by notations showing gold in the amount of \$1,697.00 taken out of claims in Grass Valley.

Though Mason's orthography was somewhat uncertain and his entries at times frustratingly brief, he appears to have been a careful observer. He took note of the size of the emigration at Fort Laramie, and thus helps to fill in that part of the story of the gold rush.¹⁰ His mileage estimates appear to have been as accurate as could reasonably be expected. The journal was kept in one of the ubiquitous little black, leather-covered books. Most of the entries are in pencil, and some of them are worn so badly as to be illegible. Such instances are indicated in the reproduction below by means of a line.

The journal belongs to a grand-nephew of James Mason, Mr. Wayne Knox of Ansley, Nebraska, through whose courtesy it is published here. It was first called to my attention by Mr. Raymond Jarusek, publisher of *The Ansley Herald*.

Apr 8 Left home came to Fairview
 9 to Wheeling
 10 a man Ran off ————— left for Cincinnati late in the evening

⁹ Wolfe, *op. cit.*, p. 696, indicates that the company outfitted at St. Louis, but this seems unlikely in view of Mason's diary.

¹⁰ See Note 31.

- 11 fine day the river———
- 12 left Cincinnati at 3 O clock the Boat was crowded
- 13 Awoke at Madisn where we Remained to 10 O'c
and took on —— met with A Gray
& David Ginn came to Louisville at 3 O clock &
walked round the falls & The Boat came over we
stoped with —— the Giant.
- 14 cold & snowing Stoped at Evansville past a Boat
That just Bursted one of her Boilers no 1 Killed.
- 15 passed Cairo in the morning day clear & pleasant
- 16 day wet & cold
- 17 Adams Left St Louis in the evening and came as
far as The mouth of the Missouri
- 18 passed St Charle
- 19 dark & Raining Sick all day broke the Rudder of
Boat passed Jefferson City at night
- 20 dark & Gloomy Jas Rainy lost \$100 last night Stolen
whilst asleep
- 21 Sabath passed Brunswick in evening
- 22 " Lexington
- 23 G. L. Melane passed in morning passed Independ-
ence landing in evening Licking Co Co had a row
among themselves
- 24 Arrived Kansas¹¹ in Evening moved to camp &
Spent the day in halling our Baggage
- 25 Spent the day in running round
- 26 Spent in fixing in Camp
- 27 day Spent in fitting up
- 28 Sabath write letters & read some
- 29 fitting up
- 30 left our camp & traveled 10 miles
- May 1 traveled 2 miles and encamped Shot some game
& fed sumtiously [sic]
- 2 traveled 12 miles & encamped on Cedar creek &
Raining Caught some fine fish & fared sumptious
rained all night
- 3 traveled 14 miles & encamped on do Creek
- 4 Crossed appilycy¹² tied cables to our waggons &
drew them in

¹¹ Kansas Landing, or as Westport called it, the Westport Land-
ing. For a valuable discussion of the development of the early town
of Kansas and its successor, Kansas City, see James C. Malin,
*Grassland Historical Studies: Natural Resources Utilization in a
Background of Science and Technology* (Lawrence, 1950), I, 91-377.

¹² Probably the Wakarusa, the spelling of which apparently
provided a formidable challenge to many of the emigrant diarists.
William Kelly, crossing the Wakarusa in 1849, wrote: "The descent

- 5 Sabath traveled 25 miles & encamped without wood in Pairie [sic]
- 6 Traveled 12 miles & encamped in ——— wood & watter rained & cold
- 7 traveled 6 miles & encamped in beautiful Pariare [sic] bought some milk from white men placed gard & the gard ———
- 8 Passed Uniontowns¹³ got some pie & milk Crossed Caw¹⁴ river & encamped 3 miles back got word that

was a matter of extreme difficulty, from its excessive steepness and the sinuosities of the path; so we took out the two lead spans from each waggon, locked both hind-wheels, and held back with ropes attached to the axle; but even with these precautions it was a very risky undertaking." (William Kelly, *Across the Rocky Mountains, from New York to California* [London: Simms and M'Intyre, 1852], p. 50.)

¹³ I am indebted to Mr. Nyle H. Miller, Secretary of the Kansas State Historical Society, for the following: "Uniontown was established in 1848 on the California road near an excellent rocky ford crossing of the Kansas river. (The place was about one mile south of the river in what is now Dover township, Shawnee county, west of present Topeka and near the present Wabaunsee-Shawnee county line.) Log houses and buildings were said to have been erected on both sides of the California road for a distance of a couple of blocks, and Uniontown was at the height of its prosperity in 1850. From its establishment it was the place of payment for annuities to the Pottawatomie Indians. But epidemics of small-pox and the opening of Kansas to white settlement caused the whites to move elsewhere. By 1855 Uniontown had practically disappeared. (See, also, *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, III, 15, 20, 21.)"

¹⁴ Kaw or Kansas. It is possible that Mason used the older route, and forded the Kansas River near Uniontown. The later, more direct route, crossed the river at Pappan's ferry, approximately thirteen miles east of Uniontown and within the limits of the present city of Topeka. Hulbert's maps show both routes, but do not give a date for the origin of the later route. (Archer B. Hulbert, ed., *The American Transcontinental Trails* [The Crown Collection of American Maps, Series IV], Vol. I, *The Platte River Routes*, Nos. 7-9.) Irene Paden quotes George Root of the Kansas State Historical Society as saying that Pappan's Ferry "came rather late." (Irene D. Paden, *Wake of the Prairie Schooner* [New York: The MacMillan Company, 1944], p. 38.) Ware's *Guide*, published in 1849, states: "At the Kansas crossing . . . you will find a ferry owned by two Indians." (Joseph E. Ware, *The Emigrants' Guide to California*, ed. by John W. Caughey [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1932], p. 14.) See also, George A. Root, "Ferries in Kansas, Part II—Kansas River," *The Kansas Historical Quarterly*, XX (November, 1933), 363-373. Robert Chalmers, who came along on May 15, 1850 (a week after Mason), passed through Uniontown, but crossed on the ferry—indeed, he had to stay over night because there were so many wagons lined up waiting to cross. (Charles Kelly, ed., "The Journal of Robert Chalmers, April 17-September 1, 1850," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, XX [January, 1952], p. 37.)

- the Pottawatimes & the Pawnees was a ware some
16 miles _____
- 9 passed the Catholic mishon¹⁵ herd the Prest say
mass Saw a lot of Indian warriors & the arrow that
Kiled the Pawnees Saw them dance round the
Scalp Saw a hand cut off traveled 14 miles
 - 10 traveled 12 miles & encamped in parie crossed
little Vermillion
 - 11 traveled 25 miles encamped in Paria with little
wood watter or Grass & then Stood gard to ½ 12
o'ck
 - 12 traveled 16 miles & crossed Big Blue¹⁶ & encamped
with wood watter & Grass here is the Bufflou &
Elk country beautiful
 - 14 traveled 12 miles & encamped in Paria with a fine
Spring 2 miles on the St Joseph road¹⁷
 - 15 traveled 8 miles & encamped in Parie with Grass
no wood Some watter dug a well called Jacobs
 - 16 traveled 10 miles & encamped in deep hollow with
wood & water
 - 17 Rested washed out clothes then _____ & I Rod
[sic] out 3 miles & we Saw 4 graves & one had
Shot himself by exident 2 days before
 - 17 4 of our men went a fishing & got lost and lay out
all night
 - 18 traveled 17 miles & encamped near little Blue went
& built a brush _____
we saw a _____ & an Indian
hut of Pawnees the Scenery Grand & Romantick
the Soil Sandy and all covered with the most beau-
tiful Pebbles
 - 19 Sabbath traveled 16 miles & encamped on a sandy
stream

¹⁵ St. Mary's Mission, on the site of present St. Mary's College. See Gilbert J. Garraghan, *The Jesuits of the Middle United States* (New York: America Press, 1938), II, 599-699.

¹⁶ After 1849, the most generally used crossing of the Big Blue was near Marysville, Kansas. From the distances given here, however, it seems probable that Mason's party followed the "South California Road," crossing the river at the Independence crossing, about eight miles south of the Marysville crossing. See Hulbert, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, No. 13; Paden, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-64.

¹⁷ The road from St. Joseph merged at Marysville with that part of the traffic from the south which had come up the east side of the Big Blue. The road from the Independence crossing joined the St. Joseph road about six miles northwest of Marysville. See Hulbert, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, Nos. 15, 16; Paden, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.

- 20 traveled 16 miles & encamped on little blue with wood water & Grass we travel up this stream some 60 miles
- 21 traveled 20 m & encamped on Blue Saw a large herd of Buffalo and got a piece of one
- 22 traveled 17 m & encamped on Blue _____
-
- 23 traveled 16 mi & enc[amped] in Beautiful place
-
- 24 traveled 25 m and encamped on plat¹⁸ it is very muddy and its bank is low & bottom quicksand the bottom is large & extensive
- 25 traveled 1- m & enc near Fort Kerney¹⁹
- 26 Sabbath lay over Saw the troops Drill the day was beautiful out at night one of the most fearful Storms that I ever Saw and tents was blowed over us all Camp _____ drenched to the Skin²⁰
- 27 traveled 18 me & E.N. [encamped] the evening clear & cool had rather a row in the morning & elected a new Captain Sml [Samuel] Reed²¹
- 28 traveled 20 m. & E.N. lost a horse but found it McDowals [?] ²² Broke an axletree
- 29 traveled 23 m. E.N. on the Banks of the River
- 30 traveled 22 m. & E.N. in bottom
- 31 traveled 20 m & E.N. went to the Bluffs the scene is grand & the Sand hills tower up in majesty height Saw _____ from Cambridge & herd from home from 1st of May Came to a camp where they had lost 18 head of cattle where we bought 33 _____ got a waggon for 5 & left our own

¹⁸ The trail joined the Platte near the west edge of T. 8 N., R. 13 W., Kearney County, Nebraska, not far from the head of Grand Island. See Hulbert, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, No. 26.

¹⁹ Fort Kearny, established in 1848 to furnish protection for the overland emigrants, and named in honor of Stephen Watts Kearny. The site is now a state park. The name was variously spelled, and seldom correctly, even by officers stationed there. See Lyle E. Mantor, "Fort Kearny and the Westward Movement," *Nebraska History*, XXIX (September, 1948), 175-207.

²⁰ As Irene Paden writes, the storms encountered in the Platte Valley, "were considered something unique even by such specialists in dirty weather as the emigrants had become." (Paden, *op. cit.*, p. 94.)

²¹ Overland companies frequently became dissatisfied with their leaders and elected new ones along the way. The original captain had been Joseph Stoner. (Wolfe, *op. cit.*, p. 696.)

²² The list of members in Wolfe, *Ibid.*, includes no one of this name.

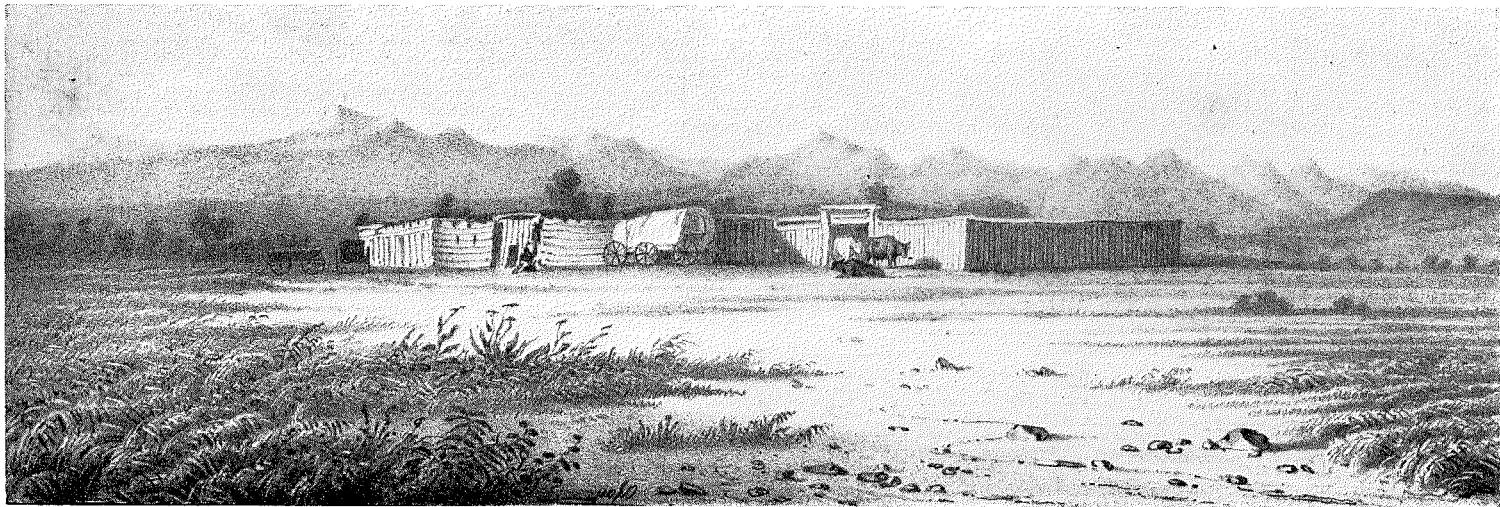
- June 1 Started rained traveled 20 m. & E.N. Grazed our Stock on ——— & I stood gard
- 2 Sabath rested made a sane [sein] & caught fish Some of our men went a hunting
- 3 traveled 23 m. & E.N. without wood & water
- 4 traveled 15 m. & E.N. crossed the Platte²³ the day very cold waded & was perfectly chiled [sic] drew some brandy & got rather funny
- 5 traveled 25 m. & E.N. left South fork & traveled over high Prairie to we come to ash hollow²⁴ were the Bluffs put in very Steep we let our waggons down with ropes came down the hollow 3 miles the Bottom Sandy & the rocks towering on each side to a great highet [sic] with small Seeders Standing there rugged Sides like so many Sen-tries²⁵ here we came to the north fork of Platt this evening very tired & ——— out the evening fire 2 Sues |Sioux| Indians came to our camp A Chief & Squaw
- 6 traveled 15 m. & E.N. the roads hevey & Sandy passed 3 Indian Encampments of Sues²⁶ the most of the Children naked & dirty & more dogs & Pups but the dogs works.
- 7 traveled 25 m. & E.N. the most of the road Sandy & heavy a great many Indians passed us mooving to other villages they hall there Baggage by tying their tent Poles on each Side of the Horses & making a Slide Kerth of them
- 8 traveled 18 m. & E.N. came in Sight of Castle Rock was in Sight of it all day it is a large pile of rock like the ruin of some old Pallace Hight 250 feet

²³ The Lower California Crossing, approximately four miles west of Brule, Nebraska. See Paden, *op. cit.*, 106-113, for an interesting discussion of the crossing.

²⁴ Across the river from Lewellen, Nebraska. The descent into Ash Hollow and the North Platte Valley was difficult and dangerous. See Raymond W. Settle, ed., *The March of the Mounted Riflemen* (Glendale: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1940), p. 89.

²⁵ There were considerable differences of opinion regarding the scenery at Ash Hollow. John Wood, e.g., who was there June 16, 1850, called it, "some of the most beautiful natural scenery," and declared, "it was almost enrapturing to behold the scene." (*Journal of John Wood* [Columbus: Nevins & Myers, 1871], p. 29.) Joseph Rhodes, passing through on May 30, wrote that Ash Hollow "was the most Desolate place I ever saw." (Merrill J. Mattes, ed., "Joseph Rhodes and the California Gold Rush of 1850," *Annals of Wyoming*, XXIII [January, 1951], p. 64.)

²⁶ The emigrants usually encountered Dakotas in this area.



FORT BRIDGER

- 9 Sabbath rested in Sight of Chimney Rock
- 10 traveled 22 m. & E.N. near Scotts bluff²⁷ Pass Chimney Rock this is an elevated mass of rocks Some 250 feet High at the Base it is round & Some 600 yds round the Shape of a potatoe pah [?] then the Rock shoots up som 75 or 100 feet²⁸ 19 miles farther on is Scotts Bluff
- 11 traveled 20 m & En on Horse Creek²⁹ passed Some Springs of good watter the Revenes in the Bluffs filled with Shrubbery of all Kinds
- 12 traveled 20 m & En near Platte passed a trading post about 20 from Laramie³⁰ Laramie's Peek of the rocky mountain can be Sen of Scott Bluff Distance 150 miles
- 13 traveled 15 m & En passed Fort Laramie En a M from fort the Emigrattion over 20,000 men 280 women 285 children 5331 waggons 16398 horses 5079 mules 10752 oxen 1320 cows³¹
- 14 rested wrote a Letter home
- 15 traveled 20 m & En on Bitter Cotton Creek³² passed a tent & Saw a man depart this life from

²⁷ The emigration in 1850 used the Robidoux Pass route. See Merrill J. Mattes, "Robidoux's Trading Post at 'Scott's Bluffs,' and the California Gold Rush," *Nebraska History*, XXX (June, 1949), 95-138. For circumstances regarding the naming of Scotts Bluff, see Mattes, "Hiram Scott, Fur Trader," *Ibid.*, XXVI (July-September, 1945), 126-162.

²⁸ Chimney Rock, just south of Bayard, in Morrill County, Nebraska, was one of the best known landmarks on the overland trail. It is now in the custody of the Nebraska State Historical Society.

²⁹ A favorite stopping place, near the present town of Lyman, Nebraska.

³⁰ Mr. Paul Henderson of Bridgeport, Nebraska, a careful student of the geography of the Overland Trail, suggests that this is probably Richard's, a trading post belonging to the American Fur Company. See Howard Stansbury, *Exploration and Survey of the Valley of the Great Salt Lake of Utah, Including a Reconnoissance of a New Route Through the Rocky Mountains* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Co., 1852), p. 288.

³¹ Additional figures on the emigration of 1850 may be found in David L. Hieb, ed., "An 1850 Gold Rush Letter from Fort Laramie by A. C. Sponsler, A Thayer County Pioneer," *Nebraska History*, XXXII (June, 1951), 138-139. For an extended account of Fort Laramie, see LeRoy R. Hafen and Francis M. Young, *Fort Laramie and the Pageant of the West, 1834-1890* (Glendale: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1938).

³² Bitter Cottonwood Creek, near Wendover, Wyoming. See Paden, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

- G bawa [?] disease Colera this streme takes its name from the timber on its banks
- 16 traveled 20 m & En near willow creek with excellent watter³³ the begins to be Broken & more timber
 - 17 traveled 20 miles & En in red hills³⁴ crossed La Bonta river³⁵
 - 18 traveled 17 m & En crossed Several Streams³⁶
 - 19 traveled 14 & E.N. on Deer Creek³⁷
 - 20 here the company disorganized & Broke in 4 companys committee to divide the property for each mess John Turnbaugh [?] Thomas Buham Joseph Buchanan & my self³⁸
 - 21 left camp on Deer Creek & traveled 18 m & En near the river
 - 22 traveled 10 m & crossed the Platt & paid 13 Dollars for ferriage³⁹ rather unwell with Dierea

³³ Probably Horeshoe Creek, near Glendo, Wyoming. The "excellent watter" no doubt came from Heber's Spring, or Willow Spring as it was called by some. See William Clayton, *The Latter-Day Saints' Emigrants' Guide* (St. Louis, 1848), p. 12; David M. Potter, ed., *Trail to California: The Overland Journal of Vincent Geiger and Wakeman Bryarly* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945), p. 109; Georgia Willis Read and Ruth Gaines, ed., *Gold Rush: The Journals, Drawings, and Other Papers of J. Goldsborough Bruff* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), I, 42; Settle, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

³⁴ For a good description of these, see Stansbury, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-59.

³⁵ La Bonte River, about thirty feet wide and two feet deep. Clayton, *op. cit.*, notes, "Good place to camp—plenty of timber, grass, and water. There is also a good chance, a mile further. Plenty of wild mint on the creek." Thomas Woodward, who crossed the river June 3, 1850, wrote: "Rough crossing on account of Being filled with Rolling stones and Running in a kind of Rugged gorge surrounded with Peaks and High Mountains covered with Rocks and Wild Sage." ("Diary of Thomas Woodward While Crossing the Plains to California in 1850," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, XVII [March, 1934], p. 358.)

³⁶ Including La Prele river, which many of the emigrants mentioned by name.

³⁷ Near Glenrock, Wyoming. This was an excellent place to camp, and many of the diarists mention the fine fishing. Chalmers, e.g., who was there at the same time as Mason, reported that the creek was "swarming with fish." (Kelly, *op. cit.*, p. 42.)

³⁸ The discord evidenced on May 27 must have increased.

³⁹ According to Lorenzo Sawyer, who was here June 3, 1850, there were four boats in operation, "one of which belonged to the Mormons." He paid \$4.00 per wagon and twenty-five cents per head for animals. (Lorenzo Sawyer, *Way Sketches Containing Incidents of Travel Across the Plains From St. Joseph to California in 1850*, ed. by Edward Eberstadt [New York: Edward Eberstadt, 1926], p. 39.) Chalmers, who crossed the same day as Mason, wrote: "We

- 23 traveled 25 m on the Sabbath over a barren country with neither wood or grass & En at Willow Spring⁴⁰ very unwell all day
- 24 traveled 16 m & E on Goose Wood creek⁴¹ over a barren track of country vegetation wild sage
- 25 Passed Independence Rock & crossed Sweet watter this Rock is Sittuated near the first crossing of the river it covers an eara of 5 acres & is said to be 40 feet high it is covered with names of the trappers & emigrants who pass this way the first Party which noticed this Singular Rock, in this manner, was a party of American trappers who chanced to pass that way upon the 4th of July when wishing to be americans even in that Secluded region of Aboriginal barbarism they proceeded to celebrate that great day which gave birth to human liberty this they did by a Succession of mountain revelings festivities & liberities which having been concluded they all inscribed their names together with the word Independence upon the most prominent & conspicuous portion of the Rock hence its name & notoriety which are as firmly established by that act as the rock of ages itself⁴² traveled 15 M & en near the Devils Gate this is a long chain of rocks some 450 feet high & the Sweet watter bursts through them the passage for the watter is Some 50 to 60 feet
- 26 Rested close to the Devils Gate cut a piece of our waggon bed & lited up all we could⁴³ 2 men died close to where we lay one of colera

swim the oxen and ferry the wagons. Fare is 5 dollars a wagon and one for a horse or an ox. There has been a number of men drowned this year by fording to save cost." (Kelly, *op. cit.*, p. 43.) See also Dale L. Morgan, "The Mormon Ferry on the North Platte," *Annals of Wyoming*, XXI (July-October, 1949), 111-167.

⁴⁰ Willow Spring was a welcome haven after the disagreeable journey from the Platte ferry. The guide books invariably warned the emigrants against using the water between the North Platte and Willow Spring. See Clayton *op. cit.*, p. 14; Ware, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁴¹ Greasewood Creek. Clayton, *op. cit.*, p. 14: "Very little grass, and no fuel but wild sage."

⁴² Independence Rock, "the Great Register of the Desert," was one of the best known landmarks on the entire trail. See Edward Eberstadt's discussion in Sawyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-43.

⁴³ Many emigrants "lited up" before this, and the overland journals are replete with discussions of abandoned property. See especially Bruff's account in Read and Gaines, *op. cit.*, I, 48-49.

- 27 traveled 18 M & En on the river⁴⁴. this day we passed 5 new graves
- 28 traveled 16 M & En by a Small lake trade 2 mules for 2 yoke of oxen Bought 1 yoke for 50 Dollars more
- 29 traveled 12 M & En crossed the River 4 times to day 2 men died near our camp this evening
- 30 Sabath traveled 16 M across a Sandy Desert & E. on the river with no wood & little Grass
- July 1 traveled 15 M & E on the mountain no watter or wood passed a good Springs this day
- 2 traveled 20 M & En on the river over a hillery road the Side of the hills covered with Snow 8 to 10 feet deep
- 3 traveled 12 M & En near the pacifick Springs⁴⁵ these Springs is 2 mls west of the Summit of the Rocky Mountains the watter boils up clear & cold the ground is very Swampy round them & can be shaken for rods
- 4 traveled 20 M without wood watter or grass & Encamped on little Sandy this Stream is muddy 40 feet wide 2½ feet deep⁴⁶
- 5 Rested on little Sandy & washed
- 6 traveled 10 M on Big Sandy good Grass no wood
- 7 Sabath rested read in the history of the plagues of Egypt & some in Burns had quite a hurlwind which blew down & tore our tents & Scattered our things & hurt some of our men
- 8 traveled 26 M & En on Green river⁴⁷ this Stream is a very rapid running
- 9 traveled 7 M. & E.n on the river Swam our stock & had rather a hard time of getting them in the

⁴⁴ The Sweetwater.

⁴⁵ Pacific Springs, T. 27 N., R. 102 W., Fremont County, Wyoming, three miles west of South Pass (rather than two as Mason indicates), was an important camping place, the first on the western slope. For a good description as of July 13, 1850, see John Steele, *Across the Plains in 1850*, edited by Joseph Schafer (Chicago: The Caxton Club, 1930), pp. 99-100.

⁴⁶ Clayton, *op. cit.*, p. 17, describes the Little Sandy as "20 feet wide, 2½ feet deep."

⁴⁷ Most of the California emigrants of 1850 took Sublette's Cut-off. (George W. Read, *A Pioneer of 1850* [Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1927], p. 69, estimated nine out of every eleven teams), which, though a dry and barren pull, was fifty-three miles shorter. See Jay Monaghan, *The Overland Trail* (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1947), pp. 351-356. Mason, however, took the longer, better-watered route along the Big Sandy. See Stansbury, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

- watter ferriage 5 dollars for ferring of waggon⁴⁸
 this river is the main tributary of the Colorado
- 10 traveled 21 m & En on Blacks fork traveled 15
 miles without watter came to Black fork then
 3¾ to hams fork thence to Camp
- 11 traveled 30 M. & En on Blacks fork mistaken in the
 road & traveled long after night next morning
 Saw 2 men tied up for Stealing a horse & mule
- 12 traveled 9 M & E on a Smal creek & good Spring
 passed fort Bridger there is no troops here but a
 trading post Kept by french & half breeds⁴⁹
- 13 traveled 24 M & En on Bear river passed Several
 excelent Springs & Copperass ore Soda Springs
 crossed Sulpher Creek on this river we found good
 Grass & watter & wood
- 14 Sabbath rested on Bear River this is a Beautiful
 valey & the Best field for the Botanist I saw on the
 road
- 15 traveled 20 M. & En on Echo Creek Good watter
 & Grass the Scenery beautiful passed Echo Cave⁵⁰
 this Cave is in a solid Rock on a beautiful arch
- 16 traveled 20 M & En on Red fork of Webber River
 our way lay down a deep ravene for 16 mls. where
 the Rocks towered for hundreds of feet above us
 on one Side & on the other the hills rose as far as
 the Eye could See Whilst Birds of prey Soured
 [sic] farr above us among the Craggs⁵¹
- 17 traveled 17 M & En in a deep ravene
- 18 traveled 15 M & En in deep ravene good Grass &
 watter very badd roads

⁴⁸ Franklin Langworthy, who crossed the Green River here on July 2, 1850, reported: "The river is now very high, thirty rods wide, deep, and at least as rapid as the Upper Platte. There are two different ferry-boats here. The price of crossing a wagon, five dollars. A Frenchman owns this establishment, who lives in an Indian lodge near the river. He has two Indian wives. . . . This stream is equally as dangerous to cross as the Platte, and many men have been drowned in it the present season." (Franklin Langworthy, *Scenery of the Plains, Mountains and Mines*, edited by Paul C. Phillips. [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1932], p. 64.)

⁴⁹ Fort Bridger, in Uinta County, Wyoming, established by Jim Bridger and Louis Vasquez in 1843 as a way station and supply point for emigrants. See J. Cecil Alter, *James Bridger* (Salt Lake City: Shepard Book Company, 1925).

⁵⁰ Cache Cave. See Clayton, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

⁵¹ See Paden, *op. cit.*, pp. 292-296.

- 19 traveled 10 & En 5 miles from the City of the Great Salt Lake
- 20 Rested & washed Some Shirts & Sold my axe for 12 dollars
- 21 Sabbath visited the city of the Lake went to church where there was a large concourse of people gathered together a Sermon from Bigham [sic] Young on the redemption of man Some of it done tolerable well it was followed in the after part of the day by an Irishman a Methodist preached & he gave the Mormons hark he was a bold able fellow he preached a random shot Sermon
- 22 drove through the City passed the hot Springs these Springs is hot anuff to boil an egge the watter is clear & 7 kinds of minerals & the Stream Strong anuff to turn a mill I allso had a bathe in the Salt Lake where the watter was quite warm traveled 13 miles
- 23 traveled 17 M & En on Second Creek this day we traveled down the valey in Sight of the Lake across nice running brooks & passed fine fields of grane the Salt Lake is 80 mile long & about 40 wide the watter is 2 degreese hotter than blood
- 24 traveled 17 miles in the valley passed through Brownsville⁵² this is a settlement of Mormons a few logg hutts the Soil off fine quality
- 25 traveled 18 M & En on boxelder creek passed hot Springs very Strong & the watter Salt $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile north of them is a Spring of cleere & cool watter Strong enuff to turn a mill
- 26 traveled 20 M & E.N. in valey good Grass passed hot Spring and cold Spring together
- 27 traveled 15 M & En at Strong Spring but the watter brakish
- 28 traveled 14 miles after night on Sabbath we Spent the day in girking our beef which we had butchered on Saturday evening was much disipointed in not getting good watter non but warm
- 29 traveled 12 Mi & E on Sink Creek⁵³ good watter & grass lost my mare stolen

⁵² Now Ogden. See Utah Historical Records Survey, *A History of Ogden* (Ogden, 1940), pp. 11-26; Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Utah* (San Francisco, 1890), p. 307.

⁵³ Probably the Sink of Deep Creek, near present Snowville, Utah. See J. Roderic Korns, "West From Fort Bridger," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, XIX (1951), 257.

- 30 traveled 9 Mi & E on deep creek⁵⁴ rested in forenoon and dried our beef
- 31 traveled 20 Mi nooned at pilot Springs thence to Sink of Some Creeks in the Mountain Side 1 M further to camp
- Aug. 1 traveled 18 M & E on Casses Creek⁵⁵ good Grass & watter
- 2 traveled 9 M up Casses Creek & E here we lost old Sock he died rather sudden he was much lamented by the boys as he was our main Sanby at the Start
- 3 traveled 19 M over a rough & hilley road passed the noted Steeple Rocks⁵⁶ the old fort hall road comes in hear⁵⁷ we En on Goose Creek
- 4 Rested on Sabbath & Spent the day verry pleasantly read the Bible & Some tracts our cattle had Some excelent Grass
- 5 traveled 18 up Goose creek & E the road mostly good Excelent Grass
- 6 traveled 20 Mi & En in thousand Spring valey no Grass this valey has a Great Many Springs of hot & cold watter Many of them 6 to 8 feet in diamiter & from 8 to 12 feet deep
- 7 traveled 15 M & E on cold watter Creek hear there is a great many natural wells of good water good grass
- 8 traveled 20 M & up Cold watter Creek passed Several hot Springs of great Strength En in fine valey good Grass
- 9 traveled 20 M down one of the most beautiful valey of grass I ever Saw with a great abundance of curenys yellow red & Black & Some Sarvisberries⁵⁸ with Springs of hot & cold watter as clear as crystal

⁵⁴ Mason's party apparently went up Deep Creek, instead of cutting straight west from the Sink, as the route generally ran. See Korns, *op. cit.*, map, "West from Fort Bridger," in back pocket.

⁵⁵ Probably Raft River. See Korns, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

⁵⁶ City of Rocks, an unusual formation near the present town of Gooding, Idaho. For contemporary descriptions, see Steele, *op. cit.*, 142-143; Sawyer, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

⁵⁷ Many emigrants were now taking Hudspeth's Cutoff, which by-passed Fort Hall. The cutoff joined the Fort Hall road approximately thirty miles northeast of its junction with the Salt Lake road. See Paden, *op. cit.*, p. 308; Sawyer, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

⁵⁸ Serviceberries?

- 10 traveled 20 M Down the valey of Marys river⁵⁹
good Grass the Stream clear cool watter with fine
place for Bathing & a lot of men went in the evning
- 11 Sabbath rested spent the most of the day in read-
ing the Bible in the afterpart of the day we had a
sermon from a baptist preacher there was about
50 of us assembled there on the banks of the Hum-
bolt the first hymn we sung was yes My native
land I love thee & the words was very appropriate
- 12 traveled 24 M Down the river leaving it Several
places & crossing the Bluffs⁶⁰ bought a quarter of
antilope
- 13 traveled 18 M crossed the river 4 times road pass-
ing through deep ravene
- 14 traveled 23 M 18 from noon passing over a range
of hills Several of us took a cutoff down a Kenyon
it proved long & rough & was 11 Ocl at night before
we got to camping place G. W. Lovel [J. W. Louv-
ell?] had a Severe attack of Colera
- 15 traveled 15 M Down the river & over Bluffs good
grass this evening a team drove into camp with a
Sick man in the waggon and he died before morn-
ing he was buried without coffin or Shroud his
complaint was inflamation of the liver from this
place on the 13 inst there was cattle Stole by the
Indians the men pursued to a gorge in the Moun-
tains when the Indians rushed out & the men run
one waz shot & one got Seperated from his com-
pany & has not been herd of Since his name was
Shield
- 16 traveled 24 M down the river
- 17 traveled 20 M down the river
- 18 Sabbath rested in good Grass an Indian shot by
an Emigrant for Stealing his horses
- 19 traveled 20 M down the river this morning 3 of
our boys went on foot Vansent I Sarchett Wm.
Parkison
- 20 traveled 20 M down the river

⁵⁹ East fork of the Humboldt River, sometimes known also as Bishop's Creek. For a discussion of the various names applied to this stream, see Sawyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 71n-72n; Ware, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

⁶⁰ The Humboldt was high in 1850, and the emigrants frequently were obliged to take to the adjacent bluffs where the travelling was much more difficult than it would have been on the floor of the valley. See Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 71; Ware, *op. cit.*, p. 34n; Sawyer, *op. cit.*, p. 72; Read, *op. cit.* p. 80n.

- 21 traveled 16 M over a verry Sandy road which fitigued our cattle verry much & En on Sandy Bank
- 22 traveled 18 M over a Sandy baran plane through a hot Sun there is considerable of Suffering for want of provisions this day I saw a fool man cutting meat of the head of an oxe that had been laying in the willows for Several days⁶¹
- 23 traveled 18 M & En on river poore Grass
- 24 traveled 20 M over Sandy & Baren planes encamped on river no grass
- 25 Sabbath tra 20 M & came to the Sink⁶² this day the Stock was very thick horses in perticular they would average 12 to the mile for 20 M a bundance of grass but watter very badd
- 26 traveled 5 M in evening waded through a swamp 1 M & cut grass on the Desert lost old Buck musketoes very trublesome
- 27 traveled 20 M mostly down the Side of the lost Slough or Lake of Mary river⁶³ where we came to the Desert here we Encamped for the night
- 28 Started in on the Desert at 2 o clock in the morning and drove through 40 M in 24 hours the rack of property on the Desert exceeds discription we think on the 40 M there is 3,000 head of dead stock from 6 to 8 hundred waggons and other property in like manner⁶⁴
- 29 where we Struck the Salmontrout river⁶⁵ there were traders from California provisions very high Flour \$2.00 per lb Bacon 1 00 Beef 25 to 50 cts & other things in proportion⁶⁶

⁶¹ Emigrants, almost always short of provisions, frequently resorted to desperat measures in this region.

⁶² Humboldt Sinks.

⁶³ Dry bed of Humboldt Lake. The emigrants went along both the east and west sides of the lake. Mason's party apparently was on the east side. See Hulbert, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, No. 34.

⁶⁴ Many of the emigrants remarked at the quantity of dead stock and abandoned property seen on this difficult forty mile stretch of desert, made all the more arduous by the fact that it climaxed the long, hard pull down the Humboldt. A. W. Harlan, who crossed the desert on August 31st, wrote: "I find there is about 30 waggons to the mile for 40 miles of the road—1200. the dead animals will average about 100 to the mile for 40 miles—4000." ("Journal of A. W. Harlan While Crossing the Plains in 1850," *Annals of Iowa*, Third Series, XI [April, 1913], p. 58.)

⁶⁵ Carson River.

⁶⁶ See Edgar M. Ledyard, ed., *A Journal of the Birmingham Emigrating Company*, by Leander V. Loomis (Salt Lake City, 1928), p. 110.

- 29 traveled 9 M up the river & En no grass
 30 traveled 15 M & En on river good grass
 31 rested & Baked
- Sep Sabbath traveled 16 M on the road mostly Sandy good grass wood & watter met large pack tranes of mules loded with provisions
- 2 traveled 17 M & En the roads mostly good passed a trading post
- 3 traveled 19 M crossed 12 M of a Desert En in good grass the Mountains begun to be covered with timber
- 4 traveled 18 M En near the mormon Station⁶⁷ Struck Carsons Medow this is a fine valey of grass Sum 45 M long & 2 to 3 wide with the Sides of the mountains Studed with tall pines & Brooks of cool watter ripling from the _____
- 5 traveled 5 M & E cut grass for the Mountain & Baked
- 6 traveled 7 M & En before entering the canyon bought Some flour 40 cts Bacon 62½ lb
- 7 this day we traveled 13 M & passed through the noted canyon of the Sieranavada Mountains 7 mi through & rocks with cliffs on each Side as the eye can reach covered with lofty pines from 6 to 8 feet in diameter
- 8 traveled 12 M & crossed the 1rst Mountain which is very Steep & rocky A Lake at the East foot called red Lake & another at the west Sabbath
- 9 traveled 16 M & crosses the Summit of the Moun the night verry cold
- 10 traveled 10 & En a M East of leek Springs the day cold & in the evening a heavy fall of snow & through the day I gathered ripe Sarvis berrys & curents
- 11 traveled 14 M rested to noon & gathered some grass went 4 M & then cut it with Knives & caried it to camp Several of our boys got lost & threw their grass away
- 12 traveled 18 M over a rough road no grass but had to browse on oak leaves
- 13 traveled 12 M & En in a little valey Meet Joseph Sarchett in the morning

⁶⁷ Now Genoa, Nevada. See Ledyard, *op. cit.*, p. 114n; Joyce Rockwood Muench, ed., *The Kilgore Journal of an Overland Journey to California in 1850* (New York, 1949), p. 54.

- 14 traveled 14 M & arived in hangtown⁶⁸ Sold our team
& waggon for \$550 & Started for Sacramento City
- 15 Sabbath traveled 22 M the country becomes open & not much timber the watter bad
- 16 traveled 22 M & got to our destination
- 17 went to the city all is bustle & confusion
- 18 visited the City agane bought Some groceries Sugar coffee & tea
- 19 Bought washer & pan & Shovel
- 20 Started for the Rough & Ready Mine⁶⁹ traveled 25 M & Stoped at the lone tree
- 23
- 24
- 25 reached rough & ready went prospecting
- Dec 20 S Luccock Started for home Dec 20 the Same night there was a ball at Denies (?) a row —— & a man Shot

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- Jan 12 Sent by J Hannah \$200 in gold dust or 12½ oz to Father
- 20 Started with Knox a prospecting a cross Bear river & a cross the north fork of the American on the divide cross grisley Kenyon Shirtale Kenion & to Indian Kenion spent a day on it had rather hard time poore fare & dear prices Spent 6 days on the trip
- Apr 10 Started to the Mountains Prospecting went Some 60 mls on to Kennion creek Snow deep & had a hard time of it made back to Grass valey (?) in 6 days from Starting
- May Left Grass valey & Started for the Mountains the day fine
- June 2 Alex Woodburn Started for the States in company with McDonalds
- July 15 Reed a Letter from Father
- Aug 4 Came to Murotz (?) Barr worked 6 days for 6 Dollars per day
- 17 do Reed 1700.

⁶⁸ More respectably known as Placerville.

⁶⁹ See H. H. Bancroft, *History of California*, VI (Works, XXIII), 356-357, 438-439.