

OVERLAND TO CALIFORNIA IN 1852:
THE DIARY OF SOPHRONIA HELEN STONE

Tutt Library Special Collections
The Colorado College

Edited and Introduced
by
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I dont know as you can make much snse out of this for I did not know how to keep a Journal and I have not had time to correct the mistakes so dont let aney one see this I have had to leave out a great deel for want of time but this is enough unless it is better

These words are penned at the end of a small, black, leather-bound diary in Tutt Library, at The Colorado College. The diary, that of a woman traveling overland to California, came to the library between 1967 and 1970. It came as a gift from Elizabeth McFaddan, who had graduated from the college in 1939. The diary had been given to Miss McFaddan's mother by a child named Caroline Daggett, and Miss McFaddan believed that Caroline Daggett had written the diary. Miss McFaddan was most certainly mistaken. According to Miss McFaddan, Caroline Daggett joined this traveling company in Iowa. This diary begins in Illinois. Also, the diary is not a child's book, either in content or form. Additionally, the apparent author signed the book in two places. A partial, scratched-out signature appears at the bottom of the last dated entry, and a full signature appears in the last pages of the book. The book belonged to Sophronia Helen Stone.

She was but one of the 350,000 people who traveled overland to California and Oregon between 1841 and 1866.¹ Sophronia Stone made the journey in the spring and summer of 1852, during the exciting early portion of the emigration. Emigration to the far

¹Merrill J. Mattes, The Great Platte River Road, Nebraska State Historical Society Publications, vol. XXV (Nebraska: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1969), p. 23.

west was still novel, and relatively free of the problems which came with the Indian wars in the late 1850s and 1860s.

She also had the distinction of being a woman in California at a time when women were a rare sight in that part of the country. The first California emigrants in 1849 and 1850 were almost exclusively male gold-rushers. Women began migrating to California in family groups in 1851 and 1852.² Evidence from the diary suggests that there were a fair number of women on the trail in 1852. Sophronia Stone noted that there were "a good many ladies" at a religious meeting the company held on May 31. Even so, the men of Yreka, California, acknowledged the novelty of seeing families when Sophronia Stone's train arrived. She wrote that fifty men followed them to their camping spot because "they wer so pleased to see famelys com in." Sophronia Stone's diary records her part in one of the greatest mass-migrations in United States history.

Sophronia Helen Stone left few clues to her identity in her diary. She failed to mention her age, marital status, or the names of those with whom she traveled. An examination of the diary reveals that she was one of a group of neighbors who left New Lebanon, Illinois, a small town in eastern Illinois, in the spring of 1852 for California's gold fields. They traveled in family groups. They also seemed to be a cohesive group. Sophronia Stone liberally sprinkled her diary with evidence that the train

²John Mack Faragher, Women and Men on the Overland Trail (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 37.

worked, played, and worshipped together. What is more, they survived together. Evidently, no one died on the journey, and the loss of animals did not cause undue hardship. This was all the identifying information Sophronia Stone provided her readers.

Further information about Sophronia Stone and her family appears in the 1860 California Census. The family settled in Shasta Valley, California, which had its post office in Yreka. Her name appears as "Sophrino Stone," recorded with the family of Elias Stone, obviously her husband. The census lists her age as forty-eight; she would have been forty when she emigrated. Evidently, Sophronia and her family had moved from New York to Illinois before emigrating to California, because the census listed New York as the birthplace of Sophronia, Elias, and their children. In 1860, her six sons ranged in age from thirty-four to eighteen, and lived in two households - hers, and that of her son, Willard. The census listed Elias Stone's occupation as "stock raiser," and estimated the value of his real estate at \$4,000, and his personal estate at \$7,000. Apparently, California had been kind to the Stones.³

Although the diary lacks specific information about the Stone family, it does reveal much of its writer's character. She was evidently religious, and wrote about the "meetings" in camp.

³National Archives and Records Service, Population Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, California, Volume 8, Siskiyou County (Washington, D.C.: National Archives Microfilm Publications, 1967), p. 116.

She also had a strong prejudice against the Mormons the company encountered. She referred to Kaneshville, Iowa, a Mormon settlement, as "a low mean dismal looking place . . . rightley named after ancient kane." She seemed to dislike the Mormons more than she disliked the Indians along the trail. The diary more strongly reflected Sophronia Stone's likes than her prejudices. Her surroundings fascinated her. She described the geology and vegetation along the trail with wonder and interest. She rapturously described Scott's Bluff. It was as if "fary hands had been tasty in bordering this spot of earth." This excitement overshadowed the moments of fatigue and discouragement which she, like any other emigrant, encountered.

Although Sophronia Helen Stone's diary is not as lengthy as some accounts, or as well written, it is an interesting and complete account of one woman's experiences on the westward journey. She kept a keen eye on her train, other emigrants, and the land around her. What is more important, she did so with appreciation and good humor.

EDITORIAL METHODS

In editing this diary, I have tried to preserve the writer's intentions as nearly as possible. I have, however, taken the liberty of adding capitalization and punctuation to the manuscript. Individual entries are often such a jumble of ideas and information that the deciphering takes considerable effort. The original manuscript boasts only occasional capitalization, usually in the middle of sentences, and no punctuation. I have added these to make the text more readable and enjoyable.

I have preserved the original spelling of the diary. Sophronia Stone's erratic spelling habits certainly add charm to the document, and it is always fun to check and see how many "milds" the party traveled on a certain day, or to note that the travelers ate "sarves barys" for lunch. I have only inserted letters in brackets where they have been obviously forgotten.

In the interest of clarity I have added the month to the date for each entry. Except for the first day of each month, she only noted the date with numbers throughout the diary. I have also noted the company's arrival at certain key points along the trail.

When reading the diary, it is important to note that not all of the entries were actually written on the day recorded. This becomes evident at various places in the text. For example, on July 4, she wrote that illness would restrict her activity for the following two weeks. Most of the diary, however, appears to have been written on, or close to, the recorded day.

April the 13, 1852

`We left New Lebanon, Ill., for California, it being a cool day and verry bad roads. We left a hous full behind us whoo came to see us start, it being a new thing to see so many start for the far west. I cant discribe the ceine, but one was a wife came and smiled on her husband and the tears streaming at the same time and holding an infant 2 weeks old, and his mother, a widow, weeping becaus of hur 2 sones going she thought for the last time. Our little band of Pioneers which consisted of 6 waggons our Neighbours. Some of our neighbours went one halfa day with us, then we wer left alone with none but our little band called Emigrants. Night cam on and found us ll milds on our long Journey. The first night we got supper in a farm hous. They let us bring our bed in and sleep on the floor, it being cold and damp. Willard would not consent to our sleeping out a dores. The boys thought it a verry funney times. Next mornning was a pleasant morning. We now are on our journey. Some slews to day.

April 14 We are now at South Grove. Here we are verry close neighbours. All are verry merry. We set our tent. The boys are all getting their suppers over a large fire. One is getting pudding. He is afraid of stiring the kittl over so he holds it down with one foot. All is nimble as deers. Here one was taken sick with the measles and had to be shut up eleve days, but with

care as good as we could and travel to he got along better those at home. Here we got hay and corn for our stock next morning.

April 15 The weather fine and pleasant. We pack up and start on again. All goes on well. At noon we stop and bate our team and we sit on the ground to dine, then we travel over a beautiful Prairie with now and then a farm house with out aney timber in milds of the hous. This afternoon twoo men came on the chace after us and said one of our neighbours owed him when he did not and took his team away. It raised a muss soon for we was as one fameley then but let him have them. Then Willard took one of our horses and went back to the man that repleved them and the team came back. That man said he would settle with the man who took them for 100\$. To night it looks like a storm. We have a large fire and all sorts of amusements going on, now supper and milking is over. We retire to rest in our waggons. The wind and rain beats hard on our covers and wets through.

April 16 A misty cold morning and muddy bad traveling. The rain pors down so we could not goe but six milds to White Rock Grove. Here we got in to an old house all but the sick one. We dare not take him out of the waggon. Here we stayed till next morning.

April the 17 Pleasan[t] in the morning and then rains and the sun shines all at one time. We pass some fine places and some verry romantic ceneries where the deer springs from their hiding place at the first sound of alarm. Before night we got to Ogle County.

April 18 We stop over Sabbath.¹ We pursue our long Journey. Nothing particular occurred, but the oxen I have mentioned before came up. Those behind first saw them and the word went from one to another till the old Gentleman heard it. He raised a shout and all came to a halt. The company gave three cheers for friend Norton and 3 for the Oxen and the old man Farley embraced the oxen for joy. All were now cheerful again.

April 19 and 20 Nothing happened in particular but tedious cold weather and awful slews that would take cattle in to their boddies and waggon to the bed. Some times have to put teams on so they would reach the hard ground then whip and drive out so sometimes Farley made us shudder to think of our undertaking.

April 21 We met Elias and the man he went after out ten miles from the Mississippi, then our company of Pioneers were all together.

April 22 We are now at New Albany, not a very large place but is situated on the Mississippi.

April 23 It took till noon to get ferried over. We are now in Iowa. Here is a small place called Camancha. It is a very good looking but the slews are intolerable. Sometimes it takes 7 yoke to draw one waggon out.

April 24 It rains and snows and blows. We stop in a house, our bedding being wet. We sleep in the house. Those who slept on the

¹This was one of the rare occasions when the party actually stopped over the Sabbath. They rested all day on Sunday only four times, and cut their travel short two other times.

floore had to pay 10 cents and those in the barn on the hay 5 cts.

April 25 To day we sea fine country a part of the day and some awful mire holes. We drive late to night to find feede. We at last came to a hous. They had no corn for our tired animals nor hay nor shelter for them nor us. A poor chance for Poor Iowa.

April 26 We stop at Decatur, Clinton County, in an elm grove, the largest slipry elm trees I ever saw. The wind howled around us like fall of the year. Here we went to a Methodist meeting in a school house. Here we cross Wapsupinaca ferry in a scow boat. Here wee are obliged to goe five milds to find feede and water. It takes a long time to cross ferries in some old boat.

April 27 Rock Creek, Scot County. Pleasant day but bad roads here. We have a fine deere taken by one of our companey, the first we have seen.

April 28 Stop in Cedar Co. Here we get hay and grain. Here we travel through a burning sun, the warmest day since we have started. Now we are at Cedar ferry and just got through with a fameley dinner of puding and milk. We stop on the open Prairie in Johnson Co., Iowa,

April 29 where we got hay that is once ben eat over. Cattle hungry as they wer would hardley tast it.

April 30 It is verry cold to day. We start between 6 and 7. It looks stormy. 2 teams gets slewed before they went ten rods. At noon it is clear and pleasant. We pay 25 and 30 cts lb corn, ten cts a head crossing Iowa river. At Iowa City we went up the

bluff to camp, the onley place unless we went a good maney milds. There was no feede but dried leavs and grass. We had some corn. Some packed hay over and it kept our cattle disturbed all night. They run our stock off before morning. 2 or 3 milds this morning.

1 May Cold and chilley. On we moove a little way of our journey. We stop where no one but a vast prarie is to be seen. Here our cattle has for the first time to pick for them selvs.

May 2 Traveling verry good to day. To night stop on a small creek called Hilter Creek. We crossed over easey enough. Boath sides were lined with Californeans. In the night it rained and hailed. It drenched us through. The hail and wind was so hard we though it would tare our waggons covers to pecies. On the other side they commenced to cross soon as day light, then it run over the fore wheeles of their waggons. We had to swimm our stock over. We were late on our journey and in tend to travel but are obliged to unload the waggons and dry our loading. Some said the hail was big as a hens egg. Hay one dollar per lb, oats and corn 50 cts lb. This is Iowa town and country.

May 3 Cold and rainy. This forenoon we cross Hiney Creek. We have to rais our waggons beds 6 or 8 inches to keep above th water. It is a bad stream to crooss, the opposite dug in to the bank just wide as a waggon and s[t]leep at that. Travel 15 milds, stop between Bare and Snookses Grove. Here we find feede, wood and water.

May 4 We are now on an eighteen mild Prairie where grass and water is plenty, but no wood. Twoo takes the horses and goes 3 milds and packs in wood. Here all our stock straid away 6 milds.

May 5 Cool but soon comes off so warm one can hardley bare the sun. Stop where we wer surrounded by hill all but one side, and that is a small grove in the midde of the Prairie. Here we are obliged to use slew water the same as the cattle. Here is good feede and and they are contented .

May 6 Their is 8 waggons and three tents. One of our men brings in to camp a wild turkey weighing 15 lb. We take wood for cooking through the day. It is a singular looking Country to find no wood for a whoole days drive with Oxen.

May 7 We are now in Newton, Jasper Co., Iowa. Warm but verry muddy. At noon stop on Cherry Creek. Prairies high and roaling, some good looking land and som poor enough, som good timber, not much good running water, but a plenty of slews that one cant gee round.

May 8 We have to carrie wood to cook. In som slew on the prairie for we must get close to water. Near Desmoin we cross a strem 25 or 30 feet wide where the buck eye timber groes spon-taneous. Stop by a byo. Here our stock 56 in number straid. It took till the next day to find them.

May 9 We moove on through a dismal road to to ferry. Desmoin is quite a large place, som fram houses but a good maney log ones. Here we cross 2 ferries in 1/2 mild. This is Polk County, Iowa. We goe 6 milds to day.

May 10 Goe 20 milds to day. Roads goes better. The country here in som places looks fine. We pass through Lin Grove. It is like other roads, one sollid mud hole. We call it basswood, it is thick, large and tall.

May 11 We are now camped and have 3 fires built for the night, and set 3 tents. Now comes all sorts of merriment and utensils scatered over the ground such as whips ox yokes chains and boxes. Some stewing apples, churning, making bread. This is Madison County, Iowa.

May 12 Camp where a great maney more is camped. It is all slew. When we get to water some visits us with a fiddle all seems to be sivil and lively.

May 13 We are on an 18 milds Prairie. To day pass a grove called Middle Grove, if it might be called a grove. Here we ford an other stream. Here is a fine country for Prairie land, verry roaling. Good roads, verry windy and hard traveling. Now and then a few trees.

May 14 On an other large Prairie. No houses but the roads lined with Californians or Orgoneans. Here we see some returning back and som dead horses. We have not seen a hous to day and but a few trees. No birds, but one hawk and one snipe. As far as the eye can see the Prairies are covered with teams at sometimes as far as one can scan the horizon. Teams looks like white specks or like ships at sea.

May 15 The Prairies are now covered with green verdure and a plenty for our stock and they are gaining fast. The clouds are

powering rain and the hallows are filld with waggons and the hills are dotted with cattle the thunder roals in the heavens and it and it threatens a terable night.

May 16 The storm is passed. We have but a little wood so we divid with our neighbours. The Prairies look beautiful, and even in this wild and uninhabited region of country it looks verry inticing to see as fare as the eye can reach one vast wild Prairie uninhabited by none but wild beast and birds and not a tree or shrub to be seen but the green erbage waving over hill and dale.

May 17 Camp on a small stream where crouds of covered waggons are drawn up in companeys and it seems like a city sprung up all of a sudden in the wilderness. The slews are filled with with every thing but gees turkeys and hogs and all sorts of noyses from the infant to the fiddle and dog. We carry wood 12 milds to Silver Creek, Cass County. Here the boys takes off their boots and wades a stream to go in to a hous. A hous is more sight now than a carivan ever was.

May 18 Here is som fine farms, and here is a hous in Iowa and a grocery. It is a board in the corner of the fence, and a white cloth hung up for a sign, and whiskey, beer, cakes and cheese for sale. Here to night we stop on a small stream. Here we find a spring of good water. We come to a ferry but the wind blew hard. They would not moove the boat. Their I saw a sight, a man beaten sensless by a band of Mormons. Then we forded above by raising the waggon beds. Here we hauled a young calf.

May 19 We pass over an uneven country, plenty of grass and good water. Here we see the first Indians. They were begging. Now we come to the Mormon settlement, a low mean dismal looking place. Here is Kanab town, rightly named after ancient Kanab. It is a small place, low houses, narrow streets. Here is fighting, quarreling, stealing. One night 20 head stolen and brought in to town and bid off at auction. Here is bad water. We have to guard our cattle night and day to keep Indians and Mormons.

May 20 The first night we got here some of our men went to town and could not find their way back. One mile from town we camped, for so many camped we blew the horn at ten at night. We are 8 miles below Council Bluffs but they extend down here. They look like hills squeezed all up flat one way. We moved from our first camp near the river. Here on the Missouri is a large cottonwood grove, is something I never saw before. Those trees tower to the height a 150 feet, and the cotton concealed in small catkins or pods white as snow and soft as silk. Here is one steam boat and two flat boats. About 3 o'clock we get over the Missouri in Nebraska and Indian Country in a land uninhabited by none but Savages. This is the Sabbath day. How different is the scene here to our own quiet little home in the States. We cross

this river the 23 of May. I have made some mistake in time for we stoped here a week. Now we go a few miles and camp.²

May 24 We climb hills and descend deep hollows, the crookedest road I ever saw. We go zigzag. The woods in Nebraska are not so large nor plenty as in Iowa. We are now going around a bend and I counted 53 teams all hurrying on to the gold region. It is a pleasant day.

May 25 Now we have come in sight of the Loup Fork where we have to ferry over again. I dislike to be in such a crowd for we know not what diseases may be among them and such hard language it makes one shudder. I am glad our company is free from swearing. This afternoon the Indian Agent came and broat the chief of the Pawnees to stay the night with us. He seemed well pleased with our treatment to him and his Squaw. When we were with the Omahaws we had to pay ten cts a team for crossing a miserable brush bridge.³ Those Indians were nearly naked some of them, and some were finely dressed off with tiny bell feathers and beads and paint

²Crossing the Missouri River was the first great milestone in the journey west. The emigrants had really stepped beyond the bounds of the settled nation, and were on their own. Sophronia Stone noted some of the common anxiety at crossing the River when she wrote that they had entered a land "uninhabited by none but Savages." This company's journey from the banks of the Missouri to California took a total of one hundred and twenty-four days.

³The Indians often charged the emigrants a toll for crossing bridges or certain stretches of land. Early in the emigration, the Indian agents sometimes encouraged the Indians to ask the emigrants for reimbursement for the privilege of traveling through Indian Territory. The federal government did not begin compensating the Indians for the use of their land along the trail until the fall of 1851. John David Unruh, The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1979), p. 169.

bows and arrows and some on ponies with a piece of raw hide tied around the horses under jaw for a bridle. Here we saw an Indian mound and a tall pole like a liberty pole by it. On seeing so many Indians, it frightened some of us green horns.

May 26 Goe to the ferry. When we came in sight of the ferry we saw for the first time a funeral. We formed in the procession and solemn we felt as we went to the grave and saw a father and mother trembling over the grave of their only child 2 years old. The grave was a large square hole and a grave in the bottom, then put their little boy down and put sticks across, then a large log on that and filled the grave up, then a prairie, and the sobs of the mother drew tears from many a stout heart and it seemed like tearing the heart strings out to leave their little one in a land of savages and wild beasts. Her groans were heart rending. Here we pay a dollar for going over once with 2 waggon and we swim the cattle. Here the chiefs squaw came and brought her papooses and told me they were hurt.

May 27 Camp on the open prairie. Nebraska is leveler than Iowa. Here is a plenty of Indians. A pleasant morning. Now we have to go in large company in the Indian country. Level roads but little wood. Platte River is wide in some places a mile and so full of quick sand in places it will let a man sink in a few moments. The water is so riley one cant see a half an inch under water. Mr. Brown, the Indian Agent, sent a man on to the bridge where the emigrants killed 2 Indians and told them to behave and let the emigrants pass with out trouble.

May 28 We heard the troops was on the other side of the river. We wer on the north side. All the way here we saw hundreds of Indeans, the greatest beggars I ever saw, some narley naked.

May 29 A fine day. Roaling prairie, no wood but what we carry. One grave to day. Pleasant weather, verry warm and dry. 11 waggons in the train to day. I made a flag and put the colours of our country on and the boys got a tall pole and fastned it on the Captains waggon and let it float to the breese. No Indeans to day. We pass 200 teams to day. Their was a slew that took ten teams to a waggon. We went lower down and found where we got through quick. The water onley com to the beds of the waggon so we com in a head of that drove.

May 30 Travel 20 milds to day to Grass Creek. Here som has the colera. We have a Doctor with us. He is a good Doct and when called at first cuers them. We have a minster. We are all healthy and in good spirits. Here is a good maney and all have somthing to make mery with, the drum, fife and fiddle and one acks the part of an Indean. Now the guard is out with the cattle. The Pawnees are here. The Pawnes and the Sous are at war with one another.

May 31 Travel to day becaus it looks like a storm and the stream we have to ford is a bad one at low water, and the Cholera is here to. Some patches of timber, some dead stock, som broken waggons, som cloths thrown away. 2 Indeans village deserted. We have a meeting to night. A good maney companies had camped around us for half a mild. We sent word all round and we had a full

meeting, and a good many ladies. We made seats with Ox yoks, our dinner boxes, waggon tungs put on a billet of wood or some such thing. Some sat on the ground, some stood up. After meeting we had a singing party. Cross Loup Fork, a bad stream to cross. One big waggon was in danger of sinking by the team stopping to drink. The quick sand gives way fast when they are traveling. The men ran back and lifted at the wheel and got them across. The waggon sank to the hub. I felt our waggon give way at every step.

June 1 Low prairies to day. We have to carry wood and water 30 miles. No wood to day. We find saleratus water, not very strong, the ground whitish. Some graves and some dead stock near the saleratus ponds. Warm and pleasant. Some is not well to day, we think it is caused by going in the water so much.

June 2 We travel over heavy roads, high sandy bluffs, and the heat is almost intolerable, and the cattle suffers for water. Saleratus water is about all we find to day. Emigrants have dug wells but they barely afford a man a taste. See more graves to day than any other. Stop after sixteen miles travel. The cattle complained so it put one in agony to see them with their tongues out and hardly go with out staggering. We stopped, but no water, but got the oxen as much in the shade of the waggon as we could but soon we heard it thunder and began to cloud up. The rain poured down to almost drowning.

June 3 Passed a number of companies to day sick with the cholera. We were told in one company last night eleven died. I

saw a cureosity to day, white ash trees eight inches through cut down by beever, looked recently done. To night we are obliged to camp near others if we camp near water or feede, and we found ourselves in the midst of the cholera. One train of thirty waggons died of so to waggons had but one to a waggon and them women. We are told our Doctor is sent for day and night.

June 4 We pass Prairie dog town to day. They throw up dirt like squirrel and are about as big as a cat. They bark like a little puppy. They are very shy. Level good roads, but Oh the cholera made us shudder. It made awful inroads in to famelies and trains.

June 5 All of us well. We saw a man put in to the ground with out a coffin or even a Prayr. The doctor was called. One died. They passed us and and about 3 0 clock. They buried a child. Our train is known from aney other for we carry a large flag and we are hailed night and day for the doctor has execlent luck in the cholera.

June 6 This afternoon it rains and diseas rains around us to. It seems the winged angel of death huvers over som trains for our fellow man is dropping dailey and ourley around us. We camp on Elm Creek, not good water.

June 7 It is a cool rainy morning. About the first thing met my sight was a man carried to his grave in a blanket and droped in and a blanket laid in after and covered up and no one to breath a prair. He was intemperate, as we learned that those large trains that lost so maney used a large quantity of liquor and thought

they must becaus of the bad water. Our doc is sick. Here come a man and begs and pleads for him to go and see his wife and with a deep sight hurries back. Dailey we see such seens. They are dropping around us dayley. The woolvs howls all around an all wise Providence seems to guide us safley on without sickness or loss. We have cows and all the train uses a goodeal of milk.

June 8 Verry level roads. Not so maney gravs to day. See som buffalow to day, som prairy dogs. To day we hold a court. An old woman becom dissatisfied with hur men so they chose 2 men for Lawyers and went on sistimaticaly and we had fun enough. Camp one mild and a half from the road on the Platt. We settle water it is clear or boil it it good.⁴ The Doctor has 2 calls to night. The flag train is inquired for and is known a great distance.

June 9 A pleasant morning. We travel along the bank of the Platt on one side and high sand hills on the other. Some is grand and eligant, one one overlooking another and smoth as a pland board. Here it is hard driving. Loos cattle becaus of the saleratus ponds.

June 10 Pass the South Fork of the Platt. Here we leave the wood. Somtimes we get floodwood or willows, but our chief fewel is buffalow chipps. I can bake bread with them as good as with wood.

⁴This party's skill in avoiding cholera and dysentery might be attributable to the fact that they boiled their water.

June 11 All well. Saw a [g]ood maney trains laid up for sickness. This after noon travel over heavy sand hills and camp on the Platt again.

June 12 Thos sandy roads are somtims over shoo and almost scalding hot. We have thos roads a great waiys.

June 13 We are in sight of the Ceader Bluffs on the south side. We go all the way on the north side stop to rest on Rattle Snak Creek. Here we have a piece of buffalow meat. Here som is going back, but the worst to me was a woman driving 4 yok of Oxen and 2 little children in the waggon. Hur husband died and she turned back to goe 300 hundred milds alone and verry sickley to.

June 14 Leave Ratle Snak Creek. Here we find a mothers grave and close by is the little son and daughters buried side by side. To night near us one dies. Another is sick. They wait for him to die, but he lived till the next day and buried him when one of our men who staid behind to help them said his fingers curled when they buried him.

June 15 Cool to day, warm to night. Camp on the Platt. Travel 20 milds.

June 16 Traveled up the Platt. It is high and over flowed the bottom lands. Camp under cobbelstone bluff. They are beautiful to look on. They are from a small nole to a towering hight of 3 or 4 hundred feet high. The sublime grandure of its appearance surpasses all we have as yet seen and awful casms is past discriptions. Som places looks like some ancient castle at a little distance. This rock is just soft enough so hundreds of

names are writin or cut in the rock. We are now nooning by that Stream that affords man and beasts our water, the Platt, the onley water we have. If it was not for that to supply us we must Perish. We are in sight of Chimney Rock and Court Hous Rock.⁵ It look like an old building decaying, and its lofty pillars standing, and twoo others standing close by I guess must be the Jail and Poor hous. Stop to night by a spring. It rains som and the winds bew verry hard.

June 17 Traveled over heavy sandy roads and low sandy bluffs. Poor feede to day, no wood and saleratus water. We have had to use buffalow chipp for a long time, but we find none here.

June 18 Pleasant day. Travel twenty milds, goe a mild from the road to camp. All well. We are close to the Chimney Rock. The woolvs howls around us to night.

June 19 Pleasant weather last night. We left a poor Ox a little from the camp that some one found and drove along, but the woolvs destroyed last night. We find no groves of timber in this country sometimes 2 days travel.

June 20 Stop a little beyond Scotts Bluff, a magnificent looking mound. It resembles a larg building. It looks like doors and windows and out houses and yards and cupolas and shrub cedars growing all around as if fary hands had been tasty in border-

⁵Courthouse Rock was the first major landmark on the trail, and was visible from a great distance. Chimney Rock towered over the trail. The Fremont Expedition in 1842 estimated its height at two hundred feet. These and all following descriptions of trail landmarks are drawn from: Irene D. Paden, Wake of the Prairie Schooner (New York: Macmillan Co., 1943).

ing this spot of earth, and on the top of this mass of sand and rock there are some cedars an hundred feet high, and to see such a garden up so high it carries one far beyond the reach of mortal man. We are now 20 miles to Fort Larimy. We can see Larimy Peak. It looks like a cloud in the distance. We have a meeting to night, text Acts 3 = 25.

June 21 We saw 3 graves. On one was inscribed, "blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." On an other was, "As you are now, so once was I, as I am now, so you must live. And to my friends that passes by, prepare for death and eternity." We are in the middle of the emigration.

June 22 To day we come in sight of a house across the river, the first for 520 miles. We are in 5 miles of Fort Larimy.⁶

June 23 It is cool. Camped a little beyond the Fort.

June 24 The Indians on the south side steal cattle and drive them off and for a sum of money drive them back. One man paid 25 dollars to get his cattle back. We stop at noon among the Black Hills. Here is the greatest variety of flowers I ever saw. Some of the Black Hills are the highest I ever saw. They seem to tower to the sky. They are covered with dwarf Pines and cedars and other bushes. Some strange looking shrubs grow nowhere but on the rocks and side of mountains. Those mountains are some of them projects over so it seems to be a wall or gun walls to a

⁶The federal government purchased Fort Laramie in the summer of 1849, with the intention of providing a way station for overland emigrants. The soldiers provided advice, protection, and mail service to the emigrants, as well as registering travelers.

boat, three or 4 above another, and trees stands in regular order all round but a gate way. It seems to be done on purpos. It is beautiful.

June 25 We went up on one of those mountains. It seemed at a dizzy hight to look down. Som of those mountains looks as if they had ben burned. The rocks are broken fine as cadimising rock and in ancient days the volcanoe had don his woorke here in maney places.

June 26 A cool morning. The hills are covered with cattle, and valleys with teams. Here one spring supplies us with water, cattle to.

June 27 Travel 20 milds over the Black Hills. Camp on the Platt. Have a meeting to night, text second corintheans 5 ch, 2 v.

June 28 Passed a notice of a murder of a man woman and boy. All had their throats cut and buried under a pile of floodwood on the Platt. The woman had a blow on hur head to. On her finger was a ring marked E W. The boy 12 or 13 years old.

June 29 Very cold morning and extreem warm days. Camp on the low lands a short distance from the lower ferry.

June 30 We are surrounded by camps on all sids. It seems like a village sprung up in the wilderness surrounded by mountains so high one has to look six or 7 times to se the top. Camp on the river.

July 1 All well. A man on the other side of the river stabled an

other than run. They caught him, tried him and hung him.⁷ Hard and tedious traveling. High and lofty mountains, deep and awful canyons.

July 2 Roads heavy so we could not ride. Got to the upper ferry, the last one on the Platt, but we were on the north side so we had not to cross. All that goes up the south side of the Platt has to cross here. Here 2 men got drowned in swimming animals, one on a mule and one on a horse. Here for ferrying a man 50 cts, a wagon 5 dollars. They get six hundred dollars a day. Those ferrymen are French and half breeds. They look savage enough. Had a hail storm to night. Here our stock was attacked by wild beasts but lost none, for 100 in a drove made such a noise the camp turned out. The nights are cold as December.

July 3 It bids fair for another very warm day. Camp at Willow Springs, water cold as tho it run over a bed of ice. Feeds poor.

July 4 Camp on Sweet Water, 3 miles from Independence rock.⁸ Stop to shoe our cattle and bake. Here I was taken sick with what was called the cholera, so before noon we had a doctor. He

⁷Impromptu murder trials were fairly common on the overland trail. For further discussions of the law's aspects on the overland trail, see Mattes, The Great Platte River Road; David J. Langum, "Pioneer Justice on the Overland Trails." Western Historical Quarterly, 5 (October, 1974): pp. 421-439; and John Phillip Reid, Law for the Elephant: Property and Social Behavior on the Overland Trail (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1980).

⁸The emigrants knew Independence Rock as "the great registry of the desert." Thousands of emigrants painted or scratched their names onto this granite formation.

said it was a violent attack, but it was 2 weeks before I could walk much.

July 5 We leave Sweet Water.

July 6 The rock is a large solid rock about 300 feet high. It stands separate from all the rest. It as level as a Prairie (roads). We stopped at noon at the Devils Gate. Here is one of the greatest natural curiosities on this trip. It is a deep casm in the Rattle Snake Mountains through which the Little Sweet Water pours its waters boiling foam. This rock in some places is perpendicular to the height of 3 or 400 feet high. This and the Independence Rock I was deprived of visiting. Stop on Sweet Water. To night bounded on all sides by high mountains but on the width of the road. Some of those mountains are covered with large pines and cedars and some are so smooth that nothing can grow.

July 7 Cold enough to snow. Men are shivering with over coats on. It thunders and lightens. It is January cold.

July 8 A little warmer. Forded Sweet Water 3 times in 2 miles. We come to trading Posts now, sugar 25 cts, brandy whisky twelve dollars a gallon. Here I was taken with the Cholera morbus so they thought at once I was dead but it was a faint I suppose of 20 minutes.

July 9 I can't give much account of our Journey for a few days for they kept the waggon close. Now the Little Sweet Water spreads its self broad and wide to one hundred yards. We gave chais to a large yellow Panther, but it soon gained on horses and dogs. There is money in those mountains that surround us.

July 10 Cool, pleasant morning. Camp on Strawberry Creek. Here we find goosberrys, the first fruit we have seen.

July 11 Traveled but a few milds stop on the same creek. Their 3 of our train was taken with the mountain fever. We gave calomel and broak it up. That was the 4 day we had traveled in sight of the Wind River Mountains covered with snow. There we had all the snow we wanted.

July 12 Lay up to wash and bake.

July 13 All better, travel on again. Arived at the summit of the South Pass, camp at the Pacific Springs.⁹ Good water, but no feede.

July 14 Travel twelve milds, camp under the snow mountain. Here is near forty waggons. We have gon about 4 milds of the road to find feede and water. Exelent water, but not much feede, mostley sage brush and greese wood. All better.

July 15 Now we come to the Salt Lake road. Here we wer at a stand whether to goe over the desert or goe father and miss it. After an our or twoo it was decided the later. Camp on Little Sandy. This stream is not clear. It is large as the Irondequrt.

July 16 Travel 8 milds, stop on the Big Sandy for the boys to come up. Our horses stampeeded, if not drove off. To day they com in to camp, all found.

July 17 Travel seventeen milds on the Salt Lake road and take a

⁹The emigrants reached the summit of the Rocky Mountains at the South Pass. The ascent was so gradual that many emigrants failed to notice that they had crossed the Continental Divide.

cut off and leave this river entirely. Here is 15 miles to Green River. By taking this cut off we save 54 miles desert.

July 18 Very changable weather, cold one hour and warm as anewhere the next. Some of our company is taken with the mountain fever. It is 25 miles to the old Sublett cut off. To night camp on Green River.

July 19 Travel ten miles to the first branch of Green River. This is a barren soil, not even sage brush or grees wood. Found a little feede on the banks of the stream. Camp to night where our vituals are gritty. The sand blows so I think a few such campings we shall not onley get our peck of dirt but a half a bushel. We are in sight of snow all day.

July 20 Cold, for the wind blows over snow if it blows at all.

July 21 Very mountainous, hard for cattles feet. Summer and winter weather all in one day. Some furr trees and the coldes spring water I ever saw. Camp at rock run at the foot of a long and tedeous decent. At noon stop on Thommas Fork of Bare River. Good feede and a large spring.

July 22 Here we see some Indeans. The hills are so high we cant see the sun rise nor set.

July 23 Rest our cattle.

July 24 Here we pay one kept by the Mormons. Camp on Tulicks Fork of Bare River.

July 25 Travel all day. We stop at the foot of one of the teageousest hills that ever poor creatures could stan and draw a waggon. We find a fine stream at the foot of this.

July 26 We start early to climb when it was cool. Here our teams went zigzag and I guess we all did. We go about ten feet and stop and look up and then down to see if we gained much. We was glad when we got up. We laughed at each other for panting and falling down. Camp on the other side on Bare River.

July 27 Stop on a mountain rill. It empties its waters in to a large stream. Find a plenty of wild currents, some is red and some yellow. We could not bare to leave one, it was such a treat, but we got our arms full of bushes and run to get in the waggons for they wer fording a deep stream. 16 waggons in our train, 6 of them would camp with us evry night and travel days becaus som of them wer afraid, and after a while com in to the train and took their turn in leading. Law in trains for all to goe in regular order. Every one knew what day their waggon drove a head. It kept all the train peccible and no jeleousy.

July 28 Com to the Soda Springs, the greatest cureosity is ever saw. It is soda water boiling up through solid rock and boyling up through a combustable that is formed by the water. It is hard as rock. Sweeten the water and drop a little tartacic acid in, it will foam over the cup. A little from those springs and by another their is a spring boiling lik a pot and red and thickish, looks like paint. A neat little stream runs by in som places, it boyls up in the stream. Next cureosity in a mild is the Steam Boat Spring. It is warm and boils and once in so long it bursts up a regular interrals. It is a small hole in the rock and on

the surface scooped out like a basin. We camp close by for it is 18 miles to water from here.

July 29 We travel over an interval where rocks are splitt open as far almost as you can see down, and I think it may have hapened when our saviour was cricified. No water here.

July 30 Come down a wid gulley where it seemed as though every thing would brake and then push a bead to almost go over the yoke of oxen we had on. Here we find a plenty sarves barys and wild currents. They are exelent.

July 31 Travel till noon and we can look down on our last camping ground. Camp on Willow Creek, water warm.

August 1 Travel till noon. At four o clock we start and travel till one at night on a 25 mile rout without water over a mountain that was six miles to the top and two down, and down was a revene just wide enough for the road. If we had had ropes it would ben easier for the cattle to let them down so. It some-times looked as tho the waggons was a goin to get on the oxens back to ride. A sight of dead stock on the road.

August 2 Travel 12 m to day to Spring Creek. Lay up to recruit our cattle and selvs from the past nights travel with out water.

August 3 Travel through a beautiful kanion, mountain rises to the hight of a thousand feet. Verry warm through here, for not much wind circulates through. Here sarvis berries a plenty.

August 4 Good water, roads good. Camp on second branch of Raft River. Had a thunderstorm. Rain for the week past evry day. Travel in sight of snow all day.

August 5 Travel without water for ten milds, but fortunately for us we found water a mild from the road so ur cattle was supplied for.

August 6 Here we come to a city of rocks. One is like a hay stack with a rider to hold the hay on. Others looked like houses barns, sheds, and one is a larg high rock and on the top was another rock sat so high it seemed lik to fall. One way you view it, it seemed like a bird. Some has large holes in like rooms. One I went in was large and seemed like gothic woork.

August 7 Lay up, one is sick. We lost a hors here.

August 8 Travel over Goos Creek, rocky roads.

August 9 Verry good roads, but awful dusty. Camp at Goos Creek, a good spring.

August 10 Goe ten milds to Thousand Springs. Stay till the cool of evning, then travel 12 milds in the night becaus cattle goes better in the night with feede and water. It freezes.

August 11 A pleasant morning and warm as ever. Come to hot springs, so we have to set it in vessels to cool so we can drink.

August 12 Severe cold till the sun gets up, then it gets so warm one cant hardley bare it. Camp on a small stream that emties its waters in to the Humbolt.

August 13 Good feede and water, ecelent clover. We stop one day. 3 horses stampeeded from camp. One was a poney. He was tied to a yoke with 60 feet of rope. They went 6 or 8 milds back. They track them 3 mild by the yoke. Its jump was 8 or 10 ftt.

August 14 This is a canion for 3 milds a head. Here is a boiling spring. It boils up 3 feet. It coms out from under a mountain of 1000 feet high. The roads are so bad here that the waggons rubbs over the rocks. At noon we com to piles of snow. Camp at night near the Humbolt.

August 15 Stop on the humbolt. The men say it is the best feede yet, and wild wry large as in the States. Some was 6 to 8 feet tall.

August 16 Travel through a beautiful valley, good roads here. 7 head of catle drove off by the Digger Indeans. Some was killed in camp, shot with arrows. One horse was not quite dead but they had to kill him.

August 17 Indeans are here hid in willows which the banks are lined.

August 18 It begins to look scary some now.

August 19 Rough rocky roads, steep assents and decents. Cold and chilley.

August 20 Travel 18 milds on the river. Verry dusty so somtims cant see the head cattle.

August 21 Good weather.

August 22 Verry cold. Travel all day near the river.

August 23 Warm and pleasan[t]. Verry dusty. Camp on the Humbolt. We see Indean signs, a smoke in the mountains, it is sign.

August 24 Over bluffs and through a canion 8 milds. Cattle lost, 25.

August 25

August 26 Som good roads, sand deep. Travel by the Humbolt or Marys River. Some heavy sand bluffs to goe over.

August 27 Cold this morning.

August 28 Travel 12 milds over deep, heavy, sandy and rocky roads.

August 29 Lay up to cut grass for the dessert. We on load one waggon in to 2 and put on team enough to draw a load of hay.

August 30 We hear leave the Humbolt for Yreka, Shasta Valley.¹⁰

September 1 We are on the dessert, no feede or water for 24 milds. From last water was Rabit Hole Springs, a poor place to water. Had to go down in holes and dip with pails. Now here is the greatest wast of Property I ever saw, waggons piled up and burned, chains are strowed all along the road, in one place 12 chains hooked to gether. Now 3 Indean fires are started at aposite directions. Now we find cattles bones in piles bleached to snowy whiteness. It seems that 3 and 4 had stood together. Travel till ten or eleven and find all hot water. We had to set it in pails to cool it. It was so hot it s[c]alded cattls feet

¹⁰Here the company left the commonly-traversed Humbolt Valley for a less-traveled route, "Lassen's Cut-Off." The term cut-off, in this case, was a misnomer. The route was actually longer than the trail along the Humbolt, and posed greater hazards. There was less water, less feed, and more Indians, and few emigrants took the route.

or made them cripple badly. It smells all round here like a cole pit.¹¹

September 2 Good roads. Lay up to rest our teams from the last drive. Here is a big meadow a good [d]eal of saleratus.

September 3 Travel all night to get water and grass. We are to night surrounded on all sides but a gap to come in and go out. Stop here to day after a night's drive. We lay up next day. Here is a volcano of a great depth and it appeared to be cinders. Some of our men went down on one side and come to the other side. I let a ball of yarn down, they fastened it, I took it back. It might be four hundred feet. Here around this place is a stone fence made. They are cobble stone. One stone is laid on one and some is 2 and 3 about a foot apart.

September 4 Heavy sandy roads as ever I saw, rocks as straight as a tree and much taller. Looks as if they had been hewn and under one was a room. Some went in they said it was 30 feet high and it appeared like water dropping. There is many wonders along this route, but the most of all is that we are spared all of us to come this far. It is dark when we get through this canyon. We hailed this spot with joy when we could stop for we had to walk, the road was so rocky.

September 5 Our cattle's feet was cut and jammed up so bad we had to lay over.

¹¹The desert presented one of the biggest obstacles in the journey. Emigrants often lost many of their animals (and, consequently, many of their possessions) in this long, forced march without feed or water.

September 6 Travel through a little kanion that beat the other 2 milds. We stop, I cant tell the name unless it is no where. We stop this afternoon so not to stop at the warm springs.

September 7 This morning the ice was half an inch thick. We are now in the Nevada, verry cold. The Indeans stole 3 yoke of Oxen and cow. The boys is gon after them. We goe afew milds and wait. Thy come and cant find them.

September 8 Nine starts out again. An arrow was shot in to camp and 2 barefooted Indeans was tracked on the side of the mountains in the morning. Stay here all day.

September 9 At ten they come in found where som had ben killed, got some of the meat. We goe on again. Thy had som in the fire cooking. The boys got that. They had lots of the meat on the rocks and in the trees drying.

September 10 The roads so rocky the boys has to go by the waggons to hold them up. Stop to hot springs again.

September 11 At noon stop in a beautiful meadow, clover as nice as you ever saw, then goe about a milds and, Oh, the beautifulest peaches and cherries. We could not goe no farther to day. The waggons was deserted in about ten minutes. The hill was alive with folks. We picked bushels more than we could carry. I made 2 gallons of Prservs.

September 12 Now we clime the Nevada mountain. Three hours in going up. At the top for 3 feet it was perpendicular, so one man took his team off and the men took hold of hands and raised it up. It was quite raisin. Camp at Goos Lake here.

September 13 We leave the old Lawson Road for the new road to Shasta Valley. To day it seems as if the road is one stone pile. We have to goe a foot in such places for fear of getting our heads nocked off. Stop after dark where their is a wall of stone on 2 sids of this spring.

September 14 Travel down this vally 15 milds. Had roads, pond holes. We hadley shun one but we were in an other, and then comes rocky roads again. I thought I had seen rocky roads before but this beats the nation.

September 15 Come where deer is plenty.

September 16 4 of the boys starts to goe through to Shasty. It is 100 milds. About twoo o clock a sight met our eyes. It was a paper tied on a stick by some willow huts. This paper forbid aney one from passing their till a companey of rangers came back whoo had gon to guide a train on. If went we should be killed for 300 Indeans had banded to gether at a point of rocks and had killed a good maney, I think 14. We stoped and corelled our waggons for the first time to put our cattle in at night, and those 4 men would just get their that night. We saw just at sun down a cloud of dust rise. Som said it was Indeans, others the rangers. We saw horses and mules and men on them and their arms glittering in the sun. They wer on the run. No one can tell the feelings of that moment. Their leader rode in to our camp and verry politely told us they wer friends to protect us, but we wer not alarmed when we saw they wer white. They wer armed with rifles and revolver and knivs, they looked savage. They said

they took a cut of and as they rounded a point they saw the last mans head goe out of sight right towards the Indeans but a short distance from the rock, so they brought them back.¹²

September 16 Stop here one day. A companey of Rogue River men come that night.

September 17 Fifteen men went twelve milds with us. As they went a head they saw Indeans. They ran for the Tuleys and hid. All went back but 3 who went 3 days with us.

September 18 They carelled 8 waggons and kept them from the water.

September 19 We travel with eys searching evry dark and suspicious place. Travel 18 milds to find grass and water.

September 20 We are now out of the Diggers land and in the Shasta Valley tribe. They are not so hostile.

September 21 Travel 6 milds. Lay up, our cattle feete is so tender. We travel four days in sight of Shasta Bute, all covered with snow.

September 22 Stop at Sheep Rock. Here is ceder and Pine, large

¹²This, unlike most "Indian scares," was legitimate. A group of California volunteers left Yreka, California, on August 29, 1852, in response to rumors of Indian depredations along the northern route to California. They arrived at Tule Lake in time to bury twenty-two murdered emigrants, and to liberate a train of sixteen wagons that was holding off the Indians. They killed between twenty and thirty-five Indians in the process. This diary suggests that the volunteers remained at Tule Lake to help other trains that came through after the massacre. The "Tuleys" mentioned in the entry for September 17 most likely refers to Tule Lake. See Unruh, The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, p. 148, for further explanation.

strait and tall. Now this is a large, rocky region where the mountain sheep abounds, deer and antelope to.

September 23 Camp on Shast River, the last camp. Here was a great time. We thought if we was going to see inhabitants and houses they must dress up.

September 24 Now we expect to soon see houses, and we get in sight of the town, and here they are as glad to see us as we are to see them, for they are watching to get the first glimps. We soon hid ourselvs back in the waggon, and a train followed to our camp much, as fifty, they wer so pleased to see famelys com in. We campt out four weeks.

I don't know was you can make much snse out of this, for I did not know how to keep a Journal and I have not had time to correct the mistakes, so don't let aney one see this. I have had to leave out a great deel for want of time, but this is enough, unless it is better.