

LETTER DESCRIBING A MARCH TO UTAH IN 1859¹

Camp Floyd, U. T.,
Sunday, October 16, 1859.

My Dear:

Agreeable to promise I will now endeavor to give you an account of our journey, hoping that it may interest sufficiently for its perusal, and while away perhaps an otherwise unhappy hour. We shall narrate things as they occurred to us on the journey and as they come to our minds. We started from Newport on the evening of May 25 and arrived in St. Louis, Missouri, on the following evening and immediately went on board the steamer Alonzo Child for Fort Leavenworth.

The scenery on the Missouri in some places is very beautiful. Large cliffs of rock on both sides of the river rise perpendicularly eighty to one hundred feet and their summits were covered with groves of trees in luxuriant foliage. We passed by many very pretty villages on the Missouri; saw many so prominent in the "History of Bleeding Kansas," by Horace Greeley. I did not see as they had suffered much from the war, the "Holy War of Freedom," but they looked pretty and peaceful, and were fast improving cities and towns. We arrived in Fort Leavenworth on the following Sunday evening and the next morning went out to camp, pitched tents and in reality began our first day in soldier life.

We were encamped there ten days. To us all, life seemed in a new aspect. The realities were soon to come. We were going to travel 1,200 miles across the plains, the home of the wild

¹This is a letter from Hiram W. Studley to Miss Lydia M. Trego, who afterward became Mrs. Studley. Mr. Studley was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, November 24, 1834, and died at Cumberland, Iowa, November 16, 1912. He was graduated from the New Bedford High School, then followed clerking until 1855 when he removed to Rock Island, Illinois, where he became a collector, and later an auditor for a land company. In October, 1858, he enlisted at Newport, Kentucky, in Company D, Seventh United States Infantry, and was soon thereafter appointed quartermaster sergeant. Because of trouble with the Mormons in Utah Territory, a force of some 1,500 United States troops was sent by President Buchanan the fall of 1857 into Utah. They were under command of Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston, afterward the famous Confederate general. Owing to the difficulties of the long overland march they wintered in the mountain valleys in northeastern Utah and did not reach Salt Lake City until 1858. The government maintained its force there a few years, and the Seventh Regiment in 1859 was evidently a part of that force. In 1862 this regiment served with the Army of the Potomac until after the New York Riots in July, 1863, when it was sent there. Mr. Studley was honorably discharged at Fort Schuyler, New York, in October, 1863, and was then employed as a clerk in the Commissary Department in New York, Nashville, Washington, and Philadelphia. In 1875 he removed to a farm near Cumberland, Cass County, Iowa, and in 1894 to the town of Cumberland. He held many positions of trust in township and town government.—Editor.



HIRAM W. STUDLEY

(From a daguerreotype made "sometime in the '50's.")

Indian, the buffalo, the panther, and the deer. But say you, can the plains be attractive to any one? Are they not like our own prairies? No, not always. Beauties there are on the route from Fort Leavenworth to this point worth journeying for. And many times when on the route have I wished that we might continue traveling, I had become accustomed to it so well. It might not have been so agreeable if I had had to walk. To some, I suppose not thinking of the future, it seemed very nice to lie in the tents on the beautiful green grass and nothing to do but the ordnance duties of camp. But the attractive feature was to come. There were long and lonesome marches some of the way, twenty, twenty-five, and thirty miles a day for many succeeding days, traveling through sand three and four inches deep, and the sun pouring down with the intensity of our hottest days at home. The weather, with the exception of the heat, was delightful, and we did not have rain more than three or four times during the entire trip. In fact I do not know what the men and women would have done if it had rained much, for as you journey on the Platte River the only article of firewood is "buffalo chips," or buffalo manure, and if it is wet it is good for nothing, and from the time you strike Fort Kearney on the Platte until you reach Fort Laramie you will find no timber worth mentioning. You can then travel for hundreds of miles and not find one stick of timber. You would smile to see the women and men, as soon as we would get into camp, taking an empty corn sack and going out to gather fuel to cook their meals.

For about 150 miles from Fort Leavenworth the country resembles our own state, but after you have left the Big Blue River the soil rapidly diminishes, and soon there is none, and no grass. All sand, sand. Let the enthusiast from New England who comes to the far West with the idea that the level prairie is a paradise, journey from Fort Kearney to Fort Laramie, traveling day after day on one continuous level. No tree, bird, or insect to relieve the eye and refresh the mind, but one continuous cloud of dust filling the air and covering everything with a splendid coating, and then you feel so nice when you arrive in camp in your miller's garb. Oh, how cheerful it was when we came in sight of the Platte! The road that day had been very dusty

and the air hot, and as soon as we came into camp the bank of the river was completely lined for quite a distance with men, women, and children, some drawing water, some bathing, some washing, etc. On the bottoms of the Platte River you can dig, say three or four miles from the river, down two feet and find good, cool water. The water of the Platte is wholesome but warm, and as we journeyed on the side of the river I thought of the Grecian mythology, peopling fairy islands with nymphs and maids, and seeing beautiful little islands in the river. I could easily persuade myself that I saw little fairies moving about.

After we had been three or four days from Fort Kearney we came across a band of Sioux Indians (peaceful) and for one afternoon it was a continual "How," trafficking in moccasins, and begging provisions. Any one could purchase a pair of moccasins for a cup or two of sugar, that being the principal thing they wanted. I should have purchased you a pair, but they were inferior and I had no means handy of sending them to you. You can hardly form an adequate idea of the amount of travel on the plains to the different points on the route, men, women, and trains of cattle. Our train consisted of 63 wagons, 400 men and women, 70 or 80 horses, 400 mules, and 75 head of buffalo [?]. Let me tell you something to give you an idea of the travel. From Fort Kearney to Fort Laramie a person would see every ten rods or less a dead cow or ox, a distance of 400 miles, and then must be taken into consideration that thousands have been devoured by wolves and vultures and others have strayed off and died; and you might find graves enough on the road to make mileposts, that is, keeping on the old California road. One of our number, poor fellow, laid his bones on the prairie 150 miles from Fort Laramie. He died one evening about 6 o'clock, was rolled up in his blankets and buried. It made me feel sad at the time to think that one so young should die, and so far away from home and loved ones. I knew that it would have been hard for me, though there are few for me that memory holds dear, but *they are dear* to me.

On the route we met many men returning from Pikes Peak, the new El Dorado of the Western World. They did not have that pleased expression as though their golden dream had been realized in full, but on the contrary many were on foot, and

most all with barely food enough to last them to the States, and to some the commissary gave provisions to last them to a fort or settlement. Many have laid their bones on the prairies, died of starvation while on the way, near Fort Kearney. We saw many buffaloes and some of the men had nice sporting times. I tasted some of the meat and it was very nice and tender. When near Scotts Bluff we came across an Indian agency distributing the annual amount of clothing allowed to the Indians. They were the Cheyennes and Sioux. I was quite amused to see some of the Indian women dressed so neatly in calico and crinoline, and some of the boys had on pants, suspenders, calico shirts, and straw hats, but these were rare cases. There were more of them with only such clothing as is peculiar to the Indian.

You no doubt have heard of Castle Rock, or Court House Rock, as it is called by some. It is really a beautiful sight, is about five miles from the road, and reminds one of the picture he has seen and description he has heard given of the old castles in the Eastern World, and we see the lord and lady with their courtly train going forth with their favorite falcons to hunt the birds of the country, or the princely knight is marching at the head of his armed retainers, with sword, lance, and helmet, to do good fight with Peter the Hermit for the Holy Sepulcher. About twenty miles from the Chimney Rock a shaft of sandstone rock rises alone by itself seventy-five feet high and is observable twenty miles off, and within ten miles of this rock is Scotts Bluff. You journey along for quite a distance without anything peculiar until all at once you go down a steep descent and enter into what would seem to have been a Roman amphitheater, once beautiful but now in ruins, a piece of ground of half an acre in extent, and enclosed by hills or bluffs from 300 to 1,000 feet in height, and the other outlet from it just wide enough for wagons to travel. Three or four days' travel from this point brings us to Ash-Hollow, the scene of General Kearny's battle with the Sioux Indians four or five years ago, and also the place where an expressman was killed by the Indians, a place similar to Scotts Bluff. You descend a distance of 2,000 feet inside of two miles. The descent was something like a pair of stairs. You would go a short distance and then there would be an almost perpendicular descent, and so continuing on until you reach the river. The scenery was

beautiful, but the dust was so awful that we could not appreciate it.

After we left this place there was not much of interest until after we left Fort Laramie, leaving the level plains and beginning to ascend the slopes of the Rocky Mountains. Three or four days after leaving Fort Laramie, after ascending high hills and descending into the valleys, we debouched into Laramie Plains. Oh, that was a pretty place! On the right forty miles distant was Laramie Peak, the next to the highest peak of the Rocky Mountains, and its summit and far down its sides it was covered with perpetual snow, and now on these plains was such nice grass, and such an amount of game! For days we traveled in sight of snow, and one night we had ice in the buckets one-fourth an inch thick. To any one who loves wild mountain scenery, the route we came would repay the travel. You will see plenty of game, and no doubt see many of the denizens of the forest, and for the wild and romantic scenery, it is there in great profusion; and to one of a contemplative and an engineering mind he may well pause and ask through what effect of the laws of nature have such results been obtained? And then looking from the law to the Lawgiver, he may well pause and say, "Great is the law, but the Lawgiver is above them all." Now don't think that I have gone pious. No, not at all. I am still the same in views that I was when at home, and once more I have to say that a person believing in our theory can see and forcibly feel that there is more beauties in nature than the bigoted Christian can see. But I am digressing.

One day when we had almost reached camp, the guide and three or four officers who had taken a circuitous scout, saw and were within a few feet of a panther as it sprang upon an antelope, and the savage beast did not leave its prey until it had taken the insides completely out. The panther was about the size of a large Newfoundland dog and measured eight feet in length. The scenery around this camp was beautiful beyond description. On all sides were mountains covered with a dense growth of timber, and their tops covered with snow glistening in the sun, and looking so grand, and right at your feet was the purling stream coming down from the mountains, so cold and pure. In the afternoon we had a taste of whirlwind, and we could see, only

half a mile off, large limbs of trees torn off and whirling in the air. And when the bugle of retreat was blown, that is the evening call, the echo was beautiful.

The next point of interest was Cheyenne Pass, the gate as one might call it of the Black Hills, they being a spur of the Rocky Mountains. I send you a flower gathered there, the pink one. The pale blue is from the Platte River. The entrance to this pass is wild and romantic. You see rocks piled one upon another like a wall, hundreds of feet high on each side, and it looked as though some mighty mortar mason had built it, so even were the stones one upon another. Not one out of perpendicular! In other places it looked as though some mighty torrent had been let loose and had spread far and wide in its work of destruction, and on the road as we were traveling along we would say, surely we cannot go ahead much farther. It looked as though the mountains met, but we jogged on and found perhaps just room enough to pass through. The next point is Bridgers Pass, the summit of the Rocky Mountains, and within two or three miles of each other you could see little streams flowing westward to the Pacific, and eastward to the Gulf of Mexico.

Lydia, did you ever feel the need of good, sparkling, cold water? Well, we did right in this pass. One day we came across a little stream called Bridgers Fork, and its sides were covered with saleratus and the water looked just like milk, and when we had to get our water for drinking, cooking, etc., it was a half-barrel, and all around the barrel when the water had settled was white, and for two or three days we had to drink just such water. In the immediate neighborhood of this pass we came across many sulphur springs. The water is very healthy but very disagreeable to smell.

The next point is White Clay Canyon. The road through this canyon for a distance of about twelve miles crosses the creek twenty-five or thirty times, and sometimes would have to follow the bed of the stream for one-eighth of a mile. In one place on the road I noticed large cliffs of rock rising perpendicularly from the banks of the stream, and they looked as though they had been formed by the mixture of small stones and sand, and not one of the stones was as big as a walnut, and it was so up to the summit. The next point was Provo Canyon. We had seen mag-

nificent sights before but this surpassed them all. All day you would see the clouds hanging around the mountains, and on one you would see only a small particle of cloud, and one might think that some subterranean fire had burst forth, and was throwing out its superfluous vapor, or that Vulcan had reappeared on earth and on this mountain had established an immense smithery, and it was in full blast. And quite often you would see beautiful cascades of water come soaring, tumbling, and leaping down the mountain side, dashing from rock to rock almost perpendicularly and making the water white with foam. These beautiful waterfalls were fed by springs on the mountain tops. You can have no idea of the beauty unless you see it.

Through this canyon eighteen miles long is a road built by the Mormons. The canyon would be impassable were it not for the road, for the Provo River flows through it. From the base of one mountain on one side to the base of another on the opposite side does not average over sixty feet, and the river in some places is quite deep. This road is sixteen feet wide and is built by cutting down trees off the side of the mountain, rolling them in and filling up with stones blasted from the mountain, and is as splendid a road, I have no doubt, as can be found in the United States. In some places it is from sixty to eighty feet above the river, and the river dashing on at a furious rate.

Within a mile or two of where the river enters Utah Lake, we crossed a substantial bridge and came into camp. We delivered the provisions out the last time on the route. The next day's tramp brought us to the far-famed Jordan, the next to Camp Floyd. After having been on the road almost three months, we were glad for a time to come to a halt.

Now, Lydia, we are done. I have written more than I meant to, but thoughts came fast upon me, and so I thought I would write them, thinking that they might be of interest. I may have been prosy, it was an error of the head, and I will stand corrected for the future, and now will say adieu.

Yours as ever,

HIRAM W. STUDLEY,
Co. D, Seventh Infantry.
Camp Floyd, U. T.

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