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Surveying the First Railroad Across Iowa

The Journal of John I. Blair

Edited by ANTHONY L. CASSEN

Reproduced in its entirety on the following pages is the personal Journal of John Insley Blair recording his survey of the route of the first railroad "through western Iowa to the River Platt in 1863." Because Blair was an important figure in the early history of railroads in Iowa, the original handwritten Notebook was presented to the state through the courtesy of his great-nephews in New Jersey, Dr. John I. B. Vail and the late Dr. William Penn Vail, whose transcription and inserted notes have been used here. Mr. Cassen, the author of a biography of John I. Blair to be published soon, kindly prepared the preface, explanatory footnotes and accompanying map. The editor was born in England, received his M.A. from Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and has been a member of the faculty of Blair Academy, Blairstown, New Jersey, since 1956.

John Insley Blair was born August 22, 1802, on a small farm along the Delaware River at Foul Rift, New Jersey. His grandfather, John Blair, had emigrated to America from Scotland in the 1730's and settled as a farmer in the northern part of New Jersey. His eldest son, James, married Rachel Insley, and John Insley Blair was the fourth child in their family of ten.

The Blairs were poor and John worked on the farm till the age of eleven, snatching what little education he could get from the district school. When he had turned thirteen, his father decided the boy should learn the essentials of business in his cousin's grocery store in nearby Belvidere. James' parting advice to his son was as follows: "Work hard, be honest, fear the Lord." These words were well heeded.

On his father's death in 1816 John returned home to help his mother with her large family; then he found another job in Belvidere in the store of Squire James De Witt. There he

learned legal forms and procedures which included methods of collecting debts, initiating suits and drawing up papers. In 1821, at the green age of nineteen, he established a store at Butt's Bridge in partnership with his cousin, James. Within two years John had dissolved the partnership and become his own boss. The growth of his business appears miraculous. As if in anticipation of the A & P and the Grand Union, he developed a chain of stores managed by brothers and brothers-in-law in neighboring communities. He purchased goods in large quantities, his prices consequently being cheaper than those of his competitors. Bills of lading and Day Books reveal purchases from as far distant places as London, England. His business enterprise did not end with the stores as he purchased several flour mills, an iron foundry and founded the Belvidere Bank. As a token of their esteem his fellow citizens appointed him postmaster (1825-51), and in 1839 changed the name of the town to Blairstown.

One item for sale in the Blair stores was to link their owner to fame, fortune and the State of Iowa—nails. John I. Blair sold more nails in northern Warren County than any other man. He obtained them from the Oxford Furnace which George and Selden Scranton had purchased from the Robeson family in 1838. The Scranton brothers ran short of capital, and it was only logical that they turned to John, their largest customer, for additional funds. Young Blair agreed, becoming third partner in the enterprise.

John I. Blair and the Scrantons might have continued in the modest business of nail-making indefinitely had it not been for a happy coincidence. William Henry, the father-in-law of Selden and a former lessee of the Oxford Furnace who successfully introduced the hot-blast process, had purchased land options around Slocum's Hollow, Pennsylvania, with a view to shipping the abundant coal and iron ore deposits of the region along a proposed railway to New York State via Ligett's Creek and to the seaboard via the Delaware Water Gap. When the options were about to expire for lack of \$8,000, the Scranton brothers, foreseeing their chance to launch into business in the fabulous Lackawanna Valley, supplied the necessary funds. Within eight months they had erected a furnace at Slocum's Hollow (soon to become the city of Scranton) and established

the Lackawanna Iron & Coal Company. The fortune of the new company was firmly established when William E. Dodge of New York placed an order for 12,000 T-rails to build the extension of the Erie Railroad from Port Jervis to Binghamton, New York.

Blair's partners initially hoped it would not be necessary to bring him into this new business because with his ability he soon dominated any enterprise in which he became associated. But the size of the new concern required the further investment of capital, and Blair was invited to join the Board of Directors. This was the beginning of his career in railroads, henceforth to become his chief preoccupation.

The dream for an outlet of the mineral wealth of the Lackawanna Valley became a reality when the first train left Scranton, Pennsylvania, for Binghamton, New York, thence to the Great Lakes via the Erie Railroad, on October 20, 1851. The next year construction began south to Delaware Water Gap. In 1853 the two railroads were consolidated to form the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad, with John I. Blair appointed its first Managing Director. Through a complicated series of maneuvers he managed to lease other railroads or rights of way in New Jersey effecting a direct link with the seaboard. John I. Blair thus emerged a director of one of the wealthiest mining operations in the country, and managing director of a railway which could carry the products of those mines and a multitude of passengers from the Great Lakes to the Atlantic.

Iowa did not enter into the career of John I. Blair until 1860, when he was elected a New Jersey delegate to the Republican National Convention in Chicago. On the journey he learned of the demand for railways in the West, and he was no doubt impressed by Lincoln's concern for economic unity as a vital condition for the preservation of the Union. The New Jersey delegation voted for Lincoln's nomination against Seward's, and John had the opportunity of meeting the future President and his wife. Whatever the real significance of these events may be, we know from his Notebook of 1860 that he went on from Chicago to Dubuque, Iowa by rail, took a boat down the Mississippi to Clinton and boarded another train to the railhead at Cedar Rapids. Blair seems to have no sooner

touched Iowa soil whereupon he perceived the boundless opportunities for opening up the West and the great possibilities of a transcontinental railroad with all its advantages to the Union.

The Notebook reproduced here is his detailed account of an expedition to Iowa in 1863 to survey the best and most economical route for building a railroad on west across north central Iowa to the Missouri River. The right-of-way was generously defined in the land grant transferred to the Cedar Rapids & Missouri River Railroad by the Iowa Legislature in March, 1860, and the general route had been prescribed in the Iowa Land Bill passed by Congress as early as May, 1856. Blair, in complete charge of pushing construction of the Cedar Rapids & Missouri River R.R. on west from Marshalltown by 1863, personally surveyed and directed its successful completion to Council Bluffs to connect with the Union Pacific in 1867. Two years later, on May 10, 1869, when the Golden Spike was driven at Promontory Point, Utah, linking the Union Pacific and Central Pacific Railroads, the overland route from Chicago to San Francisco became a reality. In recognition of John I. Blair's vital contribution to the first transcontinental railroad, he was presented with a piece of the Golden Spike to wear as a watch fob. He later gave it to his nephew, John D. Vail, father of the late Dr. William Penn Vail, to whose untiring scholarship and historical interest we are indebted for the presentation of the Blair manuscripts.

This Notebook of 1863 is but one of six which, together with other detailed records of a miscellaneous nature, reveal to us the little-known life of a significant industrial pioneer of nineteenth century America. John Insley Blair died in his native Blairstown in 1899. He retained his simplicity, humility and generosity to the last. It is typical of the man that he who was at one time president of seventeen railroad companies, owned over 2,000,000 acres of government land grants, was the principal stockholder in several banks (including the First National Bank of Cedar Rapids, Iowa) and founded over sixty towns, continued to live in the old frame house which still stands in Blairstown today; that he used to travel in the baggage car and tell jokes to the brakeman and passengers on his own little railroad from Blairstown to Delaware; and finally

that he never forgot his own misfortune of having to leave school at the age of eleven and consequently used his philanthropy to further the cause of education. Blair Academy—a top-ranking secondary school in New Jersey—Princeton University, Lafayette, Coe and Park Colleges, all owe a tremendous debt to this farsighted builder of modern America.

History of J. I. Blair Travel to River Platt in 1863

J. I. Blair & Party exploring the Rout for the Cedar Rapids & M Riv Road [Cedar Rapids & Missouri River Railroad] to the Missouri & thence to the Platt River, for the Pacific line. 1863.
June

Boonsborro, Iowa,
Monday Morning June 15' 1863

J. I. Blair, Oaks Ames, James Blair,¹ D. C. Blair,² W. W. Walker V.P. & Enginr L. C. Parder, Scty Mr. Octavis Cattle and Judge Whiting of Onowa, on the Missouri, with Our Cook, Team, Driver, with all our Camp Equipage, Provisions, Tents &co, with Three Waggons, all left Boonsborro³ for the Missouri River Endeavouring to follow the 42 Parallel through the Center of Iowa & the Counties to the Missouri River.

[NOTE: The correct name of Mr. Cattle above is H. C. Cattell. The first name of Mr. Ames is properly Oakes and not Oaks, as it constantly appears in the manuscript. L. C. Parder is L. C. Pardee. Mr. Blair invariably speaks of the River Platte as Platt. Remembering that this and Mr. Blair's other Travel Journals were written from day to day on the stagecoach, or the canal boat, or on the railroad, it is not surprising that there are misspellings or that the record is not arranged in any literary style.—William Penn Vail.]⁴

¹ James Blair was the younger brother of John Insley Blair.

² De Witt Clinton Blair was the second son of James I. Blair, the sixth child of James and Rachel. All genealogical references may be found in Wm. Penn Vail, M.D., *Thomas Vail, Salem 1640*, Walker, Evans & Cogswell Company, Charleston, 1937.

³ The railway from the Cedar Rapids railhead was completed as far as Marshalltown, some 50 miles from Boonsboro. A further 30 miles was under construction as far as Nevada, Iowa, but was not opened for traffic until 1864. (See footnote 10 on Chicago North Western Railroad.)

We Crossed the Des Moines River 2 Miles West of Boonsborro. after Reaching the Prarie Land, Some Two Miles West of the DesMoins, We Drove out Some 5 Miles West of the Des-Moins, and Stoped & fed Our Horses, and Eat a Lunch at Mr Caskey. Thence we Come on a Leval to the Bever [Beaver?] Creek, about 9 Miles Thence to Jefferson, County Town of Green County, on the North Coon River. Distance 25 Miles. the Entire Distance is a leval Prarie. the Coon River is a Small Stream 20 feet a Cross. Lays perhaps 30 feet Below the High land. it is Prarie Country the whole Distance, and no House for 16 Miles. Quite a good Road. Beaver Creek Small Stream, 10 feet Deep. Stoped at 6 Oclk P.M. at Jeffer-son for Tea.

Walker, with the Cook & Driver, Drove on to the North Coon, 2 Miles West to put up the Tent.

[NOTE: This River can be located on an old map of 1844. It is called the Raccoon Fork of the Des Moines River. It has several branches in Greene and Carroll Counties, Iowa.]

I Now Learn the Stream Named the other Side Was Buttrick Creek and Not Coon River. all Cheap Crossings. the line is a Cheap one [for building a railroad].

Back to the Dessmoins. Jefferson is a Small Town. has 30 Houses all Cheap and One Small Hotel where 7 of us Took Tea. Secty paid Bill.

Clinton [D. C. Blair, son of J. I. Blair] Shot 2 Birds Called the Curlew, about the Sise of Small Chickens $\frac{1}{2}$ Grown. Bot a 3 Barl Gun at Boonsborro, with one Barl Cut Rifle, Box fish Poles, & all the Powder Flask, Bullets Moulds &co. I paid \$ W R.00 Cash (\$50- Cost \$125- Cost \$125. the Dater [Data?] Said).

[NOTE: Evidently the letters WR are some of Mr. Blair's "Cost Marks" since this does not fit the figures added by Mr. Blair in the manuscript.—W. P. V.]

⁴ The late Dr. William Penn Vail was a great-nephew of John I. Blair. His grandfather William Penn Vail married Sarah Lock, John Insley Blair married Anne Lock and James Blair married Phebe Elizabeth Locke. All three wives were daughters of Rachel Armstrong and John Lock. Thus, there were two unions of Blair line with the Vail family.

all Well to Night. Mr. Caskey was from Beaver County Pa.

This Place Jefferson is Pleasantly Situate. Some Timber Skirting these Streams. the Land is all Very Rich the Same as the land East of the DessMoins. a Boundless Plain & Prarie Land for 20 Miles without a House You can See to the end of Sight, North & South & not See the Sighn of a Tree – Nothing but Gren Prarie Grass. the Well Water Clear & Cold

Camped out to Night Between the Rackoon River 2 Miles West Jefferson. Called our Camp, Camp Raccon.

all Slept in our Tent except the Cook & Drivers. Our Tents are Large ones 20 feet across.

We got up at 4 Oclk. Finished Breakfast at 5 Oclk. Fed the Horses at 3 Oclk. Our Breakfast Consisted Coffee, Bread, & Butter, Ham, & Eggs Dried Beef, Crackers, Pickels, Cheese, Apple Sause, all well Cooked. all our Camp Dinner, Breakfast and Tea Set Was Made of Tin. our Table 8 feet Long, 2 feet Wide Consisted of 2 Boards, & Two Boards for Seats. Tied our Horses to the Waggon Our Beds Consisted of Buffalo Skins, Waggon Cushons, Blankets & our over Coats. the Musketers was Bad. I Covered My head with My linen Coat. Our Milk we got of a Farmer 2 Miles of [off], with Some Dry Praire Grass for Beding.

The Hotel Keeper Name at Jefferson was Anderson, from Ohio First, then Indiana. the old Ladys Mother was a Jersey Woman, She Said. She was Pleased to See us. She Showed Me all the Likeness of her Three Sons, which was in the Army. McKaskeys where we Lunched Yesterday, the wife was Irish. Her House & Everything about as Clean as a pin. her Two Daughters was Spining Wool on a Large Wheel. they Made Nearly all they Wore. All Showed evidence of Industry & Health.

We Packed our Tents and left at 6 Oclk for Carralton Carral County 22 Miles at 12 Oclk. Carrall County had 58 Voters. the County Town Consist of the Court House & School House,

and Two Small Dweling Houses. One was a Store. Here we Bot a Two Gallon Jug. But it proved to have a Hole in the Bottom. at the Next House, where we expected to get Milk We pd 40 Cents for Jug. Called at Mr Gilley about one Mile West of the Town. he was the County Clerk. We wanted here a Jug of Milk, but unfortunately they said they had but little & that was Sour. We Bot 8 Eggs, all there was except 3 Eggs, the Merchant Had which Mr Cattle did not purchase on a/c Breaking his assortment. We Come on 2 Miles West of Carrolton & Camped for Dinner on a Branch of Coon River — about 20 feet across it. Carralton is on a High Ridge, the Prarie Roling. the Main Coon River Runs Some 4 Miles Noth of Carralton, & then Runs West. here is Said to be a good line for the Rail Road. it is mainly all Prarie. for the 22 Miles Travaled to day, up to this place, No House for 15 miles, Between Carralton & Jefferson. We are Now about 48 Miles West of Boonsborro.

We Now Leave the Banks of the Branch of the Coon for Bushy Creek 12 Miles, where We expect to Stay. their is No House their and None for 40 Miles. their is no Wood at Bushy Creek. We Carry Wood enoughf from Here 12 Miles to Bushy Creek for the Nights Cooking. the Country Roling for Sevral Miles Back.

All Well. fed our Horses on Corn. Bot 2 Bushels of Gilly at 2/=Bushel. We Leave at 3 Oclk.

Arrived at Bushy Creek. One of the Last Branches of the Coon River, and within One Mile of the Dividing Ridge where the Water Seperates. One Portion Runs to the Missouri or East Boyer River this Bushy Creek was dry except We found enough in Pools for to Water the Horses. We Call this Camp, Camp Divide the (Waters) South Side Carrol County. the Country is Roling & the Swells [?] Rise 50 feet at & average. Nothing But a Boundless Priarie. You Can See 100 Miles looking from the Center each Way & not See a Bush. We Brot Fire Wood with us from the Creek, where we Dinned [dined?] We Camped on a Nole [knoll] South of the Road. We all Slept well No Musketoes. Cook had us up for Breakfast at

5 Oclk. All well. Coffe without Milk. Ham Beef, Bred, & Butter, eggs, Cheese, and All of us Well. All say they Rested well. We left Camp Divide at 5 ½ Oclk.A.M. 17th (June) Having fed the Horses Corn. We Left for Denison County Seat of Crawferd County 20 Miles Distance. this line is no Doubt Below the Rail Road line, South. the Country too Roling for a Cheap Road. the land Looks favourable up the Rackoon, to Near the Dividing Waters of the Raccon & Boyer River.

We arrived at Denison at 11 Oclk, 20 Miles Distance over a Hilly Country, or High Roles, the Most so of any I have Seen West of the Missisipi, too expensive to Construct a Rail Road. Not a House. 30 Miles Between the Carral County Settlemt & Denisson. Denison has a Small Brick Court House, one Hotel, 1 Small Store & Some 4 or 5 other Houses. Mr Denison Lives here in a Small Brick House. he had Not Returned from Marshaltown where he Went with 5 Ox Teams 140 Miles, Some Two Weeks Since. We Saw Him there. he Come into Boonsborro Before We left. Nothing Transpired the fornoon, except I Shot a Wild Pidgeon, on one of the Forks of the Boyer River. We Called at the Hotel for Dinner. The Inn-keeper was from Home. the Land Lady Said She had Tea they got at Councel Bluffs. Said She did not use Tea. Could not Say what it was, either good or Bad.

We told her to Make us Tea and we would find Coffee when our Cook arrived. She had No Help but a Crying Baby. We thought it Best to dine here & feed and then Camp out to Night. the day So far is Pleasant. Some Hasy and Rather Warm.

Denison is Situate on a Ridge and in the forks of the Boyer & Branchs. Very Sightly at the West. it is 80 Miles to Councel Bluffs from here. there is Sevral Farms arround Denison. the Streams has Some Timber arround them. the Trade here goes to the Missouri River Genrally. I notice Many Eastern Names on the Tax List.

I Just Learned that the Hotel Keeper here is a Methodist

Clergyman by the Name of Richer. He had gone to the Dess-moins as a Republican Delegate to Nominate Governor for the State this week.

We finished Dinner. the Coffee was quite good. She Made from our Coffee. She found the Tea. the Landlady Said She Was from Tenessee her Husband from Pa. She Was Marred [married] at Marshaltown, Iowa her father Lives there his his Name is Wright. So this is the whole History of Land-lady & Husband &c.

Left Denison at 3 Ock P.M. and drove down the Boyer River 15 Miles, and here we Camped, on the West Side of the Boyer River, on Lands of a Mr. Jordan Near his House which was a part Cave, without floor. he Was Building a New House.

This Camp We Call Camp Boyer. the Flats down the Boyer is Handsom & quite wide, excellent for a Rail Road. There was Some 4 Streams Coming in from the West on that Rout. Paradise was the Main Stream above the Camp. We Stopped and Purchased 2 Gls Milk & Some Two dosen Eggs., which She Charged 2/= for. She was Scotch. quite Cleanly. about a Mile further We Bot 3 Chickens & Some Onions & One dosen Eggs. the Shepard Dog Caught the Chickens in Handsome Stile. it was only nessesary to point the Chicken to him in the flock, and he Soon had it. She was from Indiana. Charged 6/- 20 Cents a piece for Chickens. We Bot of Jour-dans Pottatoes. We had a fine Super [supper] Tea Coffee, Bread & Milk — Fried potatus, Beef Fried Ham. We Borrowed her Cups & Saucers which made the Coffee Drink Better. During the Night We had a Very Hard Shower. But our Tent did not Leak. Slept well. Took Breakfast This Morning at 5 ½ Ock We had Fried Chicken Coffee, Beef Boiled Eggs. all well and The Morning Cool. this is Thursday 18' June Camp Boyer is in Monona County, which Borders on the Missouri River. Our Camp is Just in the Edge of the County We Now Start for Onowa, Near the Missouri River, 40 Miles. We leave the Boyer River & pass 15 Miles over the Divide to the Soldier River. We Come Some 14 Miles Round on account of No Bridges on the Head Waters

Near Denison Just North West of Denison is the Crossing for the Rail Road. the Crops all look fine on the Boyer. quite Plenty of Wood along the Stream. Considerable Stock Raised here. Our Travals Yesterday 37 Miles. Road quite good.

We found good Spring Water their. Old Mr. Jourden had 11 Children all Born in the State. he had Cleared & Broke 12 farms & had moved more than 12 Times. his Children Mainly Settled here. One Cornelius Dunham here owned 3600 acres Land, and 600 acres Timber Land. He Wintered 204 Head Cattle Last Winter. will Turn of [off] 70 Head Fat Cattle this fall. he is the Best Stock Man in the County. Was from Massachusetts Marthas Vineyard.

We left at 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ Oclk A.M. for Onawa. all in good Spirits

The first Main Stream we Come to Was Soldier River about 15 Miles Distant here we found One House — the Occupant was Post Master. he Called his office St. Clare. the P.M. Name was Agnes. Sais he was from Newark, N.J. 25 Years Since. the Soldier is a Small Stream. Lays deep but Narrow Not over 10 feet in Bottom of Stream. We passed on to the Beaver Creek 5 Miles further. Distance 26 Miles Travaled this forenoon here we Stoped. Fed our Horses & Took Dinner in a Grove all Well except L. C. Parder, who was Complang & Could Not take Dinner.

The County Was a Succession of Hills & Bluffs. the Streams Narrow and Cut deep in the earth falling Sides of Banks perpendicular 50 feet. Drove this 26 Miles by 12 Oclk. there is Some Settlement along the Soldier River it Runs South West. it has Rich Bottoms.

We Met a Young Man by the Name of Gillet Locating Lands in Place Swamp Lands the Govt had sold. Onawa County Voted away the Swamp Lands to the Emigrant aid Society of Hartford, Connecticut who had obtained the Swamp Lands of Some four Counties on our Line. it is Now Two Oclock, and We again Proceed on our Jorny for Onawa, about 20 Miles.

We arrived at Onawa The County Town of Monona County

— it is the Most Respectable County Town Between Boonsboro and the Missouri River. the Town has a Court House Hotel and a Number of Dwellings about 200 Inhabitants. the Hotel Keeper Name Mursas [?] from New Hampshire. the Main Street 150 feet wide. the Town is Situate on the Missouri Bottoms, which is about 16 Miles Wide. We Crossed Maple River 6 Miles East of the Town and the Little Sioux about 5 Miles East of the Town. the Sioux & Maple Connect Some 2 Miles below where we Crossed. Neither Stream is Wide, the Sioux about 40 feet at Bottom and 20 ft. Banks, the Maple 25 feet wide at Bottom Banks the Same Hight as the Sioux. the Bluffs Comes to a Sharp Point Between the Maple & Sioux, where we Crossed by the Road. the Bluffs Rise from 100 to 150 feet Nearly Perpendicular. We Stopped and Walked or Climed up the Point to the Top. going up We Killed a Rattle Snake with 9 Rattles & a Young one. it was about One Half Way up.

These Bluffs are a great Curriosity. there is No Tree or Timber on them. Covered with Scanty Grass on the Top with quite Large Green Grass half Way up.

The Country from the Soldier to the Maple is a Rough Broken Country. Bluff after Bluff — Many deep Ravens. there does appear to be No Feasible Rout for a Rail Road to Reach the Missouri River from West the Des Moines River, except You Reach the Head Water of the Boyer River or Soldier River, at the 42 Degree at Denison. I Should Say from Denison down to Council Bluffs there is a Rout

Present Indications are that to get over to the Solder From Denison & then over to the Maple, that the Maple is and Easy Rout to Onawa.

The Flats on the Maple appear wide, but the Bluffs High. the Bluffs all appear to be Made of Fine, Light Clay. the Black Soil has washed down in the Valley & Sides of the Hill. Some Streams after Runing 150 Yards from the Bluffs Cut down 50 feet Nearly Perpendicular. the Soil is So alluvial that it appears after Washing under the Sod. Washes of [off]

as Easy as flour. The Missouri River Makes a Bend above This Town Some Seven Miles and Runs west 10 Miles and then Runs East. So that the River due West of the Town is 10 Miles distant across the Flats opposite Decatur, which is on the West Side of the Missouri River in Nebraska. these are the Most extensive Flats I ever saw.⁵ the Distant from East to West 16 to 18 Miles Wide, and entire Level plain all Bottom Land the Soil Several feet deep. There is Generally No Snow here. Cattle Winter in the Timber on Bushes. there appears to be Plenty of Timber on the Missouri — Said to be 5 to 6 Miles Wide. the cost of Constructing a Rail Road, the grading is only Nominal — the Iron chains [?] Spikes & Ties is the Main thing. Onawa is 65 Miles above Council Bluffs & about 50 Miles across to the North Bend of the Platt or 40 Miles from Decatur, on the West Bank of the Missouri Decatur is 10 Miles West of this place Judge Whiting our Director Lives Here.

the Country has But few Inhabitants from the Boyer River to this place, the Settlements along the Streams and Timber.

We found a Comfortable Hotel Here. the Best Since we left Marshal [Marshalltown]. the House Was Roomy. We all Took Supper Here. Had good Tea & Coffee for the West. fair Catfish for Tea, the Meat Seems as thick as Halbut.

After tea Bells was Rang and a Public Meeting held at the Hotel. Mr. Wm. L. Phillips Was Made Chairman and Mr. Butts the Editor of the Iowa Gasett of Onawa Was Made Secretary. Judge Whiting Introduced us to the audience. My Self and Mr. Walker was Called upon for a Speech. for My Part I Stated to the Meeting the object of our Visit and Intentions to make this the Pacific Line If we Could get State

⁵ This observation by John I. Blair is very characteristic. He always uses this form of the superlative on seeing an impressive sight for the first time. Cf. *Foreign Letters, 1883*, in speaking of the terrain between Cork and Blarney in Ireland, "The land is the most highly cultivated that I ever saw," or of Glasgow Cathedral, "We crossed the 'Bridge of Sighs' to the Necropolis, which contains many tombs and monuments more than I ever saw in any place in our own country."

& Gov aid.⁶ that we Intended to Survey the line to the Missouri & Thence to the Platt.

That we had Constructed the 70 Miles Road & Was Now Constructing the 30 Miles to Nevada [from Marshalltown in Marshall County, Iowa]. that they Guaranteed the Right of Way Voted us the Swamp Lands & Made us up a Bones [bonus]. if Boon County Caired [carried] out their offer this Line would be extended there by Augt a Year.

That we expected they here would aid us in the Same Manner. I Called upon them to Make a Statement How their Swamp Lands Stood. they had been Voted to the Emigrant Aid Society but the County had Control of Mortgages & Notes for Lands Sold that Might amount from \$10 to \$20,000. That this Might be given us and they would aid in Ties & other Matters. I Stated we Might Grade 20 Miles on this end First, Before Building the other end, if they Could get the Ties & other assistance, which they all agreed to do. Mr Whiting offered a Resoulation which Passed, that they would aid us on the Surveys. Mr W W. Walker Made a Speech Saying Generaly we expected to Construct the Road, but Should Want their aid They Said they had 4 Lots 12 Acres, Set of [off] as depo Grounds, South of the Town, & 52 acres Just East of the Depot Grounds. Meeting adjourned.

⁶ It was reasonable to assume that Government aid would be given in the period 1850-70, otherwise no one would hazard railway construction in a nearly uninhabited region. The procedure was for the Government to transfer land to the states involved, which in turn allotted sections of the lands along the roads to the railroad companies, to be sold to settlers as they arrived. Congress specified the general route (Cf. Union Pacific R.R., 1862), and the time within which the railroad should be built. John I. Blair's railroads in Iowa received the following grants:

1863 Cedar Rapids & Missouri River R.R.	1,298,739 acres
1864 Cedar Rapids & Missouri River R.R.	123,370 acres
1864 Dubuque & Sioux City R.R.	
(Iowa Falls & Sioux City R.R.)	226,163 acres
1864 Sioux City & Pacific R.R.	580,000 acres

John I. Blair was President of all the Land Companies and Town Lot Companies established for each of the land grants. The following towns were surveyed and/or laid out by him in Iowa: Missouri Valley (1867), Blairsburg (1869), Sloan (1879). Towns named for members of the Blair family or old friends included Blair and Scribner in Nebraska, Ames, Dodge, Aurelia (daughter), Marcus (son), Belle Plains (granddaughter: Isabelle Scribner), Blairsburg, Blairstown, Vail and Duncan (the Negro cook on the surveying party) in Iowa.

I Was Introduced to a Mr. Elwell of Salem, N. J., Merchant & Grain Buyer Mr Fairchild, Merchant From Pa. Mr Holbrook Atty Mr Oliver was atty, from Pa.

The Streets of the Town is Wide. there appears to be a Ridge about the Center of the Flats, Parallel with the River that Runs up & down the River.

Mr. Cattle Left early this Morning for Decatur on the Nebraska Side to arrange for Teams & Guids to the Platt River, and to See if we Could Cross the River. the River in June is always High. We Was Well entertained here. had good Coffee & Lamb for Breakfast. We have Laid in a Supply of Provisions for the Trip to the Platt. Mr Walker quite unwell Last Night. he and Parder the Only Invalids. This Morning they Report fit for the Trip.

The day is Pleasant. We all Rested Well.

Mr Oliver the Hotel Keep Intelegent. he is from New Hampshire, his wife from Main. a Mr Dimick from Susquehana County Pa. Called on us. he had Bot a Farm South of Town 160 acres pd \$500. the agent lived at Omaha.

it is Now 8 Oclk, A.M. We heard here last night that there Was a great Panic in New York Phil, Washington, Harisburgh, &co that the Govt had Called for Volunteers, that the Rebbels Was Making a Raid on Harpers ferry, Pa. & Maryland. This Depressed us Much. We hoped to hear Better News.⁷

This is Friday June 19' 1863. I forgot to Mention One of our Waggons the Lary [Lorry?] Broke and we are getting it Re-paired So that it May Stand the Journey.

⁷ John I. Blair's concern for the turn of events was shared by his fellow townsmen back home. In 1861 the Blairstown volunteers under Capt. De Witt Clinton Blair had marched to Trenton, only to be turned down as the New Jersey complement had been filled, though more volunteers had been accepted in 1862 and 1863 as the serious nature of the war unfolded. An actual Copperhead movement in the vicinity of Blairstown, known as the Jenny Jump Southern Confederacy and headed by a Blairstown storekeeper, Abraham Smith, served to underline the conflict in this former slave-holding area of northern Warren County.

Onawa is 65 Miles above Council Bluffs & 45 South of Sioux City. Judge Whiting Lives 9 Miles North of here — Missenger Returned from Decatur Said we Could Cross the Missouri. I wrote Two letters, one Home and one to New York to C. Scribner.⁸

We Concluded to take Dinner here before we Start to go over the River it is Said it will take the afternoon as they only take One Team at a time over to Decatur. S. T. Leaming esq Lives at Decatur, Nebraska it is Represented he is and Engineer, and had Surveyed a line 50 Miles to Near the Platt.

We had our Waggon Repaired, and all things put in good Shape. the Cook Ground our Coffe here & got Biscuit Baked & Jug Milk.

All took Dinner, and at Two Oclk. all our Teams was Ready & all Started for the Missouri River Crossing accompanied by Judge Whiting, atty Oliver, & Mr. Morison the Hotel Keeper & others. arrived at the Ferry 10 Miles distant about 4 Oclk. after Waiting Some time. the Feryman was & Indian Half Breed, by the Name of Kieugh, with Three other Half Breeds, took a Batteau Mr. Ames, James Clinton & Myself and they Rowed us across the River, which is about $\frac{3}{4}$ Mile wide. the River is Very deep on each Side in the Middle was a Sand Bar that we Rowed over not Covered over more than Two feet the Water is So Mudy You Cannot See & inch in it, and the Water is about a Light drab Collour, the Same as the Clay.

This River is Generaly the Highest in June and is Now High. he Brot us over in the Batteau to See where to Land the Teams, So as to get up the Bank in a New Place. the Landing above is on the Indian Reserve of the Omaha Indian. the Indian Cheif Fontinell is a Half Bred, from the French the Main Cheif is Jo Laflesh. the Reservation is 18 by 27 Miles. there is about 1000 in Nomber. they are much Troubled by

⁸ Charles Scribner married Emma Elizabeth Blair, daughter of John I. Blair. Scribner established a publishing partnership with Isaac D. Baker in 1846, the beginning of the well-known firm of Charles Scribner's Sons of New York. The president of the company, Charles Scribner Jr., is a great-great-grandson of John I. Blair.

the Sou Indians, who Kill & Steal Horses from these Indians when ever they Can if they find them Single, Steal their Horses, about a Year Since 60 Horses. the Sous are a Powerful Tribe and have a Spite against the Omahas. We Met on the Bank Mr. Cattle, who Went this Morning over to Decatur to Inform them We Was Coming. the Hotel Keeper Mr. Hobbs was from Massachusetts; has been here five Years. Was all Glad to See us. Mr Hobbs Sent Help to get our Teams over, as the Indian was Indolent & Lasy and thought he would only take over Two Teams to Night. We was anxious to get over to Night and Make & Early Start in the Morning, and go up Elm Creek, which is Said to Run direct West, and head Near the Elk Horn at a Place Called West point, 25 Miles Distant and Said to be a good Rout for a Rail Road to the Platt.

I Met Here a Mr Daken a Brother of Captain Daken, our coal agent at Buffaloo he had Settled here and also a Mr Young from the State of New York.

Decatur Contains Some 25 Houses and 125 Inhabitants. the First House about 8 Years. the Banks of the River on each Side about 10 Feet above High Water Mark. the Table Land on the Nebraska Side about $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ Mile Wide. the Bluffs Not High. No Timber on this Side Just at this place, while on the oposite Side We drove through timber for 3 Miles, Mainly Large Popler, Elm, Mulbery, But Mainly Cotton Wood. the Majority of the Large Trees was 150 Years to 200 Years old. I Countd the Grain of one Stump on the East Bank 150 Years old, which Showed that the Chanel had not Changed on the East Side in that time it Stood on the Fery Bank.

The Hotel Keeper, Mr. Morrison wood not take any thing for the Entertainment, which we Thought Very Generous. a Mr. Dimick from Near Scranton had Bot a farm Near Onawa Some Short time Since. he Come to the Fery with us. We parted with our Friends in Iowa with Regret. This is Friday June 19' 1863.

Their is Said to be 5 Small Stores in this Place Decatur. Said

to be a Healthy place. the Land Lady Sais She has Never been Sick. the little Girl Sais they have Some Fever & ague. Hires, the Land Lady, Was from Boston. her husband Was from Main. She Said her father and Mother expected to Visit them this Summer She had 5 Children – all Healthy.

Saturday Morning 20' June, Decatur, Nebraska.

Last Night We Succeeded in getting one Team across. the Indian Boatman Would Not Venture to Cross the others. We offered him \$2. or \$3. extra if he would get them over Early this Morning he Succeeded in geting the Second Team over. Now 7 Oclk. We had Super Lod[g]ing, & Breakfast at the Hobbs, who is a Carpenter. Our Dining Room was down in a Seller. Kitchen that had no floor But earth. the House Unfinished. the diet Was like the Western Cookery, Substantial. every Meal You may expect Fried Pork, Poor Butter, heavy Bread, Sour Cream.

Decatur is Laid out on a Large Scale 1500 acres, all this done in 1856 & 1857 at the time of the Speculation in Western Lands.

The Land Lady appeared to have More Cats than Children. She Said the First Cat they paid \$5.00 for there was None in the Territory when they Come here. Their is no Rats in the Terrytory as Yet, except at Omaha, and that Region. in Iowa they have got on to Marshaltown in the Center of the State.

We Was Informed that Coal is found above here on the Indian Reserve on the Bluffs Side of the River, as well as Iron ore.

We are all well this Morning. The Cook & Driver that had the Team Staid on the Iowa Side River. We are Waiting Patiently for them.

Now 7 ½ Oclk. A. M. Mr. Daken Brot the Profile & Survey of the Rout of the Decatur & South Pass air Line Rail Road. the Survey had been Carefully made by Mr. Leaming & oth-

ers. the Survey is Said to be accurate. I Copied the excavation on Each 10 Miles. Slopes 1 to 1 ½.

Section	1 to 10	—	523,000 Yds.
	10 to 20	—	293,000
	20 30	—	250,000
	30 48	—	340,000

1406,000 Yards in 48 Miles

The average of earth excavation is about 30,000 Yards to the Mile for this 48 Miles — it is Said the line Can be Improved. this Company is Organised — the Survey Cost \$700 — S. T. Leaming is the Engineer here.

9 Oclk A.M. the last Team Crossed all Safe. The Men Want Breakfast. We Laid in Some Bread, Donuts Or Crulls & Potatoes for the Journey to the Platt.

all Reported Well, Including Horses the day is geting quite Pleasant Now, but Cold this Morning.

Mr. Daken Brot forward the Survey. Capt. Leaming had gone to the Army. he Lived on a Farm here.

We left Decatur at 10 Oclk A.M. across the Country to the Platt River By way of West Point 30 Miles Distant to West Point. We Went up Elm Creek about 3 Miles, Leaving Bell Creek to the North. our Guide was a Mr. John McKirahan who Carred the Mail from Decatur to West Point once a Week. Got \$170 per Year. there is No House between Decatur & West Point. Decatur is in Burt County West Point is in Cumming County The Land is good in Nebraska, and after pasing up to the Divides & Table Land, it is Handsome. about 12 Miles Out We Saw Two Deer that Came up with 40 Yards of our Waggon. Clinton got his gun to Shoot at them, But as he had Shot, did not Shute. Just after this the Skane of the axel Come of [off] & Broke & Let the Wheel of [off]. We fixed it by Puting the Tent pole under the Axell — and we passed on to Logan Creek about 20 Miles West by the Way We Came Between the Divides which Was Leval,

We Could See to the North Black Bird Hills which is Wood Land. We Came down to Logan Creek. the Bottom Lands is a Mile Wide, and Very Rich Some time it over flows. the Table Land is Handsom Here is Som Wood. We found Some Stakes on the East Side and Was told it was a Town that was Laid out Some Years Since, Called Paradise City. Just across Logan Creek We Camped and Took Dinner. We Call this Camp Logan. Lunch while the Horses was Eating. the Boys went at fishing they Caught a Number of Fish they was what I would Call White Red fins, and the Horned ace, a Small fish and good Mr. Walker Said . . . that they was the same as they Caught in State New York Near Coopers Town. this Stream Enters in the Elk Horn, and it empties in the Platt, 20 Miles West of Omaha. the Mail Carrier lives at West point which has One House. there is about 12 families in the Whole County it is now 3 Oclk. the day is Pleasant and Cold. the Banks of the Logan Creek is Steep the Water about 3 feet Deep & 25 feet wide the Banks about 16 Feet High. the Water Rises in the Spring to the Banks & overflows the Bottom Land. the Second Bottom is always dry. the Western Stage Compy has all the Mail Rout in the Terytory, as well as Iowa & Many other Western States — it is and Immense Concern.

This Part of Nebraska is Handsomer than the Iowa is within 20 or 40 Miles of the Missouri the Bluffs are Not High & No Ravins or Wash of Water, and there is No deficulty in getting a Good line of Rail Road through to the Platt, So far.

We all finished Dinner & are Ready to Move on to West point. We drove Miles acros the Prarie. there Was No Road. This is the only Crossing of the Logan and here was a Cheap Bridge Built by the Stage Driver Some Week Since. We Started for Elk River where we arrived at 7 Oclk, on the Bank of Elk Creek, at the House of John D. Neligh. he was County Clerk, juge Post Master, Supervisor &c. he owned the Town of West point, which Constituted the House he lived in, which was 18/24 Two Rooms. We Camped Before his House. his Wife ofered us the use of thir House to Eat in, which we did, as well as use their Stove to Cook in. We Took Tea & Breakfast. all the Party Slept in our Tent except

Myself. I Slept on a Bunk in the House. John Neligh & wife was Born in Northampton County Pa on the Lehigh at Casauquco he Knew the Eastern Peple Pa. [Eastern Pennsylvania people] that I Knew. they had one Child a little Girl 4 Years old. they had 3 Dogs. their Nearest Neighbour was 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ Miles. their Settlemt Consisted of about 12 Families in the County he organised the County. the Land Was Handsome. some portions Roling this afternoon. the Elk Horn is 40 Yards Wide. Considerable Timber along the Stream. We Sent the Skain to the Waggon of [off] 7 Miles to get Mended. Moores was from Michigan. four Years ago the Settlement was all Broken up by the Indians. there was about 4000 Indians of the Pawnee Tribe. they took every thing the Whites had but Killed None. they Said they was Starving and took all the Cattle & about every thing the Whites had. the Whites Collected about 80 Men the Indians had 700 fighting Men. the Whites Killed 7 Indians. the Indians was Peacible. Killed None. the Whites all made their escape. they Collected & army and followed the Indians at the Head of the elk Horn — Some Two Hundred Miles, the Indians Surrenderd and Said it was Starvation on their Part. the Gov. had not paid them The Land in this Part of the Terrytory has not been Taken up Surveyed Two Years Since. the Land here appears Equal to the Iowa. this Place is by direct Line 25 Miles in South West corner and it is from Omaha 65 Miles, and 47 Miles from Collumbus, on the Platt, which is a South West Course, To Fremont 32 Miles, and 13 Miles West of the Elk Horn.

We are all well, this Morning now the 21st June, 1863. the Land Scape here is Superior. You Can See Miles up & down the Elk Horn. the Trees in Bunches & Scatterd. Look Like apple Orchards. at 9. $\frac{1}{2}$ Oclk. We left our Encampment after Paying our Bill to Mr. Neighle, who would Take no pay except for One Bushel of Corn 30 Cents. We gave the Wif a Doller for her Baby Dress. from this to Fremont, 32 Miles, there was No Visible Road except their had been this Spring 3 or 4 ox Teams had passed down, as No Teams had ever passed across to Collumbus, Which Laid Some 50 Miles up the platt — from Fremont, We thought it Best to get Mr

Neighli to go with us, to show the Way. We found he had Not been over the Road. after Leaving West Point, We Crossed the Elkhorn at a Ford Near the Town $\frac{1}{4}$ Mile. We Then Stopped Near by and got Some corn of a German. there Was four families Settled together, on Homestead Lands, but little Improved as Yet.

We Then Followed the Elk Horn River & Flats Some 15 Miles this Forenoon, to Pebble Creek a fork of the Elk Horn. Here there was a Rude Bridge, but it had over Six feet No Plank or Timber. We Cut Timber in Short Pieces, with Brush & dirt Covered over. We Then Let the Horses over Single file. We Then drew the Waggons By hand it took all hands to get the Waggons down the embankment on the Bridge as it was So Steep. Here on the West Bank We fed our Horses and Took our Lunch. We Called This Place Labour Lunch, on Pebble Creek, as we had to Work here. the Flats of the Elk Horn is about a Mile wide perfectly level, & so is the Flats on all the Streams that Comes into the Elk Horn. all a Vast Prarie, with Thinly Timber on the Banks. Mainly the timber Stands in Rows, a Single Tree deep. The Land is Rolling Back of the Bottom Land. the Soil is equal to the Iowa. over the River opposite us Lives Two Families, one a Pennsylvanian & one from Illinos this is the Only Settlement Since we left the West Point Settlement. This Place is Dodge County. We are Just in the East Edge of the County. about One Mile East on the opposite Side of the Elk River is Washington County, where those Two Families are.

it is Now 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ Oclk. We Start on a Southern Course for the Platt up Maple Creek, which Runs South West Direction, Which We followed up to Johnsons & Duns Two Houses here, which was 12 Miles. Here We put up our Camp for the Night within a few Rods of Duns House. the Flats up Maple Creek is Nearly a Mile wide. the whole Distance the Ground on each Side is Low & Level. all a Very Hand Some Country Maple Creek Enters in the Elk Horn Some 3 Miles Below where We Crossed from Pebble Creek. this Maple Creek has 3 Branches above here. One Runs about North one South and one South West. So far it is & excellent Val-

ley for a R. Road as it Runs in the Right Direction. We are within 4 Miles of the Platt Vally in a Southern Direction. Fremont is Situate from here in & Eastern Direction 15 Miles. Fontinell about 19 Miles East. We are Now in Dodge County. 32 Miles from Dodge County [City?]. We drove Yesterday We Suppose 35 Miles or More, and find our Selves about 18 Miles from West Point. We had better followed the New Road. the distance to Collumbus was 47 Miles from West Point in an row [arrow] 32 Miles. This Dunn & Wife are Scotch Decent, old School Presbyterian, from Philadelphia. have been here 3 Weeks Moved in this House Temporary. Bot about 1 ½ Miles South 120 acres Land paid \$250. is Building a House. has Two Children. his Neighbour Johnson appears Sloven. Mrs. Dunn Said she & her husband had been down to the Platt Church 7 ½ Miles. She appeard Satisfyed. All well This Mornng, June 22' 1863. Our Corn was Short, and we put our Horses on ½ allowance. Things Now is dear. the Emigration on the Platt Eats up everything. We are Ready to Leave at 7 Oclock in a South West direction. We got Two Gls Milk of Mr. Dunn we hear there is little on the Platt. the Country is fine so far No Waste Land Between here and the Missouri. the Timber is of Not Much account, except for Firewood, and that only to Supply the Settlemts on the Creek, and that only for a Few Years, if the Houses was a Mile a Part.

We left this Morning about 7 Oclk, and arrived on the Platt River at 9 Oclk, the distance 7 ½ Miles from where we Encamped, on Maple Creek, which heads within 4 Miles of the Platt. the Land is almost a Leval, the Whole Distance to the Platt Bottom. the Slope is Gentle & a Cheap Road Can be Constructed. it Was a Sight to See the Platt Flatts, where we Struck it the Place was Called Buchanan. it Consisted of One House, a Hotel. here we Bot Some Corn. we paid 50 Cents Per Bushel. Just before we Came to the Platt Flat, We Saw a Large Deer Feeding. Clinton thought he Might Shoot it. he Tried but was too Far off. Just after We Reached the Flats, We Come uppon a Colleny of Prarie Dogs. the Ground Was alive with Holes & at each one Generaly Sat a Little dog, which would dodge Back in their Holes Very Quick I made

Two Shot at them I Hit Both times. they fell Back in their Holes, and the other dogs would Take them in the Holes. it is Said You Cannot get one unless You Kill them from the Hole. We arrived here at Buckchanan, One House, which is 63 Miles West of Omaha & 22 Miles East of Collumbus. We Concluded to go to Collumbus 22 Miles Further, which Would be 85 Miles West of Omaha, and as that is on a favourable Point to Strike the Platt for the Rail Road, and as the Platt is the Same, and as that Was the Point We aimed for when we left, We all expect to Return. as our Horses Was Only fed $\frac{1}{2}$ feed this Morning We Stopped at the Rusell House, on the Platt 16 Miles East of Collumbus, which was Kept by and Englishman — a Simple House. We follow the Platt on the North Side. the Flatts appear from 7 to 12 Miles Wide, and a perfect Leval as far as the Eye Can See. the Soil appear to be deep Loam, Mixed with Some Sand. the Platt at Buchanan Parts. there is & Iland. the Water on this Side 100 Yards wide about 3 feet Deep on the other Side $\frac{1}{4}$ Mile Wide and it Can be forded Now, by Looking out Places. the Bottom is quick Sand. their is a Narrow Skirt of Timber allong the River. the Road is a Splendid Road. the Main Bridges was Built by the Government. the Road is lined with Teams. Many going to Pikes Peak, Callifornia, & up the Platt. the Great Traval for California is Nearly over. the Merchandise is going Now. But the Mormon Traval is Now Setting in. We Was told that 400 Mormon Teams had gone down to Florance Near Omaha wheir they Meet the Mormon Emigrant to Take them to Salt Lake. They Charge Each Emigrant \$40.00 those that have No Money Must Work it out So they Say.

We Met One Mormon Train Just above Buchannan. there was 42 Waggon. Some Teams had 8 Yoke of Oxen they had in all 210 Yoke Oxen which makes 420 Oxen, the Waggon was Nearly all emty, except their Blankets & Traveling utentials. Some had their Firewood. the Train appeared a Mile Long. You Could See it for Miles the Dust Looked like Smoke in the Distance. it was Truly a great Sight. the Country allong the Road is Settled. Most every House has accomodations. Considerable Grain is Raised & Cattle The Road is fine. We arrived at Collumbus at 1 Oclk P.M. and

Stoped at the Mansion House kept by the Widow Baker. Columbus Contains about 15 Houses, One Hotel and 3 Small Stores it is the County Seat of Platt County, Nebraska & is 85 Miles West of Omaha — and about 72 Miles in & air line from Decatur. this is the Largest House I have Seen in the Terytory it has 4 Rooms on the First floor & a Hall. We all Concluded to Stop here and Rest untill to Morrow, Tuesday 23^d June. We all got Dinner, which Was quite good for the West. We had Coffee & Salt Mackeral, about No. 3, But they was a Treat being 1600 Miles West of the atlantic. Boiled Eggs, Bacon, Dryed apple Pye, Bread & Butter, all was Substantial food As Soon as We Struck the Platt, We found the Telegrath Line Reaching to California it was Well put up here We got Cincinatta Papers 7 Days old, and Omaha Papers which gave us Information of the excitment & Rebal Raids in Pa & Maryland, which was all New to us, or at Least Confirmed Rumours we heard. I find the Platt Flatts Much Wider in Places than I Imagined in Some places 30 Miles wide, the Road up here is quite Sandy, and extremely dusty. Within $\frac{1}{2}$ Mile of this place the Lupe Fork enters in the Platt. here is a fery. We Saw 20 Waggons Waiting their Turn to go over. Some times Teams has to Wait 2 Weeks for their Turn. Some go up 50 Miles to Ford. the Mormons Generally ford.

They Say here that the Mormons have 500 Teams that they Send down to Omaha or Florence where the Saints or Members of the Church are Sent from all parts of the World to Congregate Here, by the Mishonarys, who Inform the Elders at Salt Lake, who Send Teams to Bring them. that every Team Knows its Load Before it Leaves Salt Lake So that the exact Number of Teams is Sent. the Pawne Reservation is Near here, them and the Sue Indians are always fighting when they Meet a Number is Kiled on Each Side Yearly One of the Tribe Was here to day he had a Horse, a Small Pony, with his Bow and arrows, about One dosen in his Belt. he had Nothing but a Buffalo Skin Round him. he had 3 Holes in each Ear and in each Hole was Two Brass Rings, Making 6 Rings in the Two ears he exhibited the Scars where the Sous had Shot him with arrows as well as Shot. We gave him

Some Change and one to Shoot at, which he Brot down the First Shot. all his arrows had and Iron point, about 3 Inches long. Sharp as a Knife on each Side, and Come to a point which was Sharp These [the] government Provides them with, and they Kill Buffaloo & Elk as well as Deer with them. I Learn the Flatts up the Platt to Fort Kearny is the Same as here. above Fort Kearny for 300 Miles their is Not a Stick of Timber to be Seen. Here We found a Mormon Saint, who Said he Was a Second Christ and apostle. Mormons are found Scatterd all along the Platt. the Lady that Keeps the Hotel here Sais She was Born in Germany. When Young Come to Collumbus, Ohio, Was Married their and then Come here Lost her Husband Three Years Since. She is about 35 Years old, has one Child. She apears to get along quite Well Sais She has a Sister here, Married to Mr. Rigly has Sevarl Children. the Second Mormon Christ Sais he was Born in Ontario County New York. I Saw a Mr. Fraly that lives up the Lupe 12 Miles. he was from Near Ithica. Knew Mr. Schuyler, Humphrey & Many others their.

Salt Lake City is 1085 Miles West of Omaha and 1000 Miles West of this Place. Denver City is [Cost Mark?] = 486 Miles. The Elk Horn River empties in the Platt 23 Miles West of Omaha. Freemont is 37 Miles North Bend 52 Miles, Buckannan 62 Miles Russell 72 Miles Collumbus 84 Miles Loup Fork 85 Miles — all these is on the Platt, West of Omaha.

Mr. Neigler from West point Come on here with us to Show us the Way. We found Ames [?] Shovels here for sale in the Store. the Merchant Sold Coffee 50 Cents pound Tea 14/- Eggs 10 Cents Per dosen. their Market is to the Emigrant & Travellers — all Know How to Charge. We Passed Several Sod Houses — as Well as Stables. Many of the Fences is Made of Sod — Some are Covered with Sod. the Droves of Cattle by Emigrants and others, Makes it Necessary to Save their Grain along the Road Corn is the Main article Raised I Saw Some Wheat. they Say their is No Mills to Grind it, and it is of No use they get their Flour from Omaha. it is Now 5 Oclk P.M. Monday, 22d June. We are Gearing our Horses to Ride out to See the Loup River and Fery, So as to

See about what is to See here, as we will Return Home by Way of Omaha to Morrow. We Saw the Loup River about 1200 feet across tho the Fery is Not over 200 Feet. the Current Swift. the Boat Bot [brought] over Three Teams. they was all the afternoon in Crossing Teams. Some 50 Was Loaded with Corn, going to Fort Laramie. the Banks of the Loup Not over 10 feet High the Bottom of the Stream is all Quick Sand. & pile Bridges Can be Cheaply Built. Just at Tea We Was informed that Some 35 Mormon Waggons Was Crossing the Ford on the Loup. After Tea We Went out to See them. they had Made the encampment on the Bank. all the Teams Formed a Circle, with and opening on each End — this Was to Bring the Oxen in to Yoke up in the Morning. Wild Oxen Could Not get out. the Oxen was all Turned out to pasture. this Company had left Salt Lake, Some 60 Miles South of their 6th April, and had expected to get Back in October. they take 6 Months for the Trip — They Was going to Florence, Near Omaha, for Emigrant Mormons. the Teams are all Sent by the Church. they Say it will Take about 600 Teams this Year. We Talked with the Men.⁹ they Said their Was One Man to each Team. They had 4 Yoke Oxen to each Team, Besides Numerous extra Oxen to Bring Back other Waggons that they expected to Purchase at Omaha They Say they Irogate 9 acres out of Ten that they Farm. Salt Lake they Say is 90 Miles Long. Some Places 30 Miles Wide that Three Pails of Water will Make Two of Salt. Salt in Rows along the Shore. You Can Load a Waggon in a Short time. They Gave Me a Sample of the Cotton Raised There. they Raised a Large Quantity this Year. One arrival here to Night Was the Chief Justice of (Idio) Edgerton, and Two Lawyers. they had Two Waggons, and Oxen going on the Way. Something is Passing here all the time.

⁹ Blair shows indefatigable interest in local people and customs. This is also true of his other Notebooks and letters from Europe in 1883. His particular interest in the Mormons and their westward emigration, initiated by Brigham Young's trek in 1847, was not surprising since the route of the transcontinental railroad was to pass through Utah on the lines of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific R.R.'s. He was alert to the practical use of his observations. The journal of his trip to New Orleans in 1841 describes the ferry at Wheeling, West Virginia. Blair later put the same type service into effect on the reaches of the Upper Delaware. Wm. Penn Vail, M.D., *Moses Vail of Huntingdon, L. I.*, 1947, p. 401.

It is Now 9 Oclk P.M. and we are all arranging for Bed, and all well. in the Morning we will Turn our Eyes East and Continue to face the Rising Sun untill We get Home. So in the Morning on the 23d June 1863 We all Turn our Faces Home, and Bid Farewell, Many of us Forever the Loup Forks of the Platt, 1600 Miles West, and 1000 Miles from Salt Lake, then 1000 Miles to Francisco, 3600 Miles across the Continent, and We are Yet Not Half Way.

Left Collumbus Tuesday Morning 23d June at 6 Oclk for Omaha Mr Walker & Cattle Took Stage for Omaha. Walker Wanted the Government Surveys for this Portion of the Terytory. he Could go by Stage to day, while it Takes us Two days. We followed Down the Vally this forenoon & arrived at Noon at the Platt Vally House 29 Miles East of Collumbus. Here we Fed our Horses our Cook Spread our Lunch on the Board Laid on the Ground & We Set down on the Buffalo Skins and Eat our Lunch which Consisted of Bread & Butter, Biscuit, Cheese, dried Beef, Sardeans, Milk Pickels &c.

We fed the Horses Corn out of the Water Pails, & Pasturd Them on the Praries. We Come along the Platt, Sometimes On its Banks, & Some times a Mile or So off. the Platt is full of Islands & Sand Bars, Timber about as Iregular Stream as one Ever Saw. The Road is full of Emigrants & Teams. Many of the Teams has Cows for Oxen. One Just drove up that had 2 pair Cows & 1 pair Oxen, four Calves Tied to the end of the Waggon & one in the Waggon — it had Sore feet. a Girl about 12 Years of age Driving the Calves Tied at the end of the Waggon.

We Called at Buckanan as We Returned & Got Some Corn the old Lady the Mother of the Hotel Keeper whose Name is Toucray. She Sais She had Three Children here the Youngest a Daughter, that Was Keeping School. She had Seven Schollars and got 20/= per Week or \$10. per Month I Saw the School House and the Young Lady.

This Platt Valey House is But a Single House One Room &

Kitchen they Come From Pittsburgh 6 Years ago took up this Farm & pd 10/= per acre of Governmt his Name is Robert Graham. She Sais She has Seen this Spring 300 Teams a day pass by of the California Movers The ox Teams Going up Loaded Make 15 Miles Per day – Coming down without Loads The Mormon Teams Make 20 Miles Per day. We are all Well. Took our Breakfast there This Morning Dinner & Tea & Lodging, Ten of us Including the Stabling for Horses the Bill \$10.50 Included Mr. Neighley bill of West Point, who We Left here and Bid him good Bye he is 47 Miles from Home he Came to Show us the Way. Graham Lives in Dodge County Near the West line. Shell Creek Comes in at Buckannan. it is Very dusty on the Platt, and Not Near as Pleasant as the Prarie Roads that is Not So Much Traveled. We arrived at Fremont 37 Miles West of Omaha and 47 Miles East of Collumbus, which made our days Traval. Fremont is the County Town of Dodge County, has about a dosen Indifferent Houses. We Stoped at the Valley House, Kept by and old Widow Lady, by the Name of Turner She Said She left Massachusets 40 Years Since. We got here at 5 Oclk We Took Tea Lod[g]ing & Breakfast. She done the Best She Could for us. Pork Bread & Butter Tea & Coffee Boiled Milk. the House was infested with Flies in every thing The Elk Horn River Comes in the Vally directly North of here Some 5 Miles. The Bluffs Runs out Thin, and the Rail Road Could be Turned West at that point which would be Near 40 Miles from Omaha. altho the Elk Horn River Empties in the Platt 14 Miles or More East of here It follows down the Platt, which is wide here.

The Telegrath Line is attended by a Man by the Name of Colson he is from Utica New York. has been here Some four Years. he Sais their is about 300 Inhabitants in Dodge County. Fremont is Situate about 6 Miles from the East line of Douglass County, which Reaches to the Missouri River, and Omaha is in Douglass County. Govenor Saunders is the Teritorial Govenor. They have No Court House here. Never had but One Court. They Shot a Horse Thief Some Short time Since. Went to Bed at 9 Oclk. & Got up at 4 ½ Ock A.M. Had our Breakfast at 5 ½ Oclk. all well & a Clear

day. Some fog in the Morning This is Wednesday 24th June 1863.

We leave Fremont for Omaha 37 Miles, and to the Crossing of the Elk Horn 15 Miles. old Mrs. Turner here sais She is 69 Years old has 12 Living Children. She Sais in 1860 they had No Rain for 9 Months & 3 Days from Fall till July, and they had the Best Crops they ever had. She Sais Some Come out here from Boston, Consumpted, & got entirely Well. the dry Clear Wether No doubt adds to the Health for Consumptives. We paid our Bill for Meals & Lod[g]ing for 8 of us \$ – She Sais Eggs is now 15 Cents Dos, Chickens 28/- dos.

Just in Sight of This Place on the Bluff is where a Young Man with Doctor Dorsey in 1849 Shot a Pawne Squaw. She Was Siting on a log at Elm Grove. out of Pure Deviltry, Doctor Dorsey & Party was Compelled to give him up. the Indians Killed the Young Man and Skinned him by a Small Stream, which from that Occurrence the People Call it Raw Hide Creek. The Indian Encampment was then Just by this place. it is Said one of the Indian Chief Skined him.

this was dealing out Justice to the Young Man, and it ought to be a Warning to the Wicked and Unthougfull in the future.

We left the Fremont House this Morning, and arrived at the Pappio, within 7 Miles of Omaha at 12 Oclk here we Stoped & fed, Having come 30 Miles this forenoon. We Crossed the Elk Horn – which is about 120 feet across Banks not High. the last 15 Miles Back to the Elk Horn, the Hills are Very High and not Susceptible of Making a Rail Road. this is a Small Stream here about 6 feet across an the Water 12 Inches deep. it Runs in the Main Pappio Stream 4 Miles Below. the Main Pappio We Crossed about 4 Miles Back. the Stream Laid Low & appeared about 20 feet across.

At this Hotel, which is Kept by a Young Man by the Name of Abbot, Born in Main. the Road at this Place Forks. one goes to Omaha 7 Miles and the other to Florance 7 Miles & Thence

down the Missouri River to Omaha 5 Miles. We Concluded to go by the Way of Florence to See the Mormons, or Mormon Emigrants. here is where they all Congregate and Fit out for Salt Lake. their was about 1600 their and in the Vicinity, Men Women & Children We Called to See them, but few Could Speak the English Language. they where [were] Mainly Swedes and Dains. they where [were] mainly Taken Something to eat & doing their own Cooking on the Ground pots Set in Small Holes. every Thing was Strewed over the Ground. Children a Sleep on the ground. the Men and Women Many Had Wooden Shoes, dug out to Suit the foot exactly, with a Tin Band across the Instep to Keep the foot in. I put on one, and found I could Walk quite well. the Swede Said it was good Shoe did not leak. the Swedes & Danes are a Small Thick set People. the Praries arround Florance Was full of them. Some gathering a Little Brush and Weeds anything that would make a little Fire. Their Was Hundreds of Teams & Oxen Encamped all Round the place. Some Sevral Miles off. Met Many Men Women & Children going out to these places on Foot Carrying on their Backs their all. Some One Thing & Some another. Some had old Wheels. One Woman had Some four or five old Reeds [?] which Indicated She Was a Morm. 650 had Just arrived. it takes these Mormon Waggon 6 Months to Make a Trip. The Mormon Church Send down the ox Teams to bring them up they put 12 persons to One Team, and Charge \$40- a head. the women & Children Ride the Men has to Walk. Saw that Some of the emigrants had Bot a Cow. this Cow is Tied to the Waggon with a Rope. they take her along to Milk for the Children. they Looked Generaly Healthy, but appeard to be a Very Ignorant Set of People. I Could Count over the Praries Thousands of Oxen. they Pasture the Country for Miles with their oxen to let them Recruit. they Generaly go in Trains. from 35 to 50 Teams they usualy have 4 Men with the Trains, that Stand Centinal & Watch the oxen all Night this is their Special Business. each is furnished with a Horse to Ride. they Sleep in the Day time. they expect to Send down 600 Teams. they Say they expect 10,000 Emigrants this Year. if they have Not the \$40 to pay they are to Work it out for the Church. We passed Hundreds of

Teams on the Road. Some a Mile Long all Oxen from 4 Yoke to 8 Yoke to a Waggon. Florence is a Miserable Place. Some 20 Houses which is Mainly used to House the Mormons in Several Stores, also the Church Store they Keep articles Suitable for emigrants Tin Ware Skillets Kettles & Course Clothing. they pick up Considerable Money out of the emigrants. I Saw One Bakery. the Bread looked good. after Walking through the Camp, and Seeing What Was to be Seen We drove on to Omaha, 5 Miles. this is a Flourishing Town. they Say it has 3500 Inhabitants. I doubt it. the Main Buildings here is the Teretorial Capital Land offices & the Main Buildings is Plain. Brick I Notice Very poor the Town is Situate within $\frac{1}{2}$ Mile of the River Lays High We Stoped at the Douglass House Took Tea, and Then left for Council Bluffs. We Crossed in a Steam Ferry Boat. Council Bluff is 4 Miles East of the River We Thought by Leaving to Night it Would facilitate our Trip Home. the Bluffs & Land Lays High for Miles West of Omaha and I See No place that a Rail Road Could be Made, except at Very High grads if at all — to the Platt. I got Shaved here, or Shaved My Self and paid 10 Cents. all Well. This the 24th June 1863.

We left after Tea, and drove down to the Fery, which We Crossed in a Steam Boat. all Three Teams drove on the Boat it Would Carred a Dosen. the Captain Made No Charge for Taking us over — he understood We Was Rail Road Men and Passed us Free. We drove up to Council Bluffs which is Between 4 or 5 Miles from the River, at the Edge of the Flats, and in a Ravine. the Bluffs are High on each Side and on the East. the Main Town is on the West Side the Ravine there is Some $\frac{1}{4}$ Mile Wide. the Town Mainly Occupies this Space, then it Runs up the Ravine the Street in the Center & Houses on each Side, for Near a Mile Some in the Bluffs. Their appeard about a dosen New Houses Built this Year, Mainly Brick Population estimated at 3000 or 3500. I Think & over estimate. there was a Number of quite Large Stores, a Branch of the State Bank a place of Considerable Trade. Many of the Merchants Send Goods to Denver & Eutaw Salt Lake. We Stoped at the Pacific House, quite a good House We had Lod[g]ing & Breakfast & Horse feed Charge \$11.00

which was extravagant. We Left at 6 ½ Oclk June 25 for For Des Moines 150 to 160 Miles. We drove on for Dinner 28 Miles to a Farmer, Mr. Bird. They was formrly from East Tenessee. They was Cleanly & Got us up Diner quite Soon. Pork Ham Tea Boiled Milk good Bread & Butter, all Cleanly.

I found a Young Lady here a School Teacher from the Bluffs. She Said She Teached the Free School. Said She got \$19.00 per Month. This I Told her, was a fair Price She Said the Ladys got at the Bluffs \$20. Per Month and the Men \$60- per Month. the Country Was Very Hilly from the Bluffs to this Place. the Main Streams Crossed Was Silver Creek & Neshney Bottony [Nishnabotna River]. the Flats of this is the Largest We Crossed. the Banks High the Stream about 20 feet across. it is Near here. Enters in the Missouri in the State of Missouri. the Flats is quite Wide, Near a Mile. We all Finished Dinner at Two Oclk. it Was the Best got up Dinner We got in the State of Iowa of its Kind. Cleanliness & Tast was Conspicuous, altho Plain. the Bread was Superior to any I eat Since I left N.J. the old Lady understood it. She Said the Flour Was ground from their own Wheat They had a Mill within 4 Miles. the Miller is Named Losh from Ohio. the old Lady Sais She Was Born in Tenessee. She had a Sister in Kansas & Relatives in Missouri. Sais Many of the Relatives is in Tenessee Some Run away & Some in the Rebal army. Some forced in. Now Two Oclk. We paid Bill – and left all Pleased with the accomodation the House had Two Rooms.

This is Potowatamie County, the Same County Council Bluff is in the Next County is Cass County. the County Town is Lewis We arrived at Lewis at 8 Oclk. P.M. Lewis is quite a Neat Village Some Thirty Houses Mainly Painted White Settled by New England People. Some 1500 Inhabitants in the County 300 Voters. it is the Neatest Village We found West of Des Moines. They Raise Considerable Stock in this County. the Sheref had 500 Sheep. he was from Hartford Connecticut. his Name was John Kise.

We Stoped at the Henderson House Kept by T. R. Chapel

quite well Kept. We drove Yesterday from the Bluffs hier which is Called 50 Miles. One of our Horses Was Sick at Burds. Detained Mr. Walker & Myself Some Two Hours. the Horse appears Not Well This Morning, dont eat Well. We had Tea & Breakfast. all Well this Morning — June 26th 1863. We are 100 Miles frm Des Moines. the Country Back to the Bluffs is Very Hilly, except the Last 5 Miles. the Crops Look Well Through out all the West, as well as Nebraska.

The First House Was Built in Lewis 1855. left Lewis 7 Oclk and arrived at Lewis Beason on Turkey Creek 21 Miles East of Lewis . . . We followed in Sight of Turkey Creek 19 Miles, and Continue in Sight 6 Miles further. Took Dinner at Beasons. Tolerable fare. Our Horses Not Very Well. The Country Considerable Settled all along Turkey Creek. the Land & Crops good. Mrs. Beason father & Mother Lived heir. They was from Owego, Some 20 Years Since Beason Keeps a post office a Young Lady, about 18, Was here She Kept School. She got \$18.00 per Month and Boarded herself. She pays 10/= per Week. her Name was Hollinsworth. her Step Father Was a Doctor Tingle, lives North 15 Miles in Audibon County. he Was from Kentuckey a Large Tall Man about 60 Years old. he had the Kentuckey air. Now Two Oclk. and we are all Ready to Start.

We arrived at Dalmanutha, Guthrie County, 40 Miles East of Lewis, which makes our Traval to day 40 Miles. the Hotel at Dalmanutha is quite a Common Concern. it is a Stage House. the Country was Hilly to day & not Much Settled. this place has 4 Houses the Next Ten Miles has But Two Houses on the line.

We are Now 60 Miles West of Desmoins. We are all well But one of our Horses is Sick. the House at Dalmanutha is Kept by Mr Porter, formerly from Ohio has been here 6 Years. they Was formerly from Pa

The Western Stage has Just gone West. the Eastern Stage goes by this place at 12 Oclk. to Night. get to Desmoins to Morrow after Noon. here at this place We held a Consulta-

tion what Course to adopt to Reach Des Moines on Saturday Before the Land Office Closed, on Saturday, to Morrow. and the Conclusion Was that We would Charter a four Horse Stage of the Western Stage Compy and Ames, Walker, Clinton, Mr. Cattle & Myself Take this Stage. after Barganing with the Drivers and paying Some Smart Money, They agreed to Hitch up. We got of [off] about 9 ½ Oclk at Night. We left James Blair, Parder, Saml the Cook & James the Tent Master, to Bring on the other Three Teams. The Tent Master Team & one other Team Belonged at Boonsborro. They was to Come on to Adell, in Dallas County 36 Miles. here they was to Turn of [off] & Go to Boonsville, which was 35 Miles, while to this place it was 25 Miles & 40 Miles thence to Boonsborro. James Blair & Parder Was to Bring on our Two Horse Carriage to this Place. they Belonged to Marshall Town. Our Stage Come on all Night. We arrived at Adell 36 Miles by 5 Oclk in the Morning Saturday 27 June. Adell has about 25 Houses. the Road appeared Quite Rolling that we passed over. We all Slept all We Could. Ames & Myself took the Front Seat. We arrived at Desmoins at 10 Oclk A.M. Saturday 27 June 1863. and Stoped at the Savary House & extensive House, which is used for First Story Stores, the Second Hotel Purposes. Ames & me had Room 33, Large Room with Two Beds. We Washed up & Shaved & Changed our Garments. Our Shirt Collars & Shirts Was Near the Colour of Black Kettles. We Took a Short Nap & Then

We Took Dinner at the Savary House at 12 ½ Oclk. We Then Took a Carriage & Driver and Rode over to the State Capital, which is Situate on the east Side of the Desmoins River 1 ½ Miles from our Hotel on the West Side. the Town is ¾ on the West Side of the Desmoins River and in the Forks of the Rackoon River and Desmoins. the Rackoon here is Not over 10 Paces wide. the Desmoins is Very Low here. We passed over the Bridge that Leads from the West Side to the Capital. it is a Tole Bridge, not Covered, Built on Heavy Pears. the Charges Was Ten Cent for our Two Horse Carriage with 5 of us. I See Teams Fording the Desmoins Just above the Bridge. the Water appeared about Nee deep to the Horses, Sandy Bottom.

We Went to the State Capital Saw Mr. Wright Secretary of State. he appeared Much Pleased to See us. he Showed us the Surveys of the Several lines of RRD as Filed in his office, including our own to Marshaltown Mississippi & Missouri, Dubuque & Suoux City, and after Interchanging opinions with him Respecting Making Our Road Through the State, West of the Desmoins which he approved of We Then Went to See the Senate Chamber Legislative Hall, Then on Top the Capital which gave us a View of the City and Surrounding Country. We Took our Carriage & drove all Round The City and To the Fair Grounds. On the Way We Called upon Henry Scribner, Esq. at his Steam Saw Mill. he appeared Very Busy. he Said he Sawed about 300,000 Feet a Year, Besides Scaling Lath all of which is Oak, Walnut, Bass & Cotton Wood He Sais he gets from \$15.00 to \$30.00 per Thousand Board Measure the High Price for Larg Timber, Scaling Lath 28/= Thousand for four foot Cord Wood he Sells about 1000 Cords per Year Gets 20/- Cord Sells Mainly for Making Brick. he States he Purchases Wood Land that furnishes his own Logs Much Cheaper. he was at Work in the Mill himself, and his dress and appearance Shows he done his full Proportion of Manual Labour. he Said he Worked hard Enjoyed Good Health, and Was perfectly Satisfied with what he Was doing and his Situation. the demand for all his Manufacture was greater than he Could Supply.

The City Covers Much ground. the Population is Said to be over 5000. I think it Over Rated. it has Stood Still Mainly untill this Year. there Appears Now a Number of Houses going up. Mainly Plain. Not Many that Cost over \$3000. There May be a Dosen that Cost \$5000 Many was quite Neat.

The Land on the West Side Perhaps is where the City Stands 100 feet above the Desmoins on the East Side where the Capital Stands is 150 feet. I am Told that the Flats on the East Side in the Spring of 1862 overflowed So that they had to use Boats to get to the Capital from the Upper Bridge. The Bridge Below Say 200 Yards Washed a Way. Their is Many good Stores here. Our Rail Road Marshaltown is Now 50 Miles from here. the M. & W. Road to Grinell is . . .

Now the Same Distance. We get a bout one Half the Business.

We paid our Extra Stage Fare from Dalmanutha here \$16.00 or \$4.00 apiece for 60 Miles, Passing through Guthrie County & Guthrie Center, and Then Through Polk County. Des Moines City is in Polk County.

I Went in the Printing office of the State Register where I found a Tribune of the 22d June & a Philadelphia Paper Giving us the account of the Rebal Raids in Maryland & Pennsylvania and the Great Excitement Prevailing at the East Since We have been absent. this News to us and every thing in the Papers I Thought I Read Twice over We Ransacked the Town for Later dates but Could find None.

The agent of the Gal & C R Rd. has an offic here Said he Recieved 5000 Pounds Wool to Ship to Marshalltown for the East.¹⁰ Sent Yesterday 10 Passengers, Mostly Morman Teamsters from Omaha, where they had left their Teams to Recruit for about a Month. they go to Visit their former Homes East, while the Teams Rest.

We have all finished Tea, and all are well. the day is Very Warm here Thermometer 98 in the Shade it is extremely dry. No Rain But a Short Shower in Ten Weeks, Tho the Grain all Looks Well. at this Place the Rain is More Wanting. it is More Sandy and the effects of the draught More Perceptible Such draughts in N. J. Would destroy every thing but there is Something here in the Soil & Climate that Stands a draught. We have Now Ben 23 days in Iowa &

¹⁰ The Galena and Chicago Union R.R., started in 1836, after many difficulties reached Fulton, Illinois, opposite Clinton, Iowa, in 1855. Three years later a combination bridge and ferry linked it with the Chicago, Iowa & Nebraska R.R. which had already completed its line to Cedar Rapids. Blair's excursion into Iowa following the Republican Convention at Chicago in 1860 was via this latter road, and he rode it again in 1863. There was through service to Marshalltown by 1863, to Nevada by 1864, and to Council Bluffs by 1867, largely due to the survey Blair describes here. At completion of the Cedar Rapids & Missouri River Railroad (the Chicago North Western since 1864) across Iowa to the terminus of the Union Pacific, which in turn made connection with the Central Pacific (now Southern Pacific) in 1869, made the first Overland Route from Chicago to San Francisco a reality.

have only had One Shower. Nothing but a Clear Sky. My Eastern Coughf has left Me and I am Clear of Cold.

I Learnt Mr Talcott, Supt. & President Brown of the Gal & C. U.R.Rd. Was here the last Week. Nevada Story County, is about 28 Miles from here. this is the End of our 30 Miles Road West of Marshaltown.

Mr Ames & Myself with our Carriage & Horses left Desmoines City at 2 Oclk P M. on the 28th June and drove on to Peori City, a Village of about 12 Houses, Situate Near the North East Corner of Polk County — on the East Side of Indian Creek. We arrived at 8 Oclk. the distance 25 Miles from Des Moines. We Stopped at the Stage House Kept by Batchelder. they had One Sleeping Room, in the Garret, under the Roof, which was not Sealed Lathed Nor Plastered. this Had four Beds in, with Just Room enough to pass in the Isle, a Window at Each End, and the Hot Stove pipe go up Near the Beds. the family, with the Grand Mother & 2 or Three Children, all Slept in Two Beds Below. there appeared about Seven in all. the Stage Drivers Seemed to Sleep on the Floor. he was Clever and Said he Would do the Best he Could for us, which I think he did We Crossed the South Fork or Main Skunk 8 Miles from Here 17 Miles East of Desmoines. the Bottoms 3 Miles Wide.

Indian Creek is Situate one Mile West of this Village the Flats $\frac{1}{2}$ Mile Wide. there is Considerable Timber along the Indian Creek, as well as the Skunk. the Settlement appears Considerable all along each Stream. The Road and Bridges is Mainly New to Desmoines all has been Made Mainly this Spring to Make a good Road to Marshaltown to the Rail Road the Stage Stops here, Runs 4 Horses & quite full. the Teaming is Large. This is Situate 30 Miles from Marshaltown, 8 Miles from Eadon Ville. We pass 6 Miles Through the East Point of Story County, then Marshal [County]. The Rail Road from Marshaltown to Nevada is within 9 Miles of this Place. Paid Breakfast Tea & Lodg Horses & \$1.50 left at 6 Oclk for Marshaltown on 29th June 1863 Monday Morning an other Shower in the Night We passed Through Eadon

Vill, which is a Small Place a Store, Steam Saw Mill, and about a dosen farm Houses in Sight. The Farms was among the Best That I Saw in the State. the Grain Was excellent the Wheat Fields extensive. a Man by the Name of Rhodes had about a Mile Square for his farm which Was Nearly all Fenced on Three Sides with Cotton Wood or Poplar Trees Standing about 3 feet a part & 15 feet High they looked Particularly Handsome. the Land Was Nearly all Prarie in Sight. I Learn they Could get to the Rail Road at a New Point in about 6 Miles Their Product will Contribute Much to the Support of the Road.

The Road to Marshaltown Was excellent it Kept on the High Ground. We Crossed Timber Creek, and then Come on to Lime Creek and Crossed it and our Rail Road Some 5 Miles West of Marshaltown. We arrived at Marshaltown on One Oclk, P.M., Monday the 29th June 1863. The other Party, Including James Blair, D C Blair, W. W. Walker, Eng'r, & L. C. Parder Secty, arrived by Stage at 2 ½ Oclock. We all Took Dinner and Prepared to Take the Cars for Cedar Rapids.

So the Reader Will See that We left Marshaltown at the end of the Rail Road on the 12th day of June 1863, and Returned on the 29th day of June 1863, Being Gone 18 Days, from that Point to the Loup Fork, at the Forks of the Platt River, 85 Miles . . . from Omaha.

The Distance from Marshaltown to Collumbus or Loup Fork by the Way We Went Was 300 Miles So that We Was Near 1600 Miles West from the Atlantic, on the 42 Parallel, 1300 Miles by Rail, which Can be Travaled in Two days & 2 Nights, while the 300 Miles out & 300 Miles Back by our own Conveyance, took us 18 days of Industrious Traval, and Considerable Perseverance to accomplish the end. Our horses stood it well.

We left Marshaltown for Ceder Rapids at 3 ½ Oclock and arrived at Ceder Rapids at 6 Oclk P.M. Mr. Ames Went direct to Chicago.

I & the others Stopped here. We have at this Place the Ceder

Rapids & Missouri River Rail Road office, and the office of the Iowa Rail Road Contracting Compy.

I Spent that evening & Tuesday to arrange the Business of the Companies and Settle with Mr. Walker & Parder for their Services, due them from the Companies, and arrange for the Future. John D. Vail Was here and Well.¹¹

James Blair & Myself Stoped with Mr. John Wear when we went out, and Was there Some Three days. Mr. Wear is a director in the Road — had Married his Second Wife. We Was well accomodated. the Hotel here is a Miserable affair. Mr. Wear Was opposed to Charging us any Thing. So I made his wife a Present of \$5.00 for her Babys dress, and on our Return when We left, We Made her another Present of \$3.00 for the Baby. In this Way We Indirectly Compensated them for the Hospitality We Received which Was Reciprocal and we Received attention that this Place did not afford us.

We left Ceder Rapids Tusday evening at 6 ½ Oclk. P.M. 29' June, and arrived at Chicago Wednesday Morning at 5 Oclk A.M. 220 Miles. We all took Beds in the Sleeping Cars and Rested quite well. We Went to the Tremont House in Chicago, had Breakfast, Dinner & Tea. We spent Tusday [Wednesday] in Chicago. Mr. Walker Come along So did Mr. Jackman, one of the Contractors for the Construction of the 30 Miles Road West of Marshaltown to See the Galena Compy to Furnish their Construction Train and Hall Ties, which they agreed to do.

James, Clinton & Myself Then arranged to Leave that Evening by Way of the Michigan Southern Road. Lake Shore & Dunkirk, N.Y. & Erie. We got Passes on the Michigan

¹¹ John Davis Vail, son of Sarah Lock, nephew of John I. Blair and father of Wm. Penn Vail, M.D., whose notes are contained herein, grew up at the Blairstown Homestead and elected to learn railway building and management under his uncle's guidance. Since he was a member of the 1863 survey party, the town of Vail, Crawford County, Iowa, was named for him, as was also Vail, New Jersey. The Blair Homestead passed to his ownership later and still remains in the possession of the Vail family.

Southern. We paid Lake Shore. James & Clinton Had to pay N.Y. & Erie. I had a pass.

We did not go Via Pittsburgh as the Raid in Pa. Prevented that or our going that Way. We left Chicago Tuesday [Wednesday] evening, and on Wednesday [Thursday] Morning at 3 Oclk A.M. Was Waked up at the Great Bend.

here We left the Cars and Went to Bed at the Great Bend Hotel. got up at 7 Oclk, A.M Took our Breakfast. Took the Cars for Home. arrived at Collumbus at 1 Oclk and Home at 4 Oclk by Stage from their on the 3d of July, 1863. We left Blairs Town on Friday 3d June 1863, and Returned Friday 3d July 1863. Having Traveled 3200 Miles in the Month. all Well, and Met with No accidents, Whatever. and on the Whole it was and Important and Intresting Trip, Having Crossed the Two Great Rivers in this Country, the Mississippi and Missouri, and in the Terrytory of Nebraska to the River Platt, and Loup Fork.

Our Trip in a National Point of View Was Likewise of Vast Importance.¹² as it Was to See if there Was a Feasible Rout for the extension of the Ceder Rapids & Missouri River Rail Road, from the Des moins River Near Boonsborro to the Missouri River, and Thence across to the North Bend of the Platt River, following through Iowa on the 42 Parallel to the Missouri River and Thence across to the Platt. there is & excellent Rout by Maple River as Well as the Boyer River, the Southing Can Be Made on the Missouri Flats; and the Platt Reached in 35 Miles, or less if Necessary from the Missouri River. the Best Crossing Would appear Below Onowa.

I Forgot to Mention the Way they Lay out Roads on the Prarie Country. they Plow One Furrow over the Prarie and this Makes a Mark to follow. the New Road from West Point

¹² This statement was no exaggeration. The vital link between Cedar Rapids and Council Bluffs was necessary to complete the first transcontinental railroad, which proved an important factor in effectively retaining the Western States within the Union, as the Republicans had foreseen in their 1860 platform. For this reason perhaps more than any other John I. Blair has been called "King of the Iowa Railroads."

in Nebraska Was 50 Miles. they had Plowed a furow 35 Miles and had 15 Miles More to Plow. if Snow in the Winter, they put up poles with Prarie Grass Tied to the top to be Seen at a Distance.

So this ends the Main Narative of the Trip to the Platt Valey in June & July 1863 by J I Blair & Party, as Sketched by
J. I. Blair.

Party—

J. I. Blair, President, Iowa Rail Road Contracting Compy N.J. & Director & One of Executive Committee C & M. River R Rd. Cont?? of N.J.

Oaks Ames, Eastern Massachusetts, Director I.R.Rd. Contractg Compy, & C. & M. R Rd Co.

James Blair }
D. C. Blair } Directors in C.R. & M. River R. Rd & Contracting Compy.

W. W. Walker Enginr & V.P. C R & M R R Rd Comp

L. C. Parder Secty in C. & M. R Rd Comp, Ceder Rapids

H. C. Cattell, agent, C & G. U R Rd Compy Chicago

Judge Whiting Diretor, C & M R Rd Compy, Onowa, Iowa.

Samuel, the Cook, from Boonsborro.

James, the Teamseter, Tent & Bagage Master,

Making 10 in the Party to Onowa on the Missouri, and 10 from Decatur to the Loup Fork or Collumbus, with Judge Nieghler.

From Collumbus Back We Then had Nine of us, With 3 Carrages & 6 Horses Including also a Large New found Land Watch Dog.

This ends the Whole Story, with the Incidents of the Party.

J I Blair

July 4' 1863

To Cure Sick Headache

Gather sumac leaves in summer, and spread them in the sun for a few days to dry. Then powder them very fine and smoke the same twice a day, morning and evening, in a new pipe. If these directions are strictly adhered to for two months, it will in every case effect a cure.—*The Circle of Useful Knowledge*, Charles Kinsley, Clinton, Iowa, 1877.

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