

DOCUMENTS

ACROSS THE PLAINS IN 1863: THE DIARY OF PETER WINNE

Edited by Robert G. Athearn

Despite the military demands of the Civil War in the eastern United States, and in face of a threatening Indian situation in the West arising out of the war situation, the movement of peoples to the territories did not cease during the war years. Peter Winne, whose diary follows, noted that when he crossed the Missouri River in the spring of 1863, he observed a "large emigration for California, Idaho, Utah and Colorado." He was a part of a sharply increased traffic westward which was to become very large within the next few years. During the years 1863-1865 Russell, Majors and Waddell, the well-known freighters, were to have 6,250 wagons and 75,000 oxen¹ on the road, supplying the wants of those who had settled in the western territories. Along the trail with their wagons were thousands of homeseekers,² searching for new economic opportunities. This did not always mean precious metals, for there was much talk of favorable climates, virgin land, and commercial possibilities in the newly developed country. And if there was a magnet, drawing them on, there was also a pressure from behind, driving them. The war had disrupted many lives, and in some cases the clash of arms over their farms had literally driven many from their ancestral homes.

Peter Winne, not quite twenty-five, wanted to move on because, as he said, he "always had a desire to go farther west." Without any doubt hundreds of thousands of Americans participated in the westward movement for no better reason than this. Winne's father had moved westward from New York to Wisconsin in 1846 with the hope of finding a healthier place

¹ Lyle E. Mantor, "Stage Coach and Freighter Days at Fort Kearny," *Nebraska History*, 29:336 (December, 1948).

² During the decade 1859-1869 there was an estimated floating population of nearly 250,000 on the Plains. "The biggest rush of overland traffic was from 1863 to 1866. The closing year of the civil war the travel was immense. . . ." Frank A. Root and William E. Connelley, *The Overland Stage to California* (Topeka, 1901; reprinted, Columbus, 1950), 314.

to live and one which might afford more economic advantages. He had died within ten years, leaving a wife and five children. The elder Winne's seventeen-year-old son, Peter, was now called upon to help support the family, which he did, until he married Lucy Parsons in 1860 and established a home of his own.

In the spring of 1863 Peter and Lucy Winne decided to move to California, in search of a more favorable climate, and with them went William H. Tibbils and his wife, Hannah, who was Peter's eldest sister. By the time the party got out to Julesburg, Colorado, some of the members decided that Colorado might offer more than California and it was determined then that they would swing south to the Denver region and try it for a year. Peter Winne lived in Colorado most of his remaining days and noted in his memoirs that, having later visited California, he was glad he had been persuaded to try Colorado first.

It was on this westward wagon trip that the diary, like so many others, came into existence. The original diary, presently in the possession of Walter Winston Winne, son of Peter, is the typical pencil-scrawled, cryptic account which records only the high points of the trip. Some time after arriving in Colorado Peter produced what he called a "copy" of the diary. It is not a copy, but a greatly expanded version of the journey, which, although done at a later date and therefore perhaps somewhat less valid, is a good deal more interesting and certainly more useful than the original effort. Possibly from other memoranda, and from recollection, Peter transformed the diary into more or less a diary-memoir. It is this work which has been here reproduced.

*The Diary*³

April 9, 1863. We started from Mothers home about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile N E of Eagle a station on the Chicago Milwaukee & St Paul railway in Waukesha Co Wisconsin at 3 P M. Passed through the village of Eagle in going to the residence of James A. Parsons — Lucy's father.

We left father Parsons at 5 P M. It was a sad time the parting with our dear ones. Sheldon Parsons Lucys oldest brother accompanied us to Mr Tibbils fathers home 17 miles. We arrived at the residence of H. W. Tibbils . . . at 11 P. M. Were detained on the road a great deal to bid our many friends a good bye.

³ Made available to the editor by W. W. Winne and Dr. Robert L. Stearns.

We have a covered wagon an excellent new one, a good tent (not fully completed). The tent and wagon cover being made of No 2 duck sail that had been used a little a stove made of plate and sheet iron. The tent a 3 foot wall tent (Not yet fully completed). Our wagon made wide on the top of the box or bed projecting six inches on each side over the wheels, this gives us an abundance of room to sleep at night. Traveled 17 miles. Had four horses.

Friday April 10th. Rainy did not travel. Stopped at Mr. H. W. Tibbils, had a very pleasant time.

Saturday April 11th. Left Mr Tibbils at 9:30 A M. Passed through Delevan and some other towns. Rained some during the afternoon. Arrived at my cousins, John K. Pooles at 7 P M or rather his wife Elizabeth is my cousin being the oldest daughter of my uncle Garret Winne. Cousin Pooles home is on Turtle Creek, four miles north of Beloit Rock Co Wisconsin. Traveled 27 miles.

Sunday April 12. Did not travel. Stormed all night. A Mr A. M. Yost and family visited the Pooles. Stayed most of the day. They had a child about two years of age that pushed itself along on the floor in lieu of creeping. It stuck its tongue out and hissed like a snake. Stormed nearly all day.

Monday April 13th. As the gray horse we bought of Mr. Thomas was a slow walker, and not fast enough for our horses, we decided to trade with Mr Yost in order to get a better drawing team. The Bay horse we got of Mr Cole bothered this morning. Did not want to pull.

Started from Mr Pooles at 9 a m. Mr Poole accompanied us to Beloit, and introduced us to Messrs Blodgett & Farwell who have been across the plains several times and were outfitting again for California. They are not ready to start. We agreed with them as to the route we would take to Council Bluffs Iowa, and if they do not overtake us prior to reaching that point we will wait for them at that place.

Remained at Beloit all day to have a brake attached to the wagon. Had our Photograph (Ambrotypes)⁴ taken in our camping outfits. Camped here for the first time. Camped opposite the Hotel Beloit. Traveled 4 miles.

Tuesday April 14th. Resumed our journey at 8:30 A M. had a good night's rest. Passed through the villages of Rockton & Harrison Ill, and

⁴ Defined by Webster as "A picture taken on a plate of prepared glass, in which the lights are represented in silver, and the shades are produced by a dark background visible through the unsilvered portions of the glass."

passed one mile west of Durand. In the forenoon the Cole horse refused to pull again for a while. . . . We had used a noose on her putting it up over her head and around her tongue pulling up and back until her tongue was dark and when I gave her an opportunity to go ahead she went. . . . Passed through a fine country. The people where we camped were very kind to us insisted on our sleeping in their house but we did not. Sent us quite an amount of things from there [sic] house for our meals. Camped on the prairie. On the premises of a Mr. Smith. Traveled 25 miles.

Wednesday April 15th. We were on the road at 8:30 A M. Passed through the village of Dacotah at 11 A M. Old Lion a very reliable horse, that we purchased of Mr Thomas was taken sick on the road, about four miles north of Freeport. Delayed us about two hours. We thought he had colic. Afterwards learned it was Lung Fever the result of a cold caught at Pooles.

Reached our camping place, one mile West of Freeport at dusk. Camped in the road in front of the house of a Mr Best put two horses in his barn and two in a barn opposite. Old Lion was taken very sick again. You could hear him breath for some distance. I walked back to Freeport, procured a horse doctor. That was after ten o'clock P M. He was a Homeopath, and I came near discharging him when I found that to be the case. His medicine helped the horse almost immediately, to my great surprise. On my travels around Freeport to find a Horse Doctor I was impressed with the large number of dogs in Freeport. Never saw so many dogs in one town. Traveled 19 miles. Tibbils staid up with the horse all night.

Thursday April 16. The horse doctor called again this morning. Old Lion is much better. People very kind refused to take any pay from us.

Started on our journey shortly after noon. Trains of wagons having 32 horses passed us here (They were from Delevan Wis.) Horses are worth in California more than double what they are in Wis. or Ill. So people buy them drive or lead them through and get their pay in gold which is worth a premium from 30 to 150 per cent. (They buy them in currency). Camped on the prairie 11 miles west of Freeport. Traveled 10 miles.

Friday April 17th. Resumed our journey at 9 A M passed through the village of Mount Carroll. Camped on the farm of M Kinney. Mr K and his sons attended a meeting of the Union League at Mount Carroll tonight. . . . Old Lion taken very sick again. We had broken one bottle of the horse medicine, lost another and we did not know what to do. We appealed

to Mr K again and again for advice. His reply was there is no one here or in Mount Carroll that knows any more about a horse, than I do, and I do not know any more than you do. So we were unable to get any advice. We proceeded to act on our own lines.

We bled him, gave him Whiskey, Hot water & capsicum⁵ mixed. Rubbed Mustard plaster on his chest made ropes of hay and wound them around his legs to keep him warm rubbed him until he was in a complete lather, continuing to rub him until he was dry. Went to bed after midnight. We are very much discouraged fearing we may lose the horse, and we do not see how we can proceed without him as we do not have sufficient money to spare to purchase another. Traveled 20 miles.

Saturday April 18th. Did not travel on account of Old Lion being sick. Men leading 11 horses passed today for California as well as several wagons.

Sunday April 19th. Celebrated my 25th Birthday in Camp had some birthday cake given us before leaving home. Very windy. Did not travel.

Monday April 20th. On the road at 9 A M. All in good health and spirits. The horse seemed in good health and the condition of the horse contributed to our enjoyment. Arrived at Savanna on the Mississippi river at 11 A M in time for the noon ferry.⁶ Arrived at Sabula Iowa at 11:30 A. M. Rainy. In the afternoon we traveled over a rolling prairie. Camped on the farm of a Captain Morehead of the First Iowa Cavalry.⁷ This farm is in a very dilapidated condition. Traveled 19 miles. The country we passed through in Illinois has a very rich soil and is admirably adapted in every way for farming.

Tuesday April 21st. Resumed our journey again. Camped in the village of Maquoketa, is a beautiful place. Sprinkled some today.

April 22 & 23d & Part of Friday 24th. We spent in this place stopping at the hotel of Mr. J. E. Goodenow.⁸ We found that the Yost horse was

⁵ A pepper-like substance used as a counter-irritant.

⁶ A ferry had operated at Sabula in Jackson County since 1837. First a "scow," then a horse ferry had been used. In 1859-1860 a steam ferry, named the "76," was run by Jacob Oswald and Matt Hodgson. *History of Jackson County, Iowa . . .* (Chicago, 1879), 563.

⁷ There is no record of a Captain Morehead, First Iowa Cavalry, in the *Roster of Iowa Soldiers . . .*

⁸ John E. Goodenow, "the father of Maquoketa," settled on the site of the future town in 1838. His first log cabin served travelers as an inn; in 1846 he built a frame house; two or three years later he constructed a brick hotel. He laid out the town

also too slow for our other horses, so we traded horses with Mr. G and as the wagon we started with was neither narrow or wide track and therefore did not fit the track in the road so we traded with Mr G — getting a wide track wagon, and we had to wait to let him change or rather repair his wagon. Mr G did this in good shape keeping us at his hotel (And it was a good one.) Had our first meals in a house here after leaving Cousin Pooles. We enjoyed it very much. He gave us the best rooms in the house. Treated us finely and we appreciated it very much. Became rested and became acquainted again with *Home Like Living*.

Friday April 24th 2 P M. Left Maquoketa. Traveled 14 miles, camped in the village of Monmouth.

Saturday April 25th. Started on our journey in good spirits, passed through the villages of Wyoming, Madison & Anamosa, the last named place is a very beautiful village.⁹ We purchased some fish (Red Horse,) on trying to eat them we were sorely disappointed. They were so full of fine bones. And although they looked nice it was almost impossible to eat them.

Camped 3½ miles west of Anamosa. It rained some and we backed our Wagon under a shed attached to and aside the barn. The people here are very kind to us, invited us into their house, and we spent some of our time in their home.¹⁰ . . . Traveled 30 miles.

Sunday April 26th. Did not travel. Several teams for California passed this point today. Rained some this afternoon. We have good stables for our horses. Are careful about that, fearing we may lose some of our horses by catching cold in these cold spring rains.

Monday April 27th. Rained last night. Also this forenoon. We did not start until afternoon, and it was sprinkling slightly when we started. Camped at Springville to have a longer tongue put in the wagon, as the one

of Maquoketa, donated building lots for public purposes, served as the first mayor, was assessor of Jackson County, and served in the Iowa General Assembly in 1849 and 1850. *History of Jackson County, Iowa* . . ., 630-32.

⁹ A visitor of 1858 was also impressed by the town. He commented on the graded streets, sidewalks, and houses "built of brick and in the most modern style." Jesse Clement, "Gleanings From the Note Book of the Itinerating Editor," *IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, 38:285 (July, 1940).

¹⁰ Inserted in the Diary as a note, "Saw the last Railroad Train at Anamosa." This was the Dubuque Western Railroad, which had been completed from Dubuque to Anamosa in 1860. In 1878 it became a part of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul R. R. *History of Jones County, Iowa* . . . (2 vols., Chicago, 1910), 1:212.

in was too short for *our large horses*. It seems that we have to learn everything by trying and experimenting. . . . The change in the wagon tongue certainly was necessary.

Rained all night but we were very comfortable. The heavy duck canvas for tent & wagon cover, protected us thoroughly from the storm. We did not get wet or chilly. Traveled 10 miles.

Tuesday April 28th. Rained in the morning. Started at 10 A M. Passed through Marion and Cedar Rapids, camped 5 miles west of the latter place. The man where we camped charged us for everything, including the chips we burned in the stove to cook with. Was the closest man we have seen. *Traveled 21 miles.*

Wednesday April 29th. Resumed our journey at 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ A M, passed through a great deal of unimproved country. Found some bad sloughs or springs. Those in the Iowa River bottoms being the worst. In one of these bad places the Cole horse refused to pull and I had to get out in mud and water knee deep. But as the horse saw me get the string out to use on her, she started and pulled the whole load out. Killed a hawk today the first thing I shot.

Our experience today has been new and strange we found some of the worst places on the highest ground. We found springs and the softest roads on the side of the hills, on the highest ground, and some times almost on the top of the highest ground. Some times we would leave the road which was soft for high ground only to find it worse than the road. This was a new revelation to us. And we decided to keep in the road in the future.

Passed through the village of Marengo. Did not get into camp until after dark. We were anxious to get across the Iowa Bottoms before it rained any more. As these bottoms are almost impassable in wet weather or rather after a long wet spell. The banks of the stream are low, the land flat and swampy. Found a large number of teams camped here. Traveled 25 miles.

Thursday April 30th. On the road again at 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ A M. Passed through Brooklyn and Malcolm. Camped four miles South of Grinnell on the prairie. G is a new town [established in 1854] on the line of the Chicago & Rock Island Railway.¹¹ At Malcolm we left the rail road for good. We are

¹¹ Here is an illustration of the fact that Winne rewrote his original diary. In 1863 this was the Mississippi & Missouri Railroad Company; not until 1866 did it become a part of the Rock Island System. Dwight L. Agnew, "Iowa's First Railroad," *IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY*, 48:26 (January, 1950).

told that this is as far west as the railway has reached at any point in Iowa. The rails had just been laid and no dirt placed between the ties and we had some difficulty in crossing the track with our wagon. Rail road track not laid to Grinnell yet we are told.

We shot some prairie chicken and relished them when cooked. Country sparsely settled. Let our horses stand out for the first time without [shelter]. Traveled 40 miles.

Friday May 1st. Cloudy started at 7½ A M. Passed through the village of Newton and camped 10 miles west. Have been traveling faster for the past two days as it is threatening to storm. And we are anxious to cross the Skunk River before there are any heavy rains as the banks of said stream are low the country flat and swampy the bottoms wide. It is said that in wet seasons it has often taken 100 yoke of oxen to pull an empty wagon across. [sic!] That people have frequently been delayed for about a month to effect a crossing.¹²

All the indications led us to beleive [sic] these stories we had heard about the conditions of the Skunk River bottoms and wet time. Traveled 25 miles.

Saturday May 2d. Passed through the village of Pope. Arrived at Des Moines at 4 P M, having been on the road since 7 A M. Found Des Moines a thrifty looking place. Saw Coal Mines for the first time in my life. People here informed us that the nearest railway was at a point near Grinnell about 140 miles easterly. On the C & R I R R. [Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad]¹³ Traveled 25 miles.

Camped in the yard of the Cooley House, a frame hotel just east of the river, and nearly west of the State Capitol Building.¹⁴ Saw some original

¹² The Skunk River Bottoms were a well-known hazard to travelers. "So famous was this bottom away back about Civil war days, that *Harper's Weekly* contained an illustration of crossing the 'Skunk Bottoms,' in which a stage coach loaded with passengers were sitting swamped in the mud, waiting for a pioneer farmer, who is seen approaching in the distance with a yoke of oxen to help the weary horses in pulling the coach to firm ground." James B. Weaver (ed.), *Past and Present of Jasper County, Iowa* (2 vols., Indianapolis, 1912), 1:28. Winne's story of 100 yoke of oxen seems an exaggeration, in spite of the reputation of the Skunk Bottoms. For another account of crossing the Bottoms, see Kenneth F. Millsap (ed.), "Romanzo Kingman's Pike's Peak Journal, 1859," *IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY*, 48:62-3 (January, 1950).

¹³ See note 11. The distance of "140 miles easterly" is obviously an error.

¹⁴ This was the "old brick capitol," built shortly after Des Moines was selected as the capital city in 1856. It was 55 by 108 feet in size and served until the state government moved into the present building in 1884. Jacob A. Swisher, "Some His-

characters here. A mixture of people. We had the genuine Western man, the contraband (negro), a few Southerners and some pilgrims like ourselves. . . .

Sunday May 3d. Did not travel. Attended a Methodist Sunday School held in the State Capitol Building.¹⁵ It is the best one I have ever attended up to this time.

We hear a great many strange expressions used. Heard a genuine contraband get off[f] some in a forcible manner. There were two men Negroes and a small negro boy trying to drive some sheep and at a certain place the sheep would start back, passing between the boy and the fence, each sheep at that point would jump up about two feet in the air, this process was repeated two or three times, when one of the men exclaimed in a loud voice, "Watch Out There Yo," "If yo let dem sheep pass you agan I will wallop yo till yo eyeballs jingle." "Yo bet." "I'll be Doggoned if I don't." This was too much for me, and I was nearly convulsed with laughter.

By the time they had driven the sheep to the same point again I had recovered from the attack of laughter and Lucy & I assi[s]ted, and we succeeded in getting the sheep into the pen or corral and as they did not pass the boy again, we did not see or hear "The Boy's Eye Balls Jingle."

Another incident. A native Iowan was in the yard where we were and was telling some of his chums about his trip. He had a horse and cart and he persisted in calling it a ve-hac-le. We hear the words "Right smart" and "Right smart chance" used a great deal. "I have saw" for "I have seen" etc.

Monday May 4th. As one of our horses had caught cold and been sick from exposure to the cold and as we had reached a point where little if any more stabling could be procured for our horses, we discussed the propriety

toric Sites in Iowa," *IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, 32:254 (July, 1934). The Cooley House, then operated by N. B. Cooley, later became known as the Loper House, and was one of four hotels in East Des Moines in the 1860's. Cooley later turned his attention to the manufacture of bricks. J. M. Dixon, *Centennial History of Polk County, Iowa* (Des Moines, 1876), 161, 268.

¹⁵ Winne noted the following in his diary: "After leaving Des Moines we were informed that the man who was the superintendent of the Sunday School we attended was the person who at one time later was Secretary Harlan of President Lincoln's cabinet, and was at one time U. S. Senator from Iowa." It is entirely probable that Winne was correct. Harlan, an active Methodist, was the head of the Iowa Conference University (later Iowa Wesleyan) from 1853 to 1855. In 1860 he was elected U. S. Senator from Iowa and became Lincoln's Secretary of the Interior at the beginning of the latter's second term. Although Harlan was a Senator when Winne passed through Des Moines, Congress was not in session, and Harlan might well have been at the Sunday school mentioned.

of exchanging our horses for mules and decided to try to do it, believing [sic] that mules would endure the hardships of the long journey before us much better than horses. This necessity of change was apparent [sic] to us as we have had no stabling for our horses for the last 150 miles. During the forenoon we made an exchange getting four youngish Brown mules, two of good size and two smaller ones.

We purchased chains and locks having a blacksmith fix rings on the chain so we could put one end around the mules neck, and the other end around the tire & felly of the wheel. Thus chaining one mule to each wheel. So that when we stopped for the night we could fasten our mules securely before retiring to rest, thus preventing the necessity of someone being up to watch them. And 12 M found us ready to move again. Traveled 18 miles.

Tuesday May 5th. At 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ AM we made another start for our Western home. Stopped at Redfield to have our *Wagon Tongue shortened*. A week before we had a longer one put in. This time the tongue was too long for our mules. At any rate we are patronizing the inhabitants of the country on the line of our travels.

We have found everything quite cheap so far the benefits of railways to a country has been shown to us as we get away from them. We find farmers ready to leave their work, go some distance to their barns and sell us provisions and supplies at the following rates. Corn at 10 & 15 cts per bushel, Wheat at 15 or 20 cts, Eggs at 5 & 6 cents per dozen other articles in proportion and yet we are only about 200 miles from a R R. A Mr Smith of Des Moines with his wife and two men in their party camped with us. We like them very much.

They told us of a notice in the Des Moines paper about the costumes of sister, Lucy, saying they saw two ladies in the yard of the Cooley House also saw them shopping described their dress and commended the style as being very sensible, especially so, for ladies traveling or camping. They had short dress, came down nearly to the top of their shoes, bloomer pants made of the same material as the dress, were neatly and elegantly made, without surplus trimmings. The ladies were modest and lady like. *Had small feet* etc. etc. Why is not something of this style the better way for ladies to dress?

Tibbils and myself have navy blue shirts wool hats, usually wear neither coat nor vest, we find ourselves very comfortable.

At Beloit Wisconsin we had our ambrotypes taken in that style of dress,

and in that country people no doubt would properly say "We looked like freaks" "Cow Boys" or something of the kind. Traveled 16 miles today.

Wednesday May 6th. On the road again at 7:30 A M. Camped 3 miles West of Grove City. We had heard of this place for some time, expected to find quite a town and at least a few trees, imagine our surprise, at finding only one house and one tree. Western Iowa on our route is almost without exception a rolling prairie. Has a good soil, but is very sparsely settled.

Corn only ten cents per bushel, eggs 3 & 5 cents a doz and farmers begging you to buy at these prices. Grain here is almost worthless. They need a railroad, then there will be a future for this section. Traveled 29 miles.

Thursday May 7th. Left Camp at 7 A M. Camped on the prairie nine miles east of Lewis. Traveled 25 miles.

Friday May 8th. Resumed our journey at an early hour. Arrived at Lewis at 10 A M, spent the day in purchasing meats, Ham & Bacon, cost us 6 cents per lb. Had some repairs made to our wagon. Lewis is about 97 miles S W of Des Moines. Traveled 9 miles.

Saturday May 9th. Started at an early hour Traveled until 5 P M. Stopped on big Silver Creek. The next stopping place was Eight miles farther. Thought our mules to[o] tired to go that much farther. Yet we could not get but one feed of hay for our mules as hay is scarce in this section, and as the grass is not started, we will be compelled to travel tomorrow. Sunday morning we hitched up our team and traveled to within 1½ miles of Council Bluffs. Traveled Saturday 32 miles.

Sunday May 10th. We traveled as stated above to within 1½ miles of Council Bluffs. The Smith party caught some frogs and had a rare nice dinner. We tasted them, and liked them. It was the first time I ever tried to eat frogs. In the afternoon we drove into Council Bluffs. The distance from Lewis to Council Bluffs is 50 miles. Traveled 18 miles.

Monday May 11th, Tuesday May 12 and Wednesday May 13th until Noon. Spent in fitting up our wagon finishing the tent and replenishing our supplies, as every day revealed some new want. Our tent was never fully completed until we arrived here. Council Bluffs is not a very large place, but is a very busy one.¹⁶ We are surprised at the amount of business done here and at Omaha. This place seems to be doing the heaviest business. . . .

¹⁶ Edward L. Peckham, who visited Council Bluffs in 1857, thought it "a miserable looking place, with but one principal street, one half-mile long" but admitted that the place was booming and crowded with speculators. Edward L. Peckham, "A

Wednesday Noon May 13th. We started again going down the easterly bank of the Missouri River. Messrs Blodgett & Farwell arrived Sunday night and we decided to go to Sharpsburg opposite Plattsmouth and then cross the Missouri river to the last named place, thence take the South side of the Platte River to Julesburg Colo, thence across the South Platte and go North to Fort Laramie thinking we would get better feed (grass) for our animals as there is not as much travel on the South side of the Platte. Saw a river steamer wending its way up the river. It was a beautiful sight, it was some distance from us, and the river had a great many sand bars in it, and a great deal of the time we could not see the water around the boat, making it appear as if the boat was traveling through land. The water being low helped in making this delusion.

There are in our party 14 men, 4 children (all girls) and 4 women. Two of them being doctors wives going through to California to meet their husbands. Glad the party is not larger, as it [is] easier to get along peacefully with a small party; and we have enough for safety at least until we reach Fort Laramie.

The emigration west is heavy this year and the most of it going on the North side of the Platte.

We have 11 mules, 22 horses and 4 wagons including the B & F teams. Arrived at Sharpsburg after dark, roads sandy and rough in places. Traveled 20 miles.

Thursday May 14th. The Steam Ferry having been sunk we find an old flat boat without power. They had some horses & mules that they would pull the boat up the stream about a quarter of a mile then turn the prow of the boat quartering up the stream and let the boat float down the stream to the other side, and then this process would be repeated again on that side until all were over.

Took all day to get our party across. Were pleased when all were safely over, as the boat was an old hulk. *Camped in Plattsmouth.*

Friday May 15th. We are on the west side of the Missouri River for the first time. We see queer sights and strange faces.¹⁷ There is a large emmi-

Journey Out West," *The Palimpsest*, 6:243-4 (July, 1925). See also Walker Wyman, "Council Bluffs and the Westward Movement," *IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY*, 47:99-118 (April, 1949).

¹⁷ Perry Burgess, who passed through Plattsmouth three years later, said it was "a dirty place and drinking, fighting, etc. are the principle amusements, there was two shooting brawls during my stay there." Robert G. Athearn (ed.), "From Illinois

gration [sic] for California, Idaho, Utah & Colorado. The most of it is for California, also quite an amount for Colorado. Most of the travel is outfitted between Leavenworth Kansas and Omaha. Council Bluffs, Omaha, Plattsmouth, Nebraska City & St Joseph Mo do the most of it.

Nearly all this travel takes the Platte route, a little going over the Republican or Smoky hill routes. The California travel reaches the Platte near Fort Kearney, a large portion of that crossing the Platte there, some going up on the South side so far as Julesburg, a portion of that going Northerly to Fort Laramie, the balance going up Lodge Pole Creek.¹⁸

Price of provisions and supplies are higher at Plattsmouth than in Iowa. So we will purchase of farmers. All we need is eggs and butter, and we have a fair supply of the latter article.

Left camp to day at 8 o'clock A. M. All well. Traveled over a rolling prairie. Camped at Salt Creek, a new place only three houses. Eggs 20 cts per dozen. Did not buy any. Traveled 30 miles.

Saturday May 16th. Broke camp at 8 A M. Passed over a rolling prairie. Did not see any timber after leaving camp.

Camped at a so called farm house. People in Wisconsin would not call this much of a farm soil did not look good, only had three acres under cultivation.

This was the first farm we saw after leaving camp in the morning. Therefore we did not have a chance to get either eggs or butter until we arrived here. And now prices have doubled.

They call these places Ranches in this country, and many of them have bars to sell a cheap grade of Whiskey, and also some of them have tobacco, a little sugar & coffee to sell. Traveled 25 miles.

Sunday May 17th. Messrs Blodgett & Farwell were determined to travel to day. Notwithstanding their positive agreement with us, both at Beloit, and Council Bluffs, *not to travel on Sunday*. But as it is not considered safe to travel alone here, so we go with them leaving camp at 9 A M. Stopped at 5 P M. No unusual incidents on the road. Traveled 25 miles.

Monday May 18th. Two Pawnee indians passed near our camp this morning, having their ponies packed with their camp equipments and game.

to Montana in 1866: The Diary of Perry A. Burgess," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 41:47 (January, 1950).

¹⁸ "The Pole Creek travel entered the mountains not far from where Cheyenne is now located." Note inserted in Diary.

These are the first indians we have seen. Left camp at 9 A M. Traveled until 5 P M.

Tuesday May 19th. Started on our journey at 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ A M. Passed over a rough country known frequently as the Sand hills, there were a great many wash outs & "Buffalo Wallows."

The wind blew furiously blowing small stones, and sand and the effect was about as severe as a hail storm combined with wind.

Wednesday May 20th. Left camp at an early hour; found some rough roads. Mr. Blodgett broke two spokes in one of the wheels of his wagon. The wind was blowing a gale the dust flying and it was almost impossible to avoid the rough places in the road. Wind blowing harder than yesterday.

About One o'clock we found smoother roads, had gotten out [of] the sand hills by this time.

We repaired the wagon by putting in false spokes aside the old ones and fastening them to the old ones with wire.

Camped on the Platte river for the first time. There are [a] great many Sand bars in the river. It is claimed the Platte is $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile wide at this point. Water very roily. Do not know the distance traveled to day. The Country new and everything looks strange to us.

Thursday May 21st. Resumed our journey in good spirits. Rained a little as we were getting ready to start. Cleared up shortly after. Camped at 6 P M on the Platte.

Friday May 22nd. Rained during the night; and in the morning we had a heavy shower, very cold; we put the stove in the tent to cook with, also found it very necessary for comfort. It was the first time we deemed it necessary. This incident showed that we were wise in making provisions for such contingencies. The Blodgetts & Farwells simply had a cold breakfast. No coffee and aside from that were wet & cold and we were warm & dry. . . . Did not leave camp on account of the rain until 10:30 A M.

I stood guard last night in the rain and caught cold. By standing guard I mean watching the horses and mules, to prevent their being stampeded by animals or stolen by thieves or indians, also to prevent the animals injuring themselves, as we picketed them out. This is done by putting a rope around the animals neck (The rope is usually about 30 feet long) and the end is fastened to an iron pin driven into the ground. Some times an animal becomes tangled up in the rope, and they will kick and struggle until they injure themselves, and in some instances causing death.

This camp is about 5 miles east of Kearney Junction on the Platte river. Heard many small foxes or swifts barking they seemed to be a long way off, and at first I thought we were at no great distance from a farm house, their barking sounded like roosters crowing at a distance. But I was mistaken again. The feed or grass is good and has been since leaving Salt Creek. Traveled 28 miles.

Saturday May 23d. Our road at Kearney Junction intersected the road from Nebraska City, St Joseph Etc. . . . We passed that place making only a short stop and going on to Kearney City to have Mr Blodgetts wagon repaired, left there at 5 P M, and camped a short distance from that place. Nebraska City, Plattsmouth and Omaha are about equally distant from this point nearly 210 miles.¹⁹ St Joseph & Leavenworth are about 100 and 80 miles farther. Distance traveled variously estimated at from 15 to 17 miles.

While waiting to have Mr B wagon repaired, the sheriff, an ignorant and bombastic son of the Emerald Isle came from the North side of the Platte with a train of several wagons. We are informed that this party started from some point in Missouri, that before starting they elected a Captain for the train or party, that this Captain had also been a Captain in the Union Army, and that after crossing the Platte there had been some disagreement, there the Captain dumped the personal effects of one man on the ground, leaving the man and his effects on the river bank.

The party left came back across the river, had the Captain and the train brought back. We were present when the sheriff in a pompous manner demanded the Captains revolvers. The Captain was willing to give them up if the sheriff would also take the arms away from the party causing his arrest and return. Of course the sheriff could not do that. After considerable parleying the Captain surrendered his arms. A trial was had and the Captain beaten or rather lost the suit.

After the trial the sheriff returned the revolvers to the Captain and the Captain shot the sheriff dead. Then the man who caused the Captains arrest immediately shot the Captain dead. Everybody goes armed in this country, the result being a great deal of unnecessary shooting & killing.

In this case there are two dead men and I am not able to see any reason or cause for it. Men seem ready to shoot on the least provocation. "Such

¹⁹ "From Nebraska City the distance to Fort Kearny was 200 miles, and from Plattsmouth, 185." Mantor, "Stage Coach and Freighter Days at Fort Kearny," 334.

is life on the plains in these times." . . . Traveled to a point two miles north of Kearney City.²⁰

Sunday May 24th. It is Sunday again and we naturally expected a day of rest. But alas, we are disappointed [sic] once more. The camp alive with preparations to move again. And away we go again. Too Bad! Another plain violation of the agreement made with us before leaving Council Bluffs, not to travel on Sunday. And as it is not considered safe to travel alone through this country . . . we concluded to go with them.

[Monday] At the camp we made last night the Buffalo stamped [stampeded] six of Messrs Blodgetts & Farwell horses, notwithstanding we had a guard out.

How much we have gained by traveling on Sundays may be seen by the time lost in repairing the Blodgett wagon. And in this instance we will have to wait until the horses can be found. But for traveling on Sunday the 17th we would not have been in the Sand on that fearfully windy day. Had it not been for traveling yesterday we would not have been at Plum Creek²¹ last night when the Buffalo crossed. But what is the use of Moralizing.

Messrs B & F telegraphed²² and enquired of the teams & the Stage Coaches for the horses, Mr Farwell then started with two men and some horse[s] to follow the trail of the runaway horses.

Monday May 25th & May 26th. Spent in the same camp waiting for information about the lost horses and deciding what to do. In the meantime the horses had been heard from 72 miles South & East on the Blue [River] & Mr Farwell and his son started after them, having returned from trying to trail them. We are to start to morrow again traveling slowly so that the Farwells can overtake us.

Now how much have we gained by our Sunday traveling? We have traveled two Sundays laid still over two and a half days. And will have to go slow for a few days.

²⁰ Had Winne known a little more of the reputation Kearney City (or Dobytown, as it was also called) had attained, he might not have been quite so surprised at the lawlessness in that area. Kearney City, located near Fort Kearny, seems to have done a thriving business dispensing whiskey to local visitors as well as to transcontinental travelers. It was as rough and bawdy as any stop on the trail.

²¹ To become better known in the next year as the site of the Plum Creek Indian massacre.

²² By October 24, 1861, a telegraph line connecting New York and San Francisco had been completed. Lyle E. Mantor, "Fort Kearny and the Westward Movement," *Nebraska History*, 29:200 (September, 1948).

On Monday night took my turn again in standing guard. Had not been on duty over one half hour before the animals began to be frightened again by Buffalo in the river crossing to the South side.

In order if possible to prevent another stampede of our animals I called up some of the men to help me quiet and hold our animals. . . .

While on the road Sunday afternoon a strange incident occurred, or rather an incident occurred that convinced me we were in a strange country, with strange or new surroundings. We had been aware from several sources that there were a great many Confederates on the road. But the incident to be related fastened the information more permanently and positively on my mind.

We were not loaded very heavily had good teams, and were traveling faster than the ox teams, or heavily loaded horse and mule teams, and it was quite common to have the people who were going slower to ask us for news. And on this day shortly after the battle of Chancellorsville, a great tall slim Missourian dressed in a suit of Butternut colored jeans (This by the way was a typical suit for them) came up to our wagon I was driving, and he propounded the following question. "Say Mr any news from the fight?" Alluding to the battle of Chancellorsville, I replied yes there had been a great battle and our troops have been badly beaten, (We had learned this news at Kearney). He then stepped back, returning in a few moments, peeping into the front of the wagon again and saying "Say Mister Who Do You Mean by Our Troops."

Then it dawned on me more fully *Where We Were!* And what our surroundings were. No doubt we saw every day more Confederates than Union people. And the distance from home, and the character of our associates were now more vividly impressed on our minds.

Wednesday May 27th. Left camp at 9 A M. Camped on the Platte near a lot of Cheyenne indians. It is claimed that there are several hundred of them. . . . Traveled 20 miles.

Thursday May 28th. Wood scarce sold by the pound every party tries to carry their own wood. Frequently they get out. When you wish to buy it is sold by the pound.²³ Feed very poor, drove about two miles from the road before we found any. Referring again to the fuel in many instances

²³ "There is no timber along here at all," wrote a traveler in 1866. "Wood sells for \$100 per cord." Elizabeth Keyes, "Across the Plains in a Prairie Schooner," *Colorado Magazine*, 10:76 (March, 1933).

people burn "Buffalo Chips." In dry weather they can be utilized quite successfully, after a fire is started with wood.²⁴ . . . Traveled 30 miles.

Friday May 29th. Left camp late as Mr Farwell & son returned with the stray horses just as we were ready to start. Glad to see them. Traveled until very late. Do not know the distance. I stand guard again tonight.

Saturday May 30th. Left camp at an early hour and traveled until very late.

Sunday May 31st. Left camp at an early hour and traveled until 5 P M. I have not been feeling well for some time.

Our camp is near a party who are driving a lot of milk cows. Told me I could have some milk if I wished it, thought it an excellent idea to get some. The offer was promptly and thankfully accepted, and I returned to our camp with some of that article. Was taken violently ill, laid down. Did not eat anything neither did I drink any milk. Mr Blodgett was quite well posted as to what to do in such cases and the two physicians wives in our party also seemed to be, they gave me some thing that night.

Monday June 1st. We traveled about 40 miles. My head ached and I had some fever. Did not eat anything. Mr B and the two ladies called to see me and they gave me Quinine & capsicum mixed with Brandy, thought I had billious fever.

Tuesday June 2d (Now in Colorado). Made a short drive and reached the Ford about 1/2 mile below Julesburg Colo.²⁵ Most of the day spent in crossing the river. We found the crossing not very good. I was not able to get out of my bed but staid in the bed in the wagon; before proceeding to cross they took levers and raised the wagons box or bed up almost to the top of the wagon stakes on the bolsters, put blocking under the box; then chained the whole down to the axles of the wagon; this to prevent the water which was high in places from getting in to the contents of the wagon and damaging the same.²⁶

²⁴ "In later years I have known of wood selling as high as two cents per pound on the Plains. Have heard of its bringing more." Note inserted in Diary.

²⁵ Described in 1866 as "a small place of 8 or 10 houses but the best I have seen since leaving the Missouri — real frame houses, two stories and shingled. . . ." W. H. Jackson, "The Steam Wagon Road, 1866-1932. W. H. Jackson Diary," *Nebraska History Magazine*, 13:153 (July-September, 1932).

²⁶ One who crossed in 1866 said, "The bottom of the river is composed of quick sand and in going across the wheels of the wagons raise up then drop suddenly down which shakes the wagons as if driving over a log way. It took nearly all day to get the stock and wagons across." Athearn (ed.), "From Illinois to Montana in 1866 . . .," 53.

Tried to cross with our own teams. At one time four horses belonging to our party were down and two of our four mules, so we hired some ox teams to haul us across. They were moving from the North side and took us over to that side very cheaply. In some of the deep places in the river one third or one half of the oxen would be swimming at the same time, think we had twenty yoke on our wagon. On reaching the north side we saw a stampede of work oxen and other cattle, that had been turned out to graze, (never knew what frightened them). They ran furiously and it took a number of men on horseback some time to stop them. They came near running into our camp. It is claimed that the most of the oxen we meet have had nothing to eat all winter but native grass and have been wintered near the mountains. They look well.

In camp. Tibbils, sister, Lucy and three brothers, by the name of Harmon from Beloit Wisconsin (named Levi, Edward & Dana Harmon) are discussing the propriety of our going to Denver in lieu of California. The Harmons are anxious to go, as we have been hearing good reports of the country. Then there was some fear that I might have Mountain fever. . . .

It was decided that in the morning we would re cross the river and stay in Colorado for One Year at least.²⁷

Wednesday June 3d. The rest of the train has gone on and left us alone. We felt sad after they left, and we had said the words of parting. All but one were very nice people, and we felt lonely in a strange land. The one mentioned as an exception to the rest was never disagreeable to us but he was to his partner & son.

We hired some men with seven yoke of oxen to draw our wagon back to the south side (They were engaged in drawing their wagons to the North side and were going back without anything, charged us \$3.00). The Ford where we crossed [is] about one half mile above Julesburg Colo. It is said to be about 100 miles to Fort Laramie. Our party consists of Levi, Edward & George Dana Harmon, and Tibbils, wife, Lucy and the babies and myself. All have been quite well on the trip save Tibbils and myself. T has been only slightly indisposed, but I have been compelled to keep [to] my bed for two or three days.

²⁷ "This no doubt was a wise conclusion as we have visited California a number of times since. Once with a view of locating there. But thought we liked Colorado better. For me especially the Colorado climate seems better than that of California." Note inserted in Diary.

After crossing the river only drove six miles, so as to favor myself. Wind blew a gale. . . .

Thursday June 4th. Traveled 25 miles. Being ill with fever I did not keep any diary until my arrival in Denver, when I wrote down some of the incidents.

Saturday June 13th. At about 10 A M. we drove into Denver. We had a pleasant trip from Julesburg. In fact the whole of the way. We did not drive fast, neither did we travel far in any one day always stopping in the middle of the day, and camping before it was dark.

At a point known . . . as the Junction²⁸ . . . we took the road known as the Cut Off to Denver leaving the Platte Route. We did not travel on Sunday June 6th. While in camp about 10 A M Friday about 30 miles from Denver, H. P. Bennett²⁹ [sic] the Delegate to Congress from Colorado with his family passed us they drove through that day, and we drove to Coal creek about ten miles from Denver. We had caught a young Antelope and on meeting Mr Bennett in Denver he recollected us and called us the "Antelope men."

After the party reached Denver there was some indecision as to what the next moves might be. Winne recorded that "for a few days I herded stock for C R Hartman, Tibbils *Looking around & Talking*." Shortly after that Tibbils and his wife moved on to Santa Fe, while the Winnes accepted the invitation of an old friend from Wisconsin, who had been in Colorado since 1859, to come to his farm north of Denver until a permanent location might be found. The new arrivals now sold their share in the road equipment, keeping only about a four months' supply of food and a few household necessities. This brought them \$470 in cash and within a few weeks they found a 160-acre farm in the Greeley area which could be had for \$150. Winne was superintendent of schools in Weld County, delegate to the constitutional convention (1864), and a representative to the territorial legislature (1866). In 1867 he moved to Denver where he remained until his death in 1916.³⁰

²⁸ Present Fort Morgan.

²⁹ Hiram P. Bennet was first elected a delegate to Congress in 1861 on the Republican ticket. He was re-elected the following year, defeating ex-Governor William Gilpin. After the expiration of this term he returned to private life in Denver and in 1869 Grant appointed him as postmaster of Denver.

³⁰ *History of Colorado* (Denver, 1927), 495.