

CAPTAIN JAMES ALLEN'S DRAGOON EXPEDITION
FROM FORT DES MOINES, TERRITORY
OF IOWA, IN 1844

The United States House of Representatives passed a resolution on the 29th of January, 1845, requiring the Secretary of War to furnish "a copy of the report, journal, and map of Captain J. Allen, of the first regiment of dragoons, of his expedition during the past summer to the heads of the rivers Des Moines, Blue Earth, etc., in the northwest". The papers transmitted by Mr. Marcy in compliance with this request form No. 168 of the *House Executive Documents*, 29th Congress, 1st session, and are reprinted below because they are believed to be deserving of a wider circulation than rare government publications permit.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF JAMES ALLEN

James Allen was born in Ohio in the year 1806. At nineteen years of age he entered the United States Military Academy as a cadet from the State of Indiana, and on the last of July, 1829, he was graduated thirty-fourth among the forty-six members of a class made memorable by such men as Robert E. Lee and Joseph E. Johnston of the Confederate States army and Charles Mason, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Territory of Iowa.¹

Second Lieutenant Allen was at once assigned to duty upon the western frontier. While he was stationed with three companies of the Fifth Regiment of Infantry at Fort Brady, Sault Ste. Marie in the Territory of Michigan, the

¹ See Mr. Clifford Powell's article on the *History of the Codes of Iowa Law* in THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. X, p. 12.

War Department authorized Henry R. Schoolcraft to make an expedition to the Indians of the Northwest. Then, in obedience to Major General Macomb's order to detail an officer with ten or twelve men to escort the party, the commandant at Fort Brady selected young Allen.

Between the 7th of June and the 25th of August, 1832, Schoolcraft and Allen headed a company of thirty-five persons and traveled a distance of two thousand eight hundred miles. So far as time and means allowed, Allen prepared a journal of some sixty-eight printed pages in accordance with directions "to describe the country . . . to delineate, topographically, the route and several points of importance; to ascertain the manners and characters of the various Indian tribes, their numbers, strength in warriors, condition, mode of living, of obtaining subsistence, whether at peace with their neighbors or not, their places of resort for foreign supplies, how supplied, and by whom." Furthermore, he noted down the nature of the soil; the geology, mineralogy, and natural history, and furnished information as to the quantity, quality, and facilities of procuring the game and fishes of the region.²

Lieutenant Allen submitted his map and daily account of the expedition to the Secretary of War, Lewis Cass. The journey had proven to be one of considerable achievement, for as the famous geographer Nicollet declared a few years later: "The honor of having first explored the sources of the Mississippi, and introduced a knowledge of them in physical geography, belongs to Mr. Schoolcraft and Lieutenant Allen. I come only after these gentlemen; but I may

² For this famous expedition to and beyond the sources of the Mississippi River on a visit to the northwestern Indians, see *House Executive Documents*, 1st Session, 23d Congress, No. 323; or *American State Papers, Military Affairs*, Vol. V, pp. 312-344.

Allen's map may be found in Schoolcraft's *Narrative of an Expedition through the Upper Mississippi to Itasca Lake* (1834).

be permitted to claim some merit for having completed what was wanting for a full geographical account of these sources."³

On March 4, 1833, Allen became a second lieutenant of the First Regiment of Dragoons, an organization of horse troops with headquarters at Jefferson Barracks near St. Louis, created by Congress as a species of frontier military force, which soon came to be especially dreaded by the Indians of the Middle West. Allen remained on staff duty at Fort Dearborn, Chicago, until his promotion to a first lieutenant on May 31, 1835, when he began to serve at Forts Leavenworth and Gibson in the South as an engineer "in connection with the reconnoissance of the Indian country." A captaincy was his reward on June 30, 1837.

During the summer of 1842 Captain Allen received orders to march to Fort Atkinson, Territory of Iowa, with Company I of the Dragoons. Taking a direct route from Fort Leavenworth, crossing the Des Moines River above the Raccoon Fork, he arrived at his post among the Winnebago Indians on August 7, 1842. Soon afterward he proceeded to the Sac and Fox Agency, twenty miles due west of Fairfield. By permission of Major John F. A. Sanford of the American Fur Company, Captain Allen quartered his

³ *United States Executive Documents*, 2nd Session, 28th Congress, No. 52, p. 59.

Elliott Coues wrote: "James Allen's name is not so well known in this connection as it should be. That is to say, the public seldom connects his name with the discovery of Lake Itasca. But if Mr. Schoolcraft was the actual head of the expedition of 1832, and became its best known historian, Lieutenant Allen was a large and shapely portion of the body of that enterprise, decidedly the better observer, geographer, and cartographer; . . . the author of an able, interesting, and important report upon the subject, which he made to the military authorities . . . His movements were the same as Mr. Schoolcraft's . . . ; his operations more extensive and more intelligently directed to explore and report upon the country. He named Schoolcraft Island and various other things; Allen's Bay was named for him by Mr. Schoolcraft, and Allen's Lake by Mr. Brouwer."—*The Expedition of Zebulon M. Pike*, Vol. I, p. 332, footnote.

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dragoons in eight log cabins then abandoned for purposes of Indian trade, and also built stables for his horses and huts for two officers. This temporary post he designated Fort Sanford, but the Government retained the name of the agency.

On November the 12th, 1842, the commandant conducted a small force on an expedition to the mouth of the Raccoon River. There, at the confluence of the Raccoon and the Des Moines, he established a new military post, evacuating his camp at Sac and Fox Agency on May 17, 1843. The troops at once set about constructing officers' quarters, barracks, stables, and corrals, and also laid out gardens. Allen chose the none too euphonious name "Fort Raccoon" for this western post, but General Scott of the War Department preferred to call it Fort Des Moines.

Although Captain Allen was kept busy protecting the Sacs and Foxes in their treaty rights by driving squatters back across the Indian border, he found time to make the exploring expedition of which he rendered the journal reprinted in these pages. In the summer of 1845 he was ordered to join Captain Sumner of Fort Atkinson on a visit to the Sioux dwelling along the St. Peter's or Minnesota River.⁴

Upon Captain Allen's recommendation Fort Des Moines continued to be occupied until the spring of 1846, when the troops marched out to serve as a military escort for the remnant of the Sacs and Foxes who had not removed to Kansas with their tribe in October, 1845. The site of Allen's post was, within a short time, destined to become the home of hundreds of ambitious pioneer families, the county seat of Polk County, and in 1857 the capital of the State of Iowa.

⁴ *United States Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 29th Congress, No. 1, pp. 217-220.

When hostilities arose between Mexico and the United States, Brigadier General Stephen W. Kearny was placed in command of the march to Santa Fé and California. He despatched Allen northward to bring back several companies of Mormon recruits. The Mormons had been driven from their temple city of Nauvoo by the irate citizens of Illinois and were scattered along the road across Iowa. It was just after they had planted their settlement at Mt. Pisgah that Captain Allen arrived, issued his "Circular to the Mormons", and with Brigham Young proceeded to their camp on the Missouri River. There he opened a recruiting office, secured five companies of one hundred men each,⁵ gave the Mormon refugees a fête or ball, which is said to have been a fine affair, and then conducted the volunteers to the rendezvous at Fort Leavenworth. Just after this "Mormon Battalion" began its march to New Mexico, the commander became suddenly ill and died of "congestive fever" on the 23d of August, 1846. "Thus," wrote Colonel Doniphan, "died Lieutenant-colonel Allen, of the 1st Dragoons, in the midst of a career of usefulness, under the favoring smiles of fortune, beloved while living, and regretted, after death, by all who knew him, both among the volunteer and regular troops."⁶

JACOB VAN DER ZEE

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
IOWA CITY

⁵ Linn's *The Story of the Mormons*, p. 371; and Hyde's *Mormonism*, p. 143.

⁶ For facts in the life of James Allen the writer is indebted to Heitman's *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, 1789-1903*, Vol. I, p. 159; *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. IV, pp. 164-177, 291-293, 451; *The Centennial of the United States Military Academy, 1802-1902*, Vol. I, p. 837; and Hughes' *Doniphan's Expedition*, pp. 134, 135.

In his *History of Des Moines and Polk County*, Vol. I, pp. 19-24, 47-54, Mr. Johnson Brigham reprints a part of Allen's *Journal* and shows his appreciation of "the record of the soldier who planted the colony . . . from which

REPORT AND JOURNAL OF CAPTAIN JAMES ALLEN'S DRAGOON
EXPEDITION IN THE TERRITORY OF IOWA IN THE
SUMMER OF 1844

[The following report and journal are reprinted verbatim from *House Executive Documents*, 1st Session, 29th Congress, No. 168, with the exception that the dates of entry in the journal are italicized for the purpose of emphasis.—
EDITOR.]

ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Washington, March 18, 1846.

SIR: The report of Captain J. Allen, 1st dragoons, of his expedition during the summer of 1844, was received too late to comply with the resolution of the House of Representatives of *January 29, 1835*, before the rising of the 28th Congress; and, understanding that the mover of the resolution (a member of the present Congress) is desirous that the resolution should now be complied with, I accordingly, in compliance with your instructions, furnish a copy of the report called for by the resolution above mentioned. Instead of the map of the route accompanying the report, I submit the more perfect map of the Upper Mississippi by Nicollet, (from which Captain Allen's sketch no doubt was taken,) upon which the route of the troops under his command has been carefully traced, in red lines, in the topographical bureau.

Should it be determined to publish Captain Allen's route, Colonel Abert is of opinion it would be best to use the plate prepared for Nicollet's map. This mode would be

subsequently grew the community life that forms the foundation of the present work."

See also *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, Vol. III, p. 191; and *Niles' Register*, August 1, 1846, Vol. LXX, p. 352.

The volumes of Heitman and Powell do not credit Allen with having attained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, but *The Centennial of the United States Military Academy, 1802-1902*, Vol. I, p. 630, and *Niles' Register*, August 29, 1846, Vol. LXX, p. 416, and September 12, 1846, Vol. LXXI, p. 20, give him this title.

not only much less expensive, but would probably improve the original map,⁷ which is one of much value.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

R. JONES, *Adjutant General*.

Hon. W. L. MARCY, *Secretary of War*.

Report of an expedition into the Indian country, made by company "I," 1st regiment of dragoons, in obedience to orders No. 13, dated headquarters third department,⁸ St. Louis, Mo., June 13, 1844.

The company was organized for this expedition in the early part of July, but was detained by subsequent orders until the 11th of August. It marched from Fort Des Moines with the following strength:

Captain J. Allen, 1st dragoons, commanding;
 Assistant Surgeon J. S. Griffin, medical staff;
 First Lieutenant P. Calhoun, 2d dragoons;
 Second Lieutenant P. Noble, 1st dragoons;
 Brevet Second Lieutenant J. H. Potter, 1st infantry, A. C. S., and A. A. Q. M.;⁹
 50 rank and file of dragoons; and
 2 privates of infantry.

The troops were provisioned with pork for 40 days, flour for 60 days, and small rations for 70 days. The route

⁷ Allen's map does not appear as a part of Document No. 168.

⁸ The United States was then divided into nine military departments. The commandants of Forts Atkinson and Des Moines in the Territory of Iowa received orders from Jefferson Barracks near St. Louis.

⁹ John S. Griffin was the surgeon at Fort Des Moines during its brief existence from 1843 to 1846. Patrick Calhoun and Patrick Noble were Military Academy graduates appointed from South Carolina. Joseph Haydn Potter of New Hampshire ranked next to Ulysses S. Grant in the class of 1843, and was breveted several times for gallant and meritorious conduct in the battles of Monterey (1846), Fredericksburg (1862), and Chancellorsville (1863), and in the campaign terminating with the surrender of Lee's army (1865). He died a brigadier general in 1892.

designated in the department orders referred to was up the Des Moines river, and to the sources of the Blue Earth river of the St. Peter's; thence to the waters of the Missouri; and thence returning through the country of the Pottowatomies. So little was known of the true geography of the country to be passed over, that it was impossible to define the route beforehand with minute exactness; and I was of course embarrassed, in some degree, to estimate the time we ought to be out, and the distance we might have to march. I therefore made provision for a march of about 800 miles, and an absence of 70 or 80 days, assuming that many days might be employed in exploring the country near the line of our route. For the actual route passed over, I must refer to the accompanying map, which will show it more fully and completely than it could be made by any other description. The map was constructed by Lieutenant Potter, under my immediate direction, and the care of taking minute notes on the way, and the pains taken during its projection by that officer to secure all the information within his reach, will warrant me in saying that it gives a very correct delineation of the country passed over, as also the topography of other parts of this territory perhaps the most accurate on record.

For a minute description of the country, and a close relation of all matters connected with the march, I will refer to the accompanying journal, which gives the observations of each day, and is nearly a literal copy of my notes made at the time shown by the record.

The *route* was from this post up the Des Moines river on the west side, as far as the "Iron Banks," when we crossed that river a few miles above its forks, and 100 miles above the mouth of Raccoon; thence up between the forks, but near the west branch, to the extreme source of this branch, in a lake which I have named "the Lake of the Oaks," 248

miles from the mouth of Raccoon. This lake may be taken as the true source of the Des Moines river, being at the most northerly point of any of its waters, and the furthest from its mouth. It is otherwise remarkable for a singular arrangement of peninsulas, running into it from all sides, and for a heavy growth of timber that covers these peninsulas and the borders of the lake. We found its latitude, by several observations of the sun, to be 43 degrees, 57' 32"; but the observations were made with a small and imperfect sextant, and ought not to be assumed as entirely correct. We had no means of determining its longitude, as we could not with our instruments measure even lunar distances, and we were not supplied with a chronometer.

From the Lake of the Oaks, I explored the country north 37 miles to latitude 44 degrees 27' 32", and thence east to the St. Peter's river, in the same latitude.

In this route I crossed twice going out, and once returning, a small stream bearing to the south, and which I took to be a branch of the Blue Earth river; and, if so, it is the most northerly branch of that river. From the St. Peter's river, I made a circuit to the southward of 57 miles, to return to the Lake of the Oaks, where a portion of the command had remained encamped. Thence I marched nearly due west 38 miles to a river which I took to be the *Big Sioux* of the Missouri. We followed this river down 159 miles to its mouth in the Missouri river, and thence took the nearest practicable route back to Fort Des Moines, crossing on the way the *Little Sioux* river, and several minor streams noted on the map. The features of the country from Fort Des Moines to the upper forks of the Des Moines river are much the same as those of the country bordering this beautiful river below — elevated rich prairie, broken by points of timber, and well timbered ravines extending into it from the river every few miles. The valley of the river often ex-

pands to make bottoms, sometimes prairie and sometimes timber, of one, two, and three miles in breadth, and always of the richest quality of soil. The timber of the Des Moines for this distance is fully equal to the wants of its share of the prairie dividing it from other streams, and will easily supply all of the farms that may be made tributary to the river. After passing the "Iron Banks," the timber falls off very much. The groves are almost all confined to the immediate valley of the stream, are narrowed in width, and frequently the bare prairie borders both sides. The first twenty miles of prairie is elevated, rolling, and dry; the soil is sandy, and much mixed with pebbles, and small fragments of lime and primitive rock. Then comes a series of lakes, many of them connected by slues and straits to form chains, almost impossible to go around or to cross, and extending from the Des Moines to the northward and eastward. This kind of country continues on the river about 35 miles, giving the greatest embarrassment to the traveller, who must frequently betake himself to a raft or ponton wagon to make his progress through it. After this comes a dry country again, very hilly and broken near the river, and back from the river dotted with numerous little lakes that have no connexion, outlet, or inlet. Here there is no timber except a narrow skirting of a few trees at points along the river or on the borders of the lakes, and occasionally a pretty grove in a bend of the river or a peninsula of a lake. There is not for 70 or 80 miles below the source of the Des Moines enough of timber to supply a single row of farms along its border. At the Lake of the Oaks there are many hundred acres of excellent timber; but the country all around it is high and bleak, and looks so inhospitable that it will be many years before any settlement can be led to it. From this point north and east to the St. Peter's, 50 or 60 miles, there is much fine rich prairie, covered with a lux-

uriant grass, easy to march over in any direction, but no timber to speak of. Much the same kind of surface extends west from the source of the Des Moines to the *Big Sioux* river of the Missouri. And here was the first great buffalo range that we had seen — and surely, of all this upper country, these animals could not have selected any more rich, luxuriant, and beautiful for their summer feeding. All of the country from the St. Peter's river to the Big Sioux, in latitude from 43 degrees to 44½ degrees, may be easily traversed by troops, but the commander of a column must not march widely from the timber of the streams and lakes, else he will find himself often encamped without fuel to cook his provisions. The grass is rich and abundant in its season, and the surface is well adapted to the operations of cavalry.

We came to the Big Sioux on the 10th of September, in latitude nearly 44 degrees, and here saw the first Sioux Indians. There were some 20 or 30 of them; and they were much alarmed at seeing us in their country: (see my journal of this date.) They were otherwise careless in every respect, and seemed to be moving along with the buffalo as they were all the same *people*. When we struck this river, it looked large enough to have its source 70 or 80 miles above. The general course of the river from here to its mouth (159 miles) is nearly due south, and it seemed to run all the way in a gentle current of two miles per hour, except at the falls described in my journal, where it breaks through a wonderful formation of massive quartz that crosses it perpendicularly, and over which the river falls 100 feet in 400 yards. The valley of the river is seldom more than a mile broad, but is all of the way of the richest soil, resembling the alluvions of the Missouri. There is but little timber on any part of it — not enough to authorize a full settlement of the valley proper. The general level of

the country back is from 300 to 500 feet above the bed of the river; and it falls off to the valley generally in gentle slopes, until within fifty miles of the Missouri, when the country becomes exceedingly broken, from six to twelve miles back, and the bluffs near the river are frightfully steep, and cannot be crossed anywhere without the greatest difficulty.

Leaving the ugly hills of the Missouri about the mouth of the Big Sioux, and going east, we find a gently undulating surface of country, and cross successively Floyd river, the Little Sioux, and Soldier's river. The Little Sioux is much the largest of these, and is probably more than 100 miles long. All three of these streams are slightly skirted with good timber, but there is none anywhere between them. The prairie is everywhere of the richest soil, except at the crossing of many little deep brooks, with muddy banks, that seldom show timber enough to make bridges over them. Pottowatomies consider the Little Sioux as the northern boundary of their lands, and make great hunts along its course every year, killing elk, deer, and bears. From the waters of the Missouri, we next come in about 30 miles to the upper branches of the Raccoon. Approaching these branches the prairie is flat and wet, and much filled up with marshes and grassy ponds, through which it is difficult to find a practicable route.

After crossing the Raccoon, the country between it and other tributaries of the Des Moines is rolling, dry, and rich, and easy to march over. The Raccoon is about 100 miles long, and runs all the way in a deep narrow valley clothed with the richest of timber. This river is one of the most beautiful of the territory, and will soon induce settlement and cultivation of its borders along its whole length.

From Lizard creek of the Des Moines to the source of the Des Moines, and thence east to the St. Peter's, is a range for elk and common deer, but principally elk. We saw a

great many of the elk on our route, and killed many of them; they were sometimes seen in droves of hundreds, but were always difficult to approach and very difficult to overtake in chase, except with a fleet horse and over good ground. No dependence could be placed upon this game in this country for the subsistence of troops marching through it.

Twenty-five miles west of the source of the Des Moines, we struck the range of the buffalo, and continued in it to the Big Sioux river, and down that river about 86 miles. Below that we could not see any recent sign of them. We found antelope in the same range with the buffalo, but no elk, and very seldom a common deer. While among the buffalo, we killed as many as we wanted, and without trouble.

The geological features of the route are sufficiently noticed in my journal, and nothing very remarkable on this subject was presented.

The only rocks seen in place were, first, a limestone ledge, forming one bank of the Des Moines at the "Iron Banks," where we crossed that river; second, the great bed of granite in the valley of the St. Peter's; and, third, the massive quartz at the falls of the Big Sioux.

I was surprised at meeting with more Sioux Indians. We penetrated their country very far, saw numerous trails and other signs of them, but only came actually in contact with two small roving parties on the Big Sioux; and we came upon these so suddenly that they were forced to meet us. They were much alarmed; approached us with great timidity, and, notwithstanding our assurances of friendship, seemed to wish to get rid of us as soon as possible. They told us there was a trading house down the Big Sioux, where there were also thirty-six lodges of Sioux Indians, all of which was entirely false, as we afterwards ascertained. We must have been seen frequently by other

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parties of these Indians, who did not wish to meet us; on one occasion two or three Indians were seen watching us from a distance.

This expedition, together with the almost simultaneous one made by Captain Sumner's company from Fort Atkinson,¹⁰ near the valley of the St. Peter's, and to the north of it, must have produced a great moral effect upon these wild Indians, as showing them conclusively that we can easily throw cavalry enough into the heart of their country to chastise them for any wrong they may do to our people and government.

In regard to the information requested of me by Captain Cram, of Topographical Engineers, in his letter to Colonel Kearney,¹¹ dated St. Louis, July 25, 1844, on the subject of the extraordinary floods of last summer of the Mississippi and its tributaries, as connected with the subject of alluvial formations, I regret that, for want of time and proper means necessary for making the nice observations necessary to a close investigation of this matter, I will not be able to furnish all the information anticipated and politely desired by Captain Cram.

I furnish, however, with cheerfulness, all of my observations on this subject that I think of any use. The Des Moines river, at the mouth of Raccoon river, rose 131½ feet above its common stage; but it was at this point, and generally above, confined within its proper banks. It did not overflow any of its prairie bottoms, as far as I have observed, up to its extreme source. Its timbered bottoms, being generally lower than the prairie, were, many of them, covered from one to three feet. The earthy deposite in the

¹⁰ Fort Atkinson, Winneshiek County, was a military post from 1840 to 1849. To-day it is a town of about 700 inhabitants.

¹¹ Stephen Watts Kearny was Colonel of the First Regiment of Dragoons. He signed his surname without the second *e*, but a great many writers spell it in Captain Allen's way.

timbered bottoms varied with the depth of the overflow, and would not anywhere exceed a half inch in thickness for three feet of overflow. This river, which I traced up carefully to its source, seemed to have risen in proportion to its volume or breadth all the way up.

Thus at the Iron Banks, 100 miles above Raccoon, it had risen $10\frac{1}{2}$ feet, and 100 miles further up it had risen 7 feet, but this river has but few tributaries above Raccoon, and drains a country only extensive in length. It is generally broad and shallow, and much of the country along it being flat and marshy and slow to draw off, it may never rise in height like some other streams of lesser magnitude. The next stream to notice was a small branch of the Blue Earth river, which we crossed in latitude $44\frac{1}{2}$ degrees. This little stream, not more than 20 feet broad and 2 feet deep, had risen out of its banks, which were 8 feet high, and had uprooted willows and shrubs along its borders which had been the growth of years, and deposited them on points projecting into its general course. I observed the same appearance on other little streams in this latitude, and inferred that they had all been much higher this year than for many years previous. When we saw the St. Peter's in latitude $44\frac{1}{2}$ degrees, it also showed signs of an extraordinary rise. It had overflowed all of its proper bottoms, and I noticed a deposit of vegetable debris half a mile from its bank, and about 30 feet above its ordinary level. This river, where we saw it, was narrow and swift for its quantity of water, and had scarcely any low bottoms for the expansion of its waters at times of high floods. Here it has broken through an immense formation of *granite rock*, and deposited great masses and fragments of this rock in its valley for many miles below: (see my journal.)

The next river to be noted is the Big Sioux, which we first touched 38 miles east [west] of the source of the Des

Moines, and in latitude about half a degree below our point on the St. Peter's. It had risen about 17 feet, covering all of its bottom lands five or six feet. Great masses of drift wood had been deposited on its low grounds and timbered bottoms but I saw no earthy deposit worthy of note. We followed this river down 159 miles to its mouth, and the rise had been everywhere greater as the stream increased in size. Near its mouth it had partaken of the great rise of the Missouri. And here I noticed water-marks four miles from the Missouri, which I estimated to be at least 25 feet above the ordinary level of that river. The Missouri had been over all of its valley by a great depth; but seeing it only at and near the mouth of the Big Sioux, I did not observe deposits of alluvion worthy of note.

From the mouth of the Sioux to the Raccoon, the streams had all overflowed their banks, but had deposited nothing of consequence but driftwood and weeds. The Raccoon had been unusually high everywhere; all of its woodland bottoms were filled with drift wood timber and other vegetable debris, until within 20 or 30 miles of its mouth, after which it appeared, like the Des Moines, to have been confined to its immediate banks. The country of the whole route passed over showed everywhere traces of wonderful rains, and from all that I could observe I am of opinion that the greatest rains occurred above any latitude that we penetrated.

If my journal can give Captain Cram any further information than is here detailed, on the subject of his letter, and which he has politely requested for a most meritorious object, I hope the colonel commanding the department will place it at his service.

FORT DES MOINES, IOWA TERRITORY, *January 4, 1845.*

J. ALLEN, *Captain, 1st Dragoons.*

Colonel S. W. KEARNEY, *Comm'g third military department U. S. army, St. Louis, Mo.*

Journal of march into the Indian country in the northern part of Iowa Territory¹² in 1844, by company I, 1st regiment of dragoons.

August 11. Marched from Fort Des Moines in very good order at 10 a. m.; followed the "Oregon trail"¹³ three or four miles; then left it to cross the Beaver river, a tributary of the Des Moines; crossed it and encamped on its left bank eight miles from the post. Weather and prairie fair; distance 8 miles; course NW. by N.

August 12. We were detained till 10 o'clock to recover an oxen that had strayed during the night. Marched on a narrow dividing ridge between Beaver and Des Moines, the Beaver running close to and nearly parallel to the Des Moines. Encamped at 5 p. m. on a ravine and branch of that river; there were many of these little ravines thrown out from the river on this day's march; they are very deep and give pure spring water. The ox team is very slow and sluggish, and sticks worse in the mud than the mules; but all the wagons are heavily loaded, and the prairie is soft; it rained hard in the night. Distance 16 miles;¹⁴ course NNW.

¹² The Territory of Iowa included the present States of Iowa and Minnesota and the eastern parts of North and South Dakota.

¹³ The main trail to Oregon lay through the State of Missouri via Independence to the Platte River in Nebraska. The movement to the Far West seems to have attracted special interest in Iowa in the spring of 1843. From this time on emigrants from the young Territory of Iowa became an element of strength in Oregon, for the pioneers of that promising country at once adopted almost all the statute laws of Iowa. The emigrants followed the Territorial roads of eastern Iowa (which alone was occupied by white settlers at that date) to Fort Des Moines, the westernmost point of habitation, and from there westward they chose their own course overland through the country of the Saes and Foxes and Pottawattamies across the Missouri River to the main trail. See also THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. X, pp. 415, 425.

¹⁴ The party must have encamped in the eastern part of the present county of Dallas. Since all of Captain Allen's route lay through uninhabited country, the counties, towns, and rivers of to-day will be referred to as then existing.

August 13. Started at 7, and soon got on a broad prairie; passed the head of the Beaver¹⁵ about 12, where the prairie expands still more; kept on the west side of the prairie towards the Des Moines; many wet places to detain the wagons; encamped at 5 on a deep and well-wooded ravine; found one bee tree with good honey. Course very crooked, but generally NW. by N.; distance 17 miles.¹⁶

August 14. Marched at 7, and followed up the Des Moines over much such country as yesterday; made 18 miles NW. by N.; day and night fine. Encamped on Bluff creek,¹⁷ a pretty clear little brook, may be 15 or 20 miles long; tried to get an observation of the pole star, but could not with our little sextant; it is too small for any nice purpose.

August 15. Marched at 6½, and soon left the Des Moines far to our right; prairie large and flat, running up close to the river, where it falls off in a sudden bluff, serrated with deep short ravines, with good springs; passed the forks of the river early in the day; saw there elk, but too far off and too wild to be chased or shot; much sign of game is reported near the river; of elk, deer, bears, and turkeys; encamped at 3 on a ravine and near the river; think we are about the neutral ground.¹⁸ Course NW.; distance 17 miles.

August 16. Started at 7; in five or six miles saw many elk at a distance; one drove estimated at 100; crossed Lizard

¹⁵ This point was doubtless somewhere near the town of Woodward because the head of Beaver Creek is much farther north.

¹⁶ Probably three or four miles south of Moingona, Boone County.

¹⁷ Probably in the northern part of Boone County.

¹⁸ In order to prevent clashes between these two hereditary and irreconcilable enemies the United States government prevailed on the Sioux and the Sacs and Foxes to cede equal shares of a strip of country forty miles wide extending from the Mississippi to the Des Moines. This was called "The Neutral Ground", and became, in part, the reservation of the Winnebagoes in 1840, in which year Fort Atkinson was established among them. Fort Dodge, opposite the mouth of Lizard River, dates from the year 1850.

creek about noon, after going much out of the way to get down to it; the country near it is so rough; encamped at 2½ p. m. on this creek, at a very pretty part of it, on a high bank, with a beautiful prairie all around and extending to the Des Moines; killed an elk and a deer at the site of encampment, and saw others. Course NW. by N.; 10 miles

August 17. Remained encamped to allow the men to wash, and the teams to rest; killed one deer, coons, squirrels, waterfowls, &c.; this seems to be a fine game country. Lizard creek is a pretty little branch of the Des Moines, clear, crooked, and many ripples; when we crossed it yesterday near its mouth, it was 20 feet broad, 10 inches deep with current of four miles per hour; it is probably 30 miles long, and its valley, which is narrow and deep, is skirted with timber enough to support farms along each side of it.

August 18. It rained very much last night, making the prairie soft and extremely difficult for the teams; we had to double teams, and also apply the men to draw the wagons through the slues, and these were numerous; worked out far from timber, and did not find a place to encamp till 9 at night, when we struck a deep ravine leading to the Des Moines, the mouth of which is called "Delaware battle ground,"¹⁹ a place where a party of some 20 Delawares were all killed by the Sioux three years since. Course NW. distance 10 miles.

¹⁹ Northern part of Webster County. The Indians whom Captain Allen mentions are identified in a report from the Fort Leavenworth Agency, dated September 1, 1842. It reads as follows: "It may not be amiss for me to state here, that a party of sixteen Delawares went out last fall to make a hunt on the neutral ground between the Missouri and Mississippi rivers. While preparing to leave their camp one morning in October, 1841, they were fired on by a large party of Sioux, who had surrounded them; some of the Delawares were shot down. Some of those that escaped the first fire spoke to a Pottawatomie that was with them, and told him to make his escape if he could; that they intended to fight by their wounded friends until they were all killed; so they

August 19. Six horses absent this morning, and were not recovered till 9 o'clock; crossed a little creek, broke a wagon tongue; went on a due north course about 5 miles, when we struck the west branch of the Des Moines at a place called the "Iron Banks;" here we crossed without trouble at a rapid ford, on a bottom of lime rock and primitive boulders; the river was above its meridian height, and was rising; a little below the ford is a limestone ledge of 20 feet height, on the east bank, in their horizontal strata, and much mixed and colored with oxides of iron. Above this point the prairie seemed to change its character, becoming rolling and dry, and much mixed with sand and limestone pebbles; the west branch, where we crossed it, was about one-third the volume of the Des Moines at mouth of Raccoon; encamped on this branch 10 miles above the Iron Banks.²⁰ General course NW.; distance 15 miles.

August 20. Kept as close to the river as the slopes and ravines would permit, over the same kind of lime country that we met yesterday; in the afternoon struck a sluggish little stream that we attempted to head, and which led us far out into the Big Prairie, and away from timber; encamped at 2 p. m. on a little lake or expansion of this stream, about three miles from the main river.²¹ Course W.; distance 15 miles.

August 21. Made an early start, but found the country bad, and were all killed. The Pottawatomie got home, but was badly wounded. The Delawares say that the Sioux committed this murderous outrage on them without any cause or offence whatever, and they have not attempted to revenge themselves in any way, but that they have a heavy charge against the Sioux: first, for the murdering sixteen men; for all the horses they had with them, riding saddles and pack saddles, guns, traps, blankets, clothing, and camp equipage. All these things the Delaware chiefs requested me to report you."—*United States Executive Documents*, 3d Session, 27th Congress, No. p. 429. See also p. 419.

²⁰ West of the town of Rutland, Humboldt County.

²¹ On Prairie Creek in southwestern Palo Alto County.

so wet and the slues so numerous, that our progress was slow and difficult; the wagons, being yet heavily loaded, cut deep into the wet ground, and stuck fast in every mire till pulled out by the main strength of the command; the men were all the time muddy and wet, and more fatigued than on any previous day; about five in the afternoon, while we were fast in a mudhole, there came a tremendous storm from the north, with torrents of rain; and night and pitch darkness, with rain, thunder, and cold, found us three or four miles from timber, and unable to go further; there was no firm ground about us, and there we spent the night as we best could, without fire, shelter, or food. Course N.; 15 miles.

August 22. It took all of this day to make six miles through this soft prairie, flooded by the rain of yesterday and last night; encamped at sunset on a pretty little lake 4 miles long and 300 or 400 yards broad, having a rich looking little island near the centre; there are many small groves of fine timber skirting this lake,²² in one of which we encamped. Course NW.; distance 6 miles.

August 23. Laid still to-day, and sent back to bring up the ox-team that had been left the day before yesterday about 8 miles from here; it could not be moved for the floods of the slues; abundance of swan, geese, and ducks on this lake, and much sign of otter all around it; one of the men shot an elk, but did not get him; killed plenty of fowl, but no fish; I believe the otter frightened the fish from the shores.

August 24. Remained encamped, and got the ox-team in about sunset, much wearied; the weather is now fine, but the prairie is yet flooded.

August 25. Marched at 7; in eight miles struck a large

²² Medium Lake near Emmetsburg.

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grassy slue or prairie stream connecting two lakes; it was 100 yards broad and swimming deep; I was obliged to ferry everything across in the ponton wagon bed, and to swim the horses; this occupied the whole day till dark, when we went on two miles more to reach timber, which was found on a large irregular glassy lake²³ that seems to belong to a chain or series of small lakes, forming, as we suppose, the sources of the west branches of the Des Moines, that we are following up; the timber of this river is seen off to our left about three miles, but cannot be approached nearer by reason of these lakes. Jones, a citizen, employed as a guide, gave up his occupation some days ago; says he knows nothing of this country; was never near so high up, and never heard of such a country as we are now in; so I am guide myself. Course NW. by N.; distance 10 miles.

August 26. We spent the whole of this day in fruitless search of a way to lead us through these interminable lakes; determined finally at night to cross a strait between two of them,²⁴ and with that object encamped on the south side of it, six miles north of encampment of last night. The grass of this country is tall and luxuriant, remarkably so for so high a latitude, but the whole country is good for nothing, except for the seclusion and safety it affords to the numerous water fowl that are hatched and grown in it. Course N.; distance 6 miles.

August 27. Crossed the strait at the point chosen yesterday; it was 200 yards broad, and swimming all the way; got all over at 2 p. m., and went on eight miles and encamped on the broad prairie, six or seven miles from any timber; we can see timber to the east of us, surmised to be that of the Blue Earth river of the St. Peter's;²⁵ the surface of the

²³ Either Crane or High Lake, Emmet County.

²⁴ Swan Lake, Emmet County.

²⁵ They no doubt saw timber on the East Branch of the Des Moines River.

country is getting more broken and irregular, as though we were approaching the sources of its streams. Course NW.; distance 8 miles.

August 28. Marched early, and sent Lieutenant Calhoun with Jones, the guide, to explore the timber seen off to our right, and thought to be that of the Blue Earth river; they returned to the command about sunset, and reported that they found a lake²⁶ 7 or 10 miles long, of beautiful character, with bright pebbled shores, and well-timbered borders, having a small stream running into it from the westward, and also an outlet to the eastward, which they followed down about 10 miles, passing in that distance several little lakes or expansions of the outlet, which, when they left it, had grown to a stream, 20 or 30 feet broad, 3 or 4 feet deep, and running with a gentle current in a direction a little east of north; this stream being some distance above the sources of the east branch of the Des Moines, and apparently running to the northward,²⁷ I infer that it is a branch of the Blue Earth river, else an unknown tributary of the "Big Cedar." Lieutenant Potter was sent to the left to explore the Des Moines, which we had not seen for several days; we had departed from it about seven miles to the eastward. I continued my general course (northwest) and in eight miles came to a lake three miles long and three quarters of a mile broad, clear and pretty, with hard high banks all around it, and heavy timber on the end towards the Des Moines. My course led me to the Des Moines in the

²⁶ Turtle Lake, partly in Iowa and partly in Minnesota. Captain Allen's geography is uncertain here or else the surface of the country has changed since his day. Nicollet's map is certainly not the modern one. Judging from the distances traveled each day, the party must have reached a point somewhere west of Turtle Lake which is to-day the source of the East Branch of the Des Moines River. Perhaps Iowa Lake is meant. See Winchell's *Historical Sketch of Explorations and Surveys in Minnesota*, p. 80.

²⁷ This description tallies with Nicollet's map but cannot be accepted to-day.

afternoon, where, in crossing a little stream, I broke a wagon and encamped; the river here shows only little groves of timber at great intervals; is of a reddish muddy color, 30 feet broad, 2 feet deep, with a current of three miles per hour; its valley is narrow, and the bluffs that border it are high, broken, and steep; country passed to-day high and sandy and poor;²⁸ killed a deer. Course NW.; distance 12 miles.

August 29. The prairie was good, high, and dry all day; encamped on a little lake half a mile long and a quarter of a mile broad, without outlet, 2 miles east of the river.²⁹ Course NW. by N.; distance 23 miles.

August 30. Marched north five miles to a little lake,³⁰ like that of last night, that we passed on our left, and continued NNW. seven miles over a wonderfully broken surface, rising and falling in high knobs and deep ravines, with numerous little lakes in the deep valleys, some of them clear and pretty, and others grassy; struck the Des Moines at 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ p. m., and followed it up three miles, when the river turned suddenly round to the bluff bordering a ravine; the Des Moines is yet a respectable stream, as though it was 50 or 60 miles longer; I will leave it to-morrow, and try to find it again in a direction W. by N., as I think this great turn to the south is only a great bend out of its natural course.³¹ I sent Lieutenant Calhoun to ascend some high bluffs that were seen at a distance on the west side of the river last evening; he reports them to be 150 or 200 feet above the general level of the country, as they seemed to be from our distance; he found on the highest peak an artificial mound of stone, and I found on the east side of the river, five or six

²⁸ Southeastern corner of Jackson County, Minnesota.

²⁹ Probably Fish or Eagle Lake.

³⁰ Bingham or Independence Lake may be referred to.

³¹ Cottonwood County.

miles from this peak, a loose stake evidently placed there by white men; I thought it was probably on the route of Captain Boone and Captain Canfield from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Snelling, made some years since, though I could see no other trace of their march. Course NW. by W.; distance 20 miles.

August 31. Spent much of this day in pursuit of elk that we could not overtake; chased and killed a large black bear found out on the prairie; the bear being driven into the midst of the column, made a considerable commotion among the horses and teams, and it seemed as though every man in the command had taken one or more shots at him before he was brought down; encamped at 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ p. m. on a small lake (two miles long and half mile broad) which is evidently a part of the Des Moines river; I spent the afternoon in exploring the country with a view to determine our future march in search of the sources of the Des Moines and of the Blue Earth river; as the Des Moines seems to extend much further up, I have determined to leave a portion of the command at this point,³² where they may rest for some days, whilst I shall continue to explore with another portion. Course NW. by W.; distance 12 miles.

September 1. Left Lieutenant Noble and 25 men encamped, and marched with all of the other officers and 25 dragoons, and one team carrying provisions for seven days, in search of the sources of the Des Moines and the Blue Earth river; I had been told that the Blue Earth river was due west from the head of the Des Moines, but I began to suspect that it was further south; I continued to follow up the Des Moines, passing over high prairie hills for 10 or 12 miles, until, from a principal eminence, I saw a large grove of timber, NW. $\frac{1}{2}$ W., 12 or 14 miles off; marched for it,

³² On the boundary between Murray and Cottonwood counties.

and found it to be the timber of a large irregular lake,³³ from which the river flowed in a good sized outlet of deep water and muddy banks; the lake is about six miles long, but at first resembles a series of small lakes, because of long crooked points of heavily timbered land running into it in all directions; I take this to be the highest source of the Des Moines that is worth noticing as such; it seems to have a little inlet from the northward, but of no size or character. There are many small lakes dotting the prairie as far as we can see, around this large one, all of which are probably drained by the river through the loose sand soil under the surface; encamped on one of these little lakes, a quarter of a mile from the larger one. General course NW. by W.; distance 25 miles.

September 2. Sent a soldier back to Lieutenant Noble with instructions to move his camp up as far as our encampment of last night; and, assuming that I had now reached the source of the longest and most northerly branch of the Des Moines, I took a new course, N. $\frac{1}{2}$ W., with a motive to extend the examination of the country. In the first four miles, we struck a large trail running east and west, which much resembled a dragoon trail, and was thought at first to be that of Captain Sumner's company; but I did not think that Captain Sumner had been so far west and north, and a closer examination led me to suppose it to be a Sioux hunting trail, which had been travelled for years; some of the men thought they found wagon tracks on it, but I could see no sign of this kind, except such as I thought might have been made by the ends of the lodge poles that the Sioux carry on horses with one end dragging on the ground; there were, however, distinct marks of *shod* horses going westward, and it may be that Captain Sumner

³³ Shetek Lake.

marched on it for some purpose. Where we crossed his trail we saw four elk, and killed two of them, one in full chase, and the other running fast after a wound by a still shot. I do not like elk meat; it has a coarse fibre, is unlike the deer, and I think a mule would taste about as well. The ground passed over to-day was generally high, dry, and rich, and the grass good. Encamped near the base of some high mounds, on a little stream³⁴ running eastward, which is evidently a tributary of the St. Peter's river. Course N. $\frac{1}{2}$ W.; distance 15 miles.

September 3. Marched on the same general course as yesterday; in the early part of the day crossed two trails near together, and both running east and west; on the first we again saw shod horse tracks, which made it appear to most of the gentlemen as Captain Sumner's return trail: it may be so, but I doubt it. On the 18th mile, we struck and crossed a large creek, (twenty feet broad, two feet deep, and current of four miles per hour,) thought to be a branch of the Blue Earth river;³⁵ encamped four miles beyond it at a small grove of rich land timber, which was nearly surrounded by deep grassy marshes; this is a miserable country, full of swamps, and no timber except in sparse little groves on the borders of brooks and lakes. This will be my furthest point north; to-morrow I go east. Course N. $\frac{1}{2}$ W.; distance 22 miles.

September 4. Marched as nearly east as possible for six hours, when we crossed the same stream we crossed yesterday afternoon, but 20 miles lower down; this stream ran NW., and we followed it down five miles when we suddenly came to a large river for this country, which is evidently the St. Peter's river; it is nearly as large as the Des Moines

³⁴ Probably Cottonwood River.

³⁵ Either the Redwood River or the northern fork of Yellow Medicine River.

below Raccoon; runs in a deep valley one mile broad, between very high and timbered bluffs; the valley is itself much elevated above the river, and is not what is called bottom land; it is without timber except on the borders of the stream, and is covered with detached masses of granite rock, some of them covering acres; Lieutenant Potter, who was sent to explore the river above as soon as it was discovered, reports that about four miles above, he found high bluffs of primitive rock on both sides of the river, and this is surely the formation from which the valley below has been filled with fragments. We heard two or three shots fired at a distance on the opposite side of the river, and supposed we were near Sioux Indians; but, though we fired in answer to them, and put up rockets at night, no Indians made their appearance. The valley of this river at this place is remarkable, that it continues in a straight line as far as we can see, and with about uniform breadth, with high, very steep timbered bluffs rising from it to the general surface of the country on either side. The river winds through this valley, and may be crossed at rapids without running much into wagon beds, though in most places it would swim a horse, and seemed now to be in medium stage. It is strange that although we are evidently very far in the Sioux country, we have not yet seen a buffalo or a Sioux Indian. This country is too poor, bleak, and broken to attract white men much, but it looks wild enough for an Indian and is remote enough for all large game. Encamped in the valley of the river. Course E.; distance 22 miles.

September 5. Marched down the valley of the river four or five miles with a view to see more of its character, and then to make a circuit back to Lieutenant Noble's camp on the source of the Des Moines; the valley all the way was filled with marsh ponds and the great irregular masses of broken primitive rock before mentioned, making it very

difficult to march along it at all; on leaving it, we rose a very high and steep wooded bluff to the general level of the country; then took a course SW. by S., on which we marched over the prairie 30 miles, and until 8 at night, before we found timber. Encamped on a respectable little creek, which we had encamped on going out, and which we take to be one of the branches of the Blue Earth river.³⁶ Whole distance to-day, 35 miles.

September 6. Reached the source of the Des Moines and Lieutenant Noble's camp late in the afternoon, after a hard day's march; Lieutenant Noble had reached his present camp two days before, having moved up his detachment from the point where I left it on the 1st instant, agreeably to instructions sent back to him from this point. All the country we have seen, on this trip to the St. Peter's, is of an almost worthless description, being broken, poor, and marshy, and without any timber of consequence; the hills are of a sandy poor soil of lime and primitive pebbles, and the valleys are deep marshy slues, with tall heavy grass; it is a tedious and difficult country for operations of troops, though near the St. Peter's it does not offer many hiding places for the Indians. Distance to-day, 22 miles.

September 7 and 8. Remained encamped on an arm of this pretty and singular lake, and took our latitude from several observations of the sun meridian; made it 43 degrees 57' 42". I have not, however, much confidence in the accuracy of our little sextant, and think it probable that our latitude is higher than here shown. This lake is filled with water-fowl, and the camp is stocked with ducks; to-morrow I march west in search of the Big Sioux river.

September 9. The lake that we left this morning is surely

³⁶ All these streams flow into the St. Peter's or Minnesota River so that it is doubtful whether Captain Allen's party ever really saw the head of the Blue Earth River.

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the head of the Des Moines river; we crossed the only inlet it has about two miles above the lake, where it is only a little slue; I do not find any lake on the maps corresponding with this, and I infer that it has not hitherto been explored by any of the map-makers; I have named it the "*Lake of the Oaks*," from the forests of immense white oak trees that border it and cover its peninsulas.³⁷ Leaving this lake, our course was NW. by W., on a large, high, level and dry prairie, that seems like the dividing elevation between the waters of large rivers; it divides here the tributaries of the Missouri from those of the Mississippi. This prairie, like all of this upper country, is dotted over with little lakes, though to-day we have seen the timber of only three or four, and have touched only one of them; we passed much sign of buffalo, but have not yet seen the animal. Encamped near sunset on the border of a slue, in the open prairie, there being no timber in sight; the night cold, cloudy, and rain. Course NW. by W.; 22 miles distance.

September 10. Continued our course on the Big Prairie, and in the first eight miles saw three buffalo grazing on an eminence about a mile ahead, the first we had anywhere seen. I halted the command in a depression of the prairie, and, taking some of the officers and men, made a circuit of the animals, and put them in full chase straight to the command, at a halt, and by this means easily killed all three in less than half an hour. Lieutenant Potter killed the first one in full chase by the first shot of his pistol. They were bulls, and rather lean; but being our first buffalo, we took a quantity of the meat. The day was cold, moist, and disagreeable; marched on eight miles further, striking, at 3 p. m., a deep looking river running almost due south, and as broad as the Raccoon at Fort Des Moines. This is evi-

³⁷ This lake escaped the notice of Nicollet, for it is not shown on the map published in 1843 after his death. Captain Allen probably referred to this map.

dently a river of the Missouri, and we are inclined to think it the Big Sioux,³⁸ but have some doubt on this; we ought before reaching the Big Sioux, to have crossed a long stream shown on the maps as Floyd's river; but since leaving the Des Moines, we have not touched or seen such a river. Some Sioux Indians came to our encampment at the point where we struck this river. They composed two or three lodges of a roving band of prairie Indians, who seemed to be wandering here with the buffalo. They approached us with the greatest timidity, two only at first, and then three others; and they, probably, would not have come to us at all, if we had not surprised them in a place where they could not escape our observation. I had no interpreter through whom to speak to them; one of the dragoons spoke a few words of their language, but all he could understand of what they said was, that they lived on the St. Peter's river high up, and that we would find a trading-house on the river we were then on, three days down it. We caught a great many small fish in this river, but buffalo — *meat of the bulls* — seems to be the rage for to-night. The country to-day has been slightly rolling, but good for marching; the grass here is very luxuriant. Course W. by S.; distance 16 miles.

September 11. Last night a heavy white frost, the first that we have experienced; determined to follow down the river, at least to the trading-house spoken of by the Indians, so marched out on the bluffs. In a few miles, killed a lone buffalo bull, and soon after came upon two lodges more of Sioux Indians. They were also much alarmed at our approach, and three men of them, whom we first saw near their lodges on horses, came to us at full gallop, and in great agitation. After I had explained to them, as well as I could, that we were friends, and were traveling through

³⁸ Probably in Moody County, South Dakota.

their country on a mission of friendship, they seemed much pleased, and the principal man galloped off to his lodge and hoisted a little American flag; and as we passed his lodge, offered us the meat of one or two buffaloes that were curing about his camp. These lodges were on the bald prairie, far from timber, and seem to be only a stopping place to cure and eat the meat they had killed near it. This is surely a fine buffalo country, the prairie is cut up with their trails in all directions, and we have seen many small parties during the day, but, as yet, no large herd. Just before we went into camp, I saw several at a distance that I took to be cows, and allowed some of the men to give them chase. They soon killed four, but all bulls again, and we do not need the meat, except the tongues and marrow-bones. In the afternoon, Jones killed an antelope, and we saw ten more in a short distance among gentle hills of the prairie; I was surprised to meet them in this country; went late down to the river to encamp, and did not get a good site, the timber being very scarce on the borders of the river. 32 miles distance; course SW. by S.

September 12. Twelve horses and mules were missing this morning, and under a strong suspicion that the Sioux had been among them — some known to have been picketed in the best manner are among them. Three of mine, one of Dr. Griffin's, and two of Lieutenant Potter's, are also in the number. I remained encamped all of the day, sending parties in all directions in search of the missing horses, and recovered all except four. Lieutenant Potter and Dr. Griffin and four dragoons are yet out, and will be out all night; it is very unusual for any of the horses to stray from camp at night, at this distance and time from home. Last night was very dark; the horses were picketed in very tall grass, where sentinels could not watch them closely, and I think it very probable that Indians came in and loosened and drove

off all that are gone, and have probably secured some of them. The Sioux are great rascals, and capable of all kinds of theft.

September 13. Sent out a party on our back trail, and marched on down the river. In about twelve miles, came to a great and picturesque fall³⁹ of the river, where we found Doctor Griffin and Lieutenant Potter and party, who had been searching for lost horses, and encamped here last night; they had seen no traces of them, and had resigned themselves to their loss. Doctor G. and Lieutenant P. were sitting on a rock, and "smoking away their horses to the Sioux," (referring to the Indian custom of giving away horses on a ceremony of smoking.) These falls present a remarkable feature of the river and country; the river, until now, running nearly due south, makes above the falls a bend to the west, and round to northeast, and passes the falls in a due east course, and continues below in a northeast course for six miles, when it resumes its former direction. The rock of these falls is massive quartz, and is the first rock formation, or *rock in place*, that we have seen since we left the St. Peter's river. It crosses the river here north and south, and is not seen elsewhere, the bluffs or general level of the country covering it some 250 feet. The fall, as near as I could measure it, is 100 feet in 400 yards, and is made up of several perpendicular falls — one 20, one 18, and one 10 feet. The rock in the course and on the borders of the stream is split, broken, and piled up in the most irregular and fantastic shapes, and presents deep and frightful chasms, extending from the stream in all directions. There is no timber here on the borders or bluffs, and only a little on a small island at the head of the rapids. After spending an hour or two at these rapids, moved down the river 12 miles, and encamped on a little stream near the

³⁹ Sioux Falls.

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p. 219.

⁴¹ This day's

main river. As we were going into camp, saw a herd of more than 100 buffaloes at the site of the encampment, gave them chase, and killed two cows and a calf, which (it being dark when they were slaughtered) were left on the prairie for the night, with the hunters to guard them from the wolves. Distance 24 miles; course SE. The party sent to hunt horses this morning came up at night, found none; so the four yet lost are abandoned — one horse and one mule being public.⁴⁰

September 14. Went a little out of our course to pick up the meat killed last night, and continued over a rough country, much cut up by various and little brooks; encamped at the mouth of one of them, and killed a buffalo bull standing across the river, six men firing at him by volley, and each ball taking effect. Buffalo have been in sight almost always since we struck this river, and we might have killed hundreds by delaying for the purpose. Distance 18 miles; course S. by E.⁴¹

September 15. Ascended very high bluffs, and marched

⁴⁰ Captain Sumner of Fort Atkinson was joined by Captain Allen one year later to make a march to the Sioux villages on the St. Peter's or Minnesota River. In his report to headquarters he writes: "In the summer of 1844, Captain Allen, while on a march in the Sioux Country, lost a government horse and mule, and two horses belonging to officers of his command. These animals were stolen by an Indian. I heard of this man frequently. He had been running about the country boasting of this feat, and I determined to arrest him if possible, as it appeared to me highly important that all Indians should be made to know that the horses of the government, on service in the Indian country, are inviolable, and that they cannot be touched by them without the certainty of punishment at the time, or afterwards. I arrested this Indian at Traverse des Sioux; but as there was no testimony against him, that would convict him before a court, I thought it inadvisable to turn him over to the civil authority. I sent him down to Fort Snelling, requesting Captain Backus to keep him in close confinement until he heard from division headquarters on the subject. I would respectfully refer this case to the commanding general of division. The Indian will not be released till orders to that effect are received at Fort Snelling."— *United States Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 29th Congress, No. 1, p. 219.

⁴¹ This day's route lay through Lyon County, Iowa.

SE. over smooth prairie till 12, then S. W. till 4½ p. m.; at 1 struck a clear little river coming down from the east, which I take to be the stream at the mouth of which the Indians we first met told us we would find a trading house; saw what we supposed to be a party of Indians far to our left, in the forenoon, but it may have been buffalo. Followed down the clear stream, and encamped near its mouth on the main river. We can see no signs of a trading-house here, no trails or appearance of near habitation, and I believe the Indians have lied to us respecting the existence of a trading-house in this country. The little stream, above referred to, is 30 feet broad, 2½ feet deep, and runs three miles per hour; the banks are low, and it runs over pebbles and sand.⁴² General course S.; distance 22 miles.

September 16. Crossed the clear stream near its mouth, and again ascended the bluffs, which here are near 300 feet high, and much broken — the breaks running far out from the main river; the obstructions forced us to leave the river far on our right, and made the line of our march very crooked. I sent two men to follow the river as closely as practicable, and look if there were any appearances of a trading-house in the neighborhood. They found none, and so it is demonstrated that the Indians have basely lied and deceived us in this respect, and for what purpose, I am unable to conceive. It is said of the Sioux, that they are prouder of, and more habituated to, lying than truth-telling, and here is pretty good evidence in support of the charge. Encamped on a slue at a bunch of willows far out on the prairie,⁴³ horses and mules much fatigued; we have not seen any buffalo to-day, nor any fresh sign of them; we are apparently out of their present range. Distance 20 miles; course S. by W.

⁴² Rock River, Sioux County.

⁴³ In Plymouth County.

September 17. Marched SW. to strike the river, and encamped on it at 11 a. m., to rest the horses and get an observation for latitude. The river here is a large stream, larger than the Des Moines, below Raccoon, not quite so broad, but is deeper, and runs more water. It has increased much since we last saw it, (30 miles above,) and must have received tributaries from the west that we could not see for our distance from it. The bluffs here are not so abrupt as above, and the bottoms are broader and more fertile; but the timber of the river does not increase, only a few elms and willows skirting the banks, which are deep and muddy like those of streams near the Missouri. I cannot yet determine what river this may be, whether Floyd's river or the Big Sioux. I shall follow it down further, and see more of its character; and if the season were not so late, I would cross it and explore further west. But my horses are much worn, and the grass and prairie are killed by the frost, and it is incumbent to hurry home. The river here seems to abound in catfish; the men caught 20 or 30 large ones in a few hours with fish-hooks. Distance 10 miles;⁴⁴ course SW.

September 18. Continued down the river with the greatest difficulty, having to rise and descend the bluffs, which have increased in height and steepness. After going over several points, fell again into the valley of the river, and soon saw a great opening to the westward, which I at once recognised as the valley of the Missouri. I had not expected to meet that river for 30 miles yet, and was surprised at seeing it here; though as our river here only runs into the *valley* of the Missouri, it may yet be several miles to its mouth. Encamped early, on a little brook, to feed on luxuriant pea-vine in its little shaded valley. Course S.; distance 16 miles.

⁴⁴ Still in Plymouth County.

September 19. Endeavored to follow down the valley of the river, but could not; it washes the bluffs so often in its bends, we were again driven over the bluffs, which here are 500 or 600 feet high, and broken almost every mile by deep ravines, that, from the heights, look like great chasms in the earth. Of course we had all sorts of trouble, upset one wagon twice, killed one mule, and broke another wagon square off at the hounds. The romance of marching through a wilderness country is much abated. General course S.; distance 10 miles.⁴⁵

September 20. Remained encamped to repair wagons; but, in the meantime, I determined to find the mouth of the river that we had traced so far. Doctor Griffin, Lieutenant Calhoun, Lieutenant Potter, and J. C. Calhoun, jr., volunteered to accompany me, and leaving Lieutenant Noble in charge of the camp, we set out early for this purpose. We encountered bluffs, ravines, vine, valleys, tall grass, and swamp, and plum-bush, and willow thickets, worse than any thing we had seen; but worked our way along, and, in the distance of seven miles, reached really the point where this river unites with the Missouri. It comes to the Missouri in a due south course, and the Missouri meets it perpendicularly, as coming from the west. Both, at their junction, wash the base of a steep bluff, some 500 feet high, and the great river then pursues its general course to the southward and eastward. Opposite to this point, there appears to be a large island of the Missouri, but we could not see enough to know if it were really an island, or a peninsula in one of the great bends of this river. I have learned all I can, now, of the river which we have followed down to its mouth. I shall consider it the Big Sioux, until I shall be better informed. To-morrow I shall march for home by the

⁴⁵ Southwestern corner of Plymouth County.

nearest route I can find. It has rained most of the day, and is cold and disagreeable.

September 21. Spent the whole day at hard labor in making ten miles out from the river over these terrible hills; made two bridges across brooks, and encamped at the last one. Course NE.; distance 10 miles.

September 22. The country continues broken, but not so bad as yesterday. Crossed a large creek on our tenth mile,⁴⁶ which may be Floyd's river, if that we left yesterday is the Big Sioux. It is slightly skirted with timber, and looks as though it may be 50 miles long—a very pretty, clear stream; crossed two little brooks without any timber, and encamped on a slue. Course E. by S.; distance 15 miles.

September 23. Crossed three little brooks,⁴⁷ deep and miry, with a very little timber on their banks. One of these, though almost without current, was generally forty feet broad, and six feet deep; it occupied us two hours to find any thing like a practicable ford. The prairie rises very gently from these brooks, and is easy to travel over. Encamped on the prairie away from timber, but had taken some for cook-fires from the last brook. Course E.; distance 15 miles.

September 24. At 11 a. m. came to the Little Sioux river,⁴⁸ running to the SW. It is a clear, pretty stream, as large here as the Raccoon is at medium stage at its mouth; midside deep to our horses; its banks are bordered with narrow groves of large timber, cotton-wood, walnut, oak, &c. We had to prepare the banks for crossing, and then to help some of the weak horses out of the mud at the shore; got all over before sunset, and encamped. Here is the site

⁴⁶ They probably marched across the southern part of Plymouth County.

⁴⁷ Probably Whiskey and Mud Creeks and the West Fork of the Little Sioux.

⁴⁸ Somewhere near the northeastern corner of Woodbury County.

of a large Indian encampment, supposed to be Pottawatomies, who seemed to have hunted extensively on this river about two months ago. Course E. by S.; distance 10 miles.

September 25. Had smooth, easy marching for ten miles, when we crossed a little creek, and in five or six miles further crossed another⁴⁹ and larger one, both running toward the Missouri. The west bank of the last was very muddy, and hard to rise, which kept us till night at the stream; nothing but a little willow brush for fire, and it was cold. Course E.; distance 15 miles.

September 26. In 12 miles crossed a creek⁵⁰ like a large prairie slue, but running a good deal of water; eight miles more brought us to a stream that I took at first to be Soldier's river,⁵¹ but afterwards thought it might be a branch of the Raccoon, though where we crossed, it was running towards the Missouri. The stream winds in short and abrupt crooks through a deep narrow valley, is thirty feet broad, two feet deep, and runs one mile per hour; is skirted with narrow strips of soft maple, hickory, walnut, &c.; all about us looks like Des Moines country, and not like that drained by the water of the Missouri. It is probable that the small streams we have crossed since we left the "Little Sioux," may unite to form the "Soldier's river" of the Missouri, shown on the maps, and that we have passed it. Encamped on this stream, after crossing. Course E.; distance 20 miles.

September 27. Met another ugly prairie slue at the end of eight miles, which it took three hours to cross, when we came to a country full of marshes and old shallow grass, like that of the Upper Des Moines. Encamped on the

⁴⁹ Perhaps Maple River in Ida County.

⁵⁰ Probably Boyer River.

⁵¹ This is probably Coon River, since Soldier River begins farther south.

prairie among the marshes,⁵² and near an island of timber, that we could not reach for the ugly marsh that surrounded it. The frosts are becoming severe, and the horses are failing fast. Course E.; distance 12 miles.

September 28. Spent the whole forenoon in travelling ten miles to make four on our course; four fifths of the country was marsh, which turned us to all points of the compass. At 12 we reached a small lake,⁵³ from which an Indian trail, after much winding around the peninsulas of the lake, led us out to better ground, and went on south. Followed it ten miles, and encamped on the open prairie; no timber near us; had taken a little wood from the lake mentioned. Course SE.; distance 20 miles.

September 29. At 12 m. crossed a little creek⁵⁴ coming from the NE., and turning south; turned into it at night to encamp, and found it much enlarged by a much larger stream coming in from the west just above our encampment. This seemed to be the west branch of the Raccoon, and we are now on the main branch of that river; the prairie, though somewhat hilly, was easy to march over all day. The bluffs of this stream, where we are encamped, are high and steep; its valley is about a mile broad and well timbered.⁵⁵ Course S.; distance 20 miles.

September 30. Started late, everything being tired from the too long march of yesterday. The grass has been so much deadened by the many frosts, that it no longer gives the horses a good subsistence; the horses and mules have failed wonderfully since we left the Little Sioux, though we have walked (on foot) most of the way. Followed down

⁵² North of the village of Lavinia, Calhoun County.

⁵³ Twin Lakes.

⁵⁴ Cedar Creek.

⁵⁵ At a point just west of Jefferson, Greene County.

the bluffs of the Raccoon on our right, and crossed two small creeks⁵⁶ running into it, both running in deep valleys clothed with heavy, good timber. Encamped on the last. Course SE.; distance 12 miles.

October 1. Marched on the dry ridge between Raccoon and Beaver, the timber of both being in sight nearly all the way. Killed a fine bear on the prairie in chase; Sergeant Williams shot him dead on first fire with his carbine from his horse at a gallop. We move slowly from previous fatigue. Encamped on Beaver river.⁵⁷ Course SE. by S.; distance 16 miles.

October 2. The route was a little rough, being intersected by ravines both of Raccoon and Beaver; hoped to reach home, but could not from weariness of the teams. Encamped again on the Beaver, near our trail going out. Course SE.; distance 16 miles.

October 3. Struck our trail going out, and followed it home. Distance eight miles. Reached Fort Des Moines at 1 p. m., having marched, since we left the post, 740 miles, and having been absent 54 days.

FORT DES MOINES, *December 31, 1844.*

J. ALLEN,
Captain, 1st Dragoons.

Colonel S. W. KEARNEY,
Commanding third military department, St. Louis, Mo.

True copy:

R. JONES, *Adjutant General.*

MARCH 18, 1846.

⁵⁶ Hardin and Buttrick creeks.

⁵⁷ The party is now back in Dallas County.

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