

HISTORY AND REMINISCENCE

JAY AMOS BARRETT

EXTRACTS FROM JOHN WOOD'S DIARY

The following extracts are from the Journal of John Wood, who came from Ohio across this part of Nebraska in 1850, and who kept this account of his experiences from day to day. The Journal was published by Nevins and Meyer, Columbus, Ohio, 1871, and a copy of the book has just been given to the Historical Society by S. W. Chapman of Lincoln. John Wood was one of a company that went out with J. H. Robinson and A. M. Ogle of Fayette county, Ohio, with a large train of ox teams and furnishings. The company started from the Missouri May 18, 1850, which reminds me that a stone was found and sent to the office of C. H. Gere, some time ago, which bore the inscription cut upon it, "John B. Hill, Ill., May 18, 1850." A figure of a person was also inscribed, intended to represent an Indian, perhaps. The stone is thought to have marked the place where this seeker after gold was buried. It was estimated that 50,000 people started across the plains for the gold fields in the season of 1850, and it is not strange if mementos occasionally come to light, telling of those who perished or of those who were left to place inscriptions above their friends.

"This company I had the benefit of traveling with. It consisted of seventeen teams and seventy-two men. . . . The greater part of this company met in Cincinnati on the 3d day of April, 1850, and left on the evening of the 5th, on the seamer James Millinger, for St. Joseph. . . . After thirteen days' run we were landed at St. Joseph, Mo., on the 17th of April. . . . The excitement here is most alarming. There are now about 10,000 emigrants in this place and are all hurrying to make a start. . . . We have concluded to move up the river about forty miles and recruit our stock a few weeks before starting. So on the 23d of April, we left St. Joseph and traveled three days and a half and arrived at Brown's Mills, where we pitched our tents and sojourned for the space of twelve days. This was our first introduction to camp life. . . . On the 8th of May we pulled up stakes and moved about two miles, crossing the Nodoway river and stopped again for three days, recruiting our stock on grass, and on the 13th we again started for the Missouri river, where we arrived on the 15th. We are now at Hawkes Ferry, where we had to cross in a boat rowed by hand. We spent the 16th, 17th and 18th in crossing this river, in which we had considerable difficulty. . . ."

May 19th—This morning we made a farewell start for the Eldorado of all our hopes. . . . Today we passed over some of the most splendid country imaginable, in appearance. Nearly all day far out of sight of timber. Prairie all rolling. . . . Road favorably good. Weather pleasant. . . . We are now among the Otoe tribe of Indians. They visited our camp this morning and traded us some moccasins, etc. They appear very friendly and seemed to be somewhat civilized. Camped early and found some grass.

20th.—Started early this morning. The country we passed over today was similar to that of yesterday. We find but little water along this road. . . .

21st.—Got along very well today, until we came to the Nimehaw river. Here we had fun until it was left. The banks of the stream being very steep we had to dig them down, in order to make our transit; many stripped and waded in to assist in the driving and pushing.

Such yelling and screaming you never heard. But no natives were there to be astonished. . . .

22d.—Started early. Roads tolerably good. No timber to be seen. The country presents rather a romantic appearance yet. . . . Camped on a beautiful knob; but had no wood to cook with. This night we were visited with one of the most desolating storms of rain and wind that ever earth was drenched with. The thunder was deafening and the lightning seemed to be all the while playing with the wagon tires. It never rains here but it pours. This night the guards were compelled to use a little of the overjoyful, to keep up a medium temperature and stimulate them, in their arduous and dangerous task. . . .

23d.—Made a late start this morning. The day was cool and pleasant. Road pretty good. No timber, scarcely. Cattle getting to work better. We have four yoke attached to each wagon. Grass pretty good. . . .

24th.—This day we had a bad road in many places. This evening we reached Salt creek; but before we got there we had to wade a lake, nearly a mile long. Crossed Ash creek today. Camped on the river bank. Tolerable grass.

25th.—This morning we prepared to cross this stream in a large yawl, which we hauled along, for such purposes. This creek is 40 yards wide and 15 feet deep. . . . The country now begins to present a very different appearance—being more level and more grass, but scarcely any timber; what there is stands along the banks of the streams and is some kind of cottonwood. We have seen no Indians for a day or two. I have not seen the elephant yet. Camped on the bank of Salt creek."



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