

**E. H. PATTERSON**

My Impressions Of The "Overland Route" To California

1850

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by  
Richard L. Rieck  
Dept. of Geography  
Western Illinois University  
Macomb

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE OF THE OQUAWKA  
SPECTATOR.

## MY IMPRESSIONS

OF THE "OVERLAND ROUTE" TO CALIFORNIA.

BY E. H. N. PATTERSON.

*Wednesday, April 17.*—

Weather to-day has moderated a little, and I think that after another snow we may hope for Spring. Emigrants continue to arrive. Pence's train is camped 16 miles east. Ferriage across the Missouri will cost us \$1,25[sic], across the Elk Horn 2, and the Loupe 3,50.

Cowan and Swezy have just arrived by way of St. Jo; they left Snook, in St. Louis. N. O. Feris and J. H. Noteware, of Galesburg, have reached here.— The cholera is said to be very bad at St Jo, among the Emigrants, and will, undoubtedly, follow the trains out. I would rather take the Northern route and escape disease, even if the grain should cost a little more here— health is *every thing* on this trip. The Galesburg Company will leave the river next Monday, and we shall, in all probability start the next day. We will thus get to grass before we feed out our grain, whereas, if we should remain here we would not be able to start with any horse feed at all. The Anderson boys are in town, and will start out on Monday. The weather to-night is mild and balmy, hope revives, and we begin to look for grass shortly.

*Thursday, April 18th.*

Jas Harris, and Jesse Bigelow, arrived this morning, safe and sound. Met Mr. Denman of Monmouth; he goes out with the Galesburg Company. Weather more pleasant.— Hay is selling at \$20 per ton, and scarce at that. If any

of my friends should determine to come this road next spring, let them send an agent on in the winter to buy up what grain they may need, and not trust to *contracts*— Californians can't spare time to await the operation of legal measures to enforce them. There are teams here from all parts of Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin; probably something over a thousand will start from about this point this spring— this estimate, however may fall short of the number, for Emigrants continue to "roll in" daily.

*Friday, April 19th.*

A "gentleman of color," from Wisconsin, came here last night to join two teams which he had fitted out, well— he found his teams and was very summarily dismissed by his hired white men, one of which drew a pistol and ordered him to vamose; this he did and set about devising some plan by which to recover his teams; in the meantime taking advantage of the night, the gentlemen who were "bound for California at the nigger's expense" sloped, and are now in Nebraska, where I wish them no harm— but hope the Indians may strip them; their rascality deserves no better fate.

*Saturday, April 20th.*—

The streets present the appearance of a crowded mart; the unloading of wagons with goods from the river, the auctioneer's cry, the horse market, the clatter of numerous tongues, an occasional quarrel, oaths, wrestling matches, jumping on wagers, and other sights and sounds go to make up "life in Kaneshville." Some Companies are breaking up; others forming; messes are swapping places; and I have just heard of a company of pack mules from Indiana who have concluded to "Crawfish"; good luck attend them, and may many others come to the same determination— it will leave a wider field for us who are *going ahead*.

*Sunday, April 21.-*

Raining a little- weather considerably moderated- some business going on in town- not much "noise and confusion."

*Monday, April 22d.-*

It has been decided by the vote of the Company to leave camp on Tuesday, the 23d, and to proceed on the North Route. I believe this route will give us a decided advantage over the St. Jo emigration, both as regards health and convenience, wood and water. We start on with a little more than seven bushels of grain to each horse. Our loads at first will be heavy, but will be constantly diminishing. After our grain gives out the plan most likely to be adopted to secure expedition will be for the m\*\*\* to unite both teams on one wagon, and change teams in harness at noon- this will give us fresh teams every day. I append a list of those who now compose our Company:

*Henderson Co.-*

D. D. Francisco, Perry Eames, O. Pike, Jno. Fletcher, E. Wykoff, Wm. Trannum, C. S. Cowan, A. McFarland, Dan. McFarland, Jno. McGaw, Jas. Rice, A. Watson, W. N. Graham, E. H. N. Patterson, The. McFarland, Chas. Chapin, Wm. Applegate, A. Eames, Geo. Slone, H. Tinker, Wm. Atkinson, J. Bowman, D. Blachart, David McFarland, H. Knowles, J. Perkins, A. Knowles, A. Henderson, Jas. McFarland, Dan. Chapin, Eb. Chapin, W. F.

Davis, W. Birdsall, J. A. Swezy, Jas. Harris, Jesse Bigelow, Dr. J. H. McDill, Stephen Mitchel, Hiram Mitchel, :- 39.

*Mercer Co.*

Steb. Chapin, - 1

*Warren Co.*

E. Brown.- 1

*Knox Co.*

Silas Roe, Jas Martin.- 2

*Fulton Co.*

Laertes S. Smith.- 1

*Jo. Daviess Co.*

Campbell, Canada, Fullon, Simmons, Gardner, Townsend, Rosencrans, Foster, Williams.- 9

Felix Harris, Jack & Roberts were in yesterday- report Darnell & Muck's teams a day or two behind. Rockwell's teams *may* join us- some of the boys are for holding on two or three weeks- but this *we* cannot do. Some of the Keithsburg, and Hoppers' Mills boys may also join us, but they have not yet done so.

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**NOTE- APRIL 23 TO APRIL 30 ENTRIES WERE NEVER PUBLISHED.**

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## MY IMPRESSIONS

OF THE "OVERLAND ROUTE" TO CALIFORNIA.

BY E. H. N. PATTERSON.

LOUPE FORK OF PLATTE, *May 1, 1850.*

We crossed the Missouri at Sarpy's ferry, 12 miles above Kane, on Wednesday night last. We were compelled to furnish men to work the boats and to draw the wagons up the steep bank; for this privilege we paid 1,25[sic] per team. Our crossing was effected, with considerable labor, against a heavy wind and strong current, between and 7 and 10 o'clock; and we left the ferry the next morning— a company of twenty-six wagons and 83 men. Two days after 14 teams stampeded, leaving the Oquawka boys and Roe's team, 12 teams and 43 men. Five wagons and 17 men will probably join us tomorrow, when our company will be large enough. Soon after starting, Mr. Harris broke a wheel which detained us a day.

We laid by at the "Winter Quarters" of the Mormons— a large collection of log huts, now deserted, but occupied a few years since by the "Latter day[sic] Saints" who were "sojourning" on the outskirts of the Gentiles, preparatory to emigrating to the Salt Lake. The town, even in its ruins, bears evidence that its inhabitants belonged to a class who are never idle.

Our road to the Elk Horn was all that we could desire— well beaten, dry, and elevated. The Elk Horn is crossed by a good rope ferry. After

leaving this stream we struck upon the road leading up the valley of the Platte, which is remarkably straight and level— stretching away as far as the sight extends, without a ridge or scarcely the "shadow of turning." This road later in the season must be one of the best bottom roads in the world, but now it is intersected by several very bad sloughs. We could probably have pulled through, but we preferred saving our horses, and packed over about half our load of grain on our backs, wading through water three feet deep. The wind has troubled us more than anything else, for several days. The prairies have mostly been burnt off by the emigration ahead of us, very recently, and the ashes and fine sand was anything but agreeable to our eyes. On Monday [April 28] night, about 8 o'clock, a light breeze was playing around us, and the balmy atmosphere betokened a pleasant night. Our coffee was boiling upon the stove, and, with appetites rendered doubly acute by the fatiguing labor of the day, we were seated in our tents, eagerly awaiting the summons of our cooks to partake of that best of meals— a good supper, when we perceived a change in the atmosphere, and heard a rushing, surging sound like the beating of waves upon a sandy beach. Another moment and the first premonitions of the coming storm— a shower of dust and ashes— warned us to prepare for a gale. Now it is down upon us in all its wild fury, snapping tent pins; sweeping away hats, stoves, victuals, saddles, blankets; filling the air with a cloud of dust and coal-black ashes till the last ray of starlight was shut out, and our throats and eyes rendered dust holes for the sweepings of the burnt prairie. Imagine the scene if you can, for it cannot be described. A hurricane is a "mighty wind" when you are obliged to face the

blast, but when to the wind is added a suffocating cloud of blinding and stinging sand and ashes, you would be very apt to think with us that the "Elephant" was scratching gravel somewhere in the neighborhood.

We have been travelling[sic] through the country of the Pawnee for several days, but have seen but few Indians. They came around our camp at night, a few only, however. They are the veryest[sic] beggars I ever saw; and [although] they bear the name of being great thieves, we lost nothing by them, except a few articles of but little value; I attribute this not to their honesty, but to the vigilance of our guards.— We station from 4 to 10 sentinels every night— changing at 1 o'clock. An attempt was made by the Pawnees to create a stampede among the horses of a small company just behind us the other night. Several horses had been untied before the watch discovered the manoeuvre. Ten Pawnees crossed the Loupe not long since and stole ten Sioux horses. The Sioux followed them and coming upon them at day break, whilst the Pawnees were at breakfast, they killed seven of the thieves— the other three managing to escape.— The dead bodies of the seven now lie on a point about 200[sic] miles below the Ferry, and the Pawnees are said to be afraid to venture across to bury them.

The emigrants who are ahead of us have burnt off all the prairies which the Indians had reserved for early grass, and game. This conduct has justly incensed them, and the curses that the emigration behind shower upon the unknown perpetrators of this gross outrage are loud and long. Such conduct in the Indian would be pardonable, but for a *white man*, hailing from a *Christian* land, to use such means of keeping back their fellow travellers— I know of no name justly applicable to him. Wherever the grass is not burned, our horses have good picking, but the grass on the burnt district will not be fit for use for several weeks

yet. I would not complain of those men, if they had built a raft and torn it up again, a bridge and broken it down— but what nature has provided for us, let us all have an equal chance at.— We shall probably not suffer as much as some yet behind us, but I for one despise the want of principle which would induce men thus to attempt to keep back emigration.

The Galesburg Company has gone on— a part of them, however, having been left behind, are here yet. We shall probably ferry to-morrow, and push ahead. We have grain sufficient to last our teams some time yet, and grass is coming on. The road on the west side of the Loupe Fork is said to be excellent. We are now 86 miles from the Missouri.

*May 3.*

Yesterday we ferried the Loupe Fork. Ferris' Galesburg company had the use of the boats in the morning;[sic] We forded our horses by wading the river and leading them. The bottom is quicksand. We forded the wagons in the afternoon, and it took six of us constantly bailing the boat out to prevent its sinking. A very heavy thunder storm *assisted* us somewhat all the time. This stream has showed us some sights— and I hope we wont have many more such. We have now crossed the Rubicon, for the Loupe bears the reputation of being the worst stream to cross between the Missouri and California, and I believe it well deserves it. This morning we leave for the West— the wind blowing strong from the Northwest. Yesterday was a day to be long remembered. I am on the point of starting and cant say more. I waded the Loupe yesterday three times, the water being about breast deep. The hardest work I have done on the road was assisting in keeping the old scow from sinking. Hurra for the Loupe— may I never see thee again in a thunder storm— or cross they rapid waters in a mud scow.

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*May 4.*

Reader, these "stray" jottings may prove of interest to you; if so, I am repaid for my trouble in sketching them, and if you find them imperfect in many respects, remember that they are hurried off during the bustle of camp life, at intervals between the duties which devolve upon every emigrant who wishes to reach California. In my last, I left the company at the Loupe Fork, and I once more attempt to follow their wanderings.

To-day has been one of 'em— sure; we started early, and traveled more than thirty miles; towards night we found ourselves in the midst of sand ridges, without any prospect of water. Several of us rode ahead to search for a camping ground, but night overtook us before we had succeeded; yet we traveled on, and were forced, about 9 o'clock, to camp on the ridge, with no grass, no water, no fuel. The wind blew cold and bleak, we supped upon our last cold victuals, and crept between our blankets. To-day we saw deer, antelope, buffalo chips and patches of saleratus.

*May 5.*

We could not lie by to-day, so we started without our breakfasts and set out upon our journey. In about two hours we came to miserable pond water; and for four hours longer, we drew our wagons through a quicksand swamp, where we stalled about

every half mile. Camped at noon on the banks of a beautiful prairie stream, where we enjoyed a dinner warm and steaming from the stove. I noticed here, the graves of two emigrants who died last June— probably Mormons. Fine roads to Wood river[sic], a fine camp, abundance of excellent water, fuel and grass. Saw the heads of several buffalo recently killed, and several antelopes.

*May 6.*

Traveled only half a day, as our horses needed rest after the fatiguing drive of yesterday. I noticed the graves of two females who died of cholera last season.

*May 7.*

Saw the Anderson boys. They were in camp waiting for grass; *waiting*, for when it will come no one can tell. To me, now, a tuft of long green grass is more full of beauty than the blooming rose of summer— never before did I look with such anxiety to see the slender blades looking upward. But I hope there's a "good time coming" if we'll "wait a little longer."— Saw a wolf and some small game, and a number of dead buffaloes on the road; and after we had camped, I saw five buffaloes about two miles distant; some of the boys gave chase without success.

*May 8.*

Traveled all day alongside of a dog town, and saw numbers of prairie dogs, rattlesnakes and small owls. These animals all live together in the same hole, but how the family agree, is more than I can tell— probably, about as well as would a whig, democrat and free soiler. The dogs are much like a ground squirrel, but considerably larger, short tailed, and bark as much like a dog as their feeble voices will permit. Wherever we meet these towns we find the grass eaten off short, the ground hard, with

gravelly clay surface.

*May 9.*

This morning Cha's and Dan'l Chapin succeeded in killing the first buffalo. At noon a drove approached us, and Applegate, McDill, Graham, Swezy and myself mounted and gave chase. After following them about two miles over the ridges, a sight, unexpected and exciting, burst upon my view; as I rose a small elevation I found myself surrounded on all sides by buffaloes; I counted a part of the immense herd, and from a rough estimate I cannot believe that I saw less than 1000 head at a view. Unexperienced[sic] as we were, we put our horses at full speed, but found that this only produced a stampede among the animals; we then walked our horses slowly along, and found that by this means we could approach near to them; when within about 250 yards of the herd I rashly fired at a grim, grisly old bull, and saw my ball strike the ground just ahead of him; Graham had better luck, for he rushed among the drove and killed a calf. McDill killed an antelope, and we loaded up our game and started campward; a rain came up which chilled us thoroughly, but the excitement of the day's adventure, and a warm supper soon cured us up.

*May 10.*

For several days we have seen trains passing up on the opposite side of the Platte. A gentleman in camp, who has traveled both roads says this is far the best. Grass looks a little better; days are warm, but we have heavy frosts at night.

*May 11.*

Two of the Joe Davies teams have re-joined the company. Plenty of game killed today— Tinker having killed a buffalo, Ebenezer and Charles Chapin two antelopes, while the shot guns have played the very deuce among the ducks and chickens. We have passed Grand Island, and the junction of the North and South Forks of Platte. We are camped at the river with Ferris' company, and the Rock Island company. Near our camp is the grave of G. W. Jordan, of Dubuque, who was buried here on the 1st inst.; this is the only new grave we have seen on the road. We are now in a region where the grass has not been burned; what can have come over the devils who have been so busy before. We nooned at the largest spring I ever saw; two streams of water boiled up, one about 6, and the other 4 inches in diameter. Now for a fresh meat supper.

[*Impressions continued next week.*]

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*May 12.*

We did not travel to-day, and find our horses looking fifty per cent better for their rest. We had not much rest ourselves, being obliged to occupy ourselves with shortening and refitting our wagon beds, washing our clothes, baking up bread and jerking buffalo meat to last us across the 200 mile stretch which we have now to travel without timber. We "jerk" our meat, by cutting it into thin slices, which is left over night in brine, then warmed over a fire and spread out upon boards to dry in the sun. Trannum and Hiram Mitchell each killed a buffalo.

*May 13.*

About 2000 buffaloes were in sight this morning on the side of the bluff. John McFarland shot one, the steak of which tastes as well as beef which costs you 6 cents a pound. At the crossing of the North Bluff Fork, I saw a family of Sioux from the interior, who were noble looking Indians— all dressed neatly, and ornamented with beads and feathers, and very cleanly in regard to their persons.

*May 14.*

Crossed eleven creeks— all good sized streams. The country is barren and sandy,[sic] Few buffaloes are to be seen. The reason why they were so numerous a few days since is that the country between the Loupe and North Bluff

Forks is in dispute, and not much hunted upon by either Sioux or Pawnee.

*May 15.*

Crossed nine streams and camped near the "LONE TREE," an aged, gnarled cedar, which stands in a "crowd by itself" upon the bank of the Platte.— This old tree is the only one we see for the space of 200 miles on the north bank of the river. This is, truly, a singular country; and the Platte is a remarkable river, being very straight, sometimes very narrow, then again spreading out to the width of a mile, at all times very shoal, being wadeable anywhere, its water muddy, its bed a mass of quicksand, its bottoms probably the widest in the world— while nothing but *legislative enactment* can ever render it navigable. Wide plains saturated with saleratus, and resting upon a bed of quicksand— bluffs of sand, or sun-baked magnesian clay— the want of fuel and building material— all these warrant us in believing that, notwithstanding the richness of some of the soil, and the fact that the grass which grows in this valley is an hundred per cent better than the wild grass of our prairies, these extensive meadows will, for years to come, remain the pasture of the buffalo and the hunting ground of the Indian. Our only dependence for fuel is on buffalo chips, which burn well, giving out intense heat, and burning much like bituminous[sic] coal, with the smell of burning dry grass.

*May 16.*

Passed Ash Hollow, a noted point, on the south side of the river. On our road we passed through a Sioux village, where we saw many squaws, children, old men, dogs and ponies; the braves were off upon a warlike expedition against the Pawnees. The Indians tell us that five men have recently died of small pox on the



other road, and this report is confirmed by a company camped opposite to us tonight.

*May 17.*

After dinner, in company with Charles Chapin, I visited the celebrated "Ancient Bluff Ruins" on the north side of our road. The weather was warm, and climbing the steep precipices "raised steam," but the view, when we were once upon the summits of the different peaks, amply repaid us for our labor. These peaks resemble paintings I have seen of ancient, crumbling towers and fortresses, but upon a more sublime scale than any work of art. We climbed up the almost perpendicular ascent of one of these bluffs, over rocks from whose crevices grew stunted cedars, a distance of about 120 feet above the level of the plain, and found the top to consist of a flat table rock, skirted with small cedars, with here and there a pool of pure, clear water. The view from the summit of another was grand; the river stretching away to the east and west— trains as far as the eye could reach— the opposite range of bluffs— while far away we could discern the towering peak of "Chimney Rock." We spent several hours rambling among the ruins, and after satisfying our curiosity, and expending our admiration upon these wondrous exhibitions of Nature's majesty, we walked away to join our camp, ten miles distant. When near camp we saw what probably man never saw before, nor ever will again— a slender column of smoke ascending to the clouds from a fire on the bluffs beyond, but appearing to emerge from the very summit of the peak! This sight was sublime, and we paused in wonder at the remarkable coincidence.

*May 18.*

Our day's travel brought us nearly opposite "Chimney Rock," but its distance prevented me from paying it a visit. It stands out from the bluffs, and ascends with a circular slope for a considerable distance, when two steps, one above the other, tower above the hill like a

church spire. Its position and singular appearance entitle it to celebrity, for it is certainly one of Nature's wild freaks. After Daniel Linn's description, however, I need say no more than to confirm it. Mr. Linn intended to convey the idea that the sort of clay which forms the base of the peak gives to the Missouri its peculiarity of being always muddy; this is undoubtedly true and[?] has the appearance of having been partially calcined, and will crumble to an almost impalpable powder. This soil is very common all along the Platte, and I presume is found upon the other tributaries of the Missouri.

*May 19.*

This day is consecrated to the beautiful works of God, and, now that the grass is tolerably plenty, let us talk of the floral kingdom. The season has been too backward to induce many of the blooming sisterhood to unveil their beauteous faces— yet I have noticed a few; a scarlet-veined purple flower resembling the sweet pea; a delicate white blossom, growing modestly in humble tufts, dotting the plain as if with snow flakes, and yielding a fragrance to the breeze; and a species of moss, bearing a small, brilliant, purple flower, and forming a heavy mat of gem-decked verdure. But enough of this.— We passed "Scott's Bluffs," on the opposite side of the river, after dinner. Viewed from the north east this abrupt bluff, rising to the height of 150 feet, backs[?] a very strong resemblance to a fort, with its port-holes, bastions and watch-towers; the magazine equals a work of art; it requires but a little stretch of the imagination to convert the cedars upon the top into clusters of soldiers; and nothing save the stars and stripes waving above its battlements is wanting to complete the illusion.

*May 20.*

Traveled over sandy roads, and met with nothing worthy of remark, except a little grass, thousands of clusters of prickley[sic] pear, and

a few rattlesnakes and wolves. I saw Laramie Peak in the Black Hills looming up cloud-like at the distance of nearly one hundred miles.

*May 21.*

We are at Fort Laramie ford of the North Platte. We cross to-morrow. Ferris' company from Galesburg and Denman are now crossing. Robert Pence's brother crosses next; his company is from Jackson county[sic], Iowa. The Mormon mail carrier is just in from Salt Lake, and leaves to-morrow for the States; he made his trip in thirty days— twenty days through snow. He met teams 400 miles out, without grass, but they still had grain. We have all considerable grain left, and grass is reported to be starting finely[finally?] on the road. I must now be brief. The road from the Missouri to this point, I consider a very good one; it is true we had some mud and a little sand, but for such a road, without any regular improvements made upon it, I consider it unsurpassed by many roads in Illinois. As to the hardships of the trip— we have yet seen nothing that I could call such, except that windy night. If we meet with nothing worse than this, I will be highly pleased with this trip. True, we have to sit upon the ground at meals, but then the appetite, reader, the appetite we have to enjoy our humble meals, you have no conception of. No one has been sick in the company except Perry Eames, who had the measles, but has recovered. In fact, except slight headaches and diarrhoeas, we have heard of but little sickness on this road. I, for one, am highly pleased with the trip, so far; and have found no cause whatever for grumbling. Our teams all look

well, and we hope to reach Sacramento in July. Fort Laramie is just 523 miles from the Missouri, which river we left on the 26th ult., and since that time we have laid by five days— which gives our average daily distance at 25 miles. Along the road for several days we have seen a number of law books, cut up wagons, burned and burning wheels, and many other articles which have been destroyed and thrown away by the emigrants. The Fort is about half a mile from the ferry, where we are now camped, and is situated upon the bank of the Laramie river, in the valley between the two rivers. It consists of eight or ten buildings, some framed, others composed of sod, or unburned brick. Crackers and flour can be procured here at high rates, and whiskey is not unobtainable— though six dollars a gallon is a big price— sufficient to almost prohibit its sale; that's the kind of a tariff I like. Measures are being taken to apprehend some person coming up on the south road who sold clothes in which several emigrants died of small pox to the Indians— such a demon should be dealt with severely. The location of Fort Laramie is certainly a most beautiful one. Here we see the mechanic trades in full force— houses, people, everything reminds us of the settlements. The garrison consists of 160 soldiers under the command of Maj. Sanderson, of Columbus. Seven hundred and twenty-eight teams have passed this point of which only about 50 were oxen; 2485 men have passed— 7 women— and 13 children. The mail is closing, and I must close. I shall continue my journal from the fort.



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*May 22.*

After ferrying the Platte at Fort Laramie we took the river road and traveled about 12 miles. We are now in the Black Hills— the first range of the Rocky Mountains. Near our camp is a perpendicular cliff of white sand stone, covered with a sparse growth of pitch pine.

*May 23.*

I never wish to travel over better roads than we have had most of the day. The scenery was fine— hills and valleys; abrupt bluffs, with pine trees growing among the rocks; deep ravines with ever green thickets; and in the distance the blue peaks of higher ridges.— Had a small shower of hail which did no damage. Passed a number of horse teams and one ox company. Distance 25 miles.

*May 24.*

Our road lay through a valley this morning, where we saw large quantities of *wild sage*, which, as it will continue throughout the journey, I will here describe it: it grows in large bunches, sometimes three or four feet high, with numerous hard, twisted stems, which afford tolerable fuel; the leaf resembles the cultivated sage, is exceedingly bitter, and in smell very much resembles a plant, raised in gardens, called southerwood. I am tired of the plant already, so excuse me from saying any more about it except that when a train passes over it the atmosphere is filled with the odor

arising from it. About noon I visited a point where the river runs through a narrow pass, with a perpendicular bluff of red flint stone, rising on one side to the height of more than two hundred feet. Since noon our road has again led over the Hills, and we are now encamped on a beautiful stream— the La Bonte. A thunder storm is raging out doors, but what of that— it will make grass grow all the better. Laramie Peak has been enveloped in a cloud reaching far down its slope all day. Distance 24 miles.

*May 25.*

Last night we were visited by a tremendous hail storm, which made us tremble for our frail cloth tenements, but, fortunately, it passed off without doing any other damage than frightening some of our horses. Many of the indentations left in the clay this morning are large enough to receive walnuts. The forenoon was cold and drizzly and the road somewhat slippery. Four miles of our travel was over a soil of red slate— the ground and bluff points of the hills presented the appearance of having been showered with Spanish brown. We took our dinner during a thunder storm, seated on the ground— *and it wasn't "hard to take."* The road soon dried off and we made a pleasant drive to the Fourche Boise river[sic]— the finest camping place we have ever had. We left a few companies behind us to-day.— It seems that horses have everywhere been selected for the trip, as oxen and mules bear but a small proportion to the number of horse teams on the road. Saw three men who are packing through on the same number of horses. Passed a footman who is going through with 23 pounds of bread and one blanket— his only stock and store; query, won't he beg "*some*" before he reaches the diggings? I noticed a very pretty flower resembling the wild rose in color and shape, though far exceeding it in fragrance, but,

unlike the rose, it grows close to the ground and is an annual plant. Elk signs are abundant, but I haven't seen his elkship yet; I saw, however, horns of the mountain goat of enormous size, and I wish now to see the shoulders that can carry them along. Distance 28 miles.

*May 26.*

We made a short drive to-day in order to reach the ferry ahead of a number of teams we have passed. The Galesburg company passed six days ahead of us. Ferris' Galesburg company is just ahead, and the Burlington company behind. On a tree near the road was inscribed, "J. A. Blackburn, June 16th;" so that we are just twenty-one days ahead of Col. Findley's time. Rained a little this afternoon. Distance 19 miles.

*May 27.*

The Platte has entirely changed its character, save that it is still muddy. It is now a narrow, gravelly-bottom, swift, cool, crooked mountain stream. We are just across the North Platte— for the last time. Our ferriage cost us \$5 per team! The river is very high, and it was impossible to ford it.— This morning we woke up to find the ground covered with snow, and the white flakes falling thick and fast; the white blanket has been torn away from the lowland by the warm sun; but the mountains are still covered. I looked for some time at the white peaks this morning before I discovered that they were not clouds— so exact was the resemblance, and so faint the outline of the ridge. Ferris' company is just behind us. Grizzly bear, black-tailed deer, black bear, antelope, and mountain sheep or goats are numerous in the surrounding mountains. Several of the grizzly bears have been shot at

by the ferrymen, and I saw two of the common bruins to-day. This is the greatest country for wet weather I ever saw; we have had rain every day for more than a week. The boys are ALL well; our horses are thriving, and we feel in fine spirits. We shall probably go by the Salt Lake. None of the boys from our county— or Mercer are ahead of us. If I meet the Mormon regular mail I shall write again on the route; but, readers, for the present good bye, and may the same good luck attend you all that we desire for ourselves.

*May 28.*

The mail carrier from the Salt Lake is just in with the regular mail. Mr. Campbell, the carrier, states that we will find good grass all the way by keeping upon the hills. The quality of the grass is very superior— differing very essentially from that growing upon our prairies. The cattle with which Mr. C. performed his trip are in fine condition after having traveled 380 miles on grass alone. I think we will go by the Lake, where we are told we can procure supplies of vegetables, cheese, eggs, &c. Flour can be bartered for, but is not for sale in the shops. The ferries here are kept constantly going by the emigration. We have passed probably two hundred teams since leaving the fort, which will probably come up to-day, as we are lying by at the upper ferry. I have procured a manuscript copy of "A guide from the Salt Lake to the Gold Mines" with distances from camping places, &c. It is just 862 miles from the Salt Lake to Sacramento City. We shall probably unite two teams on one wagon when our grain gives out. Swezy has already done so. This will give a fresh team every day.



EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE OF THE OQUAWKA  
SPECTATOR.

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## MY IMPRESSIONS

OF THE "OVERLAND ROUTE" TO CALIFORNIA.

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BY E. H. N. PATTERSON.

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The reader who has followed me to the North Platte, upper crossing, will now be prepared to go with me over the most interesting portion of the route.

*May 28.*

We remained in camp, at the ferry. Nothing worthy of note occurred. Henderson has lost two of his horses, which, I suppose, have gone ahead— as they are nowhere to be found.

*May 29.*

After having assisted in paying the last tribute of respect to the remains of Mr. Horace Conger of Jackson Co., Iowa, who died near our camp last night, we recommenced our journey.— Henderson has found his horses, which were taken up on the road by the gentlemanly Captain of the Cedar Co. Iowa, train. Crossed an alkali swamp this afternoon; the ground is here saturated with ley[sic] which stands in pools upon the surface. Passed through a rock avenue, where I discovered a bank of coal.

*May 30.*

On our road to-day we passed many lakes of alkaline water, some of which had dried up, leaving the bed incrustated with a white surface of saleratus or carbonate, which, upon trial, we found to answer as a good substitute for the manufactured article; from these lakes hundreds of tons might be collected. This evening we arrived upon the banks of the Sweet Water, a

beautiful stream about 120 feet wide. We struck the river at Independence Rock, an isolated hill of smooth, naked granite, which rises abruptly from the Valley to the height of about 80 feet. This remarkable rock is about 600 yards long; its surface is entirely destitute of earth or vegetation, and is covered with the names of thousands of visitors, among whom I noticed were those of Col. Findley and Ed. Ray. We crossed the river a mile above the Rock, where we found Denman, of Monmouth, encamped.

*May 31.*

Four miles from camp we arrived at the celebrated pass in the Sweetwater Mountains known as the Devil's Gate. I rode ahead of the train in order to obtain a good view of this remarkable point. The Sweet Water here passes through almost perpendicular walls of granite towering on either side to the height of four hundred feet above the stream.— These walls are seamed with numerous crevices, deep, dark and narrow; and the ascent from the bottom, where the river goes rushing and foaming over jagged rocks in a cascade of boiling foam, up the rugged sides of the mountain, is anything but an easy task; I accomplished it, however, and was well repaid for my trouble. Travellers[sic] who visit this romantic spot should ascend the mountain from the point where the river first enters the pass, and upon ascending about a hundred feet, the sublimity of the view below him, caught thro' a narrow gorge in the rock, will cause him to utter an exclamation of wonder at the vastness of the power which "causeth the water to wear away the rocky barriers of Earth," and of admiration at the perfection of His work. There is an old Indian legend connected with this place, which, if I ever obtain leisure from my arduous "gold digging" labors, I may relate to my readers. In the meantime we will pursue

our journey, by crossing 7 creeks, and camping for the night on Bitter Cottonwood creek[sic]. The scenery from the Gate has been picturesque in the extreme, the naked mountains presenting many beautiful views. I noticed a place where a perfect resemblance of a road runs up the side of the mountain. This was a gap, about 4 feet deep and 30 feet wide, graded with artistic accuracy; at the top may be seen the representation of a gigantic *hod*, but the Titan who used it— where is he? Saw to-day "toads with horns and tail," a species of lizzard[sic], ugly enough, but inoffensive.

*June 1.*

We continued up the river, the mountains presenting much the same scenery as yesterday. Passed a low, swampy piece of ground before camping, which rests upon a bed of solid ice. This swamp extends over several hundred acres, and ice can generally be found by digging about 2 feet.

*June 2.*

Forded the river and travelled only 14 miles, when we camped to rest our horses. We are in latitude 42° 28 min. 36 sec. I saw a man who was "sole-carting" it through, having lost his pack and poney[sic]— a hard case, truly.

*June 3.*

Left the river, and commenced ascending the principal chain of the Rocky Mountains. Crossed several mountain streams; ridges of upheavell[sic]; and the Sweet Water for the last time. The weather has been cold, and this forenoon we were drenched with a cold, driving rain. We crossed several deep drifts of snow, which are melting but slowly. After crossing the river I led my horse over a drift 20 feet deep, and could have stood upon the snow and plucked blossoms from the ground. Passed thro' Twin Mounds, and camped near the river, north of the road. The snowy hills of Wind River Mountains have been in full view for several days. Grass is scarce.

*June 4.*

This morning our road led through the South Pass of the Rocky Mountains. The summit of the Pass is over 7000 feet above the level of the sea, but the ascent is very gradual, and when upon the highest point, the surrounding country presents the appearance of a broken prairie, with bluffs upon the north and south, and the peaks of mountains visible in the distance. I culled a flower upon the highest point of the Pass, as a memento of our trip. We are now in *Oregon*, and the waters no longer flow towards the Atlantic. After dinner we reached the junction of the Salt Lake and Sublette's cut off. Here we took a vote of the company upon the route, which resulted in the choice of the cut off. I had wished to see the "Great City of the Vale," and am not sure it would have been the most eligible route, though probably a little out of the way; as we could have procured vegetables and other supplies which some of us need. Yet, if the cut off is *nearer* our point of destination, let us go ahead; a great portion of the emigration has gone the Lake road, and if we can gain five days by taking the cut off, we will be among the first teams into the "diggings." We here take leave of the "Mormon Emigrant's Guide, by W. Clayton"— the best road book I ever saw. We are camped on Little Sandy, a stream 20 feet wide.

*June 5.*

I rode ahead this morning, early, to the Big Sandy, 6 miles from camp, to procure a light wagon, if possible from emigrants there, but found it out of the question. The Big Sandy is 130 feet wide and two feet deep. We now enter upon a desert "destitute of water and every trace of vegetation, of 45 miles in extent"— so say the guide books, and I suppose this is the case in August, but we found here in patches the best grazing that we have had yet. The soil is a yellow clay, which being dry renders the roads very dusty. We filled our water casks at the Sandy and camped upon the desert near a large ravine. I saw a grave to-day which had been

rifled by the wolves. At Big Sandy we left our heavy wagon and hitched on to one a little lighter, which was left by one of our company. The fact may as well be admitted now, at once, that our horses have been dragged down on the heavy wagons with which we started. We considered them *light*, then, but what would do for two horses at home, is too heavy for four on this trip.

June 6.

Proceeded on our way across the desert, and after crossing five deep gullies came in sight of the valley of Green river. The descent into the valley from the plain is very steep and requires care in teamsters. The bluffs bear a castellated and romantic appearance. The first sight that met us at the ford was a wagon upset in the river; not very cheering, certainly; but we were on the banks of Green river— that stream which will long be remembered, and never come to remembrance but to be cursed, by last year's emigration— and El Dorado was far off on the other side. We did not, therefore, delay long, and immediately set about raising our wagon beds to the top of the standards; which being accomplished we commenced fording. We had to cross three streams, each about 150 feet wide, crossing two islands. The water was from three to four feet deep, and the current very swift, but we accomplished the crossing with but few accidents. Rice lost a buggy wagon, and Applegate was obliged to desert his empty wagon in the stream, which, however, was no loss as he intended leaving it in a few days. A man named George Roseman, of Richland Co., Ohio, was drowned here yesterday. Green river rises in the fastnesses of Wind river[sic] mountains, and rushing southward, through a country of wild grandeur, takes its course along the base of vast mountains, and across broad plains, till it is joined by Grand river, from the junction of which river it takes the name of the Colorado, and pursues its course to the Pacific.

June 7.

Here some of the company have made new traveling arrangements: such as joining teams, procuring light wagons, rigging up carts, &c. We drove southwest, over a hill[y] road, to a beautiful camping place on a small mountain rill, bordered with pine trees, some of which are 80 feet high. We are grazing our horses to-night on a sward of grass a foot high, and within 200 yards of us is a snow drift ten feet deep. We have passed through the Crow country without seeing a single Indian, albeit we were warned that *these* would be our worst foes. So far as I have heard no complaint has been made by any emigrant against the Crows, who, when seen, have been uniformly friendly.

June 8.

Passed over a rough, rocky road, with a mud hole in every hollow, caused by the melting snow on the mountains. In the afternoon we arrived at Harris' Fork of Black river, a tributary of Green. This river we found to be at a very high stage; and we were compelled to hoist our wagon beds again. We crossed without any accident whatever, although the ford was very bad. We are camped on the western shore where we find good grass for our horses.

June 9.

We are still in camp. Emigrants are pouring in, but are obliged to ferry in wagon beds to-day, the river having risen more than a foot. A man from Missouri stopped here to-day, and reports that he lost a yoke of oxen and *all his provisions* in Green river, day before yesterday— he has left two yoke of oxen behind with some one, and is pushing ahead to join some of his friends. Had a heavy thunder storm to-day, but the sun is setting clear and pleasant.

June 10.

Leaving Harris' Fork, we struck N.W. over a beautiful mountain ridge with deep gullies on either side, to a heavy grove of balsam fir trees,

where I saw snow banks which had scarce been touched by the sun. Passed on up a steep hill, from the summit of which I had a view of Bear River far away in the distance. Went down the road travelled[sic] last year, a mile and a half; the wagons, however, keeping the new road around the hill, this old road follows down a ravine, steep and narrow; about half way down we came to a "jumping-off place" where wagons must be lowered with ropes over a ledge of rock standing at a slant of about 60 degrees. At the bottom of the hill we came upon a small creek where we were overtaken by a heavy shower of hail; but we are used to such things now. Traveled over another mountain, and descended to the beautiful valley of Bear River, which is several miles wide with steep mountains on both sides rising abruptly from the level bottom land. Towards night we crossed Smith's Fork, a rapid, rushing stream, near a naked peak of rock of most remarkable formation— being layer upon layer of volcanic rock standing on edge, and rising with sharp points to a great height. Grass pretty good; but the mosquitoes— good Lord!

*June 11.*

Travelled[sic] up Bear River to Thomas' Fork, where we had to swim our horses, ferry over our plunder in wagon beds, and draw across our wagons with ropes. Here I saw a few Indians of the *Sho-sho-ne* or Snake tribe, but didn't see anything very attractive about them.— Crossed over some steep hills and camped on Bear River, with good timber, grass and water— an elyseum[sic] for an Emigrant save the devilish mosquitoes which swarm above and about us; the evening breeze will soon spring up, though, and we shall be freed from this pest. Flora has dispensed her favors with no lavish hand over that portion of Uncle Sam's dominions through which we have been travelling for the last two weeks, for I have see no flowers save occasionally a yellow weed waving its blossoms in the sunshine.

*June 12.*

Our road ran down Bear River valley for 37 miles, crossing many spring branches. At night we camped at the big bend of Bear River, in the midst of Fremont's "*Place of Fountains.*"

About a mile up a small creek running near our camp is a large c[h]alybeate spring, impregnated with iron and soda, the deposits from which has formed a large hill of shelly limestone colored with iron rust. A number of Snake Indians are in camp, selling trout and trying to swap horses. We had another hail storm to-day.

*June 13.*

Did up some horse swapping with the Indians this morning— trading off some poor horses for poneys, "even up." Passed round the bend; arrived at the beer or soda spring, on the north side of the road; this spring is constantly kept in a state of effervescence by the escape of gas; the water has an agreeable acid taste, and is quite a pleasant beverage. A little on is the steamboat spring, on a point near the river, to the left of the road; this spring receives it name from a puffing sound caused by the water which ebbs and flows— sometimes gushing out a jet of considerable volume, and then sinking back into the well of the fountain. Three miles further on we arrived at the juncture of the Fort Hall and Hudspeth cut off roads. We took the cut off. Near this point is the old crater of a volcano, now extinct, but the ground, for miles around, seamed with huge, deep chasm[s], covered with ashes, heaped up with burnt rocks, indicate that that[sic] its fires once burned with an intense fierceness. The Indians have a tradition concerning this crater, but I havn't[sic] time now to tell it. We traveled 12 miles without water to a small creek, thence 4 miles further over wretched roads, and through beautiful scenery, to a creek 20 feet wide and 4 feet deep. Just as we were across safely, and about to camp, the heaviest hail storm that we have had overtook us without a minute's warning. Verily the "clerk of the weather" can



get up a hail storm on shorter notice, and send it down with more rattling, stinging violence in these mountains than anywhere else.— The

storm over, we pitched our tents.— Good grass and wood.



EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE OF THE OQUAWKA  
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**MY IMPRESSIONS**  
OF THE "OVERLAND ROUTE" TO CALIFORNIA.

BY E. H. N. PATTERSON.

*June 14.*

To-day being the holy Sabbath, we remained in camp. We are in a lovely valley, seemingly shut up on every hand by an impassable barrier of mountains— the tops of which are at this moment completely enveloped in mist, thus rendering the illusion more perfect. It has rained nearly all day. Since we struck Bear River we have seen a few huckleberry bushes, sugar tree shrubs, wild beans and one or two varieties of phlox; great country this for a *lazy* botanist!

*June 15.*

Started this morning, during the rain and hail, with the expectation that it would soon clear up— but alas, vain hope, thou art a delusive syren[sic], whose words serve to charm only for a season.— Travelled[sic] up an undulating valley to a small creek, a tributary of the Columbia, about 18 miles from camp; crossed and travelled about 4 miles over a long hill crowned with cedars, and camped on a small spring branch. The scenery has been varied and grand. We have been travelling along the dividing ridge between the waters of the Pacific and the Great Basin, and have noticed the loftiest mountains that we have yet seen. When on the top of a mountain to-day, before descending to the creek, the clouds enveloped the ridges all around us, presenting a sublime scene; in places their black folds hid the surrounding hills entirely from sight; in others,

a cloud of snowy white encompassed the peaks of the towering mountains. While ascending the mountain after crossing the creek, a half-formed cloud rolled over the summit and broke upon us; it was charged with hail, rain, snow and mist— and a most unwelcome visitor it was. Sun sets clear. Several horses have been stolen by the Indians here recently.

*June 16.*

Again we cannot see the sun rise. Left camp and followed up a valley between high mountains to a small creek where we nooned. A few miles further on we crossed another creek of clear water, and commenced ascending a long hill, arriving at the summit of which we turned N. W. into a narrow defile between high mountain ridges, which we followed up a gradual slope for 3 miles to a quaking aspen grove, where the trunks of the trees are scarred with a thousand names cut in the bark; we then commenced descending over a rough, sideling road, through a ravine so narrow as only to admit the passage of one wagon at a time. It was nearly night when we arrived at the foot of the mountain, but we could find no water; we therefore drove on down the Valley[sic] in search of this necessary article, and camped near a snow bank, where we had good wood and grass. We melted snow, and thus procured enough water for camping purposes. The day has been cloudy and the temperature very changeable— we would be in our shirt sleeves sometimes, and in fifteen minutes we would require overcoats. Capt. N. O. Ferris received a serious injury to-day from the kick of a horse, which will probably confine him to the wagon, the remainder of the trip.

*June 17.*

Continued down the valley about five miles, when we ascended the mountain through a defile, at the summit of which we found water

on the hill side half a mile from the road. We here watered our teams and proceeded over a low range of hills to a creek where we nooned. After dinner we crossed a high hill, and passed through a long, narrow and deep defile to a sudden bend in the road to the north, a mile from which we encamped with good grass, water and fuel, near a grove of pine trees. The Indians say there is a spring a half mile to the left of the road, opposite a cedar bluff at \*\*\* that of the long hill we descended last night; emigrants next year would do well to search for it. A man who started on foot from the States was just at our tent begging something to eat; we supplied his immediate wants with pilot bread— many such applications, however, would run us short.

*June 18.*

Continued down the defile for 18 miles, crossing 2 creeks, when the road opened upon the valley of Raft River, a tributary of the Columbia, at a small creek. This valley extends more than 14 miles across a barren plain to Raft River where we camped for the night where we had grass and sage. The last 5 miles has been very swampy, and we were obliged to cross several very bad sloughs. This morning the weather was so cold that the quaking aspen leaves couldn't tremble, and running water froze a half inch thick, but we have been descending all day and are now in a warmer region. Here we leave Hudspeth's cut off, which we have found to be an excellent road— in fact as good as we could ask over the mountains.

*June 19.*

We crossed Raft River, which is here about 20 feet wide and 4 feet deep; we had to unload our wagons and carry over our baggage on a willow brush foot bridge. We intersected the Fort Hall road, which has not been much travelled this spring, and followed up the river 8 miles where we recrossed it and struck out a S. W. course through a wide valley, with gigantic hills on the

right covered with eternal snows, from the surface of which, here and there the top of a buried pine struggled into view. We then crossed a swampy piece of ground and camped near a large creek. The hills around us are covered with quartz pebbles, but the gold ain[']t "thar." The upland grass is drying up fast, being already ripe enough to burn. The bottom grass is very good yet. Three weeks later, however, it will be a hard matter to graze stock in this region. Weather clear and temperate— for a wonder.

*June 20.*

About 9 miles from camp we struck the trail leading from the Salt Lake. Before arriving here we passed for several miles through an opening in the mountains, which I will term the *Valley of the City of Castles*. It deserves this appellation from the great number of bare, granite rocks with which it is filled; these rocks, or hills, are of every possible form, and it would confound the most adept geometrician to classify their shapes, and of every size, from a hay-cock to the proudly towering dome. Crossed several streams, and nooned near the foot of the mountains.— Passed through a gap in the mountains, and after driving a few miles ascended a high hill where we obtained the most magnificent view that we have had on the whole trip. Stretching away, on every hand, like a billowy sea congealed, ragged hills, while a thin, hazy smoke which encircled them, rendered the view more enchanting, by the vagueness of their outline— a storm was visible far away in the Great Basin to the south— stretching off to the north, we could discern the snowy peaks of a distant range of mountains— while immediately below us, far down in the valley, we could discover the wandering course of Goose creek[sic]. Followed up Goose creek 4 miles and encamped.

*June 21.*

Travelled up the creek 16 miles and left it and struck a small creek in a canon, (pronounced

kanyon,) which we crossed twice. Leaving it we ascended the bluff and travelled over a stretch of barren sage plain without water. Descending the bluff we found, about two miles farther, a large spring gushing from beneath a ledge of rocks, where we encamped.

The road up Goose creek is miserable, and we found no good grass till night.— About 3 miles from morning's camp I visited a low cliff of soft sand stone, where I saw inscribed "Capt. Findley July 11, 1849." The man to whom we gave hard bread a few days since stole a sack of flour from a mess in the Rock Island train who had permitted him to tent with them for a week or so; but the flour was found and our grateful gent had to *slope*.

*June 22.*

Travelled up what is termed Hot Spring Valley; the land resembling the valley of the Platte—ground covered in many places with a slight efflorescence of alkali. Found water at convenient distances, and camped, after a drive of about 30 miles, on a narrow swampy creek, where we found good grass, though the ground is very miry.

To-day I saw six Root Digger Indians, who had hidden their nakedness with cast-off garments they had picked up on the road. I was behind the train, and was beset by the ragged devils, but rode by them though they looked saucy enough to be mischeivous[sic] had they not been rather intimidated by the sight of a packing train just coming in view around a hill; two of them following A. McFarland more than a mile, searched his pockets, but left him when he offered "fistiana"[?] resistance. Mr. Platte, late of Rock Island, camped with us to-night. He is driving an ox team, having wintered with his family at Fort Laramie, and taken an early start. He has a roadometer attached to his wagon, and intends publishing a Guide Book. I looked over his manuscript and found it very correct. A company of packers, *via* Salt Lake

are also near us. they procured potatoes for 2,50[sic], flour for 25,00 per 100 lbs, and radishes and lettuce in abundance. They tell us that it is about 120 miles out of the way, which I think is correct. Persons who left on that route when we took the Cut off are several days behind. The streams on this side the city are all high, and the rates of ferriage most exhorbitant[sic]; on the whole, I think that we "hit the nail on the head" by not coming that road.

*June 23.*

We remained in camp this morning to prepare for packing. Swezy and Dr. McDill remain for the same purpose. We do this in order to make good time which we cannot do with our wagons. We used up our horses on our heavy wagons, and think it much the most advisable plan *now* to pack through, as our load is very light, and we are in a country where we are at length free from rain.— About noon we left our camp and continued along the Valley[sic] about 4 miles, where we crossed a creek and swamp. Here there are numerous springs of ver[y] hot water; this water is clear, and slightly impregnated with sulphur. About 6 miles from these springs we entered a canon where there is a good spring. Here we found excellent grass. Passing over a hill we struck a small creek, and encamped with plenty of grass and sage.

*June 24.*

I slept last night in the open air, and enjoyed my slumber remarkably well. Started in the cool of the morning and found a small creek, after travelling 5 miles, where the advance portion of the Co[sic]. camped last night. At noon we passed through a canon, and turning a barren bluff point camped on a small, sluggish stream 20 miles from morning's camp.— The water was not fit to drink, but we found a spring half a mile further up, which, although smelling strongly of sulphuretted hydrogen, sufficed to quench our thirst. Here several of McDill's & Swezy's horses were poisoned by eating a kind

of weed growing near the creek-- the Indians at the Soda Spring can describe it to the Emigrants. Horses thus poisoned froth at the mouth, appear choked, and get very weak, but with a good drenching of vinegar or acid water will soon recover. Travelled across a ten mile stretch to a bad creek, a tributary of the Humboldt; crossed and camped near the bluffs. A few Indians are lurking about. We are now in California.

*June 25.*

Travelled two miles, and after crossing several running sloughs, we came upon the banks of the famous Humboldt or St. Mary's River. This we crossed without difficulty as the stream is here but a small brook; but as we followed down the valley we found the volume of water greatly increased and the current more rapid. We have had hot weather and dusty roads, and are now camped near the mouth of Martin's fork. The river has been very high, and the road we are now travelling was made this spring by the Salt Lake Mormons; the old road being in many places 3 feet under water now. The upland grass we find nearly all gone-- (pardon the bull) but the head grass in the bottoms is just in its prime. Teams are rushing up, and numbers who have just commenced packing are on the road.

*June 26.*

Crossed the Fork and, crossing a low bluff, continued down the river. Good grass on the banks. At noon four of the boys, Slone, Wykoff, McGaw and Bowman, left camp with provisions and guns, intending to foot it through to the diggings, thinking by this means to get in far in advance of the teams. The boys bade them goodbye, and gave them the charge

"If you get there before we do,  
Just tell 'em we're a-coming too."

Where we camped last night, four Indians made an attempt to steal horses from McKee's train two nights ago, which resulted in the killing of

one Indian by the guard.

*June 27.*

Our road now leaves the river and winds away through a succession of bluffs, leaving the old road which here crosses the river. About noon crossed a small stream. Camped to-night with some grass on a bluff, where[on] the bed of a dry stream, where we were obliged to sink holes to procure a little water. I am reminded to mention what I have heretofore neglected-- that the ladies are not unrepresented on the road, as there are a great number of families emigrating this spring; the family trains are generally from Ohio and Missouri. About ten o'clock this morning we overtook our pedestrians, who were glad to get back to the train. They got lost in the night, and had to travel considerably out of their whereabouts; so, after taking a dry breakfast, they thought it would be best to give up the expedition as a bad job, and run the risk of a little ridicule.

*June 28.*

Started very early and passed through a canon, in which are a number of springs. I took a "cut off" and found myself, after a long and dusty path, about 4 miles behind the horses. I was not the only "green horn" however. We then followed down the river, crossed a small, deep creek, and camped with plenty of grass.

*June 29.*

I was on guard this morning, in company with a man from Belvidere whose horses were grazing with ours. I had just been [on] the regular round, and found all safe, when he gave utterance to a few unearthly yells and fired off his gun. We aroused the camp, and in a few minutes our men were all out, guns in hand, but after a thorough search for the "dead Indian" we were satisfied that if the Belvidere man had seen any thing other than his own shadow, that thing had sloped. Followed the valley down till noon where we stuck the river at a stony ledge which I will take the liberty of naming *Rocky*

*Point*, where a jetting point extends into the river. Here the road runs in a westerly direction over a desert plain, parched and dusty. Camped at night near the river where we got some grass by wading in the water.

*June 30.*

Left camp at sunrise and continued down the valley over the same desert plain. About noon we struck the river again, where we found our boys who were in advance of us. They, with hundreds of others, were preparing hay for the "Desert," which rather astonished me, as I had not supposed that we were yet within a hundred miles of the "Sink," where the desert commences. Some one has stuck up a board near this place stating that he had been to the sink, 18 miles below, where he had found no grass, and had returned here to make his hay. I believe this to be all humbug, for, according to Fremont's map, we are not yet to the Big Bend, sixty miles this side the Sink; but as prudence is at all times in order, we concluded to do as others had done, and follow this person's advice. We swam the river, waded through mud and water two feet deep, cut our grass three-quarters of a mile from the river, and then packed it to the bank on our shoulders where we boated it over in wagon beds by the aid of swimmers and ropes, and dried it. I was thus engaged about six hours, and a most delectable job I found it. Hundreds of emigrants are here, and if we are fooled many others will also be; even some who went through last year are in doubt as to their locality, at which I am surprised.

*July 1.*

Left camp early and for the first four miles our road led through a perfect alkali swamp, covered with water a foot deep which smelled and tasted like weak ley[sic]. Then crossed a hill and passed through a canyon which open[ed] upon a broad swampy valley, encompassed by high hills on either side. Can this, then, be the Valley of the Sink? I think

not for the river runs *west*, while Fremont makes its course at the Sink *south*. Encamped to-night on a slough and had to swim it for grass. I am now certain that the "guide board" was put up for the purpose of delaying the emigration, and if I knew the miscreant's name it would afford me the greatest pleasure to assist him to a little notoriety.

*July 2.*

Passed over a low valley incrustated with saleratus and crossed a mountain stream of good water. Rolled on down the river about 30 miles and encamped on a slough at the foot of a sand ridge where we found good grass for our horses— *without wading*. I had the misfortune, to-day, to lose my journal of the route thus far.— This afternoon I have seen numbers of wagons, guns, and several *gold washers* thrown away.

*July 3.*

After some ineffectual inquiry of emigrants concerning my journal, I followed after the train which was several hours in advance of me. The country is sandy and barren— so much so that even the wild sage cannot grow, nothing being seen but a few dwarf grease-wood bushes. Crossed a stretch of 18 miles without a drop of water. Camped at night in "Green Valley," where by wading, we got some grass. Very many on the road are running out of provisions. The destruction of property along the road continues to be immense. All the fortune I would ask would be to have all the articles in the States that are thrown away on the road. I must return my thanks to Messrs. Smith and Grant, of Galesburg, for the hospitable reception I met from them about dinner time, and for the excellent meal that I partook of with them.

*July 4.*

The anniversary of American Independence was ushered in this morning by a few shots, which was the only outburst of patriotism that we could afford to expend. We tacitly

acknowledged the glory, wisdom and majesty of our beloved republic, and required no orator to tell us about our "forefathers who fought, etc." We travelled on a few miles to the Great Bend, where the renowned "Greenhorn's cut off" leads away to the westward; from the appearance of the road several teams must have taken this route this season.— At night the road descends thro' a winding ridge of bluffs to the river where we camped. No grass, but we got a few rushes by wading in a slough. The character of the river has materially changed; it now runs through steep banks of clay, with a narrow bottom. How any person who had ever been along here before should have mistaken [t]his locality is a mystery to me.

*July 5.*

Travelled 6 miles and stopped on a bluff; went a mile for a sack of grass. Proceeded on our journey and struck the river six miles further on. Then went 18 miles to a ravine where we found a number of springs of good cold water. Here we crossed over, taking the left hand road, S. E. to a meadow of most excellent grass growing in a slough where we made our hay for the desert in earnest— that which we made before having all been fed out long ago. I am very much indebted to Daniel E. Pierce, Esq. of Belleville, Ill., for bringing up my lost journal. Mr. P. accompanied by his lady and Mr. H. Padfield is rushing through in fine style with a good mule team.

*July 6.*

Remained in camp till 3 o'clock, when we pushed out for the Sink. We travelled through a storm of wind and drifting sand till about sundown when the wind lulled, and we entered the valley of Humboldt Lake, commonly called the Sink of the St. Mary's. This valley is probably from 12 to 15 miles wide. The surface is level and entirely destitute of vegetation except a few greasewood bushes on the outskirts of the bed of the Lake, and a patch of rushes here and there on the banks of the

stream. In the spring this vast basin is filled with water, but now the water occupies but a small portion on the extreme left of the stretch. Night overtook us before we had reached the Sink and we travelled on till 12 o'clock, when, supposing that we were very near the end of the basin we spread our blankets, and slept well after our night's drive.

*July 7 and 8.*

We moved on about a mile this morning to a point where the waters of the Humboldt are brought to a stand still. Here we found a little grass, and remained encamped till 3 o'clock, P. M. We left our camp, (if a solitary tent for a company of forty men and a few packs be worthy of the name,) and started across the desert— so long dreaded. We arrived at the junction of the Carson and Truckie[sic] routes, and finding that all travel had gone the former road, we took it. Five miles farther, after passing a few salt springs, we came upon what really deserved the name [desert], for a more completely barren waste cannot well be imagined. For miles and miles extended a *perfectly level* surface of hard baked clay without a spear of grass, or the slightest elevation of earth. Nothing could be discovered upon it save here and there a black speck far off the road, which we found to be water casks which had been blown away by the wind. We travelled upon this barren plain five miles before night closed in upon us, and noticed hundreds of wagons that had been left. We now gave our horses a little hay, and about a half bucket each of water, which we procured from one of the wagons. The water now being all used up all the wagons remaining were left, except Harris' and Swezy's. We started on in about an hour, and travelled probably 8 miles when we again fed hay, and rested an hour. Started on again, we could see nothing but the faintly glimmering stars above, and the horses just ahead of us— feel nothing but the cool night air around us— hear nothing but our steps grating through the sand or pattering in the

dust— and smell nothing but the effluvia which indicated too vividly the presence of the carcasses of dead horses along the road. Travelling 8 miles further we stopped about sunrise and rested and fed for the last time on this forty mile stretch, and after breakfast pushed on over the deep sand for 9 miles, during which we suffered a little from the heat of the morning— the forenoon here being the hot[t]est part of the day, as the afternoon winds serve to cool the air. Within about three miles of Carson river we met a train of returning Californians; each man having three mules, with which they are making great headway. We arrived at Carson river, a larger stream than the Humboldt, and which, like it, is lost in the sands of the Great Basin. There being no grass here we travelled up the river 5 miles, waded three sloughs for grass and encamped.— Here let me say, that the Humboldt has not a tree upon its whole extent— the nearest approach to timber being a few willow bushes, none thicker than your wrist. On Carson, however, we find a few scattered cottonwood trees.

On the 7th we were out of sight of snow— the first time since the 22d May. To-day we again are greeted with the glittering mountain sheets of snow.

*July 9.*

We left the river and travelled over sandy roads 10 miles, without grass or water. Nooned and travelled across a desert stretch of 20 miles, with a sandy road. On this desert we all suffered a little from thirst, and it went harder with our horses than did the Great Desert, over which they all came unscathed. Camped in the night without any grass.

*July 10.*

Our horses look thin this morning after their supper of willow leaves. We moved on about five miles and turned out to graze. We then crossed a desert of 10 miles and nooned on the river.— Near us at noon was Updegraff's train from Macomb. Camped to-night near the river with good grass.

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EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE OF THE OQUAWKA  
SPECTATOR.

## MY IMPRESSIONS

OF THE "OVERLAND ROUTE" TO CALIFORNIA.

BY E. H. N. PATTERSON.

July 11.

We moved on this morning, crossing several beautiful streams; gradually approaching the Eastern[sic] base of the Sierra Nevada mountains, which we reached about ten miles travel from camp. These mountains, covered with pine trees, rise abruptly from the general level of the Valley[sic], opposing an impassable barrier to the traveller. To cross them at this point is a matter of impossibility, and the only passage for wagons anywhere in this region is through the canyon formed by the Carson river[sic] twenty miles further on. At the place where we strike the foot of the mountains, the Mormons— (where will you go, and not find them)— have established a trading post, where we procured some "neck beef" at *seventy-five* cents per lb., and *musty flour* for *two dollars*; what think you of that, farmers of Illinois!— Passing on from this place, as fast as we could, in order to save what little money we had, we continued up Carson Valley, our road not approaching the river nearer than within a mile until night. About three miles from the Station, I noticed a guide board directing footmen and packers to take a "cut off" over the hills thro' a narrow ravine, which would bring them to the diggings at Georgetown, and save three days travel. We preferred, however, the main road, having the fear of the "Greenhorn cut-off" constantly before our eyes. Being very thirsty this afternoon, I approached a clear, sparkling spring of chrystal[sic] water, gushing from the

base of the mountains, and stooped down to imbibe the delicious fluid. The water met my lips with so ardent a kiss that I started to my feet again, uttering an exclamation not remarkably classic, which I may paraphrase thus: "hot as— the region of damned spirits." A mile or two further on we came to the first of a succession of mountain rills, which continued at intervals of half a mile the remainder of the day; and more glorious— sparkling— clear— living water I never drank.— I don't believe that the most highly-concocted glass of alcoholic liquors ever compounded, gave the same pleasure to the partaker, as did a draught from those cold, limpid waters which came leaping down over beds of white gravel, from the slowly melting snows on the summits of the mountain above.— We are camped to-night in the mouth of the canon, surrounded by the most grandly beautiful scenery that I have beheld on the route— except the Gap of Devil's Gate.

If we could rest our horses on the excellent grass of Carson Valley before crossing the Mountains[sic], I think we could go over with flying colors, but as it is, we have to push ahead, even at the risk of killing them all. We have now been on short allowances ever since we left the Sink, and many of the company are as short as we are. We have lived since we left Humboldt on a half pound of bread, and about two table-spoons full of rice per day. We were reduced to this by having lost about 60 lbs. flour and 20 lbs. went by having it stolen, by some poor, hunger-driven-to-robbery devil.

July 12.

This morning we commenced climbing the mountain— through the canon— and such a climb! The road was such an one as the most distorted imagination could have formed no idea of; rocky— muddy— sidelong— these words do not convey to the mind the slightest

impression of what it is, and I despair of giving the reader a comprehensive description.— The road had been cut through, and late in the season, would probably be tolerable, but now in some places a mountain stream crossed along the track, mud holes presented themselves at every level platform we reached, rocks from the size of a football to that of a hogshead were to be surmounted, narrow paths led along the side of the hill almost impassable, owing to the roots, stumps of fallen trees and loose stones. These roads— high towering hills on either side of the canon, which gradually diminished in height as we went up the rapid roaring stream of Carson river, which every mile was growing less in volume, but more impetuous and headlong as it plunged down over its ragged bed. This was our first day in the mountains. To-night the atmosphere is cool.

*July 13.*

Kept on our course over the mountain, with much the same road and scenery as on yesterday. No grass; but abundance of flowers. Left Carson river to the left.

*July 14.*

This morning we descended to a swampy valley, where we had considerable difficulty in crossing a stream— a tributary of the Salmon Front[sic] river. We now commenced ascending the last ridge— the summit of the chain. I shall never forget the tramp I have taken to-day.— From the stream I have alluded to, we had a view of the snow clad summits, and of trains crossing over the white field five miles distant. Our road up, up, up, through heavy pine forests— over snow banks, where through a gap melted away by the side of a rock we could see a stream plunging down the side of the mountains 20 feet beneath us— and at last over a steep snow field of more than a mile in extent, where we were compelled to walk over a slippery road, our horses before us— to the long-hoped-for summit. Here, we found no snow whatever; we were above all vegetation

save a stunted cedar bush, which had braved the storm, and planted itself above the snows; the air was cold and chilly; the atmosphere was that purplish-blue tint, which chilled us as we looked around, so much did it resemble winter. The view extended for miles and miles away, around and below. We could see lakes, hills, forests, snow fields,— and, far to the west, hill after hill, which yet interposed between us and our destination. We remained on the summit a half hour, and then commenced our descent, which we found more wearisome— over the snow— than the ascent. In many places, we saw, where the road ran a few weeks ago, trees protruding to the height of 6 feet, and I have no doubt that even below our road the progress of the thaw will discover "tall brush." We met a great many packers to-day, going over with flour; and find that, to-night, we can buy this necessary article for \$1. I saw several horses to-day which had been killed, and had the steak cut away from them! To such want are some honest men reduced.

*July 15.*

The character of the Country[sic] has entirely changed. We have now good roads, a few oak trees scattered here and there among the most magnificent pines, cedars, and hemlocks that ever grew, and the most luxurious abundance of wild flowers that I ever saw. If I had a hundred acres of the pine I have seen to-day, standing on the banks of the Mississippi, I would never wish to "try the mines."— I have estimated the height of many of these trees, and find it to be an average of 200 feet though some of them go beyond three hundred! We have no snow to-night. We have had no grass for three days— having to feed our horses on weeds and leaves. We will reach Hangtown tomorrow, and then, thank the Lord, we will indulge in one more hearty meal.

*July 16.*

Hurra! We have reached the goal of our destination! We have seen gold washed from

the vulgar soil!— Flour is only 17 cents a pound, and now for *as much as we can eat, once more!*

Reader, my dinner is over, and if ever any one enjoyed slap jacks and fat pork— this and nothing more— that individual was your humble servant. I am in a good humor now, and with a few closing remarks, I shall cut your acquaintance, for the present, though I may soon endeavor to cultivate it again.

I have walked two-thirds of this twenty-four hundred mile trip; been out of "grub" part of the time— the very time, too, I had to work the hardest; and must say that I cannot regret having taken the journey. I have never, yet, seen the elephant, nor do I believe any one else, who came over with the same outfit, has had any cause to complain, unless he be a person who has had no curiosity to gratify— no ambition to sustain him in difficulties, or who is constitutionally too lazy to enjoy good health.

We are at length here, in the land of our golden dreams, and shall endeavor to make up for lost time. I must claim the indulgence of my readers for these badly written sketches. No one, but a person who has crossed the Plains, can imagine the difficulty with which I have written. Sleep is all we ever desired, after supper, or when we were resting during the day, and I have had to snatch from my covetous eyelids, what little time I have devoted to this journal.— I thought I could have made an interesting book. My material was ample, and had I been seated in my *sanctum*, I might have done my best, and hoping again to hold converse[sic] with you from this distant land under more favorable auspices,

I am, as ever,

Your friend and servant,

E. H. N. P.

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The "Impressions" of our Junior, detailing the overland route to California, have been received, and will be resumed in our next paper.

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## FROM CALIFORNIA.

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Just as we are going to press we received letters from our Junior direct from California. We give below all that we can make room for:

PLACERVILLE, (*or Hangtown.*)  
July 17, 1850.

### KIND PATRONS:

I have at length arrived in the gold region after a trip of 81 days from the Missouri river[sic]—during which time we laid by 11 days. We had a very pleasant trip till we reached the Humboldt, &c. When we arrived at the sink, we concluded, on account of the high water, on the Truckie, to take the Carson route. We now crossed a desert of 45 miles, without grass or water, but found this to be no trick at all. Up Carson river we have poor grass, and found none on the Sierra Nevada—our horses having to live on weeds and leaves. The road over this range of mountains is, at this period, the worst that the imagination of man can conceive. By the time we reached these mountains the company were all packing, except Swezy and Blackart's teams. Chapins, Cowan, Birdsall, and Eames are in, and the others are close behind us. John and Theodore McFarland are with me here. I heard from Dr. Mangel at Fort Laramie, and from the Keithsburg boys,

Anderson boys, and Captain R. W. Miles of Knox county[sic], at N. Platte. Samuel Snook was near us at the Sweetwater. I saw Denman last at the Devil's Gate. Capt. N. O. Ferris, of Galesburg, we left at Raft river. Parker and Peck of Burlington and Updegraff's Macomb train will be in soon.

Our horses stood the trip well until we reached the Humboldt, where the alkali water made them very weak. If we had had plenty of citric acid we could have prevented this, however, but as the Co.[sic] was but poorly supplied we had to suffer the consequences. Our horses all needed rest before attempting to cross the Nevada Chain, but almost every one was out of provisions, and we had to push ahead, and several horses tired out and were left here, which could have come in if we had waited on them a day or two; but a hungry man will make any sacrifice to obtain food. Numbers of emigrants were entirely destitute of food, even on the Humboldt, and I saw men 300 miles back who were living on nothing but coffee. You might as well try to find charity in a bigot, as to look for game along the route, for I could see more game in one day's hunt about Oquawka than I have seen altogether since leaving the South Pass. Men thus straitened for food, will, of course, go any length to obtain it, and stealing became very common on the last part of the road.— But as some could not steal nor beg enough to satisfy the cravings of their appetites, and had no money to buy of the mountain traders at the exorbitant rates asked, they were obliged to eat their horses. In fact, I saw several horses which had been recently killed, and the steak taken from them.