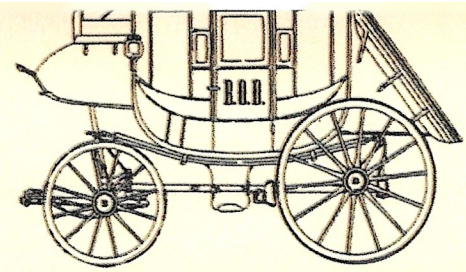


# OVERLAND DESPATCH



Volume XIII No. III

*Remember the Smoky Hill Trail*

Spring 2021

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Dear Annual Conference Attendees, all  
Trails Lead to .....Abilene.

With great optimism and good luck, we hope to have an in-person conference of the members this year. As you may know the Santa Fe Trail is celebrating its 200th anniversary and our association agreed to have this year annual's conference in the vicinity of the Santa Fe Trail to partner in the promotion of both historical trails. While the content of the conference is still tentative our field trip is expected to include a visit to Cottonwood Crossing which is part of the Santa Fe Trail.

I had the pleasure of meeting with Jim Mayhew and Michael Hook in Abilene and got their thoughts with respect to ideas for content and location for the conference. It was an amazing trip. My wife has pestered me for years to visit the Seeley Mansion and museum in Abilene, but I always resisted. Well on Saturday I was able to tour the mansion and I hope it will be a part of our conference. A tour of the Seeley Mansion, in my opinion, is in itself reason enough to attend the conference.

The conference has historically been held to coincide with the third Saturday in October which is Saturday, October 16. While plans are still being developed, I anticipate the conference

will kick off the afternoon of October 15 and run through noon on Sunday October 17.

If you can, please mark your calendar and plan to attend as I can assure there are many things to see and do in and around Abilene.

*Remember the Smoky Hill Trail!*

Ken Cole, President  
Smoky Hill Trail Association

## NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Association has been working to replace some of the markers that Howard Raynesford installed in the 1960's. I thought it would be interesting to find out about who helped Mr. Raynesford with the original markers. I found a newspaper article from the *Hays Daily News* dated August 11, 1963 that mentions the company that was hired to cut the inscriptions on the Kansas limestone fencepost markers.

The 1963 Kansas Legislature passed a joint resolution for the designation of the Smoky Hill Trail and to have markers placed along the trail. Howard Raynesford, who had been working on marking the trail for over 30 years, asked his lifelong friend, James Wolf of Hays Monument Works, to create the inscription "BOD 1865" onto 179 stone posts.

At the time of the article, 75 of the posts had been cut with the inscriptions with about 100 more posts having been "surfaced" for the inscriptions. Wolf said it cost \$7.25 for the actual work for each inscription. The rest of the work in placing the posts in their final cement bases made the total cost about \$12 each. The entire





**OVERLAND DESPATCH** is the official publication of the Smoky Hill Trail Association, Inc., a nonprofit, 501(c)(3), corporation chartered in the State of Kansas. Primary missions of the Association are to preserve, protect, promote, and interpret the Smoky Hill Trail for the benefit of present and future generations, and to promote awareness of the historical legacy associated with the remnants and locations that represent the historic trail and Butterfield's Overland Despatch (BOD) and its successors as well as the railroad that replaced the overland trail. Letters and articles are welcome and can be sent via email to the newsletter editor at <rijwilh@gmail.com> or via USPS at **Smoky Hill Trail Association, PO Box 978, Hays KS 67601**. They become the property of SmHTA and may be edited or abridged at the editor's discretion. All rights reserved.

**Membership** in the Association is open to all individuals, families, institutions, and businesses. Annual dues are \$25.00 for individuals, \$30.00 for families, \$40.00 for nonprofit organizations, \$50.00 for businesses, and \$100.00 for patrons. Life membership, individual or family, is \$500.00 (may be paid in quarterly installments during one or two years). Membership fees should be sent to **Smoky Hill Trail Association**, at the address above. Other donations are always welcome.

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Project would cost \$2,148.

Raynesford was personally making cement plaques containing the history of the trail, and at the time of the article he had created 85. These plaques were to be attached to the cement bases of the markers.

Another firm that helped with the creation of the markers was the Central Kansas Power Company. The electricity that was being used by the big electrical machines used for the inscriptions was being provided at the bare cost of electricity. Other additional costs, such as special fees for operating the machines, were absorbed by the power company.

The Kansas limestone posts were donated, and for the most part, came from the area around LaCrosse, Kansas. The article ends with provisions for the work as put forth by the Kansas Legislature.

Patty Nicholas

Smoky Hill Trail Archivist



## PAST BOARD MEMBER PASSES

Dr. Ann Liston, historian, professor, past Chair of the History Department at Fort Hays State University, and former SmHTA board member and co-editor of this newsletter, passed away on March 27, 2021, at the Care and Rehabilitation Center, Wilson, Kansas where she had lived for the past four years. She was an avid creator of needlework and had a great appreciation for music, especially jazz. She could often be seen at performances where Brad Dawson and the Luke Johnson Trio were playing. Services have not been announced but a celebration of her life is being planned in August when she would have turned 84.



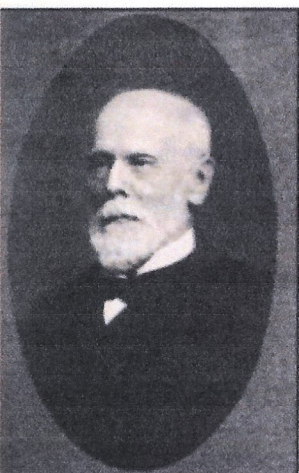
## NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The deadline for articles to be included in the next edition of the Overland Despatch is **May 31, 2021**. Please have your articles, announcements, notes, etc. sent to the newsletter editor either by US mail or E-mail by that date (addresses in box at left). Thank you.



## REPORT OF FRANCIS T. BRYAN

*[Editor's Note: While perusing the wonderful bibliography by Mike Olsen, "Literature and Lore of the Smoky Hill Trail" in an effort to find something to put in this issue, I came across the above entitled report written by Lieutenant Francis T. Bryan of the Topographical Engineers. The report was addressed to Colonel J.J. Abert, Chief Corps Topographical Engineers and was published*



Francis T. Bryan in later life (from [findagrave.com](http://findagrave.com))



John James Abert (Wikipedia, public domain)

*in the "Report of the Secretary of War, 1857." It is quite long and detailed describing Lieutenant Bryan's expedition surveying the routes from Fort Riley, Kansas to Bridger's Pass, Wyoming along the Platte River, and then his return trip via the Republican River. If his report were to be copied in this newsletter, it would take up the entirety of the issues for the next two years, to the exclusion of all else. Since our Association is more concerned with the Smoky Hill Route than the Platte River Road, it was decided to reproduce that section dealing with his trip along the Republican. For those wishing to read the entire document, it is available on the Internet at: Report of the Secretary of War, 1857, House Exec. Doc.*

*2 Appendix H. 35th Cong., 1st sess. 1857.]*

St. Louis, Missouri, February 19, 1857.

Colonel : I have the honor to forward the following report concerning the operations of the party under my command on the road from Fort Riley to Bridger's Pass. The party was composed of the following named gentlemen, assistants: Mr. John Lambert, topographer; Mr. Henry Engelmann, geologist ; Mr. Charles Lamed, in charge of barometers ; Mr. Cooper and Mr. Wood, rodmen. Having met the escort at Fort Riley, I left that post on the 21st of June.

Two routes presented themselves for consideration and survey before a location could be definitely fixed upon. One from Fort Riley to Fort Kearney, crossing the divide between the Republican and the Platte, and skirting the headwaters of the small streams running into the Blue; then from Fort Kearney, along the Platte valley, to near the mouth of Pole creek ; thence up Pole creek, through the Black Hills, to its head; and thence along the foot of the Medicine-Bon Mountains to the North Platte, and thence to Bridger's Pass, about forty miles distant from the crossing of this stream. The other lay along the Republican fork of Kaw river for three hundred and sixty miles; thence across the divide to the South Platte, where it turns to run into a southeasterly direction ; thence up the South Platte, along its right bank, crossing Beaver, Bijou, Kioway, and other small creeks; thence on the left bank of the Platte to the mouth of Crow creek; and thence over to the Cache la Poudre, and up it to the foot of the Medicine-Bon range, in the Laramie plains, and thence to Bridger's Pass, over the same ground as by the other route. It was determined to examine the route along the Platte first, and take the route along the Republican on the return.

*... Following the Platte route, they reached Bridger's Pass on August 15, 1856...*

Saturday, August 16, 1856. — To-day retraced our steps of yesterday for about eight miles to a beautiful little valley, and camped in front of a growth of pines, where we found good grass, wood,



and water.

Sunday, August 17, 1856. — Remained in camp.

Monday, August 18, 1856. — After a march of three miles came opposite the camp of August 13 and 14. Here we turned to our left, (north,) instead of following the outward route. This change gave us an excellent road, much smoother than the route before followed, and nearer to the creek. This route inward has a few places where the banks have to be cut down, but it is generally much smoother, and better ground for travelling [*sic*]. There is less of the sage plant to be encountered, also. The camp was pitched on an island in the North Platte, where there was plenty of good grass, water, and fuel. Here it was deemed advisable to remain for a few days to rest our animals and burn coal for the forge. The point where we are now encamped is some five miles below where we crossed the river on our outward route. The country is a scene of utter desolation as far as the eye can reach. High bluffs, deep ravines, and a most sterile soil are the characteristics of the scene. The bluffs are composed mostly of clay, with layers of sandstones, and are formed by the action of water washing out the deep intervening ravines. The river near the camp is still enclosed by the same precipitous walls of rock, which permit ingress and egress only at certain points. As we had determined to examine the north side of Medicine-Bon butte, to avoid, if possible, the canon of Pass creek on the south side, this crossing of the river is very favorable for our purpose. Captain Stansbury had already reported that a practicable route existed to the north of the butte, but, as it had never been attempted with wagons, we hesitated somewhat to make the trial with so many teams. An examination in advance, however, showed where there was a practicable route, and it was determined to follow it.

August 19, 20, 21.—Remained in camp on the Platte.

Friday, August 22, 1856. — After a very circuitous route through the bluffs, and some work for the pioneers, we got on the level plateaux which hold on to the foot of the mountain. This gave a very level, straight road to Pass creek, where we encamped. At one point the inward and outward routes came close to each other; the former, though, is over much better ground. The bottom of Pass creek, where we encamped, is wide, and affords abundance of nutritious grass. The water, too, is clear and of excellent flavor. Fuel, however, is scarce, most of what we used being buffalo chips and drift-wood. Wood is more abundant higher up the stream.

Saturday, August 23, 1856. — Left our camp on Pass creek at 6 1/4 a. m., and marching on our course came, in a couple of miles, to the spurs running down from the Medicine-Bon butte. The ascent to the first of these hills was very gentle; most of them were so. About four miles from camp there was one very difficult to ascend, and which obliged us to double teams. This was the only real obstruction on the route. The other obstacles were only such as were caused by small drains of ten or fifteen inches in depth, and the dense growth of sage plants. About eight miles brought us to a small creek, which we think is the Rattlesnake creek of Captain Stansbury. Here a few minutes' work was necessary; then following along the valley we turned up the valley of one of its affluents, and followed it to its divide from Elk creek. Descending on the eastern side of this divide we found ourselves in the broad grassy bottom of a small creek running from the Medicine-Bon butte. It sinks in a marshy plain about a mile below our camp. Elk abounded in this vicinity, from which circumstance the creek gets its name. The grass on this creek, as on Pass creek, was good and abundant. Wood is in plenty, and the water excellent.

Sunday, August 24, 1856. — Remained in camp.

Monday, August 25, 1856.—Marched this morning seven and a quarter miles, to the west branch of Medicine-Bon creek. We passed several



creeks during the march, which appeared to sink in the prairie at the distance of a mile or two from our crossing. They furnished abundance of wood, water, and grass of the best quality. There were several ponds to our left, (north,) which appeared much frequented by ducks and geese. After crossing the west fork of Medicine-Bon, we turned to the left down the creek, and found a camp ground where the grass was luxuriant. The crossing was of the same character as that above, the bottom of the creek being covered with large rounded stones. At this crossing there are several channels, most of which are dry. The valley here is narrow, and shut in by high bluffs.

Tuesday, August 26, 1856. — Left camp this morning at six o'clock, and ascending from the narrow, deep valley of the west fork, we emerged upon an open plain, and, keeping our course, reached in about eight miles, a small running stream at the foot of some bluffs. Bridging this with little difficulty, we were obliged to clear away some loose stones, and then ascended the bluffs without trouble. Country then became rolling, and easily passed to Birch creek, where the ascent from the bed of the creek was difficult on account of loose stones and boulders. These were cleared away, and, after ascending, we kept on the course for a few miles, and, on the top of a ridge, came in sight of the outward road near Aspen creek. Bearing towards it, we came into the road, and camped on the creek at one o'clock. Where the new road comes into the old one, a pile of stones was made and a flag-staff put in. This will mark the point of divergence by the two routes of the north and south sides of the Medicine-Bon butte. From the camp on Muddy creek to this camp the return route is shorter by three and a half miles, and is, besides, much better provided with wood, water, and grass, and a better surface to travel over. The grass at

this camp is thin and much parched.

August 27 and 28. — Followed the emigrant road by which we went out; camped on the 28th on the west fork of Laramie, about a mile above where we camped on our outward route. No fuel, except a little scattered drift-wood. Higher up the stream there is wood, and in the mountain from which this stream flows there is plenty of pine timber. The bottom of the west fork is very extensive, and much cut up by small streams. The soil is clayey, and, lying low, is very liable to overflow in wet weather, and to make travelling [*sic*] over it difficult. Grass, wood, and water are found in abundance at the head of this stream, and would furnish a post plentifully.

Friday, August 29, 1856. — Followed the emigrant road to-day, which is excellent, being over smooth, hard, gravelly soil, and very straight. Arrived in camp on East Laramie at 12 m., where we found excellent grass and water, and some fuel furnished by cotton-wood trees, of which there are a few scattered along the river. This stream furnished fish, of which the men caught a large supply.

Saturday, August 30, 1856. — Marched to-day over an excellent road to camp on a ridge lying between the head of two branches of the east fork of Laramie. The road crosses the branch on which are encamped some distance below camp, making quite a bend to the south. This bend could be avoided by crossing the creek higher up, and obtaining just as good a location, though at the expense of cutting. Our camp is abundantly and excellently supplied with wood, water, and grass; wood is mostly of willow and aspen.

Sunday, August 31, 1856. — Remained in camp

Monday, September 1, 1856. — Left camp at the usual hour; the road, considering the nature of the country, is a very good one. It is circuitous, crosses many small streams, affluents of Cache la Poudre, and has some hills, where the pulling is somewhat difficult. But for a mountainous, broken



country, it is very good, though there are several places where it might be improved, either by working it or by a change of location for a few rods. The rocks are granitic, and the soil partakes of the same character, and forms a fine hard road bed. The country to-day has not been equalled in its broken character, except by the Pole Creek pass, through the Black hills. Even there, I think, the scenery is inferior to this. Made our camp on a small brunch of the Cache la Poudre. Wood is scarce immediately at the camp, but plentiful at a short distance; water clear and good; grass thin and a good deal parched and dry.

Tuesday, September 2, 1856. — Crossing easily the creek on which we were encamped, and ascending a hill which offered little obstruction, we kept on over a very good road for some six or seven miles, to a creek on which were encamped a band of Arapahoes, under Little Owl, one of their chiefs. At the crossings of the small drains the road was encumbered with loose stones, which should be removed for a good road. This is caused partly by the breaking away of the earth and partly by stones and gravel brought down from the hills by heavy rains. These would always render these crossings rough and filled with stones. Bridges would obviate the difficulty, but there is not water enough, nor are these places sufficiently difficult of passage to warrant such an expense. A little beyond the Arapahoe camp the road wound through a narrow gorge and up a hill covered with loose stones, causing very severe labor to our animals for a short time. There was no avoiding this place, as a deep canon of great extent prevented us from turning it. A little labor would make a good road up the hill. The rest of the route for this day was good to another branch of Cache la Poudre, where we found wood and water good and abundant. The grass, however, is thin and dry. This is a favorite camping place for emigrants from

Arkansas and Texas.

Wednesday, September 3, 1856. — Our road to day ran through a valley all the way, bounded on both sides by rough hills. It is some what winding, frequently crossed by small drains, which are rough from being water-washed and the loose stones left on the surface of the ground. These only require to be removed to make an excellent road. The banks of the drains require to be smoothed somewhat, but every heavy rain would wash them again and make them rough. Most of these drains flow from our right to the left into a large, dry hollow, which crosses the road and empties into the creek. The creek itself, which is the main stream of Cache la Poudre, comes from the hills on our right. At ten o'clock we camped on it, at a point well provided with wood and grass. The bottom here is very extensive, and would furnish many tons of hay. Timber could also be obtained from the adjacent hills. This point possesses many of the requisites for a good military site, whenever it shall be deemed requisite to station troops in this part of the country.

Thursday, September 4, 1856. — Left camp at six o'clock, and in the course of a mile the road led through a narrow, steep defile. We found some difficulty in getting through our wagons from the steep ascent, but, as the cutting here would not be difficult, it would not take long to make an easy grade for wagons. From this defile we emerged into an open prairie country, and, turning the hill on our right, came again to Cache la Poudre, which we crossed, the bottom being here, as else where, covered with loose round stones, making the crossing laborious and difficult. Thence our route lay through the valley of the creek for twelve miles, and on its right bank. Crossing again, we camped on the left bank, after a march of fifteen miles, and having good grass, wood, and water in abundance. The right way preferred, as we obtained on that bank a smoother and straighter road, avoiding crossing Box Elder creek, which comes into Cache la Poudre from the east, and was reported to be deep and miry. The bottoms of Cache la Poudre are wide



and beautiful, and the soil good.

Friday, September 5, 1856. — To-day continued on our way down the left bank of Cache la Poudre, which furnished us a smooth, hard road. The soil to-day was poor, producing little vegetation, and consisted mostly of reddish sand and gravel. Occasionally the surface was thickly covered with dwarf prickly pears, making the marching difficult and painful for our men and animals. Banks of the creek to-day have been steep and high, in places resembling bluffs. Camped on the creek about three miles from the South Platte, of which it is a tributary. Grass and fuel abundant.

Saturday, September 6, 1856. — Marched to-day over a very smooth prairie, bordering on Cache la Poudre and the South Platte, to our camp on the river at the mouth of Crow creek, where we had an abundance of the requisites — wood, water, and grass.

Sunday, September 7, 1856. — Remained in camp.

Monday, September 8, 1856. — Remained in camp. The party which had been sent to explore Crow creek not having come in the night before, it arrived in good health and condition to-day at 11 o'clock.

Tuesday, September 9, 1856. — Left camp at six o'clock, and, crossing the dry bed of Crow creek, directly afterwards crossed the South Platte. Crow creek is dry for about twelve miles from its mouth. At this point is a spring, and above water is to be met with in holes. At the forks there is a little timber. On the east side of the mouth of Crow creek there are the remains of some adobe trading houses. The Platte crossing is at this time a very good ford, and we passed over without any difficulty. These fords of the Platte, however, are very variable, being liable to be injured by the flood in the spring, and in some instances to be entirely destroyed, so that where fords have been quicksand bottom is found in place

of them. Our road down the Platte to-day was mostly good and smooth, the greatest difficulty arising from the extensive beds of prickly pear during the first part of the march, and afterwards from the sandy nature of the soil. The route lay over an Indian trail for the greater part of the distance, and has been used at times by the wagons of Indian traders.

Wednesday, September 10, 1856. — Left camp at the usual hour, and, marching along the Platte over a very rolling country composed of loose sand, made 11 1/2 miles to camp, having during the day crossed the wide sandy bed of Kiowah creek. The banks are high, and the road winds along the sandy slope to find a crossing. The creek is dry at this point, but about twenty-five miles above it is a beautiful running stream, with timbered banks and wide, grassy bottoms.

Thursday, September 11, 1856. — Continued our march to-day over an excellent road to Bijou creek, a distance of eleven miles. The surface of the ground was undulating, and the soil of sand, which was the only drawback; but this was not so loose or deep as yesterday, but afforded a fine hard road bed. We confined ourselves to the lodge trail, as it was generally straight and lay in our course. In fact, it would have been dangerous to deviate from it, as large tracts on either side are densely covered with prickly pear, which would have proved very injurious to our mules. Bijou creek is here a small stream, with a wide sandy bed; the water is slightly brackish. As with Kiowah creek, it is a fine stream nearer to its head than where we crossed it, though even there it is better than Kiowah creek.

Friday, September 12, 1856. — Still kept the trail to-day along the river, and at the end of 14 1/2 miles camped on the river just above the mouth of Beaver creek. Our road for to-day was remarkably fine, being over a wide open plain and a hard gravelly soil. At this camp there were several bodies of dead Indians suspended in trees and lodges.

Saturday, September 13, 1856. — Marched to-day, 14 miles, to the point where we intend to leave



the river. The route still followed the Indian trail, and lay over a country smooth, and was covered with grass, and of a hard gravelly soil. There is now nothing like wood to be found on the river, except a few small willows. A tree is very rarely to be seen. Our course to-day was nearly northeast to our camp on the river. We leave the river at this point to cross over to the Republican fork of Kaw river, anticipating a dreary march over sand hills and clay ravines.

Sunday, September 14, 1856. —

Remained in camp. The water here, in the river, is nowhere more than 18 inches. One of the men of the party, Frederick Borthaux, died here at 10 1/2 a. m., and was buried at one o'clock, on a ridge to the rear of the camp.

Monday, September 15, 1856. —

Leaving the river, we marched for two or three miles over a good road, then into a belt of sand hills. The sand here, no doubt, is easily moved by winds, except when covered and protected by grass. Passing this sandy range, we came to a flat sandy prairie, covered with dog holes and gopher hills. A short distance after passing the sand hills was a large pond, apparently of permanent water. On our arrival we found this pond covered with ducks. Five or six miles further over an alternation of sandy flats and slopes brought us to our camp, on the headwaters of a creek tributary of the Platte. It has a sand bottom, and is thoroughly dry, except at its head, where a small stream is running, and there is water in holes. Wagons are apt to bog on crossing the bed of this creek. However, there is no necessity for this, as the creek can be turned by its head. The grass at this camp is only tolerable, water good, and fuel, except buffalo chips, entirely wanting. The road to-day, though heavy, is much better than was expected, and, in fact, would do very well for trains crossing from the Republican to the Platte.

Tuesday, September 16, 1856. —

Ascending from the valley of the creek up which we were encamped, we came upon a high rolling prairie, surface hard and smooth. For the first mile or two, the character of the country was wild, from the deep ravines and precipitous banks, caused by the action of the water. We passed on, however without the slightest trouble or difficulty, and came to a gently undulating prairie, covered in many places with a luxuriant growth of buffalo grass. At several points the water was standing in holes; the grass in these places was green and good.

Continuing our march over this pleasantly undulating surface, we came, at the end of about twelve miles, to a creek with bluff banks, in which water was standing in holes, on which we encamped. Dog towns were passed to-day. Near the camp was one of these towns, which was thickly inhabited. The water in one of the holes of the creek was brackish; the others, however, furnished very good drinking water, though it was too warm. This camp was well supplied with good grass; fuel, except buffalo chips, wholly wanting. The road travelled to-day is over a fine hard surface, and if water can always be had, which is somewhat doubtful, would make a very good route.

Wednesday, September 17, 1856. — Leaving the valley of the creek on which we were encamped, we presently found ourselves on a wide open prairie. About a mile and a half from camp, and about four hundred yards to the left, there was a large pond of water, which appeared to be deep, and was covered with ducks when we passed. From this point the country presented almost a dead level, so slight were the undulations. The ground was fine, hard, and level, and composed mostly of fine sand covered thickly with weeds. Grass was very scarce. At fourteen miles from camp, we arrived at a hollow where there was a little water, but not enough to camp on. Continuing our march, we came, at the end of twenty-two or three miles, to the foot of a range of sand hills, which rise between us and Rock creek; passing these, which were several miles across, we descended into the valley of a branch of



Rock creek. This was a dry hollow, destitute of wood, grass, and water. Good grass was thinly scattered over the sand hills; but as there was no water, and the sand was too loose to hold picket pins, we did not dare to encamp here. Continuing our march four or five miles further, we arrived at another hollow, also belonging to Rock creek, where there was water on springy ground covered with rushes and tolerable marsh grass. Here we encamped at 8 p. m., after a march of thirty- five miles. The range of sand hills is composed of loose sand, which, but for the grass, would be easily moved by the winds. The travel through these hills is very fatiguing to our draught animals.

Thursday, September 18, 1856. — Remained in camp to recruit our animals after the fatigue of the long march of yesterday.

Friday, September 19, 1856. — A march of eight miles this morning brought us to the crossing of the main Rock creek. Here it is a beautiful stream, flowing over a sandy bed, about eight or ten inches deep, and six or eight feet wide. It comes in from behind a ridge on our right. This ridge forms the divide between Rock creek and the tributary on which we were encamped yesterday. To-day our route is over a barren sandy soil, slightly covered with cactus and weeds of different kinds. The ground was fine and rolling, making us a good road. Rock creek runs under rocky bluffs composed of material similar to that making the bluffs on Pole creek. It is a very fine sand mixed with lime and limestones, and, in other instances, mostly made up of gravel from granite rocks; color, a yellowish white. Crossing the creek without difficulty, we kept down its right bank for about a mile, and then crossing a small spring branch coming from the bluff, we made our camp on the bank of the main

stream. The bottom of this stream is well supplied with excellent grass. Fuel very scarce indeed; mostly buffalo chips.

Saturday, September 20, 1856. — To-day marched down the creek for seven miles, when, meeting quite a large party of Cheyenne Indians, and the sky threatening rain or snow, we turned into the creek and made our camp. Our way lay along the creek bottom under the bluffs, and was mostly a good road for wagons, as it was over a large lodge trail. A little cutting was requisite here and there, but not much. The bluffs in one or two places came close to the creek, which is very tortuous in its course. Once or twice we thought of taking the high prairie, but, on inspecting the surface, it was found to be so cut up with deep ravines as to deter us. The Cheyennes whom we met were at first disposed to proceed to hostilities; some of them, in fact, had formed part of the band which was attacked by Captain Stuart a short time before. On discovering the strength of the party, however, and that it was prepared to receive them, they concluded to be friends. They were not allowed to enter the camp, the commander of the escort, Major Armistead, stationing sentinels to prevent them. At half past ten o'clock a cold steady rain set in, which lasted nearly forty-eight hours, making our situation extremely disagreeable, as there was no fuel but buffalo chips, which cannot be used during wet weather. The bluffs on this creek, so far, are almost entirely confined to the right bank of the creek, only rolling hills appearing on the other side, of various degrees of steepness. Stone in these bluffs is composed of fine sand, lime, and coarse gravel, and is very friable.

Sunday, September 21, 1856. — Remained in camp.

Monday, September 22. — Still keeping the right bank, we found an excellent smooth road all along the bottom. At the end of about nine miles we arrived at the junction of Rock creek with the Arickaree fork of the Republican. Made our camp about a mile below the junction of the two streams,



having crossed Rock creek and found a convenient place on the left bank of the stream, resulting from the junction of these two. Road to-day very good and smooth. A few miles from camp this morning the rock bluffs ceased on our right, and undulating hills appeared on both sides of the creek. The grass on Rock creek is abundant. The stream widens to quite a river, much resembling the Platte both in its bed and in its bottom. No fuel to be found, except a little drift-wood, which we secured at the mouth of Rock creek; soil sandy. After crossing Rock creek, and for some time before, the hills on the left bank became high and more abrupt and precipitous. They were entirely of sand, with a thin covering of grass.

Tuesday, September 23, 1856. — Left camp this morning in a very heavy fog, and crossed the river (the Arickaree fork) within half a mile. The bottom was soft from recent rains, but nevertheless easily passable. Route to-day lay along the bottom of the Arickaree fork, which afforded excellent ground to travel over. Occasionally our progress would be retarded by one of those deep ravines, with almost vertical banks, which are so common in this country. It was necessary to expend two or three hours of labor in cutting and grading the banks at each of these places. These ravines could not be avoided by crossing the river, as it is at this place, and in fact throughout nearly its whole extent, of a quicksand bottom. Even individuals found it difficult to get single animals across without bogging in it. On the left bank of the river rough looking sand hills come close down to the water's edge. They are also to our right, on the right bank of the stream, and would no doubt be very difficult to pass over. The secondary bottom of the stream affords a much better locality for a road. There are traces here and there of wagons, probably those of traders with the Indians who spend the summer on the

Republican. The soil passed over to-day seems to be of sand, and at intervals the water cuts ravines with precipitous banks, which always require more or less labor before trains can pass.

Wednesday, September 24, 1856. — To-day we had a very easy march for twelve miles along the bottom of the Arickaree fork. The route lay mostly over very smooth, level ground, avoiding the sand hills to our right. This bottom was, in places, very soft from recent rains, but in dry weather is easily passable. The hills are not to be thought of for a road, as on both sides of the river they are rugged and irregular, and composed almost entirely of loose sand. Arrived at 11 o'clock at the Republican fork, which we crossed without difficulty, although we had feared it would prove miry and full of quicksands. To-day the first clump of timber was seen which has appeared since we left the Platte; it was on the Republican fork, and to the right of our crossing. Camped at the crossing of the Republican.

Thursday, September 25, 1856. — Continuing over a range of barren sand hills, we found ourselves, at the end of half a mile, in the bottom of the Republican, which gave us an excellent travelling *[sic]* ground; here and there, as usual, it was necessary to grade the bank of a ravine before crossing, but nothing more serious impeded us. Timber appeared in clumps to-day, both on the right and left bank of the river; these were always in hollows. At 11 o'clock a creek was crossed, which had a good deal of drift-wood scattered on its banks, indicating a supply of timber near its head; indeed, a quantity could be seen from the point where we crossed it. It is called by the Indians Big Timber creek. A few miles further we crossed a spur of the sand hills, and, entering a wide, grassy bottom, camped near a grove of cotton woods, which furnished an abundance of dry fuel.

The sand bluffs just below this camp came close into the river, and nearly 100 feet in height. The whole country on both sides of the river appears to be confused and broken masses of sand hills, composed of pure sand of various degrees of



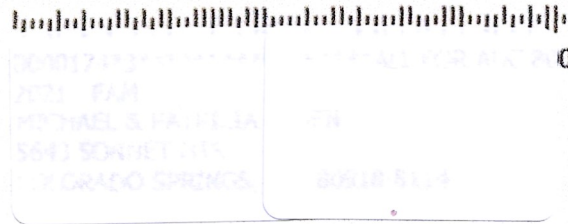


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and miry to trust to [sic]. Some cutting was necessary in one or two places, and the route over the hills and heading deep hollows was circuitous, with several ascents and descents; but there was little of it. Passing this place, we struck on to the broad prairie, which continued to the creek, near which we encamped.

Tuesday, September 30, 1856. —

Crossing the creek this morning, our way still lay on the right bank of the river, which affords us an excellent hard road. At 10 o'clock, having a creek with steep banks in front, the route inclined a little to the left, so as to cross lower down where the banks were not so high, and so, for a short time, left the secondary plateaux for the river bottom. Probably the detour may be avoided at the expense of some cutting. At 12 o'clock we reached a point where the river runs close under vertical bluffs; this forced us to cross the hills. The detour thus made was about four miles, and brought us to the river about

two miles below where we left it. Our camp to-day was pitched in a small nook in the hills, where we were very much crowded. Grass very poor and scarce. The hills and rough ground now appear to keep close on the right bank of the river. Hitherto they have been confined mostly to the left bank, leaving excellent country for a road on the right bank.

[To be continued in next issue.]



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