

## Document

### JOURNAL OF JOHN T. WILLIAMS, 1850

The old journal or diary which is here reproduced was written by John T. Williams while on a long over-land trip to California in 1850. The journey began on March 11, 1850, at Kirklin, Clinton County, Indiana, and ended on September 20 at Parks Bar, California. The diarist and his immediate companions stayed in camp at this place for six months when they moved to Grass Valley, Nevada County. The last entry which gives this information was of necessity added at some date not only after the six months period had elapsed but after the end of the gold-digging period in Grass Valley was over. The blank book in which the gold-seeker kept the record is of an old type much used for keeping personal accounts or recording memoranda. It has a tan leather binding but not the usual flap and short strap fastener. It is  $3\frac{1}{2}$  x 6 inches. The journal was started on the fifth page. The second and third pages list the supplies bought in the vicinity of St. Joseph, Missouri, and the prices paid in detail. The total expenditure for the initial outfit was \$551.95 and the total load was 1800 pounds. Most of the items with cost are mentioned in the journal at the time of purchase, and along the way prices of commodities are often stated.

The journal is not separated into daily entries, but they are recorded in regular sequence. Each page is numbered and the month and day is indicated at the top of each page; that is, the date of the matter recorded at the beginning of each page determines the month and day written at the top. Since it would have been difficult to reproduce the document as written, and, since the dates of entries are given through the body of each page, it has been very easy to reduce the journal to the usual form of a diary. It seems entirely probable that the entire diary was carefully copied by Mr. Williams at some date shortly after his California experience ended. The probability that this was true is suggested by the fact that there is no break in the writing anywhere as there certainly would be in an original copy written from day to day. Furthermore there is but one change in the color or character of the ink used, and no evidence that more than one kind of pen was used. Still the diary reads as if each

entry was originally made either on the day to which it refers or almost immediately afterwards, except the last two or three lines.

The journal is the property of a daughter of the diarist, Mrs. Sarah Williams Leasure, who lives in Auburn, Indiana. Through the kindness of Mrs. Leasure, the *Editor* has had the use of the manuscript copy, which was obtained for him by the Rev. John W. Meloy, pastor of the United Presbyterian Church of Bloomington, Indiana.

John T. Williams was born in Pennsylvania on July 3, 1825, and was therefore twenty-five when he made the trip to California. He remained in California for about four years, being quite successful in his search for gold. He returned, not to Indiana, where he had lived for a few years before going to California, but to Pennsylvania. There he married Jane Bryerly at Frankfort Springs, Beaver County, on September 20, 1855. The next year he migrated to the Iowa frontier, settling in Ringgold County. He died at Mt. Ayr, Iowa, on March 12, 1881.<sup>1</sup>

### 1850

#### JOURNAL OF THE ROUT FROM INDIANA TO CALIFORNIA.

March 11th four of us left Kirkland Clinton Co. Ia.<sup>2</sup> for California, the day was fair the road some muddy, we only traveled 15 miles put up at Cottons tavern at 4 o'clock in the evening.

12th fair day roads good we traveled to Indianapolis at one o'clock in the afternoon, we put up at a tavern till next morning.

13th we got on the car at 8 o'clock and rode out for Madison, at one o'clock in the afternoon, we were in Madison safe and sound,<sup>3</sup> we got on a steamboat the same evening bound for Lewisville, at 9 o'clock at night we were at Lewisville. it has rained all day and is still raining, the river is high.

14th we got on another steamboat bound for St. Lewis, passage 8 dollars in the cabin, but did not leave till the next day [15th] at 1 o'clock in the afternoon. in the evening we saw one boy brushing in oats<sup>4</sup> and different others had commenced ploughing.

<sup>1</sup> This information relative to Mr. Williams is contained in obituary notices published at the time of his death in 1881, and from an obituary notice which appeared at the death of his widow in 1917. These notices were furnished by the Rev. John W. Meloy.

<sup>2</sup> Kirklin, Clinton County, Indiana. This town is on the Michigan Road (State Road No. 29) about ten miles southeast of Frankfort.

<sup>3</sup> The train ride from Indianapolis to Madison was possibly a new experience for the four gold-seekers. The first train came into Indianapolis from Madison over this line, the first railroad of Indiana, in October, 1847. Mr. Williams had come to Indiana about four years earlier, and he may have ridden on a train before going to Madison from Indianapolis.

<sup>4</sup> Instead of drawing a harrow over the field where the grain had been sowed by hand (called "broadcasting"), the team was drawing a small tree with many branches and smaller limbs over the field in order to cover the grain with the loose soil.

16th at 10 oclock in the morning we passed the mouth of the wabash river the Ohio river is verry high the water is in the bottoms and in the first story of the buildings the cattle and other stak [stock] is in flat boats to keep them from drounding.

sunday morning the 17th we come in the Mississippi river, the wheat fields is green here, the boat struck a sand bar in the forenoon, but backed of in a few minuets and no damage done. the river is low it is warm enough here to go in our shirt sleeves and be comfortable.

18th at half past 1 oclock in the afternoon we landed at St. Lewis, the day was warm and the streets is crowed with buisness we got on board [19th] of another boat bound for St. Joseph passage 8 dollars.

20th at 1 oclock in the morning the boat left for St. Joseph, at 6 oclock in the morning we come in the mouth of the Missouri river the river is low, at 2 oclock in the evening we passed a steamboat that was snaged and sunk one week agoe, but no lives was lost, it was in water up to the cabin on one side and over it on the other side.

21st at 2 oclock in the afternoon, the boat struck a sand bar there was some gamblers gambling at the time the boat struck they had about 40 dollars in silver on the table, the boat struck so hard that the money all jolted of the table on the floor, they all run out and left their money on the floor but finding there was no damage done they come back and gethered up their money, there was one child died on the boat this morning with croop.

22nd at 8 oclock in the morning we are at Jefferson City, there was one man lost last night it is supposed that he was pushed overboard.

23rd the river is verry low and the boat is on sand bars every hour or 2

Sunday morning [24th] the snow is about 4 inches deep, and stormy, the boat is on sand bar and out of wood, they run ashore and gethered some dead cotton wood poles, that lasted till they got to a wood yard.

25th at noon we come to Independance. Jacob and William got of the boat here and went up to St. Joseph by land, at 4 oclock in the evening we saw 8 Indians for the first I ever seen,

26th at 6 oclock in morning we were at Fort Levensworth,<sup>5</sup> at 12 oclock at night we were at St. Joseph

27th we got boarding at 2 dollars per week, one mile east of town, Jacob and William to town this evening.

28th we bought four yoke of oxen at 70 dollars per yoke.

29 I started for Wm Downards

30th at 10 oclock I come to Downards they were all well, the country was beautifull between St. Joseph and Downards

31st I started back to St. Joseph it rained nearly all day, I stoped at John Russels and stayed all night, they were all well I bought one yoke of oxen from him price 60 dollars

April 1st I got back to St. Joseph at 10 oclock we bought one wagon price 100 dollars.

April 2 the colery is said to be in town today.

3d cold and stormy, 4th still cold and raining, 5th snow and rain.

<sup>5</sup> Fort Leavenworth, was on the west side of the Missouri, a little way north of the present Leavenworth, Kansas.

6th we hooked up our cattle and started for Downards,<sup>6</sup> we eat at John Russels we overtook McIntyre's and Wynnkop's boys in the evening and camped together that night.

Sunday the 7 we roled on, in the evening we bought 480 pounds flower at 2.50 cents per cwt camped 12 miles from Downards

8th at 5 oclock in the evening we come to Downards.

9th we bought 4 bushels corn at 25 cents per bushel. 10, 11, 12 cold and frosty we were at one log cabin raising to day [13th]

14th a light skift of snow.

15th, 16th cold and rainy

17th we drove our oxen to the bottom about one mile to grass for the first they have got this season.

18th clear but cold with north east wind 19th cloudy and cold, 20 clear and cold, 21 cloudy, 22, 23d, cool 24, 25, 26, warm, 27, 28, 29, 30th clear and warm the grass is begining to grow a little on the high ground. we have nothing to do but play ball pitch horse shoes and dollars and shute when we feel that way

May 1st and 2nd warm, 3 cold, 4 and 5th frosty in the morning, 6th warm, 7th rain, 8, 9, 10 warm and clear, 11th frost.

12th we hooked up our cattle and made a start for Callifornia 13 wagons with 52 men of us started together, we drove till dark about 14 miles over bad road and camped on a creek, grass was thin but short.

13th our company split 7 wagons crossed the river, and 6 in our company went farther up before we would cross the river,<sup>7</sup> days drive about 10 miles grass was good

May 14th was very warm the road was good we drove about 10 miles and camped.

15 warm but windy, we drove abot 8 miles and camped grass was tolerble good.

16th warm and calm we drove about 5 miles and camped by a creek grass was good.

17th we drove about 10 miles went 7 miles past the Iowa line and come to Bomans ferry, the ferry was crowded and we commenced crossing at 11 oclock at night, no grass for our cattle, at 7 oclock in the morning of the 18th<sup>8</sup>

May 18th we were all over safe, we got some breakfast and roled out about 3 miles and come to grass and water and camped till next morning, we now commence standing gard.

19th we roled out beautifull road no timber, grass still short days drive about 18 miles, we camped in the Prarie cooked with buffaloe chips

20th there was a fine shower in the morning, the day was cool travled about 20 miles grass and water plenty a little wood

21st cool we travled 20 miles camped in the prarie, no buffaloe chips nor wood except a little that we had halled

<sup>6</sup> They now traveled northward from St. Joseph on the east side of the Missouri River until they passed the Iowa line.

<sup>7</sup> The Missouri River. When the company made the actual start for California, they were a few miles northeast of St. Joseph and about fifty miles from the Iowa line.

<sup>8</sup> The division of the caravan that moved northward into Iowa before crossing the Missouri ferried the River about forty miles south of Council Bluffs. They now made their way westward towards Fort Kearney on the Platte River, about 175 miles from the Missouri River crossing which they had used.

22nd we roled on the road being a little slippy by the rain that fell the night before, crossed salt creek in the afternoon drove up the creek about 2 miles and campt on the creek, good grass, water and some wood days travel about 18 miles

23rd cool we traveled about 20 miles, and campt good grass water and a little wood.

24th we drove about 10 miles to Plat river at noon there was an Indian vilage there also a creek a little above that was so high that we could not cross we campt close by the vilage we had to give the Indians some provisions to pay them for the grass that the cattle eat, the Indians was verry friendly dirty louzy and theivish.

25th the creek had fell we crosed the creek the banks was steep and muddy we then roled on about 15 miles up plat river and campt good grass a little wood.

26th we drove about 25 miles from one bend on the river to another no water except slew water, we campt by the river good grass no wood except on the Islands which we waded and swum after

27th there was a verry heavy rain in the morning and then clears up, our provisions and clothes being damp we lay here the most of the day to dry them, we hooked up in the afternoon and drove about six miles and campt on the river.

28th we drove about 20 miles, drove through two old Pawnee vilages but no Indians, there campt on the river bank

29th some of the men went out to hunt buffaloo, two of them on horse back went together, after they had been out some time they saw a party of Indians, they begun to put spur to their horses for the road the Indians seeing their fright begun to lay whip after them the Indians horses being swiftest at first they begun to flank out to head them, they seeing the Indians calculations drew their ramrods and begun to whip and spur, one horse being swifter than the other the hindmost man begun to get alarmed and cried out to the other to make your escape I am lost, I am lost make your escape, the other hollows to him to lay whip while there life there is hope, there horses outwinding the Indians horses they got away, the same Indians the same day come across one of our men that was a foot they surrounded him, he presented his gun and would not let one of them tuche him they found he was not afraid of them and let him go, days drive 18 miles

30th we drove about 20 miles met one wagon on the return they said there was no grass, campt on the river good grass but little wood

May 31st we come in the St Joseph road it was full of emigration, 3 miles farther and then we come to New fort Carny [Kearney] it is on a beautifull place in the prarie in the river bottom but little timber, we drove three miles farther and campt the grass is good water plenty no wood but willow brush

June the 1st we have light shower but cool breezes from the mountains, there is some cases of colery on the road now we campt in the Prarie good grass no wood except willow brush

Sunday June 2nd we passed one company that was detained by burying one man that died with Collera, we also passed between one and two hundred teems, some of them was resting others detained by

sickness we campt one mile from a cool spring of pure water, the first one we have seen since we left Missouri, little grass no wood except willow brush

3rd we passed diferent companyes that had stoped on account of colery cases, also one death. campt one mile from the river but little grass no water nearer than the river, some brush

June 4th cool and windy barren country, we filled up our water cags in the afternoon and campt at the best grass we could see, it was short but thin no wood some buffaloe chips.

5th cool and rainy drove about 15 miles campt by a slough, swamp grass and rushes plenty, no wood but little of willow brush.

6th we drove 3 miles farther and then crosed the south fork of Plat river,<sup>9</sup> it was one mile wide, and the water was up to the wagon beds in places, the bottom was nothing but sand and verry uneven, which made it verry heavy drawing, I saw some teams that mist the ford a little and got into swimming water they got their provisions wet and had to double teem to get out, I also saw one wagon come out with 11 yoke of cattle to it they were all nearly give out, by being to long and swimming some, I and one more of our mess waded the river and drove our teem without much trouble, we was one hour and a quarter crossing the heaviest pulling I have seen, we drove 2 miles farther and come to good grass and campt the balance of the day, no wood some willow brush about one mile from us.

7th we lay by on account of one of our company being sick with dyaree, we caled on a doctor that was going by, he give some medison that cheked the diseas.

8th, we hooked up and roled on halling our sick man, we got to the north fork of plat river against noon distance about 10 miles, there is no grass here nor wood the[We] keeps up the river about 4 miles, and then we took the high lands, we drove till night and come to neither grass, wood, nor water, we drove on till 9 oclock at night, and on the account of storm we had to camp, we staked our cattle to the ground without any thing to eat, we were not much hungary ourselves and lay down without eating much.

9th we hooked up at daylight drove about 6 miles and come to the river again, there was but verry little grass here, we turned out our cattle for 2 hours they picked around and got a little to eat, we then hooked up again and travled till noon and come to wet bottom where the grass was about 3 inches long, we unyoked again for 2 or 3 hours, the day is verry cool with a little rain, the land here is nothing but sand we hooked up about 3 oclock and roled on till night, the grass was very short but thin no wood

10th we ocme to 2 indian vilages the Sews [Sioux], we also come to alkily water which we had to be carefull to keep our cattle from, one of our company was taken verry sick this evening, some said he had the colery, I have the mumps for my part. we campt close to a Indian vilage

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<sup>9</sup> They were now more than 100 miles west of Fort Kearney and traveled on toward Fort Laramie over the trail south of the North Fork of the Platte River.

grass was good to what we have had no wood except a little drift wood along the river.

11th Simpson McIntyre one of our company died with colery, at daylight, the Indians would not let us burry him near their town, we haled [hailed] him about 3 miles and burryed him in a sand bank, because the land is nothing but sand here, we then drove on till evening and got good grass for the first on this fork of the river but little wood, evenings cool

June 12th we hooked up and roled on, it was verry warm at noon, in the evening two more of our company Garret and James Winekoop were takeing ill with dyaree, we campt on the river bottom grass was good wood scarce.

13th the sick men was still bad, and we did not hook up till 10 oclock, drove till one oclock, one of the sick men getting worse we stopt again till next day, we had a fine shower in the evening there was one steer struck with lightening and killed, grass was short no wood

June 14th we hooked up at 7 oclock and roled on, the day being cool cattle traveled well, at noon we stoped to rest one hour oposite a large rock called the courthouse rock caled so on account of shape, drove till evening and campt on the river bank good grass, some drift wood.

15th we lay by on account of Garret Winekoop sickness, he died at 3 oclock in the evening with dyaree, we buryed him 6 oclock, and then hooked up and drove about 4 miles and campt by a spring good grass but no wood.

Sunday the 16th we went through another Indian vilage, we left the[re] early in the afternoon, drove about 7 miles from the river and campt grass was good no water except one cag we haled from the river, no wood.

17th we roled out beautifull road about 6 miles and come to a small spring also a blacksmith and another Indian vilage and trading house, there was no water for our cattle, there was some pine timber here, we drove on and got water for our cattle at three oclock in the afternoon then drove six miles farther and come to good grass, but little wood river water as usual

June 18th we come in sight of snow, near 100 miles of us, we also come to one trading house build of dride brick or clay, drove 20 miles and campt in the river bottom 10 miles from Fort Lawrame<sup>10</sup> some grass no wood, light showers of rain in the evening

19th we crosed lawrame fork of plat river at noon, it was 100 yards wide and over the fore wheel of our wagon and run verry swift, we raised our provisions on the upper bottom of the bed and roled over dry and safe, the fort was situated in the fork of the river there was 10 or 12 buildings, some of them frame but most of them built of dride brick there was one sawmill, run by mules, one store, whiskey was worth six dollars per gallon other things in proportion, we drove 6 miles past the fort and campt grass was short no wood.

20th we drove over some verry rough hills in the morning come to

<sup>10</sup> Fort Laramie was about 300 miles west of Fort Kearney. It is in the eastern part of the present state of Wyoming about 80 miles north of Cheyenne.

a warm spring at noon drove ten miles farther and camped on dead timber creek, plenty of wood water and the best of grass

21st we drove 18 miles over some hilly roads, crossed a creek at noon, camped on a small branch, good grass some wood there was a light hail storm in the evening.

22nd we drove till noon over hills and hollows, stopped one hour on a small creek drove 10 miles farther over hills of red sand and rock, camped in the hills drove our cattle 2 miles to grass but little wood.

23 we drove 20 miles over hilly road and crossed three creeks, and camped on a small river 30 feet wide one deep plenty of grass  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles up the stream

24th we drove four miles farther and come to the river again drove five miles up the river to deer creek 20 feet wide one deep, drove two miles up the creek and camped our cattle being very tired and some of them lame we lay here one day and a half grass tolerable good some wood and some fish in the creek.

25th we had rain nearly all day we kept in our tents and wagons.

26th we drove 20 miles crossed different creeks, camped on one drove our cattle 2 miles up it to grass, but little wood, light showers of rain in the evening

27th we drove 10 miles farther to the upper ferry on plat river,<sup>11</sup> crossed in the afternoon ferryage five dollars per wagon, swum our cattle, the river was 150 yards wide and deep also very swift drove out 4 miles in the evening and camped on a ridge grass was very short and thin no wood, some wild sage which answered in the place of wood we had light hail storm in the evening.

28th we hooked up early drove 24 miles without water no grass we then rested one hour let our cattle drink at a spring branch which was very muddy by the quantity of cattle tramping the ground got supper and hooked up again at dark drove five miles farther against ten o'clock no grass yet, we tied our cattle to the stakes, till next morning

29th we hooked up at 4 o'clock drove 20 miles farther against 1 o'clock in the afternoon before we come to grass, camped on sweet water [Sweetwater River] 2 miles from the devils hole,<sup>12</sup> drove our cattle  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the road to grass, we have passed alkali springs for the last 2 days that would kill cattle in a few minutes that got to the water, also passed a saleratis lake, the saleratis lay on top of the water resembling ice but when lifted out and dried become white as snow, it was about one inch thick three or four acres in the lake

June 30th we hooked up at noon drove two miles and came to the devils hole where the creek run through the hill of rocks about 300 feet deep and about 100 yards wide at the top about 50 yards wide in the bed of the creek, the road went around the hill and was not hilly but very sandy, we drove till 10 o'clock at night before we come to grass, got grass 1 mile from the road no wood but plenty of wild sage.

<sup>11</sup> The North Platte River flows northward from its source to the junction with the Sweetwater where it turns eastward. The Sweetwater flows eastward from South Pass. For this reason the trail crossed the North Platte and passed up the Sweetwater.

<sup>12</sup> Usually called Devil's Gap or Devil's Gate, a canyon cut through a granite ridge by the Sweetwater.



July 1st we hooked up at 9 oclock drove till noon rested one hour, we then drove on, our men that went on ahead of the teams to hunt grass found some, some distance from the road, struck back to the road to turn the wagons but come in behind the wagons, we drove on come to no grass, left the river in the evening, and drove till 11 oclock at night before we come to water or grass our men caught up with us one hour before we got through.

2nd we travled five miles and come to good grass we campt the balance of the day.

3rd we traveled 19 miles 16 without water, crossed sweet watter once and campt on it grass was scarce plenty of wild sage.

4th hooked up crossed sweet water twice drove 14 miles over hilly and rocky road campt at 4 oclock drove one mile of the road to grass there was plenty of snow a few rods from the grass under the hill, we campt by a cool spring and had snow in the place of ice to cool our brandy.

5th we seen plenty of snow, drove 20 miles crossed two creeks branches of sweetwatter campt by a bank of snow grass was good no wood but plenty of wild sage.

July 6th we drove 6 miles went through the south pass<sup>13</sup> of the rocky mountains the road was beautifull and nearly level, three miles farther to pacific springs drove five miles down the pacific creek<sup>14</sup> and campt, grass short, bad water, we left one steer by being lame

7th drove 16 miles over a small desart or sand plain to little sandy creek, drove 5 miles up the creek to grass, grass was good water plenty, plenty of willows and wild sage, we left the salt lake road at noon.

8th we drove six miles to big sand [Big Sandy River] the road was nothing but dust and sand drove 4 miles up the creek to grass, creek 3 rods wide one foot deep.

9th at ½ past ten oclock we started through the green river desart, 50 miles we filled up our water vessels, about 20 gallons, drove till 1 oclock rested ½ hour eat a few bites then drove till 7 rested one hour and got supper, then drove till midnight rested ½ hour then drove till 3 oclock rested till four then drove till 7 give the cattle what water we had left about one gallon each. the road has been level but verry dusty about shoe mouth deep and as light as lime, and smelt of lime and I believe was partly lime.

at twelve oclock the 10th we got to green river ferry watered and rested our cattle 4 hours till our turn come to cross in the boat paid 7 dollars for ferrying our wagon over, swum our cattle and drove about five miles to grass, the grass was short no wood but little sage

<sup>13</sup> South Pass, a very famous pass of the Rocky Mountains, is in west-central Wyoming. Though about 7500 feet above sea level, this Pass is not high in relation to the adjacent gentle slopes. Two travelers who went over the Pass in 1843, wrote: "Both the ascent and descent were so gradual, that had we not been told, we should have passed over the dividing ridge in the Rocky Mountains without knowing it." See *Route across the Rocky Mountains* by Overton Johnson and William H. Winter (reprint of 1932), 22.

<sup>14</sup> Pacific Creek flows southwestward from South Pass. Its waters find their way to the Green River via the Sandy River. Green River is a tributary of the Colorado which discharges into the Gulf of California.

11th we drove 7 miles grass was cours water scarce sage plenty road good.

12th we drove five miles farther come to good grass water and fur timber, our cattle being tired we stop the remainder of the day.

13th we still lay still to rest our cattle

14th we moved 10 miles farther over verry hilly and rough road

15 we roled over some of the bear river mountains crossed one creek come through a beautifull grove of fur timber in the evening campd close to a beautifull branch good grass and water plenty of sage days drive 20 miles part of our company commenced packing this morn- ing also pased the devles ladder it was about 20 feet nearly perpendicu- lar wher wagons used to be let down by ropes and cattle unyoked to get down, but the road goes about one mile around now but is verry steep still.

16th we roled over another mountain and come to bear river at noon, rested 1½ hours then roled on down the river in the evening we crossd three verry swift creeks, within ½ mile the water was over belly deep in each, we upset our wagon at the bank after we had crossd the last one, broke nothing but a few bottols, one of pickles which was the most loss we went over some verry rough road for ¼ of a mile after we crossd the creek, then drove 2 miles farther campd on a beautifull branch good grass water and wood.

17th we drove 18 miles crossd one creek 2 rods wide 3 feet deep made a short turn around a bend of bear river, then took the bluffs campd in the hills, grass was good water plenty no wood some sage.

18th road hilly in the morning, come down a verry steep hill and got to bear river again at noon, beautifull road in the afternoon campd on a spring branch good grass some wood.

19th we come to a french and Indian trading vilage. they had horses and oxen that was rested to trade for others that was nearly give out, they also had liquors at one dollar per pint, we campd by a large spring grass was good, some willow brush, one snake Indian stayed all night with us, he was friendly and peacible we give him as much as he could eat.

20th fine road we come to the soda springs<sup>15</sup> at noon there was another french and Indian trading post here, there was a fine shower of rain it lasted for one hour, the first we have had for one month, there was also a boiling spring here, it foamed like a pot, but yet was cool. also a steamboat spring which come out of a hole in the rock about three inches in diameter it throwed the water from three to four feet high, once about every four of five seconds, the water was warm. the soda water sparkled some, and was sower but not palateable we drove about two miles in the afternoon and campd on bear river bank good grass plenty of wood by swiming the river about 100 yards wide

sunday the 21st we drove two miles and come to the forks of the cutoff and fort hall road, we took the fort hall<sup>16</sup> road becaus it was used the least and we thought grass would be the best, we come to

<sup>15</sup> Soda Springs is a town in what is now southeastern Idaho about fifty miles southeast of Fort Hall.

<sup>16</sup> That is, they decided to go farther north (50 miles) to Fort Hall before turning westward.

another large soda spring in the forenoon at 2 oclock we come to a beautifull branch and good grass, we loosed our cattle and let them eat one hour or more then hooked up and drove on good road, in the evening our cattle began to get sick they would rase theire cood and throw it out on the ground, we drove about one mile in this way and come to a creek and campt, we give each of our steers about one pound of fat meat, they would not eat any, good water grass and some wilow brush.

22nd our cattle was better and eating, we lay by all day for fear of hurting our teems by driving.

23d we hooked up and drove up the creek four of five miles and crosed it, it was very muddy and bad to cross. I saw one man get trowed [thrown] over a mules head by it sticking in the mud. he lit on his hands and feet in the mud up to his belly. we then went over a mountain and campt in the valley of Snake river, plenty of grass good water and dead cotton wood poles, which made it a first rate place to camp.

24th we hooked up and drove down the branch, crosed it different times, it was bad to cross, on the account of mud and steep banks. in the afternoon we struck into a sand plain, which was verry heavy drawing it was seven miles across, we then come to a creek and campt five miles from fort hall, good grass water and willow brush we had a fine shower of rain at dark which laid the dust.

25th we crosed different muddy branches in the morning we come to fort hall at 9 oclock there was butter and chickens for sale here chickens five dollars each, butter one dollar per pound we did not buy any, I saw potatoes growing verry nice here, they were out in bloom, we drove on, fine road, we crosed a branch of snake river in the afternoon, it was one hundred yards wide, and half way up on our wagon beds, we raised our load on top of the wagon beds and forded safe, we roled on and in the bottom of snake river<sup>17</sup> water grass and sage was good, moskitoes plenty the first we have seen.

26th we drove down snake river about 20 miles, road some hilly in places. we come by one place the river had about thirty feet fall nearly perpendicular, in the evening we crosed one verry steep hollow but short campt on th bank of the river grass and water good some sage, there was a light shower of rain in the evening.

27th we roled on crosed three creeks bad to cross on the account of rough rocks. left the river in the afternoon, drove nine miles over a ridge campt on a creek at the forks of the Callifornia and Oregon road,<sup>18</sup> grass good creek water plenty, some fish, sage scarce

Sunday the 28th we drove up the creek about 12 miles crosed it once bad to cross on the account of mud and steep banks, campt a[t] one oclock grass wild wheat and curns plenty we gethered curns and made pies, plenty of wilow brush for wood.

<sup>17</sup> The trail westward from Fort Hall was down the Snake River Valley. From Fort Hall to the Raft River, a tributary of the Snake, those bound for Oregon and California over the Fort Hall road used the same road.

<sup>18</sup> Near the mouth of the Raft River, about 80 miles west of Fort Hall, a road ran southward up the valley of that river to join the main California Trail. This is where Williams and those with him who were *en route* to California must have left the Oregon Trail.

29th we roled two miles crossed the creek muddy crossing, drove till noon then come to the cut off road rested one hour in the afternoon we come up to two men that had been making their way on foot one of them had took sick and dide under some willow bushes the other had his grave dug, some of us that could be spared from the teams stopt and helpt him to bury the dead man. in the evening we croshed the creek again drove two miles farther campt on a beautifull branch grass was good we got some peaces of wagon that had been left that answered for wood road fine and level

30th we drove about 10 miles over a ridge rested one hour on a branch some grass, in the afternoon we drove in to the hills there was a great many verry large rock some of them 200 feet high, we come into the salt lake road<sup>19</sup> in the evening, we drove about five miles farther and campt at sun down grass was good water scarce sage scarce and a poor place to camp

July 31st we come over some verry rough steep hills nooned on a branch good water no grass drove over some verry steep hills in the afternoon campt on goose vreek grass and water good sage plenty. there is men passing us now daily their teams has give out some has had their horses stole and they are obliged to try it on foot they are generally scarce of provision and we have none to spare.

August the 1st there was ice  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch thick this morning in buckets, we travled about 15 miles up the creek crossed one verry muddy branch road good campt of the creek bank grass good willow brush plenty.

2nd we left the creek in the morning and went up a spring branch about five miles croshed the branch muddy crossing, and left it drove over a ridge about 12 miles and come to thousand spring valley then campt plenty of spring water drove our cattle two miles to grass some sage, grass was thin but short.

3rd we left the springs drove about 12 miles down the valley, thence over a ridge of three four miles to cold water creek but no water, drove up the creek about 3 miles found some water standing in holes watered our cattle and rested one hour, and then drove about five miles farther up the creek, water plenty standing in holes along the creek and verry cold, then campt wild wheat plenty some grass some wild sage road good but dusty.

Sunday the 4th we drove about eight miles up the creek and come to the hot springs, the water was so hot that we could not bear our hands in it, we stopt one hour above the hot spring, plenty of cool running water in the creek grass good. the hot springs covered nearly  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an acre of ground, the water boiled up in the black ground in places which made a branch three feet wide 3 or 4 inches deep the smell was verry disagreeable, we then drove about one mile farther up the creek and left it, followed up a spring branch of a gradual ascent for about six miles then over one hill about four miles, then four miles farther down a valley to grass and water, we then campt at nine oclock at night on the head waters of marys river good water grass and sage.

5th we roled out at 7 oclock drove four miles and come to a creek

<sup>19</sup> The road from Salt Lake City which passed around the northern end of the Lake.

crossed it bad to cross drove four miles farther down the [creek] and crossed it seven times the road was verry rough and rocky drove two miles farther and got out of the canon and rested one hour good grass and water we travled about 10 miles down the bottom the creek sunk and rased again every two or three miles campt on the creek bank standing water plenty grass scarce, some sage.

6th a beautifull morning and some appearance of rain we roled on down the bottom about nine miles and come to another fork of the creek crossed it one rod wide 15 inches deep gravelly bottom rested one hour good grass. in the afternoon we travled about 10 miles down the river and campt on the bank good water grass clover and willow brush river two rods wide four feet deep

7th we travled 11 miles down the river good grass all the way, then crossed a creek 20 feet wide two feet deep, the bottom was then narrow we then travled over some small hills for six miles and then campt grass not verry good willow brush plenty

8th we drove about 18 miles down the river good grass all the way down campt on the river bank drove our cattle across to grass plenty of willows

9th we drove five miles and crossed the river it was 20 yards wide and up to our wagonbeds we also come to salt lake cut off road,<sup>20</sup> we then drove 2 miles farther and crossed the river again. drove 2 miles then drove 2 miles farther and crossed the river the third time grass was all the way from the first crossing drove one mile farther and crossed the river the fourth time the bluffs was between three and four hundred feet high nearly perpendicular on both sides then drove two miles farther the bottom getting wider and grass good we campt at two oclock and rested the remainder of the day

10th we drove five miles down the river crossed three small creeks then took the hills drove 6 miles and come to a small spring watered a little and drove four miles farther to the sumet of the ridge drove one mile farther and come to some springs drove six miles farther and come to the river road was some rough and verry dusty at last end of the days travel then drove two miles down the river and crossed it once and campt grass was verry poor willow brush plenty.

11th we travled 17 miles down the river good grass all the way timber scarce, parts of the road verry dusty about 8 inches deep campt on a slough near the river feed good, plenty of willow brush.

12th drove about 20 miles down the valley there was no grass or water near the road, in the evening we drove to the river and campt plenty of grass and willow brush.

13th the day being verry warm we travled about 15 miles down the river the road was level but verry dusty, campt on the river bank grass poor willow brush plenty

14th we drove 7 miles north west thence 8 miles south west campt on the river bank good grass willow brush scarce.

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<sup>20</sup> On July 27 (1850), the caravan left the Oregon Trail near the mouth of the Raft River. The movement was then south and southwest to the Humbolt River. The cut-off trail from Salt Lake City, passing south of Great Salt Lake reached the Trail coming from the Snake River about 75 miles directly west of the Lake and about 140 miles from Salt Lake City.

15th in the morning we drove 4 miles over the point of a mountain then come to the river drove 19 miles down the river<sup>21</sup> campd on the bank good grass.

16th we travled about 19 miles part of the way over verry sandy road, campd on the river bank, grass scarce and wood to.

17th we travled about 17 miles parts of the road verry dusty come to a ferry at noon but did not cross kept down the south side of the river in the evening campd on the river bank grass and water good willows small.

Sunday the 18th we drove about 20 miles with out water for our cattle the most of the road verry dusty but the day being cool our stalk did not suffer much campd on the river bank grass short wood scarce,

19th we drove 14 miles over verry dusty roads campd on the river bottom grass poor willow brush small and good spring watter which we have not had for some time past.

20th in the morning we took one german girl in our company who by the loss of friends and misfortunes of this trip was left nearly alone without teem or provisions, we then drove about 10 miles down the river bank road verry dusty campd at one oclock in the afternoon, grass scarce willows and sage plenty

21st we drove about 14 miles down the valley road verry dusty campd on the edge of the slough above the sink or lake grass and rushes plenty willows and sage brush verry small and scarce, water brackish, we dug some holes about 3 feet deep for water and got plenty of it but so salt that we could not use it for anything. the country for miles around is verry level and no vegittation growing except where the water is standing

22nd we drove 10 miles down the slough the road is verry level and soled [solid] with the exception of a few places where there was some mud we campd at noon on the edge of the slough and cut grass and rushes to do our cattle across the desert, grass was plenty we did mow a good swath willows there was none sage was verry scarce and small.

23rd we hooked up at half past 7 oclock in the morning drove 8 miles down the lake watered our cattle and rested one hour then drove four miles farther against 3 oclock which brought us to the lower end of the lake or sink, we then rested our cattle till half-past 5 oclock then watered our stalk filled up our water vessles which held about 25 gallons, we then roled out for across the desert, the road was beautifull level and soled as a pike we roled on till half past 11 oclock then rested one hour gethered some sage brush [Aug. 24] and made a cup of tea and eat a chesk [cheese] we then roled on till half past five in the morning we then give our cattle what grass and water we had for them built a fire of the wagons that was left and got breakfast we now see dead stalk all the time and wagons left as many [as] 6 to ten in a place, we roled on at half past 7 oclock at nine oclock we come to verry heavy sandy roads which lasted till we got through to Carson river, we rested one hour at noon and then roled on at 4 oclock we got to Carson river<sup>22</sup> no

<sup>21</sup> They were now on the long stretch of the Trail which followed the Humbolt River.

<sup>22</sup> The Carson River is in what is now western Nevada. It flows northeast from the Sierra Nevada Mountains to Carson Lake or Carson Sink, which is a few miles south-east of Humbolt Sink into which the westward flowing Humbolt River discharges.

grass but plenty of willow brous [browse] we got our cattle all over safe it was said by one man that counted the dead stalk and waggon that there was one thousand head cattle 1400 horses and mules, and 1000 wagons left on the desert a distance of forty miles.

25th we drove five miles up the river passed different provision stores, flower was 2 dollars per lb, bacon one dollar per lb. sugar 1.50 cents per lb, we campt on the river bank at ten oclock grass was short willow brous plenty and some cotton wood timber, we rested our stalk the balance of the day

26th we drove 14 miles up the river went across a desert of 12 miles then come to the river again the road was rocky and rough in places, we campt on the river bank grass was good wood plenty.

27 we travled 15 miles on the river road, 10 miles of the way over verry sandy road campt on the river bank under a few large cotton wood trees the first shade trees we have had for months plenty of good river water grass knee high of the best quality.

28th we travled 15 miles up the river crosed it at noon the road was rough sandy and dusty in places campt on the river bank grass not verry good wood plenty.

29 drove 8 miles and crosed the river there was provisions at this point flower was 1.25 cents per lb, sugar the same, pies one dollar each, we stopt till evening, then starting out at dark across a desert of ten miles, drove till three oclock the next morning a night travel of 15 miles then campt grass was short willows plenty.

30th we drove 7 miles across a desert come to the river at noon, campt grass and water good plenty of sage for wood pack train selling flower one dollar per lb, pork 1.25 per lb.

31st this morning is verry cool we roled on up the river bottom beautiful spring branches crossing the road every mile or two running from the mountains beautiful road bottom covered with wild clover and grass, the mountains covered with pine timber the top covered with snow, there is gold mines in the mountains here but not found plenty enough yet to be prophitable plenty of provisions for sale here flower one dollar per lb, we bought 10 pounds flower, sugar 1.25 cents, rice 1.25 cents brandy 50 cents per drink campt out from the river on a branch good grass wood and water day drive 16 miles.

Sept the 1st, drove 5 miles and campt by a branch of cool water good grass wood and shade trees 8 miles from the carson river canion we bought sugar at 1.25 cents per lb brandy at 1.25 cents per pint

2nd we rolled out got to the cannon at 11 oclock, we drove on through the cannon a distance of 8 miles the roughest road we have had on the trip, then drove one mile further and campt good grass and water one mile from the road plenty of cedar wood

3rd we travled eight miles up the creek parts of the road was verry rough and rocky thence one mile up the first Sirre Nevada mountain<sup>23</sup> the steepest and roughest road I ever seen before thence three miles down the mountain to a small valley where we campt drove our

<sup>23</sup> Since the Sierra Nevada Mountains were reached on September 3, the trip from the Missouri River (crossed May 18th) to the Sierras had requirled 109 days.

cattle one and a half mile to grass plenty of snow a short distance from us plenty of wood and water

4th we drove five miles to the top of another mountain parts of the road rough and steep, and parts covered with snow as much as 12 feet deep, thence seven miles down a divide parts of the road rough through heavy pine and cedar timber campt close to a spring or small branch drove our cattle two miles to a valley to grass, and bought flower at 37½ cents per lb.

5th we drove eight miles over hilly road, come to good grass at two oclock campt drove our cattle one mile to grass.

6th we cut some grass in the morning and roled out at half past ten drove eight miles over hills then come to sink springs and campt no grass but there was some willow brous and wild onions, there was different trading posts here flower 20 cts beef 50 cents pies one dollar each

Sept 7th we travled 12 miles over verry hilly road rocky in places large pines two or three hundred feet high and plenty of them, then we come to water watered our stalk and rested one hour then roled out again travled three miles up a large hill then the girl that was in our train got shot by a gun going off in a wagon that was a short distance before our company it was said to go off by the wagon jolting over the rocks, the girl did not get bad hurt as there was only two shot that struck her one on the side of her neck just cutting the skin the other in one breast but stopt against a rib or was said to by the doctor we had to camp there on the top of a mountain as the girl was bad scared and considerable hurt we was there without water or grass we drove our cattle about a mile to some bushes and let them brouse that night and carried our water two miles to cook with

8th the girl said she could stand it to ride in the wagon we hooked up and roled three miles to water part of the road verry rough thence nine miles further over hilly rocky and dusty roads we then come to water and campt there was no grass we had a little that we had halled for four days we give it to our stalk and cut blackoak timber for our stalk to brouse at,

9th we travled 10 miles campt in pleasant valley, cut black and bur oak timber for our cattle to brouse at the timber was verry full of mast, the road was very dusty

10th we travled ten miles and was in weaver town in the gold mines, the show for mining did look dull here as there was but verry little water and a man for every 10 feet square of mining ground we drove two miles farther toward Sac city<sup>24</sup> and campt at diamond springs there was a little dry grass hay worth 15 cents per lb, we cut some oak timber for our stalk but the cattle would not eat it,

11th we drove eighteen miles good road some dusty campt by a spring plenty of dry grass and oak timber rather scrubby

12th we drove 20 miles through a prairie country there was some scrubby oak timber the road was good, we campt on the Amerrikan river 10 miles from Sac city plenty of willows and dry grass

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<sup>24</sup> Sac City, a name applied to Sacramento.



13th we got to Sac city at noon beautiful road drove a little below town and campt grass was short and willows was plenty

14 we lade in load of provisions,

sunday the 15th we lay by still resting our cattle gambling was carried on to a high degree in this city

16 we left the City at noon crossed the American river drove four miles farther and campt on dry creek good dry grass but little water and wood

17th we drove 17 miles beautifull road campt on a small lake good grass plenty of water but little wood

18th drove six miles and crossed bear river at Nichlous [Nicolaus] thence eight farther and campt on feather river good grass plenty of wood and water

19th drove eight miles farther and crossed the Yuba river at Marysville<sup>26</sup> thence six miles up the Yuba river and campt good grass water and wood

20th we drove ten miles farther up the river and campt on parks bar where we stayed six months [to] April 20, 1851 thence to grass valley<sup>26</sup> Nevada Co where we stayed till we got our pile.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Marysville, about 40 miles north of Sacramento on the Yuba River.

<sup>26</sup> Grass Valley, about 30 miles east and a little north of Marysville, not far from Nevada City. As stated in the foreword, the last two lines of the diary had to be written some time after the events mentioned.

<sup>27</sup> Perhaps some of our readers will be interested in comparing this diary of John T. Williams with that of Taylor Snow which was published in the *Indiana Magazine of History* (Sept., 1932), XXVIII, 196-209. Mr. Snow, who probably lost his life in Humboldt Valley, made the trip from Indiana nine years after that of Mr. Williams. Much of the way the routes were the same.