

## Documents

### From Ohio to California in 1849: The Gold Rush Journal of Elijah Bryan Farnham

*Edited by Merrill J. Mattes\**

*and Esley J. Kirk\*\**

In the first part of the journal, published in the September issue of the *Indiana Magazine of History*, Farnham related his experiences from Independence, Missouri, to Green River near La Barge, Wyoming. The concluding portion of the diary which is presented below tells of his journey from Green River to San Francisco.

11th [July] Swam our cattle across in the forenoon in the afternoon the Mormons that have the ferry put our waggons across We gave them 8 dollars per waggon Again 3 O C were again encamped We hearded our cattle about 3 mls off the ferry The Mormons make a good lot of money off the passing emigrants not only by ferrying but by buying broken down oxen at cheap rates and clothin which the emigrants are glad to sell They told Gold stories to us There were also some 6 or 8 old trappers and traders some had been out in these wilds so long as to almost have forgotten their vernacular language.<sup>1</sup>

12th This morning started on a winding and mountainous corse<sup>2</sup> found plenty of water Camped 14 miles from our last had an excellent range of grass for our cattle and plenty of willow and sage wood near camp

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<sup>1</sup> Here is an interesting historical "flashback." From 1823-1824 when it was effectively discovered by Thomas Fitzpatrick, James Bridger, and other trappers of William Ashley's Rocky Mountain Fur Company, until 1840, Green River was the setting for intensive trapping forays of the "mountain men" as well as a succession of colorful "rendezvous" or annual carnivals of trading and debauchery which have been vividly described by Bonneville (Washington Irving's *Adventures in the Far West*, Philadelphia, 1837), by A. Wislizenus (*A Journey to the Rocky Mountains*, St. Louis, 1912), and more recently by Bernard DeVoto (*Across the Wide Missouri*, Boston, 1947). The handful of "old trappers and traders" referred to by Farnham were pitiful relics of this romantic and forgotten era, incapable of adjusting to the new trend of things, unlike Bridger, Fitzpatrick, and Kit Carson who set up trading posts or became professional guides.

<sup>2</sup> Beginning at Names Hill or Big Hill, Sublette's Cut-off had to negotiate mountainous terrain around the headwaters of Ham's Fork of the Green before reaching Bear River near present Cokeville, Wyoming, where it rejoined the Fort Bridger branch of the Trail for Fort Hall.

13th This forenoon went over a hilly road of steep ups and downs passed by a good many and mountain streams Nooned near a spring that was shaded by spruce pines 80 or 90 feet high Passed by a great many springs and runs this P.M. there are a great many runs caused by the melting of the snow We past a bank of snow near the road where the snow was about 14 feet deep Camped  $\frac{1}{2}$  a mile off the road near a bluff of rocks Had plenty of grass and found plenty of sage wood to burn it grows thrifty here The air today was full of mosquitoes and as we were a traveling we had to be continuously brushing with our hankerchiefs

14th Got an early start went to Hams fork of Green River it is a good sizable stream about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  rods wide  $3\frac{1}{2}$  deep Nooned here We saw the Eutaw Mountains to the S. W. ahead of us before getting here we passed a very delightful looking grove of young cotton woods There were here rose bushes and other rosy bearing shrubs There were a number of Springs in it In the stream were we nooned, we caught some trout I saw one in the stream that would weight 6 or 8 lbs For the whole of the afternoon were continuously ascending at first The ascent was very steep The teams had to [a] somewhat winding course The sides of the hile was ritch and produced some thrifty looking shrubs and luxurient grapes headed out In the ravines and more shady prts were yet snow banks It looked singular to see these hallows filled with snow while immediately around were grapes headed out There is another singular characteristick about this hile that is is also applicable to some others about here It is that while the sides are so steep too steep seemingly to hold again[st] the washes of the rain were as ritch as the richest alluvial soil of bottom lands. While the higher bench was too poor to produce the meanest kind of shrubery and I should not wonder that if it should produce 50 lbs to the acre It certainly has not been long since the entire surface has been covered with snow vegetation when the snow once leaves ground must come on twice as fast as in the states After going up about 2 m came to a bench  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile brood then assended gradual at night we camped by a grove of cotton[wood] and about 3 m from the top our cattle have had a steady pull this afternoon There was a great many cattle on the side of this hile that had probably had too hard a pull There was 25 springs in this grove near us This afternoon found a spring coming out of the steep sides of the ravines and the stream fell about 50 feet into a natural stone bason underneath The clearest and coolest water that I ever saw except in these regions Saw today two sage hens they were as large as geese We saw a great many marmots We have seen more or less for some 200 on [miles] back A packer put up with us to[day] There are [many] of these going through now a packing and depending on the charity of those who have [means] It is now indeed painful to see the numbers that are now reduced to this dreadful extremity Some to that have never seen anything like hard times before It must be dreary to them to look forward on the future when provisions will be more

scarce among the trains. A dreadful job they have before them when we consider that yet half the journey lays before them<sup>3</sup>

We are now on the hill that is said to be the dividing ridge of the Eastern side of the Great Basin. It is some hundreds of feet higher here than what the summit of the Rocky mountains [are] but that place is called the summit not because it is the highest point on the road but it is because it is the ridge that separates the waters of the Atlantic from those that run into the Pacific<sup>4</sup>. On one of the hills that we had descended in the afternoon there was two roads. One the new that our teams took went a great ways around. The old went very near. Directly down and in one place was a rock of about 10 feet perpendicular height. Those that passed over this road had to take their waggon apart and let them down by pieces with ropes.

15th Today we did not move our camp. So elevated was our situation that we could look a great ways over the hills that in our late journeyings we had passed over a hundred of miles or more. There is good luxuriant grass here and wheat that is headed out indeed our pasture here contrasts quite favorably with what we have been used to having. There is also patches of wild flax here. It is already full grown and begins to show forth its small blue flower. Some 2 or 3 men that were out this morning herding cattle came into camp telling that they had seen a grisly bear going into his den. A posse of about 70 of us got ourselves together took guns and went to his quarters. It was in a ravine one of the wildest of places we had to descend 300 or 600 feet down to the place said to be his castle. But with all our noise and firing we could not induce him to come out. So we had not the opportunity of showing what we were in a bear fight. One man was wounded by a stone being set a rolling from the top of a hill. This night we had a rain the first that has happened since we left the Black hills<sup>5</sup>.

16th This morning finished going up the hill. Then made a winding descent of 8 miles down it. There was an old road to descend by a shorter distance. But in order to descend waggon had to be taken apart. This afternoon came on to the Valley of Bear River. One of the most level that I ever saw. Barley here grows luxuriant and there are large extensive patches and they present the appearance of grain fields one or two weeks before harvest. This is a good fertile looking valley and looks capable of producing grains of various kinds as well as any land in the States. Yet there is no timber here only small willow bushes that grow

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<sup>3</sup> Losing stock and wagons, even losing loved ones, to stagger onward with hollow eyes and skeleton frames, such was a commonplace Trail experience. "Seeing the Elephant" was the curious term used by the California-bound emigrants to describe the accumulation of hardships and terrors which laid an estimated 20,000 of their number in Trail-side graves. The journey was a succession of unimaginable trials which either broke a man or gave him an increment of character which would stand him in good stead when he reached El Dorado.

<sup>4</sup> South Pass marked the Continental Divide. This ridge merely marked the divide between Bear River and Green River drainages.

<sup>5</sup> That is, Laramie Peak and its foothills, just west of Fort Laramie, in eastern Wyoming.

close to the margin of the stream<sup>6</sup> Had a sprinkle of rain this afternoon We find the musquitoes to be numerous about here and have to keep our hankerchiefs brigsly playing to keep them off At evening we turned off to the right and camped between two hills one the most rugged that I ever saw and camped on a little stream a tributary of the River After cooking and supper were done away with some went a fishing but did not succeed well and others kept at their old bussness of playing cards Those that have been using all their spare time since we started in playing seem as eager now to play when they get a chance as and others who at first seemed to be dreadfully opposed to seeing others play now seem to enjoy themselves the best when at a game Thus have some men [changed] in their notions

17th In starting we crossed the stream that we camped on 3 times in going 30 rods Then we went about  $\frac{1}{2}$  a mile over the roughest kind of a road here the waggons went bouncing over the rocks at a fearful rate the rocks some of them were two or 3 ft high and were thickly over the ground We had to keep to the side of the waggons and ease them as much as possible while going off of the higher rocks onto the lower<sup>7</sup> Came out of this narrow rocky pass in the Bear river valley again and went on a course paralell to the river This valley at first was about one mile wide and then widened out to an average of about 3 m Went in the afternoon a circular course to avoid a marsh then crossed Thoma[s] fork of Bear River It was very hard getting out of the river at the ford the bank was steep and the road was sideling A team ahead of us belonging to another camp turned over in going up the bank<sup>8</sup> I saw thousands of acres of good mowable grass and also large patches of wild flax Camped about a mile from the river having made about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles this stretch And our cattle grased in the extensive meadow of tall grass We had to cross the river for our wood.

18th This morning began traveling over a Mountinous road of long and steep assents and desents We got over in to the Bear river valley again at noon There were a great many wigams near our noon halt<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Bear River Valley was one of the bright spots on the journey. After the unfriendly desert and mountain stretches of Sublette's Cut-off, to the weary Easterner it offered pleasant homelike scenery and plentiful fuel, water, and game. Mosquitoes were almost the only sour note in this happy interval. Bear River describes a great hairpin turn northward into present Idaho, then south to empty into the Great Salt Lake. The main California Trail left it at the northern end of the hairpin, to go further north to Fort Hall, on Snake River, or to follow the Hudspeth-Myers' Cut-off west and southwestward.

<sup>7</sup> After viewing the valley of the Bear from the headwaters of Muddy Fork, the travelers still had a tedious descent to make here.

<sup>8</sup> Smith's Fork was named for Jedediah Smith, one of the most illustrious of the famous Rocky Mountain trappers, who many times hibernated in this valley. Farnham is apparently in error in designating this as Thoma[s] Fork.

<sup>9</sup> The Shoshone or Snake Indians, whose thieving tendencies and lousiness were common to all Indians of the period, were the first red men to be seen in their native habitat since Farnham left the Sioux at the South Platte crossing. The Shoshone, unlike the Sioux, remained

There were the habitations of the Shoshones or Snake Indians. They came to our camp and would sit down by us while we were eating. If we choose to give them anything they would take it without saying much. The squaws came to camp with their papooses leashed on their backs. These were fixed in a kind of a leather basket when at rest they managed them quite handily. They sit them down on the ground or when at home hang them up in the baskets by the leather strings with little ones tied to a pole. We tried in vain to buy a pony of these Indians. We sold one of our sick to one Mr. Smith who makes his home here with these Indians. We had 7 more sick and lame cattle but we thought we could get them along. Mr. Smith told us that we were about 100 miles from Ft. Hall. The grass here is from 2½ to 3 feet high and is of the most nutritious kind, a fine mountain grass. And there is patches of wild wheat breast high. Mr. Smith says that he has raised potatoes and wheat here.<sup>10</sup> There is also a Mormon living here with wife and family among these Indians. Went 6 m. over a level road and thru a beautiful valley and camped on Tullucks fork of Bear river.<sup>11</sup>

19th We started early and in the A.M. passed a good many small streams of pure running water and one spring and this afternoon crossed plenty of runs and passed springs of water of the purest kind. The roads this day were extremely dusty but they were good although they were a good deal hilly. We finished our travel by traveling through a canyon 1 mile long and just wide enough for the road. Camped by a small run skirted by willow bushes so that here we had wood handy. The ground around here is thickly strewn with lava. Indians came to our camp a visiting.

20th In traveling about 6 miles came to a stream that was colored red by oxide of iron. Its banks were also red. And when the rough at the bottom was stirred up it resembled the settlings of an old cider cask. After crossing this we went to some white looking mounds. There we found little circular basins on the top of each of these into which the water is forced up out of the ground to file. These mounds are white or red according to the nature of the water that runs out of the springs. The water in some of these springs are warm and in all these springs whether warm or cold it keeps in a kind of bubbling agitation. Of these white mounds the ground seems hollow underneath. The white

friendly to the white men throughout the frontier period, possibly because their mountain homeland was not so much coveted by the whites. Chief Washakie, for whom their present reservation in Wyoming is named, gets much of the credit for this state of affairs.

<sup>10</sup> The "Mr. Smith" of whom Farnham speaks was not Jedediah Smith, for he died in 1831 at the hands of Comanche Indians. It was possibly Thomas L. or "Peg Leg" Smith, a well-known old mountain man who had a Shoshone squaw. See Georgia Willis Read and Ruth Gaines (eds.), *Gold Rush: The Journals, Drawings, and other Papers of J. Goldsborough Bruff, Captain, Washington City and California Mining Association, April 2, 1849-July 20, 1851* (New York, 1949), 618-619; Irene D. Paden, *The Wake of the Prairie Schooner* (New York, 1944), 272-273.

<sup>11</sup> Tulloch was another old-time trapper. The creek, also known as Thomas' Fork, was just above the present Idaho State Line.

rocks of the mounds are in layers and are continually forming from the over flowing waters. There were some springs each on an obliques shape rock these had all ceased boiling over the top. The water merely raising into the basin of and then falling back and disappearing out of sight. On[e] a red colored mound was a large one entirely extinct<sup>12</sup>. Went from these about 2 miles crossed a small stream an affluent of Bear River. Camped in a beautiful Pine grove in the immediate vicinity of a number of beer [beer] springs. Among these collections are some 10 or 12 feet in diameter and 5-6 feet deep and are in a constant bubbling motion & continually throwing up a kind of effervescing gas so that it is impossible to drink the water immediately out of the springs. The water to some had a kind of an agreeable acid taste while others could not drink of them at all.

Off about a half a mile from this group of springs was the most admirable of all this went by the name of steamboat Spring. The basin of this spring was about one ft across and it was situated in the top of a rock that was about 3 feet high. This was red coloured from the oxide of iron contained in the water. The water spouted out to the variable height of from 2 to 3 ft accompanied with a noise resembling the puffing of a steamboat. Near this were also two springs that were evidently supplied by the same current of water for the action of these waters were simultaneous. Near this were extinct mounds with basins crater shaped and large in dimensions. Off near the Bluffs on the right of the road there are the craters of a great many of these extinct springs one we found emitted a kind of gas of a sulfuric smell strong enough to knock one back that was presumptuous enough to stick his nose close to the hole. Everything near and around these springs & the springs themselves excite in those that see them an intense interest because every one that looks at them cannot be assured that there is powerful and mysterious agency here at work and the conclusion is that fire and water have been in some former times performing busy operations and conceive that these extinct craters or basins to have been Geyser like those now existing in Iceland in proximity to Heckly a throwing water to the height of 300 feet or more. Such these have undoubtedly been is the conclusion one comes to in looking at them and the country around. After 4 hours rest that we had taken here merely for the purpose of inspecting this place and drinking the waters

We started on and in 4 miles came to deer hill<sup>13</sup> here the river that had been running a westerly course now ran to the south. We here took a cut off which [with] mires as a guide a camp of Mo [Missour-

<sup>12</sup> The curious phenomena of Beer Springs, Steamboat Spring, and Soda Springs, in the vicinity of the present Idaho town of Soda Springs, were noted and described in detail by almost all the overland journalists. The Soda Springs are still in evidence but the others have been submerged in recent years by a reservoir.

<sup>13</sup> This was also known as Sheep Rock. At this parting of the ways the Farnham party chose the Hudspeth-Myers Cut-off instead of continuing northward to Fort Hall, a trading post set up in 1834 by the New Englander, Nathaniel Wyeth, and taken over in 1836 by the Hudson's Bay Company. The majority who took the regular Fort

ians] had entered on as pilot yesterday at noon although not a waggon had been on before that time The travil since had worn it so it now looks like an old road of a good deal of travil Our course now was a kind of a w [western] direction here where we left the river to come on it no more the banks were so rocky and perpendicular that we could not get any water out of it We passed an old extinct crater of a Volcano off to the left of the road about one mile In going to this we went down a hill rough with lava rocks that by some volcanic eruption had forced out so as to give a buldging appearance to the side of the hill What a grand power has been operating here to thus run up these high hills The volcano crator is a oval shaped hill with a crator 100 yards in diameter We went 8 miles across the valley after taking the cut off and would have camped here had we found water but no finding any we went 4 miles further into the hills & when dark overtook us camped at last with out any water

21th This morning went 3 miles & came to a stream of the cool beverage here we breakfast and watered till noon and then went on again & over a succession of hills found a stream in 6 m & another in 9 m on the latter we camped This latter was a large stream & on the banks grew an impenatrable thicket of willows There is a of volanick rocks the den of innumerable snakes

22th Sunday Did not move our camp A man in our company having traded horses with an Indian Yesterday others came back today for a bargain but did not get it We had two showers today one with thunder

23th This morning for 10 miles had a good road through a hilly country and perfectly free from dust that had been layed by yesterdays rains Our cattle too seemed to look slicker and better by being washed by them They too had good pasture at our last camp We saw Indians today more filthy than any that we had before seen These are the diggers a tribe the most degraded of all These it is said live upon ants & grasshoppers anything that crawls Yes they pick lice out of their heads and eat them We saw them do it. And we did not wish to be near them<sup>14</sup> This afternoon went 7 m and as we traviled over our new road we could not but admire it. It seemed so well to avoid the steep pitches and the places it went through the hills seemed to be the only practible ones camped on a good cool stream crossed over on ½ m before having a natural bridge over it the hills here are thickly covered

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Hall route then followed down the south bank of the Snake River, crossing Port Neuf, Bannock, Fall, and Raft Rivers, thence turning up the Raft to meet the "cut-offers" at the mouth of Cassia Creek. Historians are of the opinion that this "cut-off," like most of the others, was an illusion, saving few miles and, while it saved some river crossings, it was otherwise over much tougher terrain. To judge from Farnham's statement, the cut-off was opened up just before his arrival by the "Company of Missourians," probably that of Hudspeth and Myers themselves. This explains the wording, "with mires as a guide."

<sup>14</sup> No one ever had nice things to say of the Diggers, a root-digging, poor-relative branch of the Shoshone who lived on the fringes of the Great Basin.

with Junipers bushes The duties here are tiresome and at night all feel fatigued

24th We commenced at 6 O C Our winding way over hills and through mountain gaps There was a fine field of grass along here and wild wheat grew breast high There was a good deal wild sage nooned in 12 m from our last nights camp In the afternoon after going one mile came to large [spring] 120 yds in circumference it had a fine gravel bottom This afternoon after leaving the spring traveled up a kind of canyon in 7 m the top this canyon was just wide enough for a waggon & no more It was high time to camp when we were at the top of this but there was no water here and we not knowing but we should find plenty of water had [not] furnished ourselves with any We made 5 miles of a desert to the nearest valley and then did not find any and as saw teams 2 miles ahead of us on the nearest side hill going on as if they had found no water we gave up the search for the night Went to rest supperless and thirsty

25 This morning got up from fevered slumbers started on the breakfast when we found water We crossed over one hill after another without finding any water in the valleys between some had begun to suffer but about 11 O C we saw the distant peak of a snowcapped mountain ahead This drove away all apprehension of imminent danger But we got to a spring about 12 O C Then we dissipated on this as it then seemed the most luxurious of all beverages This afternoon had an election of officers in our com

26th Soon as daylight dawned we were on the road and for the whole day wended our way through a narrow mountain pass found plenty of water today and at night camped in a grassy valley of 50 or 60 acres and on a considerable stream To night finished our election

27th After traveling 4 miles came out into a large extensive valley overgrown with artimesia and little burry weeds in this valley The large stream that we camped on last night lost itself in the desert sands After getting a little ways into this every thing assumed a most arid appearance The cobble stones had a burnt appearance and the air was filled with a cloud of white dust Went 18 miles across this arid place and at night camped on raft [?] river<sup>15</sup> We are now thru the cut off

28th This day we found plenty of water all along To night camped on Rattle snake creek one mile off the road had good feed though rather dead and dry and willow bushes for fuel

29th Still kept encamped

30 This morning set out and wended our way through hills rough & rocky found plenty of water and tonight had greasewood and sage for fuel<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Raft River.

<sup>16</sup> At the head of Cassia Creek, originally Cache Creek, unnoticed or at least unnoted by Farnham, was another scenic feature of the Trail—City of Rocks. Just beyond this was Junction Valley, where the main Trail was joined by a direct wagon road from Salt Lake City.



31st Had 7 miles to go to get to goose creek In 2 miles came to a run in crossing this run an axeltree broke this caused a stop of ½ hours We now went over hills the roughest road was a bad one and would not have been practible to any but a California emigrant<sup>17</sup> The traile on the hill sides was so sideling that we had to hold up the waggons to keep them from turning over. Aggain it went over the high clifty tops Then the descents were frightful to look at We rough locked them and pulled back on them with our ropes To look up at waggons coming down it did not seem as if they could be held back to come down steady but yet they were To look up at the waggons toward the top they looked as if they were on end After reaching goose creek we traviled up along it 11 miles and camped for the night there is about 60 or 70 rods wide bottom long along this creek On the right ha[n]d side of the creek is a range of high hills with perpendicular sides the top appear to be over jutting on this side

August The 1st

Followed along goose creek and its tributaries 9 m Then in 4 m passed by a collection of warm springs Then passed by a body of execavated sand stone rocks struck again the creek followed it 5 miles further it run through a rocky Kanyon high on each side with rough back looking bassalt rocks The hills looked like a pile of rocks They were so bare of earth we were visited by some Indians while at the warm springs<sup>18</sup> We left the stream 3 O C in the afternoon After filling our kegs with water Then after traviling tile night camped in the sage plain here there was no grass for our cattle

2th Went 7 miles to water here we found several spring ishing out at the foot of a bassalt rock These were warm yet the water could be drank We then went 4 m to a well and nooned by There was grass here & we gave the cattle 4 hours to eat here we filled our kegs and went 6 m here we found good grass in a flat that was about 1 ½ miles wide We have been passing this afternoon over hills of white clay & the stones were of the same coulour here are sage & greesewood & Juniper bushes

3rd We traveld 10 m through the same valley Came to several Springs boiling up out of the ground in 4 m came to a stream passing down the valley near this a stream of hot water run alongside of the road off from the road were hot springs in the immediate vicinity of these were

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<sup>17</sup> This is a masterpiece of understatement. Substantial portions of the great covered wagon road have, since the Gold Rush, been visited by only the most adventurous ranchers or antiquarian researchers. Considering the incredible terrain over which the Forty-niners had to travel, their success in getting even a substantial fraction of their wagons through to their goal is a lasting triumph of the human spirit. Here the emigrants crossed Granite Mountain before reaching the head of Goose Creek, following which southwesternly course took them across the northeast corner of present Nevada.

<sup>18</sup> From Goose Creek to the head of Humboldt River drainage, a succession of Warm Springs—Rock Spring, Emigrant Spring, and the seepages of Thousand Springs Valley—make life tolerable.

cold springs and mile from these we found a good spring by which we encamped 3 cattle mired here in the spring We had to pull them out

4th Travild 6 miles & came to some good Springs then assended a mountain range went 2 miles to the summit & 2 miles down it to the other side We here nooned There was no water here only in a hole that we soon exhausted Some Indians came here to us The road forked again we took the right hand one and in 4 m we came to a stream of water one tributaries of the Humbolt Went along it 3 m camped in a Kanyon Had good feed for our cattle and willow wood

5th Lay still today we have now 2 on the sick list Capt H & H.D. An ox swamped in the stream and we had to pull him out

6th We went 4 miles over a descending rocky road & crossing the creek 9 times in gettin out of the Kanyon On each side of this there huge piles of bassaltie rock In this kanyon was a warm spring 15 ft long 8 ft wide We here went through a valley & the stream here lost itself in the sands only apearing puddles at intervalls

7th After 6 miles travil came to another branch of the humbolt and crossed it And 4 miles lower down we saw the main humbolt c[r]ossing down the mountain on our right running near a western course went along the river two miles and nooned There is good grass here and patches of wild flax a line of Willows mark the cours of the stream Nor was this valley entirely lacking in floral buties. There were here patches of blue flowers and the vareious greeswood was topped with a yellow flower<sup>19</sup> The mountains that were covered white with the fresh fallen snow now began to show some lure [bare] spots

8th Travild 4 miles and came to the end of the valley We then travild rather a west direction over the bluffs here river makes its way through the mountain We now ocasionally tuck [track] the river 8 miles travil over these bluffs brough us into a valley of the river 2 m wide The water here is not verry good but the stream is still increasing grass good went 6 miles down the valley and stoped for the night D T 18 m

9th We travild 10 down the same valley At the end of this valley we found a road runing west over the mountains We kept a S.W. Course Followed the river in its meandering Course through the mountain

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<sup>19</sup> After descending Bishop Canyon, the travelers crossed over to Humboldt Wells, near present Wells, Nevada, to pause there before undertaking the ordeal of Humboldt River. For all of its stingy and fetid water, its rockiness, choking dust, skulking Ute and Diggers, and rotted carcasses, this was the lifeline to California. The Trail crossed and recrossed the thin stream tortuously in a vain effort to find a smooth grade. At times it cut across stretches of outright desert. Over half of the animals were lost on the Humboldt stretch, either run off by the natives or collapsed from exhaustion. The Humboldt, named by Frémont for the famous German traveler, was originally called Mary's River, so-named for the wife of the Hudson's Bay trader, Peter Skene Ogden. The old Trail along the Humboldt is roughly followed by the present U.S. Highway 30.

Crossing it 4 times in going 6 miles Grass scarce D T [Day's travel]  
22 Yesterday I for the first [time] have to ride

10th We travild A M [6 miles?] West Had a good road There was not much grass Crossed a stream of good cool water Went 1½ m after crossing this & camped for the remainder of the day

11th Left the river as soon as we started travild over steep bluffs for 10 m and came to a Spring but there was not enough water here so the cattle could drink Here we went into a deep Canyon which we followed 8 miles Then we came to the river valley here 2 m wide and went down it 2 m the valley here was good deal overgrown with sage & grass was very scarce

12th Sunday

Traviled down the river valley here bounded by mountains on both sides Found tollerable grass in places The white dust lay in the road 5 or 6 inches deep and there was all the while a cloud of it in the air D T 15 m

13th We still travild down the river & crossed it once Its course is marked by a dark line of willows This is our fuil here The grass is very scarce and sundried D T 14 m

14th At first we had a strong piece of road left the river for ten miles then came on it again and followed the corse of it through a wide valley found good grass

15th Sumtimes travild along the river and Sumtimes over bluffs away from it

16th Began by traveling 6 miles in a circuitous direction Then left the river and went 6 miles through a canyon Then left the river and went then 4 miles down the river & camped D T 18 m grass poor The valley near the river which we have of late been passing over although so disty now I conclude must at some Seasons be a perfect marsh This I infer from the quantity of shells here so numerous as to whiten the ground we had a Sprinkle to day it has been cloudy two or 3 days past

17th We commenced our days Journey by Crossing a deep mily [miry] slough of Alkill strong as a wet pile of ashes Then continued our Course down the river valley We had deep dust and plenty of wind to make it circulate I did not have to ride this afternoon There are high mountains on both sides of the valley here about 4 miles wide A man and two small boys went past us with their packs on their back they had packed from the willow Springs There are a great many packers along here now they have a great time of it a camping in the willows or in the dust plains at night without tenting We had good grass to night

18th Still continued our route down the valley There was not a cloud except it is of dust to be seen The valley was here full 15 miles wide We have had Sand road it was easy to the Cattles feet but hard

to get over We had sand hills to go over that took hard pulling We crossed the river to the left hand side of it One of our men G.G.—in shooting gun that had been loaded for some time had it busst in his hands Causing a flesh wound in his right arm The members of our Company have been exempt X untile this from any acidents arising from from the discharge of fire arms Yet from the carlessness with which guns have been handled the escape from such acidents has been more from good luck than from than from the risk of those that shoot

19th Sunday Layed by untill 7 O. C then went on 6 miles We passed a Company that had been laying by on account of the indians having Stole their Cattle last night some of the Company had chased the Indians into the mountains but the Indians kept them at bay by roling rocks down onto them from the peaks The indians commit a great depredations of this kind of late Sometimes they yet come with but a great many times escape with impunity

20th Went 2 m & crossed to the right hand side of the river In a mile from th[is] came to road that left the river for 14 m ½ m from this came to another one & in a mile from this another going to the right this we took This was 13 m to the river again from accounts this was the best road not so sandy as the other two our only hard place was going up a sand hill from the river bottom Our cattle had nothing to eat this night but willows and bulrushes

21th Started early traveld until 11 O.C. A.M. and having went 7 m remained here until 1 O. c P M to let our cattle fill themselves all they could they had to do on Willow & bulrushes Now we took the dessert road We went 14 m and stoped to take supper after one hours stop again went on The mountains which in the last rays of the sun on yesterdays afternoon looked like a blue cloud to our front now had the same indistinct aperence to our rear The night was warm and comfortable

At 10 O.C. on the morning of the 22 We stopped to take our breakfast at this place was wells dug in the white clay but we were unable to get water either for ourselves or cattle one or two crackers a handful of beans and a couppe swallows of water had to do us for breakfast & dinner & supper which we took at one sitting Started on after two hours rest and kept on a continual move untill 7 O. C. at night here we terminated our desert march by coming to a hot spring as large as a good sised lake anothere was obnoxious Sulfurick smell that came from it Yet we had got over safe we suffered a little for water but not as much as we might if some had [not] rode ahead and fetched [some] back for the rest There was some on the deasert of whom it looked like a hard sight that they would get over. This is a hard place on cattle it makes them give out fast There was one train had the forth of their cattle give in going up one hill so that they had to leave them and in the latter part of the road when sandy the cattle were given out to a surprising rate some of the first left were dead the others generally had about enough life to turn up their heads to look at us as we

passed Thus they were in every direction Thus finished our desert journey of about 60 m here our cattle got drink but no grass

23rd Went 5 miles to grass here we found another very large hot spring temperature 184 deg There was fiddling and dancing in the camp tonight

24th & 25th Lay by till 2 O. C P M then tired another desert march This was 25 m across had a few miles of bad sand road We got across in a very weary state Three of our cattle gave out of our teams The valley here is extensive we got water in a glade shaded by bull-rushes High Mountains rise at the terminations of the valley on every side A train got in here last night for Oregon City<sup>20</sup> it is of 12 waggons & has an escort with it of 2 officers & 2 privates When they came to our camp we drank down their talk with gapping wonder They were going to Ft Hall An old mountaineer started out to find a road to the head waters of the Humboldt The trains were to lay here till he got back They had but got 12 m out till they came across 4 Indians and got in an affray with them A man with Scott was killed & himself was wounded The man killed was shot through the back

26 Lay by the Oregon train buried the man that was killed yesterday they dug his grave and put him down in the middle of the hard road

27 After getting our teams again in motion we went 8 miles to a kanyon There were two roads that led over this ridge into the Kanyon The right hand road was so hard to ascend that the teams had to double the left was [easier] to ascend by [but] bad to descend Then after crossing a little valley we came into a kanyon 21 miles in length This a passage between 2 perpendicular walls of basaltic rock 3 & 400 feet 21 m long and in some places just wide enough to admit the wagon track between Passed a cave of considerable size in the rocks To night had all that was needful for camping

28th Continued our road through the kanyon which had now got to be a tiresome one to us road some part stony The wind blew through here with great force and violence Saw two waggons to day that had been upset in pools of 5 or 6 feet in depth at the side of the road This evening got out into a valley 2 m long by  $\frac{3}{4}$  wide We camped in this valley

29th Crossed this valley and came into another Kanyon 4 miles in length passage very difficult here a stream run through and we had to drive along on the rough bed of rocks at the bottom of it Camped soon after getting through this There was a large concourse of trains with us

30th Took an early start and went through a region of sage passed sage a shallow stream in Sage Valley kamped in a Kanyon  $\frac{1}{2}$  m from the lake.

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<sup>20</sup> The Oregon City train probably reached the Humboldt by a route pioneered in 1846 by the Applegates, through northern California.

31st Made 2 moves today but did not go in all but 3 m

September 1th

went 15 to dry lake and crossing it camped without water We were now in 6 miles from the mountain but could not see them distinctly<sup>21</sup>

2d Commenced our travil along the border of the dry the lake bed of the through a grassy valley The tall Siera was on our left Covered with magnificent finery [pines?] along its whole extent There pines coverd hills contrasted well with those barren plains There were plenty of streams a running from the mountains The prospect was that our Suffering for water was over Camped on the eastern base of the mountain for the last time For to morrow by good luck we expected to cross

3d This morning Commenced the assent got up part of the waggons at a time because we had double teams got across this ridge of the mountain & 4 miles into the valley on the other side and camped near a pine grove water & grass we We found in plenty

A waggon belonging to Cammels parted from the team that was ahead of the tounge and dashed down the mountain side with the tounge yoke to it The trees here are the largest that I ever before saw There are gients in comparison to others trees of 7 or 8 feet is not unusual or to see them 200 ft hi

4th Went past goose lake a large body of shallow water Camped to night near bogg spring passed streams every two or 3 miles

5th Nooned on Kanyon creek in the evening took by a road that lead off to the right & camped on the same stream

6 Last night the indians shot thier arrows into 8 of our Cattle while there was a guard over them and 4 were killed on the spot They done this and were off again directly We packed up the cattle that had been killed by the Indians & between us & the hungry packers that came along we used up the flesh of the dead cattle so clean that the diggers did not get a morsel for thier pains Started at 7 O. c P M and got into the main road again Our cattle had good feed this was on Pitt river<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Because of his failure to identify geographical features, and his indefinite mileage figures, it is very difficult to trace Farnham's route with exactness through Nevada and California. It is clear, however, that, like a great many other Forty-niners, his train's captain decided to follow the above-noted Missouri train under Myers and Hudspeth, and leave the main Trail at Lassen Meadows. The main Trail dropped south from the vicinity of present Humboldt, Nevada, following the course of the Humboldt River to the Sink, thence crossing the hottest part of the desert to the head of the Truckee and Carson Rivers for a direct approach to Sutter's Fort (Sacramento). Lassen's Cut-off, taken by the Myers and Farnham trains, headed straight west from the Meadows, across some more scorching desert and the Sierra. Farnham's "Dry Lake" and "Goose Lake" seem to be identifiable with the more commonly known Mud Lake and Honey Lake, the latter astride the Nevada-California line.

<sup>22</sup> The Upper Sacramento was also known as Pit River. If Farnham really meant this river, then he was far to the north of Lassen

7th After making 18 miles We camped in 2 miles of a mountain gorge or Canyon

8th Got on the Sacramento These having got to the kanyon went 7 m and nooned and in the afternoon Continued our weary winding way through the kanyon & dark overtook us before we found a camping place It was in a valley & mires train was there The river ran through this D T 18 miles The road we went over was bad D T 18

10 [9th] Continued our Corse over high hills they were steep and bad crossing In the afternoon went 11 miles in a valley 25 miles square the largest of the upper Sacramento passed a lake 5 miles before we stopped for the night

10th Continued on our route through the valley & finding no grass filled our casks here & went on the mountain to noon This afternoon we found the roads rougher & more rocky than any that we had before went over A night Camped without water after going 8 miles over the mountain Stopped after sundown

11th We went 2 m & found water & grass Stopped let our cattle graze & we took our morning meal From this we went 10 m to grass & water again This we had to do on a rough mountain road verry rough & rocky the mountains we passed through were heavily timbered with the tallest of timber On one hill we had to double teams Our cattle to night ranged among the timber

A great many to night were Congratulating themselves on being nearly through Some have been thinking themselves near through to the Settlements for some time when we left the Humbolt only two days less than a month ago We expected to reach Fether river in going 150 m We relied in a One sur [Mister?] Mires who said this could be done he was an old trapper in these mountains he had in his previous life been on 4 different excursions a trapping for game in these mountains We thought that he knew all he pretended to know & could do all the pretended he could do With this though[t] & with the confidence We had in him that he knew the road as well as any old teamster of the States knows the pike we followed He with his train had also guided us once before in a cut off between ft Hale [Hall] & the Salt lake That time he found us a good road much better than we had expected to find it and it was so much Shorter than the other ways that we were much pleased with ourselves in going it We beat by two days teams that took other tracks we expected to find like advantages here Now we have travild over 4 hundred miles since leaving the Humbolt A great many are talking about what they will do when they will get into the Settlements to morrow they are shure to do it They think they already have gone further than they would have had to in any other

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Peak, and had wandered off the Trail. As the entry of September 11 proves, the Farnham train, following in the tracks of the train led by Myers, the same who blazed the cut-off through lower Idaho, made an uncommonly long and unorthodox detour to the north instead of turning west from Honey Lake to the head of Feather River.

route to get to a California settlement to have went to the Feather River we should have turned off by the mud lakes To our left and have drove over their beds which these Pioneers or guides expected to find dry like that of the bed of the dry lake that we traveled over a good deal before getting to the mountains We could not do it for then they were said to be too high so After the failure we had to take this round about way This was trying even to the patient to have to travel so far after imagining themselves to be near in and a great many had harbored hard thoughts against Miller although they were not solicited by him to take this road nor did he himself praise it up to anybody When he took it he did not encourage any but the special train that he was guiding through to follow him Yet he took the road himself he was guiding a train of about 70 waggon there were more Women and Children in it than in any other train Folks New that he took this they supposed that when he took it to better himself they supposed that if he could better himself They could stand the same chance They counted their risks to run as small as his if a train with women & children could get through they supposed a train of men of course could

With this kind of reasoning they were sufficiently prompted to follow in his track over this untrodden wild We all at this stage of the journey get very anxious to get out of these wild And to one that had been here as often as he was said to be they gave their dependence The confidence that they placed in him the great Desert God—as some called him as if he were superhuman The most of the trains were getting hard run for provision and when we were in a good camp we could not make ourselves comfortable for this thing was wanting Some were not entirely out of all but of some essential portion Our beef had run out and we were again without meat We had bread & we had coffee There Were some especially packers that had nothing of no kind such those that had had to help while they scrimped themselves But what mattered these things now For to morrow surely every one thought & said We will be into Lawsons<sup>23</sup> There we can certainly get all that we want So who cares Then we will be over & through and have a joyful time To night we slept on these anticipations until The dawn of the

12th We went 6 miles to water & breakfasted here we met a party of persons going the other direction They were out on a scout were going as far as Goose Lake Lawson was himself with this party and at the head They gave us news where we were & fed our imaginations with the greatest kind of gold stories

What they told us set us back considerable in our journey They all told us that we were yet 150 miles from the settlements This seemed

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<sup>23</sup> The Peter Lassen ("Lawson") Ranch, at the mouth of Deer Creek, a tributary of the Sacramento, was the immediate goal of this train. Lassen himself appears the next day in the role of scout and promoter. He purposely encouraged emigrants to follow his cut-off to this trading post; but historians have compared notes and agree that his route, by and large, was just as rough as the regular direct route to Sutter's Fort, and it was much longer, even assuming that you did not get lost.



hard to be believe because it not suit our hops wet it had to be The evidence was made clear by lawson saing so himself and they also informed us that we had a 36 mile Desert also to go over Meires was the subject of many a Curse and bitter raviling his situation as leader was an unenviable one It seems as if to be the leader of an emigrant through a wilderness is one of the most unenviable distinctions It is now and always was sume may think the children of Iserel in the Wilderness were a clammersome set but they were nothing more than what folks now are To night we got in a valley 2 or 3 m long reached it after dark D T 20 m

13th This morning the company met for the purpurs of Dissolution all got discharges but 6

14th This day went 14 m Camped by a lake the head of fether river the stream flowing from this is about 30 ft wide There is good grass here

15 Lay by all day the treasure of our company was divided

16th To day although we got an early start we only went over 12 m the roads were to bad camped on feather River The valley was large but the ground was mirey We to night pulled two oxen out of the mud

17th Another steer that had got in the mire We left Went to the valley of the South branch of the fether river here nooned and Cut grass for the desert ahead

A great part of this we cut with our knives In the afternoon went and and was till long after dark

18th Went 9 miles over a very rough stoney crossing a stream a great many times

19th Went 12 miles but did not get much grass crossed a stream 4 miles back there was no valley at this place

20th We went about 3 miles fro mour starting place Then we began decending and kept decending very rapidly the whole forenoon At noon we had got out of the apline regions into the regeions of Oaks here we had to cut limbs for our Cattle to brows upon One man cut himself severely with a hatchet by falling on it from the top of a tree while he had it in his hand in the afternoon We assended and decended hills our course lay over the most barren mountains that we had seen on the extreme top of these were oak as high as a mans head or less these were the fulest of acrons of any trees that ever I saw here on the summit We could see any number of ranges one after the other and While thus standing on the Summit many an eye was looking to discover some sign of the promised land for it seemed the eye could look over these and in the dim blue visty of the distance see the termination the last We desended before stoping Was very long and steep and a great deal of care was required to get the waggons down safe We got water tonight by driving them  $\frac{1}{2}$  miles to water over rough rocks

We also lay at the foot of a hill a little from the perpendicular this had to be assended if we went any further but we hardly knew how

21 Here we doubled & threbled teams to get up the hill took us all day and it was as hard a days walk as we had in the whole seige Our cattle got so tired out at last that all that 14 yoke could do was to haul up an empty waggon This was a hard time on both men and cattle For here both man and brute has gest barely enough to eat to keep alive and enough to give strength We lived on cracers and coffe the cattle on got scarcely anything

22 Got underway about 10 O C A M This evening a man met us with some beef cattle he kiled one for the trains here It came good being the first meat we had for some time We could hardly restrain our apetites in any thing of a proper degree

23 This day about 12 O C We got to deer creek This ended our journey to Californy for we were now Near One of the Settlements yet we were 120 from Sacramento Citty and about 300 from San francisco We stayed here 3 days