

Journal of the Oregon Trail

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“Rebels Cove.” Here he died February 6, 1887, leaving a devoted family consisting of a wife and seven children.

Henry Clay Dean, eminent divine, statesman, philosopher, and a leader of men, is dead. The highest meed of praise that could be tendered him is that “the world is better from his having lived in it.”

Sedalia, Missouri.

JOURNAL OF THE OREGON TRAIL.

In the spring of 1852 there was organized among the citizens of Cedar township, Van Buren county, Iowa, an emigrant train of about twenty-five wagons. Each wagon was drawn by from three to five yoke of oxen. In the company were, Paul Brattain and family of seven adult persons; William Newman; Lafayette Spencer; Charles Spencer and wife and two children; Henry Newman; George Gimple; Michael Smith and his wife, two sons and a daughter; George Hammonds; Henry Hammonds; Jacob Whetstone and family; George Taylor and family; Robert Carter and family; Adam Barnes and family; Oliver Mitchell and family; John Hilary and family; Napoleon Baker; William Howard and family; Charles Adams and family; Thomas Clark and family; Thomas Whetstone and family; Nicholas Boley and family; John Boley and family; James Watson and family; Hill Watson and family; Iradel Anderson; Mathies Anderson; George, James and William Ebert; Henry and Sloan Keck.

Paul Brattain was best known to the Iowa public of any in this train. He had served in different official capacities, the most important being as Treasurer of the Des Moines River Improvement Board of Public Works.

To assist his brother, William, who expected to follow in 1853, Lafayette Spencer kept a diary of his trip to Oregon, which he transmitted with a letter after the journey ended. This letter and the diary in the quaint diction and orthography of the writer are herewith presented with no more than necessary alterations.

E. R. H.

December 27, 1852.

Dear Brother:

I now embrace the present opportunity of writing a few lines to let you know that I am well at the present time, hoping that these few lines will find you all well. I have not much to write about at the present time. I have traveled a good deal in Oregon. We started from John Newman's near Oregon City the eighth day of November for the Rogue River gold mines. We traveled some two hundred and fifty miles to south Umpequa river. It rained so much that the roads got so bad that we could not travel with our wagons. We stopped on Cow creek to wait for the waters to run down and prospect for gold, but could not make it pay very well. * * * We lacked some seventy miles of getting to Rogue river but it commenced snowing and snowed for fifteen or sixteen days in succession. The snow is over two feet deep and still snowing. I do not know what will become of our stock for the people have no feed to give them. The pack mules are beginning to die now of hunger. * * * I will stay here until the winter breaks up, then I will go to Rogue river. * * * I have traveled all through the Willamette Valley. It is about 20 miles wide and is cut up with hills and mountains. All the land that is worth anything is cleaned up. The Umpequah Valley is not as good as the Willamette Valley, nor half as big. All of the best of the claims are taken up. I shall advise you to stay where you are, but if you want to come you must start by the first of April with six or seven yoke of oxen to the wagon and as much as one or two hundred dollars in cash. You will find it a long, tedious journey to travel. I send you my journal that I kept on the road through to Oregon. Mr. Newman is gone on to Rogue river. I am staying here in Umpequa with the team and provisions until I get word from him what to do. I live fat and saucy. Direct letters to Kanyanville, Douglass county, Oregon.

WILLIAM SPENCER.

LAFAYETTE SPENCER.

LAFAYETTE SPENCER DAY BOOK.

My 11th. 1852. Started from home Pass through Birmingham and camp on the East fork of Lick Creek.

12th Pass through Libertyville and Ashland and camp at The Agency.

13th Pass through Autumwa. Cross the Des Moines River and camp 8 miles west of Autumwa.

14th Camp on Colt Creek 2 miles west of Albia the county seat of Monroe county.

15th Camp on the 14 miles Between Albia and Charidon Point in Lucas County.

16th Camp on Grave Creek 4 miles west of Charidon Point.

17th Camp on Camp Creek in Clark County.

18th Camp on seven mile Creek in Union County

19th Camp on Twelve Mile Creek Cross Grand River at Pisga the old Mormon Town.

20th Camp on Nodawa Creek in Adair County.

21st Camp in a grove one mile west of the Road.

22nd Camp on a creek six miles East of Indians town.

23rd Camp near Neshynobotany.

24th Camp on Silver Creek in Potawatimny County.

25th Camp at Council Bluffs 2 miles Below Kanessville on the Missouri.

26th Lay by.

27th Lay by.

28th Camp on Missouri River 10 miles above Kanessville at the upper ferry.

29th Lay by.

30th Cross the Missouri River in the night and Camp on the west Bank.

31st Travel 18 miles Camp on Papeea Creek Good grass.

June 1st Travel 10 miles Cross the Elk Horn River and Camp on Bridge Creek Good grass

2nd Travel 15 miles Camp on a Lake to the Left of the Road Good grass.

3rd Travel 20 miles Camp on Shell Creek Good grass.

4th Travel 24 miles Camp on Loup Fork near the Ferry Good grass.

5th Lay by. Nancy Spencer taken Sick.

6th Travel 4 miles Cross the Loup Fork and camp on the Plaines

7th Travel 18 miles and Camp on Loup Fork Good grass

8th Lay by for Mr. Smith to get up with us

9th Travel 22 miles and Camp west of the Cold Spring Good grass

10th Travel 16 miles and Camp near Prairie Creek Nancy Spencer died at 9 o'clock P. M. and Burried at 8 o'clock A. M. the next morning

11th Travel 16 miles and Camp on Wood Creek

12th Travel 15 miles and Camp on the Plat River Good grass

13th Travel 24 miles Camp on Plat river opposite Fort Kenney.

14th Travel 16 miles Camp on Buffalo Creek grass fair

15th Travel 15 miles Camp on Plat River near willow Lake grass fair

16th Travel 15 miles Camp on Plat River Good grass

17th Travel 15 miles Camp on the Plat River near Skunk Creek Good Grass

18th Travel 7 miles Camp on a small Creek Robert Carter Died with colrhea

19th Travel 18 miles Camp on Plat River no more Timber for two hundred miles

20th Travel 15 miles Camp on Plat River Good grass

21st Travel 20 miles Camp on Wolf Creek and Spring

22nd Travel 10 miles Camp on Rattle Snake Creek

23rd Travel 8 miles Camp on Plat River near Cedar Bluff Good grass

- 24th Travel 22 miles Camp near Castle Creek Good grass their is a postoffice kept their I wrote back
- 25th Travel 20 miles Camp on Plat River Good grass
- 26th Travel 18 miles Camp near Ancient Bluff Good grass
- 27th Lay by on the account of sickness
- 28th Travel 16 miles Camp near Chimney Rock Good grass
- 29th Travel 18 miles Camp on Plat River near Scott Bluff Good grass
- 30th Travel 25 miles Camp at Blue Stone Cliff on Plat River
- July 1st Travel 25 miles Camp on Plat River seven miles East of Fort Laramie
- 2nd Travel 15 miles Pass Ft Laramie and Camp on Plat River near the United States farm
- 3rd Lay by Grass scarce their I wrote Back again
- 4th Travel 16 miles through the Black Hill road verry Rough Camp on Plat River Grass scarce
- 5th Travel 14 miles Camp on a small Creek in the Black hills
- 6th Travel 16 miles Camp on Platt River Grass scarce
- 7th Travel 10 miles Camp on Plat river grass scarce
- 8th Travel 15 miles Over verry rough and hilly Camp on Plat River Grass scarce
- 9th Travel 12 miles Camp on Plat River one mile South of. the road
- 10th Travel 12 miles Camp on Plat River grass scarce
- 11th Travel 10 miles Camp on Plat River near the uper ferry
- 12th Travel 15 miles Camp on Plat River grass scarce
- 13th Travel 10 miles Camp on Plat River for the Last time We have travel on it for seven Hundred miles
- 14th Lay By and Hunted Buffalo and killed four
- 15th Travel 18 miles Camp at the Willow Spring No grass
- 16th Travel 16 miles Camp near Alkali Lake grass scarce
- 17th Travel 18 miles Pass the Independence Rock a rock which raises right up out of the ground in a smooth Bottom of Sweet Water it is 125 rod long and 120 feet high We pass the Devil Gate through which Sweet water Passes It is 400 feet hie on Both sides of Perpendckler Camp on Sweet Water
- 18th Travel 16 miles Camp on Sweet Water near Bitter Cotton wood Creek
- 19th Travel 15 miles Camp on Sweet Water grass scarce
- 20th Travel 18 miles Camp on Sweet Water grass scarce
- 21st Travel 17 miles over Rough and Rocky Roads and Camp on a small Branch grass scarce no timber on Sweet Water
- 22nd Travel 12 miles and camp at the last crossing of Sweet Water grass scarce
- 23rd Travel 8 miles Camp three miles to the right of the Road on Sweet Water
- 24th Travel 30 miles Pass the South Pass of the Rocky Mountains and Persippee Spring Camp on Little Sandy three miles north of the road

- 25th Lay by to rest our cattle
- 26th Travel 10 miles Camp on Big Sandy grass scarce
- 27th Travel 10 miles off the road to get grass to Cross the Deasert forty-two miles across without water or grass
- 28th Started in the Desert travel
- 29th all night and next day til ten o'clock and cross Green river grass scarce
- 30th Travel 13 miles Camp on branche of Green river among the Snake Indians grass good
- 31st Travel 18 miles Cross a verry hie and Rough mountain and Camp in the valley grass scarce
- August 1st, 1852 Travel 12 miles Cross a mountain and camp on Ham Fork of Green river grass scarce
- 2nd Travel 24 miles over very hie and rough mountain Camp in Bear River Valley good grass
- 3rd Travel 4 miles and camp on Bear river good grass
- 4th Travel 25 miles Cross Smith and Thomas fork of Bear river Camp on Bear river
- 5th Travel 18 miles Camp on Bear river grass scarce
- 6th Travel 6 miles Camp on Bear River good grass
- 7th Travel 18 miles Pass Beer and Soda and Steam Boat Springs Camp at the Junction of the California and Oregon Road
- 8th Travel 15 miles Camp on a small Creek Good grass
- 9th Travel 17 miles Camp on a small Branch of the Port Neuf River good grass
- 10th Travel 16 miles Camp on Port Neuf Creek
- 11th Travel 15 miles Passed Ft Hall I wrote Back Camp on Port Neuf River good grass
- 12th Travel 12 miles Camp on Snake river good grass
- 13th Travel 16 miles Camp on Rock Creek grass scarce
- 14th Travel 15 miles Camp on Raft River good grass
- 15th Lay By
- 16th Travel 18 miles Camp at Bull Rush Spring
- 17th Travel 16 miles Camp on Goose Creek grass scarce
- 18th Travel 10 miles Camp on Snake River Swam our cattle across
- 19th Lay By Could not get our Cattle Back
- 20th Lay By Still could not get them over to the wagons
- 21st Lay By the only way we could get our Cattle Back was to drive them three or four miles up the River to the falls where the water was so swift when you got them into it the water wash them down over the falls on the other Side the River was three quarters of a mile wide
- 22nd Travel 18 miles Camp on dry Creek four miles off the road to water and grass
- 23rd Travel 25 miles Camp on Rock Creek grass scarce
- 24th Travel 16 miles and camp near Snake River on the Plains without water or grass
- 25th Travel 17 miles Camp on Bannac Creek no grass Our Cattle nearly all give out for something to eat
- 26th Travel 5 miles Crossed Snake River on wagon Beds and swam our cattle over Camp on the Bank good grass

27th Travel 6 miles Camp on a small Creek good grass

28th Lay By to recruit our cattle

29th Travel 20 miles Camp on a small Creek grass scarse

30th Travel 20 miles Camp on a small Creek good grass

31st Lay By with Henry Newman who was very sick with Liver Complaint

September 1st 1852 Travel 15 miles Camp on Seven miles Creek

2nd Travel 15 miles Camp on Barren Creek use warm water good grass

3rd Travel 14 miles Camp on Charlotte Creek grass scarse

4th Travel 14 miles Camp on a dry branch good grass

5th Travel 10 miles Camp on white Horse Creek grass fair

6th Travel 10 miles Camp at a good spring grass fair

7th Travel 16 miles Camp on Boies River good grass

8th Travel 16 miles Camp on Boies River good grass

9th Travel 12 miles Camp on Boies River good grass

10th Lay by

11th Travel 15 miles Camp on Boies River good grass

12th Travel 10 miles Cross Snake River at Fort Boies and camp on Bank

13th Lay By for to hunt our cattle

14th Travel 16 miles Camp on Malaher River grass scarse

15th Lay By Michiel Smith very sick George Gimple was taken sick today grass scarse

16th Travel 25 miles Camp on Bench Creek grass scarse

17th Travel 9 miles Camp on Burnt River grass scarse

18th Travel 10 miles in the afternoon Michiel Smith Died in the forenoon Burried in one hour after death

19th Travel 16 miles Roads rough and Crooked Camp on a branch of Burnt river grass scarse

20th Travel 14 miles Camp on a branch of Burnt river grass scarse

21st Travel 10 miles Cross a mountain and camp on a Spring branch grass scarse

22nd Travel 16 miles Camp on a slough of Powder River Cold windy weather grass fair

23rd Travel 10 miles Camp on Powder River grass scarse

24th Travel none but lay by

25th Travel 15 miles Cross three Powder river Camp at a Spring near the mountains

26th Travel 10 miles Cross over a mountain Camp in Grand Round Valley This valley is about 30 miles long and 20 miles wide good grass

27th Travel 8 miles Cross Grand round Camp on a small Branch at the foot of a verry hie mountain

28th Lay By

29th Travel 14 miles Cross some verry hie mountains and camp on the mountain

30th Travel 14 miles amongst the Blue Mountains over some verry hie ones it rained and snowed which made the mountains verry bad to travel on. Verry heavy timber Camp on the mountain Use snow for water grass scarse

October 1st Travel 14 miles
Cross over some verry hie mount-
ains which were verry steep and
rough Camp on the mountain

2nd Travel 12 miles Pass over
the Blue Mountains Camp on the
Umatilla River amongst the Kiouse
Indians grass scarse

3rd Travel 12 miles Roads
good Camp on the Umatilla River
grass scarse

4th Travel 5 miles and Cross
the river and camp on a hie Bluff
grass scarse

5th Travel 15 miles camp on
the Umatilla River grass scarse

6th Travel 8 miles Cross the
Umatilla River at the Agency
House and took water and wood
and camp on the Bluff

7th Travel 10 miles road
sandy took water and wood and
camp on the Plains grass fair

8th Travel 14 miles Road
sandy Camp on the Plains with-
out water or wood

9th Travel 10 miles Passed
two Springs took water and camp
on the Plaines grass scarse

10th Travel 9 miles road sandy
Camp at Willow Creek grass
scarse

11th Travel 10 miles took wa-
ter and camp on the Plaines grass
scarse

12th Travel 15 miles road good
Camp on a smal creek grass
scarse

13th Travel 8 miles Cross
John Day River ascended a verry
hie and rocky mountain Camp on
the Plain grass fair

14th Travel 15 miles Camp on
the Plains Charles Spencer took
the ague grass fair

15th Travel 10 miles Camp on
the Columbia river grass fair

16th Travel 3 miles Camp on
the De Shuts River grass scarse

17th Travel 5 miles Camp on
Only Creek Rough Roads grass
scarse

18th Travel 5 miles Camp on
five miles Creek grass scarse

19th Lay By to wash

20th Travel 5 miles and came
to the Dalls Sold our cattle

21st Started Down the Colum-
bia River in sciff The wind Blew
at night and camp on the Bank

22d Started in the sciff again
and landed at the Cascades

23d Lay at the Cascade

24th Lay at the same Place

25th Started Down to the
Steamboat Landing we hired wag-
on and oxen to haul our Plunder
down

26th Got on a Steam Boat and
Landed in Portland in the evening
the whole distence from the Dalls
to Portland is 160 miles

October the 27th, 1852 Charles
remain very sick Died at 9 o'clock
in the morning Burried in the
City of Portland the Same Day at
five o'clock in the Evening

28th Still remain in Portland

29th Started for Oregon City
at noon on a Steam Boat and
Landed in the Evening

Thus end my Journal

Lafayette Spencer

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