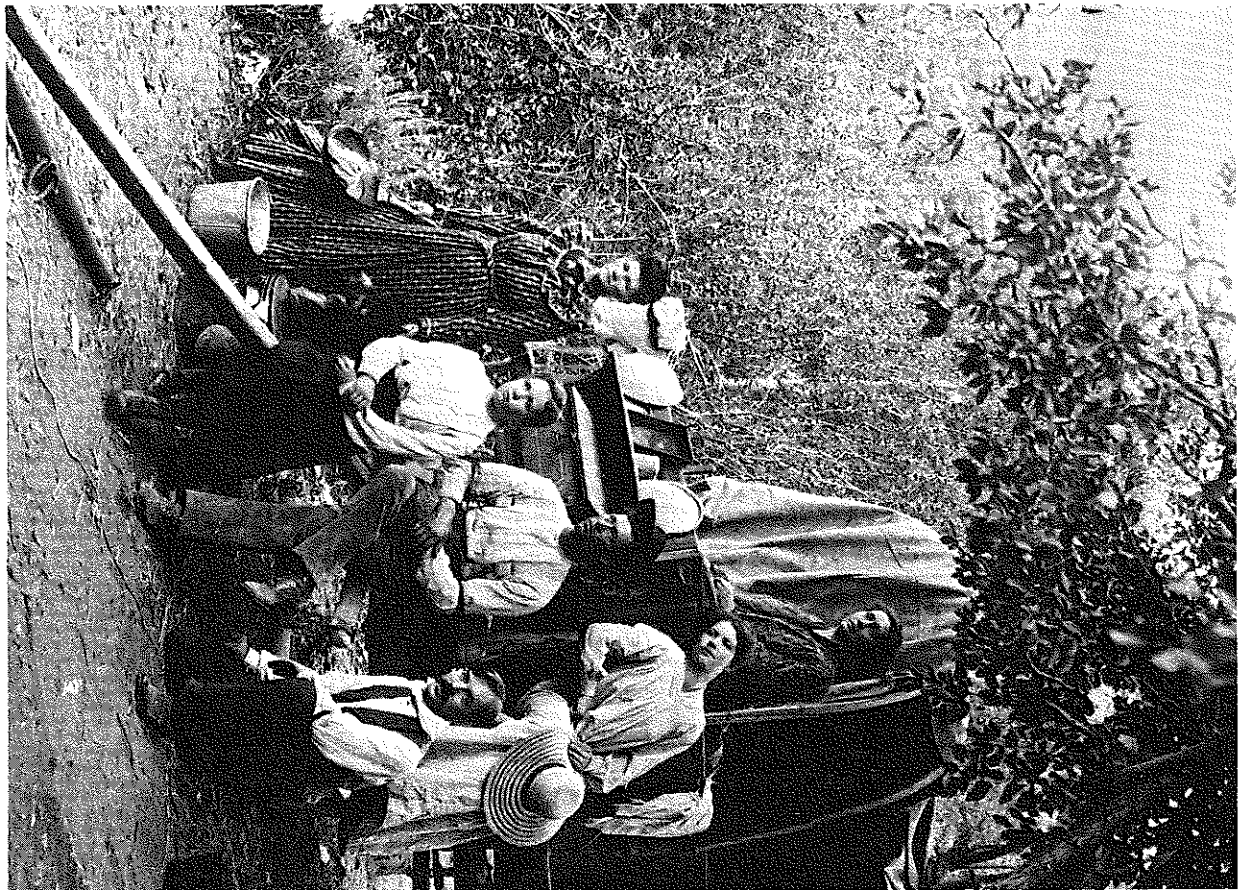


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LILLIAN SCHLISSEL

WOMEN'S

DIARIES

OF THE

WESTWARD

JOURNEY

PREFACE BY CARL N. DEGLER

Gerda Lerner
Supervising Editor

SCHOCKEN BOOKS · NEW YORK

That curly hair and forehead high
Which God to her had given
We never will see them more
Until we meet her in heaven

Oh teach me Father how to bear
This stroke without repining
That I may meet my angel child
Where countless hosts are shrining
Shall we not all meet there to love
With love that has no trembling fears?
In that dear home far, far above
This dark and dreary land of tears?

L. A. Rudd

DIARY OF MRS. AMELIA STEWART KNIGHT

An Oregon Pioneer of 1853

Amelia Stewart Knight started from Monroe County, Iowa, and headed for Oregon Territory with her husband and seven children in 1853. Her diary makes no mention of grave sites. Her preoccupation is with the road and her children—Lucy, Jefferson, Plutarch, Seneca, Almira, Chaffield, and Francis. Chaffield was her youngest; she refers to carrying him at the journey's end when the Blue Mountains are too steep to travel by wagon. He is also the child who absorbs much of her energy on the journey, getting scarlet fever and twice falling out of the wagon. At one point in the journey, her daughter Lucy is lost, and at another both Lucy and Almira have poison ivy on their legs.

The picture of the relationship between husband and wife is unusually clear in this diary. When they come to Hot Springs and the road has been dusty, Amelia's husband took her up the river to a place where the water is cool enough for her to bathe.

Her diary shows that the Indians along the way were both much-needed guides and provisioners for the emigrants.

What is not mentioned at all is the fact that at the start of her journey she is already in the first trimester of

AMELIA STEWART KNIGHT



another pregnancy. The diary must be read with this unstated fact in mind. Thus, when she tells that she is too sick to cook or sensitive to the smell of the dead oxen along the road, or that the rainfall has kept them all in wet clothes, or that the mountain passes have forced them to walking and climbing, these details must be weighed in the light of her advancing pregnancy. Amelia Knight delivers her eighth child by the roadside and comes into Oregon with a newborn infant, in a canoe and then a flatboat, across the Columbia River. Her first home is a log cabin with no windows. Her diary contains no word of complaint, just enormous relief that the overland journey is done.

Starting from Monroe County, Iowa, Saturday, April 9, 1853, and ending Near Milwaukie, Oregon Territory, September 17, 1853.

Saturday, April 9, 1853 STARTED FROM HOME about 11 o'clock and traveled 8 miles and camped in an old house; night cold and frosty.

Sunday, April 10th Cool and pleasant, road hard and dusty.

Evening—Came 8½ miles and camped close to the Fulkersons house.

Monday, April 11th Morn. Cloudy and sign of rain, about 10 o'clock it began to rain. At noon it rains so hard we turn out and camp in a school house after traveling 11½ miles; rains all the afternoon and all night, very unpleasant. Jefferson and Lucy have the mumps. Poor cattle bawled all night.

Tuesday, April 12th Warm and sultry. Still cloudy, road very muddy, traveled 10 miles and camp on Soap creek bottom. Creek bank full; have to wait till it falls.

Wednesday, April 13th Fair weather, have to overhaul all wagons and dry things. Evening—still in camp.

Thursday, April 14th Quite cold. Little ewes crying with cold feet.

Sixteen wagons all getting ready to cross the creek. Hurrah and bustle to get breakfast over. Feed the cattle. Hurrah boys, all ready, we will be the

Amelia Stewart Knight.

first to cross the creek this morning. Gee up Tip and Tyler, and away we go the sun just rising. Evening—We have traveled 24 miles today and are about to camp in a large prairie without wood. Cold and chilly; east wind. The men have pitched the tent and are hunting something to make a fire to get supper. I have the sick headache and must leave the boys to get it themselves the best they can.

Friday, April 15th Cold and cloudy; wind still east. Bad luck last night. Three of our horses got away. Suppose they have gone back. One of the boys has gone after them, and we are going on slowly. Evening—Henry has come back with the horses all right again. It is beginning to rain; the boys have pitched the tent and I must get supper.

Saturday, April 16th Camped last night three miles east of Chariton Point in the prairie. Made our beds down in the tent in the wet and mud. Bed clothes nearly spoiled. Cold and cloudy this morning, and every body out of humour. Seneca is half sick. Plutarch has broke his saddle girth. Husband is scolding and hurrying all hands (and the cook) and Almira says she wished she was home, and I say ditto. "Home, Sweet Home"

Sunday, April 17th [This party did not rest on the Sabbath. It continued to travel over rolling prairies.]

Monday, April 18th Cold; breaking fast the first thing; very disagreeable weather; wind east cold and rainy, no fire. We are on a very large prairie; no timber to be seen as far as the eye can reach. Evening—Have crossed several bad streams today, and more than once have been stuck in the mud. . . .

Came 22 miles today. My head aches, but the fire is kindled and I must make some tea, that will help it if not cure it.

Tuesday, April 19th . . .

Wednesday, April 20th Cloudy. We are creeping along slowly, one wagon after another, the same old gait; and the same thing over, out of one mud hole into another all day. Crossed a branch where the water run into the wagons. No corn to be had within 75 miles. Came 18 miles and camp.

Thursday, April 21st Rained all night; is still raining. I have just counted 17 wagons traveling ahead of us in the mud and water. No feed

for our poor stock to be got at any price. Have to feed them flour and meal. Traveled 22 miles today.

Friday, April 22nd Still bad weather. no sun; traveling on, mile after mile in the mud, mud. . . .

Saturday, April 23rd Still in camp, it rained hard all night, and blew a hurricane almost. All the tents were blown down, and some wagons capsized. Evening—It has been raining hard all day; everything is wet and muddy. One of the oxen missing; the boys have been hunting him all day. (Dreary times, wet and muddy, and crowded in the tent, cold and wet and uncomfortable in the wagon. No place for the poor children.) I have been busy cooking, roasting coffee, etc. today, and have come into the wagon to write this and make our bed.

Sunday, April 24th

Monday, April 25th

Tuesday, April 26th Cold and clear; found corn last night at 2 dollars a bushel. Paid 12 dollars for about half a feed for our stock. I can count twenty wagons winding up the hill ahead of us. Traveled 20 miles and camp.

Wednesday, April 27th A nice spring morning; warm and pleasant; the road is covered with wagons and cattle. (Paid two dollars 40 cts. for crossing a bridge.) Traveled 25 miles. . . .

Thursday, April 28th

Friday, April 29th Cool and pleasant; saw the first Indians today. Lucy and Almira afraid and run into the wagon to hide. Done some washing and sewing.

Saturday, April 30th Fine weather; spent this day in washing, baking, and overhauling the wagons. Several more wagons have camped around us.

Sunday, May 1st Still fine weather; wash and scrub all the children.

Monday, May 2nd Pleasant evening; have been cooking, and packing things away for an early start in the morning. Threw away several jars, some wooden buckets, and all our pickles. Too unhandy to carry. Indians came to our camp every day, begging money and something to eat. Children are getting used to them.

Tuesday, May 3rd . . . here Plutarch is taken sick.

Wednesday, May 4th . . .

Thursday, May 5th . . .

Friday, May 6th . . . Here we passed a train of wagons on their way back, the head man had been drowned a few days before, in a river called Elkhorn, while getting some cattle across and his wife was lying in the wagon quite sick, and children were mourning for the father gone. With sadness and pity I passed those who perhaps a few days before had been well and happy as ourselves. Came 20 miles today.

Saturday, May 7th Cold morning; thermometer down to 48 in the wagon. No wood, only enough to boil some coffee. Good grass for the stock. We have crossed a small creek, with a narrow Indian bridge across it. Paid the Indians 75 cents toll. My hands are numb with cold. . . .

Sunday, May 8th Still in camp. Waiting to cross [the Elkhorn River]. There are three hundred or more wagons in sight and as far as the eye can reach, the bottom is covered, on each side of the river, with cattle and horses. There is no ferry here and the men will have to make one out of the tightest wagon-bed (every company should have a waterproof wagon-bed for this purpose.) Everything must now be hauled out of the wagons head over heels (and he who knows where to find anything will be a smart fellow.) Then the wagons must be all taken to pieces, and then by means of a strong rope stretched across the river with a tight wagon-bed attached to the middle of it, the rope must be long enough to pull from one side to the other, with men on each side of the river to pull it. In this way we have to cross everything a little at a time. Women and children last, and then swim the cattle and horses. There were three horses and some cattle drowned while crossing this place yesterday. It is quite lively and merry here this morning and the weather fine. We are camped on a large bottom, with the broad, deep river on one side of us and a high bluff on the other.

Monday, May 9th Morning cold, within 4 degrees of freezing; we are all on the right side of the river this morning. . . .

Tuesday, May 10th . . .

Wednesday, May 11th Evening. It has been very dusty yesterday and today. (The men all have their false eyes on to keep the dust out) . . .

as far as eye can reach the road is covered with teams. Plutarch is well and able to drive. Came 23 miles.

Thursday, May 12th Thursday Noon—Beautiful weather, but very dusty. We are camped on the bank of Loup Fork, awaiting our turn to cross. There are two ferry boats running, and a number of wagons ahead of us, all waiting to cross. Have to pay three dollars a wagon for three wagons and swim the stock. Traveled 12 miles today. We hear there are 700 teams on the road ahead of us. Wash and cook this afternoon.

Friday, May 13th It is thundering and bids fair for rain. Crossed the river early this morning before breakfast. (Got breakfast over after a fashion. Sand all around ankle deep; wind blowing; no matter, hurry it over. Them that eat the most breakfast eat the most sand. . . .)

Saturday, May 14th . . . Winds so high that we dare not make a fire, impossible to pitch the tent, the wagons could hardly stand the wind. All that find room crowded into the wagons; those that can't, have to stay out in the storm. Some of the boys have lost their hats.

Sunday, May 15th . . .

Monday, May 16th Evening—We have had all kinds of weather today. This morning was dry, dusty and sandy. This afternoon it rained, hailed, and the wind was very high. Have been traveling all the afternoon in mud and water up to our hubs. Broke chains and stuck in the mud several times. The men and boys are all wet and muddy. Hard times but they say misery loves company. We are not alone on these bare plains, it is covered with cattle and wagons. . . .

Tuesday, May 17th We had a dreadful storm of rain and hail last night and very sharp lightning. It killed two oxen for one man. We have just encamped on a large flat prairie, when the storm commenced in all its fury and in two minutes after the cattle were taken from the wagons every brute was gone out of sight, cows, calves, horses, all gone before the storm like so many wild beasts. I never saw such a storm. The wind was so high I thought it would tear the wagons to pieces. Nothing but the stoutest covers could stand it. The rain beat into the wagons so that everything was wet, in less than 2 hours the water was a foot deep all over our camp grounds. As we could have no tents pitched, all had to crowd into the wagons and sleep in wet beds with their wet clothes on, without supper. The wind blew hard all night and this morning presents a dreary prospect surrounded by water, and our saddles have been soaking in it all night and are almost spoiled! . . .

Wednesday, May 18th—Monday, May 23rd . . .

Tuesday, May 24th . . . I had the sick headache all night, some better this morning; must do a day's work.

Wednesday, May 25th—Monday, May 30th . . .

Tuesday, May 31st Evening— Traveled 25 miles today. When we started this morning there were two large droves of cattle and about 50 wagons ahead of us, and we either had to stay poking behind them in the dust or hurry up and drive past them. It was no fool of a job to be mixed up with several hundred head of cattle, and only one road to travel in, and the drovers threatening to drive their cattle over you if you attempted to pass them. They even took out their pistols. Husband came up just as one man held his pistol at Wilson Carl and saw what the fuss was and said, "Boys, follow me," and he drove our team out of the road entirely, and the cattle seemed to understand it all, for they went into the trot most of the way. The rest of the boys followed with their teams and the rest of the stock. I had rather a rough ride to be sure, but was glad to get away from such lawless set, which we did by noon. The head teamster done his best by whipping and hollowing to his cattle. He found it no use and got up into his wagon to take it easy. We left some swearing men behind us. We drove a good ways ahead and stopped to rest the cattle and eat some dinner. While we were eating we saw them coming. All hands jumped for their teams saying they had earned the road too dearly to let them pass us again, and in a few moments we were all on the go again. Had been very warm today. Thermometer at 98 in the wagon at one o'clock. Towards evening there came up a light thunderstorm which cooled the air down to 60. We are now within 100 miles of Fort Laramie.

Wednesday, June 1st It has been raining all day long and we have been traveling in it so as to be able to keep ahead of the large droves. The men and boys are all soaking wet and look sad and comfortless. (The little ones and myself are shut up in the wagons from the rain. Still it will find its way in and many things are wet; and take us all together we are a poor looking set, and all this for Oregon. I am thinking while I write, "Oh, Oregon, you must be a wonderful country." Came 18 miles today.)

Thursday, June 2nd—Sunday, June 5th . . .

Monday, June 6th Still in camp, husband and myself being sick (caused

we suppose by drinking the river water, as it looks more like dirty suds than anything else), we concluded to stay in camp and each take a vomit, which we did and are much better. The boys and myself have been washing some today. The prickly pear grows in great abundance along this Platte River road.

Tuesday, June 7th Rained some last night, quite warm today. Just passed Fort Laramie, situated on the opposite side of the river. This afternoon we passed a large village of Sioux Indians. Numbers of them came around our wagons. Some of the women had moccasins and beads, which they wanted to trade for bread. I gave the women and children all the cakes I had baked. Husband traded a big Indian a lot of hard crackers for a pair of moccasins and after we had started on he came up with us again making a great fuss, and wanted them back (they had eaten part of the crackers). He did not seem to be satisfied, or else he wished to cause us some trouble, or perhaps get into a fight. However, we handed the moccasins to him in a hurry and drove away from them as soon as possible. . . .

Wednesday, June 8th . . .

Thursday, June 9th . . .

Friday, June 10th It has been very warm today. Thermometer up to 99 at noon. . . . one of our hands, left. . . .

Saturday, June 11th . . . we crossed this afternoon over the roughest and most desolate piece of ground that was ever made (called by some the Devil's Crater) (Not a drop of water, nor a spear of grass to be seen, nothing but barren hills, bare and broken rock, sand and dust). . . .

Sunday, June 12th . . . I have just washed the dust out of my eyes so that I can see to get supper.

Monday, June 13th . . .

Tuesday, June 14th . . . Had a great deal of trouble to keep the stock from drinking the poison or alkali water. It is almost sure to kill man or beast who drink it.

Wednesday, June 15th . . . passed Independence Rock this afternoon, and crossed Sweetwater River on a bridge. Paid 3 dollars a wagon and swam the stock across. The river is very high and swift. . . .

Friday, June 17th . . . Have been washing and cooking today. The mosquitoes are very bad here. . . .

Saturday, June 18th . . .

Sunday, June 19th On our way again. Traveling in the sand and dust. Sand ankle deep—hard traveling. . . .

Monday, June 20th . . .

Tuesday, June 21st We have traveled over a very rough, rocky, road today; over mountains close to banks of snow. Had plenty of snow water to drink. Husband brought me a large bucket of snow and one of our hands brought me a beautiful bunch of flowers which he said was growing close to the snow, which was about 6 feet deep. . . .

Wednesday, June 22nd—Saturday, June 25th . . .

Sunday, June 26th . . . Evening—All hands come into camp tired and out of heart. Husband and myself sick. No feed for the stock. One ox lame. Camp on the bank of Big Sandy again.

Monday, June 27th Cold, cloudy and very windy—more like November than June. I am not well enough to get out of the wagon this morning. The men have just got their breakfast over and drove up the stock. (It is all hurry and bustle to get things in order. It's children milk the cows, all hands help yoke these cattle the d—It's in them. Plutarach answers "I can't. I must hold the tent up, it is blowing away." Hurrah boys. Who tied these horses? "Seneca, don't stand there with your hands in your pocket. Get your saddles and be ready.") . . .

Tuesday, June 28th Still in camp waiting to cross. Nothing for the stock to eat. As far as the eye can reach it is nothing but a sandy desert, and the stench is awful. . . . (all along this road we see white men living with Indians; many of them have trading posts; they are mostly French and have squaw wives.) . . .

Wednesday, June 29th Cold and cloudy. The wagons are all crowded up to the ferry waiting with impatience to cross. There are 30 or more to cross before us. Have to cross one at a time. Have to pay 8 dollars for a wagon, 1 dollar for a horse or a cow. We swim all our stock. . . .

Thursday, June 30th—Sunday, July 3rd . . .

Monday, July 4th It has been very warm today. Thermometer up to 110. . . . I never saw mosquitoes as bad as they are here. Chat has been sick all day with fever, partly caused by mosquito bites. . . .

Tuesday, July 5th . . . Chatfield is sick yet; had fever all night. . . .

Wednesday, July 6th—Wednesday, July 13th . . .

Thursday, July 14th It is dust from morning until night, with now and then a sprinkling of gnats and mosquitoes, and as far as the eye can reach it is nothing but a sandy desert, covered with wild sage brush, dried up with heat; however, it makes good firewood. Evening—I have not felt well today and the road has been very tedious to me. I have ridden in the wagon and taken care of Chatfield till I got tired, then I got out and walked in the sand and through stinking sage brush till I gave out; and I feel thankful that we are about to camp after traveling 22 miles, on the bank of Raft River, about dark; river high.

Friday, July 15th Last night I helped get supper and went to bed too sick to eat any myself. Had fever all night and all day. It is sundown and the fever has left me. I am able to creep around and look at things and brighten up a little; the sun has been very hot today. . . .

Saturday, July 16th . . .

Sunday, July 17th We are traveling through the Digger Indians' country, but have not seen any yet. (We crossed Swamp Creek this morning, and Goose Creek this afternoon. Goose Creek is almost straight down, and then straight up again. Several things pitched out of the wagons into the Creek. Travel over some very rocky ground. Here Chat fell out of the wagon, but did not get hurt much.)

Monday, July 18th Traveled 22 miles. Crossed one small creek and have camped on one called Rock Creek. It is here the Indians are so troublesome. This creek is covered with small timber and thick underbrush, a great hiding place; and while in this part of the country the men have to guard the stock all night. One man traveling ahead of us had all his horses stolen and never found them as we know of. (I was very much frightened while at this camp. I lay awake all night. I expected every minute we would be killed. However, we all found our scalps on in the morning.) There are people killed at this place every year.

Tuesday, July 19th—Thursday, July 21st . . .

Friday, July 22nd Crossed the river before daybreak and found the smell of carrion so bad that we left as soon as possible. The dead cattle were lying in every direction. Still there were a good many getting their

breakfast among all the stench. I walked off among the rocks, while the men were getting the cattle ready; then we drove a mile or so, and halted to get breakfast. (Here Chat had a very narrow escape from being run over. Just as we were all getting ready to start, Chatfield the rascal came around the forward wheel to get into the wagon and at that moment the cattle started and he fell under the wagon. Somehow he kept from under the wheels and escaped with only a good or I should say, a bad scare. I never was so much frightened in my life.) I was in the wagon at the time, putting things in order, and supposed Francis was taking care of him. . . .

Saturday, July 23rd We took a fresh start this morning with everything in order, for a good day's drive. Travel about 5 miles and here we are, up a stump again, with a worse place than we ever had before us to be crossed, called Bridge Creek. I presume it takes its name from a natural bridge which crosses it. This bridge is only wide enough to admit one person at a time. A frightful place, with the water roaring and tumbling ten or fifteen feet below it. This bridge is composed of rocks, and all around us, it is nothing but a solid mass of rocks, with the water ripping and tearing over them. Here we have to unload all the wagons and pack everything by hand, and then we are only on an island. There is a worse place to cross yet, a branch of the same. Have to stay on the island all night, and wait our turn to cross. (There are a good many camped on the island) and there are camps on each side of it. There is no chance to pitch a tent, and this island is a solid rock, so we must sleep the best way we can, with the water roaring on each side of us. The empty wagons, cattle, and horses have to be taken further up the river and crossed by means of chains and ropes. The way we cross this branch is to climb down about 6 feet on rocks, and then a wagon bed bottom will just reach across, from rocks to rocks. It must then be fastened at each end with ropes or chains so that you can cross on it, and then we climb up the rocks on the other side, and in this way everything has to be taken across. Some take their wagons to pieces and take them over in that way.

Sunday, July 24th . . .

Monday, July 25th Bad luck this morning to start with. A calf took sick and died before breakfast. Soon after starting one of our best cows was taken sick and died in a short time. Presumed they were both poisoned with water or weeds. Left our poor cow for the wolves and started on. . . .

Tuesday, July 26th . . .

Wednesday, July 27th Another fine cow died this afternoon. Came 15 miles today, and have camped at the boiling springs, a great curiosity. They bubble up out of the earth boiling hot. I have only to pour water on to my tea and it is made. There is no cold water in this part. (Husband and myself wandered far down this branch, as far as we dare, to find it cool enough to bathe in. It was still very hot, and I believe I never spent such an uneasy sleepless night in my life. I felt as if I was in the bad place. I still believe it was not very far off.) I was glad when morning came and we left.

Thursday, July 28th . . . Chat is quite sick with scarlet fever.

Friday, July 29th—Sunday, July 31st . . .

Monday, August 1st . . . This evening another of our best milk cows died. Cattle are dying off very fast all along this road. We are hardly ever out of sight of dead cattle, on this side of Snake River. This cow was well and fat an hour before she died. Cur the second cheese today.

Tuesday, August 2nd . . .

[There is no entry for August 3]

Thursday, August 4th . . . Have also a good many Indians and bought fish of them. They all seem peaceful and friendly.

Friday, August 5th . . . (Snake River Ferry) . . . Our turn to cross will come sometime tomorrow. There is one small ferry boat running here, owned by the Hudson's Bay Company. Have to pay three dollars a wagon. Our worst trouble at these large rivers is swimming the stock over. Often after swimming half way over the poor things will turn and come out again. At this place, however, there are Indians who swim the river from morning till night. There is many a drove of cattle that could not be got over without their help. By paying them a small sum, they will take a horse by the bridle or halter and swim over with him. The rest of the horses all follow and by driving and hurrying to the cattle they will almost always follow the horses, sometimes they fall and turn back. This Fort Boise is nothing more than three new buildings, its inhabitants, the Hudsons Bay Company officials, a few Frenchmen, some half-naked Indians, half breeds, etc.

Saturday, August 6th . . .

Sunday, August 7th . . . The roads have been very dusty, no water, nothing but dust and dead cattle all day, the air filled with the odor from the dead cattle.

Monday, August 8th We have to make a drive of 22 miles, without water today. Have our cans filled to drink. Here we left unknowingly our Lucy behind, not a soul had missed her until we had gone some miles, when we stopped a while to rest the cattle; just then another train drove up behind us with Lucy. She was terribly frightened and so were some more of us when we found out what a narrow escape she had run. She said she was sitting under the bank of the river, when we started, busy watching some wagons cross, and did not know we were ready. And I supposed she was in Mr. Carl's wagon, as he always took care of Francis and Lucy, and I took care of Myra and Chat, when starting he asked for Lucy, and Francis said "She is in Mother's wagon," as she often went there to have her hair combed. It was a lesson to all of us. * Evening—It is near dark and we are still toiling on till we find a camping place. The little ones have curled down and gone to sleep without supper. Wind high, and it is cold enough for a great coat and mittens.

Tuesday, August 9th Came into camp last night at nine o'clock after traveling 19 1/2 miles with enough water in our cans to make tea for supper; men all tired and hungry. I groped around in the dark and got supper over, after a fashion. . . .

Wednesday, August 10th . . .

Thursday, August 11th . . . Frost this morning. Three of our hands got discouraged and left this morning, to pack through. I am pleased, as we shall get along just as well without them and I shall have three less to wait on. . . .

Friday, August 12th . . . Came 12 miles today. Crossed Burnt River twice. Lost some of our oxen. We were traveling along slowly, when he dropped dead in the yoke. We unyoked and turned out the odd ox, and drove around the dead one, and so it is all along the road, we are continually driving around the dead cattle, and shame on the man who has no pity for the poor dumb brutes that have to travel and toil month after month on this desolate road. (I could hardly help shedding tears, when we drove round this poor ox who had helped us along thus far,

*The loss of a child in all the confusion and disorder of travel was a fear that haunted many mothers, and indeed similar accounts to this one appear in a number of women's diaries.

and has given us his very last step.) We have camped on a branch of Burnt River.

Saturday, August 13th—Tuesday, August 16th . . .

Wednesday, August 17th Crossed the Grand Ronde Valley, which is 8 miles across and have camped close to the foot of the mountains. Good water and feed plenty. There 50 or more wagons camped around us. (Lucy and Myra have their feet and legs poisoned, which gives me a good deal of trouble. Bought some fresh salmon of the Indians this evening, which is quite a treat to us.) It is the first we have seen.

Thursday, August 18th . . .

Friday, August 19th Quite cold this morning, water frozen over in the buckets. Traveled 13 miles over very bad roads without water. After looking in vain for water, we were about to give up as it was near night, when husband came across a company of friendly Cayuse Indians about to camp, who showed him where to find water. The men and boys have driven the cattle down to water and I am waiting for water to get supper. This forenoon we bought a few potatoes from an Indian, which will be a treat for our supper.

Saturday, August 20th—Tuesday, August 30th . . .

Wednesday, August 31st . . . It blew so hard last night as to blow our buckets and pans from under the wagons, and this morning we found them (and other things which were not secured) scattered all over the valley. One or two pans came up missing. Everything is packed up ready for a start. The men folks are out hunting the cattle. The children and myself are out shivering around in the wagons, nothing for fires in these parts, and the weather is very disagreeable.

Thursday, September 1st . . . we have encamped not far from the Columbia River. Made a nice dinner of fried salmon. Quite a number of Indians were camped around us, for the purpose of selling salmon to the emigrants.

Friday, September 2nd Came 5 miles this morning, and are now crossing Fall (or Deschutes* it is called here) River on a ferry boat pay 3 dollars a wagon and swim the stock. This river is very swift and full of rapids. . . .

*The Deschutes River is a tributary of the Columbia River.

Saturday, September 3rd Cool and pleasant. Had a fine shower last night which laid the dust and makes traveling much better. Here husband (being run out of money) sold his sorrel mare (Fan) for a hundred and twenty-five dollars.

Sunday, September 4th . . .

Monday, September 5th Passed a sleepless night last night as a good many of the Indians camped around us were drunk and noisy and kept up a continual racket, which made all hands uneasy and kept our poor dog on the watch all night. I say poor dog, because he is nearly worn out with traveling through the day and should rest at night; but he hates an Indian and will not let one come near the wagons if he can help it; and doubtless they would have done some mischief but for him. Ascended a long steep hill this morning, which was very hard on the cattle, and also on myself, as I thought I never should get to the top, although I rested two or three times. . . .

[Within twelve day's time, Amelia Knight would give birth to her eighth child. As the last entries are read, one must imagine her in the final days of her pregnancy, stumbling over rocks and fallen trees, carrying her youngest child.]

Tuesday, September 6th Still in camp, washing and overhauling the wagons to make as light as possible to cross the mountains.

Evening—After throwing away a good many things and burning up most of the deck boards of our wagons so as to lighten them, got my washing and cooking done and started on again. Crossed two branches, traveled 3 miles and have camped near the gate or foot of the Cascade Mountains (here I was sick all night, caused by my washing and working too hard).

Wednesday, September 7th . . .

Thursday, September 8th Traveled 14 miles over the worst road that was ever made, up and down, very steep, rough and rocky hills, through mud holes, twisting and winding round stumps, logs and fallen trees.

Now we are on the end of a log, now over a big root of a tree; now bounce down in a mud hole, then bang goes the other side of the wagon, and woe be to whatever is inside. There is very little chance to turn out of this road, on account of timber and fallen trees, for these mountains are a dense forest of pines, fir, white cedar or redwood (the handsomest timber in the world must be here in these Cascade Mountains). Many of the trees are 300 feet high and so dense to almost exclude the light of

heaven, and for my own part I dare not look to the top of them for fear of breaking my neck. We have camped on a little stream called Sandy. No feed for the stock except flour and by driving them a mile or so, they can get a little swamp grass or pick brush.

Friday, September 9th Came eight and a half miles. Crossed Sandy 4 times; came over corduroy roads, through swamps, over rocks and hummocks, and the worst road that could be imagined or thought of, and have encamped about one o'clock in a little opening near the road. The men have driven the cattle a mile off from the road to try and find grass and rest them till morning. (We hear the road is still worse ahead.) There is a great deal of laurel growing here, which will poison the stock if they eat it. There is no end to the wagons, buggies, yokes, chains, etc. that are lying all along this road. Some splendid good wagons just left standing, perhaps with the owners names on them, and many the poor horses, mules, oxen, cows, etc. that are lying dead in these mountains. Afternoon—Slight shower.

Saturday, September 10th It would be useless for me with my pencil to describe the awful road we have just passed over. Let fancy picture a train of wagons and cattle passing through a crooked chimney and we have Big Laurel Hill. After descending several bad hills, one called Little Laurel Hill, which I thought is as bad as could be, but in reality it was nothing to this last one called Big Laurel. It is something more than half mile long very rocky all the way, quite steep, winding, sideling, deep down, slippery and muddy, made so by a spring running the entire length of the road, and this road is cut down so deep that at times the cattle and wagons are almost out of sight, with no room for the drivers except on the bank, a very difficult place to drive, also dangerous, and to make the matter worse, there was a slow poking train ahead of us, which kept stopping every few minutes, and another behind us which kept swearing and hurrying our folks on and there they all were, with the poor cattle all on the strain, holding back the heavy wagons on the slippery road. The men and boys all had their hands full and I was obliged to take care of myself and little ones as best I could, there being no path or road except the one where the teams traveled. We kept as near the road as we could, winding around the fallen timber and brush, climbing over logs creeping under fallen timber, sometimes lifting and carrying Chat. To keep from smelling the carrion, I, as others, holding my nose. . . . I was sick all night and not able to get out of the wagon in the morning.

Sunday, September 11th . . .

Monday, September 12th . . .

Tuesday, September 13th Ascended three steep, muddy hills this morning. Drove over some muddy, mucky ground and through mud holes and have just halted at the first farm to noon and rest awhile and buy feed for the stock. Paid 1.50 per hundred for hay. Price of fresh beef 16 and 18 cts. per pound, butter ditto 1 dollar, eggs, 1 dollar a dozen, onion 4 and 5 dollars per bushel, all too dear for poor folks, so we have treated ourselves to some small turnips at the rate of 25 cents per dozen. Got rested and are now ready to travel again. . . . there we are in Oregon making our camp in an ugly bottom, with no home, except our wagons and tent. It is drizzling and the weather looks dark and gloomy. . . .

Wednesday, Sept. 14th Still in camp. Raining and quite disagreeable.

Thursday, Sept. 15th Still in camp and still raining. (I was sick all night.)

Friday, Sept. 17th In camp yet. Still raining. Noon—It has cleared off and we are all ready for a start again, for some place we don't know where. . . .

A few days later my eighth child was born. After this we picked up and ferried across the Columbia River, utilizing skiff, canoes and flatboat to get across, taking three days to complete. Here husband traded two yoke of oxen for a half section of land with one-half acre planted to potatoes and a small log cabin and lean-to with no windows. This is the journey's end.

(finis)

“TOURING FROM MITCHELL, IOWA, TO CALIFORNIA, 1862”

Jane Augusta Holbrook was born in Ohio in 1833. She was a descendant of William Bradford, governor of Plymouth Colony from 1622 to 1656. She and Albert Gould had two small sons when they made the overland crossing to California in 1862. They were traveling with Albert's father, his brother Charlie, and Charlie's wife, Lou. It was Lou with whom Jane spent the greatest part of her days. By 1862 the Indians had become hostile, and though they had assisted emigrants in earlier years, they were now unpredictable and sometimes attacked the wagon trains that came through their territories. Jane Gould's descriptions of one of those attacks and the fears that lingered after are part of the power of her diary. Albert was unwell for periods of time along the journey. The strenuous effort of the river crossings and the constant exposure took their toll of his health, and by the time he brought his family to California, he was seriously ill.

JANE GOULD TOURTILLOTT
