

Sarah
Raymond
Herndon

Days on the Road

Crossing the Plains in 1865

M & A



Sarah Raymond Herndon

Days on the Road: Crossing the Plains in 1865

Madison & Adams Press, 2022.

Contact: info@madisonadamspress.com

EAN: 4066338125484

This is a publication of Madison & Adams Press. Our production consists of thoroughly prepared educational & informative editions: Advice & How-To Books, Encyclopedias, Law Anthologies, Declassified Documents, Legal & Criminal Files, Historical Books, Scientific & Medical Publications, Technical Handbooks and Manuals. All our publications are meticulously edited and formatted to the highest digital standard. The main goal of Madison & Adams Press is to make all informative books and records accessible to everyone in a high quality digital and print form.

Table of Contents

Preface.

Reminiscences of the Plains

Press Notices.

Days on the Road

We Start.

Our First Camp.

Through Memphis.

I Meet an Acquaintance.

An Addition to Our Party.

Bloomfield, Iowa.

Beautiful Apples.

Miss Milburn's Love Story.

A Letter to Brother Mac.

The Icarian Community.

A Swing Among the Trees.

A Fatal Accident.

Bereavement.

A Funeral.

On the Banks of the Big Muddy.

Our Last Day With Miss Milburn.

We Have Our Pictures Taken.

A Yankee Homestead.

We Meet a Friend.

On the Banks of the Platte.

The Order of Our Going.
Fort Kearney.
Eleven Graves.
A Narrow Escape.
Beaux.
We Decide to Go to Montana.
Prairie Dogs.
Preaching Services.
Music in Camp.
The Mountains in Sight.
A Town of Tents and Wagons.
We Worship in the Wilderness.
We Celebrate the Fourth.
The Black Hills.
We Visit a Beautiful Spring.
We Cut Our Names in Stone.
Laramie Plains.
In the Rain.
Indians.
We Climb Elk Mountain.
We Cross the North Platte.
Neelie is Sick.
The Summit of the Rocky Mountains.
Sim Buford Sick.
Our Train Divided.
We Overtake the California Train.
On Bitter Creek.
Delayed Another Day.

A Fatal Shooting.
Tried for Murder.
We Leave the Train.
Wild Currants Galore.
Mr. Curry's Horse Stolen.
Anxiously Waiting at Ham's Fork.
The Wanderers' Return.
Sim's Story of Their Wanderings.
Bear River Mountain.
We Meet Captain Hardinbrooke's Brother.
Mormon Towns in Idaho.
We Meet Men Returning to the States.
Mother and I Save Joe's Life.
Dick is Sold. Oh, Dear.
Mother's Birthday.
Sweet Water Cañon.
The End of Our Journey.

PREFACE.

[Table of Contents](#)

I do not expect to gain fame or fortune by the publication of this little book. I have prepared it for publication, because a number of the pioneers who read my journal twenty years ago, when published in *The Husbandman*, have asked me to.

At that time I was a busy wife, mother and housekeeper, and could only write when my baby boy was taking his daily nap, to supply the copy for each week. No one knows better than I how very imperfect it was, yet many seemed to enjoy it, and the press that noticed it at all spoke very kindly of it.

S.R.H.

REMINISCENCES OF THE PLAINS

[Table of Contents](#)

BY DR. HOWARD.

Editor *Husbandman*.—Through your kindness to Mrs. Howard, we are a reader of your excellent journal. Hence a few months ago our eyes fell upon “Reminiscences of Pilgrimage Across the Plains in 1865,” by S.R.H., and at once recognized the writer as the “lady who rode the gallant bay.” And now, sir, as we were an humble member of the gallant McMahan train, frequently referred to in her interesting journal, permit me through the columns of your paper to tender her the thanks and gratitude, not only of ourselves, but every surviving member of that train, for affording us the pleasure of again traveling that eventful road without the fatigue and hardships of a long and tiresome journey. And even now, after the lapse of fifteen years, to be so pleasantly reminded of our “Gallant Bearing” and the confidence reposed in us for protection, while passing through the Indian country, we almost regret that the savages did not give us a striking opportunity of displaying our prowess. It was our pleasure to form the acquaintance of the writer, as correctly stated, on the north bank of the South Platte, near the foot of Fremont’s Orchard. The present editor of the *Husbandman*, then a beardless youth, had been suffering with typho-malarial fever from the time we left Nebraska City, and we visited her camp (ostensibly) begging bread, and obtained as good as was

ever baked upon the plains. From this time on, at least for some hundreds of miles, it was our pleasure to meet her on the road and in camp. We were in different trains, but camped near each other every night for protection from the Indians. Very soon, somehow or other, when our trains were preparing to drive out every morning, and Miss R. was mounting Dick, we were in the act of mounting our pony Jo, and even at this day, in thinking over the matter, I am induced to believe that our ponies became somewhat attached to each other, as they would instinctively fall into each other's company. This was the state of affairs existing at Elk Mountain, where the bouquet was gathered and presented, and where, it is frankly admitted, we became somewhat partial.

Well, we do recollect the crossing of North Platte, that turbulent stream on the Fort Halleck route. Train after train was crossing all day long. We were standing on the bank, with Captain McMahan, when the Hardinbrooke train, the one in which she was traveling, approached the crossing, and we discovered Miss Raymond on the front seat of the wagon, with lines in hand, in the attitude of driving. We remarked, "Good gracious, look yonder, is it possible Miss Raymond is going to drive that team across this terrible stream alone?"

"Now," said Captain McMahan, "is the time to show your gallantry."

And before we could think twice, she drove bravely in. Of course we mounted Jo and followed after her, and here on a little island in the middle of the river is where we rode up and congratulated her on her skill as a driver. As we approached the place of our destination our trains became separated. Miss R. preceded us a few days to the Golden

City. It was our pleasure, however, to visit her in the little domicile mentioned in her narrative, and

Talk our troubles over, our journey through at last,
And in her happy presence we forgot the gloomy
past.

We sojourned in Virginia City but a short time, then crossed a tributary of the Missouri near their confluence, and wintered at Diamond City Confederate Gulch. The June following we returned to our native State.

A year after our return Captain McMahan and myself received cards announcing the nuptials of Miss Raymond and Mr. Herndon, which cards now occupy receivers on our center tables, for which we were ever thankful, and at which time, of course, the bouquet crumbled to dust. And now wishing the “lady who rode the gallant bay” and the lucky gentleman whose home she makes happy, long life and the enjoyment of a Montana home; I am,

Truly yours,
W. Howard.

PRESS NOTICES.

Table of Contents

“Crossing the Plains in 1865,” is the title under which a lady in the *Rocky Mountain Husbandman*, is publishing a series of letters. The story of every-day life on the plains is so prettily written, that these papers repay perusal. We have been charmed by the native grace of the author, and we send her our compliments whoever she may be. We crossed the plains the same year, also, six years before, and we can fully appreciate the experience of our unknown friend who writes so charmingly.—*Stock, Farm and Home Weekly*.

In this issue we close our narrative of pleasure, trials, etc., of a trip across the great American plains in 1865. It has been a plain, simple story and true to life and full of interest to Montana’s oldtimers, and all who made the journey of the plains in wagons. To the editor of this paper it has been a story of particular interest, for he, a beardless boy then, crossed the plains, was a member of the McMahan train, the sick man for whom Dr. Howard often went foraging for bread.—*Rocky Mountain Husbandman*.

“Crossing the Plains in 1865,” is the title of a story which was written by a well-known lady of Virginia City, for the *Rocky Mountain Husbandman*, and came to a conclusion in the last number of that paper.

It was a plain, unvarnished recital of the experiences of the journey across the plains when ox-trains were the

favorite conveyances, and the voyagers were subjected to many vicissitudes unknown to travelers of the present day. Though quite unpretentious as to literary merit, it has been interesting in recalling to the minds of the pioneers, who have read it, the eventful scenes of their own pilgrimage, and to them, it has been pleasant reading.—*Madisonian*.

“I have felt a deep interest in S.R.H.’s, ‘Crossing the Plains in 1865,’ all through these long series of letters, and many a familiar spot has been brought back to me that had long been forgotten. And as some of the actors in the play live in Challis, I will say to S.R.H., that Mrs. Hardinbrooke is still loved by a large circle of friends, and that little Annie is now a blooming young lady, and ever worthy the good-bye kiss; that the Captain has never disgraced the title bestowed in 1865.

“I am, Mr. Editor, respectfully yours,

“O.E. Penwell.”

DAYS ON THE ROAD

[Table of Contents](#)

WE START.

[Table of Contents](#)

May 1.

As I sit here in the shade of our prairie-schooner, with this blank book ready to record the events of this our first day on the road, the thought comes to me:

“Why are we here? Why have we left home, friends, relatives, associates, and loved ones, who have made so large a part of our lives and added so much to our happiness?”

“Echo answers ‘Why?’”

“The chief aim in life is the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness.” Are we not taking great risks, in thus venturing into the wilderness? When devoted men and women leave home, friends and the enjoyments of life to go to some far heathen land, obeying the command: “Go, preach my Gospel, to every creature,” we look on and applaud and desire to emulate them. There is something so sublime, so noble in the act that elevates the missionary above the common order of human beings that we are not surprised that they make the sacrifice, and we silently wish that we, too, had been called to do missionary work.

But when people who are comfortably and pleasantly situated pull up stakes and leave all, or nearly all, that

makes life worth the living, start on a long, tedious, and perhaps dangerous journey, to seek a home in a strange land among strangers, with no other motive than that of bettering their circumstances, by gaining wealth, and heaping together riches, that perish with the using, it does seem strange that so many people do it.

The motive does not seem to justify the inconvenience, the anxiety, the suspense that must be endured. Yet how would the great West be peopled were it not so? God knows best. It is, without doubt, this spirit of restlessness, and unsatisfied longing, or ambition—if you please—which is implanted in our nature by an all-wise Creator that has peopled the whole earth.

This has been a glorious May-day. The sky most beautifully blue, the atmosphere delightfully pure, the birds twittering joyously, the earth seems filled with joy and gladness. God has given us this auspicious day to inspire our hearts with hope and joyful anticipation, this our first day's journey on the road across the plains and mountains.

It was hard to say good-bye to our loved and loving friends, knowing that we were not at all likely to meet again in this life. I felt very much like indulging in a good cry, but refrained, and Dick and I were soon speeding over the beautiful prairie, overtaking Cash, who had lingered behind the others, waiting for me.

“A penny for your thoughts, Cash?”

“I was wondering if we will ever tread Missouri soil again?”

“Quite likely we shall, we are young in years, with a long life before us, no doubt we will come on a visit to Missouri when we get rich.”

We were passing a very comfortable looking farmhouse, men, women, and children were in the yard, gazing after us,

as we cantered past.

“Don’t you believe they envy us and wish they were going, too?”

“No, why should they?”

“Oh, because it is so jolly to be going across the continent; it is like a picnic every day for months; I was always sorry picnic days were so short, and now it will be an all Summer picnic.”

“I wish I felt that way; aren’t you sorry to leave your friends?”

“Of course I am, but then I shall write long letters to them, and they will write to me, and I will make new friends wherever I go, and somehow I am glad I am going.”

After we came within sight of our caravan we walked our ponies, and talked of many things, past, present, and future. When within a mile or two of Memphis our first camp was made. Our six wagons, with their snow-white covers, and Mr. Kerfoot’s big tent, make a very respectable looking camp.

OUR FIRST CAMP.

Table of Contents

As we were provided with fresh bread, cake, cold chicken, boiled ham, pickles, preserves, etc., supper was quickly prepared for our small family of four, and we enjoyed it immensely. Then comes my time to write, as I have promised friends that I will keep a journal on this trip. Mr. Kerfoot thinks the Government is going to smash and green-backs will not be worth one cent on the dollar, so he has turned all his money into gold coin, and stowed it into a small leather satchel—it seems quite heavy to lift or carry.

As Mrs. Kerfoot was sitting on a camp-chair near our wagons, Mr. Kerfoot came toward her, saying, “Here, mother, I want you to take care of this satchel, it is all we will ask you to do, the girls will cook and wash dishes, the boys take care of the stock, and I will oversee things generally, and we will do nicely.” She accepted the responsibility without a word, and as he walked away she turned to me, and said, “I wish it was in some good bank, I expect nothing else but that it will be stolen, and then what will become of us?”

While I have been writing Neelie (Cornelia) and Sittie (Henrietta) have been getting supper for a family of twelve, no small undertaking for them, as they have been used to servants and know very little about cooking.

When everything was ready, Neelie came to her mother exclaiming, “Come, mamma, to supper, the first ever prepared by your own little girl, but not the last I hope, see how nicely the table looks, Emma and Delia picked those wild flowers for you, how brightly the new tinware shines, let

us imagine it is silver and it will answer the same purpose as if it were.”

Her mother smiles cheerfully, as she takes her arm, Cash sneers at Neelie’s nonsense—as she calls it. Mr. Kerfoot nods approval, as Neelie escorts her mother to the table. When all are seated Mr. Kerfoot bows his head and asks God’s blessing on the meal.

Every one seems to enjoy this picnic style of taking supper out of doors, and linger so long at the table, that Neelie has to hint that other work will have to be done before dark.

When at last the table is cleared, she says to Emma and Delia, “Don’t you want to help me wash these nice, bright dishes and put them away?”

They are always ready to help Neelie, and the work is soon done. Amid laughter and fun they hardly realize they have been at work. Mr. Kerfoot insists that we women and the children must sleep in houses as long as there are houses to sleep in. Mother and I would greatly prefer sleeping in our spring-wagon, to making a bed on the floor in a room with so many, but as he has hired the room we do not want to seem contrary, so have offered no objection. The boys have carried the mattresses and bedding into the house, and Neelie has come for me to go with her to arrange our sleeping-room. So good-night.

THROUGH MEMPHIS.

Table of Contents

May 2.

We were up with the sun this morning after a night of refreshing and restful sleep. Neelie and I commenced folding the bedclothes, ready to be sent to the wagons, when she startled me with a merry peal of laughter, "Look here, Miss Sallie, see ma's treasure, she has left it on the floor under the head of her bed. Don't say anything, and I will put it in the bottom of a trunk, where it ought to be, and we will see how long it will be before she misses it."

She thought of it while at breakfast, and started up excitedly, "Neelie daughter, did you see that precious satchel?"

"Yes, ma, I have taken care of it, and put it where it will not be left lying around loose any more."

"Thank you, my dear, I am glad you have taken care of it."

"Why, mother, I did not expect you to carry that burden around on your arm by day, and sleep with it at night. I only intend for you to have entire charge of it, and put it where the rest of us do not know the hiding place, so that when we are obliged to have some, we will have to come to you to get it. And then give it sparingly, for much, very much depends upon what is in that satchel."

I MEET AN ACQUAINTANCE.

Table of Contents

We came to Memphis about nine A.M. Court is in session, several friends and acquaintances, who are attending court, came to the wagons to say good-bye. Mother's brother, Uncle Zack, was among them, he said, "Remember, when you wish yourselves back here, that I told you not to go."

"Yes, we will when that times comes and send you a vote of thanks for your good advice," I replied.

Cash, Neelie and I have been riding our ponies all day. We are stopping in a beautiful place for camping, near the farmhouse of a Mr. and Mrs. Fifer. They are very pleasant elderly people, who have raised a family of six children, who are all married, and gone to homes of their own. It is a delightfully homey home, yet it seems sad that they should be left alone in their old age. We will sleep in the house again to-night, I shall be glad when we get to where there are no houses to sleep in, for it does not seem like camping out when we sleep in houses. Cash and Neelie want to sleep in the tent, but their father says no, and his word is law in this camp.

* * * * *

Wednesday, May 3.

Brother Hillhouse discovered very early this morning that the tire on one of the wheels of the ox-wagon was broken. He started off ahead of the rest of the wagons to find a blacksmith shop and get it mended by the time we would

overtake him. It was ten o'clock when we came to the shop, near a flour-mill. There was a very bad piece of road before we crossed the creek, a deep ditch had been washed out by the Spring rains. I waited to see the wagons safely over, when some one came beside my pony with outstretched hand saying, "Good-morning, Miss Raymond, I see you are in earnest about crossing the plains."

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Smith? Am glad to see you, of course I am in earnest about crossing the plains, but where did you come from? I supposed you would be at the Missouri River before this time, have you turned back?"

"Oh, no, we are waiting for better roads and good company."

"Come, go with us, I will promise you good company, and the roads will improve."

"Where are Cash and Neelie? I have not seen them."

"They did not stop, when I waited to see the wagons over the difficulties."

"Then I have missed seeing them; was in the mill when they passed. Remember me to them. We will start again tomorrow, and will overtake you in a few days, perhaps."

"Hope you will, good-bye until we meet again."

"Farewell, may you enjoy as pleasant a trip as you anticipate."

"Thank you," and waving him good-bye, I spoke to Dick, and he cantered up the hill past the mill and the wagons. I soon caught up with Cash and Neelie.

"Guess who I saw at the mill?"

"Did you see any one we know?"

"Yes, an especial friend of yours, Cash, Bob Smith, of Liberty."

"Oh, dear, I wish I had seen him. Was Thad Harper with him? Are they going back home?"

“No; they are waiting for better roads and good company. I did not see Thad Harper. Bob said they will overtake us in a few days.”

“I hope they will, they would be quite an addition to our party.”