

Sylvester Henry Earl Diary Excerpt

. . . I went to Liverpool, spent the time in preparing for the trip until the evening of the 30th when we were all on board of the ship *Juventa* owned by Captain Watte.

On Sunday April 1st [1855] the American elders 11 in number - with Elder Glover at their head who was appointed by Elder Richards. We divided the ship into 12 wards and appointed men to preside over the same, the total number of the 74 - we had a fine voyage-- many were seasick.

On Tuesday, the 3rd, a storm.

On the evening of the 21st one child born this evening. Cold weather while crossing the banks of Newfoundland, saw many whales and porpoises and very large fish.

We landed at Philadelphia on the 5th day of May all in good health. This evening another baby is born.

Sunday, the 6th I went to the Saints Room and spoke to the Saints. Here we met Elders Taylor, Clinton, and Fullmer, who with the Saints, all met us with a pleasant smile on the continent and welcomed us to their home, the land of the free. I was then appointed to take the care of 123 of the Saints while in the city. I took them to Mr. Fishers for food and lodgings.

On Tuesday we started for Pittsburgh, where we landed on Thursday, and on Friday we started with the Saints, composing the poor for company, on board the boat "Equanok" and those that had their own fare went on the boat called the "City of Washington." We got to the city of Cincinnati on Sunday, all well and in fine spirits The captain and crew felt well towards us. The country looks pleasant, times are hard, provisions were high.

May 16th - started up the Mississippi River.

On the 17th we got to St. Louis. Here I left the Saints and went up the Illinois River and made my friends a good visit. Some wished to be re-baptized by me but I thought best to send them a good faithful elder from St. Louis. I then returned to St. Louis, found Elder Blair.

May 27th I entered into arrangements to go home with Brother Blair. [p. 5]

May 30th - Elder Spencer has just come from England and will go with us this day. We are now on the boat, called the "Alma," with about 30 good Saints. We had a good voyage up the Atchison. Here we found many of the Saints sick and some dead and others dying. Among the number were Elder G. Simpson and Elder Bill and wife.

June 7th—Elders Snow and Spencer organized our company, being the third Sixty. Elder Seth M. Blair is our Captain. Elder East Church - - I was appointed counselor and also captain of one ten and also chaplin.

We started our camp on the 11th of June—traveled eight miles when we camped and staid until the 17th. This is a sickly place. Most of the camp left [t]his day but I had to stay until the next day, when I left with the remainder of the camp. When I got within about one mile of the camp, a messenger run to me stating that Brother Jones was taken the colary and wished me to hasten to his relief by administering the ordinance of the house of God to him, but having a very hard river to cross I was detained sometime. I found Bro. Jones cold and cramped. I called Brothers J[ohn]. M[e]yer, George E. Riser, and Oscar Tayler [Tyler] to my assistance, for they were men who had had their endowments. We approached the sick and dying for by this time four more were taken. But the spirit forbade me rebuking it at this time, yet I felt to pray the Almighty to stay the pleg [plague] if it be his well. Bro. Jones soon died and in the evening Sister Leungford [Langford] died. This night Bro. East's child died also. Bro. Lankford [Langford] and some others on the 18th. We buried six persons. This is indeed a doalful time to us all.

This day we met the brotheren from the valley on missions. They were under Captain Hait. We started our camp—a number of the missionaries returned with us to where we nooned. Sister Eliza Poast [Jost] died this forenoon in the wagon. We buried her the same hour and did not stop the train. At noon we had a goodmeeting during which time several more died. We parted with the missionaries and hauled our dead until night, when a number more were dead. Some, however, were taken and when I administered to them they got well immediatly. We continued to travel a little every day and still bury the dead.

Sunday, the 15th, we camped on a small stream called the Hermileon where we buried Old Father [Nathaniel Hunt] Greer and several more died and were burried. I then spoke to Bro. Blair of the propriety of rebaptizing those who wished it and baptizing those that had not been baptized. Accordingly I went to the persons. We then traveled six miles. This evening Elder Stenson [Edward Stevenson] came to us from the Mormon Grove with some bretheren to help us. In the morning I called the Saints together. Captain Blair then red a letter from President Ballentine, stating that Bro. Stenson [Stevenson] was appointed to take charge of our company.

E. Stenson [Stevenson] then chose myself and Brother [James M.] Barlow to be his counselors. A man by the name of Wood from Texas got lost from the camp. He was ill with colery. The mules wandered all night with him lying helpless in the carriage. We are still moving in the midst of death.

On Saturday, June the 30th, this same Wood got out of his carriage just at dusk and unknown to driver and left unaware near the camping place. We soon made a general hunt nearly all night and nearly all the next day but we found him not and with much sorrow pursued our journey without him.

Sunday, July 1st—the camp is in better health.

Sunday, July 8th, we got to Ft. Carney [Kearney] all in good health and spirits except a little difficulty between Brothers Middlemuss [Earl Middlemass] and Right [Thomas H. Wright] which we took into council and strove to settle.

Monday, 9th, we camp up the first camp under the care of Capt. Hincey. Found them all in good health and spirits. We held a council with them:

Elder Conud read some instruction from Erastus Snow—undecided to travel on the next day, and went accordingly.

Sunday, 15th, we got to the Cottonwood springs, about 80 miles from Carney [Kearney], all in good health. But still we persue our journey.

On Monday and Tuesday and Wensday we were detained on account of Bro. Stenson's [Stevenson] having to go back some six miles for his coat. ..During this time. Brothers L. Blair and T. Geer being wagon master concluded to stay all day. This gave some dissatisfaction in the camp. In the evening Bro. Stenson and Myself held a private council and determined to set all right before we left. We then called a council meeting of the whole camp and we both spoke to the Saints and soon got a good spirit and in the evening we held a testamony meeting. Felt well.

Friday we crost the south fork of the Platt[e], had no bad luck.

Saturday we got to U.S.A. hollow, here we stayed until Sunday, 25, shoeing oxen, holding meeting, and fixing to go.

Monday, Tuesday, Wensday, and Thursday—the road is very sandy—teams failing.

Sunday, 29th, traveled 8 miles then camped on a nice place and had a good meeting.

Monday and Tuesday traveled hard, got to Ft. Laram[i]e.

Wednesday past Laram[i]e 10 miles, came to a small trading post. Here we bought 10 yoke of oxen at one hundred dollars, four yoke. This enabled us to go on our way more comfortable.

Sunday, the 5th of August, we are in the Black Hills about 50 miles from Ft. Laram[i]e, here we stay all day. Guarding not well done. E. Stenson [Stevenson], Elder Barlow and myself had a private council, agreed that Elder Mager be released from acting as assistant Sargent, with a vote of thanks, and that Bro. Bancroft take his place. We had a good meeting in the evening, all feel well.

Thursday, 9th, we got over the Black Hills, no wagons broke, one ox sick and left behind.

Friday, 10th we got over the Black Hills all in fine spirits.

Sunday, 12th, we got to the last crossing of the Platt[e].

We crossed and traveled up the river 13 miles. Left the river, camped on a small creek. The feelings of the camp hard towards E. Stenson for bad management, wishes expressed to divide the camp.

Monday, 14th, E. Stenson and myself went and held a private counsel, then called the officers of the camp and had a general counsel. The decision is to go on all together.

Wednesday, 15th, we are on the Sweetwater. This my birthday. I am now 40 years old, and now crossing the plains for the fifth time.

Sunday, 19th, we are laying by for the day. This week the feelings of the camp are all confusion and they have little or no regard for Brother Stenson [Stevenson]. Brother Bancroft feels dissatisfied and desires to be released from the office of assistant sargent; him and the captain had a dispute. Some hard words about fasting. Henry said his health was too pore to fast. Brother Stenson said if he had more faith in his dumplings than he had in his God then he might take them, for, said he, you have got a hard spirit. Henry said he has not, and so forth. Told them that they being the anointed of the Lord should not dispute before the Saints. At 10 a.m. we have a meeting, also in the evening—the feelings of the Saints bad towards Bro. Stenson [Stevenson].

Wednesday camped near the upper crossing of the Sweetwater.

Thursday, 22nd of Aug., we got to the Pacific Springs, Brother Greersten having got there some time before the balance of the company. They camped before Bro. Stenson [Stevenson] came up. This made him mad and he then said the camp should go on a five miles farther. This we done with much hard feeling in the camp against him for his unwise course and rough talk, which causes much unpleasant feelings. Brothers Stenson, Barlow, and myself then went into counsel by ourselves and we praid for power to control the camp and we felt well. We then tried Elder Larmont Bancroft for his rebellion and cut him off from the church.

On Monday, the 27th, we got to Greenriver [Green River].

28th—we held a counsel on other things.

29th—About 30 a.m. Elder Charles Basset came into our camp in good health and spirits. Gave us some good instructions. Report from the Saints in the rear is good. They staid five hours. We gave them food and changed and gave them three fresh mules. I sent some letters and went with them 3 miles on the way.

Sunday, 2nd—Elder Blair came to us from the valley and this morning Elder Stenson [Stevenson] started to the valley. But meeting Bro. Blair he concludes to stay. We are now

camped at Ft. Bridger, which is now settled by the Saints. We then pursued our journey and when I got to Bear River I mashed my little finger very bad. Sunday, we are at the Weber. I now leave the Company and start for home in company with Brothers Johnson, Bancroft, and the two Sister Johnsons.

We arrived into the valley on the 10th of September, being 3 years lacking 5 days absent from my family and home. I find them all alive and well and all in fine spirits, and with joy to my soul I feel to thank the Lord for his parental care over me and my family while I was on my mission.

Source of Trail Excerpt: Earl, Sylvester Henry, Diary, 1852-1856, 6-8.