

DIARY AND TRAVELS OF

Nellie Slater

Travels on the Plains in 1862

Left Decatur, Iowa May 12, arrived Auburn, Oregon, August 30, 1862. Diary kept by Nellie Slater (about 14 or 15 years of age), Grandmother of Royal F. Stanton of Arco, Idaho.

Part of the train turned off for California and Salt Lake after they crossed the Green River just below where the big Sandy joined - the diary continues from where they enter where Idaho is now. Mistake, entered Idaho, July 13.

July 7, 1862 - there are twenty-five wagons in our train. Traveled twelve miles over very rough roads, and came to a very nice little creek, good water. Plenty of water all along the road. It runs in small streams down from the mountains. The next day we traveled over bad rough roads, and came down one of the steepest places that a road could go, I believe. Traveled about eight miles, I think, and came to Hams Fork, a branch of the Green River and camped.

July 9 - Traveled three miles up the river to a crossing, and the men made a raft. We all got across about sundown. The stream is very high and runs swift. My sister, Adaline, was taken sick on the 3rd when we first came to the Green River, with the mountain fever, and keeps getting worse. We can not travel much on that account, and there's not much to write about which is very interesting.

The 10th we came three miles and camped. 11th, Started at ten o'clock, thinking we could go three or four miles to a better camp, but were obliged to travel till night. We came to the roughest roads I ever saw, and camped in a valley three miles from Bear River.

July 12 - Adaline is no better this morning. Came ten miles up the river to Smith Fork of the Bear. There is a pale bridge across this stream, and a Frenchman keeps it. Toll, one dollar and fifty (cents) a team. There is (are) six graves here. Traveled fifteen miles and came to Thomas Park, a branch of Bear River and stopped.

13th - This stream is not very wide but tis about 12 feet deep. There's no way of crossing it but in wagon boxes. Traveled over very high mountains all day, some of them from two to three miles long, and the dust eight inches deep. Traveled through the mountains about twelve miles and came to the river again, traveled up the river three miles and camped. Our train is getting very small. There were seven wagons left it this morning.

July 14 - Traveled up Bear River over rough roads and crossed small mountain streams every half mile or so. Adaline is worse today. We came 28 miles today, and are camped. this evening about eighty rods from Soda Springs.

There was a small train camped about half a mile ahead of us and while we were getting into camp the Indians ran off about fifteen head of their horses, all they had except one or two. The men followed them so close they left one horse that was hobbled, but the Indians got the rest. There (are) is a great many Indians through this part of the country, belonging to the Snake Tribe.

15th - Started this morning and came on to Soda Springs. They are quite a curiosity. The springs boil out of a rock about fifteen feet higher than the ground. The water is warm, and when it lays on the ground a short time, looks like soda. We came one mile further to steam boat springs, it also boils out of a rock. Came ten miles to another soda spring which is a good deal like the first ones. We left Bear River five miles west of Soda Springs; are camped this evening on a nice little stream twenty-five miles from the springs.

16th - Came six miles to a creek where the men had to make a brush bridge before we could cross. Traveled about twelve miles to another creek which was very bad to cross. Our team has been almost given out for two or three weeks back, and this evening they gave out so that we was (were) an hour getting a mile to camp.

17th - Jim Buckingham and John McAlister left us this morning on account of our teams being give out so, and got in with another man. Traveled over rough roads, saw some Indians, and stopped for noon on a small creek. Started and traveled down the creek for twelve miles and camped for night. There's been twenty Indians following us all the afternoon. I suppose they wanted to attack the train. Adaline is getting some better.

18th - Came three miles and struck a very deep (?), traveled eight miles through it. Came to a very steep mountain, over it, and down to Snake River. It is a very swift running stream and about forty rods wide. There's a ferry boat here, the ferry men charge eight dollars for each wagon, without stock. There is (are) plenty of Indians here; all along the river their wickiups are numerous. They say flour is fifteen dollars per hundred here. We gave one of our wagons to pay for our other, and Mr. Smith's. Started from the ferry, traveled ten miles and camped. Our teams gave out so we was (were) till eleven o'clock at night getting in to camp.

19th - We are still in camp, where we expect to stay today. The boys went down to the river and gather currants; the river bottom for miles around are covered with them. We find them very good to make pies, etc. There's plenty of good grass and water here, and all together it is a very good place.

20th - Still in camp. The ferry we crossed at is kept by some Mormons and we think they directed us on the wrong road so we would cross the river again and they could make so much more.

All the Emigration to Salmon River have gone the same way. We saw some teams on their way back today. They went out one hundred sixty miles but could not get further. They say there is one hundred and fifty teams on their way back. Don't know whether it's so or not.

July 21st - There was (were) some men passed today going back to the ferry. They say they went as far as they could get through the mountains; they are impossible. We have turned back to the ferry this morning, to take a different road. Some are crossing back over the river to the California road. We traveled two miles down the river from the ferry and camped.

22nd - Laid be (Over) for a while today, then started and came about a mile and a half to wait until the train all got together to be safe from the Indians. We are now in the Shoshone Country; they said the pale faces should not pass through. There's no other show but to raise a large force and go through.

July 23rd - We traveled ten miles to a good spring at the edge of the desert and camped. The forty miles across, without water and no road but what we will make.

24th - Stayed at the springs until half past three. Started again at one o'clock, came two and had to stop again till some of the men mended a wagon which they had broken; it took about an hour to mend it, and then we started again. We came to a small spring about ten in the forenoon of the 25th where we stopped. The water is scarce, none for stock. The roads have been very bad. I believe the worst I ever saw the place we are now at is at foot of one of the Butte mountains (Big Butte). Adaline is getting so she can sit up but Father is very sick with the flux. He has been sick for nearly two weeks but never thought he was so bad and is now almost speechless. He cannot help himself. Came ten miles further to Lost Creek (River). It is a beautiful stream and runs smooth and swift. The country around is very rocky and broken with high mountains.

July 26 - This morning at half past three o'clock, Father breathed his last on earth. He was taken very bad in the night while crossing the desert, and kept getting worse until he died. He did not talk only to answer as he was spoken to, and he was at his right mind till an hour before he died. The funeral was preached at ten o'clock by Mr. Hocket, a preacher in the train. We buried him half a mile south of the creek (Lost River) and four rods west of the road, beneath an Indian canopy. He died on the 26th of July, 1862, aged 53 years, 7 months and 17 days. After getting all things arranged we started again, traveled three miles and broke our wagon wheel. The boys fixed it up a little and drove two miles into camp, where the boys mended it and set the tyre.

27th - Came two miles to edge of a small desert; tis twenty-five miles across. Traveled all day, till five o'clock in the evening before we got across. At the edge we found a small stream and camped. (Probably

Champagne or Lave Creek) We can see a great many Indians all the time. There's a guide by the name of Tim Goodle, who is part Indian.

July 28 - Laid by today to get as large a train together as possible. It now consists of 1200, (possibly horses and cattle) 38 wagons, 795 men, 300 women and children, and 2900 shots. A young man died this morning in the train. He was one that had his horses taken at Soda Springs; his name is Colls and is twenty-three years of age. There was a funeral preached at six in the evening, and he was buried. He has one sister - a widow - and an uncle along.

July 29 - Started this morning, traveled through rocks from one to five feet high, and had to make our road through as best we could. Some of the boys found in the rocks a trunk which had been lost or hid in 1853. It was full of clothing, dishes and other small articles. We are now in the Salmon River mountains.

July 30th - Saw some names cut in trees and rocks, which had been done in 1854. We are traveling now through a volcanic country. There's (are) mountains all torn up and it is a very rough desert of a looking place. Came on past a little lake (Lava Lake) crossed three or four small streams and camped in a little valley of the mountains.

July 31st - We saw some Indians this morning, the same that stole two mules from a train at Lost Creek. The men the mules belonged to hired the Indians to bring them back. Passed over very rough rocky roads and by where there had been six hundred Indians camped.

August 1st - Traveled over nice smooth roads cross a valley twelve miles distance to Wood River, a very nice swift running stream. It ran over some of the wagons and upset two or three. Took off one wagon and all that was in it, but we got across safe by going a little further down the river, where it was wider and not so deep. Drove two miles out from the river and camped.

Aug. 2nd - Came over rough roads this afternoon. Two men in the train broke their wagon came six miles further and Mr. Smith broke his wagon, while crossing a creek. We have had very good roads this afternoon. Came eight miles, crossed a small creek and camped. There was (were) fifteen Indians came into camp this evening. There seems to be a great many of them all through this part of the country.

Aug. 3rd - Traveled ten miles across a very beautiful valley, came to an Indian village of the Shoshones and Snakes. They say themselves that there's two thousand and five hundred of them, but there's not that many here. We are camped within eighty rods of the village. They are all through the camp. Some of them appear to be friendly, while others will not speak. Some of them told the guide that they would massacre the train, but I guess they thought there was (were) too many to fight and they have not any ammunition. They were seen trying to shoot a man who was down at the creek in the willows washing. The boys that lost their stock at Soda

Springs went out among the band of Indians' horses to look for theirs, but they were not there. They have four hundred head of good mules and horses and I suppose they are mostly stolen.

Aug. 4th - Traveled ten miles crossed several small streams and came to another Indian village of the Bannock tribe. They appear to be very hostile, and say we shall not pass through, but I don't think we will have any trouble. We traveled through a beautiful valley with plenty of grass and good water. Came on eight miles further and camped for the night.

5th - Traveled twelve miles and passed close by another Indian village, came through a small range of mountains and camped on a small stream in a valley. Traveled over rough roads as usual and seen (saw) plenty of Indians all the time. There's some names cut and painted in the rocks, which was done in (1854) '54.

Aug. 6th - We thought four weeks ago that we would be in the mines by the first of August but there is no nearer prospect of our getting there than there was then. The Indians told us today that we were twenty miles from the mines, but we need not believe what they tell us. Some of the folks are getting discouraged; provisions are getting scarce. Some families have not more than will last them ten days; while some have considerable more. We are laying by today, and twenty men have gone out to explore the mountains. They went twelve or fifteen miles and the Indians would not let them go further.

Aug. 7th - Traveled ten miles this forenoon over very rough roads. Stopped for noon where there had been about five hundred Indians camped. Started after dinner and traveled through the mountains over the roughest roads that ever could be. Tis almost impossible to get through them. Some of the boys in the train broke down their wagon so they had to leave. I believe it was Billy Wallace. James Buckingham is very sick with the mountain fever and flux, There is a great many sick in the train, some I expect that will never get through.

Aug. 8th - We laid by today on account of the sick folks, excepting we traveled about three miles to change camp. A lady in one of the trains is not expected to live. She is one of the same who lost their horses at Soda Springs. There is (are) two trains just left camp and another train of twenty-seven wagons just drove in to camp. They were a short distance behind us. The Indians killed one horse from the same train and stole one hundred and fifty pounds of flour. P.M. Mrs. Wayne, the sick lady, died this evening at six o'clock, she has left a husband and one small child to mourn for her. The child, poor little thing, is sick with no mother to care for it though its father is kind to it.

Aug. 9th - Mrs. Wayne was buried this morning at six o'clock. Tis raining and very disagreeable. Traveled five miles, come to a little timber growing on the mountains - First we have seen, except willows and cottonwood, on the stream for about four hundred miles. Traveled to the old Oregon road at the place of the massacre of '53. There is one grave here and a great many bones of persons as well as bones of animals, also wagon irons. Came

on and in sight of Snake River again. Traveled over very good roads only steep in places, but there are no rocks. Came to Boise River after night and camped. It is about eight rods wide, with very high rocky banks. The boys had to climb down the banks two hundred feet to get water. There is no timber but cottonwood.

Aug. 10th - Traveled three miles this morning before we got any breakfast on account of getting to where there was water easier to get at. We started again at nine A.M. Came five miles and our team gave out so that we had to get cattle and put to our wagon. Our horses have got so poor and weak that the boys have to help some of them up when they lay down. We have now left the train we have traveled with all the way, and have got in with a train from the Peak who have ox teams. There are but two families, the rest are all men traveling together. We came to another Indian village of the Bannocks--camped close by.

Aug. 11 - The next day we traveled four miles then stopped and laid by for the men to find a ford to cross the river, but did not find any. Started in the evening and came five miles, crossed a small creek and camped where there was plenty of good grass and water.

Aug. 12th - Traveled down Boise River, roads very good except the dust is bad; tis about six inches deep and the weather is warm and disagreeable.

Aug. 13th - The next day we only traveled eight miles, and down the river in sight of where old Fort Boise stood, it being on the opposite side from us. Stopped on Snake River and began to get ready to ferry the river in our wagon boxes - there being no ferry boat. There are a number of trains crossing at the mouth of Boise River. We are above. Saw three trains that came down the south side of the river. They say the Indians are bad, had robbed a small train of twelve wagons and took all the stock.

Aug. 14th - Commenced crossing the river this morning and kept at it all day. It is about five hundred yards wide and runs with great swiftness. There is no timber here except brush, which does very well to burn.

Aug. 15th - The men did not get all the wagons across yesterday and so had to finish this morning, and swam the stock over. Got through about dark. There was a man, Mr. Curtis, got drowned in the river at the mouth of Boise below us while crossing on a mule.

August 16 - In to Oregon.