

## 1869 Journal of Lt. John Charles Currier

April 16, 1869 – May 13, 1869

*NOTES FOR THIS 2024 TRANSCRIBED VERSION: The narrative you are about to read was transcribed in 1969 by Sacramento County Historical Society from a handwritten journal kept by Lt. John Currier as he made his way west by rail in 1869. A printed copy of the 1969 transcription appeared in the Society's Golden Notes Issue of April 1969. That 1969 publication was re-transcribed for this 2024 electronic version by Placer-Sierra Railroad Heritage Society. The Journal's 1969 transcription added some punctuation to clarify the text but original spellings are shown.*

*Lt. Currier's journal entries describe his journey and observations on newly completed and not yet completed portions of the nation's first Transcontinental Railroad. He departed New Hampshire on April 16, 1869, traveling by boat and rail to Washington, D.C with his new bride, Nattie. After showing his wife the sites in Washington, they traveled on several railroads to Omaha where he rejoined his regiment. Their orders were to proceed on soon-to-be-completed tracks of the Union Pacific Railroad to Promontory, Utah Territory, where they provided a military presence and security at the joining of the rails. After the ceremony Lt. Currier and Nattie completed their historic cross-country railroad journey by boarding the first Central Pacific train to Sacramento on the nation's brand new Transcontinental Railroad.*

Brookline, Massachusetts

January, 1934

The following journal was kept by my father, Capt. John Charles Currier of the 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry, U.S.A.

My father and my mother, who was Nataline B. Smith, daughter of Waltman Smith of Manchester N.H., were on their way to California and it was their wedding journey also.

My parents had planned to go to Cal. to the Presidio at San Francisco where my father was to rejoin his regiment, but he received orders to proceed at once to Omaha, Neb. there to wait for the completion of the two great railroads which were the first to join the east and the west; so instead of sailing around Cape Horn my parents were among the comparatively few who were present at the "*joining of the ties*" of the transcontinental railroad in 1869.

Harriet Currier Hale

### **Friday, April 16, 1869**

Bid farewell to friends in New Hampshire and turned my face Westward. This time I do not travel a single man. No I have a little wife to share my joys and sorrows. We took the 11:15 train from Manchester for Boston. Col. Smith, Gustie, Hattie Hale, Harry her husband, Nellie Smith and my own Sister Julia went along with us to Boston. --- We arrived in Boston at 1:30 P.M. --- took a carriage and drove to the Tremont House. Hattie H & wife remained with us until the boat train left at 4:00 P.M. --- We bid last good bye and Nattie shed a few tears over it --- Reached Newport at 8:00 --- Went immediately aboard the boat and after a light supper retired. --- This is a quiet boat and a quiet company aboard.

### **Saturday, April 17, 1869**

Got up at 7:00, found ourselves in New York harbor. --- Drove to the Huffman House where we got an elegant suite of rooms. This is a fine hotel and fine prices kept upon the European plan. --- Slept till 11, then got breakfast. --- During afternoon we drove about the city down Broadway to the Battery, back up Fifth Avenue --- Several of my friends called. --- Took 8:45 express for Washington; got a section in sleeping car --- passed a comfortable night.

### **Sunday, April 18th, Washington D.C.**

Arrived here at 7 A.M. Found my rooms awaiting me which we proceeded to occupy at the National Hotel. Got breakfast, then hired a buggy and drove about the city; visited all the points of interest the public buildings --- up 14th St in fact I went over all my old familiar places. The old town looks just as it did when I left two years ago. I will describe the buildings. The Treasury is an immense building fronting on 15th St., built of granite with immense columns of fluted granite. The wings are elegant. In there nearly two thousand men are employed beside several hundred women. The Patent Office is on 7th St., it takes up two whole blocks, extending from 7th to 9th. The material is marble and the walls are two feet thick. Opposite is the Post Office of same material though not so pretentious as its neighbor. Inside is a perfect bee hive. The War and Navy Departments are on 17th St. very near each other --- built of brick --- The former Dept. had during the war a dozen buildings, so extensive did its business become. The Second Auditors and Q. M. Genls Office are not owned by the Govt but rented. They are very large and filled to over flowing with clerks; the Second Auditor at one time had upwards of five hundred alone. The Presidents House on Penn. Avenue faces Lafayette Park and is of Virginia Marble; presents a handsome appearance surrounded as it is by beautiful grounds with fountains playing. Lastly the National Capital stands par excellence above all others, the finest building in this country and equal to any in the world. It is situated on Capitol Hill and it with its grounds covers 59 acres --- the material of finest white marble carved and mounted on every post. The whole building is a study, the front facing Southward and both House and Senate Wings are ornamented with Statues in bronze and Marble, pictures illustrative of the rise and progress of our Nation. Settlers, Indians, Quakers &

heros of the Revolutionary war are blended together. The grounds outside are of most beautiful design; great trees thick with foliage, green grass, the odor of flowers. Easy rustic seats invite the first passenger to stop & take a rest. The weather being warm, we are glad to avail ourselves of the privilege open to all. So we recline under the trees, look up at the immense building before us whose towering dome stands 250 feet above the basement and wonder how soon we shall see our Country Mistress of the World. The sun shines bright and as warm as we find June; the trees are in lovely green; the breeze just mild enough to be pleasant. Nature seems to be all smiles this morning. This is the Sunny South towards which yon Goddess of Liberty 12 feet high looks and how delightful for this invalid --- It seems to me I would like to be sick if I were permitted to lounge under these trees every day and drink in the many delicious odors from the many flowers that bloom all about me. Leaving the Capitol grounds, we went back to our carriage and drove home to our hotel.

### **Monday, April 19th**

The Sun was shining right into my room this morning and I got up quickly. After breakfast N and self went to the Capitol. Sam Lord of Manchester showed us about the building. We visited House of Representatives Committee Rooms, Speaker's Room etc. They are all finished and furnished in the most costly manner. The engines for heating and cooling the building are remarkable; an immense fan 20 feet in diameter blows in winter heated and in summer cold air into all the rooms of the Capitol. Every groove and hinge and joint of these engines fit so nicely and run so smoothly that you can not hear a single sound. Standing within five feet of the works, I heard no more noise than I would in a parlor. A crowd of hungry looking office seekers thronged the corridors and ante rooms of the Senate which body was in "Executive Session". The office seekers are waiting to see what action is being taken upon their names. The House is not in Session. We looked through nearly all the Senate Committee rooms. Back to dinner at 5 o'clock. After dinner we took in Will Brody and Sister and drove to Arlington where is the Cemetery of Soldiers. Under the green sod sleep these 16000 (sixteen thousand) "boys in blue" who fell in defense of their country. There's little white head stones in regular rows and the green mounds stretching off almost out of sight present a beautiful yet mournful appearance. The grounds are well kept up. The sod on these graves is green and the generous hand of loving woman has planted flowers that bloom perpetually, a tribute to the fallen brave. Many, very many are marked "unknown". We went through "Arlington House", formerly the house of Rebel Genl Lee, now the office of the Keeper of the Cemetery. We wandered through its deserted rooms, its walls marked with charcoal and begrimed with dirt, through the once proud parlors --- the halls and conservatory now tenantless and silent, its very blinds closed as if ashamed to admit Gods sunlight, the wing resounding to our tread, the air damp, dark & close and wandered out upon the porch now leaning to one side as if about to fall. On this porch during the War many a weary, dusty travel-worn soldier in blue rested his head upon his knapsack and drank deep draughts of water from the spring near by. Looking from the Porch this fresh sunlight comes pouring in. As it goes down gradually in the South west, it gladdens our hearts, being such a change from the sorrows we just left. Then right before us lies

the city of Washington with its many spires. Does the mind of Robert E. Lee ever wander back to this scene of his early Manhood, and does his conscience ever receive any twinges when he reflects what he is now and what he might have been had he remained true to his old flag. Slowly turning away we rode back to the city, every one feeling little inclined to talk. We returned by Long Bridge and reached the city just as the setting sun was gliding the West. Long Bridge acquired quite a National reputation during the War. It is a mile long; the Potomac spreads itself out like coy woman. Got a late supper and had few calls before retiring.

### **Tuesday, April 20th 1869**

Rained today for the first time since we left home. This afternoon was regular reception day at the White House for Mrs. Grant. I got a closed carriage and we drove up. Met not only the ladies but Pres. Grant himself. He looks a little more careworn than he did four or five years ago in the field. The last time I saw him was at City Point when he was investing Petersburg, Va. He is kind, easy and graceful to all. Came up a heavy thunder shower but we did not get wet. Packed up for leaving. I have got orders to join my regiment. They are now enroute for San Francisco.

### **Wednesday, April 21st**

Left on the 9:30 A.M. train; arrived in Baltimore at 11:30 drawn across the city and took 1:00 train for Harrisburg; arrived in H. at 3:15. Stopped in this the Capitol of Pennsylvania only 3/4 of an hour when we got off on the Pittsburg Fort Wayne & Chicago R.R. for Chicago. Got a nice section in its Palace Sleeping Car, finest one I ever saw. We are told that we keep this car until we arrive in Chicago. Senator Howe, Robert Lincoln, son of ex Prsdt Lincoln and others, were along. Supper at Altoona Base of the Alleghanies. Leaving Altoona about dark we commenced to ascend drawn by two stout engines. It was bright moonlight and I lay awake watching from my window the windings of the road as it passed round and round on its way up the mountains. At times when going round a curve I could see a thousand feet into the abyss below; the scenery is wild and grand.

### **Thursday April 22nd**

6 a.m. Awakened this morning by the conductor shouting "Alliance. 20 minutes for breakfast." I scrambled up & pulled on my clothes in a hurry, not liking to lose my morning meal. My wife concluded she would rather lie an hour or two longer, so I breakfasted by myself – made a respectable meal off of hot cakes, coffee and beef steak. Towns are thick now; we are far beyond the mountains and running 30 miles an hour. We pass station after station in rapid succession; this is Ohio. 3:40 P.M. just dined at Ft. Wayne in Indiana; got a splendid dinner; off again like chain lightning. 10 o'clock P.M. Sherman House Chicago, arrived here half an hour ago; got nice rooms and a hot supper & bath.

### **Friday April 23rd**

Slept very soundly last night and feel very nice this morning. This a very fine hotel; took a 11:00 breakfast and the best one I ever ate in any hotel. After breakfast and a cigar, got a carriage and drove round the city. Down Wabash Avenue to the lake, back up Michigan Avenue to the Water Works, immense works that supply this city with water drawn from the lake two miles out by means of a tunnel under the Lake. Chicagoans boast that this is one of the greatest achievements of the 19th century; it is a wonderful piece of engineering. The wheel around passes the main belt is 25 ft. in diameter; the water is forced by four powerful engines of 600 horse power each.

Leaving the water works we drove to a carriage tunnel under a river; took a five o'clock dinner at our hotel; its fare team is superb. Evening went to see "Humpty Dumpty" at Curlys Opera House celebrated as being a few years since the capital prize in a fit enterprize.

### **Saturday April 24th**

During the A.M. I walked about this city and made a few purchases. Made up my mind after receiving a telegram from Omaha that the right was there to go on immediately. Left on the 3:30 train by Chicago & Northwestern R. R.; got a section in a Pullman Palace Sleeping Car. Until night we rode over prairies, passing many little country towns in Illinois. The track is perfectly straight; from the rear platform I could look back from one station and see the one preceding it ten miles back. There are plenty of cattle sheep & dogs. This is a splendid road. Took supper without Nattie at a little eating station. 9:00 we have just arrived at the Mississippi River, stopping at Fulton. 9:20 P.M. we are across; it seems a long distance; on one side Fulton and the other Clinton. Several Miss. steam boats are tied to the wharf. We came over very slowly, the moonlight shining on the waters below, the dancing tricolored lights of the steamers as they dance to & fro up & down the river, the fire & cinder from their smoke stack, the lights of Clinton beginning low down to the river brink & rising gradually to the bluffs, the whistle of our locomotive & the low rumble of our cars over the bridge --- added to the fact that this was the great Father of Waters made up a scene very grand and impressive.

A large crowd was standing on the platform at Clinton, mostly hack men or loafers. They kept up medley of shouts, yells and screeches. As we stopped they shouted in many different voices, "Heres your bus for Iowa ouse" "eres your free bus - for hotel" "Eres your free bus for poor house," shouted a wag amused at the spectacle; stopped 20 minutes then off again. Feeling very sleepy, I fell off and slept soundly.

### **Sunday April 25th**

Took breakfast at Boone, a small country town where we got plain country food which tasted good. We are right in the middle of a prairie, the vast expanse of land rich and fertile spreads out like a curtain on either side. 3 P.M. stopping for the engine to "drink"; we are nearing Council Bluffs, for we begin to see mountains and the country is more broken. We frequently pass bayous and

streams. Many of them are filled with duck and wild geese; they literally cover the water. A hunter in his boat approaches them within a rod, almost near enough to knock them down with sticks. They rise up in a perfect cloud. Some amateur sportsman on our train can't resist the temptation and fires into them with his pistol. If I had a shot gun I could lay hundred low. 4-1/2 P.M. at Council Bluffs a rough new town; the buildings all smell green. I don't think the lumber used in this building was seasoned by the inhabitants, however, are well seasoned if one can judge from these brown faces and the oaths they use. There is a great crowd of men on the platform. Omaha is in sight across the river in a cloud of dust and sand. Way off in the distance I can see our barracks. --- Metropolitan Hotel Omaha 6:30 P.M. We left our car at Omaha got into immense Omnibusses and rode across the Missouri in a shuffling ferry boat, a very crazy institution, and did not leave our bus until we reached our hotel door. We had four splendid prancing horses evidently used to their business. It took us twenty minutes to cross, the wind taking us some way down stream. --- I'll take a stalk about the city having had our breakfast. Omaha is built like all new western towns, in a very straggling manner. It is likewise well laid off into Streets and Avenues and some day may be a very handsome place. Small trees are planted all over the city but as yet they have not attained a size larger than my fist. Much business is done here, being the depot for a great stretch of country nearly a thousand miles ahead. They supply all the forts in Nebraska & Utah, furnish the Mormons, fit out travellers and best of all is the starting point of the Union Pacific Rail Road. Here all its shops and car works; they build cars and locomotives and have more than thirty shops and employ a little army of workmen. The signs of progress and industry are stamped upon the people I met. At the same time there are many red faces and signs of dissipation; whiskey shops, beer saloons and gambling halls abound. They are well patronized by Indians and Anglo Saxons. There are eight or ten churches, several large elegant brick stores filled with a fine assortment of goods and a few public buildings. They claim 20,000 inhabitants. Tis a pretty fast place; --- men have grown rich suddenly and don't know the value of money. --- We see the finest teams and dresses. The hotels are plenty for all, small and cheaply built. Ours is the best in the place, and our room is 7 ft. by 9' furnished with a hard bed, 2 chairs and a bureau. In afternoon I got a buggy and we drove up to camp, three miles away; got there about dark, found where the officers were and quietly walked in upon a dozen of them, including Capt Johnston. As I entered there was a great shout and I received a warm welcome. We remained only a few minutes when we drove back to our hotel.

### **Monday April 26th 1869**

Omaha is built on the western bank of the Missouri and is on an inclined plain which rises gradually upwards of a hundred feet. There is much life here and a great tendency to movement. When the trees grow, it will be handsome. The streets are not graded so during wet weather are perfectly fearful – mud up to our ankles. The streets are numbered from 1 upward and avenues are Indian names. Goods are not much higher than in Eastern cities; wood & coal are the most expensive on account of the distance they have to be shipped. The stores are filled with excellent goods and look very well. There is one street railway. Apparently every business relation revolves around

the "U. P." road, as the Union Pacific is termed for short. You see "UP" goods, "U.P." saloons, "U.P." hotels, etc. A friend remarked as he priced some stores today that everything was "UP" here, a very appropriate remark I think. The works of the R. R. Company are worth looking at; they cover 15 acres of land; twenty or thirty engines are in sight with steam up all the time, and trains of cars so long that you can hardly see the end. The sleeping cars are Magnificent; they are of the Pullman make and go out every night fitted up like a steamer for a long voyage. The Pacific Express starts every evening at 4:00. ---

### **Tuesday April 27th 1869**

Concluded to go out to camp and live until the regiment goes. Went out and bought a few necessary articles of household furniture such as mattress, wash bowl & pitcher, bedstead & a few chairs. Spread some army blankets for carpets, put up my curtains, had a cheerful fire built for it is cold out here and ushered my bride in. She instead of being displeased appeared to like the "situation", for she smiled and said it was quite a novelty. We fixed up our rooms to make them look cheerful & had a good laugh over "love in a cottage". We take our meals with Capt Miles & wife next door

### **Wednesday April 28th**

A great many ladies and gentlemen called; N was happy to see them. Capt J. is a frequent visitor; all hands seem disposed to make our stay pleasant. N. has passed the ordeal of introduction bravely. This is a bright beautiful day. I did not go on duty; went down town in the yellow ambulance drawn by four mules; made a few purchases.

### **Thursday April 29th 1869**

Reported for duty. Capt. O. Beime is in command of Co "I". He is a very fine gentleman and I fancy we shall get on famously. Our Camp is under the bluffs with a large parade ground rather too extensive for comfort. I have a sett of quarters; the quarters are well arranged and can be made very comfortable indeed. We are well provided for as far as rations and are concerned. Capt. O. B. is not particularly strict.

### **Friday April 30 1869**

Inspection and Muster. Nattie went out to see and approved delighted; she likes this, her first army Post very much; says it's a great novelty and she takes an interest in everything but especially the music. Our Band are in New uniforms and look very well.

### **Saturday May 1st 1869**

Received today two letters from Manchester, first since leaving home; Nattie was delighted. Most of the ladies in the garrison have called. Attended a fine party last night given in town by one of the citizens to the officers of the Twenty first; had a jolly time. N. was admired and enjoyed the evening very much. Quite a brilliant party - gave us a good supper. Met Gen. Wheaton & wife, our new Lieut-Colonel; they are nice people and Mrs. W will be company for Nattie. Danced till 2 this morning so we got up late.

### **Sunday May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1869**

Orders to leave on Tuesday for San Francisco. Had parade in the evening. Many ladies and carriages from town out to see it; first time our regiment has ever Paraded together, we during the past two years having been scattered by companies and detachments through Virginia.

### **Monday May 3rd 1869**

To town in the morning and bought a lot of ham, beef tongue, canned fruits, etc. supplies for our trip over land; got ten days supply. Every body else doing the same.

### **Tuesday May 4th**

Broke up house keeping in a hurry and packed our household goods in boxes & trunks. Had the privilege of riding in to the cars with Col. Cogswell in Headquarters Ambulance. Col. C. is the commanding officer so this was a complement. Left station at 5:20 mid the cheers of a great crowd. Fearfully warm day and dusty. Officers have an elegant Pullman Sleeping car. Our detachment consists of Cos "F", "G", "H", "I", & "K" commanded by Lt-Col Cogswell. We are a gay old party; the officers are all nice gentlemen. Johnston & Barton are with us. Besides Nattie there are three ladies, viz. Mrs. Putnam, Mrs. Cluley & Mrs. Ross. We will try and keep up with the Express which started 20 minutes ahead of us. The road is excellent, we shall have a nice trip I guess. Our car seems like a cozy little parlor and its occupants one family. 6:30 P.M. Fremont, a station on the "U.P." 46 miles from Omaha; We are travelling rapidly, thirty miles an hour. The country thus far is fine, under cultivation and well improved. We pass many grain fields which look very green and refreshing. Nebraska thus far presents nothing but an inviting appearance. Every officer has his little mess, Pickles, Meats of all kinds, bread & butter, coffee, tea, condensed milk & canned fruits. It being supper time, by general consent we all make our spreads on little tables firmly fixed in the sides of the car. Just now it looks like a restaurant, for nearly every table is covered with a white cloth or towell. Mary, our cook, makes us some coffee with a camphene lamp and a tin coffee boiler. We are entirely independent of the eating saloons along the route, which are poor.



### Wednesday, May 5th 1869

Morning – At North Platte, an eating station 291 miles from Omaha: -- Had a comfortable night; bought some hot rolls for an addition to our food. We are now out on the prairie and are spinning along “at 40 miles an hour”. The track stretches like the moons path on the ocean, straight and true, loosing [sic] itself in the dim distances. We have found the region under cultivation and find the soil dry and sandy, not stable. Very warm in the cars but we have excellent ventilation. “Lodge Pole” 396 miles from Omaha: We are passing through a more broken country; to our left are high bluffs; we see Mountains in the dim distance. The road is now through a valley, straight as a “B” line; the rock of the bluffs is soft lime stone. We are a jolly party; the officers and ladies are moving about chatting, telling Jokes, playing cards, singing and smoking. When one makes coffee he invites two or three of his neighbors. Every section of these cars is provided with a table.

**Sydney, 414 miles from Omaha.** Out of the bluffs and on the table land, it is undulating except where our track is laid. It seems as if the hand of providence shaped this country for the building of this road, for there has been a natural path all the way from Omaha whether it be among the bluff or on the plain. Just like I imagine the bed under the Atlantic on which the Atlantic Cable is laid. We are right among a school of Prairie dogs. They cover the whole face of the Earth --- their burrows in the ground like rabbits or foxes. They are about the size of our terriers and are of snuff color with sharp pointed noses. As we pass they scramble up on their little houses and bark, the latter resembling the squeak of a young fox, nimble little fellows. Bands of friendly Pawnees are in sight encamped along the road; they are filthy, squalid looking beings. The Squaws carry their papooses in a bag dangling to their backs. The males are in war paint & their fanciful dress feathers etc. look like devils which may be they are. Occasionally we pass troops out in a scout; they exchange friendly greetings with our men as we whiz by. They all look as though they had seen hard service. Whole herds of antelopes are constantly crossing our path; the men shout at them from the cars and send them running like the wind. Pretty graceful creatures, they look frightened and no doubt wonder what great fire eating animal this is that tears along over the plains so swiftly. The soil now is dry and sandy. The road thus far is in splendid condition; cars are first class and accommodation equal to any Eastern road through our most populous cities.

**Afternoon – Pine Bluff:** I have just accomplished the feat of shaving with cars running 30 miles an hour, showing how smooth is this road and how steadily we run. We only stop for wood and water. It's a long distance between stations. The inhabitants of this country go armed to the teeth and life is of little value. Accustomed to life among the savages and men recently the Employees of the road, mainly Irish, these hardy pioneers don't feel cosy without a revolver is at their sides. Whether asleep or awake the hand leaps instinctively to the knife or pistol at the slightest warning sound. We can see snow and ice in the shady places so we are going up hill. Yes, the conductor tells me we are nearly 3000 feet above the level of the sea. Cactus abounds on all sides; tis very short and exceeding “prickly”. The cattle and ponies avoid it and leap up by instinct as they approach a cluster; it hurts their feet. A few flowers are seen here & there; as we lay by for water, a soldier brought over to Nattie which she pressed and enclosed in a letter.

**Evening 7 o'clock at Cheyenne** --- the place so famous in Eastern papers. A few months ago many ambitious persons were bent on going to Cheyenne to make their Everlasting fortunes; it sprang up suddenly; it is the base of the Rocky Mountain 5800 feet above the Sea. When the U.P. first reached here and built its shops and round houses, Everybody said here's the place where a great city must be because there is no favorable location for five hundred miles ahead; so reasoning, it grew as if by Magic. Lots in this desert city ran up from nothing to five thousand dollars in five days; there was a great scramble for them. But meanwhile the U.P. passed on and lost itself in the Mountains. --- When the new City stopped growing, lots fell and in a few days half its inhabitants, who were of the roving Arab kind, took up their beds and journeyed westward; it dropped back from 8000 to 3000 people in less than three days, where it now stands. The population is of that rough uncouth kind which always shuns the busy walks of life and seeks new countries. Looking down its street, upon which nearly the whole town is built, we see whiskey and beer shop as far as there is a house interspersed and ready made clothing stores and cheap Jewelry and there are the unmistakable "Jew Names; where oh where on Earth is not that cussed race to be found. Most of the saloons are "Keg shops"; "Fire water" is a big thing in this country. The Officers of the 27th Inf. Came to meet us. They are a nice looking lot of fellows and seem very glad to meet us fresh from civilization. This road has been a Godsend to them. Stopped here an hour; then with two fresh Engines started up the Black Hills erroneously called by many the Rocky Mountains. There is very little Mountain about it; except the great altitude, you would think you were in some New England country.

**11 o'clock P.M. At Sherman** --- highest point between the Atlantic and Pacific, 8200 feet above the sea, and yes we have got up here so gradually we hardly knew it -- fairly among the clouds and in a rail car. Almost incredible two Engines took us up much Easier than those on the Penn Central. Got off and found the air clear cold & bracing. I give one long shout and go back to my berth and knew nothing more until -----

#### **Thursday morning May 6<sup>th</sup> 1869**

Got up from My berth at 6 A.M. at "Medicine Bow Creek". Ah! ha! we are now among the Mountains --- gorges & canons --- below us fifty feet runs our creek on whose banks Indians have lodged time immemorial and where only a few years ago a grand council of Peace was held and treaties made with all the Indians in this and surrounding territories. --- Long the Haunts of the Red men, now desecrated as Wendell Phillip would say by the Ruthless hand of civilization and progress! --- But this scenery is grand indeed --- We spin along through a succession of rugged and broken cuts rumbling dizzy bridge and amid the grandest of old places. The rock is soft limestone and crumbles constantly. They tower sometimes as if ready to fall over on us and crush us like pigmies as we are. We are still pretty high up and the air is sharp. Snow is plenty yet, and we have passed several snow gates built to prevent the snow drifting on the track. High peaks white capped can be seen on our left. --- 9 A.M. Stopping at Fort Stelle named for a General of that name who died a few years ago. The road runs right through the Fort; part of its building on one side and part on the other side of the track. What a great change to the beleaguered officers and men who

have been stationed here the past five years to hear the cheerful whistle of the locomotive and see civilization pass every day on the cars. It seems funny to look and see an officer of the day in full dress way up here among the clouds. Formerly the only means of reaching this place was by slowly moving mule teams. There was a general lifting of Caps. We are in Indian territory yet. Lt. Crosby got off here. The fort is garrisoned by a detachment of the 30th Infantry. We passed Laramie last night while all were asleep, which is an important station and famous as being a few years ago the scene of an Indian Massacre. 10 o'clock A.M. Stopping at Rawlins, an Eating station. Here we got a hot breakfast and the men make coffee. My breakfast consisted of ham and Eggs, rolls, hot coffee. For the past hundred miles the land has been poor, Sage grass its only production; nothing under cultivation. It is truly a desolate region; cattle can't live and so we get no real milk, using instead the substitute Condensed Milk for coffee, tea and cooking. I recognize in this latter an old friend of the War. Many is the time I have sat upon a log and drank My dipper full of coffee flavored with condensed milk, but Nattie shakes her head when I offer her some. Everything set before us on the table, the Land-Lord says, is brought from Omaha 708 miles. Large herds of Elk and Antelope are constantly passing; they are invariably saluted with shots from the cars. We see many signs of coal and carbon along the road and there are frequently coal mines being worked by the road. "Bitter Creek" 3 P.M. 780 miles from Omaha; our train is much behind time; we have been losing all the time since leaving O, our train being a heavy one. We are now ten hours behind but it is of very little matter, for in the Army the motto "time is money" does not apply. At this place a few days ago the Vigilance Committee came down upon some roughs and gamblers and "cleaned them out" completely. The rascals had been plundering trains and waylaying passengers. Their demolished "shebangs" stand a monument to all like doers. They hang men in this country on short notice. I got a quart of bona fide milk for I cheerfully gave 25 cts; it's a great luxury. The cattle look rather lean. Coal mines appear frequently. What an amount of mineral wealth this soil contains. They are all worked by the road and I am informed that there is an inexhaustible supply of this fuel, all in the possession of the company. We find our bills for food etc. are lower than to citizens. These Eating Houses are all under the control of the R.R. Company who desire to keep the good will of Army Officers because they look to us for protection. A discount of one third is generally made in price of meals. There were the usual number of loafers here, Most of them discharged Employees of the road, hard looking fellows. This station derives its name from a small stream running through a ravine near by which name is appropriate, for the waters are stale, flat and unwholesome; we can hardly drink it until boiled into coffee. Soil full of Alkali; so strong does it prevail that the ground looks as though covered with frost.

**7:00 P.M. at Green River:** -- A watering station. We all "fill up". Since leaving Bitter Creek we have passed through a succession of high bluffs & cuts branching out from the table land. The country is wild and rugged and presents a much more interesting appearance to the traveller. Now the great Sandstone ridges approach to the very track, now suddenly secede almost out of sight. We wind along in and out, now crossing a sluggish stream meandering along fifty feet below, now rolling through a deep cut, the rough jagged rocks jutting almost over our train, Just as they were left by the blaster. Several times they approach to a frightful proximity and we think "well that

pile will surely settle down upon us”, but no, they are firmly fixed. There is nothing to invite a man to live here; no herbage, no grass, scarcely any green thing to relieve the barren hills. The earth when not bunched up into hills is soft like ashes, dry and hot. During the mid day this must be a fearfully hot place. Successive formations of soft rock rise one above the other and now and then one bold face looms far above its neighbor, a rocky monolith. The air is dry and the winds that have prevailed constantly since we turned upon the downward slope of the Mountains is very annoying to the eyes and skin. There is a small village of adobe huts made of the mud; the soil here is well adapted to brick making. A man can erect his own house with material free as water ---. The house when built is of light slate color and very substantial. The Old Stage route had a station here in former days. We keep along by this road and it has been in sight now and then for the past 4 hundred miles. The telegraph poles and well worn track cross and recross ours up hill & down, sometimes above us sometime beneath us, sometime parallel & on a level, sometimes absorbed entirely in the rail road bed. When that fords a stream, we cross on trestle work; when that goes down into a ravine and toils slowly up the other side, we span it with a beautiful iron bridge. Ten miles further on “stopping for breath”; we have been following the Green River and the scenery is magnificent! On one side the solid bank of rock into which our road bed is carved rises perpendicularly many many feet, in fact out of sight. It is riding along under it while on the other the Green River bottom stretches mile upon to another succession of ridges; still farther beyond them with there tops almost touching the blue sky rise still another. --- The Evening sun as it went down a short time ago left a long line of red which gradually narrows and lines the grey skies above. Coming in bold relief these white tipped mountains and the broad expanse before me remind me of pictures of the Old Painter. No wonder the artistic eye of Brinstedt selected the Rocky Mountains as his Masterpiece. Such scenes as this would inspire the pencil of the veriest clod. Beautiful! Lovely! Exclaim one and all as every eye seeks the windows and doors.

**8:00 P.M.** Began getting too dark to see. We take our supper from our lunch baskets and all are in the best of spirits. We have got along so nicely; the usual Joke passes round. Men get coffee here. They have started a lot of fires and as they stand clustered about them they remind me of war times when we would get into camp after a long days march. Not long since, this was the end of the road; now they are more than two hundred miles farther on. The houses are of adobe brick covered with canvas. “All aboard” and we are off for the night.

## Friday, May 7th, 1869

Awoke 7 A.M. found we were at Evanston, not quite a hundred miles from where I left off last night. We made slow progress owing to roughness of the road which is absolutely awful. The most of this part was built in the winter while the frost was in the ground which of course in the spring must sink and become uneven. We are shaken about like corn in a gristmill. It is impossible to stand while the cars move without clinging to a seat for support. Resolving to show my skill in navigating cars, I got up to go for a glass of water. Before getting half way to the end of the car, a sudden jerk sent me headlong into a seat of a brother officer, knocking my nose and his hat severely. I gave it up. We begin to see a little more green. The hills and valleys have not the dingy dried up appearance we noticed so much of along the road. There are signs of vegetation. We are approaching the region ruled by "King Brigham". We are also passing working parties of Irish and trains of cars without numbers lying idle on the side tracks. As the road approaches completion, these cars become too numerous and the force is decreased. We hear that the two companies are working in sight of each other, and each putting in their hardest to get down the rails. The Junction will be about the Middle of Utah territory. On the trains are all the paraphernalia used in constructing the road, derricks, cars made to carry powder for blasting, water tanks, boarding and lodging cars, dump cars etc.; and tools of every value and description without numbers, hoes, hammers, drills, shovels, picks, spades, saws, crow bars, tons and tons of railroad iron and millions of spikes. "They say" we will be at the "End of the track" by night; it looks doubtful. As we stop it is worth while to look at those cars and their contents. Here we see the means of rapid rail road building. Every conceivable invention for this purpose is here, and it is somewhat amazing how so many, many machines could have been used. Yet when we remember that the R. R. was built at the rate of two and three miles a day, and that the work beginning with the blasting and ending with the track layers stretched over a space of thirty miles at a time, we cease to wonder. I got from one of the overseers a few facts as to how the work went on ---

|   |      |
|---|------|
| First, advance men with picks               | 500  |
| Second, Drillers                            | 1000 |
| Third, Blasters blasting rock               | 500  |
| Fourth, Men with crow bars                  | 1000 |
| Fifth, Men with shovels to clear the way    | 1000 |
| Sixth, Men with shovels digging away hills  | 2000 |
| Seventh, Men with cars hauling dirt         | 1000 |
| Eighth, Men grading the road bed; 'Graders' | 1000 |
| Ninth, Men laying ties                      | 500  |
| Tenth, Track Layers                         | 1000 |

In addition to them were men hauling ties, cutting ties, building bridges etc. etc. so that when all were at work, they had at one time twenty thousand men employed! An army! All these men required to be fed every day; they had a commissary and quartermaster and these had innumerable assistants. Men to see that the material was kept up to supply this vast army of workers; Men to forward iron from the depot back to Omaha; Men in New York, Chicago and other eastern cities

to buy and ship it. Indeed it required a master mind to put this great enterprize through and tremendous expense. They worked day and night. But the triumph was worth working for. Sage is plenty again. We retain our sleeping car another night. We will hardly get to San Francisco before a week hence.

**11:30 A.M.** At Wasatch a town three months old; Nothing but a collection of shanties; this is the end of the track open to the public. From here hitherto all passengers have been taken in stages to a point on the Central Pacific. But we got the cheerful information that we will be taken on and probably not march any distance, for the rails are very near a Junction. Here is the most despicable lot of men we have seen along the line. Evil, ugly, looking devils they are. A man just told me that forty men had been killed here inside of two weeks "and it wasn't much of a week for killing either." We are getting little tired of our lunch baskets, so we have been out and got a breakfast in a tent but we got a nice meal, decidedly the best since leaving Omaha. Walking to the eating house we had to cross a muddy ditch on a single plank. The road is fearfully rough. While waiting here the slow motion of the conductor, we saw a man knocked down and robbed not ten rods from the cars. From this point to the next station there is only a temporary track put up in a hurry while waiting to complete the permanent one which is through a deep cut and tunnel. We learn with regret that we must give up our elegant sleeping car because it can not, so the railroad men say, go "over the Z". The most prominent point in this town is the "Sherman House", a one story wooden shanty. The depot buildings and water tanks here are substantial and well built structures and I may say this of them all along the line, this being a part of their contract with our government. We see green grass here, showing far better soil. A Squad of "Snake" Indians come riding up on their little ponies. They do not in appearance, at least, belie their name, for they look decidedly satanic and "snaky". I saluted a seedy hang dog looking fellow in a butternut suit with "Well My friend, what kind of a country is this?" "Umph" he grunted. "It's every man for himself and the devil take the last". I thought so too, so quietly put my six shooter where it would be handy. We scramble from our Pullman car and get into "cabboses" conductors cars a great change from our recent luxurious accommodations, but "they say" we shall be provided for at "Echo" next station. We move and now we are among the Wasatch mountains. We are promised a grand treat in the way of magnificent scenery. Ten miles further at the entrance of Echo Canon a most beautiful spot, "indeed it is glorious, exclaim one and all!" Immediately after leaving Wasatch, we went down a fearful descent in a zigzag manner, one hundred and fifty feet in a quarter of a mile. Then we backed, then pulled up, then backed again in the form of a letter reaching the bottom of the valley. We roll along and see those workmen way above us engaged upon the main track. We barely move and stop every five minutes. Our track is a mighty insecure one. The sand rattled from under us as we climbed the hill again. Cars are overturned on every side, and we were informed by a cheerful brake man that we were quite likely "some of us" to "slide the track". To those nervous ones in our party the ride was anything but pleasant; the danger is now over, however. Large parties of laborers are seen now. I can count five hundred men and one hundred fifty carts drawn by patient mules hauling dirt to grade the permanent track where it will emerge from the mountain. There are plows, scrapers & etc. The mules are well trained; they climb up and down the bank, stop at the right place and wait till their load is dumped, then take their place in the line and go back to get another. They look like ants. The place is black with laborers; they stand as near together as they can shovel. It's a funny sight to see five hundred shovels going into the air at one time. Wells Fargos' stage route is now along side us. I suppose it will stick to us or we to it, until we get to the end, half a mile farther on. Stopping in Echo Canon; we passed through

another Canon a few minutes ago. Oh! This scenery is grand, grand! Nature seems to have swelled with the giants, splitting mountains asunder and stamping on every land evidence of her most wonderful caprice. And yet again we could imagine that an unerring Providence had here in ages ago cleft the mighty barriers for the very purpose which the intelligent enterprize of the present generation has just accomplished – the Pacific Railroad! Were it not for this corridor in the mountains no power on earth could have cleft its way through the masses of everlasting rock. We shout for joy and our voices echo from peak to peak and crag to crag, dying in the distance. Someone fires a gun and the reverberations are terrific; the mountains seemingly angry at this intrusion upon their majestic solitude send back all manner of growls and deep toned intonations. It seems as if we had waked up some fearful monster, so long and loud are the echoes. We are all delighted –

An hour later – “*Echo City*” in the Canon of same name: If the entrance was grand, this is sublimity. This is one of the most romantic spots on Earth! It is on the banks of Bear River, which comes down through an opening in the mountains. On all sides rise these natural formations of rock. Below us forty feet runs the river; on its winding banks a road is built, hard and smooth and in excellent order. Away off in the distance we see fertile lands and cultivated fields; around us are buildings, nice farm buildings good enough for any man to live in. We see little fences painted white; a mill rumbles yonder. What is this! Two well dressed ladies on horse back! Yes and here are stores with goods displayed and there - is it possible? is a “Bank”, and “Temple of Fashion” staring us in the face! What is this enchanted spot among these fastnesses. The Mormons! Says somebody, and that solves the riddle. We are indeed in Brigham’s domain; those are Mormon women we see and these improvements are by those singular fanatics “*Latter day Saints*”. Well, we will take a walk outside. Hold on; here comes our quartermaster, Capt. Johnston, with information that by reason of the washing away of a bridge a few miles ahead, we can go no further until Monday. At first we were inclined to murmur, but when Mr. Dillon, an officer of the road, came up and offered his cars for the ladies and told us he should consider us his guests, and we looked out upon the beautiful panorama before us, we felt better. I transferred Nattie to Mr. Dillon’s car a perfect little palace and took a stroll. This is truly a strong torch of civilization. There are half a dozen good frame houses and many others of an inferior order, tents and adobe huts. There is a street lined with stores pretty well filled with goods, two “hotels”; and in the bank, I am told, is stored no less than five hundred thousand dollars. It seems incredible to believe some of the people are Gentiles and there are two or three families of contractors for the R.R. Co. living here. One of the ladies came out and invited our ladies to supper. It is dark and I am granted the privilege of sitting in the elegant car where the ladies will abide till we move. It is the famous “Lincoln Car” built especially for the use of our ex president Lincoln in ’64 and is without exception the most beautiful design I ever saw. There are seats and sofas stuffed and lined with plush & velvet; the sides of it are likewise stuffed; carpeted with Brussels ----- and window curtains of heavy “Nep silk”, windows stained glass, and the panelling over head is placed upon a second tier of windows used for ventilation and painted the coats of arms of the several states of the union. ---- Wash stands of marble and long mirrors, it is a perfect ladies’ boudoir. Lt. Cluly is the lucky one who wins the privilege of staying with the ladies --- all the rest are obliged to repair to our “caboose car”. His wife is in ecstasy while the rest of our little fraus look vexed. Col. Cogswell has decided that only one officer can remain as protector to the ladies car which is half a mile from the main train. Our hope now is that we will arrive at Promontory Point by Monday noon which is fixed upon as the time for “laying the last rail.” It will be worth something,

at least, to say we were present when the Atlantic and Pacific were joined by iron bands ---- We all feel jolly; the lamps are lit in our drawing room car and it is quite cool for being still nearly six thousand feet above the sea level --- I feel inspired tonight going to sleep in such a lovely spot, surrounded as we are by these grand old hills. After a little game of enchre, retired.

### **Saturday, May 8, 1869**

Took time this morning to sleep as nobody felt like turning out early, as we all enjoyed the luxury of a nights rest with our cars standing still. About noon another train came up bringing Mr. Durant, vice President of the road, and one or two other officers. They came in a special with their fine car. Drawing up alongside of us, they came in, introduced themselves, and regretted that we were delayed. Said they would stop here with us, and insisted upon taking care of all the ladies. We dined with them and they gave us a dinner that surprised me. Beef roast and a la mode, ham, two ways, oyster pie, mutton, preserves, fresh bread, cakes and six kinds of desserts, ending with champagne and coffee. I think this is something remarkable since all these things have to be brought from Omaha and cooked in the "Kitchen car" attached to the officers car where they have every appliance for cooking and with excellent cooks. Col. Cogswell had the Band then play for us and it dispensed fine music until tattoo. Nattie, being not very well, her dinner was sent to her. They try to show us every attention. The vice Prsdt. says our ladies should occupy his car until next Monday and that he will bring us up in season to see the last rail laid sure, so we feel good over it. Four or five of the officers, to wit Franklin, O. Beirne, Johnston and Burnett, went to Salt Lake City to pay the chief of Mormons a visit. It is sixty miles from here. Mr. Dillon informs me that they will certainly join the rails Monday. We are waiting for a bridge at "Devils Gate" to be completed. He gave me some statistics. At one time they had eight hundred teams hauling ties alone and five thousand men engaged in getting them out and working these teams. He says at one time they employed twenty one thousand men. Mr. Durant has paid out one hundred and twenty five thousand dollars in the last week. He had quite an adventure at Wasatch; four hundred workmen boarded his car and captured him, took him to a woods near by and held him a close prisoner until the money which had been due them for weeks and months was paid. I reckon he was some what scared. At one time it was thought our detachment would be called on to rescue him but he was afraid he might lose his life in the scrimmage so telegraphed that he would rather we were allowed to keep right on. So we just escaped a pretty lively time it seems. Brigham Young built this section of the road with four thousand Mormons. All the workmen were kept at work twenty two hours out of twenty four and Sundays included. Wages for ordinary labor 2-1/2 dollars per day, Sundays 3 dollars. I suppose since the flood no greater work when there were so many difficulties to overcome was ever pushed to so successful an issue and so rapidly! We are almost lost in amazement! Everything at this "City?" is high; a small bottle of ink fifty cents. They don't deal in anything short of twenty five; tencent scrip is of no account here ---- cigars fifty cents each. I prefer my pipe as being a less expensive luxury. Fortunate for us that this moving hotel came up and that we met the officers of the road. This P.M. the band played again. The echoes were grand. I never heard anything so exquisite. Sometimes they sounded like distant



thunder, again like the bugle of an alpine shepperd. I thought of that beautiful passage in Tennyson "Blow bugles blow; set the wild echoes flying; answer echoes answer; dying, dying, dying". This spot and our surroundings seem almost like a fairy land, like some grotto I've read of in Arabian nights, this quiet nook. Bear River rippling along way way down beneath us, the toppling ragged rocks suspended in mid air above us. Glimpses of other mountains and other valleys caught in the opening ahead, many of their peaks capped with snow. This wonderful railway bringing in the highest type of civilization, springing up as if by magic in the wilderness; the luxurious palace cars, this Mushroom town; the constant whistles of busy engines, the band of music, the "boys in blue" standing in line at Parade with their muskets flashing in the sun ---- all go to make up the delusion. It only needs a tall Genie to stalk into our midst to complete it. Aladin with his wonderful lamp never brought forth anything more fascinating or bewitching ----

### Sunday, May 9th, 1869

**Afternoon** ---- We have just received orders to move on. We joyfully hail the news. We pass several trains which have come up. ---- **Evening:** we came through Weber Canyon, another of those beautiful places where the Great Architect has made his power manifest. We all join in the hymn, "My country Tis of Thee" and "Glory to God in the Highest". Every man and woman in our party seems to feel the grandeur of the scenes. Our train of soldiers is separate from the car where the ladies are they being in Durants car and we are very annoyed about them. We have all to cross a fearful bridge. Our engine is on the rear and is pushing us slowly up to it. ---- At the Bridge, 10 o'clock P.M. Getting permission from Col. Coggsell, we who have wives, started afoot to reach the car where the ladies are. After walking about two miles, passing train after train of work cars, climbing over piles of rails and falling in the sand, we got here at last at the "Devils Gate", and a fearful place it is. A slender trestle bridge stretches from one side to the other of a yawning abyss through which a rapid current rushes like lightning, foaming and leaping up, then falling in showers of spray. It seems as if ready to tear the bridge all to pieces ---- and such a place! The rocks on each side are cut and hacked; black and gloomy they are. Frowningly they lower upon us as if to say to the bridge builders "build your bridge if you dare and I will fall down and crush it" in this dark night with the black sides lit up by a bon fire on either end and the flickering lights of the workmen hammering away down in the bowels of the bridge seemingly holding on for dear life amid the roaring torrent! It almost makes me shudder to look! The cars were pushed down one by one and every one looked in silence as they were shoved slowly across. As soon as the car was safely over, I breathed easier and went back to our own train. In about an hour we followed and crossed safely ----- and now 12 o'clock midnight we are in the Valley of Saints. Ahead the glimmer of Great Salt Lake graces our vision. We Benedicts have passed our crisis and all is calm again.

**Monday, May 10th, 1869**

**7:00 A.M.** On board the vice President's car U.P.R.R., five miles from Promontory Point, waiting for breakfast. The darkey cook in his clean white jacket is putting breakfast on the table and it looks tempting. A great many trains have come up and many passengers. We are now in sight of Salt Lake. Last night we followed along its shores for ten miles. I rode on the engine. Don't know how far back our soldier train is as we left them behind. Breakfast is ready. Passed the last range of mountains on our path until we get to the Sierras.

**Promontory Point 12:30 o'clock noon** ----- We have just witnessed the laying of the last rail, crowds commenced assembling at 7 o'clock. There were several thousand present. Ceremonies were opened with a prayer by a Minister from Massachusetts. A laurel wood tie beautifully polished and appropriately engraved was then brought out, and by the two highest officials of each road present was placed in position. A rail was then taken by workmen and put in its place, a spike of solid gold was then produced with a silver hammer. The officers of the "U.P." advanced from the East and those of the "C.P." from the West. A telegraph wire was attached to the spike; at a given signal one – two – three strokes or taps were made with the silver hammer. The telegraph wires were so arranged that the taps were flashed to all parts of the United States so that eager thousands in N. Y., Chicago, San Francisco, Boston, Philadelphia and other large cities at that moment knew the rail was laid and the Pacific Road complete! Truly it is worth a trip from New Hampshire to see this alone. Two beautifully decorated engines, one of each road advanced till their guards touched; the engineers climb out and broke a bottle of champagne across the space and shook hands. Nattie and myself were permitted to give a stroke upon the hammer. I drove my spike with my sword hilt. The engines then backed about two rods. Our regiment marched up, stood at parade rest while our pictures were taken. Then the band played. Many distinguished men were present. We then adjourned and proceeded to the C.P. officers car where we were all treated to lunch and champagne. Thence all hands repaired to the U.P. car and got a splendid dinner. Champagne flowed like water. Much nonsense was got off but we had a jolly day. Half a dozen telegraph officers are crowded with applicants. Twenty or thirty prominent newspapers have reporters here. Everybody who is sober enough is scribbling; some are cheering, some laughing and throwing up their hats and it is a festive scene. The speeches are good and our band played pretty well until they had taken too much ardent spirit. Thus is the greatest undertaking of the 19th century accomplished. All honors to the resolute men who have "put it through". ----- **6 o'clock P.M.** The crowd has dispersed. The officials have gone back, each to his own road and we are about to start. Our cars are not so good as those we left. No more sleeping cars now. The men are hustled into box freight cars and we got some new passenger coaches just brought from Springfield Mass. Ours is the first train over the road and we think it something to brag of. Overland to the Pacific Ocean. What would have been thought of the men who dared to predict it ten years ago! Promontory is 1084 miles from Omaha and 690 miles from Sacramento. Thus the Unions have built 394 miles more of road than the Centrals. Congress has established that the junction shall be Ogden, fifty miles East of here which will cause C.P. to purchase the fifty miles

of the U.P. ----- **12:00 midnight.** We are just off after 8 hours delay. ----- Monument 21 miles from Promontory. I can't sleep for these cars shake about. This is the North End of Salt Lake. They tell us this is the last vestige of vegetation for five hundred miles.

### **Tuesday, May 11th, 1869**

**P.M. At Humboldt Wells, Nevada Territory, 165 miles from Promontory.** We are making excellent time. There is a perceptible difference in the running time from that of the U.P. We go faster. Our car is a very fair for day cars. They are splendid, made after the latest pattern in Springfield, Mass. We have patent brakes, ventilation, etc. This is a "brand new" one, never used until we occupied it. They look fresh and clean, very much like the cars on the Boston and Maine running to Portland. Our friend who went to Salt Lake joined us yesterday. We came through several historic places last night such as "Red Dome Pass," "Terrace Point", "Desert Passage Creek", "Loans" etc. We are getting into sage brush and sand. What an oasis is the Salt Lake Valley on this line. Leaving barren rocks and sterile soil, the traveller emerges into a land flowing with milk and honey, fertile soil and cultivated farms, good houses but he flies across this valley rapidly, like lightening, and comes out again upon a still more barren woods and worthless soil. Upon this we are now and, as if anxious to get over it quick, our speed is increasing. We run thirty miles an hour with very few stops. The Centrals carry their water along with them in immense tanks for it is very difficult to obtain water here. The grading of this road is perfect; for the last 80 miles we have run as smooth as a floor. The road was built by "John Chinaman", hundreds of whom are seen along the route. They attract much attention with their odd dress and cues dangling behind. They look strange to us. But they are faithful workmen and said to be infinitely superior to the Irish as laborers. It is growing hot and dusty; we are in the alkali and the dust sifts and blows. There is nothing grown, nothing but miserable sage brush; not much sleep for us tonight.

### **Wednesday, May 12th, 1869**

Passed a night of intense misery and discomfort. The dust was stifling. There was very little air and the alkali came into the car in clouds filling eyes, nose, mouth and ears. With all this we ran like lightening at a frightful speed. Made 200 miles last night. Some times our car, it being the rear one, would snap as if it was a whip. Several of the officers became alarmed at our speed. On, On, we rushed with not a stop. We are 324 miles Sacramento. Oh this alkali and sage brush! We are sick and tired of it; beats anything on the U.P. Yet "John" is encamped along the road right in the sun, apparently contented and happy. The men amuse themselves calling each other "John Knapsack" "John Haversack" "John Canteen" etc. Got a very good breakfast here; washed a little of the alkali from my hair. Stopped merely an hour. On again. A far one glimpse of running water and green grass. All remark how well this road is built. Certainly fifty per cent better than the U.P. I should as soon live in Sahara as this desert. Even the sage grass is stunted and the sand blows round in heaps like ashes. No use trying to take notes until we stop again. The railroad men are pretty fast fellows. Our conductor is half drunk but we have a trusty engineer. We pay no attention to regular stations. Passed Elk last night, the most prominent station just now on the road

as it is where passengers stop for White Pine, the celebrated mining district where so much silver is found. We whisked by without stopping.

**Wadsworth 180 miles from Sacramento.** --- The "C.P.'s" don't mean to keep us long on their road. They halt for nothing and seem impatient if we wish to stop for coffee. Somewhat different from the "U.P." This is a smart business place. We all made for the little river that runs along here and tried to get off some of the sticky dust but it burns and stings. Got an excellent dinner, including fresh brook mountain trout. Stores here are filled with goods and there was at least a dozen of Wells Fargo Stages, most of them waiting for passengers to Virginia City, Capitol of Nevada. We met here the Sacramento Express which left there early this morning. They brought late papers --- first we have seen --- and fruit such delicious fruit, strawberries, oranges, etc. All hands invested a little specie. Green backs no more they are "no go" here. Everything is gold and silver. It sounds novel and pleasant to hear the rattle of coin once more, but tis anything but pleasant to we who get our pay in currency, for we have to change every dollar at a discount of 25 per cent. Every fellow bought a little silver to jingle in his pockets. A large and busy crowd was at the station. They are mostly miners and men who are after their fortunes. They are an eager grasping, looking set. We bid adieu here to the alkali and sand for many mile. I am informed we follow the Truckee river.

**7:30 P.M. At Truckee base of the Sierra Nevadas.** --- We have struck California and the air is glorious. From Truckee here a distance of 70 miles we had a delightful run nearly all the way in sight of the river or along the base of a mountain; the air was cool, no dust, no heat. Oh it was a delightful change from the terrible ride of 24 hours preceding. Now we ride outside on a top with great comfort. Supper here and it certainly was good, fresh salmon and trout, beef steak, juicy and tender meat, broiled ham and baked potatoes, vegetables and fine cigars to smoke. We learn with regret that we have to go over the mountains tonight and thereby miss the finest scenery along the route. At any rate we can get a moon light view. At 8 o'clock we begin to ascend with two powerful engines --- 20 minutes --- We are now under the snow sheds. Just before entering I caught sight of Donner Lake quietly sleeping in the lap of the Highlands. The towering cliffs and peaks encircled about seeming like giant sentenels placed there by Almighty to protect His Exquisite Creation against the ruder elements. The moon shining down placidly upon this beautiful lake with not a ripple on its silvery surface and so far, far below us made a wonderfully picturesque scene. Most of my travelling companions too timid to enjoy anything but sleep were soundly not sleeping but snoring. Those snow sheds are great pieces of engineering. It was only through this invention that the company could get over these mountains at all, for during the winter the road is blocked with snow --- mile after mile, mile after mile we rattle along under this wooden tunnel, the snow still six feet over our heads and dropping though in little melted showers. The timbers of which it is composed are three feet in diameter and extend eight or ten feet above the cars to give ample room for the smoke stacks. The roof is riveted, bolted and bound to resist the immense pressure of a large body of snow and the work seems as strong as granite. Lights and stations are scattered along in this tunnel, as it were, for they extend 30 miles! Occasionally there

is a break where the snow does not drift. We go up --- up past two or three stations. Swiftly through these mountain wilds we whirl all comfortable in our warm cars. The labor and expense upon these sheds is something incredible! We pass many cascades and mountain torrents which swollen by the melting snows come running down and fall splashing thousands feet beneath. In about three hours we pass the highest point which is 7000 feet above the sea and shutting off steam, commence over. Not very gradual descents. We skim precipices so dizzy many would not dare to look and get down nearly 6800 feet in a hundred miles. Down, down, down we go, with all our brakes set and every train hand at his post. In the night I can catch a glimpse of the sublime panorama now and then as the moon struggles out of her cloudy surroundings.

#### **Thursday, May 13th, 1869**

**At Rocklin 7 A.M.** We have been here two or three hours. This is a little one horse place but the trees are so green, the flowers so fresh, the air so invigorating we feel like shouting for joy. Got a poor breakfast but nobody seemed to mind it since we are so soon to be in San Francisco which we are all impatient to reach now. We came in from a little hunt fairly loaded down with flowers. The band played to enliven our spirits and all feel good. We have left the desert and come into a little paradise. California, we welcome you with your vine clad hills and delicious climate. We are only one hour from Sacramento.

**11 A.M. Sacramento.** Here we are in El Dorado a perfect little bower of loveliness. Again we are in the civilized world having spanned the continent. We are almost in sight of the Pacific Ocean. There are beautiful modern houses surrounded with fine gardens, orchards of all kinds of trees loaded with tropical fruits, children playing on the green, fountains sprouting up sparkling water, smooth turnpikes on which elegant turn carts are passing and repassing; flowers of every name, color and nature springing spontaneously from the willing earth in lavish profusion; ornamental shade trees; the air balmy as June and withal the sun shining gladly and brightly. Moving on we enter the town slowly, the scenes repeating themselves at every rod. Then we pass machine shops, factories, street cars. We see stores displaying rich stocks of goods. We pass crowds of well dressed men and women. We hear the busy hum of a large city. These bow to us; ladies wave their handkerchiefs, and all is enthusiasm. The soldiers have nearly all climbed up to the top of their cars to look on. They seem very much pleased. In fact all our spirits rise. We sing Hail Columbia and other national airs and there is general rejoicing although no one says he would have missed our trip over for a thousand dollars. It has been more like a grand picnic excursion than any thing else. Sacramento has 30,000 inhabitants, is the capitol of Cal. and a very thriving city. We find our boat ready to take us along down to San Francisco and we go aboard.