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Joel Hills Johnson - Journal Entries

Joel Hills Johnson, 1857 (age 55), Trek Back to the States, Journal Entries(covering 21 Apr 1857 to 17 Oct 1858)I started on Tuesday 21st for Council Bluffs City in company with Sister Babbitt and family and a young man by the name of Robert Reed who drove for her a team of four mules, while I drove a span of horses. We crossed the Little Mountain, and camped in the canyon about three or four miles from the foot of Big Mountain. Wednesday 22nd. We started early in the morning and safely reached the top of the Big Mountain at 12 o'clock, and found the snow on the east side from ten to fifteen feet deep and very soft. Therefore, we concluded to wait until the next morning, hoping to find the snow frozen so that we could go down on the crust. Here we took our last view of the sweet valley of Ephraim until we should return. While reflecting on the subject, I went by myself and offered up my thanks in prayer to my father in heaven for the blessings I have received while living in those valleys, and also for his protecting hand to bring me safe back, when my mission is filled, to my family and mountain home. I then returned to my wagon and sat down and wrote the following lines: Farewell to my sweet mountain home With sorrow my feelings are touched To leave thee with strangers to roam And head thee so often reproached. While here on the big mountain top I take my last glimpse of the free My feelings are buoyant with hope That I'll soon return unto thee...A large company of apostates passed down the mountain today, some capsized and some broke their wagon tongues, etc. Thursday 23rd. We had our breakfast early and started down the mountain. The sun arose very hot and snow began to melt. Our company consisted of 5 men and 5 wagons, with families, who all told me that they intended to return again the next spring, but in reality were apostates. One of our company broke a wagon tongue a short distance down the mountain, but we went ahead without any accident. About two miles down we overtook the apostates company in camp, we unharnessed our teams, and went back to help down the other wagon. We found in an apostate camp a little girl about 16 months old, smothered to death by having a pan of dough turned over her head while asleep, by the rock of wagons coming down the mountain. She was rolled up in a buffalo skin, and buried high upon the side of the mountain. He wrote the following verse: "Rest little stranger, sweetly rest Beneath the mountain snow Where no intruder can molest Or any earthly foe. Sweet, lovely babe, thou here must lay High on the mountain top And sleep the lonely years away 'Till Michael wakes thee up. No mother's hand can strew thy grave With flowers, or tears can shed, Or cause the willows bough to wave Above thy peaceful head. "In a few hours the other wagons were brought down to the place where we stopped. We then harnessed up our horses and pursued our journey down the mountain. The road was dreadful, for torrents of water from melting snow came rushing down through every gulch and washed away the dirt and gravel in the road and left nothing but high rocks against which the water dashed and threw foam several feet in the air. Down this current and over these rocks, we had to roll our wagons, expecting every moment to be smashed up, but through the blessing of heaven we arrived safe in the canyon below, about the afternoon and found a good road, although the stream was high. We crossed the stream thirteen times, with the water up to our wagon boxes, and we camped for the night here where it passes through the mountains into the Weber river. Friday 24th. We started after breakfast, and found a good road to the

Weber river, where we crossed about 11 o'clock. The water was high and rapid but we crossed over without accident, and stopped two hours to let our teams feed after which we went on and at 5 o'clock we camped in Echo canyon. Though journeying long on rocks and stones And walking in the snow Has made so sore my flesh and bones I scarce can sit or go, Yet, God, my Father, hears my prayers And makes His grace abound To keep me safe from every snare And heal my every wound. For which I thank His holy name With all my heart and soul His love doth still my heart inflame And all my life control. Saturday 25th. My sister's son, Almon W. was sick all night with cholera morbus, but was better in the morning. We started after breakfast and traveled slow, and nooned towards the upper end of Echo Canyon and in the afternoon we passed over several snow banks and crossed Bear River about sundown and camped on the east side. We had a cold north wind through the afternoon and night. The water froze in the water bucket two inches. Sunday 26th. Started very early, cold all the forenoon. Nooned at Coperas Spring's and arrive at the first creek south of Fort Bridger a little before sunset and camped for the night. Monday 27th. Very cold throughout the night. The sun rose clear, having all the appearance of February. Started after breakfast and nooned at the crossing of the stream 16 miles east of Fort Bridger. My joints are weak and badly swelled Through suffering cold and chill Yet duty calls and I'm compelled My mission to fulfill. I'm sent to call my kindred home From lands where strife prevails And counsel all who wish to come To Ephraim's peaceful vales. We camped for the night at Hams Fork, having traveled through the day over 30 miles. Tuesday 28th. Left camp at 8 o'clock in the morning, and arrived at Green River at one o'clock, and turned out our teams to feed on no grass as we have not found any of consequence since we left the Weber. Felt very lonesome all day and could not suppress tears and felt more my dependence on God than ever for his directing hand to attend me on my mission until I return to my mountain home. Crossed Green River at 3 o'clock and started on our journey. We camped on the Big Sandy for the night without feed. The wind was blowing very cold and high through the night. Wednesday 29th. Started a little before 8 o'clock and traveled on 6 or 7 miles where we came to the bend of the Big Sandy on the right side of the road, and turned out our teams to feed on little or no grass. We started on at one o'clock and camped for the night at the next crossing of the Big Sandy. The weather extremely cold with high north winds and occasional snow squalls. I never suffered more in my life with cold in the same length of time than in the past week. Thursday 30th. Started at 8 o'clock in the morning and arrived at the Little Sandy about ten o'clock, and camped for the day and wrote back to my family and also to David Labaren of Salt Lake City. Absence from the one I love causes many lonesome hours. Friday, May 1st. We concluded to stay in camp today as we have good feed, wood, and water, and start our journey tomorrow morning. Saturday 2nd. We started at a little before 8 o'clock and camped at night at Pacific Creek. We have passed banks of snow in the road or beside it every day since we left the Big Mountain. Sunday 3rd. We left camp a little before 8 o'clock, fell very lonesome traveling with apostates. No meetings, no prayers, no sweet songs of praise to God our Heavenly Father. We nooned at first crossing of the Sweetwater. In the afternoon in trying to cross a snow bank, swamped the horses but got them out without much difficulty, but had to go a mile to get round it. We camped near Willow Creek. We had to stop on account of a snow bank and wait until morning to go over on the crust. Monday 4th. Started at 8 o'clock and passed over the snow bank on the crust, but had to chop ice and shovel snow two hours or more before we could get our wagons over the creek. We came on to a branch of the Sweetwater in about two miles. Here we had to run our wagons by hand over a snow bank from ten to fifteen feet deep which we did without much difficulty. We then came to Strawberry creek and nooned. In the afternoon we had many very bad snow banks to pass over or round, and we had found before for 200 miles. Traveling with apostates, how uncongenial is the spirit that they possess with the principles of life and salvation, how lonesome. Tuesday 5th. Got under way at 8 o'clock and traveled about ten miles nooned on the Sweetwater at the ford. While the teams were feeding, I walked up the river a short distance and found a grave containing five persons, four of them died on the 19th and one on the 20th of October, 1856. They belonged to one of the handcart companies. The wolves had uncovered one end of the grave, and exposed some part of

the bodies. I gave a young man 50 cents to fill up the grave again. We camped for the night on the river at the next crossing. Wednesday 6th. We started about the usual time and crossed the Sweetwater three times, and turned out our teams for noon. In the afternoon we passed by a grave where there had been several persons buried belonging to one of the hand cart companies. The wolves had dug up and devoured them as their grave clothes and pieces of their bones were scattered around the grave. We camped for the night on the river. Thursday 7th. Started at 8 o'clock and arrived at Devil's Gate about noon, and concluded to stop until Steward's trail came up. The south wind blew almost a hurricane through the day. Friday 8th. Very cold and windy through the night with cold wind and freezing through the day. Sister Babbitt had a severe chill in the afternoon. Saturday 9th. Wind low but quite cold. Weather gloomy. Sister Babbitt had another chill and considerable fever followed. Very cold at night with ice in the ice streams. Had to keep my head covered to keep my nose and ears from stinging with the cold. Sunday 10th. Very cold still. My sisters health much improved. The missionaries, 72 in number, today arrived with handcarts. Teams constantly arriving and unloading flour and loading goods all day. The mail from Salt Lake City left here today. Monday 11th. The missionaries started on their journey today at 12 o'clock. Tuesday 12th. About 50 wagons arrived today laden with flour for the mail stations. The most of them are going to return to the city with goods in store at this place. The balance of them are going to the stakes for goods. Snow and rain all the afternoon. Wednesday 13th. Very stormy through the night, but some prospect of better weather this morning. Teams very busy most of the day in loading goods. Thursday 14th. We started on our journey at ten o'clock in company of 21 wagons commanded by Captain Winson. We had several squalls of rain and hail in the course of the afternoon. We camped at about 4 o'clock for the night at Greasewood creek. Friday 15th. This morning when the company got up their teams, the four horses which detained us until about 10 o'clock. Soon after we started it commenced to storm severely, and after traveling about 4 or 5 miles we fell in with a company of Crow Indians, who detained us until about 2 o'clock. We then went on and camped for the night at Willow Springs in a severe snow storm. Snow in the morning on the ground two inches deep and ice frozen in the bucket nearly two inches thick. Saturday 16th. We started about 8 o'clock, and drove to the Platt, where we camped for the night. I never felt more love and gratitude to my Heavenly Father or more of His good spirit than today in my life. Sunday 17th. We started at the usual time and came to the fording place on the Platt, but found the river too high to ford. We then went down and crossed at the bridge by paying three dollars per wagon. We drove a few miles below and camped for the night. I felt quite unwell and lonesome, yet enjoyed a good degree of the spirit of the Lord. We had a meeting in the evening and there was a good spirit among the brethren. To a Human Skull Found on our camp grounds. Whose was this skull and what his fate When he with life was animate? What was his name and where did he dwell Wast white, or red, none now can tell. What was his sorrows, toils and cares? His occupation, grief and fears? What did he love the most on earth? Was it his God or sensual mirth? All these are questions now unknown While his poor skull lies here alone. Or rolled about upon the earth As though to him it n'er had a worth. Monday 18th. We started at the usual time and traveled about 25 miles and camped on the Platt. Cottonwood trees, shrubbery and all kinds of vegetation is not as forward on the Platt at this date as they were in Iron County when I left home on the sixth day of April. Tuesday 19th. We left camp at 8 o'clock and nooned at a small dry stream and camped for the night on the west fork of the Labonte river. Here is a good place for a station. Wednesday 20th. Left camp at the usual hour and come on the main Labonte river and there we met the mail with George A. Smith, Dr. Bernhisel, T.O. Angel, and many others on their way to G.S.L. City. We stopped about two hours in which time I wrote a few lines back to my family and friends and forwarded them by Dr. Bernhisel. We then came on to the Platt River and camped for the night at bout 2 o'clock. Thursday 21st. Arose early in the morning and the weather was very clear and beautiful. I took a walk and looked about and found we were camped in a beautiful rich bottom at least three miles long and from one and a half to two miles wide. We started from camp at the usual time and traveled on to Porter's Station at Horse Creek, where we arrived at 10 o'clock and stopped for the day to make tar. Here the company left

about three tons of flour and twelve men. Friday 22nd. Very clear and fine morning. Some of our animals could not be found so as to start before nine o'clock, at which time we started on our journey and traveled until about three o'clock and camped for the night on the Platt within ten miles of Fort Laramie. Saturday 23rd. Started a little before 8 o'clock. I went ahead and arrived at Fort Laramie a little before ten o'clock. Myself and Sister Babbitt went to see the commander of the Post in order to get some information in regards to the murder of her husband, A.W. Babbitt, by the Indians. My sister requested him to make a statement in writing of the information that he had received through the French traders from the Indians in regard to the matter which he at first promised to do, but afterwards sent for me and told me that he would do nothing about it. He said that he had no doubt that the Indians killed and plundered Col. Babbitt. I am confident that the reason why he was unwilling to make a written statement of the matter was that he was afraid he would loose favor in the eyes of those who were opposed to the inhabitants of Utah. We purchased a few necessaries and drove about ten miles down the river and camped for the night. Sunday 24th. Started early and drove until a little past ten o'clock and turned out for noon. I constantly feel grateful to my Heavenly Father for his blessings to me on the journey. While we were nooning a mountaineer drove up and told us that there was about 3,000 Cheyenne Indians camped near the road in the vicinity of Ash Hollow, and that there was 500 lodges in one place, and 300 in another. This information frightened Sister Babbitt and she thought we had better turn back to Laramie, and wait a while until the soldiers who were expected should come up. I told her that I would return if she requested it, but I thought we had better keep with the company until the next morning, and we might hear something more favorable, to which she consented and so we started on at about one o'clock. In the afternoon we met another mountaineer who said that there was but 300 lodges of Indians in all and represented the danger as being much less than what the others had. We camped for the night at Horse Creek, and had a meeting of the camp in the evening and all seemed to be in good spirits and thought we had better proceed together. Monday 25th. We started early in the morning and drove about two miles when we met another mountaineer with two wagons drawn by oxen who had been all winter trading with the Cheyenne Indians. He told us that the other mountaineers had lied, for there was no Cheyenne Indians near the road. They had heard that soldiers were being sent against them and they were moving back on to the Arkansas River to prepare for war. We thought his story looked the most like truth, however, we kept up a good night watch and day, with the strong guard about our animals. At night we camped a little above Chimney Rock. Tuesday 26th. We started at the usual time and passed Chimney Rock at about nine o'clock, and a few miles below we overtook a company of nine wagons and nineteen men mostly apostates who left us at Devil's Gate and went ahead. When they came thus far, were afraid of the Indians stopped for us to come up. Agreeable to their wishes we took them into our company. We traveled today about 30 miles and camped in a large bottom on the Platt about half a mile from the road. Our company now consisted of 28 wagons, and 54 men, 9 women and 22 children, and 175 horses and mules. Wednesday 27th. This morning we crossed the Platt to the north side of the river. At this point the river is full three fourths of a mile wide. The whole camp was over a little before ten o'clock. We thought it more safe to go down on the north side than to pass through Ash Hollow and over the South Platt which is said to be more infested with Indians than the North side. We drove about six miles and turned out for noon. Some of the company discovered a buffalo a short distance down the river and after him some of our hunters were soon under way. They over took him and shot him directly, but the wolves had made such havoc of his skin and winter of his maw that he was not fit for use and was abandoned. We saw several others on the distant hills in the afternoon but did not attack them. We came to Crab Creek and camped for the night. Thursday 28th. Very cold with a good deal of frost and ice. We started an hour earlier than the usual time, traveled 18 miles and turned out for noon. In the afternoon we traveled about two or three miles below Ash Hollow and camped for the night. Friday 29th. We started at half past seven o'clock and had not gone far before we saw two antelope between the train and the river, which was close by. The wagons halted and some of the boys shot them both. It was quite cloudy and threatened rain all

forenoon. We came to Crooked Creek about 18 miles and turned out for noon, but the clouds began to thicken and wind to raise, and we soon had a heavy squall of wind, hail and rain. In the afternoon or towards evening, we passed by an Indian village of about 30 lodges. They appeared very friendly and wanted us to camp in their neighborhood and trade with them. We accordingly camped for the night about one hundred rods from their village. Saturday 30th. Early this morning the Indian men, women and children were in our camp by scores to beg and trade. We gave them bread and flour and such things as we could spare, and traded some and smoked the pipe of peace with them. Started on our way at about 8 o'clock. The north wind blew almost a hurricane through the entire day and stripped some of the wagon covers all to strings. We traveled today about 28 miles, and camped for the night on the north bluff fork of the Platt. Today we met the first train of California emigrants with about 1000 head of young stock. Two trains also went up the south side of the river. I feel to thank the Lord for his goodness thus far on my journey. Sunday 31st. Cold north wind, and stormy. Started at the usual time. This afternoon we crossed many bad sloughs and traveled about 13 miles, and turned out our teams to feed for noon. Very cold through the day. We traveled about 27 miles and camped for the night. Many cattle and teams passed up the river on both sides today. Several Indians came into camp to swap buffalo meat for flour. June 1st. Started at the usual time and tracked about fourteen or fifteen miles and turned out our teams for noon. Weather quite pleasant in the afternoon. We traveled about 28 miles today, and camped for the night. Many emigrants trains with thousands of heads of cattle passed up the river today. Tuesday 2nd. We started early and drove to Buffalo Creek, and turned out our teams for noon. In the afternoon we drove about 8 or 10 miles and camped for the night near two emigrant trains, driving stock to California. Wednesday 3rd. Captain Winson concluded to stay in camp this forenoon and hunt buffalo, and soon 12 or 15 men were on a hunting expedition, and returned with several horses laden with beef. Three of the men stayed out until near sunset which kept us in camp. We then harnessed up our teams and traveled about seven miles to better feed and camped for the night near a camp of emigrants. Thursday 4th, We started early and came to the ford of the river, near the head of Grand Island, at which we arrived a little past 12 o'clock and here we concluded to stop until we could cross the river to Fort Kearney, and do some business and make some additions to our stock of supplies. Today we have passed about 4,500 head of cattle with many wagons and families on their way to the land of Gold. And I think that double that amount passed up the other side of the river. Friday 5th. This morning we started early to cross the river to Fort Kearney. We crossed one part of the river about 15 or 20 rods wide on to Grand Island, which is two miles wide at this point. We then came o the main river and crossed it while that water in many places ran over the tip of our wagon box. The main river is about one and a half miles wide. We saw Captain Wharton and obtained from him a bundle of papers belonging to the late A.W. Babbitt, Secretary of Utah. Said papers were picked up on the ground where Mr. Babbitt was murdered, by some French traders who delivered them to Captain Wharton, he reserving five drafts amounting to one thousand dollars each and one note of some over eight thousand dollars which he had been ordered to return to Washington City. Captain Wharton and Lady said that they had no doubt but what Col Babbitt was murdered by the Indians and he promised to send Mrs. Babbitt a written statement of facts gathered from Indian traders in reference to the matter, but she never heard anything more from the Captain. We purchased a few necessaries and returned across the river to our camp. Captain Winson with Stewart's train crossed the river with us this morning and went down the South side, and left us with the company of apostates that joined Captain Winson's company below Chimney Rock. Saturday 6th. Started early this morning and about noon we came to Wood River, and turned our stock to feed. In the afternoon we came to the Bridge and camped for the night. Sunday 7th. This morning started early and nooned on Prairie Creek, near where A.W. Babbitt's train was broken up last fall by the Indians. We saw the graves where those that were killed were buried, but the wolves had dug them up and devoured them, for we saw their bones, hair, and grave clothes scattered about the ground. We camped for the night at the crossing of the creek. Yes, dead by the thousands have we passed Entombed along the road, When Michael's trumpet must call at last To stand

before their God, Where all receive for thought and work And every deed their just reward. Monday 8th. Started late and traveled about 16 miles and turned out for noon. We passed today 12 or 15 emigrant trains on the way to California. At night we camped on the Left Fork of the Platt, near to a beaver dam built last fall and winter, which was a great curiosity to me. It was built through a heavy thicket of river willows and young cottonwood trees, first by grubbing all the trees and brush by the roots and cutting them up into chunks and placing them in a kind of window and then digging up the earth and placing it in a bank against the window of grubs or chunks. It was in some places three feet high and the lowest place that I saw was about fifteen inches on a perfect level at the top of the water, rising uniformly to within two inches of the top. I walked out to the thicket on the top of the dam about 20 rods long and could not see to the other end. I suppose it to be at least 50 rods long and perhaps longer. How many teeth and tails it took to accomplish this job, I know not, but it would have taken ten men with axes, shovels, mattocks, etc., at least one week to have completed the job and perhaps double that time. I should suppose the pond to cover at least from 50 to 100 acres. Tuesday 9th. We started at the usual time. We met several emigrants in the course of the day, and a little after 4 o'clock we came to the ford of the river opposite to the new settlement of the Saints. We forded the river and camped for the night with them. At this settlement there are one hundred men who have been there only three weeks and have made large improvements in fencing and breaking land and getting in crops. Some of which are already up and look fine. We had a meeting in the evening and the Saints had a first rate spirit and felt well. Brother Charles Shumway and myself spoke to them in reference to things at Salt Lake City which seemed to increase their courage. They intended to lay out a city in which to build their houses and call it Genoa after the birthplace of the great discoverer of the American continent. Wednesday 10th. We started at 8 o'clock. The land is all claimed that we passed today and two or three cities laid out and many houses built along the river. We traveled 26 miles today, camped for the night on the Main Platt River within a few rods of a grocery. Thursday 11. Started at the usual time. We passed several newly laid out towns today, and many new houses and the land is all cleared up several miles back from the river. We traveled about 25 miles today and camped for the night near the Platt River, A man by the name of Clark, an apostate who I have traveled with most of the way from Salt Lake, and pretended all the way to be a good Mormon and everything right among the Mormons until tonight, there being a few strangers present, he began to spew out the corruptions of his black heart by saying that he had got into a land of liberty where he dared to speak and declared that the Mormons at Salt Lake were a G--- D--- set of hell hounds, murderous thieves and including all the black catalogue that apostates have to disclose. Friday 12th. We started at the usual time and crossed the Elkhorn River at about 3 o'clock and came to the Pappes and camped for the night. Saturday 13th. Started early and arrived at my brother William Johnson's in Florence at about 10 o'clock and crossed the Missouri River at 12 o'clock and arrived at my brother Joseph Johnson's at Ellisdale at 2 o'clock. Sunday 14th. Stopped with Joseph today. Joseph and William with Ruben Barton and families all present, (with many of their friends) who provided an excellent fruit and oyster supper upon which we all feasted ourselves and had a jovial time and enjoyed ourselves first rate, after which we went home with the Barton's family. Monday 15th. Stayed at Joseph's the fore part of the day, and towards evening went with William over to Florence. Very stormy weather in the afternoon. Tuesday 16th. Very stormy. Visited the Hand cart company on the camp ground in the forenoon and stayed in the house the balance of the day. Wednesday 17th. Very stormy most of the day. Kept close in the house at my brothers. Thursday 18th. Visited the hand cart company again. They expected to have started today but were disappointed. Towards evening a steamboat arrived at the landing, which I visited and found on board Brother John Taylor and Erastus Snow, two of the twelve and a large company of Saints from St. Louis and other places. In the afternoon I went fishing with my brother and his two little boys. We caught a few sunfish and returned home. Saturday 20th. Went out this morning with Taylor and Snow to visit the Hand cart company, who was in camp about 8 or 10 miles out from the city. We arrived just as they were leaving camp. They, however, stopped and came together a few moments while Brothers Taylor and Snow gave

them some instructions. They possessed a first rate spirit and felt well. [skip to October, 1857]
Thursday 15th. Sister Babbitt took sick today with a very severe chill. Saturday 17th. Sister Babitt took a sinking or congestive chill and was confined to bed until her death. She had medical attendance and all the care possible given her by her relatives and friends, but she departed this life on Friday the 23rd of October, 1857 at 5 o'clock in the morning and was buried on Saturday 29th at Council Bluffs City, near by her mother and other relatives.

Joel Hills Johnson, 1859-60 (age 58)
Return to Utah from Genoa
Journal entries, 19 July 1859 - 1 Nov 1860

Released from labors in Genoa, Trek Preparations

Tuesday 19th, got home a little before noon. Called a meeting in the evening. Brother Eldridge spoke to the Saints, gave them some instructions and told them that he was satisfied that I had done the best I could for the people of Genoa and that I must be released from my labors and return home.

Wednesday 20th, Brother Eldridge called a meeting again in the morning at 5 o'clock in which I was honorably released from my labors in Genoa and Brother Poppleton was appointed to take the Presidency until a man could be sent from Salt Lake.

Thursday 21st, I hired brother George Moore to take me down to Florence. We started about noon and arrived in Florence on Saturday about noon, and went over to Ellisdale and in the evening went to Council Bluffs City. We stopped there until Sunday about noon and returned to Ellisdale and from there to Florence. On Monday settled with my brother William and made from him a small purchase of goods and then started for home by way of Omaha, where I purchased a few more goods and came as far as the Little Papillion Creek and camped for the night.

Tuesday 26, started early in the morning and arrived home on Thursday about noon.

Friday 29th, commenced packing my goods and preparing for my journey home across the plains.

Thursday August 4, 1859, sold out my share in the mill to Michael Pilling for \$350. Received one yoke of oxen in payment down and his note for the balance, payable the first of June next. I had previously sold the ferry for \$500, and received two yoke of oxen, one cow and one wagon in part payment. The purchaser's names were N.I. Hudson, Moses Welsh, Daniel Welsh and James Freston. I took their notes in balance due for \$240, one of which I sold to my brother, William.

To Utah (Aug. 5, 1859)

Friday 5th, stated on my journey in company with Margaret and Thomas Athchinson, a young lad of 14 whom I took to assist in driving team. My teams consisted of three yoke of oxen and one yoke of cows and one wagon laden with about 30 hundred. Drove about 20 miles and camped beside the road.

Saturday 6th, stated early in the morning and came about 15 or 20 miles and broke the fore axle tree in our wagon. I then unloaded the wagon and took off the box and placed it in a position to shelter us from the scorching sun and the heavy night dews, after which I dug a well for water to use and for the cattle.

Sunday 7th, this morning I put the four wheels of the wagon on the hind axle tree of the wagon and hitched a yoke of oxen to reach and drove to Loup Fork, a distance of about eight miles to get a piece of timber to spice the axle tree.

I came to the river and after searching four or five miles up and down, was disappointed in not

finding a stick to answer the purpose. Although very much fatigued and faint through excessive labor, I had to ford the river on foot, which was very high and rapid, to find a stick. After reaching the opposite side and searching about an hour, I found a small ash tree, at the foot of which I knelt down and thanked my Heavenly Father for the blessing. Then I went to work and cut out a piece and shaped it suitable for the purpose intended and laid it on my shoulders in the act of which I staggered like a drunken man through fatigue and faintness.

After wending my way for a half or three-fourths of a mile through brush and ravines, I reach the river, but was in doubt whether I should be able to stem the current to the other shore. I knelt down and asked my Heavenly Father to give me strength. I then breast the stream and forded nearly a mile, with the current obliquing towards the side of which my team stood. I reached it in safety and lashed my stick of timber to the cart and seated myself thereon. I started for the scene of my disaster, faint and weary almost unto death. I reached the place about 4 o'clock and laid myself upon the ground in the shade of my wagon box until nearly sundown. I then commence to repair my broken axle-tree.

Monday 8th, finished splicing the axle tree and reloaded the wagon and started about 10 or 11 o'clock and traveled until 9 o'clock in the evening and camped beside the road.

Tuesday 9th, started early in the morning and crossed Pavarie Creek at 11 o'clock and camped for the night about 10 miles from the Wood River Settlement.

Wednesday 10th, came to the settlement about noon and employed Brother Carroll to make me a new axle tree.

Thursday 11th, got axle tree made and went to the blacksmith shop to get ironed. Had to wait for coal to be burned.

Friday 12th, very stormy. Nothing done to my axle tree today, and as Brother Homer's company, with whom I had expected to cross the plains, had gone four days ahead of me, I got discouraged and gave up all hope of overtaking them and concluded to stop another year.

Saturday 13th, got my wagon finished or repaired and put together ready for a start.

Sunday 14th, moved my wagon back down to the forks of the Columbus and Genoa roads and attended meeting with the Brethren at Brother Huff's. Had a good time in speaking and finally concluded to take up a claim and build a house for a store.

Broken Wagon Changed Plans (Stayed another year)

Monday 15th, moved my wagon onto my claim and unloaded my goods. Took off the wagon box and went to the timber for a load to commence building a shanty to live in until I could build a house.

Tuesday 16th, went to the timber again for building materials.

Wednesday 17th, commenced putting up my cabin.

Thursday 18th, finished my cabin, which consisted in large forks set in the ground with poles laid

across and hay put on the top with willows cut the right length and set in the ground at the lower end with a pole pinned across the top, after which I unpacked my groceries and drugs and set them up on temporary shelves.

Friday 19th, finished fixing up my goods and traded some with the emigrants or returning to Pikes Peak.

[another bad year with bad health, drunks vandalizing his business, false charges against him in court; skip to June, 1860]

Another Start for Utah

Monday 11th [June, 1860]. Very warm and pleasant. At home packing up things and fixing to go below preparatory to starting for home.

Tuesday 12th. Helped Nephi to repair the wagons with which I expect to cross the plains.

Wednesday 13. Busy all day at the wagons.

Thursday 14th. Expected to start below today but was disappointed.

Friday 15th. Stated late in the afternoon to go to Omaha and Florence in company with my son Nephi and Margaret to purchase a outfit for crossing the plains. Went 5 or 6 miles and camped for the night.

Saturday 16th. Started early in the morning and went a little below the Dutch Settlement and camped for the night.

Sunday 17th. Started early and traveled a little below Crystal Brook and camped for the night.

Monday 18th. Started early and came to Genoa a little after noon where we met the first company of hand carts. We crossed the ferry towards evening and stopped at Brother Hudson's for the night, where I extracted a large piece of bone from the ulcer in my face.

Tuesday 19th. Swapped wagons with Dan Welch and started towards evening and camped for the night on Looking Glass Creek.

Wednesday 20th. Started early in the morning and camped for the night at Mr. Russels.

Thursday 21st. Started as soon as daylight and camped for the night at Widow Hogans where we found a large company of Saints in camp bound for Utah.

Friday 22nd. Started late in the morning and crossed the Elkhorn bridge a little before sundown and camped for the night a small distance above Elkhorn city.

Saturday 23rd. Started early in the morning and arrive at my brother William Johnsons in Florence City a little in the afternoon.

Sunday 24th. Stopped at my brothers all day being tired and unwell.

Monday 25th. Stopped to herd the oxen and take care of them while Nephi went over the river to Ellisdale.

Tuesday 26th. Assisted my brother in his store and sent a small boy of his out to herd the oxen and during the day one of them slipped away and could not be found at night.

Wednesday 27th. Spent the day in looking for the lost Ox.

Thursday 28th. Spent the forenoon in herding the oxen and the afternoon in visiting with my sister Almera, while Nephi was hunting the lost Ox.

Friday 29th. Took care of the oxen while Nephi was still looking for the lost one.

Saturday 30th. Spent the day with the oxen who keep trying to run away.

Sunday 1st of July. This morning I found that a large company of English and Danish Saints had landed at the wharf during the night from the steam boat Omaha. They rushed into my brothers store this morning for board, but he had none so I went down to Omaha with a team and brought up a quantity and assisted my brother the balance of the day in supplying them with bread and the necessaries.

Monday 2nd. Found the ox that we had lost.

Sunday 15th. Since the last date I have assisted most of the time in tending my brothers store and in preparing my fit out for the plains. I started today with a few families for my home at Hood River. Nephi was obliged to stop behind to pilot out a large company of saints he being their chaplain or pilot. Stopped at the camp two miles from Florence.

Monday 16th. Started from Camp a little after noon in company with John Snider and some Danish families and came to the big Papillion Creek and camped for the night.

Tuesday 17th. Started early in the morning and camped for the night within two miles of Fremont.

Wednesday 18th. Started early and camped for the night at Shell Harbors old place.

Thursday 19th. Started early and camped for the night at Shell Creek.

Friday 20th. Started early. Very hot through the day. Came near melting. Some of our calls went for water. Camped for the night at Spauldings.

Saturday 21st. Left camp in good season and camped for the night at Looking Glass Creek.

Sunday 22nd. Came to Loup Fork Ferry and crossed over the river.

Monday 23rd. Stopped in camp on the bank of the river all day.,

Tuesday 24th. Started early in the morning and camped for the night just below Crystal Brook.

Wednesday 25th. Started early in the morning and camped for the night a few miles above the Lone Tree Station on the Platte River.

Thursday 26th. My brother Joseph met us in camp this morning on his way to Genoa and Columbus. Started rather late and camped for the night a little below Woodrow crossing.

Friday 27th. Started early and arrived home at Woodview Center about sundown.

Saturday 28th. Commenced fitting up my wagon bow and cover.

Wednesday August 1. Since the above date I have been busy fitting up for my journey. Today I had a severe attack of the Asiatic Cholera cramping, vomiting, and purging. It was thought several times by those attending me that I was dying but the Lord in his goodness saw fit to spare my life for which I thank his holy name.

Thursday 2nd. Still confined to my bed through weakness. Nephi arrived a day ahead of his train.

Friday 3rd. Nephi's train arrive today in the forenoon.

Saturday 4th. Today in the afternoon the train started on but I was not ready and able to start.

Sunday 5th. Started a little after breakfast on my journey across the plains with two wagons belonging to myself, one containing goods belonging to the hand carts and other companies gone before which I was freighting under contract with Brother G. O. Cannon, the other with goods, provisions, etc, belonging to myself. Nephi, Margaret and an old maid who was with us by the name of Mary Ellen I had charge also of another wagon sent out by my brother Joseph E. Johnson to take out the children of the late Sister Babbitt and an old maiden lady by the name of Hannah Allen, sister to the above mentioned Mary with a young lady and child sent by my brother by the name of Eliza Sanders. We camped for the night a little above fort Kearny on the Platte River.

Monday 6th. Fell in company with Nephi's train this morning. The train was divided into two companies consisting of about 35 wagons each. One division of the train being Scandinavians and Brother Patterson being their leader. It was thought best for them to go ahead. We started from camp about noon and traveled about eight miles and camped by a large Slew near the river while the other divisions of the camp went on in order to keep a little in the advance that we might not hinder each other in traveling.

Sunday 12th. The past six days has been fine, cool weather and first rate traveling. We have had good luck and good time to this place, the Pawnee Springs, about one hundred miles above Fort Kearny.

Monday 13th. Started early and traveled about 20 miles and camped for the night on the bank of the river.

Tuesday 14th. Today Brother Budge (the president of the Camp) lost a small child by death it having been sick for several days. It was buried at evening about a mile west of the Bluff Fork of the Platte River. I wrote the following lines on the occasion and gave them to the mother.

On the bank of Platte River
Near the Bluff Fork's sandy wild
There I saw a loving mother
Weeping o'er her dying child.
There the darling babe we buried
Just as daylight disappeared
Where the red man long has tarried
And the wolf's shrill howl is heard.
Sleeping on his sandy pillow
Where no friend his grave can strew
With sweet flowers, or plant the willow
Loves sweet token to renew.
There must wait till all that slumber
With the just are waked again
Then he shall be with the number
Free from sorrow, toil and pain.
Then his mother shall behold him
Still more precious than before
And with songs of joy enfold him
In her arms to part no more.

We traveled today about twenty miles and camped near the river.

Wednesday 15th. Today we traveled over immense sand banks and passed an Indian village a little before midnight and camped about half a mile from the river having traveled about twenty miles.

Thursday 16th. This morning Brother Sharp found that his horses was missing. Nephi immediately started back to look for them he tracked them for several miles until they came near a camp of returning apostates from Utah when no further traces of them could be found, he therefore supposed that they had been stolen by them and returned to the camp. We started about 4 o'clock and traveled a few miles and camped for the night on a small stream.

Friday 17th. Started early and traveled about 10 miles and camped for the night on Rattlesnake Creek having had a very hard sandy road.

Saturday 18th. Started at about 8 o'clock and traveled about seventeen miles to Sandy Creek for the night.

Sunday 19th. Started early and traveled about six miles and come to the Sand Bluffs and had to double all our teams to cross them after which we traveled five or six miles and camped for the night.

Monday 20th. Traveled about eighteen or twenty miles and camped for the night.

Tuesday 21st. Traveled about twenty miles and camped for the night.

Wednesday 22nd. Started early, nooned at the foot of Cobblestone Bluffs passed over them in the afternoon and made in all today about 18 miles.

Thursday 23rd. Started very early and traveled over a very heavy sandy road for 12 miles and stopped for noon near the river. I had to walk most of the way and was very tired which has often been the case over this heavy sandy road, in the afternoon we traveled 8 or 9 miles and camped for the night near the river.

Friday 24th. Started early. Nephi being obligated to attend to some other business employed a lad to drive his team who in driving over a sideling [?] place capsized it which detained us an hour or more at night. We camped opposite Chimney Rock.

Saturday 25th. Started about 7 o'clock. Traveled about 10 miles and stopped for noon on the river. Some of my cattle getting foot sore so I had to shoe one on both hind feet. Camped for the night at Scotsbluff.

Sunday 26th. Started after 6 o'clock and came to Cold Creek and stopped for noon, weather very hot, and have to drive my own way which is very hard considering my poor state of health. I sometimes get so tired it seems as though life would depart. Camped for the night near the river.

Monday 27th. Started early and traveled about 20 miles and camped near the river.

Tuesday 28th. Started about 7 o'clock and traveled about 10 miles through nothing but heavy sand and stopped for noon near the river. Camped for the night 8 or 9 miles below Fort Laramie.

Wednesday 29th. Started early and stopped opposite Fort Laramie about noon, while some of the company went over to the Fort to trade, Nephi went over also and got a letter from home, we then went about four miles above the fort and camped for the night.

Thursday 30th. Started early and came to the Black Hills Road. Found it very uneven and stony. Traveled about fifteen miles and camped for the night at some springs on the north side of the road.

Friday 31st. Started at 7 o'clock and traveled about seven miles over a hard, rough, hilly road to the view and stopped for noon. Started a gain about 4 o'clock and traveled in a small sprinkle of rain about three miles and camped for the night on a high hill without water.

Saturday September 1st. Started about 7 o'clock and traveled about 10 miles to Alder Springs and stopped for noon. Road very hard over the Black Hills and I am almost tired to death of walking all day and driving team which is my constant lot, camped for the night on the river.

Sunday 2nd. Started early and camped for the night on the river.

Monday 3rd. Stopped all day to repair wagons, and shoe oxen, wash, etc, at this place. I caught a

few fine fish in the river.

Tuesday 4th. Started at one o'clock in the afternoon and traveled till nine o'clock at night and camped on the bank of the river at this place. I also caught some fish.

Wednesday 5th. Forded the river to the South side and at night camped on its bank.

Thursday 6th. Started at 7 o'clock and camped for the night at dark on the bank of the river.

Friday 7th. Started very early and overtook Joseph Young's train, and camped about 9 o'clock at night.

Saturday 8th. Started early and crossed the upper bridge of the Platte and camped for the night on the river where the road leaves it.

Sunday 9th. Started early. Traveled all day behind Joseph Young's train and passed him in camp late in the evening. Camped for the night on Goose Creek.

Monday 10th. Started in good time. Traveled all day and camped for the night on the Sweetwater River at Independence Rock.

Tuesday 11th. Started early. Traveled all day and camped for the night on the river.

Wednesday 12th. Started early. Passed the Three Crossings about noon. Traveled all day and camped for the night on the river.

Thursday 13th. Started late. Traveled all day and camped at night on the river.

Friday 14th. Started early. Traveled all day and camped at night on the river, the bones of animals and other remains of wagons lie thickly strewn all along the road being the remains of Uncle Sam's war expedition against the Saints.

Saturday 15th. Started early and left the river about noon and crossed the rocky ridges towards evening, and camped for the night near Small Springs Stream.

Sunday 16th. Last night and this morning the train lost four oxen which died from the effects of Alcohol. We started late and traveled to Rock Creek and camped for the night.

Monday 17th. Started at 10 o'clock. Wind very high. Came to the last crossing of the Sweetwater and camped for the night.

Tuesday 18th. This morning the ground was white with snow with ice in the water buckets. Found two of our oxen dead. I think the camp has lost eight up to this time. Started early and crossed the South Pass and camped for the night on Pacific Creek.

Wednesday 19th. Started early and traveled about 8 miles and camped for the night without water five miles from Little Sandy.

Thursday 20th. Started about sunrise without breakfast and drove to the Little Sandy for water and grass and stopped for the Camp to get breakfast. We then started on and camped for the night on the Big Sandy.

Friday 21st. Started early and traveled twenty miles and camped on the Big Sandy again.

Saturday 22nd. Started at 8 o'clock and camped for the night one mile below the crossing of the Green River.

Sunday 23rd. Started about 7 o'clock. Traveled all day. Made about 20 miles and camped for the night on Blacks Fork. Here I caught several pounds of very fine fish.

Monday 24th. Started as usual. Took the new or right hand road leaving Fort Bridger to the left. Traveled about 18 miles and camped for the night again of Black Fork.

Tuesday 25th. Started about 10 o'clock and camped for the night on Muddy Creek without water it being dry.

Wednesday 26th. Started early. Traveled about 15 miles. Road passes bad. Some springs of the left in the afternoon. Camped for the night on a burnt piece of ground without water.

Thursday 27th. Started before breakfast. Traveled about 8 or 9 miles to the Station on the middy near Iron Springs where we camped for the balance of the day and night, at this place we buried Sister Bennett, an aged Saint from England, who died the day before.

Friday 28th. Started early and crossed the Bear River Mountains and camped for the night on Sulphur Creek.

Saturday 29th. Started early. Crossed Bear River where we left Mary Allen with her niece. Traveled 18 miles and camped for the night at Cash [Cache] Cave in Echo Canyon.

Sunday 30th. Traveled about 18 miles and camped for the night in the canyon.

Monday, October 1st. This morning some of our cattle were missing and after a long search all were found except one of Brother Bodilys. We started late and came on a few miles and Brother Bodily and some other stopped and went back to look for the lost ox. The balance came on about 16 miles and camped for the night in a canyon a few miles west of Weber Crossing.

Tuesday 2nd. Crossed the mountains and camped on Canyon Creek.

Wednesday 3rd. Ascended the big mountain on the top of which three and half years ago I took my last view of the sweet valleys of Ephraim with a sorrowful heart.

The snow camped peaks of Deseret
With Ephraim's peaceful bells
Though absent long I love them yet
For there sweet union dwells.
Again upon this mountain top

Those lovely scenes can view
Though years ago with tears
and hope I did bid them adieu.

We camped for the night at the foot of the mountain.

Thursday 4th. Crossed the little mountain and camped for the night at Emigration canyon.

Arrival in Salt Lake City

Friday 5th. Arrived in the city and camped on the Public Square.

Saturday 6th. Attended to some business relative to the load of freight that I had hauled for the emigration, Conference commence today.

Sunday 7th. Attended conference.

Monday 8th. Attended conference again. Met hundreds of my old friends yesterday and today who gave my hearty welcome back to our mountain home.

When one returns, from foreign land
To meet old friend again
Sweet heartfelt joy, without alloy
Thrills every pulse and vein.

Heard much good instruction and felt to rejoice and thank my Heavenly Father for his protecting care in returning me safe back to the Valleys of Ephraim and for the prospect of soon enjoying the society of my family and fiends in my sweet mountain home. The Conference at evening adjourned to April 6th, 1861-- Moved my wagons from the Camp Ground to the house of my brother in law, David LeBaron.

Tuesday 9th. Attended to business in the tithing office in regard to the load of freight.

Wednesday 10th. Busy all day settling up some business in the city.

Thursday 11th. Went today with Sister Margaret Therekold to President Young's office and had her sealed to my by the President. She was born in Carlisle, England, July 21st, 1840.

Return home to Summit Springs (by Parowan)

Friday 12th. Packed up and fixed my wagons for starting home.

Saturday 13th. Started from camp and came out of the city about five miles and camped for the night.

Sunday 14th. Started from Camp early and came to the warm springs and camped for the night.

Monday 15th. Stared early and camped for the night near Battle Creek.

Tuesday 16th. Started from camp in season passed through Provo a little after dark. Camped for

the night about 2 or 3 miles south.

Wednesday 17th. Camped for the night near Payson.

Thursday 18th. Came to my brother Benjamin's at Santaquin in the afternoon and stopped for the night.

Friday 19th. Stopped all day at my brothers.

Saturday 20th. Started late and came within five miles of Nephi City and camped for the night.

Sunday 21st. Passed through Nephi and camped for the night a little east of Chicken Creek.

Monday 22nd. Today Brother Brown, (who with his brother in law, a Brother Wood, fell in with us at American Fork) accidently shot a pistol into his foot which detained us a little, we camped for the night without water about four miles form the Sevier River.

Tuesday 23rd. Camped for the night at the new settlement in Round Valley.

Wednesday 24th. Started late and camped for the night at the Cedar Springs in Parawan Valley.

Thursday 25th. Started late. Passed Fillmore about noon very stormy and cold. Brother Brown and Woo stopped at Fillmore. We camped for the night about half way between there and Meadow Creek.

Friday 26th. Started early and camped for the night at the mouth of the canyon.

Saturday 27th. Started early and camped for the night at Pine Creek.

Sunday 28th. Started early and met a part of my family about noon consisting of my two wives Susan and Janet and three of my sons, Seth, James, and Almon, who came out to meet me with Brother Thomas Smith. I then left my teams with my sons Nephi and Seth, and went on with my Family and Brother Smith who had a horse team. We came to Beaver and stopped with Sister Pratt for the night.

Monday 29th. Started early and got home to Summit Creek in Iron County where my family was living about 8 o'clock in the evening.

Tuesday 30th. Went down to my old farm at the Springs and found my orchard and fences broken down and scattered abroad, my house stripped of windows, locks, hinges, latches, etc. And otherwise very much mutilated and torn to pieces, and when I came to look after my stick I found them reduced about through the Grasshoppers and worms destroying the crops on the farm for two or three years in succession which forced my family to abandon it. But I soon concluded that there was no other course for me to pursue but to go to work and repair up the houses and move my family back again as soon as possible so as to prepare for winter the best that I could, although there was not a lock of hay or straw or grain of any kind except wheat to be procured at any price.

Wednesday 31st. Went to Parowan to settle with Brother Edsford who with his family I had brought down from the city.

Thursday November 1st. Went to the springs and commenced to prepare up the houses preparatory to moving my family back.

This Journal transcribed by Bertha McGee (Joel's great granddaughter), her daughter Linda, and Linda's husband Chuck Harrington, and Bertha's son Scott. If you want further information, contact Scott by e-mail smcgee@genealogy.org

Source: [Miscellaneous personal histories](#)

This information has been gathered by various people interested in Utah history. These are unpublished biographies.

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