

The following is a typed copy of  
Leander Burkhart's Oregon Trail Diary  
supplied by Virginia Burkhart of Albany to Glenn Harrison in 2001  
shared with oregonpioneers.com July 2001

Note: wherever there are dashes -----, the narrative is missing due to the comers having been cut off of the edges of the book, either to help start a fire, or perhaps to sharpen a straight-razor? In other cases, the words are undecipherable. The book is written in pencil. (The typing was done under nearly impossible circumstances, with countless interruptions, but at last it has been copied.) [Note: The typed copy was done by a family member, who used parenthesis to include notes. Copies were made for other family members, but the right side of the pages were placed too close to the edge of the copier. Where some letters were cut off, I have attempted to reconstruct the missing letters. Spelling is as it was recorded with my notations and best guesses in brackets. - GH]

Lee Burkhart's Book, Jan'y 1st, 1846 [1847 Like we might do in our checkbook in early January, he wrote the previous year. The correction is based on who he met and who gave assistance and is confirmed by Nancy Prevost, who is compiling information on 1847 pioneers and Stephanie Flora, who is compiling a list by year.]

May 10th: Crossed over the----- [Missouri River] at St. Joseph on morning of the 10th. Came 5 miles, 11th laid over

12th also.

13[th] moved 5 miles to Big Camp. All came up and remained here (here reorganized) Came to camp in prairie 22 miles. This is a good camp. One half mile to the left is the main road.

[No entries survived for May 14 - 21.)

22nd We traveled over beautiful prairie [prairie] 18 miles to Nim --- Good camp.

23rd Today we traveled----- ridge Prairie and some scattering timber with tolerable good road and made 22 miles.

24th Laid upon account of a very heavy fall of rain.

25th Today we traveled 18 miles over beautiful prairie to Big Blue River.

26th Today we had to lay up on account of Blue River being too full to ford after blocking up our wagons and crossing Blue River we traveled over beautiful Ridge Prairie Camp to the Independence Road ----- 9 miles passed 7 mile ---- ther to campt to the right of the road 1/2 mile this is -----camp ground. We made 18 miles.

28th We traveled over----- beautiful prairie road --- day crossed 2 small creeks. Here the Independence Company overtook us. We camped 1/2 miles to the left of the road this day we made 21 miles.

29th Today we traveled over high prairie as usual saw Antelope in several herds. Came to Big Sandy Creek in 21 miles here passed 4 companies. Encamped on this stream. Came 4 miles in the ----- and encamped to ----- We made 25 miles-----.

30th Today we had ----- roads over high prairie with very little timber. At noon we came to the Republican Fork of Blue River. We traveled up this stream on the west side 10 miles and encamped. Today we made 25 miles.

31st Today we continued over our course up the river with beautiful roads. Made 10 miles to noon here. Shucks Company passed us though we again passed them and made 9 miles. Today we made 19 miles.

June 1st We yet continued our----- up Blue River today. A part of the time----- the bottom today. At n--- [noon] we raised the Bluffs and traveled on the Bluff 8 miles to Camp 1/2 mile to the left of the road. Today we made 16 miles here. On this stream we saw the first Pawnee Indians. We also here saw plenty of buffalo signs. Here we came across a very large buffalo which had been killed this spring. No timber here, scarcely at all, except some small ash and cottonwood, though plenty for present use.

2nd We now have left the Republican fork of Blue River, passed high (nobelina?) ----- . Came to high rounding bluffs and at length hove in sight of Big Platte River. Crossed the bottom 2 miles to the west and encamped opposite a small island to which we had crossed knee deep in water to obtain. Full here at this place. We found salt encrusted on the surface of the earth in considerable quantities here. Antelope is plenty. Today we made 15 miles.

June 3 Today we took up our line of march up Platte. (Saw plenty of antelope), found ----d [wood] to be very scarce though obtained some from a ----nd Roads beautiful. We made 25 miles.

4th This morning----- raining and we con--- [continue] to lay up. At 8 o'clock Shucks Company again passed us. Here we find the river 1 1/4 mile in width, very shallow.

5th Prospect for rain. This morning was fair and we continued again to lay up but at 11 o'clock the clouds broke and we yoked and started. Made 8 miles and encamped. Found plenty of wood. Here our cattle became lame for the first time. The Independence Company came up and passed us today.

6th Today it was raining and again laid up----- . Evening the Indep----Independence Company and the] California Com ---- [Company] passed us at about ----- o'clock.

7th This morning it was again favorable and we started at an early hour. Passed low flat wet prairie. Crossed 3 small rivers and at 5 o'clock we overtook both Independence Co. at a small creek and passed them greatly to their offence. Here we again blocked up our waggon. Today we made 15 miles.

8th This morning we started -----n [at an] early hour, passed -----ks [Shucks] Company. Here they lost 18 head of cattle. The night pl-----yesterday and today in pursuit of them. Here we espied a large herd of buffalo some 2 miles off the Bluff, our hunters now on tiptoe after overtaking them and chasing them. We killed 2 of them. These were the first buffalo we have seen! Here the road lays very low and has been overflowed some 7 - 8 days. Today we made 15 miles. Here wood was very scarce and we were compelled to use buffalo dung for fuel. ----- as we passed up ----- This evening we saw very large herds of buffalo across the river.

9th Again at an early hour (this morning) we left camp, found the roads to be much better than yesterday. Passed 10 miles without any timber at all, though this evening found no scarcity. Today we made 15 miles.

10th Today passed over some better roads. After coming 5 miles we passed the last timber in today's travel. Here the bluffs are very high and the valleys between are covered with cedar to----- . -----we were compelled to leave the road 2---- [miles] to obtain a suitable place for encampment. Here we passed several bluffs covered and composed of lime. Today we made 22 miles. Here for the 5 or 6 days our road was crossed by buffalo trails at a distance of about 20 yards apart.

11th After again making the bluffs we ascended the first bench and kept it the distance of about 10 miles where we again came to the bottom. Here we found two small springs affording good water. After traveling the distance of 2 miles we discovered---- forks of the river We again----- (ascended) the bluffs passed --- and descended to the river for encampment on the south fork of the Platte. Today we made 16 miles.

12th Today we found the road pretty good. This morning we came to ???[Capt.] Findley's Company. Passed them. They were here, laid up, on account of a broken axle tree. After passing up the s.[south] fork 10 miles from last night's encampment, we found a new ford across. Here we crossed the river. Found it to average about----- inches of water and 1 mile in width. Made 2 miles farther and camped. Today we made----- miles. This was a very warm day.

Sunday 13th. This morning after a late start we traveled over rather rough roads. Passed a number of deep hollows which were very sandy. Came at length to a beautiful bottom and there we left the road 4 mile to a lone tree on an island opposite where we encamped. Today we made 16 miles.

14th. This morning we had rather a late start on account of the death of 'Mr (Wm.?) Turner's child which had been since they left St. Joseph. After the burial we continued our course up the river until noon when we came to the road leading from the south to the north fork of the Platte. Here we ascended the bluff and found the roads beautiful to our camp in the prairie. Here we found no water or wood but what we brought with us. Buffalo chips though make a good substitute for the latter. Today we made 15 miles. This camp is on the divide between south and north fork of the Platte River.

15th After an early start this morning passed a----- direction to the south ----- bluff of North Platte in 6 miles here ----- Scenery is beautiful to behold. The distant bluffs are decked with cedar and others covered with a white lime or marie substance as white as the dropping snow, and others covered with a beautiful green sward of buffalo grass. After descending we found ash trees. Here the road passing up on the south side of the South Platte intersected this. After passing down Ash Hollow 12 miles (2 miles?) to the river we found the distance from the south to the Platt[e] to be 16 miles. Here at Ash Hollow we found we found ---- timber and several beautiful springs. Here the company separated on account of feed for the cattle. While a portion of them reorganized here we, with 15 other wagons, passed up 4 miles farther and encamped here.

16th We decided to lay up one day so that we may wash and? [rest] our oxen. This morning the Independence Company and the Capt. Findley Co. passed. At about 1 o'clock the remainder of our company commenced.

17th. Today we again ----[laid] up on account of sickness. Today we had a jolly time with the boys, some hunting, some wrestling, and jumping, while a large number with our captain were engaged in playing ball.

June 18th. This morning we got an early start. Found this road to be very sandy laborious for the cattle to travel. Came 7 miles tom---. Passed on 7 miles farther and encamped and found not a stick of timber on the river on this day's travel,

the we [used] wood from the other encampment. This day we made 14?----  
[miles).

19th. After a late start this morning, we continued our course up the river, raised to the first bench of buffs which were chiefly composed of sand. This morning we saw with a view of a clump of trees ahead, traveled 7 miles to noon opposite these trees which were yellow pine. This evening we found the road rather better than usual; scarcely any sand at all. This evening we [omit we] our camp is at a beautiful spring on the first bench of the bluff. Today we made 14 miles.

20th. After an early start this morning we ----- (pages missing)water with plenty of wood and bark for fuel. It is a good camp. This eve[n]ing there is yet no news from the boys who followed the Wiles which caused some uneasiness. Today we made 20 miles. Our camp is 1/2 mile up this creek.

23rd. This morning the boys that were in pursuit of the???? returned with them. We continued our course 6 miles farther to our encampment 1 mile to the right of the road up the river where we concluded to lay up to have our blacksmithing done up. 6 miles today.

24th. ----- thing else went on but cutting waggon tires, mending chains, overhauling waggons etc. etc.  
25th. Today we continued to make repairs etc. Today our cattle suffered something considerable with smothering like the murrain? We lost 4 head. One division of our company left us.

26th. This morning we left our camp, proceeded up the bluff, found the road sandy and came 3 miles to where we struck the river bottom, marking 26 miles from when we left the river; today made 12 miles.

Sunday 27th. After an early start this morning we went up the river bluff, found the road good for the first 5 miles. Passed some sandy ridges, came 5 miles farther to forks of the river. Here we are in sight of Ft. Laramie. Came 1/2 mile to the fort. After making a general survey of the fort, we passed on 4 mile farther and encamp for the night. Here Indians were plentiful. We also passed a lame company of Indians 4 miles from the Fort. These were of the Sioux Tribe. Today we made 11 miles.

28th. Today we got a late start on account of the cattle scattering and we had to find them. Started at 9 o'clock. Made 10 miles to Big Warm Springs and here we passed up the B----- [Bluff] Bottom 1 mile. Here we ascended the bluff, passed plenty of tall pine and cedar, and came 8 miles farther to the creek, or rather spring, called Bitter Cottonwood. Today we made 18 miles.

29th. This morning on account of Ill health of the Captain's family we went only miles and lay up. Here the company divided and our company now consists of section and 6, and numbers 20 waggons, 28 men. 7 miles today. 30th. This morning we continued our course up Bitter Cottonwood Creek and for the distance of 4 miles, at length raised the -----, found it very stony, and rough. Passed a considerable quantity of pine timber, passed 10 miles farther and encamped at a beautiful creek which is called Willow Creek. Today we made 14 miles.

July 1st. After leaving the big spring 200 yards to the right of the road, we crossed the creek and found the road very rough and steep and at noon passed Capt. Hockett's (Hackett's) company. Passed on and camped on a delightful

stream called Beautiful Creek. This evening again passed the Independence Oregon Company who had passed us at the Fort. 13 miles today.

2nd. This morning we continued our course down Beautiful Creek, and 1 mile raised ----- and found the road as usual, very rough. Crossed a number of ridges, we found large quantities of red earth resembling in color the Spanish Brown which rendered the roads very disagreeable. Passed on 15 miles to the stream called ----- Mark? Head, a very beautiful creek where we encamped.

3rd. Today we continued our course across the ridges, and at noon came to Big W[Willow] Creek. Passed on 4 miles farther and again came to the Platte. Today we made -- miles.

Sunday July 4th. At 10 o'clock --- [in the] morning we continued our course up the river 6 miles. Here we met 8 men from Oregon. Here we encamped one quarter of a mile to the (left?) of our camp, where runs the beautiful creek called Deer Creek. [On this] creek 200 yards to the south up the creek we discovered a fine coal bank of excellent quality. From here we went on 6 miles to camp.

5th. After parting with our Oregon friends we passed on up the river the distance of 13 miles to the ferry and encamped here. We found the ferrying quite----- [expensive, so] we concluded to either ford or build a raft, and go 6 miles farther up.

6th. After passing up that distance we found the river shallow enough to ford by blocking up the wagon boxes 8 inches which was sufficient to keep all dry. All crossed over and passed 300 yards to camp and here we met 7 men from Oregon who camped with us.

7th. This morning after parting with our Oregon friends we left Platte? and crossed the highlands to the spring 12 miles.

8th. After an early start this morning we left the spring and passed 8 miles to Mineral Springs. From here we passed 6 miles to the Willow Springs and then 3 miles farther to a branch and encamped. Today we made 17 miles.

9th. After leaving our camp this morning we passed on 6 miles to a small creek and came on 13 miles to Independence Rock on Sweet Water. This rock is truly a fine curiosity and here we found the names of a number of acquaintances who had passed this point. East of the rock some 3 miles may be found any quantity of ?salaratus of a good quantity. 19 miles today.

10th. After passing up the Sweet Water River 1 mile we crossed, went 4 miles farther to a most singular canyon called Devil's Gate through which the river passes. We then passed on 11 miles farther to our camp on the river. The road today was pretty sandy. 16 miles today.

Sunday July 11th. After an early start this morning we followed up the river and found the road very sandy. Came 17 miles and encamped.

12th. This morning we continued our course up the river 1 mile to the fork in the road and chose the left, and found the sand to be very deep for 6 miles to where road came again to the river. Passed on 5 miles farther and encamped on a slough with good grass but little water and no wood. 12 miles today

13th. Today the road was rather sandy. Travelled 12 miles to where we again came to the river and crossed where we met Mr. Henderson with a family and several other men. Passed on 5 miles farther and recrossed the river. 17 miles today

14th. After passing ----- river 5 miles we came to the high bluffs. Pretty rocky here. Raised a bench or two of the main rise of the Rocky Mountains. Pass on to the east fork of the Sweet Water and encamped. 20 miles today.

15th. From the east fork of the Sweet Water we traveled 6 miles to a small creek the main branch of Sweet Water 4 miles farther on (a good camp), then over the Di---dge [Divide] in the pass to the ---iffic [Pacific] Spring. Here we encamped. 20 miles today.

16th. Here we found the road to be on descending ground 20 miles to Little Sandy where we passed 4 companies and traveled on 5 miles farther to Big Sandy, and encamped 1 1/2 mile above the old fort. We traveled on the Greenwoods Cutoff since we let the Big Sandy. 25 miles today. Here the road forks to the right hand and makes a large cutoff(which we took) (the left goes by the way of Bridger's Fort. 17th. On the Big Sandy we laid up until 3 o'clock for----- our cattle for 20 miles without grass ----- here at this camp. ----- through a general inspection and all the misc, was thrown away. The Captain left a beautiful mahogany bureau to stand in the solitude of an unbounded wilderness. At 3 o'clock we crossed Big Sandy, filled our kegs with water and started out for the 40 miles. Passed over a low flat of about 6 miles, now sundown, and after taking a little refreshment we may and found the road very dusty. Traveled all night and by day light made the hill as the halfway point. From here we moved on 1 mile further to break for----- and let our cattle graze [graze]. Since 3 o'clock yeste[r]day we made 21 miles.

18th. After an early breakfast we moved on and found the road very dusty and dry with very very steep hills, and at length have in sight of Green River. In descending these bluffs we found them to be very steep and rocky, and encamped on second camp down the river. 20 miles today.

19th. At 12 o'clock this morning we were in readiness to----- [cross] the river (Green River) up our waggons this ----- this is quite a rapid stream and requires a great deal of care for the safety of the waggons. After all being across we went up the river to our camp. About 1/2 half hour before nightfall we discovered 2 waggons floating down the river, and by inquiry found they were from the party of the Mc.Kinny? Company who in attempting to cross drifted down the current.

20th. At 12 o'clock we were in readiness to move on our journey and found the road so very dusty. Went on 8 miles to a beautiful creek (Bear Creek) [Bear River] and encamped. Up this creek 1 1/2 miles is a beautiful spring This is a good camp.

21st. After an early start this morning we passed up the creek 1 1/2 miles, raised bluffs, found the road very dusty, went 10 miles to Spruce Grove. Here we met Col. Fremont and Gen. Keraney (Tearney) [Kearney] and a number of other officers from California (here we w---- ?woued?), passed on 6 miles farther to our camp. This evening we came down several very steep bluffs and crossed 2 very stony-[-(creeks)]. 16 miles today.

22nd. This morning we----- [got an] early start traveled on 5 miles. Here we found a very steep ascent, 5 miles on farther to a stream called Ham's Fork of the Green River. Here several Indians of the Snake

Tribe were trading with several white men. From here we passed on 8 miles ascending very steep bluffs of the Bear River. The road this evening was good and soil of an excellent quality and at places the earth was covered with a number of kinds of blossoms (here there are faded petals of what look like the blossom of a hollyhock-type plant pressed between the panes of the diary Lee Burkhart kept to send back to his brother, Calvin Peter, for his journey over the Oregon Trail in 1951). 16 miles today.

23rd. After passing the bluffs of Bear River by noon, we continued our course to our camp at Smith's Fort. Here we overtook Capt. [Joel] Palmer's Company. 15 miles today.

24th. This morning went up the valley 3 miles to Smith's Fort. After spending 3 hours to pass on 3 miles we encamped. Made only 6 miles today. Sunday July

25th. We went 8 miles to the crossing of Thomas Fork (a beautiful stream) and passed on 6 miles farther to the river bottom. The road this evening was very rough and we had to contend with several pretty steep hills. 14 miles today.

26th. This morning we passed on down the river by some heavy timber and a house built for the accommodation of the trappers as this is a great place for trapping. Here our hunter killed a large elk, the first of that kind of game which made it quite a rarity, and he packed it on down. Passed over several small creeks. Made 18 miles.

27th. After an early start this morning we passed down the river 2 miles to G-- Fork of Bear River and 18 miles on farther till noon. Here on a small branch was the first volcanic rock we had seen. 5 miles farther brought us to our camp at a beautiful grove of cedars at the foot of -omitan? Hill and in 1 mile of the Beer Soda Springs. 15 miles.

28th. After an early start this morning we came on up the Soda Springs after halting here sometime. We passed on 1200 yards down the river and on the bank found it formed Steamboat Springs which is truly---[a remarkable sight]. 1 mile on down the road leaves the --- 7 miles farther brought us to the Soda Pool and here we laid in a supply of soda and wood. 8 miles on was our camp on a small branch -- a good camp. 17 miles.

29th.(July) This morning we passed up a small creek 6 miles, and here found a large bank [band] of Snake Indians encamped for trading purposes. 2 miles farther on we raised a large hill, crossed over the divide between the waters of the Bear and Snake Rivers farther brought us to our camp on a beautiful stream with a lovely spring. 18 miles.

30th. This morning we passed down the creek to the broad desert valley of the Snake river in 8 miles. Made 2 miles more to our camp, on the same river as we camped the night previously, a good camp. 10 miles today.

31st. This morning we passed through miles of sand to the spring in Lewis River, then 5 miles farther to Fort Hall where we spent one hour. 7 miles farther the road comes to Portneff?? [Portnut] River [in present Idaho] where we encamped. No wood. 20 miles today.

Sunday August 1st. We got a really late start on account of our cattle being lost. But by 11 o'clock all were found and we passed on to the river

[last entry until October 1st]

Friday October 1st. Today we traveled the distance of 4 miles to a large creek, of Falls River. Here we encamped. Road good.

2nd. This morning we passed up the creek the distance of 3 miles to the foot of a hill 3 miles farther brought us to our camp on a small creek. Road rocky today.

3rd. Today we traveled 10 miles to what is called Barlow's Road, very bad, and a[? Letters missing in copy.] of the time travelled -----bier. In today's travel we discovered plenty of timber, the first since we left Blue River.

4th. This morning we raised the mountain, made 9 miles, and camped on the second creek in the hills. Here we were compelled to tie up our cattle as there was no forage at all.

5th. Today we made about 11 miles, 2 miles this morning brought us to Falls R. er[? Cut off.] it in passing up it was 7 times as bad. We had today a hilly rocky stumpy road.

6th. Today we traveled about -- miles over uncommonly bad ----- [road], we traveled about 8 miles.

7th. We traveled about 8 miles and found the road much worse today than yesterday, rocky, stumpy, and muddy. Our camp tonight is near a small wet prairie with some feed for cattle.

8th. Today we traveled about 8 miles, roads very bad and muddy, and crossed several streams of cold clear water.

9th. Today we traveled about 8 miles and encamped 1/2 mile west of Laurel Hill, very muddy rough roads today.

10th. Today we traveled about 12 miles, road rocky but sandy. We had quite a fall rain today. Our camp tonight is on Big Sandy Creek-----.

11th. Today we traveled about 9 miles, our road is down Sandy Road, rocky and sandy.

12th. Today we traveled about 12 miles and encamped in about 1/2 mile of the last crossing of Sandy River, bad road today.

13th. Today we made about 6 miles, found sand plentiful, had 3 very steep muddy hills to climb, road even worse than usual.

14th. In about 5 miles we came to the first house in the settlement, 2 miles farther brought us to our camp at the second house, 7 miles farther.

15th. Today we traveled about 9 miles. Road good.

16th Today we traveled about 5 miles and encamped about 1 mile from Oregon City [City]. Road good today.(last entry)

Later in the book, near the last pages: L.C.Burkhart's account with Aaron Hydele -----

Sept --- 4 days hauling in the mountains at 3 dollars per day \$12.00

4 days do [dito] up the valley at \$2

Loaned money -- \$21.00, \$8.00, \$1.00

To buy one cradling scythe....\$2.00, and 1 box percussion caps..\$.20.  
\$2.20 [Total]

Account with Mr Leven ----

-  
4 days hauling with team \$12.00  
\$8.00 paid Dec. 7 \$8.00  
Buy 1 horse [Cost of \$20.00  
horse?]

Table of distances from St. Joseph, Missouri, to Oregon City -----  
(my note: carefully recorded are the various miles from one location to  
another.)

Reciept for a composition for the cure of a fever

40 grains gum  
10 grains gum ---qish  
30 gr. --- licorice