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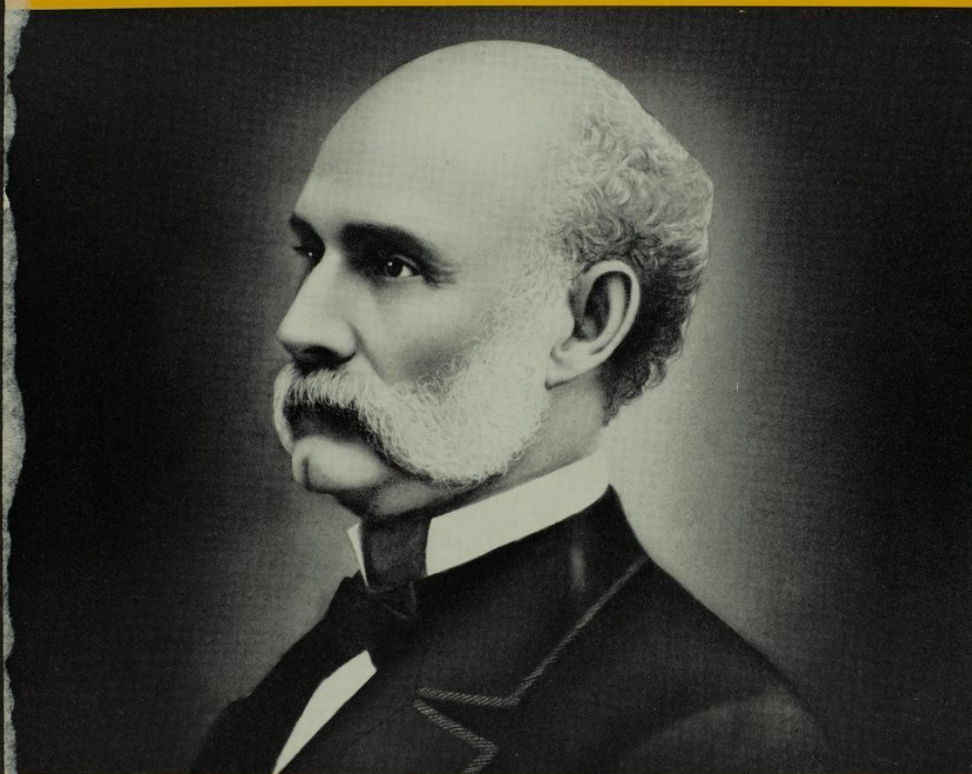
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THE KANSAS HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

February • 1949



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JAMES C. MALIN
Associate Editor

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THE COVER

Cyrus Kurtz Holliday (1826-1900), pioneer Kansas citizen and one of the founders of Topeka, was the organizer of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe railroad (*see* p. 95).

THE KANSAS HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

Volume XVII

February, 1949

Number 1

The Diary of James R. Stewart, Pioneer of Osage County

APRIL, 1855-APRIL, 1857; MAY, 1858-NOVEMBER, 1860

I. INTRODUCTION

JAMES R. Stewart, a young bachelor from New Castle, Pa., came to Kansas territory in the fall of 1854 with his brother William and a company of fellow-Pennsylvanians. The Stewarts had joined an association called the Western Pennsylvania Kansas Company which was organized at Conneautville, Pa., on September 16, 1854, with the stated objective of settling Kansas with anti-slavery and temperance people. An agent of a similar group, the American Settlement Company of New York, was present at the Conneautville meeting, and the Pennsylvanians adopted a resolution to appoint a delegate to confer with the New York company on selecting a site in Kansas.¹

The pioneer colony from western Pennsylvania set out for Kansas on October 27, 1854, under the direction of Charles Albright, one of the secretaries of the company, and arrived at Kansas City, Mo., on November 9. There were probably over 200 persons in this party, but the group quickly broke up after reaching Kansas, the members being disgruntled over lack of accommodations and apparent mismanagement of their affairs, and discouraged by the rainy and snowy weather which they encountered. When George W. Brown, the company's president, arrived in Kansas City a few days later, he found that the members were already scattered. Some had gone to the new towns of Lawrence and Topeka, some had stayed at Kansas City, Westport, Parkville and other points in Missouri, and some had returned to Pennsylvania.²

1. *The Kansas Herald of Freedom*, Wakarusa (Lawrence), October 21, 1854. George W. Brown, editor and publisher of the newspaper, was also president of the Western Pennsylvania company.

2. Letters of C. K. Holliday, December 25, 1854, and G. W. Brown, February 27, 1855, in *ibid.*, March 3, 1855.

Meanwhile, the locating committee of the two companies was traveling over the Kansas prairies in search of a townsite. This group consisted of George H. Stebbins and Lotan Smith of New York state and Joseph W. Kerr and George W. Barnes of New York City, representing the American Settlement Company, and Dr. William F. Owen of Pennsylvania, representing the Western Pennsylvania Kansas Company. They had traveled from St. Louis to Kansas City on the steamer *Polar Star*. Other passengers on this trip were Andrew H. Reeder, newly appointed governor of Kansas territory, and James M. Winchell of New York, who settled in Osage county and later was president of the Wyandotte constitutional convention. Winchell accepted an invitation to accompany the exploratory party in their search for a location for the new colony.

A townsite actually had been selected in advance, and believing that it occupied the old Indian trading post of Council Grove, about 140 miles out on the Santa Fe trail, the locating committee had already christened their new town Council City. However, they were not sure of the exact location, and when they learned that Council Grove was situated on an Indian reservation and was not available for settlement they transferred the name of Council City to a new site.

The tour, which was made in the wagon of a Shawnee Indian named Jackson, took them over the Santa Fe trail through Westport, Shawnee Mission, and Black Jack, where they made their first camp. On the afternoon of the third day they reached One Hundred and Ten crossing, and pushed on the seven miles which separated them from "our imaginary town of Council City." This, according to Winchell, was supposed to be at the crossing of Switzler creek, a few miles above its junction with the Dragoon. "When we reached an eminence overlooking the region lying between the two creeks, the sun was about setting; a light haze softened the picture, and we ordered the wagon to stop, and burst into a cheer of spontaneous admiration. Never before nor since, in Kansas, have I seen a landscape so calculated to excite pleasure as this. . . . Who selected this spot as a site for a 'city'? I do not know: but, at that moment we were unanimously agreed to ratify the choice. . . ." ³

On the other side of Switzler creek the party came in sight of an Indian log house, abandoned by its original occupants and inhabited by Isaac B. Titus and his family, emigrants from Iowa, who are frequently mentioned by Stewart in his diary. There the explorers

3. J. M. Winchell, *Experiences in Kansas Territory, 1854-1855* (untitled manuscript), pp. 9, 15, 19, 32, 35, 36, 48, in the Manuscript division, Kansas State Historical Society.

DIARY OF JAMES R. STEWART

3

spent the night, and next day they moved on downstream toward the confluence with Dragoon creek, selecting homesteads as they went. They did not make definite selection of a townsite, but traveled on another day—forty miles—to Council Grove to assure themselves that it was indeed unavailable. They then struck north to Fort Riley, and after leaving there traveled east along the north bank of the Kansas river to a point which they judged nearly opposite Council City. There the party divided. Owen, Smith and Barnes, with Jackson and the wagon, returned to Kansas City, while Stebbins, Kerr and Winchell proceeded south on foot to lay out the townsite.⁴

During the autumn of 1854 and in the following spring, many settlers arrived to take up claims in the vicinity of Council City. In his diary Stewart speaks often of friends and acquaintances in the new settlement. Isaac Titus, his wife Minerva, and their children Lorana, Idelda, and Isaac S., were among the earliest comers. John W. Freel (or Frele), an Iowa farmer, was the first settler to locate in Osage county after the organization of Kansas territory. With his wife, Mary Ann, and their daughter Margaret, he stopped at a point on the Santa Fe trail where Burlingame is now located. Their son Thomas, born that winter, was the first white child born in the county. Absalom W. Hoover, a farmer, was one of the Pennsylvania party which arrived at Council City on November 14. He had a wife, Catherine, and four children. The Bratton family, George and Sarah and their four children, also came from Pennsylvania, as did Joseph McDonald, a tailor, who was one of the oldest men among the settlers. Other Pennsylvanians included Joseph and Johnston McIntire, wagon maker and carpenter respectively; Marcus H. Rose, a stonemason; Ithiel Streit, a carpenter, and his wife and child, and David Condit, a farmer. From Ohio came the Harveys, Henry and George, who were farmers, and Samuel, a cabinetmaker. Foster Harvey, a physician, was perhaps of the same family, but is shown in the census of 1855 as emigrating from Indiana.

Lotan Smith, the resident agent of the American Settlement Company until he was succeeded by James M. Winchell in the spring of 1855, was a farmer from New York. Winchell described him as "an elderly man, of a great deal of energy, and self-esteem, with grey hair and black, sharp eyes, which, in moments of excitement, snapped like torpedoes. . . . [He] was illiterate, but made industry a

4. *Ibid.*, p. 37 ff.

substitute for culture. He wore a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles, through which the sparkles darted when his temper was excited. . . .” In his capacity as agent, Smith built a large log-house on the townsite which was called the council house, and was used for all public purposes. Another of the town fathers, J. W. Kerr, although commonly addressed as “doctor” and listed in the 1855 census as a physician, was said by Winchell to have been a druggist in New York.⁵

Of James Stewart himself comparatively little is known. He was born in or near New Castle on December 20, 1829, and is listed in the territorial census of 1855 as a saddler by profession. He lived at Council City, which was renamed Burlingame in 1857 (*see* diary entry for March 24, 1857), from his arrival in 1854 until 1868. During those years he was active in community affairs, and was elected justice of the peace in 1860. He served briefly in the Civil War as a sergeant in Company D, Second regiment, Kansas Volunteer infantry, from May 14 to October 31, 1861, the dates on which the regiment was mustered into and out of service.⁶ In 1862, while on a visit to his old home in Pennsylvania, he married Mary A. Newell. Later he was county attorney and representative from Osage county in the state legislature. In 1868 he was suffering from “bronchitis and general debility,” and planned a trip across the plains to New Mexico, hoping that the journey would improve his health. However, his illness had so weakened him that his doctors warned him against the expedition, and he and his wife left for a visit to New Castle early in May. In late May or early June he died there of consumption.⁷

The diary which follows was secured through the courtesy of Leon R. Mitchell of Burlingame. It is in two volumes, the first covering the period from April, 1855, to April, 1857, and the second from May, 1858, to November, 1860. It will be published in four installments in the *Quarterly*.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 40-42, 77.

6. *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Kansas, 1861-'65* (reprint edition of 1896), p. 70.

7. *The Osage Chronicle*, Burlingame, May 2, 9, June 20, 1868.

DIARY OF JAMES R. STEWART

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II. THE DIARY

PART ONE: APRIL-OCTOBER, 1855

APRIL 1855

KANSAS TER.

THUR, 19.

Cool & windy all day but moderat in the evening. Read Great Harmonia⁸ during the forenoon, went down to Hoovers in afternoon, thence to Titus', thence to Freels, back to Hoovers, bought 21 lbs bacon from him, and thence home, got back about 2 oC[lock] and read Great Harmonia ballance the day.

FRIDAY 20.

Clear Calm warm & pleasant. Went over to Brother Wills⁹ Cabin, worked with him at his chimney two or three hours, returned home, read Great Harmonia untill towards evening, received three letters by the hand of Mr. Johnston, read over my letters, and wrote one to Mr & Mrs Walton.

SAT. 21.

Cloudy distant thunder and threatning rain in forenoon, clear & pleasant in afternoon. Slept late in the morning Read Great Harmonia short time, eat breakfast, went down to Hoovers, paid Mrs. Hoover for baking my bread, went thence to Titus'. Saw & got acquainted with Mr. Earl, thence to Freels, got acquainted with the Basingger family. Went thence to Hunt our Oxen, crossed Dragoon Creek, stopped at Henry Smiths, got acquainted with Mrs. Howard, passed down the creek to the mouth of Log Chain, thence up log-chain about one mile. found Mr. Amy Smith & two others working at building a cabin, sat and talked short time, went thence back across dragoon Creek to Freels, walked up home with Mrs. Paine,¹⁰ thence home, read Great Harmonia.

8. *The Great Harmonia; Being a Philosophical Revelation of the Natural, Spiritual, and Celestial Universe* . . . by Andrew Jackson Davis. Davis was a young shoemaker's apprentice in Poughkeepsie, N. Y., who claimed to have remarkable clairvoyant powers. In 1845, when he was 19, he dictated, while in a "magnetic sleep," *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations, and a Voice of Mankind*, which was published as a single bulky volume. It attracted considerable attention and Davis subsequently produced several other works, all supposedly written under the influence of spirits from the other world, including *The Great Harmonia*.—*National Cyclopedia of American Biography* (New York, 1898), v. 8, p. 442.

9. William A. Stewart, the diarist's brother, was a silversmith, according to the 1855 census. He died of consumption in August.—See diary entry for August 30, 1855.

10. Probably Phebe Payne, who is listed in the census of 1855, with her six minor children, as emigrating from Illinois. Isaac D. Earl is not listed in the census, but was one of the signers of a protest against the election of March 30 (see Footnote 15) and served as a clerk at the election of May 22.—Territorial election returns, Archives division, Kansas State Historical Society. P. Baysinger, a farmer, had come from Iowa with his wife, one grown son, and seven minor children. Henry Smith, who may have been a son of Lotan, was a timer. Mrs. Howard probably was the wife of William Howard, a member of the original Pennsylvania party. Armi Smith, who is consistently called "Amy" by Stewart, was an early settler on Plum creek, south of present Burlingame.

SUN. 22.

Clear & pleasant. Arose early, got breakfast, read Great Harmonia short time, dressed a duck that Gilmore had shot, put it to cooking in a pot of beans, shaved, took a universal bathe, read over some old letters, commenced third vol, Great Harmonia, continued reading some time, eat diner of duck & bean soup, took a walk down to the garden, returned, resumed reading, read short time when Mr. John Dick & another man call[ed] in, directly from New Castle. Was glad to see them being the first living thing, I saw, from New Castle since I left. They brought me some letters & papers. I got them some diner & sat down to read my letters and papers, had long talk with Dick about New Castle. In the evening I received some more papers. looked over them and wrote a letter to O. G. Hazen.

MON. 23.

Cloudy & a few drops of rain. in the morning, cleared up warm about noon with pleasant breeze which increased to a high wind and continued so all day. Got up by sun up, eat breakfast took some flour down to Mrs Hoover to get some bread baked went thence to Titus' got acquainted with Mr & Mrs White, left a letter to be sent to the Post-office, went thence to Freels, stopped & talked short time, thence to hunt the oxen, rowd over to Dragoon Creek in Streits waggon.¹¹ Stopped at Wards & inquired about the oxen, was directed to where they were, found them & drove them home, yoked them up and hauled a load of wood. Read newspapers, worked in my garden, fiddled, & wrote letters alternately remainder of the day.

TEUS. 24

A little Cloudy with a warm and high breeze all day. Worked in the garden some time, came back to the house put some beans on to cook, read newspapers a while. Went over to Wills, got shovel and hatchet, returned eat diner, worked in garden remainder the day. read Newspapers until bed-time bathed and went to bed.

WED. 25

Cloudy & windy all day with few rain. Worked in the garden some time in the morning, returned to the house, read a while, worked & read alternately all day.

¹¹. Ithiel and Laura R. Streit, with their son George, had come from Pennsylvania. Ithiel was a carpenter.



DIARY OF JAMES R. STEWART

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THUR. 26.

Cool north wind but not unpleasant. Worked in the garden & read alternately all day.

FRI. 27.

Clear & pleasant. Worked in garden all day.

SAT 28

Pleasant but cloudy & a few drops of rain in the evening. Worked in my garden in forenoon, went down in afternoon, returned in evening read fiddled bathed & went to bed.

SUN. 29.

Warm with scattered clouds & high wind. Wrote a letter & read in forenoon, went down to Hoovers and read newspapers there a while, received a letter from J. P. Woodruff by the hand of Lotan Smith, returned home & read until bed-time; took a universal bath.

MON 30.

Warm & sultry most of the day, cloudy distant thunder and threatening of rain in evening. Worked in my garden all day, read Great Harmonia in the evening.

MAY [1855]

TEUS. 1.

Cloudy, a light shower about noon, and a little rain through the day. Worked all day in the garden, finished reading Great Harmonia in the evening.

WED 2.

Cloudy & a few drops of rain in the forenoon, clear & pleasant in the afternoon. Worked in garden as usual in forenoon, went down town to attend settlers meeting in afternoon, got home short time before sun down, commenced writing a constitution for a literary society, worked at it for some time and then commenced reading Young Mans Counselor, read some time and retired to bed. The settlers meeting was of no account, had no object in view & did nothing. Brother & I separated to day, he removing to his own cabin. After the settlers meeting adjourned, a few of us holding an informal meeting to consult about organizing a literary society, we appointed a committee to make a constitution, myself chairman.

THURS. 3.

Clear & pleasant. Worked in my garden all day until about five O'Clock, then went down town, Saw Lotan Smith, got a few



garden seeds from him, recieved a letter & peice of music from Miss Clara E. Memillen. Stopped at Hoovers, got some bread, returned home, arrived after dark, found Jim [James J.] Miller & Jim [James H.] Young there, got them some supper, talked, tolld stories &c during the evening.

FRI. 4

Scattered Clodes, the sun appearing occasionally. Worked through the day, fiddled read & wrote some, Saw, heard, nor experienced nothing uncomon.

SAT. 5

Pleasant all day. Worked in garden in forenoon, dressed up and went to Stock holders meeting at Titus' in afternoon, was appointed a committee to invite Lotan Smith to attend, found him at the boarding house, fulfilled my commission and returned to the meeting, remained untill it adjourned returned home, wrote some at constitution for Lyceum.

SUN. 6.

Beautiful all day. Wrote two letters, one to Clara Memillen and one to Mary Craven. Went over to Wills, returned, wrote read &c ballance the day.

MON. 7.

Beautiful all day. Worked in garden. went over to Brothers, stopped short time, returned, put some beans and pork to cooking, worked some more in garden, took some flour down to Hoovers to get bread baked, thence to Freels, Saw Mr McDonald, talked with him about breaking prairie, came home in the evening, eat supper, burnt some brush in my garden, wrote ballance of the constitution for Lyceum, read some in the bible, commenced reading Willards Universal history.¹²

TEUS. 8.

A little cool but pleasant. Planted corn in forenoon, went to town in the afternon Stopped at Hoover & got my bread. Came home, went over to Wills, returned read & fiddled till bed time.

WED. 9.

Pleasant, a little cool in evening. Planted Corn, Onions, radishes Beets, peas &c, read & fiddled alternately through the eve-

12. Emma Hart Willard (1787-1870) was one of the great educators of her day. She is credited with being the first woman publicly to advocate higher education for her sex, and the first to prove in her own school that women were capable of mastering mathematics, philosophy and other serious studies without harmful effects upon their brains and nervous systems.—*Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1936), v. 20, pp. 231-233. The volume which Stewart mentions here was probably her *System of Universal History in Perspective*, first published in 1835.

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ning. All alone for the last three days begining to feel lonesome & homesick.

THUR. 10.

A little cool in the morning. Clear & rather pleasant through the day. Went down town in the morning to get McDonalds oxen and plough. The oxen were not home, so I went up to the boarding house and got some garden seeds from Lotan Smith, went thence to Titus', got him to fix McDonalds plough, thence to Freels, thence home, planted my seeds, read, fiddled &c till towards evening, went back for the Oxen & plough, brought them home, went over to Wills, back home read, fiddled &c till bed-time. Am not in very good spirits today

FRI. 11.

Clear warm & beautiful all day. Got up very early and spent about an hour hunting the oxen found them and yoked them up and went over to Wills to plough began it with two yoke of oxen, worked till about 10 O'clock and turned the oxen out to rest, and pasture untill about 2 O'clock Commenced again and continued at it untill sun-down, came home fiddled and read till bed-time.

SAT 12.

Cloudy all day and some rain in the evening. Worked a little at ploughing, but, the ground being very dry and hard, concluded to quit it. Came home, washed dressed and went down town to attend Stockholders meeting, was chosen Sec. of meeting, came home in evening, sold Young some salt, Mr McDonald came about dark and stayed all night.

SUN. 13.

Beautiful in the extreme Read, but nothing else. Had a call from Miller & Freel, and Mr. McDonald for company all day. Good spirits & good nature.

MON. 14.

Beautiful in the morning. Scattered clouds in the evening thunder lightning & rain after night. Took some flour down to Hoovers to get bread baked, went thence to Titus', received four letters, returned home, planted a little corn, sold a bed cord to Jim Young, read some, wrote a letter to J A Addis, had a visit from Amy Smith, walked down town with him, stoped at Freels, thence to Titus' recieved two letters, went thence to Hoovers, got my bread, thence home, read my letters, and read in Universal history till bed-time.