

William N. Byers, Handbook to the Gold Fields of Nebraska and Kansas

Section 3, Pages 61 - 90

As the title indicated, this booklet was a guide for those want to look for gold in the Cherry Creek area near present Denver, Colorado and in the South Platte area of Nebraska. The author included an account from a miner written in 1858 on the South Platte and provided a detailed listing of the equipment needed and its cost as well as a day by day guide to the route. The booklet contained a great deal of information about and advertisements from Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Omaha City, Nebraska Territory. The author of the handbook felt that the Pike's Peak gold rush was a myth.

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NEBRASKA AND KANSAS.

51

- Fremont's Springs*—A small creek coming from 18 285
the west. The road follows along it seven or
eight miles, and camps can be made at any
point, with water and grass, but no fuel.
- O'Fallon's Bluff*—Here is a stage station, good 17 302
camp, without fuel.
- More & Grimes'* trading post, a good camping 1 303
place, with water and grass, and a few cotton
wood trees.
- Prairie Lake*—One and a half miles from river. 24 327
Good camp, with water, grass and buffalo
chips.
- Alkali Lake*—This water is very bad, and stock 6 333
should by all means be kept from it.
- South Platte Ford*—The road to Fort Laramie 16 349
here crosses the river. The road to the mines
continues up the south side, making no cross-
ing. As yet there has been but little travel
on it, but it can be easily found.
- Enter sand*—Thus far from Fort Kearney the 13 362
road has been good, passing over firm ground
—it now enters the sand, and is very heavy
for three miles.
- Camp on River*, and end of sandy road. Good 3 365
grass, but no wood. In this sand the road
crosses a wide, flat channel, which probably
has water a part of the year.

A few trees and some willows. The bodies of 3 368
some dead Indians are deposited on scaffolds
in the tops of the trees. This is the mode of
sepulture among many of the prairie Indians.
The road now keeps near the river, and is
very good. Camps can be made wherever
desired, with good grass and water, and occa-
sionally willows may be obtained from the
islands in the river. We next come to

Beaver Creek—Runs through a very deep ravine, 86 454
and the descent to it and ascent from it is
very steep. It is a handsome stream, twenty
feet wide and three feet deep. Good camp,
without fuel.

Timber and good camps. From here to the 12 466
mines, timber is found in abundance for camp-
ing purposes.

Kioway Creek—In a wide alkaline bottom. The 4 470
stream is wide and shallow, running over
sand. Water impregnated with alkali, and
should be used but sparingly.

Bijou Creek—Dry at crossing, but undoubtedly 16 486
has water most of the year. Kioway and
Bijou creeks both head in pine forests, about
35 miles south. Half a mile west there is a
handsome grove, where a good camp can be
made, with water from the river.

NEBRASKA AND KANSAS.

53

- Sand Ridges*—After leaving Bijou, the road 16 502
climbs a steep bluff, and is then very good to
these sand ridges—long sandy points running
down to the river, which washes their base,
whilst the road climbs over them, and is very
heavy and difficult. Teams can make but
nine or ten miles per day. Camps on the
river.
- Over sand ridges*, and near the river. 18 520
- Mouth of Cache-a-la-Poudre* river, and Thomp- 9 529
son's creek, opposite, both coming in from
the north-west.
- Saint Vrain's Fort*—This is a trader's fort, on 2 531
the right or south bank of the river. Here
the gold hunter, who wishes to visit the *Cache-
a-la-Poudre* mines, will cross the river, and
traveling in a north-west direction, reach the
mines in ten or fifteen miles. The mines on
this stream are, no doubt, the richest that
have yet been worked in the South Platte
country.
- Fort Lancaster*—Charley Bent's old fort—de- 7 538
serted, and in ruins.
- Fort Lupton*—Also deserted and in ruins. 5 543
- Jim Sanders' Ranch*—On an island in the river. 11 554
This is a very rich and productive island—
four miles in length.
- Dry Creek*—Camps can be made at any point by 12 566
turning down to the river.

Cherry Creek—This is at present the heart of 3 569
the mining region, and in the immediate
neighborhood, all who have yet reached the
mines are wintering; they number something
over one thousand men.

The town of Auraria was laid off in November, 1858,
on the point between Cherry Creek and the Platte; and
soon after, the town of Denver was laid out just below
the mouth of Cherry Creek. The latest reports from
there say that the two have been united under the name
of Denver, and that before spring there will be some 150
houses erected therein. Among others, one for a hotel
has been contracted for, which will be 30 by 60 feet in
size. This house will be opened early in the spring, by
Mr. Stevens, now of the Central House, in Saratoga,
Nebraska.

From here, the miner can travel in any direction he
chooses without difficulty, as regards camping places. The
mining region extends south, west and north to an unknown
distance.

Very near, on the west, rise the snow-clad Rocky
Mountains, towering high among the clouds. North and
south, stretch far away the foot hills of the great mountain
range, many of them rising to a height of six or seven
thousand feet, and covered with great forests of pine.

EMIGRANTS' GUIDE NUMBER THREE,

*From Nebraska City to Fort Kearney, to the Nebraska and Kansas
Gold Mines.*

The whole distance to Fort Kearney is taken from the "*Nebraska City News*"; distance between camps, from the journal of a party who recently traveled over the route.

Nebraska City is the second town in importance in the Territory of Nebraska. It is situate on the west bank of the Missouri river, on the site of old Fort Kearney, in latitude $40^{\circ} 40'$ north, fifty miles below Omaha, thirty miles below the mouth of the Platte river, and one hundred miles above Saint Joseph.

It has many very fine and substantial buildings, for hotels, mercantile houses, churches and residences, and contains between 2,500 and 3,000 persons. Emigrants will find this a good outfitting point, in all departments of trade.

From here the road will be the same over which Messrs. Majors, Russell & Waddell have, during the past year, transported a large portion of the supplies for the Utah army.

For the first fifty miles, the road leads through continuous settlements, and camping places or accommodations at the houses of settlers can be obtained without inconvenience. For this reason, we have not deemed it necessary to give points until we reach

Weeping Water—This is a beautiful stream, 35
bordered with fine groves of timber, thriving
settlements and towns; and well improved
farms are found all along its course.

Salt Creek—This is a fine stream of saline wa- 15 50
ter, though not so much so as to make it un-
fit for use. Fine grass and timber will be
here found. Some distance above the cross-
ing there are some fine salt springs, destined
at some future day to supply the valley of
the Missouri with that most necessary article
—salt.

The road now follows a divide between a
branch of Salt Creek and Wahoo Creek, and
camps may be found by turning off the road,
to the latter stream.

Elm Creek—A good camping place in the Platte 75 125
bottom, nearly opposite the mouth of Loup
Fork.

Slough—Here a camp may be made. Wood 5 130
should be brought from Elm Creek, and also
for the next camp. From here there is a
long drive without water, unless you go to
the river, which is distant. The road keeps
along the foot of the bluff, in the bottom.

Platte River—A good camp. The road now 35 165
ascends the bluff, and passes alternately over
sandy ridges—which run out to the river,—

and across points of bottom land, intervening between the sand hills,—and is very heavy and tedious travel. Camps may be made on the river bank.

Leave sandy road, and enter river bottom. 20 185

The road now continues along the bottom about two miles from the river. Camps may be made on sloughs, which are frequently found, or by turning down to the river bank.

Round Pond, in the bottom, near the road. 50 235

Here a road comes in from Fort Leavenworth.

Fort Kearney. 15 250

Cherry Creek—For description of road, and camps, and table of distances from Fort Kearney to Cherry Creek, the reader is referred to Guide No. 2, in this book.



EMIGRANTS' GUIDE NUMBER FOUR,*

From Saint Joseph, Missouri, to the South Platte Gold Mines.

St. Joseph, Missouri, is the largest town in western Missouri, containing a population of seven or eight thousand persons. It is the western terminus of the Hannibal and Saint Joseph Railroad, which will be finished and in running order in a very few months. When this is done, Saint Joseph may be reached in twelve or fifteen hours from the Mississippi river.

A daily line of first class steamers ply regularly between Saint Louis and Saint Joseph, during the spring, summer and autumn. All kinds of outfitting goods can be procured at Saint Joseph, at reasonable rates.

At this point the emigrant crosses the Missouri river, on a good steam ferry-boat, to Elwood, in Kansas; thence traveling through a low bottom, thickly timbered with cottonwood, and, in rainy weather, very muddy, he reaches *Wathena*, on Clear Creek, at foot of bluff, a fine 6 6 camping place. From here the road is somewhat hilly to

Mosquito Creek—Low bottom on east side of 15 21 creek; some timber on both sides. From here the road is quite hilly.

* The distances and description of camping places, in the following guide, are taken from the California Guide written and published some years since, by Judge F. Street, now of Council Bluffs, Iowa. We are personally acquainted with Judge S., and can assure emigrants that his statements are entitled to implicit credit.

NEBRASKA AND KANSAS.

59

- Wolf River*—Low, wide bottom on east side; 5 26
banks of stream very steep and miry.
- Indian Agency*—This is the agency of the Mi- 4 30
ami and Kickapoo Indians. There is a mis-
sionary station, and a good school for their
education.
- Mill Creek*—A prairie stream, with a few elm 5 35
trees just above the road.
- Small Creek*—Left of the road; some timber 22 57
on its banks; good camp.
- Grove*—Half a mile north of road; good camp. 6 63
- Small Creek* and grove—North of the road; 10 73
nice place and good camping ground.
- Small Creek*—One mile north of the road; plen- 12 85
ty of wood and water.
- Nemaha River*—This is a beautiful stream of 7 92
clear water; plenty of timber, and a fine
place to camp.
- Little Nemaha River*—Plenty of timber and 12 104
good water; good camp.
- Small Creek* in the prairie—Plenty of water 12 116
and some timber.
- Rock Creek*—Plenty of water and grass, and 4 120
some green elm trees on the bank.
- Blue River*—Should this stream be up, you will 18 138
have to build a raft to cross on. It is about
fifty yards wide, has a very rapid current,
and abounds in excellent fish.

<i>Small Creek</i> in the prairie—Some timber half a mile from the road each way.	10	148
<i>Small Creek</i> —Plenty of standing water.	10	158
<i>Small Creek</i> —Plenty of water, and some green timber half a mile north of road.	7	165
<i>Wythe Creek</i> —Plenty of timber and good water. After this, several small streams to cross, and steep hills to ascend and descend.	7	172
<i>Big Sandy</i> —Good water and some timber.	13	185
<i>Dry Sandy</i> —This stream is very wide, and the bed of sand, in which the water sinks in dry weather.	13	198
<i>Little Blue River</i> , or American Fork—This is a deep, narrow stream of beautiful, clear, running water. Its banks are skirted with a thin growth of cottonwood. Road follows the river forty-four miles, with camping places all along.	12	210
<i>Road leaves river</i> —	44	254
<i>Small Creek</i> in the prairie—Some timber; but the water is not good.	4	258
<i>Small Creek</i> —Good water and some timber.	3	261
<i>Platte River</i> —Good camp on bank of river.	17	278
<i>Fort Kearney</i> —	10	288
<i>Cherry Creek</i> —For distances, camps and description of road, see "Guide No. 2," from Fort Kearney to Cherry Creek, in this book.	380	668

EMIGRANTS' GUIDE NUMBER FIVE,

From Leavenworth City, Kansas, to Fort Kearney on the Platte.

The following distances were given by Mr. Garside, a member of Mr. Hibbard's party, who have been employed the past summer in erecting bridges on the route from Fort Riley to Fort Kearney. For distances from Fort Kearney to the mines, the reader is referred to Guide No. 2.

LEAVENWORTH CITY to	MILES.	TOTAL.
Salt Creek, - - -	3	
Stranger Creek, - - -	10	13
Hickory Point, - - -	12	25
Grasshopper, - - -	10	35
Little Rock Creek, - - -	9	42
Muddy " - - -	3	45
Indian " - - -	4	49
Soldier " - - -	3	52
Silver Lake, - - -	10	62
Cross Creek, - - -	7	69
St. Mary's Mission, - - -	6	75
Lost Creek, - - -	7	82
Red Vermillion, - - -	5	87
Rock Creek, - - -	3	90
Elder Creek, - - -	7	97
Manhattan, - - -	8	105
Wild Cat, - - -	4	109
Ogden, - - -	5	114
Fort Riley, - - -	6	120
Madison Creek, - - -	12	132
Miry " - - -	10	142
Middleton " - - -	10	152

	MILES.	TOTAL.
Loupe Creek, - - -	10	162
Parsons " - - -	7	169
Up-hill " - - -	8	177
Rocky Ford Creek, - - -	8	185
Muddy " - - -	13	198
Crooked " - - -	13	211
Clear " - - -	6	217
Cool Spring " - - -	7	224
Jenny's " - - -	10	234
Bryon's Fork Creek, - - -	9	243
Woody " - - -	3	246
Goodale's Branch, - - -	9	255
Little Blue, - - -	3	258
Water Hole, No. 1, - - -	29	287
" No. 2, - - -	9	294
Platte River, - - -	4	298
Fort Kearney, - - -	15	313

At Leavenworth the emigrant will find excellent outfitting facilities, in every branch of trade. Leavenworth has a population of over 8,000 persons, and is a place of large trade and much enterprise.

There are roads starting from points all along the Missouri river, at intervals of a few miles, which will be used by emigrants starting from their immediate vicinity. They all converge and unite with some one of the principal roads given, before proceeding very far from the river.

With the exception of Council Bluffs, Omaha, Nebraska City, Saint Joseph and Leavenworth, there are no points at which there are facilities for outfitting any considerable number of emigrants.

EMIGRANTS' GUIDE NUMBER SIX,

From Fremont's Springs to Fort Laramie.

The following distances and description of camps are taken from Franklin Street's California Guide.

From Fort Kearney to Fremont's Springs, is 96 miles. For description of road and camps, see Guide No. 2.

Fremont's Springs, from Fort Kearney, 96 miles.

From Omaha *via* Fort Kearney, 285

Crossing of South Platte—This is the old cross- 7 292

ing. The river is near a mile wide, but is not bad to cross. From here, the best way is to go round the point of the bluffs that lie in the fork of the river, and take up the valley of the North Platte. Since the summer of 1857, the road usually traveled continues up the south side, and crosses the South Fork 57 miles above this ford, and again intersects the old road about Ash Hollow.

Cedar Bluffs—Here the road leaves the river, 24 316

and ascends a long hill, after which it is good.

Long hill to descend.

Platte River—The road now follows the river 12 328
to Ash Hollow.

Cedar Grove—This is a beautiful little grove on 24 352

the bank of the river. After traveling about two miles from here, you ascend a long hill, in some places very steep, from the top of which you will descend to

Ash Hollow—You reach the creek about a mile 3 355
from the river. It is a very small stream,
with some springs along its banks, and walled
in by very high, rocky bluffs. From here
you keep near the bluff, and can get water
for camping by digging two or three feet.

Lawrence Creek—A broad, shallow stream. 38 393

Chimney Rock—From here there are two roads. 18 411
The one on the right keeps near the river, and
you can get water until within fifteen miles
of Scott's Bluffs. The other one keeps near
the bluff, and in dry weather you will find no
water until you get near the bluffs.

Scott's Bluffs, or Capitol Hills. Here will be 30 441
found some most delightful and romantic
scenery.

Small Stream—Some water, but no wood. 3 444

Small Creek—Water not good; banks very steep. 10 454

Horse Creek—About 100 feet wide, but very 1 455
shallow. No fuel here. The road from here
to the river somewhat hilly and sandy.

Platte River—The road now keeps near the 13 468
river for twenty-two miles.

Laramie River— 27 495

Fort Laramie— 1 496

M. D. DOWNS' TRIP TO THE NEBRASKA MINES.

MR. DOWNS is well known in this community as an honest, truthful man — what he says is reliable. He left Omaha, Sept. 27th, 1858, with an ox team and six months' provisions, for the Cherry Creek gold mines. After reaching there, he soon found that the six months' provisions laid in for four men, would not last them more than four months; so he returned to Omaha for a new supply, arriving there on the 20th day of December. At our request, he has furnished us the following statement of his trip, with a description of the route passed over, and many incidents of camp life, which, to those who think of roughing it on the plains, is well worth the cost of this little book.

MR. DOWNS' LETTER.

Omaha, December 29, 1858.

MESSRS. BYERS AND KELLUM:

Gentlemen:

The first few days since my return from the mines has been taken up in delivering letters and messages from those in the mines to their friends here, and answering questions. I was not prepared to find here so much interest in that new Eldorado which I have lately visited. Nearly one-half the men I meet are laying their plans for a spring stampede; indeed, I know of but three families in the town of Florence who are not talking of going to the mines.



William N. Byers, Handbook to the Gold Fields of Nebraska and Kansas

66

GOLD FIELDS OF

Having kept no written diary of my travels, I state from memory the facts herein contained, and believe they will be verified by tens of thousands who will follow my track in the spring. I design leaving here about the first of February, with a fresh load of provisions, drive to Grand Island City, this side of Fort Kearney, where there is plenty of hay and empty houses, and where a large number of persons have promised to meet me; and after resting a week or two, I shall head the train for the land of gold.

But let us go back to Omaha and the 27th day of September, when my company of four, H. Swigart, William Hoopes, W. D. McLain and myself, with a wagon, three yoke of oxen, and a load weighing 3,761 pounds, started for the Nebraska gold mines. We took no provender for our cattle, depending entirely on grass, which we found in abundance all the way.

The first day we made twenty-three miles, and camped on Rawhide creek, a few miles west of Elkhorn City. Here we were joined by ten teams, increasing our force to thirty-four men, well armed, hopeful, and all in good health.

The next day, passing through Fremont, a thriving inland town, and over a perfectly level road, with the Platte river always in sight, we pitched our camp near Buchanan, on Shell creek.

Continuing our journey without unnecessary delay along the most beautiful valley in North America, we reached, in

the evening of the fourth day, the town of Columbus, on the bank of the Loupe Fork of the Platte.

This has been considered the most difficult stream to cross on the route. There are two channels with an island between. The deepest channel is six or eight feet, narrow, and has a strong current. The large ferry boat was sunk, and a smaller one—too small to carry our wagons and teams—temporarily supplied its place. After ferrying our wagons over to the island, our cattle were driven over in the following rather amusing manner: One was driven in at a time, and when he got beyond his depth, his driver caught him by the tail, and thus buoying himself up, whipped the unwilling brute across to the island, where we yoked and hitched up, and drove our teams through some twelve rods of shallow water, to the main shore on the west side of the “*fork*.” On my return, I found two large boats in course of construction for this ferry, and the Western Stage Company design building a third, so that no delay will be incurred by emigrants at this crossing, after the first of March, 1859.

Three days' travel brings us to Grand Island City, a German town, built upon an island in the Platte. It contains about thirty houses, one-half of which are empty, the owners having returned to their old homes to spend the winter. The hay and grass on this island are very fine.

Eight miles further we come to Wood river crossing. Here Mr. Crocker, formerly of Omaha, keeps a good hotel.

This stream, running a long distance nearly parallel with the Platte, into which it empties, is lined with timber, and abounds in fine buffalo fish, nearly as good as the brook trout. They take the bait readily; so we caught a large number with hooks, and carried a supply with us, upon which we continued to feast for a week after; the largest weighed one and a half pounds.

From this point we found two roads to Fort Kearney; one along the Platte, which bows to the south; the other along Wood river, which bows to the north; we chose the latter as being shorter, the road higher and better, and affording good fuel and camping places. Geese and ducks were plentiful along the whole route. After following Wood river twenty-six miles, we struck across for the Platte ford, some eight miles distant to the south, where we arrived late in the evening, in the beginning of a rain-storm, which continued to pour down all night, all next day and the next night. We were now one hundred and eighty-five miles from Omaha; and thus far, ours had been a pleasure trip, rather than a toilsome journey. The weather had been fine, the road excellent, and the scenery delightful. The wide and shallow Platte, dotted all along with green islands of timber, and always hugging the steep frowning bluff on the south,—the Elkhorn rushing down from the north-west, where its winding course may be traced far away by the timber that skirts its banks,—the Rawhide, half concealed by the willows it nourishes, meandering through the valley, now approaching the Elkhorn,

as if to empty its treasures there, and then skipping off towards the Platte,—Shell creek, with its newly opened farms,—Wood river, cool and clear, with its shady groves and log cottages of hardy pioneers—the great *Platte Valley itself*, from six to eight miles wide,—all make up a picture, which never tires the eye, and is more appreciated the more it is studied.

Sunday afternoon we forded the Platte, which is about a mile and a half wide, and full of islands—we drove over six of these in crossing. Some of our company doubled teams, but our three yoke of oxen drew their load without flinching. The deepest channel, after the copious rain, was not more than three or four feet in depth. We are now at Fort Kearney, one hundred and eighty-nine miles from Omaha, which distance we have made in nine days. Here the Nebraska City road comes in. After spending a few hours at the Fort we drove on to seventeen mile point, where we camped in a fine grove of timber near the Platte. The next day, after driving twenty miles, we found good timber and water, and camped for the night. Here we saw the first buffalo. Mr. Swigart singled out a fine heifer, and with an unerring aim, his rifle brought her to the ground. He also wounded another. The one he killed weighed five or six hundred pounds, and furnished sixty pounds of tallow, which our men made into candles. The meat was more sweet and tender than any beef I have ever eaten; we divided it among the whole train, and threw the skin away.

Tuesday we drove all day, making twenty miles, and

camped on the bank of the Platte opposite a timbered island, from whence our fuel was obtained in the following manner. A man took a yoke of oxen, mounted one of them, rode to the island, hitched to a dry log, and snaked it across the channel to the camp. During the evening several buffaloes came near the camp, and we concluded to make war upon them in the morning. Mr. Swigart, the Nimrod of the prairies, after a night of uneasy sleep and visions of buffaloes, was up before the sun, and in a very few minutes had killed two fine bulls within ten rods of each other. Whilst the men were dressing these, three more fell before his deadly aim. As our necessities were more than supplied, and any further slaughter would be a cruel waste of life, and gratify only a hunter's passion, I begged him to put up his rifle. These buffaloes weighed from 800 to 1,000 pounds each. The skins were very fine. We presented one to Mr. Stevens, of Saratoga, who had just overtaken us, bringing many little luxuries and tokens of a mother's love to his son, a lad of 15, a member of the company. Mr. S. was highly gratified as he gazed on the bleeding carcase of a buffalo, which his son had slain an hour before. Loading this into his wagon, as a trophy of his son's marksmanship, and bidding us all good-by, he set out on his return home. Our hunt and feast detained us one day, when a company from Nebraska City came up and camped with us. They had started from Nebraska City just one week before we left Omaha, and called the distance to Fort Kearney, by the road they traveled, 280

miles. The captain of this company was a Mr. Brown, who had passed over this route years before with Col. Fremont. Being familiar with the road, the country and the best camping places, his services to us were invaluable.

Thursday, Oct. 14. Starting at 3 p. m., we drove 17 miles, and camped at a fine spring, seven or eight miles from the Platte. Finding no fuel, we suffered some inconvenience in not being able to cook our supper or breakfast. The valley is rather low and wet along here; the river not always in sight. Our road to-day has kept near the bluff. A few straggling buffaloes were observed at a distance—the last we saw on our trip out. At this camp we met a company of engineers and surveyors, 15 in number, returning to the States. [Col. Landers' party, we suppose.]

Friday, Oct. 15. We traveled 12 miles and camped at Cottonwood Springs, a trading-post, stage station and post office. Here we found Richard Darling, an enterprising young man from Omaha, and an early settler in Nebraska. He was engaged in poisoning timber wolves for the sake of their skins, which are worth \$2.50 each. Their fur is fine and valuable. These timber wolves are five or six times larger than the prairie wolf, or coyote. There are two kinds, the white and the black; the fur of the latter is most highly prized. We saw them in large numbers, following our trail day after day, for the crumbs and bones and broken-down oxen.

From Cottonwood Springs onward, no wood is found for a distance of more than 200 miles, except at one place,

where there are a few scraggy cottonwood trees. The country is entirely destitute of timber. To obtain a supply of fuel for this distance, we drove on from the spring three miles, where we halted, unhooked from our wagons, and with our cattle went four miles south of the road, where we found a large cedar grove in the ravines of the bluff. Many of the trees are dead, dry and very light. Cutting into logs 12 or 15 feet long what we wanted, we hauled them to the wagons and slung them beneath the axle trees. This supply furnished us with good fuel all the way to the mines. It being extremely light, but little weight was added to our loads. The water from Fort Kearney to the mines, except that of springs and the Platte, is brackish and alkaline, not fit for the use of man or beast. Our cattle, when thirsty, would drink it, but it always proved injurious to them. I frequently drove my oxen three and four miles to water. The water of the creeks in the mining region is pure, sweet and wholesome.

We have passed the junction of the north and south forks of the Platte, and are now on the south side of the south fork. The third day after leaving Cottonwood Springs we reached "O'Fallon's Bluff" about noon. This is a trading-post, stage station and post office. Here are the few cottonwoods before spoken of. Though insignificant in themselves considered, they are here, in this timberless waste, objects of profound respect.

Miners, spare those trees,
Touch not a single bough !

Two enterprising young men, Messrs. More and Grimes, have opened a store at this point. They are, or have been, acting as the agents of Government and Messrs. Majors & Russell. Late in the fall of 1856, while driving some five hundred head of cattle to Fort Laramie, they encountered a snow storm of unprecedented severity, in which every beast perished, and they themselves were badly frost-bitten. Their benevolence and hospitality filled our hearts with gratitude. The day not being spent, we hurried on 10 miles and camped. Two days more brought us to the Fort Laramie crossing, the ford where the military road crosses the south fork of the Platte.

Up to this point, all the way from Omaha, our road has been traveled by tens of thousands of California, Oregon and Salt Lake emigrants. This well beaten road now crosses the south fork, while *our road* to the *Gold Mines* continues on the south side of the "fork," and is very obscure at best, only three wagons having preceded us over it. This crossing, or ford, is 165 miles west from Fort Kearney. It is 150 miles to Fort Laramie, and about 180 miles to Fort Saint Vrain.

Our oxen, having filled themselves with rich grass, which they found on an island in the Platte, were in good condition to take an early start. The day wore slowly away; the country grows poorer, and our journey is monotonous.

The following day, something like a cloud, obscure and hazy, loomed up in the western horizon. The practiced eye of Mr. Brown detects the form, and he pronounces

them the Rocky mountains. " Our glass brings out the clear outlines of Long's and Pike's Peaks.

Seventy-four miles from the ford brings us to Beaver creek. The banks are nearly one hundred feet high, and very steep. The stream is twenty feet wide, three feet deep, and the water very cold. Some of the men rode in on horseback, and guided the teams across after we had driven them into the water. This stream should be bridged; it is difficult to cross with a heavy load.

After crossing the Beaver, which consumed some time, we came upon an encampment of the Cheyenne Indians, who annoyed us much by their thieving propensities. One, who stole a ladle from my wagon, I caught and searched; but, not finding it about his person, I concluded he had tossed it into the grass, where I subsequently found it. In order to frighten our cattle, they spread themselves across the road, lying flat upon the grass. The presentation of our guns brought them to their feet and stopped their fun. They are armed with bows and arrows, and one white man with a gun can put a dozen of them to flight. They will do no harm to a company of ten to fifteen persons traveling together.

Beaver creek is the first running stream we have crossed since passing Fort Kearney, though we have passed several dry channels, where there is doubtless water part of the year. One of these channels was traced by some of our men for five or six miles toward its head, but no water found. The water of Beaver creek seems to be somewhat impregnated with alkali.

From here we toiled slowly and wearily onward 29 miles, to the second and last stream of running water between Fort Kearney and the mines. This is more alkaline than Beaver creek, and some of our cattle suffered from drinking it.

As we proceed westward the country becomes more broken, and the soil less fertile and more gravelly, producing abundance of cactus and soap weed—an evergreen, ten inches high, sharp-pointed and rigid, like a spear, and completely protected by its sharp spines from attack from any animal, either tame or wild. The root is used by the Indians to remove paint from their faces.

Our cattle hold out well; the grass, though thin and short, is very nutritious.

Twenty-five miles nearer to Long's Peak, which cuts clear against the western sky, we cross a dry channel which Col. Fremont reports, in his explorations, a running stream. We sent a party to explore its channel, who found water twelve miles above. The channel where we crossed is twenty rods wide. Half a mile beyond, we pitched our tents in a small cottonwood grove—the first timber we have seen since leaving Cottonwood Springs, a distance of 208 miles. Here a high, sandy bluff, striking out to the river, cuts off the road, and compels our train to climb its steep ascent and cross a wild ravine, after which the road is good and wood plenty.

Saturday evening, October 30, we halt at Saint Vrain's Fort. This was built by, and belongs to, and is used by,

traders, and was never occupied by troops. The building is about 200 feet long and 150 feet wide, and divided into several compartments. The roof is in ruins, but the walls, built of cement and gravel, intermixed with deer's hair, appear durable and solid.

For several days past, we have seen large herds of antelope. Our Nimrod slew one, which we dressed and cooked, and ate enough to satisfy us that the meat was inferior to deer or buffalo. To me it was decidedly distasteful. The antelope is less fleet than the deer, and more easily taken. The males have long horns, which increase with age. The oldest leads the herd, which invariably range themselves in the order of the length of their horns.

Saint Vrain's Fort is on the river, which here turns abruptly from a northern to an eastern course. Our road or track to Cherry creek—45 miles distant—here leaves the Platte, which we have followed for 500 miles, and bears south-east. I think a road may be made—perhaps not quite so level—from a point on the river many miles below the fort, and running directly to Cherry creek, leaving Saint Vrain far to the right, which will shorten the present traveled distance 45 miles.

Leaving the fort early in the morning, we traveled until noon, when a snow storm compelled us to halt. Up to this time, but one rain storm had occurred since we started, and this is our first snow, which fell to the depth of twelve inches.

Monday, November 1st, we pitched our camp in a grove,

William N. Byers, Handbook to the Gold Fields of Nebraska and Kansas

NEBRASKA AND KANSAS.

77

two miles from the mouth of Cherry creek, making just 35 days from Omaha—distance 540 miles, as I reckon it,—our men all well and strong, our teams in good condition, only one animal having given out. Hopeful and strong, 540 miles from home, in a dreary wilderness of snow, hills and mountains; without a house to shelter us from the coming winter, necessarily inclement in this latitude and altitude; no fodder for our faithful but jaded cattle, except what they can get by browsing in the timber; we gathered our little company of gold hunters around the camp fire and discussed measures of importance to our present and future comfort. All agreed that we must have a house to live in; and to this end, I, being a practical carpenter, was selected to take charge of a part of the company and commence building, whilst the remainder of the company were to explore the country and gather information from the miners, select mining claims and a good point for a town site. The prospecting party was absent five days, during which time they examined the localities where the miners were at work, and found that, in spite of the snow, cold weather and freezing water, they were making, with the rudest implements, from *three to five dollars* per day. Our party also explored the country up to the foot of the Rocky mountains, near which they staked out claims for us all in this wise, which is in accordance with the rules adopted by the miners: each claim fronting one hundred feet on a creek or river, and running back any depth desired. They found indications of gold wherever they pros-

pected, and the *surface dirt* on the claims they made, yielded from *six* to *fifteen cents* to the pan, and grew richer as they dug deeper.

These claims front on Leroy creek,—which flows from the mountains to the Platte,—and are about fifteen miles from our camp. Didn't our new cottonwood log house—as yet without a roof—ring with three times three cheers when this report was made and unanimously adopted; and didn't our Nimrod and cook bestir themselves; and was ever dinner more hugely enjoyed than the one which quickly followed. Our table was of gold—being the auriferous sands of the earth—and so were our chairs, and our hopes.

All the mining ground on both sides of Cherry creek is claimed mostly by Mexicans, who are very taciturn, and refused our party the privilege of prospecting. They watched them while at work for an hour, and thought they averaged full twenty cents to the pan of earth, or one dollar per man each hour. Mr. Paine was permitted to test some dirt which they had washed and thrown aside, and obtained therefrom thirteen cents to the pan. The gold scales of this locality are exceedingly fine, and no doubt the same earth will be worked over again and again, and still pay.

It is the opinion of some in the mines, that the Cherry creek diggings are in Nebraska; but I am inclined to think they are south of the line. The richest mines yet discovered are on the north side of the South Platte, on the

Cache-la-Poudre river, a stream heading in latitude 41° north, and emptying into the South Platte in latitude $40\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ north, about fifty miles travel a little east of north from the mouth of Cherry creek, and about the same distance nearer to Omaha. These mines, on the Cache-la-Poudre river, are worked by a company of twenty or thirty mountaineers, who have been in this region some three years; have prospected the country, mined at Cherry creek and at other localities, and selected their present location as paying the best. They came to my wagon with a buckskin bag of dust, and scales for weighing the same, and offered to purchase my load at my own price. I gave them a pound of soda and twenty onions, for which they gave me \$5.50 in gold dust. The scales of gold from these mines are coarser than in the Cherry Creek mines, with some specimens of *round* or shot gold.

Cherry creek sinks in the sand, and entirely disappears, about four miles from the Platte; but no doubt there is plenty of water clear to its mouth a portion of the year.

Auraria is a new town, laid out between Cherry creek and the Platte, at their junction. One hundred log houses are being built on this site, by as many different persons, each being the owner of one share in the town. Each house above the hundred entitles the builder to one-fourth of one share.

Opposite Auraria, on the east side of Cherry creek, we laid out a town and called it Denver. It has since been made a county seat by the commissioners sent out by the

governor of Kansas to organize a county government in the mining region. Gen. Larimer & Co., of Leavenworth, have an interest in this town. We put up a claim house, to secure the site; and before returning, I contracted for the erection of a building 30 by 60 feet, for a hotel. It is to be built of hewed logs and covered with pine boards. I saw hundreds, perhaps thousands, of acres of pine timber, from fifteen to forty miles south. I think there will be a dozen saw mills at work in this pine forest before next June. Pike's Peak looms up far south of the pine region. To the west the peaks of the Rocky mountains run up like sugar loaves, looking more artificial than natural in their regularity.

The soil appears to me poor, and will not yield what would be called a good crop, but when corn and potatoes are worth \$5 per bushel, farming will pay in the mines. Tillage and manure will add to its productiveness, and no doubt many kinds of vegetables will be produced in fair quantities. Our house was built of cottonwood logs, and covered with split poles and dirt. When banking up around it we tested the soil, and found convincing indications of gold.

I spent 17 days in the mines, employed most of the time in hauling logs and building. One small store has been opened in Auraria, dealing principally in watered whisky.

As over 1,000 men are wintering in the mines near Cherry creek, and provisions are comparatively scarce,