



Solomon Valley History

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Exploring The Solomon River Valley In 1869

Diary excerpts of the expedition by Robert McBratney

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I. INTRODUCTION

Among the many railway lines projected during the enthusiasm of the 1860s was the Junction City, Solomon Valley and Denver Railroad. Early in September, 1869, a company composed largely of Junction City men was organized, and at the first meeting in October the board of directors elected Robert McBratney president and empowered him "to make such exploration on the proposed route of railway as in his judgment would be necessary and proper."

[Footnote: Robert McBratney was born January 1, 1818, at Columbus, Ohio. He served a printer's apprenticeship, began the study of law, and in 1842 became part owner of the Xenia Torchlight conducting it as an antislavery Whig paper. In 1848 he moved to Detroit and established the Peninsular Freeman, but a fire destroyed his paper in 1852 and he returned to Xenia and the Torchlight. Excitement regarding Kansas led him west, and in 1857 he and S. C. Pomeroy purchased the Atchison Squatter Sovereign, changing it to a Free-State paper. Here he also practiced law for a time. In 1861 he was appointed register of the land office at Junction City, resigning this office four years later to become presidential elector. He then began the practice of law and thereafter made Junction City his home.]

Mr. McBratney was deeply interested in the development of Kansas and was closely identified with the organization of railroads, including the Kansas Pacific; Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe; Missouri, Kansas & Texas; the Central Branch of the Union Pacific; and the Junction City & Fort Kearney. His later years were devoted to the development of minerals in southeastern Kansas. Mr. McBratney was married at Springfield, Ohio, in 1848, to Miss Mary Palmer. They had three daughters. After the death of Mrs. McBratney in 1859 he married Miss Mary E. Harbison of Xenia, Ohio. He died in 1881.]

In compliance with this order McBratney set out on an exploring trip up the Solomon valley to the western boundary of the state. He was accompanied by U. S. Sen. Edmund G. Ross; B. F. Mudge, professor at the Agricultural College and former state geologist; and Richard Mobley, state agent for the sale of railroad lands. These, with the driver of the ambulance, one cook, and one servant made a party of seven. The outfit consisted of a government ambulance and four mules provided by Gen. J. M. Schofield, one company wagon, one wall tent, and one saddle horse. In addition, Gov. J. M. Harvey ordered 100 state troops to accompany them from the Forks of the Solomon as a protection from the plains Indians. On October 14 they assembled at Solomon City and proceeded up the valley to the Forks, where Senator Ross and Mr. Mobley left the party and returned home. From their start at Solomon City they traveled up the Solomon and its North Fork for almost 140 miles, when a shortage of provisions, forage and ammunition for the troops compelled them to turn back.

Mr. McBratney and Professor Mudge both wrote letters to eastern Kansas newspapers giving most favorable accounts of the resources of the region. These letters were widely read, and while they failed to attract capitalists and railroad builders, as was their object, they did perhaps cause many home seekers to settle there in the following years, and these in turn induced the Union Pacific to extend a branch line through the valley.

Mr. McBratney also kept a diary on the trip in which he gave a detailed account of the movements of the party together with a description of the geological formations, the water resources and the wild life of the country. This journal, which was recorded in a "Receipts" book 5"x7³ bound in red leather, was written in the confusion and bustle of camp and by the fire light. It is here printed verbatim. The original, now in the possession of the Kansas Historical Society, was the gift of Charles H. Trott of Junction City.

II. ENTRIES FROM THE DIARY: OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER, 1869

Junction City.-Completed loading team for start. Govt. ambulance reported at 12 A. M. Commissariat hired of Smith & Callen, Robt. Milligan, driver. Hall Cook driver of ambulance.

At 4² took train for Salina. Met here B. F. Mudge, Professor of Agricultural College, and for[mer] state geologist, E. G. Ross, U. S. Senator, and R. D. Mobley, who propose to accompany us on the trip.

Solomon City, Oct. 14.-Parties met at Salina last night report here for a start up Solomon. Teams not yet arrived. Visit salt works 2 miles west of S. C. Well 600 ft. Wind mill, thirty vats of 1,000 ft. Salt pure white, but large globules or cubes, ground by steam, 4 to 5,000 bushels on hand. Capital \$25,000, owned by Co. at New Bedford, Mass. One section land.-Manager Charles H. Reed. Met Elder Downer, who lives on Saline river. Thinks R. R. from J. C. to Denver should follow the Solomon river. Teams arrive at 12 A. Start at 2 P. M. Start. Ambulance leading. After one hours drive, find our commiserate wagon falling behind, the light load having four and heavy load but two mules; re-arrange.

Three miles from Sol. cross Buckey[e], a small stream. Ten miles Hard crossing [creek]-fifteen miles reach Sand Creek, & go into camp. Weather warm evening cool. Soil light alluvial with sand. Bottom 2² to 4 miles wide. Timber along river and creeks light.

Oct. 17.-Get rather a late start Sunday and matters not well arranged for expedition. Last night amb. mule very sick. All right this morning. The sleep in the tent last night comfortable. Party in good spirits. Sand Creek on which we are camped (at deserted homestead of Richard Night [Knight])-is a small stream of excellent soft water. In June it was so high as to submerge houses or dug-outs of settlers. Water rose in four minutes to depth of 20 ft.

The Sol. has improved most decidedly-both in width, soil, timber &c. since leaving mouth. Camp visited last night by Geo. & And. Ingersoll. This morning by Mr. John Night [Knight] a veteran pioneer, who presented us with two sacks potatoes for the trip.

12 o'clock reach Lindsey. [Candidate] Co. se[a]t Ottawa. sit[uated], on high bot. pretty sight. Meet W. W. Lambert, Dr. Stewart, Mr. Mckee, Simpson, R. Night, Mr. Waddell & others. Also Lt. Tucker of Co. C, 2d Bat. State troops, who is to accompany us.

2 o'clock, reach Minneapolis, four miles further. Met Mr. Smith who thinks he will overtake us on Tuesday and go with us. Bluff near the river. A flour and saw mill run by water of Solomon. Crossed Lindsey Creek at Lindsey and Pipe Creek at Minneapolis--Both well timbered. Pipe creek runs nearly parallel with the river for a long distance. Uplands undulating, sandy but fertile and very beautiful.

3 o'clock, met Mr. Johnson, messenger from Governor's office who had been out to get our escort ready and Mr. Wright of Junction City. Mr. J. had promised to accompany us, but gave it up.

At sundown went into camp on the river, south west of road, on Kelly claim & in abandoned cabin. Weather not so warm as yesterday. Evening bright moonlight.

Oct 18.-This morning cloudy and threatening rain. Cool. Yesterday met several soldiers who are to go in our escort. This morning several more have reported. They all want to be with us.

Breakfast late. Got off at 8 o'clock. Three miles from camp Yockey Creek and Delphos P. O. Mailed letters here. P. M. doubtful about Senator Ross' franks sufficient to pass letters through the mail. Examine here a mound, which was a curiosity, on ac[coun]t of remains of crockery ware found in it. Ware burned, but few specimens could be had at all perfect. Saw here the first beaver and rackoon. Beaver dams frequent along the river and creeks.

At noon reached camp of Capt. Dalrymple on Fisher Creek. [Footnote: Near the present town of Glasco in Cloud county.] As we are one day ahead of time, concluded to go into camp, one of our mules being very lame, & the day being very raw and windy. At our camp are two very salt springs coming out on opposite sides of river. After dinner Prof. M. visited water fall four mile from camp said to be underlaid with blue lime. Found it light sand rock. Water power very fine and easy to improve.

Day very disagreeable. Find officers and men ready for expedition. Are unable however to find any one who has been over 30 miles beyond the forks of Solomon. Opinions differ as to which branch of Sol. best and most direct for Denver. Unable to get any definite idea of courses or distances. Met at camp Capt. Snyder & Capt. Potts, both of whom have resided in neighborhood of our camp for past three years-both are of the Union volunteers. Capt. Dalrymple promises us an escort of 12 men to the forks of Solomon.

Oct. 19.-Last night cold. This morning just before day, set into snowing hard. Wind still blowing. Early start proposed deferred. At 8 o'clock got under way. Lame mule better. Eight miles from Dalrymple reached Asher creek, residence of Capt. Reese. Promise them extension of mail route and P. O. T[w]o miles from Asher Cr. visit camp of G troop Seventh Cav. U. S. A., Lt. Law commanding. Senator arranges for a horse and escort to go with him to Republican & across to the Saline.

Four miles further reach Plumb Cr. and camp of Capt. W. A. Wincell [Winsell] of State troops. [Footnote: Camp was approximately three miles southeast of present Beloit in Mitchell county.] Our escort to this point ten men under Corporal Lyon who continue with us to Forks of Solomon.

Found Capt Wincell expecting us. He has orders to go with us as far as W. line of state with forty men & two wagons. He is afraid he will be unable to carry enough forage. We determine to engage another wagon. We also determine to reduce our load. Beyond the forks our Co. will be reduced to Prof. M. & self. The road today bad, the snowballing on hoofs. Reached this point at 1³. Found Capt. Wincell on hand and ready for the expedition with thirty men. Encamped for the night.

Oct. 20.-Last night very cold. This morning cool but pleasant. Bo't 16 bushels corn at 75 cts. Employed Richards, a hunter going to the forks to haul half of it that far. Got off at 8 o'clock. Our cavalcade of 40 men and eight wagons (including three hunters) make quite a formidable appearance. Reached Mulberry, 4 miles in one hour. Banks steep. Had to attach lariat and put on 20 men to haul up wagons. 2 miles further on reached Brown's Cr. & had to repeat operation. Both Crs. finely wooded & watered. Nooned on Brown after crossing. Water excellent. 8 miles further Limestone Cr. After crossing pass over up-land for two miles and strike into the Wacanda bottom which we keep to Forks. On high land tested depth of soil. Dug 20 inches on highest point without reaching subsoil or getting below roots of grass. Bottoms from Plumb Cr. to Forks widest yet seen. Average width about six miles. Soil black loam. Generally covered with prairie grass. West bank of bluff, shell or fossiliferous lime-fossils very plentiful and very distinct.

Neglected to say Capt. Wincell failed to accompany us on account of sudden sickness of his wife. Supplied her with medicines and jellies. Detachment of troops in charge of Lt. Beecock [Joseph Becock].

Reached Waconda or Solomon Forks at 4 P. M. Found here Capt. Stanfield from Republican and Lt. Whitney from Saline each with detachment of 30 men to accompany us. Called council of war. Find men provided with rations for 15 days, but short in forage and ammunition. Whole force 89 men, rank and file and about 15 other persons, including our party teamsters and scouts. Concluded to reduce the force fifteen and divide their ammunition and provisions among others. Officers think we will be apt to find Indians, & do not think it safe to go into the country with less men. Fix time for starting at 1 P. M. tomorrow.

Oct. 21.-At eight started with our regular party to visit the land in the forks of the Sol. Found the conformation very much as it is at Junction City except that the second bench is higher, & the hills back not so high. Saw lands next to both rivers. Soil good. All concluded it a nice place for a town. Off to the N. comes in Oak Cr. and to the S. W. another fine and wooded Cr. the name of which we have not heard.

Taken in connection with the creeks crossed yesterday, & the tributaries above in connection with the heads of tributaries of the Saline and Repub. this is as fine a contre as any in the state and were there a military post here, as there should be, it would go far to defending the whole of this part of the State, & in a short time would grow up around it a settlement that would defend itself.

Crossed the S. B. of S. and struck out for the Waconda or great spirit spring of the Indians, which is about four miles below the forks. Three miles below camp crossed the main Sol. and have thus crossed all the branches. Find about the same amt. of water in all, that is a stream about 50 ft. wide and from two to three feet deep, at this its dryest. Water clear and pure, & excellent for drinking.

About a mile from our last crossing found the spring. The river approaching in S. E. direction makes a sudden bend to the east & after a sweep of about three and a half miles returns to its course. The sp. is situated in the bend. The land on which we approach is high prairie. The top of the spring is on a level with the surface of the prairie. East of the spring the ground falls off thirty to forty feet. The basin of the spring is a natural mound, composed of lime and sandy shale in place, or in thin and irregular stratification the form being an irregular ellipse about three hundred feet from east to west by four hundred and fifty from N. to S. The thickness of the rock being from twenty five to thirty feet. The sp. rises in the center of this stone basin, is circular in form and thirty feet in diameter. Its depth is uncertain, as it seems to be filled up with dirt and rubbish. At the time of our visit, the bowl was even full and running over on the east side. Depth as far as we could judge 10 ft. The water is strong salt with slight taste of lime. Basin surrounded by a ditch 50 to 75 feet wide, 20 to 25 ft. deep to bottom of mound.

Returned to camp at 11. As men were strangers to each other and to officers, and needed organizing and drilling together, concluded to defer starting till morning. After dinner Senator Ross put men thro' cavalry drill for an hour & then made short speech explaining objects of exploration, the necessity of subordination, the dangers & privations to be expected and the advantages of R. R. Writer also made short speech. Orders by Capt. Stanfield for all to be ready to move out by 7 o'clock in morning as forces would move breakfast or no breakfast.

At sundown a strong cold wind sprang up from the north, but at this time 9 P. M. it has moderated. This morning Mobley and Lt. Tucker examined two creeks of S. F. [South Fork] One coming in from S. two miles from W. with a fine stone quarry half mile. Half mile below Cr. good water power. Water in creek stopped by Beaver dams. Cr. well-timbered with hard timber, and growing better up. Width of bottom ² to ³ mile, water good. The other Cr. 3 miles from W. below. Examined Cr. for six to seven mile. Running water. Bottom ³ mile wide-hard & soft wood.

This after[noon] Prof. M. and Mobley examined Oak Cr. for seven to 9 miles. Find it nearly as large as a Br. of Solomon, with bottom 1 miles. Well wooded with hard wood. Gooseberry, plumbs and grapes. Three branches, all wooded, with good bottoms. Upland rich loam. Ascent gradual. Rock 8 m up.-lime. Water of Cr. running, but not strong. Also ponds supplied with stock water.

Oct. 22. 5 A. M.-All hands up this morning at 4 prepare to forward movement, but 0. Phoebus, a strong norther blowing filled with snow, that fairly stings the face.

5 o'clock.-Have sent word to Capt. to suspend execution of order to move at 7. Breakfast under difficulties at 6. Invited Capt. to make tent headquarters, and advised him to organize his battalion by detailing men for adjutant, wagon master, and scouts. Agreed to. Lt. Tucker Co. C, appt. adj. Private Deland wagon master, and privates Newton & Garrison Company A, L. Taggart and Street Co. D, and Hanniwalt and Swallow designated as Scouts. Genl. order No. 1 designating headquarters, appointing adj. &c. defining order of march, guard mount &c issued, also sp. order No. 1, & Sp. Field Order No. 1 appt scouts. Hour of guard mount fixed at 5 P. M.

At 9, the storm having moderated, Senator Ross and Com. Mobley mount for a return to the settlements under Sergeant Lyon and a detail of five men from Capt. Dalrymple's troops. We part with them with regret. As soon as they were gone, the order was given to take up line of march in 3 of an hour or at 9 o'clock.

The snow had ceased falling and the men obeyed the order with alacrity. Crossed N. B. of S. at the proposed town site, at a good crossing and moved up the stream. We followed the valley for two miles, & then took the uplands by a gentle ascent of perhaps twenty feet. The prairie is gently rolling, and smooth for wagon. At three and a half miles crossed a ravine which had cut thro' the stratum of shell rock which we have noticed since passing the sand stone belt. The technical designation given this rock is inoceramus, that animal being the principal one [fossil] found in the formation.

Soon after reaching the prairie the snow storm re-commenced, with almost blinding fury. Suggested to Capt. that on account of the men, who are badly provided with clothing, that we get into camp as soon as possible. At twelve o'clock got into camp, in timber of Solomon, wood, water and grass convenient.

Oct. 23. C[am]p Stanfield.-Last night very cold ice in bucket one inch. Good deal of noise and disorder in camp last night. Too much shooting yesterday, as none of the men started with over 30 rounds. Capt. with us last night. In bed at 7³ and not up till called for breakfast. At my request he issued this morning Gen. Ord. No. 2, admonishing men that we are upon dangerous ground and exhorting to vigilance. Prohibiting shooting on march or in camp except by order or in case of attack-requiring horses to be brought into camp lines at 8, and perfect quiet by 9-at taps.

Our camp last night as near as I can make out by Colton's map, was in S. 30, T. 6, R. 11 W. [Footnote: About two miles west of the present town of Downs in Osborne county.] Before leaving home I ordered from the land office a plat of the surveys along the N. B. [North Branch] of S.[Solomon] but on opening it on reaching the river found the plat for S. B. [South Branch]

Got off this morning at 7 A. M. Followed up the bottom in a westerly course, with an inclination to the North. After traveling some ten miles found our wagons some four miles in the rear and column moving without rear guard. Protested to the Capt. against such an arrangement. Waited for train to come up, & put guard in rear. Order of march straggling, column stretched out from two to five miles. Delayed at a small Cr. in getting our wagons over. Advance marched on getting two miles ahead, when turned into a bend of the river to camp leaving the ambulance to pass on. Had to turn back. Two men sick; took them in ambulance. For first ten miles-made by 11-very cold. At 12 moderated, snow melting and balling.

Our trail since starting, up a rich smooth high bottom; from two and a half to three miles wide. Six miles from Waconda there is a succession of small hills, fifty to sixty feet above the prairie, and very much broken or cut up, present themselves to the left. The severe weather prevented us leaving the column to examine the plains back of these hills; but as the buffalo keep in them, only crossing the bottom to get to the river, we conclude there is a soil there that will produce what will sustain animal life. For the past four days we have found the bottoms marked and considerably cut up by buffalo paths from the highland to the prairies. Sometimes these paths are within ten to twelve feet of each other. They resemble wagon ruts, except that they are wider, usually being from ten inches to a foot and two to three inches below the surface. They give quite a jolt on crossing. To-day we have seen several thousand buffalo, grazing near or upon the highlands on both sides of the river. As our men are forbidden to shoot, they are not disturbed. They are generally males, the patriarchs of the herds which we know are grazing in the uplands. They are kinds of outposts who give the herd notice of the approach of danger. Imposing as we think our cavalcade, it does not appear to disturb these wild cattle. Occasionally a squad of them will, after staring at us for a short time, gallop leisurely off to a short distance, then stop, take another look and resume their feeding.

At two o'clock, went into camp, as near as I can make out on Sec 3, T 5, R. 14 W. [Footnote: Approximately three miles from the present town of Gaylord.] Distance to-day about 18 miles. Below us some four miles, come in Crs of considerable size. We are only about four miles below the mouth of Middle fork of S. The prevailing surface rock is still lime, but of a different character, and several kinds. Among them are found nodules, resembling maple sugar, caked in the dirt, specimens of the magnetian found at Junction City, but more buff, and their strattas of a darker hue, from which hydraulic cement lime is made. On this side occurs but three small Crs. to Waconda. More have presented themselves from the other side, to avoid crossing which, we chose this side the river.

Bow Cr. C[am]p

Oct. 24.-Last night cool but pleasant. Capt. retired at 7³ and slept soundly till called for breakfast. Had done same night before. He is proving himself an able sleeper. He allows the camp to take care of itself. Guard out all night and awake. Went round to see. Gave the Capt. rather severe reprimand for leaving ambulance and train three to four miles. Required him to halt the column, at different crossings, & to use the men in getting wagons over.

Rolled out at 8 A. M. This being Sunday tho't it best to give the men an extra hour. Crossed the Solomon about one mile from Camp, at a very good crossing. Struck out on a magnificent bottom, at least six miles. A creek came into the river a mile below where we crossed and another just above. A mile or two after crossing, including the river we had four wooded streams in view. We passed for some distance between two of these Cr. crossing the upper, after which we passed for near ten miles over as fine a bottom as we have seen since starting. Its average width was full six miles, with a gradual swell to the up[lands]. Both the prairie and the uplands are rich black soil, at one place where we used the spade, on bottom found the soil rich vegetable mould to the depth of 20 inches, with a subsoil of light clay, very dry and hard. Our course to-day as for the past three days has been over the prairie grass, with occasional bunch grass, in the lower bottoms. The sod seems to be very firm and hard, the hoofs of 60 men in front of us making no impression perceptible to ordinary eyes, and our ambulance making frequently no track. Our distance to-day has been only about 15 miles. During the day we have seen more timber than any day since starting. Some five miles from camp our route brought us to the bank of the Solomon, where we noticed a low valley, on the other side, half a mile wide and reaching to our present camp, very well wooded, with cottonwood, pin oak, elm and ash. On one of the creeks we found very nice sweet grapes. Before going into our present camp we passed from the higher into the lower bottom, in crossing which we noticed patches of sand plums. From the north side we had sight of a stream which we took to be Middle Fork of Solomon. If it was so we have no desire to explore it. Our reason for supposing it S. F. was that it made a larger opening in the highlands than any other that we noticed, & the opening appeared to be filled with trees, the tops of which were far below the bluffs on both banks. From the North side for a greater portion of the distance, today, the highlands appear to come almost up to the south bank of the river, and were more rugged than any we have before noticed.

We noticed also that these bluffs were frequently broken by ravines some of which were timbered for short distances, and on some of them we thought we saw cedar-we were the more disposed to think so from the fact that on one or two of the short creeks or ravines of this side, some of which had attained a growth of twenty to twenty-five feet.

We have passed out of the salt basin. The water of the Solomon and its tributary is clear, pure and hard, and known as limestone.

On the creeks we were obliged to dig, and to use the lariats in letting down [and] pulling up the wagons. The creeks have cut down their beds to 25 to 30 feet through the loamy soil, their bottoms were narrow and their sides steep. But for the cuts down their sides made by the buffalo & the wearing of rains, it would have been impossible to have crossed them, even with the aid of the strong and willing hands of the troops.

Our camp to-night is just above Bow Creek, in T. 5, R. 17 W. [Footnote: In the vicinity of Kirwin, Phillips county.] This is the only creek, the name of which we could learn. It is not large, but has a fair valley.

The day has been pleasant. Our camp is on the S. West side of the river. The grass is scarce, the buffalo having kept it grazed down short. This is hard on the animals of the troops, as the expedition is woefully short of corn. Our train now consists of 77 men and seven wagons, two of which are 4-horse. One team horse was taken sick last night, & this morning got into the river and was unable to get out, and so was shot to put him out of his misery. One team and three men left this morning to return to Fort Sibley. [Footnote: Located on Lake Sibley in Cloud county. Fort Sibley was a military camp established about 1867 for defense against Indians.]

Our scouts this evening report fresh Indian signs north of the river. The hunters remark it as a strange coincidence that all the buffalo seen are heading north. We have seen but few to-day-not over 100. Several have been shot, some distance from the trail, but none of the meat has been brought to camp. Several turkeys, as usual have been killed. To-day one of our men killed a bird of a strange specie to us all, of bright black and green plumage, tufted head & long tail feathers. Its voice was represented as like that of the magpie. Another of the men picked up a large pelican on the prairie, supposed to have been shot by Indians within the last 24 hours. It is a beautiful specimen, and large, measuring full eight feet from tip to tip of wings. Its bill to back of head measuring about 15 inches, and its pouch of the capacity of two to three quarts. One wing and bill appropriated by the Professor, the other wing by myself and the breast feather by Hall, our cook.

Since the foregoing was written, the buffalo have fairly swarmed about our camp. More than a dozen have been killed & the camp is well supplied with meat. Our mess have a pair of hams of a yearling heifer.

Since camping have visited the uplands, and have found the magnetian limestone fifteen [feet] thick, one layer being over four feet. This stone is white with a slight tinge of buff. It is ahead of the Junction stone. Also a stratum of white impure limestone, or a species of hard chalk. This stratum is irregular, but of about 20 ft. thickness.

From the uplands the view is splendid; several finely timbered Cr. coming toward the river as far as the eye can reach; the ground is nearly level, and a fair soil as fair as any lands east of the Republican. To-day we have seen more timber than any day since starting; and in sight from the uplands and within a radius of ten miles there is more good timber than can be seen from any other point on the river.

A few miles below our present camp we passed through a last year Indian camp, covering more than a half section of land. It is equal to the accommodation of at least 2,000 Indians. We picked up several relics, but none of much interest.

Three of our men out on a scout towards the Middle Branch, (about eight miles south) ran upon a herd of ten horses, running loose upon the prairie.

Camp Retreat [Footnote: About four miles east of present town of Logan, Phillips county.]

Oct. 26.-Left camp this morning at 8, recrossed river on to the high bottom, when limestone cliffs in hills came into view. Prairie Broad 4 to 6 mi. wide and course straight & no obstruction for 10 miles. Uplands, both sides, very level & land rich. Buffalo numerous men in chase and 7 gray wolves try it & fail from shouting of men. Strike an old trail soon after leaving camp & follow all day. [This was probably the remains of the stagecoach road operated by the Leavenworth and Pikes Peak Express Company in 1859-1860.] Trail overgrown. Pull up Creek bottom changes to south side. We pass over a point of high land one mile & again strike bot. Go into camp in woods on river seventeen miles. Our camp 5 miles west of _____. Horses starving grass poor men out of rations determine to turn back in morning. It is literally out of the question to go on. The grass is all eaten off by the buffalo, & some of the horses have had no corn for three days. We find that we made a fatal mistake to our enterprise in relying on the state troops for escort. However well they may do to watch neighborhoods, they are unfit for a march or a prolonged military effort. The men regard their employment a farce, & they show little respect for officers or others. Besides the officers are very like the men, untrained for their duties and accepting them simply as a bridge over some financial or other difficulty. The duties that the militia are expected to perform is one that ought to be performed by the army of the U. S. and it is to be hoped that our public men will see to it that the duty is strictly performed.

Camp Whitney [Footnote: About three miles southwest of Kirwin.]

Oct. 27.-Got out of camp on retreat at 8². Reached Saurian Cr. seven miles, in two hours. Whilst train getting over Cr. we visit Saurian Point half a mile north of the road. The Prof. was after shells & was very successful. One new shell found by him, belonging to the oyster family, shows that it has been fully 12x15 inches. It was found in chalk formation. The outside of this large shell is covered by smaller shells, apparently barnacles. Another of the same shell seen by him imbedded in a stone which he was unable to remove or get away, he estimated to be 2³x2³ feet. But the discovery of the greatest interest to the professor was that of the vertebra of some animal the species of which he could not determine, but believed it to belong to the Saurian family-the nearest living representative is the alligator. This was found in the lower part of the chalky formation, at least fifty feet below the top of the cliff of chalk rock. In this formation, he also secured a very large number of fossils which must prove of great interest to science. But I shall leave him to tell his own story in relation to the rocks, shells, &c of this interesting country. The time consumed in examining these relics of a past world consumed a couple of hours, during which time our train was moving on. But as we had with us a small guard, we felt no uneasiness, though we tho't it prudent to keep a lookout for Indians.

The professor desires that the creek be called Salurian Creek, and the point from which he collected his shells &c. be called Salurian Point.

A rapid ride of an hour took us across 10 mile Prairie. At the lower end of this Prairie the bluffs close down upon the river, requiring that the road should cross the stream. At the lower end of the prairie, we found Capt. Stanfield and his company halted taking a noon meal. They had concluded to leave us here, & to strike over to the Republican, and follow it to their post at White Rock. We bid them good bye & proceeded on, crossing the river three times passing our Bow Cr. Camp & the mouth of Bow Creek, and camping on the river 20 miles from our starting point this morning. In the timber of Solomon and Bow Cr. we find the wild turkey almost as numerous as the buffalo on the Prairie. Before we had been in camp an hour as many as 20 turkeys had been brought in-six by Lieut. Marshall of Co. A, who also br't in one black tailed deer, and wounded another.

The command of our escort devolves upon 1st Lieut. C. B. Whitney of Co. A, who takes the place of Capt. Stanfield in our mess.

Camp Lawrence, South Branch Solomon, Thursday Oct 28, 1869. -Camp quiet last night. Concluded, as the weather was pleasant, to drive over to South Fork of S. and go back to Forks by that Br[anch]. So, here we are. Prof. & self made the trip on horse back moving down N. B. on S. side three miles and then crossing the line of march of column, & striking the S. B. some five miles above our present camp. [Footnote: Near the present town of Alton.] Our object was to see the character of the soil and topography of the land between the two streams. It is quite as level as we expected and the soil rich. Stone plenty and convenient. No wood or running water after getting one mile from the river, on the route we travelled. The distance between the two streams at this point is about 18 miles. But as our course was southeast and along the divides the distance travelled by the column was full twenty-two miles. The distance ridden by Prof. M. & self over 30 miles. The hills were nearly covered with buffalo. We have seen more of them today than altogether. Saw also deer, elk and antelope. Also gray wolves thousands of prairie dogs, coyotes, and sage hens. We find the grass much more abundant, which explains the comparative scarcity on

the bottoms. In a canon of the N. B. we found the cliff of magnetian limestone full 35 ft. This was as far as we could see for the debris at the foot. The Prof. calls it the Ft. Hays stone. It is the best building stone in the state.

We struck the river at 12 M. Found it very much larger stream than the N. B. & running three times as much water. The bottom however is not so wide, not being over two to 2³ miles wide. Timber not so plenty so far. The distance from our present camp about forty miles, as we estimate it, but as we are not certain where we are it may be further.

To-day the men have enjoyed their propensity for slaughter, and have left no less than 10,000 lbs of beef on the prairie. Lieut. Marshall brought in a piece of a 3 year old cow, the fattest we have seen. In any market it would pass for stall fed beef. Our camp is on the S. B. bank. The buffalo are swarming about it.
Camp Marshall, [Footnote: Near present Osborne.]

Oct. 28.-As we made it our camp of last night was 36 miles from the Forks. Our present camp is in T. 7, R. 13, or 15 miles from the Forks.

In a ride of 15 miles on the South side of the S. F. have had a good opportunity to see the creeks, wood and water & the bottom and upland soil of this branch of Solomon. Magnificent country the very finest in the state taking the two branches together. Bottom 6 to 7 miles wide & rising to rolling uplands so gradual as to make it difficult to say where the bottom ends and uplands begin. Soil deep rich loam. Dug to depth of 30 inches without getting through. A majority of our party think this is the best valley of the two. Prof. M. & self do not agree in this. The width of bottom of N. F. greater, more timber and good rock convenient. On this B. timber of better growth, more water in river.

In crossing from N.[orth] to S.[outh] B.[ranch] failed to find Middle Branch as laid down in Colton's map. We think it comes in 50 miles from Forks.

[Editor's note: There is no middle branch, which is the reason they did not find it.]

Peculiarity of this stream, its straightness. From R. 6 W. to R. 23, in T. 7 or 100 miles not varying at any time more than 6 miles from due east course. No other stream in the state so straight.

This has been another fine day, & another of slaughter among Buffalo and turkeys. A Mr. Phillips of Lt. Becock's Co., shot four on line of march, & a halt of an hour to secure the meat.

Since coming into camp Mr. P. has shot two others the horns of one which he presented Prof. & self to be carried home. He took out 30 lbs. of tallow which he was unable to bring in, & has left it for morning, leaving one of his socks with it to keep off wolves, said to be a sure remedy.

Camp Becock, Oct. 29, 1869.-Camp astir early this morning. Mr. Phillips went out for his tallow and found it all safe. He also brought in hams of another buffalo.

Rolled out at 7³ o'clock. As we were within an easy half day's march [of the] Forks, the block house & safety, the men were loose in their movements, & some who have not ventured to leave the column for a week, are off for a hunt, & it is difficult to keep up any regular order in the movement of the column.

Soon after leaving camp, left the line of march, with Bob to have a little hunt on the highlands between the rivers. On getting out of bottom found our camp of last night was not over four miles from N. B. The lands between very beautiful undulating prairie, & as rich as the bottom. Found plenty of buffalo, & a rough ride and several shots, only damaged a couple however both of which [ran] off.

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Followed the divide down to the Forks. Train had gotten ahead of us, it having travelled only about 14 miles, whilst we have ridden at least 20, most of it a perfect steeple chase.

On overhauling train found that Co. of Lt. Whitney had turned off for the Saline, which they expect to reach tomorrow. Command of escort now devolves on Lieut. Beecock. At 12 M. left the Forks on down and return trip. Some of men turned off to visit spirit springs, & after doing continued down river sending a herd of several hundred buffalo directly across our line of march. An exciting chase and shooting, but no meat. At 1³ went into camp on Limestone, a very fine creek and well wooded. Grass in last camp & this plentiful.

Limestone Cr. Cp., [Footnote: About one mile east of the present town of Glen Elder.] Oct. 31.-Up at 5. As the State troops are stationed on Republican, Solomon & Saline and Smoky, find our escort dwindled down to a few men,

and as we had reached what we regarded as safe country, dismissed the remainder, determined to make our way to R. R. alone, leaving one commissary wagon to follow at their leisure. Reached Fisher's Creek and encamped on farm of Capt. Snyder who has been settled here over a year. Here found corn for our animals, which had been without it for several days, and were much reduced in consequence. In the evening camp visited by Capts. Snyder and Potts, both of whom complained that the Sol. Val. had been neglected, and emigrants turned to other valleys not so valuable, greatly to their damage. Were confident that unless settlers could be induced to come in and take up the lands, the few now in the valley would be driven out by Indians. Tried to encourage them by assurances, that since our expedition had gone out we had written letters to papers east that would make known the merits of the valley, and whether a R. R. was built or not the notoriety that we would give to the valley would insure its rapid settlement. They are both favorable to a R. R. and think that with one, the Sol. in a few years would contain a population of 100,000. The great draw-backs to the valley are the incursions of the bloody and merciless Cheyennes, Arapahoes, the Brule and Ogalla Sioux. The first of these are located South of the Arkansas & the latter north of the Platte, on reservations. But the Government is unable to confine them to their Reservations, to protect settlers from their marauding expeditions, or indemnify the whites against their losses as promised by the intercourse act of 1832. During the past 10 years there have been witnessed in this valley and the val. of the Rep. Saline & Smoky, many tragic and bloody scenes, the loss of many lives, and the destruction of much property. But all appeals of pioneers to the General Government for protection or redress from the Ind. revenues have thus far been unheeded.

Nov. 1.-Left Camp this A. M. and passing through Minneapolis and Lindsey reached our camping ground on Sand Creek before Sundown. This is Sunday and is a calm and beautiful autumn day. The people of Lindsey and Minneapolis seem to be entirely absorbed in the question of the county seat (Ottawa Co.) and local politics. They are indifferent about R. R. contenting themselves with a very earnest conviction that the Solomon is a natural route for a R. R. and that someday the cars will come along without any effort of theirs to bring them.

Our old friend Knight again tendered us the hospitality of his roof and farm, & we were glad to avail ourselves of his fresh vegetables and eggs. Since leaving camp this morning we have passed a number of settlements or colonies of Squatters, outside the villages named, nearly all of which are surrounded by stockades, or logs set on end in the ground, as protection against attacks of Indians. The Knights, although they have resided here for more than ten years, do not deem it safe to dispense with these means of defense, and the experience of the past twelve months justifies their caution.

For the past ten years, or since 1859, the settlements up the Sol. have not advanced, practically, five miles. The dread of the Indian has blocked the progress of civilization.

One snort of the iron horse in this valley would do more to people the wilderness we have traversed, than an army with banners.

Going out, as the land from mouth of Solomon to Fisher Creek was pretty well known we did not examine the valley as we have to-day. That portion of it lying within the limits named, is equal to any other portion of it. In some places, the valley is full fifteen miles wide, of rich alluvial soil, intermixed with sand, and some day will not be excelled in the production of crops adapted to the State.

Sand Creek, [Footnote: Near the present town of Bennington, Ottawa county.] Nov. 2.-To-morrow is the day fixed for the State election, and the civilians of our camp are anxious to reach home to vote. So we take an early start for the K. P. road [Kansas Pacific Railroad] at Sol. City. The road follows the valley, and is quite Sandy, but the fields appear to have produced good crops. From Minneapolis to Solo. City the valley is tolerably well settled, but most of the uplands are unoccupied.

We reached Sol. City at noon & loading our tent traps, boxes of specimens, curiosities &c on the cars, start our ambulance and wagon for home empty, take the cars ourselves and by evening are with our families, the professor at Manhattan, the writer at Junction City.