

Bypaths of Kansas History

CROSSING THE PLAINS IN 1850

The two letters printed below were written by S. E. Hardy to his mother, Mrs. Jane E. Hardy of St. Joseph, Mo. They were given to the Kansas State Historical Society by Fenn Ward of Highland.

THE PLAINS, May the 24th 1850

DEAR MOTHER. I take this opportunity to send you a few lines to let you know how we are getting along on our journey we are all well and in good spirits except Tom's Jeffers who was taken sick yesterday and was very bad all night until this morning when a Doctor Jones was got on the road. Tom's and Rob. and Jim are going home tomorrow we are about 160 miles from St. Joseph we have been traveling on some of the finest Prarie land in the World I expect but the worst of it is it is all Prarie and nothing else water is scarce and we have had but very little wood since we left the Bluffs of Missouri six miles from St. Joseph. there is some 5 or 6 fresh graves on the road that we have seen. if Tom has any notion to come he had better travel pretty fast or he will not get up to us at all our horses stand the trip very well so far grass is from 3 to 6 inches high and has been good ever since we left the Iowa Mission [about three miles northeast of present Highland—now preserved by Kansas as a state historic site] the roads is as good as any in Missouri a few bad Creeks excepted John and me has learned how to cook first rate we can fry meat and make coffee and mix some flour and water together and burn it a little and call it bread it tastes very well when we are hungry we bought some soda today from Jeffers boys to raise our bread we are laying by today on account of Tom's being sick we layed by Saturday afternoon 6 miles before we got to the Mission you may tell uncle Dave that I don't want home because I had to stand guard one night Joe keeps us alive with his drollery he always keeps his musket loaded he sayes he is watching for old Montezuma who he expects to meet every day the road is crowded with wagons there has been between 60 and 80 passed us today we have met a good many going back you must all try and do the best you can and I will do the same I remain

MRS. JANE E. HARDY

Respectfully your
Obedient Son
S. E. HARDY

LINDEN Aug. 25 [1850]

DEAR MOTHER I take this opportunity to let you know how we are getting along all the company are well except Jo and Munroes Ed they have been sick but about well now we have had no trouble on the road yet and are getting along very well on our Journey we are in three miles of Fort Laramie we passed Fort Kearney the 30th day of May and have been traveling over a country entirely different from Missouri ever since the main Platte river is twice as wide as the Missouri the banks are not more than from one to three feet high the bluffs are high and rocky and scattered over with cedar

and pine there is no soil nothing but sand and gravel we got to the Chimney Rock the 7th of June that is a great curiosity to any person the only way that I can describe it is it looks like a big sweet potato hill with a pile of rocks on the top something like a chimney it has rained almost every night since we passed Fort Kearney so the stories you have heard about the rains on the plains will not do we heard this evening from Fort Laramie they say at the Fort that there has been 4464 wagons passed there this spring and 400 women and 1500 children and I expect there is as many behind us our horses stand the trip as well as can be expected I like the plan of my outfit better than any I have seen yet though I cannot advise till I get through if you can find any way to send me a letter to Sacramento City if I get there I will be apt to get it as I have not much time to write I will have to wind up I Remain

Your Obedient Son
S. E. HARDY

“THE GRAVEST OFFENSE”

From *The Weekly Osage Chronicle*, Burlingame, November 7, 1863.

JAYHAWKING.—The Natchez (Miss.) correspondent of the *St. Louis Republican* gets off the following serious joke:

And so far as quiet stealing goes, the soldier gets alarming skillful. “Strategy, my boy,” becomes an element of his larcenies. It is a fact, I believe, that a party of the 5th Kansas once stole a grave. How? you ask. In this way: Some members of the 2d Wisconsin had to bury a comrade, and dug a grave for the solemn purpose. Some members of the 5th Kansas having the same melancholy office to perform for one of their deceased companions, watched a chance, and while the detailed of the 2d Wisconsin had gone for the Wisconsin corpse, took possession of the grave and buried their own inanimate jayhawker therein. I call that the gravest offense, in its way, on record.

A FLYING FISH?

From *The Weekly Free Press*, Atchison, December 9, 1865.

SINGULAR OCCURRENCE.—The train from St. Joseph due at this place at 1 o'clock p. m. yesterday, was detained at a water-tank between that city and Atchison by a singular accident. When the train stopped in order that the engine might receive its supply of water, the pipe was thrown open, but to the consternation of all it was discovered that the water would not flow. Considerable time elapsed and the passengers began to be impatient, the conductor looked puzzled and the tank-men swore, but the pent up water still refused to leave its reservoir. A careful examination was therefore instituted, and to the astonishment of all a *huge cat fish* was found tightly squeezed into the conduct pipe. No satisfactory theory is given accounting for the presence of the fish in that peculiar place. Suffice it to say the conductor captured a prize and the train moved on, reaching this city an hour behind time.