

JOURNAL OF SAMUEL FISHER CORLIES

April 27th to June 14, 1858

from Philadelphia to St. Paul, Minnesota,
then southwest to Sioux Falls to Sioux City
and thence down the Missouri River to
St. Louis and return to Philadelphia.

Left Phila. in company with my friends, Evan Randolph and Daniel Neal, 4 Mo. 27 at 7 o'clock for a tour through North West and Western territories, the object being on account of ill health and need of recreation on the part of D. Neal, Buffalo hunting on the part of E. Randolph, and a little of both, with a desire to see the Country, on the part of the Writer. Had a pleasant trip over the Pa. R.R. and arrived at Altoona at 7 P.M., where we voted for Lying over until next day. Found comfortable quarters.

28th. Rose early after a delightful night's rest and walked around Altoona before breakfast. Had a fine view from the mountain back of the town. Found some thin ice on our walk. Left in the Express train at 9 o'clock. Had a magnificent view of the Alleghanies and a pleasant ride to Pittsburgh, where we arrived at half past one o'clock, dined and left at 2 o'clock on Fort Wayne & Chicago R.R. for Chicago. Met Mr. Wheeler and he travelled with us as far as Salem, Ohio. As we could not find a comfortable place to spend the night, we concluded to go on to Chicago without stopping. Took tea at Alliance. This road passes through a very low, marshy and uninteresting country.

29th. Breakfasted at Laporte and arrived at Chicago at 2 o'clock. Saw a Wild turkey, ducks and snipe in abundance between Laporte & Chicago, the country very low and marshy, timber small. Weather quite warm.

Found good accommodations at the Briggs House. After dinner took a walk around the rail road and Grain Depots and returned somewhat fatigued as the weather was very warm. G. Brunell called and spent the evening.

30th. Left at 10 o'clock for Prairie du Chien, where we arrived at 10 P.M. Passed through a beautiful and productive country. Prairie chickens and wild fowl, snipe &c., we noticed along the R.R. all the way from Madison. Went on board Steam Boat Milwaukee, one of the best boats of the line.

5 Mo. 1. Rose at 4 o'ck. and walked to the old Indian Fort. Found it occupied by Squatters and in a state of rapid decay. The boat left at 7 o'ck. so we had to hurry back and so only had a few minutes at the fort. The Mississippi is very high, banks were flooded in some places. Spent the day in viewing the beautiful Scenery along the banks of the River. The weather very cool and fair and overcoats very comfortable.

2nd. On going on deck, found that we were lying at the level at St. Pauls and Evan & Myself started to find the Fuller House. Found it without difficulty and they furnished us with very comfortable quarters. Rode down to the boat and got Dan & Baggage in Hotel Stage. On opening our trunks, found that they had carried safely. Called with Evan on Geo. Ramsey, Mr. Jenks & Day. Jenks dined with us and we walked around to the principal public buildings in the afternoon.

3rd. Started at 10 o'clock in Company with Jenks & Yardley for St. Anthony Falls. Had a very pleasant ride to St. Anthonys and spent some time at the falls and among the saw mills near them. The beauty of the falls is very much marred by the logs jammed in them. Rode over the Suspension bridge to Minneapolis and down to the falls of Mirnehaha in Minnehaha Creek, a small stream. They are very much hidden by the surrounding forest. The entire stream falls in one leap about 60 feet and they are really a perfect gem of a beauty. Visited Fort Snelling and crossed the river at that point. We were very much pleased with the beautiful location of the fort. Noticed

Journal of Samuel Fisher Corlies
April 27th to June 14, 1858

a party of Sioux Indians, the first we have seen. They were camped near the fort.

4th. Geo. Ramsey & Col. Noble called and gave us much information about our intended prairie trip. Mr. Chapin also called and gave us an interesting account of his three month excursion alone through Minnesota and Iowa. Left at 5 o'clock P.M. in Steam boat Frank Steele for Mankato, distant 169 miles, had a delightful evening on board, and noticed the sun setting on our right, apparently in the east, as the river runs north above St. Pauls for several miles. Passed Fort Snelling before dark.

5th. Spent the day in viewing the Scenery along the Minnesota River, which is of a monotonous character all the way up. Noticed a number of wild fowl along the banks. Timber is plenty and of good quality along the banks, but does not extend back far. Arrived at Mankato at 7 o'clock and found quarters at Mankato House - the only hotel in the place.

6th. Spent the day in viewing Mankato & surrounding country. Saw a number of Winnebago Indians. Tried the fishing in the Blue Earth River but the water was too muddy & high. Wrote home in the evening. Ned Parry gave us a western terrapin supper.

7th. Started on a wagon with a party of six for Chrystal Lake for fishing. Had a pleasant ride over the prairie. Shot a number of plover and one duck. Stopped at a Settler's, named Robinson, for dinner. He gave us an account of some of his Indian adventures. Could not find the boat and as it commenced raining, we started for Mankato; our wagon having no top, we got a good soaking, but soon dried off by a good fire in Ned Parry's office. Had our first experience in Prairie Sloughs.

8th. Rained all day. Spent the time in looking around for horses and made the purchase of a Pony. Bellard came from St. Pauls.

9th. A clear morning. Cold. Arranged with Mark's teamster to take us across the Prairie with his team. The Frank Steeles came up a short time after tea. We visited a party of Sioux Indians encamped on the hill near this place and spent 2 hours in their tepee, their name for their lodge. Bought a pipe from Lamaha and met his son. He is an old man who has fought on the side of the United States against the Indians & English and has papers from the Government to that effect, and party of drunken Germans insisted on their leaving. An interpreter interceded for them and they were allowed to stay for the night. The Germans behaved like brutes and the Indians were roughly treated. We had a very interesting chat with them through our interpreter and returned much pleased with our visit.

10th. A fine, clear morning. Ther 44^o. Spent the morning in making our purchases. Rode over on Horseback to see the Winnebagos with Parry, Wister and Bellard. Spent the evening in a camp of Sioux Indians nearby. Bought a war club.

11th. A beautiful, clear morning. Left Mankato at 10 o'clock with our expedition, consisting of wagon with provisions and luggage and two of our party on horseback. Dined at a Settler's and camped on a beautiful prairie. Shot a number of plover - made about 15 miles, got into a bad slough in the afternoon - beautiful sunset. Spent rather an uncomfortable night on account of the horses being very restless and noisy. The air was quite cold before morning.

12th. Rose at 4 o'clock and got breakfast of Plover and by 7 o'clock we were under way over the Prairie. Got into several bad sloughs and had a difficult time in crossing Big Cottonwood. My carpet bag fell overboard and everything got very wet. Reached New Ulm at 10 o'clock quite tired. Had dinner at the inn and started at half past three o'clock. Crossed the Minnesota River in the ferry boat. Rode up the river bottom for 4 miles,

Journal of Samuel Fisher Corlies
April 27th to June 14, 1858

then ascended the bluff and camped on a beautiful prairie. Got into one of the worst Sloughs during the afternoon. Tired enough to sleep anywhere. A beautiful sunset and clear starlight night.

13th. Rose at 4 o'clock. Had breakfast and were under way by 6 o'clock. Stopped at Butler a few Minutes and stuck fast in two sloughs and had to unload the wagon each time. Took dinner at a pleasant spot near a small creek and camped on a small creek within 1/4 mile of Fort Ridgely. D. Neal and myself took a delightful bath in the afternoon and after supper went up to Fort Ridgely, and spent the night in very comfortable quarters and had rather a damper thrown on our intended trip by the advice given by Col. Abercrombie & his officers, Capt. Sully and Steele.

14th. Rose early and breakfasted with Col. Abercrombie & his family. Called on Randall, the resident sutler, and he advised us by all means to proceed with our intended trip, and D. Neal and Bellard started to see a half breed who had just come across from Fort Peirce. Spent the morning alone at the Camp. Dined with Col. Abercrombie's family and spent the afternoon hours looking at the troops drill and at the Camp. Went up to the Fort to Lodge. A very cool evening. Wind very high.

15th. Breakfasted with the Colonel and made our purchases of Randall and made my first attempt at making bread. Packed up one tent and went up to the fort and dined for the last time with our Kind friends. Met Bellard and Archy at Randalls with our horses & wagon all ready to start. The officers all came down to give us a formal farewell. Cap. Steele accompanied us on a horseback and his dogs for 6 or 7 miles, when we met Randall and they returned together. Saw a large wolf and gave chase. Bellard got within 100 yards when the wolf entered a swamp and escaped. The country between the fort and agency is almost destitute of timber except just along the streams. Crossed the Minnesota at the agency and encamped near the trading post on the Banks of the River. A number of Indians came and seated themselves around our Camp fire and with the prairie on fire in the distance and numerous Indians passing by, made quite a characteristic scene. After we had got fixed for the night, a couple of dragoons came to our tent with a letter for "the three Gentleman from Philadelphia". I feared for the moment bad news from home, but on seeing the letter, it proved to be for Cap. Sully, Fort Ridgely. With the Indian Chief "Red Earth Center", who was sent as our guide, the soldiers left us for quarters nearby for the night and the Indian spent the night in our tent, lying at our feet.

16th. Passed a very cold night and rose early and decided not to take the Indians as two trains leave here tomorrow for Medara by way of "Hole in the Mountain" and we have concluded to accept their invitation to join them. Rained at 10 o'clock and continued all day. Dined with Dr. Daniels. Passed rather an uncomfortable night. Report of Chippeways coming over during the night to retaliate on the Sioux. Refused an invitation to sleep in the log hut and slept in our tent.

17th. Started at nine o'clock in company with two teams for Medara, distant about one hundred and forty miles. Rode over a beautiful Prairie. Met a number of Sioux Indians coming in to meet the Chippeways. Encamped on Redwood River on a bluff exposed to the wind. Found difficulty in getting wood. Had good game from the river. Ducks, Plover &c. My attendant and I killed more than we wanted. Made about 15 miles. Night very cold.

18th. A beautiful clear cold morning. Rose early and left our Camp at 7 o'clock. Passed over rolling prairie, destitute of timber and encamped on the Redwood River after making 20 miles. Saw an Indian on his way to the agency with Sand Hill Crane and wild ducks. Had a little chat with him. We all suffered with the chopping wind and being sunburnt. Saw large quantities of wild fowl of various Kind - geese, ducks, plover, gulls, &c. Shot a number. Quite warm in the middle of the day, but wind changed and was quite cool in the evening. Caught a number of small Chub at our Camp.

Journal of Samuel Fisher Corlies
April 27th to June 14, 1858

19th. Rained all last night and a rainy morning. Had breakfast and started at 7 1/2 o'clock for fork of the Redwood, 22 miles. Rained, snowed and hailed. Wind very high. Reached the big shantee at the fork at 12 o'clock, having had a lonesome ride with Pony by myself, D. Neal being ahead with mail carrier and the team two hours behind. The country same as yesterday, rolling prairie, very little timber, the Coutean de Prairie commenced about 8 miles from this place. Had some Buffalo Meat for dinner, shot nearby within a few days past. A number of teamsters arrived and all were packed in the small shantee. Partially cleared off in the afternoon, and after bringing our tent to the Shantee, we slept in it. Very cold night.

20th. Left Redwood in company with mail driver, Billy & Bellard, for Pipe Stone Quarry. Had a pleasant ride over the Prairie. Snipe & ducks very abundant. My attendant, on reaching "Lame Bears" Mah-to-ta-man-he-che, where we found a number of Yanktons with him, he positively refused to give us any information as to the road as the Yanktons, who claimed the country, had prohibited white men from visiting it. As we would have to spend the night there with a large party of Yanktons, who were then there, we had reluctantly to give up the idea of reaching the Quarry. I procured some fine pieces of the pipe stone and a Yankton Bow and Arrow with Quiver in exchange for five Red flannel Shirts and some cash. The Yanktons are a wild looking set of fellows, dressing in Buffalo Skins and armed with Bows & arrows. They had quantities of Buffalo meat in their camp - and saw the Squaws engaged in dressing the hides in various manners. After spending a couple of hours, we pushed on to "Hole in the Mountain" and after taking a stroll around Lake Benton, the rest of the party came in sight. Our camp was a very pleasant one, being on a high bluff among timber. Randolph quite sick. We are now fairly in the Coutean de Prairie. Passed a number of beautiful lakes.

21st. Left our Camp at 7 o'clock for Medara, being four miles distant. Passed by the "Hole in the Mountain" a large opening in the prairie that has the appearance of being the bed of a lake. Looked anxiously for Buffalo all the way over as 200 have been seen here within a day or two. Noticed their dwelling places all grown over with grass. We were disappointed however in seeing any of them. Had a pleasant ride and reached Medara at 11 o'clock. Found the house fortified and in expectation of being driven off by the Yanktons in a short time. The house is bullet proof and altogether has quite a frontier appearance. Took a walk up the Big Sioux with a half breed. Shot a large Loon. Commenced raining in the evening.

22. A rainy morning. Visited several Beaver dams within a couple of miles of this place and was much pleased with noticing the ingenuity displayed in their construction. Cut off a couple of the stumps of small trees that they had cut off with their teeth. In the P.M. rode out on horseback with Joe, a half breed, to take a squint for Buffalo. Rode 8 miles up the gully of Big Sioux and returned in a thunder gust, having a soaking for our trouble. Saw a large number of Buffalo bones strewed over the Prairie.

23. Rainy Morning. Left Medara at half past 9 o'clock in the rain and rode about 6 miles when Bellard & myself spied a herd of about 250 to 300 Buffalo on the high bluff on the opposite side of the Big Sioux. We drove our wagons, &c. carefully down into the bushes on the banks of the Sioux and Neal, Dewitt and Bellard started on Horseback miles back for a chase and expecting to get around the herd and drive them towards our camp, or get them to cross the river, in which case we should have a chance at them. We watched from the bluffs nearby and to our disappointment, saw the Buffalo take the opposite direction. We returned to the wagons, got up a fire, and waited for the rest of the party to come in. Neal came in and reported that Bellard had killed a buffalo. Dewitt came in on foot, having lost the mule on the ride. Neal and Dewitt returned for Buffalo meat and to find the lost mule. We pitched tent and about 7 o'clock they came in with the meat and a calf alive. but without finding the mule. We fared sumptuously on the juicy rump, not equal, however, to good beef. Cleared off about 3 o'clock and had a comfortable night's rest.

24th. A cloudy morning. Cool. The mule that remained got off and made a stampede

Journal of Samuel Fisher Corlies
April 27th to June 14, 1858

among the horses and it was some time before they were brought into camp. The mule got off to Medara and had to be sent for. Mules came back about 9 o'clock and at 10 we got under way. Sent the Calf back to Dan, the cook. After riding about a mile, we struck the trail and a couple of hours later we spied Buffalo. Evan got a shot at long distance and I set off at full speed on the Pony and kept up the chase for about 3 miles and left them about 200 yards ahead, not being able to gain on them scarcely at all. The chase was to me a very exciting time, almost as much so as if I had killed one. I found the way back to the wagons without much difficulty and found them lurching on the Buffalo tongue. After spending a little time in that way, we all proceeded on. Stopped at Henderson and found the remains of the house burnt by the Indians. A heavy, thick cloud appearing in the west, we encamped about 6 miles below Henderson's and pitched our tent and about 8 o'clock we had the most terrific hail and rain storm I ever witnessed. The hail stones as large at stages as bullets and the rain came through the tent in torrents. We got a good soaking. The rain abated in about an hour and we fixed it as well as we could for spending the night. The soil under our ten was perfect mud but with our India rubber blankets we had a good night's rest.

25th. Cloudy morning. Found hail 6 inches deep near the camp and hail stones 3/4 inch in diameter, after lying all night. Made about 10 miles before stopping to feed and finding that we were yet 20 miles to Sioux Falls, pushed on and arrived there about 7 o'clock, after which we dined. The river here falls about 130 feet in a number of cascades, the largest being about 8 feet. It is quite a beautiful waterfall and if timber were more abundant, would be very Romantic. Stopped at the Suttler's house and had comfortable quarters. A beautiful moonlight night.

26th. Beautiful, clear morning. Tried fishing at the falls, but owing to the rise, caused by late rains, caught nothing but a few catfish. Saw a number of large pickerel going up the falls. Left the falls for Emmerson in company with Wm. Dewitt at 2 o'clock and after a pleasant ride of 3 hours arrived at the Shantee on the lower side. Took supper with them. Walked around in the evening and slept in our tent. Noticed a number of Mounds near by. Supposed to be Indian Graves.

27. Left Emmerson at 7 o'clock. Crossed the Split Rock River without much difficulty, and started out over the Prairie, totally destitute of timber. Dined on a small stream near a beautiful Beaver dam. Travelled on till 7 o'clock, when we were overtaken by a thundergust. Unable to pitch our tent on account of the wind. I slept under the wagon alone. Made 30 miles.

28th. Rose at 4 o'ck. Walked 8 miles to Rock River to breakfast. With some difficulty forded the stream and encamped about 15 miles from Rock River on a beautiful Stream. Made about 25 miles. Beautiful sunset and moon rise. On our arrival at Rock River we noticed a wagon nearly upset in the current after we crossed, which we did by ferrying over the luggage in a small batteau, and pulling the wagon over with the long rope. We took a tack and concluded to get the stranger's wagon out and made the attempt, which was successful. His horses came into Camp about the same time and we were fearful from the circumstance that the owner was drowned. We left the things in charge of some persons who camped with us and pushed on. About the middle of the afternoon we met two men who informed us that the owner of the wagon & horses was Walker and that his horses had strayed away from him and that he was coming up from the settlement 22 miles below. We were much gratified to then learn that he was alive.

29th. Rained on going out. Cleared off, however, before we finished breakfast. Had some difficulty in crossing the creek near our encampment. Reached a settler's house and had some bread and milk. Bought half Bushel of corn at \$3.50 per bushel. Stopped for lunch within 16 miles of Sioux City, which we hope to reach tonight. Evan & self walked and rested under a large tree by the road side. Began to ascend the bluffs of Sioux & Mission River and after trudging until 8 1/2 o'clock without seeing any signs of Sioux City, we turned into a Board Shantee and had our Supper and retired

Journal of Samuel Fisher Corlies
April 27th to June 14, 1858

to rest, but were very much annoyed by the Mosquitoes, Dan standing up with Poncho over his head most of the night. Commenced raining about 3 o'clock.

30th. Rainy morning. Started at 5 o'clock and reached Sioux City after about 4 miles travel - and stopped at the Sioux City Hotel, where we found a good breakfast and comfortable quarters. Continued raining all day.

31st. A beautiful, clear morning. Walked upon the mound near by and had a fine view for 10 miles round. Procured a boat and expect to start down in the morning.

6 Mo. 1. Started at 9 o'clock in our batteau down the Missouri with a head wind. Passed some beautiful woods. The banks generally very low. Had some difficulty from snags of Sawyers and camped on a sand Bar with a beautiful view. Covered with timber on the opposite shore. Commenced raining about 10 o'clock and pretty much drowned us out. Made about 45 miles.

6 Mo. 2. Left our camp early and found the snags and sawyers more treacherous. Made some narrow escapes. Passed Decatur about 2 o'clock. Saw some Omaha Squaws in a boat, and camped about 8 o'clock in the best point we could find, but it proved to be a very uncomfortable one and with two terrific thunder gusts occurring during the night, we did not sleep much. The lightning was very vivid and as the Mosquitoes were very troublesome, we left at 4 1/2 A.M. without much breakfast, which we took, however, soon after we were under way. Stopped for dinner at Woodville, but could not get anything but milk, but with it we made, with our own supplies, a very hearty meal. The wind proving favorable in the P.M., we took sail and made DeSoto at 6 o'clock, all of us tired with rowing. Found comfortable quarters in small Hotel.

6 Mo. 4th. Sold our boat and fixings to the only bidder for \$5 and started in Stage for Omaha City. Distant 22 miles. Had a pleasant ride and arrived at Omaha at 2 o'clock. Noticed a number of beautiful flowers on the Prairie on our way. Found good quarters at Tremont House. Visited Sulphur Spring at Saratoga and grave of the Indian Chief Omaha, after supper. We are looking anxiously for Steamboat for St. Louis, which is expected tonight or tomorrow morning.

5th. On getting up early found that the Dan Converse, a small, stern wheel steamboat, had arrived during the night and would start down at 8 o'clock. Went down and secured passage for St. Joseph and were under way at 9 1/2 o'clock. The wind being very high, we had great difficulty in turning the steamboat. Got aground in the afternoon just below Council Bluffs, and we were three hours in getting off. Stopped at Pacific City, a small town, and stopped 2 miles below it to take in 20 cords of wood. Made about 40 miles.

6th. Got under way at daylight and soon after smashed one of the rudders and were delayed several hours by it. Got under way about 10 o'clock and made good time to Nebraska City, where we landed. Had some difficulty in tieing boat. Made good time in the afternoon. Passed Atoe, a small village of 5 houses. Stopped at wood wharf but owing to the price being too high, the boat did not purchase any. Remained there all night.

7th. Got under way at 4 o'clock. Owing to losing the channel, ran up the bank with great force, which nearly threw me out of my berth. Stopped at White Cloud to mend the crank of wheel, 8 o'clock. Under way in about an hour and at half past 12 o'clock arrived at St. Joseph. Went on board the Platte, really a fine boat, which starts at 5 o'clock for St. Louis. Strolled around the town, which is a busy and pleasing one, and spent an hour at the Circus, which is now here. At 5 o'clock, we were under way and made good time. Stopped at Atchison for the night.

Journal of Samuel Fisher Corlies
April 27th to June 14, 1858

8th. Were under way early and arrived at Leavenworth City at 7 1/2 o'clock, where the boat remained until 3 P.M. Walked around and noticed from general appearance there seems to be considerable life in this place. Met Swift Clayton & Bliss, dined, went on board the boat. After a pleasant trip down the river, we reached Kansas City, where after considerable search I found Coates and received a letter from home. It was the first intelligence since leaving Mankato, and I was delighted to get it, particularly as all were well. Randolph very sick in the evening.

9th. Left Kansas City at 6 1/2 o'clock amidst a tremendous shower. Continued raining all day. Made a number of long stoppages for freight and stopped for the night at a wood wharf. River rising very rapidly.

10th. Under way at 4 o'clock. Stopped at Boonville. River rising very rapidly. Noticed the banks overflowed and people moving out in boats. Arrived at Jefferson City at 2 1/2 o'clock, where we took cars and at 10 o'clock arrived at St. Louis. Went to Barnwell.

11th. Rained very hard all night. River all over the levee and houses and stores inundated. Took carriage and visited some residence parts of the city and left at half past 2 o'clock per Ohio & Mississippi R.R. for Cincinnati. Had to go in boats for mile and half over the Missouri bottom, which is 8 feet under water. Noticed the entire population turned out of their houses and great suffering. Had great difficulty in crossing the Wabash and were in much fear of being carried down by the current.

12th. Arrived at Cincinnati at 11 o'clock, missing the connection by being delayed by the flood. Almost the entire country inundated. Went to the Burnett House. Spent the day in looking round the city. Rode up on the cliff back of it and had a fine view. Left at 10 o'clock for Wheeling, via Columbus and Ohio Central Road. Reached Zanesville at 7 o'clock on the morning of the 13th and found that the R.R. was out of order and that we could get as far as Cambridge with a train that was going down with workmen. Reached Cambridge at 9 o'clock, distant 50 miles from Wheeling. Found it impossible to get any conveyance to take us. We had to remain over for omnibus that leaves tomorrow morning. Quite rainy all day.

14th. Left Cambridge in crowded omnibus for Wheeling at 6 o'clock. Had great difficulty in getting our places as there were about 50 passengers anxious to get through. Had a rough ride over a hilly but beautiful country and arrived at Wheeling at 6 o'clock, very tired and dusty, and expect to start at 11 o'clock P. M. for Baltimore, and so we retired for a little rest 7 P.M. 11 o'ck. left in cars for Balt. and 15th reached Balt. at 6 o'ck. and connected with Phila. train and reached Home at 11 o'ck, and found all well and glad to see us back.