

**ACROSS THE PLAINS
TO CALIFORNIA IN
1852: JOURNAL**

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Across the Plains to California in 1852: Journal by Mrs. Lodisa Frizzell

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JOURNAL OF
MRS. LODISA PRIZZELL

EDITED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT
IN THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
BY VICTOR HUGG FALTHEIS
KEEPER OF MANUSCRIPTS



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Indians.

FROM A WATER-COLOR BY MRS. FRIZZELL, AUTHOR OF
THE ACCOMPANYING NARRATIVE

ACROSS THE PLAINS TO CALIFORNIA IN 1852
FROM THE LITTLE WABASH RIVER IN ILLINOIS TO
THE PACIFIC SPRINGS OF WYOMING

JOURNAL OF MRS. LODISA FRIZZELL
EDITED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT IN THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
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EDITOR'S NOTE

THIS simple narrative journal was written at Cañon Creek in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California, in the middle of December, 1852, by Mrs. Lodisa Frizzell, who, with her husband, Lloyd Frizzell, and their four sons, set out on April 14th, of that year, from their unnamed home, not far from Ewington, Effingham County, Illinois, on the upper reaches of the Little Wabash River, on an overland journey to California. The journal records her observations and experiences from the Little Wabash, across Illinois and Missouri, to St. Louis and St. Joseph, and over the St. Joseph and Oregon Trails to the Pacific Springs, in Fremont County, Wyoming. Here, at the continental divide and at the halfway point of her journey, the journal ends, on June 26th, or the seventy-fourth day out. It was nearly seven months later, in her snowbound quarters of the Sierra Nevadas, that she busied herself with its composition from notes she had kept by the way, enlivened by her memory.

Mrs. Frizzell's journal was secured by The New York Public Library with the manuscripts of the Ford Collection, presented by the late J. Pierpont Morgan. It has a quaint manuscript title-page, as follows: *Narrative of a Journal (sic) across the "Plains" in 1852 by Mrs. Lodisa Frizzell. Illustrated by several original drawings. And to my relatives, and friends, respectfully subscribed.* A later hand has written over the title the words, "The Overland Route to California." Among the numerous amateurish illustrations drawn by lead pencil and tinted with colors, three are reproduced here; also her three route maps. The other illustrations include the following: "The home I left behind me" (Her home in Illinois); "Crossing the Nimehaw"; "Killing a buffalo"; "Independence Rock"; "A view of Devil's Gate"; "Distant view of Courthouse & Chimney rocks"; "Chimney Rock 5 miles distant"; "Distant view of Laramie Peak"; "A view of Sweetwater mountains. 5 miles west of the Devil's Gate"; "Buffalo skeletons"; "View of the Wind range of mountains"; "View of South Pass"; "A Horned Frog."

Written on inner covers or flyleaves are several names, which may be of value for future identification. They are: John G. Harness, 1852; Nancy Varnyan; G. W. Catron; Wm. Malone; Orin Anderson and T. Alexander. Nothing has been discovered of the personal history of this Frizzell family. The patronymic, however, is found at an early period in New England.

In 1859, Lieutenant Gouverneur K. Warren, of the corps of topographical engineers, U. S. A., issued a *Memoir* and map of the exploring expeditions in the West, from 1800 to 1857, and an epitome thereof forms a part of volume 1 of *Wheeler's Report*, appendix F, of the United States Geographical Surveys west of the one hundredth meridian (Washington, 1889). Among the narratives of those who, in the main, travelled the route covered by Mrs. Frizzell, the earliest is the journal of Robert Stuart, 1812, of which The New York Public Library has a complete typewritten transcript, made from the original manuscript in 1908. This journey was begun in June, 1812, at Astoria, and ended at the Ohio. It was undertaken by representatives of the Pacific Fur Company. The next important expedition to the Rocky Mountains was made by Captain B. L. E. Bonneville, 1832-1836, of which we have the record in Washington Irving's *The Rocky Mountains*, first published in 1837, in two volumes. In 1835, Colonel, afterwards General Henry Dodge, covered a part of the way en route from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. In 1842, J. C. Frémont traversed the Plains on his first expedition, ending in the Wind River Mountains, and in 1843-1844, he went over much of the same ground. Joel Palmer's journal of his travels over the Rocky Mountains, in 1845-1846, was printed in 1852, and has been edited as a part of Thwaites's *Early Western Travels*. Among the California pioneers, who went over the route in the mad rush of 1849, was Amasa Delano, who wrote an illuminating journal, published as *Life on the Plains*, in 1854. These and many other publications have been consulted in editing the Frizzell journal.

THE JOURNAL

PREFACE

Agreeable to my promise I now set down to write the incidents of my journey to California. Having taken notes by the way, I shall be able by the assistance of my memory, to give you a full & accurate account of the "trip." It is now about the middle of December,¹ I am here in midst of the Sierra Nevada rightly named snowy mountains, the snow has been constantly falling for the last ten days & still it has not abated; it is now some ten or twelve feet in this place (Canyon Creek²) & on the mountain tops, fifty or more, there is no passing or repassing at pres-

¹ December, 1852.

² Canyon Creek, a north branch of Trinity R., in Trinity Co., Cal.

ent, I am shut up in my room, the snow having completely blocked up both doors and windows, I therefore have lighted my candles & sat down to amuse myself & "while the tedious hours away" by giving you my narative.

CHAPTER I

FROM THE WABASH RIVER¹ TO St. LOUIS

We (that is George Westall Bethel Elliot, my husband² & myself) started for California on the 14th day of April, with five yoke of cattle one pony & sidesaddle, & accompanied by several of our friends & neighbors as far as the first town, where we parted & said our last *good by*, & turning westward which was to be our course for most of the way of our long journey.

The first night we put up at widdow womans, we did not camp out, all though we had intended to commence camping from the start, but it goes so much "agin the grane" at first, & then there is so many fine people passing & repassing along the road, while you are eating your meal on a log, or stump, or the end board of your waggon, with your tin plates tin cups &c. For my part I felt *kinder streaked*³ at first, especially while we traveled in the states. As I said we did not camp out the first night & having plenty of victuals with us went in made some tea, fried some eggs, eat our suppers, & were accomodated with a fine bed, which is a great luxury after a hard days travel; but my thoughts and reflections were such that I could not readily fall asleep. Who is there that does not recollect their first night when started on a long journey, the wellknown voices of our friends still ring in our ears, the parting kiss feels still warm upon our lips, & that last seperating word *Farewell!* sinks deeply into the heart. It may be the last we may ever hear from some or all of them, & to those who start for California there can be no more solemn scene of parting only at death; for how many are now sleeping in death on the lonely plains whose Farewell was indeed their last.

[April 15 — 2d day] But to return, we started in the morning of our seckond day, a fine clear sky, but the roads rather muddy. Loyd⁴ killed ten plovers with 2 shots of his double barrel shotgun, which we dressed, & had a fine supper, which we cooked by a log in the wood where we camped for the night, about half a mile west of Ewington.⁵ We obtained lodging nearby, slept soundly started in the morning [April 16 — 3d day] after preparing our hasty meal; it soon commenced raining I kept in the waggon, we killed 2 ducks & some plovers, bought some butter, & at

¹ Little Wabash River of Illinois.

² Her husband was Lloyd Fritzell.

³ An Americanism with various meanings, — "ashamed," "disconcerted," etc.

⁴ Her husband.

⁵ Ewington, Effingham Co., Ill., twenty-nine miles northeast of Vandalia, on the west bank of the Little Wabash River. It was formerly the county seat and derived its name from Gen. W. L. D. Ewing, a prominent lawyer of Vandalia.