



To "the Eldorado of the World" 1850

(Diary – Overland Travel) Sabin, Stephen Choate (1812-1894) **Manuscript Diary – Account and Expense Book, kept while Traveling Overland from Indiana to California in 1850 and while in California, 1850-1858**

16mo, vest pocket diary 72 pages, plus blanks, entries written in ink and pencil, original leather wallet style binding, binding worn and rubbed, back-strip missing, some pages loose, several pencil entries rubbed and smudged, otherwise in good condition for having traveled overland in 1850. Sabin does not write his narrative consecutively; his diary entries are interspersed with cash accounts and other entries.

Stephen Choate Sabin was born June 8, 1812, in Jamaica, Windham County, Vermont, at some point after 1820 he moved to Steuben, Steuben County, Indiana, where he married Martha H. Stocker (1819-1894), in 1839. He and his wife had five children before Sabin set off for the Gold Fields in April 1850. Sabin formed a company, which included his brother-in-law Leland H. Stocker, and Stocker's brother George, along with an unknown number of others, and set off for the "eldorado of the world" in April 1850, from Orland, Steuben County, Indiana. The company was joined by several other individuals along the way and Sabin's wagon train was also joined by two other companies in Iowa.

Sabin describes the journey of the company across northern Indiana to Chicago, across Illinois, across the Mississippi to Iowa and across that state, where the detailed entries end and Sabin intersperses the diary entries with a series of cash accounts and other related entries, incurred on the trail and later when he reaches California. Sabin resumes his account of his journey with briefer entries describing his route along the Oregon Trail from South Pass to Beer Springs.

The diary also contains expense accounts incurred while traveling, these include expenses for ferriage, lodging, food and other supplies, horse feed, blacksmithing, supplies purchased in Iowa City, ferriage at Des Moines, purchase of hay at Silver Creek, corn at Kaneshville, etc. Sabin also notes expense and labor accounts once he and his company reach the "diggings." Sabin notes at times the amount of "dust" in the company purse, expenses for food, boarding expenses, "work done at Placerville, etc. There are accounts for the purchase and hauling of lumber for the construction of a house in "the mountains. Sabin was listed in 1850 as being a resident of Sacramento, California. Sabin apparently remained in California and the mines until at least 1858, he notes in a series of entries beginning December 18th, 1857, that his house burned down and that his neighbors subscribed money to help him rebuild, and provided labor, and hauled wood and building supplies.

Sabin also notes a list of 234 names, all male, followed by numbers, a list of company members?

Sabin did not return to Steuben County Indiana until about 1861, where his son Ernest was born, he remained in Indiana until some time after 1880 when he apparently moved to Centerville, St. Joseph County, Michigan, where he died in 1894.

Sample Quotes:

"Orland [Indiana] March 19th 1850

At about 12 o'clock M. Our company started for the eldorado of the world and travelled as far as Lima that day over quite bad roads for the country and put up at F. Jewets Hoosier House."

"20th Roads verry had 2/3's of the way to Bristol Dined on cold lunch in front of Seth W. Massey's five miles east of Bristol, enjoyed it much Past thro B at 4 p.m. and took it out of w'ard and put up for the night at Defrees house in the village of Elkhart early in the morning westward to and at 12 1/2 dined in our wagons at the west end of South Bend Rec'd an invitation and accept a public dinner which we of course declined. Stopped for the night at five P.M. after passing over several miles of bad road and two miles of which is intolerable at the east side of Tuscupia Prairie in the mud knee deep & cooked our supper had good lodgings and a bad breakfast, high bill and a quarrel which resulted in the payment of an extra dollar."

"22nd Traveled thro mud and storm until 1 1/2 and put up for the night at Springville 16 miles and had good accommodations at fair prices."

"23rd Started early in the morning and traveled 31 miles put up at Millers 23 miles from the city and 33 from Chicago The last ten miles of the of the road is the most unpropitious land I ever travelled over it being a continued series of sand hills of drifting sand and scanty growth of pine shrubs"

"24th Sabbath. The majority of the company being in favor of travelling we travelled 30 miles & within 3 miles of the great city. It has been a very cold day but quite good roads, an occasional accession to our numbers by transferring in, most of them overtake us."

"25th We did not ravel on account of having purchases to make in Chicago & spent the day in traversing the streets and laying in supplies of various kinds had my Daguerreotype taken at the Gallery of Mr. C. C. Kelsey."

"26th Started again for the west and passed through a most unpropitious country for farming purposes it being wet prairie. Crossed the Chicago ten miles from the city and travelled 13 miles on the plank road, it is to be continued some distance farther the present season. Stopped at

Napierville 30 miles from C but their prices was so high that we traveled on two miles farther and put up for the night."

"27th Travelled 8 ½ miles to Aurora a pretty village on Fox River with evident signs of enterprize and improvement. Towards night passed through little rock, then went five miles to Somonauk and passed the night, Had fair meals but other wise hard accommodations. 28 miles."

"28th Started in good season travelled to Paupau Grove a small village by the side of heavy timbered land bearing that name. Saw M Town brother to A. Town of Jackson Prairie thence west to Inlet grove 15 miles from Dixon 32 miles."

"29th Passed through the grove & crossed a small stream on which stood two saw mills in full blast, travelled 1 ½ miles to a small village beside the grove and then passed over the usual prairie scenery to Dixon 15 miles. Arrived there about 11 o'clock A.M. and called on Mrs. Aldrich and after visiting some time declined an urgent invitation to dine with her went and took lunch at the wagon, then ferried the river and passed on to Sterling and put up for the night the e side of Whiteside County 29 miles"

"30th Went to Unionville and fed then to Albany and put up until Monday. The country thro which we passed is much the same as usual exep some sandy knobs and a marsh which had the appearance of at one time containing within its banks the father of waters. A Steamboat came up in the evening the Sir Toby with two barges in tow. She left one of them and went on to Galena with the other. We are in a quandary respecting the best course to pursue in regard to supplies at the Bluff whether to ship or run the risk of purchasing them. 30 miles."

"31st Stopped at the Albany Eagle Hotel it being Sabbath and attended meeting in the for noon and in the afternoon wrote a letter to my wife."

"April 1st Ferried across the river and travelled on thro prairies and groves the great majority of which is and must for years be uncultivated. The roads were bad most of the way the slues were unbridged and the team of Mr. Scott needed assistance twice to get out of there Camped out for the first time. Travelled 21 miles."

"2nd Concluded to lay over for the day and make repairs, cook &c A good many of the company went hunting and killed some prairie hens &c Cary's company cooked a pot pie and called it good Cooking goes of rather hard"

"3rd Rained all night& L. H. Stocker took cold. Cold rainy & windy day everything muddy. Took a warm cup of tea and cold lunch for breakfast. Started late passed thro a multitude of bad slues and at 1 ½ p.m. ferried the Misssissippia river at Buena vista and travelled 5 miles and put up for the night at a private house on Rock Creek. Most of the company cooked their own grub but our mess took supper in the house and George L. H & myself lodged inside Asa & Geo. J. in the wagon. Travelled 15 miles."

"4th George left in the morning to visit his wife's brother near Tipton, the train moved on over or rather through very muddy roads, the frost is just coming out of the ground and mud is in many places knee deep, tried to get accommodations at Tipton but could not find stable room went on two miles and staid with Frasier Saw a nephue of A. Knott of Angola, just at night passed thro the worst mud hole yet. Saw six miles back a horse killed by some drunken Californians. 19 miles."

"5th Travelled on ten miles to the Washington ferry on Cedar River and just as we were crossing Barnard's company came up but they were detained to ferry and feed and did not overtake us at night. The scenery changed somewhat after crossing the River the prairies not so large and partially covered with hazle brush & rather more rolling somewhat clayey Camped in a grove 30 cents for corn 15 cents a span for hay 18 miles"

"6th Barnard came up in the morning and travelled on in our company. Camped at Iowa City on the banks of the River near the middle ford ferry and laid over for a day or two bought a load of hay for three dollars. David Dickinson Wm Gilmore & Wm Montgomery also on the Great highway to California came into our company. The roads are improving but still muddy. The face of the country presents a very different aspect having somewhat the aspect of Steuben County in many parts, quite rolling & well timbered openings. Rec'd an invitation to attend church in the evening and of course I attended also several others of our company attended heard an earnest appeal from a Baptist minister from abroad. Also attended two exercises on the sabbath and one in the evening. The Baptists have the best house in town & the inside quite similar to the Orland house"

"8th Ferried in the morning and went nine miles then bought some corn & fed & took lunch then travelled on three miles and Dickinson broke down. Hired a team to carry us on to a smith shop 7 miles & went on Our colt got away and gave me a chase ten miles back to catch him I arrive after dark"

"15th Passed thro some excellent farming country the last few days consisting of Prairies & groves rich bottom lands &c"

The detailed entries end here, but later in the diary, after sections of accounts for expenses incurred on the journey, work and company expenses at the diggings, and other entries, Sabin has a pencilled section showing the route he and his company took along the Oregon rail after apparently following the Platte River Road:

"South Pass 800

To junction of California & Oregon Roads 19

From the Little Sandy & take to the Right to the Big Sandy 12 & camp to near night

To Green River 35 no water this must be done at night – Leave Green River go west North west to the Branch by the trail 12 follow this to its head then strike across the high plain for the mountains at the head of Thomas Fork of the Bear River Keep on the dividing ridge until you come near the Bear River Valley then descend & cross down to the mouth of the Fork wher you find the Prairie Road this is a fine Road all the way, grass & fuel being plenty & with the exception of the distance between the Sandy & Green River there is fine water

Save five days travel by taking Sublettes cut off

Lay over one day at Gren River & recruit the Teames after going the 35 miles Descent Wild flax plenty good as oats Rest here to recruit teams 3 days

Down the Valley 14

Road up a bad valley to the Right

Crossing Ridge 1

Around the Canon 5

Strike the River 2

Timber & Water good

To Beer Springs 36 the road continues down the valley good camping all along”

On hold.