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The Oregon Recruit Expedition

Albert Watkins

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THE OREGON RECRUIT EXPEDITION

The object of early travel from the Missouri River to the region beyond the Rocky Mountains was, first, exploration, as in the example of the expeditions of Lewis and Clark and Frémont; second, trapping and trading; third, the colonisation of Oregon; fourth, the reaching of the California and intra-montane gold mines; fifth, the transportation of soldiers and military supplies for the protection of these enterprises from hostile Indians. Prior to the period of transcontinental railroad-building there were several rival experimental routes to the northerly part of those regions and more particularly to Oregon; but the Platte River route, known as the Oregon trail, gained supremacy during the decade of 1830-1840 and held it until the opening of the Pacific roads north of the first (Union Pacific) line divided the traffic. The military department of the federal government, including its engineers, had faith in the superiority of upper routes while the general traffic persistently preferred the Platte route. In this test native instinct and experiment seem to have been wiser than science unassisted by experimental knowledge.

On the 6th of February, 1855, Congress appropriated thirty thousand dollars "for the construction of a military road from the Great Falls of the Missouri River, in the territory of Nebraska, to intersect the military road now established leading from Walla Walla to Puget's Sound, but no action was taken upon this scant allowance.¹ In subsequent appropriations the eastern terminus of the road was fixed at Fort Benton, which was forty miles below the great falls and practically the head of navigation, and also an important post of the American Fur Company.²

¹ Fort Walla Walla, situated contiguous to the city of the same name on the Walla Walla River, about thirty-five miles above its mouth, was established as a military post, September 23, 1856. Whitman's mission, at Waiilatpu, five miles farther down the river, was established near the close of 1836. The original Fort Walla Walla, a post of the Northwest Fur Company (British) was established at the junction of the Walla Walla and Columbia rivers in 1818.

² Fort Benton was established in 1846, by Alexander Culbertson, as a post of the American Fur Company. On the 17th of October, 1869, it was occupied

It was only in very high water that boats could run to a point a little below the great falls.

On the 3d of March, 1859, Congress appropriated one hundred thousand dollars "for the construction of a military road from Fort Benton to Walla Walla," and another hundred thousand was appropriated for the same purpose by the act of May 25, 1860. Lieutenant John Mullan of the Second Artillery regiment, was detached to superintend the construction of the work.¹

On the 31st of March, 1860, Pierre Chouteau, Jr., of St. Louis, contracted with Thomas S. Jesup, quartermaster, to transport from St. Louis to Fort Benton "about three hundred enlisted men, officers, servants, and laundresses, with their military stores and supplies, and to be paid one hundred dollars for each officer, fifty dollars per man, laundress, and servant, and ten dollars per hundred pounds for stores and supplies, including the subsistence of the men during the trip."

General order number 37, dated at the headquarters of the army, New York, March 31, 1860, directed the two departments of the recruiting service to organise, at Fort Columbus, and Newport Barracks,² four companies of recruits—two at each post—of seventy-five men each, "for the troops serving in the department of Oregon"; the recruits to be detached to Jefferson Barracks, near St. Louis, April 20th next; to move from St. Louis, April 20th, by the Missouri River to Fort Benton; and thence to Fort Dalles by the route being passed over by Lieutenant Mullan of the Second artillery; arrangements for transportation beyond St. Louis to be made by the quartermaster-general; the four companies to be armed and equipped as infantry at Jefferson Barracks and supplies to be obtained at St. Louis.

as a military post of the United States. A town was laid out there in 1864. Trade and steamboat traffic fell off from the time that it became a military establishment; but they revived again in 1882-83. The river trade was destroyed and the town crippled by the advent of the Great Northern railroad.

¹ Lieutenant Mullan's regiment was already in Oregon on account of the Indian troubles. He received his instructions on the 15th of March, 1859, had organised his party and started from Fort Dalles on the 8th of June and began the work of construction on the 25th. On the 19th of March the adjutant general of the army directed General W. S. Harney, then in command of the Oregon department, to provide Mullan's party with a military escort and supplies.

² Fort Columbus was situated on Governor's Island, New York, and Newport Barracks in Kentucky, on the Ohio River, nearly opposite Cincinnati.

Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Robert C. Buchanan was assigned to the command of the recruits, but was superseded by Major G. A. H. Blake, of the First dragoons. Colonel Joseph E. Johnston, acting inspector general of the army, afterward the confederate general of our sectional war, was ordered to inspect the recruits prior to their departure.

The official reports disclose the fortunes of the expedition up the Missouri River and also its exploration purpose. For many years after the introduction of steamboats to the Ohio and the Mississippi, the more rapid and changeable current, the ubiquitous sand-bar, whose formations were more fickle even than political personal preference or public opinion, and the equally numerous and more damaging snags of the Missouri were the preclusive bugbear of steam navigation. The first steamboat to tempt this triplex obstruction and destruction was the *Independence* which started from St. Louis on the 15th of May, 1819, reached Franklin on the 28th, whence it proceeded as far as Chariton, about thirty miles beyond, before returning to St. Louis.¹

It was the public purpose that the both famous and infamous Yellowstone expedition of the same year should demonstrate the practicability of steamboat navigation to the far upper Missouri; but of the four boats that entered the river only one, Major Long's *Western Engineer*, was able to get as far as the Council Bluff of Lewis and Clark; though the next year one of these failing boats, the *Expedition*, reached the same point with a full cargo. In 1831 five steamboats made trips throughout the season from St. Louis to the settlements along the Missouri, Glasgow, successor to Chariton, and Booneville being the principal upper terminal points. By 1836 from fifteen to twenty boats were regularly engaged in this traffic. As early as 1829 a packet boat ran regularly to Fort Leavenworth. In 1831 the *Yellowstone* built

¹ Franklin was situated on the north bank of the river, in Howard county, Missouri, two hundred and five miles, by the river, above St. Louis. Within a year after this demonstration of the practicability of steamboat navigation on the lower Missouri, Franklin became a very important and thriving place, as the initial and outfitting point of the Santa Fé trail. After it had enjoyed this monopoly for six or seven years the overland initial terminal was pushed up the river about one hundred and eight miles farther, to Independence, and Franklin rapidly declined. In 1832 the buildings were moved to a new location, two miles back from the river, which soon after carried away the original site.

by the American Fur Company for the upper river fur trade, went as far as the site of the subsequent Fort Pierre in South Dakota, but it accomplished the latter part of the voyage only by much lightening and through the pertinacity of Pierre Chouteau, Jr., who conducted the enterprise. The next season this boat reached Fort Union, at the mouth of the Yellowstone River. This was accounted a great triumph of transportation. Until 1845 an annual voyage of the *Yellowstone* to the same point was the limit of steamboat traffic to the high-up Missouri. In 1834 a boat had ventured as far as the mouth of Poplar River, about a hundred miles beyond the Yellowstone; in 1853, another—the *El Paso*—went a hundred and twenty-five miles farther—a little beyond the mouth of Milk River;—and in 1859, the *Chippewa*, one of the trinity of our Oregon recruit expedition, went still farther, to a point about seventeen miles below Fort Benton, the acknowledged head of navigation. The Mormon immigration to the Missouri River, beginning in 1846, and its subsequent settlement in Utah; the resulting traffic to Utah augmented by the transportation of vast quantities of military supplies to the army sent there in 1857 and 1858 to suppress the Mormon rebellion; the emigration to Oregon and California which reached a great volume in the latter half of the decade of 1840–50, and the establishment of a chain of military posts in the interior to protect this traffic from hostile Indians; the development of a considerable fur trade in the lower Rocky Mountain region; and the political organisation and resultant rapid settlement of Kansas and Nebraska had created by 1860 a heavy business for regular lines of steamboats to Leavenworth, Atchison, St. Joseph, Brownville, Nebraska City, Omaha, and Sioux City. As far, then, as Sioux City our Oregon recruit expedition traversed familiar, and on to the Yellowstone not untried waters. The experimental stage of the journey was along the extreme upper reaches of the possibly navigable Missouri and was intended to test the relative practicability of the two rival routes to Oregon.

The official records of the war department tell us that, on the 3d of May, 1860, a detachment consisting of thirteen officers, two hundred and twenty-two enlisted men, under Major George A. H. Blake, of the First dragoons, left St. Louis for Oregon, via Forts Union and Benton and the waggon road commenced by Lieutenant John Mullan from Walla Walla to Fort Benton. “The detachment embarked on three steamers and the march

was undertaken to test the feasibility of that route to Oregon." The march was successfully accomplished and the command kept in good health, except some fifteen cases of scurvy and other diseases. These sick soldiers were sent back from Fort Benton on the returning boats. The expedition arrived at Sioux City May 23, the water being very low; Fort Randall, May 27, where it met a temporary rise of water from rains, which facilitated progress; Fort Pierre, June 2, noon, water very low again; mouth of Milk River June 22; Fort Union, evening of June 15; Fort Benton, July 2, where the boats remained until August 2. The *Nebraska City News* of February 23, 1861, notes, in a steamboat itinerary of 1860, that the fleet passed that place on the 15th of May. The *Omaha Nebraskian* of May 19, 1860, noted the passage of the fleet in its characteristically breezy style:

"On the 16th inst. a fleet of Steamers, consisting of the Spread Eagle, Key West and Chippewa, touched at this port on their way to the head waters of the Missouri—distant over two thousand miles. Each boat was crowded to its utmost capacity, with United States troops whose destination is Oregon and the territory of Washington. They will ascend the Missouri as far as navigable by the steamers above mentioned, and from thence will be marched across the Mountains to the forts of their destination. It will be remembered that this is the same route that the *Nebraskian* recommended to Oregon emigrants some two years ago, and it is a source of some gratification to know that our suggestions are properly appreciated by the general government, and to believe that this is destined to be the travelled route to one, at least, of the Pacific States. The trial trip was made by two of the boats mentioned, last season, in taking up a party of Government explorers. They then ascended the Missouri higher than any attempt was ever before made to navigate it, but we understand this fleet expects to ascend one hundred and fifty miles nearer the source of this mightiest of streams. The distance from the head of navigation on the Missouri, to the head waters of the Columbia, is only about three hundred miles. If the Mississippi be the 'Father of Waters' it is not too much to claim that the Missouri is at least the mother, the grandfather, the grandmother, the great-grandfather, the great-grandmother, numberless uncles, aunts and cousins, besides not a few poor relations."

Alfred J. Vaughan, agent of the Blackfeet Indians, in a report to the superintendent of Indian affairs, dated at the agency, August 31, 1860, tells the following concise story of the voyage:

"BLACKFEET FARM, August 31, 1860.

"Sir: In compliance with the regulations of the department, I have the honor to respectfully submit the following as my annual report for 1860:

"The fleet of steamers for the Upper Missouri, viz: Spread Eagle, Captain

Labarge, Chippewa, Captain Humphreys, and Key West, Captain Wright, all under the control of Mr. C. P. Chouteau, of the firm of C. Chouteau, Jr., & Co., contractors of the government troop's stores and Indian annuities. The troops commanded by Major Blake left St. Louis on May 3. We arrived safe at Fort Randall after a tedious trip on account of the low stage of the river. At this point we met a rise, which enabled us to make the balance of the trip without any detention. We arrived at Fort Union on June 15, and after discharging the Assinaboine annuities, went on our way rejoicing.

"In due time we made Milk River; the landing of the steamer El Paso was passed: the steamer Spread Eagle accompanied us some ten miles further and then returned on her homeward way, having been ten miles further up than any side-wheel boat was before.

"Our little fleet, now reduced to two, the Key West, commanded by Captain Labarge, in the van, boldly and fearlessly steered their way up what would seem to the uninitiated an interminable trip. At length the long expected goal is made, and on the evening of July 2 the two gallant crafts, amidst the booming of cannon and the acclamations of the people, were landed at Fort Benton with one single accident, and that was a man falling overboard, who unfortunately was drowned.

"Without wishing to be thought invidious when all do well, too much praise cannot be bestowed upon Captain Labarge and all the officers of the command for the untiring skill and energy displayed by them on this *remarkable trip*. Also to Mr. Andrew Dawson, partner, in charge of Fort Benton, for his forethought and sagacity in having wood hauled some sixteen miles below the fort, which enabled the two gallant crafts to land where no steamer was moored before."

Periodical communications from the fleet published in *The Century* are full of interesting information. The following is a synopsis of one of these letters, dated "The Expedition,—near Sioux City, May 20, 1860," and published in the issue of June 16.

Left St. Louis May 3, have made nine hundred and fifty miles in seventeen days, average per day, fifty-six miles; on some days eighty miles; water the lowest "in the memory of the oldest inhabitant. If we had only this boat"—the *Chippewa*—"and the *Key West*, both stern-wheelers, drawing thirty-two inches, loaded as they now are, we would have averaged seventy-five miles a day." The delays are all caused by waiting for the *Spread Eagle*, a side-wheeler, drawing four feet and intended to go only to Fort Union.¹

¹ The statement by the correspondent of *The Century*, as early as May 20th, that the *Spread Eagle* was intended to go only to Fort Union seems questionable. An article in the *Missouri Democrat*, written by Mr. A. J. Hull and copied in the *Peoples Press* (Nebraska City) of July 19, 1860, says:

"The mountain fleet arrived at mouth of Milk River Friday, June 22d, fifty days out from St. Louis, and, as the river had commenced falling, it was thought

Have seen some very pretty towns, "especially Omaha City." The party consists of three hundred and forty recruits, "collected from all parts of the Union, and not very strictly selected either"; one hundred boatmen and fifty officers, "passengers etc., gathered out of every nation under heaven."

The writer correctly predicts the drying up of river traffic by railroads—now at St. Joseph, next at Sioux City, then when the Northern Pacific reaches Fort Union that will be the starting point for steamboats. Besides the soldiers there were about a dozen passengers on the three boats, including Colonel Vaughan, agent of the Blackfeet, Major Schoonover, agent for the tribes near Fort Union, several employees of the American Fur Company and two New York artists,—Hays and Terry. The officers included Major Blake, Captains Lendrum and Floyd Jones, Lieutenants Cass, Livingston, Smith, Kautz, Carleton, Upham, Hardin, and Stoughton, and Doctors Head and Cooper, all going to the Columbia River, and Captain Getty and a lieutenant for Fort Pierre. The "navy of the Missouri" was under "Commodore Chouteau," with Captains Labarge, Humphreys, and Wright.

The next letter, appearing in the issue of July 5, and dated June 2, at Fort Pierre, notes progress since May 20, of six hundred miles, an average of only fifty miles a day. All agreed that starting so early was a mistake. If they had waited at St. Louis until about May 15, or until a rise of water began to show itself, two weeks time on the river would have been saved. There were only twenty-six inches of water on the bars at the Sioux City bend, so that it was necessary to unload the *Chippewa* and lighten the *Spread Eagle* to get them over, causing a delay of three days

advisable to send the 'flagship' back. Accordingly, we transferred the balance of our freight to the *Chippewa* and *Key West*. Mr. P. W. [C. P.] Choteau then proposed that the *Spread Eagle* should make a pleasure trip above the point where the *El Paso* landed several years since [1853]. And with the officers of the army, and most of the officers of the boats, we run about fifteen miles above *El Paso* point. The *Spread Eagle* has now been higher up the Missouri River than any other side-wheeled boat, and Captain La Barge has the honour of being her commander. On our arrival at the point two guns were fired, a basket of champagne was drank by the officers and guests, and one bottle buried on the point. I suppose any one who goes after it can have it. The *Spread Eagle* could have very easily got higher up—indeed it was thought at one time she would reach Fort Benton, the river rose so rapidly, but Captain Choteau did not wish to risk so much merely for glory."

in making thirty miles. Just above this point the fleet met a rise of eighteen inches, and the next day as much more, the increase alone being sufficient to float the two smaller boats. Consequently, for the following three days seventy-five miles a day were made, and Fort Randall was reached while the voyagers were "highly elated with the prospect of a quick voyage through." At the fort "the full band of the Fourth artillery greeted our arrival . . . and cheered us as we again started towards the wilderness with the echoes of "Home, Sweet Home," and "The Girl I Left behind Me." About thirty miles farther on, a terrific storm of rain and hail forced the boats to lie by under shelter of bluffs for a day and a half; but while the resulting rise lasted ninety miles a day were made. "We travel, of course, only by day, though the high water and almost total absence of snags would make night travel easy if the channel were better known."

Above Fort Randall it became difficult to obtain enough dry fuel for the boats. Between this post and Fort Pierre—two hundred and forty miles—"not a human being lives, except some white cedar log-cutters, and the reason of its desertion by Indians is evident in the almost total absence of game." Fort Pierre was nearly half way—1450 miles—from St. Louis to Fort Benton.

The next letter published in *The Century*, July 26, 1860—was dated, Missouri River, "Fifty Miles from Fort Marion, Nebraska, June 19, 1860."¹ From Fort Pierre progress had been at the average rate of fifty-nine miles a day, "including long delays from being obliged to cut all our wood where it was often very scarce and from stopping to unload freight at the American Fur Company's Forts Clark and Berthold. . . . The water has risen constantly and rapidly, so that it is higher now at Fort Union than ever before seen at the arrival of the arsenal of boats which have previously reached there only during its fall. And though the great river there divides, the Yellowstone, which had contributed half its volume, no longer helping us, yet the upper Missouri seems scarcely diminished in breadth or depth, the boats winding boldly along without fear of striking. The answer

¹ This point was probably at Marion's bend, about ten miles above the mouth of Poplar River, now in Valley County, Montana. The *Spread Eagle*, the slowest boat of the three, and the *Chippewa* made the voyage in 1859 to a point "a few miles below Fort Benton" in ten days less time. The *Spread Eagle* went as far as Fort Union and there transferred her cargo of about one hundred and sixty tons to the *Chippewa* which completed the voyage.

to the sounding-bell is almost invariably that forcible, if not exactly nautical phrase, 'no bottom.' "

A letter dated "Mouth of Milk River, Nebraska, June 22, 1860," was published in the same issue of the magazine as the preceding. The *Spread Eagle* was to start back down the river from this point the next day. The expedition had already advanced two hundred and fifty miles above Fort Union, a comparatively high point; but in that region of magnificent distances the superlative objective was still five hundred and thirty-two miles beyond. The correspondent was encouraged by progress already made to believe that "boats can easily be built which will make the trip from St. Louis to Benton, thirty-five hundred and fifty miles, in thirty days." Wood was scarce for about one hundred and fifty miles above and below Fort Pierre but increased in amount northward. Above the great bend (now in South Dakota, there were "large groves of that excellent wood, the red cedar, much of it now dead, and ready for fuel if there were inhabitants to cut it." Lieutenant Warren was in error in saying in his topographical report to Congress that this valuable tree disappeared at the forty-sixth parallel, for it reappears again at the forty-seventh and becomes more abundant above the bend, growing thirty feet high and near a foot in diameter, accompanied by the low carpet-like juniper. . . . "Milk river is named from its whiteness caused by a great quantity of alkaline mud it always contains, and which gives to the Missouri below most of its turbidity, in colour like weak coffee and milk. Above the Mussel-shell it will be found quite clear. . . . The artists left us last week having already painted some beautiful heads of animals." Our correspondent, whose name was concealed in the initial signature, J. G. C., sketched views almost daily and also busily collected specimens of natural history.

A letter published in the issue of August 2 informs us that the expedition arrived at Fort Benton July 2, sixty days from St. Louis; and that boats of proper draught would have made the trip in thirty days. Assistant Surgeon S. F. Head, U. S. A. and Dr. Cooper of New York were attached to the expedition. The issue of August 9th contained a letter dated "Camp near Fort Benton, July 3, 1860." The fleet advanced from Milk River at the average rate of sixty miles a day. Large groves of Oregon fir, excellent pitch pine, and red cedar began to appear a few miles above Milk River. They only bordered the river

where tracts bare of grass protected them from fire. It was necessary to cordelle the boats up much of the rapids below Fort Benton, three hundred men hauling by the ropes "to help the steam." Lieutenant Mullan would not be able to get through—over his new road from Walla Walla—before the end of a month. He could get oxen enough for only twenty-five, instead of the needed forty waggons for transportation for the expedition.

On the first of August Lieutenant Mullan's expedition arrived at the fort, "the road of six hundred and thirty-three miles from Fort Walla Walla to Fort Benton being opened." On his arrival he turned over all his wagon transportation to Major Blake; but he retained a force of about twenty-five men with which he returned over the road in advance of Major Blake's command, starting August 5—"having seen that the party to descend the Missouri were properly provided for their trip. . . ." He had previously reported that he had at Fort Benton "a ninety-foot keel boat, which I shall use in sending my party down the Missouri."

On November 1, 1860, in a communication to the assistant adjutant general, headquarters department of Oregon, Lieutenant Mullan sought to demonstrate that in future it would be more economical to use Fort Snelling as a rendezvous for troops destined for the easterly posts of the department of Oregon, the supplies, however, to be transported by steamboat to Fort Union and Fort Benton. In the course of his demonstration he states the experimental case of transportation of troops via the Missouri:

"As you are aware, during the summer of 1859 and 1860 the Missouri River was proved to be navigable to within one hundred miles of the Rocky Mountains, and during the present season a military detachment of three hundred recruits, under Major Blake, ascended in steamers as high as Fort Benton, where, taking land transportation, they moved safely and in good season to Fort Walla Walla.

"This demonstrated that the Missouri River, together with the intervening land transit to the Columbia, could be used as a military line whenever the necessity for a movement existed, and provided the proper season for navigation be taken advantage of. But in future years, or until the condition of the interior shall guarantee an abundance of land transportation at the head of navigation on the Missouri, the element of uncertainty must ever enter into the movement of any body of troops to this coast via the Missouri and Columbia. During the last season it was practicable because we had land transportation at hand for the movement westward."

This objection is probably overrated to accommodate a prepossession.

In a letter following Lieutenant Mullan's, Colonel Wright of the Ninth infantry concurs in his views, and he adds that the passage of a body of troops from Fort Snelling to Washington Territory would have an excellent effect upon the Indians on the route, checking a disposition to commit hostilities.

"A Report on Lieutenant Mullan's Waggon Road . . ." by Major E. Steen to Quartermaster-General Joseph E. Johnston, dated at Fort Walla Walla January 5, 1861, states the case for the overland road in a manner which discloses a somewhat bitter feeling between partisans of the rival routes:

"General: I take the liberty, and feel it my duty, to call your attention to the Fort Benton waggon road, as I believe, from experience in the service, and, crossing the plains frequently for the last thirty years, that the cost of sending recruits or horses to this coast by that route will be ten times as much as by the route from Fort Leavenworth, via Forts Riley, Laramie, Hall, and Boisé, to this post; for by the boat to Benton each soldier will cost one hundred dollars, and each waggon the same; then to get mules or oxen for the waggons would be double the cost that it would be at Leavenworth.

"Purchase your horses, waggons, and oxen or mules to transport your supplies at Leavenworth, and if the transportation is not needed here on its arrival, it can be sold at public auction for its full value in the States. By this means each soldier will hardly cost ten dollars, whereas by the Benton route each one would cost three hundred by the arrival here.

"One more suggestion. Could not the one hundred thousand dollars already appropriated, and not yet expended, be transferred to the old road I speak of? It is much the shortest and best route and emigrants come through every season, arriving here by the end of September, their animals in very good condition.

"A post is to be established at Boisé in the spring, and there will always be troops at Fort Hall to protect emigration, and all that is needed are ferries at these posts, and very little work on the road.

"There will then be grass, water, and all that is requisite for a military or emigrant road.

"I do believe, if the one hundred thousand dollars is expended, and the Benton road finished, that not ten emigrants will travel it for twenty years to come.

"But suppose you make the road from St. Paul to Benton, then you must establish a line of posts through the Sioux and Blackfoot country requiring at least fifteen hundred soldiers, at a cost of half a million annually, and if there would be a war, at a cost of three or four millions more.

"In a conversation with Major Blake, of the army, who came by the Benton route with three hundred recruits last summer, he spoke favourably of the route, and said he would apply to bring over horses from St. Paul, via Benton,

to this department. Now, I am satisfied that the cost by that route will be ten times as much as by the route from Leavenworth, via Laramie, Hall, and Boisé, and, in addition, the major's route is much the longest; and in the months of May and June, from St. Paul west, say one thousand miles, you have much wet and marshy prairie, which I consider impassable.

"Starting in July, then, you could not come through in the same season; and wintering in the mountains northeast of us would cause much expense, the loss of many animals, and much suffering amongst the men."

Against Major Steen's unsupported statement that the cost per soldier from Fort Snelling to Washington Territory would be three hundred dollars, Lieutenant Mullan shows an estimate in detail that it would be only fifty-four dollars. The road was used but little for military transportation, though, contrary to Major Steen's prediction, it became a very important highway for emigrants to Idaho, Washington, and Oregon. The construction of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1883 in the main superseded the Mullan road. The arrival of the Northern Pacific railroad at Bismarck in 1873 greatly reduced the traffic from Sioux City, and the last through trip of a commercial steamboat from St. Louis to Fort Benton was made in 1878. Steamboat traffic on the river was reduced and its main initial points changed by the successive arrivals of railroads at the Missouri River from the east,—the Chicago & North-Western at Council Bluffs in 1867; the Sioux City & Pacific at Sioux City in 1868; the Northern Pacific at Bismarck in 1873; and the body blow was struck when the Great Northern reached Helena, Montana, in 1887. In his booklet, "Nebraska in 1857," James M. Woolworth said that Omaha "is at present the head of navigation of the Missouri River." A very promising commercial traffic by barges has recently been established between Kansas City and St. Louis.

In explanation of the fact that the high-up Missouri River points mentioned herein are placed in Nebraska, it should be said that until the territory of Dakota was established, March 2, 1861, Nebraska territory extended north to the Canadian boundary and west to the Rocky Mountains. The Lieutenant Warren mentioned became famous afterward in our sectional war. He was chief engineer of the Army of the Potomac and ordered the occupation of Little Round Top on the Gettysburg battlefield, a point of great strategic importance. He participated in the famous battle of Ash Hollow, Nebraska, in 1855, and made important surveys in the territory in 1857-58. *The Century*

magazine was published at New York and gave special attention to military affairs. Copies of it are in the public library of Chicago. Its issue of June 16, 1860, describes the *Spread Eagle* as a side-wheel vessel drawing four feet; therefore it could not keep up with the *Chippewa* and the *Key West*, which had stern wheels and drew only thirty-two inches. According to Larpen-
teur, the *Chippewa*, the crack steamboat of the Missouri at that time, reached Fort Brule, six miles above Marias River and sixteen miles below Benton, July 17, 1859. The boat was burned at Disaster Bend, fifteen miles below the mouth of Poplar River, June 23, 1861. "She was a stern-wheeler, 160 x 32 feet, owned by the A. F. Co., W. H. Humphreys, master."

ALBERT WATKINS.

Lincoln, Neb.