

COPY OF LETTER WRITTEN  
by  
WILLIAM HENRY BASKETT

(I have typed it as given to me, without paragraphs, little punctuation and misspelled words. It was written on 20 pages with notes added on some of the pages. These will be included at the end.)

"Marion County, Oregon, November 5th, 1865

"Mr. James F. McDaniel. My Dear friend I expect you begin to conclude that all my promises to write to you were incincere but when you are acquainted with the circumstances under which an emigrant is placed you wil redily excuse any seeming neglect of the kind. I had thought before I started that I should find considerable leisure but I found that an emigrants life is a busy life and more over when we lay by to rest it was the busiest time of all and when I found a little spare time I found it impossible to compose my mind so as to give anything like a connected account of my travel So I concluded to wait till I stopped and then try to give you as full an account as possible. Well we started as you know on the 22nd of May which was Monday and on Saturday got to Brownsville, Neb. on Tuesday we left for Nebraska City. where we arived on Wednesday. Thursday we went to Wades where we remained till Saturday which was the 3rd day of June when we cut loose from friends and relatives and started on our long Journey. On that day we fell in with Pendleton and we moved on to Ft. Kearney. We struck the Big Platt 40 Ms. from Ft. K. on the 12ins at a place called the Junction. At the Fort we were organized by Military order into a Company of 50 men 36 wagons 50 Horses 23 Mules 128 cows and 112 Oxen with 72 children and a corresponding number of Women. So we moved from Ft. Kearney on the 16 of June. Our rout lay right up Platt river on the South Side. The road was filled with Emigrants Trains Freight Trains drovers and Soldiers so that we were never out of sight of wagons and often could see as many as 100 wagons (with from 4 to 6 yoke of Cattle to each) at one sight. Cottonwood Springs is 100ms from Kearney it is a military Fort. Julesburg is 200 ms from Cottonwood and is also a post. Here we would have crossed the river but the Military would not allow it as our rout would then be up Poll Creek North

Platt and Sweet Water and would be through the Territory of the SIOUXS AND CYANNESE (Sues and Shianns) which were in Hostility to Uncle Sam So we had to move on still on the South Side of Platt to 45 ms above the Denver Cutoff which is 145 ms from Julesburg where we ferried over on the 12 of July being just one month on Platt river But now we left it and passed up a small river Tributary to place called Cesla poudet (Pronounced Cash la pou) which we followed for 30 ms to where it comes out of the Black hills at a place called La port here we took the mountains on the 14 day of July. On the 20 we arrived on Larimie river here it rained and snowed on us for several hours on the 21 We reach Ft. Hallick on the 4 of Aug here a little Boy Son of a Widow Hubbard died and was buried Passing on from here we in a few days Struck over the Summit of the Rocky Mountains and down on Bitter Creek and a Bitter Creek it was for a distance of over 10ms there is but little grass and water and that of a poor quality We had to drive our stock from 3 to 5 ms from Camp all the time we were on this Creek in order to get feed Once we had to travel from Morning till midnight without grass or water and when we got to water it was so bad that the stock would hardly use it but it was all the chance either for them or us so we made the best we could of it and went ahead till we struck Green river where we arrived on the 12 of Aug one month after we had crossed Platt Passing from thence we soon Struck Hams fork of Green river along which we had excellent grass and water. in 4 or 5 days we left it and struck across the mountains to Bear River. here we had Some Considerable mountains to cross as bad if not the worst of the whole trip. (It was on Bear river that Fanny was taken down with her last Sickness.) leaving Bear we struck out for Snake River (which is one fork of the Columbia) where we arrived on the 28 of Aug. on the 29 we Crossed to the North side of Snake and pursued our Journey onward. Part of the emigration went down on the South Side of Snake and thereby did not have to cross at all whereas those who cross onto the north Side have to cross the Second time The North route is the shortest By from 75 to 100 ms besides the Snake Indians who inhabit on the South side are hostile and are Committing numerous deprivations. Between the Crossings of Snake at a River called Little Wood river Fannie died on the 4th of Sep. One of the greatest Curiosities I saw was on the North side of Snake. It consists of vast beds of Lava the work of Some ancient Volcano we were some 3 or 4 days passing those beds which appear to have been rock heated so

intensely hot that they have been melted to a kind of fluid state and have flown and flown the whole Country. in many places so far as the eye can see There is nothing but this burnt rock without one particle of Earth missed with it or one Plant Shrub or bit of vegetation of any kind whatever and altho it in many places is almost imposible for any kind of animal to pass over it But I cannot discribe them now I have not space. After we crossed Snake the first ime we procured a way Bill (from Some Oregon Webbfoote Soldiers stationed on the road) With the distance from one point to another for the Balance of the trip or to a town on the Columbia called Dalles which being added up make 628 ms from the upper ferry on Snake to the town which town is situated on the East side of the Cascade mountains and is the Shiping point for all such as do not wish to Cross the Cascades But I am departing from the thread of my naritive (take another sheet) Before Frances was taken sick and while we at Green river we moved Georges and Frances things into my wagons and they traveled thence forward with me for the following reasons Viz I had taken notice almost from the start that Pendleton was disposed to bearin down pretty heavy on George who with 5 yoke of oxen and often with a sick wife to attend to was required also to take up and harness the horses Strch the tent George did his duty faithfully and said but little not knowing how to help himself Willes thinking he had him where the hair was tight Still bore down more heaviely and became more abusing George still said nothing I still kept my mouth shut but my ears and eyes open untill upon the occasion aluded to when we were on Green river he gave George the lie and threatened to put them out to shift for themselves I thinking it had gone far enough Took George aside and told him that he could do as he pleased that he need not take it from him any more that I had wagons and teams sufficient to take him and his things along So he gladly accepted my proposal and left Willis to attend to his own affair as best he could who had to hire a hand to drive his team in Georges place. You Bet he was hot but he did not know who to spit his spite at." (Will included a whole line of dots and signs of laughter and spit.) "At a place called Castle Rock on the N. side of Snake one of Willis Oxen came unyoked while going down a long slant and in attempting to yoke him again they got his mate loose from the wagon and from the other cattle of the team when as soon as he found him self loose with the yoke he broke off down the hill at full speed bellowing every jump and ran into

Willises other ox team and stampeaded them who came tearing down at full speed and turning out of the road upset the wagon broke the cupling pole tore the goose neck off the tounge threw down an ox draged him 50 or 60 yds broke off on of his horns and Bruised and banged him up generaly. When we got them stopped we set to work to Repair the damage which occupied an hour or perhaps two when we came to look after the Cattle lo and behold; 3 yoke of the Cattle which ran away with the wagon were gone and no one knew where we waited and hunted for near 2 days but still could not find them so the train moved forward and left Willis behind to hunt for them. he got a young man who was hearing Cattle near by by the name of Childs a cousin to Dick to help him hunt they finaly struck their trail in the mountains and followed them back near 100 ms over took them and got some Emegrants to bring them on and he came on and over took the train again an absence of 8 or 10 days About the 12th of Sep. Israel Crook was taken with Mountain fever he was quite sick for a few days but soon recovered About the 15 of Sep. Mary was taken down with the same complaint and she was not able to do much more the balance of the trip tho she has now recovered her usual health Several of the Children were sick with Bowel Complaints all along through the latter part of the trip which made it pretty hard on us who were well. We passed Boise City about the 15 of Sep Crossed Snake River the second time on the 22nd of Sep at Olds ferry when we got a cros we were in Oregon tho not in the Williamette Valley by a jug full So we passed on and on the 1st of October got to Grand Round Valley this is a pretty vally with a thriveing town or two in it here I was tempted to stop as my family was Sick and some of my stock becoming wasteed but I went on and soon Crossed the Blue Mountains at the foot of which is the road which leads off to the right to the Walla Walla Valley here I understand Dill Porter turned aside and stoped for the winter but I still went on Our train had been dwindling down ever since we were on Bitter Creek till there were but 8 wagons of us together Our stock were getting poor and weak and we had to travel slow my water Cattle came so nigh giving out that I sold them for \$40. my Sorrel mare took what is called mountain distemper and I sold her for \$10. and the next day she died One of my Lewis Steers took the hollow horn and I swaped him off for a fresh one of the same age and gave \$2. to boot. After we got over the Blue Mountains we next came to Birch Creek where we were helped by the Settlers to as much good Sweet milk as we wanted

gratis and as much butter and vegetables at a reasonable price as we wanted and you bet we made them chepe. We next came to Butter Creek next to Willow Creek then to Ruck Creek then to John Days river then to Des Chutees River then to 10 mile creek then to 6 mile creek then to Dalles where we arrived on the 23 of October on the 24 we took Boat at 5 O'clock in the morning and at 6 1/2 in the evening we landed in Portland it is 100 ms from Dalles to Portland we had to unship at 45 ms from Dalles take Rail Road for 5 ms as the river is not navigable on account of rocks for the distance then we shipped again and were soon in Portland which is on the Willamette River 11ms from its Confluence with the Columbia. The next day we hitched up and started to the South up the valley aiming for Lynn County but everybody told me that the upper part of the valley was full of emigrants and it would be hard to find a vacant house So I concluded to inquire as I went for a place to stop at and to take the first opportunity that would conserver for we were thouroly tired of traveling Besides my family had not fully recoverd their health and the weather bid fair to be wet (one more sheet) Well on we went inquiring as we went till Saturday the 28 of October we stopped I equired of some passers by and they told me of the house I now occupy I saw the owner got permission and moved in that same day

Well now I am here and you want to know how I like the Country and what the prospect is for living here. Well from Portland up the valley this far is a heavy timberd Country part of it is roling and part of it is level the soil looks good and there is plenty of Wheat Oats hay and vegetables in the country Wheat is \$100. Oats or 50 cents pr bushel vegetables are of the best quality and as cheap as you could ask meat is scarce and high as there is but little ready for market pork is 10 cents Beef 8 cents Stock is pretty high Oxen \$100. yoke horses \$100 per head Cows and Calves \$25. There is the best Horses here take them altogether that I have ever saw Cattle and sheep are Superior to our Mo stock you have heard that this was a great fruit country but the half has not been told in fact I can hardly believe my own eyes when I see the vast profusion on every farm that I have saw there is vast amounts of the best kinds of fall fruit on the ground rotting or being destroyed by hogs while the winter apples are being gathered and housed by the thousand Bushels to the farm The apples are some of them perfect giants in size I have one now in the house that is 16 inches in Circumference In fact from what I have seen I encline to

the opinion that they have over done the thing in regard to fruit raising for they have planted so much of their land in orchards and planted it so closely that it is not fit for much else. But I have not been here long enough yet to form a correct opinion about any thing therefore I refrain from a further description at this time but will keep you posted here after I have sold my 2 horsewagon and sheet for \$132. reserving the spring seat When I speak of the price of anything I mean is is worth so much in gold that being the currency here Green bucks go at 75 cts to the dollar I have bought 30bu. wheat 50 bu Oats 21 doz sheaf Oats a cow and calf all the potatoes I want and there is more apples on the place I am on than we can use which cost me nothing I get my house for a year if I want it that long, gratis I also have a chance to rent all the land I want for the next year The house is a comfortable little frame with a frame Cook room and Stable I have now given you an imperfect account of my trip it is also done imperfect manner I will try to write again soon I request you to show this to our relatives and friends. I remain your friend"

Will Baskett

"I have left out many things that I would like to write about I cant tell all at once. Be sure and tell me all the news when you write I am so anxious to hear every thing Tell every body to write to me.

"There is but little corn raised here farther South they say they raise some considerable amount The Pararie set in Just south of here they say it is the prettiest country out doors I have not saw it yet but intend to before long.

"George and Israel are gone up the valley they will likely be at Wils Peryes before they return as they expect to go up as far as Eugene City They are looking at the country and for work to do

"Mary sends her respects to you all We will never forget you nor the Pleasure we have enjoyed in your company.

"Be sure you write to us Direct to Aarora Marion County Oregon."