ABEL J. VANMETER, HIS PARK
AND HIS DIARY

BY

MRS. JEAN TYREE HAMILTON
In 1932 "Miss Annie" Van Meter and her brother, Charles Pittman, deeded 506 acres of Saline County land to the State of Missouri for the establishment of Van Meter State Park in honor of her husband, Abel J. Van Meter. The tract was part of the original land entered by the family and included the Van Meter family cemetery where Abel, his wife, his brother, their parents and other members of the family as well as some servants are buried. This walled cemetery is on top of a high ridge of that peculiar formation called "The Pinnacles" overlooking the Missouri River bottom. Immediately in front of the stile entrance over the five foot concrete wall is an ancient Indian mound.

Abel, or Abe, as he was to be called, was born in Hardy County, Virginia, in 1834, the son of Abraham and Elizabeth Parsons Vanmeter. Abraham was born in Hardy County in 1785; his father, Joseph, served through the Revolution with Washington. Abraham served in the War of 1812. He came with his family and slaves to Saline County in 1834 where he accumulated a large tract of land near Miami and became the most extensive cattle dealer in northwestern Missouri. "... He fed cattle for the market, which market he found by driving his cattle to St. Louis and other cities, there being no railroads. At one time he drove 1600 head of cattle and a large number of sheep to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, a remarkable feat. In those days it was not possible to get hogs that would follow cattle in the feed lot and he used sheep instead for this purpose and marketed them with the cattle. The trip to Philadelphia required four months, one month of which was spent in Ohio, waiting for the grass to grow so that the cattle could be properly fed along the road."

An interesting memento of Abraham's dealings is preserved in the family papers:

1. History of Saline County (Marceline, Missouri, 1967), 483; Saline County Recorder's Records, Book 237, 49; Book 222, 511.
3. William B. Napton, Past and Present of Saline County, Missouri (Indianapolis, Indiana, 1910), 595. The Vanmeters were in Saline County by June 30, 1834, as there is a bill with Jackson & Miller of Arrow Rock of that date. Abraham and David entered land on December 16, 1834 (Entry Book A, 21).
Received of A. [bracketed] Vanmeter of Saline County for collection one note for Twenty Dollars on Sack Indian Kan-Kan-to also I have a claim to collect against said Indians “Hard Fish Band” for 20 Horses sold them by Mr. Vanmeter Amounting to Six Hundred Dollars all of which when collected I will turn over to him.

R.A. Kinzie

One Sorl Mare Hardfish  Fish  60.00
left in your care

Abraham and Elizabeth Parsons Vanmeter had four children: David Parsons (June 23, 1817 - April 21, 1884), who married Margaret Nye; Mary, who married J.P. Henning; Rebecca (August 4, 1825 - February 19, 1881), who married Joseph D. Prosser; and Abel James (born in 1834).

Abel at twelve, in 1846, attended Professor Robert Ruxton’s school at nearby Miami, and later the Masonic College at Lexington, Missouri. He left records of his expenses at Lexington and of his early business dealings including the purchase of Charles, a copper colored Negro for $1005 in 1853, and of York, in 1854, for $700. In October, 1856, he sold to Joseph Shelby (later General J.O. Shelby of Civil War fame) & Co., Waverly, 126 head of four- and five-year-old steers bought from seven different men. Besides the buying and selling of livestock, he was a “Stallion Keeper,” and in 1868 for so being he was taxed $10.50 by the Collector of Revenue at Lexington.

Abel was married for the first time in January, 1874, to Miss Christina A. Nye, the daughter of George Nye of Saline County whose sister became the wife of his brother David in July of the same year. The men built similar houses for their brides, on adjoining acreages, the same carpenter doing the building. After Christina’s death in 1883, Abel married Miss Anna Pittman, daughter of Charles Pittman, in 1886. No children were born of either marriage. His niece, Mrs. Lucinda Van Meter Haynie and his great-nieces, Mrs. Elizabeth Haynie Marshall and Mrs. Virginia Van

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4. Van Meter Papers in the possession of Mrs. Virginia Van Meter Waldorf, Marshall, Missouri, hereinafter designated as the Waldorf-Van Meter Papers.
6. Waldorf-Van Meter Papers. In 1846, Mrs. Abraham Vanmeter paid $4.75 for four months and three weeks’ tuition for Abel to Professor Robert Ruxton’s school at Miami. She also, according to the receipt, paid 45¢ for a geography; 20¢ for a second reader; 20¢ for a second arithmetic; and 10¢ for a second speller. Abel himself leaves a list of “Professors at the Masonic College in Lexington: Davis, Paterson, Camron & President Shaver.”
Meter Waldorf, live in Marshall, Missouri, and have been helpful with family history. It is Mrs. Waldorf who has preserved Abel’s diary and many other family papers.7

Abel Vanmeter was an adroit business man, entered his first land in November, 1843, engaged in farming and the livestock business for years, and at his death in July, 1920, had accumulated 2937 acres of land according to the inventory of his estate.8

On some of these acres is the location of the Missouri Indian Village, the home of the tribe for whom both the river and the state were named. Archaeologically it is designated as “The Utz Site” or 23Sa2. Today much of the village site is in Van Meter State Park. Here is located the Lyman Research Center of the University of Missouri where the Hamilton Field School of Archaeology is held each summer.

Abraham Vanmeter entered the specific sixty acres (SW Frl quarter of 19-52-21) upon which the Research Center buildings are located on December 12, 1836. He sold it to William Robbins, who had entered land to the east, in 1837. It then went to John Robinson in 1849, to E.S. Casebolt in 1869, to W.R. Utz in 1913, to Roy Franklin in 1935, to Herman Sutte in 1940, to Carlyle Morrison in 1958, to the State of Missouri in 1960, and to the University of Missouri for the Research Center in 1961.9 The Lyman Archaeological Research Center of the University of Missouri is named for Mr. and Mrs. W. P. Lyman who in 1958 donated the first 42 additional acres of archaeological important land to the Park Board to be added to the existing Van Meter Park, thus activating the chain of events that made possible the development of the Center. With a gift of 71 acres in 1969, the Lyman’s contribution of land has totaled over 200 acres. Other factors in the center’s development were the fact that Van Meter Park was selected as a pilot project by the National Park Service which provided a suggested plan for long range development, a National Science Foundation grant and state legislative appropriations that made the buildings possible, and the constant cooperation and interest of the Missouri State Park Board and the University of Missouri.

Much of the rest of the Missouri Indian Village site was entered by various members of the Haynie family in 1837. The southern part, a portion of which is now in the State Park, was acquired by W.F. Utz in 1888

7. Napton, Saline County, 595-597; Portrait and Biographical Records of Lafayette and Saline Counties, Missouri (Chicago, 1893), 148.
9. Saline County Recorder’s Records, Entry Book A, 26; Book H, 272; Book 10, 510; Book 154, 361; Book 247, 18; Book 261, 611; Book 346, 124; Book 350, 562; Book 357, 51.
from J.A. Saffley; the northern part by him from E.S. Casebolt in 1913. Today that part of the Missouri Village not in the State Park is still in the Utz family’s possession. It is fittingly called “The Utz Site.”

The forty acres (SW SE 24–52–22) upon which “The Old Fort” is located was entered by William Webb in 1837, bought from him by David P. Vanmeter in 1840, and deeded to the State of Missouri for preservation by his daughter, Lucinda Van Meter Haynie and her husband 98 years later in 1938.

It was with the Abel Van Meters that Gerard Fowke of the Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution, lived during his investigation of “The Old Fort” earthworks and the Missouri Village Site in 1906, that was published in Bulletin 37 of that institution, in 1910.

Abraham Vanmeter maintained a warehouse or storehouse on the farm some distance west of his home. It was continued by his son, Abel, who felt it much better that his workers not go to town and be subjected to the temptations thereof. So here were kept staple food, tobacco, clothing, feed and other supplies for the family and farm as well as for the workers and their families who lived on the farm. It developed into a sort of general country store where neighbors could also get supplies. Charles D. Peterman, of Miami, reported that his father, Sterling Price Peterman, bought feed there as late as 1895. Its existence is substantiated by bills for clothing and staples due the Vanmeters by various individuals and a receipt to a patent medicine company for pills to be sold on commission.

A small account book of Abel’s shows services and supplies commandeered from his family (it was during these years that his mother died) by the northern Army during the Civil War. His listings may have been made in order to render an account; there is no way to know if it was ever submitted or paid:


June 28. Co. I seven men to supper

10. Saline County Recorder’s Records, Book 58, 296; Book 154, 361.
11. Saline County Recorder’s Records, Entry Book A, 21; Book 258, 73.
12. Interview with Mrs. Annie Van Meter by Henry W. Hamilton, about 1930.

31. Lt. Burnside, 4 men and horses to dinner.


Dec. 12. By order Lt. Burnside. 4 horse team and driver, 4 days, trip to Sedalia.

12. One load of timothy hay, 1000 lbs.


July. Col. Phillips, and 7 Regular M.S.M. to 2 mules and 1 bay mare, 1 load of oats, 5 barrels of corn and burning 500 rails.

According to the 1967 Saline County History, the Vanmeter family maintained a school for Negro children prior to and after the Civil War. It was located at the edge of the bluff just east of where the first shelter house in Van Meter Park is now situated. It was taught by a white teacher. Mrs. Lucinda Van Meter Haynie reports a school for family children was held in a small building called “the schoolhouse” that was presided over by a governess.

In later years Abel Vanmeter maintained a race track southwest of his home in an area that is now just outside the park boundaries. This circular track, almost a half mile in length, would more properly be termed an exercise ring, for here he broke, trained and exercised his blooded harness and saddle horses of which he was very proud. He was proud too of his Durham cattle.

In March of 1865, at the age of 31, Abel Vanmeter went to increase his fortune (or satisfy his curiosity) in the mines of the Montana Territory, leaving his business interests at home in the hands of his brother, David, who was seventeen years his senior. With him, on the steamboat Deer Lodge, went partner, N.M. Holloway, and Holloway’s family. Also aboard

15. Ibid.
17. Interview with Mrs. Lucinda Van Meter Haynie, January 8, 1971.
18. Nathan Monroe Holloway (or N.M. or M.N. or Munroe as the Vanmeters variously call him) was the second son of Nathan Samuel and Bena Lawless Holloway, born in Saline County in 1828. Nathan (1795-1855) married Bena (1798-1861) and settled in Howard County, Missouri, in 1817, moving to Saline by 1819. Here they lived until their deaths. They are buried in the Holloway family cemetery on the Homestead (17-52-21) which was only two and one half miles from the Vanmeters. They were the parents of eight sons and four daughters, all born in Saline County between 1819 and 1838. Several sons left for Atchinson County before the Civil War, their father having entered land there for them. One son, Smith Holloway, was killed
the Deer Lodge was R.M. Frazer, about whom nothing is known except that his unpublished diary about the same trip is in the collections of the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis; Frazer’s account is often helpful in expanding on Vanmeter’s scant notes.

Vanmeter was not in the class of most gold seekers as he was already affluent; his tax receipt for 1865 showed that he paid taxes on 1576 acres of Saline Country land in that year. It is interesting that his taxes included “Union Military Tax on Real Estate.”

Businessman that he was, he did not simply board a steamboat at the nearby riverport of Miami for the trip to Fort Benton, but took advantage of the journey to turn a dollar. He took the Kate Kinney to Lexington where he purchased or otherwise secured mules and took them overland to the important market at St. Joseph. From there he went to Fort Benton on the Deer Lodge, leaving St. Joseph on March 24, 1865, and arriving at Fort Benton on May 30. He traveled overland to Helena where he soon gave up the idea of mining and resumed the familiar dealing in livestock. His livestock ventures included trading in sheep and cattle. He also sold cattle for oxen and sheep for mutton. He conceived the idea of having his brother buy cheap cattle in Missouri and ship them up river by steamboat to be sold to the freighters for use as oxen in the transportation of freight from Fort Benton to the gold fields. It is evident from David Vanmeter’s letters that due to the long lags in communication and his father’s illness, this venture did not materialize.

Abel Vanmeter remained in the Montana Territory until July 6, 1866, when he boarded the steamer Agnes at Fort Benton for the return trip.

by Indians in Nevada on his way to California in 1857; his wife, Nancy Bush, although scalped, lived for a number of years.

Nathan Monroe Holloway married Lucity Mann, daughter of Rutha and William Mann on September 3, 1854. He and his wife and children accompanied Abel Vanmeter on the Deer Lodge in 1865. The two men had business dealings together before going west and again after their return, at least until May, 1868 (Waldorf Van Meter Papers).

For many years Holloway was a dealer in mules in Jefferson City, Missouri, and gained considerable wealth before he moved to California for reason of health; he died on the West Coast in 1904 (All Holloway family data from Mrs. R.H. Everett, St. James, Missouri, a descendant of a brother of N.M. Holloway).

It is surprising that Holloway took his wife and family along to the Montana Territory; possibly he once had some intention of staying permanently. In letters quoted later in this article, we shall see that David Vanmeter sends his regards to “Munroe and Mrs. Holloway and children,” evidence that the family was along on the Upper Missouri.


20. Ibid. Also Waldorf-Van Meter Papers.
Because his father, who had been in ill health, died on August 25, 1866, we may presume that it was a message concerning the elder Vanmeter's condition that caused Abel's return.

Vanmeter kept a diary during this period in his life, and meager though it is, along with a letter he wrote to Missouri and a few he received from his brother David, gives us an insight into the time and its conditions.

On the back pages of the diary, Abel kept detailed accounts of his business transactions, but he seemed to enter them wherever he happened to open the book. The entries, while dated, are in no chronological order; both the years and months are mixed.

Abel spelled his name "Vanmeter" as did the rest of the family at the time. It should be explained, perhaps, that the present family members spell it "Van Meter" and so the park is named. All names and places mentioned in the journal have been identified as far as is possible, and finally, it should be remembered that when Vanmeter speaks of "left" or "right" bank of the river, he means the bank on his left or right, and not as in modern usage, the river's left or right bank.

THE DIARY OF ABEL J. VANMETER

Started from home on seventeenth of March A/D 1865, went to DeWitt and returned to Miami and taken a boat, Kate Kinney, to Lexington, Lafayette County, Missouri. [DeWitt, on the north bank of the Missouri River in Carroll County, was founded by Mormons in 1837 with the hope of establishing a Mormon port for goods to supply the religious group's settlement of the region. They were driven out, however, during the Mormon war in the fall of 1838.21 Miami was platted as Greenville in 1838 on the south bank of the Missouri in Saline County, but soon was named Miami for the Indians who at one time had a village nearby; it was, by 1840, a river port of considerable importance, shipping large quantities of hemp and other produce.22 The Kate Kinney, with John Kinney of Boonville as Captain, was one of five Missouri River packets belonging to the St. Louis and Omaha Packet Line which made regular trips from St. Louis to Sioux City.23 Lexington, seat of Lafayette County, was platted in 1822 and became an early commercial center for river and overland trade. It

22. History of Saline County, Missouri (St. Louis, 1881) 445.
23. St. Louis, Missouri, Tri-Weekly Missouri Democrat, March 6, 1865.
was the home office of Aull Brothers, and Russell, Majors & Waddell, both pioneer freighting firms, the latter the originators of the ill-fated Pony Express. Lexington was the site of the Battle of the Hemp Bales in September, 1861, which ended in a Southern victory.]

I went to Knoxville, Ray Co. stayed all night at Thomas Linville’s 7 miles N E of Knoxville, thence to Platsburg and staid all night with J.D.Clasley 7 miles N W of Platsburg. [Knoxville was a village in Knoxville Township, 15 miles north of Richmond and 90 miles southeast of St. Joseph. Thomas Linville was a prominent Ray County farmer and livestock dealer who took an active part in the local war against the Mormons and was one of the party that captured Joseph Smith. Platsburg, the seat of Clinton County, was founded in 1835 and served as the United States Land Office from 1843 to 1859.]

The night that I arrived at J.D.C.’s the mules got out and I hunted them days and found them all but two. The next day started to St. Joseph with the mules, arrived there in the evening and started back to J.D.C.’s the next day about twelve o’clock, hunted the mules three days and found them and returned to St. Joseph on the evening of March 23, A.D. 1865. [St. Joseph, which grew from Joseph Robidoux’s 1826 trading post, was incorporated in 1851. The short-lived Pony Express used the city for its eastern terminus in 1860-1861. It had long been a market center for hemp, grain and livestock, so was a natural market for Vanmeter’s mules.]

Stayed on the Steamer Deer Lodge that night and started from there the next evening about half past one. [The Deer Lodge was a fast, light draught steamboat of 493 tons especially constructed at Pittsburgh for the Montana & Idaho Transportation Line owned by John G. Copelin and John J. Roe for the handling of freight in the immediate Fort Benton area. This was her maiden voyage. An advertisement in the St. Louis Tri-Weekly Missouri Democrat on February 24, 1865, promised that “Steamer Deer Lodge will remain between Fort Union and Fort Benton so cargo of all boats of this line can be delivered to Benton. By this arrangement shippers have great advantages and an assurance that their freight will be delivered to destination. We are prepared to furnish land transportation from Fort Benton to the Mines and will give through Bills of Lading to Silver City,

24. William Young, History of Lafayette County, Missouri (Indianapolis, Indiana, 1910), I, 91-118.
25. Missouri Gazetteer and Business Directory (St. Louis, 1876-1877), 279.
26. History of Ray County, Missouri (St. Louis, 1881), 712.
28. History of Buchanan County, Missouri (St. Joseph, Missouri, 1881), 391.
Last Chance, Prickly Pear, Deer Lodge, Virginia City, Bannock City and Gallatin." The Deer Lodge was described by General Phillippe Regis de Trobriand who rode her in 1867 when he went to build Fort Stevenson as follows: "... the general construction is simple. The hull is flat, almost without a keel, made to displace as little water as possible. When completely loaded, it does not draw more than 4 feet of water, average 3 to 3 1/2 ft. Under the first deck, the hull forms the hold where the merchandise is stacked, one half to two thirds the length of the boat, the forward deck is open. The stern is closed in a room to protect the engines and serve as a repair shop. The furnaces and boilers are on the deck, forward of the engines. They pile firewood port, starboard, and forward, leaving a passage for the crew on each side of it. In front of the furnaces, there is an open stairway which leads up to the Upper Deck. This deck supported the length of the boat by castiron columns, encloses a dining room or salon in the center, from which all cabins open on port and starboard. . . Outside the cabins on both sides there is a gallery onto which each cabin opens by a glass door. The great paddle board wheel which propels her is as wide as the stern. The pilot house, which contains the wheel is located forward on the upper deck between the two high smokestacks and a little astern." 29 She was armed with a field piece and carried both a carpenter and a blacksmith.30

Nothing transpired on the 24th, got along well. Lade up eight miles above White Cloud [White Cloud, Doniphan County, Kansas, was laid out before 1857 and named for the chief of the Iowa Indians.31] 25th got along well, lade up near St. Stevens opposite Holt Co., Mo. 26th got along fine, nothing happening, laid up 8 miles below Nebraska Cty. Arrived at Nebraska Cty 1/2 after 7 in the morning, laid up at the above named 1/2 hour & proceeded. [Nebraska City was the site of the original Fort Kearney, built in 1846 and later moved in 1848 to the south bank of the Platte in south central Nebraska.32 While the Deer Lodge was laid up here, it had its first visit from a band of Indians on a begging mission.33]
All well 27th, lay up at St. Maries [St. Mary’s] in Miles County Iowa, 10 miles below Council Bluffs, nothing transpired this day. [The name Council Bluffs was taken from a map made by Lewis and Clark on their expedition. The party had held a council with the Otoe and Missouri chiefs on the Nebraska side about 20 miles above the present town. Later when making their map, the explorers lettered in Council Bluffs on the Iowa side of the river for convenience sake.]

Mar. 28 A.D. arrived at Omaha at 12 oclock nothing transpired of importance this day, laid up 5 miles above Bower River. [Omaha, named for the local Indian tribe, was surveyed in 1854 when Nebraska became a Territory. In 1865 it was a haven for many Missourians “vamoosing” from northern counties to escape the draft: “This Territory is pretty well filled with Skiddalers from the States. Work is very scarce with exceptions of Rail Roading. I have been at work one week at two dollars per day, paying four dollars a week for board. I have found a great many friends here from Missouri. Several from Monroe County, have not met any Shelby County boys yet, but expect to see some soon from the news I see in the papers.”

Mar. 29th Proceeded up a short distance, laid up 4 hours for repairs [a broken flange on the paddle wheel] taken a hunt, killed nothing. Proceeded up to mouth of Soldier River, laid up for the night. 30th Proceeded, got to the mouth of the Little Sioux at 4 oclock. 20 miles above in a short Bend of snags, broke one of our rudders, ankered out in the River, dark came on before we could get them fixed, laid here all night. [Snags were the Nemesis of the steamboats in the sandy part of the Missouri— that part of the river below Cow Island. Attempts at their removal were begun early. In 1838, two snagboats, the Heliopolis and the Archimedes ran up river 325 and 385 miles respectively and removed 2,245 snags.]

Another important snagboat was the Horatio G. Wright.]

Mar. 31st Proceeded a short distance, near 8 oclock in a snaggy bend Snag caught the hog chain on the boiler deck and carried it off and smashing things generally. Went to work and repaired it and proceeded again, near 12 oclock got [aground] again. We left one of our passengers, Bishop

35. Letter from John B. Lowman dated Omaha, February 8, 1865, to Sarah F. Duncan, Shelby County, Missouri. Duncan Family Papers in the possession of Jean Tyree Hamilton, Marshall, Missouri.
36. Frazer diary entry for March 29, 1865.
38. United States Army Corps of Engineers, Missouri River.
[Bishop C. Bedford] got lost and the Boat started without him but before getting far we heard him shoot and wave his hat. Sent the yawl out for him aboard. Proceeded some 18 miles and laid up some 10 miles below the Harmony Mission at a wood yard. [The Presbyterian Mission for the Omaha at Blackbird Hills near present Macy was active from 1854 to 1894.] While laid up here several Indians came on board during the evening among them, White Cow, big Chief of the Omaha tribe. Obtaining sufficient wood was an ever present problem as the steamboats used about 25 to 30 cords every 24 running hours. Major Stephen Long, after much experimentation, discovered the most satisfactory fuel was dry mulberry which was seldom available. The cost of wood was about $100 per day, bought ready cut at the woodyards along the banks.

Apr. 1 A.D. 1865 Proceeded a short distance got aground and out of wood, got some on the beach. Arrived at Mission 10 o'clock. 10 of us taken a hunt across the Bend. Found no game, struck the River and Boat 12 o'clock at a woodyard. Proceeded a short distance in a bend of snags broke one of the ruders, detaining us 2 hours. Found the Steamer Benton fast on a bar, she got over. We went up to the bar and had to take out 30 Tons of our freight before we could cross it. We ankor in stream for the night and boated the freight with the yawl in the night. [The steamboat Benton, commanded by William Howard, a sister ship of the Deer Lodge, made the trip from St. Louis to Fort Benton with her.] The log of the Benton for March 31 reported: “Wooded at Omaha Mission, saw lots of Indians.”

Apr. 2nd. Proceeded all right except being detained on bars a short time until in site of Sioux City. Snag caught in the stern of the Boat did not damage much but raised the excitement generally. Arrived at Sioux City 3 o'clock laid until next morning, discharged some two Tons of freight for the town and left some 70 tons more so we could get along. We all enjoyed ourselves and shaped sabbath tho it was. [Sioux City, located at the mouth of the Big Sioux, is where the Missouri turns sharply westward and is known from here onward as the “Upper Missouri.”] It was described in 1865 as having about 1000 inhabitants, one street of

41. Frazer diary entry for March 31, 1865.
42. Lass, 7, 13.
43. Tri-Weekly Missouri Democrat, February 24, 1865.
45. Lass, 1.
businesses, a good hotel (the Wauregan House), and a number of handsome private residences. It was the first stop of steamboats within the “States” or “America” as travelers from the Territories called the nation.46]

Apr. 3rd Cleaned out the boilers and started, got one passenger and left one. Nothing transpired worth note, had some trouble on two bars. Traveled some 35 miles by river and only 3 miles from where we laid up last night. Sioux City by land. Laid at a woodyard, past Boat Benton at 3 oclock, left her on a bar. River rose 2 inches.

Apr. 4th Got along well except occasionally on a bar. Rained some, river on a stand, weather cool for the season. Got to Vermilion River [So-called as it was the source of red pigment used by the Indians, it was the site of a short-lived American Fur Company post established in 1851.47] Made a good days travel. Struck a snag and sprung a leak, almost bust a a hole in her, lucky for us not very seriously damaged.

Apr. 5. Snowed and sleeted all day and desperate wind in the evening, so bad that we had to lay up for the day very cold for the time of year.

Apr. 6th. Here still very rough, cold this morning, lay here all this day, this was a desperate day. Apr. 7th River full of ice and cold went up some 4 miles and laid up for the day at an isleand. [St. Helena Island, according to Frazer48] Hands went to getting wood, passengers went out hunting, Saw some turkeys and a wild hog, no Deer on this isleand. Apr. 8th Still at the same place, snowed and stormed all day. River falling and full of ice the Therometer stood 5 degrees below freezing.

Apr. 9th Proceeded up at 9 oclock. River full of mush ice and shortly where the river was gorged with ice except for a small shoot, the Boat ran in and [did] not have power enough to drive through it. Boat stopped, the ice gorged it. All seamed fast for a while looking frightful. By straining and having more steam the Boat worked through, came to the mouth of the James River, there had to spar over a bar some 200 yards, after dark got over and tied up for the night, all on board well. [The practice of sparring over a bar was a common one in the old steamboating days on the Missouri. The spars were long heavy timbers resembling telegraph poles, and a set of them, two in number, were always carried on the sides of the boat near the bow ready for use. When the vessel became lodged on a bar, the

48. Frazer diary entry for April 7, 1865.
spars were raised and set in the river bottom, like posts, their tops inclined somewhat toward the bow. Above the line of the deck each was rigged with a tackle-block over which a manila cable was passed, one end being fastened to the gunwale of the boat and the other wound around the capstan. As the capstan was turned and the paddle wheel revolved, the boat was thus lifted and pushed forward. Then the spars were reset farther ahead and the process repeated until the boat was at last literally lifted over the bar. From the grotesque resemblance to a grasshopper, which the craft bore when her spars were set, and from the fact that she might be said to move forward in a series of hops, the practice came to be called grasshoppering. It was only one of the many novel expedients often necessarily used in navigating those shallow waters.  

Apr. 10th. Proceeded some 10 miles, came to a bar, was the forenoon sparing over it, got up to Yankton at 10 o'clock. [Yankton, named for the Yankton branch of the Teton Sioux, settled in 1859, was capital of the Dakota Territory from 1861 to 1883. In 1865 it was described as follows: “This place is on an elevated bank that is washing into the river at a rapid rate. This town has no streets but is scattered about in spots. The Capitol is a three story frame building, and looks more like a schoolhouse than a place where they make laws, there are two groceries, and one hotel which they call the ‘Ash House,’ and there are also some very handsome private residences at this place.”] We got beef which cost $80 for 600 pounds and some wood. [Until they got to the big game country and the hunters could supply fresh meat, it was customary for steamboats to buy beef along the way if they did not carry butcher stock on board.]

A party got off while on the Bar and sported a while, Killed 2 chickens and walked to Yankton and the Boat laid by for the night. Heard a Boat sunk near Omaha. [This is the Bertrand. The fully loaded, 160 foot sternwheeler left St. Louis on March 18, 1865, bound for Fort Benton under the command of Captain James E. Yore. On April 1 she struck a snag, was swamped, and sank immediately at Portage La Force, Nebraska. Almost every boat on the river made mention of this in its log, nearly every diarist recorded the accident.] How surprised they would all have

50. Smith, 100.
53. Frazer diary entry for April 10, 1865.
54. Moss, 161.
been to know that 104 years later the Bertrand would be located, excavated, and much of her cargo salvaged in a preserved state.\footnote{National Park Service, Report of the Annual Meeting of the Committee for the Recovery of Archaeological Remains (Washington, 1970), 66-67.}

April 11th. Could not go any farther for the want of water there. Two shoots in the River and the most could be found was 2½ feet. The Boat was drawing 3½ feet, so we thought we would take a hunt. Captain M.N.Holloway [his partner] and second clerk and myself. We killed some chickens. Waiting here for the River to rise, River fell some 4 inches. All well on bord.

Apr. 12. Proceeded started 10 oclock, was all day going 2½ miles over two Bars and through a bend of snags, had to cut some of them out of the way before we could pass. Laid at a sawmill and woodyard. One of the deck passengers got in a fracas at Yankton and cut a fellow badly, did not arrest him. [Law officers from Yankton came aboard the Deer Lodge to investigate this “fracas” but found proof too hard to obtain and left.\footnote{Frazer diary entry for April 12, 1865.}]

Apr. 13th. Proceeded up some 5 miles after dragging over several Bars, came to three shoots in the River and none of them sufficient for us to pass through. Boat laid up for water, went out on a hunt, killed some rabbits. All well.

Apr. 14th. Still at the same place. Passed this day off sporting and shooting at a mark and running foot races. Some went to Yankton for the news, The hands cutting wood. All well. [Passengers tried all means of passing the time while the boat was immobile. This day’s activities were described by one of the participants as: “All hands went on shore to shoot at mark for different amounts. Capt. Rea and Jo Fecto shot 10 shots at 40 steps for $100, Fecto’s distance for string 29 13/16 inches and Rea’s 27 12/16 inches, being in favor of Capt. Rea 2 1/16 inches. Capt. Rea shot off hand and Fecto with a rest. I had a foot race with Bishop for 100 yards and got beat.”\footnote{Frazer diary entry for April 14, 1865.} String measure was a standard of marksmanship in those days.]

April 15th. Proceeded a short distance, there taken out some 70 tons of freight, ankered out in the stream then boated with the yawls, lay there for the night. All well. Got a paper from Yankton telling that Lee was captured and his army surrendered to Grant. [The freight of the Deer Lodge was probably about the same as that salvaged from the Bertrand in 1968-1969 after having spent 104 years under the sand and water. It consisted of, among other things: mercury, pickled meat, pickles, whiskey,
champagne that still fizzed, miner’s boots, shoes, coats, felt hats, cigars, crates of mirrors, powder canisters, 12-pound mountain howitzer ammunition and mine machinery. Popularity of the mostly alcohol patent medicines is indicated by 40 cases of Dr. J. Hostetter’s Celebrated Stomach Bitters, also Kelley’s Old Cabin Bitters, Drake’s Plantation Bitters, and Schroeder’s Spice Bitters.[68]

Apr. 16th. Proceeded 3 miles and took on some wood, went on fine until 4 oclock, came to a bar and was detained for 1 hour, passed Running Water [Niobrara] 6 oclock, laid up at a woodyard for the night, met a rise of some 2 ft and still on the rise, All Well. [Running Water is the English name for the river called Niobrara by the Sioux and L’au qui Court by the French.[69]]

Apr. 17th. Started 4 oclock in the morning, went all right for some 4 miles, got aground but was not detained long, got up to Yankton Agency 10 oclock. Got on a bar just above, was detained but a short time, some 2 hours, went on fine and came to Ft. Randall at 4 oclock. No news of importance, some letters for passengers, staid an hour, started, went up to a woodyard on Cedar Iseland, taken on some wood and started and went on until 8 oclock, laid up for the night. The wind blowing very hard today. All Well. [Yankton Agency was established in 1859 for the Yankton Sioux who remained friendly during the Minnesota uprising and afterward.60 Fort Randall, established in 1856 by General William S. Harney as a base of supplies for posts on the Upper Missouri, protection to the settlers, and a means of pacifying the Sioux, continued in operation until 1892.61 J.A.Hosmer reported that Randall was the handsomest post on the river in 1865, and noted that “inside the fort are the Officers’ Quarters and Dwellings and the Parade Ground. Outside of the fort are the Residence of Gen Todd, a Sutler’s Store, a Photographic Gallery, a Block House, and a few private dwellings.”62 There were several “Cedar Islands” in the Upper Missouri, so-called because of their remarkable stands of juniper.]

Apr. 18th. Proceeded 4 oclock in a short distance got on a bar and was detained for 6 hours. Balance of day got along fine, lay up after 8 oclock. Weather fine, all well.

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60. Ray Mattison, “The Indian Reservation System on the Upper Missouri,” Nebraska History, XXXVI, No. 3 (September, 1955), 172.
61. Lass, 22-23.
Receipt for Tanning Hides

When you tan light hides with the wool or fur on, such as sheep, fox, calf, Mink, &c, first soak the flesh and clean in the usual way. Then make a Tan as follows:

To 1/2 bu wheat bran and 1 qt. corn cob ashes, add six gallons of hot salt water and let it stand in a warm room until it ferments. Then strain out and dissolve therein 4 lbs Chloride Sodium or salt then add 11/2 lbs Oil Vitrol while agitating it to make the whole blend together. Light hides require to be handled from one to four hours, then rinse them and hang in the shade to dry. When nearly dry if required oil or stuff them as described hereafter.

The above Tan will give no shade of itself but acts as a mordant for a setting of a variety of colors.

For heavy hides add to the above Tan 2 lbs melted Jappanica this will shade and make the leather more firm.

To Take Off the Hair

To 10 Gals. soft water add 1/4 bu. slacked lime and 1/4 bu wood ashes. Time 1 to 2 days.

Bait for taking out the lime. To 10 gals, soft water add 1/2 bran liquor as above described and 1/4 lb OIL Vitrol. Time 1 to 2 days.

Stuffing for Hides

1/3 Alcohol to 2/3 Tanners Oil. Thicken with flour pach and tallow, equal parts. To make waterproof add Beeswax or Indian Rubber (Beeswax best.)

Blacking for Grain


James Camron of Sioux City.

* * * * * *

Apr. 19th. Proceeded, had a very high wind and some rain, got along fine until after sunset, ran on shoal water and very swift, swinging across the current. In sparring around to get her off, spar hung in the sand and then swung around and struck the deck spar and blocks and everything went over broad. Considerable damage. Swung ashore and ankered for the night. River on a rise, all well.

Apr. 20th. Proceeded until 11 oclock, some rain and very high wind, so high the boat had to lay up, at mouth of White River, 150 yards wide, some cottonwood on it. [White River enters the Missouri from the west
and was to become the northern boundary of the Rosebud Brule Sioux and the Pine Ridge Oglalla Sioux Reservations. In 1865 the bar at its mouth was considered the worst on the Missouri River.\textsuperscript{63} The hands went to cutting wood and after dinner the passengers went out to run Foot Races. After the races were over they went to shooting. The Boat started about 6 oclock p.m. Proceeded some distance up stream and tied up for the night. All Well. \textsuperscript{64} Although the cost of wood bought by the cord from the woodhawks along the bank was high and amounted to about $100 per day, if the boat crews cut the wood the loss of time prolonged the trip and the economy was not appreciable. Consequently the captains used their own crews to gather wood only when they were forced to do so.\textsuperscript{64}

Apr. 21st Backed down 1 mile to find a crossing, failed and came back. Backed down second time, laid over to gather wood. Proceeded 1 mile, laid up for the wind until 5 oclock. Proceeded 2 miles, dark came on, found shole water, laid up for the night. All Well.

Apr. 22nd. Proceeded, cleer and cold. We came to some wood on our left, cottonwood. The country very Broken below Crow Creek 29 miles. Traveled some 15 miles, came to some Oak Wood on our left, cottonwood on our right, below Crow Creek Agency, past Crow Creek 35 minutes after 2 oclock. A good deal of Timber to our right, small and large cottonwood, some level praria to our left. Soon came to the Crow Creek Agency. Took on some wood, left half after 5 oclock. Fell back to the shore and tied up for the night. We saw a good many Indians at this place, Winnobagoes, a Friendly Tribe. \textsuperscript{65} Crow Creek flows into the Missouri from the east about 10 miles below Crow Creek Agency which is on Soldier Creek. Fort Thompson was built in 1863 in incarcerate the Santee Sioux and Winnebago Indians who, as a result of the Minnesota uprisings, were removed by the government from Fort Snelling by steamboat. It later became the Crow Creek Agency for the Lower Yanktonai. The Winnebago had had no part in the Minnesota uprisings but were removed here as a protection for their people after it occured. Most of them later went down to the Omaha Reservation in Nebraska where they were granted a reservation of their own.\textsuperscript{65}

Aprile 23rd. Started out this morning and found not water to proceed, fell back to the shore and tied up and commenced lightening up principally all day. A very pleasant sabbath. All well. River very wide.

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 214.
\textsuperscript{64} Kane, 30.
\textsuperscript{65} Ray Mattison, “Historic Sites in Big Bend Reservoir,” \textit{South Dakota Historical Collections}, XXXI (1962), 248; Lass, 25.
The Picture Section

Figure 1. Abel J. Vanmeter. From an oil portrait when he was about 47 years old by an itinerant artist in 1881. (Painting owned by Mrs. Virginia Van Meter Waldorf, Marshall, Missouri)

Figure 2. The Deer Lodge at the Sioux City wharf, 1867. (Courtesy State Historical Society of Missouri)

Figure 3. Map of Van Meter State Park, drawn by Mrs. Eleanor F. Chapman, Columbia, Missouri.

Figure 4. Home of Abel J. Vanmeter, painted by an itinerant artist about 1881. The home was built for Vanmeter’s first wife in 1874 and has since been razed. (Detail of painting owned by Mrs. Virginia Van Meter Waldorf. Photograph by Robert Gibbs)

Figure 5. Home of David P. Vanmeter, painted by an itinerant artist about 1881. The structure was also built in 1874 and has since been razed. (Detail of painting owned by Mrs. Virginia Van Meter Waldorf. Photograph by Robert Gibbs)

Figure 6. The Van Meter family cemetery in Van Meter State Park. Abel’s tombstone is at the left. (Photograph courtesy Pauline Woods)

Figure 7. Drawing of the Old Fort in Van Meter State Park as it appeared in 1891. (Courtesy Minnesota Historical Society)

Figure 8. The embankment of the Old Fort earthenworks as they are today. (Photograph courtesy Hadley K. Irvin, Missouri State Park System)

Figure 9. Archaeological excavation of a Missouri Indian house, with buildings of the Lyman Archaeological Research Center in the background. (Photograph courtesy the Lyman Archaeological Center)

Figure 10. Shelter House in Van Meter State Park (Photograph courtesy Pauline Woods)
Aprile 24th, Monday. Proceeded 4 miles, discharged about half the freight on bord and went back for the other left yesterday. Was two hours turning around. Laid up for the night. All well.

A.D. 1865 Apr. 25 Tuesday. Proceeded up stream some half mile but could not cross the reef, we found only two feet of water. Returned to the shore, the Prairie lays fine but poor. Morning very pleasant, we started from the bank about 10 o'clock and wallowed about 10 hours and got over the Reef and ran up to the freight we discharged yesterday. Arrived at the freight 9 o'clock and tied up for the night. Windy this evening. All well.

Wednesday Apr. 26th A.D. 1865. Started 4 o'clock in the morning, pleasant. Sun rose beautiful but soon became cloudy. Some timber on both sides of the river, some rocks in the bed of the river, country broken and rough and poor. Dinner. Ran about 30 miles. Quite a level Plane of considerable size to our Right, rough and hilly to our left. Laid 1 1/2 1 o'clock. Rainy this evening. All Well.

Thursday 27th A.D. Started out, was 3 hours crossing a Bar past the mouth of Medicine Creek [sometimes called Medicine River, it enters the Missouri from the west and was the site of a fur post, Fort Bouis, later called Fort Defiance, established by rivals of Chouteau's Fort Pierre.66] We proceeded until 11 o'clock, after we got off at 2 o'clock. Timber cottonwood and cedar mostly. Land mostly broken but some that lays beautifully sloped and wooded on the left. To our right a nice piece of land of some considerable size. 2 1/2 in the evening struck a Bar laid all night. All Well.

Sunday Aprile 30th A.D. 1865. Started out 4 o'clock, landed at Ft. Sully 10 1/2 o'clock, somewhat cloudy and cool wind. Ft. Sully is situate on a nice piece of level plane of some size to our right. Started out 15 minutes 11 o'clock. It was reported that President Lincoln was shot. We took the right hand shoot, went some distance but could not cross the reef and had to return and taken the left. We saw a good many Indians on the left Bank of the River, ran on a Bar at 4 o'clock got off at 6:30 ocl. went up stream, laid up for the night 7 miles above Ft. Sully. All Well. [This is Old Fort Sully. It was established in 1863, as a result of the Sioux uprisings, on the east bank of the river about 3 miles below present Pierre, South Dakota. According to J.A.Hosmer it consisted of one stockade, three sutler stores and one billiard hall.67 The location was exposed to spring floods and proved to be unsatisfactory so the fort was moved in July, 1866, to 25

67. J. Allen Hosmer, 205.
miles above present Pierre. Troops were finally withdrawn from there in October, 1894. The old fort was the site of very important councils with the Sioux in 1865 and again in early 1866.68 The Indians that Vanmeter saw on the west side of the river were no doubt Teton Sioux who frequented that territory. The stop for the night was just one mile below Old Fort Pierre according to Frazer's entry for April 30. Fort Pierre was a trading post of the American Fur Company and had been established in 1831 and named for Pierre Chouteau. All that remained of it in 1865 were a number of old chimneys according to J.A.Hosmer.]

May 1st A.D. 1865. Proceeded 4 o'clock, run until 7 o'clock, got off 7:30. Ran 25 miles today, laid up 1 mile above the mouth of American Creek. Beautiful day, wind quite high this morning, but laid this evening. All Well.

May 2nd A.D. 1865. Proceeded all well today. Pleasant and warm, about 4 miles below Big Cheyenne a party of us got off the Boat and went across a bend, Seyman J. Lockhart, Holloway, Bishop G. Bedford, James Cannon of Sioux City and myself. I shot a buffalo but did not get it. Antelope and deer by the wholesale but there was nothing of importance. I suppose we lay above the mouth of the Big Sheyanne about 15 miles, we ran 40 miles today. All Well.

May 3rd A.D. 1865 Proceeded 4 o'clock, pleasant morning, warm. Saw about one hundred Antelope to our left hand and in the evening I saw some elk to our right. We ran about 20 miles, tied up about sun down on the left bank. All Well.

Aprile [May] 4th A.D. 1865. Warm pleasant, doing all right this morning. Past the mouth of the little Cheyenne this morning to our right hand 7:30, antelope to our left. We ran about 20 miles, we did not run all day. All Well.

Apr. [May] 5th A.D. 1865. Friday, started 4 oc. Proceeded until 7:30 and was detained until 11:20. Proceeded, 2:20 laid up for the wind just below mouth of River Moreau. Proceeded until 7:15, laid ashore, ran 30 miles today. We took considerable hunt. We saw a good many antelope but did not kill any. Day warm and pleasant. The Moreau is a stream of some size, say twenty-five yards across on our left. All Well.

Aprile [May] 6 Pleasant and clear, ran some distance came to a Bar 9:35, got over 11:40, went up stream, stopped two or three times to take the boys in that had gone out hunting. Saw plenty of Antelope but did not kill any. Past the Grand River on our left 6:30 oclock, it is some 20

68. Prucha, 110; Mattison, “Historic Sites in Big Bend Reservoir,” 270.
yards across, ran until 10 p.m. ran 40 miles. There is a level bottom up
and down the River on each side of Grand River. Some 3 miles below
Grand River there is a considerable Bottom on the same side of the Mis­souri River, say 4 mi. long and 1 1/2 miles wide. All Well. [Grand River
became the southern boundary of the Standing Rock Reservation for the
Hunkpapa Sioux. It was up the Grand near present Bull Head that Sitting
Bull of the Hunkapas was killed by Indian Police on December 15, 1890.59
It was above the mouth of the Grand, between it and the Cannonball that
Lewis and Clark first encountered the Arikara Indians in their earth lodge
villages.70]

Sunday May 7th A.D. 1865. Started 4 oclock, Proceeded all rite, passed
Mofflite [Hermaphrodite or Big Morphodite] Creek at 8 1/2 A.M., run on
again and passed Beaver Creek [Little Beaver River] at 4 p.m. and got
aground 2 miles above Husband's Point at 7 p.m. Clear and cool today.
There was more bottom land timber than we have passed for several days.
We saw but one anteope today, Holloway shot a beaver this morning but
did not get it, laid up on the left hand, ran about 40 miles today. All Well.

May 8th. Pleasant this morning, this evening it clouded up. Raining
tonight We did not proceed over 5 miles today on account of Bars and
low water. Me and Mr. James Lockhart of Virginia City, Montana Terri­
tory took a hunt of some two or three miles. I saw 2 deer, I shot one several
times, but did not get it and [saw] a grizzly Bear, I did not get a shot. I
came back to the Boat and got my supper and a party of us went out and
struck his trail and followed it a considerable distance. Unluckly it com­
menced raining, we gave up the chase. His track measured 8 in. wide and
15 in. long. [The trackers were fortunate they did not find their grizzly
rather than "unluckly;" more seasoned hunters than they have had unfor­
tunate encounters with the bears.] All well on Board.

May 9 Tuesday, Cloudy and cold wind. One of the deck passengers
killed a antelope this morning. The Boat is sparring this morning, got over
went 3 1/4 mile, put out some freight, laid up for the night. Snowing. All
Well.

May 10th. Proceeded up 2 miles, put out some freight and went up
stream 2 miles and put out the remainder & returned to the lower freight
pile this evening. Cloudy and cold today. Missouri [Mr. Hume] killed a
deer today on the left hand shore in the bottom. River rising All Well.

May 11th A.D. 1865. Took in all of the Freight and laid up for the
night. The Boat had to double trip it in and about the mouth of Big

70. Frederick W. Hodge, "Handbook of American Indians," Bulletin 30 Bureau of
American Ethnology (Washington, 1907), Part I, 84.
Beaver River, the mouth is on the right shore. Today pleasant, River rising. All Well. A yaug with us this evening from Ft. Rice said the Boat Yellowstone at Rice this morning. Windy this evening. All Well on Board this Craft. [The Yellowstone, a 378 ton sternwheeler, was built at Cincinnati in 1864 and made regular runs from St. Louis to Fort Benton for the Montana & Idaho Line.72 She had passed the Deer Lodge just above Omaha according to Frazer’s entry for March 29. She would play an important part in the transportation of the army in the Indian campaigns of 1876.73]

May 12th Proceeded 5 p.m., detained crossing a reef at Beaver River some considerable time. Past Cannon Ball River at 1:20 a.m. [so-called because of the many spherical sandstone formations that resemble cannonballs on its banks.] It is situated on the left hand shore, quite a nice bottom on the left of it and timbered. It is 25 yds wide with roaling bluffs above it. Came to Ft. Rice at 2:20, on the left bank, a nice situation. [Fort Rice was established by General Alfred Sully on the west bank of the Missouri as a supply base for his operations against the Sioux in July, 1864. Its rude cottonwood-log, dirt-roofed huts were rebuilt in 1868. It was dismantled in 1876 after the establishment of Fort Abraham Lincoln in 1873.73 In 1865 it was manned by “Galvanized Yankees.”74 Here the Deer Lodge took on a Lieut. Cyrus Hutchins and ten men who stood guard at night to prevent surprise Indian attacks.75]

We were detained at Ft. Rice until 8:30 o'clock. Col Diamond [Dimon] Com. of Ft. Rice required all on the Boat to take the oath of Allegiance to the Government. Ran 2 miles above and laid up for the night. Day pleasant and warm. Boat ran 32 miles. All Well. [Colonel Charles Augustus Ropes Dimon, Commander of the 1st U.S. Volunteers at Fort Rice from October 17, 1864, to July 22, 1865, had come up through the ranks, being made full Colonel in August, just before the regiment left for the West. The volunteers were made up largely of Confederate prisoners of war from Point Lookout, Virginia.76 It is not known whether the requirement of the Oath of Allegiance from all upriver travelers was due to Dimon’s arrogance77 or to his apprehension. It was true that many of the employees of

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71. Tri-Weekly Missouri Democrat, March 10, 1865.
72. Hanson, 347.
73. Prucha, 102.
74. Moss, 178.
76. Brown, 77, 91.
77. Ibid., 77.
the fur companies were pro-Confederate in their sympathies; it was believed that the Canadians were inciting the Indians against the Americans and it was feared that the Northwest might possibly be taken over by the South.88)

May 13th. Proceeded 4 ocl. A.M. proceeded all right, wooded 2 times before 12 A.M. Past Apple Creeke 11 ock A.M., past Cinaboin [Assiniboine] Island to our right hand 12:30 P.M. [Apple Creek or Apple River is listed as the place where the steamer Assiniboine burned.89] A nearby island also takes its name from the fire "... camped on Burnt Boat Island, this island recives its name from the Steamer Assiniboine, which burnt off this island it is some times called Assiniboine Island, but not very often."89]

Past the Heart River at 1:23 oclock to our left hand, a nice Bottom of some considerable size. [Here, at the confluence of the Heart with the Missouri, lived the Mandan in earth lodge villages when they were first visited by white men.91] Below it rough and rolling land, above it is a small stream. Ankored for the night 9 P.M. not far from squy Buks hills [Square Butte Hills]. Past right smart timber today, ran 70 miles, river rising. All well.

May 14 A.D. 1865. Proceeded 5 ocl, it rained last night. Cloudy and warm this morning and some rain. Past the painted woods 10 oclock, past Old Ft. Clark, 2:15. Ankored out in the stream. Saw 2 Buffaloes to our right hand about dinner time, Boat ran 75 miles today. Pleasant tonight, All Well. [Painted Woods is the name given a locality by the Indians. According to one story these woods were the battleground of the Arikara and the Mandan before the former moved into the region. The Indians were especially antagonistic here in 1864-1865. It also became one of the earliest settlements in North Dakota when William Mercer laid out the townsite “Painted Woods” in 1869.92] Fort Clark was built in 1829 by James Kipp for the American Fur Company for the Mandan and Hidatsa trade and named for Captain William Clark. It was second only to Fort Union in importance. Here Maximilian, Prince of Wied, author, soldier and scholar spent the winter of 1833-1834. His artist, Karl Bodmer, made

78. Ibid., 88.
any striking illustrations of the Fort and its inhabitants. When it was abandoned after 1860, the Indians moved to Fort Berthold. Steamboats often wooded there, gathering wood from the houses, palisades and drying racks.

Monday 15th A.D. 1865. Cloudy and warm this morning. Proceeded 4 o'clock A.M. stoped at the right Bank at a large old Indian Camp and wooded and got some coal, the strat was 4 feet thick and extended along the Bank 30 yds that it showed. Got aground some 3 miles above where we wooded. [The Indian camp where they wooded was an unidentified abandoned earth lodge village. In addition to getting wood from such villages, the steamboats also got it from abandoned forts: “... at 10 A.M. we arrived at Fort Mitchell, where we cut dry wood from the pickets houses and fences...” According to Frazer, the coal that the Deer Lodge secured was fine for blacksmithing.]

We lost an hour but arrived Ft. Berthold 5 oclock. Laid 3/4 hour, saw a good many Indians at Fort, Grovons Tribe. Rainy this evening. The Ft. is situated on the right hand bank, a nice place for a fort. We passed but little timber today. Tied up for the night at the Bank at 8 oclock, 7 miles above the Ft. Boat ran 65 miles today. All Well. [Fort Berthold was established in 1845 by the American Fur Company and named in honor of one of its founders, Bartholomew Berthold. It was located at Like a Fish Hook Village of the Hidatsa and Mandan. Not only did Vanmeter see Grovon (short for Gros Ventres, the French name for Hidatsa) but also Mandan and Arikara, for by May, 1865, the remnants of the Three Tribes of the Upper Missouri were living at Like a Fish Hook, the Arikara coming in 1862. According to Frazer, they numbered about 2500 souls by 1865.]

May 17th A.D. 1865. Cloudy this morning. Started out 4 ock A.M. went up stream some four miles and had to back down about the same distance before we could cross the reef. Saw some Elk this morning on the right Bank of the river, past the mouth of the Little Missouri at 11 ockl A.M. Very rough and hilly above mouth and some bottom timber, some 2 hundred acres and a nice piece of Bottom Prarie just above the timber of some thousand acres. Past it 12 A.M., then we came to what is called the
big bend, a nice prairia to the right just above the big bend. We got aground 7 P.M. and was aground 3 hours, saw 1 Buffalo, passed a good deal of timber, mostly to our left. Pleasant this evening. Ran about 55 miles today. All Well. [This big bend must not be confused with the Big Bend or Grand Detour as it was termed by the French (miles down river and the present site of the Big Bend Dam below Pierre, South Dakota) that was mentioned by most travelers beginning with Lewis and Clark.]

May 17th A.D. 1865 started out 4 o'clock A.M. Warm and pleasant this morning. Saw a good many Buffalo. Past White Earth River 5 P.M., was detained 3 hours late in the evening. Past a good deal of timber, ran 50 miles today. Ankored out in the stream 9 ock. All Well. [White Earth River was so named by Lewis and Clark as the abundance of salts caused the earth of its banks to be perfectly white. This point was considered the most northern of the Missouri River.]

May 18th. Started out 4 A.M. Beautiful morning, saw some Buffalo swimming the river but did not get in gunshot of them. Past right smart Timber on both sides of the river, more signs of Game than we have heretofore. Quite warm and sultry this evening. Boat ran 75 miles today. All Well.

Friday, May 19th A.D. 1865. Pleasant this morning and nice breeze. Saw but few Game of any kind. Past the mouth of the Yellowstone River 5 ock P.M., got up within one half mile of Ft. Union at 7 ock P.M. but could not cross the reef. Fell back to the Bank and laid up for the night, had a good shower late this evening and quite windy. Ran about 54 miles today. The mouth of the Yellowstone is about 150 yds. wide, it is one the left side as we go up. All Well.

Saturday May 20th A.D. 1865. Pleasant, but very windy today, so much the boat lay up all day, we started out 7:30 P.M. this evening when the wind ceased blowing so violent, arrived at Ft. Union 10 ock P.M. River rising, cloudy. All Well. [The trading post, Fort Union, was built in 1829 at the mouth of the Yellowstone River and was a finely appointed center and headquarters for the Upper Missouri business of the American Fur Company. Here agents lived in a sort of barbaric splendor with a great retinue of clerks and engagés. Fort Union was quadrangular in shape, 240 by 220 feet in size, palisaded with heavy pickets 17 to 20 feet high and squared and placed close together, and it had two-story...]

89. Mattison, “Historic Sites in Big Bend Reservoir,” 243.
bastions of stone containing small cannon. It was garrisoned as a military post from 1864 to 1865 and dismantled in 1866. Taciturn Vanmeter did not mention his experiences at Fort Union, however he probably attended the party Frazer mentions and saw the "many curiosities made by the Indians." Frazer also relates that "On my way back to the boat I saw the body of an Indian and it was a horrible sight. He had been scalped and both arms cut off. His scalp I saw at the Fort, he had been hung in retaliation for a Sargeant that had been killed and who when found had 12 arrows in him."[94]

Sunday May 21 A.D. 1865. Rained this morning and rained considerable last night. Started out 5 ock A.M., past little Mudy Creek 10 ock A.M. Saw some Buffalo and Elk this evening. Clear past Big Mudy 6:30 P.M. Past right smart timber today and saw a good many Beaver. Boat ran about 80 miles, ankored out in the stream 9:30. Land generally rough, saw some this evening that laid nice near the river. All Well.

Monday May 22nd 1865. Pleasant and warm, started 4 ock. Past Ft. Steward 5 A.M., past Ft. Mackensey [McKenzie] 12 M., grounded 3 hours, broke the dereck & some other damage, saw a good many buffalo. Ankered out in the stream for the night at 10 ock P.M. All Well. Ran 75 miles.

This was the site of Fort Stewart which had been established as a fur trading post for the Assiniboine in 1854 in opposition to the American Fur Company and destroyed by fire by the Indians late in 1860. It was visited by W.J.Hays in the summer of 1860; he made two sketches of it, the only illustrations extant.[95] Fort McKenzie, built by Owen McKenzie, son of Kenneth McKenzie who achieved fame as agent at Fort Union, was erected in 1862 for the Assiniboine and abandoned a year later.[96]

May 23, 1865. Started out 4 ock A.M. Pleasant & warm. Saw about 2000 Buffalo, killed about 20 while they were crossing the River, past Sinking Creek 7 ock P.M. Boat ran 70 miles today. We was not out of sight of Buffalo today, there was one antelope killed and some fish. All Well. [The Buffalo was a powerful swimmer and frequently crossed the Missouri at buffalo fords. Steamboat passengers delighted in shooting at them.]

93. Prucha, 113.
94. Frazer diary entry for May 20, 1865.
96. Charles Larpenteur, Forty Years a Fur Trader on the Upper Missouri (Chicago, Lakeside Press, 1933), 291.
May 24, A.D. 1865. Cloudy but Pleasant, this morning started out 4 ock A.M. Past Porcupine Creek, it is about 3 yds, at 8:30 A.M. Come to Milk River 5:30 P.M. it is on the right hand shore, it is one hundred yards wide at mouth. [Milk River is about 275 to 200 miles below Fort Benton. By mid-July, 1865, it was the head of navigation on the Upper Missouri, the steamboats being able to go no farther. To meet the problem the steamboat companies erected a stockade fort with a log bastion mounting three guns to sweep the exposed faces. The fort was divided into three compartments which were owned by the proprietors of different lines of boats and were called Fort Jacobs, Fort Copeland and Fort Keiser. They were, in fact, corrals, but of twelve foot posts and measuring 50 by 100 yards. The goods were covered with tarpaulins while awaiting the wagon trains. Some 800 to 1000 tons of freight could be stored in the area.98]

We saw a good many buffalo today. Jake, our hunter for the Boat, killed a Buffalo above Milk River. Saw some Buffalo at evening just below Ft. Gilpin [Galpin]. Boat ran about 70 miles today. River rising. All Well. [Fort Galpin, about fifteen miles above the mouth of Milk River, was built in 1862 by Larpenteur and named for Major Charles E. Galpin, a picturesque and well-known figure on the Upper Missouri.99]

Thursday, May 25th A.D. 1865. Cloudy and Pleasant. Mr. Adams killed a Beever this morning, saw some Buffalo but not a great many. Saw some Antelope and one Elk. Saw the first Pine Timber on rough Barren land. Past the mouth of Back Water 4:20 P.M. Saw a great many Buffalo in and around the mouth of it, it is about 50 yds wide to our left. Past good deal of Timber today. Boat started out 4 ock, laid up 9 ock. ran about 90 miles. All Well.

Friday May 26, A.D. 1865. Started out 4 ock A.M. Clear & Pleasant this morning. Saw a great Many Buffalo and a good many Antelope, the most of them in the forenoon. Past the Round Duke Hill 8:15 A.M. [Round Butte was a landmark on the south side of the river about half way between Fort Union and Fort Benton.] The land is very rough, broken and some pine. River rising, quite warm. We average about 3 hours a day lost time wooding. Right smart cottonwood in the Bottoms along, the Bottoms are small and far between like Angel visits. Boat Run Very Well today, 90 miles. Laid up at shore 12 p.m.

Saturday 27, May A.D. 1865. Started 3 A.M. Cleer and very warm, saw some Buffalo in the river. Past the mouth of Musel Shell this morning 8 A.M., past a good deal of timber, past one camp of Indians this evening.

98. Virginia City, Montana Territory, Montana Post, July 29, 1865.
Land rough and broken, pine on the hills. [The Indian camp was thirty lodges of Crows according to Frazer’s entry for May 27.] Mr. George Liman [Lyman] killed a black tail Deer off the Boat. We stopped and got it, ran very well today. Past Musel Shell Creek 9 A.M. ran about 80 miles today. All Well.

Sunday 28 May. Kool & Pleasant this morning, started 4 A.M., run very well. Past Cow Island 9 A.M. [Cow Island, also called Snake Point, was the beginning of the “Rocky River,” so-called because the channel cuts through solid rock formations, flows swiftly in a narrow, straight channel, with rapids, loose boulders, rocky reefs, and permanent sandbars. The water is clear and the banks devoid of timber.] We killed one Buffalo and saw a good many more, saw some Mountain sheep & lams just after dinner. At 2 p.m. saw 10 Indians, did not know what Tribe they belonged to. Mr. Ammons killed a Buffalo off the Boat, did not stop to get it. Past Dophans Rapids at 7 P.M., tied up 9:30 P.M., ran 90 miles. All Well. [Dauphin’s Rapids, named for Antoine Dauphin, were the first of a series of rapids below the mouth of the Judith that were especially hazardous to steamboats. However, the Deer Lodge was traveling early enough in the season so that the water was high enough to prevent serious difficulty.]

Monday May 29th. Started 3 A.M. Pleasant and Warm. Took on a large lot of wood this morning, 16 cord, past the mouth of the Judith River 8:40. It is about 30 yds wide on the south side of the River, Past Doxendenman Rapids 6 A.M. got through. Past City Dell [Citadel Rock] 4 P.M., Eagle Creek 6 P.M. Saw Buffalo, Mountain Sheep, Antelope, good many of each kind. Laid up 9:20 P.M. All kinds of scenery, all kinds of stone. Ran 65 miles. All Well. [All travelers were impressed with the rain and wind worn sandstone bluffs that formed the Bad Lands of the Judith and stretched some 50 to 60 miles along the Missouri. The fantastic shapes were given many names descriptive of the forms they resembled: “Citadel,” “Castle Rock,” “Church Spire,” etc. Vanmeter’s “all kinds of stone,” while not up to the eloquence of most, is eloquent for him.]

Tuesday May 30th. Started 3:20 A.M. Past the mouth of Marier [Mariah] 10:10, the steamer Cutter lying just above. [The Cutter had been a victim of low water on her return trip from Fort Benton in July.

100. Lass, 1.


1864, and had remained aground here all winter.103] Morning clear and Pleasant. Arrived at Fort Benton 4:45 P.M. Fort Benton is situated on the North side of River. All Well Ran 70 miles. 4 hours from mouth of Marier, distance 35 miles. Marier 100 yds wide at mouth. [Fort Benton is the head of navigation on the Missouri from whence passengers and freight moved to the gold fields by ox team. It was a fur post of the Chouteaus, built in 1846 as Fort Lewis and then renamed for Thomas Hart Benton. The post was a quadrangle some 200 by 250 feet with two bastions. A large number of men, women and children lived at the fort and cared for the warehouses and cattle yards.104]

Wednesday morning, May 31. Still in Fort Benton. Beautiful Morning. Received $19 from Mrs. Hollway [his partner's wife]. In the evening rained a little. Still on Deer Lodge. All Well. Fort Benton is on the north side of the river, a very good situation, inhabited with French.

Thursday, June 1st A.D. still on Deer Lodge. nothing new transpired. Rained some late this evening and considerable wind. Quite warm. All Well.

Friday, June 2nd. Kool and Cloudy. Left Deer Lodge 4 A.M. and went out into Camp. Started out with Mr. Hugh McGowen's train 2 P.M. Arrived at Helena on 13th of June. [It is probable that Hugh McGowen was a teamster with the Montana & Idaho Transportation Line, Copelin & Roe owners. It would be natural that Vanmeter would travel with this line as they owned a freight line to the mines as well as the Deer Lodge and so advertised in the March 10, 1865, issue of the Tri-Weekly Missouri Democrat. Helena was named in October, 1864, by the miners who in the previous July had discovered the rich placers in what they called Last Chance Gulch, now the main street of Helena.105 It became capital of the Territory in 1874.]

Here Vanmeter's daily account stops; he no longer has time for the entries, but keeps a running record of sorts. He makes detailed financial notes, but there is no order in their entry; he seems to have written on whatever blank page he opens. Vanmeter evidently intended to go on to Virginia City for he is listed in the "Letters Unclaimed in the P.O. Virginia City June 22" column which appeared in the Montana Post for June 24, 1865, and again in a list published on July 8. It is not known whether or

103. Moss, 267; M.A. Leeson, Montana History (Chicago, 1885), 395.
104. Lass, 42.
not he got these letters, but one from his brother dated July 8, 1865, states in part:

Dear Brother:

. . . . the Rebels have all surrendered except Shelby, he has gone to Mexico with about three or four hundred men. They are shipping troops up the Missouri and Red rivers for some purpose we don’t know what. I think the war is over for a while. Cattle is very dull at present, I sold 50 cattle to John Sears for $35 a head. . . Give my best respects to Holiway and family. Me and father joins in love to you.108

Your affectionate brother until death

D.P.Vanmeter

On July 29, Abel Vanmeter wrote a letter to “Miss Sallie,” and cautious man that he was, he kept a copy of it:

Miss Sallie:

I had quite a pleasant trip of it for such a long one. I was 72 days on the Boat. I was very much pleased with Officers and passengers on the Boat, I can say they were the most agreeable set of Gentlemen I ever was with, I did not hear a harsh word during the whole time which is something for such a long trip.

I and my partner N.M.Holloway are living in Helena, one hundred and fifty miles north of Virginia City, this is more central point for the mining region than Virginia. We have built a house in this place with two rooms in it, it is built of sawed logs which is the height of style in this country. This is called the best mining region in Montana Te. some individuals seem to be lucky and make a fortune in a short time, others do not, hardly make a living. As a general thing the mines are turning out well, better than that of California.107 There are a good many arriving here from California and Colorado Territory. I have seen a good many old acquaintances out here that I was acquainted with in the States. I do not like this country well enough to make it my settled home, it is no farming country, I think, to any extent. It is true most everything can be raised here, but with great trouble and expense. Everything that is raised here has to be irrigated from two to three times a week.

Everything sells for an enormous price in this country. I will try to give you some idea of the prices: Flour, Salt Lake Brand 24¢ to 27, per lb; States Brand 30 cts to 36 cts. [States Flour, St. Louis Flour, and Salt Lake Flour each had a different price. Vanmeter would have

106. Mrs. Abraham Vanmeter had died on April 1, 1863.
107. Lass, 63.
found prices extremely high had he been in the Territory during the Flour Riots in April and May, 1865, when it sold for as much as $100 per sack, or $1.00 per pound.\textsuperscript{108} Bacon wholesales 50 cts to 55 cts per lb, retails from 70 cts, to 75 cts. Sugar 70 to 80 cts, coffee $1.00 per lb. Tea $3.40 to $5.00 lb., salt 60 cts lb., beef retails at market from 20 to 25 cts. lb. Tallow 25 cts, Mutton 40 to 45 cts lb, chickens $1.00 a piece, eggs $1.00 dozen. Butter $1.40 lb, milk 40 cts gallon and vegetables of all kinds in proportion. The only thing that there is but little difference from that of the States is Dry Goods & wearing apparel. I think I will not mine for it is too uncertain business for me to engage in, if I cannot make but fifty a day clear of all expenses I wish something positive. . . . .\textsuperscript{109}

Your respectful servant
Abel Vanmeter

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Remained in Helena until August 2nd, then went down on the Missouri River cutting hay. First snow 24 October fell 2 in. deep on Valley.

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Meanwhile, brother David Vanmeter was taking care of the business in Missouri, and on August 20 he wrote to Abel:

Dear Brother:

I wish you and Holloway was here, we would put up the mill. Labor is worth one Dollar a day here, the boys have all gotten back, and everything is still here at this time and nothing doing, the people are aiming to make a living and no more. The rebels came back without any money or clothes and they are riding about doing nothing. Times are very dull and hard. It has rained here for four weeks, day and night. We have made no hay yet, the wheat, oats, and rye are all spoilt and the corn is much injured. We have six stories in Miami. . . Corn is worth one dollar a barrel, oxen are worth one hundred twenty to 30, 3 year olds $35 to $40 a piece, 2 year olds $20 to $25 a piece. Hogs are worth 5 cts gross, sheep $3 to $4 a head . . . I let Mrs. Carty have $750 and took a mortgage on the land. I paid all the claims against us I know of, paid the taxes yesterday and they were $175, I paid Scott $65 and paid Ford $65 for Holliway. I sold John Loury six yoke of Oxen for $750 and he was to pay you in Virginia City if you want it and if you don’t want it he is to pay me this

\textsuperscript{108} Dick Pace, \textit{Golden Gulch, the Story of Montana's Fabulous Alder Gulch} (Helena, Montana, 1962), 52-53.

\textsuperscript{109} Vanmeter then goes on and proposes to the lady.
fall here at home. I want you to get the money from him and give a receipt against the note I hold. I sold John Speas 48 head of three year old cattle at $35 a head and I am keeping them for him at 50 cts a month a head. I sold two fat cows for $70 and the small stags for $100 ... I think I will buy 100 two year olds this fall for you ... Father and I send our love to Holliway and family, tell Holliway to write.

D.P. Vanmeter

Abel Vanmeter found the Montana winter harsher than those he remembered from back in Missouri, as his random records indicate:

Nov. 1—snowed 1 in. deep. Dec. 4—snowed 1 in. deep, river blocked. Dec. 12—snowed 1 in. deep and quite cold. Dec. 14 & Dec. 15—snowed all day both days, the snow about 8 in. deep. Dec. 25 in Helena, snowing this morning, but soon stopped.

Jan [1866] Snowed 10 in. on an average on the Valley, laid on the ground 3 weeks. 5 days of the time 40 degrees below zero. [In January Vanmeter was dealing in sheep according to the accounts in his diary; some animals he sold at 20 cents per pound, some at $3.50 per head.]

On February 16 he recorded $5433.36 worth of business: 2 steers at 14 cents a pound; 13 yoke of oxen at $150 per yoke; 14 yoke at $170 per yoke; a cow at $85; and three wagons at $450. The accounts appear on a flyleaf of the diary.

March quite cold and blustery up to the 16th. 17th snow 3 in. average laid on the ground 3 days, came another 21st 3 in. Quite a wet snow, somewhat cloudy but not cold. 24th came to Beever Creek today. [Beaver Creek runs into the Dearborn River shortly before its confluence with the Missouri.] Sunday March 25 thawing today. Monday March 26, thawing and somewhat cloudy. Joe Poe went to Crow Creek to hunt cattle. [Joe Poe seems to have worked for or with Vanmeter and between November 3, 1865, and March, 1866, he was staked to the following articles: "pr boots $12.00, pr. socks $2.00, pr. pants $12.00, pr drawers 2.50, looking glass .90, box caps 1.25, 1 slk thread .50, citing pistol 2.50, pr blankets 25.00, pr mitts .75, 1 blanket 3.50, pr pants 5.621/2, Sutherland by cash .60, 1 bar soap .50. Due March 26 $74.62 1/2, by cash 3.00, balance due $71.62 1/2." Later the account was marked paid. Crow Creek valley was recognized early for its fertility.]

110. Moss, 271.
lette south of Clark & Huntley’s ranch where they raised their first crop in 1865.\[111\]

March 27th Tuesday, pleasant and thawing, somewhat cloudy. Wednesday March 28 pleasant and thawing. Thursday 29th. Pleasant, somewhat cloudy. In the evening delivered I.A. Pease. Agent King & Gillette 25 head of oxen. [James King and W.C.Gillette were freighters from Fort Benton to Helena, Virginia City and other points. They maintained a store in Virginia City and one on Bridge Street in Helena where they advertised as “wholesale dealers in groceries, drygoods, shoes and mine tools.” In the same advertisement they were offering “Freight, 25¢/lb from Snake Point (Cow Island) to Bannock City.”\[112\]

Friday March 30th. I.A. Pease started from here this morning with 25 steers and John Poe delivered him one more, a roan steer. Thawing today.

Sat. 31st Kool, but pleasant. John Poe started to represent his claim on Indian Creek today. [Indian Creek enters the Missouri near present Townsend, its headwaters paralleling Crow Creek.]


Wednesday 4th Cloudy until 11 A.M., sun came out and but little wind. Last 3 days lost about 25 head sheep. Thursday 5 Apr. Kold, cloudy commenced snowing 10 A.M. stopped 4:30 P.M. Friday 6th Apr. snowing this morning, snowed about two hours and stopped. Sat 7th Apr. Rained 2 hours, sun came out, windy, & thawing. Sunday Apr. 8th snowing this morning, little wind. Monday windy & snowing two hours. Tuesday Apr 10th Rained 2 hours. cleared & windy. Wed 11th snowing & windy. Thursday 12th Windy & cold, snow 1 in. deep. [In April Vanmeter must have had dealings with the following; (although no amounts are given in the accounts): “April Account: Jim McClintic, Chas. Francisco, John Chrisman, James Wright, May B. Craig, B.M.Davis are all on the Gallatin River between East and West Gallatan, 10 or 15 miles above Gallatan City or the Forks of the Gallatan.”]

14th Apr. Delivered a steer at King & Gillette Ranch on Crow Creek. Friday 13 sun came out kool & windy... Wednesday pleasant. Thursday 19th Apr. sunshine. At Mr. Mason’s on the Missouri River. Friday 20th Pleasant up to Sunday. Snow & cold Monday. Pleasant Tuesday 24th on Clark Creek ¼ mile above Montana town on Prickly Pear Creek.

Saturday May 8 1866. Reynolds Cty this morning, snowing. Kold

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111. Leeson, 539.
112. Montana Post, July 8, 1865; December 9, 1865.
Rainy and Cold for the last 8 days. [The placers of Bear Gulch were discovered in October 1865 by the Jack Reynolds party and settlements made and named in March 1866.\textsuperscript{113}]

The following letters were written on November 6 and 21, 1865, and no doubt were received by Vanmeter about mid-May on one of the first steamboats to come up the river in 1866. Vanmeter had reported the river blocked by ice in December, but Frazer, going down river in July was told at Fort Benton on July 4 that there would be no more boats beyond Cow Island because of low water, and freight had to be unloaded at that point and sent on by wagon train.

Nov. 6, 1865

Dear Brother:
Times are very good here now. At present some little stealing, a horse missing once in a while. The Civil law is in force again and I think every thing will work out pretty well again. I rented your brick house to a Bush Whacker for one year and 80 acres of land for $2.50 a acre.

I rented the old J. Henning place one hundred and forty acres for one third of the crop cribbed. Hogs are ten cents gross, sold 80 head about two months ago for 6½ cents gross. I have 30 head fattening very fine hogs which I expect 13 cts for.

Oxen is 100 to 150, 3 year old oxen 30 to 40, twos 20 to 25. I bought a pair 2 year old mules for 200 the other day, they are well broke. I have seven head out to brake to ride and work. I get them next spring . . . I don’t think our cattle have done very well this season, it rained 2 months, every day. I lost all of the timothy hay but I made two hundred and fifty tons in the bottom. Our cattle is very much scattered but I think I will get most of them. I have got one negro and Bill and Harriet is with me yet and 2 hands at $1.50 per day. All the Boys want I Dollar a Day for work . . .

I got two letters from you, one dated in June with your ——— type. I was glad to get it. Give my best respects to Munroe and Mrs. Holloway and children.

My love to you.

D.P. Vanmeter

November 21, 1865

Dear Brother:
James Alexander was here yesterday and wanted 200 cattle to eat Arnold’s crop and is willing to pay 40 for three year olds. I didn’t sell any for I got a letter from you not to sell any more. I am buying

\textsuperscript{113} Leeson, 580.
all I can, they are tolerable scarce. I thought I had bought 100 Texas cattle fours and fives and sixes and seven year olds and I was to have them for 25, but they flew the track . . . I want to know if Texas cattle will suit as well as oxen as the cattle we buy at home and what is the difference in price in your country. They can be bought very cheap in the South, if they will suit, for I think there is money in them, more than in any other cattle. They can be bought in Texas for 10 to 12 dollars a head from 4 to 6 years old and get the pick of them.

We have seven stores in Miami, a grocery, drugstore and a number of other establishments . . .

Give my respects to Monroe and wife and children.

Love

D.P.Vanmeter

In June Vanmeter was too busy to write daily but as usual kept minute accounts; through the 15th he records sales on $2540.65. $314 was for sheep sold to Sam Rickey and Degenhart. He seems also to have been butchering as he sells eight different mutton [not sheep] to Mulken whose ranch he locates twelve miles “this” side of Elk City. Vanmeter also sells heart at 25 cents a pound and liver at 50 cents. He buys supplies such as 21 pounds of sugar for $1.20; East Powder and one pound tea for $2.10; and records toll on 40 sheep at $4.00.

But Abel Vanmeter was about to start home—as we soon discover:

July 4 arrived at Fort Benton, got on Steamer Agnes for St. Louis, started the 6th. Water in fine stage.