

1854 Naches Pass notes from Dennis Larsen

1854 accounts:

The diaries:

- Ebey's-published by OCTA
- Elizabeth Austin - In Covered Wagon Women 7
- Anna Maria Godell -In Covered Wagon Women 7
- Harvey Jones - at the Auburn Museum

The first 1854 wagon train

The Pioneer and Democrat reported on September 2 that Mr. Silas Galliher, the advance guard of the season's first of seven wagon trains that would come over the Naches Pass wagon road, had arrived in Olympia on August 29. The newspaper stated that Galliher reports the road over the mountains as being much improved from what it was represented to be last year, and that the party under Mr. E. J. Allen are within about 18 miles distant on the western slope of the summit, proceeding as rapidly as circumstances will warrant eastward. Interestingly, in that first wagon train which reached Olympia on September 14 was James Kirtley, brother of Whitfield Kirtley.^[1]

^[1] Pioneer and Democrat, September 16, 1854, page 1.

Wagon Trains Discussion:

These trains travelled separately at times and together at times. As they neared Naches pass they seemed to bunch up. As they all had separate origins I refer to them as separate trains. It was quite common for trains to join for a time & then separate.

- Ebey wagon train
- Wisconsin wagon train with the Burr/Whitsel family that eventually married into the Meeker family
- Vermillion wagon train
- Harvey Jones wagon train
- Yantis wagon train ^[2]
- Jacob Meeker's wagon train

^[2] I haven't researched the Jones/Yantis trains so I can't list all the folks in them.

The Wisconsin Wagon Train Members

David Solomon Burr—age 31

Nancy North Burr—age 27

1. Lewis Burr—age 10
2. Emily or Emeline Burr—age 9
3. Marie Angelina Burr—age 7
4. Lynus or Linus Burr—age 6
5. Samuel Burr—age 4
6. Sarah Burr—born ca. May 1854 (“on the plains” according to the 1860 U. S. Census)

Anna Maria Goddell’s diary entry of June 20th commenting on David Solomon Burr’s death says, “*He leaves a wife and four children.*” Winfield Scott Ebey’s diary entry for the same day states, “*Now he lies in the grave & his stricken wife & Six small children mourn the loss of a Husband & Father.*” Ebey had been with the Burrs for nearly a month. Goddell came upon them as David Solomon Burr was dying. It’s likely that Ebey is a better source as to the correct number of Nancy Burr’s children. However, to muddy the waters further, there is no record of Lewis Burr in any of the Washington Territorial records. He may or may not have been on the journey.

Thomas Jefferson Headley—age 38

Sarah Ann Burr Headley—age 32

1. Sarah Ursula Headley—age 14
2. Samuel Newton Mark Headley—age 9 months

Henry Whitsell—age 41

Margaret Bulman Whitsell—age 32

1. M.E. Whitsell—age 16 (There is no mention of this daughter in the diaries, but she shows up in the W.T. 1860 census.)
2. Nancy Whitsell—age 15 Margaret’s stepchildren
3. William Whitsell—age 13
4. Anthony Whitsell—age 11 Margaret’s children
5. Alex Whitsell—age 8
6. Elizabeth Whitsell—age 7
7. Margaret Whitsell---age 4
8. Calvin Whitsell---age 1

Hunt’s *History of Tacoma* says seven Whitsell children made the trip over the Oregon Trail. The editors of the Ebey diary say only five children were present. All eight children on this list show up in Washington Territorial records as being born in Wisconsin. M.E. and Nancy may be the same person, recorded in error

by the census taker. Nancy is noted in the diaries, as one might expect an unmarried fifteen-year old to be. No one mentions "M.E." Future research is needed to resolve the issue.

Meeker Wagon Train Members:

Jacob Redding Meeker—age 50

Phoebe Shaw Baker Meeker—age 53

Oliver Meeker—age 26

Amanda Clement Meeker—age 15

Usual Clark Meeker—age 17

Jesse Dunlap---age 30 (per author's belief---see following paragraph.)

Hannah Jane Meeker Dunlap---age 20

John A. Packard---age 33 (Bonney, *History of Pierce County*, page 124)

Lulu M. Packard---age 30 (*Pioneer Reminiscences*, page 114)

The following people/families were with the Meeker train when it joined the Vermillion party on May 26th, but we do not know when or where they joined the Meeker train.

C.P. Anderson and family

Goodell and Austin simply call them Mr. and Mrs. Anderson. Bancroft in his *History of Washington* supplies the initials. The Andersons traveled with the Meekers from May 29th until July 1st, when they sprinted ahead.

Mr. Hammond—disappeared while searching for missing cattle on June 7th and was never found. It was believed that Indians captured him.

Mr. Wright—confusing, as there was a nine-year-old James Wright with the Ebey train. The Meeker train's Mr. Wright seems to have arrived with the Andersons and left when they departed.

An unidentified African-American family (Goodell and Austin) whose names we never learn.

Ezra mentions all the family members above in *Pioneer Reminiscences* except Hannah and Jesse. Census records indicate that Hannah gave birth to a child in Washington Territory in 1855. There is also a photograph in Ezra's book of all the living Pierce County survivors of the 1855-56 Indian wars. Ezra doesn't identify the people in the photograph. However the same photograph shows up in the University of Washington archives and in Weldon Rau's book about Willis Boatman. Both

identify the woman sitting next to Eliza Jane Meeker as Mrs. Dunlap. Finally, Bonney on page 123 of his *History of Pierce County* identifies Jesse Dunlap as one of the eighty-four who took out a donation land claim before the law expired at the end of 1854.

It is indisputable that Jesse and Hannah were in Indiana in April 1854 and in Washington Territory by the end of the year. Based on this evidence, one concludes that Hannah and Jesse Dunlap were likely part of the 1854 Meeker wagon train. In a 1920 interview with the *Yakima Herald*, Ezra stated that his father had three ox teams when he met him in 1854, suggesting teams for Jacob, Oliver, and the Dunlaps. Ken Keigley, however, suggests another option. Since Jesse's father was a physician, he may have had funds ample enough to take the Isthmus of Panama route to Puget Sound. That possibility can't be ruled out, though I suspect not.

The Vermilion Wagon Train Members

William Bird Goodell—age 25

Anna Maria Goodell—age 22

Frederick Augustus Goodell (Freddie) —age five months

Elizabeth Austin—age 27

Charles P. Judson—age 48

Louisa Judson—age 44

Lucretia Judson—daughter, age unknown

Charles Van Wormer—age 35, later settled in Lynden, WA (Robert E. Hawley, *Skqee Mus, or Pioneer Days on the Nooksack*, Bellingham, 1945 p. 185)

Mary Ann Van Wormer—age 27 and their three children

Ebenezer Hardy—age 21

The Vermilion party crossed the Missouri River on May 18th. The Meeker train caught up with and camped next to them on the evening of May 26th at a location due north of today's Central City, Nebraska and just south of the Loup Fork River. The Meekers traveled with the Vermilion wagon train from May 26th until June 17th. The five women, four men and four children of the Vermilion train had come from Vermilion, Ohio on the shores of Lake Erie just west of Cleveland. Even though the Meekers had long lived in Indiana, they hailed originally from southern Ohio and, no doubt, the two groups found much common news to share. Anna Maria Goodell and Elizabeth Austin's journals chronicle the twenty-three days the trains traveled together through Nebraska.

Through the journals we learn that Phoebe Meeker took ill with cholera near Chimney Rock. The Meekers halted for two days just over the Wyoming border. Mrs. Meeker died there. Word of her death reached the Vermilion wagon train, which had gone ahead seven miles and camped. The two women diarists noted Phoebe's death as occurring either on the night of June 17th or in the morning of June 18th. There are no descriptions of her burial. The Meekers fell behind the now combined Ebey/Vermilion wagon train and did not catch up to them again. Anna Goddell made one last mention of the Meeker company on June 27th when she noted they were a day's travel behind and were approaching today's Casper, Wyoming. Ironically, two days after Phoebe Meeker died, Goddell and Austin witnessed the death and burial of David Solomon Burr and commented on the grieving widow who would in the not too distant future become Jacob Meeker's second wife. The Meeker's were not yet finished with death. Somewhere near Devil's Gate the youngest of the clan, seventeen-year old Clark Meeker drowned while crossing in the Sweetwater River.

Ebey Wagon Train Members

Winfield Scott Ebey—Age 22

Jacob Neff Ebey—age 61, his father

Sarah Blue Ebey—age 58, his mother

Mary Neff Ebey—age 38, his sister

Elizabeth Ruth Ebey—age 25, his niece

Almira Neff (Myra) Wright—age 11, his niece

James Polk Wright—age 9, his cousin

George Wesley Beam—age 21

James J. Wood—age unknown, died of cholera at Bluff Spring

John W Lesley, his wife and three children—departed from the train with those bound for California at Independence Rock

Several more wagons joined the train on June 1, including George E. King and his wife and two children.

On Sunday May 28, 1854 at Wood River, a bit west of today's Grand Island, Nebraska Ebey tells of the Wisconsin wagon train joining his company.

“This evening we drove in with another small train & intended traveling with them. There are 3 waggons with each a family for Washington Terry & one wagon & 2 young men for Cal. The families are Mr. Thos. J. Headly who has two young men as

drivers Mr Henry Whitesell & Mr. S. P. Burr all from Wisconsin Three married ladies two single ones Miss Sarah U Headly and Miss Nancy Whitesell the girls are cousins & the families are all connected Our friend Bradley seems Sweet on Miss S.U.H. With this Company we expect to make the trip to Puget Sound, Mr Headly having been to California knows something of the road.”

Ebey also gives us a detailed look at the death of David Solomon Burr a month later.

“Tuesday June 20th 1854

Laid in camp all day in consequence of the sickness & death of one of the Company—Mr. S.P. Burr this morning at daylight was taken violently ill with the Cholera & at 3 oclck this afternoon he was a corpse. Yesterday he was as well as usual & went to his bed with as high hopes as he had felt on the road Now he lies in the grave & his stricken wife & Six small children mourn the loss of a Husband & Father—Mr B suffered the extremist anguish throughout the day until relieved by the Kindly hand of Death Every thing that could be done, was tried with no effect I started to go to the fort for some medicine but was not able to ride Mr Bradly went over but the medicine did no good Poor fellow he was called to his accord very Suddenly We buried him this evening—Mrs Burr & children will go on with her brother-in-law Headly.”

The flag

On September 26 the Ebey train moved on to Government Meadows. In his diary that night Winfield Ebey wrote, “Passed over a part of the New road opened by Mr. Allen It is well cut out but the ground is rough & in many places Swampy.” The next day as the wagon train descended the mountains Ebey noted, “...to our right was ‘Mount Ike’ a tall bare rocky Peak. On its Summit we could just See a Flag waving in the morning breeze It was put there a few days since by Mr Allen.”