

THE FREE PRESS.

L. B. RAYMOND, Editor.

Hampton, Iowa, Friday, Aug. 12, 1870.

THE FAR WEST.—In another column will be found a communication from a former resident of Franklin county, who is now in California. Mr. Prendergast left Iowa about the first of July, and his communication is replete with interesting statistics and incidents of travel experienced by him during his trip across the continent, which we publish with pleasure, hoping we shall be similarly favored often in the future

correspondence of the Free Press.
From Utah.

SALT LAKE CITY, July 18, 1870.

Mr. Editor:—Four days ago I left the Mississippi and travelled through Iowa on the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad. The western half of that road passes through the most lovely part of our beautiful state more rolling and broken than in the northern counties but with a richer deeper soil. The bottom lands—many miles across, of the West Nishnabotony are called the richest in our state and are now held at fancy prices, though an eastern man who travelled with me seemed to think such land must be cheap at any prices. Railroad towns—I might almost say cities—have sprung up wonderfully along the line of that road in the last two years, yet comparatively few new farms have been opened up. Now however that the lands of the company are put up for sale the settlement will be more rapid. In one county alone (Montgomery) they own nearly ninety thousand acres. Red Oak the county seat, which two years ago I knew only as a little village as large as Alden, is now a thriving town of much business. Could I have foreseen its future I might have made a goodly pile by getting in town lots there.

It is also the point of junction for the branch line leading to Nebraska city.

Omaha and Council Bluffs, two rival cities stand on either bank of the Missouri, at present Omaha has the start, but when the railroad bridge is finished and the transfer grounds of the Pacific Railroad established at Council Bluffs the latter city will probably rise the fastest. Both cities are finely situated. Omaha I found a large live western city, pushing out railroads like the spokes of a wheel and calling herself the new Chicago. When I was there a scorching sun beat down on the broad shadeless streets and a fiery gale from the south swept the sandy dust in blinding clouds through the city.

What an ugly muddy ditch is the Missouri compared to the stately Mississippi!

The overland train leaves Omaha in the afternoon, this time consisting of nine cars, three baggage and express, three sleeping, one second class and two first class cars, all well filled.

All that afternoon we rolled up the valley of the Platte, a broad shallow stream fringed here and there with scattering trees, the only timber to be seen, farms and small towns at first were often passed and the land looked good enough but I saw nothing there to induce any man to quit Iowa.

Next morning I awoke to find the train stopping at a little water station away out on the plains, the depot the only building in sight and that occupied by U.S. troops, some asleep on the floor, others rolled up in their blankets on the prairie, sleeping amongst the picketed horses. From this on till we reached Salt Lake, we passed troops everywhere, the track repairers were all armed and in the baggage cars I noticed stands of repeating rifles, still we saw no Indians, and antelopes and prairie dogs were the only animals in sight.

The dry elastic air and cool nights on the plains were very enjoyable, and people who before had seemed quite worn out by travel, now began to feel alive again and forget their fatigues.

More anon,
FRANCIS E. PRENDERGAST.

Correspondence of the Free Press.
From Utah.

SALT LAKE CITY, July 18, 1870.

Mr. Editor: My last letter was descriptive of my journey across the continent, which I now resume:

These plains, though so called, really present more variety than those prairies, where we traversed them. For 500 miles the railroad follows the course of the Platte, of its tributaries imperceptibly yet constantly rising.

On the second day from Omaha we first sighted the Rocky Mts., said to be 170 miles distant, but seemingly much nearer; Their summits were streaked with snow, and towered grandly over the plains.

After leaving Cheyenne the grade rises more rapidly, and at Sherman we have attained a height of 8,240 feet above the sea, the highest point yet reached by a railroad. So gradual has been the ascent however that it is hard to realize our great elevation.

Now we descend into Laramie Plains, a fine pasture country but as yet exposed to Indian raids. On the third morning we breakfasted at Carter, one of the first stations in Utah, soon we begin to descend into the Great Salt Lake Basin, through Echo, and Webster Canons, rocky defiles of indescribable grandeur.—Nature seems to have cut a roadway through these rocky barriers and but in few places has there been any heavy grading or bridging required.

Now we get into Mormon settlements, where by a hard fight against nature and irrigating, these industrious settlers have carved out a few small mountain farms and raised homesteads in the wilderness. In the afternoon we reached Ogden, where we change cars to the Utah Central R. R. a road 37 miles long, built and operated by the Mormons. All the way down to the city are thriving settlements, the fields irrigated by water brought from the mountains and the houses of gray sun-dried brick, peeping out of fine orchards and flowery gardens. Yet it is a desert all around and without irrigation these farms would be as desert as they were before the Mormons came. On our right lay the Great Salt Lake, its calm blue waters sparkling in the setting sun and except the settlements all the rest of the scene was made up of desert plains, and still more barren mountains.

About sundown we reached Salt Lake City, with its 25,000 inhabitants, dwelling in snug houses of sun-dried brick and each house standing in its own lot, and always surrounded by a fine garden and orchard. The streets are broad and already well shaded with young locusts, and streams of clear cool water flow through every street. The store signs strike one a little strangely, for instance what do you think of "Zion's Co-operative Store," with an eye and "Holiness to the Lord" over it? That I believe is the Mormon symbol. On an eminence a few miles east of the city is Camp Douglass, where U. S. troops are stationed the year round. On Sunday afternoon I went to the tabernacle, a gigantic building which seats 8,000 people. A man named (I think) Elder Benson, preached, a white bearded old Mormon of great but ill directed energy. His discourse was a long winded history and defense of Mormonism and he called the "Book of Mormon," the

"Bible of the Great American Continent" and quoted scripture which may have proved it to his satisfaction, but certainly not to mine. At the conclusion the question was put to a vote of the congregation, "Shall Elder Benson be sent on a mission to Norway?" Men and women unanimously voted the affirmative, by holding up one hand. The communion was partaken of after the manner of the Independents, except that water replaced the sacramental wine.

They have a noble organ of great power and sweetness and the large trained choir sang to perfection. The best front seats are reserved for Gentiles and strangers of whom there were many. Brigham Young presided, but took no active part.

F. E. PRENDERGAST.