

Walk's Camp 1872-1873
[Lincoln County, Colorado]
A Narrative By Samuel Davis

A Narrative of Samuel Davis about his experiences at Walks Camp, Lincoln County, Colorado in the winter of 1872-73. John J. and Martin Walk are brothers, their wives are sisters and daughters of Samuel Davis. Ephraim, Anderson, Orben, James and Hiram are all brothers and sons of the writer Samuel Davis. William Moore is also a son-in-law. There are a few notations from Jackie Held.

I was raised to farming in Western Pennsylvania, near Braddock's Field. On that battleground I have been often. I moved to (what is now West) Virginia, and resided some years near Sistersville. I have also boated on the Ohio River. Some years ago I moved to Pike County, Missouri, but have lived several years near Middletown, in Montgomery County. Many interesting incidents and adventures during the sixty years of my life might be related, but I will ---- myself with a brief account of my visit to Colorado in the fall and winter of 1872-3.

On my invitation to visit my children living in Colorado, I made arrangements to accept it, and on the 22nd of Oct., 1872 I started for River Bend, in Colorado, on the Kansas-Pacific Railroad, and arrived there on the 25th, being only three days out; having traveled 800 miles, some of it over as beautiful country as one could wish to see; but it will require many years to improve it, and fully test its real value for agricultural purposes.

On my arrival, I met only W.M. Moore, a son-in-law, who was keeping a boardinghouse. Ephraim K. Davis and John Walk were at Hugo, 20 miles east on a hunt. They shipped their game from Hugo to Orben Davis at Denver, where he had gone to sell for them.

I telegraphed to Hugo, asking if the boys were there.

The operator asked, Do you wish to know if they are here now?

I do.

They are; what shall I tell them?

Samuel Davis is at the Bend.

Ephraim wrote by that evening mail, desiring me to come down and go hunting with them.

After three days Hiram Davis and Martin V. Walk came down from Pueblo, 90 miles from River Bend, to join the others; Hiram and Anderson Davis, Martin V. Walk and myself went down to Hugo in Hiram's spring-wagon, drawn by his fine match span of California ponies which he was just breaking. There were spry, so we let them have a good run.

Arrived at Hugo but the boys were out hunting. On reaching their camp 10 miles out, we found some hides and two dogs, but no person. Following their wagon travel, we came to their 2nd camp about miles farther Ephraim, finding Dutch George, (a young butcher they had hired,) and a team of horses, but the boys were out hunting. They came in some 2 or 3 hours afterward, in good spirits, but desperate-looking, being covered with blood and dirt. Dined about 3 p.m., and all went out to haul in the game-5 buffalo killed that day.

Nov. 2 Game being rather scarce in this section, we moved about 10 miles northward, over fine rolling prairie, killing three rattlesnakes on the way. It was a delightful day. At night we camped by a fine natural pond of good water. Here we gathered sufficient buffalo chips and small willows to make a good fire: other fuel rather scarce. About an inch of snow fell during the night, but we lodged in a comfortable tent.

Nov. 3 As game was scarce here, we set out for Hugo this morning. As Anderson and Martin wanted to have a chase with their horses, they took their guns and loped off. They soon overtook two buffalo, one which Anderson shot, but Martin V. ran his some distance. It finally circled back to the dead one. We soon drove up with our wagons, and Anderson rode up, saying, Father, I know you want to have it said, when you go back, that you killed a buffalo while out here.

Yes, I do.

Well, heres my gun, take it and shoot him, but dont go too nigh him, as he is very angry, he might run at you.

I replied, I can beat him running to the wagon, anyhow.

I took the gun and fired, being about 30 yards from the animal. He didnt seem to mind it. Martin ran up, saying, Here, take my gun and try him. I did so: he staggered and fell.

After the deed was done, I said, Boys, this is Sunday and it is not right; but I have been rather crowded into it by you.

I measured the one I shot, and found it ten feet from the tip of the nose to the root of the tail. We did not skin them, but cut off the hind quarters and left the balance.

The sun being low and our horses suffering for water, we had to strike out for some place for water and camping. Being only about 8 miles from Hugo, we made that place, and camped in a good earth cave that had been made by some soldiers formerly stationed there. It was a comfortable place. Next day (Nov. 4) we returned to River Bend, where we met Orben who had returned from Denver, where he had sold over \$300s worth of buffalo meat, selling at 4 @5 cents a lb.; but it came down to 2 cents a lb., so he closed out and came home.

After a few days, Martin & John W. Walk, Hiram and Orben Davis, and self, took our wagons and struck for Pueblo, about 90 miles distant, S.W. We passed thro a beautiful prairie country having some excellent farming land in it. In Bijou Basin were some half dozen fine little farms and springs of running water. This is probably 30 miles east of Pikes Peak, which we passed the second day.

In the morning Dutch called our attention to a cloud on the Peak. It was like a belt round its middle, as both top and base were visible. The cloud seemed descending, and finally settled so that coming up, we drove through it as thro a dark, dense fog. It was quite dark and chilly, and the air frosty. It was a strange sight to me. He said it was about two miles from the mountain.

We now came to a little stream called Fountain River, formed altogether by springs from the Peak. Small but constantly flowing, it affords sufficient water for the farmers to irrigate their lands. We kept down this stream to Pueblo, where it enters the Arkansas River.

After a few days, John and I went in his wagon southward 54 miles, to see my son James, where Johns wife (Emmaline Davis Walk) was on a visit. We passed through some farming country, having some small farms on the little streams where they could irrigate. Arrived at Jamess next morning, finding all well but

himself, he had a rising!

I remained here two weeks, but John and his wife returned in a few days.

James lives about 18 miles from Spanish mountain, up which I expressed a desire to go, but he said it would be very unpleasant, as the snow always made it disagreeable at that season of the year.

I could not enjoy this visit as well as I wished, as the neighbors used the Spanish language, which I could not understand. My little grandson, Samuel, could understand and speak some Spanish, and he is only five years old.

This is on Chatarras River, a fine small stream of clear water constantly running from Spanish mountain. Fine farming could be done here; for the Mexicans are generally poor farmers and work but little, yet receive good return for all their labor. They generally enjoy themselves, and have one or two social dances every week in their little town. James and John and their wives were invited to one. James could not go, but curiosity led me to go in his place. The ladies were decently dressed, but the men very slovenly in attire generally in their dirty clothes. This slovenliness made John unwilling for his

(Seems that a couple pages are missing at this point. Jackie Held)

The houses are made of adobe or sun dried brick. Their brick are larger than ours. They make very comfortable, but rather rough-looking houses. They are built about 8 or 9 feet high, and covered with plank and dirt.

Nov. About 8 o'clock this evening I started in a stage for River Bend, traveling 20 miles to Johnson station, where (on Saturday, 30) I changed and took passage in a carriage to Pueblo with the road Agent, distance about 30 miles.

As I expected to take the Narrow-gauge R. R. northward to Denver, 120 miles, I had to lay over on Sunday, as no trains ran on that day. (An excellent arrangement that all hands may rest.)

Monday, Dec. 2 At 8 o'clock we left Pueblo to Denver, running up the west side of Fountain River to the mountain chain of Pikes Peak. After crossing the ridge, we went down cherry creek sixty miles, arriving at Denver just after dark, having passed through fine mountain scenery. The red and brown rocks, and patches of snow on the mountainsides, showing thro the green pines, afforded a delightful view, very agreeable to the eye.

There is some apparently fine farming land along this route. Wheat is the staple grain of the country. But with good soil & a delightful climate, it can not be a good farming country unless the seasons change so they can have rain as in the States. However, it is a good grazing country, and thousands of cattle are being brought in from Texas and other places, and seem to do very well.

(By planting forest trees freely over these plains, as has been done in Lower Egypt, and along the Suez Canal, a very great change might possibly take place, and rains come in sufficient quantity to meet the requirements of the agriculturist, and the land yet blossom as the rose.)

I remained in Denver one day to view the city, and do say it is a fine place, the only place I saw from the time of leaving home, for which I would desire to live. It is about eighteen miles east of a chain of mountains, apparently very delightful and seemingly only 2 or 3 miles off. In this mountain there is plenty of silver, and many miners are constantly engaged in collecting it, - daily loading a car with the silver-bearing quartz, and sending it east.

Denver is a beautiful town, extending about 2 miles along the R. R., with plenty of room to grow in every direction except west; in this direction it is only 18 miles to the mountains; in all others as far as the limit of vision, which is the blending of the cedars and pines on the far distant mountains with the sky. Occasionally, clumps of trees may be seen on the high prairies, but these would not prevent they would rather aid in the extension of the city. Nineveh or Babylon of old was not so extensive or grand as Denver has room to be, excepting a grand Euphrates to pass thru it to water it. Their fuel is principally coal from the mountains, where it abounds in large quantities and of excellent quality.

At 8 oclock in the evening, (Dec. 3,) I took the train on the Kansas Pacific R. R., for River Bend, where I arrived after a delightful four hours ride, finding all well except Martins child, which was very sick.

A doctor from Denver came down on the same train, but I did not know it until we got off at the Bend and he walked with me up to Wm. Moores, 200 yards from the station. Anderson had a horse ready saddled to take him to John Walks. The child was not expected to live at the time of telegraphing for the doctor. (That is their way of sending for the doctor here, and the Iron Horse brings him.) He administered some medicine, and it soon began to improve.

Martin and John Walk and Ephraim Davis were at this time out on a hunt, and knew not that the child was seriously ill. Wm. Moore went for Martin Walk the next day, but did not find him and also got lost; but in wandering round he found one of their camps, bundled up in buffalo skins, staid till next morning and returned not in a very good humor, after a poor nights rest.

He jumped on the horse immediately, struck back, and brought Martin in the same evening. He did not hunt any more for some time, but Ephraim, John and Dutch George kept it up.

About this time Ephraim and John went out for a brag days hunt, each taking a direction that would not bring him in the others way. They found their droves. Ephraim killed 23, and returned to camp; John killed 24, but had to remain out all night, (which was quite cold,) saying, when he came in next morning, that he had to keep moving about all night to keep from freezing, holding his horse with one hand, and his gun in the other. Ephraim was somewhat uneasy, lest the Indians had got him; but after he came in, laughed at him, saying, I believe you killed some of those buffalo last night, is what kept you out; but that kind of count wont do me. Being tired and hungry, he did not reply, but hastened to his breakfast. After gathering in their hides and meat, and putting things to rights, Ephraim came to River Bend for horse-feed, and some provisions. This was Dec. 15.

On the 17 of Dec., I went out with him to their camp about 30 miles off. As we passed Cedar Point, - 7 miles out we collected and took with us some pine limbs for fire in camp. This made quite a heavy load, and we were benighted before reaching camp. Not knowing how far we had driven before dark, we could not determine how soon we should strike camp. I asked Ephraim if he was going the right direction. He said, I believe so; and walking ahead, I drove after him. After a while he halted and fired his gun, hoping to get an answer from camp; but no response. I referred to a dark cloud, supposed to be in the N.E., asking in what direction he thought the camp from it. He said, toward the west end of it. I observed a star --- that end of the cloud, and I watched it as I drove along, so as to keep the direction in which we supposed the camp to lie. Traveling a mile farther, he fired two more rounds, but without response. Still we moved on as nearly in the direction of the star as the several ravines we had to cross would permit. We stopped near a ravine, and I proposed striking fire and waiting till morning, but he said, No, it is too cold; but we may strike a fire and wait till the moon rises; and while you start a fire I will go to the top of the hill and fire a couple of rounds, for I think we must be near the camp. He did so, and his second discharge was answered. He returned, we smothered our fire, and drove over to camp, probably one-half mile from the place he fired the last time. Found all right. It was about 10 o clock. Ephraim seems almost as successful

in navigating the plains as Kit Carson, for in his four years experience, I have never heard of his being lost. John Walk is a good hunter, but gives up to Ephraim.

On the morning of Dec. 18, Ephraim said he would take me where we could find some buffalo. We went westward and John Walk and Dutch George went eastward. We killed five and saw many more. We did not follow, but returned to camp, - 2 or 3 miles. Of the other party, John said he killed 15, but George didnt know whether he had killed any or not, but he had shot one. They had a rather funny incident: - John wounded a buffalo and sent George to kill it. When near enough, he dismounted to shoot, and the buffalo made at him. He dropped his gun, lost his hat, in jumping on his mule fell over its head, and if the buffalo had not become alarmed at this antic and stopped, it could have caught him. This saved him. George is a good butcher but a poor marksman.

Next day, Dec. 19, we went and skinned the 15 John had killed. They were somewhat frozen. Whilst thus engaged, several buffalo came in sight: Ephraim took his gun, went over the point, and shot 5, which we left till the next day, when John and myself went to skin them whilst Ephraim and George went for the five killed on Wednesday ---- but they found them frozen so they only cut off the hind quarters, loaded them into the wagon, and returned to camp. Cold increased, and some snow was falling so we concluded after eating some, to prepare for home, lest we should be caught in a storm. As we had no wood, and buffalo chips were scarce, we were not very well prepared for such an event.

As we started homeward, I cast my eyes northward and saw three or four large herds of buffalo feeding leisurely along, but we had to turn our backs on them, as the snow seemed increasing.

We drove in a S.W. direction for about 10 miles, as we supposed, to find water in the ravine where we had stopped, but found none; so we were obliged to do without supper that night for want of water, and a small pine stick about two feet long made all the fire we had in our camp for the night. For want of wood and water we had to do without breakfast next morning (Dec. 21). It was severely cold, and snowing a little. After hitching up, Ephraim asked if I would drive.

I will if you will bundle me up with robes and blankets. This he did and marched ahead while Dutch George and I drove the wagons. The winds were very tart and the cold sufficient intense to frost our whiskers. We arrived at River Bend about 3 oclock that day Saturday, Dec. 21, having a good appetite after our long fast. The girls soon prepared us a good dinner, and we very much relished the buffalo and antelope sausage, which is a common article of diet in this region. The boys were now tired of hunting and thought they would quit for the season.

On Christmas day I went out with Orben and Anderson on an antelope hunt. We fell in with an old gentleman from Mo., who had stopped at the Bend to buy up meat. He had an old muzzleloader. We didnt hunt much, but looked about, and spent the time talking. The boys had gone on. Finally we returned and they came in at night, bringing eleven antelopes in their horse-cart, which they had rigged up themselves for hauling in their game. This gentleman bargained to buy all their antelope saddles at 5 cents a pound, wishing, as he had but small capital, to pay for it as he received remittances on his shipments. They said they didnt do a credit business with strangers. He bought several lots, paying cash; but finally they sold him a lot on his promise to pay in a few days; but he failed to come to time, and left for another station. Here they afterward met with him, asked for their pay, and were answered, I have no money to pay with. They said he must go to the Bend with them. Rather than do that he suddenly found that he had money enough to pay them off.

Their average, while hunting was about 10 a day. They killed some 400 noting to go to so far as the R. R. for antelope as the others had for buffalo.

I went out the other day with Anderson and Orben on an antelope hunt. When we came to sight of a flock, we unhitched our horses and crept cautiously along toward it. It was feeding up a slope toward us. When near enough Anderson said, Make ready. We rose, counted one, two, three. And all pulled. My piece missed fire, the others did not hit, but before the flock was out of reach they brought down two and crippled a third; this their greyhound caught after a splendid chase.

The same day as were walking over the prairie, a jackrabbit jumped up about thirty yards from us. The dog started, Anderson hallooed to stop him, but he made no halt. I said, Let him run, I want to see the chase. It was a nice rising prairie, and I could see him a long way. Probably a mile off he ran over the rise out of sight a little while but I could soon see him again running southward, but did not think he gained on it. Anderson thought he would catch it going down the other slope, as he could run faster down hill and it not so fast. A dark cloud of weeds could be seen in the distance: should it reach that, he could not catch it as he ran altogether by sight. The rabbit was invisible to us. The dog being somewhat foot sore running over cactus on the prairie when after antelope, failed to catch the rabbit. He came back and Anderson whipped him, as I thought rather severely, for running without bidding. We gathered up our game and returned to the Bend.

After the holidays were over, the boys having enjoyed high living and rest, began to talk of another hunt; so Ephraim, Martin, and John went back about 20 miles N. E. and built a fine camp, dug in the ground and well covered with small poles and dirt, so as to make it warm and comfortable. Having finished their camp, John came in with his team for horse feed and asked me to go out with him, as the weather was pleasant. I went. This was about the 7th of Jan. 1873.

This is a big prairie country but water is scarce, very little rain falls and most of the streams from mountains sink in their beds early in the summer.

While Ephraim and Martin were building a meat house, on the 9th John and I went about 9 miles eastward from camp, looking for buffalo but saw none. We however saw a gang of antelope, on which we fired and shot one, the skin of which I brought home with me. Finding no more game we returned to the camp. As we rode up, Ephraim said, Ah! Boys, you have no blood on your hands, you have killed no game today.

Nothing but this antelope.

Jan. 10 Leaving Ephraim and Martin still engaged on their place for salting and drying, we hitched up the mule team, took our guns and saddles to be ready for an emergency, and went some 6 or 8 miles down the dry stream on which we were encamped, to bring in the hides and meat of game killed some days before. Just as we finished leading, John looked westward, spied a herd of buffalo quickly feeding. We unharnessed and saddled our mules, took our guns, mounted, and rode toward it. Halting, we found the wind toward the buffalo, so we changed our position to avoid discovery, for should they scent us, they would quickly take to flight.

In circling to the east of them, we rode by a herd of antelope, of which I counted 55 near enough to be shot, but durst not shoot lest we should affright the buffalo. Riding as near the buffalo as we deemed prudent, we dismounted, tied our mules, and crept slowly forward down a ravine, sometimes having to slide on our belly snake fashion, to prevent their seeing us, John being 4 or 5 yards ahead of me. While moving on in this way my gun was accidentally discharged by some grass catching on the cock. This alarmed him and the buffalo. He looked back and asked, In what direction was your muzzle?

Dont be alarmed, Johnnie, as I never carry the muzzle of my gun toward a person, even when empty.

We had to lie still for sometime, as they moved off slowly in the direction they had come down, and we had to go back as we came until we reached the top of the slope on the other side of which they went up. We aimed to meet them at the top of the little ridge. It was hard work, boys, but we made the desired point. When we rose up they had scented us and were turning off a little, but were near enough to us to fire on them. John killed one and I hit another so that after running near 200 yards it staggered and fell. As John could load much faster than I, he ran on and wounded two more, which he got afterward. We had to be very expeditious just now to get to our mules. We ran, each carrying a heavy gun, mounted our mules and rode hard for some two miles along the side of the little ridge in order to get ahead of the herd. When we were on the other side, John asked me to hold the mules, while he crept nearer to bring down the leader. Being tired, I was willing to rest. I tied their bridles together and sat down on a prairie dog mound. While sitting here, I could see grasshoppers jumping round quite actively as on a midsummer day. This was a curious site to me on the 10th of January. It was a warm pleasant day, and I was sweating freely after such hard exercise. He finally got ahead of them, and was near a mile off when I heard his gun two or three times and started toward him. Getting in sight I saw him on his knees loading and firing. I tied the mules and thought I would join in the sport, but John saw me start and beckoned for me to stay, lest I should affright the buffaloes which were standing still, then I, feeling like a bound boy at a husking bee, sat with loaded gun in hand, looking at him shooting the buffaloes. He shot eleven in a space less than an acre of ground, but only crippled the last one. I ran up caught it, threw it down and cut its throat, saying, You shall not have it to say that you killed all of them. He was in quite a sweat from his great exertion and excitement. I was obliged to laugh some. It was now 3 o'clock and we had killed 17 buffaloes since 11 a.m. John said, No time to skin them but we will gut and leave them until tomorrow, then return and skin them.

By the time we had finished this job the sun was near setting. We had to go about two miles north to our wagon, which, as I said before, was loaded with meat and hides. We drove for camp, but were out so late that the boys began to think the Indians had taken us, or that we were lost, but rather supposing the latter, they built a fire on some high ground, making quite a blaze which we saw about 5 miles distant. To let them know we saw it we fired one of our sharpshooters.

Having a heavy load, we experienced considerable difficulty in driving across and around ravines, but reached camp all right at 10 o'clock.

The anecdotes of the day, while we were engaged, some rendering tallow, some running bullets, all being occupied, furnished us with entertainment till we were ready for bed. Our room was very comfortable and well furnished with robes and blankets.

Jan. 11 Hitching up two teams, all four went out to skin and bring in our game which, as before stated, was some 10 miles east from camp on the same dry stream.

As we had suffered for water the day before, we took a keg of water with us, but were very much disappointed on going for a drink to find our keg empty. In crossing a ravine it turned over, let water out and we had to do without all day. Soon after this we came upon some snow on north side of bank and I lay down and licked up some, which relieved but got nearly as much dirt as snow.

The bed of this stream is probably 26 to 50 yards wide and is filled with gravel all sizes and colors and is some 34 ft. deep as I saw from holes made by a person digging for water. The reflection of sunlight upon gravel was very brilliant as from glass of all hues of color. While Ephraim and John were out after a buffalo and antelope, I picked up about 100 different specimens of pebble and put them in my pocket to bring home. After they killed the game, we drove with the wagon and got it. Soon we came to those we had killed the day before, and commenced our work of, skinning them. This made us a big days work, and heavy loads for our teams; - one antelope and the hides and meat of 18 buffaloes over 3000 lb., and it was almost sundown when we were ready to start for camp, where we arrived about 10 o'clock; all right

but very thirsty.

A drink of good water was very refreshing after doing without all day, having had only a little ice, which we found in some sheltered places, and by which our thirst had been somewhat relieved. A cup of good coffee, with antelope ham and good bread and vegetables, made us an excellent supper. The boys are good cooks and bakers.

Jan. 12 Sunday. Leaving Martin and Ephraim at camp, John and I set out for the Bend. He was to take back a load of horse-feed and some salt. As we drove quite fast, my valise was lost off the wagon, and we had gone some distance before missing it. I wished to go back for it but John said No, I can find it tomorrow as I go back.

After getting to the Bend I concluded to return home, and asked Orben to ride out and bring back my valise. He willingly went, but did not find it, and I supposed the wolves had carried it off. The day (Monday) was very severe, on account of a cold wind, and some snow was falling. He returned Tuesday, and I prepared to come home without my valise.

As Orben was going to camp looking for my valise, he met Ephraim after a troop of wild horses, one of which he shot, causing it to fall but breaking no bones. Orben rode up and threw a lasso over its head and took it back to camp. Since coming back home I have been informed that it died.

I enjoyed myself excellently all the time of my visit and should like very much to take another and be able to tell you more about the country through which I should travel. The boys enjoy themselves as well as they ever will in this world, - having good guns, good dogs, good horses, and can go hunting whenever they please, and rest when they wish.

If I have made any mistakes in this, it was not intentional, and if I can ever visit that country again and go on the mountains, I will be able to give better information of things and scenes.

My pretty pebbles were in my valise, which, I have learned since coming home has been found.

Wednesday, June 16, 1873, I took the cars for home bringing with me the skin of one buffalo (the one I caught and killed with the antelope, one wolf ---- jackrabbits, and three prairie dogs showing samples of western animals.

I arrived home on the 18th, having had a pleasant ride and a tolerably plain view of the prairie country for 200-300 miles seeing no timber until near Kansas.

Now, patient readers the old Pennsylvanian has finished his narrative, wishes you a prosperous life-journey, and bows himself out.

Samuel Davis

Generously contributed to this site by Karen Walk, [email kwalk@pld.com]

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[Lincoln County portion of the COGenWeb](#)

