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# On the Way to Iowa

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## On the Way to Iowa

In the spring of 1866, Amaziah and Cornelia Cannon with their three children, Emeline, Sidney, and Ettie, left Columbia County, Wisconsin, to come to Cerro Gordo County, Iowa, where they settled on a farm near Mason City.

Emeline Cannon was sixteen at the time of this trip, and like teen-age girls even today, she kept a diary, in which she recorded the problems and the costs of travel in pioneer times. Here are her entries for April 23rd to May 3rd, 1866, on the trip across southeastern Wisconsin and northern Iowa.

*Monday April 23rd, 1866, noon.* Stopped about 9½ miles this side of Lodi [Wisconsin] to eat our dinner and feed the teams. Sidney says "I wish we were going back after dinner." (evening) Got to Lodi before supper and put up at the Lion House. We are very tired tonight. The roads were very bad part of the way. (6½ dollars)

*Tuesday noon April 24th.* Stopped at noon 10 miles from Lodi at 4 corners where there was about 50 Dutch young ones and I could not count any more. I presume there was about a dozen

that was not big enough to get out yet. It is very bad road and we have come but 10 miles. (evening) Passed Mazomanie about 4 o'clock, got to Dover and put up. It has been very bad roads and we have come about 25 miles. The bridges are all gone and roads all torn up. Bill \$2.00 last night.

*Wednesday noon April 25th.* It rained last night but not enough to make it very muddy. It is pleasant today and the roads are good. We have been through some splendid valleys today. We passed Arena this morning and I saw a train of freight cars and there were 31 cars. We are eating our dinner by the side of the road. (evening) We came up a hill this afternoon that was about 2 miles long and passed rocks that were larger than any house. Came on to the old military road this afternoon and came across the prairie. Put up at a large farm house at 5 o'clock. Ma is tireder tonight than she has been before since we started. We have come about 25 miles. We are 3 miles north of Dodgeville. I rode in the buggy this afternoon and drove the colts. It has been very pleasant today. Bill \$2.75.

*Thursday 26th.* Pleasant today and good roads. It is warm and good prairie. There is some splendid farms along here. Staid at the Fennimore Center house a tavern on the prairie.

Have come about 30 miles today. Did not stop until after sunset. Came through Wingville this afternoon. \$3.00.

*Friday 27th.* The wind blows awfully and it is very warm. We passed an emigrant wagon with 2 span of horses on it going to California and a little while ago we passed 3 teams going to Iowa. We are going across prairie again today. Ma is not very well today. Went through Bridgeport and came across the Wisconsin Bridge tonight. The river is very high and rising all the time. We came through where the water was over the wheels and running awful fast. The little horses nearly went down 2 or 3 times. The water is rising all the time. We are the last ones across and the bridge will be gone in an hour. We got to Prairie du Chien just at dark. We have come 32 miles today but we can't get across the Mississippi. The water is higher than it has been for 15 years. It is 6 miles from the Wisconsin River to Prairie du Chien.

*Saturday 28th.* Ettie don't want any breakfast and she says she is going to drink enough coffee to pay her fare. No prospect of crossing the river. The river is tearing houses and barns down today and keeps rising. The Wisconsin Bridge went down last night. We are staying at the Otto's Hall in Prairie du Chien. Came here last night

and will have to stay till we can go across the river. I went down to the river today and it was overflowed about half a mile and is taking off houses and buildings. The river rises all day today. Sidney wishes he was back home. It has been a nice day today. \$6½.

*Sunday 29th, 1866.* Staid at Prairie du Chien till 2 o'clock and then a steam packet Alex McGregor came over and took us to McGregor [Iowa]. There was eight teams when we went off of the boat. Morg (one of the horses) slipped and fell off into the water and hurt his ankle. There was a man murdered last night in Prairie du Chien for his money and I saw two men arrested on the boat today for it. We went about 10 miles from McGregor and staid at the Henry House, a hotel out on the prairie. Did not go but 10 miles today.

*Monday 30th.* It rains today. It rained this morning a little. We came through a pretty village on the Turkey River about noon. Went to a small frame house and stopped to eat our dinner and then went on and about 6 o'clock we stopped at a large stone house to stay tonight. Went 2 miles north of West Union this afternoon. \$2.50.

*Tuesday May 1st.* Started this morning about 7 o'clock and drove 16 miles, and stopped at a farm house to eat dinner. It is very cold today

and it snowed some this morning. It has been very bad road today the worst I ever saw, it is through what is called the Wapsie flats and it is very muddy low ground, swampy and wet. We stopped about sundown at the Farmers' Inn. Sidney says he has soured on the Wapsie. \$4 $\frac{1}{2}$ .

*Wednesday May 2nd, 1866.* Got through the Wapsie this forenoon and got to Bradford at noon and had to ford the Little Cedar River and a mile farther we came to the Big Cedar River and had to cross in a little boat and the teams had to ford the river. The colts went in all over. We had very bad roads all day today. We got to St. Charles City tonight. We are 32 miles from Mason City.

*Thursday May 3rd.* Started from St. Charles in the morning. It was prairie most of the way. We came to the Shell Rock River about noon and had to ford it. The Bridge was gone. We crossed at Rockford, ate dinner there and crossed Lime Creek at night and got to Mason City at dark.

Thus the Cannons arrived at their destination after a long and tiresome trip. Two years after her arrival in Iowa, Emeline Cannon married Thomas W. Dent, a Civil War veteran who had served with General W. T. Sherman on his march from Atlanta to the sea. In 1881 the Dents moved

to the house which had been built on the farm which had been purchased by Amaziah Cannon, Emeline's father. There they lived for the remainder of their lives — Thomas, until his death in January, 1932, and Emeline, until October, 1944.

HUGH H. SHEPARD