

15. Westward Migration in the United States

It may be helpful for us to look in a little more detail at migration history within the United States. We don't often think about the uniqueness of that phenomenon, nor how it actually happened. It is another bit of information that helps us understand our ancestors. Here is a telling comment from Morris Birkbeck, an English visitor in 1818, who wrote *Journey in America*:

"The condition of the people of America is so different from aught that we in Europe have an opportunity of observing ... They are great travellers, and in general better acquainted with the vast expanse of country, spreading over their eighteen states ... than the English with their little island. They are also a migrating people, and even when in prosperous circumstances, can contemplate a change of situation, which under our old establishments and fixed habits, none, but the enterprising, would venture upon, when urged by adversity."

In a way, we can think of American domestic migration as a wave rolling across the country, from east to west. The Encyclopaedia Britannica's *Westward Movement* article gives a good summary:

Westward movement, the populating (by Europeans) of the land within the continental boundaries of the mainland United States, a process that began shortly after the first colonial settlements were established along the Atlantic coast. The first British settlers in the New World stayed close to the Atlantic, their lifeline to needed supplies from England. By the 1630s, however, Massachusetts Bay colonists were pushing into the Connecticut River valley. Decades of continuous westward pushing of the frontier line followed, but it was not until the conclusion of the War of 1812 that the westward movement became a significant outpouring of people across the continent. By 1830 the Old Northwest and Old Southwest—areas scarcely populated before the war—were settled with enough people to warrant the admission of Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Alabama, and Mississippi as states into the Union. During the 1830s and '40s, the flood of pioneers poured unceasingly westward. Michigan, Arkansas, Wisconsin, and Iowa received most of them. A number of families even went as far as the Pacific coast, taking the Oregon Trail to areas in the Pacific Northwest. In 1849 fortune seekers rushed into California in search of gold. Meanwhile, the Mormons ended their long pilgrimage in Utah. Between the gold rush and the Civil War, Americans in growing numbers filled the Mississippi River valley, Texas, the southwest territories, and the new states of Kansas and Nebraska. During the war, gold and silver discoveries drew prospectors—and later settlers—into Oregon, Colorado, Nevada, Idaho, and Montana. By 1870 only portions of the Great Plains could truly be called unsettled. For most of the next two decades, that land functioned as the fabled open range, home to cowboys and their grazing cattle from ranches in Texas. But by the late 1880s, with the decline of the range cattle industry, settlers moved in and fenced the Great Plains into family farms. That settlement—and the wild rush of pioneers into the Oklahoma Indian Territory—constituted the last chapter of the westward movement. By the early 1890s, a frontier had ceased to exist within the 48 continental states.

Here is an astonishing statement from *Conner Prairie.org*, *Indiana History Western Immigration*:

“In examining the geographical and residential status of early 19th-century Americans, historians have discovered ‘persistence rates’ (or the percentage of those individuals who remain in one location from one census enumeration to the next) of approximately 30% to 50%. This meant that well over one-half of the population found in one location at a given time could not be found in that same location ten years later, thereby indicating a highly mobile population.”

The article continues:

Migration has been an important force in the development of America. Ever since the English settled along the banks of the James River in 1607, subsequent generations have looked beyond the boundaries of their settlements to the unsettled regions of the west. These people realized that the advancement of their civilization was dependent upon a continuous supply of mobile humans who were willing to pack their belongings and their families, to relocate to another part of the continent, to transplant their culture, and to resume life in a new environment. Since the American nation was founded and developed on the basis of this westward orientation and on a belief that God had predestined the American people to fill the nation to its natural boundaries, one can easily conclude that migration has been, and continues to be to this day, a distinct characteristic of America and its people, so much so as to earn the population the title of a "People in motion."

A good example of this movement can be seen in the changing distribution of populations in the western regions.

1800 - 10% of all Americans resided west of the Appalachian Mountains, primarily in Tennessee, Kentucky, and the area of West Virginia.

1824 - 30% of all Americans resided in the region between the Appalachians and the Mississippi River, with increased movement further west into unsettled territories.

Likewise, the rapid growth of state and territorial populations reveal the great movement of the American people into the opening Western lands:

	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840
Ohio	45,000	239,581	581,434	938,903	1.4 million
Indiana	5,000	24,520	147,178	343,600	600,000
Illinois	-----	12,282	55,211	157,445	476,000
Michigan	-----	4,700	-----	-----	212,000

Frontier historian Ray Allen Billington claimed that the “frontier” moved at a rate of 10-40 miles per years, and that during the 1830s and 40s, land and other commercial agents could be found 1000 miles ahead of the frontier towns of the Mississippi Valley, indicating the anticipated growth of the nation in the coming years. Foreigners also constituted a portion of the migrating population. English, Scotch, Irish, German,

and other immigrant groups came to America to seek new opportunities in the vast western lands. However, the massive migration of these groups from Europe did not occur until the late 1840s, so these ethnic groups did not contribute to the initial settlement of central Indiana.

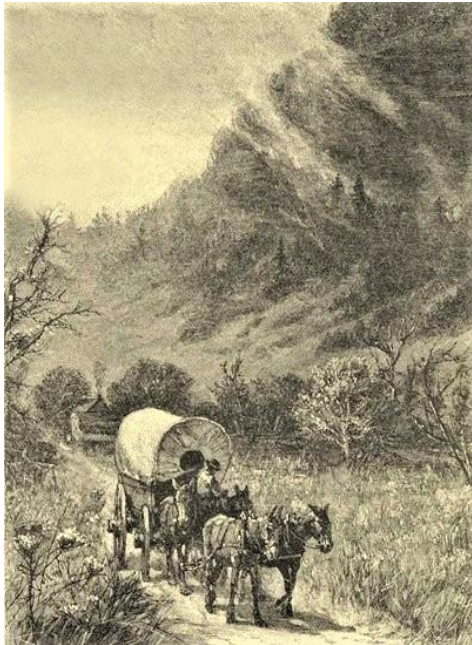
When discussing the westward migration of people, one must consider three major points:

1. Migration did not occur in orderly fashion. All people did not choose to move at the same time nor to the same location. Pioneers decided to migrate and to settle where they believed they would best continue their traditional ways of life and thought and still seek new opportunities and improvement of lifestyle. Immigrant and religious groups often decided to migrate and resettle together in an effort to preserve and to perpetuate the culture and beliefs with which they were accustomed and to escape the force of Americanization that accompanied contact with the American population.





2. Migration was a selective process: not everyone pulled up stakes in the East pushed into the open western lands. Migration was primarily a personal decision, dependent upon a variety of factors: age of the head of household; economic status; personal attitudes; and projected costs and benefits of the resettlement.



3. Westward migration was not an easy proposition, despite the romanticization in literature and idyllic fashion. Removal to and settling in a new region posed numerous problems for the pioneers, as described by R.C. Buley in his work, *The Old Northwest*: "As the earlier settlers came into the region north of the Ohio, they were confronted with two sets of problems: the one concerned with shelter, food, health, and protection – things vital and immediate to the individual and his

family; the other with ownership of land, transportation, and currency – things necessary for his economic advancement. Without the successful solution to the first, there was little need to worry about the second; with the beginning of progress on the second it became possible to think of schools, churches, cultural societies, humanitarian reform and the development of institutions which mark social accomplishment."

What we will do now is try to find the best way to bring the real pioneer travel experience to life for Heinrich and Maria. We will use family records and albums, the information from Sylveria's book, the information from Fred Althoff, the information from *Roots and Wings*, other information we can find, and some descriptive sections of a novel written by Phil Stong in 1937 based on his grandfather's pioneer journals *Memories of Frontier Iowa* published in *The Annals of Iowa*. Even though this novel, *Buckskin Breeches*, describes a life lived 20 years before our ancestors, its focus on the human story behind the dry historical facts of migration will help to bring the real pioneer experience to life. While good genealogical records, written documentation, and historical facts are, of course, important to any story, in my opinion we will get a better idea of what our pioneer ancestors actually experienced if we try to capture the human drama that is inherent in an undertaking like pioneer travel.

That human drama is depicted engagingly in the Jesse Ellison family story in *Buckskin Breeches*. There are significant differences between the Ellisons and the Segbers: The Ellisons were third-generation Americans of Anglo-Saxon heritage who in 1837 left their home near Cincinnati, Ohio, where they had lived for 20 years, to go to southeastern Iowa, near Ft. Madison. Mr. Ellison had grown discouraged with the "deviltry" of civilization and sought the freedom and innocence of a new land. His goal was to get as far away from civilization as possible. Mrs. Ellison, who longed for the comforts of civilization in large cities, accompanied him only because he took their four children ages 10, 15, 17, and 19. The Segbers were first-generation German-American Catholics who sought the safety and security of a community of like-minded people, which they found in 1854 in New Vienna in northeastern Iowa. The Ellisons staked their Iowa claim in 1837, before statehood, and therefore would have been among the pioneer settlers who bought their farms by government auction for \$1.25 an acre several years after they were already established on those farms. (This is a highly interesting story that we will not recount at this time.) The Segbers bought their farm from an already-established settler, with clear boundaries and title.

We do not know exactly when Heinrich and Maria made their journey, but it would have been in the six months between November 1853 and June 1854. Their son Henry, my father, was born in Cincinnati November 25, 1853, and Heinrich's family is listed on the Iowa census of 1854 which we

think was taken in June or July. So despite the logic of traveling during the summer when water and forage for the animals would have been more abundant, as did the original five pioneer families in New Vienna, I think our ancestors traveled in the very early spring, before the thaws that made river crossings dangerous. The Ellison family in the novel traveled in the winter. Colder weather would have helped to mitigate several major hazards of the trails: cholera, drowning, and the deep mud in which wagon wheels got mired. Also, game animals for food may have been easier to spot once the leaves were off the trees. Let's follow the stories of two covered wagon journeys that are quite different from each other: the Hellman story in *Roots and Wings* that recounts the journey of five families traveling together from Ohio to Iowa in the summer of 1843, and the Ellison family story in *Buckskin Breeches* recounting their travel from Ohio to Iowa in the late fall of 1837 with one other family. Heinrich and Maria may have had some of the experiences of both. The two stories together will help us understand what our ancestors experienced on their trek. Here is the story recounted by the Hellman family in *Roots and Wings*:

In 1843 five energetic, brave men, together with their resolute wives and families, determined to sell their farms in Ohio and move on westward to the territory of Iowa. Their purpose was to take up government land on some location affording opportunity for a large German-American Catholic settlement.

On May 20, 1843, they left their homes in Ohio and set out in the famous prairie schooners, six large wagons covered with triple canvas, equipped and laden with all the necessities of camp life. These wagons were drawn by six yoke of heavy oxen. Three horses were also taken along, but these did not stand the hardships of the journey and soon were given in trade for an additional yoke of oxen. As one brave member of the party stated, the trip was not attended by any great hazard or unpleasant events except those incident to all like enterprises. One can, however, get a faint idea of the difficulties these intrepid immigrants had to contend with if one considers that they traveled by oxen a distance of 600 miles.

Moving on through Indiana and Illinois, they crossed the Mississippi River at Burlington about the middle of August on self-constructed flat boats made of logs. They had to traverse hills and dales, pass through forests and plains; they had to cross swamps and unbridged streams until finally they reached Iowa City, then a small village. Not finding that vicinity suitable for the large settlement they envisioned, they continued traveling northeast guided by Divine Providence in the direction of the small mining town of Dubuque. They had heard of the great friend of early settlers, the humble pioneer bishop of Dubuque, Mathias Loras, and decided to consult him. They therefore pitched their camp in the vicinity where Cascade is now located and remained two weeks. During that time they sent two members of the expedition to Dubuque to seek advice and direction from the saintly Bishop Loras. Four others proceeded on an exploring tour northward along the Maquoketa River to what was known at that time as "Wilson's Grove", a 200-acre patch of fine timber land. Here these

hardy German-American explorers found the desired location. The site was eminently suitable and offered all desirable conditions for agricultural pursuits as well as water power for operating a grist mill and a saw mill. With glad hearts the scouts returned to camp to report their good fortune.

They reached New Vienna in August, three months after leaving Ohio. They continued to live in their covered wagons while establishing ownership of the plots, enclosing the plots with sod and rail fences, breaking the soil with spade, oxen and plow, and building their first log houses, which were one-room buildings 14 feet by 20 feet, with a ground floor. The logs were fastened with wooden pegs and the chinks between the logs were plastered with clay. Fireplaces and chimneys were built of split logs and also covered with clay. Split shingles three feet by ten inches in size, held in place by stringers fastened with wooden pine, formed the covering for the roof.

The Ellison family consists of Jesse, 46, his wife Margaret Garrison Ellison, 37, David 19, Susan 17, Teddy 15 and Hiram (Hi) 10. Jesse served as a soldier in the wars of 1812 and 1813 and forged a reputation for unusual courage, bravery and skill with weapons including the gun, the knife, and his bare hands. He left soldiering to marry Margaret and run her family's tavern and restaurant, but he has grown increasingly miserable over the years and finds himself now, 20 years later, deeply unhappy. Margaret was raised in polite Cincinnati society and has never really adjusted to the roughness of frontier living. She longs for the cultured society of large cities. When an effete New York minister with pretensions to culture and literacy takes up residency in the town and becomes infatuated with Margaret, paying her extravagant compliments and attention that distract her from her boredom, Margaret soon becomes the subject of town gossip. Both Jesse and Margaret are highly educated, but Jesse more so, including fluency in Latin, Greek, and some French, with a thorough understanding of works like his favorite Emerson or *The Age of Reason*, all of which allow him to quickly see through the minister's pretensions. The family attends the Congregational Church, but privately Jesse struggles with the theology and philosophy of the existence of evil and how a God, if there were a God, could condone the evils that Jesse has seen. In addition, Jesse is very opposed to slavery and has to serve customers who regularly rail against the abolitionists. Jesse has in fact saved a runaway Creole slave from recapture by the bounty hunters and this young and beautiful woman fell in love with him. Against his wishes he finds himself admiring her gentle and lovely nature. The children also seem to be at crossroads. David has become infatuated with the town's loose woman and Susan with a handsome fiddler, Teddy is a gentle person who does not like to be involved in the usual street brawling of the young teen males of the time, which makes him the target of bullying. Young Hi is keen to get into trouble.

Into this volatile mix come the unsavory transients passing through Jesse's establishment on their way to take advantage of the opportunities in the new settlements of the new state of Michigan. These are "land speculators, lawyers, political adventurers who hoped to find distinction in the new-made commonwealth that they had not achieved in more settled places, a scattering of beggars, cheats, and sailors of misfortune – all considered miscreants and locally branded contemptuously as 'Yankees'".

A young neighbor couple, Leland and Georgie Pickett, whose family bank had gone bust, decided to go to Iowa. When Jesse learned that, he decided on the spot to go with them. He told Margaret he was leaving with the children and she could do as she wished. She determined that although pioneer living was the last thing she wanted, she would go with him simply to prove that she could handle as difficult an undertaking as he could. At any rate, she did not want to be parted from her children.

Before we look at the Ellison trip itself let us, just for fun, read the following delightfully irreverent passage, a rueful reflection by the world-weary and cynical Jesse as he struggles to think of some way out of the situation in which he finds himself. "I suppose I could teach school except that if I were asked for the truth I would probably tell it. 'Master, tell us about our glorious nation.' 'Why child, it is founded for the benefit of John Hancock and some other greedy merchants; it has been enlarged by swapping, stealing, treaty breaking, and murder for the benefit of Southern brutes, Northern cheats, and Western peasants. It is governed by cunning ignorance, grandiloquence, and skullduggery – for the benefit of magnified peddlers and of beastly slaveholders. Its chief magistrate from being a puppet has now risen to posture independently. Its chief contemporary hero is an unhinged murderer, a blusterer, a notorious adulterer, a liar, a treaty violator and a man so eminently suited to preside over similar ruffians and robbers that he served two terms as the nation's head and retired with honor.'"

Let us now begin our journey with the Ellisons, and start with a description of the wagon.

The wagon was necessarily a huge affair; it had to house a family of six and all the effects – a plow, flails, scythes, hoes, axes, kitchen utensils, tools, a spinning wheel, a small forge, only forty or fifty of Jesse's books – Jesse found it remarkable how many of his books he could dispense with in a pinch – and virtually no furniture except the clocks. The furniture could be made after the family reached Iowa.

The wagon was not "lumbering" or "clumsy." The bending canvas, stretched over hickory withes above the sturdy, but proportionately slight and graceful wheels, fairly earned the vehicle its name

of “prairie ship.” Jesse had helped to build it himself and he knew that every axle, every beam and stick in it was fit for the bumps and mudholes of the 400 mile journey.

The family spent the entire summer choosing and discarding, advising with defeated and disgruntled settlers on their way back East far more than with the hopeful numbers headed for the West. With mud and doubtful trails, they must count on it taking a full month, at least, to reach the Mississippi. There Jesse intended to winter his family at some convenient tavern and go on with his two oldest sons to build a cabin and clear the land for the spring crops. He had paid an agent the extraordinary sum of \$100 to go ahead and choose a site for him, his only condition being that it must be beyond the edges of settlement. It was a letter and not the agent that came back to him:

“Wajis here is four shilings a Day. You will Have to go on past the Des Moynes River and Except it is pretty Lonesome it is the Best Farmin Ground I Have saw But Good Water and the Grass is High as your Shoulders. There is no Use to Locate a Farm becaus you will see a Thousand. You would be Handy atween Ft. Madison and Burlington and Dubuque and if you Take a place on the Bottoms Could Float your Things to Market even down to St. Louis but will be Trade at Ft. Madison or Closeter soon. More when I see you. Advice you Come for early Spring Clearin but not later as Country is Settlin acrost Mississippi and They may be some Settlement near D.M. River in a few Years. So if you want new Tertory you had Better come soon. Faithfully, ...”

There would be two covered wagons, each pulled by a team of oxen. Many reassurances were given that the Indians they would encounter would be friendly (much to the youngest son’s disgust since he was forever playing at shooting Indians.) Finally it was the day of departure. Tearful goodbyes were said and everyone settled to their places, with young Hi choosing to walk behind the wagons. “David waved a signal from his ship and the expedition started with a statement no more glorious than ‘Giddap.’”

Jesse had no whip – he had a long hickory branch with which he could prod the animals up if they grew remiss. They never needed punishment or much exhortation, only this reminder. Old Mike, the bay gelding, Dot, who was David’s fine walnut mare, Ermy, the milch cow, were tethered behind the wagon, with the draft team tethered behind them. After teary goodbyes the two wagons set out with a simple “Giddap.” The well-greased joints and axles of the wagons barely creaked as they went down the last street of the town and took the road heading west toward their first stop, a little group of cabins which Jessed hoped to reach in four days in Naylor, Indiana. These small towns scattered along the way provided needed rest stops and replenished supplies. Soon the last of the well-trodden town road was behind them, and the oxen now slogged along through the tall grass

that grew in the wagon ruts. The riding was not too bumpy, but the danger of holes hidden by standing water was a risk to breaking an axle. No one ever filled those holes. It started to rain, and the water dripped down onto the drivers.

As the oxen crested a small hill and started down the other side to the creek the oxen trotted a little, then splashed through the cold water and heaved themselves and their loads up on the other side. Sometimes the fine spray from the oxen blowing blew back into the driver's face. The oxen went steadily onward at two or three miles an hour. The sky grew steadily darker and twilight came on at midafternoon. In the late dusk that evening, Jesse remarked that it was going to set on. But he drove on doggedly behind David's track.

He grinned, at last, when David stopped his yoke and allowed him to catch up. "Going to do it all at once, hunh?" "Couldn't see the path any more, dad." "Nor I. I was just watching your back end and listening to the wheels. Pull off, son, when they sound wet. One side will sound wet before the other. Listen to your wheels – I forgot to tell you." "That's smart," David said. "I didn't think of that. We camp here?" Jesse waved his hand at the rain. "In our wagons. I'll send Margaret over with Georgie and you at nights. You're all right for supper?" "Cold beef, potato slices, chicken fry, kidney stew – we can't warm it up in this rain – a lot of pickles and preserves – we won't starve."

Jesse and the boys staked out his animals while Susan and her mother spread out the cold supper and set the tea to boiling on the charcoal heater. It was wet and turning cold, but the glow of the charcoal and the familiar odor of the teapot made the dim interior of the ship almost cheerful. Jesse and the boys came in soaked and peeled off their jackets to drip at the end of the wagon. Margaret made each of them take a teaspoonful of whisky in a cup of tea at once.

The storm drooped away and left them in the chill of the late autumn night, the children feeling rather forlorn at last, as if they had left the whole world behind in Merkurville. The night sounds of curious animals, disturbed by this renewed invasion of their wilderness, came to them in mysterious snufflings and breathings, there were whippoorwills on every horizon of sound, the moaning of owls, and the light stirring of the trees.

Their bodies had warmed this cloth sanctuary, but the candles merely made more definite the blackness outside the woven shelter. They had gone perhaps twelve miles. David gazed out of the back of the wagon. There had been no chance to bathe or clean up decently and David could faintly smell the clean sweat on his own body. Stout youngster as he was, his shoulders were tired from steering the two oxen over twelve miles of the rutted and muddy road to this arbitrary spot in the

forest. He had been out of the wagon four times during the afternoon to throw brush in front of the wheels and to coax an extraordinary effort out of the animals at their muzzles.

In the morning they continued on. And the days passed.

They spent few nights at taverns, or what passed for taverns – sprawling wayside cabins in settlements of five or six houses. It had grown so cold now, with several light snowfalls, that they almost regretted the earlier autumn rains. They ate indoor meals, wrapped in their coats and blankets. When the weather was clear, Jesse and David built two great fires between the wagons which, even at a safe distance from the flames, served as windbreaks. The tall grass, sometimes almost at the wheeltops, had died in the heavy frosts, but the beasts made no objection to this; they grew leaner but they grew stronger. The forests, which had thinned out in Indiana, became groves as they approached Illinois; the heavy ground herbage gave reception to the seeds of trees only in patches where they were favored by special conditions of wind and soil. As they came closer to the great river, to the Mississippi, the valleys of the swelling streams grew broader and deeper until they became at last the softened representations of mountains, steep enough and high enough to make the trail more winding.

They decided to find a tavern in Amenia to sleep in and get warm. The wagons plunged and bumped into the embryonic village square, sparsely surrounded on three sides by scrawny frame buildings. Gusts of snow were blowing over the frozen mud of the streets and the air was pungent with the smoke of burning hickory from a dozen chimneys. Behind the houses the skeletons of the year's corn crop bowed together back and forth in the cold, changing gale. The first glance about showed where two prairie wagons were stationed for the night – as good a sign of a tavern as Jesse needed. He pulled up in the yard and families began to unload from the wagons, shivering in the wind from which their thin covering had sheltered them. They went to the door in a troop. The door opened and a thin dolorous man with thin whiskers over all his chin and face stood in the light of the candles and a good, blazing fire. "Come in, come in and warm yerselves. I can feed ye but Lord knows where ye'll sleep." Indeed, the room was crowded and it was only too evident that there could not be more than three or four more rooms to the little tavern. Seated at a table were a jaundiced-looking pair of middle-aged people, presumably from the near-South, and eleven dirty children were distributed about the room – the oldest not more than thirteen. Also at the table were a respectable-seeming couple of about Jess's and Margaret's ages. The pale, lovely, blond girl between them must necessarily be their daughter.

This family was the Drummond family, also on their way to Iowa. As the evening progressed and the two families came to converse together, Jesse eventually said to Mirabeau Drummond, "I tell you, if you don't think it's forward of me. If our oxen keep pace, why don't we travel together for a way and see if we'd like to be neighbors? We both came out here to get out of the United States. But there's no use fooling ourselves that we've got to start a new state if we want our children and grandchildren brought up like civilized people. I've spent a good deal of my life in the woods and I could maybe give you some points. When it comes to settling, you might be able to help me some with my farming. The women would be company for each other and Sue and Julia seem to have hit it off. If you don't like the notion, pretend I never said it." But Mr. Drummond liked the idea very much, and the deal was struck. Meanwhile the scrawny, pessimistic, little tavern-keeper arranged sleeping quarters for this expanded group, including a pallet in the kitchen, the room for the women, and the hayloft for the men. Then he insisted that everyone sit down for a hearty meal of deer meat with gravy, potatoes, beets, several pitchers of milk, with apple pie and homemade cheese for dessert, followed by sweet cider for an after-dinner noggin. The families warmed themselves before the fire and took themselves off to a well-earned rest out of the cold winter wind,

The wagons made better time the next day. The ground was frozen and the ride was rough but safer. No more treacherous passages of grass-hidden mud; no more straining against the yokes by animals which could hardly find a foothold in the slush or muck. The frozen clods on the trail made the ride sufficiently difficult, however. Jesse's neck was weary with tugging at his span before the day was over, but they had been assured at the last cabin that they were now in the State of Illinois. Watseka was only a few miles ahead, but it was much too late to hope to reach the village that night.

The wagon jolted along to the dreary complaining of the tired axles. Winter had settled in early, in Ohio as well as in Illinois, Margaret recognized when she took care to think of it, but its ordinary impression on her was that she was being dragged and bumped into an increasingly barren, frigid, and ominous wasteland. It was not summer anywhere near, to east or west. The wagon souged into a hidden ditch and banged sharply as it came over the far edge. Margaret heard, with profound irritation, Emma Drummond's quick protest to her husband – a thousand times reiterated: "Mirabeau! Watch where you're going! Remember the passengers!" Mirabeau's worn and provokingly good-natured reply, "All right mother. Hold your horses. Hole in the pavement." Margaret wondered if she would ever see real pavement again.

They were in half-frozen mud then for three days, when old Jules lurched and threw Jesse's wagon off kelter at a ditch slope. All the upper spokes in the front two wheels splintered or smashed. The men whittled with blue fingers and Eli cursed. It was bitter cold; the breath of the cattle steamed out and disappeared almost instantly. When the wheels were repaired, the party creaked along in silence for a while with the fierce chill seizing almost tangible at their faces. Jesse had tied a handkerchief over his mouth and nose and up around his ears. David held the heavy arm of his coat sleeve across his face. Interminable prairie, white-carpeted except for the jagged ends of stubborn weeds, wild azaleas, and buckbrush stretched out in front. The puffs of tough bunch grass made the snow seem to bubble. Since there was no track on the snow in front of them except the occasional marks of a rabbit or a bird, Cynthy the ox could see the trail no better than Jesse, but both of them clung to the likelier and easier passages of the prairie and occasionally Jesse was reassured by the jouncing of a rut. There was a dim and dubious shadow across the plain, sometimes, cast by the furrows that many wagon wheels had turned up. Apart from this intermittent guide there was no beacon or landmark except the few settlements of Tanner's map, some of which Jesse never found at all.

Three days later they burst out of thick scrub, heavy sprouts, and saplings with the occasional wreck of an old oak – both youth and age showing the precarious life of a tree in a great flood bottom – and ascending a mild grade, came at last to a rise of land from which they could see the cold, brown glitter of the Mississippi, the high bluffs and hills on its farther shore, all white except for the black-spotted shacks and cabins of Fort Madison, in loway, scattered and solitary.

There were a half dozen wagons gathered about the ferry station to wait for a morning crossing, but Jesse drove as he had been instructed back in Merkurville directly to the Barker cabin where the stout jolly tavern-keeper had indeed received a letter informing him of the Ellison party on the way. He received the party warmly and soon had the animals settled in the barn by his sons, and his guests settled in his tavern by himself and his wife.

The blizzard came on. The wind moaned at the house corners and the windows were completely covered with snow which still whispered at the casements. Profoundly, Jesse felt a sympathetic pleasure in Barker's enjoyment of these facts. His house was large and warm and merry – there was meat aplenty and cider and salt and good company and, though Barker was not a particularly thoughtful man, he would have been less than human if he had not felt that this refuge, unabated by solitude or storm, this warm and cheerful spot in the hostile wilderness was the work of his own hands, the fruit of brave and reasoned enterprise. The night log was lifted on the fire and the company reluctantly recognized that it was time for bed.

It was at this tavern that a wealthy but embittered man joined their continued journey. Samuel Carpenter would eventually provide the money for the grist mill and saw mill that would make the Ellison/Drummond/Pickett/Carpenter settlement grow. With the blizzard, no traveling was possible

because the wagons could not have been pulled through the heavy drifts even if the men and animals could have endured the cold. The Barkers were frankly delighted by this fact and enjoyed their company for several more days.

Three days later the sun had packed the drifts sufficiently for travel and the caravan formed in the dooryard. It was a considerable party now: five wagons, a dozen horses – most of them Carpenter's, and a spare yoke of oxen. They came to the ferry in an hour – a crude flatboat some thirty feet long and half again the width of a wagon, twelve feet in all. Now Jesse's wagon was maneuvered off the landing and onto the boat, the oxen were unyoked and securely tethered at the sides. Jesse, Drummond, David, and Leland sat down at the oarlocks while the ferrymaster handled the steering oar. Slowly, in the sluggish current, between chunks of floating ice, the clumsy boat and its heavy cargo made out in the wide river, drifting more rapidly downstream than it made toward shore. Finally, on the bank at last, the oxen were yoked and the boat was towed to the landing place. This was the first of many trips. The wagons, the animals, the goods, and the people were loaded in Illinois and unloaded in loway as the day wore on. David and Ted felt their arms pulling from their shoulders as they relayed other rowers, but Jesse and Mirabeau went on tirelessly, furious to complete their job before nightfall. At dusk it began to rain – a cold winter rain. The last load, the women, was drawn into the landing. Already Eli, Hi, Carpenter and the boatman at the landing had filled the wagons again. Above them all towered the Mississippi bluffs, for what land were these barricades appropriate?

The yonside boatman – the proprietor of the dock on the loway shore – thought they might put up the night somewhere around. There were two or three taverns and the weather looked bad again. The one tiny creek through the formidable cliffs furnished a road to the heights above – beside its channel lay the trail. Another blizzard might make it impassable. Jesse glanced at the road to the loway settlements. "We'd better make it tonight, Mirabeau." Mirabeau was fagged, dog-tired and gone. He nodded, "We'd better get uphill, Jess. I'm sure I can make it." Jesse smiled at the farmer. "I'm sure you can, Mirabeau. God bless you, farmer, we'll get a glimpse of loway before we shut our eyes." Jesse helped him as he climbed to the seat. Mirabeau did not get that first glimpse of the splendid plain above the bluffs - he had been asleep for an hour before his oxen stopped behind the front wagon. Margaret and Emma were crying from exhaustion. The green strength of the boys' bodies had been tried and tried again and Ted was sobbing while he pulled up his span; Hi cursed his horses imaginatively. Sue was sound asleep when they made camp. No one considered a supper – supper would have to be breakfast.

The next day they were all surprised to find that Iowa was not an endless prairie but was instead an undulating woodland, prickly-backed with the leafless trees, cut with respectable streams and ravines, and bordered with long, rounded hills on its horizons. They camped that night at the foot of a hill. The ground was icy under a soggy blanket of snow, and dry wood was hard to find. Eli and Hi found dead branches from which they cut slivers under the bark, and once they had the slivers burning strong, they soon had wet wood drying sufficiently to become a good fire to prepare the evening meal, which was followed by warming at the fire and bed in the wagons.

A mile a day or ten miles a day they advanced into Iowa. Gradually the place possessed them, quietly thrusting up its oaks and maples, elm and hickory and walnut. Half a hundred thousand years before, the best soil of a hemisphere had come down here on tides of ice and brought life and

the food of life along with it. There were rocks that had known the poles of earth and springing timbers that could have been used in ships to search them out again. No man of farm experience could see even winter evidences of the heavy black soil, left by old glaciers, without some reassurance and comfort. Game, always plentiful, became increasingly so as the families approached the Des Moines River. The settlers' course thus far had been between the Mississippi and the Des Moines, perhaps thirty miles above the place where the two rivers, flowing in directions opposed at approximately forty-five degrees, finally join each other. It was not hilly country, there were many plains for fields, but the word "rolling" was not adequate to the beauty created by the rivers.

They came into the little town of Farmington one evening while the ice of the Des Moines was still crimson and silver with the red sunset and found the smoke of a dozen chimneys. They spent the night at the tavern, and in the morning Mirabeau Drummond announced that he would settle his family close by Farmington. The families promised to stay in touch and said their farewells.

Beyond Farmington the wagon track spread like a fan and dimmed out. This was the end of roads and the end of people. They left the river almost immediately to take the higher prairie ground and cut back by compass and stars to the upper corner of the Great Bend in the Des Moines. They drove miles to run the courses of inconsequential gullies, and after the hard day's driving found themselves on the other side, two or three miles from the start. There were hours of delay when an axle or a wheel broke and had to be repaired. Finally on the sixth day they reached their destination. In all their lives they would never see any land with more immediate beauty than this mile of the Great Bend. There was the cold, gray-green sweep of the great river as it flowed over seven miles of rapids so gentle that they were imperceptible to view except for an occasional ripple.

To their great surprise as they surveyed the new land, they saw a large new cabin, its great logs still showing green and the chinking not yet dried. Upon investigating, they found that an older German couple had set up a trading post and were doing a thriving business with the local Indians. A satisfying meal with their hosts left most of the party soporific and ready for bed, but Jesse found, to his amazement and delight, that the trading post owner was highly educated, and the two were soon besting each other in Latin and Greek, exhaustion for Jesse completely forgotten. The next day Leland and his wife and Samuel Carpenter were left at the site where the two mills would rise, and Jesse's family continued another day's journey to select their own land. There, in a seeming fury of activity, Jesse and his three boys soon raised a log cabin. The Indians in the village by the river nearby brought enough split hickory to roof the cabin in a day, and also brought them a possum and several squirrels, asking only some drinks from the cask of liquor in return. The following day the Indian women brought sand and clay that they strewed on the floor and then stomped repeatedly to a repetitive chant until the floor was hard and firm. The following day Margaret moved her family's possessions into the new log cabin and set up housekeeping as Jesse and the boys walked the property marking the boundaries of their new farm.

From these stories we have a good idea of some of the experiences of covered wagon travel on the trails our ancestors traveled. They would have to travel over 500 miles from Ohio to Iowa, cross the Mississippi River, and continue on to New Vienna. A covered wagon could cover 8-20 miles a day depending on weather and terrain. So it probably took Heinrich and Maria about a month and a half

to make the trip. They would have wanted to travel as quickly as possible, but still accommodating their travel to their own needs and the needs of their animals. One covered wagon could comfortably hold the belongings of five people, and we will propose that Heinrich and Maria took only the bare necessities they would need for the trip. Because the ride might be rough, usually only the very young or very old would ride in the wagon, and everyone else walked. Heinrich may have walked next to his oxen, but I think because they kept the wagon load as light as possible, he rode in the wagon to help provide safety and warmth for the children as he drove the oxen team. With a new infant and two small children to take care of, Maria would have ridden in the wagon. From Census documents and land records we can propose that Heinrich and Maria made their Ohio to New Vienna trek in the early spring of 1854, starting perhaps in late January.