Over the Santa Fe Trail Through Kansas in 1858

H. B. Möllhausen

Translated by John A. Burne
Edited and Annotated by Robert Taft

I. Introduction

Heinrich Balduin Möllhausen was a German who, between 1849 and 1859, became extensively acquainted with the American West. He was a member of two federal exploring parties and accompanied a German prince on a third expedition, as has been described at greater length in an article on Möllhausen in The Kansas Historical Quarterly for August, 1948.

In the fall of 1857 Möllhausen accompanied Lt. Joseph C. Ives’ expedition on an exploration, by steamship, of the Colorado river from its mouth in the Gulf of California to the head of navigation. Leaving their boat, members of the expedition attempted their exploration along the Colorado river eastward through the rugged country along the southern side of the Grand Canyon. The expedition was abandoned in the spring of 1858 at Fort Defiance in present eastern Arizona. Möllhausen, with several fellow members of the expedition, continued eastward to Santa Fe, and left that town via the Santa Fe trail for Fort Leavenworth on June 16, 1858.

On his return to Germany, Möllhausen wrote an account of the expedition, based on a diary which must have been carefully kept on the Western journey. It was published in two volumes at Leipzig, Germany, in 1861, under the voluminous title Reisen in die Felssengebirge Nord-Amerikas bis zum Hoch-Plateau von Neu-Mexico, unternommen als Mitglied der im Auftrage der Regierung der


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Vereinigten Staaten ausgesandten Colorado-Expedition (Journeys Into the Rocky Mountains of North America as Far as the High Plateau of New Mexico, Undertaken as a Member of the Colorado Expedition by Commission of the Government of the United States).

This first-hand account of the West has never been translated into English and is even rare in the original German. We have been able to locate but few copies in this country. Through the kindness and courtesy of the California State Library at Sacramento we secured an extended loan of an excellent copy of Möllhausen’s work. Professor Burzle is preparing a translation of both volumes, but a translation of that portion of the account describing the return trip through Kansas is presented herewith.

This portion of the Möllhausen account includes chapters 35, 36, 37 and 38 of his Reisen (v. 2, pp. 333-391 of the original) and begins while the return party was still in present northeastern New Mexico, covering the dates June 29 to July 25, 1858.

Although not a literal translation, translator and editor have attempted to follow the original meaning as closely and exactly as possible—not an easy task, for Möllhausen was at times, as the interested reader will soon find out, a wordy and an effusive writer. The most important changes from the original in the translation occur in the spelling of proper nouns where modern American spelling has been consistently followed, i.e., Topeka for “Topeca”; Neosho for “Neoscho”; Cheyenne for “Scheyenene,” etc. Despite Möllhausen’s proximity, he was an observant and thoughtful traveler. The record of his intense interest in the detail of life and surroundings of a day now gone is a most valuable contribution to the contemporary literature of this period in Kansas history.

II. THE JOURNAL—UP THE SANTA FE TRAIL THROUGH KANSAS

[CHAPTER 35]

When we stepped outside our camp on the morning of June 29 I noticed that we had stopped overnight in a grass-covered basin surrounded on three sides by hills. A swampy brook with clear water which, however, contained magnesium, wandered through the prairie. Because of low water level, it was stagnant at the time; I observed thousands of fish of various sizes in it that hurriedly slipped back and forth between the reeds. We did not take time to catch any, especially since I saw only the one species of “Pomatis.”

1. Möllhausen evidently classified these fish correctly as this family would include such fish as bluegills, green sunfish, etc., common to our Western rivers.
After a journey of 25 miles, we reached the Cimarron river in the early hours of the afternoon. We were forced to continue our trip for some time up the little river. We then immediately prepared to stay overnight. The main sources of the Cimarron river are on the eastern slopes of the Raton mountains (104° W. L. of Greenwich); flowing in a northeasterly direction from the mountains it approaches the Arkansas river within a few miles at 101° longitude. Then suddenly it turns southeast, and cutting away from the northern bend of the Arkansas, it empties into this river at the 96th degree.

As far as I am familiar with the Cimarron, it resembles a brook, winding through green treeless meadows, its water level only a few feet below its wide shallow banks. Like many other creeks and rivers in these latitudes, the Cimarron flows at times under the surface and only when it receives water from the snow of the Western mountains does its wide valley resemble a river; then roaring wildly it empties into the Arkansas.

Whenever one comes upon running water in the Cimarron during the dry season it has only a slight taste of magnesiam; but it becomes almost undrinkable in the pools because of its alkali contents. It also is accompanied by a bad, musty odor that makes it quite disagreeable. Whenever I rode through the little river I observed that only a thin film of sand covered its bed, and that wagon wheels, as well as the hoofs of animals, stirred up an evil-smelling, blueblack mould which gave the stagnant water of the nearby brooks and pools these peculiar qualities.

Contrary to my expectations, I found the territory of the Cimarron river poor in game; to be sure, I noticed numerous buffalo paths and even a dead buffalo dried to a mummy, an indication that in some years the bison extends its wanderings to these regions. The native game of the region, the antelope and the white-tailed stag (Cervus Virginianus), I saw only in very small numbers and usually from a great distance.

We left our camp on June 30th at the usual hour, and followed the level, but winding road in the Cimarron valley. We encoun-

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2. The travelers encountered the Cimarron near the extreme northeastern corner of present New Mexico and followed the river for some 60 or 65 miles, first on one side of the stream and then the other, going into present Oklahoma and then Colorado as the river follows a devious way eastward before entering Kansas in present Morton county in the extreme southwestern part of the state.

The dry, alkaline, or miry character of the river bed in this region, as mentioned by Möllhausen in the text which follows, has been described by other travelers; see, for example, the field notes of Joseph C. Brown in the Eighteenth Biennial Report of the Board of Directors of the Kansas State Historical Society (Topeka, 1913), pp. 122, 123. Brown’s notes are a part of the report of a committee appointed to prepare a map of the Santa Fe trail through Kansas and this source is hereafter referred to as the Eighteenth Biennial Report.
tered several caravans of traders; they were taking goods to New Mexico on heavy wagons with teams of twelve oxen; from everyone with whom we talked we learned that the larger part of the buffalo herds had already moved north, but that we could still count on good hunting.

This news hastened us forward so that even in the noon hour when the sun was perpendicularly above our heads and our shadows almost disappeared under our feet, when the heated atmosphere trembled and dazzled us, and the mirage tantalized us with its illusions, we still hurried on as cheerfully and vigorously as we did in the early morning hours after a restful night, or, as we did in the cool of the evening when an expanse of water beckoned to us from the distance. With enthusiasm we even hunted the sly wolf and the fleet antelope on our robust animals. If we did stop for a few hours during the day, we rested around the wagon in a circle, laying our heads in its shade so as not to be exposed to the dangerous effects of the sun’s rays during our short nap.

After riding fifteen miles we reached the spot where the road leaves the valley and rises to the plateau above. There we met the United States mail which had left the Missouri sixteen days earlier. They brought only scanty news but they stressed the fact that they had encountered numerous bands of Indians on the way and had escaped being molested only because of their speed. We asked them to mark the places where the natives were encamped, but not particularly worried about our future, we ascended to the upland in order to continue our trip until nightfall.

For 12 miles we rode over a surface that was almost as smooth as a billiard table and then came down again into the valley where we passed the night. A small group of travelers, evidently coming from Missouri, camped close to us. We walked over to ask whence they had come and about their destination, and were most pleasantly surprised when Peacock recognized an old and trusted friend in their leader.3

We soon were engaged in a lively conversation, and as an example of how hospitality is offered and accepted on the prairies I quote the conversation between the two old friends: “How about it, Peacock?” the stranger asked, “Did you count on bad water and have you taken sufficient fortifying spirits along to last until you get to the Missouri?”

3. Peacock was C. H. Peacock “of California” in charge of the mule train of the Ives expedition.—See Joseph C. Ives, Report Upon the Colorado River of the West (Washington, 1861), p. 6; see, also, Footnotes 10 and 17.
“When we left Santa Fe,” Peacock answered, “we had so many full bottles and barrels that we thought we could sell some on the Missouri; but we have constantly come upon bad water, the sun has been so hot and our thirst so great that I can’t think of the future without worrying.”

“And there is no prospect,” the other one interrupted, “of your thirst diminishing; fortunately my train is still behind me, and I am glad to be able to help you out in this dilemma.” With these words he tore a piece of paper from his notebook, wrote a few words in pencil on it and handing it to Peacock he said: “You’ll meet my train tomorrow night or the following morning, give my regards to the wagon master, hand him this receipt and an empty barrel; if you don’t get it back filled with as good brandy as ever was taken across the prairies, then I’ll be hanged.” “But not in the prairies,” Peacock added smilingly, “it might be difficult to find a tree for you.”

We visited together until late into the night, but when we stepped outside the following morning we found the camping place of our host deserted; he had already set out during the night.

On the first of July we remained only a short time in the river valley; but before we turned to higher ground above the river we stopped at a depression at one side of the road to fill our water vessels at a spring there [Middle Cimarron spring], for even though we rode hard we could not count on reaching the running water of the Cimarron that same day. At this place the Cimarron river makes a bend toward the southeast and consists of nothing but a few puddles. Our day’s journey amounted to 28 miles, and when the sun set, we again approached a green, grassy valley in which we discovered a pool of dirty water for our animals. We stopped and had hardly finished the last preparations for the night when a thunderstorm broke loose. A fine wetting rain veiled the whole country and hastened the onset of night.

It was still raining when we mounted the mules the following morning and proceeded in the same direction, following the Cimarron for the first twelve miles. As the sun rose higher the rain diminished and when we approached one of the most important springs in the otherwise dry river valley at about eleven o’clock, the clouds had parted and the almost perpendicular rays of the sun greedily absorbed the rain which had fallen.5

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4. The travelers were now in Kansas, as the Middle Cimarron spring was “in southwest Morton county, about seven miles north and six miles east of the southwest corner of Kansas.” —Eighteenth Biennial Report, p. 125.

5. Probably the Lower Cimarron spring (later known as Wagon Bed spring) in present southern Grant county.—Ibid., pp. 115, 122.
We rested for two hours at this spring and were visited there by a group of disreputable looking Mexicans who claimed that they were returning from a trip to the Comanches with whom they had traded. Never in my life had I seen a greater assortment of robber faces than among this band; indeed, some of them presented a truly terrifying exterior, and they certainly did not give the impression that any one of them would have shrunk from cold-blooded murder. They were about twenty in number and I can truthfully say that we were not particularly pleased when some of them joined us and started to question us to the best of their abilities. We gave them short answers, and as far as the continuation of our trip was concerned, incorrect answers, because no one of us was in doubt that we were face to face with one of the bands of highway robbers which made those trade routes unsafe, and committed the numerous crimes which are often blamed on the Indians. We were too well armed to be afraid of this sinister company in daylight, and only to prevent a night attack and the loss of our mules did we lead the inquirers astray with our answers.

Upon continuing our trip we underwent a torture which we had experienced on preceding days but which doubled in intensity after the mild rain. Small, scarcely visible flies filled the humid air and descended upon us and the animals in droves; we tried to protect ourselves by covering our heads and our hands, but we did not succeed in shutting out the small insects completely; they crept into our beards and into our hair where they tortured us extremely with their bites and stings. Not until we left the valley and moved to higher ground over which we continued our trip to the Arkansas was there an end to the torture.

After having journeyed 27 miles we arrived toward evening in a small valley in the plain which is known by the name of Sand creek. We stayed overnight near a murky pool which we found in the bed of the infrequently flowing stream, and almost against our expectations we remained undisturbed for we had not believed that the band of robbers which we had met the previous day would be able to resist the temptation to try at least to steal our mules.

During the latter part of the night it rained very hard and we saddled and mounted our animals in the rain on the morning of

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6. The camp on the night of July 2 probably was in present Haskell county somewhat less than half way from Wagon Bed spring to the crossing of the Arkansas river in present Gray county, if we interpret Möllhausen's distances correctly. No Sand creek is listed in Brown's notes as the survey apparently followed a somewhat different route in this part of the trail than did Möllhausen and his party. There is listed a Sand creek in Gregg's table of distances along the trail which was some 50 miles from the crossing of the Arkansas.—Ibid., pp. 116, 121.
July 3. Our surroundings presented so desolate and hopeless an appearance that we had no wish to remain there waiting for better weather; we therefore put our blankets around our shoulders and at a fast pace moved across a level expanse whose horizons were marked by the falling rain as if by lead-colored walls.

We met several caravans that morning, and among them there was also the one we expected. Peacock had carefully preserved the slip of paper and according to our previous arrangement he gave it to the wagon master; he actually got the promised barrel of which it could be said that never had a better one found its way through the prairies. The sky cleared again around noon and the boundless prairie extended in all directions without even the slightest swell. Although rainwater had gathered in the low parts of the road, providing many appropriate camping spots, we traveled on until evening without interruption and then pitched camp in a grassy hollow.

The sun set on the plain in all its glory, and rose again as gloriously from the fiery east on July 4; not a cloud obscured the lovely blue sky and huge dewdrops adorned the short stems of buffalo grass. The grazing mules had brushed the dew from the grass and had given it a darker color for a short distance making paths which crossed in the queerest patterns. It was a magnificent morning, a morning of which there are so many on the prairies. We could have considered ourselves the only living beings and therefore the masters of the entire world, for besides our small group there was actually nothing but the wide green plain, the infinite firmament, and the beautiful sun. True, our shoes had begun to fall off our feet, and our tattered clothing showed little desire to stay with us very much longer, but our surroundings, as simple as they were, seemed sublime.

We greeted the new day with loud shouts and with heartfelt songs, like larks that have no worry but dull weather, and no other desire than bright sunshine. My mule contentedly closed its eyes as I approached, perhaps with the hope that he would remain unnoticed by me. He heaved a deep sigh when I pulled the girth tight, and when I mounted him, he pricked up his long, long ears and trotted cheerfully ahead of the rumbling wagon in the company of his fellow travelers.

For a distance of 14 miles the character of the scenery did not change at all, but then we came to a series of sandy hills, and an hour later we were on the edge of the valley of the Arkansas river.7

7. The travelers were now approaching the crossing of the Arkansas river near the present town of Cimarron in present Gray county.—Ibid., p. 113.
Two caravans were camped there, numerous mounted Indians roamed about, but before I turned my attention to them I looked down into the valley that the wide, clay-colored Arkansas divided in half.

On my journeys I have observed a number of prairie rivers, among them the Nebraska [the Platte], the Canadian, and the Arkansas, but as a rule I have not noticed any distinct difference in their character. Everywhere was the same sandy, wide shallow bed; everywhere the low banks, the flat grassy valleys; everywhere the hilly border of the valley, and nowhere were there trees worth mentioning. The latter circumstance is no doubt the reason why, at first sight, these rivers do not produce as pleasant an impression as one gets from rivers in scenically more agreeable regions.

One must get used to them, so to speak, in order to like them; one must have drunk from their waters for weeks; one must have bathed in their shallows in order to leave them with regret; and this feeling is also true of the upper Arkansas river which hurries through the plains almost moody; at times rising, at times falling, but carrying a large part of the water of the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains to the father of the rivers, the Mississippi.

The Indians whom we met belonged to the tribes of the Cheyenne, the Kiowa, and the Arapaho, but I was unable to detect any feature in their exterior which would have pointed to a tribal difference. They were tall, well-built people, genuine inhabitants of the plains in whose posture you could not miss seeing a certain boldness, and in whose armour, Indian wealth. Their hair fell down to their knees on both sides of their painted faces while the fantastically adorned scalp-lock, together with the hair of the back, reached down to the middle of the spine.

The dress was different in the case of each native, and so gaily colored, so peculiarly adorned and cut that one involuntarily wondered at the gift of imagination of these people who knew how to express their taste in such varying and different forms. Not only the moccasins and leggings were brilliant with glass beads, finely cut leather fringe, bells, rare fur strips and rings, but the saddles of their strong and wiry horses were similarly decorated. Contrary to our expectations the wild prairie riders proved to be friendly and sociable, and one after another rode over to us to shake hands and greet us.

We remained only a short time on the upland with the caravans; riding down the sandy slope we soon got down into the valley
which lay scarcely one hundred feet lower than the prairie proper. On the green bank of the river we unharnessed the animals in order to rest for an hour; scarcely had this fact been noticed by the Indians on the hills above when a number of them galloped near and camped quite close to us. It was not our intention to get deeply entangled with the visitors whose motives we could not guess. Their obvious modesty, however, had this time more effect than their usual forwardness, and we were soon engrossed in a conversation with one who seemed to me to be one of their most respected warriors.

As a means of communication I used the sign language as I had learned it during my stay among the northeastern tribes on the upper Missouri, and I was very pleased when I made myself understood, and in turn found the answers very intelligibly given in a similar manner. Thus, I learned that the Arapahoes, the Cheyennes and the Kiowas were gathered farther upstream on the Arkansas river in order to receive the gifts which were to be presented to them by the Indian agent Bent in the name of the government of the United States. To be sure, these tribes receive a small bounty every year if there are no complaints about them from the caravans and, in all probability, it was mainly due to this circumstance that they behaved so politely and reservedly toward us.

As a rule, Bent trades with all the natives on the upper Arkansas river and his main depot is at Bent's fort (103° W. L. of Greenwich), a fortified place from where business and negotiations are conducted even with natives living in more remote regions. Through the fact that Bent has been appointed agent of the United States, a liaison officer so to speak, between the United States and the Indians and as all payments and presents for them go through his hands, his influence and esteem have been considerably increased, and gradually a relation of mutual sympathy has arisen, a relationship one still frequently finds in the West between traders and natives. Naturally, Bent derives the greatest relative benefits from such traffic, inasmuch as all Indians in whose district he lives feel themselves obligated to trade their furs only with him.

Thus the Indians looked forward to the arrival of the agent. Some of them had assembled for that purpose farther upstream and others farther downstream from the spot where we first came

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8. Bent was doubtless "Col." William Bent, builder of Bent's new fort and a famous figure of the Southwestern frontier. Information on Bent can be found in George Bird Grinnell's extensive but irregular account, "Bent's Old Fort And Its Builders," in Kansas Historical Collections, v. 15, pp. 28-88. According to Grinnell (pp. 86 and 87), Bent was not an Indian agent in 1858 but Fort Bent was frequently headquarters for the Indian agents of the upper Arkansas tribes.
upon the Arkansas river, so that they might welcome Bent and accompany him to his fort. For several weeks they had been waiting, and some distrust had begun to creep up among them as day after day passed without their hope being fulfilled. As I have mentioned above, however, they abstained strictly from any remark concerning this fact, and allowed the numerous caravans to pass without molesting them. The tribes, about which the people accompanying the mail had complained, were the Osages and the Kaw or Kansas Indians; they had no relations with those who depended on Bent; on the contrary, there was friction between them, and at the time of our presence, bloody engagements had occurred between the Osages and the Comanches.

After a two hours' rest we set out again and followed the Indians who had raced wildly ahead of us toward the Arkansas river. We were able to recognize the ford from afar because a large caravan was crossing the river, and at the moment we arrived the last wagon was brought up to the right bank. It was a government caravan accompanied by a command of mounted troops who were on their way to Fort Union.

The officers met us in the most friendly manner and since they recognized us as a government expedition by the "U. S." with which our animals and our wagons were marked, no special formalities were needed to establish friendly relations quickly. We had scarcely an hour at our disposal because the troops had to start looking for a camping place with more grass, and we ourselves intended to ford the river before nightfall, and also look for a good grazing place for our animals. An hour, however, was sufficient to get acquainted with one another and to question each other.

Moreover it was July 4, the mere mention of which transports the American into ecstasy; it was the celebration of the Constitution which a great many citizens do not think is celebrated adequately unless they burn down a few houses as a climax to fireworks, and then they look for nocturnal peace in an artificially produced happy mood. Even though we did not shoot off fireworks, we had enough stuff for our Constitutional thirst, and standing around boxes and baskets we drank every kind of toast, it may have been to the Constitution or to the emperor of China, to the Democrats or to the Whigs, to the slaves or to the free black man or to any other subject destined to go down or to rise; at any rate we drank and it tasted wonderful. The troops, too, did not lag

9. Möllhausen's knowledge of American history was evidently not much better than that of many Americans in confusing "celebration of the Constitution" with Independence day.
behind, because everyone, without distinction of rank or person, received a double ration of brandy in honor of the day.

Not far from us a high-wheeled light traveling coach had stopped, and in it I saw a beautiful pale lady with a white and a black servant. "It is my wife," the commanding officer remarked. "I ask your pardon if I do not present you to her, but the poor creature got so frightened when we forded the river and the carriage threatened to capsize that she still is unable to speak." We thanked him and were not dissatisfied because during our long trip our faces had received such a robberlike patina that we justly feared to make an unpleasant, horrifying impression on a lady who had just been torn away from a cultured home and atmosphere.

Since the level of the Arkansas river was unusually high and the water came over the shoulders of the mules, the commander of the troops put two of his tallest horses at the head of our team in front of the wagon, and we were overjoyed to see our belongings arrive safely on the left bank of the river in a short while. We then took leave cordially, and crossing our feet above our saddles we rode into the river. The impact of the water was more powerful than I had thought, and on the treacherous sandy soil eroded in furrows by the current, the animals needed all their strength to keep themselves upright with their load.

But we crossed the stream, which at this spot is approximately six hundred feet wide, without an accident; a few Arapahoes had accompanied us on their horses, and we gave them some tobacco for their trouble. We then waved good-bye to the caravan that was just starting west on the other bank, and a few minutes later we were on a plain above the river and trotting cheerfully along on the road which forms a boundary between the valley of the Arkansas and the prairie proper. Toward evening we turned to the river, and stayed overnight near some tall grass that marked a strip of swampy soil.

On July 5 we continued our trip along the river valley; the road was good, the weather extremely pleasant, but there was so little change in the scenery that it could be considered as non-existent. When we therefore observed indistinct forms of three or four cottonwood trees on the far horizon or went past islands on which willows grew, we turned our full attention to them, and found objects beautiful and pleasant which would have gone unnoticed in other regions.

Around noon we rested near the last remnants of an old abandoned military post which Peacock identified as the former Fort
Mann. Commissioned by the government, it had been founded in 1847 by a certain Daniel P. Mann to protect nearby herds of grazing cattle. Establishment of new posts further west with more timber, made the maintenance of Fort Mann unnecessary. Since passing caravans considered the rafters of the deserted shacks and huts welcome firewood, the clay-walls, deprived of their supports, soon fell into ruin, and a simple sod wall, in the shape of an irregular triangle is all that is left of the post. Near Fort Mann the Arkansas river makes quite a bend toward the south. Since we had now learned that the Comanches were camping in that region with their wives and children, and since we had no great desire to make our way directly through their temporary village, we decided to cut off the bend of the river and to slip past them by going across the plain in a direct line. At this time a meeting with the Comanches was, to be sure, not dangerous, but we might have been delayed, a fact we wanted to avoid under all circumstances. By the way, there is a road across the upland known as the “Dry Road.” It is even shorter than the road down the river which has been called the “Water Road,” but the “Dry Road” is always avoided by the oxen caravans, and usually by the mule caravans, too, because of the lack of water.

That afternoon, after a trip of 25 miles, we were near a road junction when we suddenly noticed a small dark spot crossing our road and moving slowly towards the river. The opinion that it was a bison was confirmed when Peacock looked at it through his telescope. We at once decided to give chase. Since I was the only one with a rifle, my companions being armed only with double-barreled shot guns, I undertook the job of either stopping the hairy fellow with a well-aimed bullet or moderating his speed so that my comrades would gain time to ride close enough to make use of their guns. To be sure, Peacock observed that on all his trips never had the first buffalo that came in sight been killed, but I was not to be deterred from the attempt.

I spurred my animal on, and describing a wide circle got the buffalo between myself and the river. The wind was favorable, and instead of running away, the enormous animal turned toward me and watched as I zig-zagged toward it foot by foot. I was almost within shooting distance when it suddenly snorted, turned
around and galloped toward the river. I immediately started to
gallop after it on my mount; but the buffalo stopped after a short
run and looked around for me. I also stopped dead in my tracks
without having lessened the distance between us.

I quickly threw the lasso to the ground, which prevented my
mule from running away, slid quietly from my saddle and flattening
out I crawled toward the buffalo which kept its eyes on the grazing
mule. I had come within two hundred paces of it when it saw me
and put up its short tail as a sign of distrust. I got up at once,
and before it had time to think of flight, my bullet hit it through the
ribs between its shoulder blades. The colossus trembled under the
heavy impact but it stayed on its feet and clumsily trotted toward
the river. The bullet had, however, found its mark and after 20
paces the animal stopped and watched me and my companions who
were slowly approaching it. A second bullet from my rifle again
shook the gigantic body without, however, felling it and only after
the third shot did it fall.

My companions had come close in the meantime, and especially
Dr. Newberry,¹¹ who had never seen a buffalo in the wilderness,
watched with great interest the defenseless animal that did not want
to die. “I’d like to shoot at the buffalo, too,” said the doctor, when
we were less than 50 paces from it and could see the fierce expres-
sion with which the animal looked at us. “With pleasure, doctor!”
I replied, handing him my rifle, “but keep in mind that the buffalo’s
heart lies deeper than in any other game.” The doctor raised the
rifle, aimed and fired; the animal jumped up with its last strength,
reached the bank of the river in two leaps, and plunged headfirst
into the water. “But, doctor,” I exclaimed, “you are bringing to
life again what I have killed.” And laughingly we went to the spot
where the buffalo had disappeared.

Fortunately, it had not fallen into deep water, but rested on solid
ground, although half-covered by the water; we did not experience
any difficulty in pulling the dead animal out of the water and ex-
amining it more closely. It was a bull, and I must admit that I
have rarely seen a buffalo that surpassed this one in height and
girth; because of its age it had, however, lost the woolly hair from

¹¹ Dr. John S. Newberry was physician, geologist and naturalist of the Ives expedition.
A biographical sketch of Newberry will be found in the Dictionary of American Biography

The heartless shooting of the bison described by Miller on this and succeeding pages
of his narrative was nothing unusual in Western frontier history. Every expedition and every
traveler as soon as “buffalo” country was entered became imbued with the lust for slaughter,
whether meat was needed or not. The wanton killing of these animals reached its apogee dur-
ing the 1870’s when the vast buffalo herds were virtually wiped from the map of Western
America.
its back and flanks; it could whet the appetite of only very hungry people or of the wolves which constantly circled around us. We were satisfied with taking out its tongue, and severing some skin from its back for leather strips. With a feeling of remorse for having killed the animal to so little advantage, we set up camp there on the bank of the river.

Immediately upon leaving the camp on July 6 we moved up to the plain which at this spot rises about fifty feet above the river valley. The grass there had already felt the effects of the almost unbearable heat of the sun, for the endless surface was no longer the green we were accustomed to, but was yellow and dry and seemed to join the horizon without a break.

The road, however, was as solid as a barn floor, and in order to reach water again at an early hour the following morning, we speeded up the pace of our animals. Luck favored us, because twice we came upon pools where we could water the animals, the last one after a trip of 32 miles, in the dry bed of a river which Peacock called "Coon creek" and where we then, of course, set up camp for the night.\textsuperscript{12}

Our cavalcade, which consisted of eight pack mules, six riding mules and a race horse, was increased by a strong horse on this day. The horse which we saw from the road, had probably escaped from the Comanches camping near us down the river valley. Since we could see no one near or far, we considered the horse masterless and agreed to catch it for our own use. It was no easy task and it took all our energy to drive the nervous animal to the spot where we camped. There we began a new attack with united forces, and after several futile attempts which, by the way, gave us material for many interesting conversations, we succeeded at last in surrounding the flighty racer in such a way that we were able to catch it and to tie it by means of lassos.

When the horse was captured, it proved to be manageable. We noticed on its back the unmistakable signs that it had been worked a great deal recently and had probably been used on the buffalo hunt. At any rate, our trouble was rewarded and, in prairie fashion, we no longer cared who had formerly been its rightful owner.

The wolves that run in packs, especially near an Indian encampment, molested us considerably during the night, the more so as we could not distinguish in the cloudy darkness whether the unrest of our animals was caused by wild beasts or by thieving Comanches.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{12}. Coon creek is in present Pawnee county.—Eighteenth Biennial Report, p. 112.
The early morning convinced us that we were not to be troubled by uninvited guests for the plain was, as far as the eye could reach, barren and empty; numerous smoke columns rose from the tents of the natives along the Arkansas valley, and hungry wolves circled around the camp in order to take possession immediately after our departure. In fact we were not two hundred paces distant when they were already fighting for the kitchen scraps; I sent them a bullet, and at once the wild group dashed away upon seeing one out of their number sink down without a sound, hit by the murderous lead.

We went on our way quickly, and when the heat of the rising sun began its fatiguing effect, a small wooded grove shone invitingly from the distance. With many turns the dark green strip traced its way from north to south toward the Arkansas river; the slope of the land indicated that a small stream pursued its course continually in cool shade. Taught by instinct about the proximity of water, the animals strained themselves still more in their dusty harnesses, and obeyed the spurs and the whip willingly.

The Pawnee fork \(^{13}\) was before us, a favorite summer resort of the natives of that district. From the caravans which we had met we had been prepared to meet an important group of the Cheyennes and Arapahoes, but to our surprise we found the valley deserted and empty, and only screeching ravens and crows hovered over the artificially erected arbors that had been used as temporary shelters, the surest proof that only very recently people had lived there. The tracks of horses and of dragging tent poles \(^{14}\) going west toward Fort Bent indicated to us that a group of at least four-hundred people must have camped there, and that they had left only on the preceding day.

Although we had journeyed only 25 miles that day, we decided not to pass by the inviting spot, and established our small camp on the left bank of the river. I hastened to get down to the river with my fishing tackle but I threw my hook in vain for, although numerous fish enlivened the water, none of them seemed to be inclined to touch the bait. For a long time, however, I sat on the edge of the water and watched the rushing stream which was about 20 feet wide and 3-5 feet deep. The stream flowed tempestuously.

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13. The Pawnee fork was crossed near present Larned, Pawnee county.—Ibid.

14. "Dragging Tent Poles.—When the Prairie Indians are traveling they fasten the tent poles (16-30 feet long) on both sides of their pack animals in such a fashion that the thin end drags on the ground. Children, sick and aged people take long trips on the prairies in relative comfort by being assigned seats on buffalo skins that had been tied to the poles dragging behind the horses on both sides, and were quite elastic."—Mülhausen.
around the accumulated driftwood, reflecting the steep banks with their shady trees in its moving surface.

The wide prairie with its sublime tranquility and its majestic expanse certainly has an appeal to receptive and contemplative minds. But when, after a long trip through the endless grassy meadows, one suddenly finds himself in a region where mighty walnut trees, sycamores, oak trees and willows of many kinds crowd the dark masses of their tops together, decorated with lianas and grapevines —where, in other words, the earth's inexhaustible productive force is revealed in the luscious vegetation, in the knotted trunk as well as in the tender twig—then the enjoyment is doubly great. Also doubly beautiful does the picture of the grassy plain appear to be, the plain which one has just left and which he is going to cross once more. The smallest wooded strip extends nature's kind greeting to the wanderer of the prairie.

The twittering and the singing of birds touch your heart, and even in the clear eye of the turtle which raises its head from the water and watches your motions, you seem to recognize a greeting; in fact, nature beckons to you, friendly and understanding, from all sides, if you listen attentively to the thousand voices which speak to you even from seemingly inanimate objects.

The mosquitoes finally chased me from the river; when I returned to the camp I found my companions occupied in watching a buffalo through a telescope. The animal was slowly moving toward our camp. We got ready for the hunt at once, but the bison, apparently suspecting danger, suddenly turned from the direction it had followed and went farther down the Pawnee fork toward the Arkansas river.

The night passed without any disturbance, and in the early morning of July 8 we were on our way. A mild rain had refreshed the entire country after a thunderstorm, and the wooded grove far to the south, which we could see from the height, was resplendent in the freshest green; even the green of the prairie was brighter. Our wide road extended in an easterly direction, freed from the unpleasant dust for a while. At times we approached the Arkansas river, and then left it again as the river wound along, or we passed dry beds of streams running from north to south that crossed our road at several places.

We met only one Arapaho; he was going to announce to his tribe the impending arrival of the agent who, according to his information, was still a four days' trip behind. The Indian presented a
picture of a handsome warrior, and though he was overloaded with arms and fantastic decorations, especially owl and hawk feathers, he controlled his fiery horse with extreme grace and assuredness. Judging from his weapons, he must have been an aristocratic chief-tain because before on his saddle rested a long rifle, from his shoulders hung a shield of solid buffalo leather, as well as a bow of elk horn with a well-filled quiver. In his right hand he held a light spear while a tomahawk and a knife flashed in his belt.

After a short stop we parted, but soon afterward we met three single riders who raced like mad over the plains on their wild horses. When they noticed us they turned toward us, and from afar we recognized two Americans and an Indian who could hardly be distinguished from one another in appearance. The former were two young fellows with audacious expressions on their beardless faces. By neglecting their personal appearance and by dressing partly in Indian garments their features had taken on much of the native’s traits, while the Indian whom I considered a halfbreed on account of his light color, attempted to imitate the white race through his posture and dress. They told us that they were connected with the trader whose establishment on Walnut creek we would reach in the course of the day and that they were about to go to the Comanches to whom they had already sent a few wagons with articles for trade.

I must ask the readers' indulgence that I even mention meeting individual people in my book but in the indescribable loneliness of the prairie the appearance of human beings is considered an event and is, therefore, imprinted in one’s memory in inextinguishable colors; I think that I should not omit mentioning such trivial circumstances here.

In this case I remember it especially well because my eyes deceived me as I did not recognize a man with whom I had at one time wandered through the prairies for months. I learned in the house of the fur trader that the suspected half-breed was actually a young Mexican by the name of Vincenti who had been kid-napped as a child by the Comanches and had gradually taken on their customs and interests. His features and the tone of his voice had struck me, but not sufficiently to cause me to ask for his name. I would never have suspected that the handsome slender Indian,

15. Möllhausen had met Vincenti in 1853 near Fort Arbuckle, in present Oklahoma, when a member of the Lt. A. W. Whipple expedition.—See Möllhausen, Diary of a Journey From the Mississippi To the Coasts of the Pacific, translated by Mrs. Percy Simnett (London, 1858), v. 1, pp. 94-97.
whose richly embroidered moccasins and leggings indicated that very skillful squaws waited on him, that this was little Vincenti who at one time accompanied Whipple’s expedition as an interpreter; the boy had changed so much in the course of four years.

Whether Vincenti really did not remember me or out of sheer moodiness did not want to recognize me I cannot say; anyway we met and parted as strangers and a few hours later I learned that the prophecies which I once had made for the wild boy had come true, that he was happy in the fancy-free life of an Indian and that since he possessed a few pretty wives he was not ready to exchange his lot with that of anyone else.

[Chapter 36]

After a march of 30 miles we got to Walnut creek,\(^{16}\) a little river that completely resembled Coon creek in character and in size. I noticed the same picturesque grouping of trees, the same variety in the trees themselves, the same healthy dark-green appearance and the same steep clay banks. We crossed the river, and turning downstream toward the Arkansas river we reached the log cabin of the fur trader in a short time.

The owner of the trading post had gone to the Missouri, as a few young people who were staying there informed us, in order to sell the furs he had obtained and at the same time to procure new goods. To protect his property, which included a nice herd of cattle, he had left six young Americans and Vincenti; according to all appearances they all led an easy life. The natives, who were glad to have a trader there, molested them but little, and there never was a lack of food in the cabin since they always had fresh meat to supplement a supply of flour. The eastern angle between Walnut creek and the Arkansas river was constantly enlivened by buffalo and, when on a fast horse, it took only a little effort to kill one or more of them.

We decided to stay overnight near the log cabin on the river bank, and betook ourselves presently to the young people who were not a very select company but afforded us, nevertheless, interesting conversation. We also found there an opportunity to replace our boots which no longer held together, with soft Indian moccasins. We also got some poor whisky which aroused my suspicion that for their furs the Indians were often paid here in something more exciting than the usual articles of trade. The inhabitants of the trad-

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\(^{16}\) The crossing of Walnut creek was near present Great Bend in Barton county.— *Eighteenth Biennial Report*, p. 112.
ing post did not feel entirely safe; the coming winter months worried them especially, for then they would receive numerous visits from the natives who came for the sole purpose of being fed through the off season and could not be rejected if the traders did not want to spoil their chances for trade with the whole tribe.

I cannot deny that I have been, so-to-speak, an admirer of the adventurous life of a trapper and a fur trader ever since my first acquaintance with the "Far West"; to such an extent that it took a great deal to change my intention of spending my entire life in the romantic, alluring, primeval wilderness. Nowhere did I feel more comfortable than in the log cabins on the upper Missouri and in the Rocky mountains, and nowhere was I happier than in the company of white hunters, even though other conditions of the most adverse nature might confront and threaten me on all sides.

But here in the trading post on Walnut creek it was different and, although I cannot explain it, I felt that many things were not the way they should have been, and that this establishment could not be considered one of the trading posts of the American Fur Company by which the natives are always treated according to certain principles, even if some accusations against the company are true, and military order partly takes the place of the law.\(^ {17}\)

I had a great deal of pleasure in watching six tamed buffalo which were being driven, together with the rest of the cattle, into an enclosure formed by strong palisades. Although not yet fully grown, they were, nevertheless, stately animals and did not differ at all in character and behavior from their spotted comrades which seemed to have developed a special kind of friendship for them. It must seem strange, however, that the tamed buffalo never joined the numerous wild herds that grazed daily in their neighborhood; this fact confirmed my opinion that the North American bison, as it is more correctly called, is suited just as well for a domestic animal as sheep or ordinary cattle.

These buffalo had been caught as calves with little trouble after their mothers had been killed, and had been added to the herd.

\(^ {17} \) The trading post, purely a private affair as Möllhausen suggests, and not company owned, was established by one Allison of Independence, Mo., in 1847. It was at this post that a George Peacock was killed in 1866 (cf. footnotes 3 and 10).—Emporia News, September 22, 1866; Kansas Historical Collections, v. 19, pp. 664, 665. There seems to be more than a possibility that George Peacock was the G. H. Peacock of the Ives expedition. We have already called attention in these notes to the fact that apparently Peacock was a man of long experience on the plains. The Weekly Reveille, St. Louis, November 10, 1845, mentions a Peacock, a Santa Fe trader. In J. J. Webb's Adventures in the Santa Fe Trade (Glendale, Cal., 1931), edited by Ralph P. Bieber, p. 179, mention is made of George Peacock of Independence in December, 1845. Bieber makes editorial comment on Peacock, citing the reference to the Weekly Reveille given above and also to the Daily Missouri Republican, St. Louis, September 18, 1860. The Kansas Press, Council Grove, April 9, 1860, states: "Mr. Peacock of Allison's old Ranch, passed through town the other day with 2000 Wolf Pelts for Kansas City."
From the first moment the young animals had shown neither restlessness nor antipathy to being driven or led by men. They were eventually to be led to the Missouri river and to be sold; the buffalo trade there was considered a business which really deserved some attention.

The bison brought to civilized regions is unfortunately used only for slaughtering purposes and sold by the pound at very high prices to people who wish to become familiar with the taste of this world-famous meat. Therefore the momentary profit does not permit the establishment of proper buffalo breeding in America, but I gradually became convinced that with some care in their breeding the bison cannot only be tamed easily, but acclimatized. Its introduction to Europe would be less troublesome and more profitable than might be suspected at first.

It was too late to start hunting on this day, and so I enjoyed myself till evening with observing the distant herds through a telescope. I was amused by the antics of the gigantic shaggy animals as they walked towards the water after their meal, or lay around comfortably ruminating. The long-bearded, powerful animals had an extremely serious look; it therefore seemed the funnier when some of them in youthful exuberance jumped about in awkward motions or attacked one another with their dull horns in a battle-like game. The old ones of the group looked indifferently at the young folk, the cows cleaned and licked their redbrown calves, and on the bent backs of all, flights of trusting cowbirds lighted to remove broods of poisonous flies from their shaggy fur. The setting sun illuminated a picture of serene peace, a picture of peace in which only man was absent to disturb it, since a mere glimpse of one would have been sufficient to cause the animals to flee in fright.

On the morning of July 9 we discovered to our great dismay that under the cover of darkness one of the mules had slipped away in the trees. A careful investigation revealed that it had taken the way back, and we immediately had one of the young men at the log cabin ride after the fugitive and bring it back as speedily as possible. We ourselves went on to the mouth of Walnut creek, two miles distant, to wait there until the next day, on the grassy bank of the Arkansas river, for the return of the escaped mule. The heat was oppressive and we tried in vain to escape the glare of the sun in the shade of the wagon and the tent; we almost forgot that we were in the buffalo region and were therefore no little surprised.
when we suddenly noticed nine powerful buffalo bulls clumsily wading in the middle of the river.

From the direction in which they moved I concluded they would reach the bank a short distance below our camp. I hastened to meet them there with my rifle while the doctor and Peacock saddled the two horses and got ready for the pursuit. But we had noticed them a little too late, for I still was not yet within good shooting range when the first one jumped onto the bank and shook the water from his fur. He was followed by the others but because they looked around and saw me I could not lessen the distance that still separated us. When they saw the wagon and the mules they became restless and, getting ready for flight, they put up their short tails. In the meantime I lay in the grass and having chosen the fattest one as a mark for my bullet, I fired the moment the first one started galloping.

Badly hit, the animal went down on its knees but rallying rapidly it joined its comrades and raced like mad across the prairies. As soon as the shot had been fired the doctor and Peacock started from the camp on horseback and chased the fleeing buffalo, each with his revolver in one hand and swinging a whip in the other. A knoll in the ground soon removed them and their prey from my sight, but shots, fired in rapid succession, told me that they had caught up with the herd and had scattered it.

I was just ready to reload my rifle when my attention was drawn by our cook to a lone buffalo racing straight towards our camp. Wigham, whose curiosity had also gotten him out of the camp, was between me and the onstorming bull. I called to him to chase it toward the river so that it would have to run straight toward me. But Wigham, our loyal Irishman, was of a different opinion; intending to conceal his person from the frightened animal, which seemed to him horrible beyond all description, he lay down on the ground and hid himself as well as he could in the low grass. Unfortunately, he was directly in the path which the buffalo had taken. In mortal fear he saw the animal race toward his hideout which he dared not leave for fear of being pursued and caught by the furious beast.

When the bull was only about 20 paces from him he could no longer bear the horrible sight. In his imagination he saw himself tossed and trampled by the thick horns and heavy hoofs; gathering all his strength for a last attempt at saving himself, he jumped up

18. About Wigham, apparently a member of the Ives expedition, we have little information other than that given here by Möllhausen. He is not mentioned in the official Ives report.
and ran toward the camp. But scarcely had the buffalo seen the human figure emerge from the grass in front of him when he, no less frightened, jumped aside and galloped around the Irishman in a wide circle. Although I was running as fast as I could, trying to get closer to the buffalo, I did not miss the indescribably comical picture in which man and beast frightened and fled from each other. In my memory I still see faithful old Wigham before me, how he held his revolver in one hand, his hat in the other, how his long yellow hair, standing on end with fear, surrounded his face like a halo, and how he forced his massive figure to take leaps of the sort that would make an antelope proud.

The buffalo stormed past me within good shooting distance and I did not fail to fire my rifle at it. With a loud report the bullet made its way through the shoulder blade, the animal collapsed, but rose again, hurried through the river, half swimming, half wading, and finally fell and died on the opposite shore. I now returned to Wigham, still speechless with fright and reproached him because he had not driven the fleeing buffalo toward the river as I had wanted; in that case it would have been easy to kill the animal a few steps from our tent. But Wigham, who was unaware of the cowardice of fleeing buffalo, replied that he did not consider it a joke to be attacked and pursued by such a terrible beast, and that he would not fight with such an animal for all the gold in California and for all the buffalo tongues on the prairies.

The slain buffalo was not recovered from the wolves which now approached from all sides for none of us felt a great desire to cross the treacherous river; moreover we had obtained so much meat from the first one which had been shot, and from the second one which the doctor and Peacock had killed with their revolvers, that we should have had enough for the remainder of the trip, if it could have been kept from spoiling too quickly in the glowing heat of the sun.

We felt very comfortable in the luxury with which our larder now was provided and our contentment was increased when the messenger we had sent out returned shortly before evening with the escaped mule. Now no new obstacles prevented the continuation of our trip, but it was not without anxiety that we viewed the horizon in the northwest where the setting sun hid behind heavy clouds that rose with furious speed, and at nightfall concealed the entire sky in a black fire-spitting veil. As we went to bed the first raindrops hit the tautly stretched tent walls, the thunder rolled
dully and incessantly while the lightning magically illuminated the entire surroundings for a brief moment and then let it sink back into the black impenetrable darkness. The steadily increasing tumult and the oppressive atmosphere did not prevent us from falling asleep, however.

Not until about midnight, when the rain had turned into a cloud-burst and the earth trembled under the crash of heavy thunder, did we jump up and notice that the tent posts had become loosened in the softened ground, and that the water trickled in under us and into our beds. We immediately hurried out to prevent the collapse of our tent and we barely succeeded in tightening the canvas that had become heavy with water. The dampness was thus kept away from above, but we could not prevent the rising of the water on the ground below. In order to save the blankets from becoming completely drenched we rolled them up and put them on the camp chairs; we ourselves then sat down on the raised seats, and pulling up our feet we watched the water as it rose in the grass and any thought of sleep was banished for the rest of the night.

The storm continued with unabated fury until daybreak; the angry elements seemed to struggle for supremacy in an endless fight. Numerous thunderstorms had concentrated from all sides above the mouth of Walnut creek; flashing bolts of lightning stormed at one another and when one retracted, it was as if to gather new strength and then to engage in battle with redoubled vigor.

Darkness had completely disappeared, the entire atmosphere was suffused in a bluish light with zigzagging lines which incessantly crisscrossed the masses of water pouring down; columns of fire connected the hanging clouds with the trembling earth for seconds; added to all this scene, the deafening thunder rolled, and quickly following one another, piercing and penetrating bolts crackled as the lightning hissed into the foaming water or split trees or dug up the earth. The frightened mules crowded around us as if seeking protection, but what protection could we give them who were drenched ourselves and who searched in vain for a camping spot on the ground that now had turned into a swamp?

How gladly man forgets unpleasant situations if through them he can increase his knowledge and his experiences in the realm of nature! It seems as if she opens for him at such times the most secret part of her book so that one can read a page in it; amidst the loudest thunder and the brightest lightning she announces her
wise laws and arouses sincere admiration; in fact, filial love is inspired in her affectionate adherents although she horrifies animals and neurotic minds.

When on July 10 the light of day replaced the morning haze, the storms dispersed, but heavy clouds still covered the sky and a heavy rain poured from them incessantly. At our camp site the ground was not only soaked but was partly covered with water; we, therefore, did not deem it advisable to stay longer, and after having eaten a scanty meal, we hastened to leave the swampy corner and to exchange it for the higher ground.

Before we set out one of the young traders came to us; he was sick and wished for advice and help from our doctor. I learned at this time that there had been serious friction between the Comanches and the Osage Indians on the previous day and that the latter had stolen unnoticed into several isolated tents, had scalped two women alive, slain several men and had taken several women and children with them as prisoners. He also told us that a Mexican who had gone ahead of the “train” in order to hunt buffalo had been shot on the road near Cow creek by an Osage Indian, and he advised us to be on guard during the next few days.

We thanked the young man although we could not be any more watchful than we had been, and moved slowly through the grassy flat into which the wagon wheels cut deeply and into which the animals sank above their fetlocks. However we soon reached the solid road on the upland and using whip and spur we increased the speed of our train to three miles an hour.

At noon we found ourselves among a number of sandy hills, and since the rain had decreased in intensity we stopped there for an hour. We were just about to continue our trip when I noticed a herd of buffalo grazing peacefully in a bowl-shaped valley. While Peacock and the doctor saddled the horses which were usually riderless, I went around the herd in a wide circle in order, if possible, to kill one of them and to drive the others toward the road where my companions could take up the hunt.

Everything went according to plan. I left my mount and unnoticed got to the edge of the little valley. The herd was unfortunately still too far from me to assure success. Nevertheless, I fired three times, and three times a buffalo trembled in pain before it moved slowly towards its companions grazing farther away. As the hunters had in the meantime taken position, I mounted my animal and pursued the fleeing herd across the road where the hunt
was immediately continued by the doctor, Peacock and Egloffstein. It was an interesting spectacle to observe how the riders separated the animals of the herd from each other, rushed up to a single buffalo and fired at full speed shot after shot from their revolvers until the exhausted animal, bleeding from many wounds, finally collapsed.

I had picked out as my mark a bull which had been hit, and my mount had no difficulty in keeping up with the exhausted animal. I rode so close to it that the fire from my revolver singed its wool, but a few more shots were necessary before the beast stopped and I could finish it off.

The hunt had separated us far from one another and as a fine but very dense rain concealed the landscape, it was only after some wandering that we met again at the wagon which had continued its course undisturbed. It rained uninterruptedly until evening but when we arrived at Cow creek, after a journey of 27 miles, it had cleared in the west and the setting sun was reflected in the innumerable raindrops that weighed down the blades of grass or descended from the disappearing clouds as a last gift of the cooling air.

Dusk had already set in when we stopped on the green bank of a little river and started pitching camp. Wet were the ground, the grass and the green ash-trees on the bank; wet were the tent, the blankets and our garments; we, therefore, had no great choice but spread the cots on the damp grass, and warmed our feet at a little fire of buffalo chips, over which fresh juicy meat was roasting. Steaming hot “grog” revived us and, wet as we were, we crept between wet blankets from which we moved only to take over the watch, and to walk shivering around the camp for an hour.

The tent steamed under the rays of the sun when we gathered around the table on July 11. Since Cow creek, which normally had water no deeper than one or two feet, now had risen to 16 feet, we could not cross it. The bright sunshine was, therefore, doubly welcome as we were able to spread our drenched articles on the green meadow to dry. The air was sultry, the dampness steamed from the ground and we could no longer keep the meat which we had brought along from Walnut creek. Limiting ourselves to what we had bagged on the previous day, we threw away the older meat; but when the rising sun started the fermentation process thousands—

19. F. W. von Egloffstein, a Bavarian, was the topographer of the Ives expedition.—Ives, op. cit., p. 91.
20. The Cow creek crossing was a little west of present Lyons, Rice county.—Eighteenth Biennial Report, p. 112.
upon thousands of green and red Spanish fly and brass-beetles 21 appeared from all directions in order to get the meat as food for their brood. There was a humming and buzzing as if we had been surrounded by swarms of bees; the glittering insects surrounded the evil-smelling chunks of meat in droves.

Around the tent and the wagon there was a thick circle of these clumsy insects which had hit against the tautly-drawn canvas in their speedy flight, and had fallen to the ground on their backs. Never did I see beetles in such masses as on that morning, and it almost looked as if the clumsy but gorgeously colored winged insects had come from miles around.

I found the tumblebug in particularly great numbers; the tumblebug is known to every prairie traveler and its curious behavior amused me many times on my trips. The insects, the size of the ordinary dung beetle, form, alone or in pairs, round regular balls, the shape and size of a pigeon egg, out of manure and other decayed matter. When one ball is finished they harness themselves in front of it in such a way that, if the ball belongs to one, it rolls the ball forward with its two hind legs, walking backward on the four front legs; if two share in the possession of the little work of art, the second one is harnessed in front and pulls the load after it. Thus the industrious animals often take their treasure a great distance, bury it in a safe place, together with their brood, and then fly away to chisel out new supplies and to roll them in another direction.

These strange beetles are found most frequently on roads where cattle have been driven, and you see them rolling their balls tirelessly in the wagon tracks until they finally discover a spot where they can roll their load out of a canyon which must be an awe-inspiring sight for them. I often dismounted and made a track for the industrious workers so that they would not be crushed by the wagon wheels. But I often, too, surrounded them with an earthen wall to force them to exert their greatest effort. In the latter case the little insect would leave its ball, and immediately run up and down the slopes looking for the most appropriate place of exit; then it would go back to its load and now begin the difficult task of lifting and pushing.

I never knew at what I was more astonished, whether at the strength of the beetle that pushed the smooth ball uphill or held it in balance, or whether at its perseverance in starting all over again

21. Mühlhausen’s meaning here is uncertain. He undoubtedly is referring to the very common “blow flie.”
without discouragement when the ball escaped its claws and rolled down the slope together with the beetle, after the beetle had reached a terrace. I made a beetle roll its ball to the top of such a terrace 60 times in vain but I did not succeed in making it give up its property and fly away, because my patience was not equal to its own. I, therefore, opened a comfortable gate for it, saw how it harnessed itself behind the ball almost triumphantly and pushed its load away with undiminished strength.

In the course of the forenoon the United States mail arrived at Cow creek. It had left the Missouri river only eight days before; its carriers were unpleasantly surprised that they were held up in their flying trip by the flooded little river. The carriers are obliged by contract to make the trip through the prairies within a certain time and only truly insurmountable obstacles are accepted as an excuse for lost time; in other cases they have to expect a reduction of pay. The post-office business in the United States is almost exclusively in the hands of private persons; they receive considerable sums from the government for the fast and safe transportation of letters and persons. They also have the right to requisition escorts, where the roads are very unsafe at times, from one military post to the next on the routes between the Missouri river and the Pacific. These escorts are then forced to keep up with the little caravan.

The mail caravan normally consists of one to six light-traveling wagons, depending upon the number of passengers that have registered for the trip; each wagon is provided with four or six of the best mules, but takes along a double number so that the mules can be exchanged every four to six hours; since the larger part of the freight consists of heavy nutritious fodder, and the animals are therefore not dependent on grass, they are given at the most six or eight hours of the 24 for rest. Besides the driver there are two riders with each wagon, one of whom has to supervise the unharnessed animals while the other one rides at times on the other side of the wagon and keeps the draft animals in fast motion with the help of a long whip. Thus the mail hurries across the endless plains at an average speed of four miles per hour. Provided with the best animals, it is not difficult for the mail coach to cover 50-70 miles per day and to get to Santa Fe from the Missouri or back in the incredibly short time of 18 days.

Several times at a nocturnal hour when I walked around the camp and no other sound disturbed the stillness except the deep breathing of resting men and animals, I could hear the sound of the
mail in the distance like the uncanny rumbling of a ghostly hunt. More and more distinctly I could hear the encouraging calls, the cracking of whips, the trampling of hoofs and the rattling of wagons. I would try peering through the darkness but could see nothing but sparks emanating either from iron-clad hoofs striking the pebbles on the road, or from the wind blowing into glowing pipe-bowls. The indistinct silhouettes of wagons, riders and animals would gradually become clearer as the flying caravan came closer and closer.

Suddenly at shooting distance it would stop. I would hear the cocking of pistols and at the same time the call: "Who is camping there?" "A government expedition" would be the answer. "The mail" it would come back, the whips would crack, the chains and rings on the harnesses would ring, and with a loud "Hallo!" the United States mail would trot past. A rider would leave the caravan, address a few questions to me concerning the road or the natives, answer my questions briefly, urge his horse on, and gallop after the wagons and the riders who had already disappeared in the darkness but whose sounds were still audible far in the distance when I crept back into the tent to wake up my replacement.

Such a caravan had arrived at Cow creek at an early morning hour, and had camped almost opposite us. We greeted the riders that accompanied it but the rushing stream disturbed our conversation although we would have preferred to keep it up for a long time. The shade of the tents and the wagons was more welcome to everyone than the sunny river banks sheltered from every current of air.

We had been informed that we would not find buffalo any more during the remainder of our trip. Since I saw to the west several more herds that were grazing slowly north, I made one more attempt toward evening to end, as I could rightly surmise, my buffalo hunting for this life. I could only hope to continue the hunt some day like the Indians in the Happy Hunting Ground.22

During the afternoon I had already observed through the telescope about twenty splendid bulls whose movements were scarcely noticeable in the indicated direction. According to my calculation they had to cross the road shortly before sunset at a spot where on the previous day I had discovered some gullies washed out by the rain that were excellently suited for a hiding place. I therefore set out and two hours before nightfall I was about three miles from the

22. Möllhausen is quite evidently referring to the fact that his penchant for wandering had been satisfied and he was ready to forego further travels.
camp; from my hideout I observed the longbearded herd grazing on their way toward me.

An hour passed, and the buffalo were still a quarter of a mile away from me; the sun set toward the plains but the buffalo did not hasten their steps. I finally realized that I would have to wait until late at night for their arrival, perhaps until the following morning. I therefore decided to stalk them in the open plain. I placed my revolver and my knife on my back, took the rifle in my left hand, and stretching out in the grass I began the tedious task of crawling on the ground as level as a table and where no stone or bush offered me an opportunity to rest without being noticed.

The wind was in my favor and the sun just touched the western horizon when I arrived within shooting range of a bull who watched me attentively and probably thought me a wolf since he was blinded by the long head hair. He had unfortunately turned his head and chest toward me and I, therefore, had to wait for a considerable time before I was able to shoot. Following the shot the buffalo made a convulsive motion but walked toward his companions without swaying; only from the restlessness with which he pushed among them did I realize that he really had been mortally wounded.

As with all cattle, the smell of blood that gushed from the wound caused furious consternation among the herd; with a hollow, uncanny roar the embittered animals lowered their bushy heads, and where the blood had reddened the ground they dug up the grass with their short horns and with heavy hoofs they threw up earth and grass. I used the general confusion to reload my rifle in haste and to crawl still closer. When a heavy bull turned his broad side toward me I carefully took aim and fired for the second time. But this one too did not fall immediately; walking among his companions he heightened the fury of the herd by his loss of blood. Satisfied with the success of my hunt as the two wounded bulls could hardly stand upright I used less caution, and got to my knees in order not to be hindered in my movements when loading.

Suddenly, as if by a given signal, all raised their heads and observed me very attentively for a few seconds under their bushy manes. I cannot deny that I did not like it at all when the whole bunch, snorting loudly, came towards me with measured steps but it was apparent that they still thought me a wolf—not a human—and were planning to unleash their fury on their hated enemy. I jumped up and waved my hat to shy them away but this movement had the opposite effect because the animals started to crowd to-
gether and increasing their speed they approached me with all the signs of unfriendly intentions.

I had but one method left to avoid the menacing hoofs and horns and I did not hesitate for a moment to use it; I bolted as fast as I could run around the herd in a westerly direction and when the first animals were scarcely thirty paces from me I was in line with them and a northwest wind blowing gently across the prairie. Hardly did the buffalo sense the proximity of man when, seized by sudden fright, they rushed away in wild flight without stopping. This again afforded me an opportunity to fire another successful shot.

The three wounded buffaloes separated at once from the herd and only a short distance from me one of them crashed to the ground. I went to him presently, finished his suffering with my long knife, and cut out his tongue. When I got up and looked around for the escapees, I saw only the two wounded ones at about a mile’s distance, one of them was lying on its side, dying, while the other one stood beside it as if in meditation. The dusk that quickly passed into darkness prevented me, however, from going farther toward them.

Not without a feeling of remorse for having killed three of the stately buffalo of the prairie for a single tongue I turned toward Cow creek. The night was clear and starry but dark; the camp fires showed me the direction, and listening for the slightest noise around me, I hurried past the spot where a few days before the Mexican had lost his life through a hostile bullet, and where his friends had buried him.

Our first walk on July 12, bright and early in the morning, was to the fording place. We met the escorts of the mail and together we examined the depth of the river that had already receded considerably but still prevented our crossing. Not until noon did the mail undertake to begin the crossing; it got over to us without any trouble. Bent 23 who had arrived there in the course of the forenoon with a few light carriages followed it, and when the last of his horses climbed the right bank we crossed over to the left, where we continued our trip with renewed vigor.

[Chapter 37]

After we had crossed Cow creek the path led us up an elevation. From here we could see the winding course of the river with its wooded banks as far as its junction with the Arkansas. We rode

23. Presumably Bent was William Bent of Bent’s fort mentioned previously (see Footnote 8).
side by side and listened to one of Peacock's murder stories which he recalled because of the surroundings.

"Do you notice down there the sharp bend in Cow creek?" he asked. "Twelve years ago in the cold of winter, when there was very little traffic on this road, 22 travelers camped on that spot. They had only as many wagons or rather pack animals with them as they needed to transport their food for they were in part merchants who had their warehouses in Santa Fe and were on their way back there, and in part people who were leaving the Missouri to go to the same city. The latter wanted to make sure of a place, for the following spring and summer, in the army destined to fight against Mexico. In other words they were all men who wanted to travel as quickly as possible and therefore paid little attention to comfort.

"In the company was a rich merchant named Jarvis who, partly because of his reputation and partly because of his experience, had been chosen as captain of the expedition. Since he was carrying about a hundred thousand dollars of government money on his person he thought himself fortunate to be surrounded by a guard which was not only familiar with life in the wilderness, but had already gained some experience in the Indian wars.

"Without mishap and even without annoyance the company reached that spot. They could have camped just as well here on the road where they would have likewise found firewood in abundance; but since the whole company agreed on that secluded spot, Jarvis, who had no suspicion of treachery, gave in and left the road with the whole caravan in order to spend the night in this concealed place.

"On the following morning when Jarvis was preparing for departure he was surprised that not a single one of the company was following his example. When he asked the cause of this behavior, he was still more surprised that no one wanted to answer him and that all kept out of his way. A certain MacDaniel, Jarvis' intimate friend and at the same time the ringleader who had been able to win the whole company over to his treacherous plans, finally stepped up to Jarvis: 'You are in possession of a hundred thousand dollars,' he began. 'Now look at us. We are all agreed that the money shall be divided among us, but in order to carry this out you must die.'

"Jarvis, who realized that nothing could save him from the hands of his murderers, turned thereupon to the men: 'If you are really determined,' he said, 'to rob me of my property, then take it, together with my oath never to divulge a word about it, and I will
leave you in undisputed possession of it. Only allow me to return home to my family and do not defile your hands with my blood which will certainly cry out more for revenge against you than the money which you covet.'

"This speech caused a commotion among the men and at once two parties were formed, of which one voted for the death of the merchant and the other against it. Even if there were some who would have liked to back out and who would have preferred to let Jarvis return home with his wealth undiminished, they did not dare raise their voices lest they too would disappear without a trace in the prairie. So there remained just the two parties, and they immediately prepared for the vote that was to decide over life and death. The result was that of 21 men, 8 insisted on the murder while 13 on the other hand, wanted to let Jarvis go unharmed under the terms of the above-mentioned oath. A quarrel ensued and it would certainly have resulted in violence if MacDaniel, with the words, 'Dead men tell no tales,' had not suddenly raised his gun and shot the unfortunate Jarvis through the heart.

"After the murder they set about the division of the spoils, swore one another with oaths and threats to absolute secrecy, buried the body at the edge of the creek, and separated with the words, 'never to meet again.' The eight murderers took the road back to the Missouri, the other thirteen on the other hand, half of whom had taken part in the theft unwillingly, went to Santa Fe and in spite of all the oaths and threats immediately made known the crime.

"Of course, couriers were sent at once to Independence on the Missouri. Although the murderers had long since separated and scattered in different directions, the police who were pursuing them captured them one after the other and all except one or two atoned for their crime on the gallows." 24

So ran Peacock's story; scarcely had he finished it when he remembered another similar one and we crossed few brooks or rivers which did not awaken in his memory an experience of his own or the adventures of other travelers in which theft and murder usually played the major role. But such things cause no surprise, for as the broad surface of the endless ocean, following the eternal laws of nature, rolls on in its appointed way and becomes smooth and tranquil

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24. Möllhausen was always ready to listen and record tales of camp and trail, and his recasting of Peacock's story is typical. Peacock's story is a version of a well-known tragedy of the plains. "Jarvis" was the anglicized (or Germanized) form of Chaves—Don Antonio José Chaves to be exact. Chaves was a reputable trader of Santa Fe and his murder in 1848 (not 1846, as the Peacock story would seem to date the event) was one of the leading events in the Texas-Mexico-United States troubles of a century ago.—See A. T. Andreas and W. G. Catlett, History of the State of Kansas (Chicago, 1885), p. 56, and Josiah Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies (Philadelphia, 1855), v. 2, pp. 160-169.
again untroubled about what is hidden in its depths, so in this same way the flowering plain germinates, grows green and withers, untroubled by the crimes which frequently desecrate its surface. On the graves of the slain, flowers bloom, and each spring covers the blood-reddened earth with a new cloak in order, as it were, to hide the “secrets of the plains” only a few of which come to light.

After a ride of 18 miles we reached the Little Arkansas river, a river which has dug deep into the loamy earth and whose steep banks bear trees similar to those of the Missouri.25 We camped on the right bank near a little log cabin which several adventurers had erected for the purpose of trading with the Kaw Indians. We saw the Indian encampment farther above at a distance of about four miles; we also saw a single warrior who slipped past in the shadow of the woods and seemed to be avoiding us.

Against our expectations, however, we were not disturbed during the night and if the thieving Kaws, true to Indian custom, chose the early morning hours to appropriate several of our animals, they came too late, for before day dawned we were already under way, while on the abandoned camp site, the fire, fed intentionally with dry wood, flickered merrily.

During the first half of the day a fine but penetrating rain made traveling difficult. In the afternoon, however, the weather cleared; the warm sun dried our clothes as well as the road; and blades of grass and stems of flowers, bent sadly to the ground as a result of the continued dry heat, revived almost before our eyes. The closer we came to the Missouri the more luxuriant and fresh became the vegetation; the short, insignificant but nevertheless nourishing buffalo grass (“Sesleria dactyloides Nutt”) disappeared entirely and in its place appeared the long dark green leafy grass which serves so excellently as hay. The depressions of the ground became deeper, the elevations higher, and the springs and brooks whose beds cut through our road became more numerous.

We went up and down in the rolling plain and after a journey of 27 miles we reached Turkey creek where we decided to spend the night.26 Why the little river had been named after the wild turkey I could not explain, for as far as I could see I discovered not a tree or a bush, and it is well known that turkeys prefer wooded regions in order to be able to escape from their numerous enemies by taking refuge in the tree tops at night.

25. The Little Arkansas was crossed in present eastern Rice county.—Eighteenth Biennial Report, p. 112.
26. Turkey creek is in present McPherson county.—Ibid.
On July 14 about noon we reached Cottonwood creek, a little stream charming beyond all description. Because of its valley with its gradually rising ground and its magnificent groups of trees it had already enticed several settlers. The few little log houses which I noticed at great distances from one another had not yet changed the character of the landscape; still it was a pleasing sight to see a narrow column of smoke rising from the chimney of a human dwelling, to see the fence which surrounded a green cornfield, and to see the spotted cows grazing in the rich grass by the edge of a brook.

We rested for several hours by the rippling water in the shade of a mighty cottonwood tree, and not until the rays of the sun fell more obliquely did we mount again and ride seven miles farther to a ravine where we found water and where we spent the night.

The entire stretch of 28 miles which we covered on July 15 was between tracts of land which seemed ideal for cultivation and settlement. Even though some uplands gave promise of nothing more than good grazing land, the lowlands, however, presented such a charming variety of meadows and narrow wooded strips, and the healthy vegetation of trees and grass gave proof of such fertility of soil that one felt involuntarily attracted by it. One also felt a certain inclination to overlook all the hardships and obstacles with which first settlers always have to contend, and to think only of the pleasures which are afforded to the diligent and satisfied farmer by his eden-like surroundings as well as by the grateful soil.

Unfortunately, however, there is so great a difference between the winter and the warmer seasons in these regions that many a person whose eyes and feelings were fascinated by his first visit in the mild spring or in the first summer months is greatly disappointed in spite of the advantages offered. This disappointment comes largely because it is difficult for the settler to become accustomed to loneliness; a loneliness which is not felt bitterly until a cold winter with its snow storms hinders communications and keeps him prisoner in his log cabin.

Shortly before evening we reached one of these secluded settlements which was situated picturesquely on the slope of a little valley where an icy cold crystal spring bubbled out of the rock. The place had been named Diamond Spring, and a more suitable name could scarcely have been imagined, for a strong jet of water gushes

27. Cottonwood crossing was in present Marion county near present Durham.—Ibid., p. 111.
like diamonds out of the earth and ripples brook-like through the nearby valley. 28

Although still far from the borders of civilization, the inhabitants of that settlement, among whom I noticed several women and children, seemed to be extremely satisfied with their life. They grew corn chiefly, and were able to dispose of their products on the nearby trade route. They, moreover, had the advantage that the money was brought right to their houses by the travelers and the goods taken away in exchange. Transportation, therefore, was no problem for them at all. We, too, purchased several sacks of feed corn for our animals as they were beginning to lose their strength rapidly, although they had been in the best of condition when we left the Rio Grande. The herd, once strong and well-nourished, now consisted of thin, emaciated animals.

We camped several miles east of Diamond Spring on an unnamed brook. Tall grass surrounded us, an annoyance which we could not avoid. A very uncomfortable annoyance it was, because the heavy dew of evening had already fallen and whenever we moved we got thoroughly wet. This was especially so in the morning when we were preparing to break camp. We were soaked above our hips with every movement and had no other change of clothing nor wearable shoes. A storm threatened to increase the unpleasant wetness but it passed by during the night with much noise and without a drop of rain having fallen. When we continued our journey on the morning of July 16 the clear-blue sky was mirrored in the dew-covered prairie.

After a march of six miles on a higher plain we suddenly came to the edge of the valley of the Neosho, the last tributary of the Arkansas which we were to touch on our trip. We had already left the immediate environs of the Arkansas at Walnut creek. The Arkansas river flows at that point in a south-southwesterly direction. We had by now approached the Kansas river which we followed in a northeasterly direction.

Although we were near the Kansas river and were getting farther away from the Arkansas, we had until now crossed only tributaries of the latter. 29 Since we crossed the Arkansas we had been travel-

28. Diamond spring, the famous "Diamond of the Plain," was in present Morris county about four miles north of the present village of Diamond Springs.—Ibid. The naming of "The Diamond of the Plain" is described by George C. Sibley in The Western Journal, St. Louis, v. 6 (December, 1860), pp. 186, 181.

29. Middelhausen is correct about the two drainage basins. In present Morris county the line marking the divide between the two basins runs roughly on a line northeast to southwest dividing the county in half.—See map, Transactions of the Kansas Academy of Science, v. 56 (1947), p. 117.
ing, however, in Kansas territory, the southern border of which is formed by the Arkansas and the northern border by the Nebraska or Flat [Platte] river. The name was taken from the river which cuts through the tremendous expanse of land across almost its entire breadth.

For several days we, therefore, had been traveling through a region to which the stream of immigration is particularly directed at the moment; to be sure this is being accomplished by two different parties, each one of which is struggling to influence the new constitution of the young state by superior voting power, and to make it either a “Free State or a Slave State” according to the principles or rather according to the personal interests of the victorious party. As is evident from the last pages of my description, the settlements in that region were still widely scattered. Still there can be no doubt that the growth of the population must be hastened when two mighty parties are struggling for supremacy. Whether the free man eats his bread by the sweat of his brow, or whether the colored slave writhe under the whip of a cruel master, no barrier can any longer stem the onward push of civilization, any more than it can the final solution of the problem of slavery. The solution of this problem may still be held in suspension artificially during the coming decades, but slavery must break down of its own accord as an unnatural institution especially in a time of progress and of growing enlightenment.

We reached the edge of the elevation from where we had a view of the wooded valley of the Neosho and the delightfully situated little town of Council Grove. We halted almost involuntarily in order to feast our eyes longer on the landscape which was lovely beyond all description. The dense, vigorous forest with its strange distinct contours hid the little river from our view. But I thought that I had never seen anything more beautiful and more charming than when I looked down on the tops of the oaks and hickories, the sycamores and cottonwoods which with their magnificent shades of color blended together as in one single carpet, and as I watched, the shadows of light feathery clouds glided along lazily and yet

30. The geographical location of Kansas territory as bounded by the Arkansas and Platte rivers is, of course, only roughly correct.
31. It should be recalled again that Möllhausen is writing in a period (1858) when Kansas was a territory and the strife between the Free-State and Proslavery parties was still acute at the time of Möllhausen’s visit. His prophetic comment on the disappearance of slavery in the United States is doubtless based on the experiences of his extended travels in two continents which gave him a truer perspective of coming events.
32. Council Grove is in eastern Morris county on the Neosho river.—See Eighteenth Ri-
enial Report, p. 111.
animatedly over the expanse of the woods and darkened the fresh green of the trees for a few minutes at a time.

I looked up and down the winding valley to where wooded depressions and grassy heights were veiled in blue haze. Gray log houses peeped out of the wooded fringe, herds of cattle grazed on the green slopes and right before me lay the settlement with its two rows of houses, its enclosures and cornfields. On the street, children were playing, dogs were barking, roosters were crowing, and I recognized clearly the regular beat of the hammer, wielded by a strong hand, falling heavily on the sparkling iron and the resounding anvil.

This flourishing little town is called Council Grove in memory of the fact that only a few years ago the wild sons of the prairie gathered there for their councils, and even now the neighboring tribes meet every year in order to carry on negotiations with the white man; negotiations which usually have to do with abandonment of new territory or payment for land already abandoned.33

The environs of Council Grove have been reserved for the Kansas or Kaw Indians; a mission school is situated there in which the children of the natives are to be brought up as Christians and made into diligent citizens. However, the attachment to the free, unfettered, nomadic life is too deeply rooted in the North American Indian tribes to be suddenly smothered. With the exception of a small number hardly worth mentioning who lean toward agriculture, the Kansas Indians still roam the prairies, hunting, fighting and plundering.

We rode down from the upland and when we entered its only and very broad street we noticed crudely painted signs on all the houses on both sides of the street; the houses numbered about thirty. By these signs we saw that the place was inhabited exclusively by merchants. There were also two inns which stood out because they were painted white. We entered one of them which also had a store connected with the hotel.

We halted there only long enough to read an 8-day-old newspaper and to eat breakfast which was served us by an old negress and consisted chiefly of fresh, cool buttermilk and cornbread. We bought as much of the buttermilk as we could put in our bottles, and enriched in this way we left the town. After crossing the Neosho we rested for several hours in the shade of tall trees. While the mules were enjoying themselves in the rich grass, we refreshed

33. For a more exact note on the naming of Council Grove, see Geo. C. Sibley's account in The Western Journal, St. Louis, December, 1850, pp. 178-180.
ourselves by a bath in the little river and not until the sun had crossed the noon line did we leave the charming valley.

I shall avoid describing the rest of the journey in diary form, for on the entire route from the Neosho to the Missouri, a stretch we covered in six days, we were constantly in surroundings whose character remained unchanged but which seemed to us none the less beautiful and inviting. For even though flowered meadows, shady groves and clear brooks are repeated just as the sky, overhung with black clouds and threats of lightning, alternates with lovely sunny blue, the gifts of nature will remain eternally new. The original impressions are recalled to nature lovers with the recurring shapes, forms and colors.

Now we came only to tributaries of the Kansas river, which at times as insignificant brooks and at times as swollen rivers, frequently cut through the paradisical stretch of land and irrigated it. Everywhere, however, I saw signs of terrible recent downpours and several times we had to stop at brooks which a single night’s rain had transformed into raging torrents and which made further travel impossible for an entire day. We crossed Rock creek in whose valley the cornfields of the settlers were largely washed away by terrible cloudbursts; next we forded Bluff creek and “Creek 142,” so named from the number of miles from there to Independence.

At Elm creek we waited for the water to recede and on the following day we reached the junction of the roads to Independence and to Fort Leavenworth.34 We spent the night near Brownville, a delightfully situated village of about 30 houses.35 There we learned that the bridge over the Kansas at the little town of Topeka had been torn away by the swollen river. We, therefore, turned toward the city of Lawrence situated farther east, where the communication between the two banks of the Kansas was maintained with difficulty by a ferry. On July 19 we crossed the Wakarusa and on July 20 about noon we camped within sight of the city of Lawrence where we intended to attempt the crossing over the Kansas on the following day.

For the last few days we had noticed numerous settlements from the road. Most of them, however, were not really inhabited farms. By the regular intervals at which small log houses appeared, each

34. Bluff creek, Creek 142, and Elm creek are in present northern Lyon county. The road junction mentioned was probably near Burlingame, present Osage county.—Eighteenth Biennial Report, pp. 110, 111.

35. The travelers had taken the Fort Leavenworth road, leaving the Santa Fe trail in present northwest Osage county and going north into Shawnee county, for Brownville was in southern Shawnee county, about 12 or 15 miles southwest of Topeka and 30 miles from Lawrence. Brownville is present Auburn.—Kansas Historical Collections, v. 12, p. 474.
surrounded by a fence, I knew very well that here, too, land speculators had preceded the real settlers.

Whenever the government of the United States acquires land from the Indians by agreement or by purchase, it hastens to have the land surveyed, and divided into districts and then into regular "blocks" of 80 and 160 acres. The government hands these blocks of land over to the new settlers and newcomers for the small price of one and a quarter dollars per acre. In order to bring about a more rapid colonization the purchaser is obliged not only to pay a small property tax but also to build a house on his holding, to cultivate the land as well as to fence it in, also to live there for at least part of each year or to have a tenant or a servant live there. Besides this, when soldiers have served their time they are given certificates upon demobilization by virtue of which they may claim 80 acres of land for every four years of service and they may choose it from any government land wherever it may be.

These so-called "land warrants" are, however, used only in the rarest of cases by their original owners in the manner intended by the government; depending on the circumstances they find their way into the hands of land speculators for a price ranging from a bottle of whisky up to $100. If the stream of immigration turns in a certain direction, individuals possessing adequate means or simply land warrants, hurry on ahead of the farmer, utilize the certificates issued to the soldiers, and buy up as many more blocks of land as seem appropriate or as many as they can pay for. And then, in order to satisfy the law and not to lose their claims, they put up a little cabin on each 160 acres as well as some fencing, even plough up a little piece of meadow, have a man live in turn on a whole succession of so-called farms, and then wait quietly until the advancing population gives them an opportunity to make double and triple what they themselves have paid a short time before.

To call a complete halt to the misuse in this way of the bounty of the government will be very difficult; but it can be foreseen that voices will be raised against a practice whereby relief and benefit intended for the needy ones come only to people who do not need them. Unfortunately, among the land speculators are found men of the highest reputation and influence, people who are able to throw a heavy weight into the balance if anyone should consider attacking their freedom of enterprise and their freedom of trade, even if such an attack be in harmony with the laws of humaneness. However, in order to discover such abuses, I might almost say inveterate
evils in human society, one does not need to go to the far West; we find them everywhere where human beings live together, and where therefore egotism, prejudice, conceit and differences of opinion exist and form the basis for oppression and hatred that cannot be overcome.\textsuperscript{36}

The city of Lawrence is beautifully situated on the right bank of the Kansas at the foot of the slopes of the prairie which lies about 300 feet higher and which at that point approaches to within a thousand yards of the river and its wooded valley. The population may comprise 12,000, and there is great activity in the main streets which are lined with beautiful, massive four-story buildings, by shanties and by log cabins.\textsuperscript{37} Shops, poolrooms and saloons are to be found side by side in motley mixture, and among these one notices a German beer house here and there where good Bavarian beer is served by heavy-set fellow countrymen.

The prejudices of Americans against everything originating in Germany have in some respects diminished considerably. For even though, for example, the wearing of a mustache was, as I remember quite well, taboo among native Americans a few years ago, just as beer drinking was considered ridiculous, one now notices beards even in the Eastern states and among all classes of society; beards which would do honor to a German demagogue and make a pampered ensign proud.

Likewise the Americans, accustomed to stronger beverages, now drink beer as if they had learned it at German universities. Although the former, like all customs which are subject to fashion, has no special significance, and I only mention it as a kind of curiosity, nevertheless the latter is to a certain degree not without blessing for the nation, for obviously the taste for alcohol diminishes in the same degree as the love for the malt brew grows.\textsuperscript{38}

We betook ourselves at once down to the Kansas river and I was no end delighted to see the broad stream again, which, swollen by the numerous downpours, raged and foamed in wild anger. Communications had been completely cut off on the preceding day and not until shortly before our arrival had they begun, by means of a spacious flat-bottom boat, to transport waiting passengers back and forth, along with wagons, horses and cattle. As I now watched the

\textsuperscript{36} Note that the federal land policy described by Möllhausen was not that contained in the homestead act of 1862 as Möllhausen was writing in 1858. But the abuses of the land policy were discussed with considerable truth.

\textsuperscript{37} Möllhausen had been so long away from "large" towns that Lawrence deceived him. Its population in 1860, according to the federal census of that year, was 1,645; that of Topeka, 759.

\textsuperscript{38} Doubtlessly Möllhausen would be astonished and more than pleased to see his argument for the use of malt brew appearing in this publication of a dry state.
heavy craft which danced like a feather on the surging waves and every moment ran the danger of being smashed to bits by huge drifting tree trunks I thought of times long past. In my mind’s eye I saw the peaceful Kansas with its firm bed and its mirror-smooth surface as I had known it when I had entered the plains of the Missouri river for the first time, and had crossed the river a short distance above this point in company with Duke Paul of Württemberg. 

The ferry man disturbed me in my contemplations: “All ready, gentlemen,” he called to us and shortly after that we were busy loading our goods and animals. Without mishap we reached the left bank of the stream where we continued our journey without losing any time. The road led through low-lying land which was partly inundated and as a result we made very slow progress.

Towards noon we reached higher ground and just as we expressed the hope that we would no longer be hindered by impassable roads, we suddenly found ourselves at the edge of a deep gorge, filled with water, whose bridge had been torn away by recent rainstorms. On both sides I noticed groups of people standing there in expectation of making the crossing on a raft put together from the remains of the bridge. Since, of course, the travelers had to be taken across in the order of their arrival, we could not count on continuing our journey the same day. We set our animals free and camped on the bank, from where we watched how the people were ferried across on the craft so frail that their lives were in danger. The wagons eventually followed one after the other.

The glowing heat of the sun made the atmosphere in the shady, damp woods almost unendurable; this, together with the circumstance that wagon and luggage often sank into the water, and could be pulled out only with the help of several obliging Shawnee Indians, and that we had to protect our collections above everything else from dampness, induced us to inquire whether there wasn’t another road leading to Fort Leavenworth. A young Irishman who lived there among the Shawnees and who likewise helped with the crossings, informed us that he did indeed know of another road but that it was at least six miles farther away. The possibility of danger to our collections seemed to us so great that we could not shun the detour, and since the Irishman was willing to act as our guide, we saddled up before evening and followed him up the ravine. We

39. On a trip to Fort Laramie in the summer of 1851, Müllhausen had accompanied Prince (er Duke?) Paul of Württemberg and crossed the Kansas river on the outbound trip at the Uniontown crossing in present Shawnee county.—See Prince Paul’s account in the New Mexico Historical Review, Albuquerque, v. 17 (July, 1942), p. 198.
soon found ourselves on an extensive meadow which was enclosed by strips of woodland. We rode rapidly through the tall grass, the blades of which reached up over our saddles.

Not without anxiety we watched the western sky which with lightning rapidity became overcast by threatening clouds and which was tinged fiery red and sulphur yellow by the hidden rays of the sun. We soon heard the dull roar of thunder, sharp individual claps became pronounced, and before we had agreed upon the place where we were to pitch camp for the night, the storm broke over us with such violence as I had never before experienced.

We tried to protect ourselves from the cloudburst by laying our saddles on the ground and crouching down on them with our weapons under us and a blanket around our shoulders. But the firmament seemed to collapse and after a few minutes we were sitting in deep water which rushed violently down toward the Kansas. The yellow tinge had in the meantime spread over the whole sky, and like a flaming dome the bursting clouds seemed to rest on fiery pillars of forked lightning. The peals of thunder were endless; the earth trembled under the deafening blows and the animals fearfully crowded up close to us as if seeking protection from the raging elements. Then, when the storm had reached its peak the black ceiling of clouds suddenly lifted from the prairie, a fiery streak flashed from north to south, and for a few minutes the setting sun appeared in full glory. The rain soon ceased but during the whole night under the starry sky we were chilled because we had been so thoroughly drenched. That was our last experience on the prairie.

On the evening of the following day, accompanied by the Irishman, we reached the main road which led directly to Fort Leavenworth, our goal, from which only a good two days’ trip separated us.

[Chapter 38]

After long, arduous labour, when the end is in sight, one often feels inclined to finish the work faster by increasing the pace, although loath to leave a task which has been done to the best of one’s ability. That’s how I feel now that there are only a few pages left for me to report. That’s how I felt then as we rapidly approached the Missouri river and finally saw the beautifully situated and flourishing city of Leavenworth.40

Since the Irishman’s departure we had come through more or less settled country, with farms, fenced-in gardens and fields; we ad-

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40. In 1858 Leavenworth was the metropolis of Kansas. Its population, according to the census of 1860, was 7,429.
mired everything as is to be expected after a trip in the wilderness, but only in passing, for we had no time to stop. The animals had to exert their last strength to carry their masters as fast as possible to the edge of advancing civilization; they, themselves, however, were bound for the green pastures of the military post.

Even the many hundreds of heavily laden wagons which we noticed everywhere, which were destined to transport food to the army stationed at the Great Salt Lake, aroused only superficial comment on our part, especially since we had learned of the armistice concluded between the United States and the Mormons and the prospect of an early peace.

It was more interesting for us to notice that the closer we got to the city the more curiously we were observed. Since our exterior and the appearance of our animals gave evidence of a long hard trip, we were usually taken for couriers from the battlefield. When we told individual questioners of our Colorado expedition they smiled in disbelief, winked an eye and replied: "We know you have come from Salt Lake with secret dispatches and you do not want to be questioned. Well, good luck," they called when we left and continued cheerfully on our way.41

At nightfall on July 24 we finally rode into the city of Leavenworth and soon found ourselves among its lighted houses with their dark silhouettes.42 We rode up and down the streets before we discovered a hotel to our liking. In Peacock’s opinion, one was too fashionable for our appearance; another, according to my opinion, not fashionable enough, and it was, therefore, quite late when we registered at a so-called boarding house, there to await the next morning. Fortunately we had our men camp outside the city, because even we four had quite a time in finding lodgings in rather dirty rooms.

I must not fail to mention that we obtained the desired quarters only after having proven ourselves solvent. You could not blame the people for acting in this manner because everything we had on

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41. Reference is made here by Möllhausen to the Mormon “war” of 1858.
42. The arrival of the party in Leavenworth was reported by a newspaper in part as follows:

"LEAVENWORTH TIMES’ COLORADO EXPEDITION.—The following gentlemen connected with the above expedition arrived in our city on Saturday last:—Dr. J. S. Newberry, Surgeon and Geologist; B. Möllhausen, Artist; F. W. Egloffstein, Topographer, and Geo. H. Peacock, Train Master. We learn some interesting particulars relative to their trip. [Here followed several paragraphs discussing the route of the expedition.]

"Dr. N. brings with him a large number of specimens, geological, mineralogical and botanical. The Artist has a collection of fine sketches, and Mr. Egloffstein a complete topographical map of the region.

"The report of the expedition will be very valuable and of interest. Gentlemen like those, who for months undergo the privations of the wilderness, are the true heroes of the age. Their works will benefit Humanity while themselves are forgotten. All honor to the Crusaders of sciences and Pioneers of civilization, say we."—Leavenworth Times, July 31, 1858."
our bodies, with the exception of our guns, was no longer worth enough to pay for the lodgings of even one of our party; and our exhausted animals would need long and very good care before they could ever be used for work again. For that reason they, too, would not have made very good securities. But we did not forget the lack of confidence shown toward us. After we had taken a bath the next morning, had gone through the hands of a colored barber, and had then changed our clothes from head to toe in a clothing store, we hurried back to our landlord where in the meantime our men had arrived with the wagon. We paid our bill and then moved to the best hotel in town despite polite and impolite invitations to stay.

Our next matter of business was to pay the men and then to deliver the mules, the wagon, harnesses and saddles, in brief all government property, to the military post which is situated very picturesquely three miles down [up] the river.\(^43\) Since we had not kept anything but our diaries and our collections, nothing prevented us, until the departure of the St. Louis steamboat, from thoroughly enjoying the small pleasures which civilization offers and which had become so unfamiliar to us.

\(^{43}\) Fort Leavenworth was the great supply depot of the West for the U. S. army.—See Elvid Hunt, *History of Fort Leavenworth, 1827-1927* (Fort Leavenworth, 1926), p. 97.