Memoirs of Philip Johns
A Pioneer of 1851
contributed by Laurelen Jabbour
Memoirs of J Philip Frederick Johns
Written by him between 1890 to 1895 in C C, MO

pages 22 to 44

As transcribed by his granddaughter, Marie Johns. Marie was attempting to join the DAR. She was corresponding with a woman in Ohio by the name of Fern, who was assisting Marie in gathering documentation.

A fellow Deford researcher, J. Schnael, found copies of their letters while she was doing family history research in Ohio a few years ago. She realized that these letters answered a question I had been asking for several decades. What happened to Lavina Deford and Philip Johns?

These are the only pages I have. If anyone has the rest of his memoirs, or any part of them not included here, I would like to see a copy of them in an attempt to make them whole.

J Philip Frederick Johns came from Germany to show he was 24 years old and at one time when the Mexican War in 1847. After the war he left for a good life as an engineer and invented the whole of it. The rest is history.

From the Mexican War to the Mexican War Long County, Iowa over the Oregon Trail by Toward Oregon and Other Adventures in the Memoirs of J. Philip Frederick Johns from page 22 to 44

As power was one of the Jefferson Barracks near St. Louis, Mo. The very next day was to arrive here and found his claim. He then went west and west and west in the fertile fields of the Missouri. After he had found the gold which was more than ample, he and each one of us got along very well in the area and found. After we changed our uniforms for civilian suits, I started at once for Jefferson Barracks, Kentucky, where it left my trunk full of clothes and about fifty dollars in
silver half dollars, in those days it was not often a keeper saw a silver dollar. I found everything alright, for a while I had a good time. I visited my uncle in Indiana and stayed a while with them. I felt still more independent having now a land in my pocket for 160 acres, two hundred dollars and could speak a little English. I began to feel that I was one of the boys, who helped gather all that country where you find gold, the Indians and buffalo and all the rocks mountains and the great Columbia River I dreamed of gold even when I was a little boy in Germany. I must surely start in that direction. So I left my uncle and went back to Louisville, Kentucky.

One day in a German saloon I heard a man say that Iowa had lately been made a state, it had the richest soil for farming in the world. I asked the man in what direction was that town, he told me all about it and the next day started for Iowa. I found there a place of a few log houses, having reached the town proper I found there were also a few frame houses and one or two brick houses near the banks of the river. I wanted to see a stage office, to get through the country and buy a new pair of shoes. To my questions the driver asked how far and where did I want to go— I told him I did not care how far or where, I wanted to see the country and wild animals. He stayed the next morning, were in Council Bluffs but a few log houses, then Omaha, a small village, Fort York was a little village. Now we reached the Bluffs, the Missouri River, which we crossed on an old style 20 ft ferry boat. Now we were in the Old Fort on the Missouri, at Boon County. Now a street in town. The best hotel was a double log house and once the officers quarters, one, two story brick house, two frame houses and two rows of soldiers log houses, the one on Story, Oliver and the other on Moore Avenue and a small brick court house, near a ten acre cornfield. Doctor Hemmel, a German, had the most residence right in town, on a large hill, on the east side of town and a cornfield of eighty acres. The German family were very pleasant people and I always felt like I was at home there. He had two sons, Frank enlisted in the one daughter who was married to Judge Cassidy, Frank was
had the best general store in Des Moines, in a double log house with a dirt floor. During the war he became a millionaire. He had been together in the Mexican War on the same time. Also there was a one story log house, standing where a street is intended to be extended to. Mr. Bil's family occupied the house.

I was for the first time delighted since residing in America. Campbell Beck, Indian trader, during a winter fire, also hitched up a team waggon, and several hundred Indians came to town and planted their wigwams. You may imagine when I was a little boy, about American Indians and buffalo began to be a reality. It was my greatest delight (but all were quite yet) Ornately I met my friend, Mr. M. Hall, in a store and he showed me the few, small grains of gold which he had that day, received from a friend. In a letter he had gone to California that same spring, overland in 1849. I clutched a white at the gold and started for my dinner. Others got back from M. Hall. I commenced preparations for an outfit, at once, to cross the plains. This spring of 1850, I crossed the big rivers and the mountains and freight cars in the Great Plains.

In the meantime I became acquainted with one of the best lawyers in that country, Colonel Bagley, who lived a mile and a half miles from Des Moines. The Colonel told me he was going to see the springs. He wanted me to bring my oxcart near to his place, as he had plenty corn, and the husband was a Frenchman. Mr. Bagley, the Colonel, and she would be pleased to entertain his German, mostly, servants and stay with the Colonel until Spring, and we had plenty of comfort that winter, going hunting and so meetings and expecting, and delights (not to mention the Colonel's horse, the Colonel, and all the speeches) as he only knew a few words of English which I had learned in the Mexican War. However, I went and I got to help the Indians often, by abounding the Colonel. So the spring of 1850 came the good news that 500 wagons were returning as the cholera had begun. During that year became acquainted with Colonel Beckers, with the daughter of Beckers, a man of the Olden 1812, also a brother of Chief Simoes and Tousal, I would not a want and married by our April 16, 1850, with Eugenia Beckers, the best man and find the best woman, the old man.
did not want me to go west at all next year, and offered me
some of land near the river and only 50 miles from
De Montreux, Iowa (we mean Des Moines) But I had not seen the big
fifty-the Rockies-the Siouanes and the great Columbia R'iver
But this dream of my boyhood was this year 1857 accomplished-
But nine months and a little over after we were married a
boy baby was born Feb 7 1857, in spring quarter of that year Cor-
ried and the Musical Director of Lafayette 8nd (some of Philadelphia)
Penn New musuem will come true and a reality to cross-
ing these Great Plains.
It was about the 8th day of May 1857, I think, when we started
to cross the great plains for Oregon and California, and a
great trouble were. We had twenty years old yet, music not
fifteen and our first born but l'd quite 7 months old
and such a young happy family to undertake a trip of two
thousand miles and from beginning to end meeting
out Indians, buffaloes by the thousands and also antelope
by the thousands. When we started I filled my wagon bed
nearly to the top with corn to keep the cattle in good shape and
had a long journey before us and I must have treated our
animals right as our lives depended on those cattle.
We traveled with only team of about fifty wagon long
unconcerned and happy as we were going to a combination
After crossing the Missouri river we camped at the old Mormon
Bapping grounds and saw a few Omaha Indians not any
notice, but after we crossed Pl um om, and got among the Iowa
Indians, our trouble commenced with that old Indian Chief
for traveling through their country—we must pay them for their
grace. He did not intend to pay, and were about to make
them to stand, when try no we were confronted by several
hundred Indians, to be taunted and on horse talk Dialected
for their Chief's eye. Our howl talk. He came and we were sur-
rounded by these high colored Indians. He asked the chief
what he wanted for his Day, for Traveling through his country
and his answer was shook head of cattle and wanted us to
shoot the cattle. He declined to shoot our cattle when we had
nearly two thousand miles to travel with them. Some Captain
had considerable horses & cattle, also a large family, he
agreed to give the Indians a piece of cow, which we had
to shoot for in the Red Sticks. Now after we shot the cow for
for these red devils, they inserted their arrows in every eye. Now the squaws arrived with their baskets or bags to pack all the meat. Then each cow had been ripped open, and all the blood that had collected in the carcass had been drunk up by the double handfuls by these red brutes — and also the tail and they cut in pieces of about five inches long — they pulled them through their fingers, and let them run down their throats like noodles.

The next day we started on our trip again, and when we got to our new place of camping place, where the bridge across a small stream was burned down, built of drying emigrants, who had come before us, this was the work of the Brandy tribe again — and now we took the Chief a prisoner (as we allowed him to enter our Forty Foot Circle of our wagons), unless all our ladies ever were then at work, they had the work. He treated them kindly, ministering all over them, and the last regale was the Chief who would be able to do for defense of our wives and children. He ordered all the other Indians to stay within a four mile's distance of our Forty Foot Circle that night. He treated them Chief well that night with the promise to allow us next morning to repair the bridge, and then to depart without any trouble on their part — all roundly, precisely. These Pocone Indians were always the most troublesome. Their nature is treacherous, small in stature and always wary. The rest of Indians and the next tribe, the Showhowsi, they are tall and noble looking Indians, more so than any other on the Great Plains of the West.

The cars (the diggers) were both toward dirty Indians, which must we had yet to pass through. But we had no more trouble of any consequence thereafter. However, there was no remaining several hundred, Savage Indians, and our women, children, at their mercy about fifty years ago, until not a house for two thousand miles. Only until Lamar, about 200 miles from Council Bluffs, with a few company of soldiers at Fort Benton about 200 miles further on, 100 soldiers, only a few Hudson Bay traders. Fort Hall then had no soldiers. And 200 miles further we were trading post. And further on Grand Round Valley Trading Agency. And my memory these were all.
One more little incident do not forget before we get to the Paka Springs from which point, all scattered off in the opposite direction. One fine morning a young lawyer from the law school of Massachusetts joined the team for a party in our train and I left our train, after they had started, too good buffalo hunt, and appeared to me that signs were very good for the hunt. We had started from the Prairie in to the hills and upa steep ravine, the wind was in our favor and following the slope we were soon on to the "buffalo run shot. Each of us fired on the same buffalo and the dropped one ball struck him in the head and another in the throat foreleg. It was now getting very late in the afternoon and we thought now we had better get down to the Platte again to find our team. Our first impulse was to

1. Train the buffalo with our hatchet and musket, cutting a chunk out of the hind quarter, and lift the balance of the carcass for the wolves.

2. Start down the mountain for the great plains to our surprising saving train, no sign of a road or getting very late in the evening. We knew we had to go back to a large mountain in our way—south or could not go the direct north we saw a little gap in the mountain and we knew we were lost, perhaps a target for some wild animals or a prey for some wild animals. We began to get very tired, being very hungry since early morning and sat down for a good rest for consultation as we knew we were lost. After a good rest we concluded that our train must have turned off to go direct north through that narrow gap in the range, then again turning toward north that would bring them into Camply right, already on the west side of the Platte right before the.)

3. I started up, being not very high, I began to get late and behold to our greatest joy, wherein we got to the summit, we saw our team at the foot of the west side of the Platte starting time for supper. It took us not long to get down by bringing down hats into the ground at every limb down. Our people under frighten thinking we were closely lost but we had a small train of buffalo and buffalo train, if we did have to cook them with buffalo chips.

4. The young lawyer, from New York from Oregon City, I saw very tired the next morning up we were off for the Pacific Springs.

5. On the Burea Springs—getting ready for the crossing of the 50 Miles Dessert.
The last Camp early next morning and got to the Pacific Springs about noon, where we stopped until 4 o’clock in the afternoon. We now filled everything we had in our wagon with water that would hold any, as we had not before been fifty miles without water, wood, grass or anything else. We then traveled all night like horses and arrived on Green River about 12 o’clock noon without stopping except about half way to 20 minutes to give each out nine a little taste of water. In going down the mountain to arrive we could not hold them back until they all got into the water, which was very unpleasant for horses.

But we soon got everything in good shape and camped for the night near Cedar River. The next day we crossed it and traveled until we found a good Camp and plenty of grass. We saw many wonderful formations of nature in the Chimney Rock about 100 feet high in a great distance. We reached in the Rocky Mountains where one wagon at a time was able to pass through. Not water Springs, mineral and cold water springs. No more accidents or trouble with Indians until we got to Snake River when one of our men Mr. Hatley got shot through the head, as large an arrow head as the Doctor could pull through his brain, but in my opinion he was a dead riding horses. No more accidents for had about this time we met with Mr. Hartle and a man that had been all the way with the wagon. We crossed the Columbia River and started down a long, rocky pass of the mountains and to the banks of the Columbia River, which concludes the last of my dreams of my trip as before mentioned and after we got down to the Columbia River I gave up as hopeless, for without a horse I could not get to San Francisco.

Now the last of our hardships Cross the Cascade Mountains. I began to feel happy to think that in a few more days we will be in a civilized Country, where we will hear again our regular trains running and the gong ringing. Since it had been years since I had heard a regular train running through a boulder hills of two thousand miles. We
the morning we left our camp very early to get as far as possible in to the Cascade Mountain Range and make another camp over night before starting down the very steep three mile decline and the next one down the mountains and very close to the foot of Mount Hood, whose crater discharged smoke at the same time in the fifties when San Francisco had that fearful earthquake. Camping that time in the mountains we had not much time to lose and in getting up our cattle I could not find one of my own and had to leave them behind. Then we got to the steep decline we all got to sucklock our wagon, cut fir trees down and fasten the tarp to the hind end of the wagon and then we opened the sliding down the mountainsides from 8 to 10 feet high, we took a day or two forest. On the next another butterfly train continued down the mountain and beheld what had done, my ox pulling a carriage! I had no trouble locking my animal, Eugene. Sweeney asked him, if for money sake, he didn’t much he charged me, he answered ten dollars, as now had but ten cents in the world. Held him 10 dollars for pulling his carriage which carriage one of his train told me would have had to be left behind if there was not for my, we called Mary; and I took my ox. After we had reconstructed our cattle on the first stage and as the rain had sat in and which we had not been for months we commenced preparing by two and three wagon cooking for rotations. The old settlers were very kind to us, my old friend and brave in hunting companions, who had mentioned only before left for Oregon City where his parents resided for some years migrating from Cincinnati, Ohio. The father had two ships playing between Portland and San Francisco Gal. The one being a third fire, ran away from home with his gun, ammunition and $500 cash. Falling in with some old Rocky Mountain trappers he luckily managed to reach the Atlanta States and Cincinnati Ohio his old home. The parents considered him dead, for one day two fathers, declared a clear frame. The father wrote back making arrangement for him to go to school in Cincinnati and there to nurse school which he did. He blamed another trick.
got married and after his father heard that, pulled loose from him again and got another cent of money he received from his heart's desire to be near young Tomney. He went in the spring of 1851, left his wife and child and went on a job to drive a team and make some money. He left in May. While in the seat of the Oregon town his father, through a friend, furnished him and took me to this ship. With the help of one. I received to help them they were to send the ship back to the ship to his father. To keep the young man to his father and young Tomney to his father. When he got to the north of the Columbia River, a very dangerous place for ships and a storm. The ship went down and much work being rescued and the last of the young Tomney.

After my cattle with a good load cut up the country south and took my claim eleven miles south of Snake on the forks of the St. Helens and Willamette Rivers.

My land claim now in the Willamette Valley.

I crossed the Snake River with my team at night and struck my pocket, 2000 miles from home. My friend and baby, but we got along very nicely with what we had. Next morning early I was still raising fire wood and did all night. After breakfast I told my wife I was going now to look for a 320 acre home to which were entitled. Talking about three miles south through the Snake Island, I came to what was called Knott's Butte, and passing it on the east side at some elevation, and looking to the south I noticed a forty-mile flat on a hill at the Butte, and stretching behind some groves of Oak and Ash timber. This country looked to me like a paradise, and said to myself "Wehaka!" and by investigating a little further at that large Butte, old settler John Miller and John Oelq's names I learned from a mormon. We fancied the Miller's "little fetters," or rock at the door
The first question he asked, if I had a family, and when I answered yes, a wife and one child, he told me to go and get my family at once and that at the south end of this place was 320 acres of land, and we would immediately go and start to go right back and bring my wife and child to his house and stay until I could build my cabin first. He would take it for a loan once. After stopping off the ground I started back and it did not take me long to go back the three miles. It was called the Albany Prairie, and the heart of Oregon. When I got back I did not waste much time in my own team, and on the way back to my brother-in-law Mr. Millers' and always afterwards the best friend I ever had in my life. Next day I commenced my house, and while I was building it, I stayed with his family. In eight days we were going in our new houses, about 370 acres of land in the heart of Oregon. Twenty miles to the junction fleet and 25 miles to the Pecos. I made the first fence rails that winter, laced them and painted them about two acres and plowed the same for winter wheat. It was the first plowing I ever did. I plowed so cheap to take to sell it for five miles distance, and my neighbors had no wheat, and it was one dollar per bushel, and no money which put me in a critical position. So I started out to move and about a family distance I found an old settler who had plenty to sell his wheat, I told him I had wanted twenty-five bushels of wheat, and that I had no money and that he had to wait for it, he told me to come and get it after I told him where I settled. But he also remarked if I could raise him 50 dollars, which he needed, he would sell me 1,000 bushels of wheat, and I would leave it in the granary as long as I wanted to. When I got home I told my wife I would sell my team and raise 50 dollars to buy a third hand plow to go to the field and thought a great many farmers had done the same thing. There was no wheat in the store, which she thought foolish to do. I got my 25 bushels of wheat and in two weeks from that time, wheat took a raise from 25 cents to 50 cents a bushel, and it went up to 60 cents a bushel and the millers would come to the granaries say that price and haul it away. I asked my wife what we would do if we was too late.
During the winter and next spring, I did considerable trading and made money. Most farmers raised a little crop but of no consequence, and as I was no farmer I began to get tired of it. Some men came along and offered me out thousand dollars, Doctor to ride and make a trip to Northern California.

From J. Philip, F. John's memoirs, written by him from 1895 to 1895 in K.C. Mo.