

H P Shumway,  
Wakefield, Nebraska;  
July 21st 1886

Notes on the G. A. R. Excursion Trip

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We are really starting on our tour. It hardly seems possible. We in the freight from Emerson to Lyons and surprised its folks very much when they found we were really going. Reached Omaha and got our tickets all right. We decided to take the longest trip and return by steamer to Portland, Ore., by Northern Pacific to Minneapolis and then home. We got a comfortable berth and started all right from Omaha.

July 22nd

The morning breaks beautifully as we are whizzing over the plains of Nebraska. The soil of western Nebraska is very poor. We are with the New York delegation of G.A.R.'s and they are very sociable and agreeable. Few of them smoke but nearly all men and women drink wine and something stronger.

The Platte is an odd looking river. The banks are not more than 4 feet high and I should think it was eighty rods wide. The water of the South Fork has been drawn into irrigation canals in Colorado, so it is entirely dry. Teams drive across in the bed of sand anywhere. New York G. A. R.'s divided at Denver junction, some going on while several cars came to Denver with us. They had twenty cars in the delegation.

We reached Denver at 8:00, got a nice room at St. George Hotel, and spent the evening walking in the town. We are immensely pleased with Denver. It is so quiet and orderly and still seems to do so much business.

July 23rd

Start for Colorado Springs at 6:00. As we ride along the views are grand. The foothills are full of picturesque scenery and the mountains beyond give it an air of massive grandeur. Some of the towns are very pretty especially Palmer's Lake. We changed cars at Colorado Springs and reached Manitou about noon. After considerable hunting we found a furnished room which we rented at \$1 per day. In P.M. we strolled up Wilson's Cañon to Cave of the Wind. There are strange and pretty views in here. The Inferno and Crystal Palace are especially interesting. We ascended the Mountain and came down over the ridge. It made Nellie very tired.

July 24th

This morning we walked up this pass to Rainbow Falls. We could see the rainbow but faintly. These falls are not as beautiful as Minnehaha but the immense cliffs give a kind of

sublime grandeur. We then went up to the Iron Springs. In p.m. we hired a rig for \$3 and drove to the Garden of the Gods. This is wonderfully grand, but nothing beautiful. Then we drove to Glen Eyrie. My imagination never pictured to me anything so lovely as this place. There is a glen of about eighty acres shut in by massive cliffs which seem to reach the sky, halfway up one is an eagles nest; the ground is covered with native trees and shrubby, and thickly matted with grass, a beautiful brook meanders through the glen, stocked with fish, while from among the trees rise gigantic boulders like Major Dome only a few feet in diameter at base and 330 ft. high. While to complete the scene is General Palmer's beautiful and costly summer residence. One must see to appreciate this place. We then drove to Colorado Springs, a most beautiful city- returning to Manitou, we drove up to Pike's Peak trail as far as teams can go. We have thoroughly enjoyed the day.

July 25th

After much persuasion I got Nellie to allow me to climb up Pike's Peak. I started at daybreak afoot and alone, and was far up in the mountain when the sun rose. The sunrise over the plains was a view of exquisite beauty. The trail most of the way led up a narrow ravine, lined with immense boulders among which dashed a mountain stream, clear as crystal, broken into a thousand waterfalls, some being of romantic beauty. Especially beautiful are Minnehaha, Rosa-Emma, and Covered Falls. I reached the Trail House five miles up in two hours and ten minutes. So far the scenery has been very beautiful, but the rest of the way it was especially noticeable for its solemn silence. Above its timber belt, it was a hard climb over boulders, but sheltered among these were the most beautiful wild flowers I ever beheld. I reached the summit at 11:30 and felt a thousand times repaid for all the toil of climbing. Then the sky was clear and the plains lay to the north east and south stretching out for 150 miles in the solitary grandeur, while to the West the horizon was broken by a broad ridge of the Rockies 75 miles away. As I stand here among the sublime works of God, I cannot but raise my heart in humble adoration to the Supreme Architect of the Universe, and I can feel with Job "what is man that thou art mindful of him." In about half an hour the thunderstorm gathered in the West, looked like a dense rail being moved up the mountainside, changed into a snow storm as it passed the summit, and again into a thunderstorm after it passed over. We can hear the thunder and see the lightning far below us while here the sun is shining. It is a view never to be forgotten. I reached home at 6:10 much to Nellie's a delight and was quite a lion among those [who] found I had walked to the summit and back in one day.

July 26

We continued our journey this morning at 9:40. Nothing of interest was seen until we reached the Rocky Cañon of the Arkansas in the afternoon. The solid ledges of rock rise on either side, almost perpendicular three thousand feet while in some places, not over 20 feet wide, the river dashes down it in stony bed in a mad fury as though angry at its confinement. The

railroad bed has been in some places blasted out from solid rock which arch over it, and in on e place it is swung from iron beams planted in the cliffs on either side while the river dashes below it. Leaving the stream the road climbs the mountainside, twisting around like a snakes track. In one place is three tracks one above another, going many miles to make a five hundred feet ascent, a wonderful triumph of engineering skill. 10800 feet elevation. Just before dark we crossed Marshall Pass, \_\_\_\_ feet above sea level. The pass is cut down several hundred feet from the mountains, and cover being as dark as a tunnel almost. We got two double seats and retired comfortably.

July 27

We passed very awfully poor land today. West of Grand Junction we traveled 150 miles without seeing a single farm-house and a thousand square miles of land would not support one farmer. The hills are cut into very fantastic shapes, so the scenery is very varied, but it is at best a monotonous ride. Toward evening we entered in Salt Lake Valley. The landscape is beautiful, but it does not seem possible that families can be supported in so little land. We reached Salt Lake City just before dark and got a very fine room at Palace Hotel.

July 28

We spent today taking in the sights of Salt Lake City, a beautiful place. The tabernacle is majestic in its proportions, capable of seating ten thousand persons comfortably. The organ has 2800 pipes. The hall is so well arrayed for acoustic purposes that we could at one end hear a pin dropped by a guide at the other. The temple is the finest building I ever saw. It is 100 by 100 by 200 feet. It is to be used only for the ceremonies of the church, and has no seating capacity, no organ, and no Auditorium. It was commenced in 1843 and was 40 years in building. The pipes for the organ in the tabernacle were brought by oxen across the plains from the east, and the organ was builded it in its place. I wonder what the Mormons will do with their magnificent buildings when they are no longer allowed to practice their religion in the U.S. We also visited Brigham Young's residence and his grave, also the Hot Springs. We road to the Lake but it stank so we were glad to get away from it. We reached Ogden just before night [ ] an enormous jam. Got our seats. Nearly one half of the crowd had to wait over for the next train.

July 29,

It is terribly crowded and uncomfortable riding. Every car and seat is so chuck jammed full. All day are ride has been over a dreary waste, well called the Great American Desert. I am surprised to find that Colorado and Utah and Nevada have such terrible poor land and for farming one section of land in northeast Nebraska is worth more than either of these states. Just before dark we reached Reno. Many got off here so we had comfortable quarters for the night.

July 30th

We came near having a serious accident at 3:30 this morning. A brakeman had left a switch open. Our engineer saw it just in time to slow down the train, but both engines were thrown off the track and one badly demolished, and the entire train came near being thrown down an embankment into a lake here at Gold Run. It detained us about seven hours till an engine could be brought up from Sacramento, but it allowed us to go through the grand scenery of the Sierra Nevadas and around Cape Horn by day light. We reached San Francisco about five o'clock, and had a hard working to find a hotel where we could stop. From what we could see of California today it seems to be an Eden, but from what I can find about prices and crops, farmers had best stay in Nebraska.

July 31st

The hotel where we stopped, the New Franklin, is a vile hall, and it took us nearly all the A.M. in finding a room. We finally got a pleasant one at the Fremont house. In p.m. we went out to the Cliff House and visited Sutro Heights. There is nothing at the Cliff House but the seals. We could watch them by the hour. But the Heights are fixed up finely. We could spend hours delightfully wandering about its beautiful grounds, viewing the statuary, flowers, trees and shrubs in these beautiful grounds. Just as we returned we met a procession on Market St.

August 1st

It is Sunday, but this morning early we went out to Wordard Gardens. I never saw such fine gardens in my life. They cover six acres of ground, and it would take volumes to describe what is in them. It seems as if there was every tropical and temperate flower and shrub I ever heard or read about. Any one could spend days and days here. Then there are thousands of animals, birds, fishes and reptiles. This part alone is worth a dozen menageries. Then the collection of paintings and statuary is very fine indeed. Even the museum exceeds the collection at the University of Minnesota. The band played finely. It was hard to tear ourselves away. Thoughts of it seemed like a fairy dream.

In the p.m. went to Golden Gate Park. This park in a few years will be, I am told, one of the finest in the U.S. It is finely laid out and two miles wide by five long, but at present it does not compare with Wordard Gardens in Sutro Heights. They had a fine concert this p.m. of 40 pieces of musical instruments and one novel feature was one piece played upon anvils. But there was such a jam, about 20,000 present, that we could not enjoy it much and soon returned to our rooms.

In evening we attended meeting on the Howard Street M.E. Church. This is one of the first churches of the city and was nicely decorated, but the minister can't compare with the Rev. Martin.

August 2nd

We spent today in taking in the sights of the city and getting ready to start tomorrow. We do not like to go so soon, but the boats are all full now until the 15th so must go.

Market Street is the principal street with good (?) in Kearney and Montgomery. The streets are elegantly and expensively decorated for the G. A. R. I understand that San Francisco is now more finely decorated than any city in the U.S. A. has been on any occasion.

I do not like this city. It seems to do an immense business but there are no fine, nice clean-looking stores, as in Minneapolis, Omaha and Denver, the sidewalks are poor, the streets miserably paved with cobblestones, and it is at best a noisy, dirty, dilapidated-looking city. The Chinese quarter is very revolting. General Logan came this evening but Nellie hated to have me leave so bad that I did not go down to the train to see him, and I only caught a glimpse of General Sherman.

August 3rd

We go on the Oregon. We went down to the boat early to get our berths before the rush commenced, but can see the parade up Market Street as we are outward bound. We passed out of Golden Gate about noon, and are in the tossing waves of the broad Pacific. I think California is a fine place to spend money. Everything is very cheap. Lots of the fancy dry goods are not half as expensive as with us, excepting lumber I have not priced a single article but it was as cheap. It surprised me. You can get as good a meal here for from 15 to 25 cents as one can get in the Mississippi or Missouri Valleys for from 50 to 75 cents. I think if one has their fortune made and invested where it brings a steady income, here would be the place to live and spend that money, for a little goes so far, everything a person wants can be bought and so cheap and the climate is delightful. But while it is the rich man's paradise, woe be to the poor man that comes here! I would not wonder in the years to come, if California would be mostly settled by rich men from the Middle states and territories, who had their residences here and money invested far away. We hardly left the docks before Nellie was seasick. Before night many are sick, the boat is badly crowded and our quarters are very uncomfortable. But there are so many on board that they have three in every stateroom so Nellie has to be in one room with women, I in another with men. The air is so bad we got a mattress on the upper deck where the air is fresh and we can be together.

August 4

This is at best a dreary day and a dreary ride. There was a storm last night and the breakers are running high so they often break over the prow and flood the outer deck. So one must stay inside, and outside the wind blows a gale and it is as chilly as November, and to go inside is like jumping from the frying pan into the fire. There are about 300 passengers aboard and accommodations for only about 150. They are stowed in every crick and fissure. And then all of the 300 except some 15 or 20 are seasick, and such spewing and retching one never did see, unless on a ship. The very thought of it makes me sick to my stomach. The waiters cannot begin to attend to the sick folks, so they have a sorry time of it indeed. Poor Nellie. She is very sick

and I (?) fear the straining will injure her seriously. There is not much fun in a ride on the wild wild sea and there have got to be very strong inducements somewhere to ever tempt us on the ocean again. Last night during the gale when the vessel seemed to be rocking so hard and her timbers were creaking as if they were going to pieces, I just thought that if I was in Wakefield I would stay there for one while. Toward evening the gale abated so we could go out on the decks and get fresh air. It was a great relief to escape the sickening odors from the cabins. But poor Nellie, she can't get out from her bed. If I was sick instead of her how relieved I should be.

August 5

The sea is quite calm this morning and most of the passengers have got over their sickness so it don't seem quite so bad. One can endure being crowded when they are not vomiting all around. Nellie drank some water this morning and ate a little breakfast and did not throw it up. By night we expect to enter the Columbia River when the sea sickness passes away. I feel so relieved to find the worst is over, and she is no worse than she is. I am somewhat surprised that I have not been sick. Among the 300 I am almost the only green one who is not sick. My respect for my stomach has increased greatly since it has stood the rarefied air of Pike's Pete and this rocking of the stormy billows yesterday. But I always thought my stomach was my weakest part, but if it is as strong as it seems to be, I don't see why I can't live to be as old as my grandfathers have been before me. Toward evening a heavy fog set in, but we could hear the foghorns and steered toward that. We reached it just before dark and cast anchor to await the lifting of the fog or daylight. These foghorns are a simple but wonderfully useful invention. They look in the mist like an Indian wigwam. It is made by several rods fastened to the rocks far below, to them are fastened a tube with a whistle at the top, in this tube is a buoy, which rises and falls with the waves, sucking in or forcing out the air through the whistle, causing it to give a hollow moaning sound which can be heard for miles.

August 6

This morning when I awoke the fog had lifted and we were under way, we soon crossed the bar and steamed into Astoria about 7 o'clock. We stopped here about an hour unloading freight and then steamed up to Portland which we reached about 5 p.m. The Columbia is a majestic river, and we had a lovely ride today. Nellie's seasickness had left her as it did nearly all of the passengers, and all were gay and merry. We had read a good deal about how fine a boat ride was up the Columbia, but the reality exceeded the anticipation. We got a prime room at the Overland House in Portland and retired early, having spent perhaps the most pleasant day of our trip; we had just a fine boat ride and the scenery was so varied and beautiful.

August 7

We spent the forenoon in packing our lunch basket and then in taking in the sights of the town. Portland is a fine place, and we are much pleased with it. From what I can learn of Oregon

and W.T. I am very favorably impressed with them, and I think that I should come here if I left the Logan Valley. At 3:00 p.m. we crossed the ferry and started on the O.R. & N.Co. R.R. for home. As we ride along the Columbia River the scenery is grand beyond description. Of the many beautiful rides we had had since we left this is by far the loveliest. Bridalveil Falls, Multnomah, 824 feet high, are exceedingly lovely. The Cascades of the Columbia have an air of massive power. The mountains with their immense cliffs or shelving sides of lava have a majestic beauty. We reached Dallas [the Dalles] at dark and are exceedingly sorry to have those beautiful views fade into darkness.

August 8th

This A.M. we had a dreary ride over the Great Plains of the Columbia, they ought to be called desert instead of plains. About noon reached Spokane Falls, a considerable river with fall of almost 65 feet. The ride in p.m. was through most beautiful scenery. It is not so grand as the Columbia, but it would be hard to imagine anything more lovely. We stayed awake until we crossed the famous \_\_\_\_\_

August 9th

We awoke this morning just in time to appreciate going through the Mellon Tunnel, 3800 feet long and elevation of 5500 feet above sea level. After passing through the road makes some beautiful curves in going in the valley below. Until we reached Livingston the road runs through fine scenery, but we have seen no farming land to speak of in Oregon, W.T., Idaho or Montana. I am very much disappointed in the farming land. Just east of Livingston we passed through Bozeman Tunnel, 3610 feet long. We left the train at L. with a big crowd to go to the [Yellowstone] park. The railroad goes to Cinnabar six miles from Mammoth Hot Springs and 66 miles from the Upper Geyser Basin. We passed Devil's Slide before reaching Cinnabar. It is a very queer formation and the only point of much interest before Hot Springs. At C. we took the stage, and drove into the town about nine o'clock. The river is nearly full and the first the number of the Mammoth Hot Spring formation glistening in the moonlight amply repaid us for the visit. I thought the formation covered 40 acres and about six hundred feet from base to top of cones. It is a fine view. Board is four dollars per day.

August 10

We were up early and had a good ramble all over the Mammoth Hot Springs before breakfast. Then we went up to the Cottage Hotel where they charged \$2.50 per day. Nellie went to bed, I got a horse at \$5 and started for the geysers. The first point of interest was Golden Gate; then West Gardiner Falls; Swan Lake and from the birds in it, rightly named;

The End -

Nellie sounds like something of a pain here, but she had a child, Carl, who was born the previous year (and died in September, a month after their return from this excursion) and she was 5 months pregnant with her second son, Earl.