

Timber was noticeably absent on the Platte-Sweetwater route. Just how effective as fuel were the buffalo chips most emigrants used as a substitute?

It took two or three bushels of chips to heat a meal because chips burned so rapidly.
[Merrill Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, p. 57.]

Emigrants traveling the south side of the Platte River through central Nebraska had to ford to the South Platte somewhere beyond the forks of the Platte. In terms of present towns, where did they cross?

There were three crossings, or fords, of the South Platte during the years of heaviest travel. The Lower Crossing was located a few miles west of the city of North Platte, across the river from the town of Hershey, Nebraska. The Middle Crossing was a few miles east of Ogallala, and the Upper Crossing was a few miles west of Brule, Nebraska.

[Merrill Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, p. 265.]

What kind of a load did the average wagon carry? What kind of provisions, daily menu and fuel predominated on the trail?

"Recommendations for an ideal wagon load varied from 1,600 to 2,500 pounds."

"Lansford Hastings, one of the earliest guidebook writers, advocated that each emigrant be supplied with 200 pounds of flour, 150 pounds of bacon, 10 pounds of coffee, 20 pounds of sugar, and 10 pounds of salt. The basic kitchenware was a cooking kettle, fry pan, coffee pot, tin plates, cups, knives, and forks."

"Charles Tuttle describes the daily menu of a typical emigrant: 'for breakfast, coffee, bacon, dry or pilot bread; for dinner, coffee, cold beans, bacon or buffalo meat; for supper, tea, boiled rice, and dried beef or codfish'.

Since timber was scarce or non-existent through western Nebraska and Wyoming, buffalo chips were utilized as a replacement fuel.

[Merrill Mattes, *The Great Platte River Road*, pp. 42,46, 48, 57.]

"The staples of the typical emigrant diet were bread, bacon and coffee. A number of travelers made a point of carrying along citric acid, vinegar, pickles, dried fruit and vegetables as antiscorbutics. Others prepared salads from wild fruits and vegetables along the way. Those who neglected to bring antiscorbutics and did not utilize the fresh vegetation might succumb to scurvy in the last third of the trip because of vitamin C deficiency."

[Peter D. Olch, "Treading the Elephant's Tail: Medical Problems on the Overland Trails." *Overland Journal*, Volume 6, Number 1, 1988. Pp. 25-31.]