

Gregg, Josiah. *Commerce of the Prairies, Or the Journal of a Santa Fe Trader Volume II*, Henry G. Langley, New York, 1844-1845. Kansas Collection Books www.kancoll.org/books/gregg/

“But of all the prairie animals, by far the most curious, and by no means the least celebrated, is the little prairie dog. This singular quadruped is but little larger than a common squirrel, its body being nearly a foot long, with a tail of three or four inches. The color ranges from brown to a dirty yellow. . . . Its yelp, which resembles that of the little toy-dog, seems its only canine attribute. It rather appears to occupy a middle ground betwixt the rabbit and squirrel — like the former in feeding and burrowing — like the latter in frisking, flirting, sitting erect, and somewhat so in its barking. . . .

A collection of their burrows has been termed by travellers a ‘dog town,’ which comprises from a dozen or so, to some thousands in the same vicinity; often covering an area of several square miles. They generally locate upon firm dry plains, coated with fine short grass, upon which they feed; for they are no doubt exclusively herbivorous. But even when tall coarse grass surrounds, they seem commonly to destroy this within their ‘streets,’ which are nearly always found ‘paved’ with a fine species suited to their palates. They must need but little water, if any at all, as their ‘towns’ are often, indeed generally, found in the midst of the most arid plains — unless we suppose they dig down to subterranean fountains. At least they evidently burrow remarkably deep. Attempts either to dig or drown them out of their holes have generally proved unsuccessful.

Approaching a ‘village,’ the little dogs may be observed frisking about the ‘streets’ — passing from dwelling to dwelling apparently on visits — sometimes a few clustered together as though in council — here feeding upon the tender herbage — there cleansing their ‘houses,’ or brushing the little hillock about the door — yet all quiet upon seeing a stranger, however, each streaks it to its home, but is apt to stop at the entrance, and spread the general alarm by a succession of shrill yelps, usually sitting erect. Yet at the report of a gun or the too near approach of the visitor, they dart down and are seen no more till the cause of alarm seems to have disappeared.”

