

ACROSS THE PLAINS

The following is a true story of a trip across the plains in the early days and was written in 1930 by Louisa M. Sweetland, resident of Carson City, Nevada, who celebrated her golden wedding anniversary a few years ago.

In the year 1863 George W. Chubbuck and family and his aged mother left Platteville, Wisconsin, May 1st, destination California. The outfit consisted of covered wagon and six mule. We left Council Bluffs and our train consisted of about fifty wagons. Mr. Kendall was appointed captain of the train. We left Council Bluffs about the 5th of May.

A son was born to my mother as we were camped on the Platte river. We finally started on with a great many happenings all along the road. The son that was born at the camp died a few months later in Placerville, California.

There are a great many things I can hardly remember, as I was not quite ten years old. However, I will mention a few that I can well remember.

One that impressed me, was in fact we all felt badly over the death of a little child, and to think it had to be buried out on the plains. We were so far from civilization there was no way of getting a little coffin or getting material to make one, so my uncle being along and very handy with tools said if each would help by what material they could spare, some pieces of wood, nails and material for lining, he would do the best he could, so he made the little coffin. Each one gladly gave the best they had, and the dear little one was laid to rest with the help of the kind people; the little mound was covered with rocks to keep the wild animals from digging it up, which would of been done without that protection, and we left the little grave with tears of sympathy for the ones that had to part with their dear one way out on the lonely desert. The little coffin was made of sixty pieces of wood the different ones gave, and I think thirty pieces of material of different kinds to line the coffin. It seems no matter where we are or what the circumstances are, there is some way of doing good and helping each other in time of trouble and sorrow.

We had several thrilling experiences with the Indians. At one place we camped, a band of Indians came to our camp. One of the young men in the party was anxious to try and see how he could shoot with a bow and arrow, so one of the Indians gave him the bow and arrow to see what he could do by shooting with it. It did not take very long for us to find out, and nearly to our sorrow as the arrow came down and instead of hitting mark it struck the Indian in the back. It was all excitement for a while, and the old chief got a lot of his men together and we all thought that we would be massacred. I well remember how we all felt. My grandmother, Father's mother, went in the emigrant wagon and there she prayed for the good Lord to spare our lives. My sister Lizzie and I were crying. The old chief got

on his horse and so did the other Indians get on their horses and were about to start for more Indians. What to do was a problem; finally we made peace with them by giving them all the tobacco and molasses we had on our train. My father was the one who thought of the tobacco and a man in the train had some. We were not going to give them but one piece of it; then they talked between themselves a long time and the old chief came to my father and held up two of his fingers and said, "Two to whack." The tobacco was the plug tobacco so they wanted two large plugs of it, so we gave them the two large plugs. They said, "No kill now," and you may believe that it was settled and we left in a hurry. It was dark and we thought if we stayed there that night they might return and make trouble. We all knew the arrow hurt the Indian, for when the arrow was pulled out of his back the blood began to trickle down in a stream.

At the time it happened we had just finished eating. Mother had made some nice biscuits, and then the Indians asked for something to eat and we were afraid to refuse them, so they sat down to our little table and asked for biscuits and coffee. It was while he was eating the man accidentally shot him with the arrow. It was a serious affair to have anything like that happen as the Indians were at war with the whites. A great many times we traveled by night and had no camp fire, for fear of being seen by the Indians and being carried off and killed by them, as killing of whites and getting a scalp to hang on their belts was a great honor to them.

We traveled until we came to a place where we could get fuel and water. Our fuel was buffalo chips; the water was very bad and scarce. Most of it tasted of salt and sulphur. At one time it was so bad that Mother said she did not know what they would do and little brother George says, "Well, if you can't get water, make tea, Mother." At last we got to a place where the water was very good, so decided to stay there overnight. We were undecided if we should stay there or try to go on further. It was fortunate for us that we decided to stay there as the next morning we passed a station that the Indians had burned down and three men lying by the roadside burned to a crisp. There were some horses also burned.

We started on our way and passed a stage loaded with soldiers, all armed. We knew we were in a dangerous part of the country. As we were passing the stage we saw something bounding from one side to the other of the road as the six big stage horses were coming down the hill as fast as they could, and saw an Indian they had caught, one that had been doing a lot of mischief, had him tied on the back of the stage dragging him to death. He had several scalps hung on his belt where he had killed people and taken their scalps.

Going out of Salt Lake City we had an experience I never shall forget. We were the last wagon out of Salt Lake as Father had to have his mules shod. We were going through a deep cut in the mountains rather slowly. A wagon drove up with several men in it. One came along our wagon and asked:

if they could pass as they were in a hurry. By that time we were in a very narrow cut and impossible for us to pass or get by. Any way the men who passed us knew they had the best of us as we soon found out. One of the men came back and was trying to get the spare span of mules that was hitched on the back of the wagon. We had a span ready to change when the others would get tired out. My father protested when he saw what they were doing. It did no good, as it seemed they were determined to get the mules. They said they would have them and our lives as well. At their threats we were very much frightened; we children began crying, poor dear Mother pleading for our lives and Father doing all he could to protect us; poor old Grandma praying for our safety and for relief to come. It seemed her prayer was answered, as our uncle and some other men in the train missed us and rode back just in time, as they had their knives out, either to murder or frighten us, which they most certainly did. It looked as if we would have been dealt with roughly if help had not come just as it did. Child as I was, I shall never forget what we passed through.

We stayed in Salt Lake City ten days to get the mules shod and rested up and while in Salt Lake City Mother and Father wanted to have our pictures taken. So Grandma said she would stay by the wagon while we went to the photograph gallery. There was sister Lizzie, George and myself. Well, we had our pictures taken. We have them now. When we returned poor old Grandma had fallen asleep and what do you think happened? The Mormons had stolen all of our best clothes. Mother had sewed all of her nice dresses, Father's broadcloth dress suit, Lizzie's and my silk dresses we had for best all in the sacks, as trunks would of taken too much room in our wagon. We all felt sorry about it, but not so sorry about the clothes as we did for poor old Grandma. They also took our provisions and cleaned most everything out they could. Father got a policeman and the town was hunted over, but no trace of them could be found, so we all remember our stay in Salt Lake City. We were there on the 4th of July, arriving the 30th of June on sister Lizzie's birthday 1863. Salt Lake City is a beautiful place. I remember how the women would come to our wagons selling berries and vegetables.

Then we started on our journey again to California. On the desert it looked so beautiful to look way off, and as we thought, to nice homes, green grass, trees and running water. It looked as if the houses were fenced in with picket fences, so we would travel to get to those lovely places. Finally we were told there were no homes or anything; just a mirage.

The weather became so hot that we had to travel by night. In some way we got separated from the other wagons and got lost on the desert. We could not find any wagon tracks and traveled around and around for a night and a day and perhaps longer. I cannot remember just how long. It certainly seemed a long time. I knew we were getting quite discouraged. The water we carried was about gone, and the animals were very tired and hungry and men of water traveling on the dry and dusty desert. We began to realize we were in a very serious position and it seemed we