



A Long Road to Stony Creek

*Being the Narratives by Rufus Burrows
& Cyrus Hull, of their Eventful Lives
in The Wilderness West of 1848-1858.*

Introduction & Annotation by Richard Dillon

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INTRODUCTION.

THE LATE DALE MORGAN, in editing Harold C. Gardiner's memoir, *In Pursuit of the Golden Dream*, remarked that scholars of Western Americana are now duty-bound to raise their eyes from the much-pawed-over pages of contemporary Gold Rush diaries, letters and travel journals in order to study the neglected leaves of the "literature of recollection." While he warned us that the abundance of (substantial) reminiscient literature has been overestimated, he called for increased attention to these neglected narratives in order to inform ourselves on what truly occurred during those adventurous years in the Old West.

Reminiscences are discounted by many scholars and writers and by some readers and book collectors, under the assumption that the mere passage of time must, necessarily, corrode not only the memory of ex-emigrants but also the value of the documents. Accounts written long after the fact have built-in shortcomings, to be sure. For example, Rufus Burrows, in recalling a buffalo hunt, misplaces it in his narrative so that it pops up in his recall of the Humboldt Valley in Nevada rather than on the High Plains of the Platte country. But it must be observed that a candid and faithful retrospective account by a skilful reporter, like Rufus Burrows or Cyrus Hull, is of much more value than a clumsy and unthinking diary even if scrawled by the light of a buffalo chip campfire in '48, and both in terms of historiography as well as readability.

Compared to more substantial memoirs, those of Burrows and Hull may seem slight. But in the literature of the American West, as in so many other things, it is quality rather than quantity or bulk that counts. Both narratives are Grade-A in character, worthy of bibliographical kinship with such well-known recollections as those of J. D. B. Stillman and Jacob Wright Harlan.

In 1848 Rufus Gustavus Burrows was a young Hoosier. He was just 14 years old that spring when he set out with his mother (who was suffering from goiter, a lipoid or fatty tumor or, possibly, Hodgkin's Disease of the lymph glands) and his stepfather, Rufus Hitchcock. An uncle, Street Rice, also made the overland march to California. The party made an uneventful trip

from the Kansas City area of Missouri to Fort Laramie. There they joined a large train captained by a colorful Californian, M. M. Wambough. The latter got his wards safely across the dangerous plains and mountains to California, perhaps because he had three scouts along, one of whom was the legendary Old (Caleb) Greenwood, accompanied by his brood of six half-breed sons and daughters.

Burrows recalled that the march as far as the Laramie Fork was "without mishap." But the remainder of the journey furnished incidents a'plenty, excitement, adventure and danger. First, Old Greenwood was caught napping and robbed by Pawnee buffalo hunters. Escaping, Caleb hurried to a nearby Sioux camp and alerted the Dacotas, who then were friendly towards the whites, to the presence of Pawnee trespassers on their land. The Sioux attacked and routed the interlopers, killing about fifty of them. Unfortunately, the fleeing Pawnees then came upon Wambough's train. The Captain hurriedly circled his wagons into the defensive corral favored by plains travelers while the younger braves urged an attack on the caravan and the older warriors cautioned withdrawal, since they had only bows and arrows against the circle of rifles, muskets and shotguns facing them. At last, the counsel of the elders prevailed; the Pawnees moved off and Rufus Burrows had his first Indian fight postponed.

But Wambough's train was not free of Indian scares. The redmen pestered the whites with begging, bullying and thieving. They often reneged on trades (hence the term "Indian-giver"), and thus it was not surprising when a brave indicated to Burrow's mother that he had changed his mind and now wanted to take back some item he had bartered away. Burrow's mother stuck out her tongue at the warrior and waggled two fingers in his face, as if to say that she did not have two tongues, did not speak with a forked tongue. She insinuated that her agreements were binding, even if his were not, and that she did not reverse herself on trades. Since there were no men around, the Indian decided to close out Mrs. Hitchcock's account, for once and for all. He drew an arrow from his quiver, nocked it and began to draw it back on his bow. But as he did so, the woman calmly

reached into her wagon and brought forth an Allen pepperbox pistol. This early revolver did not have a rotating cylinder like the Colt; all the barrels revolved. It was a notoriously undependable weapon on the frontier. According to stories, you had only two possible results in using an Allen; either none of the chambers would discharge or all would go off at once. Thus, it was often deemed to be just as safe in front of a pepperbox as behind it. But the Indian did not know that if Mrs. Hitchcock were to "fire at Courthouse Rock she would hit Scott's Bluffs." He eased off the tension on his bow, and took off, muttering in grudging, admiring pidgin, "You no squaw."

The next Indians Rufus Burrows met were Snakes or Shoshones, traditionally friendly to the whites, like the Nez Percé, since the time of Meriwether Lewis. It was a wide-eyed lad who watched these warriors gallop about in a sham battle to show off their superb horsemanship.

A tragedy occurred on Mary's River, more commonly called the Humboldt, in Nevada. James Shields tugged his rifle out of his wagon and it accidentally discharged, killing him instantly. Few students of the migration westward have noticed how common were such accidents among the greenhorn travelers. Unused to firearms, the argonauts were often their own worst enemies, not the Pawnees or Paiutes. Curiously, Rufus's future father-in-law virtually repeated the same accident four years later on the same overland trail. Cyrus B. Hull was luckier than Shields; the lead ball "only" tore through his jaw, smashing the bone, knocking out his teeth and driving one so deep into his tongue that it was not cut out until three years later. The rifle ball then continued, crashing through his mouth and nose to emerge at the inside corner of his eye, blinding him in that orb. How the gritty pioneer managed to survive this bloody and painful accident will be seen in his letter in this volume.

Wambough showed his plains savvy by putting Shields' corpse in a box and the box in a covered wagon for a full day's drive before burial. He wanted the grave to be spared the ghoulish attentions of the Paiutes. Earlier, Rufus had been disgusted at the sight of the remains of a woman dug up beside the trail by Indians. When the wagons circled for their night halt,

Wambough buried Shields in the center of the corral of vehicles. Next morning, he ordered all drivers to swing around in several circles, passing over the grave and obliterating all signs of the interment.

At Donner Lake in the Sierra, or possibly at nearby Prosser Creek, Captain Wambough stopped for a day to gather and bury bones of the cannibalized victims of the Donner Party tragedy, although the task had supposedly been done completely the prior summer. Rufus Burrows never forgot the grisly chores of that day at Cannibal Camp, and when he was interviewed for the 1880 mugbook history of Colusa County he referred to it but his interviewer, apparently ignorant of the Donner debacle, garbled the reference into "Cambol Camp," near Truckee. Burrows recalled seeing limbs of trees cut off high above the ground, suggesting the great depth of Sierra snow that killing winter of 1846-47 when the Donner Party died. But his memory faulted him here, for the stumps which can still occasionally be seen today in the Prosser Creek area are far from being sixty feet high, as he recalled them.

On the Forty Mile Desert between the Humboldt Sink and the Carson River, Rufus and his comrades met Mormons headed for Salt Lake City after working for Captain John Sutter. They told the newcomers about Jim Marshall's discovery of gold in Sutter's sawmill race at Coloma.

Burrows figured that he reached California in late August and that he arrived at Sutter's Fort, via Bear Creek (the Johnson Ranch, Wheatland area), on September 10, 1848. While his parents ran a hotel there, he freighted for Albert Tanner and William Fowler. When winter shut down the roads (so-called out of courtesy only) which ran to the diggings, he became a cowboy for Tanner at Sutter's Fort, herding horses and cattle. Sadly, he lost his youngest sister, Susan Ann, to "lung fever" there at New Helvetia.

Not until the spring of 1849 did Burrows become a prospector. The 15-year-old argonaut mined on Carson Creek and there witnessed the killing of Lieutenant Roderick M. Morrison by Dr. Erasmus French. The Doctor's misfiring Allen pepperbox finally cut loose and wounded the Lieutenant from K Company

of Colonel Jonathan D. Stevenson's (unruly) Regiment of New York Volunteers. Since French was the only doctor about, he had to treat his own assailant and victim. But he could not save him. After Morrison died, the Doctor was speedily tried and just as quickly acquitted of the charge of murder. The officer had attacked him with a bowie knife during an argument and the shooting was ruled to have been in self-defense.

While his parents continued to keep hotels at Ten Mile House and Green Springs, Rufus resumed his career as a teamster. On one trip, he was paid by "Judge" Lansford Hastings with a bag of gold dust. Burrows just tossed it into the wagon box, knowing that it would be safe there. No one would bother it. Such was the "lawless California frontier" as of 1849! Burrows hauled everything with his team - boots costing \$75 a pair, hay, flour, even snow from Leek Springs.

In 1850 Burrows went east to Albany, New York, taking the steamer *Panama* from San Francisco. The respite from adventuring which he was entitled to expect, however, did not come to pass. Five days out of Acapulco, cholera swept the ship and carried off many passengers. He returned to California in 1851 and became a cowhand again, herding stock near Green Springs. There, his mother died of smallpox and although Rufus had successfully dodged the cholera aboard the *Panama*, he now came down with smallpox. He recovered, thanks to the care of a man named Amos Sylvester, whom he never forgot.

When he was well again, Burrows took ship to Oregon and went to school on the Tualatin Plains west of Portland. He became an 1853 drop-out, however, when he found parsing to be less interesting than hunting. He bought some cattle and set up as a stockman in the Umpqua Valley but just in time to play host to a horde of grasshoppers which caused him to abandon his spread. Next came the outbreak of the Rogue River War in which he and two companions were besieged in a cabin. The Rogue River Indians fired on everything that moved, killing all their saddle horses, a cow and even Rufus' dog. But the three men were rescued in the nick of time by a company of volunteers.

In the spring of 1857 Burrows helped drive a herd of cattle and some horses to California, running into a war party of the Pit

River tribe on this expedition. The attackers were soon defeated and driven into the river and the drovers continued southward down the Sacramento River. Rufus Burrows kept his eyes open for a good place in which to settle and he finally found it in the Stony Creek country of Colusa County (now part of Glenn County), 100 miles north of Sacramento on the east side of the great valley, in the lee of the Coast Range. Here was rangeland galore, for the asking, enough water, wood nearby, good hunting of antelope and deer – and no mosquitoes. Burrows chose a site just northeast of the later village of Chrome and about five miles south of old Newville and beautiful African Valley, so called because two Negroes pioneered its settlement (*circa* 1854). His range came to be known as Burrows' Hollow and today's topographic maps show the road from Chrome to Newville cutting across Rocky Ridge via Burrows's Gap, above his fields.

In Colusa County, Rufus and his wife put down deep roots. The 1880 history, *Colusa County, California, Illustrated . . .* reported, "His farm is in one of the lovely valleys of the foothills of the Coast Range." There he prospered and when the *Colusa County Annual and Directory* in 1876 listed taxpayers by their wealth, Rufus was found to have a worth of \$10,440 – no mean sum in the Centennial year. Burrows lived out his life in the hollow, dying there in 1913, but he apparently considered his years as a successful Northern California farmer and sheep rancher to be too humdrum to detail in his manuscript autobiography. The account ends with his story of a deer hunt of 1858 at Black Butte.

Burrows and his family, luckily, did not figure in the depressing calendar of shooting scrapes and other violent affrays, drownings, falls from horses and wagons, *et al.*, listed for 1870-1892 in the pages of the *Colusa Sun Annual and County Directory* of New Year's Day 1893. A typical entry concerns Lett's Valley, southwest of Stonyford via Fouts Springs, named for David and Jack Lett. Both brothers were killed in 1877 while trying to oust squatters from their land. The valley was named in their honor.

Rufus Burrows' life in this period was not entirely without

incident, although he was spared a listing in the mayhem report. Renegade Indians from Round Valley or the Noma Lackee Reservation near Paskenta struck the Elk Creek and Grindstone Creek areas just south of Burrows' Hollow in 1861, stealing and killing stock and driving away the friendly Indians who worked as cowhands and shepherds for the ranchmen. Emboldened by impunity, perhaps the result of the distraction of the Civil War and the lack of troops, the Indians resumed raiding in April of 1862 and, this time, were egged on by a bellicose, big (*amazonian*) Pit River Indian squaw named Hat Creek Lize. They killed a Grindstone Creek settler, Henry Watson, for whom Watson Creek is named, and an Indian boy herding sheep for a rancher named Darling. They also butchered many head of cattle. According to pioneer George Washington Millsaps, the trouble started when a squawman beat his wife so badly that she died. Whatever the case, sparsely populated Colusa County had a small Indian war on its hands. The before-mentioned James Jackson Lett of Stonyford led a posse of fifteen men in chase of the raiders and was soon joined in the field by Rufus Burrows with an equal number of men from Newville and Paskenta. They followed the Indians 'til evening, then put up in an old cabin for the night, playing cards. (The winners of the stakes were S. W. Shannon of Round Valley and S. R. Ford.) Next day, the party continued its march, being joined by Oscar Tower of Newville, and followed the renegades up Thomes Creek and into the mountains northwest of Paskenta. Near Eagle Peak, Burrows and Lett found them encamped around two huts or *wickiups* they had built, thinking themselves safe from pursuit. A pitched battle ensued but, after an hour and a half of fighting, the redmen broke and ran. Some probably escaped, although George W. Millsaps reported all of the Indians killed except a squaw and a child who were spared and allowed to return to Tehama County. Probably some fifteen were killed, while the combined forces under Burrows and Lett lost but two men. Ironically, they were the winners of the card game of the night before. Shannon was shot through the head and killed outright. He was carried down the hill by his comrades and buried under an oak tree beside the trail. For years, his grave was marked by a picket fence but time,

the ground as dry as in a normal August. Nor did spring rains come to relieve the dry spell. Thousands of head of cattle and sheep starved to death by the fall. So disastrous was the season that it led many Colusa County settlers to diversify their ranches, adding grain-growing to stock-raising.

Of the old towns near Burrows' Hollow little is to be seen today. Chrome is just a "wide place in the road" east of the chrome mine for which it is named, and Newville is just a ranch. But, for a time, Newville was one of the county's proudest settlements. It was a center for the best wheat for milling purposes and the *Souvenir of Glenn County, California, As She Is* (c. 1897) boasted, "Every product that grows anywhere in the county grows here. The people are hard workers, energetic and contented." The little town of Newville was, indeed, an energetic and busy settlement in Burrows' day. The 1876 *Colusa County Annual and Directory* aptly termed it a "trading post" for the surrounding area, for it served the ranches and farms scattered along the foot of the Coast Range for many miles and boasted, beside the usual general merchandise store, hotel, blacksmith shop and stable, a Masonic Hall and a flourishing lodge of Good Templars.

Burrows found Stony Creek to be a curious watercourse. Rising in the Coast Range mountains forty miles south of the northern border of Glenn County, it finally made its escape from the foothills near that county line. He found it to vary from an almost bone-dry gulch in mid-summer to a raging torrent in winter, carrying tons of sand, gravel and even boulders in its grip as it hurried toward the Sacramento River - which it seldom reached except in winter and early spring. One of the few streams in California to flow north, Stony Creek is perhaps unique in that it also is a tributary to a river flowing in the opposite direction, the Sacramento, heading southward. But like Putah Creek or Nevada's pathetic little rivers, it usually vanished in a sink, its waters swallowed up by the thirsty layers of gravel forming its bed. For much of the year, it was a river without a mouth. But the trough, from an eighth of a mile to a quarter of a mile wide, with banks twelve to fifteen feet high in places, drained the entire eastern slope of the Coast Range for fifty miles.

Although hospitable to wheat, barley, orchard fruits, and vegetables in its little valleys (even peanuts were raised there by Chinese), the Stony Creek area favored wild clover and other grasses and, later, alfalfa. Thus it early became a great sheep grazing region. By 1880, Rufus Burrows was running a flock of 1,500 woolies on his land, which had grown from 160 acres and a spring (acquired in trade for a steer), into a 2,000-acre spread. He was a man of substance. He and his wife had seven children and they kept a garden and a neat little orchard with a variety of trees. Burrows was particularly proud of a fig tree measuring forty-two inches through the butt, said to be one of the largest in the state. His son Ancil continued in sheep-raising and, around 1900, after visiting Uriah S. Nye's fine flocks, he mated Cotswold rams with Merino ewes to produce a dual-purpose animal. This new sheep ran to both heavy and vigorous lambs, for meat, and had longer-staple wool than the Merino. Eventually, Ancil Burrows bred the prize-winning "Thribble Cross" from this crossbreed and a Spanish Delaine.

In the pages that follow, Rufus Burrows' narrative is complemented by the memoir of his father-in-law, Cyrus B. Hull, in the form of a two-part letter written to Hull's brother Morgan on March 26 and 28, 1875, from Newville. In it, Cyrus sketches his life from about 1837 on, when he left his birthplace (1816), Berlin, New York. He went to Illinois, married 16-year-old Nancy Shinn and settled in Warren and Pike counties as a dairy farmer before moving West. Their first surviving child was Charlotte, who married Rufus Burrows.

Hard times always plagued Hull, good man that he was. He lost his land and had to work as a carpenter, but ultimately became Coroner, Deputy Sheriff and Collector, of Pike County, Illinois, at various times. When he ran for High Sheriff as a Democrat, however, he was defeated by a Whig and decided to go West. In the spring of 1852 he headed for Oregon with his wife and six children.

The Indians were peaceful that season and the only trouble Cyrus Hull had on the early stages of the continental crossing was high water on the Wakarusa River in Kansas and the Portneuf in Idaho. But real trouble came his way between the

Snake River and the Burnt River in eastern Oregon. A rifle accident blinded Hull in one eye, placed him near death for a time, and consigned him to agony for a long period. With a shattered jaw, mouth, nose, cheek and blinded eye, he found himself 500 miles from the Willamette and with all of his oxen dead but three. Luckily, his wife, Nancy, bore up well under the strain of responsibilities, and friends in the caravan helped nurse him. Half-way to the Dalles, he suggested that they stop with the Indians but his indomitable wife was determined to get him to civilization. They pushed on. He was not up to the jolting ride over the Cascades so he sent his oxen and wagon ahead with some "friends" (and never saw hide nor hair of them again), while he took a flatboat down the Columbia. A sixteen-mile portage proved to be torture for the wounded man but, by drinking heavily of some wine which he had with him (although the *Pacific Christian's* obituary for him stated that he "became a Christian at the age of 21"), he managed to anesthetize himself enough to stay aboard an Indian pony until the tribulation was over.

Hull and the members of his family were destitute when they reached the steamboat landing. His wife even had to sell his rifle to get \$20 for the passage from the Dalles. But now, at last, Dame Fortune cracked a wan smile in his direction. When the Hulls arrived at the lower end of the Cascades, they found two rival steamboats engaged in a price-war, and one of them took the family to Portland, *gratis*. There, Cyrus was barely able to walk to the main street although assisted by two men. His wife and daughter, Charlotte, supported the family by washing and sewing while he slowly mended. Once he was able-bodied again, he set about earning a living and paying off his debts by building a barn and doing other work.

Cyrus Hull erected a log cabin and eked out an existence but could not afford a team to improve his land. Often, the Hulls had no flour to make bread and Cyrus's wife would grind a little wheat in a coffee mill and boil it into a mush for supper. An attempt at mining paid him no better than farming. As he told his brother, "I plodded along for fourteen years in that country, a'gaining but little." Finally, he followed his daughter and

son-in-law, Rufus Burrows, to California. In Colusa County, life improved greatly with abundant wheat, barley and hay crops, and a flock of sheep. If it was not a land of milk and honey, it was at least one of infinite variety. "We have every variety of soil that could be desired," he wrote, "the richest and the poorest, the stoniest and the freest of stones, and gravelly and rocky. The climate varies as much as the soil."

Misfortune returned to haunt Hull even on his Grindstone Creek place near the Indian *rancheria*. During the depression of the 1890s he lost most of his property, and his home ranch was taken over by Joseph Millsaps. His health was failing, too, for he never really recovered from the effects of the horrible gunshot wound. He died at Willows, California, after a lengthy illness, in 1905. The *Pacific Christian* of November 30 of that year praised him highly as a pioneer lay preacher.

A most striking characteristic shared by Burrows and Hull is their stubborn courage, which is even more impressive than their remarkable spirit of independence. Both the teen-ager and the bloodied family-man showed a dogged and undaunted toughness of purpose in crossing the plains and hacking out homes in a wilderness. Adversity was almost a tonic – the idea of giving up the struggle seems never to have occurred to them.

This is the grain of truth embedded in the romanticized legend of a mythical West for which only brave men and women dared to set out from the East or Midwest –: Burrows and Hull and their wives were common people, like most of the emigrants to California and Oregon in the 1840s and '50s, but they had uncommon courage. It was pioneers such as these, rather than the swaggering gunmen of Dodge City or the speculating sharks of San Francisco's captive Comstock Lode, who were the true heroes of America's frontier West.

– Richard Dillon.

THE RUFUS BURROWS NARRATIVE.

THE PLACE OF MY BIRTH was LaPort, Indiana; date April 8, 1834. From there, while [I was] still a babe, we moved to Illinois, staying there only a short time. Our next move was to Atchison County, Mo., as we then supposed, but long since I have been informed by some of my cousins that lived there and were grown up to years of manhood, that when the Government purchased the State of Iowa from the Indians the state line was run through my stepfather's ranch, where we then lived, [and it] is now covered by the town of Sidney, Fremont County, Iowa. We lived there until the fall of '47, when my stepfather sold out and we started down the Missouri River for Kansas City. On our way we passed through Savannah and St. Joseph. Our mode of travel was by ox teams. On our arrival at Kansas City, my stepfather rented a house from West Bruce. It was on the side of a steep and high hill facing the Missouri River. Here we remained until the Spring of '48.

Early in the spring of '48, my stepfather, Rufus Hitchcock, and my Uncle, Street Rice, went over to Independence, Mo., for the purpose of laying in supplies for our trip across the continent. It took us three days to accomplish this short trip, our mode of travel being by ox teams. On our return, we went to loading and preparing for our trip up the Missouri River, heading for Fort Laramie, which was to be the rendezvous of our train fitting out for California.

Some time during the latter part of April, I think, we moved out of Kansas City and arrived at Fort Laramie without mishap. Our object in coming to California was for the benefit of my mother's health. My stepfather took her down to St. Louis some time in the early days of '47, as there was some kind of a protuberance growing on the front of her neck, and she was in delicate health otherwise. After consulting with the most prominent medical authorities, they said that they could do nothing for her, but all advised him to move her to a warmer and more equitable climate, and thought perhaps she would outgrow it.

My stepfather, being engaged in the fur business, running

what they then termed a trading post, buying furs from the American and British fur companies, besides many different tribes of Indians and being very intimately acquainted with many of those old hunters and trappers such as Kit Carson, Greenwood, Lasley and a host of others of this class, was deeply impressed with their many stories of California and the Pacific Coast, and concluded to chance the trip and cross the plains to California.

After our arrival at Fort Laramie, our train was soon organized with the election of Wm. Wambo (sic) as the Captain of the train. Our train consisted of fifty-one wagons, about two hundred people all told, two hundred and fifty head of oxen to draw the wagons, and besides these, we had two or three hundred head of stock cattle and about fifty head of saddle horses.

After our arrival in California, the State government was organized and Captain Wambo was elected one of its first legislators. I think before this, he accompanied General Frémont in all of his explorations in the Sierra Nevada and Rocky Mountains, so he was qualified, being familiar with the lay of the country we had to pass over, as well as the different tribes of Indians that inhabited the country at that time. Wambo made a fine captain, and was also a fine man. If he ever had one word of trouble with anyone in the train on our long trip, I fail to bring it to mind. I will state that we never had reason to regret our long and arduous trip across the continent. My mother's health improved from the start and she stood the trip across the plains fine. When we reached the Sacramento Valley she still continued in like health until she was taken with confluent smallpox at Green Springs, El Dorado County, in the winter of 1852, which carried her off.

* * * *

Now being all ready, we pitched our camp and rolled out on our long and arduous trip for the Sacramento under the command of Captain Wambo. Old man Greenwood, a noted Indian fighter, trapper, hunter, etc., with his family, consisting of himself and four boys, John, Billy, Boggs – these three were half-Crow Indian, and Britt, a half-Spanish boy, and two girls, one I think



AN OVERNIGHT PAUSE ON THE PRAIRIE.

was a half-Crow Indian, the other half-Spanish, were in our train. Greenwood had lived among the Crows and other tribes of Indians in the Rocky Mountains for twenty-five or thirty years, and much of his life was spent in Mexico and California, so he understood the country well. We also had two others, a half-breed Cherokee Indian and a man by the name of Stone. I think these two accompanied Colonel Frémont on all his explorations.

This old road, being traveled but once a year, and not many years at that up to this early date (1848), became nearly obliterated by the winter storms before the next emigration. Having these men along with us, we experienced very little difficulty in following the route.

We traveled over the old emigrant route; crossed over both North and South Platte Rivers: passed Fort Hall, Mary's River, now known as the Humboldt River, then over the desert to Truckee River, then over the Sierra Nevada Mountains to the Sacramento Valley, arriving in California in August, 1848.

Our emigrant train had various experiences on the way to California. On account of one sick man, Mr. Huntsucker, the

train was delayed for a while. In order to get better feed for their stock, Mr. Greenwood, his family and a young man by the name of P. B. Cornwall, went on ahead of the train for one day.

The next day, after leaving the main train, this little party met five or six hundred Pawnee Indian warriors who had been out on a big buffalo hunt, and also intruding on the Sioux Indian grounds. Not knowing of the large train behind, the warriors took all Greenwood had in his wagon and let him go on. As he started, Cornwall walking behind the wagon, four or five young warriors, wanting to give him a scare, shot five arrows at him; Cornwall then stooped and picked them up, taking them along.

Greenwood, having been across the plains many times before, and knowing the country well and that there was a Sioux Indian village just a short distance ahead, and also knowing that they were at peace with the whites, went on to the Sioux village. After reaching there, Cornwall took his five arrows and went to the Sioux chief and presented them to him, the chief exclaiming, "Pawnee, Pawnee, Pawnee." Then taking the arrows he said, "When the sun goes down, we will give them their arrows back with some of our own with them," meaning an Indian battle. The old chief then gave a loud yell. All of his warriors came running to him. After a little time and a few gestures, they commenced to scatter.

Just a short while before the sun went down, those Indian warriors, braves in their war paint and many feathers, came riding up on their horses and circled about their chief. They all started back on the road to find the Pawnees. After traveling quite a distance they discovered the camp, but did not make an attack then, but waited until near the break of day, when they surrounded the Pawnee camp. A fierce battle ensued, the Sioux killing about fifty of the Pawnees and forcing the rest, about four or five hundred in number, to flee, leaving a large number of Indian ponies and a quantity of dried buffalo meat, which the Sioux took as the spoils of war. The fleeing Pawnees on the road back to the village met the main train and, on seeing it, most of them stayed back a short distance. But a few came up to the train, begging and bothering us so we could not go ahead. The Pawnees did not know that we had given them a lot of stuff as

we passed their village, so Captain Wambo said to them, "We gave you all we could when we passed through your village; and now get out of the road and let us go on, as we have a long way to go."

While this parleying was going on, a man by the name of [Alvin Waite] Stone, who was with Frémont on his expeditions in California and the Rocky Mountains [not so, but a member of Frémont's California Battalion] had seen and was talking with an Indian missionary boy who had been educated in the East but had run away from school and joined his people. Wambo, hearing the two talking, went up to them and said to the boy, "What do they want?" He replied, "We want blood." Wambo said, "What for?" The young Indian replied, "That Mormon wagon ahead sent the Sioux back and they killed fifty of our warriors, also took our ponies and a lot of buffalo meat." At this, Wambo gave orders to corral the wagons at once, then saying to the young Indian, "We are ready, come on." This was on the open prairie. Warriors backed up about three hundred yards, parleying.

The Indians only having bows and arrows, the older and wiser of them did not want to fight, but the young warriors parleyed all day, trying to get them to fight, but at last gave it up and left just as the sun went down. Our train then hurried up and started for the Sioux village, knowing that they were at peace with the whites and would afford better protection.

In the battle between the Pawnees and the Sioux, the Pawnees had scattered buffalo meat from their camp to the road, and this we gathered up. Afterwards, the Pawnees followed up the train to trade moccasins and buffalo robes, on which there were painted war scenes or horses, for tobacco or anything they could get. After trading they would come back dissatisfied and, always going to the women, wanted to trade back, saying they had not got enough for their moccasins and robes.

My mother, having been more or less around the different tribes of Indians, could talk several Indian languages, Pottowattomie, Otoe, Fox, Iowa, Sac, Wyandotte, etc. One day, a large warrior came to the train with the stuff he had traded his moccasins for and wanted to trade back. Going up to my

mother's wagon he told her he wanted to trade back. She stuck out her tongue and wiggled her two fingers, meaning that she did not talk with two tongues, and that she would not trade back. He, understanding what she meant, grabbed an arrow from his sheath and brought it down to shoot her. She reached back in the wagon and grabbed an old Allen pepperbox pistol that you could not hit the side of a barn with, and drew it on him. Admiring her bravery, the warrior said, "You are no squaw," and then turned around and walked away.

While passing Snake Indian country, we came to a dead Indian warrior lying on his buffalo robe just beside the road. Greenwood, knowing the country well, and being familiar with all the Indian nations, told us he was a warrior of the Snake tribe. His bow, quiver of arrows, war club, tommy-hawk, and scalping knife lay beside him.

The train passed on and after a few miles came down in a nice little valley. There beside a nice little stream, we found a big Snake Indian village. These Indians were at peace with the whites. We camped just one half-mile below the village. The Indians were all glad to have the train camp near them as that gave them an opportunity to trade their buffalo robes and moccasins for different articles.

Some of the men told the Indians about seeing the dead warrior and they said that they were out on a war raid when they ran on to a large rattlesnake. This Indian, saying he was possessed with a totem or [was a] medicine man and that he could remove the fangs without the snake biting him, picked up the snake and it bit him. The bite soon proved fatal. His faith failing in his Indian belief, his companions would not touch him and left him alone to go to the happy hunting grounds.

We passed an Indian grave up in an old cottonwood tree. I presume he was an Indian warrior, as all his possessions were hanging there beside his skeleton. A horse's head, war club, tommy-hawk, bow, quiver and blankets were beside him. Their belief being that he might need his horse and war outfit on the road to the happy hunting ground.

While camped at the Snake village, Captain Wambo told us we would see some sport. About eighty young Indian warriors

were going out to practice on a ridge about three quarters of a mile long near the camp. To this the Indians went, riding their ponies bareback with only a tug in their mouths to guide them. About five would start at a time and at full speed and run their ponies down the ridge, hollowing and yelling and pretending to be escaping from the enemy. But to show how cute they were in warfare, they would split, one half going on one side of the ridge and the other half on the other side, getting out of sight of the first. Then they would go back up the hollow on each side of the ridge and come in behind the other band, running and yelling, following them up to show how smart they had been. They would keep this up for hours, training their horses and themselves.

On our way – I think it was [on] the Humboldt River, [which] we had been following and [where we] had made our camp – a very sad accident happened. A man by the name of James Shields came to me and wanted to borrow my shotgun, which I told him he might have. He had seen some wild ducks on the river and as we had very little bacon with us, everyone had to get all the wild meat they could, saving the cattle to bring to California.

It was the custom to take the cattle out every evening to graze after we had made camp. This evening while the guards were watching, they saw two Piute Indians crawling through the grass. They surrounded the Indians, rushed in on them and took them captive. The guards kept them until they went to camp, giving them up to Captain Wambo. He said, "We will keep them until morning so they will not go back and inform the rest of the Indians."

In the morning, Shields came to me for the shotgun I had loaned him the evening before. He said, "I do not want any powder, but will take some shot." I gave him some shot and he started to his wagon for his bullet pouch. I went into our tent and was just sitting down to eat breakfast when we heard the report of a gun. We all rushed out of the tent to see Shields lying on his back, blood running from the center of his chin. There was also blood on the back of his head. When he went to his wagon after the bullet pouch and powder, he took hold of his loaded rifle to pull it to one side, and the hammer catching, fired the gun,

killing him instantly.

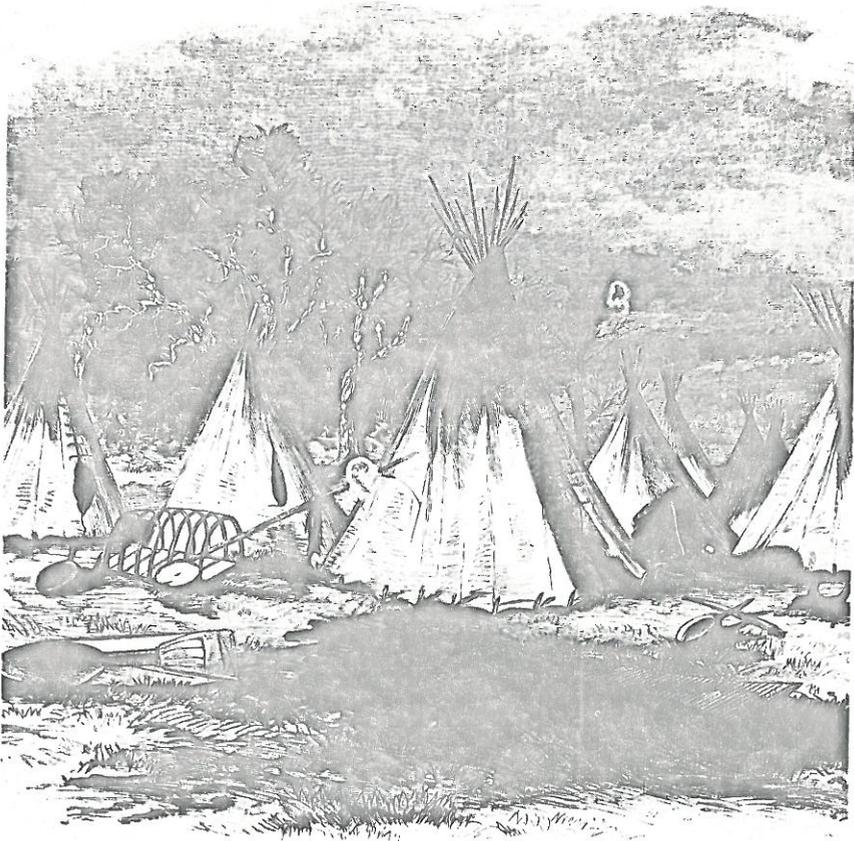
Captain Wambo, knowing it was the custom of all these different tribes of Indians to dig up the graves of all whites that were buried, to get clothing or anything else that was found, and having in mind an open grave that we had passed where the bones and hair of a woman, who had been buried the year before and dug up by these savages and left to bleach by the sun and winds, decided to circumvent the Indians in this case and let Shields's body rest in peace.

Captain Wambo took the remains of Shields in the tent, placing it in a box, not letting the two captive Indians know where it was. The body was then put in a wagon and hauled all day. The two Indians were turned loose and allowed to go to their village. When camping time came that evening, the wagons were corraled as usual, going round in a circle, but with this exception, Captain Wambo had carefully picked out a place covered with sod in the center of the circling wagon tracks, here a grave was dug and Shields was buried. In the morning when the train started it was driven several times around in a circle, passing over the grave. This was done to obliterate all signs and to keep the Indians from digging up the remains. Then we started on our way. This happened in the state of Nevada.

I rode a Pottowattamie Indian pony across the plains, given me by my friend, Old Half-Day's son. (Half-Day was the chief of the Pottowattamie nation.) One day, some of the train men discovered a herd of about 150 buffaloes, while looking through a field glass. Five men and myself started on our horses after them. I carried a big old flintlock gun and was riding my Indian pony, which had been trained by the Indians to run buffalo. The men killed one buffalo and I ran up on a point, jumped off my pony and dropped on the ground, [and] snapped my old gun, but it would not shoot. I jumped back on my pony again and started back to the train [but] had only gone a short distance when I ran on to three old buffalo bulls. My pony, being trained, ran right up to them. This was too close for me and as my pony still stayed close to them, one old bull turned on me, his hair standing on end. I at last got my pony to stop and turned him for camp. I had all the buffalo chasing that day that I wanted.

When we got to South Platte, some of the boys and I went out hunting jack rabbits. We were about one-quarter of a mile from camp when we ran on to an old buffalo bull traveling. We all got ready and shot at him with our shotguns, and started him in a lope. The men that were in camp saw that the buffalo was getting away, so they jumped on their horses and soon overtook and killed him.

On the way we came to Donner Camp at the foot of the summit of the Sierra Nevada mountains. Two cabins had been built late in the fall of 1847 [really the winter of 1846] by this party. We laid over here one day in order to gather up and bury the bones and skeletons of the people that had perished in the winter before. We could see where they had cut off limbs of trees sixty feet high for fuel, this showing that the snow had



IN AN INDIAN VILLAGE ON THE PLAINS.

been sixty feet deep, otherwise these limbs would never have been cut so high.

On the desert between the sink of Humboldt and Truckee rivers, we met a company of Mormons returning to Salt Lake. They told us of the discovery of gold by Marshall at Coloma, El Dorado County on the American River, while building a mill race for Sutter.

We passed over the mountain and soon arrived in the Sacramento Valley, near Bear Creek, where Wheatland now stands. From here we went to Sutter's Fort, arriving on September 10, 1848. My stepfather, Rufus Hitchcock, and my mother kept hotel here all winter. The first thing I did was to hire out to Fowler and Tanner, who were hauling freight to the mines with oxen. They had control of all the freight business at this time. I worked three yoke of oxen for a short time, hauling principally to Coloma. Then Tanner put me to herding horses and cattle for the balance of the winter.

In the spring of 1849 I started to go to the Stanislaus River. We stopped on Carson Creek and worked two days mining, [then] heard of great gold discoveries on the Mariposa River [and] we all started for this place and, in crossing the Stanislaus River one of our horses was drowned. We went on, but when we reached the Mariposa River, we found it so high that we did not attempt to cross, so we returned to Carson Creek after being gone a week. On our return I found my youngest sister, Susan Ann, very sick with lung fever. She only lived a few days, then died.

While at Carson Creek, I saw the only man killed that I ever saw in my life. Dr. Erasmus French was on his horse, waiting for some medicine that he had ordered from the storekeeper; Lieut. [Roderick M.] Morrison, under Jonathan Drake Stevenson, also was on horseback. He and Dr. French had never met before. The lieutenant asked the doctor a question and he gave him a very short answer, he having a very quick temper. The lieutenant, having a hot temper himself, a fight soon started.

Lieutenant Morrison jerked out a long bowie knife and Dr. French drew an old Allen pepperbox pistol. They came together with their horses, the Dr. snapping the old pepperbox until all

of the loads had been snapped, the lieutenant meanwhile striking with his knife and the doctor guarding the licks off with his pistol. The doctor, after snapping his pistol the sixth time, whirled his horse around and started to ride away. On doing this, he pointed the pistol behind him and pulled the trigger. The pistol went off and, looking around, I saw the lieutenant leaning forward in his seat and finally falling from the saddle. It was necessary to call in a doctor and as Dr. French was the only one to be had, he went in and stopped the flow of blood, but said that Lieut. Morrison would die, as he had received a fatal wound. His words proved to be true, as the Lieutenant only lived a short while. Dr. French had his trial that same evening and was acquitted.

From Carson Creek we went back to Sutter's Fort to bury my sister. After the funeral we moved to the Ten Mile House on the American River. This was ten miles from Sacramento but at that time not even a little town was there. My mother and stepfather kept hotel for a short time at the Ten Mile House, then bought the Green Springs in El Dorado County. While in this place, I made a trip with seven others for Tanner and Fowler, all having ox teams with the exception of Tanner, who was with us, he having horses.

Loaded with freight, it took us seventeen days to make the fifty-mile trip. When we got near Coloma, Tanner went ahead with his team of horses and stayed in town. The other six boys and I camped before we reached the town. Tanner gave us strict orders to get up early in the morning and start on before breakfast.

When we reached the little mining town, we started a camp fire to cook our breakfast. Tanner seeing us, came and said, "None of that, boys," and pointed to a cabin on the hill, said, "Go up there and get your breakfast. That is a hotel and there is a live woman up there." We took him at his word and went, not so much for the meal but to see the woman, for they were pretty scarce in those days in the mines. Tanner came with us and talked with the landlord while we were eating. After we had finished our breakfast, Tanner said he wanted the bill, and the landlord replied, \$48.00.