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OVERLAND JOURNEY TO CALIFORNIA

Written by Mrs. James Caples May 1911

After the discovery of gold by Marshall in 1848, my husband and brother with myself and infant child, joined the mad rush over land to California with an oxteam, as it was thought at the time, that horses could not stand the trip.

The twenty-first of March, we crossed the Mississippi at Warsaw, Illinois, eight miles from our home, where my father had settled in 1833, coming from Kentucky eighteen months after the Black Hawk War.

We traveled leisurely through Iowa and Missouri, arrived at the Missouri river, ten miles above St. Joseph, crossed over and the 21st of April looked our last on civilization and took up our line of march with hundreds of others, over an almost trackless inhospitable country, infested with hostile Indians, but our numbers were so great, there was but little danger, as fifty out of a hundred had left their families at home - all young stalwart men - more or less used to frontier life, and armed to the teeth, those from the East, having gone by Isthmus, or around Cape Horn.

The first little trouble we had with the Indians, was at Little Blue. There a large company had built a rough bridge, passed over and on, leaving the bridge for the accommodation of those behind.

The Indians the "Sox" and "Iowas" were disposed to be friendly, but incited no doubt, by white renegades, took possession, and demanded toll. We found as we drove up, about one hundred men parleying with them. My husband who was Captain of our small company, was asked to join them, so he went forward, saw the Indians lined on either side with rifles in their hands, tommyhawks loosened, and looking deter-

mined, so he advised the emigrants to pay toll and have no trouble, which they did, concluding with my husband that "discretion was the better part of valor." I was greatly relieved; they were the first Indians I had ever seen, and to my frightened vision, dressed in their long macinaw blankets, with eagle feathers in their hair, they looked ten feet high,- my thought was that they would kill us all, and take my baby in captivity.

We then drove on, through a beautiful level country, which is now the state of Kansas, until we arrived at the Platte River, which we followed up about three hundred miles, suffering great inconvenience for want of fuel, not one stick of timber, nothing but green willows with an occasional dead one, to cook with,- except when we had a few days of dry weather we would collect buffalo chips, and make a glorious bonfire,- after about six weeks travel up the river, we had to cross over, which we did by fording it - a slow sluggish stream, a half a mile wide, and from three to four feet deep, not dangerous, except for the quicksand, which forced us to keep moving constantly. There we encountered about one thousand Indians, the "Sous"; they were the best equipped tribe, that we saw on the whole route, with arms and horses. They demanded tribute for passing through their country, so much sugar and coffee, from each wagon, but we numbered now about three hundred wagons and from two to three men to the wagon so we refused, but took the precaution on the other side of the river, to order every man under arms to drill, and march and fire platoons, drove our wagons in the form of a corral, placed double guards and the stock was driven into this enclosure, it was no doubt the plan of the Indians to stampede the cattle, and we

would have been at their mercy; there was every evidence on this occasion as well that the Indians were incited by renegade frenchmen.

We drove on the next day, without further trouble, in about two hundred miles we came to the north fork of the Platte, where we found a temporary ferry, a raft of logs, kept in place by a cable, stretched across the river; this was the only ferry or boat we had the entire distance from the Missouri river to Hangtown. When we arrived at Green river, a deep turbulent stream about as large as the Sacramento, we unloaded our wagons, calked the beds with cloth, made cars of small saplings flattened at one end, with an ax; the water was ice cold, and running very swift which made it a most dangerous undertaking. We took the wheels off and ferried them over and then the running gears, and our goods. We then swam our cattle over and drove on to Webber river, there we made a raft crossed over and passed down Echo Canyon, a magnificent piece of scenery, the perpendicular walls from about seven hundred to fifteen hundred feet high, the road running along at the foot of the canyon, on the bank of the Webber river, a small stream that carries the water into Salt Lake City for irrigating purposes.

As we emerged from the canyon a magnificent view burst upon our sight, Salt Lake City lying peacefully in the sun. The houses were built altogether of adobe, and one story high, the Mormons having arrived there in '48 coming by a somewhat different route. We were acquainted with many of them, they having been driven from our country in Illinois. After a few days of rest for ourselves and cattle, we drove on to Bear river, where we camped, and the next day was one of the greatest suffering that we had on the whole route; we had been provided with a guide book, which so far had been reliable, it told