

Life and Adventures

5 I was born in Henry County, Indiana, September the 15th, 1836.

In 1843, father moved from there to Marion County and settled on Little Eagle Creek, about ten miles northwest of Indianapolis. There I spent the earliest days that I can remember. I was sitting in the shade of that old beechtree that stood at the foot of the hill, with my little dark-eyed companion by my side.

How happily the hours passed away! Time rolled on and my little friend took sick. She lay in her little bed two weeks, then bade us all good-bye and passed over the dark river. That was a sad blow to me, for I had lost the best friend of my childhood.

In the fall of 1850, father rented his farm, intending to visit my brothers, who lived in Platte County, Missouri. He soon had the team and wagon ready, and one bright morning in September, father, mother, brother and I started on our long road to Missouri.

6 Nothing of interest transpired that I can remember, until one evening, just before we reached a little stream in Illinois, we saw a gang of wild turkeys fly up from the side of the road and alight in a little grove about two hundred yards from the creek, where we camped for the night.

The next morning before daylight I took my gun, and my brother and I started for the grove where we had seen the turkeys alight the evening before. When we reached the grove we stopped under a big tree and waited for daylight so we could see where the turkeys were sitting. While looking up into the tree under which we were standing, we saw something on a limb about fifty feet above our heads, but it was not light enough to see what it was. I thought it might be a turkey. It was almost directly over our heads. I shot and it fell within six feet of where we stood.

To our surprise, it was a big fat turkey. A prouder boy never stood with a gun in his hand than I was while looking at the turkey lying at my feet.

7 After daylight I shot several times at the turkeys in the trees, and each time I shot the feathers flew, but they always carried off the bird. At last I got tired and gave it up, and we started back to our camp with our turkey. We sat down to rest awhile under a big oak tree, where the ground was covered with acorns. I laid my gun on the ground and sat down with my back against the tree. The gun was lying on the ground to my left. After we had rested awhile I turned over on my left side and reached for my gun. I could just reach the muzzle of it. Taking hold of the muzzle I pulled it towards me, when it went off. I jumped to my feet for I thought the bullet had gone through my body. While I was feeling of my legs to see if the bullet had gone through them, I looked down and saw spots of blood on my shirt bosom. Then I saw I had lost one joint of one of my fingers of my right hand. When we got to camp mother saw the blood on my hand and wanted to know what the matter was. I told her what had happened, but said: "That is nothing, see the fine turkey I have killed."

In due time we reached my brother's house in Platte County, about six miles south of Platte City. I had a nice time visiting my brothers' that winter, but in the spring my brothers got at my father to sell his farm in Indiana, and live in Missouri with them. It was midsummer when I heard the sad news. I thought my heart would break for I wanted to go back to our dear old home again. The thought of leaving

the dear old place where I had spent so many happy days was a sad thought to me. With tears in my eyes, I went to my father and told him how I longed to go back to the old place, and begged him not to sell. I told him if he sold his farm and let my brothers have the money I would go to Oregon in the spring, if I could get a chance.

In the fall of 1851 he sold out, and early in the spring of 1852 I got acquainted with Zura Duncan and his brother. They were fixing to start to Oregon as soon as spring opened up and the grass began to grow. I coaxed Mr. Duncan to let me go with him. Riley Duncan wanted a boy, so my baby brother went with him.

8 They had everything ready to start the 18th of April. About two weeks before we started I went down to where my father and mother were living with one of my brothers to bid them goodbye. When I told them I was going, and had come to say a long farewell. They followed me to the gate and when I turned around and took them by their hands my eyes were full of tears. I kissed them, sobbed goodbye and turned and walked away. Little did I think that I had looked on their loving faces for the last time. Oh, if I had laid them in their silent graves, I could not have felt worse than I did when I left them at the gate crying to God to protect me while traveling to that far off land. I had never been away from home two weeks before, but I knew it would be years before I would see them again. That bright morning in April I had looked on their loving faces for the last time unless I see them beyond the dark river of Death, which I intend to do with the help of Him who does all things well.

9 On the 18th of April, we left Mr. Duncan's place, which is about three miles north of Camden Point, and on the 20th of April, we crossed the Missouri river on a flat-boat. We could take but one wagon at a time on the boat. There were twelve wagons in our company, each wagon drawn by from three to four yoke of oxen. In addition to those we had about seventy-five head of loose cattle.

When we got all our things across the river, we hitched up our teams and drove about three miles from the Fort, and encamped for the night on a little stream. Several of our old friends and neighbors who had helped us across the river, came and camped with us over night. The next morning, after we had hitched up, they shook hands with us and bade us God speed while on our journey across the plains.

After we left the little creek, we saw no more signs of civilization till we reached Fort Kearney, on Platte river.

The next place of any note that I can remember was Ash Hollow, on the Platte river, where Gen. Kearney killed so many Indians a few years before, and here we camped for the night.

10 The next night we camped on the river, and to our left about two hundred yards was a little grove of ash trees, where, about two weeks before, the Indians tied a young man about seventeen years of age to one of the trees and skinned him alive. He belonged to a family that came from Illinois and was going to California. The boy had sworn that he would kill the first Indian he saw, and just before they camped for the night he saw an old squaw sitting by the side of the road, and took his gun out of the wagon and shot her dead. They had not been camped more than half an hour when about two hundred Sioux warriors came riding up the river towards the camp, and seeing the old squaw lying beside the road, they stopped four or five minutes and then galloped up to the camp. There were eight wagons in the train. As soon as the Indians came up they asked who had killed the squaw, but no one would tell. At last the Indians told them if they did not tell who had shot her they would massacre the whole train. Then the captain pointed out the boy who had shot the squaw. As

soon as he was pointed out the chief ordered two of the warriors to take the boy. The boy ran and jumped into the wagon where his mother and sister were sitting, and calling for his father to save him, crawled under the blankets. The Indians jumped into the wagon and pulled him out by the heels, while his mother and sister cried as if their hearts were breaking. They took him to that little grove and treated him as already described in sight of the whole camp. The wild screams of the boy as they tore the skin from his body was more than his mother could stand
 11 and she fainted. There was not an eye in the camp but what was filled with tears as those people listened to the wild despairing cries of the poor boy. It last about half an hour, then all was still and his friends went to the spot and cut him loose from the tree and buried him at the end of the little grove. A sad ending to a young life.

Not a day passed, after we left Ash Hollow, but we saw from one to five graves along the side of the road as we traveled up the Platte river.

I well remember the night we camped opposite the Chimney Rock. It was standing at the foot of the hills about five miles south of the old emigrant road. That evening two young men drove up within a hundred yards of our camp and stopped for the night. I went over to their camp. One of the men was sick and died that night. I learned that there were four of them that had bought the team together and had started across the plains. Two of them had died before they reached this place. The next morning the young man buried his dead friend and with a sad heart he started back home. What became of him I do not know.

We crossed the North Platte near a craggy point of the hills, about two miles below Fort Laramie. After crossing over the hills we came to Sweet Water, a little stream where thousands of men, women and children that had started for the gold fields of California and Oregon have been laid to rest. For weeks and weeks we traveled up that little stream before we reached the foot of the Rocky Mountains.

12 Near the foot of the mountains we came to where a man kept a small trading post. Mr. Duncan bought a small brindle cow of him which we drove along with the train for several days. At last she got sullen and lay down and the only way we could get her up was to get off our horses and get in front of her; then she would jump up and take after us. As soon as we would get on our horses she would stop and then we could drive her several miles before she would lie down again. She kept this up for several days. One day one of the boys and I were driving her along behind the train. We were ascending a long hill and had nearly reached the summit when she laid down. Looking back I saw two men coming up the hill on foot, and further back was a wagon drawn by four yokes of oxen. The men soon overtook us and said: "Is your cow sick?" "No," said I, "she is only tired." Will you please kick her in the head and make her get up." One of the men stepped around in front of her and raised his foot. When she saw him raise his foot she jumped up and ran after him. He made for the wagon which was about one hundred yards away, and the race which followed was one of the most exciting I ever witnessed. The cow was about three feet behind when the man jumped into the wagon. A woman was sitting in the front end of the wagon. She laughed heartily when the man jumped into it. At last he raised his head above the wagon box and commenced to "te he" and we all roared with laughter. "Look yonder," said he, pointing off to one side of the road, "I think he is as badly frightened as I was, for he
 13 is still running." That night Mr. Duncan had the cow shot. He was afraid she might hurt some one.

We hardly knew when we reached the top of the mountains, for it seemed to me to be almost as level as the plains we had crossed. For miles and miles no elevations

were visible except a few little hills. But in several places at the head of some little gulch we saw great piles of snow with wild flowers blooming not three feet away.

We got across the Rockies all right and went down on Bear river and camped one night at Soda Springs.