

The original of this account, written by Anton Ewers in 1856, is in long hand in a small book. In 1930 the book was in the possession of his son, Joseph C. Ewers.

In April 1854, now almost three years ago, I and two of my friends set out for California. We were full of courage to undertake such a weary, long and dangerous journey. Thirst after wealth drove us, and in the best hope to find a treasure of gold in that region, which was so famous in that time. We did hear every day some news about California, and many of all United States traveled in crowds to gather the precious metal. We left Cincinnati on the 5th of April and took railroad through Indiana and Illinois. This part of our journey we performed in few days, but now in Iowa we had a more troublesome time. Railroads are not there, nothing but very bad roads over rocks and hills, and through endless forests.

We resolved to buy horses for our journey, and we soon succeeded in finding three old horses, as we thought to be fit only to carry us to California, my old chap cost only \$18., and was not the worst of them. It was black colored, a large kind and very lean and lazy. We had only a blanket to sit on it, and we let the horses run in the woods, to seek food for themselves, when we stopped, and during night. Sometimes they had plenty grass, other times scarcely any. We soon came in the Missouri territory, and sometimes could not find, after a troublesome days journey, any Inn or lodging house, so that we were obliged to sleep under trees. We carried some food with us, and sometimes needed it much. If we did find a cottage on the wayside at eventide, we made use of it, to ask Indians for the necessities of life. We could not understand the people, and were afraid that they would steal everything from us. In one evening it happened as we were in the dwelling of an Indian, two stout fellows and a boy entered. As it was dark, and they spoke secretly for a long while with our Indian, then they examined and looked at everything we had. But at last they went silently away, to our great joy. Nevertheless we could not sleep the whole night, and had our guns by our side, while we lay down upon straw. We took our route along the North Fork river and the Sweetwater river, and sometimes had to cross brooks and little rivers without bridges, so that we were in danger of drowning. After six weeks travel, we came to the South pass through the Rocky Mountains. Here the lofty mountains, tops covered with snow, reached on both sides many hundred feet towards. Soon after we came upon the Great Salt lake in the Utah territory. A vast region covered with forests and inhabited by savages, who lived by hunting after buffalo. We could find scarcely a man to speak with, the days became hot and the roads so bad and so hard to find, that we could not go many miles in a day. The Almighty had protected us against the attacks of the wild Indians, who have so many others plundered, wounded or killed that were passing this route. Five weeks were we on the road to cross the Utah territory. One of our horses died, and for three weeks we had only the use of two horses, for three men. Afterwards as we came on the mountains that separated Utah from California, we let run the two horses in the woods,



perhaps they may be yet alive. We had then to carry everything we had, on our backs, and to cross this with great trouble and danger these mountains, we had to climb over steep rocks with much difficulties, and it took three days until we came on the opposite side.

Now we were in California after an elapse of three months traveling, in that land of our desires, that made us travel more than 5000 miles, inspite of all dangers and difficulties. We went through several towns and valleys which had been mostly settled by those, who the last years had arrived from all parts of the world, to seek gold. We were in the Sacramento city, and thus in the heart of California, but we did not find any gold. Many poor people with ragged clothes beg us for alms, and we find out at last that great many, who in the same purpose had come thither were poor and in a miserable situation. That they had to labor hard for their support, and if they could, they would return to their former home. We could not find a good opportunity to earn money, and most everything did show us, that we were deceived. We had already spent much money for our journey, and only enough to turn back. It was already in August, when a good occasion for our return came. One Ship lay for anchor in the bay of Saint Francisco, to sail to Panama in the Isthmus of Darien. We were glad that we on the 10th of August could go on board towards home. The other way by land was too weary and troublesome, and the winter reaches us too soon as to come safe home. The Steamer brought us in ten days to Panama. We crossed the Isthmus by railroad, and had longer to wait than eight days for a Ship that would sail for New Orleans. In the beginning of September as we were in the Gulf of Mexico a violent storm arose and a tempest, that we were nearly on the point of perishing all at once. Three days and three nights the storm continued, and the waves rose as mountains, and threatened to swallow the Ship. We lost one mast of the Ship, and came at last safely to New Orleans, after a fearful and dangerous voyage. As soon as possible we went on a Steamboat on the Mississippi for Cincinnati, and in nine days we reached it. We were glad to see our friends and relations again, and could much relate on account over our mischievous and dangerous journey, to the gold region of California. And I thank God that he had protected us until to this day, and that I only have lost nine months of time, and a good purse of money. And I am sure, that I never again will try to fetch gold from California.

All went well until we reached the Atlantic side of the Isthmus and had purchased our tickets for the last leg of our homeward journey, by steamer to Spain and I to Dubuque. To my amusement, just a few hours before the day of sailing, I discovered that I had been deceived. All my friends, though my traveling companions were the only persons in the company who knew of the treasure I carried, I had no suspicion of them. However, they asked to be allowed to see it officially before sailing. I remained for the next night in the hope that the culprits might be apprehended and I remain my



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[purposely omitted from Platt's Riv. Road Narrative]

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