

# NUGGETS FROM '49

AN ACCOUNT OF PIKE COUNTY MEN  
IN THE GOLD RUSH

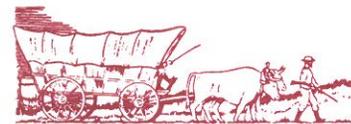
Condensed From The Diary of  
JAMES M. DAIGH

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YE GALLEON PRESS  
Fairfield, Washington



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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Daigh, James M.

"Nuggets from '49"

Reprint.

Includes index.

1. West (U.S.)—Description and travel—1848-1860. 2. Overland journeys to the Pacific. 3. California—Gold discoveries. 4. Daigh, James M.—Journeys—West (U.S.) I. Hannant, Owen. II. Title. III. Title: Nuggets from forty-nine.

F593.D14

1985

978'.02

85-22626

ISBN 0-87770-364-7

CHAPTER I

HERE I AM, HERDING LIVESTOCK ON ONE of California's wild mountainsides. The wanderlust and a consuming desire for luxuries has carried me to the edge of God's Earth. I try to pretend now that I made this trip solely to better my family's lot but I know that isn't true. For a man of my age and responsibilities I was fired with too much eagerness and enthusiasm, letting romance mingle with reason, seeing in this trip a glamorous adventure, a trek across a mighty continent to California's gold.

I started my journey from Perry, Illinois about the tenth of April, in company with Richard T. Phillips and Abram Whitaker. We were delayed a few hours at Naples awaiting the steamboat *Connecticut*, which carried us to St. Louis. This gave us ample time to bid our friends, there, goodbye and to receive their well-wishes. It was with sincere reluctance that I left this river metropolis, being more affected with loneliness at this time than when I left Virginia years before.

From St. Louis the *Embassy* carried us upriver to St. Joseph. She was loaded far beyond capacity and the trip was very unpleasant. Men and dogs literally fought and shoved for standing space among the cattle, horses and mules. There were fully four hundred passengers on board, a rough hilarious lot, who cared little for sleep.

However on the morning of the twelfth a young Virginian, named Thomas Washington, died of cholera and was buried, by his comrades, atop a high bluff about

five miles below Jefferson City. This incident cast a solemn gloom over all aboard. Cards and bowie knives were hastily discarded and bibles blossomed out in great profusion. Sadly enough this religious zeal soon abated when it became apparent that no new cases of the disease were going to develop.

When we arrived at St. Joseph we put most of our goods in storage there and then proceeded out of the city to set up our camp. Here we waited impatiently more than a week for the arrival of our teams which were being driven overland. During the forepart of the week there was a fresh outbreak of cholera and several persons died from its ravages. In fact, it so dispirited some of the emigrants that they returned home and a great many more would have followed suit had it not been for their pride which alone subdued their fear.

Our teams arrived on the evening of April the twenty-fifth. Early the next morning we departed for St. Joseph, where we loaded our goods and headed north. We encamped that night on land belonging to a Mrs. Chenoweth, a widow. Being an Aunt to some in our company, she kindly invited us all to supper. We remained in this camp for several days.

Eventually, on the morning of May the First, we moved up to the Savannah Landing, expecting to be ferried over at once since the ferryman had procured a second boat. However it was overloaded with stock cattle on the second trip and sank when in the middle of the stream. Such a chaotic scene as then ensued I hope never to witness again. The water boiled as frantic men and frightened cattle thrashed it turbently in an effort to persevere. Finally the cattle swam for shore and all made it safely. This

allowed the boat to rise just high enough to furnish the men a precarious refuge on the railing. With the remaining boat we managed to overtake the runaway about two miles down stream and rescue the five men. They were so chilled from their dousing that only two could stand without our assistance.

Intending to ferry into the night we took three yoke of oxen to the opposite shore, leaving Joseph V. Jones and Thomas A. Neel to guard them in the growing dusk. But before we could load again the frown of ominous clouds blackened the eventide sky. Safety demanded that we deviate our plans. This forced our two men, on the other bank, to shift for themselves, not even possessing a blanket to turn the rain which came with the night. You can well imagine the wrathful greeting we received next morning from these two unfortunate rain-bedraggled comrades.

After ferrying the rest of the company we camped for a few days, awaiting other teams which we hoped to organize with us. While there, one of our men, Mr. Abner Allen, decided to return home. He felt that with so many making the trip across the plains, some were bound to die and even though we should all safely reach California there would be such a multitude ahead of us there that we could not hope to do well. While many of us felt that his was a prudent decision, having started we were resolved to see the thing through. I accompanied Mr. Allen as far as St. Joseph where our ways diverged, his back to the comfort and security of home and mine perhaps to a perilous and futile search for gold.





## CHAPTER II



OUR FIRST DAY FROM SAVANNAH LANDING carried us over a rough country to Mosquito Creek, a distance of only ten miles. At the ford and immediately on the bank of this stream we discovered a dead Indian laid up in the burial fashion of many of the tribes. The body was lying in a trough, hollowed out from a log and lashed up in the fork of a tree about twenty feet from the ground. The corpse was that of a child and apparently had lain there about two years.

The remainder of our company came into camp on the seventh of May and we called a meeting to elect officers. Elsworth Owesley of Lewis County, Missouri was chosen Captain, James M. Daigh (myself), first lieutenant and Phillip Agee, first sergeant. P.N. Haycraft was chosen chaplain and six councilmen were also elected.

The company was composed of thirty-six wagons. Eight were from Pike County, Illinois, one from Indiana and most of the others from Lewis County, Missouri.

Next day, on the eighth, five of our Illinois teams withdrew from the train, declaring it too large. Those who severed from us were the Chambersburg Company and Allen and Griswolds. That evening we passed the Indian Agency and camped on Agency Creek. Here beneath a large tree was the grave of a Dr. Small from New York who had died on the day before at the age of twenty-five.

On the morning of May the twelfth John Chenoweth killed a fine turkey to supply us with a splendid breakfast. About seven o'clock we resumed our march, driving hard for three miles to Nimehaw Creek. We crossed the ford

there with little difficulty, leaving many teams behind. A short distance from this crossing was another fresh grave. From the headboard we found it to be that of Dr. Don Ferdinand Sims of Louisiana who had died on the eighth of May.

Having taken two short cuts in as many days we arrived at the Big Blue to find ourselves heading fifty wagons which we formerly followed. On the bank of this beautiful stream and near the easily crossed ford was another fresh grave but the inscription was illegible.

Leaving Big Blue we come to Independence Road in about two miles. Independence, Missouri is the starting point and general rendezvous for most of the emigrants. It is situated about six miles from the Missouri River and on the south side of it. This too, for many years, has been the principal outfitting point for the Santa Fe traders and contains about two thousand inhabitants.

After traveling over beautiful prairie for almost five miles, where wood and water were sufficient for camps, we come to almost unbroken prairie for approximately fifteen miles. Here, looking back over the route, we were treated to an impressive spectacle. With their white sheets billowing in the breeze, an endless armada of wagons trailed us. Never were there less than a hundred and fifty in sight. It was on this stretch that we passed the grave of B.F. Adams of Ohio who had died on the ninth of May at the age of twenty-three years.

After a great deal of difficulty we forded the Vermillion and in a short time come to high rolling prairie intersected with numerous small streams adequately fringed with timber to make good camps. On the sixteenth we passed the grave of Sloan MacMillion of Louisville,

Kentucky. He died at the age of twenty-six when the mules he drove ran away and pulled the wagon over him.

The small son of G.W. Wamack fell from his horse shortly before we arrived at the Little Blue and fractured his arm. Our men, there, managed to catch enough fish to furnish our supper and also our breakfast next morning.

After driving over the prairies for some time we again come to the Big Blue on the eighteenth and traveled near it all day. The bottom was dry and sandy, the grass, very short. A few cottonwoods grew along the river banks and stunted burr oaks grew at the mouths of the many small streams which emptied into it. Soon after pulling onto the bottom we had a dandy chase after a Pawnee Rabbit but it finally eluded us. They are quite abundant and in color and conformity are about the same as our own cottontails but about twice as large, with ears fully seven inches long. They run with the speed of the wind and can stir up about as much dust.

We traveled in sight of several trains on the nineteenth and from notices left on the trees we knew that many wagons had passed during the previous three days. Messages are stuck up in various places at all crossings to inform following trains of the progress and difficulties of the preceding caravans. Even the buffalo skulls are utilized for such purposes. Messages, names and dates are written on them in pencil, and left by the side of the road.

On May the twentieth we had the pleasure of hearing a very good sermon delivered in our tent by the Reverend Mr. Haycraft, a Baptist preacher from Lewis County, Missouri. He took his text from the thirty-fifth chapter and eighth verse of the prophecy of Isaiah. It was delivered in an able and sincere manner and was attentively listened to

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by the three women and most of the men of our train.

Sunday night it turned very cold and by morning it was like November. Having no fuel for fires and only weeds to cook with, we did not linger long for breakfast but hastened to hook up in an attempt to warm our chilled bodies. In about three miles we come to the Platte River. Immediately on the bank of this stream a man by name of David Harris had been buried only a few days before.

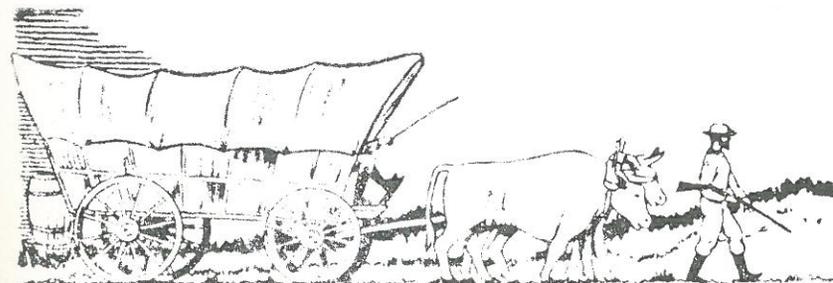
About noon, on the twenty-third of May, we passed Fort Childs. It was a sorry looking place made up of a few sod huts, perhaps twenty, grouped together like a bunch of prairie dog holes. Sod had been thrown up for the walls, poles laid across and then more sod thrown over the poles to serve the purpose of roofs. A few goods were left there for sale by some traders. Approximately sixteen hundred wagons had passed the fort ahead of us.

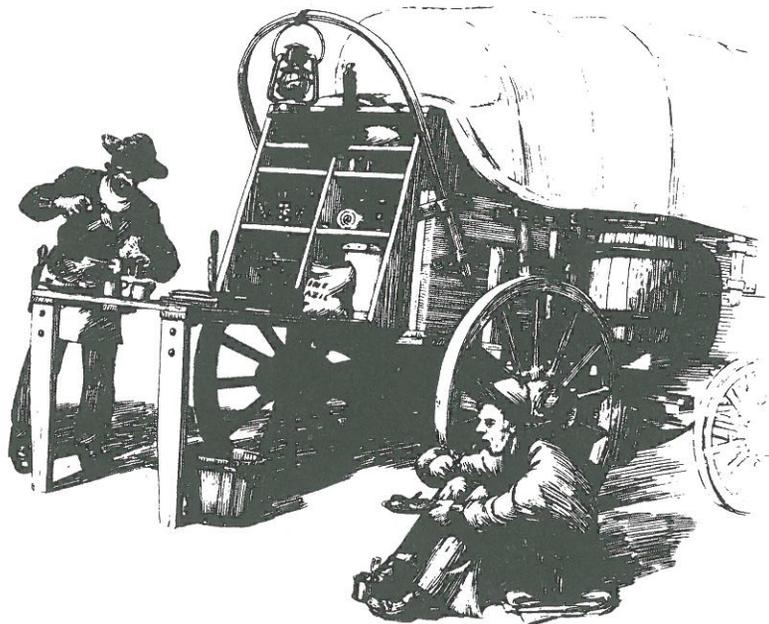
As evening drew near next day, it began to rain and we were forced to camp on open prairie without a stick of fuel. The fury of the storm increased with darkness and to such proportions that it became absolutely necessary for us to grasp our tent with our hands and hold it to the ground by sheer force of our united strength. By morning most of the tents were down and our camp was a miserable sight. Men, shivering and wet, were gathered in groups, unhappily surveying the destruction around them. The cattle and horses were scattered for miles over the muddy prairie.

Such atmospheres breed disentions and our case proved to be no exception. Indeed with such a large company we had been fortunate not to have had a disruption before. As it were, after assembling our animals once more, a part of the company wished to remain in

camp while the others desired to move on. A quarrel resulted and finally a vote was taken. The great majority signified their desire to move on but the Captain, who wished to remain, still would not give the order to march. Hasty words were spoken and the Captain angrily announced that those who wished might move on and leave the others behind with him. Only a few wagons remained behind, the wagon-master being the only officer loyal to the Captain. These remaining wagons, including the Captain, soon followed in our rear. At noon he overtook us and persuaded about half the company, including all the families, to remain with him and organize a separate company.

We called our half of the company together and proceeded to adopt a new constitution and elected the following officers: William O. Briscoe, Captain; James M. Daigh, wagon-master; T.T. Haycraft, assistant wagon-master, and Phillip Stoner, first sergeant. We also elected three assistant sergeants and four corporals.





## CHAPTER III

**U**PON LEAVING CAMP ON THE TWENTY-ninth we soon left the river behind. The rugged hills on our left gradually disappeared and we traveled all day over a beautiful prairie thickly set with a short curly grass that reminded me of closely cropped pastures at home.

With the coming of night the wind changed from south to north and blew violently, tipping the clouds and plunging their waters down upon us in sheets. Practically every tent in camp was laid flat and almost everything was saturated by the rain, even the bed-clothes.

The violence of the storm stampeded our cattle again and they made for the distant low bluffs. As soon as it was light enough a number of us started in pursuit. We overtook some of them in about five miles; others were as much as twelve miles from camp. I was driving in twenty head when I met others of our company with a similar drove, moving directly away from camp. It was hard to convince them of their error but finally they turned their animals in with mine and we herded them back together.

When darkness came the storm was still raging and, as we had no fuel, we broke up boxes and kegs and even used our bacon to kindle fires to cook with. Three of our hunters had given chase to some buffalo on the preceding day and had pursued them so far as to be unable to return to camp by dark and were forced to lay out on the plain without shelter. The storm gave them a merciless beating and the wind blew intensely cold. Even though they had killed one

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buffalo they were unable to bring any of it back. In fact one of their horses failed completely and one man was compelled to throw away his gun.

When we had it, our cooks prepared great batches of meat and we dispatched it in a manner that I know would have disgusted anyone unfamiliar to life on the plains. We had but few knick-knacks and our appetites were ferocious. We did ample justice to anything that came to hand and though we never saw the necessity, I am quite sure we could have done right well by either mule or dog.

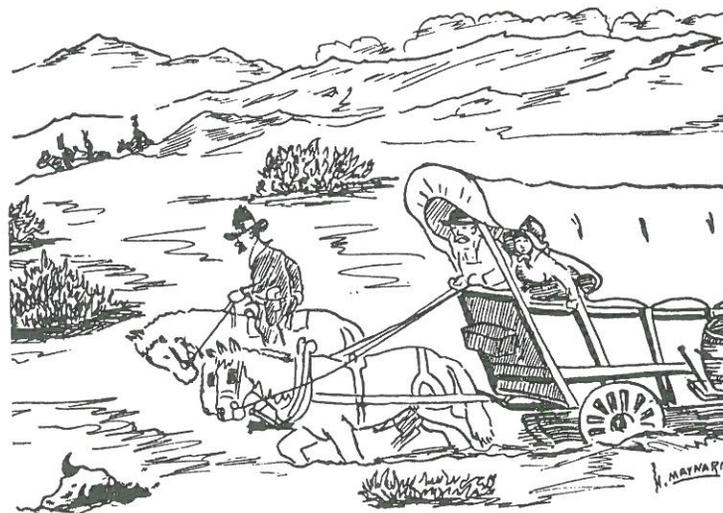
The Platte bottom probably will never have any great agricultural value. It seems to me that the All-Wise Creator has in that almost boundless prairie wisely provided the Indian and buffalo a retreat, where for many years to come, they may roam unmolested, except on the main highways

While winding our way through Ash Hollow, the pass which carried us from the south fork of the Platte River to the north valley, we met up with three Indian youth, the eldest being a fine looking young fellow mounted on a handsome Claybank pony. True to their Indian nature they were spoiling for a race and were very eager to match the Claybank against anything we had. To accomodate them some of the boys gave them a race but as might well have been expected the Indian bested them both in horsemanship and in speed.

Occupying the river bank were a number of Indian lodges and living there, with the Indians, were several white men who for the past ten years had lived in the wild, taking squaws and begetting many children. This self-imposed exile is not so uncommon. Usually the white man, with his superior intelligence, assumes a prominent place in tribal politics.

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On the sixth of June, just before coming to Court House Rock we passed the grave of I.W. Tindall of Tecumseh, Michigan. Another man died at the same place. I have forgotten his name but he was a Missourian and died of consumption.



## CHAPTER IV

**W**E BROUGHT OUR WAGONS TO A STOP about ten o'clock on the seventh of June because of the critical illness of Isaac Brisco. We were afraid that the continual jolting of the wagon might kill him. But grass being bad, next day we decided to move on and leave Mr. Briscoe behind. Among those who stayed with him were two brothers. The parting was a painful affair since many of his kinsmen were among us and they would never see him again.

We caught sight of the Chimney Rock on the seventh and on the eighth I paid it a visit. It is a vast pile of soft rock, perhaps three hundred feet high, topped by a column about thirty feet in diameter and rising about a hundred and twenty-five feet higher. The scenery in the vicinity of the rock is remarkable and picturesque. There are a number of rocky elevations which resemble vast temples and pyramids with domes and spires partly in ruins. I recorded my name among the thousands of others which garnish the rock as high as humans can reach, which is only to the base of the Chimney.

Soon after passing Chimney Rock, Scott's Bluff came into view. It is a grand and imposing sight. The trail leaves the river and runs up a beautiful valley of about fourteen miles in length and varying from five to eight in width. It is bound on either side by steep rugged bluffs of vast heights and of every conceivable shape.

About five o'clock in the evening it commenced raining very hard, accompanied by deafening thunder and



brilliant displays of lightning; also strong winds and hail. Water being four miles away, we caught enough in our tent to fill our cask and several buckets. Three hundred wagons were camped within sight. Good grass made this possible.

We started next morning with the weather clear and warm. The soil was sandy and we suffered no inconvenience from the nights rain. As we ascended the valley, it narrowed and at it's head we found an excellent spring of pure, cold water forming a deep ravine. The storm of the previous night had raged with great violence near the spring, the lightning having killed an ox and knocked several persons flat.

Upon ascending this ridge, we had our first view of the Rocky Mountains. Laramie Peak and several other elevations, about one hundred and twenty-five miles distant, could plainly be discerned even though the atmosphere was smoky.

I left the wagons on the eleventh and rode on ahead to Fort Laramie where I arrived about three o'clock. It is a trading post belonging to the American Fur Company and is in the territory belonging to the Sioux Indians. It is between six and seven hundred miles from Independence, Missouri and is situated on Laramie River about a mile and a half from it's junction with the Platte. The walls of the Fort are constructed of adobe and they enclose about three-quarters of an acre. Other than the emigrants passing through, there were only nine or ten white men and a few squaws present.

We had expected to get some smithwork done there and also to sell some provisions to lighten our loads but could do neither. The blacksmith had no coal and as to selling provisions, they would not make us an offer on

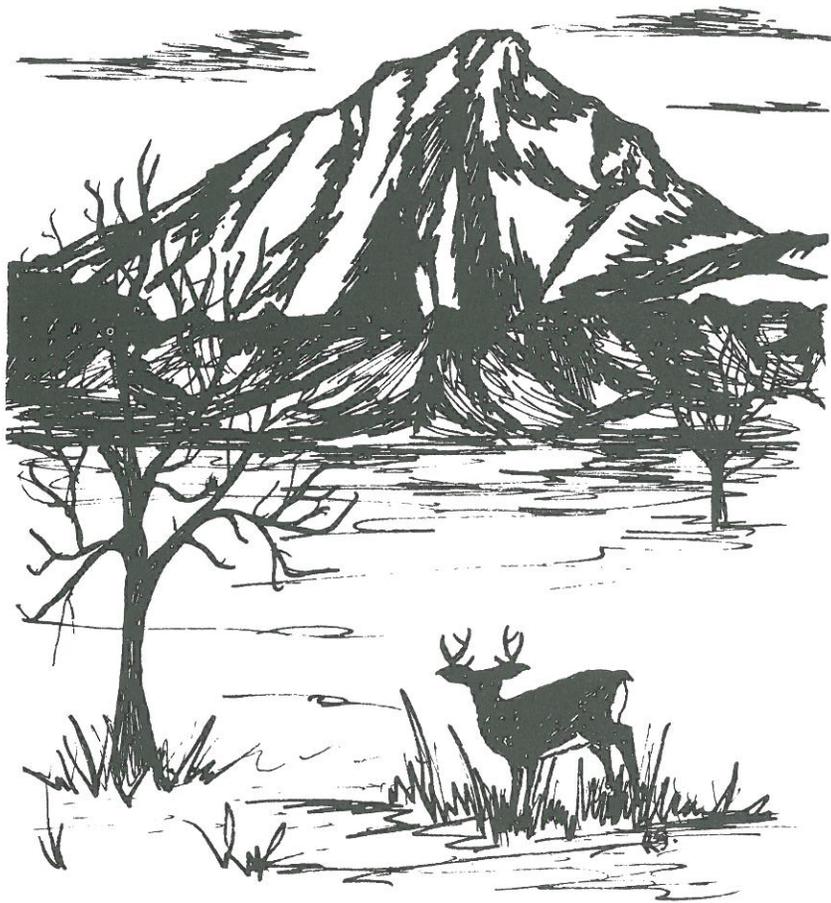
anything but flour and only two dollars a hundred on that.

We spent several days passing through the Black Hills. They are rough, hilly and beautiful, abundant with splendid springs from which we obtained plenty of good water. But the grass was not very good and the gravelly soil was hard on the oxen's feet. Many failed on that account. After their feet were worn down, shoeing did little good. Old David Porter died here.

Coming again to the Platte, we found ourselves in the Alkali Region where much of the water was poisonous to the livestock. The alkali water was usually found in small ponds but sometimes even running water was impregnated with it. Soon after crossing the Sweet Water River we came to the worst alkali region of the entire route. There, pure saleratus covered acres of ground.

Near the bank of the Sweet River we found the famous Independence Rock, so named because one of the first emigrant companies to Oregon celebrated the fourth of July at that spot. About five miles farther on we came to Devil's Gate, a remarkable fissure in the rocky mountain wall through which the stream flows. It is about thirty-five feet wide and the perpendicular walls rise up nearly three hundred feet on either side. Thirty miles below the crossing of the North Platte we saw a natural rock bridge over a creek some thirty yards wide.





## CHAPTER V

**T**HERE WAS A HEAVY DEW ON THE MORNING of June the twenty-eighth, so cold that it made our fingers ache. We had an early start and traveled over a vast plain, where, in addition to the wild sage, flowers of many colors grew. One variety resembling moss was as white as snow and just barely lifted itself above the ground. It is the most beautiful flower I have ever seen. Others were yellow and some blue, there were some that resembled the common dog fennel at home. Then there was a pretty little pink flower, growing scarcely above the ground, arranged in clusters of from one to seven. It had no leaves. Although I never paid much attention to flowers at home, I saw many along that trail which I greatly admired. Nature must purposely scatter her children in that desolate region to cheer the weary traveler along his way.

Crossing the Sweet Water River for the last time we drove up a steep hill and made a gradual ascent over an excellent road to the famous South Pass, the dividing ridge of the Rockies which separates the waters of the Pacific from those of the Atlantic. I was greatly disappointed with the backbone of the North American Continent, as the pass is sometimes referred to. In place of the rugged imposing scenery which I had expected to see, there was nothing in sight to be called a mountain closer than the Wind River Mountains about twenty miles to our right. The gap, or pass, itself, is many miles in width, a vast uneven plain covered with little vegetation other than the wild sage. On the left are a few elevations of no extra-ordinary height with a few stunted shrubs scattered over them.

The ascent up the Platte and Sweet Water is so gradual that, although the elevation of the Pass is very high, one is scarcely conscious of rising to the summit of the Rockies, the temperature being the strongest indication of one's position.

The descent was also very gradual, hardly perceptible for two miles, until we came to the famous Pacific Spring. Here again I was disappointed. Instead of a bold, gushing spring, as I had expected to see, there was nothing more than a quagmire, about 100 yards wide and a mile in length with a small stream running down the center of it. It was so swampy that it was dangerous for the animals to drink from it.

We were delayed a short time, next morning, as our cattle had wandered in search of food. After rounding them up, we drove eight miles to a small creek where we attempted to water them but they would not drink. Much of the water of that region was alkali, especially the small ponds. It was a common sight to see the bodies of dead oxen strewn along the bank of the streams. After crossing the North Platte we passed at least six dead animals daily.

On the first of July we took what is known as Greenwood's Cut-off. It is about sixty miles shorter than to go by the usual route past Fort Bridger. The main objection to the Cut-off is that between Big Sandy and the Green River, a distance of forty miles, there is no water. We left Big Sandy about noon, drove until near sunset, rested about an hour and then resumed our march. In many places we passed good grass. During the latter part of the afternoon a fine shower of rain fell which boosted us on our way. Then we again came to the dust, deep and disagreeable. We rested an hour at daybreak, drank a cup

of coffee, and then proceeded on. The road was excellent except for a few deep ravines. About ten miles from Green River there were deep hollows and high hills for some distance.

We reached the river about noon, approximately twenty-four hours after leaving Big Sandy. It is a rapidly running stream, about 120 yards wide, with scattered cottonwoods growing along its margins. Although there it is called Green, lower down it is known as the Colorado and by some as the Red.

There were two quite respectable ferries in operation. They charged four dollars for each wagon ferried over and fifty cents for each animal swum alongside. The emigrants were crossing at several places, some in wagon boxes. We saw eight mules and a horse drowned in an attempt to swim them without the aid of the boats.

The wagons were rolling in so rapidly that, though the ferries worked day and night they were unable to keep the banks cleared. When our turn came to cross there were probably two hundred wagons waiting behind us. Among them were forty government wagons accompanied by dragoons.

A man had been stabbed and killed near the ferries only a few days before we arrived. The murderer had been tried, found guilty and sentenced to be shot but no one could be found who would actually execute him. Consequently, the murderer had gone his way, unpunished. The officer in command of the troops promised that if he were brought back and found guilty he would be executed. A party prepared to go after him.

We commenced crossing the river at daybreak on the fourth and by ten a.m. we were all safely over. We crossed

fifteen wagons and swam our stock. The night had been exceedingly cold and ice had formed in the boats making the footing treacherous.

After crossing the Green River the trail became rougher, leading us over a washboard of hills. It seemed as though we ascended one hill just to descend another and usually we had to cross a muddy little stream between, some very difficult. At one place the trail terminated on a ledge where we were compelled to lower our wagons about twenty feet by means of ropes.

We found plenty of snow in the ravines and on the mountain sides. I walked over one patch that covered an acre to a depth of almost three feet. Within a few inches of its edges, the grass was growing green.

We came to Bear River on the eighth and soon after noon on the ninth we crossed Thomas Fork. Tragedy stalked us there, whisking away the life of a young man named Milton belonging to the Virginia Company, when he attempted to swim the stream.

On the tenth we passed near a small Indian encampment where, grazing at close range, were many magnificent ponies. Attracted by their beauty, some of us tried to strike up a trade for several of them but their Indian-owners would not consider parting with any of them. These Indians, a very pleasant looking people, were all well-dressed and very friendly. Upon meeting us they saluted us with a cheerful "How-do"! and a hearty shake of the hand. They belonged to the Snake Nation.

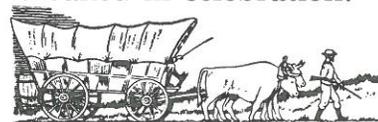
On the afternoon of July the eleventh I visited the Bear or Soda Springs. They are situated within the horse shoe curve that Bear River makes, at its most northerly point when it abruptly changes its course from north to south

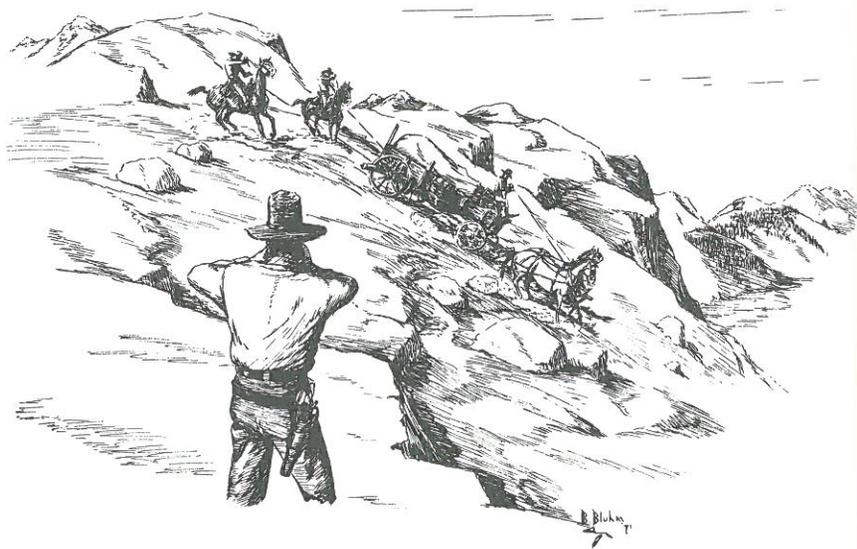
toward Great Salt Lake. The most remarkable of the many springs is called "Steamboat Springs." Having no perceivable outlet, it is situated on a rock which is elevated about eighteen inches above the surrounding rocks and within a few feet of the river bank. At regular intervals a white column of water is thrown up a foot or more into the air. This small geyser is accompanied by a noise resembling that of a steamboat.

On Thursday, the twelfth, our route carried us into a pretty little valley, luxuriantly carpeted with excellent grass. Here we camped and a number of Indians visited us. They desired to trade but after much bickering, we failed to make any transaction.

Next day we commenced our march early and ascended the mountain along a small stream. The ascent was very gradual but in some places difficult because of the many small branches which emptied into it. However, we finally reached the summit and found that it was the ridge which separates the waters of the Great Basin from those of the Columbia River. The descent was steep until we came to a small branch which burst out from the side of the hill, a bold and beautiful spring of the finest and coldest water that I have ever tasted.

Near evening we had the gratifying experience of overtaking some of our neighbors from Chambersburg. We had not seen them since leaving Laramie and it cheered us indeed to join them again. Wild currants and gooseberries, growing in profusion nearby, were gathered and some excellent pies were baked in celebration.





## CHAPTER VI

OUR WAGONS MADE A SHORT STOP AT FORT Hall, where we disposed of part of our powder, coffee and tobacco. Fort Hall is a trading post belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company and is situated on Lewis Fork of Snake River. To the south and west of the Fort lies a large bottom that appears to be fertile. Whether it has ever been tilled I do not know but I have heard that the Indians do not look with favor on any agricultural pursuit. The Fort is built of adobe and patterned much the same as Laramie. About twenty-five white men are employed there, trading with the Indians. In addition to the men, I saw three white women, one being the wife of a half-Indian negro. The principal trader was a handsome, portly man of about sixty years, very polite indeed. He had a number of good horses and cattle for sale but was asking as much as three hundred dollars for some of the horses.

Moving on, about three miles from the Fort, we passed a number of wagons which had been destroyed. This was a common sight after leaving the Blue River. Wagons and provisions, valued at thousands of dollars, were cast aside by those unable to take them farther. Usually the wagons were burned or chopped up in such a manner as to leave them useless. Occasionally, however, we did pass wagons left totally intact.

We broke up camp on the sixteenth of July in great sadness for it was necessary to leave William Chenoweth behind. He left home in feeble condition hoping that a change of climate would bring improved health but, on the

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contrary, the journey gradually weakened him until he could travel no farther. His brother Arthur, and cousin Newton Harryman remained with him until his death on the twenty-sixth. He was buried 139 miles from Fort Hall on the Panack River.

Our Chambersburg friends were badly worried when Joel Aiken failed to return to camp one night, a thing very unusual for him. Next morning nearly all their company turned out in search for him, some of our own men assisting them.

Our own teams however proceeded on and early in the day overtook Joel. He had been far in advance of the train at nightfall and rather than retrace his steps he had spent the night with some emigrants and was waiting by the roadside for his own company to catch up. When we told him of their alarm, he hurried back in double-quick time.

Our route carried us down Lewis Fork of the Columbia River through a desolate and barren country. In places the region appeared to me to have been torn to atoms by some volcanic eruption. Many of the rocks seemed to be nothing more than cinders. There was little timber except a few stunted cedar; the wild sage covered the plain as usual. In many places the river was bounded by high bluffs creating a succession of falls for many miles. In one place it fell more than sixty feet in two hundred yards.

On the twenty-second of July the wagons forming the Perry Company, three in number, split from the main train and pulled out ahead. Three days later we passed Hot Springs. They extend for half a mile or more along a branch and boil up with much force. The water is so hot that a person can not hold his hand in it for half a minute.

On the twenty-seventh the Indians made an attack on

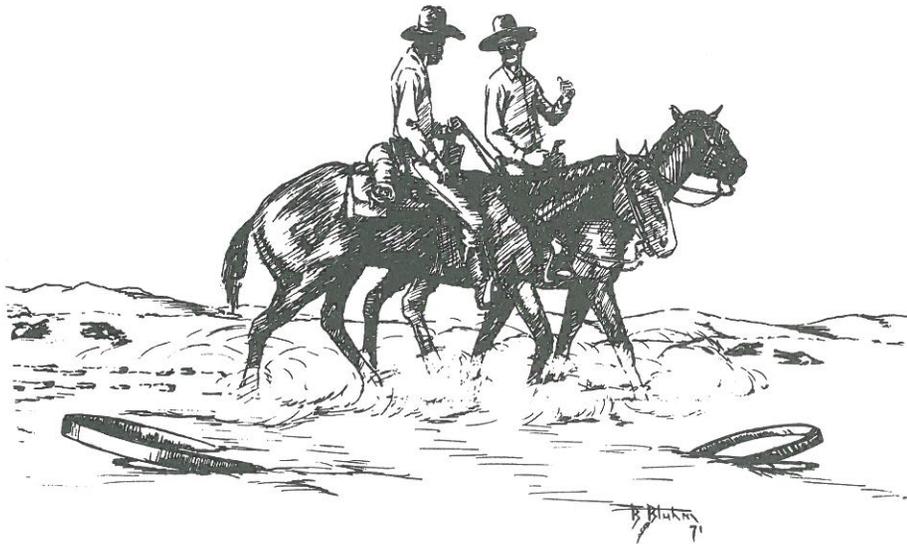
## 'NUGGETS FROM '49'

some cattle that were grazing only a short distance above ours, killing three and escaping with several others and also with several mules. These animals belonged to William Roe and Farrand of Meredosia.

On the thirty-first a burning fever struck me. My back pained dreadfully and the dust and rough roads added to my torments. I became so indisposed that for two weeks I could do little more than lay in the wagon. However the scenery remained much the same, the trail laying down the Humboldt River.

About twenty miles above the sink of the Humboldt, the river regularly overflows a large portion of the valley. Mr. Blair from Pike County, Illinois, there, discovered about ten thousand acres of good grass. Notices were immediately posted on the trail notifying the trains of its location and the emigrants flocked in fast to recruit their animals and to cut grass to last them across the desert which begins there and continues for about seventy miles.





## CHAPTER VII

**A**BOUT NINE O'CLOCK ON AUGUST THE fourteenth, our company resumed its march, striking off down a slough. But they did not travel far before they saw the impracticability of their course and turned back to the main road. I happened to be some distance ahead when the teams turned, and on foot. My recent illness had left me weak and it was impossible for me to overtake them. Finally, in desperation, I struck off across the bottom, intending to intercept them where the trail doubled back upon itself. Fortunately for me, Mr. Conklin and Charles N. Vertrees saw my plight and came to my rescue, Mr. Conklin bringing me his mule.

Picking an easier path for the mule I became separated from my friends, and came to a place where for two miles the ground was so soft and full of cracks that I could scarcely get the mule over it. In fact, every few steps the animal would plunge through the soft earth to its breast and it became necessary for me to dismount and lead it. In many places the soil was burned to brick-red and lower down where Conklin and Vertrees crossed they said that several feet beneath the surface it was actually on fire.

It proved to be eight miles to the road and I seriously feared that I could not make it. However, at last, I arrived at the road to find myself in advance of the teams. I was perishing for water.

Continuing across the desert our trail lay down an almost barren, desolate valley, its soil about the color of lime. Near eleven o'clock in the evening we reached the

Sulphur Springs, a few shallow wells dug about six feet deep. We obtained plenty of water from them but it was so impregnated with sulphur that the stock would hardly touch it.

There were many dead cattle and mules strewn around and together with the stench of the water, they made it the most disagreeable place I have ever visited. Many teams were already there and others rolled in all night. Forbidding as the place was, we were forced to remain there throughout the next day since the intense daytime heat made it necessary to travel by night.

It clouded up near evening and the wind blew fresh and cool. We immediately harnessed our teams and were on the march. The road forked about three miles from the springs and we took the left hand fork which had been opened by Major Childs during the previous season. It showed little evidence of recent use but we had been informed that it was only twenty-two miles to water by that route, while we knew that by the other, it was forty.

However, until we come to Salmon-Trout River, we found the only water to be nothing more than shallow holes dug in the ground and the water very salty.

About mid-night we met several families returning from California to Salt Lake. They told us that we had chosen the better road and gave us great news as to the quantity of gold in California. They also told us that after we crossed Carson River, about sixteen miles distant, that we would have plenty of water and grass for the remainder of the trip.

About daybreak, two of the oxen which I had helped drive from the States, began to totter. So we stopped, unloaded them and allowed them to rest and then drove on

but finally they failed altogether and we were forced to leave them.

Our train, consisting of eight wagons, was strung out for several miles along the road and several other oxen belonging to the other teams, failed also. On this desert, the superiority of the older cattle was fairly tested and proved. All that failed were young while the older animals went through quite well.

I left the wagons soon after daybreak intending to walk to the river which I thought to be about ten miles away. But it proved to be nearer sixteen and in my condition it became a weary task for me to keep dragging one foot after the other. I was so thirstly that when I did finally reach the river, about four o'clock in the afternoon, I rushed to the water's edge and drank in great draughts. Some emigrants, camping there, sensed my plight and kindly invited me to eat with them. Since I had had nothing but a crust of bread all day, I gladly took advantage of their generosity.

The sand was so heavy for about ten miles before reaching the river that the drivers had to double the teams and leave half the wagons under guard to be returned for later. Our own company brought in only one of our three wagons since six of our oxen had failed. When evening came several of our men with seven yoke of oxen went back after one of our wagons; the other we decided to abandon.

Next morning, moving up the river a few miles, we joined the balance of our train. Upon arrival we found Roland Griswold, who had been ill since leaving home, much worse. Soon after we camped I visited him and was convinced that he would live only a short while.

He was calm and composed never-the-less and fully

aware of his predicament. "What would you give for my chances?" he asked me with a wry smile. Realizing that he was not a man for evasion, I answered him honestly. "I consider your case very bad!"

He agreed with me. "I don't believe I can last more than a day or two," he said.

I examined his pulse and found it very irregular. He asked me if he had any pulse. I told him that he did have. He then said, without a tremor, "I know I must die but I have never been afraid of death."

"Roland," I said, "You should pray to the Lord to have mercy on your soul."

"I am aware of that and shall do so, of course."

I asked him if he had any pain.

"Not any! All that bothers me is a difficulty in breathing." His breathing was very laboured.

I left him for only a short while but when I returned he was dead. We built a very nice coffin for him from an abandoned wagon box and laid him to rest beneath some large cottonwood trees.

Descending the mountain on the second of September, we reached a pleasant little valley early in the afternoon. The boys turned out prospecting and some of them found a small quantity—our first—, and it cheered us immensely. All recent news, relayed to us, had been favorable and, through we were tired and worn, that night merriment reigned in camp. The old fiddle, mute for two hundred miles, broke its long silence and shrilled out happy melodies. Joy possessed us. Instead of singing "Carry Me Back to Ole Virginny," as we so often did in our gloomy moments, we boomed out "Lucy Neel Suzannah, Don't You Weep for Me! California is the land for Me!"

## CHAPTER VIII



AT WEBER'S CREEK WE CAME TO THE FIRST gold diggings about noon on the third of September. The water was fairly good so we decided to stop for a while and look around. Our cattle were so thin from labor and starvation that it was absolutely necessary for us to get them on good pasture at once or let them die. Accordingly, the following morning, Joseph V. Jones, Richard Conklin, Henry Allen, Samuel Ross, James Burgesser and I started them for Daley's Ranch. It was thirty-five miles away but the nearest place where we could have them herded safely on good grass.

We made camp the first night with the Chambersburg company at White Oak Springs. We found them all well with the exception of John Aikin who was very ill. The company was laying by there for a while to recuperate from their toilsome journey. They had discovered gold in their vicinity but had too little water to wash it to any advantage. This was the first time we had seen them since the seventh of July and we passed off the time very pleasantly.

We arrived at the Daley Ranch about two p.m. on the sixth and camped under some large oak trees near the bank of the Cosamer River. We sent Mr. Conklin on ahead to the ranch house to purchase some provisions, supposing, since we were coming to a farm that we could get a plentiful supply of milk, butter and vegetables but we received a sad disappointment. All that he could buy was a little jerked beef at fifty cents a pound.

Daley owns a strip of land fronting the Cosamer River

for eleven miles and three miles wide, with the exception of a tract three miles square three miles below the ranch house which he sold to a Mr. John Rhodes. He has been in this country eleven years and has acquired a large fortune by raising livestock and trading with the Indians. He lives in an adobe house surrounded with sheds where he keeps provisions and articles of trade.

Some of his land has been enclosed by a ditch, with the river on the other side. He has a large number of horses, cattle and hogs and they all run at large, requiring no feed other than what they find for themselves in the woods. They are all in fine shape and this seemed remarkable to me. In fact fine herds of wild horses and cattle roam the plains as freely as bison.

Mr. Daley had gone to Sacramento City so it was necessary for us to wait until next day to see him. I arose early next morning and went to the house but found no one awake. A batch of lousy Indians were sleeping in the yard, curled up like a pack of dogs, and I guess they sleep there every night. After waiting an hour or so I returned to camp, ate breakfast and then once more went to the ranch house.

Mr. Daley I found to be a stout, hearty Englishman about forty years of age, a genuine "John Bull", proud of his birth place, fond of a glass of brandy and always ready for a trade. Mrs. Daley was much younger than her lord, about twenty, I should guess, and very good looking.

I sold Mr. Daley fourteen of our poorest cattle for two hundred and ninety dollars and he agreed to herd the balance for two dollars and a half per head per month. I then went down to Sacramento City with Joseph V. Jones, Richard Conklin and Samuel Ross.

Sacramento sprang up within a few months near the junction of the American Fork and Sacramento River and was a very busy place, carrying on immense trade in the sale of provisions and articles used in the mines. At that time (Sept. 8, 1849) the buildings were mostly of frail materials, generally just posts set in the ground and covered with canvas. However there were a few fairly good frame buildings and others were going up fast. There were about one hundred stores or trading establishments and hotels, boarding houses and gambling houses without number.

We took up camp by an old oak tree in the bottom near the city preferring to keep up our common way of life rather than go into their boarding houses. By purchasing our provisions and cooking them ourselves our meals cost us about fifty cents each as compared to a dollar fifty at the taverns. Hundreds of people were living in tents in every direction.

While in the city I sold our old mare for sixty dollars and wrote two letters, one to my wife and the other to B.D. Whittaker of Perry.

Packing enough provisions on our mule to last us back to camp we left the city on the ninth. Samuel Ross of Brown county stayed in the city which left only three of us. We left the mule at Daley's Ranch and shouldered the provisions, I, the bag of food and Conklin and Jones, the blankets.

At night we slept beneath the oak trees which began branching very close to the ground and offered a good protection from the night air. But even at that the nights proved very cold. On one occasion Mr. Conklin roused us by shouting "Boys! Get up here! Let's get some hot coffee into us and be trotting! For By God, If we don't we will all

freeze to death!" We took him at his word and were up and off in a hurry.

My feet became blistered and meeting John Metz and Charles Winegar on the morning of the eleventh we insisted that they eat with us to lighten our load which was proving an encumbrance to us. These Chambersburg men were on the way to Daley's to get their cattle.

After eating we resumed our journey and reached the Chambersburg company near dark. John Aikin had died in our absence and we found A.M. Powell to be a very sick man. We spent the night there and came into our own camp about three p.m. on the following day. Our men had been washing some gold during our absence but had made no valuable discovery. We found Arthur and James Chenoweth still sick and Samuel Bradbury and Phillip Stoner had both become sick also which left but very few men to work.

We continued to dig, finding some gold, but water was so scarce that we could not make good wages. There were many people digging in that vicinity and while a few were washing sizable amounts, most were hardly wreaking out a livelihood. The prospect was by no means flattering, so far short of what we had all expected that we were in general discouraged. A great many were ill and many more, sick in spirit. All were so weary from their long toilsome journey that they could hardly work. A general lamentation could be heard among them. They felt that they had better have stayed at home and doubtless had they been there, it would have been hard to coax them into another California scrape soon. We again heard the old and mournful tune of "Carry Me Back to Ole Virginy."

## CHAPTER IX



HAVING SPENT THE NIGHT OF SEPTEMBER the fourteenth with the Chambersburg company, I returned next morning to my own company to find them very anxious for me to go in search of better diggings since, during my absence, they had about exhausted our prospects. So I returned to Dry Diggings and purchased a mule, saddle and pack saddle for one hundred and eighteen dollars. Then it was agreed that I should go south and that Richard Conklin would accompany me. At the same time a party started into the mountains to retake cattle and horses stolen by the Indians and also to search for gold which the Indians claimed abounded there in large quantities. The party numbered about thirty-five men, having a Mexican for a guide and included four men from our own company. They were John H. Chenoweth, Henry Beatty, Jesse Dennis and Newton S. Harryman.

Richard Conklin and I agreed to take three mules to Daley's Ranch for a Mr. Willis. This was really an accomodation to us since Mr. Conklin's mule was already there.

We arrived at Daley's about noon on the eighteenth and after eating went in search of Conklin's mule. We searched until dark and then camped on the bank of the river beneath some oak trees. The day had been warm and pleasant, the night was beautiful and calm. The moon soon passed over the horizon, leaving the stars undimmed in brilliant rivalry. The fish leaped and played in the stream, Katydid's sang in the trees and wolves gave vent to their nocturnal serenade.

Mr. Conklin casually mentioned our wives and wondered where they thought we were, and laughed in his easy way. That brought on a general discussion of our respective families and homes which left me in a very solemn frame of mind. Long after Mr. Conklin had fallen asleep I lay awake conjuring up scenes of my family. I experienced bitter misgivings and chastised myself roundly for ever having left home. I wondered if, through the Mercy of God, I should be fortunate enough to return home again whether I would find them all happy and healthy or if some might be grown cold in their graves. Such thoughts can be told but not described. The agony of this fearful uncertainty kept me awake for a long time.

We were unsuccessful in finding Mr. Conklin's mule until early on the morning of the third day of our search. While I was preparing supper on the second day I killed a wolf. When I first observed it, it was laying in the grass, about ten paces away, watching me very closely. These animals are very plentiful and at night they will steal provisions from within a few feet of a man's head.

On the twenty-first we fell in company with a Mr. Taylor and another gentleman, whose name I have forgotten, and traveled with them until dark. Our route lay over rough country, passing near several companies mining along the river who did not seem to be very prosperous. We camped for the night in a rough, rocky bottom near an Indian Trader's Station. Just across the river was a large encampment of Indians. One or two of them kept up a continued hollering and singing throughout the night. Sometimes their voices were clear and melodious, at other times they seemed to be mourning and would howl like wolves. Next morning two Indians visited our camp and

from them we learned that one of their party had died and they were preparing his funeral. Runners had been sent out all night and before we left small parties were beginning to filter into their camp. At daybreak the number of singers were increased and from appearance there was going to be an elaborate ceremony. I would have liked to witness it and would have done so had it not been necessary for us to return to camp as soon as possible. I understand it is the custom of these Indians, after gathering all in the neighborhood, to burn their dead and have a great lamentation over them.

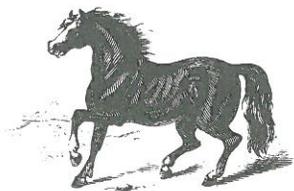
We proceeded on up the river but were unsuccessful in finding a likely place to go to work so we turned back toward our company's encampment and reached it about noon on the twenty-third. We found all the men in camp, those who had gone to the mountains also having returned not having made any discovery that would justify going there to work. Some dissatisfaction had taken place and all hands were discouraged. So, with one accord, we concluded to go to Sacramento City, divide or sell the teams and goods and dissolve partnership. In Sacramento City, Stoner and Arthur Chenoweth sold out their interest in the company and returned to Dry Diggings while the rest of us remained together.

We went to Daley's after our stock and found all of it except my mule so I remained behind to search for him. During my search I fell in company with Thomas Maxwell, a gentleman I knew in Virginia. He had his family with him, including several grandchildren. It had been twenty-two years since we had last been together and we spent several pleasant hours chatting over incidents of our youth. I searched for my mule four days and then concluding that

it had been stolen, I joined my company in the city.

On the fourth of October John H. Chenoweth, T.A. Neel and I started up the Sacramento River to hunt elk. On the second day out, about twelve miles from the city, I turned off the road into the tule and soon heard the shrill, keen colt-like call of some of the animals. The tule was so high and thick that I could not see over it and could proceed only by following the numerous paths which the elks had made in every direction but I finally located the herd, thirty or fifty of them, feeding in the lake. I fired at one but my shot caused such confusion among them that I could not tell whether I killed it or not. There was such a splashing and turmoil that I lost sight of it; if it fell, the water was so deep that it covered it. The animals then ran up the lake and I followed, they in the water and I on shore. They ran about two miles and then crossed to the opposite bank. I tied my horse and followed them, killing one.

We managed to kill four elk in the first two days and Neel took them to the city, selling the hind quarters for twenty-five cents per pound and the remainder for sixteen. The animals were plentiful but several companies had hunted them before us making them extremely wild so that we found it hard to get within shooting range. We passed over plenty of bear sign on this trip but saw none of the animals. The tracks were very large and were made by grizzlies. On the tenth of October it began to rain so we returned to the city.



## CHAPTER X

**A**BOUT THE TWENTIETH OF OCTOBER I went to Rhodes Rancho on the Cosamer to buy some cattle. I inquired of him concerning my stray mule and he told me that he had seen it several times so I made another unsuccessful search for it. During this expedition I met up with Comfort Barker and Jesse Dennis who had come after their cattle to haul provisions to Webber's Creek where they intended to winter. However I persuaded them to accompany me to the Mari Posi River as I had heard some flattering accounts of the richness of the mines in that section. So Barker returned to Weber Diggings for Newton S. Harryman, Henry Allen and Joel Aiken and we met them in Sacramento City.

In Sacramento we were charged six cents per pound for hay. This was too expensive so we left for Murphey's Rancho as soon as possible. Mr. Murphey is a friendly man who was born in Ireland. He has been in this country several years and has become quite prosperous. Like all the old settlers, he has a gang of Indians and Mexicans to herd his stock and perform all other necessary labor.

I asked Mr. Murphey if I might rent a horse from him to ride to Rhodes in search of my lost mule. He looked at me for some time without speaking, finally he told me that he had loaned a horse to a man to ride to Stockton and it had come back with it's back ruined. I replied that I did not feel that it was a good rule to judge all men by the actions of one. He readily agreed with me and told a Mexican to saddle a mule for me.

From Rhodes I learned that my mule was with a herd of horses about ten miles away so I sold it to him for one hundred dollars. Night overtook me before I was half-way back to Murphey's. The road was not plain so I trusted to the sagacity of the mule to take me right but this he failed to do so that it was very late when I reached the Rancho. Mr. Murphey was waiting for me and when I asked how much I owed him he said "eight dollars!" but before I could get my money out, he said six would do.

Proceeding on to Stockton we passed a number of Indians encamped on the banks of the Mukelemnes River having a real spree. All were drunk, whooping and hollering for all they were worth.

We reached Stockton late in the afternoon and pitched our tent at the edge of town. Dragging some logs together, we built a large fire and were quite comfortable even though it rained by showers throughout the night. After our wagons were loaded next morning they were driven out about five miles to a place called French Camp, where a store is kept, and encamped.

I remained at Stockton and wrote a letter to my family which took until after dark and then I rode out to camp. It was a cool, damp night and I laid down chilly and unwell. I arose with a severe headache and high fever, also a severe cough. I walked about 200 yards and then had to climb into a wagon. Our route lay up the San Joaquin Valley.

Some of the boys discovered Salmon crossing a shoal on their way up the river to spawn. They were so thick they could hardly pass each other. The men killed them with guns, spades and shovels and then ate great messes of them. Sick, unable to eat, it made me want to vomit to see them stuff them down.

On the eighth we came to the Merced River and for six weeks there after I was hardly aware of anything that happened. I lay in a stupor most of the time, tormented by my thoughts. My family had been intensely opposed to my coming in search of gold but I was so determined to make the trip that all their grief and persuasion could not alter my plans. I made the statement that I was determined to make the trip or die. How this expression haunted and tormented me! As I lay there, looking out over the red barren hills that surrounded me, I knew full well unless my condition speedily changed that within a few days my body with all its hopes of riches would be laid there and at home my family would be scattered and perhaps my children bound out.

When out of my head, I imagined I saw my children but there was always some obstruction between us and I could not reach or speak to them. I cared nothing for the gold in California then. All I wanted was to see my loved ones again before I died. I prayed with all the fervency of my soul to God to restore me to health. And glory be to His Name I feel that He must have heard me. For after twenty-two days of fever I began to recover.

We reached our destination the latter part of November (Cold Water or Auri Freean). The boys prospected for a few days but had little success. Finally they concluded that the prospect of making money there during the winter was too discouraging.

When we left Sacramento City we had expected to have some trouble with the Indians since in that locality it had been reported that they had killed several people and driven off the rest. While we were there, they came down out of the mountains almost every night, stealing horses

and mules.

Although we had sworn mutually, come what might, to stick together the two Indians deserted us and returned to Stockton. But Henry Allen, Comfort Barker, Joseph Jones and Joel Aiken stood to their promise. They were determined not to desert me even if they didn't make a cent all winter.

Henry, Comfort and Joel built a snug little cabin while Joseph attended me and did the cooking. I was so feeble that I had to have assistance whenever I had reason to get up. My heart fills with gratitude whenever I think of how faithfully these men attended me, especially Joseph Jones.

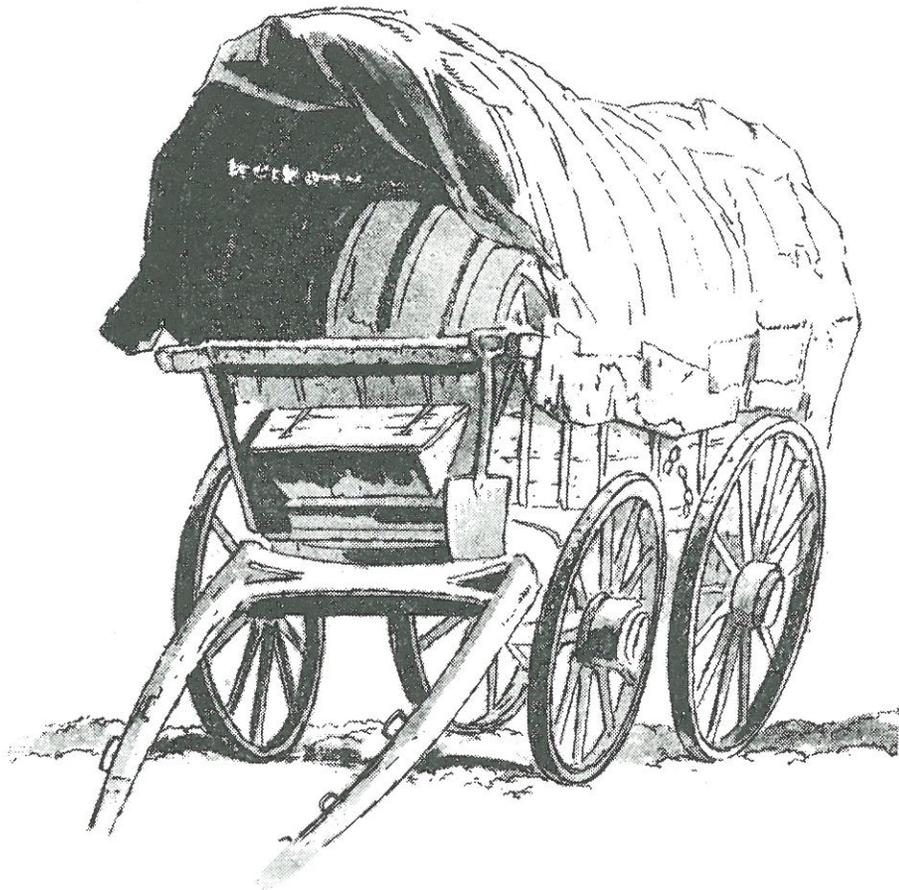
After the little cabin was finished I only lodged in it one night, having recovered sufficiently to be willing to risk everything to rejoin our company in Stockton. Before leaving we disposed of our provisions and mining tools at considerable profit. We sold flour at ninety cents, pork at seventy-five, sugar at one dollar and other things in proportion. Our two loads, hauled by four yoke of oxen sold for almost eighteen hundred dollars.

I again met my friend, Maxwell on December eighth. He had settled near Stockton and was returning from a trip to the mines where he had hauled provisions. The distance he hauled was 80 miles and he had been out ten days, clearing 76 dollars per day for himself, wagon and four yoke of oxen.

On the ninth of December we reached French Camp and next day I visited Stockton. I was amazed at the rapid growth of the town during my five weeks absence. It had simply mushroomed. In many places where only tents stood November the third, good looking frame buildings were standing. A brisk trade still continued and goods were

selling at exorbitant prices. Flour was 23 dollars, pork was sixty to eighty per barrel, sugar seventy-five cents and boots from 20 to 30 dollars per pair.





## CHAPTER XI

**W**E WERE TOLD AT STOCKTON THAT launches made regular trips between Benicia and Sonoma so we sold our oxen and wagon, receiving four hundred dollars for them, and engaged passage on a small launch to Benicia. Incidentally one yoke of these oxen we had driven all the way from Illinois, having purchased them from Mr. Morrison on South Prairie; the other was a small yoke that I picked up on Cosamer River. The wagon was the one John H. Chenoweth provided when we left Illinois.

Henry Allen decided to accompany us so he dissolved partnership with Comfort Barker and Joel Aiken and joined Joseph Jones and me. Comfort and Joel remained in Stockton intending to haul provisions to the mines.

Passage on the launch cost each of us twelve dollars plus ten dollars for our baggage. Because of rain we didn't leave until the morning of the thirteenth. In my convalescing condition I suffered a great deal from the cold. The people here keep no fires other than what they cook by, however in the afternoon I discovered a spanking good one in a gambling house and remained there until almost dark. Then I started out to find the launch where we intended to spend the night. Our baggage was already on board and I met Henry on the bank. He told me that the vessel lay nearby and that Joseph was waiting for me, there.

Our bedding was made down under a small covered space in the bow of the boat, about seven by five and three feet high. We all three crawled in and slept there until

morning. When we secured passage, the Captain had promised us that we could occupy this small covered space exclusively but in the morning when the rest of the passengers came aboard there were twelve or thirteen of them, a rough set of scamps. Among them were two burly, ferocious looking, red headed Scots who I don't think had shaved since leaving Scotland. Then there were several genuine Paddies, about as unkept as the Scotchmen, fresh from their Emerald Isle, full of whiskey and blarney. But the one who outshone them all in ugliness and filthiness was a monstrous Englishman with only one eye. His huge ruddy nose was almost hidden by the tangled thicket of his beard. His appearance together with the dirtiness of his clothing made him the most loathsome person I have ever seen. If I had not already paid my passage, I don't believe I would, under any consideration, have stayed aboard.

Since it was raining, as soon as these lousy rascals came aboard they crowded themselves in upon us. I was so weak that I could not resist them and they nearly smothered me. It continued to rain most of the day and from contrary wind and tide we made only thirty miles before dark. However we continued on during the night and next morning about eleven o'clock we landed at a town near the junction of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers called "New York." The launch was tied to a large vessel which lay between us and the shore. This prevented me from going to shore or even seeing the town. All other hands went ashore to eat and the boys brought me some lunch which was the first food I had eaten since the morning before. The wind began to blow so hard that we remained there overnight and Joseph, Henry and I again had the boat to ourselves.

Next morning we arrived at Benicia and I was very

glad to leave the boat. Henry took me on his back and carried me to the boarding house he had engaged. It was within thirty feet of the spot we landed and completely surrounded by water.

I was very cold and asked permission to sit in the cook room a short while to warm myself. My wet shoes, when they dried, were so shrunken and hard that I couldn't get my feet into them. So I sent Henry up into town to buy me a new pair but he was unable to find any large enough for me. So the best I could do was to soak the old ones again and put them on while still wet.

The proprietors of this establishment, which was boarding house, grog shop and bakery combined, were a company that had come around the Horn on the ship, *Lenose*, from Boston. There were ten or more of them. Several had been to the mines and had returned sick. The principal man, Mr. Sawyer, was a small, spry man of about sixty years, sharp of feature, with restless grey eyes and a long nose. He was plainly a man with initiative.

We engaged rooms with him indefinitely, or until we could get passage to Sonoma. The rates were twenty dollars per week per person. Meals there were first rate. I ate potatoes for the second time since leaving the Missouri River.

On the first evening of our stay a set of social fellows concluded to have a spree. They began drinking soon after supper. As they waxed mellow they began to sing. They commenced with hymns and executed them in first rate style but after each song they quaffed off a horn and it wasn't long before they were in boisterous discord. The evening wore on and the men, one by one, became too drunk to sing. Finally only two continued their rivalry, one

singing, "Carry Me Back to Ole Virginny," while the other repeated the words to "Oh Susannah." At last one dropped out and the other soon subsided. All was still again except the roaring of the wind, the patter of rain and the splashing of the waves.

Seeing no prospect of getting to Sonoma by water the boys started out on foot on the eighteenth of December, leaving me to follow as soon as I could get passage. By the twenty-second I had given up all hope of reaching Sonoma by boat and concluding that I was recovered sufficiently to ride a horse again, I went up into town to see if I could find an animal for sale. But this I failed to do. However, my walk was not altogether wasted, for I had a good belly laugh.

A Mexican had roped a large bull and was trying to lead it to a suitable place for slaughter. But the animal had other plans and made such a furious assault on the man's horse that it's rider was forced to loose his riata and make his escape.

Frustrated in it's attempt to gore the horse, the bull, still panting with rage, spied a negro man toting a pail of water in the street. Immediately all it's pent up rage was transferred to this new victim and off it charged. The negro, sensing his danger, dropped his bucket and sprinted for a near-by broken-down cart and around and around it he went screaming "Murder! Murder! Help! Help!"

Following the man for several turns, the bull saw that all his efforts to catch him would be fruitless and so, to the great relief of the "darky," abandoned the chase. The Darky then scampered off to a more secure place of refuge.

## CHAPTER XII

**I** WAS FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO SECURE passage as far as Napa City by whale boat on the twenty-third of December. There were five passengers, including myself, besides the three men managing the boat. Upon leaving Benicia we kept to the main bay for about six miles and then turned to the right down a strait for about the same distance to the mouth of Napa Creek. This creek is not more than a hundred yards wide but is navigable for small schooners as far as Napa City, about fifteen miles from its mouth.

The country on both sides of the bay is very much the same in appearance as in the vicinity of Benicia for about eight miles. Then the hills on the left give way to a large tule swamp which extends as far as the eye can see. On the right the beauty of the country continues unabated. The hills are five or eight miles from the bay, with small groves of timber dotting the plain which extends between.

We arrived at Napa about ten o'clock at night and although it is called Napa City it contains only about fifteen houses. It is situated on the bank of the stream and is surrounded by a handsome valley. This valley is settled for twenty-five miles beyond the city. Considerable oak timber and Redwood grow in the vicinity.

I had heard many tales of the gambling prowess of Spanish women but had never seen one engaged at her profession before entering a public house at Napa. It is universal custom, as far as I have seen, for every public house to have a bar and at least one gambling table,

sometimes seven or eight. This woman was seated at a table, with her husband, dealing Monte. A great crowd of Spaniards, Americans, Mexicans and Indians were in town, celebrating the holiday, many of them gambling. The old Spaniard was relieving them of their cash pretty fast and when it came time for him to move on, he had more silver money than he could conveniently carry away so I traded him gold dust for eight hundred dollars of it and he paid me four per cent.

Christmas day dawned warm and pleasant, about like a May day in Illinois. Crowds had been drinking and carousing around firing guns the greater portion of the night and they continued their festivities throughout the day. But for me, it was the saddest yule tide of my life. Thousands of miles from my family, I had no acquaintance of more than a few days. In fact I had received no word from my family since leaving them in April nor any news from my home-town partners since the thirtieth of October and I was still scarcely able to walk. However I always try to partake of the good things of life as I journey along. So I attended a splendid dinner cooked up at one of the public places. There was good pig, potatoes, roast and stewed goose, venison, pies, puddings, pound cake, butter and wine; everything of the very best that this country affords. For this I paid two dollars.

On the twenty-sixth, I tried to hire someone to take me to Sonoma (a distance of only ten miles) but met with no great success. No one would take me by horseback for less than twenty dollars or by wagon for less than thirty-two. Rather than pay such highway robbery I bought a horse and rigging for one hundred and seventy-five dollars. I packed as much on him as I conveniently could and then

started out, jogging along over a beautiful country. Little of the ground appeared to be fit for cultivation but it was covered with an abundance of green grass and the bands of beautiful horses which literally swarmed over the hills and through the valleys were a delight to the eye.

I arrived at William Moore's (about one and one half miles from Sonoma) near dusk and stayed overnight. Mr. Moore migrated from Kentucky to Missouri and then came west. He is truly a hospitable man, kindly toward strangers. His wife is a real ambitious western woman, treats everyone well, works hard, and is one of the very few people that a little prosperity hasn't made a fool of.

Their place seemed more like home to me than any place where I have stopped since coming to this country. For the first time, in California, I ate cabbage and had plenty of milk and butter. Several persons were boarding there. Among them, a Baptist minister from Mobile, Alabama, named Lindsley, a gentleman of fine talents and education, who made very agreeable company.

Another specimen of humanity, boarding there, was a genuine fault finding, whining Bostonian. (And of all animals in human form he was the most egotistical. Nothing satisfied him unless it was exactly as it had been in Boston). Like many others, he had come to California to gather up fifty or a hundred thousand dollars in gold dust, having had no idea as to the amount of labor it would require to obtain it. He had spent all his money and was very unhappy about it. He began on me as soon as I was seated, stating all his grievances and blaming them on illness. Then he showered me with questions, asking me what he should eat; if this would harm him or that help him. I answered him as civilly as I could until I found out

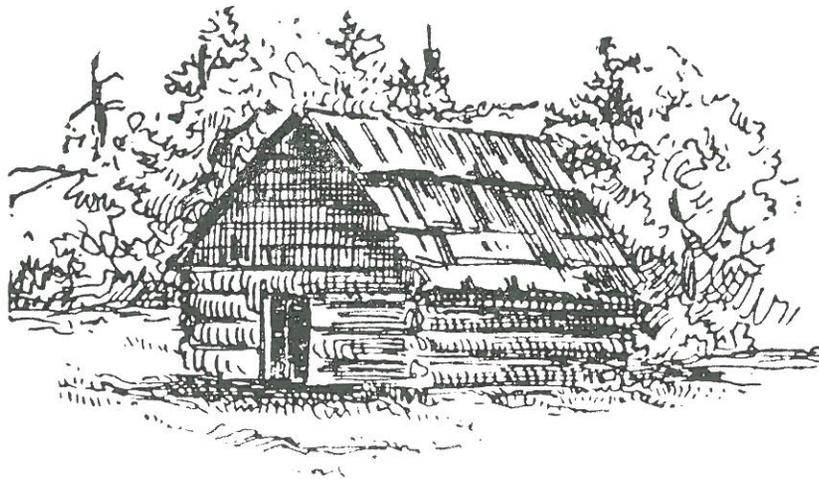
that nothing would quiet him. Then I told him bluntly that I was not a physician and that my advice to him was to go back to Boston where things were more congenial to him.

I met Vertrees in Sonoma and was saddened to hear of the death of Thomas A. Neel.

The company was camped about six miles outside of town and Vertrees escorted me there. Never in my life had I seen such an improvement in the appearance of a group of men. Not only were they better clothed but also sleek, well-fed and healthy as young stallions.

They served a supper of bread, coffee and venison. Two deer were hanging from a small tree nearby, killed on the mountain-side where plenty more were waiting.

They were living in a snug little house which they had built themselves and we passed the winter, there, very comfortably, at the same time making good wages in the city. At the time of my arrival, they had a contract with Ex-Governor Bogg of Missouri to finish a house for him. They were to receive eight hundred dollars for the job and it took two months for two men to complete it.



**S**ONOMA IS FORTY-FIVE MILES FROM, AND not on the main route to San Francisco. It is situated about one mile from the creek and fifteen miles inland from the northern shore of the Bay. The stream is navigable for small launches only as far as the embarcaders, which is about three miles from town.

The valley, itself, is sparsely covered with oak timber and the soil is fertile, but a great portion of it is gravelly. It is all covered with oats and clover clear up to the foot of the mountains. The mountains support a sparse covering of scrubby timber, below which grows heavy underbrush and excellent grass. While they are not the tallest mountains in California, some are of considerable height. The ravines which lead into them from both sides of the creek are set with good Redwood timber, valuable for fencing and building purposes.

Sonoma is one of the old Mission Establishments of California but there is now scarcely a mission building left standing, most of them having fallen into shapeless ruins. Some of the very heavy timbers which went into the five-foot thick walls are still lying about in a good state of preservation and the old mission bell is still standing among the debris. Occasionally an old Mexican rings it and instantly every Mexican, within hearing of it, removes his sombrero and prays. It does not matter how he is employed at the moment, even at the gambling table, he removes his headgear and mutters the prescribed prayer.

Most of the old buildings of this town were constructed

from adobe and were placed to surround a handsome plaza of about two hundred yards square. But now most of that beauty is gone, destroyed by subsequent builders who visualized in the plaza an easy source of clay for their adobes. There are now several very good frame buildings in the town and its vicinity, with others going up fast.

Of the many peach trees and fruitful vineyards which once abounded there, only a few remain and they are all at the mercy of the numerous herds of cattle which roam freely over the plain. The once friendly fences and protecting walls are crumbled and gone, providing them no protection now. Since the discovery of gold, little attention has been given to agriculture. Where once grew the choicest fruit not one vestige of it remains.

After I arrived in Sonoma, about the first of the year, we all worked partnership until about the twentieth of March. There was not much work by that time and things began to look dull. So John Chenoweth and Charles Vertrees struck off for themselves, continuing to work in town where they had good jobs. The balance of us remained together and with the exception of a few trifling jobs were idle for some time. Then James Chenoweth and Samuel Bradbury went to town, got a small job, bought a team and dropped off, leaving only Joseph Brown and myself unemployed. Finally, we bought a wagon and four yoke of oxen, which cost us one thousand and fifty dollars, and did some hauling, first for ourselves and then for hire. This kept us busy and profitably employed until the latter part of April.

We had intended to go to the Sacramento Diggings in the spring but the waters remained so high that it was impossible to get our teams through. About this time there

arose a great clamor about the richness of the Trinity Mines, discovered only last year. Several persons coming to Sonoma during the winter claimed that they had been making one hundred dollars a day, there, when they were forced to quit because of a lack of provisions. In the face of these flattering reports we changed all our plans and decided to go to the Trinity by all means.

An old Methodist preacher took it into his hypocritical head that he could get through with a team. He claimed that a man, named Buck, whom we all had met, had told him that the route was possible in this manner. Buck came from Trinity during the winter, waited at Sonoma until spring, and then went back by water through Sacramento. We finally let the old minister prevail upon us and organize a company of three wagons and twenty men. A large company preceded up with pack animals, among them were John Chenoweth and Charles Vertrees who had grown tired of just doing well in town and had decided to go to Trinity, make their fortune, be done with it and get home.

We followed Sonoma Creek to Russian River and made it quite well to its head. But confronting us there, we found two hundred and fifty miles of almost impassable mountains to be crossed before reaching Trinity. We decided to make an attempt at it and pushed on.

In the days that followed, it was my task to scout ahead and find the best route for the wagons to take. Frequently we reached spots where it took two days to find a way forward at all. During this time I was traveling on foot, where few white men had ever been, among savages, entirely naked and with intelligence little above that of monkeys. They showed no signs of hostility toward me; only curiosity. Many of them, at sight of me, ran and hid.

Others trotted along at my heels for hours, gibbering in their strange tongue.

We managed to get our wagons as far as Eel River by the fourth of June (We started on the thirtieth of April) but from there we could budge them no farther. So Joseph Jones, Henry Allen and I packed two horses and two oxen and pushed one, leaving Joseph Brown to bring the remainder. We traveled for fourteen days through the roughest mountains I ever saw and for several days we traveled on one snowy ridge where I imagine the snow must have been thirty feet deep.

About sixty miles from the mines we came to a road leading from Humboldt Bay. We had been on it only a short time when we met a small party returning from Trinity. They greeted us with the familiar old tune, "Nothing there boys. You had better turn back."

We were very discouraged but were determined to go ahead and have a look for ourselves. When we got there we found it about as we had been told. There was little activity. Those who were working were not making more than six to ten dollars a day which, here, is looked upon as a mere pittance. I prospected for several days then rode over to the Bay to see whether Brown had got through. I found him there with all the cattle but he had been forced to abandon the wagon.

I stayed two days at the Bay, then started back to the Trinity mines. Brown decided to stay at the Bay so I left one yoke of oxen with him, which he was fully entitled to.

William Moore joined me and we started out alone on the return trip, expecting trouble. Three white men had been wounded and several Indians killed along the road during the past few days and hostilities were considered as

fairly well started. The first day we passed an encampment where on the night before two mules had been killed and perhaps twenty men put to rout. A short distance farther we came to an encampment of ten men and passed the night with them. We were not molested and next day we moved on with our company increased to seven but with only three fire-arms amongst us. On the third day we met a party that had killed two Indians and burned their Rancherie which was near the road. As we were the first party to pass afterward, we expected them to attack us since they had a large settlement nearby. However the worst they did was set up a hideous howling on the mountainside as we passed.

The whites have had considerable trouble with them farther up the river. They steal or shoot arrows into the livestock at every opportunity. To retaliate for this the whites shoot every Indian on sight. I will relate a thing which took place a short distance above us. I would not tell it if I did not have sufficient proof of its veracity. I do so to show how far civilized men can degenerate in the wilderness. "The Indians stole some horses from a party of white men. The men went to the Indian Rancherie and found the men gone. They took the squaws back to camp, keeping them overnight and treating them in a disgraceful manner. Next morning they returned them to the Rancherie and murdered them."

During my absence Joe and Henry had sold the two oxen which I left with them for two hundred and ninety dollars and purchased a horse and a pack-saddle for one hundred and twenty-five. They had been digging and had made seventy-three dollars. They had decided to go about ninety miles farther north to the Chesty River and were

only awaiting my return to proceed. According to reports the strike there was very rich and a man could make his pile in a short time.

Although I had been deceived many times before, I thought I might as well try again. We sold two more oxen for three hundred dollars and set out. It proved to be the worst route that we had yet traveled. It took us nine days. Grass was scarce and there were long stretches without water. At one place the ground was so rough that one horse had to be left behind. Another one failed and we were forced to pay thirty-five dollars to have his load packed for two days by a mule. I was scalded badly on the second day out and my leg, from the knee down, was in a blister and so inflamed that I could hobble along only with difficulty.

When we arrived at Chesty it was the same old story, "Nothing here." Many had already gone back to Trinity while others were going back as soon as they recuperated their horses sufficiently to make it. Still others were preparing to go ahead about sixty miles to the Clameth River where rumor has it that gold lies in abundance. For our own part we were too exhausted to go either forward or back.

So the boys have purchased a "washer" and gone to digging and are doing very well, each making from eight to sixteen dollars every day. We found a patch of grass about three miles from the "diggings" where I am herding horses and cattle, our own and others. I have been camping here alone for more than a week, with no one closer than two miles of me. I am paid two dollars per head for herding the stock and am making between forty and fifty dollars a week. My leg is improving and I will be able to work soon.

We have had a hard time this summer. The trip,

overland, from the Missouri River to the first gold diggings last season was a holiday task compared to the round we have taken here, in California. Regardless of how far we go the gold is always a little farther on. Many of the men have given up hope of ever making a fortune and are now preparing to return home. While I never made such large calculations as some, I did believe I could better my condition by coming and I am still of that opinion. But it will take much to compensate me for the suffering that I have endured, both in body and in mind, in so long an absence from home.



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# COLOPHON



*The Owen Hannant "NUGGETS FROM '49", condensed from the diary of James M. Daigh, was printed in the workshop of Glen Adams, which is located in the sleepy country village of Fairfield, southern Spokane County in Washington state and one township removed from the Idaho line. This Ye Galleon edition was set in fourteen point Baskerville roman type by Sharyn Brown, using a model 7300 Editwriter computer photsetter. Camera-darkroom work was by Tami K. Van Wyk using a model 660C DS twenty-four-inch camera and a 25-inch LogE automatic film processing machine. The film was stripped by Dale LaTendresse. The sheets were printed by Jeff Crabtree using a 28-inch model KORS Heidelberg press. The sheets were folded by Tami Van Wyk using a three-stage 22x28 Baum folding machine. Assembly was by the Ye Galleon crew. Paper stock is seventy pound Linweave Textra, Felt Finish. Indexing was by Dale LaTendresse. This was a fun project. We had no special difficulty with the work.*

