

## MY OVERLAND TRIP TO CALIFORNIA IN 1852

BY COL. L. A. NORTON

(Editor's Note — The articles by Col. Norton in our last issue met with such great approval with our readers that we have decided to reprint Col. Norton's experiences from the time he left Illinois until he settled in California. The following article is taken from his own manuscript entitled "My Life and Adventures" and was written in 1886.)

"I had two four-horse wagons, and our party organized, calling ourselves the "Rough and Ready Company," of which I was elected captain. We pushed along all right to the Missouri River without any serious difficulty. But on arriving at Traders Point, where we were to cross the river, we found an immense crowd waiting transportation across the stream. There was but one small scow, which would only convey a single wagon at a time, and at that rate it would take about six weeks to ferry the crowd across the river. But the man (Stokes by name) who owned the boat entered into an agreement with us that he would, with our aid, build another boat, and my company was to be crossed first.

There was also a large Missourian company with ox-teams waiting, and I noticed that they were also working on a new boat, and at length it leaked out that Stokes was playing us falsely, and had made the same promise to the Missourians that he had to us. Ours was but a small company, thirteen wagons, and we said nothing, but kept to work. The boat was completed and launched, and before it was through its oscillations I sprang into the stern and seized the rudder. My men, who understood the situation, sprang into

new boat, when Red-shirt gave me the line. Somehow his foot slipped and he fell on the side of the boat. The next moment I felt some one buckling a belt around me, and I discovered a revolver in one side and a knife in the other. I raised the revolver, and fully persuaded the crowd to stand back until the boys could run the wagon on the boat.

As my red-shirted friend stepped overboard, I looked around to see if I was alone in the muss, when I saw Sponable and J. L. Mack, who were both powerful men. As I looked around, they exclaimed, "Give them hell, Cap, we are here." I stood to the helm all that night, and the next day until ten o'clock, when our wagons were all landed. I then restored the boat to Stokes, and paid him a dollar apiece for ferriage of the wagons, which I should not have done, as his duplicity got us all into trouble.

Now all went well with us until, far out on the plains, they began to find fault with me as captain of the train. And it was not long until there was shot a man, woman, or child but what knew more about encamping and camp-life generally than I did. There was constant quarreling and bickering among them, with innumerable lies, which prejudiced them one against another until the best of friends were ready to fight. At length we overtook some Dutchmen, with several head of cattle, and the Indians were hanging on their flanks. These men, for some cause, had been separated from their company; I have forgotten how it happened, but I saw that the Indians intended to rob and probably murder them. I told them that I

dians had swung to the rear of our company, thus completely hemming us in. I saw that they meant mischief, as their bows were all strung and the wipers were out of their rifles.

White's team was in advance, and some of the chiefs stopped him, and said they wanted toll for going through their country. White gave them five or six dollars and they let him go on, which he did, and kept going. The next one was Fred Parker. The Indian said, "Me chief, me want money." Parker replied, pointing to me, "That is our chief, go to him if you want money." I was dressed in uniform as a United States officer, and rode with my sword on, and my pistols in the holsters. I did this at the request of the company, as the Indians had great respect for army officers. The chief started to make his demands on me, when I drew my sword and charging to the rear ordered the Indians, who were closing in upon us to leave the road and take to the river bank, when their spokesman, in fair English, told me that they had as good a right to travel the road as I had.

At this I called to the company in advance to seize their rifles, and form in line. At the same time I whipped out a pistol, rode right up to the Indians, and told them to leave the road or I would fire. They reluctantly moved off to the river. I then charged back to the front and met the chief, who handed me a paper (extorted, doubtless, from some one) stating that he was a good chief. I threw his paper on the ground, told him we had given them corn in payment for the right to go through their country

were not left on the desert to feed the wolves and buzzards.

We had passed the sink of the Carson River, and were proceeding up that stream, when we came to an encampment in a very pleasant valley, and on inquiry learned that it was a relief train sent out from California to aid the immigration. We encamped but a short distance from the relief train, and I walked over to the camp to make some inquiries regarding their object and the nature of their supplies. I was soon introduced to Gen. James Estel, who I learned was first in command. I found him very affable, and apparently ready and willing to do all in his power to aid immigrants. The supplies he informed me, were intended for those who had no money to purchase what they needed.

He then introduced me to Gen. J. W. Denver, General Price, and some others holding subordinate positions. I then informed him that we could not claim to be without funds, yet we needed some articles for the use of some of our party who were sick, for which I was ready and willing to pay. General Estel said, "We cannot take pay, but that is all right, make out your requisition." I said, "General, shall I make my requisition in bulk or by ration?" He replied, "Oh, make it out in detail." I went to camp, and made a regular requisition in accordance with the regulations of the United States army, as follows: Twenty men, ten days' tea, 200; twenty men, ten days' coffee, 200; twenty men, ten days' sugar, 200—and so on until the requisition was filled. I chose William Brophay, a shrewd fellow, and told him to take a team and go down to the



first. There was also a large Missourian company with ox-teams waiting, and I noticed that they were also working on a new boat; and at length it leaked out that Stokes was playing us falsely, and had made the same promise to the Missourians that he had to us. Ours was but a small company, thirteen wagons, and we said nothing, but kept to work. The boat was completed and launched, and before it was through its oscillations I sprang into the stern and seized the rudder. My men, who understood the situation, sprang into the boat with their poles, and I gave the order to shove down to a second landing (only a few yards) where one of our wagons was ready to come aboard. All was so well arranged that before the other party was aware, our first wagon was on the boat, and we ran across the river and landed it. Returning, we ran up to the landing to receive another wagon, when to my surprise there was a big Missouri wagon, with a crowd of men ready to run it aboard. They had driven our men and wagon aside intending to put their company across ahead of ours. The wagon contained sixty hundred weight of corn, for feed on the plains, and as it came rushing down the bank I exclaimed, "Push off, boys!" They did so, and as the boat moved out of the way the wagon plunged into the river.

I called to our boys on the bank to bring a wagon to the other landing. They did so; but before we got it on the boat, a crowd from the Missouri company came to take possession of the boat, and a powerful-looking young man, who claimed that I, as commissary, had issued him rations in Mexico, was at the head. I took my position near the bow of the boat, and told the parties to keep off; that we had an arrangement with Stokes that we should be the first to cross on the

knew more about encamping and camp-life generally than I did. There was constant quarrelling and bickering among them, with innumerable lies, which prejudiced them one against another until the best of friends were ready to fight. At length we overtook some Dutchmen, with several head of cattle, and the Indians were hanging on their flanks. These men, for some cause, had been separated from their company; I have forgotten how it happened, but I saw that the Indians intended to rob and probably murder them. I told them that I would regulate our travel to their pace until they could fall in with some other company, or to a place where it was safe for them to encamp until they should be overtaken by ox-teams.

This proposition met with a most stubborn opposition by my company. Some asserted that I was crazy, to take those Dutchmen on my back, and others proposed to depose me and elect a man by the name of White, who had crossed the plains before. I was indignant to think that my company wanted to leave the unprotected men to their fate, and told them to go on, if they were disposed to do so, but I would remain with the Dutchmen and share their fate.

We continued our journey for two days, when I think they had decided to elect White that night, and the next day to push on and leave me and the Dutchmen. But about noon we came to Shell Creek, where we found about three hundred Indians gathered on the bank of the Platte River. We had to cross Shell Creek near its junction with the river, where there was quite a grove of cottonwoods along the banks of the creek. The principal band of Indians was on the west side of the creek, between where we had to cross and the river, while the squaws were further along on the bank of the river. About seventy or eighty In-

me that they had as good a right to travel the road as I had.

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We continued our weary march across the plains with the usual experiences that have been written and rewritten, and in the course of time we reached Carson Valley, poor and jaded—that is to say, those of us who

were sick, for which I was ready and willing to pay. General Estel said, "We cannot take pay, but that is all right, make out your requisition." I said, "General, shall I make my requisition in bulk or by ration?" He replied, "Oh make it out in detail." I went to camp and made a regular requisition in accordance with the regulations of the United States Army, as follows: Twenty men, ten days' tea, 200; twenty men, ten days' coffee, 200; twenty men, ten days' sugar, 200—and so on until the requisition was filled. I chose William Brophay, a shrewd fellow, and told him to take a team and go down to the supply camp and give my requisition to General Estel and mark what occurred. In about two hours Brophay returned, and made his report as follows:

"I presented your requisition to General Estel as you directed. He took it, and commenced reading. 'Twenty men, ten days' tea, total two hundred pounds,' and so on through the requisition, reading all pounds. Finally the old general said, 'I don't understand this, take it to General Denver.' I handed it to General Denver, who it seems was issuing commissary, and he read it the same as General Estel,—instead of number of rations, as carried out, he read it all pounds. But they were puzzled to know why you had put all two hundred pounds—tea, coffee, pickles, and potatoes. They called in General Price; he read it the same. They finally said to me, 'Is your captain a military man?' I informed them he was; that he had served almost fourteen months in Mexico, and then added, 'I think the captain intends the two hundred at the right hand as the total number of rations, and not pounds.' General Estel said, 'Ah! yes, yes, I understand it, that's all right.' General Denver, issue the rations."

General Denver did issue the rations,

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# MY OVERLAND TRIP TO CALIFORNIA IN 1852

(Continued from Page 10)

In addition, I received a very polite note from General Estel, saying that they had issued on my requisition, but they were sorry that, owing to their limited means, they were not able to fill it. And now the cream of the joke is, they had issued at least four times what my requisition called for, thus proving to my satisfaction that the military lights of California, whatever they might be in other respects, did not know the value of a regulation ration. In after time I had lots of fun with Estel regarding the commissary department of his expedition for the relief of immigrants on the plains, in 1852. But the next year, in Sacramento City, we compromised the ration business. I was never to tell the story on him, and he was to treat whenever we met.

We rested a few days where we met the relief train, and continued our journey. Nothing of importance occurred until we reached the lower end of Carson Valley, I think it was the first day out from Mormon Gulch, when I got about the greatest fright of my life. We found several camps in the valley where there were wounded men, whose wounds had been inflicted by Indians in their attacks on immigrants. From them we learned that the Indians were very hostile in the valley, and also learned that the attacks had been made from the willows and timber growing along the banks of the river.

Now, the only grass for our stock was in the valley lying along the river, and the stock must have feed; we were compelled to let our teams graze there, they would starve. We turned them about sunset to graze for the night, when I called for volunteers to lead the stock next to the river. I could not find a man who was willing to take that dangerous position. I finally told the men that I would take my post myself. Accordingly I rode to the spot and continued to look after the stock, and the

by my men on having my scalp-lock preserved, but the joke was too good to keep, and in a few days I related my adventure, which caused great merriment in camp.

We continued our journey to the upper end of the valley, where there were some settlers. Here I found Captains Bolch and Parker, with a drove of cattle which they had brought across the plains; and they had encamped to rest the stock. I made an arrangement with them to leave my teams and wagons in their care, and took my riding-horse and joined a company of horsemen to cross the mountains to California by way of old Emigrant Canon, where hundreds of wagons had passed. And such a road! Many places the wagons had to be lifted over big boulders, three or four feet high. After getting through the canon proper, we reached a lovely valley, through which a beautiful mountain stream flowed, one of the sources of Carson River. The valley was a regular amphitheater, the mountain walls reaching nearly three-fourths of the way around it. All was green and beautiful in the valley, while the lofty range that surrounds it was capped in perpetual snow.

I wandered up a small stream at the east end of the valley, where I discovered immense deposits of marble. The marble boulders in the head of the stream had been washed for ages by the water as it had been poured upon them by the rushing mountain torrent, until they had received a polish that could not be surpassed by the most ingenious workman, bringing to view all their inherent beauties. Whether the quarry has since been utilized or not, I have never learned. From this place we wended our way up a steep mountain until we reached the summit of the Sierras. We had passed the summit but a short distance when we came into an immense field of small red flowers, many of them just peeping up through the snow. I mention this because these hardy little plants were the only things save the

prior. This is rather a hard story, but I know it to be a fact. I saw the mess he had made by scattering crumbs, and also the print of his immense feet in the soft earth, as well as the storekeeper that he did not awake while old bruin was taking his meal.

This may strike the eye of some one who was present at the time, as many beside myself had ocular demonstration of the fact. It occurred about the first of September, 1852.

Nothing further worthy of note occurred and I arrived safely in old "Hangtown" (now Placerville). Of course at that day I thought of nothing but money, and I firmly expected, with my superior genius that I would make the rivers and gulches yield up their treasures in untold thousands. But there was something to be done. My teams were yet in Carson Valley and I must get them over the mountains, and dispose of them before finally settling down. Accordingly, after selling my "akalied" horse, and purchasing what I supposed to be a fresh one, I prepared to resume my travels.

(Continued next month)

Hugh Brown, who died in San Francisco, Feb. 6, 1826, at the age of 80 years, was one of the few Pony Express riders who refused to carry a gun.

Sept. 9th, 1850, California was admitted to the Union. Just eighty-four years ago this month.

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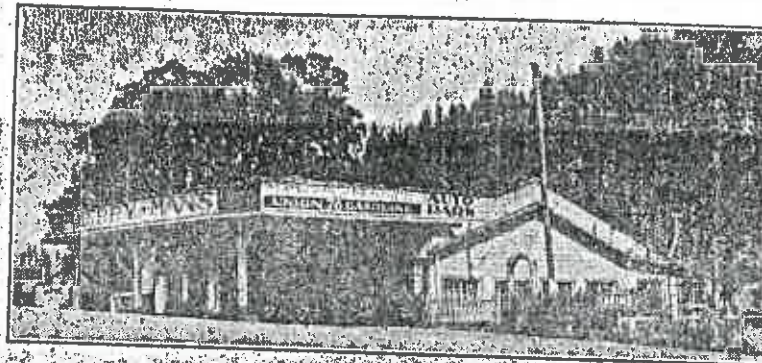


Merry-Man's Camp Ground and Service Station



had been made from the willows and timber growing along the banks of the river. The only grass for our stock in the valley lying along the river, the stock must have feed; we were compelled to let our teams graze there or they would starve. We turned them about sunset to graze for the night when I called for volunteers to guard the stock next to the river. I could not find a man who was willing to take that dangerous position. I finally told the men that I would take the post myself. Accordingly I retreated to the spot and continued to fight between the stock and the Indians with my holster pistols. The Indians were scattered along the valley for about half a mile, and I continued to march up and down between them and the brush until midnight. In making my beat I returned to the river end, where I found that some of the horses were close to the edge of the brush. I went around to start them back when all of a sudden I saw the willows commence shaking and bending right in front of me. My first thought, of course, was Indians. I cocked my pistols, presented them at the point of commotion, and commenced running backwards, expecting momentarily to feel the point of an arrow. Presently I struck my heel against a little hillock and keeled over on the ground. I did not attempt to rise, but kept my eyes steadily fixed on the brush. But the shaking of the brush soon stopped, and I saw one of my horses walking out on to the open ground. In an instant I recognized the cause of my fright. To the horse was attached a long lariat, which had got caught in the willows, causing the commotion. I got up, and after thinking over my ludicrous position, I had to laugh over the farce, but thought I would keep it to myself. The next morning I was congratulated

by the water as it had been poured upon them by the rushing mountain torrent, until they had received a polish that could not be surpassed by the most ingenious workman, bringing to view all their inherent beauties. Whether the quarry has since been utilized or not, I have never learned. From this place we wended our way up a steep mountain until we reached the summit of the Sierras. We had passed the summit but a short distance when we came into an immense field of small red flowers, many of them just peeping up through the snow. I mention this because these hardy little plants were the only things, save the mountain forests, that gave any evidence of vegetable life to relieve the eye in this desolate waste. We now commenced descending the mountain by an easy grade towards the Pacific, and that night reached Leak Springs, where we encamped with a large crowd of immigrants, all bound for the valleys in California. This was the point I had reached in 1850, when I was compelled to return, owing to a family of friends having lost a husband and father by death. I have omitted reference to that trip in this history, as there were but few events worth noting, and I have designated to record only the most remarkable events in my life. As already stated, at Leak Springs we encamped for the night, with many other immigrants. There was a station at this place, a mere booth of brush and shakes. Under the counter and about one foot from the top was a shelf, upon which was a large cheese and many other things, and under this was the proprietor's sleeping bunk, or rather, a nest. Now at that time the western slope of the mountains was filled with grizzly bears; and during the night a large grizzly came into the place, ate up the big cheese, and made off, without awaking the pro-



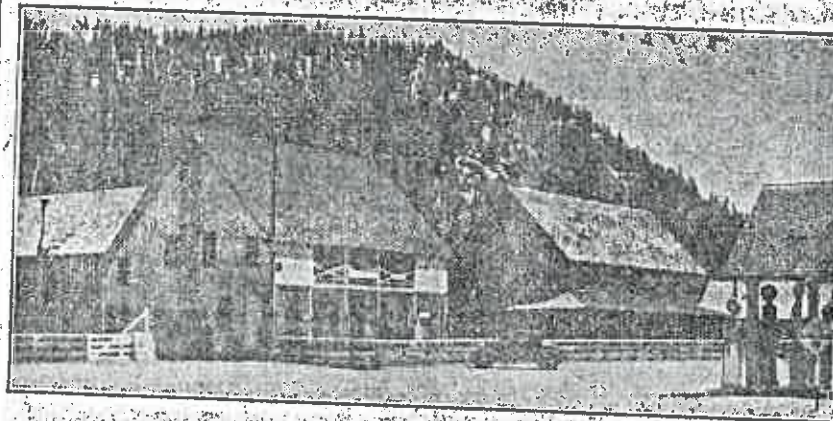
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## MY OVERLAND TRIP TO CALIFORNIA IN 1852

BY COL. L. A. NORTON

(Continued from last month)

The reader will remember that I incidentally mentioned having met Gen. J. W. Denver in Carson Valley. After my arrival in Placerville, I became more intimately acquainted with him. He was at that time smarting under the effect of the duel between himself and young Nelson, editor of the "Alta California," which resulted in the death of the latter gentleman.

When I spoke of having to return to Carson Valley, he also expressed an anxiety to make a trip across the mountains; and it was finally agreed that he should return to San Francisco to enlist a party of friends who he thought would like to go along, and among them was a young lawyer, whose name (I think) was Snyder. He was a man of great promise, but was fast going to a drunkard's grave, and the excursion was as much to get him sobered up as for any other purpose. We had set the fourth day of July as the time for leaving Placerville.

We were going to cross by the Johnson Cut-off, a mere bridle trail across the mountains, where even the fallen timber was not cut from the trail. The entire route was an unbroken wilderness inhabited only by grizzly bears, California lions, and wild Indians.

Well, the day arrived for starting, but the night before I had received a line from Denver saying that his party could not get ready for some time to come. But I had made full preparations for the trip, purchased what I supposed to be a fresh pony, got my blankets, and a little sack of provisions, revolvers, and some hooks and lines. Thus equipped, I could not wait, as my horse would soon "eat his head off" in those days; and, besides, I was anxious for my

him but my blankets and saddle, and we made a few miles only before the sun went down and darkness came creeping over us. We were threading our way through a dense forest of lofty pines, redwood, and mountain cedar, whose tops reached some three hundred feet into the air, and in the gray light giving a dense gloom to all surroundings, but at length I thought I saw an opening through the trees to the left of the trail. I led my horse in that direction, and soon came to a creek with several acres of open ground, and found an abundance of food for my used-up horse. I removed the blankets and saddle, and tied him where he could get all he wanted of food and water.

I now began to look about for a place to sleep. I found a felled tree about five feet in diameter, with large slabs of bark that had fallen from the log. I also found some dry poles and placed them one end on the ground with the other leaning against the log, then I laid the bark on the poles, thus making for myself a shelter. I had plenty of matches, and could have built a fire; but then came the question, was it policy to do that? It was true it would keep off wild beasts; but, on the other hand, it would attract the attention of Indians if they were about, and I chose to risk savage beasts rather than savage men. So, with my saddle for a pillow, I crept into my trail shelter, and placing my revolver under my head, was soon in a sound sleep, from which I was awakened about ten or eleven o'clock by the cracking of brush. I grasped my pistols and listened; it seemed to be approaching me, I sat up, watching further developments, when, all of a sudden something larger than

known as Strawberry Valley, where I got out my fishing tackle and grasshoppers, and soon caught trout enough for a good meal. I built a fire, and roasted and ate trout until I felt like a new man. They were excellent, although I had no salt for them.

Between two and three o'clock in the afternoon, I again resumed my journey, the trail following up the river; but, as before, my progress was very slow, sometimes leading and sometimes driving my horse before me.

About an hour before sundown, finding good grass for my horse, and a chasm in the rocks for my own nest, I concluded to camp for the night. So I cut a fishing pole, went down to the stream and took out enough trout for my supper, which I roasted as before. By this time it had grown quite dark. My den was between a rift in the rocks, about three feet in width, and some ten or twelve feet long, the bottom being a natural receptacle for leaves and small twigs, which had accumulated to such a depth as to make me a nice, soft bed. I now commenced to roll in a quantity of loose rocks to fill the chasm at my head, which was about five feet deep, and then to cover the top with green brush, which I cut with my Bowie-knife. When my nest was completed it was quite dark, and I seated myself upon a rock to survey the scene, which was the most gloomy (yet in some respects sublime) that I ever gazed upon. The eye could not reach the lofty heads of the monarchs of the forest that surrounded me; in front of me, not fifty yards distant, were three pyramids, to which Cleopatra's Needle would be as a cambric needle to a crow-bar, rising abruptly from the valley to a height

over four feet long (which is a good size, even for the mountains).

Again I was under way, and about noon I crossed the river at what is now known as Slippery Ford, and followed the trail along the north bank of a small creek (which empties into the river) for several miles. As I was leading my horse along I saw ahead of me some small animal coming in the path directly toward me. I halted, drew my revolver, and when it got within about thirty feet of me I fired, shooting it through the head. It fell in the path; I hastened forward and discovered it to be a large groundhog. It would weigh, when dressed, ten or twelve pounds. I soon removed the entrails, letting the skin remain on to keep the meat from getting dirty, and hung him on the saddle to balance my string of fish, then who was happier than I?

But it soon became camping time again. There was plenty of grass on the banks of the creek, and in looking around I soon found a long, hollow tree, which at some time had been burned out at the roots, leaving a doorway into which I could crawl. Here I resolved to pass the night. As the night closed in it became very cold, as I was then high up in the mountains, in fact, upon the summit of the Sierras; and in order to keep warm, was compelled to build a fire in front of my hole in the tree, in defiance of the savages. But I very properly reasoned that they would not be likely to camp where it was so cold.

I found my scalp all right in the morning, and my horse where I had left him, and, after breakfast, I again pushed forward. But before noon, I met some packers and purchased



timber was not cut from the trail. The entire route was an unbroken wild, inhabited only by grizzly bears, California lions, and wild Indians.

Well, the day arrived for starting, but the night before I had received a line from Denver saying that his party could not get ready for some time to come. But I had made full preparations for the trip, purchased what I supposed to be a fresh pony, got my blankets, and a little sack of provisions, revolvers, and some hooks and lines. Thus equipped, I could not wait, as my horse would soon "eat his head off" in those days, and, besides, I was anxious for my teams. Consequently, I set out on my journey alone. At about twelve o'clock I crossed the American River (south fork) at Martlett's Bridge, that route.

I commenced ascending the mountain on the opposite side and had nearly reached the summit, when I met a lot of my acquaintances who had crossed the plains with me to Carson Valley, and were footing it over the mountains. Their provisions had given out, and they were nearly starved. Well, I opened my provision kit, and before their appetites were satisfied, they and myself had exhausted my slender store. I then took leave of them, and started on my lonely trail, with nearly one hundred miles of unbroken forest before me, without an ounce of provisions, my revolver and hooks and lines being my only dependence where to gain a sustenance. I jogged along on my pony, as I supposed all right, when all of a sudden he gave out. Although he was fat and apparently in good condition, he refused to carry me further, and would have lain down and I not dismounted. I soon discovered that he had been recently alkalied, and hence the deceptive appearance. I let him rest a little then, and drove him before me, with nothing on

him, plenty of matches, and could have built a fire, but then came the question, was it policy to do that? It was true it would keep off wild beasts, but, on the other hand, it would attract the attention of Indians if they were about, and I chose to risk savage beasts rather than savage men. So, with my saddle for a pillow, I crept into my trail shelter, and placing my revolver under my head, was soon in a sound sleep, from which I was awakened about ten or eleven o'clock by the cracking of brush. I grasped my pistols and listened; it seemed to be approaching me. I sat up, watching further developments, when, all of a sudden something larger than a dog sprang upon the log about four feet from me. I leveled my pistol and fired, when the beast did some good running. I did not then know but afterwards ascertained that it was a California lion. But that shot rang through the little valley and far into the mountains, and if there were any Indians about they would be sure to hear the report and perhaps see the flash. Hence, it was necessary to change my quarters, which I did by crawling under the lee of another fallen tree, not so good a place as the first where I spent the rest of the night in peace.

Next morning I was up, with the sun, saddled my pony, which had had a good feed, tied by blankets to the saddle, and once more finding the trail, prosecuted my journey. I could travel only at a pace of about two miles an hour, on account of the horse (which I wished to save), but I trudged on until about nine o'clock, when I felt very hungry, having had no supper and no breakfast as yet. In an opening among the pines, where the sun's rays penetrated, I found some grasshoppers, which I pocketed and went my way. About noon I came upon the bank of the south fork of the American River, at what is now

to roll in a quantity of loose rocks, to fill the chasm at my head, which was about five feet deep, and then to cover the top with green brush, which I cut with my Bowie-knife. When my nest was completed it was quite dark, and I seated myself upon a rock to survey the scene, which was the most gloomy yet in some respects sublime that I ever gazed upon. The eye could not reach the lofty heads of the monarchs of the forest that surrounded me; in front of me, not fifty yards distant, were three pyramids, to which Cleopatra's Needle would be as a cambric needle to a crow-bar, rising abruptly from the valley to a height of seven or eight hundred feet, while every brush and old stump of a tree was transformed into an Indian, and every rock that rose above the surface wore the garb of a grizzly bear or a crouching panther, and the sense of loneliness that crept over me called to mind Cowper's verse—

"Oh, solitude! where are the charms  
That sages have found in thy face?  
Better live in the midst of alarms  
Than reign in this horrible place."

Nevertheless, I got a good night's sleep, and was out early in the morning with my rod and line, pulling out the finny denizens of the stream until I had plenty of provisions for my onward trip. I got my breakfast, and about nine o'clock went back to my grotto to get my blankets and prepare for my journey. But on my approach I discovered that my possession was disputed and my claim had been jumped, for within three feet of the entrance lay, coiled in the sun, a huge rattlesnake, which warned me on my approach. Here was an enemy I had not even thought of, but since that time, in traversing those same mountains, I found them plenty large, and vicious. I attacked my enemy with a club; the contest was short, and I was soon in peaceable possession of my den. The snake was something

which at some time had been burned out at the roots, leaving a doorway into which I could crawl. Here I resolved to pass the night. As the night closed in it became very cold, as I was then high up in the mountains, in fact, upon the summit of the Sierras; and in order to keep warm, was compelled to build a fire in front of my hole in the tree, in defiance of the savages. But I very properly reasoned that they would not be likely to camp where it was so cold.

I found my scalp all right in the morning, and my horse where I had left him, and, after breakfast, I again pushed forward. But before noon, I met some packers and purchased a piece of salt, half as large as a hen's egg, for fifty cents. Then I was fixed. A couple of miles farther brought me to where I commenced my descent from the mountains; and before sundown I was in Lake Valley, and across the first summit. Here I met a lot of immigrants packing through. They had plenty of crackers, but no meat. Hence a bargain was soon struck; my groundhog was put in the camp-kettle and stewing in short order, and we all had a feast that night. They cooked the most of my trout for breakfast, I reserving a few for an emergency and taking my pockets full of crackers.

I camped the next night at the lower end of Lake Valley, and the day after reached Mormon Station, via Dyer's Ravine, in Carson Valley, where I joined a band of old mountaineers, who extended to me the right hand of fellowship and considered me duly initiated. Since that time I have scoured those mountains most effectually, and when Green Yarnell and myself wanted to start a grizzly bear from his lair, we always went to North Peavine for him; and when I have shown my first night's habitation alongside of the old log to the boys, they always declared that I must have been hunting

(Continued on Page 11)



## MY OVERLAND TRIP TO CALIFORNIA IN 1852

(Continued from Page 10)

grizzlies, as it was the worst place in the mountains for grizzly bears.

On arriving in Carson Valley, I again met my old friends Bolch and Parker; found that my teams had sufficiently improved to be able to start in a few days on the return to Placerville with my wagons. One day as Captain Parker and myself were talking with one of the men who owned the toll-bridge across the south branch of Carson River, away up near Emigrant Canon, some immigrant wagons came up where we were conversing. The bridgeman stepped up to one of the immigrants and said, "I am one of the owners of the toll-bridge about five miles ahead, and I want you to pay your toll here." The man hesitated a little and then, while taking out his purse, asked the tollman how he should know but that he might find a man again at the gate who would demand toll. The fellow assured him that he would find no one at the bridge, as the Indians were troublesome in that vicinity, and the owners had left and come to the valley. There being two travelers together, the other man asked, "Have you a charter for your bridge?" The bridgeman replied in the affirmative, when the immigrant paid his toll and went on.

As they left, the tollman addressed himself to Parker, saying, "If those fellows had asked me to show my charter (clapping his hand on his revolver, suggestively) I would have shown it to them." Presently the fellow went away, when I remarked to Parker, "When I start across the mountains with my teams, I will make that gentleman show his charter, or else I will not pay to cross his bridge." In a few days I was ready to start, having Bolch and Parker with their pack in the valley, to follow in a short time.

Joseph Stone drove one of my teams and a young man, whose name I do not remember, drove the others. We

immigrant ford? I want you to remove your nuisance at once, or I shall drive over it." He again replied that I could not cross the bridge without paying toll.

I then stepped forward and pitched the pole into the stream and called out, "Drive on, boys," I remained with our two heroes, one of whom said that if they knew my name they would prosecute me; that I had taken the advantage of them and forced the bridge by superior numbers. In reply I said, "I do not think I have much advantage of you; there are two of you and but one of me, as my teamsters are entirely beyond my reach for aid. So I do not see where the advantage comes in." But," said I "listen to me; in this matter I have not acted without an object. So far as my name is concerned, you shall have that." I handed him my card, saying, "I shall be found in Placerville whenever you want me, and now for my reasons." I then referred to the boast of some days before to Parker, about showing their charter, and also told them what I had said to Parker regarding their charter; and clapping my hand on my pistol, I said, "I always carry a pass for all such charters as yours, and wish you to learn this lesson: it is the easiest thing in the world for a man to be mistaken. You undoubtedly can boast of being 'old forty-niners', and imagine that all the immigrants are a set of submissive cowards; but to rectify that mistake, I want you to distinctly recollect that I am an immigrant!"

During our controversy, a couple of packers came along and crossed the bridge, going to Carson Valley; of course they met the immigrant trains and told them that the bridge had been forced, and after that no one would pay toll. The next day the fellows burned their bridge and left, and I never saw them afterward. But, by the way, when I came up to the wagons, which were awaiting me about two hundred yards distant, I found

would get up and air his eloquence in a gambling hell, warning the occupants of their wicked ways, and if he happened to take the crowd, he would reap a rich harvest for the labor thus bestowed. I was intimate with one of that class, who often remarked to me that preaching was easier than handling the pick and shovel."

## GOOD INJUN

(Continued from Page 7)

When he told the following incidents, Billy Merrill's eyes twinkled and he laughed good-naturedly.

"White man gave Injuns powder caps for gun and Injun try to make beads out of them—don't know what it's for—he bores hole in middle to string them and piff! It goes off with a loud bang and scares Injun—want no more beads.

"Some Injuns give 'em sweet roots that they dig out of ground. White man taste 'em, like 'em and say 'How much?' Injun no understand so white man give Injun some money—four bits. Injun don't know white man money and think it good to eat. He try to bite it—pretty hard, not very good to eat he thinks. White man laughs.

"One white man had bacon and gave it to Injun. Injun sees hair on bacon and thinks it is meat from human so throws it away."

When talking to Billy Merrill it was easy to look through his eyes into the past. His kind eyes seemed to reflect the spirit of the real Indian at heart, who wistfully longed for happier days. What a reliable source of Indian lore has gone to the Happy Hunting Ground with Billy Merrill!

The primitive Indian made the most of what was at hand, using many wild plants for food. A root plant, similar to our potato, the "caukshee" was gathered and cooked by the Indian women. The wild turnip "zelebeilu" also was used. It was known to be poisonous if eaten raw.

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TO USE  
POSTAGE STAMPS  
1, 2 or 3 cent  
stamps will do

—:—  
Pony Express Courier  
Placerville, Calif.

As they left, the tollman addressed  
Parker, saying, "If those  
fellows had asked me to show my  
charter (clapping his hand on his re-  
volver, suggestively): I would have  
shown it to them." Presently the fel-  
lows went away, when I remarked to  
Parker: "When I start across the  
mountains with my teams, I will make  
that gentleman show his charter, or  
else I will not pay to cross his bridge."  
In a few days I was ready to start,  
leaving Bolch and Parker with their  
stock in the valley, to follow in a  
short time.

Joseph Stone drove one of my teams  
and a young man, whose name I do  
not remember, drove the others. We  
went on until we reached the afore-  
said bridge, or rather two of them  
close together, when my boastful toll-  
taker came out and demanded his toll.  
I said, "Sir, have you a charter auth-  
orizing you to receive toll for the  
crossing of these bridges?" He hesi-  
tated a moment, and then said, "No,  
I have not." "Then," said I, "I will  
not pay to cross." At this his partner  
stepped out of the toll-house. The  
first one pulled out a long spring  
dick-knife and commenced whittling  
as he talked, leaning up against a long  
pole that laid in two crotches, making  
a barrier to prevent driving across the  
bridge. He said he had no charter;  
that the bridge was not in California,  
as the lines had not been run. I asked,  
"Why, then, did you not get a charter  
from Bringham Young? I have been  
recognizing his charters ever since we  
reached Utah." I then peremptorily  
demanded, "Get away from there and  
take down that pole, so I can cross,  
or I will pitch it into the river." He  
replied, "You must not touch that  
pole, and you cannot cross this bridge  
unless you pay your toll, as this is our  
property; you shall not interfere with  
it, and we will defend it." I retorted,  
"Look below your bridge; do you not  
see that it is placed exactly over the

forty-niners', and imagine that all the  
immigrants are a set of submissive  
cowards; but to rectify that mistake,  
I want you to distinctly recollect that  
I am an immigrant!"

During our controversy, a couple of  
packers came along and crossed the  
bridge, going to Carson Valley; of  
course they met the immigrant trains  
and told them that the bridge had  
been forced; and after that no one  
would pay toll. The next day the fel-  
lows burned their bridge and left, and  
I never saw them afterward. But, by  
the way, when I came up to the wa-  
gons, which were awaiting me about  
two hundred yards distant, I found  
my friend Joe Stone with my old rifle  
cocked and a bead drawn on the  
bridgemen. When I asked for an ex-  
planation, he said, "I did not know  
but they would shoot you as you walk-  
ed away from them, and I did not in-  
tend to allow that."

We proceeded on our journey, and  
in time, without further adventure, we  
reached Placerville, which, outside of  
San Francisco, was then the town of  
the State. The streets were crowded  
with people of all classes, and all na-  
tionalities, and all professions. Men  
of industrious habits were generally in  
the mines, and those who lived by  
wits were looking for a chance to  
make money by adapting themselves  
to anything that might be learned  
easy. Lawyers found a very fair field  
for their wits in defending mining  
suits, under the district mining laws,  
and physicians were generally employ-  
ed in their legitimate profession. But  
the preachers; ah! there came the  
rub; what should they do? There were  
no churches; at that day the body was  
to be cared for, but the soul was sel-  
dom thought of. Hence, like black  
Othello, they had to own their occupa-  
tion "gone." And I have seen many a  
divine change the pulpit for the monte  
table or the faro bank, while another

When talking to Billy Merrill it was  
easy to look through his eyes into the  
past. His kind eyes seemed to reflect  
the spirit of the real Indian at heart,  
who wistfully longed for happier days.  
What a reliable source of Indian lore  
has gone to the Happy Hunting  
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The primitive Indian made the most  
of what was at hand, using many wild  
plants for food. A root plant, similar  
to our potato, the "caukshee" was  
gathered and cooked by the Indian  
women. The wild turnip "zelebellu"  
also was used. It was known to be  
poisonous if eaten raw.

Even as the young Indian children  
now dig and eat the wild onion, their  
grandmothers and grandfathers when  
children watched for the first sign of  
the green shoots and eagerly devoured  
them. Then as now, also, the children  
were taught to know the plants that  
were poisonous.

Billy remembered that his mother  
gathered tules which grew along the  
river. The upper part became ripe in  
the late summer and was filled with a  
yellow powder. With this she made a  
sort of cake. The soft, downy part of  
the tule was taken and made into pil-  
lows.

Summer will come again at Lake  
Tahoe without Billy Merrill. The white  
people that he worked for say that he  
was a good fisherman. Indians of his  
tribe say that he was a good Washoe.  
He would be happy to know that folks,  
white or brown, remembered him as a  
"Good Injun."

John Brandenburger, who was a  
Pony Express rider between Giltard  
Station and Marysville, died at Marys-  
ville, Kan., recently at the age of 80  
years. He was also an old Indian  
fighter and buffalo hunter and often  
boasted that he killed 22 buffalo in  
one day's hunt.



P.P.  
252-

LIFE  
AND  
ADVENTURES

OF  
COL. L. A. NORTON.

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WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

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OAKLAND, CAL.,  
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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## THE JOURNEY AS FAR AS CARSON VALLEY.

I HAD two four-horse wagons, and our party organized, calling ourselves the "Rough and Ready Company," of which I was unanimously elected captain. We pushed along all right to the Missouri River without any serious difficulty. But on arriving at Traders' Point, where we were to cross the river, we found an immense crowd waiting transportation across the stream. There was but one small scow, which would only convey a single wagon at a time, and at that rate it would take about six weeks to ferry the crowd across the river. But the man (Stokes by name) who owned the boat entered into an agreement with us that he would, with our aid, build another boat, and my company was to be crossed first.

There was also a large Missourian company with ox-teams waiting, and I noticed that they were also working on a new boat; and at length it leaked out that Stokes was playing us falsely, and had made the same promise to the Missourians that he had to us. Ours was but a small company, thirteen wagons, and we said nothing, but kept to work. The boat was completed and launched, and before it was through its oscillations I sprang into the stern and seized the rudder. My men, who understood the situation, sprang into the boat with their poles, and I gave the order to shove down to a second landing (only a few yards) where one of our wagons was ready to come aboard. All was so well arranged that before the other party was aware, our first wagon was on the boat, and we ran across the river and

landed it. Returning, we ran up to the landing to receive another wagon, when to my surprise there was a big Missouri wagon, with a crowd of men ready to run it aboard. They had driven our men and wagon aside intending to put their company across ahead of ours. The wagon contained sixty hundred weight of corn, for feed on the plains, and as it came rushing down the bank, I exclaimed, "Push off, boys!" They did so, and as the boat moved out of the way, the wagon plunged into the river.

I called to our boys on the bank to bring a wagon to the other landing. They did so; but before we got it on the boat a crowd from the Missouri company came to take possession of the boat, and a powerful-looking young man, who claimed that I, as commissary, had issued him rations in Mexico, was at the head. I took my position near the bow of the boat, and told the parties to keep off; that we had an arrangement with Stokes that we should be the first to cross on the new boat, when Red-shirt gave me the lie. Somehow his foot slipped and he fell on the side of the boat. The next moment I felt some one buckling a belt around me, and I discovered a revolver in one side and a knife in the other. I raised the revolver, and fully persuaded the crowd to stand back until the boys could run the wagon on the boat.

As my red-shirted friend stepped overboard, I looked around to see if I was alone in the muss, when I saw Sponable and J. L. Mack, who were both powerful men. As I looked around, they exclaimed, "Give them h—l, Cap., we are here." I stood to the helm all that night, and the next day until ten o'clock, when our wagons were all



landed. I then restored the boat to Stokes, and paid him a dollar apiece for ferriage of the wagons, which I should not have done, as his duplicity got us all into trouble.

Now all went well with us until, far out on the plains, they began to find fault with me as captain of the train. And it was not long until there was not a man, woman, or child but what knew more about encamping and camp-life generally than I did. There was constant quarreling and bickering among them, with innumerable lies, which prejudiced them one against another until the best of friends were ready to fight. At length we overtook some Dutchmen, with several head of cattle, and the Indians were hanging on their flanks. These men, for some cause, had been separated from their company; I have forgotten how it happened, but I saw that the Indians intended to rob and probably murder them. I told them that I would regulate our travel to their pace until they could fall in with some other company, or to a place where it was safe for them to encamp until they should be overtaken by ox-teams.

This proposition met with a most stubborn opposition by my company. Some asserted that I was crazy, to take those Dutchmen on my back, and others proposed to depose me and elect a man by the name of White, who had crossed the plains before. I was indignant to think that my company wanted to leave the unprotected men to their fate, and told them to go on, if they were disposed to do so, but I would remain with the Dutchmen and share their fate.

We continued our journey for two days, when I think they had decided to elect White that night, and the next

day to push on and leave me and the Dutchmen. But about noon we came to Shell Creek, where we found about three hundred Indians gathered on the bank of the Platte River. We had to cross Shell Creek near its junction with the river, where there was quite a grove of cottonwoods along the banks of the creek. The principal band of Indians was on the west side of the creek, between where we had to cross and the river, while the squaws were further along on the bank of the river. About seventy or eighty Indians had swung to the rear of our company, thus completely hemming us in. I saw that they meant mischief, as their bows were all strung and the wipers were out of their rifles.

White's team was in advance, and some of the chiefs stopped him, and said they wanted toll for going through their country. White gave them five or six dollars and they let him go on, which he did, and kept going. The next one was Fred Parker. The Indian said, "Me chief, me want money." Parker replied, pointing to me, "That is our chief; go to him if you want money." I was dressed in uniform as a United States officer, and rode with my sword on, and my pistols in the holsters. I did this at the request of the company, as the Indians had great respect for army officers. The chief started to make his demands on me, when I drew my sword and charging to the rear ordered the Indians, who were closing in upon us, to leave the road and take to the river bank, when their spokesman, in fair English, told me that they had as good a right to travel the road as I had.

At this I called to the company in advance to seize their rifles, and form in line. At the same time I whipped out a pistol, rode right up to the Indians, and



told them to leave the road or I would fire. They reluctantly moved off to the river. I then charged back to the front and met the chief, who handed me a paper (extorted, doubtless, from some one) stating that he was a good chief. I threw his paper on the ground, told him we had given them corn in payment for the right to go through their country (which was true), and that they were forked-tongued, bad Indians, and then ordered him to the rear of our wagons. He refused to go, upon which I welshed him across the shoulders with the flat of my sword, which made Mr. Indian move as directed. When I had started him I rode right in among the band, and, with the flat of my sword, drove them like a flock of sheep to the rear. All this time I had thirty men in line with cocked rifles. I expected to be killed, but I knew it was the only chance to save the company. When I had driven them across Shell Creek, I ordered the wagons to advance, keeping a rear guard to protect us until we got out of the way of the Shell Creek Indians. Late in the afternoon we overtook White, and that night we encamped in a short loop of the Platte, where I could defend our position, with our wagons drawn up in front as breastworks. There was no talk of an election of a new captain that night, nor did I ever hear the subject mentioned afterwards. But our valiant would-be captain, White, became the butt of the company.

We continued our weary march across the plains with the usual experiences that have been written and rewritten, and in the course of time we reached Carson Valley, poor and jaded—that is to say, those of us who were not left on the desert to feed the wolves and buzzards.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### RELIEF TRAIN—A FRIGHT—CROSSING THE MOUNTAINS.

WE had passed the sink of the Carson River and were proceeding up that stream, when we came to an encampment in a very pleasant valley, and on inquiry learned that it was a relief train sent out from California to aid the immigration. We encamped but a short distance from the relief train, and I walked over to the camp to make some inquiries regarding their object and the nature of their supplies. I was soon introduced to Gen. James Estel, who I learned was first in command. I found him very affable, and apparently ready and willing to do all in his power to aid immigrants. The supplies, he informed me, were intended for those who had no money to purchase what they needed.

He then introduced me to Gen. J. W. Denver, General Price, and some others holding subordinate positions. I then informed him that we could not claim to be without funds, yet we needed some articles for the use of some of our party who were sick, for which I was ready and willing to pay. General Estel said, "We cannot take pay, but that is all right; make out your requisition." I said, "General, shall I make my requisition in bulk or by ration?" He replied, "Oh, make it out in detail." I went to camp and made a regular requisition in accordance with the regulations of the United States army, as follows: Twenty men, ten days' tea, 200; twenty men, ten days' coffee, 200; twenty men, ten days' sugar, 200—and so on until the requisition was filled. I chose William Brophay, a shrewd fellow, and told him to take a