

RECOLLECTIONS  
*of a* PIONEER

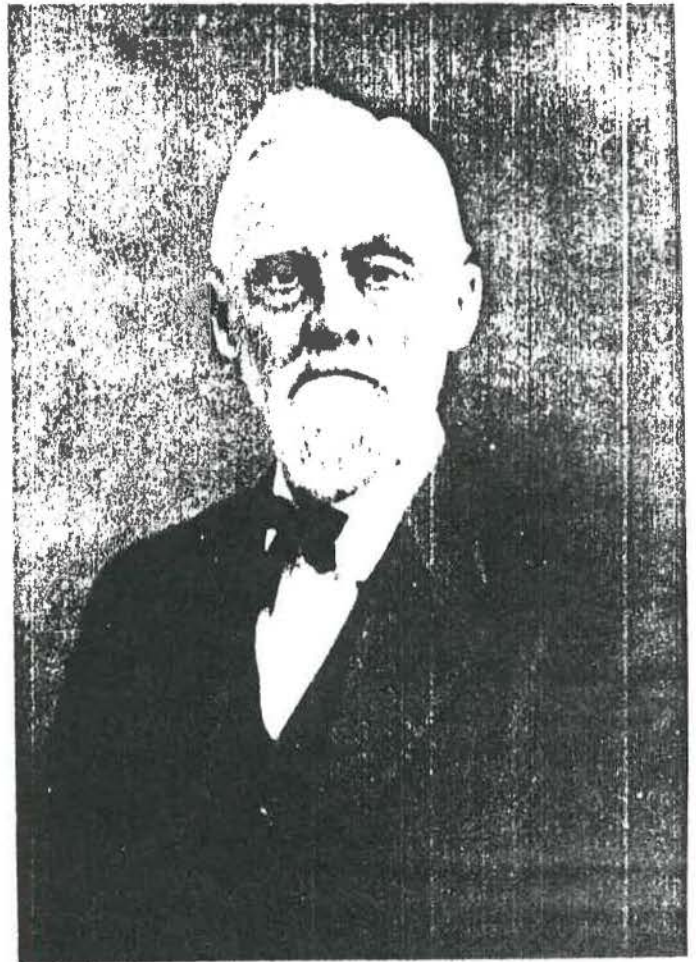
BY

J. W. (WATT) GIBSON

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J. W. WARD, JR.

## "RECOLLECTIONS OF A PIONEER"

This book written by Watt Gibson in his later years and published in St. Joseph, Missouri in 1912 is a real gem.

Watt and his associates panned gold in California during the Gold Rush of 1848-50 and later made trips across the plains with cattle before the Pony Express and before there was a railroad west of the Missouri River.

Squatters were settling in this area which is known as the Platte Purchase. It became a part of the State of Missouri in 1838. Watts' parents settled in the area somewhere between Garrettsburg and Gower in the vicinity just east of where the Hillyard Y.M.C.A. Camp is located, in 1839. Much of this area had not been surveyed.

I recall reading this book as a teen ager soon after it was first published and again when well past 60. When I learned that it was more or less of a collectors item and there were available only for inspection or loan but few copies i.e., " in the St. Joseph Museum and perhaps in a couple of libraries in the area, also that the Lincoln, Nebraska Museum had scouted the country for a copy for their museum. It then occurred to me and to others that had read the book that it was truly a "Golden Nugget" in so far as history, adventure and pioneering is concerned.

Frankly, I feel that everyone in this area will be very much interested in reading and owning one of these books. It is a history of this area that has been almost forgotten.

It is our hope that the reprint of this book, "Recollections of a Pioneer," will be a source of enjoyment and historical information and a welcome addition to your personal library.

**PRACTICAL PERSONAL  
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## FOREWORD.

The following pages are entirely from memory. I kept no notes or other record of the events I have attempted to relate, but I am sure my memory has not often deceived me. My early responsibilities compelled me to give close attention to the things which transpired about me and thus fixed them permanently in my mind. In fact, most of the experiences which I have attempted to relate were of such personal consequence that I was compelled to be alert and to know what was passing.

I undertook the present task at the solicitation of many friends and acquaintances who urged that my recollections of a period, now fast passing out of personal memory, ought to be preserved. It is probable that I have made a good many errors, especially, in my attempts to locate places and to give distances, but it must be remembered that we had no maps or charts with us on the plains and that but few state lines or other sub-divisions were in existence. The location of the places where events occurred with reference to present geographical lines has been my most difficult task.

J. W. (WATT) GIBSON.

*St. Joseph, Mo., August 15, 1912.*

## CHAPTER I.

### *Early Days in Buchanan County.*

I was born in Bartow County, Georgia, on the 22nd day of January, 1829. Sometime during my infancy, and at a period too early to be remembered, my father and his family moved to East Tennessee, where we lived until I was ten years old. About this time reports concerning the Platte Purchase and its splendid farming land began to reach us. I do not now recall the exact channel through which these reports came, but I think some of our relatives had gone there and had written back urging us to come. My father finally yielded and in the spring of 1839 sold his Tennessee farm and prepared for the long journey overland. I was old enough at the time to take some note of what passed, and I remember that my father received four thousand dollars for his land in Indiana "shin plasters." I recall also the preparations that were made for the journey—the outfitting of the wagons, gathering the stock together, and most important of all, the part assigned to me. I was provided with a pony, saddle and bridle and given charge of a herd of loose cattle and horses. We had a rude camp outfit and carried along with us all the household plunder with which we expected to start life in the new country. As may be well imagined, there was not a great deal of it, although the family was large. In those days the people had to be satisfied with the barest necessities. Some idea of the extent of this part of my father's worldly property may be given by saying that the entire outfit, including camp equipment, was loaded into two wagons.

I shall never forget the morning we started. Everything had been loaded the day before, except the articles necessary to the sojourn over night. We were up bright and early, had breakfast in little better than camp style, and were off before sun up. My father, mother, and the younger children took the first wagon, and one of my brothers and my sisters the second. I was upon my pony and in my glory. The wagons moved forward and I rounded up the cattle and horses and forced them along after the wagons. I was too young to feel any tender sentiment toward the old home or to appreciate the fact that I was leaving it forever, but I remember that my father and mother often looked back, and as we passed over the hill out of sight, I saw them turn and wave a long farewell. Many times since I have thought of that scene and have learned to know full well its meaning to my father and mother.

I cannot recall all the particulars of this toilsome journey, and if I could, they would hardly interest the reader. I remember that I soon lost the enthusiasm of that early morning on which we started and grew very tired and longed for the end of our journey. For a great many days it seemed to me we traveled through a rugged mountain country. The hills were long and toilsome, the streams had no bridges and had to be forded, and I frequently had great difficulty in getting my cattle and horses to follow the wagons. On such occasions, the caravan would stop and the whole family would come to my aid. Of course, there were no fences along the sides of the road and my stock becoming wearied or tempted by the green herbage alongside would wander out into the woods and brush and give me much trouble.

When I think of these difficulties, I do not wonder that I became wearied, but as my life was afterwards ordered, this boyish experience taught me a lesson which many times proved useful.

I remember when we crossed what they said was the line into Kentucky. I could see no difference in the mountains, valleys or the rivers, but somehow I felt that there ought to be a difference and that Kentucky could not be like Tennessee, and yet it was. Here I learned, thus early in life, what so many people find it hard even in later years to appreciate, that names and distances do not make differences and that all places upon the face of the earth, no matter how they vary in physical appearance, are after all very much alike. I believe it is the realization of this fact that makes the difference between the man who knows the world and the one who does not. After a long time, as it seemed to me, we passed out of the mountains and into a beautiful rolling country improved even in that early day with many turnpikes and exhibiting every indication of prosperity. There were negroes everywhere—many more than we had in Tennessee, and I remember hearing them singing as they worked in the fields. I now know that this country was what has since been known as the "Blue Grass Region" of Kentucky, though at the time, I thought the mountains of my old home a much better place to live.

For a long time, even before the journey began, I had heard a great deal about the Ohio River and knew that we must cross it, and when the people along the road began to tell us that we were nearing that stream, I became filled with curiosity to see it and to know what it would be like and to see and experi-

ence the sensation of crossing it on a ferry-boat. Finally we came to the top of a long hill and away off to the north we saw the river winding through a deep valley, and some one, my father, I think, pointed out a mere speck on the surface of the water and told us it was a ferry-boat. When we reached the bank of the river we found the boat tied alongside, and to my surprise, horses, wagons and cattle were all driven upon it. I had no idea that a ferry-boat was such a huge affair. It was run by horse-power, and it took us only a few minutes to reach the farther shore, and I was disappointed that my trip was not a longer one. The landing and unloading took but a few minutes. My father paid the man and we started immediately to climb the hill on the other side. I must not neglect to mention that somewhere on the road in the northern part of Kentucky or immediately after we crossed the river, my father exchanged the "shin plasters" for which he had sold his farm for silver, that currency being at par in that locality. He received four thousand silver dollars. I saw them with my own eyes. He put them in a strong box and loaded them into one of the wagons along with the other luggage.

I do not remember at what point we crossed the Ohio River. I did not, of course, know at the time, and if my father or any member of the family ever told me the place afterwards I have forgotten it; but the event is as vivid in my mind as if it had occurred yesterday.

There was little in our journey across Indiana and Illinois to impress that portion of the road upon my memory. All I recall is in a general way that I could see no familiar mountains, and over parts of the journey I remember that the country appeared to me to be monotonously level. I cannot give the length of

time that was required in making this journey, but I do remember when we reached the Mississippi River. We crossed at Alton, if I am not mistaken, and in place of a horse ferry we had a steam ferry, which was to me a much more wonderful contrivance than the horse ferry on the Ohio. Then the river was so much wider. I remember wondering where all that vast body of water could come from. They told us, when we landed on the opposite shore, that we were in Missouri, and I thought my journey must be nearly ended, but I was never more mistaken. Day after day our wagons trundled along, night after night we went into camp, worn out with the day's journey, only to get up again early in the morning and repeat the same experience.

We reached Tremont Township, Buchanan County, on the 29th day of May, 1839, and straightway settled upon a tract of land about a mile and a quarter southeast of what is now Garrettsburg. A house of some character was the first thing to which my father turned his attention, and it was not long before a rude log cabin was under construction. I was too small to take much part in this work, but I remember that such neighbors as we had were good to us and came and helped. The logs were cut in the woods and dragged to the site of the house and the neighbors and friends came and helped us at the "raising." The house consisted of a single room with a wide fireplace built of rough stone extending nearly across one entire end of the room. The roof was of long split boards laid upon poles or beams in such a way as to shed the water and weighted down by other beams laid on top of them. I do not think a single nail or other piece of iron entered into the construction of the building, but we thought it a great improvement upon the tent life

we had experienced on our journey, and my father was quite proud of his new home. I will not attempt to describe that country as it appeared to me in that early day. In fact the changes have been so gradual that it seems to me to be still very much the same country it was when I first saw it, though when I stop to reflect, I know that this is not so. Most of it was heavy timber. A glade or skirt of prairie passed in now and then from the almost continuous prairie of what is now Clinton County. And I remember distinctly that a stretch of prairie extended from Platte River directly across from where Agency is now located in an east and south easterly direction toward Gower, and thence around to the left where it joined the main body of prairie land. There were no fences to speak of, and deer were as plentiful as in any country I have ever seen. There were few roads and no great need for them and no bridges. The county seat of the county was at old Sparta, and Robidoux's Landing was the most talked of place in the county.

In 1846, my father built a brick house, the first, I think, that was ever erected in the county. It stood about a quarter of a mile south of the present residence of Thomas Barton, a respected citizen of Tremont Township. The brick were made upon the ground and I was old enough at that time to have quite an important part in the work, and it was hard work, too. I helped cut and haul wood with which the brick were burned, and I "off bore" the brick as they were moulded. I carried the brick and mortar as the house was being erected and assisted in putting on the roof, laying floors and finishing the house. It was quite a commodious structure when completed and was considered by all our neighbors and friends who still lived in their log houses as quite a mansion.

Our farming operations were not very extensive. The land all had to be cleared of heavy timber, and I have seen thousands of feet of the finest white oak, walnut and hickory burned up in log heaps, but there was nothing else to be done with it. We had to have the land and there was no use to which we could put such a quantity of timber. The few rails that were needed to fence the field after it was cleared, required only a small portion of the timber that was cut away, and as all the land except the fields was allowed to remain unfenced, there could be no profit in expending time and labor in making rails to be piled up and allowed to decay.

Most of our work was done on the farm with ox teams. Our plows were rude, home-made implements, and the hoe, axe and sickle, or reaping hook, all home-made, were about the only other tools we had. With these and with our slow plodding oxen, we thought we did very well to produce from our stumpy ground enough for the family to subsist on. Even the accomplishment of this small result required the efforts of almost every member of the family. My mother and sisters frequently worked in the fields, and I often saw, in those days, a woman plowing in the field, driving a single cow, using a rude harness without a collar. We cut our wheat with a sickle and our hemp with a hook. We hackled the flax by hand and spun and wove it into linen. My mother and sisters sheared the sheep, washed and picked the wool, carded, spun and wove it into blankets and clothing for the whole family. They took the raw material, green flax and wool on the sheep's back, and made it into clothing for a family of ten. They milked the cows and washed the clothing besides, and then found time to help in the fields. It must not be thought that the men

were idle while this was going on. They worked just as hard, but their tools were so poor and the difficulties so great, and they could accomplish so little that even with all their efforts they sometimes fell behind the women in their tasks.

As may well be imagined, there was little time for a boy or a girl under those conditions to go to school, even if the opportunity had presented itself. We had a school in the neighborhood, however, held for a time at the homes of various members of the community, and later we built a school house. The erection of this building was the first public enterprise, so far as I know or have ever heard, that was undertaken by the people of that community. I was old enough to help in it, and I remember very distinctly the meetings the neighbors had to plan the work of building, and afterwards, I recall the meeting of the men with their teams to do the work. Each man furnished two logs which he had previously cut and hewed to the proper dimensions. These he dragged to the site selected for the building which was, by the way, upon the ground now occupied by the Stamper School House. When the logs were all assembled, the men and boys came in bringing baskets of provisions and food for their oxen and all went to work. The house was "raised," as we called it, by laying the logs one upon the other in the form of a pen, the length exceeding the breadth by about ten feet. The logs were carefully notched and fitted down at the corners so as to eliminate space between them and do away with the necessity of "chinking" to as great an extent as possible. The floor was of logs split half in two and laid the flat side up. The door was of hewed timber and must have been fully two inches thick, and was hung upon wooden hinges. At a proper

height from the ground, one log was sawed out the full length of the building to afford light. The roof was of clap-boards with logs laid upon them to hold them in place. The benches were puncheon—that is a long round log split half in two and hewed to a smooth surface with legs driven into auger holes beneath. The fireplace extended nearly all the way across one end of the room. It was built of rough stone as high as the mantel, and from there up the chimney was of sticks, plastered inside with clay to keep them from burning. A long puncheon was placed at the proper angle just underneath the opening which served as a window, and this constituted our writing desk. When the writing lesson was called, each pupil took his copy book and went to this rude "desk" where he stood until his lesson was finished.

I cannot at this time recall the names of all the men who participated in the work of building that school-house, but among them were George Reynolds, George Jeffers, Donald McCray, Philip McCray, Henry Guinn, Ambrose McDonald, William Bledsoe, Robert Irvin, James Poteet, James Gilmore, Ransom Ridge, Bird Smith, Isaac Auxier, Tom Auxier, my father, George Gibson, and my uncle, James Gibson. Most of these names are familiar to the citizens of this county, and their descendants are still substantial citizens of that community. I had the inestimable privilege of attending school in this building as much as three terms of three months each, and this constituted my entire educational course so far as schools are concerned. The sons and daughters of the men I have named were my school mates and, at this writing, but few of them survive. The men of that day, of course, have all passed to their reward many years since.



It will be easy for the reader to understand me when I say that in that day money, that is currency or specie, was very hard to procure. Fortunately for us we needed very little of it, because there was nothing to buy with it that we could not procure by a sort of trade or barter. We could raise our horses, hogs and cattle, but there was no market for them. If a neighbor happened not to have what another neighbor had beyond his own necessities, some means was devised by which a trade could be entered into and each secure thereby the things he did not previously own. I think hemp was about the only thing we could sell for money. This we took to Robidoux's landing now and then where we procured cash for it, and we then bought such few necessities as our farms did not afford.

It must not be understood that the men of that day were without enterprise. When I look upon the great undertakings of the present day and then recall a venture which my father and older brothers and myself undertook in 1847, I am compelled to believe that of the two, that early enterprise required the greater business courage. I have related how my father received four thousand dollars for his Tennessee farm and how he converted this into silver on the way to Missouri. He had in addition to this quite a sum of money besides and had accumulated some money during the years of his residence here.

In the spring of 1847 he began to purchase from the neighbors around about and from the men in other communities, their surplus cattle, and in this way collected a herd of five hundred. These cattle were driven overland to Iowa where a few of them were sold, thence on to Illinois and across Illinois and through Indiana and Ohio, peddling them out as we went, and

into Pennsylvania, where the last of them were sold. I went along, and we had many hardships, but somehow I did not think so at the time. The trip broke the monotony of my life upon the farm and I was glad to go, even though I often grew very tired and had to endure the exposure to hot sun, wind and rain. We made some money on the cattle—quite a good deal. We got every dollar of it in silver and carried it home on horse back. In 1848, brother Isaac and I took another drove over about the same route for Peter Boyer, who lived near Easton. Our experiences on this trip were very much the same as those of the former trip, and the enterprise netted Boyer a handsome profit.

## CHAPTER II.

*First Trip to California.*

Late in the year 1848 or early in '49, we began to hear wonderful stories about gold in California. News traveled very slowly in those days, and we could depend very little upon its accuracy, but the reports that came convinced us that the discovery had actually been made and we readily pictured in our own minds the fortunes to be had in that country. Difficult as the methods of travel were in those days, we were not without information as to the route and character of the country intervening between us and California. Robert Gilmore, a neighbor of ours, had been overland to Oregon and back, and could tell us very definitely about the country out to a point beyond the Rocky Mountains. The talk of gold, and of an expedition to the country where it had been found, soon became general and it was not long until a party of men was made up to try their fortunes in California. Brother William, brother James and myself agreed to become members of the party, and we rigged up a wagon and four yoke of oxen, laid in a year's provisions, provided ourselves with guns and plenty of ammunition and joined others of a company who had made like provision. I must not neglect to mention that as an important part of our commissary we added a half barrel of good whiskey. We started on the first day of May and stopped over night at St. Joseph. The next day, everything being ready, we crossed the river on the ferry boat and pitched our tents the first night out on Peters Creek.<sup>1</sup> Our party consisted of twenty men and boys, all from Buchanan County.

\* MOUTH OF CLEAR CREEK.

They were Robert Gilmore and his son Mat, James Gilmore and his son Dave, Ben Poteet, a man by the name of Spires and his son, Milt Gilmore, Lum Perkins, a man by the name of Fish, Charles McCray, Henry McCray, Liel Hulett, Mitch Hulett, old man Greenwood and his two sons, Brother William, Brother James, and myself. We had seven wagons, fifty-eight head of cattle and seven horses.

Robert Gilmore was our pilot. His previous journey over the road as well as his peculiar fitness for the task made the selection of any other person out of the question. He had an accurate memory concerning every point along the road. He knew the courses of the rivers and how to cross the desert divides at the narrowest places to avoid long distances without grazing and water for our cattle. He also knew better than any of us the habits of the Indians, and his experience with them often avoided trouble and saved our property and most likely our lives. He was cool-headed and prudent and as brave a man as I ever knew. It must be remembered that we made no provision whatever to feed our cattle and horses. We expected to move slowly and allow them time to graze for subsistence. During the first part of the journey at the season of the year in which it was made, we experienced no trouble whatever, as grass was very plentiful, but later on, as I shall relate, we often felt sorry for the poor dumb beasts that we had taken from the fine pastures of Buchanan County and driven out into that arid country.

Our second day's journey brought us to Wolf River. During the next few days our journey led us by gradual ascent up on to a high prairie, which must have been the water shed upon which the town of Sabetha is now situated. The whole earth was

covered by abundant verdure, and I recall very distinctly the expansive view which presented itself in every direction from the crests of the ridges as we passed over them. There was not a single human habitation in sight and no evidences that human foot had ever been set upon this land, except the dim outline of the trail we were following. Only one or two companies were ahead of us and the tracks of their wagons and oxen made but little impression upon the fresh grown grass. Farther out the almost total absence of trees made the most vivid impression upon my mind, accustomed as I had been for so many years to a timbered country, and though I could see no evidences that the soil was not productive, I could hardly believe this place would ever be a fit habitation for men. We traveled some days over such country as I have described and no doubt passed over the sites of many present flourishing towns. The sixth or seventh day out, if I remember correctly, we reached the Big Blue. In our journey thus far, we had occasionally seen deer and antelope, but when we began to descend into the valley of the Big Blue we saw great numbers of these animals. On the banks of the river we found in camp a party of eastern emigrants who had left St. Joseph a few days in advance of our train. Their teams were all horses and they had camped for a time in order to lay in a supply of venison. Their horses were then in fine condition and they were riding them out on the prairies chasing the deer and antelope. We camped for the night and next morning, as usual, plodded on. Later in the day we were overtaken by these emigrants who trotted by us with their faster teams and made fun of our equipment. They told us, as they passed, that they would have the gold in California all mined out before we got there.

Some of us, the younger members at least, who had had no experience on the plains, felt that they might be telling us the truth; but Gilmore assured us that we had taken the safer course and that we would reach California long in advance of those men, and that it was doubtful if they would ever get there at all. Weeks later Gilmore had the satisfaction of verifying what he had told us, for we overtook and passed these very trains. Their horses were thin and poor, starved out on the short grass, and famished for water.

From Big Blue we crossed a rolling divide to Little Blue and followed that stream a long distance, then across a high prairie, that seemed to be almost perfectly level. It was on this part of the journey that we had our first disagreeable experience. Up to that time, the boys of the party at least, had looked upon crossing the plains as a great frolic. The weather had been fine. The company was congenial and the novelty of the whole thing kept us well entertained. Shortly after we broke camp one morning and started on a twenty mile drive, it began to rain and continued all day long a steady downpour. We had found no wood with which to cook dinner and had eaten cold victuals, with some relish, believing we would find plenty of firewood at night. We traveled until quite late and finally stopped at a small creek, where other emigrants had camped, but there was no wood, not a stick to be found. The only thing in sight was a tough old log which had been hacked and hewed by preceding emigrants until scarcely a splinter could be chopped from it. The buffalo chips were all wet and it was still raining. The boys were not so gay that night. They managed, after hard work, to get splinters enough off the old log to heat up the coffee and that was the only warm article of diet we had for supper. We made

the best of it and after supper prepared to crawl into wet tents to sleep if we could. Bad as the prospect was, I was happy that it was not my turn to stand guard. It rained all night and next morning the boys who had been on guard were sorry-looking fellows and the cattle and horses little better. I do not remember how we managed to get breakfast, but I do recall that we started early and pushed on still through the rain. The moving warmed us up and we were much better off traveling than in camp.

We reached Platte River late the same day at a point which must have been some miles above the location of the present city of Grand Island, probably about the site of the City of Kearney. The river was running bank full and the only fire wood in sight was on an island out in the stream. The stream, though wide, was not deep, and we rode our horses over and carried back wood enough to make a fire, though it was a very bad one. It stopped raining about night, but remained cloudy and cold and we passed the night with less comfort, I believe, than the night before. Next day we made only twenty miles but stopped long before night at the mouth of a little stream or gulch that descended down into Platte River which we knew as Plum Creek. The wind had blown from the north all day and had chilled us through and through in our wet clothing. The principal inducement to the halt was the canyon through which Plum Creek emptied into the river. It afforded a sheltered camping place and its sides were covered with red cedar which made splendid firewood. We pitched our tents in behind a high bluff and immediately built a blazing fire. Everybody was busy. Blankets were stretched upon poles before the fire and the wet extra clothing was hung out to dry in like

manner. We cooked the best meal the stores would afford and prepared plenty of it. Before night we were all dry and warm, had had plenty to eat, and were again in a happy frame of mind. There was but one thing to prevent complete satisfaction with the situation and that was that at this very point in years gone by several vicious attacks had been made upon emigrants by the Indians. It was a fine place for the Indians to ambush the unwary traveler. Gilmore had learned the story of these attacks on his previous trip and immediately after we had supper he started the members of the company out in various directions to look for Indians. It was an hour or more until sundown, as I recollect, so we climbed to the tops of the hills and inspected the country for miles around. There was not a single sign of Indians anywhere to be seen. He told us to look particularly for smoke as we would probably not see the Indians but would discover the smoke from their fires coming up out of the valleys. The favorable report made to Gilmore did not satisfy him. Weary as we all were, he ordered a double guard that night. I stood with the boys the first half of the night. At sundown the sky had cleared of clouds and the wind had ceased to blow. The whole earth was as still as death. The only sound that broke the silence was the howl of a wolf now and then away off in the distance.

The next morning the camp was astir bright and early. The oxen and horses were rounded up and hitched to the wagons and after a good breakfast we packed the camp outfit and started on our journey up Platte River, following the south bank. The clear sky and bright sunshine soon made us forget the hardships of the two previous days, and our company was again in good spirits. I have not been able to locate

the exact position of Plum Creek. It was out some distance beyond the Grand Island and almost at the beginning of what we called the sand bluffs. I do not recall any incident worth mentioning on the journey up this stream except that in a few days after we left Plum Creek we passed the junction of the North and South Platte. The trail followed the South Platte and we followed the trail. About fifty miles beyond the junction we crossed the South Platte and went over a high ridge and down a steep canyon about five miles in length into the valley of the North Platte. I have never known why this early trail led up the South Platte instead of crossing the main stream at the junction and moving directly up the North Platte, as was done later by all the emigrant trains.

We reached North Platte about night and found a large tribe of Indians in camp. It was no very pleasing prospect to most of us to go into camp so near the Indians, but Gilmore told us that we would not likely have any trouble as Indians were always peaceable when their squaws and papposes were with them. I never forgot this remark by Gilmore and had occasion many times afterwards, as I shall relate, to observe the truth of his statement. We put a strong guard around the cattle. We did not fear for ourselves, but were alarmed somewhat on account of the cattle, as we expected that the Indians were probably scarce of food and might try to get one or two of them. The Indians seemed to be astir most all night and we imagined that they were watching to catch us off guard, or probably to catch a stray horse or ox that might wander away from the herd. Morning brought us great relief, and we soon packed up and moved on up the North Platte as fast as we could.

Some seventy-five miles or more up the North Platte we passed those strange looking elevations which had the appearance at a distance of immense buildings in ruins and which have been mentioned by so many of the early emigrants. Two of these formations which stood side by side were especially noticeable. They both rose abruptly from the level table land to a height of two hundred feet or more. The larger and taller of the two was not so well proportioned as the smaller, but both of them easily gave the impression, viewed from the path of our trail, of great castles with wings and turrets, all tumbling down and wasting away. Gilmore told us that the earlier travelers on the Oregon trail had called these formations the "court houses." Some distance beyond these curiosities we came to Chimney Rock, which I am sure every one who passed over the trail remembers. It stood out in the valley of the Platte several hundred feet from the main bluff of the river and rose to a height of nearly three hundred feet, as we estimated. The base covered a considerable area of ground and the top was probably fifty feet across. It was a mixture of sand, clay and stones, and the action of the weather had crumbled much of the upper portions about the base.

A little beyond Chimney Rock we came to Scott's Bluffs, which we reached late in the afternoon. We drove into a beautiful little valley and camped for the night. Just about dark the most terrific thunder storm I ever experienced in my life broke upon us. The whole valley seemed to be lit up in a blaze of fire and the thunder was deafening. Some three or four emigrant trains which we had overtaken were camped in this valley and next morning we counted fifteen cattle that had been killed by bolts of lightning. For-

tunately none of them belonged to us. Scott's Bluffs is a single row of hills or perpendicular cliffs standing out in the valley between the main table land and the channel of the river. They are much like Chimney Rock in formation and are of various forms and moulds and present a strange appearance from the path of the trail. We passed for miles between these bluffs and the table land with the river over beyond the bluffs.

Fort Laramie was our next point, some sixty miles farther on. The fort is situated on Laramie River about a mile above its union with the North Platte. Here we saw the first white man, except the emigrants who were outward bound with us, since leaving home. We were given a very hearty welcome by the soldiers and the few others who lived there. They asked us many questions and told us they had had no news from home all winter until the emigrant trains began to arrive. The Indians were constantly about them and they had to be very careful to avoid trouble with them. Their greatest difficulty was to procure firewood, which they found some considerable distance from the fort and over the river. They told us they always sent a guard of soldiers out with the wagons when they went after wood. We camped there over night and I was on picket. Next morning at daylight I saw a beautiful mound not far away, and as I was anxious to investigate everything, I walked over to it. I found it was an Indian burying ground, and was literally covered with human and animal bones which had been placed around, apparently in an effort to decorate, and human skulls seemed to be a particular favorite. Hundreds of them it seemed to me lay grinning at me. I am sure had I known this grewsome sight was so close to me I could never have been induced to stand guard

all night in the darkness. I was but a boy then and this scene horrified me. I soon learned, however, not to be afraid of dead Indians.

After a rest of a day or two under the protection of the Fort, we started forward, moving across a high, mountainous country which occupied the wide bend in the North Platte River. As I recall, the distance across this strip of country is probably one hundred and fifty miles or more. Many places were very rugged and we experienced much difficulty in making our way. On this portion of the road we had great difficulty also with the Indians—that is we continually feared trouble. We were not attacked at any time nor did we lose any of our horses or cattle, but we lived in continual fear both of our lives and of our property. The Crow and Sioux tribes occupied this land and they were war-like and troublesome savages. Scarcely a man in the company dared go to sleep during the whole journey from Fort Laramie to the point where we reached Platte River again, opposite the mouth of Sweetwater. It was in this very country, as I shall relate hereafter, that these Indians tried to kill and rob my brothers and myself in '51, and in '55, while my brother James and my youngest brother Robert were bringing a drove of cattle across, my brother Robert, only seventeen years old, was killed. I think all the early travelers across the plains dreaded the Indians on this portion of the road more than any other obstacle to be found on the entire journey, not excepting the alkali deserts of Utah and Nevada. When we again reached Platte River it was very high and the current very swift. It was out of the question to attempt fording it, and it looked for a time as if our progress would be retarded perhaps for many days. It would serve no purpose to attempt to find a better

place to cross, for from the amount of water in the river, we felt quite certain we could find no place within one hundred miles where the wagons could be driven over. We had one satisfaction left to us and that was that we had plenty of water and plenty of grass, and if we had to stay on this side of the river any considerable time we were in no danger of losing our stock. We camped and rested a day and thought about the situation. Finally we decided to try rafting the wagons over and herding the cattle across. We cut four good sized cottonwood logs from the timber which grew near to the stream, fastened ropes to them and pushed them in the water. They were then tied firmly together and anchored to the shore. We then unloaded the wagons, took off the boxes or beds, and set one upon these logs. We then reloaded this bed and four men with long poles got upon the raft and some one on the bank untied the rope. I thought from the way this rude ship started down stream that it would reach St. Joseph in about three days if it kept up that rate of speed. The current caught it and dashed it along at a great rate and I was considerably alarmed, I remember, for a good portion of our provisions had been placed in the wagon box. The boys on the raft, however, kept their heads and though none of them were much accustomed to the water, they understood enough about it to avoid upsetting the craft. Little by little they pushed and paddled toward the middle of the stream and finally brought it up to shore probably a mile down stream. After anchoring the raft the articles loaded into the wagon bed were removed, placed upon the bank and finally the wagon bed was taken off and likewise placed on high ground. The boys then with great difficulty towed the raft along the shore up stream to a point far enough above the camp

on the opposite bank to enable them to pilot it back to the desired landing place. They finally brought it up when, after anchoring it firmly, the running gears of the wagon were rolled down and pushed out upon the raft, the axles resting on the logs and the wheels extending down into the water. This cargo was ferried across in the same manner. In this way after much labor, paddling and poling this raft back and forth, our entire outfit was landed safely on the opposite side of the stream. Our belongings were, however, pretty widely scattered, because the boys always unloaded at the place they were able to land. It took much time to again rig up the wagons and collect the provisions and camp equipment and get it all together again.

We had allowed our cattle to remain on the east side of the river during this operation, and after everything was ready on the opposite side we rounded them up and pushed them into the water. They swam across in fine shape, the men swimming their horses after them. It was a great relief to all of us to feel that we were safely across and to realize that we had saved a good many days, perhaps, by the effort we had made. We were especially desirous of keeping well in front of the emigrant trains that we knew to be upon the road in order that our oxen and horses might have better grazing and we felt that by the accomplishment of the task which had just been finished we had probably set ourselves in advance of many of the trains.

After a good rest we moved on and soon entered the valley of Sweetwater River which we followed for many miles. Toward the head waters of this stream we passed Independence Rock, which, even in that day, was a marked natural curiosity much spoken of by travelers. There were many names cut in the smooth face of this immense boulder and we added our own

to the list. A long toilsome climb after leaving Independence Rock brought us to the crest of the continental divide from which we descended into the valley of Green River. This is an extensive basin and we were a good many days passing through it, but met with no occurrences worthy of special mention. As we passed out of the valley, our road led us over a high range of mountains and I shall always remember the view which presented itself in front of us as we reached the top. The valley of Bear River lay before us for many miles. The view was obstructed only by the fact that the eye had not the power to see all that was spread before it. In all my experience in the mountains, I can at this moment recall no place that presents so striking a picture as the one which remains in my memory of this scene. I cannot locate the place upon the map, except approximately, though I have often tried to do so. In those days we had few names. There were no county lines and no towns by which to locate natural objects so they might be pointed out to others. Even the mountain ranges and many of the smaller streams had either not received names or we had not heard them. The place I have been attempting to describe was near the extreme western border of Wyoming and must have been about opposite Bear Lake in Idaho, perhaps a little north.

An incident occurred at this place which served to impress it upon my mind independent of its natural beauties. Shortly before we approached the crest of the mountain we began to see emigrant wagons ahead. Finally we noticed what appeared to be an immense train stretching out in front of us. On nearer approach we discovered that some forty or fifty wagons which had fallen into the Oregon trail at various places along the line were blocked, apparently by the difficul-

ties attending a descent of the opposite side of the mountain. We halted our teams and went forward on foot and discovered that there was but one place where the descent could be made at all and that was along a steep, rough canyon at one place in which the wagons had to be let down by hand. We approached and watched the operation for an hour or two. The teams and wagons in proper turn passed down to this abrupt place where the oxen were taken off and driven down. The wagons, rough-locked with chains, were then let down by long ropes, a great many men holding to the ropes to prevent the wagon from running away. It was very slow work and we immediately saw that a delay of three or four days at least was ahead of us if we waited to take our turn down this embankment. A conference was called as soon as our men got back to the wagons. Gilmore said he was not willing to believe that the point these emigrants had selected was the only place where the teams could get down, so he and a few more of our company started to the left of the trail to seek a new place. After about two hours, Gilmore and his men came back and said they thought they had found a place and directed the teams to move forward. A long winding drive down a spur or ridge that led off to the left of the canyon brought us to the place Gilmore had discovered. I went up and took a look and I confess that I was very much afraid we could not make it. There was not a tree, nor a log, nor anything else out of which we could make a drag to tie behind the wagons and thus retard them as they moved down the slope. I saw that Gilmore had some plan in his mind, however, and waited to see it develop. He ordered the three front yoke of oxen off the front wagon and directed that they be taken to the rear of



the wagon leaving the wheel yoke hitched to the tongue. These three yoke of oxen were tied by a chain to the rear axle. The wheels were all four roughlocked with chains made fast and tight. When this was done we gathered our whips and told the oxen to move on. As the wheel yoke started forward the wagon pitched down upon them. They set their feet forward and laid back upon the tongue. When the chain lightened on the three yoke tied to the rear, they, like the yoke in front, set their feet and laid back upon the chain. Then the whole—wagon and oxen—went plowing down the mountain side more than one hundred yards before the ground became level enough to release the wheels. It was a great relief to be able to unlock the wheels and release the oxen and know that all was safe. The six other wagons repeated this experience in turn. The whole descent had required but little more than two hours and we found ourselves well down into the valley of Bear River two days ahead of time, and best of all, in the lead of those emigrants who were waiting to let their wagons down by hand over on the other road.

Soda Springs on Bear River was our next point. We reached it after a two days' journey from the point where we had descended the mountain. Here I saw another wonder—to me. Water, almost boiling, spurted right up out of the ground. One spring in particular which they told us had been named Steamboat Spring was especially noticeable. Every three or four minutes it would throw a jet of water up four or five feet high, then subside. Just about the time every thing seemed to be getting settled, the water would gush out again. This continued at regular intervals night and day and may, for all I know, still be going on. There were a number of hot springs, besides

several other springs, the water of which was strongly impregnated with soda. We halted a little while here to rest and to inspect this great wonder and then pushed on in a north-westerly direction toward Fort Hall, which is located on Snake River. This required about a three days' drive, as I remember. We knew at the time that this course took us considerably out of the way, but we had no information as to the barriers to be encountered by an attempt to shorten the route, so we were content to follow the beaten trail.

I remember an incident which occurred at Fort Hall. We had fallen in with a train from Jackson County which was known as Hayes' train, and we all journeyed together to Fort Hall. A government fort was located there and Hayes found in the fort, a negro man who had run off from his Jackson County plantation six years before. Hayes instead of asserting ownership over this negro and compelling him to go back into servitude, made a contract with him to drive one of his teams through to California and work one year for him in California, after which the negro was to have his freedom. This seemed to suit the negro exactly and he picked up his long gad and started after the oxen. We all moved together down Snake River to the mouth of Raft River, and on this part of the journey an incident occurred which caused all of us a good deal of uneasiness. Hayes had a bright lad with him about sixteen years old who was always playing pranks. He also had a driver who was dreadfully afraid of Indians. One night after we had camped, the lad took a red blanket and slipped away from the camp around near to where the driver was standing guard. He threw the blanket over his shoulders after the fashion of the Indians and secreted himself behind an

obstruction, and at the proper time, slipped out of his place of concealment and started toward the driver. The driver ran just as the boy had anticipated, but when the boy started to follow, playing Indian all the time, the driver halted long enough to put a load of shot into the boy. Fortunately the shot was not fatal, but the boy was dreadfully wounded and had to be hauled in one of the wagons clear on to California. We had little or no means of giving him attention and the poor boy suffered a great deal, but he finally got well.

When we reached the mouth of Raft River, a small stream which flows into the Snake River from the south, we halted for a conference. Hayes with his train was accompanying us, but he knew no more about the country than we. It was clear that we must break away from the Oregon trail at some point in that immediate vicinity and it occurred to us that this little river would afford the most likely passage to the crest of the divide from which we could descend into the valley of the Humboldt. Accordingly our oxen were turned out of the beaten path and headed over an unknown stretch of country. We experienced very little difficulty that I now recall so long as we were able to follow the river, but by and by the stream became very small and led us into a rugged, mountainous country. After much climbing and wandering about we reached the crest of a divide which is now called the Raft River Mountains; passing down the farther slope of these mountains we encountered a dreadful alkali desert before reaching the main stem of the Humboldt River. The men, horses and cattle suffered greatly. The alkali dust raised by the moving teams parched the throat and nostrils and lack of water denied either to man or beast any relief. Fortunately

for us, this did not last many days. Whether by accident or from good judgment, we soon located a good sized stream of water which eventually proved to be one of the main prongs of Humboldt River. We followed this stream probably two hundred miles or more, and while the grazing was very short, we had plenty of water and were able to get along.

One night just before we reached Big Meadow, while we were camped alongside the Humboldt River, a band of Digger Indians slipped into our herd and drove two of the cattle away. Next morning after rounding up the cattle these oxen were missed and search was immediately instituted. Bob and James Gilmore, Charles McCray and brother William got on their horses and made a wide circle about the camp. They discovered tracks leading toward the mountains and followed them. After they had gone several miles and could still see nothing of the cattle, they became convinced that the Indians had taken them into the mountains, and as McCray and Gibson had gone away without their guns, McCray was sent back to get them. McCray reached camp, got the guns and started out to overtake the boys, but soon returned saying he could not find them. The company remained in camp waiting continually for their return and when, late in the afternoon, they had not returned, we began to feel quite uneasy. When night came and they had still not returned, we piled sage brush on our camp fire and kept it burning very bright to light them in. No one in the camp slept and as the hours passed, uneasiness increased. Finally, late in the night they came in, all safe, but very tired and without the cattle, and gave us the following account of their experience.

They had followed the tracks of the cattle through the sand fifteen miles and traced them into a steep,

rough gorge or canyon that opened into the valley from the mountain. They entered this gorge with great caution and had not gone far when they found the carcasses of the cattle warm and bleeding, but no Indians in sight. They were convinced that Indians could not be far away, and momentarily expected an attack from ambush. The Indians had evidently posted a watch on some high point on the mountain, who, when the men were seen approaching, gave the alarm, upon which the cattle were immediately killed and the Indians fled to cover.

It was then nearly night. The horses were poor and weak, and neither the horses nor the men had tasted food or water throughout the day, and there was no relief except in camp. Delay was useless, so they turned immediately and started back. After reaching the plain they noticed far out in the distance a cloud of dust on the horizon and supposed at first it was a small whirlwind, as whirlwinds were very common on those sandy deserts. The dust continued to rise and apparently to approach toward them, and in a little while they were able to make out objects moving through it. They then knew that the Indians, having been warned of their approach and having seen them enter the canyon, had made a wide circle to the rear, and that their purpose was to cut them off from camp. Only a few minutes were required to reveal the fact that the Indians, about thirty in number, were coming toward them as fast as their ponies could gallop, and a brief counsel of war was held. To attempt to out-run them on the poor jaded horses was out of the question, and the situation looked rather desperate. Their lack of guns and ammunition and their inferior numbers made the result of a fight very doubtful. They had no choice but to make the best of it, and the

only thing in their favor was the well known cowardice of the Indians in an open face to face fight. Each of the Gilmores had a double barrel shot gun and Gibson had his bowie knife and these were the weapons with which the fight had to be made. The boys dismounted and as the Indians came within easy view of them they stepped out in front of their horses and waited. The men with the guns held them in position to fire and Gibson drew his bowie knife and held it steadily in his hand. The Indians came on furiously, screaming and yelling, but the boys did not stir a step. The plan was to let them come and get as many of them as possible with the four loads that were in the guns, then with the knife and the guns as clubs, fight it out.

The boys said that for two or three minutes there was every indication that the Indians really meant to fight. They showed no disposition to halt, but came yelling and dashing forward until they were almost in range of the guns. Even though the boys were not equal to the task they had to keep their nerve. If they had shown the least disposition to waver or to change positions the Indians would have been encouraged to come upon them. They stood as firm and steady as though they were made of stone. Not a word was spoken, except that Bob Gilmore quietly counselled the boys to stand perfectly still. This attitude was too much for the Indians. They became convinced that they really had a fight on their hands, and when within seventy-five yards they came to a sudden halt and all danger was past. The bluff had worked and the Indians were going to pretend they never had any hostile intentions. The boys continued to stand perfectly firm and wait. After a moment or two, three or four Indians came forward bowing, making every

demonstration of friendship, saying, "How, How," and asking for tobacco. Gibson in return bowed to them and said "How, How." He also indicated they could have tobacco if they would approach, but the Gilmores kept their guns steadily raised in the same position. When within twenty or thirty feet, the Indians stopped and Gibson approached a little nearer to them and put on an appearance of great friendship. He had no tobacco, but the Gilmores had, so Gibson went back for it, the others remaining in position to fire, and took it from their pockets. The Indians then bowed and the boys bowed and the Indians turned and went back to their companions. The four emissaries who had come out for the tobacco mounted their ponies and the whole thirty of them rode away. The boys kept their positions until the Indians were far out on the plain. They could see them as they rode away, turn on their ponies and watch them, and they proposed to give them to understand that there was a fight ready for them if they desired it, and thus probably prevent an attack farther on in their journey to camp and after night.

When the Indians were well out of the way, the party journeyed on. It was then nearly sundown and fifteen miles to camp. The boys had taken note of the natural objects along the road out, and before it grew entirely dark they located these objects with reference to certain stars that would lead them after night, and in this way managed to get along until they came to where they could see the reflection of the burning sage brush upon the sky. We were greatly rejoiced to see them, and even though they did not bring the cattle back, we felt after our hours of anxiety that the loss of the cattle was but a trivial matter.

A few days' drive after our encounter with the Indians brought us to Big Meadow, a name given to a sort of oasis which was covered with abundant grass and where our cattle could get the finest water. We took a good rest here and it was a delight to see the cattle and horses, after their long drive over the sand and through the sage brush, wade belly deep in the finest of grass. During our stay at this place we cut and cured a large quantity of hay and loaded it on our wagons. We had heard that there was a desert ahead and wanted to be prepared for it. We must have spent four or five days at this place, and when we set forward both men and cattle were much refreshed. A day's journey, as I remember, brought us to the lower end of Humboldt Lake, where, so far as we could see, Humboldt River stopped, that is the river ran into this lake and there was apparently no outlet. We could see a barren country ahead, and rightly judged that we were approaching the desert we had heard of.

Next morning everything was prepared for a long drive without grazing or water. We left early and all day long traveled over a hot, dry plain without once finding a drop of water, and where there was no vegetation upon which our cattle could feed. When night came a conference was held. To attempt to camp in that arid place without food or water would weaken our stock and exhaust our men, so we decided not to camp at all. Accordingly the weary oxen and horses were pushed on at increased speed. We traveled all night long and when daylight came there was still no prospect of relief. To stop, however, was more likely to bring disaster than to go on, so we kept moving. About noon we began to see some evidences of a change. Off in the distance we thought we could see

that the land had a green appearance, and this raised our hopes. On nearer approach we found that our first impressions were correct and that we were really approaching food and water. In a little while we came to a prong of what I learned afterwards was Carson River, which came down from the mountains and ran in an opposite direction from the Humboldt River. The water was clear and had hardly a tinge of alkali in it. When our cattle and horses saw the water, we could not hold them and we did not try very much, for we were almost as nearly famished as they. We took the yokes off of them and let them go. They ran pell-mell down to the water and plunged into it. The men did scarcely better. Many of them jumped right into the water with their clothes on and drank and splashed by turns until they had slaked their thirst and relieved their parched throats. As soon as food could be prepared, and eaten, everybody went to sleep except those who were detailed to stand guard the first two hours. We remained there, the guard being relieved every two hours, until the following morning, when both men and cattle were sufficiently refreshed to proceed.

Thenceforward our journey led us up Carson River. This was not a hard journey. The grass was fine and the water clear. There was no occasion for hurry. It was then growing toward the end of July and the worst of our journey was over.

We moved only fifteen or twenty miles a day and allowed our cattle and horses to browse along and fill themselves as they went. Nearly a hundred miles up the river we came to Carson Valley, where Carson City is now situated. As I recall my whole journey, I can think of no place that so impressed me with its beauty. Six miles across this valley, we came to

the mouth of Carson River Canyon where the river flows out of the mountain. Six miles farther on and after crossing the river a dozen times or more, we passed out of the canyon and found ourselves at the foot of what we named "The Two-Mile Mountain." This mountain had to be climbed. It was so steep that ten yoke of oxen were required to draw each wagon up. This made slow work, as some of the wagons had to be left at the bottom and the oxen brought back to get them. After reaching the top, we journeyed on and came to Red Lake. This was a beautiful body of water. I am not sure whether it is what is now called Lake Tahoe or not, though I feel sure it is. After passing beyond this lake, we came to the "Six-Mile Mountain." This was not so steep as the "Two-Mile Mountain," but it was a much longer pull. As we approached the top we came to snow. This was the 5th day of August, 1849. Before we reached the very crest of the range our oxen had to pass over great drifts of frozen snow which, for all we knew, may have been hundreds of feet deep. At the top of the mountain we were on the crest of the Sierra Nevada Range, and it was a great relief to start down hill. One of the men went forward and picked out a route and twelve miles down the mountain we came to Rock Creek. Beyond this we encountered a descent which was almost as abrupt as our descent into Bear River Valley, but in the present place, we had plenty of timber, so we cut large trees and tied them by chains to the rear of the wagons and allowed them to drag behind. This put a very effective brake upon the wagons and enabled them to go down safely.

I remember an occurrence which took place shortly before we made this descent. Our road led along the edge of a steep declivity which seemed to be a thousand

feet above the valley below. Mitch Hulett and I found it great sport to roll rocks off this precipice and watch them bound away down along the mountain-side. Sometimes we would pry a rock loose that would weigh two or three tons and watch it plunge down, tearing through the timber with frightful noise, scaring grouse, pheasants and wild animals out of the brush in great numbers. Some of the huge rocks would occasionally strike a jutting portion of the mountain and bound a hundred yards downward without striking a single obstruction. We had not noticed the lapse of time and the train got far ahead of us. By and by, we heard a great noise to the rear and in another moment a band of Indians dashed around a curve in the road and were right upon us. There was nothing we could do but run. The road ahead was down hill, and I have always thought we made a pretty good job of it. We broke away at full speed, never stopping to look back, and expecting every moment to feel the arrows in our backs or to see or hear them whiz past us. Every step gave us hope, and after a long run and when completely exhausted, we ventured to halt and look and listen, we discovered that we were not being followed at all. The Indians must have been greatly amused at our fright, but we were still unwilling to take chances and made the best haste we could to overtake the wagons. It required more than two hours, so rapidly had the time passed in our sport. That was the last time our pranks ever induced us to let the teams get so far ahead.

A place which afterwards came to be called Leake Springs is the next point I remember. We camped there for the night and on subsequent journeys I grew familiar with it. Twenty miles beyond this we came to Grass Valley and emerged from the high mountains. Fifteen miles farther we came to Weaver

Creek, August 12th, 1849, where we first saw the gold glitter.

We thought our train was first over the trail, but somehow a few had beaten us in. When we got down to Weaver Creek, three emigrants were at work panning out the gold. We stopped and camped and watched them for a long time. That night I was taken sick with the flux. It was a bad place to be sick and I was dreadfully sick, too. They fixed me sort of a pallet under the shade of a big tree, and I lay there night and day for a week and they didn't know whether I would live or die. Trains were constantly arriving and in one of them there was a doctor. He came down to see me and told the boys they must hunt up a cow and give me fresh warm milk. They told me afterwards they found a train in which somebody had foresight enough to bring a cow along, and they got the milk and brought it to me. I drank it and soon recovered.

## CHAPTER III.

*Gold Mining in '49 and '50.*

At last we were in California. I had a rather bitter introduction, but I soon felt well again and began to look about to see what California was really like and to learn the truth of all the wonderful stories I had heard about gold. We didn't want to take up claims immediately—wanted to look about and get the best location possible. They told us about Sacramento City being down the river and we decided to go down there. Weaver Creek was a small tributary of the American River, so we went down to the main stream and moved on down in the direction of Sacramento City. We met a man who said he had just been down there. We asked him how far it was, and he said forty miles. Said it was at the mouth of the American River, that is, where the American River flowed into the Sacramento River. In two days we reached the mouth of the river, but we didn't see any city. I saw a few tents, and there was an old sail boat anchored on Sacramento River up close to the bank, but that was all. I asked a man where Sacramento City was. He said, "This is the place."

We didn't expect to find much of a city, but were hardly prepared for what we found. We stretched our tent, turned our cattle out to graze and prepared for a rest. It was a delightful place. I never saw finer grass nor finer water, and we still had plenty to eat. Toward the close of the day I went down to where the sail boat was being unloaded. Four or five men were carrying provisions—flour, bacon, pickled pork, sugar, coffee, rice—in fact everything substantial to eat, out of the

boat and throwing it upon the bank among the grape vines. I saw no owner. There were no police and nobody seemed to be afraid of thieves. They were not afraid either of rain, for none could be expected at that season of the year. Nor was there even any dew. Everything seemed to be safe both day and night.

Our lean old cattle fattened fast and in a little while we could hardly recognize them. It was a joy to see them eat and drink and rest after the hardships they had endured. The poor things had suffered even more than the men.

About the first of September we started back to the mines. Twenty miles up the American River we each took up a claim and went to work. Everything was placer mining. Each man had his pan and with it and the water of the river, he washed the gravel away from the loose gold. We worked there several weeks and so far as we could see, exhausted the gold that was in our claims. We found on estimating the result of our work that each man had averaged about sixteen dollars a day for every day he had worked.

About the time our claims were exhausted, we were surprised to meet Russell Hill, a cousin of mine, who had worked his way down from Oregon to Sacramento by way of Shasta City, and learning at Sacramento that we were up the American River, had come on up to see us. He had left his home in Iowa the year before and had gone to Oregon. He told us he had stopped a few days at Shasta City and believed it to be a better mining place than the American River, and urged us to go there. Accordingly we yoked up our oxen and packed our belongings into the wagons again and started. When we reached Sacramento City this time, it was not necessary to ask where the city was. The whole valley was covered with tents and lunch stands.

There must have been several thousand people there. They had come in from everywhere, off the plains by caravan, up the river from San Francisco by boat, and from every other place in the world, it seemed to me. There were as yet no houses. People, men mostly, lived in tents and the lunch counters consisted of the sideboards of the wagons laid upon poles supported by forks driven in the ground. Meals were a uniform price, \$1.00, but lodging was free. Just spread your blanket down on the grass anywhere and make yourself at home.

Shasta City is two hundred miles up Sacramento River and a little northwest of Sacramento City. Knight's Landing, near the mouth of Feather River, was our first stop of any consequence. We went up Feather River to where Marysville now stands and thence in a northwesterly direction back into the Sacramento Valley. This valley is about an average of twenty-five miles in width and at that time there were no towns or even camps upon it and consequently I can give little account of our progress. I only recall that about every twenty miles we came upon a ranch occupied by a few families of Spaniards. These Spaniards had made slaves of the Digger Indians who lived in mounds or huts covered with earth. The Indians raised wheat and gathered it in cane baskets. They then rubbed the wheat out of the straw and beat it into flour. These Indians went almost naked and lived, themselves, on salmon, acorns, grapes and grasshoppers. They were the most disgusting mortals I have ever seen in my life. When we passed the huts or mounds in which they lived, the papposes would dart back into them exactly like prairie dogs. I asked an old Spaniard why he kept these filthy Indians around him, and he said they protected him from the wild Indians.

The whole valley was covered by abundant vegetation and was full of wild herds of Spanish horses and thousands of wild Spanish cattle. It was also full of many savage wild animals, grizzly, brown and black bear, California lions, panthers, wolves, wild cats and badgers. There was an abundance also of elk, deer and antelope, and we never lacked for fresh venison.

We reached Shasta late in September, and like Sacramento City, found everything but the city. One or two log cabins and a few tents made up the sum of all the improvements. We put in a few days looking over the situation and viewing prospects for getting gold and decided to spend the winter there. This made it necessary for us to look immediately into our stock of provisions, and upon going through it we found that we had hardly enough to last us. Nothing could be done but go back to Sacramento and secure an additional supply, and brother William and a man by the name of Gleason, from Iowa, who had made the trip with us up the river, started back with one wagon and four yoke of oxen. We stretched our tent and stored all the provisions we had in it in such a way as to protect them, and brother William and Gleason bade us good by.

This trip meant four hundred miles more of hardship and danger, and we hated very much to see them leave, but nothing else could be done. The boys made the trip down without trouble, so they reported upon their return, but on the way back the rainy season set in and swelled the rivers so that they were past fording much of the time. The trip ought to have been made easily in twenty-five or thirty days, but it occupied from the latter part of September until Christmas.

Hard as this trip was upon the two who made it, their sufferings were hardly to be compared to the



condition of brother James and myself. We had but a small tent in which to shelter both ourselves and our provisions and such meagre equipment as we had hauled across the plains. We had been alone but a few days when brother James was taken down with the scurvy. About the 10th of October the rain set in and continued almost in a steady downpour for about three weeks. Everything was completely soaked. It was next to impossible to find fuel enough to start a fire. I had to take care of brother James and keep changing the provisions to prevent them from spoiling, had to dry the blankets and clothing three or four times a day. In all, I don't think I averaged more than two hours sleep out of the whole twenty-four during this period of continued rain. I battled along the best I could, and at the end of about three weeks it ceased to rain so hard.

I shall never forget two friends who came to my rescue at this time—Charles Laffoon and Mike Cody. Both were from St. Louis and had run a dray on the wharf on the Mississippi River, they said. They had reached Shasta a few months ahead of us and had built a log cabin. On one side of this they attached a shed which they used for a cook room and the whole made a very comfortable dwelling. Lately, however, a great many people had arrived and they had arranged a bar at one end of the main cabin and fixed up some tables at the other for a poker game. Both of these enterprises proved good money makers and they were getting along fine. After it had been raining three or four weeks, Mike came up to our tent one morning. He saw the trouble we were in and said we must not stay there. I told him I knew nothing else to do. He said he would arrange that all right; that he would make room for us in his cabin. He didn't even

wait for an answer, but set to work packing things up. In a little while everything we had was moved under a roof. He fixed a bunk in the shed or cook room for my brother and brought some men up and carried him down and laid him on it. We used our own blankets of course, and I cooked our meals, but Mike and his partner took care of the rest of it. Everything was very quiet in the day time when the men were out working in the diggings, but at night things were mighty lively—drinking, gambling and fighting. We didn't mind all this, for it was so much better than the leaky old tent we had put up with for so long, and no kinder men ever lived than Mike Cody and Charles Laffoon.

Brother William and Gleason got back on Christmas day, worn out themselves and their teams in worse condition. It was still raining. They had had a dreadful time, high water, mud, rain and no shelter. They had to expose themselves in order to keep the provisions dry.

A cabin, some distance away from the cluster of houses which was called the town, had been vacated, and we moved in, though I think Cody and Laffoon would have arranged in some way to accommodate all of us in their cabin had they thought we could do no better. The cabin was fairly comfortable. It had a good fire-place and a good roof, and these were the principal necessities. The weather was not very cold, but everything was so entirely saturated that fire was even more necessary than if the weather had been cold. We had room in the cabin for our cots and provisions, and we settled down about the first of January to spend the winter. We drove the cattle ten miles down the river to Redding's Ranch and turned them loose in his wild herd to graze until spring. About the middle of January, William took

the scurvy. James had improved very little, so I now had both of them on my hands. They both lay there unable to walk a step for three months. There was but little that could be done for them, but I had a great deal on my hands doing even that and was thankful that I had been spared from the disease myself, for if I had taken down we should all have been cast upon the generosity of the wild, rough men who made up that camp. I had no fear, however, but what we would be taken care of. During the latter part of the winter, I was taken with a light attack of the same disease. I was very much afraid it would become serious, but I did not get down. I could walk flat footed on my left foot, but had to tip-toe on my right, and all through the balance of the winter I did the cooking, provided the wood, and ran the errands, hobbling along the best I could.

Besides this, we were somewhat troubled by finances. Everything was going out and nothing coming in. Everybody at work making plenty of money, but we were compelled to stay in this cabin and spend what we had made. We were rich, however, in provisions. Had enough to last us a year and they were worth more than gold. I remember that flour was worth two hundred dollars a sack, and most everything else was in proportion.

Late in March a doctor drifted into camp. He heard that we had sickness up at our cabin and came up. He looked my brothers over. He had no medicine and there was very little, if any, in the camp. He prescribed raw Irish potatoes sliced in vinegar. We had no potatoes. I went down to see if I could find them in camp. I hunted the place over and could not find any. I was going home discouraged when I met Mike Cody. I told him what I had been doing and he said

if there was a potato in California, he would get it for me. Next morning a man brought a bushel up to our cabin and told us that was all the potatoes in that part of the country. I asked him what he wanted for them and he said they were paid for. When I asked him who paid him he said it was Mike Cody. I then asked what he got for them. He said seventy-five dollars. I took the potatoes and fixed them up as the doctor had told me and gave them to the boys. In a few days they began to mend and in two or three weeks were able to hobble about the cabin, and by the first of May they were well enough to take care of themselves nicely. I hadn't forgotten Mike Cody in the meantime. I went down one day and told Mike I wanted to settle for the potatoes and for the use of his cabin the early part of the winter. He said "You don't owe me anything for staying at the cabin and the potatoes were a present." Said if he could do anything else, just let him know. I thanked him the best I could, but he told me that he didn't want any thanks, and that I must not feel under obligation to him. He reminded me that on several occasions when he wanted to go out in town and have a good time, I had kept his bar and run his poker game for him, and said that paid for everything he had done for us. I knew that was only an excuse to keep me from feeling so much in debt to him, but I let it go at that and never lost an opportunity to show that I appreciated what he had done.

I ought to mention, probably, my experiences as a bar-keeper and manager of a poker game on the few occasions when I was called upon to assume those responsible positions. The bar was a broad plank which rested upon supports and extended clear across one end of the cabin. The bottles of whiskey and bowls

of gold dust were kept on this plank. Mike sold nothing and had nothing to sell but whiskey. When a man wanted a drink he would hand me over his sack of gold dust. I poured out the price of a drink in the scale pan and put it over in the bowl. I then gave him his drink and handed him back his bag of gold dust. The poker game was not very hard to manage. The players had their rules and kept their guns close by to enforce them. This made everybody very cautious about observing the rules and seeing that a fair game was played. As long as the fellows remained sober I never saw any trouble over these games. Sometimes a fellow would get drunk and try to start trouble and he usually succeeded. We generally saved the lives of such fellows by taking them immediately away and putting them to bed.

About the 1st of May, Gleason, who had remained at the camp all winter, and I rigged up a couple of pack mules and went over to Trinity River, thirty miles west. There we found quite a prosperous camp where they were getting a good deal of gold. We each took up a claim and went to work, and got quite a quantity of gold. About the 1st of June, James and William, who by that time were able to ride horseback, came over and they each took a claim. By the 1st of August we had worked these claims pretty well out and decided to go on to Salmon River, forty miles farther west. While we were at Trinity River, Alfred Jack of near Camden Point, Platte County, came in and joined us. He decided to go on with us to Salmon River and we all packed up and started. The trip was without incident, except that over toward the end of our journey we came to an Indian village. We rode in toward the village and as we approached we saw the bucks all running away as fast as they could, leaving

their squaws and papposes behind. This was strange behavior and we wondered what it meant. When we got up to the village, we found a white horse which they had just shot full of arrows. This looked a little dangerous to us. We didn't know the meaning of this conduct and took it to be a sign of war. We passed on through the village, hurried after the Indians and soon overtook them. We had our guns and plenty of ammunition and were pretty well prepared for a fight with them, as against their bows and arrows, though they greatly outnumbered us. When they saw we were prepared for them and knowing as they did that we had not harmed their squaws and papposes, they came and told us that they had run away because their dogs had run at sight of us. They didn't explain why they had shot the horse full of arrows, but I have always been of the opinion they intended to waylay and kill us if they could.

We reached Salmon River late in the afternoon and camped for the night. Next morning we took our picks, shovels and pans and went out to look for gold and found it. By noon when we gathered back at the camp every man was satisfied to make permanent camp and remain a while. We were the first in this immediate section of the country. Other parties were farther up the river and still others farther down the river, but we found no evidences at all that any white men had ever been in this particular place. We seemed to have a way of getting in ahead. We were in the lead across the plains, among the first to reach Sacramento, about the first at Shasta City, and Trinity River, and actually the first on Salmon River. We were not there long, however, until others began to come in, and in a short time all the available locations for placer mining were taken. We remained some six weeks, as

I recollect, on Salmon River and panned out quite a quantity of gold; enough to pay us well for the trip but hardly as much as we anticipated we would get when we left home, after hearing the reports that came to us. Still we were satisfied and now that we all had good health, had no complaint to make. Some one who came into our camp on Salmon River brought the word that our brothers were coming across the plains from Missouri, and would get in sometime in September. We decided to go back and meet them, so we broke camp and went back to Shasta City. Here we loaded our plunder into our own wagons which had been left during our absence, and after procuring our cattle from Redding's Ranch—so fat and sleek we could hardly recognize them, we set out down Sacramento River. The trip was made without incident. It was the dry season of the year. There was plenty of game, plenty for the cattle to eat, and no trouble about fording the river. While we were in camp one night at Knight's Landing, I put a sack of dried beef which we called "jerky," under the back part of my pillow to make sure the coyotes would not get it. In this I was mistaken, for sometime that night a coyote came up and helped himself and we had no jerky for breakfast. My slumbers were not disturbed in the least by the burglar.

A little farther down the Sacramento River, while in camp one night, we were all awakened by an unusual noise. The camp fire was burning dimly and afforded enough light for us to see, not twenty yards away, a huge grizzly bear. He was sniffing around picking up scraps of meat and bone which we had thrown away. There was a good deal of quiet excitement in the camp over the discovery of this guest, but fortunately everybody had sense enough to keep still.

The old fellow prowled about the camp for a long time. Sometimes he would get right up by the fire and then we had a good look at him. He paid no attention to us at all. Apparently didn't know we were in the neighborhood. At least if he knew it, he didn't let on. By and by, after satisfying himself that there were no more scraps, he walked slowly away and we could hear him rattling the bushes and crushing the dead limbs and sticks that lay upon the ground for a long distance. It was not until he had been out of hearing for quite a long time that anybody dared to speak, and then our first words to each other were of congratulation. We hadn't had very much experience with grizzly bears at that time and didn't know but what the old fellow might have attempted to piece out his meal on one of us. We were glad enough when he decided to go and hunt up some more bones and scraps and let us alone.

We reached Sacramento City about September 20th, and from there went up to Salmon Falls on the American River, where we found our brothers, Isaac, Zach and Robert, and quite a company of our Buchanan County acquaintances—Calvin James, Charles Ramsey and his family, Perry Jones, William Glenn, James Glenn, and some others whom I do not at this moment recall. Charles Ramsey's wife was the first white woman I had seen since I left St. Joseph, May 2nd, 1849.

It was a great joy to us to meet these old acquaintances and to feel that we were now not quite so lonely out in that wild country. We all remained in camp at Salmon Falls for several weeks. During this time the boys looked around to see what they had better do. Chas. Ramsey and Calvin James took up a ranch about thirty miles west of Sacramento River on Cash Creek.

The five brothers of us decided that the best thing we could do was to take up a ranch also. We went over into the same neighborhood and squatted on a body of land. There was no law prescribing any amount that each man could take, and the grazing land was held largely in common. We had a good bunch of cattle and horses of our own and emigrants were continually offering their teams for sale. Isaac, Zach and Robert had brought considerable money out with them, and James, William and myself had practically all the gold we had cleaned up in mining, so we were in shape to begin the cattle business on a pretty good scale. By the first of December we had a fine herd of cattle, all branded with our particular brand, grazing on the pasture along Cash Creek.

We built a cabin close to the cabin that James and Ramsey had put up, and staked out our ranch. There were five men in the James cabin and seven in ours—six Gibson brothers and Eli Wilson. The whole valley of Cash Creek as well as much of the valley of Sacramento River, was covered with wild oats. Red clover grew wild and there were many other grasses just as good for cattle.

We had plenty of flour, sugar, coffee and such other common groceries as were to be had in the markets at Sacramento. It had cost quite a sum of money to get these provisions—I do not remember just how much, but it was fabulous almost, and the only consolation we got was out of the fact that we didn't have to buy meat. We had our own cattle if we wanted beef, but there was no need even for that when venison was so plentiful.

It must have been sometime during the first of December that we organized a hunt for the purpose of laying in a good supply of meat for the winter. We

rigged up ten pack mules, went to the mountains a few miles distant and camped. From this camp we conducted our hunting expedition and in a few days had more than enough venison to last through the winter. We killed elk, deer and antelope enough to load our train. Part of this we took down to Sacramento and traded it for other provisions. We felt that we could get meat any time when we had to have it, but might not be able to get other provisions, and that an extra supply would make us feel more comfortable.

The grazing was fine all through the winter. The climate, as every one knows, is not cold and the one discomfort was the continued rain, but this had its compensations. When the rivers and sloughs filled up with water, the wild ducks and wild geese came in to feed upon the wild oats. We had little to do but look after our cattle and think about what we would like to eat. If we decided in the morning to have duck or goose, some one took the gun, went out and brought back just what we had decided upon. The rivers were full of the finest fish and they were no trouble to catch at all, so when we wanted fish, it was at hand. I have never lived at any place in my life where I felt so sure of provisions as in that cabin during that winter. We had four large greyhounds that had come across the plains with some of the emigrants and we picked them up as company. We trained them to hunt bear—that is the bear soon trained them. It was no trouble to get them to trail bear. They seemed to do this by instinct, but seemed not always to be sure of the kind of animal they were after. I judged this by watching them tackle the bear after they had overtaken it. They would dash in with as much confidence as if he were a jack rabbit or a coyote and showed plainly that they proposed to take him in

and annihilate him at once. They would also show a good deal of surprise when the old bear would rise up on his hind feet and box them ten feet away. They soon learned to keep their distance and play with the bear, keeping him standing on his hind feet, watching them until we could come up close enough to get a shot. That always ended it. Sometimes the bear would take to a tree. In either case we always got him. These dogs were great company for us. If we happened not to want any bear meat, we would take the dogs and chase jack-rabbits and coyotes. They were pretty swift dogs, but it was seldom that they could pick up a jack-rabbit, and rarely ever got a coyote on a straight run, but we had as much fun and more probably than if the dogs had been able to pick them up right along.

Thus passed the winter of '50 and '51—as pleasant a period as I recall during my whole life. By the spring and early summer of '51 our cattle were fat and fine and ready to be sold for beef. We peddled them out to the butchers and miners along the Sacramento and American Rivers. They brought us an average of one hundred and fifty dollars a head. By the first of July they were all gone and we began to look for emigrants' cattle to re-stock the ranch. We supposed that emigration across the plains would continue and in order to get first chance at cattle that might be for sale, we loaded up our pack mules, crossed the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and went down Carson River to Humboldt Desert. We were greatly surprised to find only a few straggling emigrant trains coming in and most of these were bent on settlement rather than mining and had brought their families. Of course, they had no cattle to sell. We waited until the latter part of July, and when we became convinced that no cattle were coming we had to determine the next best thing to do.

The grazing of cattle had proved so much more to our liking than digging gold that we wanted to continue in that business, but we couldn't do it without cattle. We thought about the thousands of cattle back in Missouri that might be had for ten or fifteen dollars a head, and decided to return across the plains and during the winter gather up a herd and take it back the following summer. This plan seemed to suit best. Brother William was not in the best of health and didn't feel equal to the task of crossing the plains, so it was agreed that he and Eli Wilson would stay with the ranch and take care of things during the year and that the rest of us would go back.

## CHAPTER IV.

*Back Across the Plains.*

It was now close to the first of August, 1851. We were camped at the western side of the fifty-mile desert which gave us so much trouble on our way over. We had packed provisions and equipment sufficient only to take us across the Sierra Nevada Mountains and back. We always allowed for emergency and put in plenty. The question now was whether we were well enough equipped to start on a long journey back across the plains. We made an inventory of our stock of provisions and supplies, and decided that we could make it. Brother William and Wilson took only a small quantity of supplies with them on their return journey. They were going into a country where plenty was to be found, and if they ran low, it would make no great difference. With us it was different. We had no assurances that we could get supplies of any kind at any point on the journey, at least not until we reached the outposts near St. Joseph.

As already related, we had carried our supplies from home on pack mules. We had no wagons or oxen with us and had to arrange to make the entire journey carrying our provisions and camp equipment on the mules.

After getting everything ready we bade goodby to brother William and Wilson, and started early in the morning. We entered at once upon the fifty-mile desert and traveled that day and all the following night. Our mules made better progress than the ox teams, and we reached the Carson Sink a little after daylight where we found water. We also fell in with

four men who said they had started to Salt Lake, but had heard from the passing emigrants that the Indians were on the war path ahead and were afraid to go any farther alone and were waiting for company. We had heard the same story, so concluded their excuse for being there was a good one and that they had no designs upon unwary emigrants. We sized them all up and decided to take them into our company. Three of them were brothers whose names were Kilgore. The fourth was a German whose name I have forgotten. They all lived in Iowa. They seemed very much frightened at the idea of going on, and suggested that we wait for further reinforcements. We told them we had no time to waste and that we were going on and they could join us if they wanted to. They finally consented, rigged up their outfit and made ready. We traveled up the Humboldt River over the old road until we reached the head waters of that stream. There were three roads open to us from this point. One to Fort Hall on Snake River, a middle road which had been blazed since we came over, called Hedgepath's cut-off, and the South road to Salt Lake. We took the Salt Lake road, though it was new to all of us. We struck Bear River, about one hundred and fifty miles from Salt Lake, crossed it and traveled down the East side to Weaverville and then on to Ogden. Here we rested a few days and had our mules and horses shod.

The day after we camped, Brigham Young paid us a visit. He asked us many questions, but we gave him little satisfaction. We had ten thousand dollars in gold with us and hadn't any confidence in the Mormons, so we kept close watch. A day or two after this, we took our mules and started to Salt Lake City. About twenty miles out on our journey we met a large ve-

hicle drawn by eight big white horses, a driver on top, and a great many women and one man inside. I recognized the man as Brigham Young, but said nothing. A little farther on we overtook a man in the road and I asked him who the man and all the women were that we had met back on the road. He said it was Brigham Young and twenty of his wives.

We made a short stop at Salt Lake. There seemed to be but one road out of the valley in which the city is situated and that led us south about ten miles, thence east through a steep, rough canyon. It was at the mouth of that canyon where the Mormons later built the wall to resist the government soldiers. The road through the canyon led us finally to the top of a high range of mountains. Passing over this and down the eastern slope, we came to Ft. Bridger on Black Fork of Green River. We followed this stream down to the main prong of Black River and went thence northeasterly to Green River, thence up a prong of that river until we reached the divide at South Pass. Here, after four hundred miles over a strange road and over wild and rugged mountains and deserts, we came again to the Oregon Trail, and found a familiar road.

This portion of the road is now familiar also to the reader. It led down Sweetwater, past Independence Rock and Devil's Gate to North Platte River. Just after we crossed the North Platte, we stopped for dinner. We had eaten our meal and were resting when we saw what appeared to be a band of Indian ponies back across the river and about a mile away. We could not tell whether Indians were upon the ponies or not, but there was little doubt in our minds but that there were. We packed our mules hurriedly, saddled our horses, and started on and had made but a short distance when three Indians came running up in our rear

on foot. They had dodged out from behind a boulder somewhere along the road. They appeared to be quite friendly. They said "How, How," and pointed to the good grass along the road. By these signs we understood that they wanted us to camp and were recommending the place to us. All this time the ponies were getting closer to us and all doubt that Indians were upon them was removed. When the three saw that we were not going to stop, one of them grabbed the bit of the horse ridden by one of the Kilgore boys and attempted to hold it. Kilgore threw his gun down at the Indian, who loosed his hold and ran back. One of the three during this performance dropped behind and raised a sort of flag. At this the whole band of ponies started towards us and every pony had a red-skin on his back lying close down to the pony's neck. They came galloping as fast as the ponies could carry them and in single file. As they came closer we saw that they were all painted up in war style with black feathers plaited in their hair. There must have been twenty-five or thirty of them, and there were nine of us—five Gibsons, three Kilgores, and the Dutchman. This Dutchman rode in a little cart while the rest of us were on horse-back. We had eight pack mules loaded with our camp equipment and provision, and they had to be taken care of.

We put the pack mules abreast and pushed them directly ahead of us. The first Indians to reach us appeared to be very friendly, as if they could deceive anybody by that old ruse. They said "How, How," and appeared to be very anxious for our welfare. Their purpose in this, it was plain enough to see, was to allow their companions all to come up. When the last of their party caught up they all set up a great yell



and made a dash to get between us and our pack mules. Every man in our company drew his navy and each man pointed at a different Indian. We had the drop on them. They had not drawn the guns which some of them had or the bows and arrows which others carried, and the first attempt to draw a weapon meant a dead Indian and they knew it, so they halted and fell back. As soon as they were out of the way we moved up and formed a ring around the pack mules, facing outward. This seemed to please them wonderfully, for they started galloping around us, yelling and going through all manner of ferocious maneuvers, but apparently never getting in a position where they could draw a weapon. As soon as we had surrounded our mules, Zach and Robert slipped off their horses and coupled all the mules together. This would keep them from scattering out. In a moment the boys were back in their saddles and back in the ring facing outward. The Dutchman in his cart was outside of our ring. He was very much agitated for a time for fear he would get cut off from us and be taken by the Indians. He managed to dash in, however, and get right close to our line and stop his horse. This gave him a chance to get out his double barrel shot gun which he carried in the cart and get ready for action.

This milling and yelling, around and around, must have kept up for ten or fifteen minutes. We didn't want to kill any of them, but we didn't propose they should get any advantage of us, and every man was on guard. By and by, Robert and Zach, who faced the road ahead, put spurs to their horses and broke through the ring, Robert turning on the Indians to the right and Zach to the left, each with a navy in each hand and the bridle reins in his mouth. This caused the Indians to break up the milling and hurry to the

rear in order to keep their forces together. At the moment when they started back, two of our men put whip to the mules and forced them out through the gap as fast as they could gallop. The rest of us stood firm and steady, holding our guns on the Indians. We held them in this manner until the mules were well out of the way, then turned and galloped after them. We knew all the time that we had the Indians bluffed. They couldn't get any advantage of us and they would not fight in the open. They stood completely still after we left them and continued to watch us as long as we were in sight.

We made good haste that afternoon and traveled late. By 6:00 o'clock we were twenty-five miles away, and after supper we pressed forward until midnight. We counted that this put us a safe distance away, but to make still more certain of our position, we rode off from the trail about a mile to camp. At daylight we were moving again and the next day at noon reached Ft. Laramie. Perhaps this haste and forced marching were all unnecessary, but in dealing with the Indians, it is a good idea to put just as much distance as you can between yourself and them. Ft. Laramie offered us the first real security we had known since we crossed the Continental Divide. The whole territory, especially between Platte River and Ft. Laramie, was infested with the worst bands of Indians then known to emigrants, and many trains had been robbed and the members killed on this portion of the journey.

We found sixty thousand Indians at Ft. Laramie to draw their pay from the government. All were camped across the river north of the Fort. As we left Ft. Laramie we rode over and stopped for our mid-day meal. They gathered around us, made signs, tried to

swap ponies with us and pretended to be, and were in fact at that time, very friendly with us. I remember an amusing incident that occurred at this time. Brother Isaac had a little Spanish mule which he offered to the Indians for a pony. The Indians asked if the mule was gentle. Isaac told them it was perfectly so, and in order to prove it, he jumped upon the mule bareback and with nothing but a halter to control it by. The mule had carried a pack all the way from Sacramento, but this was a new experience. He immediately bowed his back, stuck his head down between his knees, and began bucking. In a twinkling, Isaac was rolling ten feet away in the sand. I never saw anything give as much delight as this gave the Indians. They whooped and yelled and kept it up. Now and then it would subside and then break out again. We joined the Indians and laughed as heartily as they; everybody enjoyed it but brother Isaac. It was like most funny things, no fun at all to somebody.

About 2:00 o'clock we started down North Platte. The soldiers warned us to look out for scouting parties of Indians, and our own experience told us this was good advice. We met with no trouble, however, and reached the mouth of South Platte in good time. On this ride from Ft. Laramie to South Platte I think we must have seen hundreds of thousands of buffalo. They were so tame they would hardly give us the road. We had all the good buffalo beef we wanted every meal. A while before camping time, one of our party would ride ahead, pick out a good place where water and fuel could be had. He would then ride out to the closest buffalo herd, pick out a fat yearling, shoot it, and have it ready when we came up. It was short work to make a fire, make our bread, make the coffee and broil a fine buffalo steak. I have never enjoyed

any meals in my life more than these. There was only one trouble about this method of getting our meat—the wolves kept us awake most of the night fighting over the carcass. In order to avoid this we usually dragged the carcass out of hearing of the camp. On the trip down from Ft. Laramie we noticed one day a great herd of buffalo far in front of us and a little to the right of the trail, which seemed to be grazing on the hillside in a circle. As we came nearer we made out the situation more clearly. Hundreds of them grazing, heads outward, formed a complete circle in which there must have been a thousand little calves all lying down. On the opposite hillside a half mile away, we saw about twenty savage wolves watching the herd. The buffalo were watching also. They knew the wolves were there and they were protecting their calves against them.

When we reached Ft. Kearney we learned that the Indians on Little Blue were on the war path, so kept on down Platte River fifty or sixty miles farther, and then passed across the country where Lincoln now stands, and reached the Missouri River at old Ft. Kearney, where Nebraska City is now situated. We crossed the Missouri River into Iowa and thence down the east side of the river. About the middle of the afternoon one day, we crossed the Missouri line, journeyed on to night, and went into camp without a guard, the first in three months. We passed Jackson's Point and Oregon, in Holt County, and reached Jimtown, Andrew County, where we stopped for the night with Drury Moore, a cousin of ours, and slept in a bed, the first in three years. Next day we reached home.

We rode up, driving our pack mules loaded with blankets, bread pans, frying pans, coffee pots, tin cups, and sacks of provisions; hair and beard long and un-

kempt and tanned as brown as Indians. Mother, sister Mary and brother Isaac's wife were the only members of the family at home and they came out on the portico of the house to watch us. They were not expecting us for two years, and of course, thought the caravan they saw belonged to strangers. When we began climbing off our horses and fastening the pack mules to the fence, they fell back into the house. We hitched, got over the fence, and walked up to the door without being recognized. In fact, we had a real hard time convincing them that we were really ourselves, and I am not very much surprised that they should not have known us. The dirt, sand, wind, sun and the grimy life we had led for more than six weeks without a shave or a hair cut was enough to disguise us.

We reached home about the middle of September, 1851. It was a delightful thing to be at home once more, but in order to carry out our plans we had little time to spare during this season of the year. Prairie hay grew in great quantities on the old farm and it was now in perfect condition to be cut and cured. We rested only a day or two, then sharpened up the scythes and went to work. We cut and cured twenty or thirty tons of this hay in order that we might have something to feed the cattle on as we collected them together. After this was done, we had a good long period of rest. Christmas came and we entered into the fun with the young folks. I think I shall never forget this winter at home.

About the first of January, 1852, we began buying cattle and kept it up throughout the remainder of the winter. By the first of May we had five hundred and fifty head collected upon the old farm ready to start.

## CHAPTER V.

### *Across the Plains With Cattle. 1852*

The first days of May found us on the banks of the river at the mouth of Black Snake. Most of the men went along with the first load of cattle ferried across the river. As the cattle were driven out on the farther shore, the men corralled them and held them on a sand-bar to await the slow process of bringing the whole herd across. Elwood bottom at that time was a perfect wilderness of timber with only an Indian trail leading through it out as far as Peter's Creek. After much delay, the last of the herd was ferried over and then came the wagons, oxen, horses and mules.

There were twenty-five men in charge of this drove of cattle. Each man had a horse, and besides this, we had a number of mules. We took three wagon loads of provisions and had four yoke of oxen to each wagon. This comprised the outfit.

The Indians occupied the land on the Kansas side of the river and they came down to see us cross. They were peaceable and harmless, and did not mean to give us any trouble. They would come up close to the trail, and stand and stare at the cattle, and this was about as bad a thing as could have been done. I don't know why it is, but cattle never liked Indians. The whole herd would pass a white man without paying any attention to him, but if an Indian stood by the wayside where the cattle could see him, he would create a great commotion, and frequently, unless the greatest care was observed, a stampede would follow.

The cattle were not used to traveling, and we experienced our greatest trouble the first week out. We had not only the Indians to contend with, but we had to break the cattle to drive, and the brush and timber were so thick that every man in the company had to be on the watch to keep from losing some of the herd. The men were as green as the cattle, and with all these hindrances we made slow progress the first period of our journey. At the end of about a week or ten days, and after we had reached the high prairie, things began to settle down. The men learned their duties and the cattle had apparently been as apt as the men. They understood exactly what was before them when the start was made in the morning. One of our company always rode ahead and it was a pretty sight to see all the cattle break away from grazing and start out after this leader as soon as the men began to crack their whips and call to them.

We made no haste. The grazing was good and the water plentiful, and we wanted our cattle to get in a good condition as possible before they reached the desert part of the journey. Ten or fifteen miles a day was counted a good day's drive. At this rate, there was plenty of time for grazing and rest. The new men with us were impatient to go faster, but those of us who had been over the journey knew too well the trials ahead to permit haste on this part of the road. We wanted to save our strength in order that we might make haste across the mountains and the alkali that lay between us and the end of our journey.

At Little Blue we overtook a train lying in camp, and learned that Cholera had broken out, and that several deaths had occurred. An old man by the name of Frost came out to where we were and said he had been waiting for us; that he had heard we would

be on the road this year, and when misfortune and sickness overtook his train, he decided to wait for us. He lived on Grand River, and his son had died of the Cholera, and we wanted to take the body back home. He said he had enough of the plains and didn't care to spend the remainder of his days amid such hardships. He had forty head of choice dairy cows and asked us to buy them. We told him we had no money for that purpose with us. He said he didn't want the money, if we would give him our note it would be good enough for him. We accordingly gave him a note for six hundred dollars and he turned his little herd over to us.

Brother Isaac decided to return with Mr. Frost and wait until he heard from us, and if we succeeded in getting our cattle through without difficulty, he would bring another herd the next year. Within a week after Isaac left, brother William, who had made the trip home by way of Panama and New York, overtook us with a drove about equal in number to ours. We combined the two and all moved together, thenceforth throughout the journey.

I may anticipate a little here and say that after arriving in California, we sent the money back to take up our note given for the forty cows. It reached our father and he communicated with Mr. Frost, paid him the money and took up the note. It was pretty slow business, but it was accomplished without difficulty.

When the two herds of cattle and two companies of men were joined together, they made quite a caravan. A good many Buchanan County boys made the trip with us, among them were James and Russell Deakins, Joe and Sebastian Kessler, Rufus Huffman and a man by the name of Streeter, who went along as cook in brother William's company. There were many others, but I cannot now recall their names.

We journeyed without incident that I now recall until we reached Plum Creek, which I have described in the account of my first trip out. Close to this place the wolves attacked our cattle one night and caught a fine cow and a heifer, and before we could relieve them tore their flanks so dreadfully that they both died. The bellowing of these two raised the whole herd and came near creating a stampede. It was a very dark night. The entire company got out upon horseback and rounded up the cattle, and kept galloping around them the remainder of the night, firing their guns to frighten away the wolves. It is a wonder we didn't have more trouble with wolves than we did. The buffalo had all gone south and had not returned, and the wolves were savagely hungry and would attack most anything that offered them a chance of securing food.

We kept our course on up the Platte, taking every protection against wolves and Indians, and finally reached a point just below the junction of the two rivers. Here we decided to try a new road. We would not go up the South Platte as we had gone on our previous trip, but would cross the river and follow up the North Platte. We spent half a day sounding the bottom of the river and found we could cross by raising our wagon beds about ten inches. The banks of the stream were low, but the water was running nearly bank full. By the middle of the afternoon we had the wagon beds all raised and the banks spaded down and ready for the start. We hitched ten yoke of cattle to one wagon and drove in with five men on horseback on each side of the cattle to keep them straight. This wagon crossed over in good shape and the oxen were driven back and a second wagon taken across the same way. As the last wagon crossed, we pushed the whole

drove of cattle, a thousand in all, after the wagon. The loose cattle traveled faster than the work cattle and began to bunch behind the wagon and around the oxen until we could not tell the work cattle from the loose ones, except by the yoke. The loose cattle crowded on, more and more of them gathering about the wagon until I began to think our work cattle as well as the wagon were in great danger. We took quick action to relieve the situation. I ordered fifteen or twenty of the boys to rush right in, and with their whips force the loose cattle away from the oxen. They cut and slashed, whooped and yelled, and finally got in alongside the wagon and the work cattle. They then forced the oxen as fast as they could to shore and drove them out safely on the opposite bank. This left the loose cattle without any guide as to their course across the river. The current was running swiftly and the cattle wandered off down the river, sometimes getting beyond their depth and finally when they reached the bank, it was in many places so steep they could not climb out. It was a pretty serious situation for a little while, but by and by through hard work and much racing of the horses, we got them all out on the opposite shore and rounded them up about sundown.

Next morning we started on our slow journey up North Platte and moved on day by day, passed Fort Laramie, and a few miles above it struck across the mountains along the old trail most of us had twice traveled. Scenes were familiar along this route by this time—Fremont's Peak in the distance to the north, Independence Rock and Devil's Gate, and farther on South Pass, which divides the waters of the Atlantic from the Pacific.

Green River was past fording. A couple of men from the east somewhere had constructed their wagon beds

of sheet iron made in the shape of flat boats and had left home ahead of emigration and when they reached this river, unloaded and set their wagon beds on the river and were ready for business. They set our wagons over at five dollars per load, and we swam our horses and cattle after them. We chose the old trail over which we had gone in forty-nine, as better than the Hedgepeth cut-off, and so we passed Soda Springs and Fort Hall, thence down Snake River to mouth of Raft River, up Raft River and over the divide to the Humboldt, down the Humboldt, over the desert and across the Sierra Nevada Range, and down on the other side. Every spot seemed as familiar to me as my father's door yard, but the most vivid recollections came when I passed the old pine tree at Weaver Creek under which I lay sick for ten days in forty-nine.

We crossed Sacramento River on a ferry at Sacramento City and went forty miles southwest into the Suisun Valley, nearer San Francisco Bay than our first ranch. We stopped a few days on Charles Ramsey's ranch until we could locate grazing land of our own. Ramsey was a son-in-law of Calvin James, and, as heretofore related, had brought his family with my brothers on their trip out in 1850. He built a pre-emption house in a black-haw patch where Easton, Missouri, now stands. After his arrival in California in 1850, he took up a ranch in Suisun Valley and passed the remainder of his life there.

After resting a few days at Ramsey's, brother James and I went back east about ten miles to Barker Valley and located a ranch, and returned for our cattle. Our first thought was of the cattle and after they had been provided for, we thought of ourselves. We put up a substantial cabin to shelter us from the rainy season, and then built a large corral by cutting posts

and setting them deep in the ground, and binding the tops together with rawhide. We then dug a deep ditch around it, after which we were sure it would hold a grizzly bear. Our ranch proved to be on land claimed by Barker, a Spaniard, who lived about ten miles away, but he gave us no trouble. He had a little village of Spaniards around him and about fifty Digger Indians who were his slaves. They were quite friendly, and we all worked together looking after the cattle.

By the time all preparations had been made for winter, the season was pretty well advanced. Through it all, we had not had time to lay in a supply of venison for the winter or to enjoy a good hunt. After everything else had been done and we had rested a few days, we rigged up our pack mules and started for the mountains. I have already described the abundance of game in this country, and on this hunt we found no exception. Deer, antelope, elk and bear in plenty. We had to watch also for California lions, wolves and wild-cats. They were abundant also. We were gone on this hunt about a week. Had a camp in which we assembled over night and brought in the results of our day's work. It was great fun to sit about a big camp fire and re-count the experiences of the day. We secured all the venison we could possibly need for a long period of time, and with it set off to our cabin to spend a winter very much the same as we had spent a previous winter farther up the valley.

Our only diversion was with the gun and the dogs. Wild fowl was still abundant, and we had the choicest meats whenever we wanted them. I remember during this winter that a large herd of elk were driven out of the swamp by the water, and into an open valley near our cabin. The dogs sighted them and made for them. They singled out a monster buck and

he took to the water to battle them. The dogs were plucky and swam in after him, but they had little chance, as the water was beyond their depth, while he could easily stand on the bottom. As the dogs would approach him, he would strike them with his front feet and plunger them under. We watched the proceedings for a few minutes and soon saw that our dogs would all be drowned if we let the buck alone, so one of our boys rode in and shot him with his revolver. We dragged him out and dressed him. He was a monster, and must have weighed as much as 800 pounds. His antlers were the largest I have ever seen.

## CHAPTER VI.

### *A Bear Hunt.*

By March, our cattle were fat, and we began marketing. A bunch of dairy cows shipped across San Francisco Bay to San Francisco brought two hundred dollars a head. A month later we took over one hundred beef cattle and sold them to Miller and Lucks for one hundred dollars per head, and at various intervals throughout the spring months, we culled out the fattest cattle still on hand and took them over, receiving for all of them prices ranging from seventy-five to one hundred and fifty dollars per head.

Our plan was to stay in California during this summer, and we congratulated ourselves that we were to escape the burning plains. We had very little to do, had plenty of money and plenty to eat, and I believe every man in the camp was pretty well satisfied with California.

Late in the fall, as was our custom, we organized another hunt. I would not mention it but for an incident that occurred out in the mountains which may be interesting. The party consisted of my brothers, William, James and Zack, Joe and Barsh Kessler, and myself. We reached a good place to camp late one evening and pitched our tent. Some of the boys went to work about the camp, others took their guns and went out to look for camp meat and found it. One of the boys brought down a nice deer, and brought it in in time for supper. Next morning the party was up bright and early, and took off in various directions to look for game. We had not been separated a half hour until I heard the guns popping in vari-

ous directions. I was crawling along the side of a gulch making my way up the mountain, and had concluded luck was against me. Shortly after I had made this reflection, I heard the sound of brother William's gun, which I knew very well, off to my right and across the canon. Then I heard a dreadful growling and howling and knew that William had wounded a bear. In a moment I heard a second shot, but the growling continued. I ran down the side of the gulch, crossed the ravine at the bottom, and started up the other side when I saw farther up the mountain a big grizzly making his way slowly along sniffing, growling and plowing through the wild oats that covered the side of the mountain. I was satisfied it was the bear that William had wounded, and I knew it was not safe for me to get very close to him. However, I was then in safe quarters, and I decided to move on to a position where I could get a shot that would bring him down, and, if I could not do this, it was my plan to keep him in sight so I could direct William, who was on horseback, how to follow him. In passing through the brush and undergrowth, however, I lost sight of the bear. I stopped and listened, but could hear nothing. I was in fairly open ground and could see some distance away, and as the bear was quite a distance ahead, I decided to move cautiously along. I really thought the bear had gone over the mountain. I moved slowly and as I approached fairly well toward the top, I noticed a thick bunch of weeds off at a distance, but it did not occur to me that the bear had stopped there. However, I continued up the mountain, intending to leave the weeds to my left. I slipped along until I got opposite the weeds, and there to my great astonishment, I saw the bear not thirty yards from me. His eyes were set upon

me and his hair all turned the wrong way. I then thought for the first time how indiscreet I had been. I had only one chance, and I took that in a hurry. I dropped my gun and started down the mountain for a scrubby tree which stood about sixty yards away. When I started to run the bear took after me. I ran with all my might and as I passed under the tree, I jumped up and grabbed the lower limb and swung myself up. The bear came growling and plowing down the mountain, and raised on his hind feet, and grabbed my boot with one of his paws just as he passed under me, but the ground was so steep and his momentum was so great that it forced him on down the side of the mountain beyond me. This gave me time to go up the tree as high as I could, though it was so small that I could not feel very secure. The bear came back growling and snarling, and came up to the tree, stood up on his hind feet with his paws around the tree, and tried to reach me. I was not over five feet above him, but he could not reach me. I pulled off my hat and threw it upon the ground. He growled and fell back after it, and tore it all to pieces. This seemed to satisfy him for he did not come back to the tree any more, but stood looking around for a while and then walked away. He went on up the side of the mountain, perhaps a hundred yards, and crawled into a thicket of chapparal brush and laid down. I called William as loud as I could but got no answer. I called again and again, and finally he heard me. The first thing he said was, "Look out, there is a wounded bear up there." I called back to him and told him it was gone, but he didn't understand me. He said, "Get back, get away from there, there is a wounded bear in the weed patch right by you." I answered



and told him to come on up, and he did so. He seemed surprised to see me in a tree, but I soon related my experience and pointed out the chapparal brush in which the bear was lying.

I had had a pretty narrow call, but I was not willing to give up without the bear. The question was how could we get him. I would not risk getting down and walking up to the brush patch. One experience of that kind was enough. There was a tree standing a few yards from the thicket, and after looking the situation over a while, I told William to go and ride between the tree and the brush, and keep a close lookout, and I would get down, run to the tree, climb it, and go out on a limb that extended toward the brush where I thought perhaps I could see to get a shot. He said it was a little dangerous, but I told him I was willing to give the old bear a dare anyway, that he had caught me off my guard the first time. We waited quite a long time and heard nothing from the bear, so William concluded to try it. He rode around up the side of the mountain between the brush and the tree, and made considerable noise, but the bear lay still. He called me, and I climbed down, ran as hard as I could, and was soon up the other tree and out of danger. This was a large tree and gave me plenty of protection. After I was well up the tree, I pointed out where I had dropped my gun and William went and got it. He said he had hard work to find it, as it was almost covered with wild oats straw and dust which the bear had dragged over it in his chase after me. The gun was father's old Tennessee rifle and as true a weapon as I ever used.

William handed the gun up to me and I examined it to see if it was all right. I then climbed high up in the tree and went out on the limb that extended toward

the brush. From this point I had a good view down into the thicket and I soon located the bear. I laid my gun across a limb and drew a bead on his head. At the crack of the gun he straightened out and began to tremble and kick, and I knew the fight was over. His struggles dislodged him from his position on the steep mountain side and he tumbled over and over down the slant to the bottom of the gulch. He looked as big as an ox, but not half so dreadful to me as when I was scampering away from him an hour before.

We dressed him and went to camp. The other boys were there and each had a story to tell. Ours was of big game and easily carried away the honors.

We put in a week or more at this camp and had a good time and got any quantity of venison. Everything was so free, the air and water were so pure, and the wild tent life so fascinating that I often think of those days with delight.

Shortly after our return from this hunt, Joe Kessler and I loaded our pack mules and started back across the Sierra Nevada Mountains to meet brother Isaac, who was about due with his drove of cattle from across the plains. We had heard nothing from him since he left us the summer before, but he had told us he expected to get a herd of cattle and come. We met him on Carson River, and as I recall now, there were a number of Buchanan County boys with him—William James, John Sweeney and John Bridgeman were three that I recall. They had some eight hundred or a thousand cattle, and had crossed the plains without any very great difficulty, except the suffering and hardship from the drouth and alkali which could always be expected. We got the cattle across the mountains and on the ranch without difficulty and turned the poor things out to rest and get fat.

We remained on the ranch and in the cabin until everybody was well rested and then Bridgeman and the other boys who had come out with Isaac, began to talk about a hunt. They had heard our bear and deer stories and wanted some experience of their own.

I must tell one thing that occurred on a hunt that was planned for these boys especially, although I have previously related at considerable length my hunting experiences. We had been out in the camp a day or two and had not had much luck, especially with bear; but one afternoon while we were all moving along pretty close together and somewhat contrary to our ordinary methods of hunting, we ran on to two brown bears just as they were going into a dense thicket covering about twenty acres of ground. We had no chance to get a shot before they went in. We immediately surrounded the thicket and posted men at convenient distances apart, and began an effort to dislodge them. In spite of the danger of doing so, some of the boys went into the thicket and made a great noise which drove the bears to the farther side and gave the boys on that side a fair chance for a shot, but they did not get them and the bears ran back into the thicket. The same tactics drove them from one side of the thicket to the other for an hour or more, and nobody was able to make a telling shot. By and by both got away, and everybody was deeply chagrined—especially the boys who were out for the first time.

We moved away from the thicket and down the mountain side, all still much excited, and stopped to rest in a little glade that was almost completely surrounded by thick brush. There was not a loaded gun in the crowd. As we sat there talking, a grizzly bear that looked as big as an old gray mule,

walked out of the brush not twenty steps away. He raised up on his hind feet with his paws hanging down to his sides, dropped his lip and showed his teeth. I don't think I ever saw a crowd of men so badly scared. They jumped and ran in every direction. The closest tree stood between where we were sitting and the bear. Sweeney made for it.

He was beside himself. He tried to climb the tree but lost his hold and fell back. He tried again, but the tree had a smooth trunk and he slipped again. He slid down until he sat flat upon the ground with his arms and legs locked around the tree. Here he lost his head completely. His desire to get up the tree had evidently placed him there in his own imagination, for he called out: "Hand me my gun up here! Hand me my gun up here!" He then said, "Why in the hell don't you boys climb a tree?"

I stood perfectly still and kept my eye on the bear. I soon saw there was no danger in him; that he was as badly scared as we were. He stood a moment, dropped on his four paws to the ground, wheeled and went tearing back through the brush. I told the boys he couldn't understand what they were doing and took their conduct to be preparation for a great fight, and that I didn't blame him for getting scared. If the devil himself had seen them and hadn't understood that they were scared, it would have frightened him.

When we got over our scare, we loaded our guns carefully and started for camp. The boys were still excited and as we passed over the stream which flowed at the bottom of the canon, we saw where a bear had apparently, but a few minutes before been wallowing in the mud and water. The mountain sides were steep and rough and covered with brush, and our boys after their recent fright, were in almost as much terror at

this evidence of nearness to a bear as they were when they could actually see him. The experienced members of the party looked into the situation for a moment and decided that we would probably get this gentleman. We climbed back up the canon, every now and then loosening a big rock and rolling it down through the brush. By and by we routed out a brown bear. He started up the mountain on the opposite side of the gulch and in plain view. I gave him a sample of what my Tennessee rifle could do and sent him rolling back to the bottom of the gulch ready to be dressed.

We remained in camp a week or two on this hunt and everybody, as usual, enjoyed it. We went back to the cabin where six Gibson brothers lived together. The cattle were little trouble, and there was nothing to do most of the time but loaf, and this didn't suit us after so much activity. We soon began to plan for the succeeding year. The cattle were not much trouble and two men could easily take care of them. James, Zack, Robert and myself volunteered to return to Missouri and bring another herd out next year, leaving William and Isaac in charge while we were gone.

## CHAPTER VII.

### *Home by way of Panama and New York.*

About the first of November, the four of us left the ranch for San Francisco. There we bought four tickets for New York for eight hundred dollars, and each man belted a thousand dollars in twenty-dollar gold pieces around him. Our ship was the John L. Stephens, and carried about a thousand passengers, besides a large quantity of freight. It was my first experience on the water, and as we sailed out through the golden gate and into the open sea, I had many misgivings and wished myself back upon the plains among the Indians. But in a little while I grew accustomed to life on the ship and really enjoyed the whole trip. At some point on the coast of Old Mexico the ship anchored and took on board a drove of beef cattle, and that was the only stop between San Francisco and Panama.

When we reached Panama the ship anchored about a mile from shore and little black natives rowed out in small boats to carry the passengers in. When the boats reached the side of the ship, they were hoisted by ropes to a level with the deck, loaded with passengers and lowered again to the water. The natives grabbed the oars and away we went. All passengers remained in Panama over night, and next morning a train of pack mules was lined up for the overland trip. We rode twenty miles on mules to the Charges River, then down the river in boats twelve miles and then eight miles by railway to Aspinwall. The ship, George Law, was waiting for us, but it required two days to get all the passengers and baggage

across the isthmus and loaded. During that time we remained in Aspinwall. It was a wonder to me that the task could be finished so quickly. There were a thousand passengers—many women and children—and the sick who had to be carried on stretchers by the natives twenty miles over the mountain to Charges River. Besides, the road was a mere pack trail through rocks and cliffs, often very steep and very rough. To make the task more difficult, the passengers of the *George Law*—about as many as were on the *John L. Stephens*—were making the trip in the opposite direction to take our ship back to California. Those were busy days for the natives.

The *George Law* steamed right up to shore against a rock bluff and the passengers walked directly over the gang plank on to the ship. When all was ready the seamen hauled in the cables and we sailed for New York. The sea was very rough all the way—that is, it seemed so to us. We landed at Key West, but remained there only a few hours and stopped next time at New York City. As the passengers started for shore the captain told them to look out for their pocket books. We had done that back in San Francisco when we put on our belts.

Our first thought on landing was clothing. We were dressed for summer time, as the climate we had been in required, but it was winter in New York, with deep snow on the ground. The afternoon after landing saw us duly provided with plenty of warm clothing and tickets by railroad and boat to St. Louis—railroad by way of Buffalo, Toledo and Chicago to Quincy, and from Quincy to St. Louis by boat. At St. Louis brother Robert was taken sick and we all remained there a week. The usual course from St. Louis home was by stage, but we met a man named Andrew Jack-

son from Holt County, who told us if we would pay him stage fare—twenty-five dollars each—he would buy a span of mules and a carriage and drive us through—as he needed both the mules and the carriage at home. This arrangement was made and we left St. Louis about the middle of December. The weather was very cold, snow a foot deep or more, and the roads very rough in many places. One pleasant thing about the trip was that we always had good, warm lodging places for the night along the road. Towns were close enough together to enable us usually to reach one of them and put up at the tavern, but if we failed in this, we always found good treatment at the farm houses by the way.

A few miles west of Keytesville, Chariton County, we put up one night with a man named Tom Allen, who had a hundred head of steers ranging from two to four years old. They were exactly what we wanted, but were so far from our starting point that we were uncertain whether we could take them. He asked three thousand dollars for the herd. Next morning we looked them over carefully, and told him if he would keep them until the first of April we would take them. He agreed to this and we paid him a thousand dollars down and continued our journey. He was a complete stranger to us and we to him, but in those days men seemed to have more confidence in one another. No writing of any kind was entered into and we felt not the slightest uneasiness about getting the cattle.

We reached home Christmas day, 1853, having made the trip in less than two months.

## CHAPTER VIII.

*Another trip across the plains with cattle.*

From Christmas until the middle of March, 1854, the time passed rapidly, with mother and father and with visits to old friends and acquaintances. On April first, according to contract, we arrived at Tom Allen's in Chariton County, and paid him the balance of two thousand dollars—in gold—and got our hundred head of cattle, all in good condition. As we passed Brunswick, we bought one hundred more and attempted to ferry the whole herd across Grand River in a flat-boat. We cut off a bunch and drove them down the bank on to the boat. They all ran to the farther end of the boat and sunk it, and the cattle went head foremost into the water. All swam back to the same shore, but one steer. He swam to the other side and ran out into the brush. We could do nothing but watch him go and gave him up for lost. A strange thing happened in regard to that steer. Just a year later, I found him on our ranch in California—the same marks and the same brand, besides my recollection of him. There could be no mistake about it. I can account for his presence there easily, for at that time many men were driving cattle across the plains. Some one found him and drove him along and, after arriving, as ranches were large and unfenced, he wandered with other cattle up into our ranch.

After the unsuccessful attempt to ferry the cattle over the river we changed our plan and drove them twenty miles up the river to a point where it could be forded. Passed Carrollton where we picked up a few more cattle, and came on up to John Wilson's in

Clay County, gathering a few here and there until we had three hundred head. Wilson had a herd of one hundred which we bought. These four hundred with two hundred purchased around home completed the herd. By the last day of April we had six hundred head in father's pasture at home, thirty head of horses and mules, two wagons loaded with provisions—four yoke of cattle to each wagon—and twenty men employed to go with us. As we laid the pasture fence down to let that drove of cattle out into the wide world, every man had to be on his guard. It was a timbered, brushy country and very hard to drive the cattle without losing them. There were probably fifty of our neighbors on hand to see us start—many of them on horse-back—and they gave us much assistance. By two o'clock next day we had everything across the river at St. Joe and the cattle herded on a sandbar above where Elwood now stands. After starting off the sandbar we had the same trouble in the heavy timber and with the Indians that we experienced on the first trip, but finally got out on the high plains with horses, cattle and men fairly well trained, and then considered our hard work finished, although two thousand miles of plains and mountains were ahead.

Brothers James, Zack and Robert all started to accompany me on this trip, but, as it was unnecessary to have so many along, James and Robert returned after we had reached Big Blue, to gather up a herd for the following summer, and Zack and I continued the journey. I was considerably older than Zack, and the principal responsibility fell to me. The cattle were very valuable, but, in addition to that, I felt in a measure responsible for the lives of the thirty persons who

accompanied the train—at least, in any conflict with Indians, I would be depended upon for counsel and guidance.

I shall not attempt to give the details of this trip. The road is now familiar to the reader, and I hope also that, by this time, he can appreciate the tediousness of such a journey. He may be aided in this if I say here that we hadn't a pound of grain or hay with us, either for the horses and work cattle or for the herd, but all of them had to subsist by grazing. It was impossible, therefore, to make more than a few miles a day and it was only by determined persistence and a display of patience that I cannot describe, that we ever accomplished the journey. There are a few incidents, which, in addition to the ordinary hardships, served to make the trip still more tedious and trying, and these I will mention.

One night we camped on a high, rolling prairie out beyond Little Blue. The cattle were grazing peacefully and the horses and mules—except those used by brother Zack and myself and by the guards—had been picketed out, and everybody in camp was asleep. One of the mules pulled up his picket stake and dragged it at the end of a long rope through the camp and caught the picket stake in the bow of an ox-yoke. This frightened the mule and he ran into the herd of cattle still dragging the yoke. A stampede followed. Work cattle, horses and mules—everything—and the noise sounded like an earthquake. The guards could not hold the cattle at all. Zack and I, who kept our horses saddled and bridled and tied to a wagon, were out in a moment, but we could give little assistance to the two guards in managing the crazy cattle, and the other men could not come to us for their horses had gone with the cyclone. It was very dark and our only guide to

the location of the cattle was the roar of the ground. After a race of a few miles the roar ceased and we knew the cattle had checked. We rode in front of them and held them until daylight. They were badly scattered and exposed to wolves and Indians. It was twelve o'clock next day before we got them rounded up and ready to start forward. All the cattle and horses were found, but one of our mules was missing. No trace of him could be found anywhere, so we left him alone somewhere on those plains for the Indians or the wolves, or possibly, for a succeeding emigrant train.

Day by day and week by week the journey continued without incident, until we reached a point high up on the North Platte. We camped one night upon the banks of a small stream that emptied into the Platte, and during the night a terrific hail storm came up. Shortly after it broke upon us, one of the guards came and said the cattle had gone with the hail storm, and the guards could do nothing with them. Several of us were on our horses and after them at once. A flash of lightning now and then helped us to find the main bunch, which we rounded up on a sand-bar in Platte River. No more sleep that night. When daylight came the hail lay two inches deep on the ground. I never experienced such a hail storm in my life, and it is my opinion that but few like it have ever visited this country.

The count that morning showed thirteen cattle missing. For fear of a mistake we went forward and strung them out between us and counted again. Still thirteen short. To leave them without further effort was out of the question, so I picked five men—James and Russell Deakins, Joshua Gidlett, Buchanan County boys, and Tom Sherman and Henry Marks, two boys from Boston who joined our train at St. Joseph, and,

with our guns and blankets and a small amount of provisions, started back to circle the camp and look for tracks leading away. I thought the Indians had them and told the boys we would likely have to fight, but all were willing to go. Zack was to move the train slowly forward until he heard from us.

We did not search long after reaching the place where the cattle had been grazing when the storm came up, until we found tracks leading to the north, and by appearances we were able to conclude that there were just about the number we had lost in the bunch that had been driven away. We followed the tracks a few miles, looking all the time for Indian tracks and pony tracks, and could see neither, but there were numbers of what appeared to be dog tracks. This suggested wolves, and I began to look closely at the tracks made by the cattle. Going up the sides of the sand hills the cattle seemed to remain together, but going down they would separate and run, and on level ground would get together again and all circle around and wander back and forth. At such times we had great difficulty in tracing them. The movements of the cattle convinced me that wolves were after them.

The tracks led us to the north about ten miles and then turned westwardly. We had followed in that direction about five miles when night came. As soon as it grew so dark we could not see the tracks, we staked out our horses, ate a lunch and spread our blankets down on the ground. We rested, but slept little. We had seen no Indians, but did not know how many had seen us, and might be following us. Two stood guard at a time while the other three lay on the ground in the darkness with their eyes wide open. At daybreak we were up, and as soon as it was light were

on the trail again. Some miles on the tracks turned south, and this gave us courage, as Platte River and the emigrant road lay that way, but the wolves still had our cattle. The tracks led us on and on and finally up the side of a high range of sand hills, from the top of which we could see the valley of North Platte and the river far in the distance. We followed down the opposite side into the valley, and when within about two miles of the river I saw a bunch of cattle lying down near the bank. I was confident they were our cattle, unless other emigrants had lost a bunch in the storm, which was not probable. We hurried on and when within half a mile of the cattle found a carcass lying in the high grass and twelve or fifteen savage old wolves lying near by asleep. We pulled our navies and waked them up with bullets—killed three and wounded several others. We then rode on and found that the cattle were ours—twelve of them. A three year old heifer missing—the carcass we had found. The cattle were sore and gaunt, but otherwise unhurt. We pulled the saddles off our horses and staked them out to graze and lay down for a little rest. We had been gone from camp twenty-four hours, had had but two scanty meals and were probably twenty-five or thirty miles farther up the trail than the camp we left. Our train had not passed, as there were no fresh tracks on the trail, and we decided to endure our hunger and rest awhile before starting to meet it. In about an hour, however, I looked down the valley and saw the train moving slowly along. It reached us just about noon and all were greatly rejoiced. The noon meal was prepared and I think my tin cup of coffee was the best I ever drank.

The train moved on without incident until we reached a point on North Platte some seventy-five miles above Fort Laramie, where a spur of the mountain, or rather a very high bluff, prevented us from following the river, as had been our purpose on this trip, and forced us across ten miles or more of rocky, mountainous country. When I entered my train upon that part of the journey I calculated there would be no obstruction, as no emigrants were ahead that I had heard of, and I knew no cattle trains were ahead of us. I rode in front always and the lead cattle followed close to my horse's heels. Always the same cattle, three or four in every herd, insisted on being in front, and if left in the rear as the train started out in the morning, they would crowd through the herd and be in front within an hour; then came the whole drove and then the wagons, followed by the loose horses and mules. Strung out in this fashion we started across this portion of the road, which in many places permitted only one wagon and team and not more than four cattle side by side. I led the long, winding string to the top of a mountain, and from that point I could see a line of dark objects a quarter of a mile long approaching us. I looked closely and determined it was Indians, and passed word to that effect back along the line. The men rushed to the wagons and got their guns, and by the time they had returned to their places I had made out that the Indians were moving and that we need not fear attack, as Indians never fight when the squaws and papposes are along, but I was surprised at the little comfort I received out of that assurance. The puzzle to me was how to meet and pass them without stampeding the cattle. Cattle do not like Indians. They do not like their looks and they do not like their smell, and it is hard work to get them to pass a band of In-

dians on the broad prairie where they have plenty of room to shy. To pass on this narrow road was out of the question. I stopped to think and to look. Some distance ahead, but closer to us than the Indians, I saw what appeared to be a cove or basin, almost completely surrounded by high bluffs and opening upon the road. I rode hurriedly forward, beckoning the men at the same time to push the cattle after me. When I reached the mouth of the basin I stopped and turned the cattle into it. Little more than half the herd had gone in when the Indians came up. The cattle began to hoist their heads and shy, but the Indians did not stop. I rode back a few paces and met them, bowed and said "how-do" as friendly as I knew how, and made signs that I wanted them to stop. They seemed not to understand until I pointed to the cattle, still hoisting heads and tails, and when crowded forward, jumping to the side and running into the basin. When they saw this the whole train stopped. Our cattle and wagons and loose horses all came up and turned in—the men standing along the roadside to see the Indians pass in their turn. When everything was safely lodged in the receptacle, which it seemed to me Providence had designed for just such an emergency, I turned, took off my hat and bowed long and low and rode aside. The Indians bowed in return and passed on. We stood by the roadside and saw the whole caravan pass. There were probably five or six hundred of them—a tribe of the Crows. The long tent poles were tied one on each side of a pony, the ends dragging on the ground behind with a platform or base joining them, on which the tents and skins and such rude camp equipment as they had were piled. The shorter tent poles were tied one on each side of a dog, with baskets resting on the rear ends in



which the papposes were hauled or dragged along. Everything turned loose—not a halter or strap on dog or pony—all herded or driven like cattle. They were nearly an hour in passing us, and the men who were on the plains for the first time thought it an amusing experience. It required but a short time, after the movers had passed, to get our cattle out and start them on the road again, and, by night, we had passed over the mountains and were back on the river. A double guard kept watch that night, as we feared a band of the bucks that had passed us might come back and try to get some of our cattle, but the moon shone very bright, and as our whole force had stood by the roadside with guns across their saddles, they probably thought such an attempt would be useless.

Our train moved on slowly, passed Independence Rock and over the continental divide and down into Green River Valley. When we reached Green River we rounded the cattle upon a sandbar and forced them all into the water at once. They got to milling around and round and going down the swift current, until we thought they would make the rest of the journey by water, but they soon found the water too cold for their enjoyment and headed for the farther shore. All got out but one.

We took Hedgepeth's cut-off and reached the head waters of Humboldt without difficulty, thence down this river mile after mile, through sage brush and grease wood and alkali shoe mouth deep. As the cattle passed, a dense, black cloud rose above them, almost stifling men, horses and cattle. At night the men were black as negroes and complained of sore throat and sore lungs, but there was no escape. Big Meadows, as I have heretofore described it, afforded a delightful resting place just between the dense alkali and the

sixty-mile desert. But for this oasis, I may call it, where rest and food and water could be had, it is doubtful if herds could have been taken across the plains. Certainly a different trail would have been required.

With all our precautions the trip across the sixty-mile desert was a very hard one. The weather was hot. Not a drop of water nor a blade of grass for thirty hours. When the cattle caught sight of Carson River late one afternoon they went wild. No power could hold them. They ran headlong into the river and next morning five were dead. After the long march across the sand and alkali, the trip up Carson River and over the Sierra Nevada mountains was an easy one, and we made it without difficulty. Going down the opposite side we had to pass through great forests of pine timber, and the cattle, after being so long upon the treeless plains, seemed not to understand this and gave a great deal of trouble. One night we camped near Leake Springs in a heavy body of pine, quieted the cattle and had them all lying down, as we thought, for the night. Something frightened them, and away they started, right across our camp and back toward the top of the mountain. At the first sound of the stampede we jumped to our feet, whooped and yelled, threw our blankets in their faces and tried in every way to stop them, but they paid no attention and came crashing on through the brush. We were compelled to get behind trees to protect ourselves, and after the tornado of cattle had passed, gathered our horses and took after them. They were all strung out on the road, running as fast as they could, and we had to pass them by making our poor jaded horses outrun them. It was no easy task, and the leaders of the bolt for home were some fifteen miles away before we overtook and passed them. It

was almost daylight when we succeeded in doing this, and it required most of next day to gather all of them up and get back to camp. Not a man had a morsel to eat until we returned to camp. We decided to keep moving slowly throughout the entire succeeding night, as the best means of preventing another stampede and in order to get out of the timbered mountains and into the valley where the cattle were not so apt to get excited. Early next day we reached the valley and stopped. Horses, men and cattle took a good rest. This stampede jaded both horses and cattle more than crossing the sixty-mile desert, hard as that was.

After a day's rest we pulled on and passed through the mining district of Weaver Creek and American River, and reached Sacramento River at Sacramento City, crossed the river on a ferry and camped for the night on the farther bank. No guard out that night—the first in four months—and the boys went up to see the sights of the town. Human tongue can hardly tell the relief I felt when I could lie down and sleep without fear of Indians or wolves or stampedes. A better set of men than I had with me never crossed the plains, always ready for duty and to help me out of trouble. It was about thirty miles out to our ranch and I told the boys if they would go out with me I would board them as long as they wanted to stay. About half of them went and the others began to look about for themselves. It was an affectionate farewell that took place between us, and in all the years that have passed I have never seen many of those boys, but I shall never forget them.

We reached the ranch without difficulty and turned the cattle loose. The poor things had been traveling so long and had become so accustomed to it

that we had to watch them every day for nearly a month. They seemed to think they had to be moving, and after grazing awhile in the morning would string out on any road or path they could find and sometimes get miles away—the old leaders always in front—before we would discover them. After awhile we got them convinced that their journey had ended and that grass belly deep was a reality which they might actually enjoy.