



Sic fractus fortis
(If broken, still strong")

The Foster Family

California Pioneers

First Overland Trip . . . 1849
Second Overland Trip . 1852
Third Overland Trip . . 1853
Fourth Trip (via Panama) 1857

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Dedicated

TO OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN

As a Christmas Gift for 1889

Dear Children: Of all the great men and women you may read of, we are sure the deeds of none will please and interest you more than those of your Grandparents. When the need came, you will see, no hardships were too great for them to bear, and were worth all they cost.

Now you enjoy lovely California homes; you cannot be too grateful to those who prepared the way for you; strive to make the world better for your living in it, as they have.

Mrs. R. C. Foster

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BY
LUCY FOSTER SEXTON

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Second Dedication

As Another Gift for 1925

To the Grandchildren of the second generation, we are adding these true human documents and the diaries of the other trips and memoirs of their Pioneer days in early California, carrying on their mottos "to make the world better for having lived in it."

Lucy A. Foster Sexton

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Printed by
The Scribner Printing Studio, Inc.
Santa Barbara, California



Marriett Foster Cummings

Second Trip Across Continent

Isaac Foster with Part of His Family

By Marriett Foster Cummings

April 13th, 1852—Started for California amidst the tears and sighs of our friends which is indeed a comforting depression upon our spirits. We find the roads very bad. Went fourteen miles and stopped at a little place called Pavilion, rather a romantic name for a few miserable huts. I stayed at a public house and ate fried pudding. This I expect is the beginning of trouble.

14th—Started early and passed through the pretty village of Newark. Found the roads about as bad. Stayed at a sick farmer's where we were well accomodated about five miles from Ottawa. Went 23 miles.

15th—Got to Ottawa about one o'clock; stopped at a miserable hotel until noon when a Californian was robbed here. The night before his valise was cut open, \$20 in cash and a quantity of specimens taken from it and was left on the bank of the creek. Came to LaSalle and stayed at Hardy's Hotel, where we saw Mrs. Cutting, an old acquaintance of sister's.

16th—Commenced raining early but we started and found the roads bad and traveling in the rain unpleasant. Passed through Peru, two miles below LaSalle, and a much prettier place than the latter. Some beautiful residences in it. Went seven miles and stopped at a farmer's where we stayed over night. Came off pleasant.

17th—Got up and put on a suit of short clothes to avoid the mud. Got out and walked and in passing one house the women came out and laughed at me or my dress. I did not ask which, but find it much more convenient for traveling than a long one.

After going fifteen miles we came to the pleasant village of Princeton, by far the prettiest inland town I remember having seen, in all the country, on high and rolling ground. I noticed a great many pleasant country seats. Princeton itself is situated on a commanding eminence and contained two churches and a fine courthouse and the dwellings were in fine state, some of them really beautiful. A few miles below Princeton crossed Beaver River, quite a pretty little stream

There was a camp on the hill of some Ca'linas just starting, which we called upon in the evening. They knew about as much as so many Arabs. They were eating their suppers. The women sat flat on the ground and turned their backs to us, peering occasionally from under their awful, old dirty bonnets at us as though they had never seen a civilized person before, which I presume was the case.

May 1st, 1852—Did not start very early. Were hindered by the men, who traded a horse for a mule and bought a span there. There were two span in our company that had not been broken and they had a great time breaking mules. Came to a few houses called Stringtown, a very appropriate name. Broke a wagon and were obliged to stop two or three hours. We went into a little log hut, destitute of a window, the light they had being admitted through holes between the logs, and found a family living in it from Southern Illinois. Very homesick; thought they were even fools for coming out of the pale of civilization.

The woman said the country was settling very fast, mostly slaveholders from the south; that there was 75,180 acres of land entered at a little land office last fall. Came on and camped on the west side of New Creek. Made 18 miles.

2nd, Sunday—This morning had a severe thunderstorm which lasted until about 10 a. m. About noon eight or nine teams loaded with Pokes for California crossed New Creek close by our camp. I never saw such human beings as they were. We stayed in our camp all night and it rained almost as hard as it could pour down. We slept in our wagons and the rain fell with such force that it misted through constantly.

I did not venture my head out of bed but once or twice and then the vivid flashes of lightning drove me back quickly.

3rd, Monday—Went about seven miles over a very fine country. Crossed Honey and Big Muddy Creeks and came to Trenton, the county seat of Grundy county, the only group of houses that might with the least propriety be called a village. We waited three or four hours to get some repairing done and took dinner at a public house, where I saw the first Negro babe that I had seen since childhood.

We see plenty of slaves. Every family has one or more at Trenton. We crossed on a long bridge Grand River, came on seven or eight miles and stopped at an old Illinoisan's. Made about fifteen miles.

4th, Tuesday—Did not get a very early start. Went seven miles and forded Little Muddy Creek; the water came into

the carriage box. Stopped about noon at Craven and bought some corn. Here is the very center of the old Mormon war. Two or three houses had been burned off this very place by them. Went about three miles to Cravensville and crossed the De Armee, a branch of Grand River, but much larger in its swollen state. The ferry boat was a very good one and was rowed across. We passed in sight of but did not see Adam's grave, where Jo Smith says the father of all mankind, reposes.

The grave, we were afterwards told, is very curious. There are five trees, two at the head, one at each shoulder, and one at the foot, enclosing beneath the surface five strata of stone, precisely in the form of a coffin. Jo Smith in his day had a revelation that Adam was buried here.

8th—About noon came to St. Jo, but were obliged to go back two miles to camp which we did on a romantic little place on the slope of a hill. St. Jo is rather a pretty city of 4,000 inhabitants and is situated between high bluffs on the Missouri river. We were obliged to stay here until the 12th. We did not receive but one letter. That was from A. E. G., informing me of the marriage of my best friend, M. E. Goddard to C. F. Ballard of Georgetown, Madison county, New York. God bless her; may she be very happy.

12th—Went to St. Jo early, but was detained trading for mules until afternoon. Went seventeen miles and camped on the road to Savannah.

13th—Passed through Savannah, a small town, but were advised to go to Old Fort Kearney to cross. Passed through one of the worst mudholes I ever saw in sight of the town. Went six miles and camped on a hill near a herd of cattle.

14th—Started early and crossed the Nodaway in a rope ferry. Camped by the lone tree.

15th—Camped on the banks of the Great Tara. Caught a silver fish.

16th—Traveled through a very romantic country, high bluffs that looked like a miniature range of mountains. Camped near a little stream in a little valley.

17th, Sunday—We did not intend traveling today, but it was rather unpleasant where we were, so about noon we broke up camp and passed through a valley that had undoubtedly once been the bed of the river. Crossed the Nishnetottamah and about night stopped one mile from the ferry, but instead of finding a village as we supposed we should find at Fort Kearny, we only found a miserable log hut and

pack house, occupied by the most swinish specimen I ever saw in the shape of a ferryman.

18th—Moved our camp a mile from our old camping-ground and dug a hole to get some water fit to drink. Washed.

19th—Went down to the ferry to see Mrs. Thomas Burrell. Saw H. Kaufman.

20th—Went fishing and burned my face but did not have a single bite. Some of the party caught two fish of a new species but which we did not eat.

21st—Came down to the old ferry but was obliged to wait until evening before we could cross. In the meantime we found my old beau Lamb who had with his family started for California. We went two and a half miles and camped on a hill near a little stream of soft water, and our people commenced standing guard. Heard plenty of prairie wolves.

St. Joseph, May 22nd—Saturday—It was foggy and cold this morning but we started early in company with the people who camped with us. As we passed over miles of beautiful prairie entirely destitute of timber, and entirely out of sight of it, occasionally we would pass near a little stream with a slight border of cottonwoods. We crossed Weeping Water and Saline River. The last was slightly salt, but certainly the most beautiful stream I ever saw.

We forded easily and camped on the banks and went fishing. We set our hooks, lost two of them and caught one fish, a white or silver fish. We made about 25 miles.

Raining hard when I awoke. Harnessed the animals early but did not break up camp until eleven o'clock. For the first two miles we saw some timber but after that none, but without doubt through the most beautiful prairie country in the west, just rolling enough to be beautiful and good. Did not see a house or a fence in our whole day's travel.

Camped about three miles from a half-dozen trees, and sent Billie on the pony after some wood. Our animals had a stampede and it took an hour to secure them, as their throwing Billie and pony and Byron all in a stack. It has rained hard all day. Three teams joined company at dusk. Made 18 miles.

23rd, Sunday—Started early and traveled all day over the same boundless prairie. Camped about 25 miles from Salt River.

24th, Monday—Pleasant; traveled on, on, on over the same kind of country, one flat prairie as smooth as a house floor. A mail stage passed us. Saw an abundance of prairie

wolves. Just at night came down into the valley of the Platte river, one hundred miles from old Ft. Kearney. Camped on the bottoms. The wolves began to yell before night and were in sight from every direction.

25th, Tuesday—The road lay along the bottom, some distance from the Platte. About noon we overtook the Burrell and Kaufman company. Went down to the river just at the head of Grand Island, which is 80 miles in length. Kaufman's company joined ours, six men, two wagons, and some pack animals. In the afternoon we saw some Indians, six in number, the first we had seen. They were mounted, and one of them on a fine American horse, undoubtedly stolen.

They passed rapidly, but not before I saw the dress of one, which was a breech cloth, and over his naked shoulders was thrown a round piece of skin two feet across, ornamented with feathers, as were the horses' tails. Made 25 miles.

26th, Wednesday—Before we started this morning we were visited by quantities of Indians that followed us all the forenoon and camped for their dinner near us. They cut willows and stuck them into the ground and spread their buffalo robes over them so as to form quite a primitive tent.

Their fires were kindled in a thrice and a single crotch stuck into the ground obliquely supported their kettles over it. We broke up our noon camp before them to avoid them if possible, but we had not gone out of sight of their encampment before we met five of their number returning driving a mule, and screaming in the most terrific manner and screaming to us to "Hold on."

We caught sight of their pursuers who followed them almost into camp, rode around awhile and then slowly retreated to the hills. There were but 11.

The returned Pawnees created a great sensation in the camp. There was stripping and mounting in hot haste, and as they got ready they came singly and in groups, screaming in the most devilish, unearthly style imaginable. We were between the contending parties.

As the Pawnees came running their horses by us each one would point at the Sioux and at us, and motion us to stop and join them and whip their enemies. They were very angry that we did not, and we were apprehensive of an attack, but they were too cowardly.

A portion of the foremost scoured the hills for their enemies, while the rest as they came screaming and yelling, singing their war songs, running their old ponies, gathered

in a group on a slight eminence on the east side. Directly they discovered the Sioux and squaws, 13, in the north, and they commenced a running fight.

We heard three guns and arrows in abundance. The Pawnees had not courage to join the fight, many of them, but the Sioux killed one of them, and then the Pawnees fled, 150 of them, before 13 Sioux and left their dead man on the field of battle. They came back stiller but full as fast as they went out.

In the meantime we had stopped and driven into a huddle, and the men had got their guns and ammunition ready for instant use. When the old chiefs returned they were perfectly beside themselves with rage and fear. One in his impetuous gesticulations struck at one of our company with his bow. He showed him his gun and the chief left suddenly. There were two guns among the Pawnees and my brother gave one of them some ammunition but he had not courage enough to use it.

The Sioux and squaws got two scalps, one on the battlefield and one in the hills. We thought there were none of them injured but an emigrant train that overtook us said they met the Pawnees in full retreat driving before them on foot a Sioux that had been shot through the body and otherwise badly wounded. He was bound and weak with loss of blood but they drove him on with whips. A brave nation, truly! One hundred and fifty of them vanquished by 13.

We passed on and by an Indian village that was deserted near which was a square of perhaps twenty feet formed of ponies' skulls with the large part out that presented quite a unique appearance. We camped on a little flat where the mosquitos beat everything I ever dreamed of. However, despite them we took a bath in a slough nearby. Made over 20 miles.

27th, Thursday—Rose early amidst clouds of mosquitoes and passed over sand hills that came close to the river's brink. The river presents a most beautiful prospect, varying from three quarters to a mile and perhaps more, in width, and thickly studded with emerald islands, the largest of which were thickly wooded. Passed an emigrant train of 10 or 12 ox wagons, bound for Oregon.

Camped at six o'clock on a flat. Fine feed, and one of the company dug a well that afforded excellent water which we were glad enough of after the intense heat of today. After we had camped we were joined by 16 or 18 mule teams,

which made our company appear quite formidable. Made about 25 miles.

28th, Friday—Started early, before most of the camp. Much cooler than yesterday, there being a strong west wind. Traveled most of the morning over sandhills that came to the river's brink, but made our noon camp on a vast flat. Plenty of grass and Platte water. Passed forty or fifty wagons camped on a great prairie. Poor feed; dug a hole for water, but it was so strongly impregnated with sulphur that we could not use it. Made 28 miles.

29th, Saturday—After traveling for seven or eight miles struck the junction of the St. Jo and Ft. Kearny roads and a few miles farther on came in sight of Fort Charles, or new Fort Kearny. Camped for noon in sight of the fort; stopped some time there. There are two or three fine buildings, one for the captains, another for the teacher and doctor, and one for the inferior officers. The soldiers' barracks are turf, sod and all, most miserable looking holes.

Passed on eight miles and camped a short distance from the ferry.

30th, Sunday—Broke up camp late to ferry the Platte, which is one and one half miles wide. I never dreamed of anything like this river. It is impossible to see an eighth of an inch into it and the bottom is quicksand so that an animal can gain no sure footing and a wagon runs as though it were the roughest stones, one constant jar; and the moment it stops settles very deep.

It took us two hours to cross with one wagon, the box of which was raised a foot, and then we got into one hole where the water ran into the box. I drove the wheel mules and was very much frightened for fear of their drowning. I surely never was so glad to gain "terra firma" before. After we all crossed we went two miles and camped. Found a very heavy watchcase of silver in the road.

31st, Monday—Got an early start and went eight or nine miles and crossed Elm Creek; saw a cow left; saw the first buffalo chips and plenty of skeletons and horns. Passed on seven miles further and came to Buffalo creek which they were obliged to bridge with brush before crossing; a bad place. The feed poor; the prairie has been burned over, and a great want of rain, it must of necessity be poor.

Camped on the prairie; dug for water but without success. Used the river water; and buffalo chips for fuel and they make a very good fire when dry. Two men died in an

ox train which we passed, of cholera morbus. Passed 96 teams today, all ox but two. Made 28 miles.

June first, Tuesday—Broke up early, and after traveling seven miles came to Willow lake, a kind of mud puddle or series of them honored by that name. Passed one of them where a man was just taken sick of the cholera morbus, very sick, too. Saw quantities of prickly pear and for several days spots covered with saline and alkali deposits.

The flat on this side is quite extensive, the sand bluffs in some places out of sight. The heat today is almost unbearable and has been for some days from eleven to three in the afternoon. No rain for almost a fortnight and no dews of consequence, sometimes so slight as to be almost imperceptible.

Passed several graves, I should think twenty since entering the Indian territory. We passed this afternoon a colony of prairie dogs and saw plenty of them as they came out and barked at us. Their dens covered a good many acres. Made 28 miles and camped near the river.

June 2nd, Wednesday—Passed over a fine low portion of the flat; good grass. Saw three new made graves, one of them made yesterday, a man from Illinois and a lady from Peru, Illinois. Crossed some quicksand bluffs that came to the river's brink. I walked over them and sank into the sand nearly over my shoes every step. Saw several little gray lizards, quicker than lightning. Met the Mormon mail from Salt Lake City. Very sickly.

(Neglect)—Awful sick with the earache and headache last night.

June 8—Today passed Castle Ruins, a series of curious rocks resembling a ruined city, some of them looking like solid masonry. One could easily fancy they had been inhabited. Saw "Chimney Rock" a distance of forty miles. Came on four miles and camped near the river. Made thirty miles.

June 9th—Started early and passed a grave just finished, an old man from Illinois. Came to a high sand ridge white as snow. Passed Courthouse Rock, square in front, with a smaller one near by looking like a sentinel post. The upper part of Chimney Rock is becoming plainly visible. An antelope came almost into our noon camp. They shot at it but it went bounding off to the hills unharmed. Camped opposite Chimney Rock, said to be 700 feet above the level of the Platte.

It is rock or rather petrified clay in form like this. It did

not look so high as it stood in front of a higher bluff. Made 28 miles.

10th—Passed Bluff Ruins, most beautiful, too. I made a rough draft then I was so charmed that I could not gaze enough. Made our noon halt opposite Scott's Bluff, altogether the most symmetrical in form and the most stupendous in size of any we have yet seen. One of them is close in its resemblance to the dome of the Capitol at Washington.

There is a pass through that is guarded on one side by Sugar Loaf Rock, on the other by one that resembles a square house with an observatory. There is one (nearest the river) I will not attempt to describe, certainly the most magnificent thing I ever saw. Away up on the top is a green spot of earth and cedar trees are clinging to its rocky sides and covering its lofty crest.

Camped above Scott's Bluffs near the river. Father took a shovel and dug up some pitch wood, probably deposited by the water.

11th, Friday—Drove all day through a desolate looking country, some parts of it literally covered with prickly pears and alkaline deposits. Towards night struck the river, which was absolutely bordered with roses. Camped on some sand-hills covered with wild oats in sight of the river. It has been exceedingly unpleasant today on account of high winds. It seemed as though the wagon would upset some of the time. Made 28 miles.

12th, Saturday—Took an early start and after traveling a few miles struck the river which was bordered with trees, the first we have seen on this side for over 200 miles. In a group of trees near the road was a trader's tent pitched, and several skin wigwams near for the manufacture of moccasins. Saw an Indian village on the opposite side of the river.

Came opposite Fort Laramie about ten o'clock. There is a ferry across the north branch here. The north and south branches unite just below, in sight. There were several Indian lodges and a Frenchman, a trader, living in one of them with a squaw and lots of halfbreed children. There are two fine two-story buildings at the fort, one of them officers' quarters and the other a trading post. We found dried fruits and hams and bacon as cheap as at St. Jo.

We stayed opposite the ferry nearly all day as Father was busy selecting a span of mules from a drove across the river. Went out half a mile and camped. Grass poor. A Sioux visited our camp this evening and he was a fine specimen of an

Indian. The Sioux are a tall, athletic, symmetrical tribe. The squaws are quite pretty, some of them, and the babies really so. They seem too proud to beg as their brother redskins the Pawnees, do.

13th, Sunday—Started at five o'clock to find good grass and traveled over a hilly country for ten miles and camped until twelve o'clock. Saw a new flower, the Lily of the Black Hills. Then we passed over the most precipitous hills and the most beautiful gorges I ever dreamed of. The hills were almost mountains and the sides covered with cedar and pine trees in the most fantastical shape imaginable, giving them from a distance a black appearance. Hence the name Black Hills. Just before night we struck the river and camped in a very pleasant spot. Made 28 miles.

14th, Monday—Traveled on, on, through the same gorges and over the same hills until noon when the country became less broken, and the trees less frequent. Have passed but one or two little brooks today. Made thirty miles and camped near some stagnant water. Have not seen the river since we left it this morning. Rained this afternoon; cold, very.

15th, Tuesday—Did not start early; cold and unpleasant. Went down some steep hills and in about three miles came to a trader's tent with Indian wigwams around it. Did not succeed in getting any moccasins. The country is assuming a curious aspect, high hills of bare rock, some of them closely resembling an ancient citadel and again others conical with a cap of rock of square form. Passed through a gorge a hundred feet deep with pyramids in the bottom and walls or rock around it. The bottom was of white clay rock. A wild and strange place, one that gave a person curious emotions.

Greasewood and sage have been abundant for a few days. About noon came to the river, which looked refreshing after the clouds of dust we have passed through. Made a noon halt late near the river. Found a curious arrow, the blade sharp at the point, and the part joining the wood notched so that it could not be drawn out. Saw two species of cactus in blossom and a new flower a little resembling the pink, but without its fragrance. A man is sick with the cholera within a few rods of us.

Passed on over desert sandhills until about seven o'clock and after going down a perpendicular, rocky hill came into a valley and camped. Grass not very good. Near the river for more than 80 rods were crotches and poles stuck into the ground thick where there had been Indian lodges. Probably

winter quarters from the quantities of old moccasins and buffalo skin strewed over the ground.

16th, Wednesday—Traveled nearly all the morning to get a few miles on our direct course for we went over several (to me) high mountains and crooked around to avoid deep ravines. Made our noon halt on a miserable place but did not travel more than two miles in the afternoon when in getting to the river for water we came directly into a beautiful little valley of good feed, where we immediately camped for the remainder of the day, which I improved by having a thorough wash.

17th, Thursday—Before we left camp this morning Mr. Sawyer's wagon drove into the valley. The road today has lain over deep sandhills and we made our noon camp on one of the highest, from which we had a glimpse of a buffalo hunt.

The buffalo was coming down to the river very leisurely when some men encamped near saw him and gave chase. He ran down across a little plain, swam a deep creek and plunged into the river. After maneuvering around awhile he struck for the shore and effected a landing amidst a perfect shower of bullets, several of which took effect, one of them fracturing a foreleg.

He ran up the road for nearly half a mile, but there were a hundred men after him and he turned and ran for the river and jumped twenty feet off a bluff into the water swam down a mile and landed on a little island, when he was so disabled that a man went over and dispatched him with a pistol.

Came on over heavy hills until five and camped in a miserable place almost overgrown with cactus. Made 15 miles. Arthur killed our first rabbit tonight.

18th, Friday—Started a little after four o'clock this morning in order to pass a large oxbow before it got in motion, which we effected. The roads were mostly sand. Passed over the worst hills we have seen; came at noon to the south ferry and went up on the side of the worst sandhill for 200 miles to come and made a noon camp.

Grass good; wild oats. Got a piece of antelope of a man and saw my first buffalo steak. The trains went over the mountain but I went across it on the brink of the river which was at times nearly 100 feet almost directly down beneath. I did not dare look at the water for fear of falling. It was nearly a mile across and intensely warm. I was tired and heated but I bathed my face and hands in the river nearby a beautiful cottonwood grove and went on over a bottom covered with alkali to the road which I reached before the trains.