

Recalling the Donner Tragedy



Photo by International

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

THE other day a news picture service issued the photograph shown above and in doing so brought back for a moment from the dim past the memory of one of the most glorious periods in all American history and recalled the story of one of the two outstanding tragedies of those far-away times. In the annals of the historic "Days of '49" there are no more thrilling stories than those of two different groups of homeseekers whose sufferings on the overland trails to California have immortalized the names of the "Donner party" and the "Jayhawker party."

It is a curious coincidence that both parties originated in the state of Illinois, that both traveled over the famous Oregon trail until they reached the region of the Great Salt Lake in Utah and that both made the tragic mistake of seeking a shorter route to the Promised Land instead of following the route which would have brought them in safety to fortune and happy homes in a new land. But there the coincidence ends except for the fact that both found Death awaiting them along the trail. To the Donner party, which set out from Springfield, Ill., in 1846, Death appeared in the form of starvation and freezing cold in the snows of the high Sierras. To the Jayhawker party, which left Galesburg, Ill., three years later, in the spring of 1849, and which, seeking to avoid the mistakes of the Donner party, fell into greater tribulation, Death appeared in the form of starvation and thirst and the overpowering heat of that earthly inferno to which they gave the name of Death valley.

The Donner party was one of the hundreds which began to flock to California almost immediately after the war with Mexico. On April 15, 1846, 31 men, women and children who had assembled at Springfield, Ill., for what they thought would be a five-months journey to the Pacific coast, set out for the Golden West. The organizer of the party was James F. Reed, but it took its name from the Donner brothers, George and Jacob, who were neighbors of Reed. Of the 31 in the party, 16 were children, among whom were two little girls, Eliza Donner and Virginia Reed, who later wrote stories of their journey which have become classic accounts of this expedition. Eliza Donner's description of the equipment which her father and uncle provided for the long journey is as vivid a description of the "covered wagon" era in American history as can be found anywhere. In one wagon were the seed and farming implements for use when they reached California and with these the laces, muslins, satins and velvets to be used in trading for land. In the second were the supplies for the journey, the food, clothing and camp equipment, as well as various brightly-colored garments, beads, necklaces, mirrors and the like, to be used in making friends with the Indians along the route. The third wagon was the family "home on wheels" and it, as well as each of the other two was drawn by three yoke of oxen.

For several weeks the journey was uneventful. On May 19, the Donner

Mrs. Catherine M. Brown of San Francisco, sole survivor of the ill-fated Donner party, recalls the vivid incidents of early California history when she was a little girl during the hectic gold rush days, and, being an artist of unusual ability, puts them on canvas.

party fell in with another emigrant train, commanded by Edwin Bryant, consisting of 98 fighting men, 50 women, 46 wagons and 350 cattle. The addition of the Donner party to this caravan made it so large that it was divided into two parts for convenience in traveling and an organization with the proper officers to direct its affairs was formed. By the middle of June the emigrant train was making its way through Nebraska and nearing Fort Laramie, which they reached safely and stopped to repair their wagons.

Although several of the party (mainly the older ones) died and were buried along the trail, the party reached Fort Bridger without undue disaster. Then when it was near the Great Salt Lake the emigrant train divided, the larger portion deciding to keep to the old road to California while the Donners, Reeds and many others, 87 in all, made the fatal decision to attempt what was called the Hastings Cut-off, which passed along the southern edge of the lake and was said to shorten the route to California by 300 miles before it rejoined the Fort Hall emigrant road on the Humboldt river in Nevada.

The Donner party soon found that it had made a mistake, for the emigrants were seven days in reaching Weber canyon and then found that they must make their own trail by cutting their way through heavy underbrush and making a road as they went. While they were struggling through the Hasting Cut-off they were joined by the Graves party, another Illinois group which had set out from their homes near what is now Lacon, Ill., at about the same time as the Donner party had started. The Graves party consisted of W. F. Graves, his wife and eight children, his son-in-law, Jay Fosdick, and a young man named John Snyder, and they were to play a prominent part in the tragedy that was so soon to follow. No less dramatic than the stories of Eliza Donner and Virginia Reed is the account of the Donner tragedy as given from the viewpoint of the Graves family and recorded in an old book "Records of the Olden Time, or Fifty Years on the Prairies" by Spencer Ellsworth and printed in Lacon, Ill., in 1880.

After making their way at last through Weber canyon, the combined party found itself facing a desert. They had been told it was only 40 miles wide and they took what they thought was an ample supply of water. But the desert proved to be more than twice that distance across and for two nights and a day they struggled across the dreary alkali waste, suffering from heat and thirst by day and from cold at night. When the third day came and the unending desert still stretched before them, one of the party went ahead in search of water, leaving instructions for the drivers to unhitch their oxen and follow if the cattle began to give out. All of the wagons except one, had

to be abandoned and eventually the party emerged from the desert and approached the mountains. Then it was discovered that their food supplies were running low and California was still hundreds of miles away. By this time, too, dissension had arisen in the party and a dispute between Reed and Snyder resulted in the killing of the latter. When they finally reached the mountains it was to find that the many delays had brought them even greater dangers. For the early snows had begun to fall on the Sierras and crossing the mountains would be impossible. So with heavy hearts they turned back to a cabin on the shores of a lake, since known as Donner lake, which had been built by a party of emigrants two years earlier, built more cabins and prepared as best they could for the winter.

A series of storms piled up the snow until it was 14 feet deep. The food supplies were almost exhausted and when the last of the cattle had been killed and eaten the emigrants were reduced to eating the hides, which when boiled, were little more than masses of glue. Several attempts were made to push across the mountains and seek relief in the California settlements on the other side, but all, except one, failed. A "forlorn hope" expedition, of ten men and five women set out and although eight of the men perished on the way, the survivors finally reached Sutter's fort.

A relief party was immediately sent out by Captain Sutter which cached a supply of food along the way and arrived with only a small amount of provisions which were doled out to the famishing members of the party. On February 22 a party of 23 started out to cross the mountains and after struggling through the snow found that wild animals had destroyed the cache of food. Fortunately, another relief party from Sutter's fort reached them in time to save them from starvation.

In the meantime scenes of almost indescribable horror were taking place among those who had remained at Donner lake. Faced by the alternative of starving to death or resorting to cannibalism—the wretched survivors chose the latter and it is in the account of the Graves family, as written by Ellsworth, that the harrowing details of what took place there are revealed. More relief parties eventually arrived and by degrees the remnants of the party made their way over the snows of the mountains down into the valley of the Sacramento and to Sutter's fort.

Starvation and the cold had exacted a fearful toll. Forty-two of the 83 members of the party who had been overtaken by winter in that terrible camp had perished. Only 18 of the original party of 31 which had left Springfield ever reached California. Descendants of some of the survivors still live in California and in 1918 had a part in dedicating a monument on the spot near Donner lake where many of the party perished. It is a monument to the dauntless pioneer spirit which carried the survivors of the historic Donner party through horrors and privations such as few human beings have experienced to deathless fame.

How to Control Rats Is Problem

Temporary Measures Include Use of Poisons, Traps and Gases.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

Rats cause losses amounting to not less than \$200,000,000 each year in the United States, according to the biological survey of the United States Department of Agriculture. This enormous damage occurs in homes, stores and factories, and to a large extent on farms.

Temporary Measures.
Temporary measures of rat control include the use of poisons, traps and deadly gases. These devices merely eliminate the animals for a short time and do not in any way prevent others from reinfesting premises. Nevertheless, temporary measures are the first consideration in dealing with the rat problem. Permanent control consists primarily in depriving rats of one or both their necessities of life—food and shelter. Attention to such community rat-breeding places as garbage dumps and city abattoirs will keep down the rat population. Every community interested in preventing disease epidemics that may possibly be spread by rats should make it a point to provide for proper maintenance of dumps and similar places for garbage and refuse disposal. Changes in the construction of buildings can be effected to make them rat proof, and building codes of cities and towns can require rat-proof construction.

Effective Poisons.

Barium carbonate and red squill are effective poisons for the temporary eradication of rats. Barium carbonate has neither taste nor odor. It is mixed with various foods and, if prepared as recommended, is usually effective. Red squill has an advantage in being relatively harmless to animals other than rats. If taken accidentally by cats or dogs it acts as a powerful emetic and is thus eliminated. A small quantity of red squill will kill a rat, however, and it is therefore an ideal poison for use on farms and in many places in towns or cities where there may be danger of poisoning beneficial animals.

Calcium cyanide fumigant has been widely and effectively used to kill rats that live in burrows in the ground, under concrete, or in other inaccessible places. It comes in powder form and is applied with a duster or blower. When the dust comes in contact with air it forms a poisonous gas. Calcium cyanide is a deadly poison and should be kept out of reach of children, irresponsible persons, and live stock.

Feeding Milk to Laying Stock Increases Yield

Liberal feeding of milk to laying stock will help to increase the egg yield and improve the quality and size of the eggs. Fertility and hatchability of the eggs will likewise be improved.

Milk feeding helps to keep fowls healthy and to prevent disease. In 1904-05 Dr. Louis Dechmann demonstrated that the mineral content of eggs could be increased, and made more desirable from a medical viewpoint by feeding the desired minerals in finely triturated form, mixed with milk curd, to the laying fowls. W. McA. Johnson, chemist and metallurgist, has also pointed out that the rare mineral content of eggs may be enhanced by feeding the fowls finely powdered minerals rubbed up in warm fresh milk and in milk curd. Also, he states, as Doctor Dechmann claimed, that "medicated eggs" are possible and that we may expect them soon.

In experimental work in feeding minerals to growing chicks, milk, milk curd, and milk powder have proved the best mediums for feeding the powdered minerals. So milk and milk products not only help keep poultry healthy and productive, but may be the means of introducing medicinal elements into eggs which, in a very agreeable manner of administration, may help to prevent or cure disease and keep human beings in good health.

Agricultural Notes

Something is wrong if young chicks are not active.

Gardening keeps down the cost of living on the farm. It's no longer just a job.

Liquid skim milk is recommended for young chicks in place of water during the first week.

Carbolineum, cresote, or crude carbolic acid make the best spray material to use in poultry houses to keep down red mites.

It is better to feed silage to dairy cows once a day over a longer period than to feed it twice a day for a shorter time if so other succulent feed can be had.

To disinfect a brooder house, scrub the floor and side walls with a strong solution of hot lye (one pound of lye to 40 gallons of water), using a stiff broom. When the floor and walls are dry, drench them with a strong disinfectant—3 per cent creolin or lysol. Treat the fixtures in the same manner.

Islanders Would Bar Autos From Country

The honk of the automobile horn is disturbing the peaceful inhabitants of the tiny island of Norfolk, which lies in the South seas, 800 miles from the coast of Australia. A number of the most prominent inhabitants have drawn up a petition asking the British administrator of the island to abolish this mechanical nuisance in their quiet domain.

Norfolk Island is only about six miles in length and contains an area of 13 square miles. It is practically rock bound, being surrounded by steep, rugged cliffs of dark basaltic lava. A cable station is its only link with the outside world. The inhabitants, descendants for the most part of the Pitcairn mutineers, number less than 800.

This lonely little island has long been renowned for its natural beauty, quietness and simplicity of life.

Homelike

Landlady—You have been here three months and have never paid any rent.
Student—But you said it would be like home here.
Landlady—Well, I hope it is.
Student—At home I never paid any rent.—Berlin Der Wahre Jakob.

Cute in a Baby-Awful at Three—and it's Dangerous
by Ruth Brittain



Thumb sucking does look sweet in a baby, but it is disgusting in the three-year-old and sometimes it hangs on until fifteen or sixteen! The habit may cause an ill-formed mouth or induce adenoids; and it always interferes with digestion. Pinning the sleeve over the hand; attaching mittens, or putting on cardboard cuffs, which prevent bending the arms at the elbows, are some of the ways to stop the habit.

Another bad habit—irregularity in bowel action—is responsible for weak bowels and constipation in babies. Give the tiny bowels an opportunity to act at regular periods each day. If they don't act at first, a little Fletcher's Castoria will soon regulate them. Every mother should keep a bottle of it handy to use in case of colic, cholera, diarrhea, gas on stomach and bowels, constipation, loss of sleep, or when baby is cross and feverish. Its gentle influence over baby's system enables him to get full nourishment from his food, helps him gain, strengthens his bowels.

Ant Hills Bailed Flames

Ant hills saved a valuable tract of timber from destruction on the farm of H. A. Livingston, at Nashua, N. H., after 200 acres had been burned and two calls been sent for the Nashua firemen. More than 100 men were fighting the flames when they neared the most valuable timber tract. The fire ran against a long wall of ant hills, some of them four feet high. These checked the fire so that the fire-workers saved the timber.

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Get It Straight
If you want consideration, you've got to consider other folks. That's not sentimentality. That's a fact.—Atchison Globe.

Howling monkeys have such extraordinary vocal abilities that many zoos refuse to keep them because they disturb the other animals.

Life of "Skyscraper"

The associate editor of the Architectural Record says that the average skyscraper is estimated to continue in existence from 25 to 30 years. This brief period of existence is due to the rapid growth and change in our cities, and does not indicate failure due to construction. The modern skyscraper with proper care to protect the steel framework and footings, should exist a century or long

er. Electrolysis has been found to be injurious to the life of steel, and this may be a destructive factor (about which little is known) which under certain conditions may shorten the life of the skyscraper to half a century or so.

Fine Engineering Feat

Engineers developing a hydroelectric power plant near Sao Paulo, Brazil, caught a couple of rivers which had the habit of flowing westward, reformed them to flow east and then

led the waters by a series of dams and siphons up over a mountain range to the penstocks. Now the plant has an effective head of 708 meters, produces 100,000-horse power and can generate 800,000, and the annual runpage of the rivers, which once resulted in flooding ten square miles of valuable land within the city, has been squelched.

The Canadian government has established a sanctuary about 15,000 square miles in extent for musk oxen.