

# Two Mysteries of the Plains

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

**O**UT in Kansas plans are under way to erect a marker where once stood Fort Aubrey and to preserve its site as a memorial to a thrilling chapter in the history of the Sunflower state. Fort Aubrey was named in honor of Col. F. X. Aubrey, who found several springs of fresh water there and suggested it as a good place for a fort. Although the outpost which once bore his name has long since passed away, the fame of Felix Xavier Aubrey, French-Canadian by birth but an American hunter, trapper and trader by occupation, has endured because he was the hero of one of the greatest long distance rides in history—from Santa Fe, N. M., to Independence, Mo., a distance of more than 800 miles, in five days and sixteen hours.

Early in the morning of September 12, 1846, Aubrey rode out of Santa Fe for the start of this classic of the plains. From the morning of the start until Independence was reached he stopped neither to eat or sleep, and on at least three occasions during his ride narrowly escaped capture and death at the hands of Indians. He ate while riding, and after the second morning out he tied himself into the saddle and snatched bits of sleep at times.

Late at night on September 17, five days and sixteen hours after leaving Santa Fe, Aubrey rode up to the old Noland House in Independence. He had traversed 800 miles by horseback in that length of time by 136 hours of continuous riding and traveling 140 miles each 24 hours.

Fort Aubrey was established in September, 1856, about four miles east of the present city of Syracuse, Kan. During its brief career it was an important post on the historic Santa Fe Trail, for it was the only refuge for wagon trains, harassed by Indian attack, in the 150-mile stretch between Fort Dodge, Kan., and Fort Lyon, Colo. It was garrisoned by United States troops for a time and then, the necessity for its being there having apparently passed away, it was abandoned. At least it passed out of the army records about 1858 or 1859.

Interesting as Fort Aubrey was as a haven for those who traversed the Santa Fe Trail by stage coach, covered wagon or pack train when the savage tribesmen swooped down, it is even more interesting because it is the scene of a tragedy of the plains which is still one of the unsolved mysteries of the Old West. For here one day in December, 1863, a party of 22 Missouri militiamen froze to death in a fierce blizzard which swept over western Kansas. What their names were and just how they met their death no one knows. Local tradition has preserved part of the story and the military records throw some light on the tragedy, but there is still enough left untold to make it a true "mystery of the plains."

The local tradition part of it has been preserved by a Syracuse merchant, H. Helfrich, a pioneer home-steader and the Socialist candidate for governor of Kansas in 1926, whose hobby is the history of his county. He got the story from R. T. Goans, who was a member of the party caught in the blizzard and who assisted in the burial of the dead.

Mr. Goans told Mr. Helfrich three companies of cavalry, an escort of Governor Goodwin of Arizona, left Fort Leavenworth in the fall of 1863 to accompany the governor to Fort Union, N. M. He said they arrived safely at their destination, but were separated on their way back and that, while camping in the ruins of Fort Aubrey, 22 men of Company I froze to death.

Records of Fort Leavenworth and the Arizona Historical society show Governor Goodwin, the first governor of Arizona, left Fort Leavenworth September 25, 1863, escorted by Companies A and H of the regular cavalry, and Company I of the Fourth Missouri militia. The expedition was in charge of Maj. James A. Phillips of Kansas, with Lieut. Peter F. Clark, Capt. John H. Butcher and Capt. Daniel Rice in command of the companies. They arrived at Fort Union, N. M., November 9 and left November 11. They reached Fort Lyons, Colo., November 23, in a snowstorm. On this part of the trip they lost several horses and some of the men were frostbitten. The party remained at Fort Lyons eight days and from that time there are no more records of Company I.

Mr. Helfrich believes that a disagreement among the soldiers at Fort Lyons caused Company I to split from the rest of the command. Companies A and H reported at Fort Riley on December 23, having lost one by freezing. They also reported much suffering from the heavy storms which they encountered.

As for the fate of Company I, ac-



According to the Goans story, these militiamen reached the site of Fort Aubrey about December 1 and camped in the old dugouts of the fort. While there the blizzard swept down upon them. Huddling together in an effort to keep warm and burning their wagons they tried in vain to fight off the deadening cold. But it was no use. When morning came 22 of them were dead. According to Goans, they were all Frenchmen, naturalized citizens of the United States, without near relatives in this country, but if there ever existed any record of their names that record has not yet been discovered.

From up in North Dakota comes the story of another and similar tragedy. What is believed to be the first printed account of it appeared recently in the Gaucha Republican-Record at Chardon, Ohio, written by its editor, Arthur E. Towne. As a small boy, Mr. Towne went to the Dakotas with his parents in the eighties and this story is one of several told to him by old timers in that country, which he has written under the title of "Highlights from Old Days in the West" for the Republican-Record. His story of the mystery surrounding the death of a whole platoon of United States cavalry reads as follows:

"In the fall of '82 the first venturesome settlers penetrated into Dickey county in what is now North Dakota, one of the most beautiful pieces of prairie country in the James river valley. Two chance land hunters whose names may now be lost, unless they can be dug out of the old files of newspapers published at that time in Aberdeen, were prospecting in that region.

"One evening as they were heading towards the river in search of a good camping place, they passed a grass-grown buffalo wallow. Here there burst upon them a sight which they probably never forgot. The circumference of the wallow was literally lined with bones of men and horses, other skeletons lay within the circle.

"Although the bones had been scattered some, investigation indicated that the horses had been used for defense in place of earthworks. United States army buttons and brass belt buckles were found, also badly rusted barrels of muzzle loading guns of the old army musket type, with their stocks rotted away or burned away by prairie fires. Rusted bits, iron stirrups, canteens and other metal parts of soldiers' equipment were also found here—all of which went to show that this was a troop of United States cavalry.

"Reports made at the time stated that the skeletons of 28 men and a like number of horses were found, but nothing was discovered that showed to what regiment or company this troop belonged. If this was the result of a battle, it is probable that the Indians carried away anything of the soldiers' equipment that struck their fancy. This would account for nothing remaining that would identify the troop.

"The bones looked as if they had been bleaching in the sun for years and years. Inquiry was made, some time after, of various members of Drifting Goose's band of Sioux, located on the reservation west of the Missouri. These Indians once claimed the territory in what is now Spink county and vicinity. They had their main village on Arndale island in the James

river some sixty miles to the south of this tragic spot. The Indians could throw no light on the subject, and it may be that this fight occurred before their advent here.

Among the theories advanced to account for the wiping out of this cavalry troop is one to the effect that these men perished in a blizzard. What gave rise to this idea was the fact that no broken bones or perforated skulls, showing the effects of gunfire, were found. From this the idea was gathered that these men and their mounts did not perish in battle. The story went around that these men were a part of a cavalry regiment stationed at some post along the Missouri, about the time of the outbreak of the Civil war. That they were either recruited from the South or were with the South in their sympathies, that they had deserted sometime in March of '61, and headed for the James river with the view of working their way down into the Confederate states by that route.

"The theory was that this was the safer route, as the army trails generally followed the Missouri, and there would be much greater danger of pursuit and capture, if they traveled that way. That on their way to the James they were overtaken by a blizzard and, being lost, and bewildered in the driving snow, and in imminent danger of freezing, they had, on stumbling on this buffalo wallow, buried themselves in the snow, which would be deeper there, in the hope of preserving their lives until the storm abated, but because of the intense cold, they perished to a man. Not so far away was the river, with high banks which would have afforded some shelter, and there was plenty of wood for fires, so that they might have escaped had they traveled a little farther with their backs against the storm.

"However, old army officers who had spent most of their lives on the plains, say that they never heard of desertion on any such a wholesale scale. Neither had they ever heard of a cavalry troop riding out into the vastness of the plains and vanishing so completely, and for so long a time, that even the circumstances of its departure and the mystery of its utter disappearance were forgotten.

"That this was a United States cavalry troop, however, is practically certain from the odd pieces of equipment found. The fact that the bones were lying on the prairie just where the troopers gave up their lives, indicates that this detachment was never located by the command of which it was a part, since the United States army always buries its dead.

"Whether this troop belonged to General Sully's army, which fought in the Little Crow war, or a scouting party of Minnesota troops which participated in the same conflict, is a matter of conjecture.

"This unknown battle of the buffalo wallow may have been one of the many fights which occurred along between the late sixties and the Custer massacre in 1876, when the plains Indians were making their last desperate attempt to retain the prairies for themselves. But who these men were, or whether they perished in conflict with the red warriors of the Sioux nation, or with the white armies of King Winter is still, so far as we know, one of the unsolved mysteries of the plains.

## Community Building

### Sees Industrial Future

#### Center in Small Towns

The America of the future will be a nation of small towns and villages, prophesies Prof. Walter B. Pitkin of Columbia university in an article in the Household Magazine.

"The community of the future," writes Doctor Pitkin, "will not be the few hundred or thousand people around the old crossroads. It will embrace 50 small towns and the county seat. There will be between 100,000 and 300,000 people in this social unit. They will not be packed together like the inhabitants of the typical modern city of that size. They will be spread out over two or three thousand square miles, each family having its own home, each village having its own playgrounds, motion picture theater, and parks. America will be dotted with tens of thousands of pleasant homes having big back yards in which tiny workshops will be busily turning out an indescribable variety of special products. All the villages and small towns of the United States will become industrial centers. But in a new and better way. All their factories will be new, perfectly lighted, and operated electrically. Most of them will be surrounded by spacious lawns and flower beds. Roads will be so good and autos so fast and safe that the owners of large farms between the villages will either live in town or be there much of the time, and still manage their acres with ease. Nobody will live more than ten miles from a town with every convenience and with a well-developed social life. It will require not more than 20 minutes for the farthest farmer to reach such a town outside of the Rocky mountains and parts of the Southwest."

### Building Laws of Vital

#### Interest to Community

Discussing the question whether good housing is possible to families of small means, Dr. James Ford, Pitt. D., executive director, Better Homes in America, says:

"If the average life of a house is from one-third to one-half of a century, most persons cannot live in new dwellings. So our first question is to ask how old houses can be made better.

"The first obvious answer is that there should be good building laws, health laws and housing laws, wisely framed by citizens who have practical knowledge of the subject of housing and who, though cognizant of practical difficulties, have standards that are high and sound. Such laws must be enforced by wise and practical citizens whose standards are also high.

"As no law is self-enforcing, it is necessary to have in each city a body of citizens to make a continuous survey of housing needs and standards, and to lend public officials their moral support and assistance. Because there is no such medium of community service in most cities, standards of housing legislation and enforcement are relatively low."

### Consider Value of Trees

The value in effect of old trees on a place cannot be overestimated. For the new house they may form the perfect setting, linking it with the grounds and with the entire landscape. An oak, a pine, a few cedars or an old apple tree may impart the happy effect of age, of being settled and of belonging to the site.

Many architects and owners have wisely and cleverly taken advantage of such opportunities, thereby gaining what could not be had by the planting of any number of perfect specimen trees from a nursery. Nature may have achieved a picturesqueness and irregularity that art cannot achieve.

### Tree-Lined Highways

A sensible agitation has been started by various bodies for the planting of trees along the highways of the Dominion.

Apart entirely from what the provinces have done towards such planting, several rural municipalities have shown a willingness to assist the innovation.

Tree-lined highways not only add to the attractiveness of rural districts themselves, but are a magnet of attraction to tourists.—Montreal Family Herald.

### Highway Made Attractive

Experts from the Missouri College of Agriculture co-operated with state highway officials in the beautification of federal highway No. 40, from Kansas City to St. Louis. The college made a soil survey along the highway to determine what types of grass would grow to the best advantage along the different sections, while highway officials took steps toward the removal of all unsightly stands and billboards and other advertising along the right of way.

### Civic Leadership Important

Good roads make most towns accessible to many more outsiders than formerly reached them. These towns are called upon to provide facilities for the traveling public. They also are on exhibition. Local pride is stimulated. The town that has a leader or a group of leaders with vision and persuasive powers of organization is a fortunate town.

## Kill Moths

or They Will Cost You Money  
Get Your Flit and The Special  
Flit Sprayer Today!



### Here's Additional Proof

#### That Silence Is Golden

Elihu Root said in an after-dinner speech in New York on his return from Geneva:

"Silence is golden in diplomacy. It is golden everywhere.

"Once upon a time a corpse in a bathing suit was fished out of the sea and sent to an undertaker's. A rich young man called the next day and identified the corpse as his father. The young man was giving orders to the undertaker for the most expensive burial in the establishment's program when the mouth of the corpse fell open, and a row of false teeth dropped out.

"That's not father," said the young man, and he hurried away.

"The undertaker had been putting the corpse into a mahogany coffin with gold trimmings, but now he put it back on its stone slab again.

"'Idiot!' he said to it. 'If you'd kept your mouth shut you'd have had an A-1 funeral.'"

### Gave Telephonic Consent

Unable to attend the wedding of his daughter, Miss Florence Mills, a graduate of Vassar, Maj. Byron J. Mills "gave her away" over long-distance telephone wires when she was married recently to Albert Hawkins in Calgary, Canada. Major Mills was at his home in Seattle, Wash., when the words came over the wire. "Who giveth this woman away?" "I do," answered the bride's father in Seattle and the marriage ceremony became a fact.

### Finding Careers

If the world's celebrities had all stuck to the careers in which they started, it is estimated that 80 per cent of our most famous names would never have been heard of.

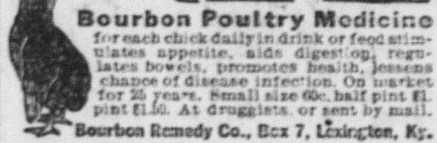
Contractors' Equipment and Coal Business, on Penna. R. R. in progressive Pa. city. Completely equipped, excellent warehouse and office building. Well established and profitably conducted. Owner retiring, will sell real estate at far below replacement value; financing arranged. B-2139, Realty Trust Corp., Munsey Bldg., Baltimore, Md.

CABBAGE, ONION AND TOMATO Plants—best leading varieties, 100, 50c; 1,000, \$1. Ruby King pepper and New York purple egg plants, 50c, \$1.25; 1,000, \$2. Navy Bell and Porto Rico potato plants, 50c, 75c; 1,000, \$1.25. These plants shipped C. O. D. for postage guaranteed. Good strong plants that will please you. Open field grown and packed in moss so they will arrive in good setting condition. Give us a trial order and see how these plants will please you.

Valdosta HAMBY PLANT CO. Valdosta, Georgia.

Wanted—Old books and pamphlets on "Life of Mary Jemison," Indian captive; give publisher's name, address and date. Used Book Exchange, Box 957, Rochester, N. Y.

Wanted—Local representatives whole or part time; financial institution; exceptional opportunity; wonderful future. Allied Securities Co., 29 Central Ave., Newark, N. J.



**One Drop**  
Bourbon Poultry Medicine  
For each chick daily in diets of feed stimulates appetite, aids digestion, regulates bowels, promotes health, prevents change of disease infection. On market for 25 years. Small size 50c, half pint \$1.00. All druggists, or sent by mail. Bourbon Remedy Co., Box 7, Lexington, Ky.

### Objects to Word "Necking"

"There's one thing about 'necking'—it's prettier than the word. The old way of using the words 'hugging' and 'kissing' is preferable to that hideous word," comments an Athol woman. "I do not believe I could have stood love making when I was a girl if it had been called 'necking,'" she concluded.—Athol Globe.

### Social Stimulus Needed

The highest ideal a man might visualize could only be put into effect in a personal environment, and the finest powers of his mind remain unrealized apart from a social stimulus.—Exchange.

## Would you like to try this doctor's laxative free of charge?

Every family has occasional need of a laxative, but it should be a family laxative. One that can't form a habit, but can be taken as often as needed. When breath is bad or tongue coated. Or appetite fails. Only a doctor knows the right ingredients. Dr. Caldwell discovered the correct combination years ago. Dr. Caldwell's Syrup Pepsin combines harmless herbs and pure senna. It starts muscular action and soon corrects constipation. Gently, but surely, it relieves a bilious or sluggish condition. It is mild. Delicious. Effective. All druggists keep this famous prescription ready, in big bottles. Or write Dr. Caldwell's Syrup Pepsin, Monticello, Ill., for a free trial bottle postpaid.



**Men Primarily Responsible**  
In condemning the vanity of women, men complain of the fire they themselves have kindled.—Lingree.

**Korean Counting Rods**  
Rods made of bone were used in teaching computing in Korean schools as late as the end of the Nineteenth century.

## For Housekeepers



**LYDIA ORLOSKI**  
425 So. Washington Ave., Scranton, Pa.  
"I took Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound for run-down condition before my baby was born. Now I eat better, have gained in weight and have more strength to take care of my four children. I can do my housework and not get a bit tired. My mother and my sister, also several of my women friends are taking your medicine now, because I believe that this medicine will help any woman that will take it regularly."—Mrs. Lydia Orloski.

**MINNIE E. HICKS**  
R.F. #2, Nashville, Indiana  
"When I started taking Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound I could hardly do my housework. I was so nervous and weak from Change of Life that I had to lie down very often. I heard about the Vegetable Compound through a pamphlet which was left at my door. I am doing all the housework for a family of four and it keeps me on my feet. I have gained six bottles and I have gained strength and flesh."—Minnie E. Hicks.

**Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound**  
Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Co., Lynn, Mass.