



## **CROSSING THE PLAINS**

### **Personal Recollections of the Journey to Oregon in 1852**

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First written in Dayton, Yamhill County, Oregon, September, 1906,  
for Dorothy Paxson Nelson by Anne Kemp Gowdy

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I was born Nov. 23, 1843, in Pettis county, Missouri, near where the city of Sedalia now is, but there was no city there then, the county seat, Georgetown, was the nearest town from where our farm was.

In the spring of 1852, the spring after I was eight years old, we started to Oregon. We called it "crossing the plains." More people came to Oregon that year than in any previous year, or in any year since. They came in "prairie schooners," large, heavy wagons drawn by oxen. Several families would come in one company, or train, with a captain. Our captain was a man who had crossed the plains to Oregon and back, so he knew where to find wood and water, when it could be found, which was not always. Sometimes we had to save water in our casks for a day or two for drinking and cooking. The cattle could drink from a muddy pool or go without.



Our family consisted of my father, mother, 8 children, and three hired men, 13 in all. We had three wagons, two large, heavy ones drawn by three yoke of big, strong oxen, and a lighter one drawn by two yoke of oxen, in which we rode, when we rode at all. We walked most of the way, after we got used to it. They never stopped the wagons for us to get in or out. The wagons had broad, flat tongues and we soon learned to hop in or out while they were going along. I did not know how many were in our train. My mother's oldest brother and her youngest sister and their families, and two neighbor men and their families are all I can remember; but there was quite a lot more. I do not know what month it was that we started in; or what month we got to Oregon in; but we were six months on the road. People come now-a-days in six days, and say, "What a tiresome trip we had!" I wonder what they would say if they had been six months on the way in an ox wagon instead of a steam car, with plenty to eat and a good bed to sleep on at night.

Our big wagons had deep boxes packed to the tops with flour, bacon, coffee, salt and sugar. There was room in front for two or three persons to stand on top. The provisions were covered with planks and on the planks were piled bed and bedding and clothes tied up in sacks. In the light wagon there was two trunks full of our best clothes, with bed and bedding and two chairs with various other things. We had crackers, rice, tea and a lot of dried peaches, and apples, and a few other things, luxuries in case of sickness; but a great many people had nothing of the kind, and of course mother would give to them in sickness, so we were soon out of anything of the kind ourselves. We had some jars of strained honey and my oldest sister brought a sugar bowl of peach preserves all the way to Oregon. She said when she put them up that she was going to open them for her wedding dinner, and so she did; but the dear sister died a few months after.

On the back end of the big wagons were boxes as wide and deep as the wagon boxes, with lids. We called them provision boxes. One was full of the provisions we were using on, so we would not have to open the big boxes every meal. The other carried the cooking utensils and table ware, tin plates, jars, and cups. We had no stove or table; cooked on an open fire, and spread a table cloth down to eat off of, and sat on the ox yokes for chairs; but before we got here we ate most any way, a piece of bread and meat in one hand, and a cup of coffee in the other, and ate anywhere or how.



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I do not know how many cattle we started with. I can remember the names of seven cows. One cow, Pink, a big red cow, was very much opposed to coming to Oregon, and would try to go back; after we got a long way out on the plains one morning Pink was gone, and after we got here they wrote us that she came back home; Mother said she was a sensible cow.

I do not think we had any horses. I know my sister Lib used to ride a mule, and help one of the boys drive the stock.

I had two girl cousins, and one of them had a stepsister, all about my age, and there were several other little girls along. We used to have great times playing together. We would build a little fire away from the big fire and our mothers and big sisters would give us some dough and a slice of bacon. We would twist the dough around a little stick and hold it to the fire, or cook it in the ashes, and sizzle the bacon in the fire, or hold on a sharp stick before the blaze; then we would go to camp and get a tin cup of coffee, spread it all out on the dusty grass, or leaves, and we would have a fine spread. We would gather up all the bacon rinds we could, find and brown them to a crisp and eat them for desert; we would chew sour dock leaves, or have service, or choke cherries, a kind of wild cherry, very puckery and sour.

When the cows were fresh we had plenty of milk; they killed the little calves. Mother had a churn and we had butter; she would churn as we traveled along. But the poor cows could not give milk very long, so bread, bacon and coffee were soon our daily rations.

My brother killed an antelope now and then, and one buffalo, and a deer, and sometimes prairie hens or jack rabbits.

My uncle gave an Indian a straw hat for a little Cayuse pony and we girls could ride him two or three at a time, so we would "ride and tie" all day.

Our cooking utensils were some big coffee pots and long-handled frying pans, a baker to bake bread in, a teakettle or two. I have one of the kettles now. My mother brought it from Virginia with her.

We had plenty of provisions to last us all the way; but divided with people who were out until we were nearly out ourselves before we got to The Dalles, the only place where we could get anything. So I don't think we children really went hungry and we got so used to the fat bacon and bread we didn't care much; but at first I used to cry for a little piece of lean meat.

For weeks at a time we had not a stick of wood to make a fire with, and what do you think we had to cook with? We burned "buffalo chips," dried buffalo droppings, you know. The plains for ages had been covered with thousands of buffalo, so the "chips" were thick almost everywhere. They made a very good fire when nothing else was to be had, better than sage brush or grease weed. We had to use grease and sage wood a great deal, and everything tasted of it. The grease wood gave off a thick smelly smoke which permeated everything. And oh! the dust. When a buggy goes by this time of year we think "Oh! the dust!" but imagine if you can, what it would be if hundreds of loose cattle were being driven by, and a continuous string of wagons drawn by oxen, hundreds of them were passing all day long. The



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dust rose in such clouds we could scarcely see a foot or two head of us, and when the wind blew sand as it often did, and the dust was alkali dust you can't think how disagreeable it was.

It would sting and cut our faces and almost draw blood. The dust was so hot we girls couldn't go barefoot and when it was cool so we could go bare foot, the prickly pear thorns would run into our feet and make them so sore, they were so thick and covered up with dust we could not keep off of them. Some of them had to go bare foot, they had no shoes, and their feet got so tough and hard they were like sole leather; but I had plenty of shoes.

From the time we left the boundary of Missouri we didn't see a house except at the forts and I think they were all adobe, sod houses, until a few miles beyond the Dalles. There we saw a log cabin without any floor in it. A white man with a squaw wife lived in it. He had a little garden, and sold us (at an enormous price) potatoes about as big as marbles. He sold us fresh beef also, and a kettle of potatoes cooked with a little piece of beef, and bread crumbled in the broth, tasted better than anything I ever ate before or since. But we had to eat very little beef at a time or we would get sick, we had been without anything of the kind for so long.

The odor of fried fish about the Indian wigwams took our appetites for fish; but we thought fresh fish would taste good; but one day we came to a river (the mouth of the Umatilla, I think; but it may have been the Columbia, not the mouth) and there we found a large camp of Indians drying fish for winter; they had piles of fish spread on scaffoldings drying in the sun; that took away the last vestige of our appetites for fish. The little Indian children ran around with a piece of dried fish in their hands. They ate it as if it was a delicious morsel; but we would not have given a slice of salt fat bacon (although that was almost all we had to eat for months) for a whole, fresh Chinook salmon just then.

One time when we were camped, we children went down a broad, well beaten path into a deep hollow. There we found some trees full of the finest choke berries we had ever seen. I was the only one who had on an apron, so I stood at the foot of the tree while the other girls climbed up and threw down the cherries for me to catch in my apron; they threw long limbs and clusters, until we had all we could carry to camp. Then they came down, and we were just going to load up when, on looking around, we saw an Indian boy about our size, coming out of the brush. We were used to seeing Indians all the time and were not a bit afraid of them; but from some cause the sight of the Indian boy threw us into a panic of fright, and we ran screaming at the top of our voices. In our fright we could not find the path we had come by, so we scrambled up a rough, humpy, steep path, or the other girls did; I held on to our cherries, and could not use my hands to pull myself up. My cousin, seeing my predicament, came to my rescue, (we always stood valiantly by each other in all our scrapes); she told me to throw down the cherries, and taking hold of my hands, helped me up to the top, and we got to camp nearly frightened out of our senses. After a while the boy came along, carrying the limbs of cherries on his arms, with the fine large clusters lying on top, We were not a bit afraid of him then, and went boldly after him for them. He made signs that he would give them to us for a needle and thread that my aunt had. She gave them to him, and he gave back our cherries.

One time we found some elder bushes with berries on them, and the girls made pies of them. I suppose I must have been a piggy and ate too much of them for it made me sick, and I can't eat elder berry pie to this day (if I know it is elder berry.) We thought service berries were good also; but now I do not like them.

Once when we, were camped my mother and aunt went to a camp near by; the folks were strangers to

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us; when they came back, (they were there all night), they told us a little boy was born there in the night, and his mother was dead. We left them digging her grave. The baby's father's name was Smith, and there was a little girl about three years old named Amanda. Sometime afterward the train Smith was in overtook us and traveled along, and camped near us for some time. The folks who were keeping the baby did not seem to be taking very good care of him. It was hard to take care of the baby under such conditions and the father begged mother to take him; at first she said she could not; but we children begged her to, so she took him. As long as we had, or could get, milk for him he got along pretty well, but when we couldn't get milk it was hard to keep him from starving. She fed him bread soaked in tea or coffee, and at night tied up bread and sugar in a wet rag and put it in his mouth. The baby's father went on ahead of us, and we did not see him again until we came to The Dalles. The baby, (little Sammy) was nearly dead when we got there. It was raining and our tent leaked by that time, so we were all cold and wet. A man had a store in a tent and he told mother to take the baby in by the fire; he had no family, so she went into his tent; how nice it was to get by the stove out of the wind and rain.

One day little Sammy died in mother's arms. She dressed him in a pink calico slip, the only decent thing she had to put on him. I thought he looked so sweet. I think he was about four months old. His father took him off and buried him. Then he got an Indian to take Amanda and himself down the river in a canoe; we stood on the bank and watched them go. I never saw Amanda again; but saw her father several times after we came here.

One evening we saw a little girl playing with a little lamb, in a camp near ours; we children were wild to see the lamb. My mother and aunt took us over to the camp; the girl's name was Janey Miller; we fairly envied her the pet lamb, but when a few days later we passed the newly-made grave of her mother we felt sorry for her. I never saw her again, but Papa John knew her. They stayed a long time at Mr. Brown's, where he lived, and he called Janey his little sweetheart. Mr. Brown bought the pet lamb, and when I knew him, several years afterward, he had quite a flock of sheep the progeny of the little lamb that followed Janey across the plains.

The day before the Fourth of July we camped at a place called "Devil's Gate." I do not know where it was, but it seems to me it was a narrow valley with a range of mountains on each side, and a narrow pass between them. We could see snow on a high peak. It looked strange to see snow on the Fourth of July. There was a fine stream of water flowing through the valley, and the grass was thick and green.

My brother killed a buffalo that evening not far, I think, from camp, and the next day he and some more men went up to the mountains hunting and he killed a black-tailed deer. I think some of the other hunters killed deer and mountain sheep. So we had lots of fresh meat in the camp.

A great many folks were camped there, and on the Fourth of July they marched with flags flying, drums beating, and a band composed of several horns, fifes and fiddles.

The fresh meat was divided among everyone, and father cut some long, lean strips, hung them over a pole in the sun, and built a fire near so that the smoke blowed over it, and dried it. He called it jerked meat.

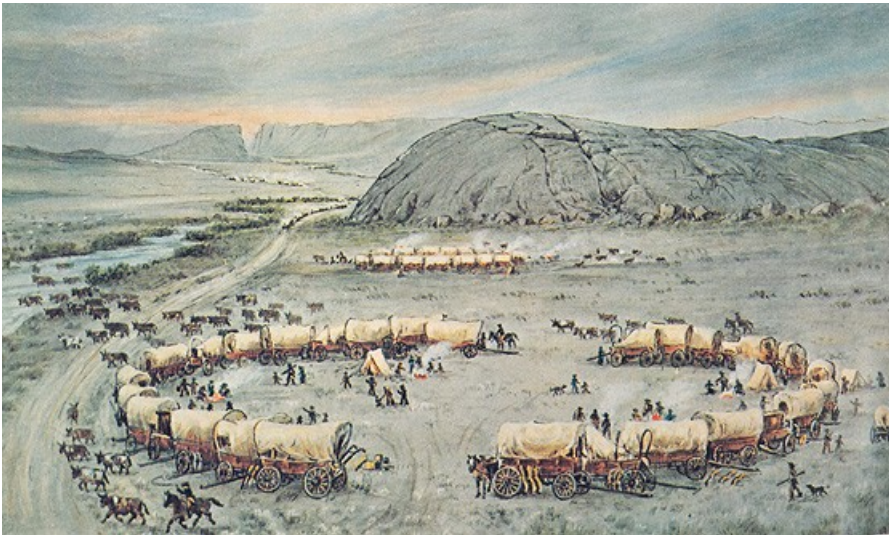
They had songs and speeches also, and that was our Fourth of July on the plains. The trains kept together for a while, but when the cattle began to die, and provisions to get short, the trains all broke up, and it was every fellow for himself, and - well we will say, good luck to the hindmost.

My uncle, mother's brother, found that himself, wife, seven healthy growing boys, two girls, and two or

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three hired men, could stow away more bread and bacon than he had any idea of. So he had to push ahead as fast as possible. Father had to let him have flour and bacon to help him out to where he could get a supply, (The Dalles), and he left us and went ahead, but my mother and her sister refused to be separated, so they stayed with us all the way through. I think we had to let them have some food, also.

There was so much sickness and so many deaths. The poor cattle, too, died by the hundreds, starved and overworked, the plains were covered with their carcasses and the air was polluted with their sickening odor. I wonder how any of us lived through it all. Just think of lying with a burning fever in a rough jolty wagon, on a big feather bed put on top of a pile of things all jumbled up with nothing between you and the burning sun but the wagon cover in that smothering dust with sometimes not a drop of fresh water for two days and hardly ever a bit from one camping place to another, and it was often a stagnant pool, with nothing to eat but fat, salt bacon, bread and coffee, cooked on a sage brush or grease wood fire. The sage brush smelled like sage, but the grease wood gave off a thick, black, pungent smoke, with an odor which permeated everything, and with hundreds of fires of it all around, you could hardly see through the smudge. No wonder the graves were thick everywhere around us.



I think we never made more than one dry camp at a time. That is a camp without fresh water, but often the water was a muddy pool hardly fit for the cattle to wet their noses in. We hauled water in wooden casks, and the men carried it in canteens hung over their shoulders. A canteen is a flat, tin flask, with a neck, covered with flannel or felt with loops around them to run a leather strap through slung around the shoulders. When we children were walking and

wanted a drink we went to the canteens for it. When we wanted a lunch we went to the boxes on the end of the wagons and those of us who could lift the lids, (I was not tall enough to), always found bread and maybe bacon covered with a table cloth on top of the other things.

The poor cattle had a hard time as well as the people; they suffered for water many times. When we would be nearing a stream of water they would smell it a long way off and the loose cattle could not be restrained. They would break into a gallop, and we children would have to scurry to the wagon to keep from being run over. Sister Libbie on her mule would be flying along in the thick of it all, like a little cowboy, (she was only 14 years old); the drivers would have to get in front of their teams and beat them back. Once a lot of teams did run away, ours among them. A man came riding by in a gallop. He had on a pair of buckskin trousers with fringes down the sides, beaded moccasins and was covered over with bells, the bells making a fearful racket and scaring the oxen, and away they went pell mell over the plains. I tell you there was lively times for a while; pedestrians had to do some lively dodging to keep from being run over, women were screaming at the top of their voices, children crying, and the men running at full speed and, swearing to "beat the band," they would say nowadays. It was a lively

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mix-up for a while, but when order had been restored out of the chaos, no great harm had been done. Some bumps and bruises and things shook up in the wagons.

Some of the drivers had no mercy for the poor oxen; the whips had long wooden handles with long braided leather lashes called a cracker – and they were scarred and marked all over their almost bare ribs with the cruel blows. Some of the drivers fastened nails in the crackers and then blood was brought trickling down their sides by a blow. One of our drivers fixed his whip that way. But when father found it out he had an interesting interview with him on the subject and when he got through with him, poor Frank felt like he had changed places with his poor oxen. None of our drivers ever tried that again.

My aunt's husband was a good singer and sometimes after supper when everybody, tired with the strenuous day's travel, would be preparing to lay their weary bodies on their hard beds, he would start up some old Methodist hymn; others would take it up and it would seem like an old-fashioned camp meeting was in progress. It must have fallen like a benediction on their over-wrought nerves. My brother was also a fine singer and my sisters, even down to little me could sing. So brother often started up a song, but he did not always sing hymns. Being lively and jolly, his songs were apt to be the same, but they did people good; also sent people to bed in a good humor.

I was going to tell you about the cattle swimming the river once. When we came to the Snake River, I think it was, the cattle, ours (I don't think anybody's else did), all rushed into the river and swam across. The teams were unyoked and went to the river to drink; they all swam across. My brother and one of the drivers swam over and drove them into the river and they came back all right, but the water was cold and swift and the boys were almost drowned.

I do not seem to remember as much about the latter part of our journey as I do of the first. But I shall always remember The Dalles. A good many people went over the Cascade Mountains, but we with a great many more came down the Columbia River. Those who went over the mountains had a hard time; the road was not much more than a rough trail; the oxen gave out and they nearly starved. At one place called Laurel Hill they had to tie ropes around the hind axle of the wagons and wrap it around the trees near the roadside and let the wagons down with the men hanging on to the ropes to keep the wagons from running over the oxen. But they had pure air to breathe and pure water to drink, while we, on the river had neither.

The Dalles looked like the jumping off place with no place to jump in but the river. I saw a statement in the Oregonian a day or two ago that there was a small cluster of log cabins there then, but I do not remember seeing even a log cabin when we were there. I have written about seeing a cabin the other side of The Dalles, where a man lived with a squaw wife. His name was Nathan Olney. His Squaw wife died and he came to Salem while we lived there. He was a fine looking man finely dressed. He came to our house several times, and they used to tell my oldest sister that he was looking for a white wife, but she gave him the mitten. I saw in the Oregonian the death notice of an old pioneer at The Dalles, the first man who was married in Wasco County. It said Nathan Olney, who was the first justice of the



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peace in Wasco County, married him. But to return to The Dalles, I thought it the most miserable place I ever saw. The wind blew a gale and with hundreds of people and cattle to stir it up, the sand arose in clouds and covered everything and everybody like a thick fog.

We had to give \$25 a sack for flour and other things in proportion. We had always had New Orleans sugar, brown but clean and finely flavored. All the sugar that we could get at The Dalles was Island sugar, strong, coarse-grained, black dirty-looking stuff, adulterated with sand; our coffee and tea would be so gritty we could hardly drink it and would be quite a deposit of sand in the bottom of the cup. It looked like we were eating our full allowance of sand free without drinking it at a high price. Some of it was unrefined. It was all in matting sacks. We could get pickled pork and fresh beef. We got some beef liver. At home I wouldn't eat liver, but now a slice of it fried over a smoky fire seasoned with sand was a most delicious morsel, and if I had been allowed to, I would have made myself sick eating so much of it, but for years after that I never wanted to taste liver.

We found a good many at The Dalles whom we had parted company with back on the plains. Among them Dr. McCurdy and wife; they had no children, but he had a big hound and she had a little white poodle, Snowball. He was a fine doctor, but there was a saloon there and the doctor got on a big spree. It did seem too bad with so many sick folks needing him so much. We found two young men there who had started in our train, but had gone on ahead when the train broke up. One of them we knew in Missouri. His parents were neighbors of ours; he wanted to come with us, but father would not take him, because his folks did not want him to come, and he was not of age. I remember hearing my father say, "I will take no boy under age without the consent of his father," so poor Clark Anderson got someone else to take him; the folks he wag with left him at The Dalles so sick he could hardly walk. He came dragging himself to our camp one day; without a cent of money, and a very scanty supply of ragged, dirty clothes. His folks were poor people, and he had a scanty outfit to start on. Of course mother could not bear to turn the poor boy off, so she took him in, as poorly able as we were to add another to our family.

We had one tent in which the family slept. The boys slept in or under the wagons, but now they were taken apart, so she had to put him in a bed in the tent; sister Mary was sick in one bed, and when sister Martha got down also she had to lie in the same bed with her. The other young man lived some distance from us, and we only knew of him before we started; his folks were well off and he started with a good outfit. The folks he was with left him at The Dalles, sick also. A man and wife had a hospital in a tent; it was full of sick people who paid a high price for very poor accommodation. This young man was there very sick. Our girls went to see him; he was lying with only one quilt or blanket between his emaciated body and the ground and one over him, with a ragged, dirty shirt and trousers on, without a pillow. He had given the man quite a sum of money and a fine rifle, about like one my brother had sold for one hundred dollars; brother had two, so he sold one. He said he was nearly starved. The girls told mother and she sent him a good warm coverlid, a pillow and a little glass of strained honey, and a little cooked rice. She did not think of a cent of pay for the things, but he gave sister five dollars in gold which the man had overlooked when he searched him after he got helpless. They took his trunk of good clothes and all the rest of his money, but did not find the five dollars. It was the last cent of money he had, but he would have her take it, for he said the folks had had ample pity for all they had done for him and they would bury him in his dirty rags. He died soon after we left The Dalles.

We had to go from The Dalles to the Cascades in flat boats, the cattle being driven over a pack trail to

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the mouth of the Sandy River. Two of our men took ours. They packed the oxen with bedding and food, and left as soon as possible as there was nothing for them to eat at The Dalles. They took the wagons to pieces, tied the running gear of each together, and took off the covers. They put the running gears in the bottom of the boats, set the wagon boxes on the top, heaped things high on top of them, then packed people "like sardines in a box" on top of all that. We children used to watch them load by the hour. The day before we left we moved down to the brink of the river, and slept in our tent, with the wagons torn up we had to all, sick and well, sleep in one tent with all our things piled in also. The next morning early, we were up, made a breakfast of cold bread and meat with a cup of hot coffee and climbed on board; with the sick on beds spread out on top of everything. We couldn't cook on the boat so had to take cold food along. When we got put in midstream they found we were too heavily laden; and were in danger of sinking. Some of the women were panic stricken and screamed, and if we hadn't been packed in so tightly, I suppose they would have raised such a commotion we would have sunk.



But they landed us five miles below The Dalles on a narrow sandy beach with a high wood bluff back of us; they put off all who did not have their wagons on board. Besides my aunts and ourselves I can remember but three other families, but I think there were others. They said they would send a boat for us the next day, but I think we stayed there a week or two. We could see the boats passing every day but none

came for us. We got out of provisions and the men had to walk back to The Dalles and carry sacks of flour down on their backs. The families put off with us who I remember were Dr. McCurdy's, Mr. Henderson's and Mr. Warsaw's. The Doctor sobered up and was real good about seeing to the sick. He got an Indian to take them with the big hound and the little poodle in a canoe. I never saw Mrs. Mc. again but knew him for years after we got to Salem. She was there sick. My oldest sister went to see her. She died soon after. Mr. Henderson made a raft and put his wife, five children and all their things on it and went off. We knew them well after we came here as long as they lived. Mr. Henderson was elected to Congress. I visited the Warsaws twice after we got here.

My sisters, Mary and Martha, and the sick boy were "sick in bed" but if they could have had food to give them strength they might have got along. Mother got tea and rice and crackers for them at The Dalles, but that did not give much strength. I think many of the sick people, must have starved to death, not from the want of food altogether, but from the want of proper food and care. The sick boy's constant cry was "water, water," but the doctor said it would kill him to drink all he wanted of the river water. One night he crawled out of the tent when we were asleep and went to the river; our tent was on the brink of the river and the lapping of the water on the sand nearly made him frantic, so he crawled on his hands and knees to the edge of the river and lying flat down he drank all he could swallow and then crawled back. The next morning he was much worse and when he had told what he had done they knew that he could not live.

At last a boat stopped on the way down for us. Two of our wagons were on board, the other one we never got. We sold one after we got here for two hundred dollars. When we started down the river again we were heavily loaded and the wind blew up the river so strong we ran across and landed on the Washington side. I think we only stayed there one night; we slept on the boat, just tumbled down anywhere we could but we cooked on the river bank. When we started again we had not gone far when our sick boy, Clark Anderson, died; poor boy, he was so anxious to come to the new country, but

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instead of finding a pot of gold at the end of the long, weary journey, he only found a new made grave. His father wrote to Mother that he and the boy's mother would remember her as long as they did their boy. She neither asked for nor received a cent of pay for what she did for him. They landed and buried him on the Oregon side of the river.

I thought there could not be a worse place than The Dalles, but when we got to the upper cascades I knew there could be. People by the hundreds were crowded on a narrow strip of land at the brink of the river, with a high rocky cliff at the back, with so many sick. We did not hear or know anything about "germs" or "microbes" then, but the air and water must have been thick enough with them to see them wiggle. We stayed there for some time waiting for the boys and oxen. When they came they put the wagons together and piled things in and went around the portage to the lower cascades, five miles; we children walked all the way. We passed through an old Indian burying ground; the bodies were put in rail pens, but they had fallen down, and the skeletons were scattered thick over the ground, a most gruesome sight.

When we came around the falls to the lower cascades, they had to take the wagons apart again, load them and ourselves on another flatboat, while the boys and cattle went on down the pack trail to the mouth of the Sandy. We stayed there a week or more at the cascades waiting for a boat, but it wasn't quite as bad as the upper Cascades.

The name of one boat we were on was "Skookumchuck." Skookum in Chinook means strong, and chuck means water, "strong water" means whisky. The boatman's name was "Billy." We used to watch him fry "flapjacks." He would pour the batter in a long-handled frying pan and when it cooked on one side he would run a knife around the edge and give the pan a dexterous flip and the "flapjack" would turn over and he would catch it bottom side up in the pan. We never tired of watching him.

There was an old block-house there, a man had a store in it. I do not know what he had to sell; all I ever saw was a row of glass jars filled with the loveliest pink and white peppermint candy; the sticks were a little larger around, but not quite so long as the stick candy we get nowadays. One day when my cousin and I were at the door feasting our eyes on the lovely sight I saw my brother in the store talking to Mr. Dunlap; I ran in and went to him. Mr. Dunlap saw the direction my eyes took I suppose, so he gave the man a dollar, and told him to give the worth of it in candy to me. My cousin seeing how well I was faring, came in also. For all that money we expected to get two, or three jars of candy, with the jars thrown in, for he gave the man another dollar for candy for her. The man gave us eight sticks of candy apiece, sixteen sticks for two dollars. If you and Beth had to pay that price for candy now I think my pink box would not be filled as often as it is. We were, "the best pleased children in the world." I do not think we thought of our manners and said thank you, we were so excited; we flew to camp with our precious packages hugged tight in our arms. I offered a bite to all my sisters; my mother and oldest sister took bites like we do when baby offers us a bite. My two other sisters were too sick to eat candy. I thought they must be awfully ill, but my other two sisters took a little bite and I ate the rest of the stick. I rolled the rest of the candy up and put it in my little basket in which I kept my doll and other trinkets; it was setting just inside the tent, as we did not have everything piled up in the tent; after awhile I came back just to look at it; I did not intend to eat any more that day, but what was my dismay to find the basket tipped over and all, every bit, of my precious candy gone. I was just heart-broken. My sisters said there had been only one in the tent except Mother since I had been in and that had been a half grown girl who came in and talked a few minutes with them; as she went out she stooped over

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and then went out quickly; they couldn't see what she did. I wanted Mother to let me tell her folks, but she said no; she would deny it, and everybody's nerves were unstrung and they were like fire and tow, ready to go off at anything or nothing, so it would likely make a fuss and do no good, and that I must not tell Mr. Dunlap, for he would likely get me more; (I wished I might if that was what he would do) but I did not tell anyone except my cousin, for fear she would lose hers; her mother locked it up in her trunk. I thought I never would forgive that girl, but I did. The first and only time, I think, that I ever saw her after we came here, my Arthur was a six or eight months old baby. She had a baby boy about the same age, and when I looked at her baby and then at mine I forgave her; for my baby, if you believed his grandma and aunties, even my sisters who had babies of their own, all said the same, was just as pretty, cute and bright as a baby could be, while her baby was a poor weaseled faced little idiot, with scarce the semblance of a human being. Perhaps the poor girl was not so much to blame after all; I ought to have given her a bite. They were camped near us, so she may have seen the candy and it must have looked tempting; but she was several years older than I was, so I never played with her or was intimate with her; or if she had only left me two or three sticks, but to take it all did seem more than I could bear; she has been dead these many years now.

We first met Mr. Dunlap at The Dalles. Mother knew some of his folks in Missouri. One of his sisters married a cousin of my Father's, so he called himself our cousin. But he had been in Oregon and California for some years. He was buying cattle at The Dalles and had the first "fifty dollar slugs" I ever saw; they were fifty dollars in gold all in one piece like the twenties we have now; they were common on this coast when we came here, and were called "slugs." Mr. Dunlap was very kind to us. He got oranges for my sick sisters. He was nice looking but stuttered badly. He is living now in the soldiers' home in Ashland. I have his picture and a sketch of his life cut from the Oregonian.

After a week, perhaps, we loaded on to another flatboat which landed us at the mouth of the Sandy. The boys and girls and cattle were there; they put the wagons together, piled everything in, hitched up the oxen and we pursued our weary journey. I do not know how many yoke of oxen we had left, but we must have had at least two yoke as we had two wagons. A little this side of the Sandy we came to a cabin in a little clearing among the tall fir timber where they had a garden, some pigs and chickens; how good it did seem to see some signs of civilization again. That place now is perhaps, a lovely home in a suburb of Portland. We passed through what is now East Portland; it was all thick timber then; we could catch glimpses of Portland through the thick trees, but it did not look much like Portland looks now, and it did not seem like much of a town could ever be built in such a place. We heard more, talk of Oregon City and Salem than we did of Portland.



When we got to Milwaukie we rented a house with two or three rooms and a fireplace in it. Some one had left a pile of pumpkin peelings on the floor. We children roasted them in the fire and ate them. I wouldn't eat the nicest piece of hard-shell squash spread with mother's good butter on it at home. The Lewellen orchard near there was the only bearing orchard in the state, or territory, as Oregon then was. My mother and aunt took my cousin and myself out there and bought us each an apple for which they paid twelve and one-half cents apiece, my first apple in Oregon. The apple trees were brought across the plains in wagons. The boys could get nothing to do in Milwaukie and were anxious to go on to Salem, but Nannie, my aunt's oldest daughter, was very ill and they could not start out with her. It was raining all the time, and the road was not much more than a rough, stumpy trail. So we reluctantly

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left them there, to come as soon as Nannie was able to travel, but her long journey ended, as did many another one's at a new made grave. She was a sweet, pretty girl about sixteen years old.

After her death my uncle and aunt settled near Milwaukie and lived there until their deaths several years ago. We were several days getting to Salem; when we got there we camped in what is now North Salem, then it was open prairie with a few farm houses scattered over it, covered with bands of emigrant cattle turned out there to recruit on the high grass with which it was covered. Salem was crowded with emigrants and houses were in demand; my brother rented a small house of Dr. Wilson. Salem was built on his donation claim, six hundred and forty acres. How good it was to get out of the rain and mud and have a fire to warm by without smoking your eyes out.

And thus our long, toilsome, sad journey across the plains from the state of Missouri to Oregon Territory. We left our home in Missouri on the second day of May and had not been long in Salem on my ninth birthday, the twenty-third of November, so we must have been all of six months on the journey.

I will now try to write of the two sad events of our trip. My sister Frances, the baby of the family, was three and a half years younger than myself. I was taller than she, but otherwise she was larger than I was, for I had been sickly while she was always so strong and well. Mother said she feared I would not live through the long, hard journey, but never had an anxious thought about Fannie. She was five years old the 5th day of May. In June we were traveling on the Platte River (there were two Plattes, one north and one south; we ferried one and forded one). The water was bad and there were many sick and many deaths, but there had not been a death in our train. One night Fannie was taken sick and before sundown the next day she died. It rained that forenoon and I rode in the wagon with her; she sat on mother's lap, but could not play with me. At noon a doctor came around to see the sick, he said she was dangerously ill, but they thought he might not be much of a doctor. It rained all the afternoon and I got in the wagon with some more little girls and we told stories and played all afternoon.



Fannie fretted for me, but mother did not know where I was. We stopped near the roadside earlier than common. We girls laughed to see the boys putting up the tent and making a fire of "buffalo chips" in the pouring rain. As soon as the tent was up mother and the older girls carried the bed and bedding into it while father followed with Fannie in his arms. Pretty soon one of my sisters came to the wagon and told me Fannie was dying. I sprang out and ran to the tent and sure enough my pretty sweet little sister was just breathing her last. I looked on terror-stricken until it was all over and father closed her eyes, then I went out and crouched down in the rein close to the tent. After awhile my oldest sister came and sitting down by me took me in her arms and told me of the lovely home Fannie had gone to and if I was good I would go there too some day. A few years after and that dear sister went to that lovely home herself, leaving a sweet baby girl to take Fannie's place in mother's arms. I thought Fannie looked very sweet next morning, all in white. They made a little grave near the roadside; there was nothing to make a coffin of, so they wrapped the little white robed body in a sheet and laid it in the hard ground. My uncle cut her name and age with "Suffer little children to come unto Me" on a small piece of smooth board and put it at the head of the grave. Only a short time after he cut the name and the same

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inscription on another board and put it at the head of the grave of his own baby, a pretty little fellow about two years old, a twin, but his twin had died before we left home. And so we came away and left little Fannie lying there. I do not think there was a tree or even a bush to be seen, only the vast boundless prairie covered with tall waving grass, with the two wide, shallow rivers flowing sluggishly over their quicksand bottoms, without any banks.

I do not remember any more sickness in our family for some time after that, then my brother was very ill; they did not think he would live. The cholera was raging on ahead of us, but we did not have it in our train. When we came on where it had been, the graves were thick, side by side, for nearly or quite a quarter of a mile. In August sometime my father was taken sick. We laid by with him at first, but he got no better so we had to travel on; we had a doctor but he was a stranger and they thought he was not much of a doctor. When we came to the Grand Ronde River the bank was so steep it looked like the wagons would tip over endwise, and the rocks were great boulders; father moaned pitifully at the cruel jolting; mother held his head in her lap and the girls tried to hold up his body to ease the jolting; the bed of the river was very rocky also. When we crossed the river we drove off to the left of the road and camped in a pretty place near the river bank, and there a few days after father died. He was born in Virginia, June 2, 1803, and died near where the town of LaGrande now is, Sept. 5, 1852. They say there is, or was lately, a faint sign of the old emigrant road still to be seen where it starts up the mountains out of the valley. A little way up the mountain side at the left of the road there was a small level spot, a little bench on the mountain side, and there surrounded by tall fir and pine trees, they made his grave. We bore him to it and laid him in on a wide board taken from the side of the wagon in which we rode; extra boards had been put in to deepen the bed. They covered his body with fir boughs.



How handsome I thought he looked. Clean shaven - I never saw him with whiskers - with a few threads of gray mingled with his thick, dark, curly locks; dressed in a fine suit of black broadcloth. I do not know his height, but he was not so tall as my brother; he weighed two hundred pounds, had small hands and wore number six shoes. Mother says he was said to be the handsomest young man anywhere around when they were married. He had been a member of the legislature and was sheriff of Pettis County for eight years. After we came here we often met people, strangers to us, who had known him. After I was married, a man who had known him introduced me to an old man who had just come here from Missouri; he said to the old man "This lady is a daughter of our old Pettis county sheriff, Riley Kemp." The old gentleman sprang to his feet and extending his hand said, "Is that so? Then my dear madam I must shake hands with you again. I knew your father well, everybody in Pettis county knew and liked Riley Kemp, he was one of the most popular sheriffs we ever had, his cousin, James Kemp, who was sheriff after him, was also quite popular, but not as much so as Riley; he was honest as the day was long."

And now Dorothy, dear, I have written a long, rambling account of my trip across the plains to Oregon. When you look at the scratchy writing and the crooked letters you must remember the stiff, crooked fingers that made the scratches and the crooks. Remember also that I have written it all from memory and that I was only eight and one-half years old when I started across the plains, and now I am almost sixty three, so very likely there may be inaccuracies in it, but it is all as it seems to me. If I was as

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smart a woman as I hope you will be, and had the education which I hope you will have, and time and cruel pain had not dulled my memory, perhaps I might have written it in an interesting way, but disconnected and crudely written as it is, you may like to read it over sometimes, long after I am gone, but keep it anyway in memory of "MAMA JOHN."

Dayton, Yamhill County, Oregon, September, 1906.

Written for Dorothy Paxson Nelson by Anne Kemp Gowdy