

Mrs. Kelley was held in very high esteem by all the miners. She was never too busy to help them, was an excellent cook, and when they fell ill she prepared many dainty dishes and rendered many services which only a woman knows how to perform. Later she received a letter from some of them:

“Written by John Lanwick, appointed by the friends of William Bowden, deceased, as a committee to present a gold bracelet to Mrs. Kelley of Yreka, California, December 25, 1851, for her kindness to the deceased during his last illness, Madam: It has fallen to my lot to discharge a most pleasant and agreeable duty, to bear witness on behalf of myself and companions to those superior and excellent qualities of the heart common to your sex, but which have been manifested in so eminent a degree by yourself to our deceased companion and friend, William Bowden, in his last illness. To die under any circumstances is a solemn thing, but the mind recoils with horror from the idea of dying in a distant land deprived of all those kind attentions which are associated in our minds with our loved ones. The poor, weak invalid who has to depend exclusively upon the rough sympathy and indifferent attention of men alone can justly appreciate what it must have meant to our friend to have a woman smooth his dying pillow. Accept, Lady, this bracelet, as a feeble mark of our respect and esteem. It is made from virgin gold of our valley and in its purity is only excelled by those purer qualities of your heart. May there still be in store for you many years of happiness and usefulness and may you not want those delicate attentions which you are so ready to bestow upon others. Signed, John Lanwick, on behalf of the committee.”

On arriving at “Humbug,” my father and brother staked a claim and went to work. They found the place no humbug for them, but struck it very rich, and stayed there taking out gold until late in the fall of the same year.

Father’s great desire now was to bring his family out and locate in the beautiful Rogue River Valley in Oregon. He pre-

pared for his trip with a hundred other men who were going back East by pack mules, riding one and packing the other with their gold, and with blankets and provisions enough to last them until they reached Salt Lake, for this time they took the southern route.

Two years before this the Mormons had been driven out of Nauvoo, Missouri, for they had been very free to help themselves to other people’s belongings, which the settlers resented so much they drove the Mormons across the Missouri river. My aunt, who lived at Nauvoo at that time, told us afterwards of an incident that will convey the idea. Her husband had a big beef in the barn ready to be butchered for the winter meat supply. One day two men on horseback approached the barn, opened the door and drove out the beef. When my aunt ran out to question them they told her the Lord had need of it. As her husband was away from home, she was powerless to stop them. This band of Mormons went on to Salt Lake and settled a colony there, and from them my father bought his second supply of provisions, enough to last until he reached Iowa.

Complete confidence existed among these men as they journeyed along for months together.

Though they had thousands of dollars in gold dust, their fear was not of robbery, but of the Indians that infested the country. And perhaps the only thing that saved them was the fear the Indians had of the white men’s guns, that could “speak” a greater distance than the bow and arrow. My father arrived safely in Keokuk, Iowa, rested a few days with his sister Mrs. Duty, then pushed on to St. Louis to take his gold dust to the United States mint. While in St. Louis, he ordered his wagons made for the return trip with his family. He also had long-distance guns made that were a wonder to all who saw them. Instead of bullets, they used slugs, which went with such force that they would pass clear through one animal and kill another within range. I remember one day after we had started across the plains my sisters and I were walking ahead of the wagon when we saw a herd of antelope grazing on a hill

about 300 yards away. We had been told that antelope would not take flight if we would stand still, so we remained motionless while one of us returned to the wagon for father who came with his gun and killed two with one shot.

[The writer is probably comparing powerful rifles, like the Sharps, to the squirrel guns of Kentucky and Tennessee. The latter were accurate but light. Her "slugs" were probably conical bullets; her "bullets" probably rifle balls.]

The wagons were built for great comfort and convenience. In the bed of the wagon were boxes that fitted tight together and were flat on top. These contained bacon, hams, syrup, flour, a keg each of pickles, brandy and lard, also a medicine chest, in fact enough of everything to last for the entire trip. This was necessary as there was no chance to obtain food after leaving the Missouri River until we reached Oregon City, Oregon. The only inhabitants of this vast domain were Indians and herds of buffalo.

On the 15th day of April, 1852, we were all packed and ready to move forward. [Martha's sister, Mary, recalled that the departure from Sweetwater was much earlier in the year, and that "we put up quantities of dried peaches for the trip"



THE HILLS' OLD HOME AT SWEETWATER, TENNESSEE.

during that winter.] I will never forget the last night we spent in Tennessee. Our friends gathered at our home from miles around to bid us good-bye. In those days one room in my father's house was as large as the whole floor space of a modern bungalow. In this room was built an immense fireplace in which, on this particular night, great crackling fires threw a warm glow all over the room and made the light from the tallow candles, which was our only means of lighting, dim by comparison. In one of the rooms, the old folks were visiting, while in another were gathered the young folks, playing such games as drop the handkerchief, and hunt the goose. Our guests did not depart until after midnight—a very unusual thing.

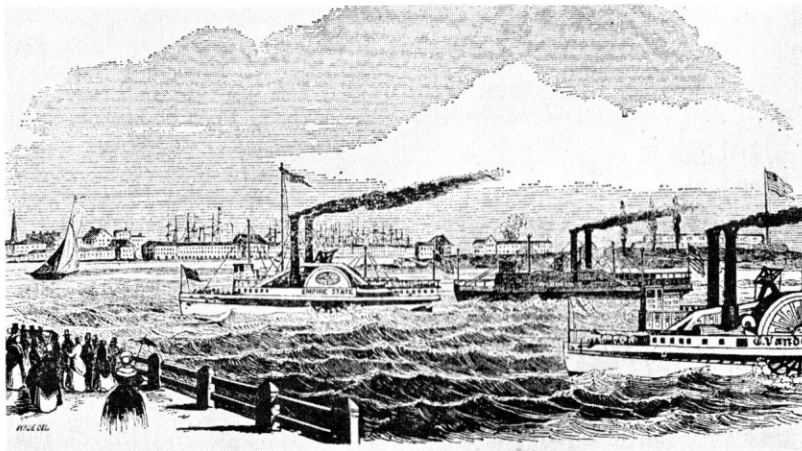
There was not much sleeping done that night, as we had to be up early the next morning to catch a boat on the Tennessee River. This boat took us up to Kingston on the Ohio River where we were transferred to the old *Kate Kearney* bound for St. Louis.

On the Mississippi, as we entered St. Louis, there was a boat race between *Kate Kearney* and a rival boat. A bet was on as to who would get into the harbor first. All the spectators along the shore took sides, and the excitement ran high as we began to gain. In order to make a hotter fire in the steamboat's furnace they threw on bacon. There was one woman on board who was noted for her stinginess but even she became so excited, she forgot the cost of bacon and cried, "Throw on my bacon, throw on my bacon!" Old *Kate Kearney* won the race.

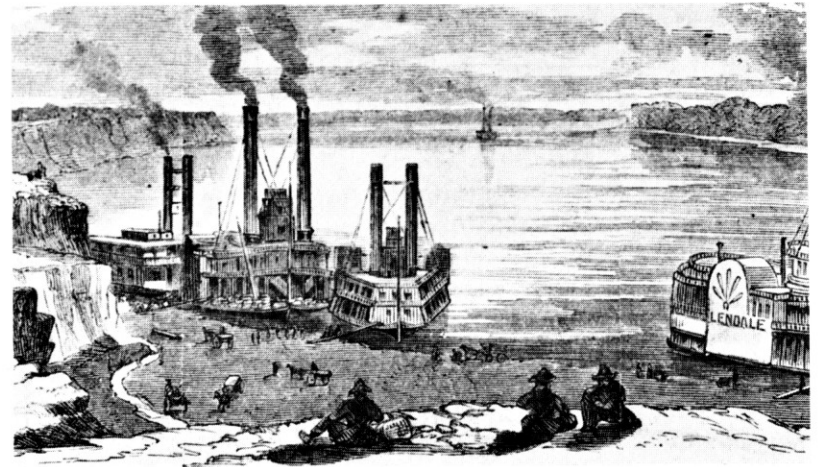
At last, about the first of May, all things were ready there and we started out, with 500 head of cattle, and three wagons, each drawn by four oxen. As my father had made the trip before, hundreds of people from Iowa and Missouri wanted to join his train and promised to meet him at the Missouri River. When we arrived at the river great excitement prevailed, as every one wanted to cross first, but we had registered with the ferryman before, so we were served at once, which caused much anger among the others. One man, a Dutchman, was

going to kill my father because his wagon was removed from the ferry.

The only means of crossing was by two flat row-boats, one long enough to carry two wagons and about thirty people, and the other made with railings and used for the stock. We had the great misfortune here to lose a dear brother. [John.] He had charge of loading the cattle and had made several successful trips across the river, and the boat was loaded for another one. It being about the noon hour, so many men wanted to cross to get their dinner that they jumped on the stock boat already loaded to its capacity and down went the boat, men, stock, and all. The river was a very swift, muddy stream and one had to be an expert swimmer to keep from sinking. As there were no skiffs or small boats of any kind to send to their assistance the only help that could be given them was throwing ropes from the shore as they were only a short distance out when they sunk. All were saved but my brother. We felt we could not leave the place without him. Men were sent for many miles down the river, but after many days of anxious watching and waiting we were compelled to move on. Father left his address with the ferry man, also sent notices to all the Iowa pa-



A STEAMBOAT RACE.



A STEAMBOAT LANDING ON THE MISSISSIPPI.

pers. After more than a year (for all mail had to come around the Horn in sailing vessels) we heard from friends that his body had been found almost 20 miles from the place he went down.

After leaving the Missouri River we traveled through Nebraska, Wyoming, Idaho and about 300 miles into the state of Oregon without meeting any white person, nor seeing one house. We travelled for miles without seeing a tree. Sage brush was plentiful and there were many wild animals. Everywhere we encountered Indians.

One night a little calf strayed away from the rest of the cattle, and next morning my cousin and I volunteered to go back and find it, as we rode on horseback. After about an hour we found the calf, and, in starting back, came to a bridge across a small gulch. At the end of the bridge stood an Indian, and demanded the calf as toll. I was so frightened that I would gladly have given up the calf, but not my cousin. She told the Indian that toll had been paid once by our wagons, and she struck the calf with her whip, and we dashed across the bridge before the astonished Indian could stop us. I soon lost all fear of them as we never made camp without a few of them around. One night

after we struck the Platte river, and had stopped for the night, my uncle was pitching his tent and an old Indian stood directly in the way. Uncle asked him to move but he only gave a big grunt, so as he was delaying things, my uncle pushed him aside. The Indian and his followers jumped on their ponies, dashed away, and were promptly forgotten until later in the evening when we saw about 100 of them coming at full speed across the plains.

Uncle called to father and told him of the incident and father told him the only way to appease them was by gifts. At first the Indians wanted cattle as a peace offering, but at last they went away happy with a few strings of bright beads brought along for that purpose.

We traveled up the Platte River about 300 miles, passing by Chimney Rock and an Indian graveyard. Holes had been dug in the side of the hill large enough to hold each dead body and all his belongings. The body was placed at the back of the hole in a sitting position, and the one I remember even had his hat on, and in front of him were placed his blankets, cooking utensils, bow and arrows, and everything he owned.

About this time the cholera broke out on the west side of Platte River, and to escape it great companies came across to the east side of the river where we were, which almost caused a panic in our train, many begging father to push on without delay; but it was very warm weather and our ox teams were already worked to their limit. Many who were not encumbered with cattle left us and went on. My father had cholera medicine, and sent word throughout his train for all those who had the first symptoms to come to him for help, so he saved many lives. Great difficulty was encountered by those who crossed the Platte, on account of the treacherous quicksands. I remember seeing one family fording across, who had their wagon blocked up about three feet high, and in the middle of the stream the oxen struck the quicksands. If it had not been for the ready aid of men on horseback, the wagon and the family in it would have been pulled into the quicksand.

My mother was the first one in our train to get the cholera. Father took charge of her and warned us to keep away from the wagon where she lay. (No one thought of stopping for sickness), but after a few days she was well again. With the cholera, you were either well or dead in a few days. We saw a young man burying his bride of a few months. He came withing calling distance of our camp, and told father he was leaving behind his wagon well provisioned, also his wife's trunk filled with beautiful clothes, and would father give the things to his girls. Such a longing went up from our hearts for the beautiful things, but my father soon squelched them when he asked us which we wanted, fine clothes or the cholera. Another case was a woman dying lying on some boards in the wagon, and about a mile ahead we saw men digging her grave. I am sure she could not have been dead but a short time when she too was left behind in an unmarked grave. Another time we saw a man lying under some willow trees. Father called to him asking if he could help him and the poor fellow pleaded so to be taken along that our hearts were wrung, but we could not take him as it would endanger the whole train. He was left there to die alone. There was extreme need of pushing on, as the train must stay together for fear of Indian attacks, but the cholera proved a protection to us, and we saw no more Indians while we stayed on the Platte River.

Every day about an hour before camping time men were sent ahead on horseback to select a good spot for night quarters. Feed for the stock was the main thing to be considered. When we arrived, the cattle were put out to feed on the grass until dark, then they were brought in and placed in a temporary corral made of the wagons placed close together, the tongue of each wagon run under the bed of the wagon nearest it until about 100 wagons were placed together, in this way making a round corral. The stove my father had made to cook on was about 4 feet long, with tin reflectors for baking on each side of it. All the dishes used for the table and for cooking were of tin, as breakable dishes were out of the question. Rough



roads soon made short work of crockery. My mother thought she could not drink water from a tin cup, so she started out with a glass, but the wagon wheels ran into deep chuck holes and it was soon broken. One time as camp was being made, I heard a woman say, as my mother climbed down from the wagon with her glass in her hand: "Just look at Mrs. Hill, she looks as if she had just stepped out of a band box, even to her clean handkerchief tucked in her belt."

The fuel we used for cooking was "buffalo chips" and it was most surprising that there was neither odor nor smoke from them, but they made a very hot fire.

Each of us had our regular work to do. My sister Mary always made the biscuits, filling great baking pans made to fit the reflector. My father had a place fixed in the back of the wagon with everything convenient for making bread, but it was no small task to bake bread for 15 people three times a day. I did all the cooking on the stove and tended the fires. Our meals consisted of ham or bacon, rice or beans, bread and butter and fruit. We had brought hundreds of pounds of dried fruit, and each meal I cooked great quantities of it, which was eagerly devoured by the men. Canned goods of any kind at



THE FIRST EVENING ON THE TRAIL.

that time were a thing unknown. Father had a churn built in the back of the wagon and each night and morning we placed the richest of the milk from the cows in this churn, and as we jogged along the motion of the wagon made the butter. My youngest sister Hasselton set the tables and brought the water. We went through this routine every day for months and months, the only difference being that we had cold biscuits for lunch. And here I would like to say that not one word of complaint did I hear from anyone the whole length of the long trip. When we started from home father had a man hired to do the cooking, but he was so dirty and wasteful that we girls had to take things into our own hands. We had never done such work before as we were just out of school, but it shows what one can do when necessity calls. I think often, what a manager my father must have been. Deprived by drowning of his oldest son, how he and my youngest brother Cicero, worked to keep things moving.

After we left the Platte River, we traveled over beautiful country and it seemed to put new life into the whole train of people. There were little streams of water running everywhere and plenty of grass for the stock. We went through this country of valleys and hills until we came to the Big Horn Mountains where we encountered real hardships. [Martha was far from George Custer's Bighorns—probably she was referring to the Black Hills of the Laramie Mountains, not the Black Hills of Dakota.] One place we were out of water and had to travel all night. Hundreds of wagons were ahead of us and had worn chuck holes in the bad narrow road. The only way we could travel this night was for men to go on ahead with lanterns. When they came to a bad place they would call out "chuck hole," and then the driver would hold the head of the oxen so they would go slowly and let the wagon pass over the bad place as easily as possible. It was with great discomfort that we kept our places in the wagons at all. It would have gone badly with us if we had fallen out, to roll down the mountain side or be trodden under the feet of the oxen; much of the time it was so