

MEMOIRS OF A FORTY-NINER

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Memoirs of a forty-niner by John Evans Brown & Katie E. Blood

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JOHN EVANS BROWN & KATIE E. BLOOD

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of a
Forty-niner**

by John E. Brown

BY HIS DAUGHTER
MRS. KATIE E. BLOOD
PARKERSBURG, W. VA.



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Journey Across the Plains to the Pacific

MARCH 15, 1849. Our final arrangements were made yesterday, and all were ready this morning to start on our long trip to California. Our families and friends watch us from the Court House, as we wend our way down the hill towards the river, and at the last bend we wave our last adieu to our loved ones. The day is rather cold with threatening clouds, and with heavy hearts and feverish hopes, we ride on. Our party is small, but many will join on our way and at Independence, hundreds will be on the trail.

Our company consists of Thomas S. Lowry, Jarius Palmer, John Roberts, James Reynolds and Henry A. Wood. I ride my bay horse, two others ride, and two drive in waggons, which carry provisions and clothes, and such things as we need.

We travelled sixteen miles to Weaver on French Broad River, arriving in a very hard rain, and it was with difficulty that arrangements were made for the night. Roberts and myself slept in one waggon while the rest were kindly furnished with a comfortable bed in the house. This evening I was initiated into the mysteries of washing dishes. I fancied I did the thing up "brown."

March 16th. The next day the rain stopped and we left camp and travelled as far as Bartlett's, twenty-three miles, when the waggon broke down and had to be repaired. Wood and I walked over the bridge to the Warm Springs and I was surprised to find the water quite warm. The Warm Springs are situated in a healthy and romantic valley of the French Broad River, and are owned by Thos. Patton, Esq., who has fitted up an extensive establishment for the accommodation of invalids, who are generally restored to their wanted health by the medicinal waters.

The next day we left Bartlett's at seven o'clock and drove to McMa-

honey over very bad roads. The day was very wet and we were put to our wit's end in setting our tent and cooking supper in the rain. Reynolds was taken quite sick but soon recovered. The falling of the rain was dreary, and our thoughts wander back to those sitting around the home fire. Drove twenty-three miles today.

March 18th, Sunday. Early this morning, we broke camp and drove to Miller's. The roads were very muddy and fatigued our horses more so this day than any preceding one. Passed through a fine country, some highly cultivated. Crossed French Broad River for the last time at Hayes Ferry. Drove twenty-three miles.

The next day, we drove all day, arriving by night at Dr. Ramsey's at the Junction of French Broad and Holsten Rivers, where they form the Tennessee. We were kindly furnished with rooms by the Doctor and treated with the greatest kindness. The roads are muddy and with difficulty did we drive twenty-four miles.

Late Tuesday morning we broke camp, cooking breakfast being intrusted to the most skillful, as the rain caused the fire to smoke. The coffee was good, but the bread was poor. The oven will not heat well and put us once more to our wit's end, but we arrived in Knoxville at night. We intend to remain until some arrangement can be effected to take the Company by water. I sold my horse to Col. John Davis for Forty-four Dollars in gold and made my arrangements to go by water in a flat boat to St. Louis, while the Company are determined to go by steamboat.

All day Wednesday we remained in Knoxville endeavoring to sell the waggon and horses, finally succeeding in disposing of Roberts' horse, the Company remaining in the house fiddling away the time. On Thursday we divided in shares our equipment, my share being a horse, bridle and saddle, which I immediately sold for Fifty Dollars. I then went on board

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of boat, "Sam Martin." I formed a mess with Haines, Mason and Atkinson, of Jonesboro, East Tennessee. There are other young men on board bound for California. One Hundred and Nine miles from home.

March 23rd. Friday. Our boat has been running down stream at the rate of fifteen miles an hour. The country is beautiful,—not as level as I had anticipated, only small flat pieces of land along the shore. The boat is quite crowded, chiefly men with the gold fever.

Arrived in Chattanooga early Saturday morning and went on shore in hopes of seeing Thomas Durin, but was disappointed. While the steamer is loading, many passengers walk into town to stretch their legs and are hurried back by the steamer's whistle, signalling her intention to leave the wharf. We made a fine run but "Cassindra" outstripped us.

On Sunday morning we arrived at Whitesburg, and I was agreeably surprised to find my friend, Thomas Durin where he was preparing to leave for home. With much regret, I bade him farewell and I could not but shed a tear as he was the last of the family I would see. How many thousands of miles I shall travel before seeing those dear faces again.

We reached Decatur having made a steady run of fifteen miles an hour. We were there compelled to take cars on railroad drawn by horses. Some Companies have their horses on board, so they go with them. After much dickering and confusion, we leave Decatur and travel at the rate of six miles an hour. The railroad is very slow after the drifting of the steamboat. We arrived at Tusculumbia, a beautiful place. It has many advantages of making a large business city. We put up for the night at the Franklin House. The Landlord is accommodating. We spend Tuesday in Tusculumbia, awaiting the arrival of a boat to carry us to the mouth of Tennessee River. The boat does not come until three o'clock

Wednesday. On Thursday, we left on the steamboat, "Courtland," a beautiful boat equal in size and accommodation to any eastern boat. The officers are very gentlemanly, and the fare is as good as any I ever knew on board a boat. The landing is one of the most picturesque places I ever saw and the immense warehouse is not surpassed by anything in the world. It is built on the point of hill and is a very durable building. I lost Ten Dollars in gold this evening.

March 30th. Friday. Made but little distance at first, owing to the great quantity of cotton on board. There was much gambling on board. The country through which we passed was very fine, but unimproved. The rich river bottoms are much neglected, perhaps because of their liability to overflow, the banks being quite low.

Saturday, we gently sail on. March went out very pleasantly indeed. With but four exceptions we have had fine weather to travel in. The boat took in two hundred tons of pig metal from the furnace of Stackal. I walked about two miles to the place, and I was surprised to find the richest kind of fossil ore, and quite convenient. This makes a very fine metal.

Sunday, April 1st. A beautiful day but a little cold, fires being quite comfortable. We were running at the rate of fifteen miles an hour, while the water was nearly over the guard. Reaching Paducah as a boat from Cincinnati was coming in, I immediately, on her landing, engaged passage for all of our men, Ne Plus Ultra, at \$3.50 to St. Louis. There are nearly one hundred and fifty persons from Boston on board, who are bound for California.

The next morning we awoke to find ourselves at the wharf in St. Louis. After dressing and breakfasting, I set out with Stover and Harris to find lodgings, which we succeeded in getting after a great

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length of time, at the United States Hotel, a very good house. In the afternoon, we visited the United States Arsenal and bought knives and carbines for our journey. We need these to protect ourselves and for procuring food. In the evening we went to the circus, and saw Dan Rice perform the clown in a very creditable manner. The enclosure was crowded, and seemed the resort for those awaiting the making up of parties to go West.

Wednesday was a wet day, raining very hard. I remained in my room and wrote letters and otherwise busied myself with mending in preparation for a long journey, it being quite restful.

On Thursday, Harris & self started out and made our purchases of equipment, but did not finish. Tomorrow, we must try again. In the afternoon, we went out to the finest portion of the city, and were much disappointed in finding everything in a filthy condition. No care is taken of streets or buildings. Everyone is on a run, and scarcely turns around to observe a fine building. Much fever is exhibited, and interest in the emigrants who purchase fire arms, etc.. I was delighted on Friday, when Mason very unexpectedly dropped into our rooms having arrived the night before at midnight.

I had my daguerreotype taken to put in a gold locket to send home to my sister Elizabeth.

On Saturday, we bought the rest of the articles needed for the journey. I have packed them in leather cases, tying the ends together, and we rolled the blankets in three bundles. We expect to cook out doors and sleep in waggons. I have a swinging bed and hope to be comfortable at night. We form mess with Dr. Stone and Wm. Taylor on equal shares. Taylor will come up the river in a few days, and soon our travels will commence in real earnest, as we have arranged our watches. All is work and excitement and proving ourselves men,

leaving family and friends to go amongst the wilds. Who can tell which or how many will fall by disease, an Indian arrow or the several dangers that will beset our path, but to the West we have set our faces, and to the West we go. We have agreed with the clerk of boat "Embassy" to carry us to Independence for Seven Dollars, each.

Sunday, April 8th. I went to church and heard the Rev. Mr. Lyon preach at the Westminster Church, and enjoyed it very much. He is a very able minister. In the afternoon, we walked out to the camp of Buncombe (N. C.) boys, and on to the Camp Spring (Tennessee), where we found many people collected to have a dance. The band was playing and all was bright and gay. We watched them dance one waltz and then left the wretched place. St. Louis is a wicked place, there appears to be no control over any young man who whoops and halloos on the streets on Sunday to his heart's content. St. Louis is increasing rapidly in population and bad morals.

Monday was wet but we went on board steamboat bound for St. Joseph. The boat is new but badly managed, the crew very unaccommodating, and there is much grumbling amongst the passengers. It was with difficulty that our luggage was put on board in the hard rain.

Left St. Louis about sunset and passed up the river about twenty miles where we land to await daylight, when we again go slowly up the river. The boat is crowded with emigrants, which makes it very unpleasant. All are looking into the future, and many are thinking of the great hardships to be endured together.

The next morning, Tuesday, many complain of sickness and giddiness. Cholera has broken out and has caused great excitement. There were two cases, one being very ill, and on Thursday, one young man of the Virginia Company died. So full of

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bright hopes never to be realized, but buried. At dark, we stopped at a wood yard to bury the dead. A beautiful green spot high on the hill between two small budding trees, was selected to bury the poor fellow. Amongst strangers he died, and in a strange country we buried him. Quite a gloom was cast over us as the funeral services of the Episcopal Church were read. As we hear the impressive words, greatly are we impressed.

Friday morning, we passed Jefferson City, the capital of Missouri. It has not a thriving appearance, although a very westerly town. Neither is it as large as I anticipated. The Capitol stands on an eminence near the river's edge and is a very fine building. Being built of stone with single palisades, it has more the appearance of strength and durability, rather than beauty. We also passed Boonville, the intermediate point of the land route to Independence.

The sick seem better and the excitement and dread of cholera is subsiding.

The nights are cool, and on Friday night it was very cold. In the morning, all on board were complaining of bad colds. In the midst of complaints, arose cries of alarm of fire. The stove which was red hot and heating to its utmost, fell over, and the men with great presence of mind threw water and wet blankets on it and thus extinguished the fire and saved the boat. I am not very well.

On Saturday afternoon, the piston of the engine broke, which caused a delay for repairs of three hours.

Sunday, April 15th. Just one month since I left home, and how many things have I seen, how many strange faces, and how my thoughts wander back to home and all that the word means—so much that is dear. Alas! my face is turned to the West, and Fate, sad Fate pushes me along, almost imperceptibly, to wealth or an untimely death among strangers, and perhaps an inveterate foe in the per-

son of an Indian. How thankful should we be that Providence has allowed us to live this long. An unprofitable life it has been, but we can turn to His holy word and find peace for the troubled soul. Many passengers forget the beautiful Sabbath and are drinking with noise as if they were not accountable beings. We passed a beautiful prairie this morning, which was dotted here and there with a little white shanty, the home of a western pioneer.

On Monday, we went at a good rate and passed a small town named Brownsville. Tuesday, we arrived at Independence, landing in the morning, and we were the whole day in getting out our goods, and making camp on the brink of the river. Cooking supper seemed quite a difficult matter and night found us very tired. I spent a very uncomfortable night, but one watch was kept as thieves are the only expected visitors.

On Wednesday, we moved our camp one-half a mile beyond town by the Santa Fe road. Our waggons looked very trim and the mules in fine condition. My horse has been feeling fine for the long rest. I went into Independence in the afternoon and found it a great place of business. It is the trading-place of the Mexicans and hunters, who meet here every Spring and exchange their wares, and purchase goods. The town is full of waggon shops and from these is done a great business, and I am told much money is made. The town has a population of fifteen hundred people. Independence is to be our starting point and we will spend a week in preparing to make our journey. We formed our company and framed our Constitution. Stone, Taylor, Harris and myself agreed to furnish Atkinson with an outfit. We bought eight mules at Sixty Dollars each and were much pleased with our bargain. The mules were broke to harness every day, affording us much amusement as on-lookers. They are very stubborn

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and it seems a question which two would pull together. Finally they mate, but not so the four. Each waggon is drawn by four mules. The forward ones kick the back couple and cause great commotion. This delay is annoying.

The waggons have been overhauled and flour bought and packed. We await here until Wednesday.

May 2nd. All was in readiness to start. I rode my horse most of the day, but took my turn at the four-in-hand late in the afternoon, driving six miles to Rice's where corn was bought. It is a most beautiful and fertile country. For miles around as far as the eye can reach over the plains, is a waving mass of green, dotted here and there with ploughed fields and cottages,—a beautiful sight for man to behold.

We remained in our comfortable camp all day Thursday, doing little jobs and quite enjoying the camp life. We take turns in caring for the stock and cooking, and at night each unroll their blankets, the waggons are placed on each side of the fire, and the mules are tied together, three feet apart. Only one man keeps a four-hour watch during the night.

We expected to start on Friday, but awoke to find our camp almost deluged in water by the night's rain. The rain continued and rendered the cooking of breakfast and duties most difficult and disagreeable.

We settled with the Treasurer, and found that each man's share is \$186.66, the whole outfit costing \$1120.00.

On Saturday, I went with Taylor to town and bought several things. Received several letters, one from James Potter, of Penna. I became very unwell, caused from eating a very hearty dinner in town. The premonitory symptoms of cholera made their appearance, so Dr. Stone gave me a great quantity of laudanum, but without good results.

I felt better on Monday, but much alarmed, as there have been six

deaths in surrounding camps from cholera. The dread disease has surely taken a lodgment, and all thoughts are turned to checking it in camps.

The next day I felt better, so we broke camp and drove three miles, where we waited until Taylor drove up with the other waggons. I am unable to do anything, but the Doctor thinks I will get well with due care, but I feel very weak.

When Taylor came, we drove three miles to a beautiful spring where we set camp, and we remained until all was ready to start. These many delays are annoying.

On Friday, May 10th, we struck camp and drove three miles to Little Blue, where we again sat down to wait until Saturday for Means and Wilson. I rode about two miles. I bought a Comanche pony for \$60.00 in order that one might ride her.

On Saturday, Taylor and Harris went to Independence in the morning to purchase articles and get our letters, as this was the last chance of receiving any until we reach the mine. I sent by Taylor many letters, and he returned in the evening with a number from home.

The Buncombe Co., the Carson Co. and the Wilson Co. passed this evening, and we followed them in the early morning.

Sunday, May 12th. We rose very early this morning and found Taylor very sick. We regret breaking camp and following train, while Taylor is in this condition. Reynolds, of Buncombe was also taken ill with cholera, and we fear he is very ill.

Tuesday, May 14th. We made an early start in a very heavy rainstorm, and when out a mile, the tongue of my waggon was broken through by the stubbornness of the mules, and we were compelled to unhitch and make a new tongue, but caught up with the camp at night. Taylor is very ill with the cholera. I began to feel very unwell in the evening so Sunday we remained in camp as so many