

NARRATIVE OF JAMES SWEENEY.*

I was born in County Sligo, Ireland, in 1838, came to America in 1846, landed in New York. In May, 1855, I enlisted in the 5th U. S. Infantry, at Rochester, was sent to Governors Island, N. Y., where I remained about one month, was then ordered to Corpus Christi, and from there to Ringgold, Texas, where I joined my regiment.

In the Winter of '55, we were ordered up the Nueces River after Apache Indians, who had been causing trouble with the Piutes and some white settlers. There were in the command three companies of the 5th Infantry and three companies of the mounted troops. We got between Eagle Pass and San Antonio, but did not succeed in coming up with the Indians. They had traveled Northwest to avoid the troops. We spent three months there then returned to Ringgold, where we remained through the Summer of '56. That Fall the 5th Infantry was sent to Florida. Part landed at Tampa. I was with the balance, under command of Lieutenant Colonel Wade. We landed at Fort Myers. We were sent to clean up the Seminole Indians, who had been causing depredations and threatening settlers. We were sent up into the cypress swamps and everglades, where we remained eight months hunting Indians. We had numerous small engagements, mostly bushwhacking.

We had one fight at Beily'd Garden, under Lieutenant Wingate, and Lieutenant Archer, where we surrounded the Indians, about two hundred. We killed between seventy and eighty. The rest escaped. Our loss was four men killed, and two wounded. We attacked the Indians at Palm Hommock, where we lost three men. We then started to return to Fort Myers, following an old Indian trail. This led us to where the Indians had concealed their squaws, children and old men. We surrounded the camp and captured sixty squaws, nine old men, and many children, all of whom were taken to Fort Myers. Captain Pratt, 4th Artillery, and Lieutenant A. P. Hill were in command.

Our troops went with General Harney from Fort Myers to Key West by boat and then returned to Fort Myers, where the Indians surrendered to General Harney.

* This narrative was written by J. Ross Mackenzie, M. D., as related to him by James Sweeney, now living at Carrington, Foster County, North Dakota, where he located in the Spring of 1883, and has resided continuously, respected by all who know him, for his rugged character and sterling honesty. By his industry, he has acquired, and now in his declining years, enjoys an independent competency. He traversed much of the Northwest in the days of placer mining.

The Government was preparing to send the Indians to the Creek country, when General Harney was ordered to Utah, taking the 5th Infantry with him. We were in New Orleans four days and were then sent to Jefferson Barracks, where we remained ten days. From there we were shipped to Fort Leavenworth where we remained two weeks and then took up our line of march for Salt Lake. When we reached Fort Kearney, we stopped for orders. Then we renewed our march, but stopped one day at Laramie. Winter overtook us at Ham's Fork, on the Green River and we went into Winter quarters.

I should mention here that after I enlisted and had joined my regiment, the boys always called me "Bill" instead of my proper name "James" or "Jim" and during my army life, and afterwards in the west, I was known as Bill Sweeney, as many had known me in the army.

The Mormons having burned all the grass, our mules all died. In order to move the Army in the Spring, it was necessary to procure mules and for this purpose Captain Marcey, was sent with a detachment of men to New Mexico. This detachment was made up from the 5th and 10th Infantry, with some civilians attached to the army. I was one of this detachment.

While I was on guard duty at Fort Bridger, four of us stole one hundred pounds of flour. We also bought ten pounds of sugar and six pounds of coffee of the Sutler, which we divided and took with us. When we started, Tim Goodale and Jim Baker, two squaw men, with their squaws, were our guides. They got lost when we were about the head of Bitter Creek and, instead of crossing the Rockies, they kept on the West side and got lost in the snow. In consequence our mules commenced to die. Then Mariana, a Mexican, told Captain Marcey we were lost. Captain Marcey put him in charge as guide. We crossed the rockies. It took us five days to do so. By this time most of our mules were played out, and our grub was gone. We were compelled to live on mule meat. It was our main diet for seventeen days. We even ate old "Billy", a pack mule about forty years old, who would always break out of the pack train, and follow Captain Marcey's mare. During the time we were getting through the snow, it was so deep that it was necessary for the men in turn, to go ahead of the mules to break a trail. In this the four of us who had the flour, sugar and coffee, were called on more often than the rest as we were better nourished and stronger than the other men, excepting Corporal McLeod, of the

10th Infantry who was a very powerful man, and had wonderful endurance.

One night, soon after we got out of the snow, we were camped by a small stream. It was very cold. Some of the men perished from starvation and exposure. Captain Marcey was standing by a camp fire shivering when I went up and told him if he would come over to our camp fire he would be more comfortable. He did so, and when he got there I gave him a cup of coffee and a biscuit. He asked where I got it. I told him we stole it from one of the wagons and that was the reason we were stronger than the rest. He laughed, but after that every morning and night he got his coffee and biscuit. The guides were still uncertain as to where we were. We struggled on for several days, until one day about noon, we came to a small stream. Mariana came and told the Captain that he thought he knew where we were but was not sure until he would go to see an aspen grove that he thought he had seen twenty years before. When he returned he said he was all right, that we were one hundred and twenty miles from Fort Garland, New Mexico. The Captain then told him to take his (the Captain's) mare, and go to Fort Garland, or as far as the mare would carry him, to remove the saddle, turn the mare loose and proceed on foot.

From the time he left us, he returned in four days, bringing two ambulances, a Doctor, some mules and provisions. We remained there two days when teams came out and took us to Fort Garland. When we got in they had put up tents on the parade grounds for us. Captain Marcey objected to putting his men in tents, and demanded the best quarters in the post. They vacated two barracks, which we occupied. Captain Marcey went on to old Mexico, and purchased a lot of mules, we remained at Fort Garland until March, 1858.

We then started back, being reinforced by three companies under the command of Colonel Loring, and three companies of the third and seventh infantry, under Colonel Morris. When we arrived at Cherry Creek, where Denver is now located, we met about forty miners, prospecting under Old Denver, and a man named Gregory. The Colonel supplied them with provisions to last them two months. We continued our march down Cherry Creek to its junction with the South Platte. The water was high and we had to build a ferry-boat which delayed us some time. This was sometime in May '58. We then resumed our march. When we reached the Green River, it was in flood. We there received word from Fort Bridger, that they had only three days' provisions left. We put

heavy lines across the river and made a pontoon bridge out of our wagon boxes. Then, with two eight mule teams, we got provisions across by hand and by swimming the mules and started the provisions for Fort Bridger. We took all our supplies across the improvised pontoon bridge and moved sixty miles to the fort. The reason the army at Fort Bridger was short of provisions was that the Mormons had captured two supply trains and burned them before the cavalry got up.

We remained at Fort Bridger about three days and then started for Salt Lake under the command of General Albert Sidney Johnston. When we reached Salt Lake, we formed a line in front of Governor Cummings' headquarters and he requested General Johnston to move the troops out of town three miles across the Jordan River. General Johnston disliked to do so and I heard him say that he would give his plantation for the chance to bombard the City for fifteen minutes, but he complied with the request of the civil authorities, and moved the troops out of the city. This was in June 1858. We stayed in Salt Lake two days and then went into Camp Floyd, about forty miles distant. There we built adobe quarters.

We had six Mormon prisoners, among them Bishop Kerns, charged with murder. They were tried before Supreme Judge Cradlebaugh, who was intimidated by the Mormons, and the prisoners were acquitted. Three companies of cavalry and one company of artillery were sent at his request as the Mormons were threatening to release the prisoners.

Three companies of the 2nd Cavalry were sent to investigate the Mountain Meadow Massacre and found the wagons. The emigrants had dug a well to get water and, after the Mormons had killed them, their bodies were thrown into the well. Babies were killed by beating their heads on the wagon wheels, the wheels being covered with blood.

After the troops returned they were ordered out to protect the emigrants going through to California and went up the Bear River, where Corrine is now. The cavalry was busy picking up emigrants who had escaped the Massacre. All the stock had disappeared and no trace of them could be found. They brought into camp eight or nine people, among them a Mr. Hill, his wife and two children, who were found at the sink of the Humbolt River, by cavalry under the command of Lieutenant Marmaduke. We were then ordered back to Camp Floyd. The Government had a reserve at Rush Valley,

where stock was kept in pasture and hay made. Sargeant Pike of the 10th Infantry was in charge of twenty men. The Mormons were stealing hay. Sargeant Pike caught a Mormon stealing and they got into a fight. The Sargeant getting the best of the Mormon, hit him with his gun. The Mormons swore out a warrant of arrest against Sargeant Pike. He was taken to Salt Lake for trial. While under arrest, a man stepped up behind the Sargeant and shot him. He later died of the wound. The assassin escaped, but was later identified, tried and hanged in Salt Lake for the crime. We remained in camp for the Winter, I secured my discharge from the army, from General Johnston, in the Spring of '60, my time not being up for a month.

I went out with a party to Fort Laramie. We got provisions for twenty days. When we reached Chimney Rock, we found about sixty emigrants, with wagons. The Sioux were stealing their supplies. We got between two bands of Indians and captured five bucks and two squaws. We sent word to the main band of Indians, who were camped on the North side of the Platte River, that we would hang the prisoners if they did not return the stolen property. They returned the stolen property. We then escorted the emigrants back to Fort Laramie and turned them over to Captain Starr. We returned to Chimney Rock and then went to Lone Tree Crossing, now Julesburg, on the South Platte. Then we started for Cherry Creek, now Denver. There was a log cabin there built by prospectors. I stayed there two months, holding down city lots. I there met Denver, Gregory, Jack Wilson, Dick Todd. I got two lots and traded them to a Missourian for two yoke of cattle and a wagon. I purchased flour, bacon, beans and other supplies and started for Gold Run and Buffalo Flats, to prospect. I found some diggings in both places and remained there two years 1861-62. I then returned to Denver, where I joined a party of about forty men organized to go to the Salmon River, Idaho. We got along without any trouble until we reached the Snake River, where we had to calk our wagon boxes and ferry our outfit across. Sometime after crossing the Snake River, we were attacked by the Bannock Indians and had to fight them off for thirteen days, until we reached Grasshopper Creek, where we found some diggings and we built a stone fort close by.

We worked the bar in partnership and took out about ten thousand dollars worth of gold in ten days. Half of the party then went to Salt Lake for supplies; the balance continued mining. After

our party returned, men came from Boise, and Oro Fino, and by Winter there were over three hundred men in camp. A herd of cattle was brought in from Idaho to be slaughtered, during the Winter. The Bannock Indians came in for offal. We killed most of them. They had caused us so much trouble that we showed them no mercy.

In May, 1863, I left my partner, Duffy, to run the diggings and with George Orr, Bill Fairweather, Charles Edgar, Cover, Harry Rogers, and Barney Hughes, we started prospecting towards the headwaters of the Snake River. We found gold but not in paying quantities. Then we got into what is now the Yellowstone National Park, but we called it "The Geysers." One morning at daylight, the Indians surprised us and stampeded all our horses but one and got away, leaving us on foot. We burned everything excepting what we could pack and headed back for Bannock. About the sixth day we camped on a little stream that runs into Alder Gulch. We named the place Alder Gulch, because alder brush grew along the stream. We stopped to get dinner. While Fairweather and Hughes were making bread, I said to Harry Rogers: "There is a bar across the creek. Let us go and prospect." We did so and worked about ten minutes and found gold. I took a pan down to the creek and got about a dollar and a half. We panned there and got about twenty seven dollars. I brought the gold in the pan to where the boys were getting dinner. They did not believe me but, when they saw the gold, they all went over to the bar. Hughes took the pan and the first pan was three dollars. Several pans varied from one to three dollars. We were then satisfied that we had good diggings. After dinner, which was the last meal we had before reaching Bannock, seventy miles away, we started for Bannock. It took us a day and a half to get there.

We rested two days, picked up our friends and started back horseback, forty men in the party. When within twenty miles of the diggings, we camped and elected a court and drew up a code of laws to govern the camp. The court was composed of Bill Fairweather, Judge, and Charles Edgar, Recorder. Then an agreement was made that the discoverers were to have two days, in which to select their claims of two hundred feet fronting on the stream, the others after that, to select claims of one hundred feet fronting on the stream. The agreement was kept, Harry Rogers and myself took the claims where we had discovered the gold. The next meeting was held two or three days after reaching the diggings. The same

officers were elected. The purpose of this meeting was to frame a code of laws for the government of the camp and provide how a claim was to be held. 1st. A man had to work his claim at least five days a week. 2nd. The District (the discovery district) was to be three miles up and down the gulch, following the creek. There were two other districts adjoining, called the Highland and the Summit districts. The claims in these districts were one hundred feet, and a person could take up a claim in these districts, even if he had a claim in another district.

In the Fall there were more than a thousand men in the Gulch, which was a paying placer, thirteen miles long. Every claim was good for from five to fifty thousand dollars. Business places grew rapidly, principally saloons and gambling places; many rough and lawless men came in, among others Henry Plummer, who was elected sheriff, and who was afterward proved to be the leader of the robbers and road agents. He was unsuspected at first but continual robbery of miners going out with gold and the frequent robbery of the stage, the movement of which Plummer was perfectly familiar with and the seizure of some of his letters, caused suspicion to rest on him.

One day in the latter part of 1863, I went into Charles Wright's saloon, in Nevada, while on my way to Bevans Gulch. I had fifteen hundred dollars intended for a man named Fogerty, with which to buy a claim. While in the saloon, Wright asked me where I was going. I told him and also stated I had fifteen hundred dollars for Fogerty. I called up George Ives, and Buck Stinson to have a drink and bought a bottle for the journey, and started. I was riding a slow old pack horse and when out about four miles, or so, I saw Ives and Stinson following me. I of course knew them and their reputation. As they overtook me I drew to one side, so they would both be on my left side. When they came up they opened up the conversation, and asked me to have a drink. I was suspicious, but took the drink, watching them all the time, but they made no move. About this time a man appeared behind, driving two mules. Stinson said: "George here comes the man we are looking for." They rode off in the direction of the man. In about an hour and a half they overtook me. They were laughing and Ives said: "We got five hundred from that fellow. Tell all the boys to come down to Charley Wright's saloon and we will have a good time tonight."

I later learned that the man they met was a German, named Nicholas T'balt. They killed him and concealed his body. The rob-

beries and murders were so numerous that the people organized themselves into a committee of safety in 1863. The organizers were Saunders, Foust, Clark, and others. They organized all the miners. I did not belong to the vigilantes as I was out prospecting most of the time and did not know when I might run across any of the outlaws and dared not take a chance.

The most prominent men in Virginia City, at this time were W. F. Saunders, Judge Stuart, Harry O'Connor, John Haeffner and Charles Brown.

The Vigilantes, after the murder of T'alt, captured George Ives, a road agent and one of Plummer's deputies. He was given a trial and hanged in Virginia City in December, 1863. The Vigilantes knew all of the outlaws as some one of them had confessed. After Ives was hanged the Vigilantes captured Plummer, Buck Stinson, and Ned Ray and hanged them. Then they captured and hanged Hayes Lyons, George Lane, who was called "Club Foot George," Jack Gallagher, Parish, and Bone Helm. All were executed in Virginia City, sometime, I think, in January, 1864.

I knew Dan McFadden, known as "Bummer Dan." He was a character in the camp. He was a simple fellow and rather lazy. He got hold of a claim which proved to be rich. One time after a clean-up, he started with his gold for Salt Lake, but was held up by the road agents, who robbed him of all his gold. He cried and they gave him back about one hundred dollars. He got hold of another claim and went to work again, making some money. He got his name from his habit of bumming things, especially meals. He was not considered much of a miner and was looked on with more or less pity.

Johny Grant was a Scotch half-breed who lived at Deer Lodge. He was a fine man in every way, a great horse-trader and traded some with the Indians. The Grants were a numerous family. One of the girls was married to Captain Higgins, of Bitterroot. Another girl married McLaren, an Indian trader, who lived at Jaco Valley, above Missoula. Most of the Grants later moved to Canada.

I also knew "Baron" O'Keefe. He was a comical character, a farmer, living at Frenchtown, below Missoula. He used to sell vegetables to the miners. Johny Lynch, John McDermott, and myself attended his wedding and I afterwards visited him and his wife at their "Castle" in Frenchtown. There was a lawyer by the name of Jim Brown, who wanted to be County Commissioner, but he

was not liked by the boys, so they ran "Baron" O'Keefe, against him and the "Baron" was elected.

In 1868, I joined a party of eighteen or twenty men. We started from Walla Walla north through the Yakima country, on an expedition, looking for gold. We were not successful. We crossed over to Victoria, then back to the main land in British Columbia. We followed up the north side of the Fraser river for about four hundred miles. I met Angus Cameron in the Cariboo country, where I remained about two months mining, I did not get any diggings, but made a little money, I then returned to Victoria and from there went to Seattle, then on to Portland. I had but twenty-five cents when I reached there. I bought lodging from Mrs. McCaff, whom I knew six years before in Boise. I stayed in Portland three days. I got some money from Joe Riley, whom I knew in Alder Gulch, where I helped him get a claim. I then met a man named Mike Sheridan, who had some blasting to do in the Cascades. He hired me to do it. I worked there two months. Then I went to Walla Walla. There I got a riding and a pack horse, and went to Orofino, Idaho, and went to placer mining.

After leaving Montana, I went to Salt Lake and mined in Bingham Canyon, thirty six miles from Salt Lake. I remained there two years. I then went to Cheyenne, Wyoming, then started for Custer Creek, in the Black Hills. From there I went to Deadwood, then over to Iron Gulch, where I whipsawed lumber for sluice boxes. I then went to Sand Creek, where I mined and made about six thousand dollars in eight weeks. I then went to Cheyenne and bought eight mules and two wagons and began freighting between Cheyenne, Sydney, Neb., and Deadwood. I was engaged in freighting about two years. Then I moved down to Colorado Springs and hauled freight into Leadville. Then I started for Washington through Montana, but after reaching Montana on my way I remained in Montana, where I freighted from Dillon to Butte, Boseman and Missoula, whenever I could get any freight to haul. I continued to freight in Montana, until 1883 when I came overland with wagons and mules to Foster County, North Dakota, where I took up government land and still own a section of farm land, northwest of Carrington.

JAMES SWEENEY.

Carrington, North Dakota, June 1st, 1921.