

IDAHO PIONEER OF 1864*

It is not my intention to tell you any blood curdling stories that happened, or are said to have happened in the days of Idaho's history. Too much has already been written that in a way has stained the early reputation of the state.

The country was new, wild and promising. Those conditions could not help but attract some of that part of humanity who delight in recklessness, chance and crime, and occasionally tragic events happened that have furnished material for the stories associated with the early days of Idaho but the rank and file of the people have always been such as had the highest regard for law and order and whose ideal was to see the state the magnificent commonwealth she is today.

Our party came into Idaho 59 years ago last September, by the old '49 emigrant road, somewhere near where the town of Soda Springs is today.

The day we crossed over from Wyoming was bleak and windy, the country desolate and drear and Idaho did not suggest to me the seat of comfort as its outlines on the map might suggest. The Fort Hall Reservation had been opened a few months before but was not proving popular with the Indians as they were not at this time accustomed to any of the restrictions of civilization.

The only Indian scare we had after entering the Territory was on Big Camas Prairie and we prepared for an attack which did not come. Breast works and defenses were thrown up that were still standing a few years ago.

The first part of Idaho that we saw, like that we had been passing over since leaving the Rockies, was barren and monotonous—sage brush, alkali dust, all sorts of creeping things and millions of crickets. These crickets were very unlike the old hearth stone cricket. They were much larger, the general size being nearly as large as a half grown mouse, with legs fully an

*The writer of this article is spoken of as a perfectly wonderful old lady. In her eighty-second year she is living in Moscow, Idaho, where the University atmosphere keeps her mind alert. She comes from pioneer stock, whose generations witnessed the progress of the frontier from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Her maternal grandfather, Jacob Johnson, crossed the mountains from Virginia to Kentucky with Daniel Boone and settled on Mount Farm, near Mount Sterling. The old log house still stands. Her father, George Washington Call, settled first at Greencastle, Indiana, and then moved to Chillicothe, Missouri. In the meantime his daughter, Frances A. Call, had been attending school at the older home in Mount Sterling, Kentucky. In 1864 she was a member of the emigrant train as told in these reminiscences. A year after arriving in Idaho she became the bride of James Davis Agnew, who had come to the Coast in 1850. These facts were obtained from Mrs. Agnew's daughter, Mrs. R. Hodgins, of Moscow, Idaho.—EDROR.

inch and a half long. The Indians were said to be fond of eating them. If so, food was certainly plentiful. When the tents were pitched at night it was necessary to drive out these intruders before the beds could be spread. When morning came it would reveal them on every article. We learned to not fear them and for many days ate and slept with them.

The party numbering about 250 people with 150 wagons arrived at the top of the bluff overlooking Boise Valley, seven miles from the City late in September, 1864. Spontaneous shouts of joy went up from every throat as we looked down upon the first signs of civilization we had seen since leaving the little towns on the Kansas border and prayers of thankfulness were breathed that the long six months journey with its many dangers and privations was over at last, and into my mind came a vision of Moses, from Nebo's lonely mountain looking down into the promised land.

The picture was most beautiful and peaceful. The river flowed on and on until it lost itself in the distance. Here and there were little farm cabins with small fields of grain harvested and in the shock and gardens of vegetables and melons. We could hear the crowing of the fowls and the barking of the dogs, all reminding us of the homes we had left miles beyond the Rockies.

We crossed the river on rafts and proceeded toward Boise. As we passed down the valley the farmers loaded our wagons with farm produce. One thing that we saw at this time was a Bannock Indian village. Little Papposes were wallowing in the dust outside the tepees. Older children clad in paint and feathers were at play. It was the first time that we had an opportunity of seeing Indians without experiencing fear.

Five miles from Boise we passed the celebrated hot springs that now supply the water for the magnificent Natatorium and give Boise the unique privilege of heating her homes with natural hot water.

The first house or cabin was built in 1863 and Boise boasted of but one street when we arrived. The permanent population did not number more than 300 people, but as it was a shipping point for all the surrounding mines, it was a very lively and rushing little town, with people coming and going constantly.

The business interests consisted mostly of the liquor traffic. It seemed to me that over the front entrance of every other building one could read the word saloon. The eating houses and restaurants came next in number and even these usually had a bar near the door.

There were feed stables with corrals at the back, blacksmith shops, few dry goods stores, two drug stores and one hotel called "The Stage House" on account of its having been a stage station in 1862 and 63. "The Overland," that famous hostelry, was just being built. There was also a saw mill and a flour mill.

The Statesman Printing Co. was publishing a tri-weekly paper of four pages, that was 18 inches long and 12 inches wide. This was the first paper published in Idaho. Doctors of fine skill and ability were there. Also as brilliant legal talent as you would find anywhere in the world.

Evidently the people's thoughts were not yet on spiritual things for there were no churches and no ministers. The next year the Baptists erected a little church at the lower end of Main Street. A year later the Episcopalians held their first services in a little adobe cabin on the corner of 8th and Idaho. I was one of the four ladies who made up the congregation. The next year the Methodists came and other denominations followed.

In 1862, the post had been moved from Old Fort Boise, farther down the river, and placed one mile north of town. There was a Catholic church there presided over by a jovial, roly poly, little priest. This church was afterwards burned.

The first houses were built mostly of adobe, logs or boards, the doors of which opened on the street with the proverbial latch string hanging down. Dry goods boxes were at a premium as most of the furniture, in the way of cupboards, dressers and wardrobes, were made of them.

The nearest railroad was at Atcheson, Kansas, and all goods had to be freighted in from there, or from The Dalles, Oregon. This was done by pack trains of mules, or in freight wagons. We had four daily mails coming from different directions. That from the east came in on the long to be remembered Overland Concord Coach. This coach carried from 8 to 10 passengers and had a front and a back boot. It was an interesting sight to see this equipage rolling into town, the driver in his seat over the front boot holding the reins of six spirited horses, while a Wells Fargo man with a revolver on each hip and a shot gun in his arms, rode by the side of the driver. All the wealth was carried in and out of the country in this way. It was not an unusual occurrence for highwaymen to hold up a coach and relieve the passengers of their money and valuables as well as seizing the express box. I remember that at one time the highwaymen got a prize of over a hundred thousand dollars worth of gold from this box.

The people of our train were the first emigrants to arrive from the east, those people that were there having come from California and Oregon, or if from the east had sailed around the horn and would have been insulted had you called them emigrants. Nevertheless some of the wealthiest and most influential citizens Idaho has ever known have been of and are descendants of the emigrants.

We landed with little money and most of our stock had died enroute. Many of our people were living in dugouts in the foothills. The winter of '64, which was the hardest that Boise has ever known was coming on. Food, clothing and fuel were selling at prices that would seem fabulous now, for instance, flour was selling at a dollar per pound and eggs at \$6.00 a dozen. Things looked very doleful indeed for the emigrants. Word was sent out into the mining districts of their need and plight and when help came it was a bountiful help for it numbered thousands of dollars for distribution.

The quartz mines were located at Silver City, Rocky Bar and Atlanta. The placer mines were in Boise Basin, the metropolis of which was Idaho City. I spent the year of '65 in this place, then a full fledged mining camp of two years growth and have seen as many as ten thousand people on its streets, at the end of the week, when the miners would come in, with their bags of gold dust and nuggets to buy supplies. The people and the town showed all the characteristics of the race for gold. One not only met graduates from the best colleges, but title men of Europe, handling the pick and shovel. Many of the houses gave the appearance of being up on stilts, ten or twelve feet high, while under and all around them, the earth was being dissolved and worn away by hydraulic mining.

The town had been destroyed by fire in 1864 and, in less than 24 hours, business was resumed, in tents, shacks, and street-stands. No restrictions seemed to be placed on one's privilege to make money; consequently, the forms and methods of business were very varied. The street-peddler, with his tray, or bags, of merchandise, was a common sight on the streets. Hotels, restaurants, as well as gambling dens and dancing halls, were open day and night, and were patronized by almost every nationality in the world. Two theater companies did a paying business. One of these companies had as leading lady a well-known actress by the name of Julia Dean Hains, who proved to be as general a favorite in the West as she had been in the East. A little later than the

time of which I write Brigham Young induced her to go to Salt Lake City to play in his new theater which he named Julia Dean in her honor. The other theater attraction was the famous Sue Robinson Company. This lady, Sue Robinson Getsler, was an actress of unusual ability and a woman of noble and beautiful character. From San Francisco to Victoria, British Columbia, her name called forth expressions of admiration, and there are few pioneers to whom it does not bring memories of many happy hours of entertainment.

Lack of conventionalities was everywhere evident, and one could see vice and wickedness if they wished to find them; but truth and morality were there, also, and a good woman's honor would have been defended, even to death's door. No call for assistance for the sick or needy ever failed to receive a generous response. Gold-dust, nuggets and greenbacks were the medium of exchange; and nothing less than twenty-five cents was given in the way of change. Greenbacks were far below par, being worth only twenty-five cents on the dollar. One eccentric gentleman, whom I knew, and who also had more rum in his stomach than brains in his head, used over fifty dollars' worth of these greenbacks as wads for his gun.

I feel that this paper would not be complete without a word about the cowboy, a character that only in exceptional cases was a desperado, although always fun-loving with a dash of wildness in it. More than once we have been awakened at night by the rush of horses' feet, the shouts of men and the firing of pistols, only to find out when our fear and trembling had subsided, that it was only some cowboys having a little fun at the expense of the sleeping town. No harm ever resulted from these escapades. In his fantastic make-up of high heel boots, spurs with large rowels, chaperoes, sombrero, and gaily colored bandanas, he was a familiar feature of the streets of Boise.

These days of freedom and romance have passed and gone, as have most of the dear people of '64, and over the land of sagebrush and bunch grass reign civilization and prosperity. I join with you in asking God's protection for our well-beloved Idaho, and you join with me in asking His blessings for the emigrants of '64, for they blazed the trail for you and those to come.

MRS. JAMES D. AGNEW.