

ALONG NATURE'S TRAIL

By KEN McLEOD

In our last column we left Sheridan as a time he discovered he was the heels of a band of Pit River Indians, who, like Sheridan, were following the trail of the Williamson party. Sheridan's narrative continues:

"Dismounting from my horse I counted the number of moccasins to ascertain the number of Indians. I discovered it to be about thirty, and then followed on behind cautiously but with little difficulty as appearances of speed on the part indicated they wished to make a dash for the river. I was not much interested in overtaking the Indians in front to seek for victims in the rear."

"After a hard-bread breakfast we started again on the trail, and proceeded but a short distance when, hearing the voices of the Indians, we at once slackened our speed so as not to overtake them."

"Most of the trail on which we traveled during the morning ran over an exceedingly rough lava formation — a spur of the lava beds often described during the Modoc war of 1873 — so hard and flinty that Williamson's large command made little impression on its surface, leaving in fact, only indistinct traces of its line of march."

"By care and frequent examinations we managed to follow his route through without much delay or discovery by the Indians, and about noon, owing to the termination of the lava formation, we descended into the valley of Hat Creek, a little below where it emerges from the second canyon and above its confluence with Pit River."

"This means midway between the present towns of Burney and Fall River Mills. Sheridan's account was written in 1888, the memory of the battles of the Lava Beds was still strong so we find these old timers mentioning the Modoc war even as far south as Mt. Lassen. Sheridan could have made better mention of the Indian war when he crossed the actual battleground but apparently chose not to do so."

"When we struck this delightful locality we traveled with considerable speed, and after passing over hill and vale for some distance — the trail becoming more distinct all the time — I suddenly saw in front of me the Pit River Indians. This caused a halt, and having hurriedly re-capped our guns and six-shooters, thus preparing for the worst, I took a look at the band through my fieldglass. They were a half-mile or more in our front and numbered about thirty individuals, armed with bows and arrows only."

"Observing us they made friendly demonstration, but I had not implicit faith in a Pit River Indian at that period of the settlement of our country, and especially in that wild country, so after a 'council of war' with the corporal and man, I concluded to advance to a point, when, relying on the speed of our horses rather than on the peaceable intentions of the savages, I hoped to succeed in cutting around them and take the trail beyond. Being on foot they could not readily catch us and inasmuch as their arrows were good for a range of only about sixty yards, I had no fear of any material damage on that score."

"On reaching the place selected for our flank movement we made a dash to the left of the trail, through the wildest part of the valley, and ran our horses swiftly by, but I noticed that the Indians did not seem to be disturbed by the maneuver and soon realized that this indifference was occasioned by the knowledge that we could not cross Hat Creek, a deep stream with vertical banks, too broad to be leaped by our horses. We were obliged therefore, to halt, and the Indians again made demonstrations of friendship, some of them even getting into the stream to show that they were at the ford."

"Thus reassured, we regained our confidence and boldly crossed the river in the midst of them."

After we regained the bluff on the other side of the creek, I looked down into the valley of the Pit River, and could plainly see the camp of the surveying party. Its proximity was the influence which had doubtless caused the peaceable conduct of the Indians. Probably the only thing that saved us was their ignorance of our being in their rear, until we stumbled on them almost within sight of the large party under Williamson."

(Continued Tomorrow)

Late Harvest Time Crop Report Given

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Agriculture Department, in a late harvest-time report, Tuesday estimated this year's corn crop at 3,000,000,000 bushels.

This is 15,671,000 bushels less than last month's estimate of 3,015,671,000 bushels. It compares with last year's crop of 3,216,007,000 bushels and with the ten-year (1940-51) average of 3,036,380,000 bushels.

The department made no new estimates for wheat, oats, barley, rye, flaxseed, hay, dry peas and beans. Final figures for the year will be issued Dec. 17.

Potatoes 370,856,000 bushels; 1952, 370,000; 1951, 347,504,000 and 411,007,000.

Sugar beets 11,537,000 tons; 11-49, 10,169,000 and 10,027,000.

The production of milk in October was reported at 8,779,000,000 pounds compared with 9,219,000,000 in September, 8,664,000,000 in October last year and 8,555,000,000 for the ten-year October average.

Bag production in October was reported at 4,614,000,000 compared with 4,206,000,000 in September, 4,201,000,000 in October last year and 4,446,000,000 for the ten-year October average.

The condition of pastures on Nov. 1 was reported at 52 per cent of normal compared with 56 a year ago and 77 for the ten-year Nov. 1 average.

The average acre yield of crops for which new production estimates were made included:

Corn 38.4 bushels per acre, compared with 40.6 last year and 39.2 for the ten-year average.

Potatoes 247 bushels; 248.6 and 211.2.

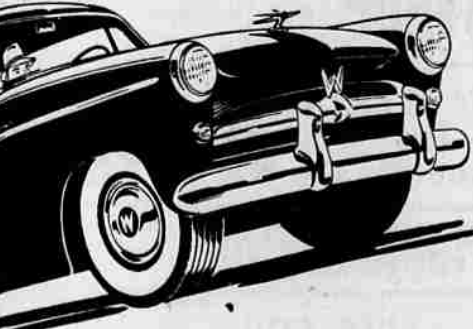
Sugar beets 15.9 tons; 15.3 and 11.4.

The indicated yield per acre and production, respectively, of important crops by major-producing States include:

POTATOES: Idaho 290 bushels per acre and production 42,920,000 bushels; Washington 310 and 11,180,000; Oregon 320 and 12,180,000.

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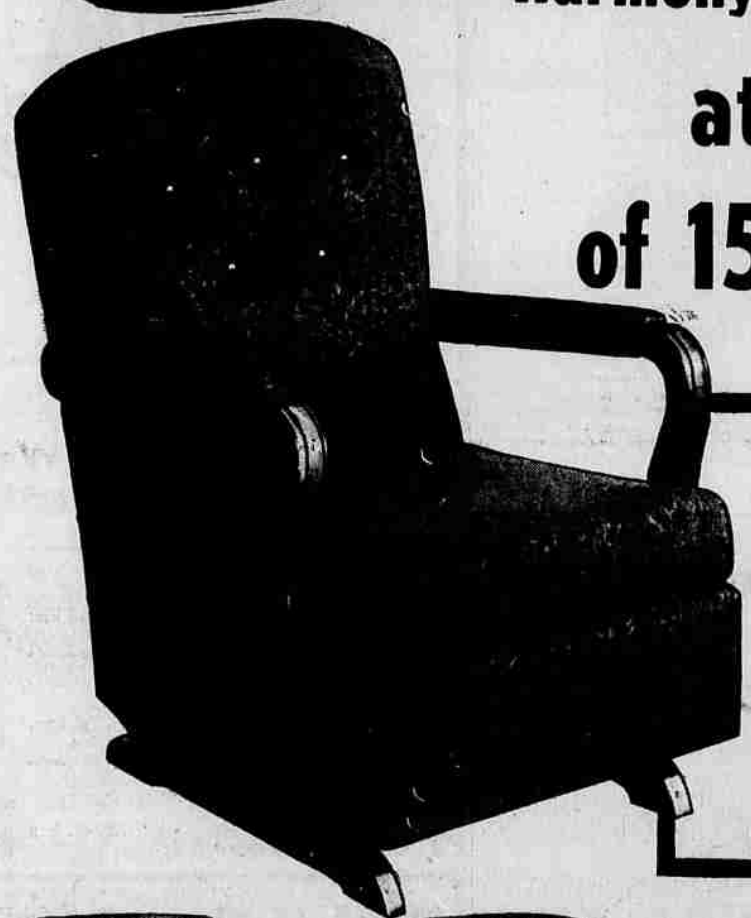
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