

Two Mysteries of the Plains

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

OUT in Kansas plans are under way to erect a marker where once stood Fort Aubrey and to preserve its site as a memorial to a thrilling chapter in the history of the Sunflower state. Fort Aubrey was named in honor of Col. F. X. Aubrey, who found several springs of fresh water there and suggested it as a good place for a fort. Although the outpost which once bore his name has long since passed away, the fame of Felix Xavier Aubrey, French-Canadian by birth but an American hunter, trapper and trader by occupation, has endured because he was the hero of one of the greatest long distance rides in history—from Santa Fe, N. M., to Independence, Mo., a distance of more than 800 miles, in five days and sixteen hours.

Early in the morning of September 12, 1846, Aubrey rode out of Santa Fe for the start of this classic of the plains. From the morning of the start until Independence was reached he stopped neither to eat or sleep, and on at least three occasions during his ride narrowly escaped capture and death at the hands of Indians. He ate while riding, and after the second morning out he tied himself into the saddle and snatched bits of sleep at times.

Late at night on September 17, five days and sixteen hours after leaving Santa Fe, Aubrey rode up to the old Noland House in Independence. He had traversed 800 miles by horseback in that length of time by 136 hours of continuous riding and traveling 140 miles each 24 hours.

Fort Aubrey was established in September, 1856, about four miles east of the present city of Syracuse, Kan. During its brief career it was an important post on the historic Santa Fe Trail, for it was the only refuge for wagon trains, harassed by Indian attack, in the 150-mile stretch between Fort Dodge, Kan., and Fort Lyon, Colo. It was garrisoned by United States troops for a time and then, the necessity for its being there having apparently passed away, it was abandoned. At least it passed out of the army records about 1853 or 1859.

Interesting as Fort Aubrey was as a haven for those who traversed the Santa Fe Trail by stage coach, covered wagon or pack train when the savage tribesmen swooped down, it is even more interesting because it is the scene of a tragedy of the plains which is still one of the unsolved mysteries of the Old West. For here one day in December, 1863, a party of 22 Missouri militiamen froze to death in a fierce blizzard which swept over western Kansas. What their names were and just how they met their death no one knows. Local tradition has preserved part of the story and the military records throw some light on the tragedy, but there is still enough left untold to make it a true "mystery of the plains."

The local tradition part of it has been preserved by a Syracuse merchant, H. Helfrich, a pioneer home-steader and the Socialist candidate for governor of Kansas in 1926, whose hobby is the history of his county. He got the story from R. T. Goans, who was a member of the party caught in the blizzard and who assisted in the burial of the dead.

Mr. Goans told Mr. Helfrich three companies of cavalry, an escort of Governor Goodwin of Arizona, left Fort Leavenworth in the fall of 1863 to accompany the governor to Fort Union, N. M. He said they arrived safely at their destination, but were separated on their way back and that, while camping in the ruins of Fort Aubrey, 22 men of Company I froze to death.

Records of Fort Leavenworth and the Arizona Historical society show Governor Goodwin, the first governor of Arizona, left Fort Leavenworth September 25, 1863, escorted by Companies A and H of the regular cavalry, and Company I of the Fourth Missouri militia. The expedition was in charge of Maj. James A. Phillips of Kansas, with Lieut. Peter F. Clark, Capt. John H. Butcher and Capt. Daniel Rice in command of the companies. They arrived at Fort Union, N. M., November 9 and left November 11. They reached Fort Lyons, Colo., November 23, in a snowstorm. On this part of the trip they lost several horses and some of the men were frostbitten. The party remained at Fort Lyons eight days and from that time there are no more records of Company I.

Mr. Helfrich believes that a disagreement among the soldiers at Fort Lyons caused Company I to split from the rest of the command. Companies A and H reported at Fort Riley on December 23, having lost one by freezing. They also reported much suffering from the heavy storms which they encountered.

As for the fate of Company I, ac-



Relics of a Tragedy



The Last Stand

According to the Goans story, these militiamen reached the site of Fort Aubrey about December 1 and camped in the old dugouts of the fort. While there the blizzard swept down upon them. Huddling together in an effort to keep warm and burning their wagons they tried in vain to fight off the deadening cold. But it was no use. When morning came 22 of them were dead. According to Goans, they were all Frenchmen, naturalized citizens of the United States, without near relatives in this country, but if there ever existed any record of their names that record has not yet been discovered.

From up in North Dakota comes the story of another and similar tragedy. What is believed to be the first printed account of it appeared recently in the Geauga Republican-Record at Chardon, Ohio, written by its editor, Arthur E. Towne. As a small boy, Mr. Towne went to the Dakotas with his parents in the eighties and this story is one of several told to him by old timers in that country, which he has written under the title of "Highlights from Old Days in the West" for the Republican-Record. His story of the mystery surrounding the death of a whole platoon of United States cavalry reads as follows:

"In the fall of '62 the first venturesome settlers penetrated into Dickey county in what is now North Dakota, one of the most beautiful pieces of prairie country in the James river valley. Two chance land hunters whose names may now be lost, unless they can be dug out of the old files of newspapers published at that time in Aberdeen, were prospecting in that region.

"One evening as they were heading towards the river in search of a good camping place, they passed a grass-grown buffalo wallow. Here there burst upon them a sight which they probably never forgot. The circumference of the wallow was literally lined with bones of men and horses, other skeletons lay within the circle.

"Although the bones had been scattered some, investigation indicated that the horses had been used for defense in place of earthworks. United States army buttons and brass belt buckles were found, also badly rusted barrels of musket loading guns of the old army musket type, with their stocks rotted away or burned away by prairie fires. Rusted bits, iron stirrups, canteens and other metal parts of soldiers' equipment were also found here—all of which went to show that this was a troop of United States cavalry.

"Reports made at the time stated that the skeletons of 28 men and a like number of horses were found, but nothing was discovered that showed to what regiment or company this troop belonged. If this was the result of a battle, it is probable that the Indians carried away anything of the soldiers' equipment that struck their fancy. This would account for nothing remaining that would identify the troop.

"The bones looked as if they had been bleaching in the sun for years and years. Inquiry was made, some time after, of various members of Drifting Goose's band of Sioux, located on the reservation west of the Missouri. These Indians once claimed the territory in what is now Spink county and vicinity. They had their main village on Arndale Island in the James

river some sixty miles to the south of this tragic spot. The Indians could throw no light on the subject, and it may be that this fight occurred before their advent here.

Among the theories advanced to account for the wiping out of this cavalry troop is one to the effect that these men perished in a blizzard. What gave rise to this idea was the fact that no broken bones or perforated skulls, showing the effects of gunfire, were found. From this the idea was gathered that these men and their mounts did not perish in battle. The story went around that these men were a part of a cavalry regiment stationed at some post along the Missouri, about the time of the outbreak of the Civil war. That they were either recruited from the South or were with the South in their sympathies, that they had deserted some time in March of '61, and headed for the James river with the view of working their way down into the Confederate states by that route.

"The theory was that this was the safer route, as the army trails generally followed the Missouri, and there would be much greater danger of pursuit and capture, if they traveled that way. That on their way to the James they were overtaken by a blizzard and, being lost and bewildered in the driving snow, and in imminent danger of freezing, they had, on stumbling on this buffalo wallow, buried themselves in the snow, which would be deeper there, in the hope of preserving their lives until the storm abated, but because of the intense cold, they perished to a man. Not so far away was the river, with high banks which would have afforded some shelter, and there was plenty of wood for fires, so that they might have escaped had they traveled a little farther with their backs against the storm.

"However, old army officers who had spent most of their lives on the plains, say that they never heard of desertion on any such a wholesale scale. Neither had they ever heard of a cavalry troop riding out into the vastness of the plains and vanishing so completely, and for so long a time, that even the circumstances of its departure and the mystery of its utter disappearance were forgotten.

"That this was a United States cavalry troop, however, is practically certain from the odd pieces of equipment found. The fact that the bones were lying on the prairie just where the troopers gave up their lives, indicates that this detachment was never located by the command of which it was a part, since the United States army always buries its dead.

"Whether this troop belonged to General Sully's army, which fought in the Little Crow war, or a scouting party of Minnesota troops which participated in the same conflict, is a matter of conjecture.

"This unknown battle of the buffalo wallow may have been one of the many fights which occurred along between the late sixties and the Custer massacre in 1876, when the plains Indians were making their last desperate attempt to retain the prairies for themselves. But who these men were, or whether they perished in conflict with the red warriors of the Sioux nation, or with the white armies of King Winter is still, so far as we know, one of the unsolved mysteries of the plains.

OREGON STATE NEWS OF GENERAL INTEREST

Principal Events of the Week Assembled for Information of Our Readers.

The population at the state penitentiary at Salem has reached a new high mark, with 900 prisoners on the register.

The first fire of the year in Crater national forest was started recently by lightning striking a tree in the Applegate district near Copper.

Organized labor of Eugene will sponsor a Fourth of July celebration in Eugene, and preliminary steps will be taken at once, it is announced.

The cherry crop in Lane county will be better than it was indicated two or three weeks ago, according to C. E. Stewart, county fruit inspector.

Owing to lack of funds the city council of Roseburg has deferred the widening of the main streets. The estimate for improving 10 blocks was approximately \$10,000.

Rocking of the road leading from the Oregon coast highway north of Florence to the ocean beaches between the mouth of the Siuslaw river and Heceta head has been started.

The town council of Lakeview has authorized the immediate paving of 10 blocks in the business section. Robert Gould, city engineer of Bend, has been engaged to supervise the work.

K. A. Young, 55, driller for an oil company in Coos county, was killed when an automobile went over a grade near Remote on the Coos Bay-Roseburg highway. It is believed Young fell asleep.

Plans and specifications for the Hendricks bridge-Doyle hill section of the McKenzie highway covering nine miles have been received by the Lane county court from the state highway department.

The annual picnic at Pleasant Hill, which has been held since pioneer days, will be held this year June 14, it has been announced. The Christian Endeavor society of that place will have charge.

The last of the salvage from the Admiral Benson, which was wrecked near the mouth of the Columbia, has been brought to Astoria. It includes winches, anchors, chains, port lights and other heavy equipment.

George Lambirth of Alpine dropped dead Sunday at a ball game in which he was playing. He had been batting, when the umpire called him "out." As he turned to leave the plate he pitched forward on his face.

A 2-year-old horse fell into a 50-foot well on the Martin ranch on the Lexington market road near Heppner. He was standing on the top of the well drinking from a watering trough when the timbers gave way under him.

The unusual sight of a rainbow at night was seen by a number of Glendale people recently at 10:15 when a complete rainbow arched the northwestern sky with a silvery full moon in the opposite side of the heavens.

A total of 11,842 loans, representing an aggregate of \$28,328,525, were authorized under the state veterans relief act up to March 1 of this year, according to a report from Frank Moore, secretary of the state bonus commission.

Mr. and Mrs. R. Alexander, prominent Pendleton residents, were felicitated by friends there and by telegraph and radio from distant points, the occasion being their 50th wedding anniversary and the 80th birthday of Mr. Alexander.

A flaming meteor, said to have been the size of an airplane, was reported to have fallen near Conway, Or. T. F. Mills, Pendleton angler, reported seeing the white-hot rock plainly. He said it fell somewhere in the Blue mountains.

THE MARKETS

Portland

Wheat—Big Bend bluestem, \$1.16½; soft white, western white, \$1.03½; hard winter, northern spring, western red, \$1.01½.

Hay—Alfalfa, \$20 per ton; valley timothy, \$20.50@21; eastern Oregon timothy, \$23.50@24; clover, \$17; oat hay, \$17; oats and vetch, \$17.50@18. Butterfat—31@35c.

Eggs—Ranch, 21@24c. Cattle—Steers, good, \$11.25@11.55. Hogs—Good to choice, \$9.50@11. Lambs—Good to choice, \$8.50@10.

Seattle

Wheat—Soft white, western white, hard winter, western red and northern spring, \$1.04; Big Bend bluestem, \$1.15.

Eggs—Ranch, 25@29c. Butterfat—35c. Cattle—Choice steers, \$11@11.50. Hogs—Prime light, \$10.50@11. Lambs—Choice, \$9@10.

Spokane

Cattle—Steers, good, \$10.25@11. Hogs—Good to choice, \$10.35@10.50. Lambs—Medium to good, \$9.50@10.

Fishing operations in the lower Columbia river continue to show small results while upriver conditions are good, according to returns to Astoria cannerymen.

The intangibles tax law enacted at the 1929 legislature, with a fixed rate of 5 per cent, has returned to the state up to this time a total of \$907,065.73, according to a report prepared by the state tax commission.

According to C. W. Kimball of New York city, president of the Kimball Fruit company, who is visiting the company's plant at Central Point, the promises for the fruit industry in Rogue River valley were never better than this year.

The annual Gilliam county fair will be held in Condon September 11, 12 and 13, or two weeks earlier in the month than in previous years, in hopes of having better weather and also be just a week after other fairs in the neighboring counties.

Historical markers are to be placed on several landmarks in Lane county by the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution in May and June. One of the markers will be placed on the homestead of Eugene Skinner, founder of Eugene.

Purchase of 15 acres and large concrete buildings from the Coos Bay Lumber company by the Port Orford Cedar Products company opens a new industry at Marshfield which will be used to save waste from the manufacture of white cedar lumber.

Lamb shipping is beginning in several parts of Douglas county. One truckload has been shipped out of Yoncalla and another from Myrtle Creek. Shipments are earlier this season owing to the low market, which shows little prospect of improvement.

Wheat fields of Jefferson county have been greatly benefited by heavy rains of the past week, according to information from Madras, where .31 of an inch of precipitation was measured. Spring wheat is in excellent condition and good crops are expected.

A fierce electric storm passed over central Oregon recently and left three towns, Prineville, Redmond and Madras, without power and light service for many hours. The bolt which put the power line out of commission struck a pole in Crooked river gorge.

Arthur Cables, garage man of near Seaside, was confronted with a full-grown cougar in his garden a few days ago. Not relishing the prospects of becoming a meal, Cables shouted for help. A cousin appeared with a gun and fired three shots as the animal fled.

The Mountain States Power company has commenced installing the 29 new ornamental street lamps authorized by the city council of Albany and will have the work done within a few weeks. When this series of lamps is installed Albany will have 81 ornamental posts.

Automobile registration time, and, incidentally, time for payment of the annual license fee, is again approaching. Reminders of this fact were being sent out to approximately 300,000 Oregon motor vehicle owners by Secretary of State Hal E. Hoss in the form of application blanks.

Through the efforts of A. C. Allen, resident state horticultural commissioner, George I. Reeves, senior etymologist of the department of agriculture, arrived in Talent in Rogue river valley to begin operations on the control of the alfalfa weevil in Jackson, Josephine and Klamath counties.

Oiling operations on the Sherman highway from Demoss springs to Grass valley, designed to provide a non-skid surface, has started, the state highway office at The Dalles has announced. A similar surfacing will be applied on the Columbia highway from the Multnomah county line to The Dalles.

Thomas Lillebo of Reedsport started the work of changing the Roosevelt ferry routing across Coos bay and is installing new slips on the south and north sides. The routing will move the north slip a quarter of a mile westward and the crossing will be shortened several hundred feet, giving ferry crossings 20 minutes instead of 30 as heretofore.

Jean Jones, 15, daughter of Frank Jones and granddaughter of Benjamin F. Jones, "father of the Roosevelt highway," has been elected to represent Newport at the opening of the Salmon River highway from Grand Ronde to Otis, where the new highway will connect with the Roosevelt highway. The opening date has been set on July 19, at which time cities of Oregon will participate in a pageant.

Within the next ten years the Willamette valley will produce more than 300,000 acres of flax annually, according to the prediction made at Salem by E. G. Robinson, president of the Pacific Coast Linen mills at Vancouver, Wash.

The senate claims committee has reported favorably on a bill to reimburse Clatsop county for \$100,000 that was spent by the county several years ago to purchase a site for the naval base at Tongue Point, which never was completed.

CHIC GLOVES ARE IMPORTANT; OUTFITTING OF LITTLE GIRLS

HUSBANDS and fathers please take notice, from now on the dress allowance for wives and daughters must be increased. Henceforth and until further notice the budget must be made to cover the expense of gloves ranging from the most formal types to every conceivable kind such as time place and costume may demand. At every Paris couture opening, the glove is being made a theme of out-

illustration herewith carries the point with emphasis.

The graceful drooping leghorn which this little girl is wearing is trimmed with a broad velvet ribbon matched to the rose color print of the frock. Which is as it should be, for even in the little folks' realm, the costume must present a related color scheme from head to foot to be fashionable. In this instance the winsome



Gloves Become Important.

standing importance. Perfectly fascinating long gloves in pastel tints are registering for formal evening wear. A preferred type is the 16-button monospetate suede glove in such baby colors as pink, pale blue and light yellow. Worn with the right evening gown, they create nothing less than a sensation.

Long white lace kid gloves are in demand but the eggshell and suede tints are newer. Very handsome and exclusive types finish their top edges with borders of rhinestone or bead embroidery. Offsetting these fanciful creations are the very long black suede gloves, the same considered treasured with colorful evening gowns.

Quaintest of all are the very long and not so long black lace mitts which are complementing the gown made all of lace, also smartly in evidence with demure frocks which are sleeved with cunning short puffs.

In selecting gloves one needs to consider the style, the color and even the leather in relation to the costume and

dress is made of shantung printed in a delicate patterning which silhouettes blue and rose against a white background.

Designers, manufacturers, also the family dressmaker and home-sewing women in general are rejoicing in the wealth of lovely materials which this season are at their disposal for the making of little folks' apparel. They cite particularly the prettiness and at the same time practicality of printed shantungs and printed linens which flourish in the fabric showings, likewise the wearableness and attractiveness of printed crepe.

In making up youngsters' fashions the very style points which are contributing so conspicuously to the smartness of adult fashions are being exploited in the children's realm with utmost enthusiasm. For instance, the little dress in the picture is styled with the popular cape sleeves, the circular-flare hemline, and a most sophisticated jabot made of self-material.

Another mode which appears in replica of the costumes designed for mother and grown-up sister is the jacket suit, made of lively print silk. Most cunning models in miniature are laying siege to little daughter's heart. Outstanding among these is the jacket-and-skirt suit of printed crepe, as



Properly Hatted and Frocked.

the other accessories. For afternoon longer slip-ons have become the rage. These are usually of suede or mocha in off-white shades, yellow or pinkish beige to blend with the stockings as a rule. A very smart color note for this season is to have gloves, hat, bag, and shoes of one shade.

Full-ons with decorated flare cuffs are also considered good style. Several interesting types are shown in the upper picture, also the newest lace mitts.

With her handsome gown of white oemberg moire, the evening-attired lady as illustrated is wearing an exquisite pair of long pale blue lace kid gloves. Rhinestone buckles and a bow on one shoulder and at the belt provide the only trimming for her modishly fitted-at-the-waist frock.

Attire for Small Girls.

The call of the wide-brimmed hat is heard in the children's realm. From juvenile headquarters comes the welcome news that lovely big leghorns, than which there is no more flattering type for youngsters, has come into its own once more.

A gay print frock topped with a ribbon nashed or handled leghorn worn by a dainty little miss never fails to make a "perfect picture," and the il-

well as those of shantung or linen. For every day wear polka dotted effects are perhaps in the majority. For tots the pleated skirt buttons on to blouse, while older girls may if they so desire find cleverly devised yoke shirts which fit over frilly tuck-ins of dotted swiss, handkerchief linen; also cotton net, which is so very popular this season for frocks and the blouse.

Very charming printed silks, which are designed for the very young, are patterned in quaint Dresden effects, depicting children at play. Suits of monotone pastel spun silks or of flat crepe in a solid color are also voguish for little daughter.

JULIA BOTTOMLEY.

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