

Overland Journey

1849

From
Indiana to California

Geo. W. Patterson

Alvarado, Cal.

1872

Alvarado April 8/92

H. H. Bancroft

Dear Sir I find myself
unable to proceed further
with my notes of our trip, for
want of time. I shall be
glad to continue them if they
can be used in any way. But
of this I am doubtful for they
are certainly too long for ^{your} purpose
and to abridge them greatly we
might as well strike all out.
Of course they must be re-writ-
ten and this I expect you to
do. If it is a long story you
want or even a short one let
me suggest a plan. If you think
best open a correspondence with
the members of the party whose
addresses are known and let each
supply what items he will
own

and from all you may write
something to suit your purpose
I was to the east last ~~fall~~ October
and saw all the American country

Dr Anthony Garrett was ^{the} Conn
Clerk for Carroll County address
"Delphi Indiana" Littleton a
Justice of Peace in Lafayette address
"Lafayette Ind." Richardson
keeping Hotel in Crawfordsville
address "Crawfordsville Ind."
Fishers address is "Battle-ground"
Tippecanoe County Ind.

Alpheus Bull (was a Universalist
minister when with us) was Ban-
king in or about Shasta or Red Bluff
- probably after words in San Francisco.
Granville Dall was in the Cal,
Senate one or two terms address
probably "Red-Bluff" G. A. G. Sta-
ckhouse "Gross Valley" and John
Bongle and Joseph Grey "Portland, Or."

Letter Continued from Portland
Wm. H. Hawthorne address
"San Francisco Cal," and
I know the address of no other
at present. I wish this story
to place all on equal footing
and will accept of a place ^{not} more
prominent than the rest

Be assured if you cannot use
these notes I shall not have
the slightest feeling in the matter
but take the same interest
in your Book as before.

Awaiting further Instru-
ctions I remain

Very Respectly

Geo. W. Patterson
(in haste, excuse these scraps)

1892

Patterson G. W.

Alvarado April 8

Across Mexico

G. W. ^{by} Patterson

Alvarado April 4-1872

H. H. Bancroft,

Dear Sir

Your communication asking for material to be used in the Pacific Encyclopedia was received some ^{days} since.

I feel flattered with your notice and will gladly do what I can to promote a work so desirable and auspiciously begun. Up to the present I have been unable to decide upon what to do, or what answer to return.

As to my Personal History so humble and obscure - surely no one can be interested in it; But as connected with the Company in which I came it may be slightly otherwise so; I will give the brief outlines of our Expedition and you can pick out such

items as fall within the plan of your work and would be of Public interest and send them back for further elaboration.

Omitting at present all Biography I will commence with the winter of 1849-50 with the excitement or rather frenzy or furor that followed the news of the discovery of Gold in California.

I lived in La-Verette Indian ^{Ca} at that time and every man with blood in his veins and a few dollars ⁺ in his pocket, or credit to borrow, turned head to war ^{Ca} California - His heart was already here. At first all was confusion and each for himself but at length association suggested its advantages and a Company was formed. ours (for there were others) consisted of over

3 Twenty members organized
as a Joint Stock Company
to carry on the business of mi-
ning manufacturing and gra-
ding. It was composed of the best
material from the middle
class of society running from
piery youth to vigorous mid-
dle age. Each member put in
five hundred dollars (no small
sum at that time) one half of
which was sent to New York
to purchase ^{and ship} supplies to San Francisco.
The other half was carried with
us in Gold. At that time every
known route to Calia, was, or
soon was to be blocked up
with the rush of emigration
and we turned our faces to the
west without knowing what
route to go. The morning of the
13th March 1849 may be forgotten
by others but it is glorious to
us. In our Company was the
better part of two Brass Bands

4 one of La-Hayette and the other
from Americus a village
8 miles above on the River, and
they carried their instruments
along to be dashed to pieces on
bucking mules or tumbled over
precipices on the Cordilleras
Mountains. But I am ahead
of my story and must go back
to a steamboat passing the wharf
at La-Hayette with our Band bid-
ding farewell to half the assem-
bled Town. Cheer followed cheer
till they died in the distance and
"we far away on the billow."

Now for the first time all sob-
bered down and turned a hand
to business. We went to Evans-
ville thence on the "Hiram Powers"
to New-Orleans. Here we were
compelled to select a route, and
learning that Gen. Worth was in
Texas proposing to cut a military
road through by way of the River
Gila decided to go that way; or at
least to go to the front for information
from N. O. to Port Lavacca by Ste-
am Ship. Portland. Here we bought
oxen and wagons to haul the baggage
and some horses to ride

At San-Antonio were told
the roads ahead were impass-
able for heavy teams and changed
the entire plan, by selling the teams
and unnecessary baggage and buy-
ing mules and mustangs to pack^{ers}

These animals were sleek and
fat and selected for their good look
from large droves of half wild hor-
ses called Corred or Corneyard or
some such name. They were sold
cheap \$5 to \$10 each, and the owner
said they would make excellent
pack animals when broke. He
engaged to lasso and blind
their eyes, and then we took pos-
session. Now we were from a Chris-
tian Country where they don't raise
mules and know nothing of their
nature and in a few days nearly
all could show wounds more or
less severe - some kicked some bitten
some skinned with ropes and some
whose spines were nearly broken and
bruised all over.

6
Mr. Dennett said we were
too severe; to treat them gently
the Law of kindness governed
all &c. In reply it was said of
them as of the State before they
were "ill begotten and illegitimate
conceived in sin and brought
forth in iniquity" that God never
made them or any Law to govern
them. Dennett's proposition was
voted down and the war went
on as before. A month or more
passed with various success
sometimes the mules had it
and sometimes me. During
the time nearly all had the cholera^{tra}
but strong to say none died here.
The Cholera caused frightful destruc-
tion of life all around us
and especially in Gen. Worth's
camp near by - himself dying.

Here we decided to hear to the th Son
and make our way through Me-
xico; and the men being better pre-
pared to start,

7

we packed the mules and tied their heads and tails in

a string but had not gone a ^{le} mile when twenty of them were bucking at the same time and our goods scattered to the winds. We kept on working however, and things ^{grew} a little better from day to day.

But we were under a tropical sun and the labor was great and progress slow. Thus to the Riv-Grand at Eagle Pass where crossed by swimming the horses and ferrying the goods in a boat made of an ox hide stretched over hoops in the shape of a kettle or basket. A little adventure of my own. My horse was dashed over a rock and went down back foremost. - Left the saddle to save myself and came up below in the stream. Had an over coat tied round my neck belt & pistols and rifle - disengaged the latter but could not the others and thus was carried

and swam to an island $1/4$ mile &
below where they took me off.
Completely exhausted. Before leaving
Gexas let me say it was the Paradise
of the Hunter Traveller or lazy man
of the best of water and wood everywhere
and an unbroken meadow ^{of grass} waist high
waving in the breeze for hundreds of
miles. Add to this the immense herds
of horses and cattle as fat as feed can
make them, and hundreds of Deer con-
tinually in sight and you have Gexas
as we saw it. We had a small wagon
along to carry the sick which was tow-
ed across the river with Lories attach-
ed to the horns of the saddles and
when it went up the steep bank
on the other side with a whoop, I
was gratified to hear a Soldier rem-
ark to his comrades standing by, that
"these Hoosiers are some pumpkin

The country was now rapidly cha-
nging for the worse and feed growi^{ng}
shorter from daily. Our provisions
getting short we were put on rations
and this was the severest trial of all

That men from the Wabash - the
Land of Pork and corn should be
limited in their eating was not to
be endured, and we were raven-
ous as wolves three hours after
eating a plentiful breakfast and
thought of nothing else. Such is the
power of imagination.

2 9 At length privation and toil
long continued worked a dis-
solution of the Company near San-
ta-Rosa in Mexico. The Company
^{property} was divided equally and the men
messed ~~together~~ in squads to suit
their inclination. There was no
ill feeling however and all tra-
velled together as before. This
was necessary for safety as well
as desirable otherwise, for the India^(ns)
were bad and the Mexicans not
to be trusted - the war having
just closed, the American Boys
as they were called, from choice
as well as for convenience messed
together from the start and were
the only country members in the
Company. The rest were from La-
Fayette. There were six of the former
- viz Dr Garrett, Nelson Littleton,
Gepheniah Richardson, John
Whishen Perry Starr and myself.
Some of us were playmates in
Boyhood and all old neighbors

10 The remained together and
worked in common to the end
Perry Starr was an unusually
small Boy of 19 or 20 years of
age. His Parents were from Virgin^{Via}
and settled on the River directly
opposite the old Prophets Town at
a very early date, and raised a
large family there. They had two
Daughters and Perry was the fifth
of seven sons. His Father had been
dead some years but left a valu-
able estate and they were all mo-
derately wealthy, and with a large
circle of relations moved in the best
society. His elder sister married
Dr Garrett but was then dead.
Two Brothers died in, or on the way
to Oregon and two at home two
remain on or near the old Town
and the sister in the same county
-married. His Mother, full of years
and sorrow for the loss of her
family died a few years ago

Under a burning sun over dry
 plains covered with sage
 brush and cactus we marked our
 weary way for days and weeks to-
 gether. The roads dim and uncertain
 were more likely to lead astray
 than direct aright. Added to this,
 none of us could speak their Lan-
 guage intelligibly and our pronun-
 ciation so different that often we
 could not make them understand
 where we wanted to go. Their igno-
 rance contributed much to this last-
 ing difficulty for their knowledge ex-
 tended only to ^{the} objects or places im-
 mediately around which were not
 marked on our map. These plains
 are broken at intervals of a day's
 travel more or less with lowland
 or oasis where grass grows; and
 where people can exist occupied by
 a race that seemed ^{to us} only half
 tame. one of these desolate stretches
 must have been 60 miles or more
 in extent for we started at four
 o'clock in the evening and did

not reach water till ten next 12
day ready to fall from our horses
with thirst and fatigue. But our
suffering was nothing compared to
that of our animals. At Rancho
Hacienda or village we obtained
limited supplies, but our men would
often eat at a single meal what was
for sale in a village. These places
were full of long lank specimens of
of humanity lounging in the street
with blankets around them or jaw-
ling ~~around~~ ^{about} our camp to steal.

They are skillful thieves as we lea-
ned at our cost. If a horse stray-
ed away mysteriously there was no
use for us to look after him but offer
these fellows a few dollars and he
was forthcoming ~~in no time~~, in a few
hours. Travelers were murdered on
the road frequently - said to be by
Indians but we were not sure of
that, and kept well together.

We traveled a long distance along
the ^{eastern} base of the Sierra Madre Mon-
tains. There with their towering
domes of limestone rock glittered
like silver in the sun, and were
to us, never having seen a mounta-
in before, exceedingly grand.

At the foot of one of these where
a small river cut its perpen-
dicular way through grey lime-
stone 2000 feet high ^{we} came to a stop.

From Memphis Tennessee
we had been on the high tide
of cholera in its westward
march and at different times and
places nearly all attacked but strange
to say no deaths occurred up to
the present. Here young Starr
was taken down with every in-
dication of a fatal result. It was
peculiarly afflictive for he was
the life and favorite of the Compa-
ny, and when a difficult feat was
to be performed with horse or rifle
he was the first to volunteer and
the first to succeed. I have seen
him load his pistol guiding his
horse on a keen run at the same
time, and his rifle was often brought
forth to show inquisitive Mexicans
what could be done firing at a target.
A tent was made of bushes and
blankets and a party sent through
the cut in the mountains to a vil-
lage below for supplies. They brought
back some corn but it was found

14 impracticable for all to stay and
port went on, leaving his own
party of six and a few others.

All that medical skill or nursing could do, was done without avail and he died the next day. ^{(Come} But too well we knew let whatever
Set fortune attend us, or danger
Our Comrade was sleeping ^{for from} ^{his home}
This was on the 14th day of June 1849 And alone, in the land of the ^{(or} Strong-

A Grave was prepared on the
bank of the stream and he low- ^{(Bed} Nay-sweetly he sleeps in his low narrow
ered to his long home, with his ^{For near him} grim-visaged and hoary
Mexican scrappa around him and The Mountain remains, to watch ^{his head} over
his horn (I think the tenor Trombone) And the River to sing his sad story
by his side. A Prayer was said,
and a board placed over the grave
on which was written his name
and years by the unletter'd Muse

Small arts to hide grief it was vain to employ-
Each heart-throb and tear answered other
For we knew we had buried along with her Boy
The heart of his dear sainted Mother
And, slowly and sadly we turned to go
Every Bosom was heaving with sorrow
For we knew not the way; nor the woe
And new perils to come, with the morrow

The Boy's Bible was handed
to me and Doctor Garrett (his Bro-
ther-in-law) took charge of his other
effects, and we passed on to the
City of Durango where the other
Party were waiting for us.

Here we rested a few days to
gather strength for Journey over
the Mountains.