



This typed version is an Appendix in *Ernest John Sweetland and His Fifty Years of Inventing*, by Dale Z. Kirby.

Louisa Marie Chubbuck Crosses The Plains

In the year 1863, George W. Chubbuck and family, and his aged mother, left Platteville, Wisconsin, May 1st 1863, destination California. The outfit consisted of a covered wagon and six mules. The wagon train started at Council Bluffs and consisted of about fifty wagons. Mr. Kendall was appointed Captain of the train. We left Council Bluffs about the 8th of May. A son was born to mother as we were camped on the Platte River. We finally started on with a great many happenings all along the road. The son that was born at the camp on Platte River died a few months later in Placerville. There are a great many things I can hardly remember, as I was not quite ten years old, however, I will mention a few that I can well remember.

One that impressed me, in fact we all felt badly over the death of a little child, and to think it had to be buried way out on the Plains. We were so far from civilization there was no way of getting a little coffin or getting material to make one, so my uncle being along and very handy with tools said if each one would help by what material they would spare, some pieces of wood, nails and material for lining, he would do the best he could, so he made the little coffin. Each one gave gladly the best that they had, and the dear little one was laid to rest with the help of the kind people in the train, the little mound was covered with rocks to keep the wild animals from digging it up, which would have been done without that protection, and we left the little grave with tears and sym-

pathy for the ones that had to part with their dear one way out on the lonely desert. The coffin was made of sixty pieces of wood that different ones gave, and I think thirty pieces of material of different kinds to line the little coffin. All was given gladly and the best each one had. It seems that no matter where we are or what the circumstances are, there is some way of doing good and helping each other in times of trouble and sorrow.

We had several thrilling experiences with the Indians. At one place we camped, a band of Indians came to our camp. One of the young men in the party was anxious to try and see how he could shoot with a bow and arrow, so one of the Indians gave him the bow and arrow to see what he could do by shooting with it. It did not take very long for us to find out, and nearly to our sorrow, as the arrow came down, instead of hitting the mark it struck the Indian in the back. It was all excitement for awhile, and the old Chief got a lot of his men together and we all thought we would be massacred. I well remember how we all felt. My grandmother (father's mother), went in the emigrant wagon and there she prayed for the good Lord to spare our lives. My sister Lizzie and I were crying. The old Chief got on his horse and so did the other Indians get on their horses, and were about to start for more Indians. What to do was a problem, finally we made peace with them by giving them all the tobacco and molasses we had in our train (emigrant train). My father was the one who thought of the tobacco and a man in the train had some. We were not going to give them but one large piece of it. Then they talked between themselves a long time and the old Chief came to my father and held up two of his fingers and said, "Two to whack, no kill," and you may believe that was settled and we left in a hurry. It was dark and we thought if we staid there they might return and make trouble. We all knew the arrow hurt the Indian, for when it was pulled out of his back (the arrow), the blood began to trickle down his back. At the time it happened we had just finished eating. Mother had made some nice biscuits, and when the Indians asked for

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anything to eat we were afraid to refuse them. So they sat down to our little table and asked for biscuits and coffee. It was while he was eating, the man accidentally shot him with the arrow. It was a serious affair to have anything like that happen, as the Indians were at war with the Whites. A great many times we traveled by night and had no camp fire, for fear of being seen by the Indians and being carried off and killed by them, as killing of whites and getting a scalp to hang on their belts was a great honor to them.

We traveled until we came to a place where we could get fuel and water. Our fuel was buffalo chips. The water was very bad and scarce, most of it tasted of salt and sulphur. At one time it was so bad that mother said she *did not know* what they would do, and George says, "Well, if you can't get water, make tea, mother." At last we got to a place where the water was very good, we decided to stay there overnight. We were undecided if we should stay there or try to go on further. It was fortunate for us that we decided to stay there as the next morning we passed a station that the Indians had burned down and three men lying by the roadside burned to a crisp. There were some horses also burned. We started on our way and passed a stage loaded with soldiers all armed. We knew we were in a dangerous part of the country. As we were passing the stage we saw something bouncing from one side to the other of the road as the six big stage horses were coming down the hill a fast as they could, and saw an Indian on the back of the stage dragging him to death. He had several scalps hang on his belt where had killed people and taken their scalps.

One place where we were camped a band of Indians, they did not seem very savage although they did not look good to us, they were dancing a war dance all in a circle, some of them had women's scalps hanging from their belts, and all bright colored feathers sticking in their hats, or what they had on their heads.

I was a great lover of riding on a horse or mule, so to please me Father let me ride on one of the spare animals. I thought it great, so this day I got a little ahead of the emigrant

train, which I should not have done as Father and Mother told me never to get out of sight of the wagon. I was going a little faster than the wagon train, so I was undecided when I came to a couple of roads running in different directions. I happened to look and right by my side were a couple of men. They did not look very good to me. One said, "Little girl, where are you going, what a fine animal you have." I started on the road that I thought was the one to take. He says to me, "That is the wrong road." I began to feel afraid and turned as if I were going to take the other road, instead I just made quick time and got back to our wagon, and I learned to do as I was told, not to get out of sight of the wagon again. No doubt if I had gone the road they told me, I never would have seen my folks again.

Going out of Salt Lake City we had an experience I never shall forget. We were the last wagon out of Salt Lake, as father had to have his mules shod. We were going through a deep cut in the mountains rather slowly, a wagon drove up with several men in it. One came alongside our wagon, and asked if they could pass as they were in a hurry. By that time we were in a very narrow cut and impossible for us to pass or get by. Anyway the men who passed us knew they had the best of us, as we soon found out. One of the men came back and was trying to get the spare span of mules that was hitched at the back of the wagon. We had a span ready to change when the others would get tired out. My father protested, when he saw what they were doing. It did no good, as it seemed they were determined to get the mules. They said they would have them and our lives as well. At their threats we were very much frightened, we children began crying, poor dear mother pleading for our lives, and father doing all he could to protect us, poor old Grandma praying for our safety and for relief to come. It seemed as if her prayer were answered, as our uncle and some other men in the train missed us and rode back just in time, as they had their guns and knives out, either to murder or frighten us, which they most certainly did. It looked as if we would have been dealt with roughly if help

had not come just as it did. Child as I was, I will never forget what we passed through. We staid in Salt Lake City ten days to get the mules shod and rested up, and while in Salt Lake City mother and father wanted to have our pictures taken, so grandma said she would stay by the wagon while we went to the photograph gallery. There was Lizzie, George and myself. Well, we had our pictures taken. We have them now (you might laugh to see them). When we returned poor old grandma had fallen asleep and what do you think happened. The Mormons had stolen all of our best clothes. Mother had sewed all of her nice dresses, father's broadcloth dress suit, Lizzie's and my silk dress we had for best all in three sacks, as trunks would have taken too much room in our wagon. We all felt sorry about it, but not as sorry about the clothes as we did for poor Grandma. They also took our provisions and cleaned most everything out they could. Father got a policeman and the town was hunted over, but no trace of them, so we all remember our stay in Salt Lake City. We were there on the 4th of July, arriving the 30th of June, on Lizzie's birthday, 1863. Salt Lake City is a beautiful place. I remember how the women would come to sell berries and vegetables. Then we started on our journey again to California.

On the desert it looked so beautiful to look way off, and as we thought to nice homes, green grass, trees and running water. Looked as if the homes were fenced in with picket fences, so we would travel to get to those lovely spots. Finally we were told there were no homes or anything, just a mirage. The weather became so hot that we had to travel by night. In some way we got separated from the train and got lost on the desert. We could not find any wagon tracks and traveled around and around for a night and a day and perhaps longer. I cannot remember just how long, I know we were getting quite discouraged. The water we carried was about gone, and the animals were in need of water, traveling on the dry, dusty desert. We began to realize we were in a very serious position and it seemed as if we never could find our way out. We had lost our bearings entirely as to where we were or how far

from the road, and to see broken wagons and bones of animals and people that had been lost and died, that was certainly terrible. Again I think dear old Grandma's prayers were answered, as we saw what looked like a very slight mark of what was an old wagon track which we followed, and were happy when we found it took us to the main road and we were safe once more. We did not meet any of the party again. No doubt they looked for us and wondered where we were. We got so far away and off the road they could not find us, as we were way out on the plains.

End of June 24, 1924. See the next page for the remainder of the article.

"Across the Plains"

This is the last installment of a story written by Mrs. W. H. Sweetland regarding a trip she made with her parents and other members of her family across the plains in the '60s:

We found some of the rivers were beds of quicksand and I remember how they crossed those rivers. They would hitch all the mules, horses and oxen on one wagon, and the horses would reach the other side, then they would take one wagon at a time and cross as quickly as possible. If they stopped the wagon and animals would quickly go down in the quicksand. No doubt a great many lives had been lost in those quicksand beds. So each wagon was taken over that way and landed safely on the other side of the river.

Little did we children realize the danger there was in traveling at that time. One place where we were traveling, father lost the tire off one of the wheels of his wagon when we were driving one night, and had to go back thirty miles to find it. He did not miss the tire until the next day. I guess I did not write about the men going in swimming or bathing in Salt Lake. When they came out of the water their clothes were perfectly white and stiff, as the water was so strong with salt.

Another thing I did not mention, when we were camped some Indians came up and had a blanket and began to shake it so the horses became frightened and started to speed and went over the hills as fast as they could go and the Indians after them. The men got the best of them and brought the horses back to camp again. All the women and children were left alone while the men went after the animals, and we did not know if the Indians would have us all murdered when my father and the men came back or not. The animals were getting pretty good, so we camped in a place called Ruby Valley, that was in the eastern part of Nevada. There were just two teams of us left then, a man by the name of Bevins came along until we got near Fort Churchill, when we got separated, then each took a separate road.

We camped in Empire a few days, then we came on west up over the Van Sickle grade and stayed at Mud Springs a few days (it is called El Dorado now). We reached Mud Springs August 8, 1863. From there we went to Placerville and settled down for several years, then later returned East. Before going East we went to Dayton. My father had a large piece of wood land in the Como mountains. He had men cutting wood in the mountains and several large teams hauling the wood to Virginia City to the mines. After staying in Dayton for about three years we returned to a city called Vineland in New Jersey, about half way between

Philadelphia and Cape May.

We went East on about the first train that crossed the continent after the gold spike was driven. There were no nice coaches or sleepers like they have now. For our beds we bought sort of ticks stuffed with hay, turned the seats toward each other, had boards the right length to put these ticks on, and that was our bed. One place the brakes on the cars did not hold very good, and it was down grade. The cars started to go at a very great speed and went quite a distance before they could be stopped. Luckily we did not meet another train or there would have been a collision. No doubt a lot of the passengers would have been killed.

We certainly had a lot of narrow escapes coming and going. We saw great herds of buffalo and some of the men would shoot out of the car windows at them. The stations were a great distance apart, and the men at the stations had dried buffalo meat to sell.

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I hope you will excuse all the mistakes, and the children will enjoy hearing you read my trip.

MOTHER

[Louisa Marie Chubbuck Sweetland]

Carson City, Nevada
January 2, 1923

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