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EDITORIALS

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OUT OF OLD NEBRASKA



by **JAMES C. OLSON**, Superintendent STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The fact that Nebraska has more miles of running water than any other state in the Union didn't make life any easier for the thousands of emigrants whose covered wagons traveled its trails to the west. Indeed, one of the most serious problems facing the overland emigrant was that of getting across Nebraska's many streams.

The traveler was faced with the problem no matter which trail he took—that north of the Platte or the one running along the south side of the river. There were no bridges until in later years, and ferries, in addition to being few and far between, often were so expensive that the average traveler simply couldn't afford to use them. In most cases, the only feasible way to get across a stream was a ford it.

This always was time consuming and frequently hazardous. At some places, the streams were shallow enough to make it possible to take the wagons through without endangering the contents. At others, it was necessary to remove the baggage and ferry it over on rafts. Frequently wood for rafts was unobtainable. Hence in time the beds of some of the better emigrant wagons were made with calked seams so that they might be turned into clumsy barges when the occasion demanded it.

Along the northern route—usually called the Mormon Trail, but actually used by many others in addition to the Mormons—the

principal river barriers in Nebraska were the Elkhorn and the Loup. William Clayton's Emigrants' Guide, prepared for the Mormons but much used by all travelers, gives specific instructions for fording these two streams.

Regarding the Loup, Mr. Clayton wrote of "the wisdom and necessity of having several men go across on horses, to find the best route, before you attempt to take wagons over."

"If this precaution is not taken," he warned, "you may plunge your wagons from a sand-bar into a deep hole, and do much damage."

The South Platte Route was even more difficult, because ultimately the Platte itself had to be spanned. No matter where it was crossed—west of Fort Kearny, at Brule or at Julesburg—the Platte was a formidable barrier. In time, bridges or ferries were provided at other important crossings, but never at the Platte. Too shallow for ferries and too wide for bridges, from the days of the first fur

trappers on through the Oregon migration and the California gold rush, the Platte had to be forded.

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Prize For Dr. Bunche

BY IRVING PFLAUM
 The Chicago Daily Sun

When the awards are given out by God and man, near the front of the line should stand an American Negro, grandson of a slave and son of a poor barber. Ralph J. Bunche is worthy. He is a credit to his race and country, a flower in the lapel of mankind.

When Ralph Bunche came to Northwestern university to study anthropology, he was an honored student of political science. On a fellowship of the Social Science Research Council he had gone to Togoland, on the African Gold Coast. But he discovered that unless he knew why the natives live the way they do and what makes them what they are, he couldn't understand them.

Anxious to help improve the mandate system in Africa, Dr. Bunche appealed to a famed anthropologist, Melvin Jean Herskovits of Northwestern. For six months Bunche worked in Evanston. Then he went to London and to South and East Africa to study colonial problems. He traveled around the world studying.

War sent him into government service and war has kept him in since. From OSS to the state department to the United Nations, Dr. Bunche has been the learned voice of the dark skinned colonial.

Thus, when a murderer struck at Count Bernadotte, Bunche was prepared. He understood the Arabs whose war with the Israeli he was called upon to stop.

He had inherited a history of political blunders. High passions had been aroused, ancient hatreds

revived, sensitive prestige sorely injured. The fanatics on each side still were struggling to prevent a settlement and peace.

Dr. Bunche, of course couldn't create brotherhood where so lately there was only bloodshed. But with gentle tact, fine understanding and endless patience he, and he alone, brought a modicum of peace to the Holy Land.

For this he deserves, in these barren days, our highest honors. The U.S. and UN should start to reward him.

"Since he lost his money, half of his friends don't know him any more."

"And the other half?"

"They don't know yet that he has lost it."

"Here's one name on the committee that I never heard of."

"Oh, that's probably the person who actually does the work."

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