

# Monument to Pathfinders Who Blazed Old Oregon Trail



AUDIENCE LISTENING TO ADDRESSES

The wide plains and the mountains called to them. And many a gray dawn saw their camps in the rain.

**C**HANGE was their mistress, chance was their counselor; yet the first pioneers who opened the trails through the country now so happily grown into the prosperous state of Nebraska must surely have had visions, however dim, of the beautiful picture of civilization that would grow out of the waste they passed through.

In all its pride of accomplishment Omaha, and its vigorous sister cities, must pause now and again to pay the reverent word of gratitude to the camp-makers who first spread ashes on its soil in the cause of patriotism. And it does so this, willingly and graciously, in speech and practice alike.

The "landmarks of history" in this region have recently been added to by the erection in Riverview park of a permanent monument to mark the entrance of the Old Oregon Trail into Nebraska. It is in the form of a sundial—a time marker—that it is hoped, will survive in its sunny location for many a decade. Useful in itself, this monument, erected by the Omaha chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, will also serve to bring to mind the reflection that in the ancient day brave spirits were wont to open new paths to the promising westland, to blaze trails for the other fortunate thousands who were to follow.

Mouldered into dust beside the windings of the old trail, the bodies of many and many a stout-hearted man and woman have enriched the soil and their memories have inspired later comers to strive and compete. In groups and singly, numerous of the first travelers on this famous trail fell victims to the blood lust of fierce Indians. Others succumbed to the hardships that befell them when they had passed the frontiers of civilization; and many beside laid down under the weight of grief and disappointment that shadowed their hopes



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and blazed their brave anticipations. On the foundation they began safer, easier, modern trails have been laid; and it seems entirely fitting that those who enjoy them should pay grateful tribute to the sturdy pathfinders of the earlier time.

Adventurers, gold-seekers, settlers, home makers and history makers, have all passed this way. As early as 1540 Coronado and his venturesome band of explorers penetrated to the Platte Valley. Under instructions from President Thomas Jefferson Lewis and Clark traversed the land in its virgin state, then altogether unpromising of its later triumphs and richness. These pioneer captains made camp not far from the present site of Omaha, probably about where Calhoun now dots the map, from whence they pressed on over lowland and highland, through woods and across rivers, until they reached the Pacific ocean. Half a year of strenuous travel was devoted to covering the distance now made in luxurious comfort in a week.

It was in 1804 the Lewis and Clark expedition passed this way, and six years later the Astorian band of fur traders and trade boosters followed practically the same route of the government expedition. William Price Hunt, the leader, is credited with having made many an original detour as he wended his way over this section of the American desert, which in the later development has shamed the riches of ancient lands. This expedition it was that established Astoria, on the Pacific coast.

Guiding a party of scientific investigators, Major Stephen H. Lang, of the United States Army, set out from St. Louis in the spring of 1839, and made his winter camp somewhere between Calhoun and the site now occupied by Omaha. The next spring the party traversed the length of Nebraska along the north bank of the Platte. Then followed other bands, unknown to history, made up of adventurous spirits, until Captain Bonneville came along with a commercial wagon



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train, accompanied by trappers. They made headquarters somewhere about Falls City, for trapping, and Bonneville went on to the Pacific. This party is credited with being the first that got through without suffering great loss at the hands of the Indians.

But it's fifty miles to Vassar! Missionaries now took the field, and as the message of the gospel went into the lonely places soon information came back for a strong advance of settlers and a wide spread of business. It is today matter for wonder that up to 1842 less than 200 people were known to be in the vast stretch of country west of the Missouri river and north of California—Oregon—through which the mighty rivers flowed



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down to the sea. But conditions bettered with amazing rapidity when Peter H. Burnett and other indefatigable leaders of caravans pushed through the forbidding country with long trains of wagons and animals, accompanied by regiments of people who would not recognize difficulties that the old Oregon trail, despite its dangers, was a wonderful highway, in its broadest sense a national road. They testify, too, that it was the route traversed by a national movement, the broad path to opportunity heretofore neglected, "as a highway of travel the most remarkable known to history."

Indian tribes gave way, sullenly but certainly, to brigades of useful people. Cultivators, producers, more and more each year, greeted the passing traveler whose predecessors had met only lurking savages and far-spreading desolation. Life, development, took the place of stagnation and danger; husbandry replaced hunting, school houses broke the horizon line where tapers had been set, and the whole land was quickened, gladdened and made to bring forth riches in abundance.

The trail makers have passed on over the eternal divide, the generation of first settlers is passing fast, but their descendants have an inheritance, in Nebraska and other states of the west, the like of which is not surpassed on the earth's surface. Impressed by the thoughts that flow

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**VIRGINIA**  
of the  
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**CHAPTER XIV—Continued.**

"In a horn," remarked the soldier, "give us another of them coffin nails!"

Mr. Craighed began humming "It's Twenty Miles to Vassar," evidently a West Point ditty, paced the guard house, working corners with military precision, or stood accurately with certain fingers on certain seams of his trousers as precise as a tin soldier. The atmosphere had permeated his system; and when a corporal's guard called for them, his stride might have been offered as a model.

Access to Major Flathers' desk was opened for them by orderlies described by Mr. Waddy as state's prison looking fellows, armed to the teeth. The major was thin, solemn, bilious looking, as if he had a bad liver from service in the tropics; haughty, as if the liver had overflowed his temper. Their hearts sank as they looked into his eyes of yellowish brown, with whites of smoky yellow; and noted the funeral droop of his long black mustache, cut down the middle by a greater droop of the nose enormously high, surpassingly hooked, incredibly sharp and thin; he looked so unapproachable and jaundiced, and like an immense excited potentate contemplating candidates for the asylum for the irrevocably worthless who had been found below grade. His voice was the deepest of basses rumbling softly out as if protesting that, really, it had no room to turn itself. Craighed stared at the sound, and began a close scrutiny of Major Flathers, making notes in a book.

"Who are you?" said Major Flathers. He looked at Mr. Waddy, his tone of well modulated distant thunder seeming to say that they were really nobody.

"Who are we?" cried Mr. Waddy. "Who are we? American citizens, sir! Citizens and taxpayers before you was ever born, sir! Wire John H. Gunn, at Washington, that Cyrus Waddy's shut up in jail, and you'll find out. You'll—"

"It would seem an economy of time, Mr. Waddy," said the major, after quelling him with a yellow glow, "not to trouble Mr. Gunn nor the president, who might find it inconvenient to attend for purposes of identification. It would be quite as easy for this young gentleman to be the crown prince of Germany, and the other the first lord of the admiralty as for you

down of the chin with a hoarse whisper on the word "in Gunn!"

"Oh, his twenty miles to Vassar, and the Hudson for to cross; But his regulations to be broke at both ends of the route; But Belinda's eyes are like the sky, Belinda's hair is floss; And his love is black as plumed with love, and doesn't care a hoot! Oh, his twenty miles to Vassar! United States Army, set out from St. Louis in the spring of 1839, and made his winter camp somewhere between Calhoun and the site now occupied by Omaha. The next spring the party traversed the length of Nebraska along the north bank of the Platte. Then followed other bands, unknown to history, made up of adventurous spirits, until Captain Bonneville came along with a commercial wagon

to be Mr. Waddy—illustrious though he may be, and no doubt is. You must prove yourselves good citizens by authorities nearer than Washington. What can you say, sir?"

This query was directed at Craighed, who had ceased to take notes and was looking at the imposing major in the manner of one who knows his man.

"Most high and illustrious one," said he, "the world is wide, its population some sixteen hundred millions. Of this considerable force, we are but three. You ask O. Serenity, to set ourselves apart from the others by brands and marks. Wert thou present when the obstetrician scheduled our strawberry marks, or the midwife recorded the notches in our ears? Then how can the thing be proven? It is a hard saying. And yet, didst ever see that serated nose? Give me a pen, and let me mark it 'Exhibit A'."

The major rose with pronounced absence of haste, adjusted a pair of rimless glasses to his pre-iptuous beak by a clasp of special construction; examined Craighed's nose critically and impersonally, as if looking at a specimen in a case; slowly removed the glasses, and deliberately re-adjusted himself.

"I have observed such a nose in but one case," said he; "but its introduction in evidence does not establish its identity with the only snout of similar asymmetry recorded. 'Exhibit A' will be considered for what it is worth—a evidence. Proceed."

"The memory," went on Craighed, "is more intimately personal and individual than is the organ of olfaction. I will now render a song, which I beg this honorable body to receive as 'Exhibit B.'"

Though this declaration made a distinct sensation among the officers and orderlies; and though the sergeant, who was short-hand reporter, broke three pencils in his agitation, Major Flathers never let down by even one degree the saturnine dignity of his presence. Craighed sang with a fine independence of tone, but with an air and style of tone emission which reminded all hearers of a basso profundo laboring in the trough of the heaviest vocal set. That it reminded the friends of the major himself were shown by smiles hidden behind hands, by significant glances, and a final utter as Craighed finished with a sub-ocular cadence so low that it could not be sung, but only indicated by the drawing

Nobody but Craig—let's write a letter to Bill Alexander—in Gunn!"

The major was as complacent now as he had been unyielding. He and Craighed talked over the Belinda episode, the expulsion of Craighed, the slowness of promotions, the aeronef company, and then the aeronef itself as it lay on the parade ground—on which occasion Major Flathers was particularly fierce in commanding a search for down looking photographic mechanism, and for explosives. The examination, the dinner, the view of the Flathers baby, and Mrs. Flathers' confidential conversation with Carson, who was always strong in his appeal to the ladies, delayed their departure until the sun was sinking beyond Fort Gaines, and Mr. Waddy was startled into trembling fit by the sunset gun as they crossed the rifle range, taking it for an artillery attack on the Virginia. The darkness crept under them across the peninsula as they flew; and it was startling when they alighted, each filled with his own anticipations—Mr. Waddy, of supper; Mr. Craighed, of the company of Mrs. Graybill; and Carson, to whom the terrible experience of the day before had made her doubly dear, of admission to the presence of Virginia. Mrs. Graybill met them, with a letter in her hand for Mr. Carson, and a troubled look on her face. Carson turned white as he tore it open.

"I am going away," it ran, "with my expressions for which I should be sorry. As for the compromising of myself, of which you have spoken, I care nothing, other things count for so much more. I want our parting to be without bitterness; so with the assurance that I shall watch over you and pray for your success, and with thanks for the many, many good and kind things you have done for me, I bid you goodbye forever. We can never forget each other—the things we have never together forbid that; but we can never meet again.—Virginia Suarez."

Craighed caught Theodore as he staggered.

"When did they go?" said he.

"About noon," replied Mrs. Graybill. Carson groaned, thinking bitterly of the hours wasted at Fort Morgan; and asked for Mrs. Stott. She had gone home on the Roc.

"They went north, then," said Carson. "So must we," rejoined Craighed.

"Yes," said Mr. Waddy, who seemed to consider the Virginia incident closed, "I'll go home and push the work in the west; you boys to New York, to start the injunctions an' things."

"Very well," said Carson. "Craighed, we'll start for New York in the Virginia in the morning!"

That night Carson wandered to the spot on the beach where he had drawn Virginia down out of the sky in the runaway helicopter. The heavens were overcast, the east winds nooned through the pines, great gray waves broke thunderously on the beach, and from the marshes came the croak of night herons. He sat pondering on his misery, on the temptation to which he had succumbed, on the hopelessness of his lot. They—him and she—had approached each other like two stars, and

flown off into space, never to meet in predestined orbits. And after all they had enjoyed and lived and suffered together! The hand on his shoulder felt for the moment like hers, but it was Mrs. Graybill who had come through the soft sand, silent as a ghost, to his side.

"Mr. Carson," said she, "this isn't the last. Don't give up. I couldn't speak to her; I was only a stranger. But I kept the fragments of the letters she tore up. Put them together. They will cheer you up. What a woman wants to say, and doesn't dare, means much, much more than what she says. Mr. Carson, don't despair!"

And she ran away as silently as she had come.

**CHAPTER XV.**

**A RETREAT FROM BABYLON.**

The date when the Virginia left the dunes of the Alabama coast for her first long voyage is now historic. It placed man, as a flying animal, on an equality with the birds and bats and insects. It released the makeshift with which the world had attempted the conquest of the air, with the flail, the coracle, the galley, the galleon, the distaff and the sling, to the limbo of abandoned things. The gas bag of the aerostat, and the aeronefs of the first decade of the century, went the way of the tentative and imperfect with the steam engine of Hero, and the war gins of Archimedes, Callimachus and Demetrius. The new era is one of great flying engines beside which the Virginia was as a humming bird to a hawk; but which are, every one, built on the Virginia's principles—the direct thrust of the blades, and the balancing by the automatic distribution of power by means of light gyroscopes. The new hero was the miserable young man who looked like one with his death wound, and manoeuvred the machine like a veteran—Theodore Carson. Every schoolboy knows these things.

But every one does not know of her difficulty in getting off. She cleared from her nest and struck out like a honing pigeon, and suddenly, as if by an elastic return ball, she returned to the launch of Mr. Waddy and Mrs. Graybill on Fresh-water lake.

"What's wrong?" inquired Mr. Waddy anxiously.

"My mental cargo shifted," replied Craighed, from above. "The Virginia was leaky and unseaworthy! Had to put back!"

"Shifting cargo" symbolized the fact that Mr. Craighed had something to say—in which he passed from a forced business conversation to an exchange of farswells with Mrs. Graybill, and short by Carson's resumption of flight.

The wharves and verandas of the hotels and villas were filled now with observers of the new inhabitant of the sky. They saw her take her second flight northward; but again, with a sweep that filled them with admiration, she fled back once more to a position a few yards above the launch.

"The crew mutinied," said Craighed. "Salt horse wormy! And we ought to work out this Broom Idea a little more, Mr. Waddy."

"There ain't no use in your comin' back for that," said Mr. Waddy. "I know my business as well as the next one. I'm handlin' the west. You let me alone."

"Assuredly, Michael," assented Craighed, "No use o' that," cut in Mr. Waddy. "You give Flathers the idee."

"I communicated the conception," said Craighed. "Yes."

"An' I paid him fr an opinion on it?"

"You became obligated for it," said Craighed. "Equivalent to payment, in your case, but, legally, quite distinguishable."

"It's the same thing," cried Mr. Waddy. "An' the fellers we hire know more than a quarter section of folks that don't know their own minds. Don't you come back again; it bothers me like musketeers. Go on!"

"Presently, most pulesant sir. There's a matter we haven't mentioned. How shall we yawp forth the grand halting sign of distress, when I am far away?"

"They're still runnin' the mails and telegraphs, ain't they?" queried Mr. Waddy testily.

"Would you," queried Craighed, "place a world in pawn on the faith of a mail clerk; or the fidelity of a telegraph system, controlled by our loathsome enemies? As tributary to triumph, answer, in the name of our patron saints, Sir Henry Morgan and Jesse James!"

"We agreed on a cipher," snapped Mr. Waddy. "Go on an' use it."

"Cipher?" scoffed Craighed, who had devised it himself. "Not with the hounds of Shays on Carson's traces. Why, any cipher can be deciphered. Go back to the time of Bacon!"

"Well, if you stay much longer," cried Mr. Waddy irritably, "we may as well go back to the time of Ham as Bacon! What are you drivin' at, anyhow?"

"Your pungent play on words," said Craighed, "gives me joy. It proves the power to corrupt. Last springtime you'd have been incapable of it. I'm driving at the necessity of a trusty messenger who will die rather than disclose, will swallow blue pills to keep them from the enemy, will explode a magazine before admitting a traitor even into its table of contents. I know one such."

"Who?" asked the puzzled Waddy.

"Your beautiful daughter! Give her a running schedule per ten-hour train between Chicago and New York, bringing your messages and returning with ours until victory is won. Eh?"

"It won't do," she said. "I never could eat blue pills. Any one can deceive me." "Then I've some hope," said Craighed. "That's worth coming back for!"

"Use the mails, you absurd fellow!" she went on. "Goodby. Take him away, Mr. Carson; and return with your shield, or on it, Mr. Craighed. Oh, you—ha, ha, ha—ha—ha!"

"This ripping ha-ha, fair one," said Craighed severely, "would be usefully from a less seemly pharynx. But I swear—"

The oath was cut in two by an upward and forward flight, at the last speed, that pulled the speech in twain and left the launch alone in the great marsh, with Mrs. Graybill, her color high, her mouth occasionally curving into a smile—sometimes culminating audibly—practicing Japanese flower arrangements, while her father combed his beard with his fingers and said nothing.

(To Be Continued.)