

EXPERIENCE OF A PIONEER

I was born at Garden Grove, Decatur County, Iowa, June 26, 1846. My father, Walter G. Perry, disposed of his farm and other possessions and, in April, 1854, started with team, loaded wagon and family of wife and four children for the West, intending to go no farther than Nebraska; but falling in with a large emigrant train, which was under the command of one J. P. Coats, bound for the, then, Territory of Oregon, he was persuaded to continue with them; which cost him his life.

After having traveled three or four months we came to where the Indians had burned the grass for the purpose of starving the stock of the emigrants. Confronted with this condition, the train was divided into three sections, the foremost being designated as the Ward train, from the fact of its being composed almost entirely of the Wards and their relatives, while the second section constituted the largest train, and we brought up the rear with four wagons.

Our last camping place, where all were to meet alive, was at a place designated in our guide books as "White Horse Creek," I think in Idaho now, the time being about the last of August or later. We had traveled perhaps an hour the following morning when Indians were discovered coming out of a canyon in great numbers, the foremost afoot, and apparently unarmed, followed by mounted Indians armed with guns. They came up squarely in front of our train and stopped the teams, but appeared friendly, shaking hands and asking for whiskey; upon being told that we had none they began to talk of trading with the men, and while my father was talking of trading a pistol for a pony, they opened fire on us, shooting my father, my uncle and my father's teamster. Guns were then brought into play and the Indians retreated beyond gun-shot range, but hung around for several hours trying to stampede the stock. Thinking they wanted our horses, they were turned loose and the Indians departed after catching them all.

Of those shot, my uncle was killed outright, my father's teamster was shot through the abdomen and lived until the following morning and my father was shot through the lungs and lived until the evening of the fourth day. We overtook the big train on the fourth day after the attack. My father was buried on the morning following, and a few days later we came upon the dreadful sight of the massacred

members of the Ward party, all of whom were slain except two boys, William Ward, a boy of fourteen or fifteen years, who was shot in the lung with an arrow, but hid away and made his escape to Fort Boise, where the arrow was extracted and he recovered, and Newt. Ward, a boy of nine years, who had been left for dead by the Indians, and was rescued by Mr. Yantis, later a prominent citizen of Thurston County, Washington, who owned a farm near Tenino. From appearances the Indians had attacked the Ward train on the same day that we were attacked, as the stench from the dead and mutilated bodies was terrible, but we stopped long enough to dig trenches and rude graves for the burial of our murdered companions. The women and children presented a sickening spectacle, having been burned by the savages.

After having performed that sad and sickening task, we pursued our journey to its end without further incident of note, many going to what is now the state of Oregon, while we, with several other families, including Mr. Meeker, the father of John and Ezra Meeker, of Puyallup, and the Whitesells of Orting, made our way to Puget Sound by way of the Naches Pass, over the Cascade Mountains, which was a perilous trip. In coming down the mountain sides the wagons had to be "snubbed" down, as it was called, which was done by making strong ropes fast to each wagon and taking half-hitches around trees to control them while going down steep places.

My first stopping place to call home after reaching Puget Sound was a log cabin with the earth for a floor, on the bank of Bushelier (now Spanaway) lake, about ten miles south of Tacoma, into which my widowed mother took her four children. This was in October, 1854. After a few weeks we moved into a comfortable log cabin erected on a donation claim which my mother located, on American Lake. Soon after this my oldest brother and myself were compelled to herd sheep for the Hudson's Bay Company to obtain provisions to sustain life, which consisted of salt salmon and potatoes with an occasional pan of flour. This was our vocation during the Indian war, our shield from harm, when questioned by the Indians, being that we were "King George Tilicums." After the close of the war we passed through nothing more eventful than the usual hardships of pioneer life of those days. We had our own cows, which supplied us with plenty of milk, but we were often without bread. On May 8th, 1859, while yet a very young girl, I married Andrew J. Frost, who came to the country ten years prior to my arrival, and since that time my home has been in the territory and state of Washington, ex-

cept for an interim of four years that we lived in Mendocino County, California, and less than two years spent in Alaska. We have raised a family of six children, all of whom are married; the boys being Walter G., Andrew J. and Robert E., and the daughters are Harriett E., now Mrs. Forest J. Hunt, of Ketchikan, Alaska; Anna M., now Mrs. A. W. Morgan, of Ketchikan, Alaska, and Amelia, now Mrs. D. C. Stewart, of Nagrom, Washington. My husband died on the 9th of March, 1909, at our home at Hillhurst, Pierce County, Washington, which I still occupy.

MARY PERRY FROST.