

Adventures on the American Frontier

Following the Frontier West

Part Six

John Bidwell's Wagon Trip to California



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This book features QR codes that link to audio of the book being narrated so that readers can follow along.

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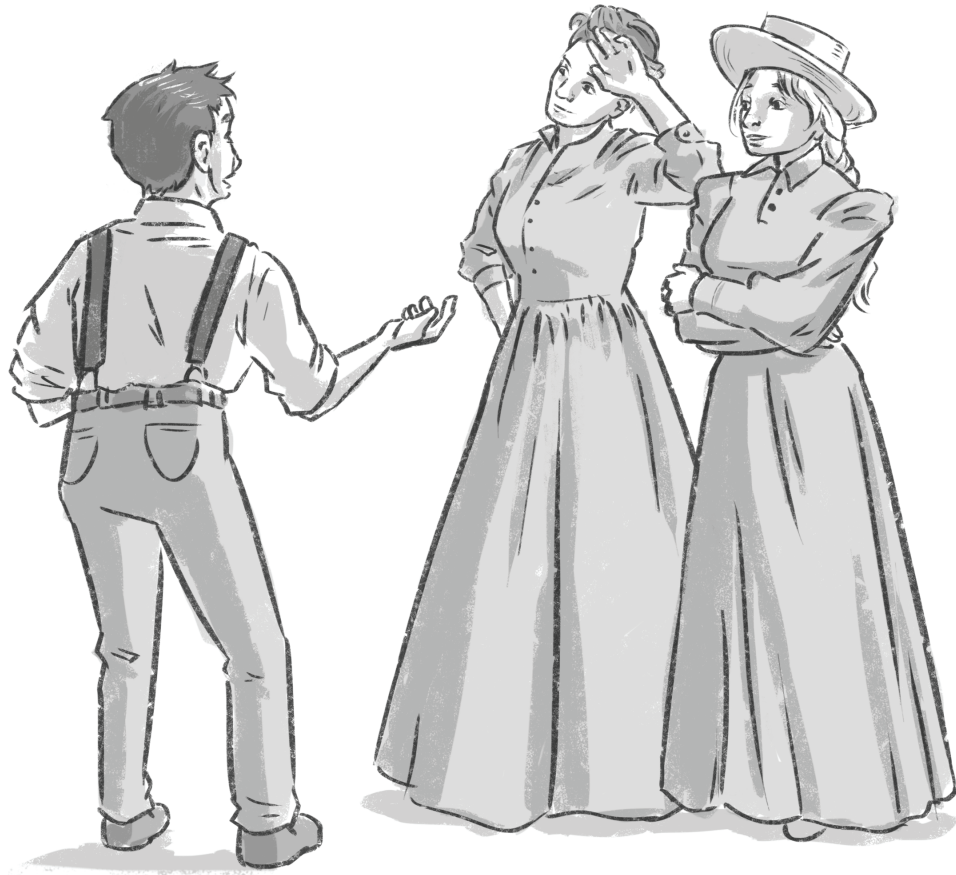
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John Bidwell was a restless young man. He read with envy the stories of the trappers and traders who were exploring the great wilderness of the American West, clear over to Oregon and California.

In 1839, John's Ohio home could hold him no longer. He heard of land that the government was selling to settlers in western Missouri near the Missouri River. It was the first step to adventure. Off he went. He filed a claim, and soon he had built himself a log cabin.





But John wasn't sure that Missouri was where he really wanted to settle down. He had been talking with trappers who had been to California. "California! Now, that's where I really want to go," he told his friends. "The Mexican government will give a man a



big ranch there for little to nothing.”

He set to work talking people into taking the trip with him. They would travel by wagon. “Come to Sapling Grove outside the city of Independence, ready to start for California, by May 9th,” he told the people who seemed interested.

The fact that no one had ever gone all the way to California by wagon train did not bother young John. He painted the picture of adventure in such bright colors that many people agreed to go.

John was getting his wagon ready in March of 1841 when a man rode into Independence on a fine black horse. "Where's the California company?" he asked. "I'm ready to go."

John smiled. "Trade your horse for some oxen, and I'll share my wagon with you," he told the stranger.

The stranger, George Henshaw, liked John right away. So he traded his horse for a pair of oxen and got a one-eyed mule in the deal. "The mule won't be as fine to



ride as my horse was, but it'll do," he said.

"When do we start?"

"The ninth day of May," replied John.

"Other wagons will be waiting for us in Sapling Grove."

The two men worked hard to get ready for the long journey ahead of them. Then they loaded the wagon with their supplies and took the ferry over the river. Sure enough, sixty-nine men, women, and children were waiting for them. With them were thirteen wagons and some animals.