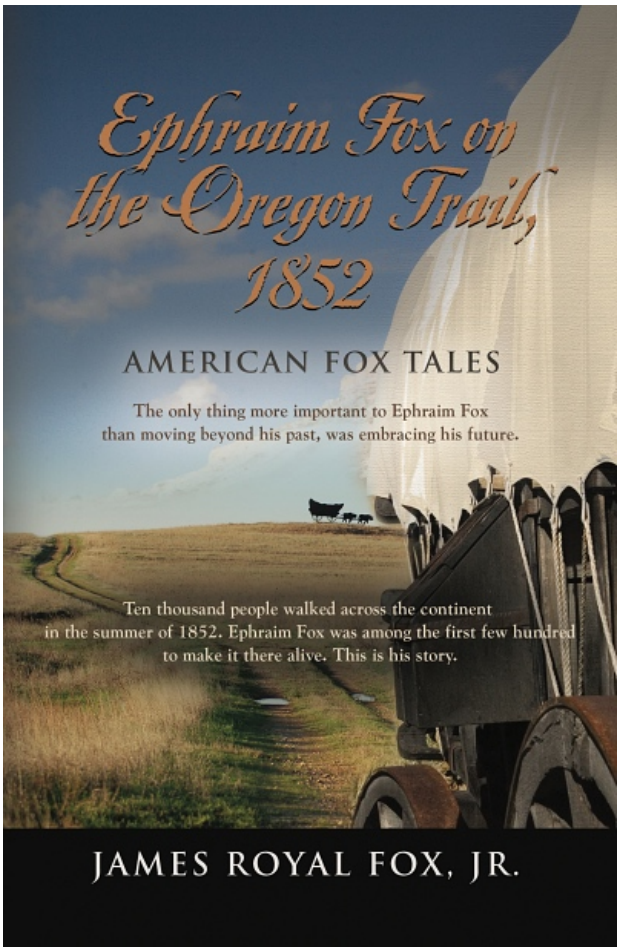

In 1852, Ephraim Fox found himself racing at the leading edge of a stream of humanity stricken by Cholera. At that point, the only thing more important to Ephraim Fox than moving beyond his past, was getting his family to Oregon, alive.

American Fox Tales:
EPHRAIM FOX ON THE OREGON TRAIL - 1852
By James Royal Fox Jr

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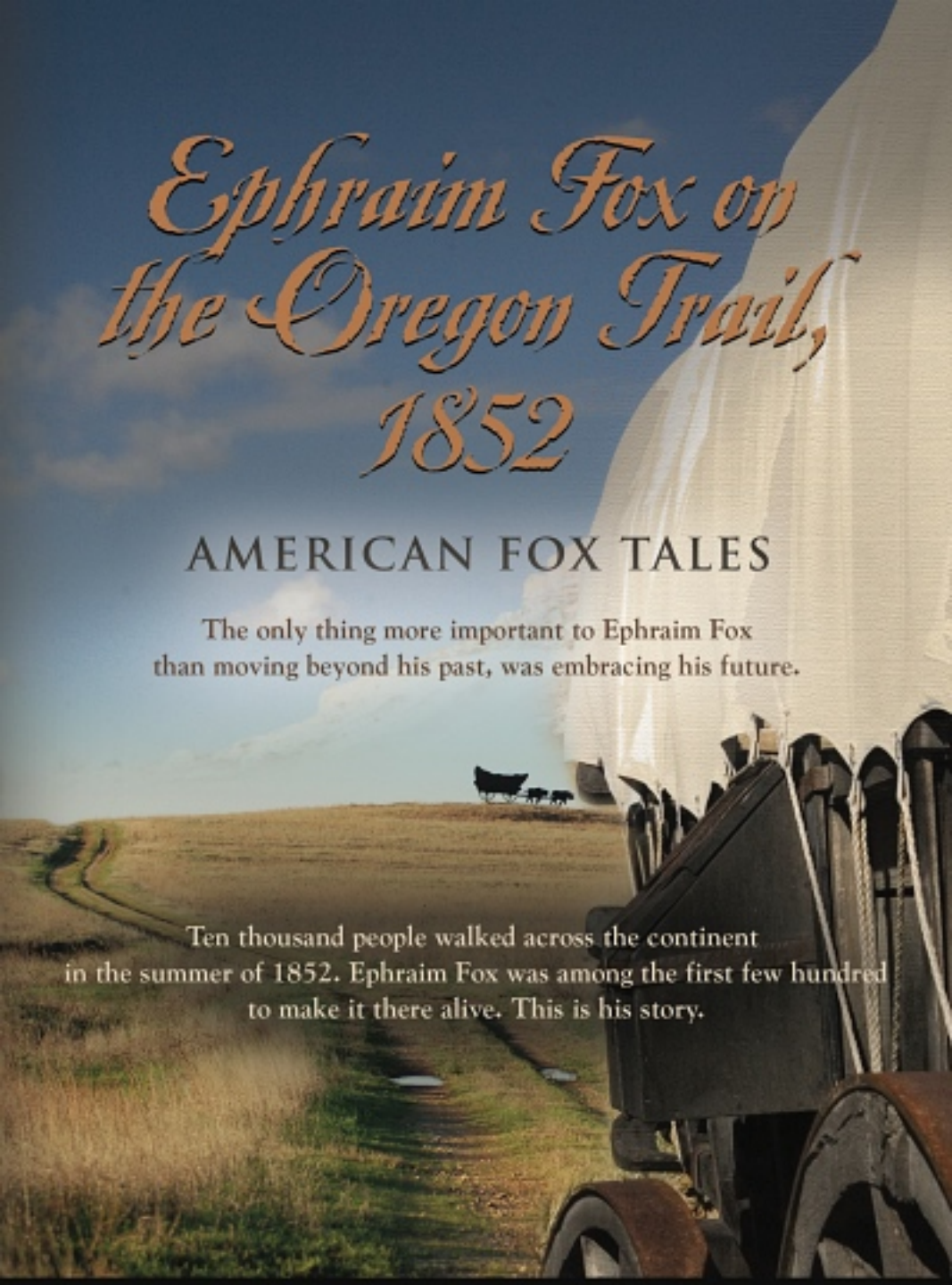
Ephraim Fox on the Oregon Trail, 1852

AMERICAN FOX TALES

The only thing more important to Ephraim Fox
than moving beyond his past, was embracing his future.



Ten thousand people walked across the continent
in the summer of 1852. Ephraim Fox was among the first few hundred
to make it there alive. This is his story.

JAMES ROYAL FOX, JR.

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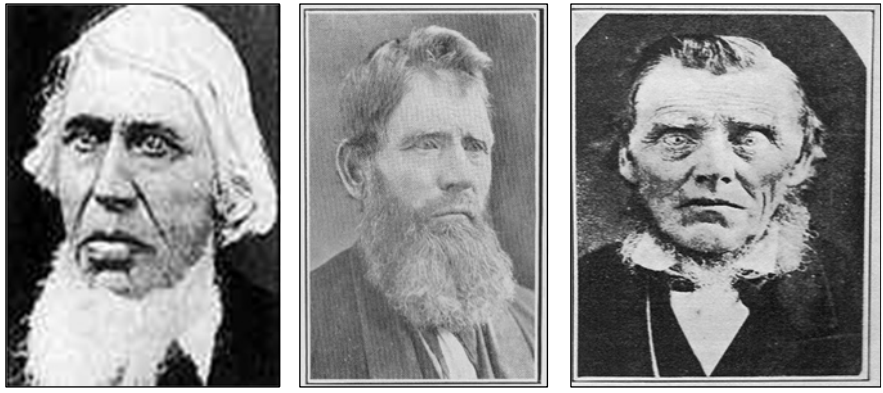
Chapter Twelve:
Preparing to Leave Missouri, 1851

Reports reached newspapers in Missouri in the spring of 1851, boasting the population of Oregon had reached about 12,000 and that men outnumbered women, 2 to 1. Many of the men in Oregon who had abandoned their farms and employment for riches in California gold fields were returning to take back up their previous occupations.[14] On January 29, 1851 Lane County was formed out of the southern part of Linn County and parts of Benton and Umpqua Counties.[151] The Territorial Legislature passed an act designating Albany as the new county-seat of Linn County, unseating Calapooia.[154] Also that year, the Indian Appropriations Act was passed, allocating funds to move Indians onto reservations for their safety and to reduce hostilities between them and white settlers.[1] On the Pudding River, despite gold-fields luring away most of the population, the Silver Creek Christian Church was established in April.[43]



John Alkire Powell and his brothers Noah and Alfred (9, 10, 11)

The largest Christian wagon train to cross the Oregon Trail in 1851, was the Powell train, led by three preaching brothers, named John Alkire Powell, Noah Powell, and Alfred Powell. The train

originated in Menard County, Illinois. John had been acquainted with Abraham Lincoln when the future President lived near the Powell family and both served in the Blackhawk War, in 1832. John was an imposing figure; six feet tall and about 225lbs. His presence on the pulpit was as powerful as his voice. On April 3, 1851, the Powell brothers jumped off to Oregon. Like everyone who crossed the Oregon Trail, their suffering was horrible. John Powell's eldest daughter gave birth along the way and though she recovered, near the Snake River she took ill and died near Meacham. Her infant passed away shortly after the family reached Linn County. The Powell's settled along the Santiam River, about seven miles east of Albany, except for Noah, who settled in Howell's Prairie in Marion County.[43]

Interestingly, when John wanted to know more about establishing a church in the valley, he knew to ask Glen Owen Burnett. It is unknown how the two knew each other, as one came from Missouri and the other from Illinois. Excited to find the Restoration Movement was strong in Oregon, John resolved to establish a church in Linn County. With his brother Alfred, they canvassed the area and established what has always been known as the Central Church in Linn County. Three additional accomplished preachers of the Restoration Movement arrived in Oregon that fall; G.W. Richardson, Samuel Bates Briggs, and Dr. John Nelson Perkins. Within a year, Richardson organized a small congregation that met at Hester Schoolhouse in Scio, in Linn County. Samuel Briggs entered the Oregon country through the Applegate Trail and remained in the Umpqua Valley of Douglas County, where he became the first member of the movement to preach. About a year later, Briggs began service as a county commissioner for a number of years. Like Dr. James McBride, Dr. John Nelson Perkins

was a physician-preacher. He settled with his family in Linn County not far from the Powell's and Richardson's. After preaching in Oregon throughout the 1850s and early 1860s he sold his claim sometime after the fall of 1862 and moved to Washington Territory. A historical record made note on Perkins; "*Finally business and politics drew him away from the gospel ministry and he went to Eastern Washington where he engaged in stock-raising and became noted as a cancer doctor.*"[43[p.141]] Many early pioneers sold their claims in the 1860's as 'free' land had become scarce and driven up property values immensely.

About a half-year after a commission had been created to make treaties for all the land west of the Cascade Mountain range, they finally became active. Allocated $20,000 for the purpose, they spent all but $300 after making six treaties with tribes in the Willamette Valley before they were notified that Congress had discontinued all treaty commissions. Again, all the Indians saw was white men who lied; and who could blame them? All treaties were now the duty of the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Anson Dart. Despite the size of territory and many tribes to be dealt with, Dart did a professional job. His knowledge and subsequent reports relating to the Indians were spot-on. In June of 1851 Dart visited the Cayuse and was shocked to see the once-great Indian tribe was reduced to 36 warriors. When Dart discovered the Nez Perce were going to war with Shoshone or Snake Indians, he talked them into waiting a year, until 1852. He promised if U.S. troops were not stationed in the Snake country by then, he had no quarrel with their fight. While this was a worthy goal, as it turned out the Shoshone spent the summer and fall virtually at war with emigrants instead, killing 34, wounding unknown numbers and stealing $18,000 worth of property.[21]

Spring was wet in the United States in 1851, when in June, a relentless rain spread across the Great American Desert, slamming into the border states of Iowa and Missouri, creating a flood nearly as

devastating as the Great Flood of 1844. In St Louis the waters of the Mississippi were within five feet of their peak in that record setting flood and in Cape Girardeau the flooding was worse. Des Moines, Iowa was all but destroyed and the town of Dudley was destroyed. Fences, homes and barns were washed away leaving great ruts through fields as they drained, wiping out the crops that once grew there. The rest of the summer remained wet as well.[26] In August when streams were as low as they would get before the fall rain, Ephraim and George along with their neighbors, were dismayed to see how much water still flowed. It is unfortunately impossible to know how deeply affected the families were by this epic storm. There was no means of weather forecasting, so by the time it was raining in buckets and streams began to blow out their banks, it was an emergency. There can be no doubt that taking cover at times that year from the rain, Ephraim worried fiercely that the soaking wet would last into the following spring when they planned to leave. Floodwaters were still making a great impact on the border states when on a cool, cloudy July 13 morning in 1851, James Bunch, 23, married Nancy Jane Fox, 16.[67] The weather outside on the day they wed might have given some hint to the future of their union.

Among those pioneers to jump off to Oregon despite the wet conditions, was Jonathon Keeney, who led a twelve-wagon train with a large drove of cattle out of Missouri in April 1851. His brothers James and Ely (twin to Elias), and possibly more of his family were among the group. At the Iowa, Sac and Fox Presbyterian Mission on April 24 his train joined with Rev. Neil Johnson who led three groups in five wagons.[133] In this group was Dr. John W. McCully, younger brother of David and Asa McCully who had gone to Oregon in 1849. About three days later the two groups traveling with Rev. Johnson, including John McCully, pulled ahead and away from the group. By

August 28, 1851, Keeney, Johnson and others that had joined them arrived at Philip Foster's farm in the Willamette Valley.[208]

By as early as 1851, when it was incorporated, it was plainly apparent that Portland was the new Oregon metropolis. Despite the stiff competition that Milwaukie had put up, the natural deep-sea port at Portland preordained its dominance. Three brick buildings were erected in Portland that year[14] and the state legislature authorized the construction of a new territorial penitentiary in Portland since the original prison in Oregon City had been destroyed by fire five years earlier.[108]

The hot spot in 1851 was southern Oregon, though so remote the world would only find out months later. Natives of the Shasta, Rogue and their allies turned the remote road from Oregon to California into a dangerous and deadly thoroughfare. Three men were attacked in May; David Dilley, was killed and the other two escaped into California to tell their tale. Volunteers quickly organized to respond. Crossing north over the Siskiyou Mountains, they killed two Indians and took a number hostage until the Indians gave up the murderers. The Indian chief refused to capitulate. June 1st a way down the river, a group of white men were attacked, and one Indian was killed. The following day at the same crossing of the river, three more groups of white men were accosted; one party lost four men.[21]

On June 2, 1851, Dr James McBride of the Christian Church was leading 32 miners' home to Oregon after prospecting for gold in California. Near present-day Ashland, 150 Rogue Indians ambushed the party and set off a four-hour gun battle. One miner was injured and the Indians got off with horses, packs and $1500 in supplies and gold dust. Seven Indians were killed including their chief and another four were wounded in the effort.[21; 157]

The Oregon coast was yet inaccessible but for Indian trails when Capt William Tichenor sailed his steamer, the *Sea Gull*, to the southern

coast on June 10, to establish a town that would someday become Port Orford. Unaware of any hostilities, Tichenor dropped off nine men with supplies and a small cannon and told the men he would return in two weeks. Soon approached by the Quatomah band of Rogue Indians, the colonists were menaced, so retreated to a rocky promontory between the tidal flats and the Pacific Ocean. The site became known as Battle Rock. As they prepared for attack, the Indians held a war dance, emboldened by a white bearded man in a red shirt, who turned out to be a Russian that likely marooned, made his home among the Indians. The war dance led to about 100 warriors advancing on the colonists. The Indians had no conception of cannon-fire so assembled for a charge when the first shot from the cannon killed seventeen of them including the Russian provocateur. Shocked and awed into a parlay, the Indians were told when the men's ship returned in two weeks, they would leave. By the time the 15th day had arrived about 400 Indians had assembled on the beach and the white men knew an attack was imminent. With a limited supply of ammunition, they decided to steal away and make for the settlements near the mouth of the Umpqua River. When Tichenor arrived soon after, his men were gone and he could see there had been a battle. When he found an incomplete diary that detailed the battle, Tichenor assumed the white men were all dead. His report resulted in newspaper articles on the coast detailing the massacre.[21; 157]

As these events were only beginning, on June 17, 1851, Maj. Philip Kearny was leading 28 men of the 1st Regiment of Mounted Riflemen from Oregon back to Missouri, through California, to recruit men from the Jefferson Barracks in St Louis. So many desertions had occurred by men to gold diggings that their ranks were sorely depleted. When Kearny heard the Rogues were at war with the whites and were assembling at Table Rock, he moved that way. High water delayed him until June 17, 1851, when 5 miles below Table Rock or 7 miles north

of present-day Medford on the Rogue, expecting an attack, the Indians engaged Kearny first. A captain was killed, and two soldiers wounded while eleven Rogue Indians were killed and six more wounded. As the captain was buried there on the banks of Stuart Creek, that bears his name, Kearny sent for reinforcements to pursue the Indians.[21; 157]

Jesse Applegate gathered volunteers and camped at Willow Springs to either cut the Indians off, or rendezvous with Kearny if he came that way. Joe Lane, having been elected a Territorial Delegate to Congress was on his way to inspect his gold diggings near Shasta when he heard the news and responded with the 40 men that were with him. Governor Gaines rode to the Rogue country without an escort to gather volunteers but found all the men were already racing toward the site of the fight. He remained in the Umpqua Valley until the end of June. Horseback dispatches attempted to coordinate Kearny and Lane's forces but Lane missed Kearny, so he went back to Stuart Creek. Here he met WG T'Vault and Levi Scott who were part of a detail getting supplies for Kearny. Lane followed them back to a rousing reception and the combined forces began to make their plan of attack. A brief skirmish occurred the morning of June 23 at Table Rock, but the real battle took place that afternoon, lasting until dark. Several whites were wounded but none were killed and though the Indians suffered losses, the number remains unknown as the bodies were drug away. The Indian leader, Chief Jo, challenged Kearny for more of the same but Kearny bluffed and proposed a new treaty to buy him time to think. Overnight the Indians disappeared, and Kearny went in hot pursuit downriver, crossing 7 miles below Table Rock and following Sardine Creek to its mouth at the Rogue River. Warriors scattered into the hills, leaving Kearny with 30 captive women. Kearny tried for two days to locate or goad the Indians into a fight without success. Governor Gaines used the hostages to negotiate a treaty and the Rogues agreed to accept US jurisdiction and to bring back stolen property. When

Gaines returned to Oregon City, he recommended a military guard and Indian agent be sent to the Umpqua Valley.[21]

Back on the coast, persistent efforts to populate Port Orford continued and by August, about 70 settlers felt confident they presented a sufficient number to be safe from Indian attack. Over-confident, about 23 men struck out to explore a right-of-way for a road to the gold fields. By August 23 the underbrush and terrain were such that most of the group wanted to give up and 13 went home to Port Orford. It wasn't long before the nine that chose to go on also abandoned the job. Now surrounded by thick underbrush, they employed some Coquille Indians to take them by canoe, downstream. On September 14, 1851, the Indians reached their village on the river and beached the canoes as their band, having heard of their white passengers, surrounded the boats. The Indians armed with bows and arrows and war clubs as well as knives fashioned from iron salvaged from the shipwreck of the pilot boat, *Hagstaff*, demanded the white men forfeit their weapons. A bloody fight ensued and five of the men were killed. One later said it was "the most awful state of confusion; it appeared to be the screams of thousands, the sound of blows, the groans and shrieks of the dying".[21; 157] Four escaped though one was wounded, including being partly scalped. Were it not for the Cape Blanco Indians, the men would not have survived to reach white settlements on the coast. Volunteer units were assembled and led by Gilbert Brush, who had been wounded and nearly scalped in what was being called the Coquille River Massacre. On November 5 the Indians armed with the firearms of the white men they'd killed, met the white men on opposite sides of the river and laid down their challenge. Fire was traded by both sides without effect for the river was too wide. The Indians disappeared. November 7 the volunteers built a raft and the dismounted men crossed to the other side. Moving up both sides of the

river for a number of wet and cold Oregon coast days they found no Indians, but encountered empty villages that they set to fire.[21; 157]

Encountering only poor weather, the plan changed, and the men returned to the mouth of the Coquille River where they procured three small boats and with 60 men, rowed back upstream in pursuit. On reaching the junction of the North and South Forks, Lt Thomas Wright went up the South Fork and Lt George Stoneman the North Fork, each with 14 men. In seven miles, Lt Stoneman encountered a large village that spanned both sides of the river. Exchanging a few shots, he returned downstream to reconnoiter with Wright, who though went further, saw no Indians. The next day the force divided as all worked their way upriver to confront the Indians. Two boats of ten men went ahead while 50 men walked along the south bank. When they were a half mile from the Indian camp, one company crossed the river as all continued stealthily upriver. When the Indians saw the boats, they ran to the river to prevent them from landing, not having seen the white men in the brush. The ambush killed 15 Indians and sent the rest running into the woods. Feeling as if the Indians had learned a sufficient lesson, the troops returned to the mouth of the river where they constructed a log barracks. Thus, 1851 ended a typical year of intercourse between white and red man in the Oregon Territory.[21;157]

Across the sea in Australia that year, gold was found and started a gold rush from California to Australia.[202] Another important event occurred in 1851 in Oregon; Jacob Vanderpool, a black man who owned a boarding house and saloon in Salem, became the only person to ever be exiled from Oregon using an exclusion law.[165]

No record discovered describes the process which Ephraim used to sell his farm and that of his mother, nor the property of his brother-in-law, George. Looking to the Old West article simply mentions the farms were sold. Ephraim and George either built up wagons they already owned and used on their farms, or they acquired them. Though

some distance away, Simmons Hardware Store and Wilson & Brothers, located in St Louis, was where many families outfitted themselves for the trip. There were many places closer where guns were bought or traded for, as well as coils of rope, tack and tools.[161] If Grandma Sara and her daughters weren't already aware, they were taught safe handling of both black powder rifles and pistols and instructed in the proper way to load, fire and reload as well as how to clear the barrel and clean the weapon. As most women's job was to keep the men in their cabin fed with ammo, most women knew how to melt lead and make musket balls from the time they were a girl. We know that George carried a 58" rifled barrel muzzleloader that had sights to 200 yards, because the *Old West* article includes a photograph of the rifle. The black walnut Mannlicher stock that supports all, but the last two inches of barrel was darkened from hanging in smoky cabins and carried in sweaty hands.[28] It is claimed in the article that it was a rare day when George missed anything he shot at with the large caliber rifle and that is probably true. The type of firearm Ephraim carried across the plains was never recorded.

The cost of traveling over the Oregon Trail and its extensions varied from nothing to a few hundred dollars per person depending how entrepreneurial a man might be. The cheapest way for a single man was to hire on to help drive the wagons or herds, allowing them to make the trip for nearly nothing or even make a small profit. Women seldom went alone unless their families had perished. Those with capital could often buy livestock in Missouri and drive the stock to California or Oregon for profit, which is what Keeney was engaged in doing in the spring of 1851. About sixty to eighty percent of the travelers were farmers like the Fox and Bunch families. As such, they already owned wagons, livestock, a team and many of the necessary supplies, thus lowering the cost of the trip to about $50 ($1690.83 on

Nov, 2020[170]) per person for food and other items. Still not an inexpensive prospect.[174]

With Grandma Sara and her daughters preparing for the trip months in advance; additionally making clothing and food stuffs, this further reduced the cost for the families to make the trip. It was the unforeseen costs of ferries and toll roads; some they were aware of and surely some they were not, that was most concerning. The $10 to $15 per wagon that was charged in places was a terrible price ($10 in 1850 is equal to $338.17 Nov 2020),[170] but there was little they could do but pay the price. If they didn't have it, they had to take their chances and push everything they owned into the water hoping all would survive. In 1852 when Ephraim Fox, George Bunch and neighbors came across the Oregon Trail, it was still mostly undeveloped; there weren't nearly as many bridges and ferries available as would be in later years.

Of note in the *Old West* article is the mentioning of a specific neighbor, named Ticer who lived near George Bunch. According to the article George's neighbor could not afford the trip and plead; weeping with George to help him go west. The article states George bought him a wagon and a yoke of oxen. While this event might have happened, there was no neighbor of George Bunch named Ticer, nor any variation of this name. Nor does the name appear in Linn County in historical documents. It should be noted that judging from census information George Bunch was a reasonably wealthy man of means, whose real and personal property values far exceeded those of his nearby neighbors. For this reason, the story might have some basis in fact, but it cannot be verified. Incidentally, Ephraim too, compared well financially among his neighbors, though not as well as George. Thus, if this story is true, it was not Ephraim that was miss-identified as 'Ticer'.

From the onset, it is very clear that Ephraim, George and those they traveled with, approached crossing the frontier with a simple goal, to

move as fast as they could safely travel. They intended to jump off early and move fast and hard. Judging from the men they knew who preceded them to the Oregon Territory, they learned this simple plan from first-hand advice. Those they knew that did not get to Oregon before the snow suffered for it and provided them valuable lessons too. Because of the speed in which Ephraim and those in his party moved, initial question was given to what stock drew his wagons. The virtues of both oxen and mules might have been a moot consideration, for if he and his neighbors as farmers already owned oxen, it would be simplest and cheapest to use them. In addition, all the guides to Oregon were promoting their use but most important to answering the question, is the fact that members of the Murphy wagon train used mainly oxen.

The summer of 1851 waned and shorter days with cooler temperatures returned. News from Fort Kearney where they had been keeping track of emigrant numbers each year since 1848 when the fort was built,[199] might have brought rumor the number of emigrants was down from the previous year of 1850. In fact, the reduction in numbers was almost as stark as the increase had been the previous year. This could only be seen as a good thing for Ephraim, hoping for the choicest land.

The *Old West* article goes into quite some detail about preparations that Grandma Sara, George, Phoebe and their children went to. Unfortunately, the article doesn't include the efforts of any of the rest of the family. Detail in their preparations was impressively complete; as their gardens declined that fall, they dried fruit on racks in the sun; corn and beans were left to harden on stalks and vines and then packed in rags. Carrots, parsnips, turnips and rutabagas were shredded, dried and sacked. Tubs of honey and molasses, sacks of wild rice, brown and white sugar would be in each family cooking wagon.[28]

Sometime in the fall, Nancy Jane announced first to James, then the rest of her family, that she was due in the spring. While the news

might have been met with congratulations, it was also quite alarming, especially to her mother, Sara. The fact is to all but the smallest of children who could not understand what the families intended to accomplish; this news was worrisome. It was no small expectation of a healthy mother to embark on such a march. Consequently, if Nancy had a difficult birth, it could prevent her and her husband James from going along to Oregon, at best; at worst it could kill her, and James would walk to Oregon a widower.

There must have been plenty of tears of both joy and sadness that year during the holidays; their last together, in their homes. It is unknown if the family had ever seen Susan again after they left Kentucky in 1843, but probably not. Certainly, this would be the last Thanksgiving and Christmas with Ann, who might have spent the holidays suffering the thought of losing her mother Sara, brothers and sisters. Though no notes are left to say how Ann felt; she might have made no secret that she felt it was a mistake of lethal consequence to go west; she might have been against the idea. Then again, she might have wished she and husband Martin and children were going too; we will probably never know. At their gatherings, memories of Kentucky surely blended with hopes of their futures in the Willamette Valley, both sources for laughter and tears. Nancy Jane fortunately remained healthy.

Sara was unable to take much for furniture and other possessions; many of these items were likely given as gifts of heirlooms to Ann for her and perhaps to hold for her sister Susan in Kentucky. Family keepsakes might well have been the hardest things to part with for Grandma Sara, though it surely gave some solace to know they were left with her daughters. For Ann and Susan, these material things were all they would have to show, very soon, for the loving family they once knew. Knowing she would never see her daughters, grandchildren and most of her things again nor many of her beloved husband's family,

surely left Grandma Sara hiding tears many times from her sons and daughters in those last months. As time passed that winter, saying goodbye became both more frequent and painful.

A rare look at the contents inside a covered wagon. This and the clothes on their backs were all the emigrants had chosen to keep and carry across two thousand miles of unforgiving terrain. It would be unloaded and loaded many times and much of it would be destroyed in the process. (12)

Chapter Thirteen
Gold Discovered in Southern Oregon

During the winter, of 1851-52, packers on the trail from Oregon to California discovered the placer mines of southwestern Oregon. As with all discoveries of gold the early bird got the worm and when word got out, the hills were filled with miners. From ships along the coast and up from California or over the Siskiyou's from the settlements along the Willamette, the Rogue River landscape was crawling with hardened miners' earnest in their goal to be the first to get to the big strike. For the Indians of the area, it meant settlements and mines now shared the land and its resources. Suddenly the whites were threatening their way of life. Though a treaty had been proposed, it was never ratified and so the rule was, there was no rule. Superintendents of Indians affairs swore the white people wouldn't displace the Indians, but they had no way to stop the flood of people pouring into the Rogue River. While many gave up the hard scrabble dream of striking it rich and returned to mundane but steady work on their farms, about 1000 people remained in Josephine County.[21]

The schooner *Captain Lincoln* grounded January 1852 trying to carry a garrison to Port Orford. Crude shelters were constructed, and they named the place Camp Castaway. The quartermaster didn't arrive at Coos Bay until April 12 and then without any roads, the wagons had to be pulled down the coastline by mules to rescue those at Port Orford. The party arrived back at Port Orford on May 20 and established Fort Orford. With no roads, the coast fort of 32 men was surrounded by foliage that prevented pursuit of Indians or protection of settlers, but they did have artillery.

About this time, a number of sailors jumped ship off the coast of Oregon and made their way to the headwaters of the Illinois River in

the remote and rugged Siskiyou Mountains. After a fair amount of exploration, they found gold in a gulch that became known as 'Sailors Diggings'. Some of the small mining camps became towns, like Waldo, Oregon, that for a time, was the largest town in the county. Located in an approximately 25 square mile general area known as Sailors Diggings, the town of Waldo grew from the camp of the same name. A need for services grew from the development of the camp and others around it.[171] Roads were improved and stagecoach, as well as freight lines, soon began to traverse hills inhabited by displaced and angry tribes of Rogue River Indians and mining camps of humorless, hardened miners. Along these routes in and near Sailor Diggings, road agents were soon taking advantage of the increased traffic. A single stage could be carrying as much as $10,000 in gold, or more.[54]

In addition to these events, by the winter of 1851-'52 the Christian Church had grown to a substantial enough size that members of the movement were considering an annual state meeting, like they had back home. Alexander Campbell wrote a letter in the winter of 1851 encouraging the idea. While several meetings were held in the coming months, it was at the Central Church in Linn County that the idea was shared by John Alkire Powell and approved, to host a "co-operation meeting" for late summer of 1852.[43]

That winter and spring before jumping off were filled with preparation by all members of every family. During the winter, Sara would have carded wool and sat at the wheel for long hours spinning yarn and rolling it into huge balls to carry along. Lucy, Nancy and Phoebe would knit socks and sweaters for all the family. Nancy, 16, would become more encumbered by her first pregnancy as her due date came near the end of February. Ephraim and George killed the remainder of their ducks and geese while the youngest Bunch brother, Stokely, and Ephraim's little brothers William, John and Nick dipped and plucked them. From the feathers Sara, Phoebe, Nancy and Lucy

fashioned mattresses for the family, also called tics. Pigs were slaughtered and the meat cured into hams, bacon sides, salt pork and sausages in their smoke houses. Beef were slaughtered and the meat dried as well as smoked. Grease and tallow from this were poured into wooden tubs.[28] The Fox and Bunch women molded long tallow candles with plenty of help from Andy and Riley, with watchful eyes on busy 2-year-olds; George and Willy, and 1 year old Mary Elizabeth.

As winter turned to spring, Nancy neared birthing and may have been even less involved in the family preparations. Sara had her youngest sons gathering budding weeds and flowers and digging roots as she prepared medicines in glass bottles she corked and packed in cornmeal. Lucy and Phoebe boiled tubs of lye soap and packed compact boxes of medical supplies; witch hazel oil, turpentine, quinine, alcohol, camphor gum, goose grease, whiskey, ginger root, tansy, sage, cascara bark, pine pitch, horehound, flax seed, asafetida, coal oil, pine tar and squares of bleached cloth and strips of linen for bandaging material. An assortment of flannel, linen and linsey as well as an assortment of knitting needles, hairpins, curling irons, lamp wicks, corset staves, shoe buttons, button hooks, safety and straight pins were fitted into a tight package. Like beavers building a dam one stick at a time, the wagons were packed and repacked until all available space and weight had been used. Constantly refining their equipage, the women and children adjusted their loading to fit more in the small but heavy wagons. More than once children stashed secret items of their possessions in the wagon when their folks weren't watching, usually only to be found and removed by their mother or father later. When all space had been taken inside the wagons the outside was equipped with hooks and nails on the side and underneath to carry this or that. On the front of the wagon was a wooden bed whip socket, where the stock whip was kept when not in use. On the side of the bed of one wagon could have hung a chicken coop and all the wagons

carried water barrels and jockey boxes to put things in for easy access.[28] As it was common for sayings or family names to be painted across the white canvas covering wagons, Ephraim might have used black tar and painted "FOX" on the side of his wagon while George and James might have done likewise on their wagons, painting "BUNCH". Names allowed their wagons to be identified from a distance and would help their group keep track of each other. In this fashion the wagons parked near one another, would create the “FOX BUNCH”, and more than a few giggles and grins.

In the decade the trail had been in use, especially since the flooding misfortunes of its competitor, Independence, Westport had become a premier location to jump off to Oregon. Located on the Missouri River, Iowa lied on the other side, attracting traffic from the north. From there, most held up at campgrounds west of these towns before taking off. At Indian Creek, also called The Rendezvous, for obvious reasons, they would gather in groups to jump off. Two factors combine to determine Ephraim Fox and his family used Westport and the popular campground at Indian Creek as their jump-off point. As residents of Macon County, the families would be physically closer to Westport than Independence or St Louis but more importantly, Westport was where John Ecles Murphy departed from, joined by others. Among them, it is theorized, were Ephraim and brothers-in-law George and James Bunch.

Research may never reveal how many wagons or how many head of stock Ephraim or George brought. We can only judge by the standards of their peers. It was rare for people to ride in wagons, despite Hollywood depictions. God bless the old western, *Wagon Train*, but it did a disservice to the pioneers by showing them riding in wagons. The trail was not much of a trail and the wagons had no springs or suspension, so they beat the passengers badly. If someone was sick or with broken bones, they had to stop, because they couldn’t

take the beating. Women who were pregnant couldn't ride in the wagons because the beating began their labor, so they walked all day. However, it's hard for Hollywood to have a covered wagon chase when the drivers are running alongside their teams, swearing and shouting, some with stock whips, some without. Unfortunately, 150 years later, after 75 years of Hollywood dramatics, the truth has to be researched and comes to a surprise. Some who had infirmed family or elderly began with a surrey or some small conveyance, but just as often, it didn't work out or it fell apart. The trail from Indian Creek campground to Fort Laramie was littered with abandoned passenger wagons. They couldn't afford to use stock for them and the beating they took made them mostly not worth it. Did the Fox Bunch use one initially for new mother Nancy and her aging mother, Grandma Sara? It's possible, but if their experience was like their contemporaries, the simple conveyance would have given out and those using it would be walking with everyone else. While there were many families who had only one wagon, there were a lot of those who had two or even three. One was used for a cooking wagon, the other for a sleeping wagon. Many times, one of these wagons didn't make it all the way to Oregon, but when they set out, many had more than one. Considering there were essentially four families it is likely they began with at least four wagons, maybe more. The stock to pull these 1400 to 2000 lb wagons carrying loads between 1500 lb and 2500 lb were teams of two animals. At times ascending hills or crossing streams it took two or as many as three teams to pull these wagons. Many brought extra oxen for this purpose or to alternate teams in case of injury.[152] This is a considerable amount of stock, tack and harness.[158]

Milk cows and mounts were tied to the back of wagons while men walked along behind and off to the side of their teams, with long reigns. Sometimes these reigns weren't required and they could use a long stock whip to direct the forward plodding beasts. Calves might have

followed loose. The stock tied to the back weren't used to being led and initially pulled against the stock in front drawing the wagon, causing a herkie jerk motion as they began forward. The length of the trail ropes half-hitched on the stock at the back of the wagon had to be snubbed tight when the trip began as they learned to follow. As the animals ceased pulling back against the teams drawing the wagons, the ropes were lengthened to a comfortable distance. Mounted teenage boys would be directing loose stock, while women and children kept out of the way on the side of the trail with yapping dogs running throughout.[152] The first miles to the rendezvous were an education for all involved. Stock had never been asked to do what they were suddenly expected to do and until many days of repetition had gone by, they were stubborn and scared, quite often working against each other. Tempers were hot and there are several documented cases of fistfights in the first miles to rendezvous, and plenty more once they got there; such was the state of common discourse. It wasn't all work though. There was a fair amount of play. Journal entries made by a hired hand in the McCully train, just ahead of the Murphy group reported "Some of the men had a wee bit of a spree with the ferry men. One of them got whipped by my partner. This is my birthday, 23".[51] The following day the young drover was feeling the effects of celebrations and all but swore off alcohol, admitting a quarrel with someone in his company. They had shooting contests, mounted competitions and at least occasionally on their way to rendezvous got into trouble with settlers with their antics.[51]

Nancy Jane Bunch gave birth on March 5, 1852, to a son that she and James named George, a longtime family name.[119] They might have called him Georgey, to keep him separate from 'Little' George Fox. He was healthy and so was Nancy, to the relief of her mother, Grandma Sara, who was certainly happy to find she had worried unnecessarily. As the days passed Nancy and her baby quickly gained strength. About

two weeks later, March 22, 1852, was Ephraim's 30th birthday. At this point, it was a matter of days until the Fox and Bunch families left their homes, to rendezvous at Indian Creek. Anxious excitement must have been intensifying as the time of departure neared and celebrating Ephraim's birthday might have been the last time the families gathered. Standing at the edge of 2000 dangerous miles with his entire family relying on him, Ephraim Fox's landmark 30th birthday was a turning point in his life and those of his family and ancestors.

When the Fox family left for Oregon from Missouri, Mary Sara, or Grandma Sara, was 56 years old. Her son Ephraim 30, his wife Lucy 25 and their sons, Andrew 8 and little George 3. Phoebe was 26 and her husband George Bunch 36; his son David, by his previous marriage, was 14; their children James Riley, known as Riley 5, William "Willy" Madson 3 and Mary Elizabeth 2. Nancy Jane was 17, her husband James 24 and their one-month-old newborn, Georgy. Additionally, among them were Ephraim, Phoebe and Nancy's younger brothers, John Madison 15, William J. 12 and C. Nicholas "Nick", 10. Finally, was Stokely Bunch, 18 years old, youngest brother to George and James. Despite how large the Bunch family was there were no other members of the family included in the migration west, for many more decades. The Fox family too, were alone in this journey. Aware or not of the discrepancy in Benjamin Fox's birth or of the out-of-wedlock births of John R Cobb and Henry Franklin Martin, there were no other members of Ephraim Fox's family that crossed the plains. Indeed, every surviving male in this Fox family was in this group; there was no one to follow, biologically speaking. Many decades later an Uncle Nathaniel Bunch and some cousins of George, James and Stokely came to Oregon, after the trail had been considerably tamed, but none of the Virginia Foxes from which Ephraim's grandfather was named and raised, came to Oregon across the Oregon Trail.

Chapter Fourteen:
Leaving Macon County, Missouri

The Reverend John Ecles Murphy was born in Warren County, Kentucky in 1806. He married Frances Mary Wright Doughty in 1827 and by the 1830's, established the Church of Christ on Cedar Fork of Henderson River in Warren County, Illinois. By 1840, he was preaching in Knox County, Kentucky and by 1850 had established the Abingdon Church in Knox County. He organized a wagon train to Oregon in 1852.[105] It is likely that John Murphy shared at least an acquaintance with members of the Fox family during his youth in Warren County where it has been established Arthur and Richard Fox were well known. Considering he was preaching in Knox County, Benjamin Fox and or his son Nicholas and family could well have attended his services.

Before realizing Ephraim and John Murphy likely generally traveled 'together', as a matter of achieving accuracy, meticulously calculating the distance between each landmark, campground and historical point of reference, the author deduced the Fox family had probably left home in Macon County, Missouri on Sunday, April 4, 1852. Sometime later as clues led to the realization Ephraim likely traveled with John Murphy, research began on his family relationships. Historical accounts cite generally, that the families of John Ecles Murphy departed Monmouth, Illinois in April of 1852, sourcing this with an article that appeared in The Monmouth, Illinois Atlas newspaper of April 16, describing both the gathering and departure of the train. Sometime later, important if overlooked information was found in the *Oregon, Biographical and Other Index Card File* of Carter Tarrant Davidson, John Ecles Murphy's cousin and well documented member of the same wagon train. Carter T. Davidson is

more exact and cites the group left Monmouth on April 5,[74] the day after the author calculated Ephraim left Macon County.

Is this evidence that Ephraim and his group generally knew when the Rev. Murphy was leaving for Oregon and were leaving to intercept the larger party and accompany it to Oregon? Considering the familial relationships, it would seem this was the case. The groups would have encountered each other at Westport or a short distance up the trail at Fort Kearney, a popular rendezvous location along the trail. There are many trains of 1852 whose members have only partially been identified. Usually, rosters were not kept. Therefore, while no definitive proof exists Ephraim Fox traveled with the John Ecles Murphy Wagon Train; the circumstantial evidence strongly suggests it. At the very least proof exists in DLC records they were traveling near each other when they reached Oregon.

It is regarding this subject where the *Old West* article might have provided some truly historically excellent factual information, but it doesn't. The identity of all the families Ephraim, George and James traveled with can only be deduced. There is sufficient evidence to conclude Ephraim's neighbors James Powell, married to Nancy Beth Pugh, as well as her younger sister Eliza, who intended to wed Jackson Powell upon reaching the Willamette Valley, traveled with Ephraim However, Wilson Pugh, Lincoln Epperley and members of the Arterbury and Allingham families joined Murphy's group and accompanied them to the Willamette Valley.[72] All of these neighbors came to Oregon in 1852 and were either documented to have been with John Murphy's group or had family that were among the reverend's wagon train. Whether by design or chance, these people arrived within days of each other. Of those documented to be traveling with the gospel preacher John Ecles Murphy's train, were his son-in-law, Albert Whitfield Lucas, William Mason, a professor from Bethany College and his wife, Margaret Davidson Mason, the daughter of Christian

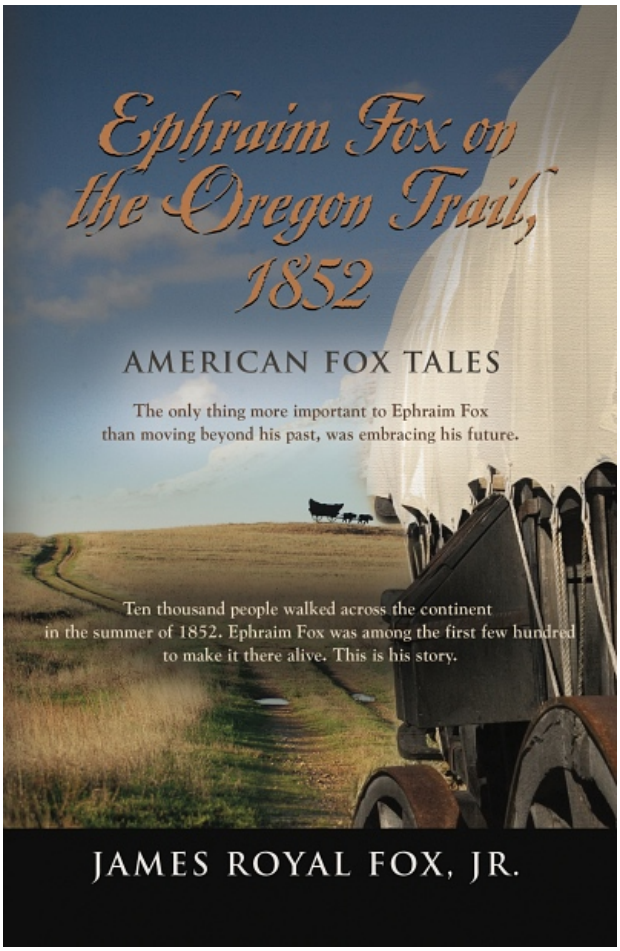
preacher Elijah Davidson. This was also the year when the families of Hezekiah Burford, John H. Robb, Frederick X. Shoemaker and William Menifee settled in Polk County on the west side of the Willamette.[43]

There were neighbors in Macon County, Missouri that did not travel with the Murphy Train as well. It is simple to eliminate those that did not travel with Ephraim and George, by the donation land claim records that show when pioneers arrived. Those that arrived the same day, or within a few days at most, must have traveled with the Fox and Bunch wagons, even if only toward the end of the trail in Oregon City. Membership in these trains was not written down for posterity. The names of those traveling together in trains were mentioned in letters, journals and diaries; the lists are in no way complete. Unless a name was written down somewhere, there is no way to prove what wagon train or individual families traveled together. Even when names are mentioned in journals and diaries it is many times only a note here and there, scattered all over by people with and without a relationship to those they mentioned. It is by process of elimination; setting aside the known from the unknown listed traveling in other wagon trains, then cross referencing the DLC records of the remaining neighbors, we can see patterns and, in many cases, place individuals in groups.

Some of the largest and best-documented wagon trains took part in the exodus of 1852; all of which can be eliminated from being involved with Ephraim Fox or George Bunch, except the Murphy Train. Of interest while researching wagon trains of 1852, was one formed by the citizens of Cedar Township, Van Buren, Iowa, who organized a train of about 25 wagons, among them was Adam Barnes and family. Adam's youngest daughter, Irene Claressa Barnes, who would be born the following year in Oregon, would someday wed Andrew Jackson Fox. This train is known to history as the Lafayette

Spencer wagon train because Spencer left a detailed diary of the trip, but at the time it was called the Brittain wagon train. Paul Brittain was the most well-known member of this party, having served in a number of different official capacities.[133; 187] This train finished well after the Murphy Train and the Fox family. Tracking Ephraim and the Bunch brothers was complicated by the fact it was common for family groups to split off and rejoin several times. A family might launch forward or fall behind, to find themselves traveling among a different train. When a single train reached Oregon, as much as 50 miles separated the front wagon from the back. This being the case with all factors considered, even if they did not rendezvous with the Murphy wagon train by design, Ephraim Fox and family certainly pulled into Oregon with them.

Of those Christians traveling west in the migration of ‘52, was Lucinda Powell, a younger sister of Christian disciples John, Noah and Alfred Powell. Lucinda had been married to Anthony Propst for 16 years and brought their six children.[43]



In 1852, Ephraim Fox found himself racing at the leading edge of a stream of humanity stricken by Cholera. At that point, the only thing more important to Ephraim Fox than moving beyond his past, was getting his family to Oregon, alive.

American Fox Tales:
EPHRAIM FOX ON THE OREGON TRAIL - 1852
By James Royal Fox Jr

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