

*The 1845 Pioneers' Guide for the Westward Traveler: The Emigrants' Guide To Oregon  
And California*

Written by Lansford Hastings in 1845

Review written by Mike Walker

"The design of these pages is not to treat in *extenso* of Oregon and California, but merely to give a succinct, and at the same time, practical description of those countries; embracing a brief description of their mountains, rivers, lakes, bays, harbours, islands, soil, climate, health, productions, improvements, population, government, market, trade and commerce; a description of the different routes; and all necessary information relative to the equipment, supplies, and the method of traveling." 1

**Chapter I. Scenes And Incidents Of A Party of Oregon Emigrants** (pages 5 - 11)

"The number of emigrants continued to increase with such rapidity, that on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of May, our company consisted of one hundred and sixty persons, giving us a force of eighty armed men, which was thought ample for our protection. Having organized, and having ascertained that all had provided themselves with the necessary quantum of provisions and ammunition, as well as such teams and wagons as the company had previously determined to be essential, and indispensable, and all things else being a readiness, on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of May, in the year 1842, all as one man, united in interest, united in feeling, we were, *en route*, for the long desired *El Dorado* of the West." 2

"Accordingly an election was held, which resulted in the election of myself [Hastings] to the first . . ."

**Chapter III. A Description Of Oregon** (pages 23 - 33)

"The river lying next south of the Umpqua, is the Rogue's river, which has its source in the Klamet and Cascade ranges, near latitude 42 deg. north. It pursues a course about west by north, winding its way through alternative sterile mountains, high hills rich, fertile valleys, and beautiful plains, and finally, empties into the ocean, at the parallel of 43 deg. north latitude. The entrance of this river, is also much obstructed by a vast sand bar, at its mouth, which is entirely impassable, the greater part of the year. This river is about the same width as the Umpqua; its current is very rapid, and it has numerous falls and rapids, which much obstruct its navigation, even for boats and canoes. Its bed is generally about fifteen or twenty feet below the surface of the earth, hence its waters are very difficult of access. It is navigable, perhaps, about eighty miles, for boats and canoes. The country through which it passes, is usually, very well timbered, well watered, and much of it is rich and productive." 3

**Chapter IV. A Description Of Oregon** (pages 34 - 42)

"South of this, upon Rogue's river, are several other very extensive and unusually rich valleys. The principal of them is found upon that river, about sixty miles from the ocean. It is about eighty miles long, and averages from ten to forty miles in width, on each side of the river. For beauty of scenery, richness of soil, abundance of timber, and vegetation; and for its peculiar adaptation to both, grazing and agricultural purposes, this valley much surpasses all others, in any part of Oregon. Besides this, there are also, several others, which are found upon, and in the vicinity of this river, and which, are much less extensive, but equally productive of both, timber and the various grasses. All these valleys, however, are surrounded by stupendous mountains, high hills, and elevated plains, which are generally, entirely destitute of timber, and in many places, devoid of all vegetable productions." 4

"Upon, and in the neighborhood of the Umpqua, Rogue's and Klamet rivers, there are not only the valleys referred to, but there are also several others, as well as numerous sections of high lands, undulating, elevated plains, and rolling prairies, which are also very productive, and which, are admirably suited to the purpose of grazing, as well as that of farming. This southern portion of the Western section, is by far the most valuable and delightful portion of Oregon, and in point of richness and productions, it very much resembles the unequalled plains and valleys of California" 4

#### **Chapter VI. A Description Of Oregon (pages 53 - 64)**

"The most numerous and important tribes, of the Western section, are the Shatshet, Squamish, Toando, Chalams, Classet, Chenook, Clatsop, Klackamus, Klackatats, Kallapuyas, Umpquas, Killamucks, Rogues, Klamets, Shasty and Celkilis tribes, which like all other tribes of the country, have, by many, been thought to be migratory, and wandering tribes, but this appears not to be the case. They are always to be found within their own proper territories, sometimes passing and re-passing, however, from fishing to fishing, or from hunting ground to hunting ground; yet, their usual haunts are very seldom, if ever, entirely abandoned." 5

"These Indians are of much service to the settlers, as they can be employed for a mere nominal compensation, to perform various kinds of labor, at many kinds of which, they are very expert, especially paddling canoes, rowing boats, hunting and driving horses, and bearing dispatches. With the exception of those in the extreme northern and southern portions of the country, they are entirely friendly and inoffensive. Such is the character, particularly of those, in the immediate neighborhood of the different settlements, yet, it is true, that the settlers here, are not entirely free from the little pilferings, and low treachery, to which all Indians are, more or less addicted." 5

#### **Chapter VII. Scenes And Incidents Of A Party Of California Emigrants (pages 64 - 69)**

"Having remained in Oregon, as long as I had originally designed, I now, proceeded to make preliminary arrangements, for an over land tour to California, to visit which country, was also among my original purposes. But traveling from Oregon to California,

like traveling from the States to Oregon, is attended with imminent danger, from innumerable hostile Indians; hence it became necessary to obtain a party of armed men, sufficient in numbers, to secure our protection. I, therefore, visited the different neighborhoods, with that view, when I soon found, that there would be no difficulty in obtaining a party, ample in numbers, to insure our entire safety. Upon designating a place of rendezvous, on the Wallamette river, about twenty miles above the falls, we soon had fifty-three emigrants, of whom, twenty-five were armed men, when myself having been again honored with command, on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of May, 1843, we were outward-bound for the second and last *paradise* of the west, California. As the presumption is, that many of the Oregon emigrants will, eventually emigrate to California, and that too, by the same route which I traveled; I have deemed it proper, to give some of the principal scenes and incidents, of this party of California emigrants. This I do, in order to put the future emigrants upon their guard, and thereby, to enable them, to avoid the innumerable dangers and difficulties, which we encountered, and of which, we were wholly unadvised." 6

"Leaving our place of rendezvous, as above stated, nothing of importance occurred, until we arrived at Rogue's river, which we were under the necessity of crossing, by the aid of the Indians, who soon appeared with their canoes, and proffered their aid, which we were under the necessity of accepting; but we proceeded with the utmost caution, for as we were well advised, several parties had been robbed at this place, under quite similar circumstances. In view of the peculiarity of our perilous situation, I directed twelve men to cross the river, in advance, in order to receive and guard the baggage, as it should be sent across. The residue of the men, remained, in order to protect the women and children, and to guard the horses and baggage, previous to their being sent across. During all the time, which was occupied in crossing the river, great numbers of Indians thronged around us, on each side of the river, frequently rushing upon us, in such a manner, that it became necessary for us to draw our forces out, in battle array, against them, when we were under the necessity, of discharging a gun or two occasionally, in the open air, in order to deter them from any further hostile movements. Upon discharging a gun, they would, invariably, fall back, and flee in every direction, with the greatest confusion; but after the lapse of a very few minutes, they would again, crowd and huddle around us, in increased numbers when we would again dispel them as before. Their object in crowding upon us, in this manner, was to intermingle with our people, to such an extent, as to produce general confusion and disorder, when they designed to steal and plunder and if they could produce disorder and tumult, to the extent that they desired, they, no doubt, intended to make a direct attack upon us, not only with the view of stealing and robbing, but also with a determination to effect our indiscriminate extermination. By the above system of caution, however, we finally, succeeded in crossing the river, in perfect safety, and were enabled to leave them, to enjoy the wild howlings of their timid confusion, without the loss to ourselves, of either life or property. Upon emerging from the boisterous confusion, of these more than barbarous beings, we continued our journey, for several days, without any thing worthy of remark, until we met a company of cattle drovers and emigrants, who were on their way from California to Oregon, the former, with cattle for the Oregon market, and the latter, designing to locate in Oregon, where

they hoped to find refuge, from the oppression, which they had suffered, in California, of which I shall speak more fully hereafter."

"Upon meeting this party, both parties immediately encamped, where we remained together, all that day and night, as well as part of the ensuing day, which time was spent, in discussion the comparative advantages, and disadvantages, of our respective places of destination. We, of course, had nothing very favorable to say of Oregon, for we were then in search of a desirable place of abode, which in our view, could not be found in Oregon; nor had they much to say in favor of California. They all concurred in the opinion, that California was, beyond any doubt, one of the most delightful countries in the known world, both in point of mildness of climate, and fertility of soil; but they remarked, that they had been seriously oppressed there, and that they would seek refuge, *for the time being*, in Oregon. 7 This discussion terminated in very disastrous consequences to us; for about one third of our party, was prevailed upon to return to Oregon. This reduced our number, of armed men to sixteen, and that too, in a region where our full forces, were more than any where else required; in a country where we were everywhere surrounded by a numerous and hostile foe; where our "sixteen" were, at anytime, liable to be attacked by thousands of unrestrained, and barbarous Indians. But the most distressing circumstance, at this particular juncture, was, that our guide also left us, with the view of returning to Oregon, contrary to our wishes, and repeated solicitations to remain. This left us, not only without a force sufficient for our future protection, but also, without any knowledge of the route, or any means of obtaining that knowledge; and also, without any knowledge of the haunts and prowess of the countless savages, with whom we were now everywhere surrounded. The time of our separation had now arrived, when we proceeded to take our leave, of these our friends of long standing, with whom we had traversed the great western prairies, immersed in doubt, and surrounded with fearful dangers innumerable; and with whom, we had penetrated the deep, wild recesses of Oregon, amid the howls of beasts of prey, and yells of frantic savages, and desolation and death, in all their various and varied forms. We were sad, sad indeed, and grieved too, even to the shedding of tears. Much did we regret the necessity, which impelled our separation, and as much, did we dread the danger, attendant upon that separation; but to accomplish our purpose, we were determined, regardless of all consequences. So leaving our friends, we traveled on, silently and solemnly, contemplating the cheerless past and the fearful future." 8

#### **Chapter XIV. A Description Of The Different Routes** (pages 134 - 142)

"In all there are eight distinct routes to those counties . . ." "There are but five of the above routes, which are worthy of a particular notice; all of which, I will now proceed briefly, to describe. The most northern of them, is that lying through the great gap, between Brown's and Hooker's Peakes, through which the Canadian emigrants, and the fur traders of the Hudson's Bay Company, annually pass, in their journeying from Canada, to the lower settlements in Oregon. As this route is very seldom, if ever, traveled by citizens of the United States, it is not deemed important, to enlarge in its description."

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1. Hastings W. Lansford. 1845. *The 1845 Pioneers' Guide for the Westward Traveler: The Emigrants' Guide To Oregon And California*. Applewood Books. Bedford, Massachusetts.