

THE BASKET MEETING OF 1852

--From notes by H. C. Bailey

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By the time September came, we were all in a good frame of mind to endorse him and carry out his proposition to hold a basket meeting. We wanted to please him and have a good time too, and some of us had a lingering wish to take up the lives we lived in "the states."

At the time and place, a pleasant and jolly crowd met to do Crazy Bob's bidding, whatever it might be. I can now recall to mind only ten ranches, in the whole circle of my acquaintance, where a woman presided, all others were <sup>-re</sup> bachelors.

That was a remarkable meeting. The results were the most unexpected of all the unexpected things that ever came under my observation. It began on Friday evening. On Saturday a man and his wife opened a restaurant, another man a whisky mill.

Saturday the presiding elder and a young preacher named H. C. Settle arrived. The latter had a young wife who cut quite a figure in the meeting. On Saturday we all took our dinner to the grounds, and had a good sermon from the presiding elder, E. H. Russell, which pleased all.

2. 在下列各句的空白处填入适当的词，使句子完整、通顺。

Russell was a fine speaker and understood his audience. All things went smoothly and all felt assured of success. Sunday was to be the big day.

For miles and miles the people came in crowds, all drawn to a common center. Some sat under the arbor and listened to the preaching, some swapped horses, and all indulged in the usual style of spending Sunday except those

who sat under the arbor.

By the time preaching was over, the whisky mill was doing a big business; more than one man had more whisky than was good for him, though there was no drunkenness, but the crowd was shifting about and quite jolly.

The wives of the two preachers had been to the restaurant to get dinner, and returning to the arbor, about 150 yards, passed near the whisky mill. One peculiar old fellow was pretty full. He was a rough looking man, in his shirt sleeves, with a savage-looking beard; but with all the instincts of a gentleman, despite his rough exterior, and worth about \$50,000.

While passing, Rev. Settle's wife, from some cause--nobody ever found out what--imagined that Bird, the rough looking man, had acted rudely, and was offended.

Bird tried to apologize but she became more angry and finally began to scream, which made Bird perfectly wild with distress, and many ran to see what was the matter, and there was a great pow-wow until the woman was taken away and all explained.

It took about an hour to get quiet restored. Some of Bird's friends got mad and left the grounds. The usual results followed. Partisans sprang up on both sides and bitter feelings were expressed. A number of the best citizens went to the whisky man and gave him a limited time to leave or have his mill thrown into the river, with a chance of following it.

After this the meeting moved along smoothly and increased in interest. Our preacher was in his glory and was becoming more popular every day. The young preacher, Settle, proved a fine orator and an impressive speaker.



By Tuesday a revival was under way, and we brought our dinners and suppers and wasted no time. The interest increased every day; all became interested; many were converted. Others who had been religious came and wanted to be religious again. It was the only meeting I ever attended where all publicly manifested a desire to be religious. It was held over two Sundays and closed on Monday.

Before closing everyone there stood up for prayer. The congregation was not large but there was not an indifferent person there. All were eager to get good and do good; all disturbing elements were gone. "Pike" and "Yank" were forgotten. The best of feeling and kindness prevailed.

Friendships were formed that the civil war could not destroy. My heart warms within me today when I recall some of the happy hours spent with my worst political enemies. I ask no other proof of the truth of Christ's teaching. Consciousness is far more convincing than theory or orthodoxy.

## THE FIRST CAMP MEETING, 1858.

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The basket meeting in '57 proved such a success and all were so well pleased that a grand free camp meeting was there and then planned for the next fall. I have never seen a community nearer a unit on any public proposition.

The effects of the meeting marked a new era in the whole community. New ideas and new lines of future procedure were originated and marked out to be followed by the community with a few exceptions. And even the opposition was to a degree affected on the well known fact that aggression produces opposition.

We found it disagreeable to ride home in the cold night, so concluded to arrange as far as possible to leave home for the time being and have a good time. It was no small job to prepare food and provide sleeping room for from five to eight hundred people and their horses.

For be it known that campers came from near and far twenty-thirty and even forty miles. We expected from eight hundred to one thousand on Sunday. To the uninitiated, the question will arise how did you provide for so great a crowd. That is what I propose to tell as well as I can.

The free camp meeting was to us a truly original idea and so far as I know was the first one ever held in California. It had its origin in our talks while cooking and eating our suppers. Charley Girdiner and I both having small children and living farthest from the ground declared our intention of locating on the ground next year. Others took it up, Charley Miner, Dick Gleason; in fact all in attendance soon became enthusiastic in the proposition.



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"To resolve was to act," was California style at that time and the whole scheme was discussed and outlined before we left the ground. We never did things by halves in those days. When the time came for action, committees were appointed to look after all the different interest and management of what we expected to be a grand occasion.

My memory may be a little at fault, but I think Hunt Byres and Sam Wright were to look after meat; Dick Gleason and Kirk or John White after hay; while the tables, and cook and cooking was assigned to Charley Miner and myself. I think Corbier was assigned to look after the preachers, visitors and general stand and arbor interest. Such are my recollections; but forty years are likely to bring mistakes.

The preacher had the general superintendence of the arrangement of the preaching stand, plan and seating of the ground and the preacher's tent. The preacher's tent was for the use of the preacher and was furnished with bedding by individual campers.

The heaviest responsibilities rested on the table committee. A chief cook at \$5.00 per day and \$5.00 extra for Sunday with assistants, dishwashers, fuel, provisions, &C, had to be obtained. There were also necessary dishes to set four tables sixty four feet long. They had to provide stoves, cooking utensils, buckets, dippers, and all the paraphernalia belonging to such an undertaking.

A large brick bakers oven was provided with two hundred pounds of bread capacity or double as much beef, the largest kettles for boiling produrable and plenty of them.

Winship was the autocrat of the feeding department and was on hand Friday to superintend its arrangement. He could cook more grub and do it better, in the same length of time, than anyone I

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ever saw. He was not a second, but first edition of Tom Reed.

By paying breakage and damage, the crockery was borrowed from some dealer. Knives, forks, spoons and tinware had to be bought. Sugar, coffee, tea, pickles, soap, candles and all such other supplies as our autocrat demanded had to be supplied by this committee. We bought sheeting for table clothes and when it got soiled turned it over.

A table committee was appointed of one or more to procure waiters from meal to meal. There were always plenty of active young fellows willing to help. Another was also necessary to keep up the carving end; also a bread cutter or two.

Thus equipped our ruler, who had arrived on Friday, entered his domain, stood upon his throne and issued orders for the day (Saturday). So he entered on the active duties of his office; and for the next thirty six hours they were sure enough active. No stop or rest till about low noon Sunday and while he was going he generally managed to keep at least one of the committee on the go.

We generally exchanged donated flour for bread, pound for pound, though on one occasion ('64) I mixed, worked and set to rise two hundred pounds of flour from ten o'clock Saturday night till ten o'clock Sunday morning.

The meat committee was expected to keep a good supply on hand. I never knew them to fail. The forage commission always kept a good supply on hand, though the waste was fearful to contemplate (at least it would be not).

Where did all this stuff come from and how was it procured?

Californians at that time were a whole souled set of hearty go luck fellows that put their whole soul in anything they indorsed, from the scrub horse race to a camp meeting. They knew no half way



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stopping grounds, whole hog or nothing, was the prevailing sentiment governing their actions.

On that principal, the offering, in all country products, like volunteers for the Cuban War, was far ahead of the requirements. Nor did our cash in all my experience fall short, but once and that was the fault of the collectors.

All who came brought an offering of some kind, many by choice preferring to pay cash. All the soliciting required consisted of the announcing from the stand of the names of a few persons to receive donations.

Lives there a participant in that whole section who does not look back with a feeling of pride in contemplating those times of unselfish generosity. The times, when, by a common volition, all seemed to want to pay a little more rather than a little less.

Though nearly all of them rode in lumber wagons or horse back and lived in shack houses and few dressed fine, were we not fully recompensed for our lack of our hail fellow well met or easy go lucky unostentatious free and easy lives.

No tramps, no want; all had plenty. If misfortune overtook anyone the donations generally exceeded the loss, freely and gladly given, and were as gladly accepted without the sting of dependence, the spirit of giving having extracted the sting.

It is refreshing to the soul to recall kindnesses and favours received and given in that whole souled, unselfish spirit that characterized the old style Californian. But they have passed into the great beyond as have most of the participants. But to recall and live over these scenes in memory, I doubt not makes a green and restful oasis in the past life of many, if not all, still on this side of the river.

## ORGANIZING THE CAMP MEETING

--By H. C. Bailey.

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The management of a free table camp meeting, where large crowds of people and horses had to be fed, and a general oversight of all the arrangements, required pretty good executive ability and lots of solid work. After all needed things were on the ground, it took a great deal of work with both head and hands to get all things in proper running order. We had committees to look after the different lines. One on forage to keep up the supply of hay (all did their own feeding); another whose business it was to keep a good supply of meat on hand; another to see that the table was always in order and well supplied, and that meals were ready on the proper time, and then blow the horn (not Gabriel's, but the dinner horn--sweet music to every boy raised in the south). A general superintendent had charge of the whole, to whom all requisitions were made and by him to those who had charge of the different lines. If we wanted meat all the committee had to do was to butcher it, and quite often we got it dressed by the donor.

Stock men would say: "You know my brand, go get what you want, or let me know and I will bring in as many as you want." Grain raisers would make the same offer for flour and others for vegetables. All were eager to help with hands and substance. Money was collected to buy sugar, coffee, tea and such things as could not be donated. A committee appointed was announced from the stand and it always came without further soliciting. It was our yearly gathering for many miles around. It was the only ten or twelve days' respite for the overworked wife and mother from the never-ending household cares and grind of cooking, washing, scouring, milking, churning and all the



other tread-wheel attachments of the times. We had none of the modern conveniences of the present, but did all our work under unfavorable conditions. Even the best of us lived in board shacks and often carried water from 50 to 150 yards. No one can form a correct idea of what a ten or twelve days' respite meant to all hands, even the children, only by experience. All that the mothers had to do was to care for their children, go three times a day to the table, stay in the tent, visit or receive visitors, listen to preaching, sing and shout if they wanted to, and exercise all the rights and privileges of a free camp meeting.

We all wore plain clothes and rode in two-horse lumber wagons and sat on the straw floors of lumber wagons and sat on the straw floors or lumber benches. But was our happiness marred by these conditions? I think not, for all were on a level. The frontier spirit ruled supreme and a whole year's experience had to be told and heard and often repeated. We had no camp meeting courting then, simply because here was no one to court except the other fellow's wife, and that didn't always pay. It was simply a gathering of a large community to have a jolly visit, with preaching, praying and singing for all who desired it, and a general good time for all, along the line of their own choosing. There was never any disorder or hoodlumism, for that element had not reached California, and it would have fared badly with any one to have attempted anything along that line. Not two per cent of the attendants were church members, but all alike would have resented any bad behavior.

It was a happy time for the women and few children, with nothing to do but eat, sleep and enjoy a glorious good time. Some greatly enjoyed the religious exercises and others the social, but all were content.

## THE CAMP MEETING OF 1863

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I had been gone on a visit about two months and got home Thursday and the meeting was to commence Friday. We washed Friday and got onto the ground Saturday forenoon and found the affairs in a muddle and no one to direct or superintend them.

The proper arrangements had been about half made and all hands seemed to have quit. They had a negro cook, plenty of beef, flour and potatoes, a good brick oven of 100 pounds bread capacity, but no cooking vessels or no arrangements for heat.

It was easy to see that if we fed the usual round of from eight hundred to one thousand, on Sunday, some rustling had to be done right away. We sent to my place for a 45 gallon kettle and 50 milk pans. By noon we had mixed two buckets of salt rising bread. Soon we got the kettle and filled it with beef. When it was cooked, we emptied and refilled it.

At 11p. m. the yeast was up and in just two hours I had 200 pounds of flour in the milk pans set to rise. By eight next morning we had nearly 300 pounds of good bread and the oven full of good beef. By noon, with other preparations, we had plenty for all and the first and worst agony was over.

But our trouble was far from being over. There was nothing in the country to do, so many thought it a good time to seek religion, or at least go to the free camp meeting.

The future was far from bright. One of our children came near dying with the croup Sunday, so we went home and did not get back until Wednesday, and by so doing missed most of the meeting.



Now for the joke at one of this meeting. It was in 1863 when the war spirit was rampant and sectional lines almost made a Chinese wall between the people. Consequently, when a South Methodist camp meeting was announced, all the southern element of miles around came, regardless of denominational prejudice or preference.

We all knew it would be a strictly southern crowd where we could land Jeff Davis, Lee Jackson and all the southern leaders, laugh over Bull Run, and consign Abe Lincoln and all the Yankees to the bow-wows to our heart's content, without let or hindrance. We fancied, at that time on a general average, that we were ahead in the war, and felt sure of final results.

In 1863 there were three candidates for governor: Stanford, republican; Conness, Douglas, democrat; McConnel, secesh or Breckenridge democrat. All felt sanguine of success. With one exception the democrats had always succeeded.

The election came off the Tuesday after the meeting commenced. We were all filled more with politics than religion. One of the preachers even declared he would walk to the polls, about two miles and a half, on his knees, if necessary, to vote.

We made Tuesday wash day so the men could go and vote and the others wash. Wednesday about 10 o'clock, an hour before service commenced, a stranger rode into the camp full speed and shouted that McConnel, our man, was elected; that San Francisco had given him a large majority. That was where we expected to get beaten.

Such an excited crowd I have only once mingled with. Some shouted "Glory to God," falling on their knees offering thanksgiving for the great

victory of the right.

One preacher who had had a rather hard time with the Yankees, rolled over and over in the straw, then jumped up and shouted his thanksgiving and glory with tears running down his cheeks.



~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ Camp Meeting *Memories*

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There is no country on the globe that has passed through so great and radical changes in sixty years as the territory of the United States west of the Allegany mountains. Except in a few mountain districts in Kentucky, Tennessee and Missouri and probably a few small localities in Illinois,

the change almost equals a new creation. The genuine frontiersman first occupied all this vast domain. A peculiar people with general characteristics common to all but with individualities common to all society.

Some remained reaped the benefits from the localities that had subdued. But there was an ever restless moving contingent, moving from the rear to the front like wild pigeons hunting for beechnuts.

There was many customs and institutions peculiar to the times and conditions that played their part in evolving the later civilization and has passed into the bygone, leaving only a pleasant remembrance with the few remaining participants who will in the next two decades have gone the same way. *Then will be left behind only fragmentary records of what has been.* ~~leaving a remembrance of what has been.~~ I think the most prominent and powerful factor for the betterment of the surroundings of the frontiersmans' life for the cementing and uplifting of society, was the old style camp meeting.

I doubt if twenty miles square of populated territory of what we call the great southwest to the gulf, on the west to Pacific, from Washington to Mexico can be found where the camp meeting has not been a powerful factor for the good of society on general principles and individuals in particular.

If an individual is by any means made better society is benefited in proportion.

To write up an old style camp meeting in all its phases would be no small undertaking. It was emphatically a pioneer institution and as near a genuine cosmopolitan agregation as can well be imagined.

The richest and the poorest, the most learned and ignorant, all met on a common level, drawn to a common center by a common impulse and desire; ~~to~~ to have a good time and a respite of ten or twelve days from life's routine of cares and drudgery. If there was any social or financial distinctions Before the meeting they were all left at home.

All were determined on a real good time and though the lines followed



*the fact that all were*  
might widely diverge, ~~all being~~ bent on the same errand was a help to all in accomplishing their ends.

The backslider waited and longed for the time when he could be renewed. The overworked housewife longed to get away from sweeping, milking, scrubbing and the never ending routine of every day life. The laddies and lassies naturally hankered for a renewal of last years good times and good things. The children were in ~~extacies~~ *ecstasies* contemplating what times they would have romping under the arbor afternoons and *concerning* numberless other sources of fun peculiar to boys of a certain age, not unfrequently including a mellow patch.

The dude and dudine were also present. I have known fellows to plow all week in stumps and roots *in a* barefooted, wardrobe of home made shirts and pants, got to meeting with kid gloves and rigged out to correspond. ~~It was~~ *realization* ~~that is always sensitive~~ Even the dogs had a good time, if not by anticipation by ~~realization~~ here they could play, fight and steal to their hearts' content.

From the time, the place and date were determined, ~~all~~ all was rush and expectation to get ready; the women folks in the house and the men outside. It required a good deal of work to fit up a camp ground to accommodate one thousand people, besides tents and many other things ~~at home and on the ground~~. Friday afternoon the moving in began and was kept up till the middle of the next week. *was all the* The hubbub and excitement of a whole community coming to a common center, half of them not having met since last camp meeting; *interested* The howdying and hugging and kissing and "I am so glad to see you", and the genuine inquiry about health and prosperity. The universal good humor and confident spirit of expectancy prevailing the whole made a most exhilarating scene. A short service Friday night opened the meeting.

These scenes, *here,* so briefly and imperfectly portrayed, still live in the memory of only a few, but are bright and green spots in the past *and* ~~that~~ moves the heart with emotions hard to express; *near* emotion similar to recollection *near*



and dear ones long since dead. We love to recall and live over now almost hallowed associations.

No clouds now shades the vision, or discords mar the harmony. A softening hallowed influence prevades our better nature so it is a real luxury to sit and dream away some of our <sup>or</sup> leisure hours and hold sweet communion with the better part of the past and anticipate <sup>that</sup> ~~their renewal for ever~~ in the near future, *they will be renewed forever.*

But they all belong to the past. The old style camp meeting has long since gone and no one, <sup>so far as I know</sup>, has ever <sup>written</sup> ~~wrote~~ its epitaph. It has been cast into the rubbish pile and soon all its participants will have passed. It is true we have in several local center camp meetings under ~~the~~ control of private enterprise, but they resemble the horse show or agricultural fair more than the ~~other~~ *old style camp meeting.*

What cause or causes had lead to the decadence and final disappearance of a once so loved and potent institution? The chief cause was a departure from the original spirit of the meetings. As society advanced, ~~and~~ the conditions changed that gave rise to them, innovations began to creep in, <sup>and</sup> certain leaders insisted on radical changes; an organ, a choir, an appointed leader for all singing, a <sup>restaurant</sup> and ~~huckster~~ shops. ~~and~~ Many other departures so hampered and distorted it that it had only its name left.

When class distinction, <sup>and</sup> conventionalities enter, <sup>ed</sup> ~~the~~ the true spirit died, and disintegration soon followed. I fear our government, of which we have always boasted so much, is in a fair way to go the way of the ~~camp~~ meeting. When the spirit of right and equal justice to all dies, the body will soon follow.

~~In another article I will give an idea the~~  
~~the meeting and some incidents.~~

of



~~THE~~:  
 If you were to insert a notice in <sup>A news-</sup>~~the~~ paper that on a certain date, at a specified place, a free table camp meeting would commence and hold over two Sundays or longer, come one, come all, free grub, free provender and free salvation, no doubt it would create lots of talk and speculation among the present population, if nothing more.

I have little doubt there <sup>but what</sup> ~~are~~ still living in and around Colusa those who hold the traditions of our old style free meetings in kindly, if not loving remembrance. But, to the great majority, they are only a tradition and not of sufficient importance to be worthy of a second thought. ~~It~~ <sup>I have</sup> It is now a thing of the past, like all frontier customs and institutions. ~~It~~ <sup>I have</sup> passed away before a higher and more refined, civilization, if not a better, It may be all that is claimed for it. But still there is something peculiar to frontier customs, thoughts and emotions not easily portrayed on paper, but fully understood and held in esteem by all pioneers.

The thousand and one trials and frequently hardships, from which none have any security of execution, but must from the very nature of the surrounding bear their proportion.

~~Afflictions~~ ~~are~~ ~~both~~ ~~in~~ ~~distress~~. A brother to relieve; how exquisite the bliss. A sense of reliance on our fellows has a wonderful influence in expanding our better feelings and desires. I have always observed far more care and sympathy for the sick, afflicted of unfortunate from any cause on what is generally termed the rough border of society. As our refinement and conventionalities advance these ruder, though kindlier bonds, seem to retire. But all old timers will realize of what I write, but cannot explain. There seems to be a kind free masonry, or family bond felt and realized by all and in which all have a common interest and pride.

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~~How the meeting was managed and its results with some incidents and a few character sketches, may be given in a future article.~~