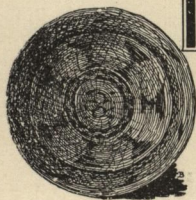


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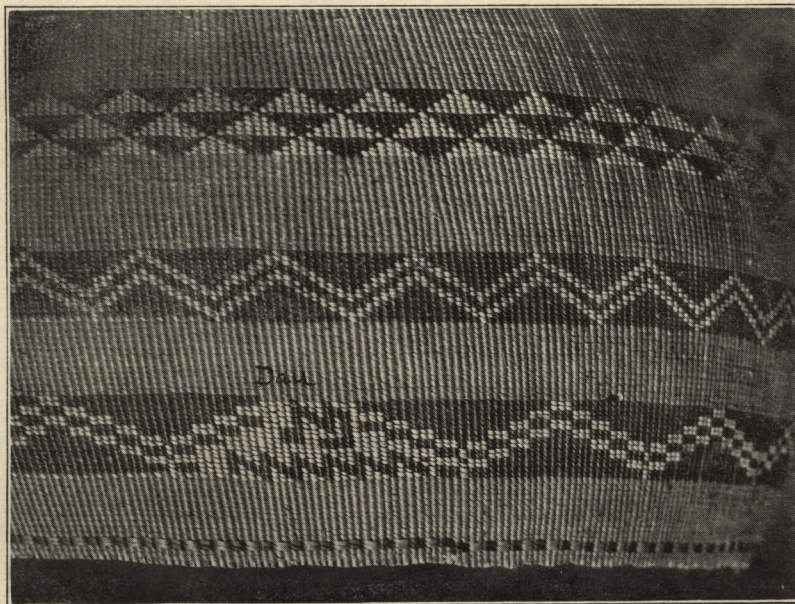
## THE "DAU" IN POMO BASKETS.

By CARL PURDY.



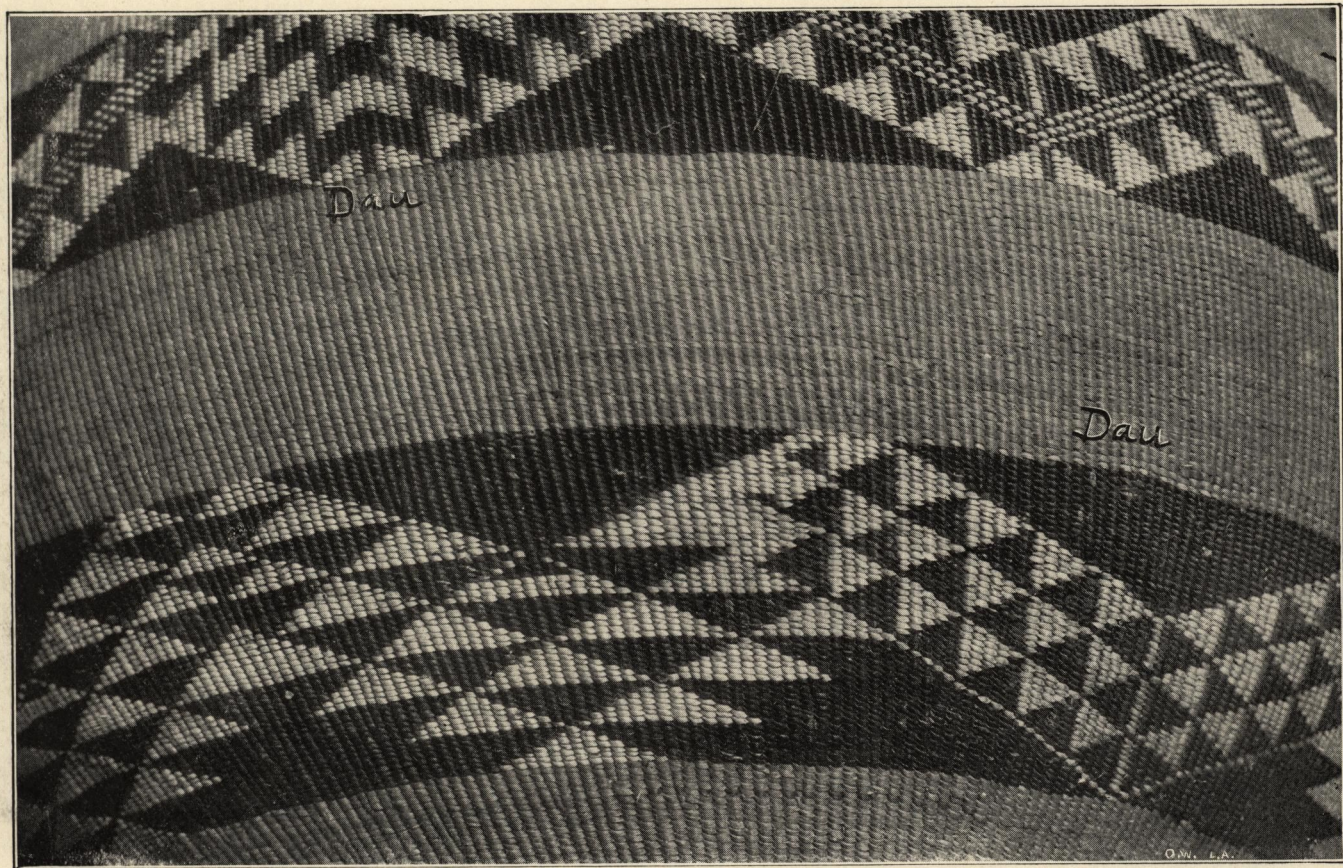
IN a series of articles on "Pomo Indian Baskets and Their Makers" which appeared in *OUR WEST* of Dec., 1901, and Jan., Feb., and March, 1902, I omitted all mention of some very curious phases of basketry embodying religious ideas. My information on the subject did not satisfy me at that time. During the past winter, studies which had been previously carried on independently by Mr. S. A. Barrett, of Ukiah, and myself, were continued in collaboration, and made to include a study of the language, customs, myths and industries of the Pomos, the work centering on the Calpella Pomo dialect, but touching four or five others. The work so carried on lacks much of completion, but includes a vocabulary of some thousands of words illustrated by sentences, many myths taken verbatim in Indian and with both free and literal translations, and a body of other information. While these studies must be put in systematic form, compared and verified carefully before ready to be submitted as a scientific publication, I am satisfied that the matter which I submit to the readers of *OUR WEST* is strictly authentic.

The Pomo Indian was a pantheist. He not only believed that man's spirit is immortal, but that all animals had immortal spirits, that their prototypes, animal spirits embodying the

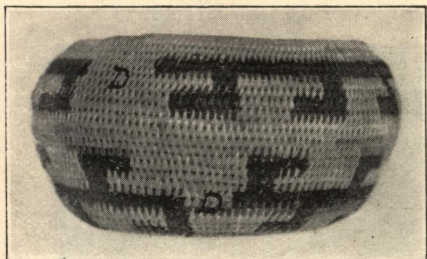


The accompanying illustrations show different basket weaves, the "Dau" being usually indicated by the letter D.







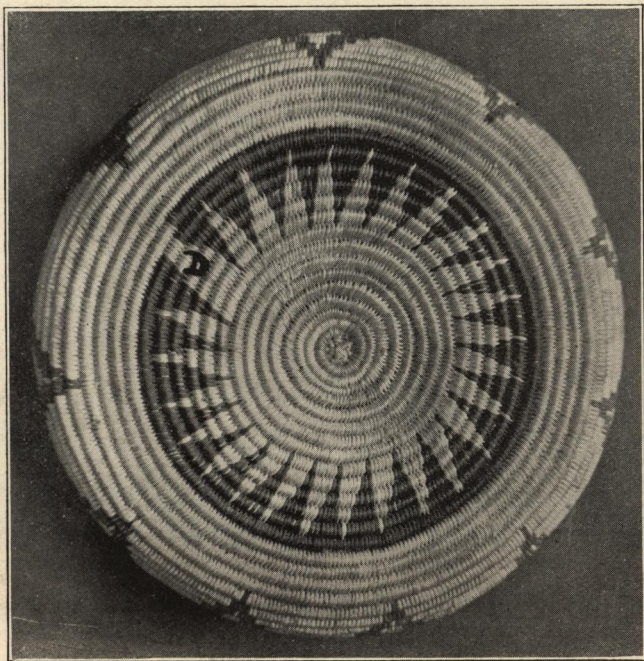


idea of deity, preceded and paved the way for all life, and that every inanimate object had a spirit. The creator of all was a spirit called the coyote spirit (*duwi namo*). He, who in their myths is described as the all-wise spirit and the knowing spirit, created or superintended the creation of the world, and at

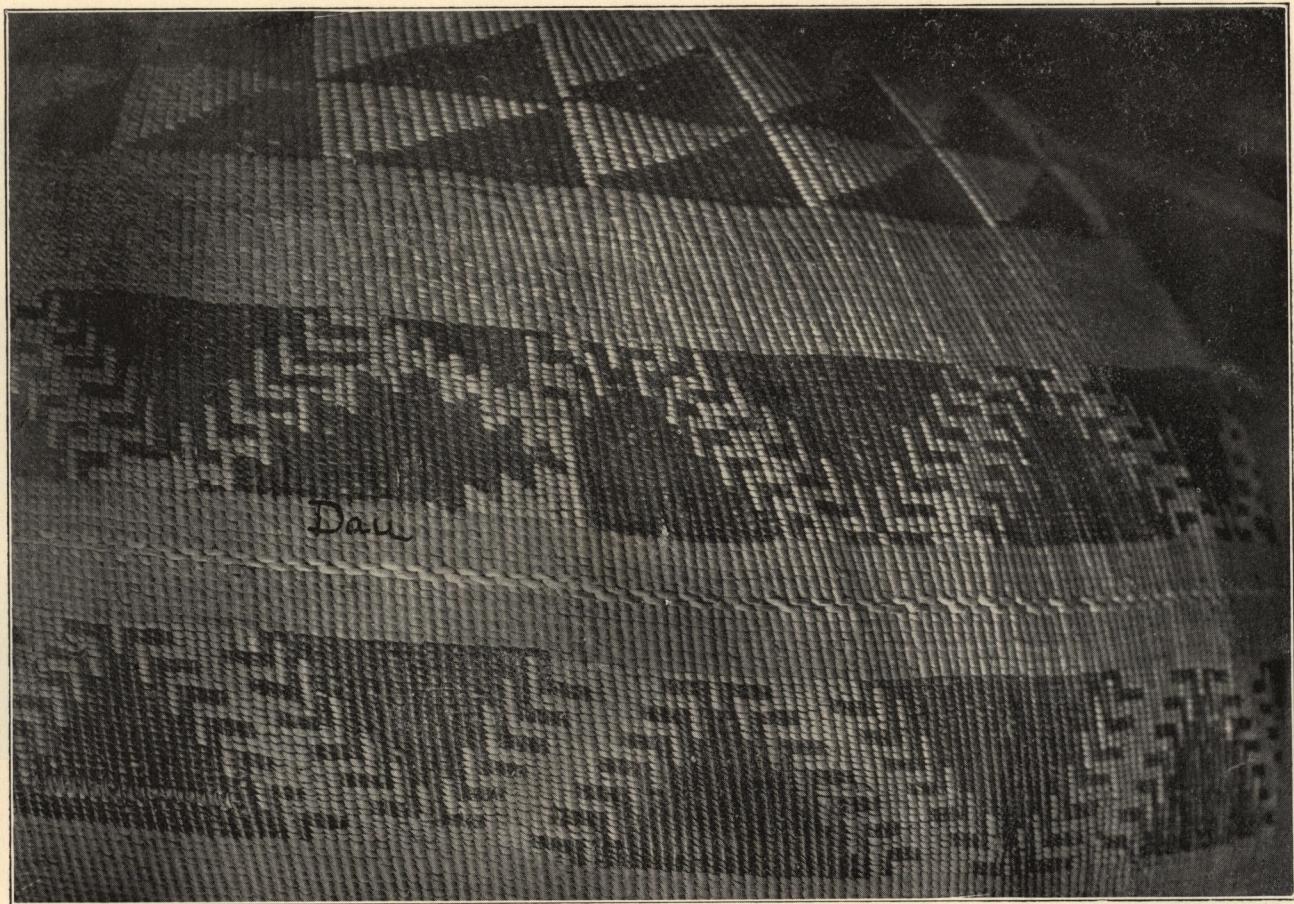
different times it would seem (for creation myths are abundant) planned and created races of men. With this preamble we will proceed to give the myth telling of the origin of the "dau."

#### THE MYTH OF THE DAU.

When the world-maker, the coyote spirit, had concluded his work of creating the world and man, he seated himself to rest, congratulating himself upon the many good works he had done. At this juncture the Pika Namo, or basket spirits, came before him and petitioned him to give them a village or home to be theirs always. The coyote spirit graciously acceded, and said to them, that there, on the surface of baskets, they might have a home which should be theirs always, and then addressing the basket spirits, said, "You basket spirits, young men and young women, old men and old women, children all, here is a good







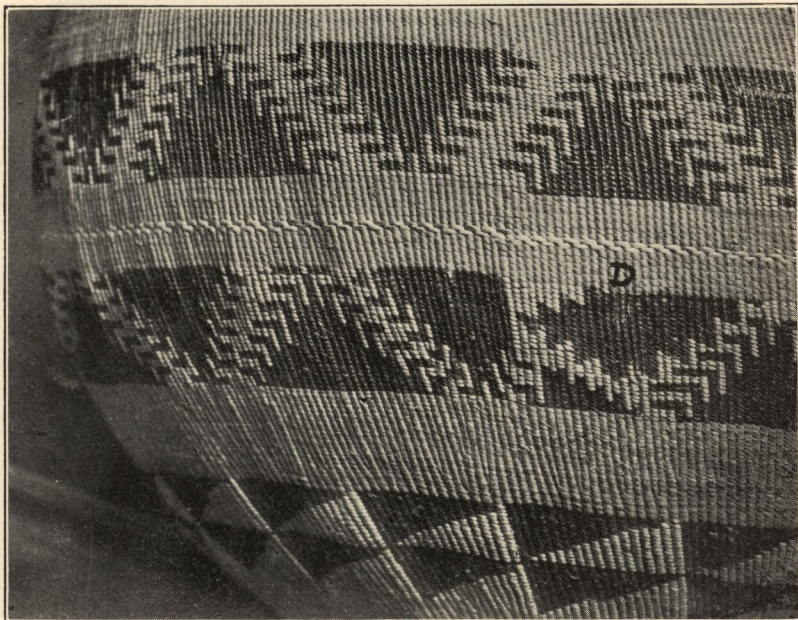


home for you all, to be yours always. If you die, you will lie in the ground four days here, then you will ascend to the upper sky to live forever, where there is no sickness, where it is always day, where all are happy.

"The door (dau) of the basket will always keep swinging for you to escape through when you die."

But the basket spirits were discontented and kept crying out as if in pain.

"What are you doing down there?" the coyote spirit asked. "We said nothing," they said. "We talk good; we speak discourses to the dead ones. Now we basket spirits are going to do good; you have spoken wisely to us and we will remember it.



We will stay in this home you have given us until we die and can go to the sky home."

This myth shows clearly that they believe a particular race of spirits inhabited the baskets, and that they needed the dau, or door, to escape through when the basket was destroyed. As to what this door, which should always swing open, is, our illustrations best explain. In baskets in which the design is circular, there is an intentional break in the continuity of the design. Follow the circle and there is a design or alteration of designs repeated again and again, but at the dau an altogether different design is inserted. A dau may be very small or inconspicuous, so much so that the untrained eye fails to note it; but it is usually very plain, and often the most beautiful part of the de-



sign. Where the design is in a number of circles, there is not always a dau in each circle, and if the design is spiral, there is no need of a dau. If a basket has a number of designs, each forming a circle, there is not always a door in each circle, although there may be. It has been suggested by some students of basketry that the dau originated in the fact that sometimes a repetition of a design did not form a complete circle, but left a gap which the weaver filled in with some sort of figures; and that the myth or superstition was a second thought. It is easily to be shown that this supposition is absolutely groundless. In the first place, christianized Indians make baskets without daus, and still more pertinent is the

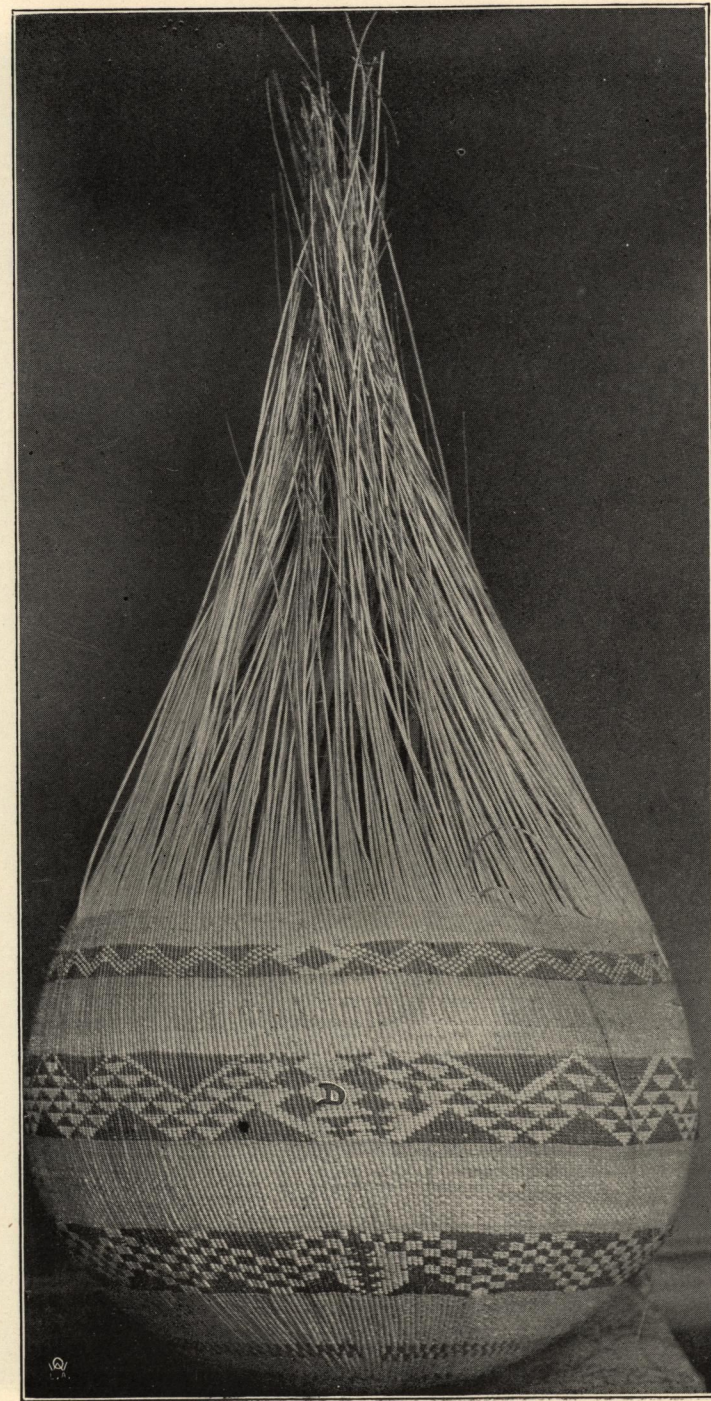


fact that a woman may make a small dau, a very large dau, or none at all, in the successive circles of one basket, showing that she is complete master of the situation.

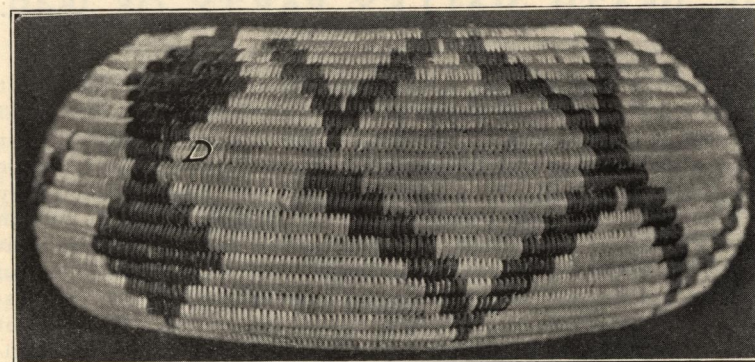
Many Indian women are Catholics or Protestants, and some are quite intelligent; but there are few who will omit the dau from a basket. The following myth explains this. To one who believed it, it must have carried a terror sufficient to preserve the custom.

#### THE LEGEND OF KALTOI.

There was a woman in Gravelly Valley, near Kaltoi, who had failed to make a dau on a basket. To her appeared the spirit of the basket, saying, "You have always neglected to make a door for our spirits to escape by. You shall never go to the home above over there, I say to you. Good women never







fail to make daus, I tell you. I will myself cause you to die ; this instant shall you die."

Then the Kaltai woman said, "O, my basket spirit, spare me now, and after this I will never fail to make daus in my baskets. When I die I will meet you in the sky-home above, where we will always be good, where day always stays, where you and I will live together. O, basket spirit, my heart is good now. My brain will stay good. If I die now, you will come to me afterwards and we will live friends forever."

Then the world-maker said, "It is good. I accept this woman's life as a sacrifice, and you may live in the sky home together."

Then the woman, weeping, accepted her fate and died.

These myths, as is the case with all Pomo legendary lore, are recounted from time to time by the old medicine men to the younger generation, and serve as a most forceful reminder of the sacred obligations to the basket spirits assumed by those who choose to make baskets. And it may be added that these are obligations which are seldom broken.

Ukiah, Cal.

### THE ROCK COLUMBINE.

By FLORENCE EVELYN PRATT.

'TIS a little fairy dancer  
In her skirts of gold  
Flutters where the wind is piping  
Music faint and old.

Vis-a-vis a butterfly  
Balances and bows,  
Gorgeous in his brown and yellow,  
Come to pay his vows.

In a little brown arroyo  
Many miles away,  
Dance, my lady Columbine !  
Dance, my rover! gay !

New York.

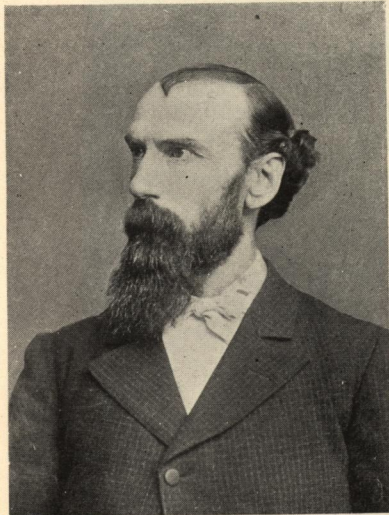


## THE DEATH VALLEY PARTY OF 1849.

By REV. JOHN WELLS BRIER, a Survivor.

[On the 4th of last month a rather wonderful little reunion was held at Lodi, Cal. There three old people, who had not seen one another for 53 years, met to celebrate the anniversary of the day when they and their comrades, the pitiful, starving remnants of the Jayhawkers of the historic Death Valley party, staggered forth from the last defile of the grisly desert on which they had wandered lost for months, and were safe in "God's Country." It was Feb. 4, 1850, that the 16-year-old scout, sent ahead by the despairing and perishing immigrants, found at last a human habitation, and brought them to the noble hospitality of the San Francisco rancho, where they were tenderly nursed back to life. The ruins of the old adobe ranch-house can still be traced near where the Southern California village of Newhall, and the railroad station of Saugus, are today.

The boy scout is now a gaunt and grizzled veteran — Capt. J. B. Colton, of Kansas City. He has been record-keeper of the Jayhawkers ever since; and has filled a stack of bulky scrapbooks (some of which he showed me the other day) with all sorts of matter concerning, and relating to, that famous journey. With the single exception of the "Donner party," it was the most fearful overland trip in our history. Much concerning it will presently find place in these pages. Thanks to Capt. Colton, too, the survivors of that heroic episode have been kept in touch. This Lodi meeting was the 31st reunion he has held of the dwindling and far scattered survivors on the anniversary of their great deliverance. Only seven of the 36 original Jayhawkers are still living; but every year Capt. Colton gets to the remote home of some one of them; and perhaps one or two others are able to come from afar; and the rest send letters.



REV. JOHN WELLS BRIER.

The Lodi meeting was at the home of Mrs. J. H. Brier, that wonderful little woman who, with her husband, and three little boys, the oldest nine, the youngest only four years old, shared the indescribable horrors of that wandering; thanks to her magnificent pluck, and to the manly devotion of the Jayhawkers — who admitted the Briers to their party when the big caravan broke up soon after leaving Salt Lake. The husband — who preached the first Protestant sermon in Los Angeles, soon after their miraculous escape, and was for years a famous Methodist pioneer missionary in California — died several years ago. Mrs. Brier, at almost 90, is still active and alert. The six-year old boy who trudged beside her that deadly way, and rested on her heroic breast, is now Rev. J. W. Brier, who wrote for me, a year or two ago, the following reminiscences of what was so sharply burned in upon his childish mind. — ED.]

THIS is a record of such events of an awful four months, journey from the Mormon village at Salt Lake to the Spanish pueblo at Los Angeles as stamped themselves so

deeply on the memory of a six-year-old lad that they stand out clear and vivid after more than half a century.

September 30, 1849, our party of 105 wagons left the rendezvous on the bank of a stream flowing into Utah Lake, and took up the trail across the wild flax fields, with the Wasatch mountains on our left, and a broad plain, whose broken bounds and barriers appeared only faintly and occasionally, stretching to our right. Captain Hunt, who had contracted to conduct us to Los Angeles within nine weeks for a thousand dollars, was our leader. While the teams were fresh and the credit of Capt.



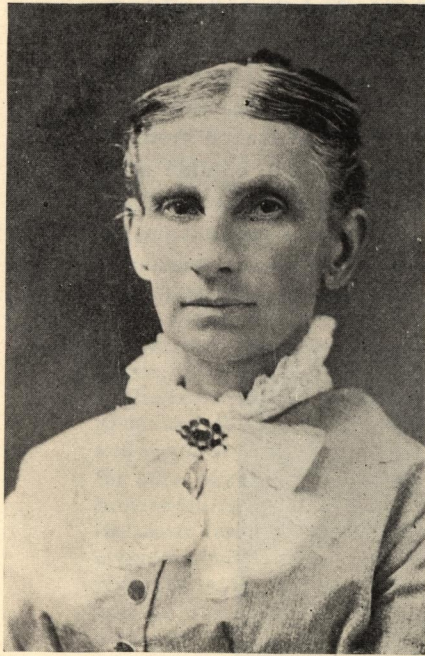
Mrs. Brier Columbus Brier Rev. J. H. Brier  
Kirke White Brier John Wells Brier

THE BRIER FAMILY.

(From a daguerreotype in Marysville, Cal., in 1852.)

Hunt was unimpaired, we were in excellent spirit. At length, however, the guide began to miscalculate; and, on one occasion, his uncertainty cost us a week of time and travel. The train had been loaded for expedition rather than comfort, and no provision had been made for leisure. The leading thought had been to make it as easy as possible for the teams; and when they began to wear a jaded look, when seven weeks of the nine had passed with no more than a third of the distance covered, the spirit of discontent grew towards open revolt.





MRS. J. H. BRIER.  
(From a photo made 25 years ago.)

The Captain was taciturnity itself. If he possessed the knowledge of a guide, he seemed to be wanting in the tact of a leader. This may be the fancy of a child, for I confess that I was afraid of the silent man, and wondered if he ever loved anybody, and if he slept on horseback.

We had journeyed down into the Great Basin, and every day the scenery had become more and more unattractive. A party came into our camp near the Iron Buttes, who were on a forced march to California, guided by a chart furnished by the Utah Chief, Walker. This route lay due west and entered the valley of Owen's Lake. It was a most inviting trail, dotted at convenient intervals with springs; and as we were assured that a fortnight would take us to the en-

chanted shores of Owen's Lake our affections were immediately alienated from Captain Hunt and the Spanish Trail.

There were, perhaps, five hundred people within the circle of our wagons. In mass meeting, the new departure was discussed, and my father was one of its most enthusiastic advocates. The guide very consistently opposed it. "Gentlemen!" he exclaimed with characteristic brevity, "All I have to say is, that if you take that route you will all be landed in Hell!"

As the result of the conference, Captain Hunt was left with a following of five wagons, while we pushed on without a guide, without a chart, without a particle of authentic information and without the faintest conception of the true character of the wilderness we were about to penetrate. As early as the second day our trail began to swerve too far to the south. We should have reached the Mountain Meadows, but, when night came, we halted on the brink of an impassable cañon, traversed by a tributary of the Vegas. The only man who could descend to the stream was a Canadian voyageur, and those who drank of its water were compelled to pay at the rate of one dollar per bucket.

Clearly we must find a way of escape or turn back. Mr. Rhinerson, a man of cautious judgment, resolved to return to

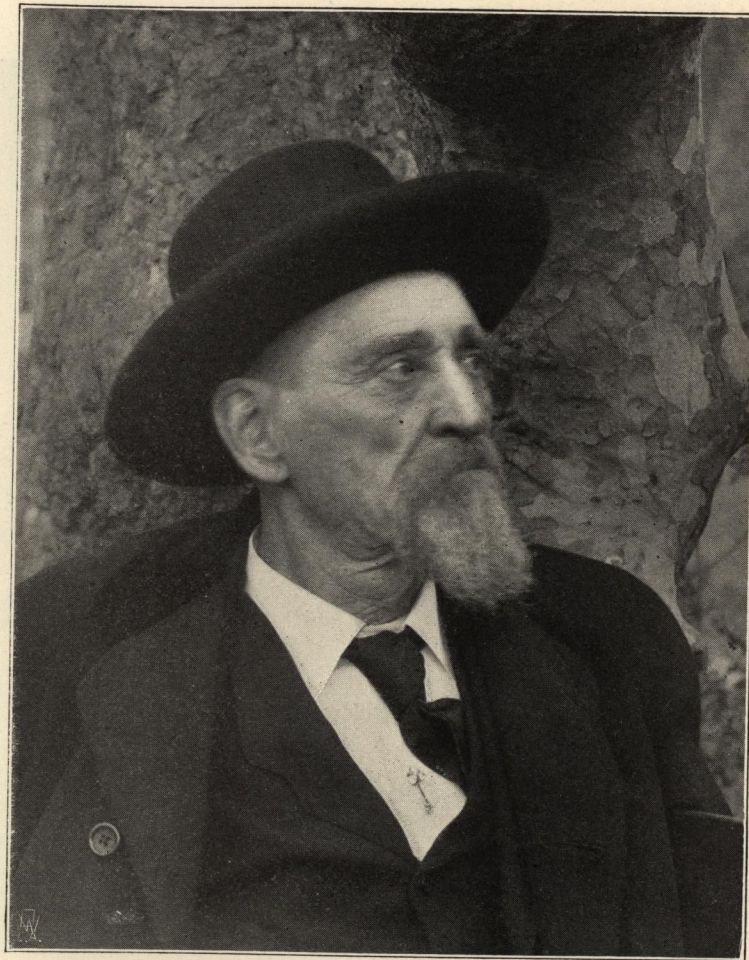


Photo by C. F. L., Jan. 29, 1903.  
CAPTAIN JOHN B. COLTON. (See page 326.)

the guidance of Captain Hunt, and I believe that more than half of the company followed his example. Meantime explorers had gone out, and my father was able to report that from the top of a pine on a hill he had seen open country toward the west, with a mountain intervening around whose side, bristling with dwarf cedars, a road must be cut for the train. Men were at once sent forward, and that night we camped among quaking bogs at the edge of a dark drain of the Mountain Meadows.

The day following we advanced, by a long and easy grade, to a summit whereon was an old Indian cornfield. The air was sharp, and the sky was overcast. The men circled about the greasewood fires and sang the old songs, some of which were





SALT GROUND IN DEATH VALLEY.

*Photo by C. Hart Merriam.*