Chapter 7

The Long Road Back

“This day all who were left alive of Mr. Rose’s Party came into camp, bringing melancholy intelligence.” This is how Udell began his journal entry for August 31, 1858. He then gives the details of the battle as related to him by the survivors. He quickly came to the conclusion that his own condition was worse than that of any of the others.

I was in the worst situation of anyone in the company who had a family—my wife being sixty-five-years of age, and so feeble that she was not able to walk, and I had not an ox or hoof left, except an Indian pony which I had kept at my wagon, and he was so worn down he could scarcely travel or stand. The other families had an ox or two each, which they could have put together to haul their little ones who could not walk, and the small quantity of provision they had left, which they finally did, but there was not half enough provisions in the company to sustain us until we could reach white settlements, where we could get any, so that, in all human probability, at that time, we must all perish by the hands of merciless savages or by starvation—even if we could start from here. . . . At this time the scene in our camp was an awful one—the widow weeping and mourning for the loss of a beloved husband, and a loving daughter so mutilated by the savage arrow that her life was despaired of; the wounded still besmeared with their own gore—some lying helpless, some with an arm useless. Here were fathers, and brothers, and sisters, husbands and wives, and even an aged mother wounded by the barbed arrow of the unfeeling savage, and nothing but a premature death seemed to stare us in the face. Indeed, I almost envied the lot of those of our comrades who were left dead behind us—their lifeless bodies to be burned by the savage foe, as is the custom of these Indians. No wonder if
the tears streamed from every eye! I think that a heart like Pharaoh’s would have melted in sympathy to have beheld our condition.¹

Udell’s gloom and doom were no exaggeration. Starvation and death now stared them in the face! Those who had remained at the mountain camp now had to make the same agonizing decisions that those at the river camp were forced to make—that is, what to take with them and what to leave behind. For the Baley company the choices were even more limited than they had been for the Rose company, for the Baleys did not have enough oxen to pull even one wagon. Everyone would have to walk, even mothers with infants in their arms.

The few oxen that remained would have to be used as pack animals until they either died or were butchered for food, and then the backs of humans would have to bear the load. As there was no immediate threat from Indians, the Baley company had time to cache the possessions they couldn’t take with them. They spent three days preparing caches for their valuables.

Just when things seemed nearly hopeless, the weary survivors received news that gave them new hope. They learned that a large emigrant train from Iowa was encamped at Mountain Spring on the east side of Sitgreaves Pass, only a few miles back. Most likely, scouts from that party were the first to make contact.

Who could these strangers be? In their eagerness to find out, the anxious emigrants left the mountain camp that evening, September 3. They again crossed Sitgreaves Pass at night, and arrived at Mountain Spring early the next day. To the delight of the Rose company, this emigrant train also hailed from Van Buren County, Iowa, and some of its members were old friends of Rose. These gentlemen were John Bradford Cave, James Jordan, Robert Perkins, and Calvin “Cal” Davis.² They all had their families with them; Cave was the captain. There were three or four other families in this group. Most were driving a loose herd of horses and cattle with them. To help manage all these animals, they employed about thirty young men, probably grubstakers.

Also in this train, according to Udell, “Was an intimate acquaintance of mine, . . . John Hamilton is the gentleman’s name; to him I repaired immediately for assistance for my old lady and myself—at least to carry our provisions for us.”
This kind-hearted friend responded favorably to Udell’s request, saying to him, “Yes, come, you and your old lady, and go with us; you shall fare with my family as long as I have an ox left, or anything.” Unfortunately for Udell, there wasn’t much that his friend could do for him other than to haul some of his provisions. Hamilton had lost two-thirds of his stock for lack of water and grass and from Indian depredations. He was forced to abandon five wagons, lacking oxen to pull them. In his one remaining wagon he had to carry his own large family and their provisions, as well as the family and provisions of his son-in-law, John Miller.

“He was ill able to haul his own large family,” Udell writes, “yet his sympathy prompted him to take us in—while his companions in travel refused to take any except Mr. Rose and his men, although some of them had plenty of horses, mules, and cattle to take the whole company—but Mr. Rose was a monied man.” This was not a fair assessment of the situation, for in reality, all had suffered greatly. Udell continues his discourse by stating, “I walked and my old lady rode my pony, and Mr. Hamilton carried our provisions as long as it lasted, which was not long after its being put into common stock.”

The members of the Cave train shared what food they had with the unfortunates, even butchering some of their cattle so that the hungry emigrants could have fresh meat, but there was little nourishment in the carcasses of the half-starved animals. Cave and his party were nearing the end of their journey and were getting low on food, especially flour. They, too, had been harassed by the Cosninos (Hualapais) since leaving the vicinity of Peach Springs. Many of their cattle were killed or stolen.

After hearing all the gruesome details of the Mojave attack on the Rose-Baley wagon train, it didn’t take much further convincing to persuade the Cave company to join the retreat, so they too turned back.

On the evening of September 4, the combined Rose-Baley and Cave wagon trains began their long march back to Albuquerque, New Mexico, a distance of nearly five hundred miles. As they continued their retrograde journey, they enacted a tale of hardship and suffering seldom equaled in the annals of westward emigration!

The season was early autumn, one of the hottest and driest periods of the year in the Southwest. Due to the intense heat, much of
the traveling had to be done at night, but often the long distances between water holes forced the weary emigrants to travel both day and night. Although the days were hot, the nights were cold because they were in high desert country. Many of the unfortunates possessed only the thin summer clothing they had worn on the day of the battle; some lacked even a well-worn blanket to protect their frail bodies from the chill of night. All except infants, the infirm, and the seriously wounded had to walk. The rocky terrain quickly wore through the soles of their shoes, forcing many to walk barefoot. Trudging along over the sharp rocks and prickly cacti needles, their feet became swollen and infected, adding intensely to their suffering.

The rocky surface was equally hard on the feet of the animals; it wore their hoofs down to the quick, slowing the poor beasts considerably. The wagon train was now averaging only eight to ten miles per day over the same terrain where they had averaged fifteen to twenty miles per day on the outbound journey. To compound their problems, water was becoming more difficult to find; many of the water holes where they had found water previously were now dry. Feed for the stock was almost nonexistent. Many of the remaining animals died from starvation, forcing the abandonment of several of the Cave company wagons. Food supplies were almost gone, yet they were hundreds of miles from the nearest settlement. If these problems were not enough, they were now entering Cosnino (Hualapai) territory. These Indians now began a campaign of harassment even greater than the one waged against the emigrants on their outward journey. Sensing the weakened condition of the wagon train, the Indians felt the pickings would be easy. They would conceal themselves behind rocks and fire their arrows into the stock as the wagon train passed by. Udell wrote that an arrow was shot through the back part of his pony’s saddle, but fortunately, no one was riding the animal at the time.

The rocky terrain, combined with the heat and the scarcity of food and water, soon began to take its toll on the unfortunate travelers. After crossing the Cerbat Mountains near present-day Kingman, Arizona, their water supply was nearly exhausted, yet they were still thirty miles from the nearest known source. Realizing they could not travel that distance without water, they sent fifteen young men ahead with the loose stock to the nearest known spring. While the animals
were recruiting, water was to be carried back to the main party by a smaller group of young men following the first group.

When the latter group came within a short distance of the spring, they were startled by the sound of gunfire coming from that direction. Up ahead they saw only Indians and cattle at the spring. Seeing none of their comrades, they assumed the worst: a total massacre! They ran back excitedly to the main group and reported that the Indians had killed all the members of the advance party and taken possession of the spring as well as all the cattle. This was frightening news to the beleaguered wagon train, for without water they would all perish.

Udell and others hurried ahead to investigate this catastrophic report. When they arrived at the spring, they found that there indeed had been a battle, but again the emigrants had emerged victorious. The young men from the advance party had found a large number of Indians occupying the spring with the specific intent of denying its use to the wagon train. They expressed this intent with a barrage of arrows when the young men approached. Knowing that they must have water soon, the advance party charged the Indians and drove them from the spring. Two of the young men were seriously wounded, one from an arrow and the other from a musket ball. One of the Indians was seen firing a gun, so in all probability the gunshot wound was caused by hostile fire. This was the first time they had encountered Indians with firearms, which boded ill for the emigrants who, up to now, had been saved by their superior firepower. In addition to the two young men wounded, a fine horse also had been killed.

Savedra identified these Indians as Cosenenoes (Cosninos, or Cosniños), the name that early explorers applied to the Hualapai. This is about the only mention Udell makes of Savedra on the return trip. Savedra might not have been the most popular member of the wagon train at this moment; although no one blamed him for the Mojave attack, some were quite vocal about his shortcomings, especially his inability to find water. Anyway, there was little need for a guide now, since they had been over this route only a few days before.

Although the Hualapais were driven from the spring, their harassment did not cease. As the train traveled through Truxton (Truxtun) Canyon, the Indians fired arrows down at it from the top of
the canyon. Fortunately, no one was killed or wounded by these attacks, but several more precious cattle were killed or injured.

The emigrants decided to put a stop to these annoying tactics by sending a group of men to the top of the canyon to try to catch the culprits in the act. On the night of September 10, Gillum and William Right Baley, and six of the younger men, climbed to the top of the canyon where they hid behind rocks and waited for the Indians to appear. Early the next morning they surprised a group of warriors attempting to shoot arrows into the wagon train passing below. They fired at the Indians, killing three and driving the others away. As souvenirs, the victors brought back a bloody scalp, a bow and some arrows. The women were horrified by the sight of these gruesome trophies, but after that the depredations ceased.

The wagon train moved slowly eastward through Truxton Canyon toward White Rock Spring, arriving there on September 12. At White Rock Spring the travelers were nearing the end of their endurance. Provisions were nearly exhausted; their only food was the meat from the cattle that had died on the road from starvation or thirst, or from both, and whose flesh contained little or no nourishment. Even this meager repast had to be consumed without benefit of salt or bread, as these two staples were almost gone.

Some of the emigrants gave up all hope and lay down by the side of the road to await death. The Rose-Baley and Cave wagon trains were rapidly going the way of the Donner party. As frequently happens when the going gets the roughest and the storm clouds are the darkest, it is the iron determination of the women that steadies the morale of the men and holds the group together. So it was with these emigrants. One little girl in particular refused to give up hope. She was seven-year-old Julia Brown, daughter of the slain Alpha Brown and Mary Brown, and a half-sister of Sallie Fox. Julia told her mother, “One thing assures me—the Lord will provide.” And provide, He did.

On the evening of September 13, while still camped at White Rock Spring, the emigrants observed strange objects slowly descending into the canyon and moving toward them. In the dim distance they resembled old-fashioned, high-crowned sunbonnets. What could they be? Could they be optical illusions caused by the effects of the thin air on half-starved bodies? Ironically, the first to see them was Sallie Fox,
who had given the alarm when she saw the Mojaves sneaking up through the brush to attack the wagon train at the Colorado River. Sallie was still seriously ill from the arrow wound she had received in that battle, and due to a lack of proper medical care and adequate nourishment, her condition had worsened to the point where there was grave doubt about her recovery. When Sallie called attention to the approaching objects her mother thought that Sallie must be entering a period of delirium that often precedes death, and she feared for her daughter's life. But when her mother and others looked to where Sallie indicated, they too saw something on the far horizon moving in their direction. As the distant silhouettes approached nearer camp, the distinct form of covered wagons became discernible to the excited emigrants. Who could these newcomers be?

The new arrivals turned out to be members of a large wagon train hailing from Decatur, Macon County, Illinois, the joint property of E. O. and T. O. Smith. The Smiths were driving a large herd of cattle, horses, and mules that they hoped to sell in California. There were no women or children in the train. The Smiths had employed forty men as teamsters, blacksmiths, herders, etc., to assist in driving and managing this large herd. They also had encountered no problems with Indians until they reached the vicinity of Peach Springs, but at that location the harassment began. One of their men was wounded by an arrow shot at random into camp.

E. O. Smith (Edward Owen) was a forty-one-year-old native of Maryland, and of the two brothers, he was the one clearly in charge. The age of T. O. (Thomas O.) Smith is unknown, but he is believed to have been several years younger than his brother, who was a prominent businessman and an influential citizen of Decatur, Illinois. E.O. had built the first opera house in that city as well as an entire block of buildings in the business section of town. He was active in political affairs in the state of Illinois, having been a delegate to the convention that drew up the Illinois State Constitution of 1848. He was well acquainted with most of the political figures of the state, including Abraham Lincoln. He had successfully driven a large herd of cattle, horses, and mules to California in 1853 by way of the Southern Route. That venture proved to be most profitable; he hoped to repeat his success on this trip. An activist in political affairs in his home state, he had
heard about Edward F. Beale’s proposed survey for a shorter route to California, and wrote a letter to his congressman in February of 1858 requesting information on this new route. It is unknown just what information his congressman was able to provide him on this subject, but at Albuquerque he learned that two emigrant parties were already traveling the road. This was enough to convince him.

The Smiths proved to be good friends and good Samaritans. They not only shared their remaining food supplies to the last mouthful, but they also killed and butchered their dwindling herd of cattle to feed the starving emigrants. E. O. Smith was especially kind to the Widow Brown and her five children. That first night shortly after arriving at White Rock Spring, E. O. Smith sent some flour and beans to Mrs. Brown’s tent. Writing about the overland trip many years later, Sallie Fox recalled, “No such beans were ever tasted before, even by a Boston epicure.” Sallie thought that E. O. Smith was the handsomest man she had ever met. She vowed that if she married and had a son she would name him after E. O. Smith. True to her promise she named her only son, Edward O. Allen. Without this fortuitous meeting with the Smiths, it is doubtful that many members of the Rose, Baley, and Cave companies would have survived the journey back to Albuquerque; slow starvation or death from an Indian arrow or war club would surely have been their fate.

Since the Smith train was composed only of able-bodied men, Udell argued that they were now strong enough to continue their journey to California.

I thought as we were now one hundred and eighteen men strong, we could go on to California, and probably we could recover the most of our property from the Mojave Indians. I used every effort in my power to induce the company to go on to California, but a majority of those who had turned back represented the road as horrible and the Indians so numerous and warlike, that certain death to all would be almost certain to ensue. I argued that if twenty-five men had succeeded in driving the Indians from them, when the Indians had completely surrounded them in the brush, and had every possible advantage of them—if twenty-five men could do that, I thought that with one hundred and eighteen men and any kind of precaution, we could achieve the victory without the loss of one life. I pressed
my appeal so strong that some of the Iowa company became angry and began to curse me, so I didn’t push the matter any further, as I was altogether dependent on others, go which way we would.7

Udell reckoned without the full knowledge and understanding of the psychology of fear and defeat. These emigrants were so imbued with it that for them there was no turning around and going westward again. Like a routed army, no persuasion, no matter how eloquently or logically presented, could stop their headlong flight or restore their forward march. Some of these same feelings of fear and defeat also rubbed off onto the members of the Smith train. E. O. Smith took a vote of his men as to whether they should return with the others or continue on to California, and whether they were willing to give up their seats in the wagons to the suffering women and children and share their food with them. All but two or three voted to retreat with the emigrants. Again, the rescuers elected to go with the rescued, and all turned back.

At White Rock Spring the emigrants were approximately two hundred and seventy-five miles from San Bernardino, California, but more than four hundred miles from Albuquerque. But a comparison of distances made little impression on the travelers, for all but Udell and a tiny minority had made up their minds to turn back.

The addition of the Smith train brought the total number of emigrants to 203 individuals, far too large a group to travel and camp together given the limited supply of water and grass. Again, they divided into two groups. Rose and his family, along with most of the Cave train, formed one section, while the remainder joined the Smith train. It was probably a good idea to have Udell and Rose in different sections since the two didn’t get along well. It is interesting to note that the Widow Brown and her family were not included in the Cave group even though they had been with Rose all the way up until now. Perhaps because of Sallie Fox’s wounds they could not travel as fast as Rose and the Cave train, which was in the vanguard. From White Rock Spring back to Albuquerque, the Rose-Baley wagon train could more properly be called the Cave-Smith wagon train since these two men were now the dominant members.

The Cave train, along with most of the Rose company, left the encampment at White Rock Spring on September 14, the day after the
The arrival of the Smiths. The now greatly enlarged Smith train spent the day organizing and left the following day. Night travel was still necessary due to the heat. Udell found the Smiths to be much more accommodating than were the members of the Cave train.

The Messrs. Smith possessed quite different dispositions from the principal proprietors of the Iowa train. . . The Messrs. Smith furnished teams immediately for all those who had wagons, and wagons and teams to those who had none, so that all could ride, and they divided out their provisions among all alike, and their men rode horses and mules. I rode my pony. Mr. Hamilton and three other families from the Iowa train, who needed help traveled with the Smith train.8

With so many more mouths to feed, the food supplies which the Smiths had generously apportioned from their own dwindling larder began to run out. The Smiths butchered their cattle to feed the starving emigrants. “They killed their best,” Udell wrote, “but they were feverish in traveling so far and suffering so much for water and food.” They ate this meat garnished only with a few cracker crumbs because their salt and flour were again nearly exhausted. Smith vowed that as long as he lived he would always keep a good supply of crackers on hand.

To relieve the pressure on the diminishing provisions, about twenty to twenty-five of the young men decided to strike out on their own for California. Their plan was to travel about two hundred miles south through the desert and connect with the Southern Route. They were aware that the Butterfield Overland Mail was now carrying both mail and passengers between St. Louis, Missouri, and San Francisco, California over this route.9 They believed they could get provisions from the relay stations and send word to the proper authorities about the desperate condition of the other emigrants. Several of the Smiths’ best cattle were butchered and the meat jerked for their use on the way. Eloquent and emotional speeches were made in parting as both groups were still exposed to imminent danger and there was little expectation that they would ever meet again.

The expanded Smith train struggled on eastward until it reached the vicinity of Mount Floyd (Udell’s Apache Peak). Other members of the party now referred to it as Picacho, probably confusing it with
Picacho Butte which lies a few miles to the south. Here they caught up with the Cave train and the Rose company. Although no longer harassed by Indians, they still faced the threat of starvation. The food supplies brought by the Smiths were almost gone, and all were now living off the meat from the Smiths’ feverish cattle. The emigrants realized that without help from the outside they could not survive much longer. At Picacho (Mount Floyd), they drafted the following letter to the commander at Fort Defiance, the nearest army post:

Picacho, Sep. the 22nd, 80 miles west of the St. Francisco Mountain

To the Commander of Fort Defiance.

There are 8 companies of us here now, who started Beale road for California, consisting in all 23 men, 33 old and young ladies, and 47 children of all ages from the 2-week babe up—
The first Company on the road reached the Colorado with 400 head of stock, wagons, provisions, and made presents to the Indians, and done all in their power to give no offence and please them, and know of no cause for offense that they gave—
On the third day about 300 Mohave Indians, while some of the men were busy herding and preparing a raft for crossing the river, attacked the camp, and the men that were out, all at the same time, with the apparent intention of massacring all of them, but our wagons being in a good situation for defense, and all our men getting in that were out, they found it perhaps warmer work than they anticipated, and they contented themselves with taking all our stock except 19 head of cattle, and 11 horses, which were frightened by the attack, and ran up to the wagons, and had it not been for this, to us their lucky circumstances, we could never have got away, and that we did so is yet a mystery, and can only be explained by believing that they did not know of our departure, as we left in the night and only took 2 of our wagons to haul a little bedding and provisions for each—On the return of the first company to Colorado Springs [Mountain Spring] (24 miles from the Colorado) they met the second company, the [Cave company] and with what joy cannot be described, for starvation was already staring them in the face. They very generously delayed their train for several days, to the great injury of their stock, as they had no grass for them, and but scant water to help us over the mountains. They have also shared with everyone who needed with a generosity that is more rare and remarkable as they have taken it out of the mouths of
their own children, and divided it with others. Their waiting on
the first company and the scarcity of grass and water to here, has
been ruinous on them so much so, that out of nearly 500 head
there are now only 145 left, and they are all footsore and per-
fectly worn out, and have been 22 days coming thus far, and
would not be here now, if we had not met with the third
Company, [the Smith train] who have done all in their power,
and are doing all they can for the good of the whole. But our
stock is all worn down, poor, and what is worse their feet are
worn to the quick, and with cruel beating cannot make more
than 8 or 10 miles a day. Here the water will not last more than
a day longer, as it is rain water. It is 35 miles to Alexander
Cannon [sic], and 10 days ago there was no water there; from
there it is 30 miles to water, and 65 miles without water we can
never make with a wagon. We may possibly get some of our
stock, which will enable us to live until assistance can reach us,
and this will be all we have to live on, beef alone for some time
as our flour and all kinds of provisions are about gone. What
makes it still worse, the beef is very poor and sick, so that half of
us are more or less unwell, and very unfit to perform the labor
which is necessary, and walk along. Most of us are destitute for
shoes and warm clothing, many not even having a blanket and
ladies and little children who have always before been accus-
tomed to plenty to eat, and comfortable homes, are trudging
along, crying, some from hunger, some tired with blistered and
bleeding feet—We hope you may help us—We pray you may
help us, for you not to help us is a thought blended with
death—We ask it not, as men, we could help ourselves, but for
our wives and little ones—We ask it as brothers of that order
whose emblem is the Square and the Compass, and we ask it still
more as men, belonging to one universal Brotherhood. May it
be possible for you to help us—In the fight with the Indians at
the river we had about 33 men in the engagement. The Cosnino
Indians have also been very troublesome, to the 2 last parties
going, and to all of us returning they have repeatedly shot at us
from hiding places and run off much stock, and should they
continue to follow us, then it would become a very serious mat-
ter for men are leaving us every day, leaving only the heads of
families, the weak, and wounded behind

We are respectfully Yours,
Signed: E. O. and T. O. Smith
Joseph Ferman James H. Jordan
John Hamilton J. B. Cave
It is unknown which member or members of the wagon train actually drafted the letter, but whoever it was, they possessed a better than average education for that period. The reference to the “Square” and the “Compass” pertains to the Masonic Lodge. The Masonic Lodge was, and still is, a prestigious fraternal organization. Many army officers belonged to it. From this emigrant train, Alpha Brown is known to have been a member, and there were doubtless others in the group who were members. It is interesting to note that John Udell was not one of the signers of the letter. The reason for the omission of his name is not known. Six of the young men volunteered to attempt delivery of the letter to Fort Defiance, nearly three hundred miles away. Unfortunately, the names of these six brave men are not recorded.

Udell, despite his sixty-three years of age, decided that he was the one who could rescue the wagon train from its imminent peril. His plan was to ride full speed ahead to the nearest Indian pueblo, Zuni, two hundred and fifty miles away, and send food back for the relief of the others. He remembered that they had been able to obtain corn from the Zuni Indians on the outward journey, and perhaps they could do so again. He also believed that he could get the Zunis to help deliver the food. If unsuccessful at Zuni, he would ride on another hundred or so miles to Albuquerque. The Smiths lent him one of their best horses to ride, as the only animal that Udell had been able to save from the Mojaves was his Indian pony which his wife now rode. By not being encumbered with a wagon or loose stock, he believed that he could make rapid progress and get help before it was too late.

He persuaded four young men to accompany him on his mission of mercy. They left camp at Mount Floyd on September 24, and traveled forty miles to Alexander Canyon where they camped for the night. They had found water here on the outbound journey. The next morning the four young men volunteered to go down into the canyon
to search for water while Udell waited by the road for them to return. When they did not return by nightfall, Udell, fearing for their safety, climbed down into the canyon to search for them. While there, he met Bradford Cave of the Iowa train, which was again traveling in the lead. Cave informed Udell that he had encountered Udell’s companions earlier in the afternoon. The guide (presumably Savedra) told the young men he could pilot them across the hills by a route which would save them ten miles. They took the guide up on his offer and he led them out of the canyon and back to the road, but at a point some twenty miles ahead of where they had left Udell. Perhaps they thought Udell could either overtake them or would wait there for the wagon train to catch up with him. “Either would be a dangerous situation for me to be in, in a savage country,” Udell wrote in his journal. He decided to camp where he was for the remainder of the night and get a fresh start in the morning without the company of his thoughtless companions.

The next day, September 26, Udell traveled thirty miles to Hedgpeth (Bear) Spring where he found Rose and his Iowa companions camped. Rose informed Udell that another small wagon train had come as far as Leroux Springs, but had turned back when they heard about the misfortune that had befallen the Rose-Baley wagon train. This new train carried some four or five hundred pounds of flour that the owners wished to sell. Udell started to ride on ahead to overtake this train, hoping to purchase a few pounds. At this point, Rose told Udell that he had already sent men ahead to purchase every pound that the train could spare. Udell states that Rose flatly refused to sell him a single pound:

I begged of him to let me have some [flour], if it was not more than two or three pounds, for my old lady, as she was becoming sick from living on feverish beef alone. He positively refused to spare one pound, although I offered him three times as much as he had to pay for it. At the same time, the Iowa company, with which he traveled, had had flour all the way—while the Messrs. Smith’s train and those of us who traveled with them had been living without any for a number of days.¹²

Rose suggested to Udell that if he would overtake this train, perhaps he could play on the sympathies of the ladies and persuade them to scrimp and let him have a pound or two.
Udell hurried on and overtook this train, which he found camped by a small stream. When Udell related his plight to the train’s proprietor, Washington Peck, Peck told him that he had sold Rose’s agents all the flour that he could spare, and that he would probably be short himself before his train got back to where they could purchase more. Moreover, he had sold the flour for exactly the same price that he paid for it, and did so with the understanding that it would be equally divided among all the sufferers. He was disappointed to learn that this was not done. After hearing Udell’s tale of woe, the ladies of this emigrant train took pity on him and collected between fifteen and twenty pounds of flour which they gave to him without charge. With this stroke of good luck, Udell abandoned his plan of going on to Zuni and hurried back to his wife, “To share with her,” he wrote, “the precious boon bestowed upon us by those generous-hearted people.”

Apparently, after being so critical of Rose for his failure to share the flour he purchased from the Peck party with other members of the wagon train, Udell likewise failed to share his good fortune with the other members of his company. At least if he did so, he neglected to mention it in his journal, an omission not typical of Udell. However, he might be partially excused because the small amount of flour that he obtained, had it been equally divided among all members of the train, probably would not have amounted to much more than a slice or two of bread apiece. Besides, he had a sick wife to feed.

While Udell was traveling back and forth in his quest for flour, the Smith train reached Hedgpeth (Bear) Springs. This is where he found them camped when he returned with the flour. It was at this location that Thomas Hedgpeth killed a bear on the outbound journey. But now there were no signs of bear or any other game. Some nice fat bear meat would certainly have been a godsend. Any game that might have been in the vicinity during the summer months had by now disappeared, either off to a winter range or scared by the noise of such a large group of humans invading their habitat.

On September 30, Udell had more bad news to report:

This day another alarm; three of those men who left us to go to California, a few days since, returned, and said they supposed the others had all perished for want of water. They traveled together, finding no water, until some of the party became
so famished they could travel no further. They then started in different directions to find water. Three of them succeeded, and returned to inform their companions. On their return they found guns, ammunition and provisions strewn along, but found no men. They then steered into camp as fast as they could, and found us fifty or sixty miles ahead of where they left us. We all supposed the other twenty had perished.\footnote{13}

On the evening of October 2, the Smith train arrived at Leroux Springs at the base of the San Francisco Mountains. This had been a very pleasant camp on the trip out, but now it was a camp of misery. The weather suddenly turned cold and rainy, causing the emigrants much discomfort due to a lack of food and proper clothing. Udell wrote of this camp, “My feeble old lady and myself suffered in being on the cold wet ground with wet clothes and nothing but clouds and one thin quilt to cover us.” Leroux Springs, at an elevation of more than six thousand feet, gets heavy snowfall during the winter months.

The following day, the remainder of the young men who had attempted to take the Southern Route to California came into camp in an emaciated condition. Since they were presumed dead by their comrades, there was great rejoicing in camp upon their return. They related a story of incredible hardship and suffering. They had taken only a small quantity of water with them since they were confident of finding more along the way and didn’t want to be burdened by carrying a large supply. Besides, they were in a hurry to get to California. When they failed to find water as expected, they had to abort their attempt to reach the Southern Route. They turned back to rejoin the emigrant train which had traveled some distance eastward in the meantime. The salty dried beef that was their only food greatly exacerbated their thirst, and soon their meager supply of water was exhausted. Some became so dehydrated they could travel no farther.

Three of the stronger young men set out to find water for the others. During their absence, one of the men who remained behind thought he recognized a canyon where he found water on the outbound journey. Leaving their belongings scattered along the way, the others eagerly followed their comrade to the supposed water hole. When they arrived at the spring, they discovered to their great disappointment that it was now dry. Driven by the utmost thirst, they traveled all night
searching for water but failed to find any. They were about ready to lie down and await death when suddenly they came upon another water hole. Its water was so foul they could smell it from a distance. Living in the water was a kind of white worm about an inch long, but this was no deterrent to these thirst-driven young men. They simply pulled out their dirty handkerchiefs and strained the water through the filthy rags, declaring it the best water they had ever tasted! They spent the better part of the day at the water hole, resting and drinking their fill. They were still there when their three companions returned with water to where they had left them, only to find them missing. After refreshing themselves they caught up with the wagon train a couple of days later. Again, there was great rejoicing in camp upon their safe return.

The emigrants had now been more than a month on the road back to Albuquerque, but they had covered only about half the distance. They would have to do better! Soon winter would be upon them; already the first chills of the season were being felt. There was little actual danger of their being snowed in all winter as can happen in the Sierra Nevada, but winter in the high deserts of Arizona and New Mexico can be a miserable experience, especially for those who lack warm clothing and adequate food.

It soon became apparent that their only hope for survival lay in getting aid from the outside as soon as possible. Nothing had been heard from the young men who set out for Fort Defiance to seek help from the army. There was fear that they might no longer be alive. The young men who had attempted to reach the Southern Route were now back in camp in a starved and worn-down condition, a further drain on the rapidly diminishing food supplies. Again, another group of young men rose to the occasion and volunteered to go ahead to Albuquerque to seek help. They left Leroux Springs on the morning of October 4.

Several more of the Smiths’ cattle were butchered for their provisions. With plenty of grass and water at Leroux Springs, the Smiths decided to remain there awhile to recruit their livestock so that they could better endure the trip across the desert where feed and water would be at a premium. Since there was not enough food to sustain such a large number of people at this camp, and relief was still uncertain, the Udells and several other families decided to strike out for Zuni, a distance of more than two hundred miles. There, they hoped
to at least get some bread. They left Leroux Springs for Zuni on October 7, according to Udell:

To-day my friend J. Hamilton, his son-in-law, John Miller, and Messrs. Hedgepeth [Hedgpeth] Mr. Daily [Daly] Mr. Holland and myself all started with our families to travel to Zuni, where we could get bread. As the Messrs. Smith intended to remain here [Leroux Springs] two or three weeks, to recruit their cattle, they furnished us teams to go on with and killed their cattle for our provision on the road. We traveled daily until the 20th of October, when we all arrived safe at Zuni, in a starving condition.¹⁴

Not mentioned by Udell are the two Baley families and Mrs. Brown and her family. They apparently remained at Leroux Springs with the Smiths. The reason is unknown, but it might have been because they had family members who were too ill to travel. The Zuni Indians again treated the emigrants with great kindness, furnishing them with bread, beans, and pumpkins. “All of which we ate so greedily for several days that we made ourselves quite unwell,” Udell related.

Residing at Zuni at that time was an American merchant by the name of Ezra Bucknam. Through Bucknam’s efforts the Daly and Holland families were able to obtain a large room in the pueblo. They then invited John and Emily Udell to move in with them. It must have been quite crowded with all of them living in one room, but at least it was better than sleeping on the cold, wet ground. Bucknam’s kindness to the Daly and Holland families might have been partially motivated by his fondness for the Dalys’ twenty-two-year-old daughter, Adeline (Madeleine Isabelle Adeline). On November 1, Udell recorded: “Today I joined Mr. Ezra Bucknam and Miss Adaline Daily [sic] in the sacred bonds of matrimony.” Bucknam cast covetous eyes toward Adeline on the outward journey, but there was not enough time for him to strike up a relationship with her. The marriage reduced the size of the wagon train by one person.

On October 30, a large army wagon loaded with provisions for the hungry emigrants arrived at Zuni. The letter that the emigrants wrote back at Mount Floyd pleading for help had finally borne fruit. The six young men who attempted to deliver the letter to Fort Defiance had been unable to do so because of the Navajo war that
broke out in the vicinity of Fort Defiance. Eventually, after great difficulty, they succeeded in getting through to Albuquerque, where they delivered the letter to a Major Backus, then in command at that post. Backus drafted an order to a Lieutenant L. W. O’Bannon authorizing the following commissary stores to be immediately dispatched to the emigrants:

Lt. O’Bannon, 3rd Inf.
Headquarters, Albuquerque, N.M.
A.A.C.S. October 12, 1858

Sir:

It appears by good evidence that a party of Californians have been attacked by Mohave, and other Indians, near the Colorado River—lost three men, four women, and two children, and the party is now returning in a starving condition. It is on Beals [Beale’s] trail beyond Sunia [Zuni]—They have sent in for relief, and I propose to send a six mule wagon tomorrow to meet them at or near Sunia—I wish you to send the following subsistence stores, by said wagon, and file this paper as your voucher.

Viz. 600 — six hundred pounds of flour.
400 — four hundred pounds bacon
100 — one hundred pounds of coffee
200 — two hundred pounds of sugar
8 — eight quarts of salt
4 — four gallons of vinegar

Major Tucker will have a team in readiness tomorrow morning, by which the stores may be sent without delay to Mr. L. J. Rose, one of the men of the suffering party—A small escort will go out with the party to Zunia, including six of the Californians.

I am, Most Respectfully
Your Obidt. Servt.
E. Backus
Major, 3 Infry. Comdg.

The order for four gallons of vinegar was crossed out in the original letter; apparently vinegar was in short supply at the post and couldn’t be spared. The six Californians referred to in the letter as forming part of the escort might have been the six young men who delivered the letter to the army. The U.S. Army is not in the habit of giving food to civilians, and when it does, usually in cases of an emergency, it must justify the act with proper authorities. Colonel B. L. E.
Bonneville, then in charge of the Department of New Mexico, sent this letter to army headquarters in New York City.\textsuperscript{17}

Headquarters, Dept. of New Mexico  
Santa Fe, N. M.  
Nov. 6\textsuperscript{th}, 1858  
Lieut. Colonel L. Thomas  
Asst. Adjt. General  
Headquarters of the Army  
New York, City  

Colonel:  
In continuation of my communication of the 23\textsuperscript{rd} of October, I have the honor to enclose for the consideration of the General in Chief, the following copies of reports received from Colonel Miles and his subordinates in the Navajo Expedition, showing operations in that country up to date, viz.:  
(A) Report of Lieut. Col. Miles 3rd Infry  
(B) Report of Bvt. Major Brooks 3rd Infry  
(C) Report of Captain McLane R.M.R.  
(D) Supplementary report of Bvt. Captain Hatch R.M.R.  
(E) Report of Lieutenant Howland R.M.R.  
(F) Copy of my instructions to Col. Miles on the above report.  

Major Backus’s column is in the field since the 24 ultimo, but has not been heard from.  
A large party of emigrants who had taken Beale’s route to California was totally defeated with the loss of all their stock, provisions, etc., by the Mohave Indians at the crossing of the Colorado River, and must have starved had not fortunately on their return, met another party traveling about eight miles behind them. In a short time all were reduced to the most destitute and deplorable condition, having nothing to eat but the few work oxen left, and hundreds of miles away from the settlements or assistance. They succeeded in informing Major Backus, then in command of Albuquerque, of their situation, and he sent out a supply of commissary stores, sufficient to bring them into the settlements. In consideration of their perfect helplessness, being amongst a people not able to appreciate their condition, and speaking a different language, I found it indispensably necessary to give them additional assistance, there being a large number of women and children left perfectly destitute.  

I am, Colonel, very respectfully
Your obedient servant.
B. L. E. Bonneville
Colonel, 3rd Infantry, Commanding.

The arrival of the army commissary wagon in Zuni (there may have been more than one wagon) was cause for great rejoicing for it now appeared that the worst of the ordeal was over. On November 1, there was more good news. The Smith train with the remainder of the emigrants arrived in Zuni. The Smiths decided not to stay two to three weeks at Leroux Springs recruiting their cattle as they had first planned. The physical condition of some of the emigrants traveling with the Smith train might have prompted them to hurry on toward the settlements.

The government provisions were divided equally so that each family had enough food to get to civilization, one hundred and fifty miles away. The army also sent a small escort of soldiers along to protect the emigrants against any Navajos who were still at war. The army hauled all of those who had lost their teams, so that none had to walk.

Meanwhile, Rose and his fellow Iowans who were traveling with mule teams, forged farther and farther ahead of the others and reached Albuquerque on October 28.

The trip back from Zuni to Albuquerque was slow, but it was made in relative comfort when compared to the ordeal that they had gone through. There was food enough for everyone and enough wagons to haul the whole group. They again camped at Inscription Rock, but this time none of the emigrants carved his or her name on the rock; they were all too intent on getting back to Albuquerque. On November 10, the Smith train arrived at the Indian pueblo of Laguna. That evening they listened to a sermon preached by the Elder Gorman, the same Elder Gorman who preached to them on the way out. Udell described the sermon as, “A discourse very applicable to our misfortunes and present circumstances.” Gorman not only provided the emigrants with spiritual comforts but also gave them money, flour, clothing, and vegetables to the amount of twenty-five or thirty dollars, according to Udell. This timely aid, combined with that provided by the army, enabled them to reach Albuquerque on November 13, 1858, nearly two and one-half months after being attacked by the Mojave Indians at the Colorado River.