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PACKING, IN THE MOUNTAINS OF CALIFORNIA

Miners in search of the precious metal, have penetrated the vast forests, explored the deep canyons, climbed the rocky steeps, and, eventually, many of them have made themselves a dwelling place among the rugged and almost inaccessible mountains of California. Thus shut out from the cities of the plain, packing, to them, has become an indispensable necessity; and is not only the means of obtaining their supplies, but, like the ever welcome expressman, a kind of connecting link between the valleys and the mountains.

In some of the more isolated mining localities, the arrival of a pack train, is an event of some importance, and men gather around it with as much apparent interest, as though they expected to see some dear old friend stowed away somewhere among the packs.

This necessity, has created an extensive packing business with the cities of Stockton, Marysville, Shasta, and Crescent City, but very little with Sacramento, at the present time.

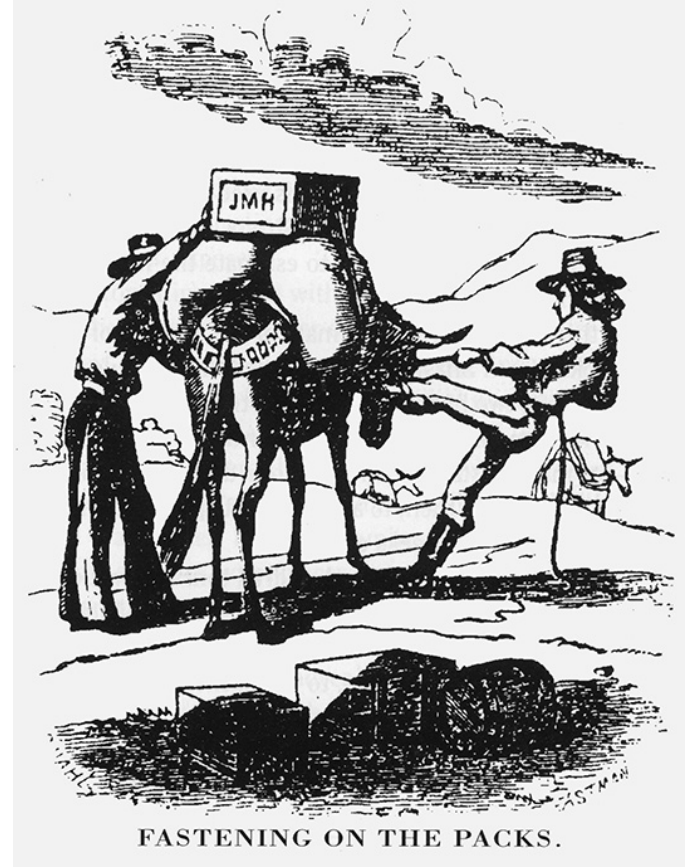
We are indebted to a friend in Stockton for the following interesting information concerning the packing trade of that city.

The quantity of freight packed on mules to the counties of Calaveras, Tuolumne, Mariposa, and Tulare, from Stockton, is about two hundred tons weekly, or one fifth of the entire amount of goods weekly transported.

There are generally from forty to fifty mules in a train, most-ly Mexican, each of which will carry from three hundred to three hundred and fifty pounds, and with which they will travel from twenty five to thirty five miles per day, without becoming weary.

If there is plenty of grass they seldom get anything else to eat. When fed on barley, which is generally about three months of the year - November, December, and January - it is only given once a day, and in the proportion of from seven to eight pounds per mule. They seldom drink more than once a day, in the warmest of

weather. The average life of a mule is about sixteen years. The Mexican mules are tougher and stronger than American mules; for, while the latter seldom can carry more than from two hundred to two hundred and fifty pounds, the former can carry three hundred and fifty pounds, with greater ease. This fact may arise from the mules in Mexico being accustomed to packing only, and over a mountainous country; while the American mules are used only for draught. The Mexican mule, too can carry a person forty miles per day, for ten or twelve days consecutively, over a mountainous trail; while it is very difficult for an American mule to accomplish over twenty five or thirty miles per day.



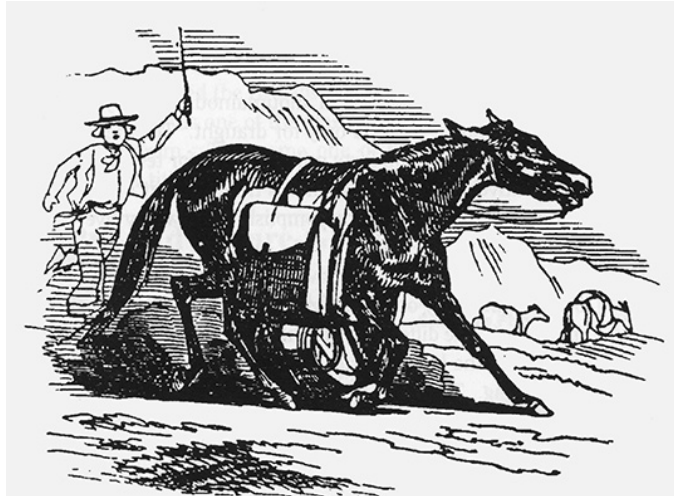
The Mexican mule can travel farther and endure more without food than any other quadruped; and with him, apparently, it makes but little difference whether fed regularly or not; still, like animals of the biped species, he has no objection to the best of good living. They can,

however, always be kept fat with but little care, and it is but very little that is required; while the American mule, to do only half the amount of work, requires good food, regularly given, besides being well cared for otherwise. The Mexicans consider them altogether too delicate for their use. Then again, from the steady regularity of their steps, the Mexican mule is much the easier, generally, under the saddle, and a person will not often become as much fatigued from riding one a week, as he would be in riding an American mule for only three days.

The packing trade of Marysville is very extensive with Downieville, Eureka North, Morrison's Diggings, St. Louis, Pine Grove, Poker Flat, Gibsonville, Nelson's Point, American Valley, Indian Valley, and all the intermediate and surrounding places in the counties of Sierra and Plumas, giving employment to about two thousand five hundred mules, and between three and four hundred men.

From the town of Shasta, during the winter of 1854- '5, the number of mules employed in the packing trade to the various towns and mining localities north of Shasta, was one thousand eight hundred and seventy six. This does not include the animals used by individual miners; and, according to the Shasta Courier, of November 11th, 1854, it would be safe to estimate the number at two thousand.

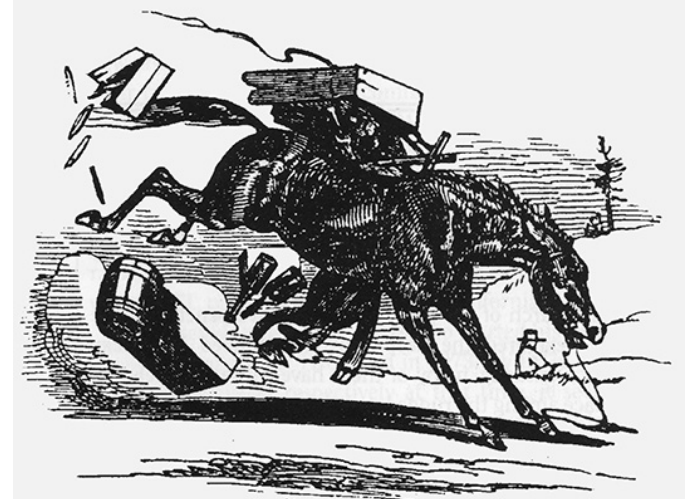
"With this data a very fair estimate of the amount of freight packed from Shasta may be formed. Each mule load will average two hundred pounds. A trip to the most remote point to which goods are taken will never occupy more than two weeks - in many instances three or four days less. It is a very moderate calculation, then, to average the trips of the entire two thousand mules at two weeks each."



IN TROUBLE.

"This will give a result of one hundred tons per week, as the aggregate amount of freight packed from Shasta - which, at the very low figure of five cents per pound, would yield the sum of twenty thousand dollars per trip, to the packers."

The principal places to which freight is this transported from Shasta, are Weaverville, (or "Weaver," as it is now called,) Yreka, and the settlements around, and between, those points. One is astonished to see the singular goods that are often packed across the Trinity and Scott mountains, to those places; such as buggies, windows, boxes, barrels, bars of iron, chairs, tables, plows, etc.



UNPACKING WITHOUT ASSISTANCE.

In the fall of 1853, there was an iron safe, nearly three feet square, and weighing 352 pounds, transported on a very large mule, from Shasta to Weaverville, a distance of thirty-eight miles, over a rough and mountainous trail, without an accident; but, after the load was taken off, the mule lay down, and died in a few hours afterwards.

All kinds of goods, at all times, are not alike safely packed. A friend of ours, who resides in Yreka, sent, among other things, a rocking chair and looking-glass, "and when I reached there," said he, "I found that the chair back was broken, the rockers off, and one arm in two pieces; and the looking-glass was as much like a crate of broken crockery as anything I ever saw."

A gentleman has also informed us that in the summer of 1855, two sets of millstones were packed from Shasta to Weaverville, the largest weighing six hundred pounds. Being looked upon as an impossibility for one mule to carry, it was first tried to be "slung" between two mules, but that being impracticable, it was abandoned and packed on one. The following fact will give some idea of the expense often occasioned, as well as the immense weight sometimes packed, over a rough and mountainous country.

When the Yreka Herald was about to be published, a press was purchased in San Francisco, at a cost of about six hundred dollars, upon which the freight alone amounted to nine hundred dollars, making the entire cost \$1,300.



ACCIDENTS SOMETIMES HAPPEN

The "bed-piece," weighing three hundred and ninety-seven pounds, which, with the aparajoe, ropes, etc. exceeded four hundred and thirty pounds, was the weight of the entire pack, placed upon a very large mule.

On descending the Scott Mountain, this splendid animal slipped a little, when the pack over-balanced and threw him down the steep bank, killing him instantly.

Many a mule, in California, has breathed his last in a ravine where accident had tossed him - to be the food of wolves or coyotes.

One train was passing the steep side of a mountain, in Trinity county, when a large rock came rolling from above, and struck one of the mules in the side, frightening others off the track; and killing one man and three mules. This can be appreciated by a glance at the engraving on the opposite page.

During the severe winter of 1852, and '53, there was a pack train snowed in, between Grass Valley and Onion Valley, and out of forty-five animals, but three were taken out alive. It is almost incredible, the amount of danger and privation, to which men who follow this business, are, sometimes, exposed.

It is truly astonishing to see with what ease and care these useful animals pack their heavy loads over deep snow, and to notice how very cautiously they cross holes where the melting snow reveals some ditch, or tree beneath; and where some less careful animal has "put his foot in it," and, as a consequence, has sunk with his load into trouble. We have often watched them descending a snow bank when heavily packed, and have seen that as they could not step safely, they have fixed their feet and braced their limbs, and unhesitatingly slide down with perfect security, over the worst places.

There is something very pleasing and picturesque in the sight of a large pack train of mules quietly descending a hill, as each one intelligently examines the trail, and moves carefully, step by step, on the steep and dangerous declivity, as though he suspected danger to himself, or injury to the pack committed to his care.

The packing trade from Crescent City, a seaport town about three hundred miles north of San Francisco, is one of growing importance. From thence most of the goods required in Klamath, and some portions of Siskiyou and Trinity counties, are transported. These is already an extensive trade with Jacksonville, (Rogue River valley,) Illinois Valley, Sailor's Diggings, New Orleans Bar, (on the Klamath River,) and county seat of Klamath, Scott's river, Applegate creek, and several other prosperous localities in that section.

There are about one thousand five hundred mules in the packing trade at these points. It is no uncommon



PACK TRAIN IN A SNOW STORM.

circumstance, to meet between twenty and thirty trains, with from twenty to seventy-five animals in each train, and all heavily laden, on your way from Jacksonville to Crescent City. The loud "hippah," "mulah," of the Mexican muleteers, sounds strangely to the ear, in the deep, and almost unbroken stillness of the forest.

It seems to us, that the Mexican sings no song, hums no tune, to break in upon the monotonous duties of his calling; but, is apparently indifferent to every kind of cheerfulness, until the labors of the day are done, and then but seldom.

A large portion of the trail lies through an immense forest of redwood trees, and which, from their large growth and numbers, are much more imposing in appearance than the mammoth tree grove of Calaveras.

The soil must be exceedingly fertile, as the leaves of the common fern grow to the height of from twelve to fifteen feet.

On the trail from Trinidad to Salmon river there is a hollow tree, measuring thirty-three feet in diameter, which is the usual camping place of trains, holding all the packs for the largest, besides affording shelter and sleeping room to the packers.

The distance from Crescent City to Jacksonville is 120 miles, and generally takes packers about ten days to go through.

There is now a considerable packing trade carried on between Union - Humboldt Bay - and the mining

settlements on Salmon, Eel, and Trinity rivers; also, with the town and vicinity of Weaverville.

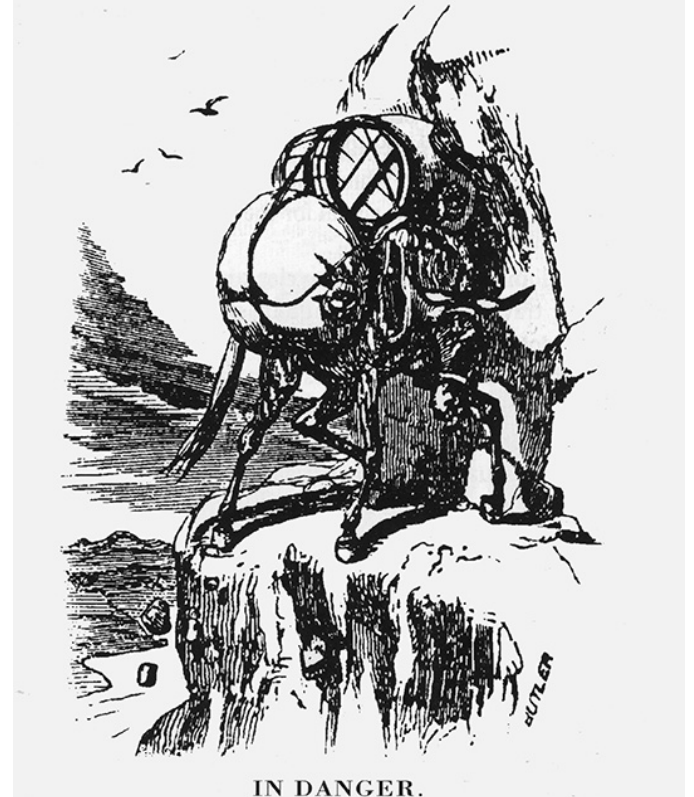
All of these trails across the coast range of mountains, are very rough, and almost impassable during the winter, from snow in some places and mud in others.

We are indebted to Mr. Dressel, of the firm of Kuchel & Dressel, of this city, who has just returned from a sketching tour in the north, for interesting particulars concerning the above trail.

"During the Rogue River Indian War of 1853, while Captain Limerick's command was stationed at Bates', on Grave Creek, to keep the trail clear, and guard the pack trains against the Indians, an incident occurred, which is too good to be lost, altogether, and for which we are indebted to a source nearly as good as an eyewitness; especially as the night was extremely dark. As usual, a strong guard was placed around the house, for protecting the provisions, groceries, liquors, and other valuables, that were stacked in the rear. A Mr. D. was not very comfortably situated to sleep, from the fact that the night was very cold, and he had only one blanket "to go to bed to." In this dilemma he remembered that among the other good things piled up, was some good old rum, and the thought struck him that if he could only secure a bottleful, he could raise sufficient spiritual help, to make up for the deficiency of blankets. But to get it, he thought, "aye there's the rub." He knew the risk that he should run if he were caught at it; or, if the guard, in the dark, mistook him for an Indian; but, after debating in his own mind all the advantages and disadvantages, he



concluded that the advantages were in favor of taking his chances, and having the rum. Stealthily went his feet, and cautious were his movements, and as luck would have it, he succeeded not only in finding the right keg, and tap-ping it, but of transferring a portion of its



contents to a large black bottle, with which he had "armed and equipped" himself before starting on his dangerous but stimulating mission. Grasping and guarding the treasure with his arm he groped his way with cautious movements, towards his solitary blanket; but, as fate would have it, the guard was awake! And moreover, to increase his trepidation and his danger, he shouted in a stentorian voice, "Who goes there?"

"A friend," replied D. "Advance, friend, and give the countersign," cried the guard in a fierce and firm tone. At this critical juncture of affairs, D's presence of mind forsook him, and he hesitated in his reply.

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign," again cried the guard, in a trembling and confused tone of voice, as he raised his rifle to a "present arms," "fire."

D. immediately, but cautiously, advanced towards the guard, and said in full, round, English,

"I've got a good bottle of rum." "Then pass on, friend," said the guard, "but be sure and pass this way, and give that counter-sign, as he lowered his musket, and shared the plunder.

The business of packing is often attended with considerable danger, as well as exposure, which the following incident will illustrate.

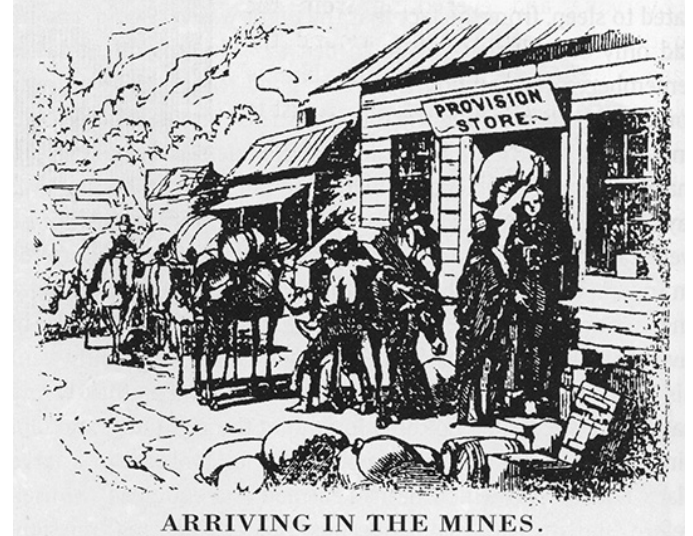
In the summer of 1854, Mr. Robert Woods, (of the firm of Tomlinson & Woods boss packers, of Yreka,) was crossing the Scott mountain, when a shot was fired from behind a rock, which took effect in the neck of the mule he was riding; it fell instantly, scarcely giving him time to recover his feet - when, with great presence of mind, he deliberately aimed his revolver at the robber who had fired at him, and shot him; when he leaped up, exclaiming, "I am a dead man." Two other men then made their appearance, with their rifles; but, while they were seeking a secure place, behind a rock, from whence to shoot, Mr. Woods made his escape, leaving his saddle-mule, saddlebags, and money, (about \$1,400,) behind.

Packers on the Sacramento River trail to Yreka, have been plundered of their whole train and cargoes; by the Indians, and their owners murdered. For two years this route was abandoned, chiefly from this cause.

The Mexicans invariably blindfold each mule, before attempting to pack him, after which he stands quietly, until the bandage is removed. A man generally rides in front of every train, for the purpose of stopping the train when anything goes wrong, and acting as a guide to the others; although in every train there is always a leader, known generally as "the bell mule;" most of the mules prefer a white one, which they unhesitatingly follow, so that when he starts it is the signal for the others to immediately follow.

They seldom start before nine o'clock in the morning, after which they travel until sunset without stopping, except when something goes wrong.

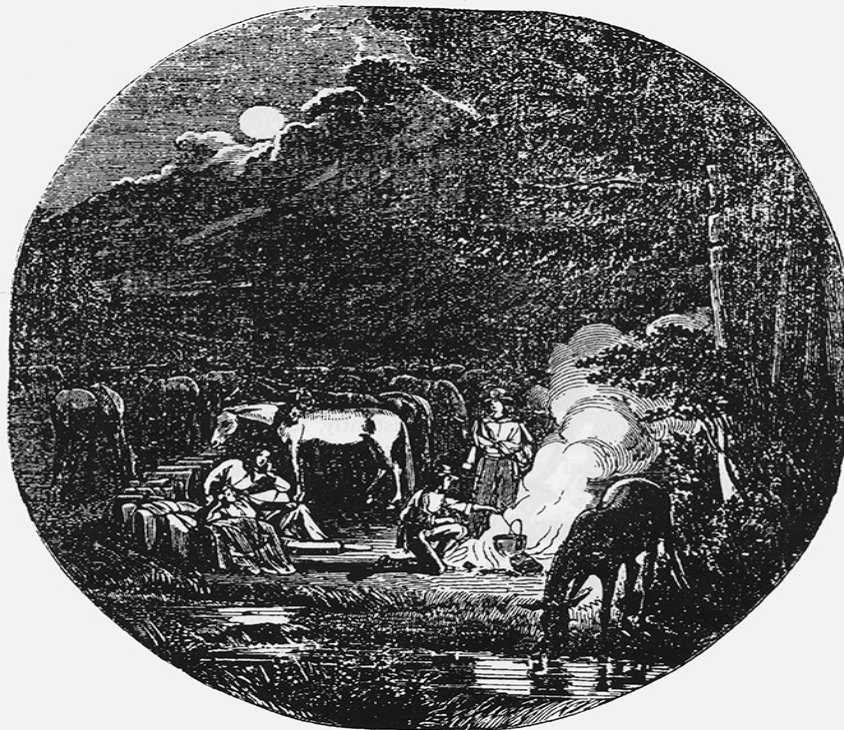
When about to camp, the almost invariable custom of packers, after removing the goods, (by which they always sleep, in all kinds of weather,) is, for the mules to stand side by side, in a line, or in a hollow square, with their heads in one direction, before taking off the aparajoes; and then, in the morning, when the train of loose mules is driven up to camp to receive their packs, each one walks carefully up to his own aparajoe and blanket; which he evidently knows as well as does the packer.



ARRIVING IN THE MINES.

An aparajoe is a kind of packsaddle, or pad, the covering of which is made of leather and stuffed with hair, and generally weighs from twenty-five to forty pounds. These are always used by Mexican muleteers, and are much easier for the mule than a common packsaddle.

When the toils of the day are over and the mules



CAMPING SCENE BY MOONLIGHT.

are peacefully feeding, comes the time of relaxation to the men, who while they are enjoying the aroma of their fine flavored cigarita, spend the evening hours telling tales of some far off, but fair seniorita, or make up their bed by the packs and as soon as they have finished their supper, and lie down to sleep for the night.