



The Emigrants' Guide: To Oregon and California in 1844

By Lansford W. Hastings

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Editorial Review

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Tired of cold Atlantic Winters? Where would you like to be? In the 1840's readers were gobbling up books like Lansford Hasting's *The Emigrant's Guide to Oregon and California*. Here is his description of California:

"It is milder on the Pacific coast, in latitude 42° north, than it is in 32° north on the Atlantic coast, being a difference of more than ten degrees of temperature, in the same latitude. No fires are required, at any season of the year, in parlors, offices or shops, hence fuel is never required, for any other than culinary purposes. Many kinds of vegetables are planted, and gathered, at any and every season of the year, and of several kinds of grain, two crops are grown annually. Even in the months of December and January, vegetation is in full bloom, and all nature wears a most cheering, and enlivening aspect. It may be truly said of this country, that "December is as pleasant as May."

Small wonder that in the 1840's the wave of westward expansion and exploration increased. *The Emigrant's Guide* was a critical part of this process. It contains observations and descriptions from various emigrants, as well as navigable routes and information regarding necessary supplies. Hastings was a lawyer who had a tendency towards self-aggrandizement and the shrewd ability to portray the Mexicans and Indians in a most unflattering light in order to legitimize Anglo-Saxon claims to the territories.

He was careful to identify problems that the traveler would encounter: one might think that wood would always be plentiful for instance, but Hastings notes that in many places along the Oregon trail wood must be purchased from the Indians who police the area and hoard every stick. And here is another danger that one might not have thought of:

"In hunting the buffalo, emigrants are very liable to lose the fleet horses, which, after having been used a few times in the chase with whatever timidity they may have at first approached the buffalo, will, the moment buffalo are seen, evince the greatest anxiety to commence the chase; and, if restrained, in the least, they prance to and fro, under the steady restraint of the rider, or standing, they gnash the bit, and stamp and paw the ground, with all the wild ferocity, of those trained for the race course, or the battle field; and, unless perfectly secured, by being permanently tied or held, they dart away, and commence the chase without a rider. There have been numerous instances, upon the appearance of the buffalo, of their having broken loose in this manner, although saddled and permanently tied; and having commenced the chase at the top of their speed, until they arrived in the midst of the buffalo, when horses and buffalo together, leaped away over the vast plains, and were never seen or heard of afterwards.

(Chalk one up for the horses!) And of course, if you were headed west in the 1840's you had to travel through Indian territories, and here is a description of one encounter:

"The man who was wounded, was a Mr. Bellamy, who happened to be posted as guard, at the most vulnerable part of the camp, and near the river. He was the guard who gave notice of the attack, which however, he did not do, until several arrows had been thrown. The first knowledge which he had, of the presence of the Indians, was the reception of an arrow in his back, which, I suppose, he thought to be "striking proof," "pointed evidence," of their presence, if not of their omnipresence. The arrow was immediately extracted, but from the intensity of the pain, which it appeared to produce, it was feared, by some, that it would be attended with fatal consequences. In the morning, it was thought, from the increased

pain, that in all probability, the spinal marrow was affected, and hence, that it would be unsafe to move that day; but we determined to make the attempt, which we accordingly did, and were happy to find, that it was not attended with serious consequences."

Crucial reading for all interested in 'How the West was Won.'

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Sharon Stennis:

Do you have favorite book? If you have, what is your favorite's book? Book is very important thing for us to be aware of everything in the world. Each e-book has different aim or even goal; it means that e-book has different type. Some people really feel enjoy to spend their time for you to read a book. They can be reading whatever they take because their hobby is actually reading a book. Think about the person who don't like reading a book? Sometime, man or woman feel need book once they found difficult problem or maybe exercise. Well, probably you will need this The Emigrants' Guide: To Oregon and California in 1844.

James Bassler:

The knowledge that you get from The Emigrants' Guide: To Oregon and California in 1844 is the more deep you digging the information that hide inside the words the more you get interested in reading it. It does not mean that this book is hard to comprehend but The Emigrants' Guide: To Oregon and California in 1844 giving you excitement feeling of reading. The copy writer conveys their point in certain way that can be understood through anyone who read it because the author of this publication is well-known enough. That book also makes your own personal vocabulary increase well. So it is easy to understand then can go together with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We suggest you for having this specific The Emigrants' Guide: To Oregon and California in 1844 instantly.

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Jim Molnar:

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