

# THE Instructor

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TEN miles isn't far when you are riding in a car, but when you are walking, it's a long way. Twenty-four thousand miles isn't far to an astronaut streaking around and above the earth, but to a passenger on a sailing ship, it's a weary, six-month journey.

"See those birds? They're land birds!" someone shouted on the evening of July 29, 1846. Most of the Mormon pioneers on the good ship *Brooklyn* rushed to the deck in hopes of seeing land. Where there are birds they must be land, but the fog was so heavy they couldn't see it.

The "water pioneers" were weary, and some were sick from the many days they had traveled on the water; but now the voyage was over. The crowded quarters, the poor food, the rolling ship, soon would be things of the past. They went below to the big meeting room and prayed and sang together. The words of "How Firm a Foundation" rang out grateful and strong.

#### No Houses For Rent

By afternoon of next day the breeze had blown away the fog, and the *Brooklyn* slipped into port beside another American ship. The bay was beautiful, but the land was a disappointment. These Saints from the East had never seen adobe Mexican houses, which to them didn't look like houses at all. The little town of Yerba Buena (now San Francisco) was then nothing but a dirty village.

Mothers and fathers gathered up their children and their few possessions and went ashore to set up tents, some of them made from bed sheets and quilts. They built bonfires to cook their first meal on land. The population of the town was doubled with their arrival, and there was no food to buy.

There were no houses to rent, but 14 families were allowed to move into the old Mexican customs office. In the long room that reached from one end of the building to the other, the families hastily put up partitions with quilts and settled down in quarters more crowded than on board ship. Some families moved four miles away to the Mission Dolores, a dilapidated building that hadn't been used for some time. The Saints cleaned, scrubbed, and repaired it. In one of the rooms Angelina Levett began the first English-speaking school in all of California.

Brother and Sister Joyce were lucky. They were able to rent part of a cottage not far from the Plaza. The largest room was already rented to a Dr. Powell for a hospital; another room was a print shop where a clattering, banging old Spanish press

(For Course 5, lesson of May 7, "We Love Our Neighbors"; for Course 7, lesson of May 14, "Water Pioneers"; for Course 9, lessons of March 26 and May 21, "A Leader is a Builder" and "A Leader Shares"; for Course 11, lesson of April 4, "Church Beginnings in California"; to support family home evening lesson 9; and of general interest.)

*In 1846, when San Francisco was still the small, dirty village of Yerba Buena, the population doubled one July day with the unexpected arrival of . . .*

# THE SAINTS FROM THE GOOD SHIP BROOKLYN

*by Helen Hinckley Jones\**

was set up. The Joyce family occupied a bedroom and the kitchen.

Many families lived in military tents until new houses could be built. The men would have liked to start building at once, but first they had to pay a debt.

#### The Debt

The Mormons had promised the ship's captain \$1200 a month for the voyage from New York. Now Mr. Richardson wanted to be paid, and the Mormons had no money. It wasn't his fault, Mr. Richardson maintained, that a storm had blown the ship off course almost to Africa; that they had had to put in at Robinson Crusoe Island; that they had been detained in Hawaii longer than they had expected; that it had taken six weeks to sail from the Islands. The Mormons did not argue. They wanted to pay the bill. The strongest men went across the bay to Mill Valley and cut and sawed a load of timber which Captain Richardson accepted in place of money.

#### Ship's Bread For Sale

The Saints could have endured the makeshift shelters, but they were always hungry. The only available food was Mexican wheat which had been threshed by driving horses over the wheat spread on the ground. Before the whole kernels could be boiled into mush, they had to be washed carefully to remove the gravel, sand, and bits of horse droppings. Boiled wheat for breakfast, dinner, and supper was

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Buena, but Mormons do not like to be idle. Three Robbins brothers pooled their money, bought a horse for a thousand dollars, repaired a cart, and went into the transfer business. William Evans started a tailoring business, and his wife and son helped him. Most of his trade was with the few wealthy Spanish people in the area, and his children all learned to speak Spanish. Brother Williams built a wharf. Everyone helped to build a school and a church. Twenty men went up the San Joaquin River and built a sawmill and a big log house, and they planted and fenced eighty acres of good farm land. They hoped Brigham Young would bring all the Saints to California.

### Gold!

In 1849 everything changed for the California Saints. When gold was discovered, Sam Brannan's *California Star* told the world about it. The California population doubled and redoubled. All the Mormons had opportunity to become rich. The men could seek gold or they could work at their trades. The women could cook, sew, manage hotels and rooming houses, even launder clothing. It became so hard to get laundry done that some men sent their white shirts all the way to China to be washed and ironed.

But few of the Saints were deeply interested in this new wealth. From the first week of their arrival they had held Church services, and most of them wanted to go on to the Valley to be with the other Mormons. As soon as those families had money for supplies, they left the gold-rich country and traveled eastward to Great Salt Lake City.

Others remained in California, settling in areas from Santa Rosa on the north to San Bernardino on the south. Brigham Young wrote to the Saints who decided to stay in California: "... You are in a goodly land . . . in process of time the shores of the Pacific may be overlooked from the Temple of the Lord. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

### References:

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Kate B. Carter (compiler), *Heart Throbs of the West*; Daughters of Utah Pioneers, Salt Lake City, Utah; Vol. III, 1941, pages 300-302; Vol. VII, 1946, pages 389-402.

<sup>1</sup>*Journal History*; "An epistle . . . to the Saints in California under the presidency of Elder Samuel Brannan, August 7, 1847." Library File Reference: CHURCH HISTORY—CALIFORNIA.

the daily fare; sometimes served plain, with salt, or on special occasions, with molasses.

One day word spread through the village that a whaling ship was in the bay and that it had some ship's bread for sale. The women rushed to buy it; but they found afterward it was so hard it had to be broken with an axe, and it was moldy all the way through. They soaked it in water until it was soft, but it tasted awful. The women obtained permission to scrape the fat from a pile of hides waiting for a cargo ship, and with this they made beef lard and fried the soaked bread in it. This made it a little better, but far from delicious.

That Christmas a cook from the hospital room in the Joyce house brought Sister Joyce a wonderful present; a quart of beans and two slices of bacon. Later Dr. Powell brought a gift, too: one slice of ham and a piece of butter the size of a walnut. He told them where half a barrel of flour could be bought, and Brother Joyce bought the flour and carried it home on his back. Then Sister Joyce made a cake. She baked it by putting it in a tin pan, covered with another pan, in the hot coals of her fireplace.

They felt it would not really be Christmas if they ate such good food alone, so the Robbins family was invited to share it. Sister Robbins, eating the pork and beans and looking happily at the cake said, "This is lovely, isn't it? Just like Boston."

### No Paid Jobs

There were no paid jobs available in Yerba