

Pack your wagon for San Jose

James and David Lee Campbell led an ox-drawn wagon across Missouri and the plains to California in the summer of 1850. Thinking that their families might follow them, they later wrote home about how to prepare for the overland journey. Details of what they wrote are available in the book *Direct Your Letters to San Jose: The California Gold Rush Letters and Diary of James and David Lee Campbell, 1849-1852*, by David Jackson. Here, in their own words, is what James and David Lee Campbell suggested as provisions for the trek:

“Every useless pound is so much loss ... Keep out everything that you can dispense with.”

Transportation:

At least have two wagons. Make sure one is some lighter with good sized axel trees and wheels. A spring wagon, or carriage for the women with two mules ... or, two horses assisted by a yoke of oxen. Two tents well made to fasten down with ropes & pegs.

Four yoke of good well made (well broke, or well put up) oxen to each wagon and one spare yoke if convenient.

Tolerable sized oxen are best from 5 to 8 or 9 years old. A yoke of cows to each wagon.

1 bell for the oxen.

Four or five horses to ford streams, hunt cattle, heard oxen, &c.

Mare are the most valuable here [in California] Don't run your horses after game.

Some few loose cattle if you have hands enough.

½ inch ropes 12 feet long and hickory picket pins to fasten your cattle when it looks like a storm.

Learn them to stand fastened to a pin before you start if you can. When you leave the settlement at first if grass is scarce you will have to tie them up to keep them from running off, horse particularly. If you can get into a company of civil people it would be well to guard at first to keep the stock from leaving. But after you get out some distance you may quit it if grass is plenty.

You might drive some extra milk cows but don't use the milk when you come to alkali swamps.

Take good care of the teams and they will come through very well.

Food:

The provisions here are calculated for each person.

Bring what will be equal to 200 pounds of bread stuff and one hundred pounds of meat to each person.

100 pounds of flour to each person.

80 lbs of bacon mostly side meat with a little dried beef.

50 lbs of sea bread to each.

20 lbs of parched corn ground (parch it in a kettle 2 gallons at a time).

15 or 20 pounds of rice as it is easy cooked & good to eat if you are likely to have plenty of milk.

8 lbs of coffee: 1 lb tea.

20 or 25 lbs sugar. This you have great deal of use for and be saving of it.

1 ½ lbs of saleratus [like baking soda].

1 ½ cream tartar for making bread [David Lee tells how to “make light bread without shortening].

Don't bring much lard.

Some butter, some molasses &c.

2 lbs ginger.

A little cayenne pepper, 2 lbs pepper to 4 men.

¾ bushel of salt is plenty for all hands as cattle will not use it after you get on Platte River.

2 or three bushels of dried fruit – apples and peaches.

A few pickles.

A gallon or two of vinegar.

1 pound of tartaric acid and one pound of soda.

2 keg to each wagon containing 3 or 4 gallons each to haul water in for cooking & drinking along the road.

Always keep some along. Prepare to carry from 30 to 50 gallons of water across the deserts by filling everything full.
2 canteens holding from 3 pints & 3 quarts. They are necessary to carry water at a distance to drink.

Utensils:

You have but little chance to cook, wood being scarce in most places.

Skillet	no earthen ware. Plenty here [in California].
Light tea kettle.	Frying pan. No pots.
Two sheet iron camp kettles.	No smoothing irons.

Medicine:

Bring medicine viz No. 6 castor oil, Cooks pill, peppermint, cholera remedy &c. ½ gal brandy [medicinal].
Stop a diarrhea at the beginning. Parched meal is a good preventative.
Eat moderate. Be careful about eating too much when a little unwell as that has killed hundreds.

Tools:

One ax	1 cole chisel
1 hatchet	one spade & one mattock for fixing the road
1 brace	one chisel
2 or three bits	a file
saw	a file
1 lb wrought nails	one monkey wrench
1 lbs cut nails	

Firearms:

Have two guns to your four men and some pistols.
Don't get very heavy guns. Have one large ball & 1 small powder is plenty. 2 guns & a pistol or two.
8 or 10 lbs lead, 4 lbs powder, 2000 caps for all.

Clothing:

Little light articles may be bought at home. You can think of several little conveniences.
Need not bring much clothing. Put your clothing in sacks, no boxes.
Bring one waterproof coat to 2 or three persons. It don't rain after you leave Platte River.

Map & Guide:

Get a Mormon Guide from Council Bluffs to Salt Lake. You might also get Stemans Journal but don't get Wares.

General Advice:

It is the most trying trip in the world and people soon become very ill natured. Every one thinks he knows best. So when any person don't please you let them alone. Don't get angry at any person or thing. All ways be in a good humor, play no tricks, speak mild, try to make every one happy, do your part, keep your oxen and horses in good humor. And if any persons pester you the road is long and wide. Go to yourselves. Many have come through alone. By doing this you will find only half the trouble and some amusement.

And now I charge you to keep a way from the water. Even in dipping water from them two should be along as I have seen the banks crumble in and persons fall in over their heads. Caution is the mother of safety.

The above is near about your outfit.

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