

# When Fisk's Expedition Crossed the Plains

## Took Northern Route and Outwitted Sioux War Parties; Was Summer's Holiday

### HOW JACK HARRIS KILLED A BEAR

THRILLING ADVENTURE OF FORT BENTON CAPITALIST IN THE HIGHWOOD MOUNTAINS.

Bear Puts Up Vigorous Fight After Receiving Mortal Wound From Harris' Rifle; Horse Detects Bruin's Attention and Hunter Manages to Escape.

Jack Harris, one of the foremost stockmen and bankers of northern Montana, was, in his younger days, one of the successful bear hunters in the state. Now bear baiting is no child's sport, and in the course of a number of years Mr. Harris had adventures with Bruin, the telling of which leaves a thrill.



JOHN HARRIS.

"It was in the fall of 1873," began Harris when he was prompted to tell his pet story to a visitor to Fort Benton, "that James Shaw, who now lives at Priest, Idaho; John Caruthers and myself went hunting in the Highwood mountains for deer and elk. We camped on McDonald creek on the east side. While the other two boys remained in camp to cook the supper, I rode along the Indian trail that skirted the edge of the mountain. The trail crossed a branch stream that descended the steep wall and formed a meadow with a clump of willows.

"I looked up the canyon and saw a bear rooting on the side of the tributary gulch. He was a grizzly—the biggest I ever saw—and he was engaged in the innocent pastime of turning over rocks to get worms and other insects, as bears frequently do.

**Felt Like a Cave Man.**  
"I got off my pony and tied her to a willow with a 60-foot rope I carried with me. Where I tied her she was hidden from the bear. From the willows I crawled up the bottom of the gulch until, still on my hands and knees, I was almost directly under the bear, who continued to dine—cafeteria style—on worms. Now and then he turned over a boulder that threatened to roll down and crush me. No elephant at a circus in my childhood days ever loomed larger to me than that bear did then. A short time before I had been reading a book that told of some of the creatures as big as a house in the earlier ages of the earth, and now I imagined myself as puny as a cave man in the presence of one of those monsters. I was yet 50 yards away however. With the utmost precaution I got on my feet and, standing broadside to the grizzly and leaning way back to take aim at the high angle necessary, I fired.

"The bear fell down and rolled over and over until he came to my feet as I stood in the bottom of the gulch. I had to jump to escape being crushed by his weight. I thought he had been killed, as he made no movement until he landed in a heap. I was standing calmly three feet from him when he finished rolling.

**Bruin Shows Fight**  
"The next moment my blood ran cold for the bear glared at me and reared up on his hind legs. Still glaring and showing his teeth and with his fore paws reaching out for an embrace, he came toward me as I took a backward step or two. I had no time to take aim, but I fired as quickly as I could raise my rifle. I had hoped to hit him in the head but instead the bullet went through his right paw and broke his wrist. I almost touched him with my rifle as I wheeled and ran. The bear jumped at me and I seemed to feel his hot breath as we both tumbled and rolled together down the mountain.

"The pony, hearing the racket, ran around straight toward me until she came to the end of the rope. As soon as I got off the steep part of the mountain, I found I was able to outrun Bruin. When I reached the pony I jumped into the saddle and I was off like a whirlwind for more than 100 feet. Then I was precipitated like a bolt from a catapult. My rifle went in one direction and I was hurled in another. When I regained my feet I found that the pony had turned a complete somersault. It

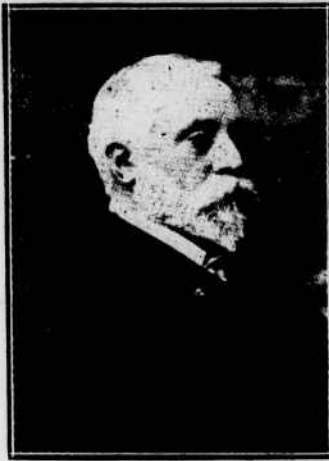
Hardship was the lot of most of the pioneers of Montana who crossed the plains in the sixties and seventies to try their fortunes in the new land of promise, but there was one expedition—the Fisk expedition of 1866—to which the long journey in carts and wagons and on horseback was like one long summer's holiday. This was the largest party that ever crossed the plains and it included 30 or 40 women and a number of children. Altogether there were about 400 persons in the expedition, which was led by Captain James L. Fisk, popularly known as "Jim" Fisk, one of five brothers in the party, all of whom had served in the Union army. These immigrants followed the northern route, virtually the same as that taken a score of years later in the construction of the Northern Pacific. In this way they eluded the roaming war parties of the Sioux, which habitually lay in wait for the unwary south of the Missouri.

**Not a Hostile Indian Met; Not a Single Horse Lost.**

The party left St. Cloud on June 6 with 140 carts and wagons drawn by oxen and cows and with a considerable number of horses and arrived three months later at Helena. Not a hostile Indian was met throughout the trip and not a single horse was lost. The weather was ideal with the nights mild and clear and at every camp where a smooth stretch of ground could be found on the prairie a dance was held. There was one "regular" musician in the expedition, W. O. Dexter, a violinist, who still lives at Fort Benton. There were others along, however, who were able to do their part in the make-up of an orchestra with accordions and Jew's harps.

"Yes," mused Dexter a few days ago at Fort Benton as he was tinkering with a gasoline engine in front of his bachelor quarters, "it was a gay time we had those summer nights in '66 on the plains. There were a dozen or two women in the party—wives and daughters of members of the expedition. There were ten times as many young fellows who desired to join in Virginia reel, quadrille, mazurka or polka. We hadn't crossed the western boundary of Minnesota before it became plain that some 25 or 30 fellows, who were among the most adept dancers, were bent on monopolizing the women available as

partners. The wall flowers of the prairie determined that this was not to be and formed a kind of vigilance committee to 'bust the trust.' Word quickly was passed around that any male caught dancing twice before all



Hon. Martin Maginnis, Who Accompanied Fisk Expedition.

had had a turn would be ducked in the nearest stream. From that time the rule of a dance for each and a dance for all was strictly observed. Moreover, as the leader of the emigrant orchestra, I was instructed to make the dances short."

**Played for Fort Benton Dances for 30 Years.**

Shortly after the expedition arrived at Helena and disbanded, Dexter settled at Fort Benton. There he played for dances for 30 years subsequent to 1868, or until his hand became crippled in consequence of partial paralysis occasioned by an accident in which he broke one of the bones of his neck. "The first dances in Benton were held in 1868," said Dexter. "They were known as 'squaw dances' as there were scarcely any white women in the town and partners were drawn from the Indian women encamped with the trading parties at the outskirts of the post. The squaws, of course, had to be taught the white man's dances, but they were very

adept pupils and they soon surpassed most white women in the gracefulness of their steps. Many of the trappers and traders had Indian wives. In later years there were a considerable number of half-breed girls who enjoyed nothing better than a fling or a whirl on the dance floor. I remember playing for a number of parties at Benton at which there were 30 men and six women."

**Reported to Have Fired Cannon From Mule's Back.**

Rumor has it that Dexter routed a band of Indians in the early days by firing a cannon from the back of a mule. Dexter qualifies the rumor by admitting that he fired the cannon but denying that he used the mule for a gun platform. Yet the Jubilee committee at Great Falls when the celebration was held there two or three years ago had Dexter lead a mule in the parade upon whose back was mounted this identical cannon. Eight times as the procession wound its way through the streets, Dexter fired his cannon at an Indian who followed on horseback.

Throughout the journey of the Fisk expedition plenty of fresh meat was supplied by the crack shots of the party who hunted buffalo, deer and elk. The party reached the Missouri river 12 miles below Fort Berthold, passed Fort Union and followed the Milk river to a point between the sites of Havre and Chinook, neither of which towns had then come into existence. Thence the route lay to Fort Benton.

**Expected to Sweep Up Gold Like Sawdust From Floor.**

"As we got closer to Helena," said N. T. Chemidlin, a member of the expedition, who is still working as a printer at Fort Benton, "the gold fever grew in intensity. The big strike in Last Chance gulch had been made in the fall of 1864 and everybody was crazy over it. When we reached Benton a big outfit was in and all the miners were waiting for a boat. They carried their gold dust with them and there were rumors in the air of fabulous fortunes made. Most of the members of our party had the idea that the gold could be swept up like the sawdust on a barroom floor."

Of the 400 in the party, 100 were in the especial care of Captain James Fisk, who had agreed to take them to the gold diggings for \$100 apiece.

Previously, in 1862, 1863 and 1864, Captain Fisk had led parties across the plains as commander of a military escort.

**Company of 140 Led By Major Maginnis.**

The first train, that of '62, had left Minnesota bound for Washington, but the greater part of the company resolved to put their fortunes to the test in the newly discovered diggings near Bannack. The train that set out in 1864 was attacked by the Indians 150 miles west of Fort Rice and was in danger of massacre. It was rescued by a command under Colonel Thomas of Minnesota which included a company under Andrew J. Fisk, one of the five brothers.

The big expedition of '66 traversed the prairies in four parallel columns to guard against attacks by Indians



Wheeler O. Dexter, Who Furnished Music for Fisk Expedition Dances.

that never came. Among those who thus traveled together from St. Cloud to Fort Benton was one party even larger than Captain Fisk's own flock. This was a company of 140 organized by Major Martin Maginnis with 40 wagons. The original Fisk party arrived in Helena on September 2 and Captain Maginnis and those under his leadership on September 5.

### STATE TO LOAN FARMERS MONEY

AMOUNTS MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM TO BE LOANED; INTEREST CHARGES FIXED.

Land Must Be Valued at \$10 or More Per Acre; Interest Is Six Per Cent; Minimum Loans \$500 Maximum \$5,000; Loans Made on Two-Fifths Value.

School funds in the state treasury are to be loaned to farmers under the state farm loan act, and the land commissioners have promulgated the rules under which these loans will be made. Loans will be restricted to the land that has been appraised at \$10 or more for the past three years. The board stipulated that the loan shall not exceed two-fifths of the appraised value of the land. No loan will be made for less than \$500 or more than \$5,000, and the interest rate will be six per cent.

The rules adopted by the commissioners are as follows:

"Loans will be made only to actual residents of Montana, and only upon good improved farm lands of an appraised—not assessed—value of not less than \$10 an acre. No loans will be made on more than two-fifths of the appraised value of lands offered as security therefor.

**Method of Procedure.**

"Any person desiring a loan will file with the register of state lands a verified application, upon a form furnished by the state board of land commissioners. Such application must contain an agreement to pay railroad fare and traveling expenses of the state land agent appointed to make an appraisal of the lands offered as security. No application will be considered unless such agreement is filed. Applicants must furnish at their own expense an abstract of title to lands offered as security upon request from the register of state lands.

"All loans shall be secured by a first mortgage upon lands offered for security upon a form furnished by the state board of land commissioners, running to the state of Montana as mortgagee.

**Interest Rate Six Per Cent.**

"All loans shall bear interest at 6 per cent per annum, payable annually to the register of state lands, who shall receive all moneys, both principal and interest, arising from such loans, and account therefor to the state treasurer.

"No loans shall be made of a sum less than \$500; and not more than \$5,000 will be loaned to any person, firm or corporation. No loan will be made for less than three nor more than ten years. Payments may be made upon the principal of any loan running for more than three years in whole, or in part by payments of \$100 or multiples thereof, upon any interest bearing date, after three years from the date of said loan.

**State Appraisal.**

"Before any loan is made the lands offered as security therefor shall be examined and appraised by the state land agent, whose appraisal shall be based upon the productive value of the land, exclusive of buildings. The state land agent shall report his findings to the state board of land commissioners upon forms furnished by said board.

"All applicants for loans shall as nearly as practicable be considered and acted upon in the order of their filing.

**Certificate of Release.**

"Upon the full payment of principal and interest and all other sums becoming due upon any farm loan mortgage, the register of state lands shall execute a necessary certificate of discharge and release as required by law.

"Whenever any farm loan mortgage has been executed, the register of state lands shall forthwith have the same recorded in the records of the county in which the land hypothecated thereby is situated; he shall also have custody and safely keep all promissory notes or other obligations given by persons to whom money is loaned."

### EQUITY CHIEF OPENS \$200,000 ELEVATOR

Splashing a dipperful of muddy water from the Mississippi river against the concrete wall of the farmers' terminal elevator at St. Paul, President J. M. Anderson of the Equity Co-Operative \$200,000 structure open and ready for business. Five thousand farmers from all sections of the middle west witnessed the ceremony and cheered heartily.

President Anderson declared the time not far distant when the great Mississippi would be used by the farmers to ship the wheat which grows on the river's watershed, to the ocean via the river.

Speakers at the Equity meeting warned big interests against opposing the farmers. The statement was made that the farmers did not intend to destroy the Minneapolis chamber of commerce, but would clean it up.

### Homesteader, 70 Years Old, Makes Good in Montana

Here is a story of a homesteader who, after he had almost arrived at the scriptural limit of man's existence, came to Montana, filed on a tract of land, proved up, and made a farm which sold for enough to keep him in his old age.

His name is A. S. Brownwell. He came to Montana from Sparta, Wisconsin, six years ago. He was then 64 years of age. He located a homestead about 14 miles from Malta, south of Lake Bowdoin.

His start was modest. For the first three years he barely made enough out of the land on which to live. Gradually he worked his place into a state of cultivation which made it profitable.

But he was 70 years of age. The call of his old home ties was strong on him. The other day an Iowa land buyer came along, looked the place over, and made him a tempting offer, enough to keep him all of his remaining days. He accepted and the deal was made.

He left for Sparta the other day with the fat price of his farm in his pocket. He is going back to spend his declining years with his own people. And he is going back independent. He will be a living advertisement of Montana possibilities.

was the rope, which I had completely forgotten, that checked the pony abruptly in its course. I was scarcely on my feet when the bear was upon us. Bruin appeared to be bewildered for a moment. Should he make for me to wreak his vengeance or for the horse?

**Pony Biffs Bear in Nose.**  
"Apparently because the pony was the larger he gave the pony a slap on the hind quarters that left an ugly scratch or two and then, as the pony made a leap in the other direction, he grabbed a big piece of her tail which he retained in his grasp. The pony halted in her flight long enough to rise on her forelegs and plant her hind hoofs squarely upon the bear's nose.

"So much I saw as I glanced backward in my own headlong flight. I kept on until I had turned the edge of the ridge. Then I lay down behind a boulder to watch the antics of the bear and the pony. Several times Bruin raced on three legs back and forth as the pony ran the length of the rope in opposite directions, but he was too lame to catch her. Finally he limped up the mountain into a clump of pine timber.

"The next morning all three of us went cautiously from the camp to the scene of the encounter. We found the bear dead on the mountain side, killed by the first shot I had fired, which had lodged in its side. We recovered the pony, which had escaped with the loss of part of its tail and with the scratch of a claw on one flank."

## A New Governor Sits in the Capitol

### Burlingame of Cascade, Montana's Executive

#### Some Interesting Gubernatorial Situations of the Past

Montana has a new governor. His name is J. M. Burlingame. He is well known as the senator from Cascade county, but as a governor of the state he is new, and needs introduction. He took office just the other day.

Governor Burlingame is sitting in the gubernatorial chair, with his feet under the beautiful mahogany desk upon which all the commissions and proclamations and pardons are signed. His overcoat is hanging in the gubernatorial closet, where all his state secrets are kept, and he's the regularly constituted executive of the state, as made and provided by the constitution, and vested with all the power that goes with the high place. The new governor of Montana is a republican.

It came about this way. Governor Sam Stewart was called east to attend the annual convention of governors of all the states, a meeting that has become of importance. Lieutenant Governor W. W. McDowell, who would have stepped into the executive place by reason of the governor's absence, is also out of the state.

The law provides that when both the governor and the lieutenant governor are out of the state, the president of the senate automatically becomes acting governor. Senator Burlingame is president of the senate. He left for Helena a few days ago to assume the duties of his high office. He will be governor for 15 days, when Governor Stewart is expected to return.

**Not An Empty Honor.**  
There may be some who imagine that the functions of Governor Burlingame, during his short tenure of office, are purely honorary. Such is not the case. He is governor of Montana, clothed with full authority, and may discharge all functions pertaining to the highest office of the state.

For instance: President Wilson is said to be engaged in picking out his official cabinet family. It is said that he has in mind the selection of a western man for the position of secretary of the interior. What if he would offer this high place to the Hon. Thomas Arthur, tall sycamore of the Yellowstone, and whose knowledge of the great west is encyclopedic? He could go further and do worse. Tom Arthur, because of his expanding oil interests in southern Montana and northern Wyoming, would probably decline the post, with one of those famous letters of his. Then the president would tender the place to Senator Thomas Walsh. Senator Walsh would accept.

Senator Walsh's acceptance would necessitate his immediate resignation from the senate of the United States. This would create a senatorial vacancy. The governor of

Montana would have the right to name the man who would succeed Senator Walsh.

Senator "Bill" Frary. If all this occurred while Senator Burlingame was clothed with gubernatorial power, and he should see fit to appoint his old friend "Bill" Frary of Great Falls United States senator for Montana, the appointment would stick until the term for which Senator Walsh was elected, had expired. Frary would be a regular honest to goodness senator.

A number of interesting situations have been created by the president of the senate becoming governor. During Governor Edwin Norris' term both he and Lieutenant Governor



J. M. BURLINGAME.

nor W. R. Allen were called out of the state. This made Senator I. A. Leighton of Jefferson county, who was president of the senate, acting governor.

When Governor Leighton took executive power he found on his desk a mass of applications for pardon, from convicts in the penitentiary. He proceeded to exercise executive clemency, and gave about a dozen men who were the guests of Frank Conley their liberty. It happened that a majority of those pardoned were republicans, and some good-humored chaff was directed at Leighton, himself a republican, because of this circumstance, but the fact remains that there are 12 meriting liberty who consider him the best governor that Montana ever had.

**An Interesting Incident.**  
Then there was the time when Lieutenant Governor Spriggs appointed W. A. Clark to the United

States senate. Governor Bob Smith had gone to California with Tom Hinds on a mining deal. Lieutenant Governor Spriggs was out of the state. Senator Edwin Norris of Beaverhead was president of the senate and became acting governor. The legislature had elected W. A. Clark United States senator. His election was contested. Suddenly came the announcement that Senator Clark had tendered his resignation.

A vacancy was thereby created in the United States senate. Norris, as president of the state senate, was the state's executive head. He had the naming of the next United States senator from Montana. He was just about to announce Governor Joseph K. Toole as his appointee when he received a telegram from Lieutenant Governor Spriggs advising him that he had returned to Montana. This put instant end to Acting Governor Norris' tenure of office, and took from him right to appoint. Lieutenant Governor Spriggs arrived in Helena next day and appointed Mr. Clark as United States senator. However, this certificate of appointment was never presented to the legislature. At the next session of the legislature Senator Clark was elected. It is interesting to note that if the opportunity to appoint had come to Governor Smith he would have named Hon. Martin Maginnis as senator.

**Some Other Governors.**

Under Governor Toole, Senator J. P. Murray of Beaverhead county became acting governor on several occasions, and under Governor Stewart, Senator Dearborn of Granite county, was on one occasion acting governor. Under Governor Edwin Norris, Senator A. W. Miles, of Park county, and a nephew of Nelson A. Miles, officiated for a few days as governor.

So it is no empty honor which has come to Governor Burlingame. All things would be possible if the opportunity offered.

Being governor occasionally is just a side issue with "Burly," as his friends call him. He is one of the strong financial men of Northern Montana.

### AFTER WETZ, EGG KING; HAS 20 MILLION EGGS

"I've got them; what are you going to do about it?" That is the answer of James Wetz, who has 20,000,000 eggs in storage, to the investigators for the government.

Wetz' eggs are in Chicago. A Chicago ordinance prohibits the storing of eggs for more than 10 months. Wetz must place his eggs in the market about the first of January or not at all.