

## Local settlers traveled west with Donner Party

By Jerry Bowen

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When you study our West's history it is always interesting to note how many of the pioneer stories have a claim that they were part of the Donner Party.

Well, if they left Missouri in 1846, the chances are pretty good that they did travel with the Donners, although almost all of them are unable to claim they were part of the Donner wagon train.

And so it is with the Lyon family who were among the very earliest arrivals in the Vacaville area and did, in fact, travel partway with the Donners.

Obviously, they did not go all the way with them since they aren't listed in the many volumes written about the Donner tragedy.

Albert Galiton and Prudence (Patton) Lyon and a 3-year-old daughter left Cass County in Missouri sometime shortly after May 2, 1846. They traveled overland with Prudence's mother and father, John Patton and Elizabeth Patton. Prudence was the seventh of 12 children of John and Elizabeth.

It appears the Lyon and Patton families traveled with the Lilburn Boggs party and were a part of the mass of wagon trains under the initial leadership of Col. William H. Russell; and yes, the Donner party was a part of this enormous migration to California.

It was not a trip without problems. When the train set out in early May 1846, Boggs campaigned to be elected its captain, but lost to Russell. The Russell train was held up by high water at the Big Blue River near present-day Marysville, Kan., for a while before being able to continue.

About a month after reaching the Platte River, Russell resigned as captain of the wagon train, and Boggs was elected as leader.

Among the Boggs Company were most of the emigrants who later separated from the group that formed the Donner Party. When the Boggs Company arrived at Fort Laramie they met mountain man James Clyman and discussed a new route, the Hastings Cutoff.

Clyman had just come east with Hastings over this route and advised against taking it.

The day after crossing South Pass, the Boggs Company and several others camped at the Little Sandy River in present-day Wyoming. A group of emigrants decided to take the Hastings Cutoff. They elected George Donner their captain, creating the Donner Party. Boggs and the other emigrants took the customary route by way of Fort Hall.

The Boggs party, with the Lyons and the Pattons, arrived in Sonoma in November 1846 and were provided temporary refuge by Mariano Vallejo at his Petaluma ranch house.

Albert Lyon and family lived during the winter of 1846 with William Gordon (Gordon Valley), near Cache Creek in Yolo County.

In the spring of 1847 the Lyons and Pattons received a half league of land between Alamo and Putah Creek on the west side of Pleasants Valley Road in partnership from Juan Manual Vaca.

There are two stories regarding the deal for the land. One is that they bought it for \$8,000 and the other was as payment for labor at the Pena and Vaca Adobes, including shingling the roof among other work.

But this transaction was not documented until April 7, 1849.

After raising one crop on the Pleasants Valley land, the excitement of the discovery of gold took hold of Albert Lyon. Joining so many others, he headed for the gold fields and did not do well.

Sometime in 1848, after his endeavor in the gold fields, Albert moved his family to Sonoma where he purchased a Land Grant on April 11, 1849. In 1851 Albert sold the land he had acquired from the Vacas to the Long family, another early pioneer family in the Vacaville area.

I'll continue the story of the Lyon family and their long-standing connection to the Vaca family and the old Pena Adobe in my next column.

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