

Camping in the Rockies

OBIT OF MRS. JULIA B. MONAHAN in Brockport (NY) Republic
1/5/1893

William Durkee is a well know resident of the town of Hamlin. About fifteen years ago his son Jared Durkee and family removed from the town of Hamlin to Greeley, Colorado. Julia B. Durkee, daughter of Jared Durkee, who was born in Hamlin, March 31, 1867, was at the time of removal about ten years of age. In 1886 she graduated from the Greeley High School, and then became a teacher. In September, 1891, she was married to D. S. Monahan, a lawyer of Greeley. She died Dec. 5th, and was 25 years of age.

The Greeley Sun says of her: "Mrs. Monahan was a lady of exceptionally high social attainment. Of a frank and winsome nature she was a universal favorite with all who were fortunate enough to be called her friend."

About a year and a half ago she wrote very interesting sketches for publication in the Republic. She visited her former Hamlin home occasionally, and there as well as at the West she had numerous friends who mourn her death.

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Camping in the Rockies

BY JULIA B. DURKEE, OF GREELEY COL,
FORMERLY OF HAMLIN

Every section of our country and probably every state in the Union has its favorite summer resort, and of course all of them are beautiful and healthful places where every one can find a change and a rest from the many and varied employments of American people.

But to all westerners, and especially to people of Colorado, there is no place so grand and beautiful as the Rocky Mountains. And I believe every one who knows any thing about the enjoyment to be had there, and can possibly go, spends a few of the summer weeks to some part of the mountains.

It is my intention to describe, as nearly as possible the "kind of a time" our party had while camping in the mountains the last two weeks of July, 1890. There were thirteen of us, all living in Colorado, though not all from the same city, town or ranch, but a very congenial party we were, both when we started and when we had spent the two weeks camping out. The

latter part of the above statement may seem strange, but people say that if a person ever quarrels or gets cranky, they are sure to do so in the mountains, that is if they camp out as we did. But the reason they are then inclined to show the wrong side of their dispositions, is because many parties do not take a cook, but depend on each other to do the cooking, and it can be relied upon that there is a great deal of depending done and every one has unbounded confidence in each and all when it comes to the question – “Who can cook?” And so judging from many reports, there is not much to eat, and to add to this calamity everybody is exceedingly hungry, so a cook becomes a necessity if the members of the party intend to have a good time.

One of the young gentlemen of our party was from the Percheron-Norman horse ranch, near Greeley, and through him the cook from that ranch was hired. They took along the “round up grub-wagon,” which is one of the most convenient arrangements imaginable. It is a very large wagon with a cupboard made in the back of it and facing the end. It is as high as a man can reach while standing on the ground, and is closed by one large door which opens from the top and when let down there is a large brace used as a table leg, and so the door makes a handy table. The cupboard is called the “mess box.” All the tin dishes are arranged in it in “apple pie order,” and also the smaller parcels of eatables. In one corner of this cupboard is a secluded nook in which is a large granite bread pan. There the bread is put to rise, and it made no difference whether traveling or camping, the bread that our cook made was sure to rise. It was so energetic that it rose too high on the way up to the mountains, so the cook had to stop to mix it down before we came to the camping place, and the boys played ball during the process. But when we camped permanently the dough was made into biscuits, baked in a “Dutch oven,” and were some of the best biscuit ever made, we thought. The gentlemen of our party started from Greeley about noon with the “grub wagon,” a covered spring wagon, and eight saddle ponies, with saddles, tents, camp stools and all camping furniture. They went to a small town near the foot-hills called Loveland and staid [sic] all night. One gentleman, however, did not go with them but waited till the next day to escort the ladies, take care of their satchels, etc., for the ladies went on the train to the above place, by that way avoiding the tiresome ride over the plains, and after a short ride on the cars we met the boys at Loveland depot. Although the people there must used to seeing mountain parties there was quite an assembly at the depot to see us off.

The cook with the “grub wagon” had gone on ahead, as it was heavy and the horses could not go fast. The light wagon was at the depot, the ponies saddled and everything ready to start. Three girls and four boys rode

in the light wagon with two married ladies, our chaperones the pleasantest and jolliest ones imaginable.

We galloped and walked our horses along and had a very pleasant ride. It rained for a while, but we did not get very wet and when the sun came out we were soon dried. All this time we were in the foot hills. There was a most beautiful rain-bow, the end of which could be distinctly seen on the trees, shrubs and rocks between us and a large hill.

At the foot of Bald Mountain we came up with the cook and as it was a hard pull there, the boys fastened ropes from the heavy wagon to their saddle horns and helped pull. They were obliged to do this quite often on the way up. We went over this mountain and then camped for the night in Rattlesnake Park. A very formidable name this little park has, but I have heard that rattlesnakes are not seen there now-a-days, and that it is named so because a few were killed there years ago. Our destination was Willow Park, a small one just beyond Estes Park. So we got an early start the next morning and rode over Poll hill [now called Pole Hill] and into a small, but quite level space called Diamond Park. Here once in a while, we saw a log cabin around which was a garden and a little oats or wheat. The people seemed to like their home and were contented; but to live there in winter must be solitude indeed. We had a lunch at noon there and then started on over Park hill [on U.S. Highway 36]. After quite a hard pull we reached the top and from there we could see Estes Park. The view from there is magnificent; the great wide park looks so cool and peaceful and so securely enclosed with those solid, Rocky Mountains whose sides are clothed in the beautiful pine and spruce forests.

At the entrance are two large mountains of nearly equal size, an entrance all Nature's own, and nothing could be more imposing.

We rode on down Park hill and into the park. The road along which we passed is high up on the side of the hill and in some places solid rocks have been blasted and rolled away in order to make room for a wagon, and places for wagons to pass when meeting are made at certain distances.

As we entered the park we could not see the numerous cabins, cottages and hotels but when one rides around among the numerous semi inclosures of the park, here and there can be seen groups of log cabins and pretty little cottages where people have their rooms, generally boarding at a hotel, situated at a convenient distance. There is only one large hotel in Estes Park, where people room and board at. There is one group of cottages where there is no hotel, and from them is one of the best views of Long's peak. People rent these cottages and board themselves, and some people have cabins or cottages of their own there.

To return to our journey, we rode on through Estes Park and arrived at Willow Park about the middle of the afternoon, selected our camping place, pitched the tents, made ourselves comfortable and rested the remainder of the afternoon. After supper we spent a pleasant evening and we were tired enough that night to sleep soundly till daylight, and we might have slept longer but just about sunrise there was a most awful din just outside the ladies' tent; it sounded like an avalanche of tin pans. But when we were sufficiently awake we found that one of the boys was standing quite near our tent pounding on a tin pan. It was the signal for breakfast, and as soon as possible we were seated around the "grub wagon" thoroughly enjoying the repast.

This was the first morning in our permanent camping place. Some of the party saddled their ponies and rode over to the large English hotel, on the way passing a large clear pond, called in the mountains Mary's Lake. The English hotel is so called because it, with some of Estes Park is owned by the Earl of Dunraven, and there is an exquisite and spacious summer cottage just to the left of the hotel and situated among the beautiful green hills of the place, called the Earl's summer cottage. I do not know that the Earl ever spent a summer there, but he has another Englishman living there who looks after all his possessions in the park. It is a very lovely place, full of grand and natural beauty. The hills and mountains, the pines, the rocks, the mountain stream and the glorious sky and sunshine of the Rocky mountain region are all there. And after looking at all this, a patriotic American might wish that the place belonged to one of his own nation, for it seems that grand and majestic nature must be our teacher of love of country, and even if the smallest amount of such love is in his nature, while surrounded by that glorious and healthgiving atmosphere, from the fullness and thankfulness of his heart, he will exclaim "This is my own, my native land," and he will be glad that he has it, strive with all his power to keep it, and labor usefully and uprightly to guard it

Camping in the Rockies (12/4/1890 installment)

BY JULIA B. DURKEE, OF GREELEY COL.,
FORMERLY OF HAMLIN [NY]
(Continued from last week.)

It would be difficult to tell what we did each day in order, so the principal happenings only, of the two weeks will be brought to light. Evening hours in camp were some of the pleasantest we spent. Just before sunset usually a horse was taken up the side of the mountain to haul down enough pitch pine logs for the camp fire and the next day. Then two or three

large stones were fixed in place and the logs placed upon them for the fire. At the proper hour they were lighted and all of us brought our camp stools and extra wraps, one young gentleman brought his banjo and book of college songs, another his mouth organ (of which a supply was taken along.) and as the fire roared and smoked, blazed and crackled, we sang or talked, listened to the music of the banjo and mouth organ, turned our backs to the fire to warm them, and spent altogether the pleasantest evenings around the camp fire that could be imagined. We did not spend all our evenings alone, for there were camps near us, and we were quite near Mrs. Sprague's cottages, so people used to come from all those camps and cabins to spend the evening with us one in awhile.

Some evenings we danced by the light of the camp fire, and the scene was quite fantastic; but we do not wish people to infer that we looked like fairies; we were too black red and tanned all at once to look like anything so much as Indians.

Our favorite dance, I think, was the hop waltz as we were obliged to hop over so many small boulders while dancing. Sometimes we had a basket of crackers and a pail of water for refreshments. Probably we would not have liked the repast at home, but in the mountains—well, we could eat almost anything.

It must not be omitted that our favorite song was Annie Rooney. I do not know how it happened to become so, but every one in the camp patronized it to a great extent and in some mysterious [sic] way our camp was known all around as "The Annie Rooney Camp." And in consequence of this, whenever any one passed some one of our party would warble forth in a bird-like soprano, a deep and profound bass, a delightful tenor or a thrilling contralto—"Little Annie Rooney in my sweetheart." I do not know whether this musical salute frightened any horses so that they did not recover from the shock or not, but then mountain horses are used to many strange things and are not afraid of dark nights nor mountain lions. There is a spring at Mrs. Sprague's cabins—which we visited every time we had an opportunity. The water is the clearest ever found, I believe, and the bottom of it is covered with large stones which could be seen so distinctly through the water that at the first glance one might think there was no water there at all. It is as cold as ice water, and very soft, like all mountain water, but this spring is noted for its delicious purity.

The first week we did not do very much climbing for we were saving our strength for our climb up Long's peak. We rode a good deal, three of us climbed Deer mountain, a medium sized one, and all but the cook went into the park to see a base ball game. A high hill answered as the grand stand at

the game and there were quite a number of spectators. We came back from the game in time for dinner and, as we had several books along, we spent the afternoon in reading.

On Sunday we went riding, not going to any place in particular, only around the park. But the rides there were always pleasant, and we enjoyed them more each time if possible. On the way home we sang hymns and the day seemed very much like Sunday. One of the girls had brought with her that beautiful sermon by Henry Drummon entitled "The Greatest Thing in the World," and some of us read it in the afternoon, one party of us taking it with us when we went riding again and as we came to a hill the horses could not easily climb we let them rest while we sat under a tree to read.

Two of the boys went fishing all that day, and caught fish enough for breakfast, and all enjoyed eating them. They were speckled trout. In some parts of the mountains the streams are noted for their trout.

When the boys got home they told us of a berry patch they had found up the canon, so we decided that we would go berrying the next day. Monday morning after breakfast the ponies were saddled and eight of us started. We had a pleasant ride for quite a distance and then we were obliged to ride single file along a narrow, and in some places a very indistinct trail. The trees here are very thick and the branches low and we dodged them in all sorts of ways. We rode across the stream several times, the bottom of which is covered with quite large and nearly round stones and the water rushes over them at a great rate. But finally we reached the berry bushes and the berries were very plentiful. Mountain raspberries have an excellent flavor; they are much better than cultivated ones. We filled a large tin pail with them, ate all we possibly could, rested awhile and then started back to camp. The vegetation in that canon is more rank and plentiful than in any other place we visited. The ground is almost covered with fallen timber and the pines are exceedingly large. The brakes are beautiful and the tallest I ever saw.

A small tree called the quaking asp grows in the canon and in fact in all parts of the mountains. The bark is quite white and the leaves small and nearly round. The tree probably gets its name from the fact that its leaves are continually rustling, fluttering and quaking. We reached camp in time for dinner, and our berries were not slighted in the least, even the daintiest deigned to eat some from a tin cup.

In the afternoon we rested and read, and in the evening went to a dance at one of the hotels, had a pleasant time as usual, and the next morning made preparations for our much talked of trip to the top of Long's peak.

Not all the party were going, as some of them had been and others did not care to go. There were three ladies and four gentlemen going, and after dinner the ponies were made ready. The boys put their saddles on the ponies that the ladies rode, as side saddles were not so safe, and much harder on the ponies' backs. Two of the boys strapped as much bedding around their horses as they could possibly ride upon, for we were going to stay all night up at timber line, and it is usually very cool up there. After the lunch was packed and we had collected all the essentials we could possibly carry, we mounted our horses and rode away, nearly all of us being a little suspicious that we were going to have a day and a half of hard work, though perfectly sure that we would be repaid when reaching the top of the peak. We rode along, talking and enjoying the ride, and finally we came to the single file trail, but it was easy enough to ride so far. After awhile we came to a place where the beavers had built a dam across the stream and blocked up the trail. We were obliged to cross in another place, and had to ride our horses down a steep bank and across a place where the timber had been laid crosswise and in all directions it seemed. The horses had hard work in getting across, for they had to pull their feet straight up after sinking down quite a ways while stepping between the logs. One of the horses with the bedding became so frightened that he actually sat down on the bank, but was persuaded to cross without any serious difficulty. That was the only place where there was the least bit of danger, and after passing there we rode on and on winding in and out among the fragrant evergreens, finding our way by the trees that were blazed to mark the trail, and guiding our horses for fear of being brushed off their backs by some scraggly tree. Between three and four o'clock we reached timber line. There we prepared to camp, that is, the horses were unpacked and unsaddled, then hobbled and turned loose into some very good grass; wood was brought for our fire, and we then sat around resting and breathing the delicious air which really must be of the sweetest and purest in the universe. It was soon cool enough for a fire, so we lighted one, and had a lunch consisting of cold ham and bread, coffee and canned fruit. After lunch we made the fire large and sat around it, telling of past happenings and talking of different people until we were quite sleepy. Then we made our beds, first stretching out the large tarpaulins in which they were rolled and making the beds on them. Of course there was no tent or cabin anywhere near, so we slept in the open air and all of us spent a comfortable night.

(To be continued.)

Camping in the Rockies (12/11/1890 installment)

BY JULIA B. DURKEE, OF GREELEY COL,
FORMERLY OF HAMLIN [NY]

(Continued from last week.)

The next morning the boys started the fire before daylight and we all got ready for breakfast as soon as possible. We went down to a small stream to wash our faces, and a rod [16.5 feet] or two from where we stood the water was running from under a snow bank, and O, how cold and clear it was. The air was quite chilly too, and after our faces were washed we were thoroughly awake though some were rather sleepy before. We went back to camp and ate breakfast, saddled the ponies and started out about sunrise. We left the bedding and enough provision for a lunch at timber line. After riding our ponies over on large hill and a short distance farther we came to such large rocks that riding was not exactly safe, so we left the ponies to graze and we went on toward the peak, having to walk all the rest of the way. There were very pretty flowers all around, and some of them were picked and pressed. We soon reached the lava beds and the walk is not so very hard there. Then we came to what is known as the boulder field, and the walking was more difficult, for the boulders are large and of all shapes, and the tops of them are quite far apart, but nearly all the rocks are firm and do not move when stepped upon. The boulder field is a large expanse of solid rocks, and a most desolate looking place it is. After going over the boulder field we came to what is known as the “key-hole,” a large opening on the side of the mountain, and it gets its name from its shape. We had to pass through it in order to go around on the west side of the mountain, for it is impossible to make the ascent from the east side where you first arrive. When the wind blows in just the right direction through the “keyhole,” sometimes meeting there, it forms a current of very cold air, and people climb through as quickly as possible, for it is too cold for comfort. But when we arrived at the “keyhole” there was no wind to speak of, and so we rested awhile before going farther, in the meantime safely depositing as we thought, a few hard boiled eggs for a slight lunch on the way back.

There at the “keyhole,” where we rested, is certainly a lonely wilderness of rocks, and near or nearly in the trail is a large boulder and close to it a board is placed on which is written – “Here Carrie J. Welton lay to rest and died alone Sept. 1884.” Of course there are sometimes very severe storms in the mountains during September, and although the unfortunate woman had been warned of the danger of ascending the peak by the people and guides, she could not be persuaded to give up going to the

top. So the guide took her and they made the ascent, but at the “keyhole” coming back she was completely exhausted, could go no farther, and stopped to rest on the large boulder. The guide, not much more than a boy, went for help, which of course was a long way off. A hard storm came up, and she perished there, the hard cold couch, the mountains in their harsh and wintry dresses, the wind and snow-flakes the only earthly witnesses. When help came she was carried away, and afterward the board with the strange epitaph on it was placed there in memory of her.

Well we had rested long enough so we went on along the west side of the mountain for a long way and came to what is called the trough. By the way, before we came to it we found some very pretty flowers, but now there was nothing but stones. The trough is a broad steep ascent and the rocks all shapes with which it is filled or covered, slip from under the climber’s feet a great deal. It is the hardest place to climb on the way to the top and the longest steep ascent. We were obliged to rest every rod or two till we could breathe easier as we were nearing the top, and the air up as high as we were is very light. But it did not take long to get rested, and so we did not lose much time. After the trough comes the narrows, winding around on the south side of the mountain. The walking there was a rest after what we had gone over, as it was not nearly so steep. But just at the end of the narrows is a short, but very steep climb, and after getting up, that we were on the top. We had walked partly around the mountain to get up and of course were tired, but surely there was enough to pay us for our exertions. We had made a very quick trip, as nearly all of us were at the top at 8:15a. m., while all were there half an hour later and we were 14,271 [sic] feet above the sea level.

The day was quite clear and we had a fine view of the mountains. Toward the west we could see North and Middle Parks and range after range of snow capped peaks. And all around, away out among the pines, there are many little mountain lakes, and nearer among the rocks, far below the peak, are others making altogether a wonderful scene and a very beautiful one. Above it all were hanging some white clouds, which looked very soft and fleecy, over the dark trees and hard bare rocks. Away down the east side of the mountain, the nearly perpendicular side is a small mountain lake [Chasm Lake]. There is nothing very beautiful about the lake itself, but it seems quite wonderful that it should be there. As we looked beyond it out over the plains we could see dozens of small lakes, and we could hardly believe there are so many, for we do not find them at all near together while on the plains. The view of the plains was not very clear, as many clouds were hanging over the land in that direction, but we could see a great distance. Looking another

way we saw our camp away down among the mountains and the tents were like little white dots, but we could see them quite well with the spy-glass. We had now looked at everything far away, so we began looking at the curiosities [sic] on top of the peak; that is, at the autographs of people who had been there before us. They had written all sorts of things, principally abuse to themselves for climbing the peak. There were quite a number of names written on paper and put into tin cans; and we also found a cane witten [sic] full of names. We read them, wrote our names, rested a little while and then started down the peak.

(To be continued.)

Camping in the Rockies (12/18/1890 installment)

BY JULIA B. DURKEE, OF GREELEY COL,
FORMERLY OF HAMLIN [NY]

(Concluded.)

It was as hard going down the peak as up, and when we got back to the "key-hole" we found that some little Norwegian rabbits [pikas] had hidden and eaten some of our eggs. That was a great disappointment for us. We went on again over the desolate boulder field and lava beds feeling very much rejoiced because we were nearing our horses. After awhile we came to a small clear stream of water issuing from under the rocks now and then, so we made cups of our hat brims and stopped to drink quite often. We soon came in sight of our horses, and after reaching them we decided to walk farther, for the hill there is quite steep and the rocks too large to ride over going down hill; but we soon come to where the rocks were small, and then we rode back to our camp at timber line, arriving there about noon. We made some coffee, and then started for our other camp which in our thoughts was home. After we were nicely started it began to rain a little, then it rained all the way to the camp. The boys loaned the girls their large yellow slickers while they wore our thin gossamers, which they call "leakers," and no wonder, for they were soaked through in a few minutes. The rain came down in little streams and the trail was quite slippery. When we got near camp we started our horses on the gallop and rode into camp single file, intending to make an impression, for we were certainly a very formidable looking procession. But, alas! Every one had gone riding but two girls and they were in the tent asleep. They were soon roused however and we had the satisfaction of frightening some new campers who had camped near our camp while we were gone. They rushed to the opening of their tent and looked out as we passed and afterwards told us that they ran to hide their valuables, for they did not know what to think of us. It was a little after

three when we reached camp. We had made about the quickest trip of the season, and felt very much like resting and eating. We laughed a good deal at our chaperone who went to the peak with us, telling her she rode as fast and acted a wild as any of us riding into camp. That evening in camp was the only unpleasant one we had. It rained very hard, and of course a camp-fire was impossible. So we stayed in the tents, sang a song or two, that is one of the girls sang, shivered a little and then went to bed.

During the hardest part of the rain, one of the boys asked Charley, the cook, what he would take to ditch the tent, whereupon he drily replied – a shovel. Of course the shovel was given him and he went to work.

The next morning some of the party went horseback riding to Gem Lake and the rest of us stayed at camp, some blacking their shoes, washing their handkerchiefs; others brushing, mending, etc. and all reading a little before dinner. After that important event we went riding around the park and the whole party were [sic] back at camp in time for supper, and we ended the day by sitting around our usual camp fire. The next day six more of us went to Gem Lake, and a charming little wonder it is. After climbing up quite a high mountain we followed a trail, a gradual ascent, and all at once th[r]ough the evergreens we caught a glimpse of the water, and after a few more steps we could see the whole lake. Away up there in the mountains, set so securely among those great, gray rocks, it is a little gem indeed, and the reflection of the pines and rocks and sky in the water, and range after range of mountains with valleys between and as snow capped peaks beyond, make a grand and beautiful pictures -- a fit subject for an artist's dream.

We sat down under some trees near the water, ate our lunch, and then took a walk around the lake. The walk was mostly climbing however. We wrote our names and pinned them on a tree with some others, and then started for camp. We arrived there before supper and spent our time in various ways until it was ready. Then after supper we prepared for our last and longest camp fire, as we were going to start for home the next morning. We had nearly all the campers around and some of the boarders from Sprague's to spend the evening with us, and we had a merry time, enjoying all our usual evening pastimes.

When our visitors started to go way, Charley gave a very pretty girl's mother some of his bread, which he was sure we would not need, and the boys teased him a considerable. But they could not prevent him stopping at their camp as we passed next morning, to say goodbye to the girl. After the company had all gone we sat by the fire till 11 p. m. It was too bright and cheerful to leave.

The next morning we got ready to have the pictures of ourselves, horses and camp taken, and after that every thing was packed and we started for home. It was a beautiful morning, and a delightful ride we had all the forenoon. We camped a short time for dinner and Charley told us he was sick; the poor fellow looked so indeed. We found what we could to eat, and went on. At night we camped as usual; but we were nearing the plains, and sorry for it too. We spent a pleasant evening though and as Charley was still sick, and the ladies did not get up early enough the next morning, the boys got breakfast. After that we started along again and reached Loveland quite early, and as our mountain dresses were so much soiled we had decided not to ride to Greeley on the cars [train]. So we rode along over the plains, and a dreary ride it was -- nothing to be seen but distance. In the meantime, those of our party behind us on horseback thought we were going to camp near Loveland and get dinner. But the seven of us in the spring wagon rode on with the intention of reaching Greeley about noon. The horseback riders with the "grub wagon" reached Loveland about noon and bought canned fruit, beef steak, etc., enough for dinner for thirteen. Then they drove on to where they expected to find the rest of us, but there was no one there. So the five of them with the cook, who was sick, camped and ate dinner for thirteen. Any reasonable person would think they had a plenty, but for some unknown reason, a cow that had followed them a short distance was milked, and so a little more was added to their repast.

They said they ate dinner three times, and when the "grub wagon" arrived in Greeley of the miraculous amount in had carried from the grocery, nothing was left but one lone bar of soap. The ones ahead in the spring wagon reached Greeley about noon, while the "dinner eaters" did not come in till 6 p. m.

Our two weeks in the mountains had been spent and I am sure that all of us have many pleasant memories of the trip, and in years to come, when we will look back upon past happenings, these memories, I think, will be some of the bright flowers in the garden of our lives.

All the pastimes of a mountain party could not possibly be written in a reasonable space, for there is no end to all that is done to make time pleasant. But to spend two weeks or a month in the midst of the grand and solemn mountains, seeing in all directions, the calm and majestic features of the lofty old peaks, hearing the rush and splash of the pure mountain streams, and breathing the purest of air, laden with the delicious fragrance of the pine trees, one can realize completely the grandure [sic] of Nature and be devoutly thankful for the great goodness of the Giver of all.

