



A Tale of a Simple Sewing Needle

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As I pack my suitcase for a trip, I often think back to my ancestors as they loaded their wagons to make the long trek across the plains to make a new life in the West. As I look at my suitcase, I think of the things that were essential for them to take. They had one pair of shoes and perhaps a second pair. They didn't have multiple sweaters, shirts, and numerous other items as I have in my suitcase but the bare essentials that were necessary to sustain their new life.

It reminds me of a story about a small town in Oregon along the road that my ancestors passed by in 1846. One of the most important items that a person possessed was the simple sewing needle. It was essential for sewing new clothes, repair of equipment, sewing injuries and many other necessities. In the small villages they didn't always have a store. It was important that you took care of what you had because it could be a long time till the next traveling salesman came. Such was the case in this small town. They had but one sewing needle left between all the families, and they shared it amongst themselves. One neighbor sent her daughter over to pick up the needle as she had some mending to do. The daughter picked up the needle and made her way home but not before stopping along the way to wade in the river and sit under the shade tree. When she arrived home, she was to discover that she had lost the needle. The mother sent out the word that all in the town should meet near the river and look for the needle. They spent all day searching but with no luck. As it was getting late and dinner had to be made, they headed for home but not before taking one more look around the tree where the daughter had rested before heading home. By some miracle they found the needle.

My ancestors started with seven wagons loaded with supplies and memories, and by the time they reached their destination, all they had left was the clothes on their backs.

It is hard looking in my sewing box and seeing all the packages of needles and not thinking of my ancestors and realizing what they would give to have had all the things we have today.