

TAPE #10RUTH AND HAROLD GABRIEL

Recorded: February 16, 1977

Reference: The Bi-Centennial Wagon Drive to Valley Forge.

Ruth---I'd like to tell you how we got involved in it. The summer of 1974 we were approached by Mr. Tom Johnston. He asked my husband if he could help him get 200 horses for a wagon train. We said, oh, yes, but thought he was kidding. Later, he came to us and asked if we could get four horses and drive a wagon. We said yes. As long as we could drive the California Wagon. Then we started planning the trip. This is a picture of our trailer---our four horse trailer--- and we slept in it. Our out-rider, who was with us most of the time, slept in our wagon.

Harold---We left Pomona, Ca. on January 2 and went to the lower part of Arizona and up through New Mexico.

Ruth---Even in January and February the weather was very nice. Leonard Silva from Union City, who drove the chuck wagon, was along. As we went through each of the states we picked up their official wagon. We started with the Calif Wagon and the Hawaii Wagon, the Pennsylvania Wagon and the chuck wagon were the official wagons. There were private wagons, among which were the Scofields who are here tonight.

We tied up our livestock at night. Stretched a rope from a tree to our wagon and tied the animals and let them rest.

We were in New Mexico 42 days. We entered at Rodeo and exited at Raton. We tried to go to all the hospitals and rest homes along the way.

One night we went to bed and had no idea it was going to snow.

The next morning everything was covered.

We lost a horse on the trip; her name was Nellie.

We went through Kansas; entered at Syracuse and left at Kansas City.

It rained all the time we were there.

I (Ruth) was known on the trip as the official teamster for the Calif. Wagon. My husband was my assistant. He did the work, but I got the credit. Our outrider was a girl from Southern Calif.

Her Dad was our wagon master from Calif to Missouri.

We looked at two butts, day in and day out.

Going into towns we'd have marching bands come out and lots of people.

At Independence, Mo. they loaded the wagons on barges and took us up the river to just below Pittsburg, Penn. We'd rather have gone on land, but they said the river was historical and we had to go that way. This was up the Missouri River. There were some exciting moments while the wagons were on the barges. We couldn't go on the barges, but we heard that a few times the tugs barely made it.

The water route took five weeks. During the five weeks we drove our trailer and our horses to just below Pittsburg.

The wagons were unloaded in Elizabeth, Penn.

Then we were taken over by a new wagon master and he was nothing like the old wagon master.

An Indian princess from a Pennsylvania tribe welcomed us.

We went over 300 miles through Penn. on the last leg of our journey.

This was different from the rest of the trip. It's very humid, and there were lots of high hills. It was very hard on the horses.

After our horse died, people raised money for us to buy a replacement horse.

Some ~~AAAA~~ Amish families visited us; they always came by horse and buggy.

The Pennsylvania wagon led the wagon train from Calif. to back east. Had to give rides to city officials all the time, and we hated it. There was a lot of politics involved. We had to start driving the Hawaii wagon because the Calif wagon was taken away from us. But we got it back. The wagon in the background with two mules pulling it is the Schofields.

Every night we circled the wagons up---just like in the old days. We had to have a cotton candy wagon go with us for a while because some of the states said they needed the money to help pay the expenses of their wagon. We didn't like it---people selling souvenir programs and all that.

At Daniel Boone's place in Penn we were 30 miles away from Valley Forge. And it was a sad place. We were fired as drivers of the Calif Wagon. And we were never given a reason why. To this day I don't know why. This man who was running the program just came to us one night and fired us. So---some people near there let us put our horses in a field. Then we had to head home. One of the saddest moments in our life was when we heard on the radios the wagons going into Valley Forge. But we weren't there.

We later found out that the Calif wagon was almost destroyed. The public crawled all over it, carved it up and took parts of it.

THE SCOFIELDS (FIDDLETOWN)

The wagon was real rough. I wasn't chosen. We sold the ranch and bought a team of mules. Bought the running gear and built the rest of it. Then we just took off. All we owned in the world was two mules and a wagon. Our 7 year old son went with us. He started out in the wagon and then he had a mule given to him. He rode it. No matter what the

weather was, he was out there riding. We travelled over 3000 miles and I'll never forget it. We drove back in a pick-up we bought and it seemed much more difficult. ~~XXXXXX~~ ^{Martin} LaBanco helped me train the mules. They were wild when we got them. We'd go to sleep in the wagon and the snow would come in. We know a little bit more of what the pioneers went through. Restrooms went along with us, but I preferred the sagebrush. Someone blew up the johns at one point.