

Extract from AUTO BIOGRAPHY OF J. J. SCHELLEN
(January 1, 1819 - August 10, 1886)

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This abbreviated account was copied and translated from the original, printed in German, by W. Zander; son of Myrtha Zander-Scheller, daughter of the above J. J. Scheller.

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Sacramento, California

TRIP TO AMERICA:

I

Dec. 21, 1848: Said farewell to family. Traveled to Zurich and Basel.
Dec. 22,-28: Train to Muhlhausen, Post Coach to Paris, train to LeHavre.
Dec. 31, 1848: Boat left LeHavre at 4 P.M.
Jan. 1, 1849 to Feb. 21, 1849: Our boat was a small sailer, bound for New Orleans, name of Captain Grossby. Traveling steerage, I had to furnish my own provisions and do my own cooking. Was seasick for a few hours, but enjoyed trip very much until we arrived in the Gulf, where a terrible storm delayed landing for 4 days.

Feb. 21, 1849: First glimpses of shores along Mississippi, not very inviting, nothing but swamps and thousands of alligators. New Orleans. What a place! See nothing but dirt, dirty streets, dirty houses and dirty people, hope I won't have to stay here very long. Not finding work, I made up my mind to continue on to Mexico, but just before leaving I got a job in an Omnibus factory, painting and decorating Omnibusses and carriages. This was my trade, I liked the place, the bosses were satisfied with my work and I stayed for 1¹/₂ months. During that time, I had a touch of yellow fever, got swollen legs with open sores, but lost only a few days of work. News of the gold strikes in California had reached New Orleans, the "Gold Fever" got a hold of me and I decided to "go west"!

ALONG THE WAGON TRAIL:

The trip from New Orleans to California per boat would have been much shorter, but the wide open spaces seemed to fascinate me and I decided to do it "the hard way"!

I traveled by steamboat to St. Louis, spent 5 weeks there, in preparation for the big trip and teamed up with 4 others, previously unknown to me. My new partners in adventure were J. Kinlein, saddlemaker from St. Louis, H. Hagelstein, cabinetmaker from St. Louis, G. Eilers, a German from Hanover and an Irishman whose name I forgot. All of them left their wives and children in St. Louis.

We left St. Louis per boat on the 26th of April 1850, 3 o'clock in the morning and arrived in St. Joseph on the 5th of May, after a very unpleasant trip. The boat was overloaded, our gang alone had: one wagon, 6 horses, 4 mules and much unnecessary baggage. Twice we got stuck on sand banks and had to unload everything to free the boat.

In St. Louis, I got acquainted with my dear friend John Schneider from Bern, Switzerland and Dr. Huber.

There was still snow on the ground as we departed at St. Joseph. Thousands of emigrants had arrived here ahead of us. The crossing of the Missouri was made on floats, a very slow process. Finally on May the 9th, 10 A.M. came our turn, we crossed and started on our journey toward the unknown. We were well equipped, armed to the teeth with guns, revolvers and knives, and expected the trip to California to be a grand and glorious adventure, but our enthusiasm was soon to be cooled off. Already the first day, only about 6 miles outside St. Joseph, we got stuck in a swamp and had to unload twice to gain higher ground.

Now followed days and weeks of continuous hardship and danger. Man and animals had to suffer much. We crossed the "Big Blue River" about ten times. On the 18th of May we rested, worked on our wagon to make it lighter and discarded many unnecessary articles. On the 20th we arrived at the "Little Blue River" and found the first graves of emigrants, on the 22nd we saw the first rattlesnakes, on the 23rd we met the first herd of buffalos and on the 24th the first Indian village, Pawnee Indians. On the 25th we crossed a barren plain, no water or wood, very hot day, had to wear dust glasses all day. May 26th, arrived at "Platte River," got stuck in the drifting sand while crossing it and had to be pulled out by another party with oxen. Fee \$5.00. We had a most severe storm that night, hail stones as big as eggs and we were nearly killed. The animals ran off and it took us till noon next day to find them again. No fodder for the animals here, so we drove on, made about 6 miles and arrived at "Fort Kerney." Near the fort, a blockhouse with 10 soldiers, we rested a day to dry out clothing and food. On the 28th we proceeded along the Platte River, found no drinking water or fire wood all day. The Irishman left us that day to join another party of Irishmen. On the 29th and 30th we saw large herds of buffalos also droves of white wolves. On the 1st of June, we drove along the river and on the 2nd crossed it for the second time, this time with better success. On the 3rd we traveled over steep hills and arrived at the "North arm of the Platte River" where we again had a severe storm, that lasted all night. This is barren, inhospitable country, a very den of snakes and wolves. After crossing a chain of hills we again arrived at the Platte River. What a change of scenery, beautiful mountains and green plains, dotted with fragrant flowers and juniper trees.

June 4th. Rain all day, made only 8 miles, past two Indian Villages, Sioux Indians. The roads were getting worse, had to rest again, made 6 miles the following day. Found the first Indian burial site. On the 6th made 20 miles, found no fire wood all day, crossed a big Indian village. June 7th, stuck in the mud again, desperately depressed, resolved to divide all our possessions and leave it to the individual to find his own way, but by evening decided to stick together till we reach Fort Laramie and sell our wagon there. On the 8th we made 16 miles past two villeges of Creek Indians and were nearing two big rock formations sticking out of the endless plain like guide posts, they called them the "Courthouse" and "Chimney Rock." On the 9th we made 22 miles, bad roads, had a storm again. This is beautiful country, granite hills of all shapes and sizes on both sides. On the 10th we traveled 24 miles over the "Scotts Bluffs," past two Indian villeges. From here we had the first good view of the Rocky Mountains, about 100 miles in the distance. June 11th, arrived again at Platte River, on the 12th June 1850, finally at "Fort Laramie, 700 miles from St. Joseph. Here at the crossing of the river the emigrants were counted and the recrcds of that day gave the following; 22,273 men, 331 women, 341 children, 6,054 wagons, 11,796 horses, 5,744 mules, 12,724 oxen and 1,554 cows, comparing these figures with the final count of the year 1850, you will see that we were in the first quarter of the emigration. Fort Laramie located about 1 mile from the river had a garrison of about 100 cavalry and 200 infantry. There was no chance of selling the wagon, we had to abandon it. We now divided

everything. One part for Eilers and myself and one for Kinlein and Hagelstein. Each party got 2 animals and half of the provisions. Eilers and I discarded (i.e. threw away) all not absolutely necessary equipment, packed the rest on our animals and left our former traveling companions about 5 P.M. I may add here, that the two others loaded their animals with all kind of unnecessary stuff with the result that the poor creatures soon died. The two men arrived in Sacramento five weeks after us and in terrible condition.

The weather was cold and rainy. I took sick with fever and only the good care of my partner saved my life. On the 20th we crossed the Platte River for the last time, made 22 miles and camped at Mineral Lake. On the 21st we made 30 miles over endless sandy flats, crossed the Sweet Water River on the 22nd, passed Independence Rock and stopped at noon at the Devils Door. On the 23rd more sandy flats, made only about 20 miles and this being Sunday rested that afternoon. 24th & 25th about 30 miles per day, crossed the Sweet Water River seven times. June 26 & 27 ascended Southpass of Rocky Mountains, deep snow for hours, tough going. On the 28th we again reached the plains and took the road to the left toward Salt Lake. On the 29th we crossed two small deserts, sand 5-6 inches deep, we had to walk, the horses could hardly manage without the extra load. In the evening we arrived at the Green River, crossed on an existing ferry for a fee of \$2.50. (Old Lombard Ferry?) This is wild and mountainous country and the roads are bad. On the 30th we crossed the Blackford (Blackfork?) twice and arrived at Fort Bridger, a blockhouse for fur traders. On the 1st of July we again crossed the Blackford and on the 2nd the Hamsford, a dangerous crossing due to the swift current. After crossing more snow covered mountains we camped in a forest in the valley, on the evening of the 3rd. July 4, 1850, Independence Day, I will never forget this one 4th of July. The regular road to Salt Lake City would take about 2 days but a short cut over the mountain would take us there in 4-5 hours, so we were told. This sounded good and we "fell for it." We were about 30 men in the party with as many horses and mules. The ascent of the steep canyon, crossing a wild mountain stream 48 times was indescribable hardship for men and animals, but we finally reached the top about 4 P.M. and made camp, not being able to go on. We had lost three horses on this trip, were soaked to the skin and trembling from hunger and cold. From a clearing in the woods we could see Salt Lake City below us in the valley. Eilers and I were first to leave camp the next morning.

July 5, 1850: Salt Lake City; To us a veritable fairyland, beautifully located and richly blessed by mother nature. The people seemed to be prosperous and very congenial. As many other emigrants had passed here, provisions were rather scarce and only after much pleading we were able to buy 45lbs. flour for \$20.20, 16lbs. bran \$3.20, one pound cheese \$.25, one dozen eggs \$.50 and one quart milk \$.40.

July 7th, Left Salt Lake City, road very dusty, slow progress. 8th made 28 miles past several Mormon settlements. 9th arrived at last Mormon settlement, Brownville, stayed two days, bought some dried bear meat. Milk and butter were plentiful here. July 12th covered over 30 miles, saw 3 hot springs. July 13th, about 30 miles, arrived at Bear River. July 14th, met a troop of Indians, bought a pony from them for \$20. July 15th & 16th about 25 miles per day, arrived at the so called Fort Hall Road. This was the main road of emigration, only comparatively few, those that wanted to see the Mormon City or were short on supplies took the detour.