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OVERLAND TO CALIFORNIA WITH THE PIONEER LINE,
THE GOLD RUSH DIARY OF BERNARD J. REID,
edited by Mary McDougall Gordon,
Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA 1983...
found in National Frontier Trails Center, Independence, Mo

(Barry, Louise, BEGINNING OF THE WEST, cites several passages of Reid's Diary as incorrect. It appears Reid took notes and added details later. She believes SEARL'S published diary is more correct.)

Prologues, page 26 - ...and when I decided to go to California he (Brewster) proposed to accompany me and we agreed to travel together and join our fortunes in California. In purchasing our outfit every article of personal wear was got in duplicate which gave us the appearance of twin brothers. The pony was used in common on the "ride and tie" or rather day about plan. We had a small medicine chest suitably filled under his directions for emergencies. He too procured an army rifle and ammunition. Each of us had a pair of heavy Mackinaw blankets, a broad brimmed soft fur hat and an indian rubber cloak and indian rubber leggins...

On the 28th of April we embarked on a steamer for Independence, reaching it on the fourth day (? in 4 days would be May 2 but this probably meant May 4th, since there was a receipt marked May 5). I rode Don to the wharf...

page 27- he objected being led over the planks....going ashore, I threw the rein over his neck, sprang into the saddle and spoke to him, when he walked the plank at once as if he had been used to it all his life.

On the steamer (Sacramento?) I made the acquaintance of Dr. Sylvanus M.E.Goheen, a prominent physician of Bellview, Illinois, and his brother, Rev. Davis Goheen, of the same place, who were going in our train to California - the latter on account of ill health....We put up at the same hotel in Independence, preparatory to our going into camp about eight miles out on the prairie, near the line of Kansas territory.

....On the first evening at the hotel in Independence, as Brewster and I were in the parlor, a local physician came in and asked if we if we belonged to the pioneer Train. On learning that we did he said he said he had just come from the room of a Mr. Beadles, a newspaper man from Iowa, who was one of our passengers and who had an acute attack of cholera, with no one to attend him. He asked whether we would go to his room and take care of him in his (the doctor's) absence...we went together to the sick man's room and nursed him till midnight, when he died...then

about retiring to get some sleep when Dr. Goheen came to ask us to assist him in caring for his brother, the minister, who had the cholera... rendering such help as we could, till day break, when the patient died... We slept till noon, and at dinner were told that Black Harris, a

noted Rocky Mountain hunter and trapper, who was engaged as guide for our train, was lying sick with cholera, in a room near the hotel...we remained with him about two hours, when he died. Thus in the short space of 18 hours, we had waited at the death beds of three members of our train...

Page 29 - At our camp we found a scene of bustle and activity in the preparations for weighing anchor and setting sail with our "prairie schooners" and other craft on the wide prairie ocean we were about to cross. Several days elapsed before the train was fully organized -

(Walter Cook: First encampment was 8 miles from Independence, Mo, on the Santa fe Trail (see page 27 and also footnote on page 34.)

Page 30 - and equipped but on the 8th day of May orders were given to strike tents and begin to move. (18)

18. "The date was actually May 9. Searls wrote in his diary on May 9 that it was "the day appointed for our final departure," but harnessing proved difficult, the train traveled only two miles, and several baggage wagons had not arrived. Thomas Turner was in Lexington, Missouri, on May 8 buying extra wagons, according to the MISSOURI REPUBLICAN, May 13, 14, 1849. Searl's entry on May 15 makes it clear that the train started in earnest on that day. The Pioneer Line originally projected April 26 as the departure date; see MISSOURI REPUBLICAN, April 16, 1849.

Our wagons were new and well-built, and were brought from St. Louis by steamer, hauled to camp and arranged as a "corral" or oval enclosure, with a roped gap at one end, into which the mules could be driven for protection in case of attack by Indians, and for "catching up" and harnessing at every start of the train. there were twenty good spring wagons with square tops, some covered with white canvas, others with black or green oil cloth, and each seated for six passengers. The "lazy-backs" were hinged and could be let down flat, making, with the seats, a bed o which three could sleep in the shelter. tents were provided for the other passengers and train men, but on account of their great weight and trouble were discarded before reaching the mountains, and those who could not find shelter in the wagons had to sleep under them or under the sky as a canopy. there were 22 freight and baggage wagons with the usual hooped covers, all loaded to their full capacity and drawn with six mules, and some of the heavier ones by eight. The passenger wagons were drawn by four mules each. One of the spring wagons was for the proprietors and their staff. The others were numbered and a mess assigned to each. There were eleven messes of six each, three of five, three of seven and two of nine (11 x 6, 3 x 5, 3 x 7, 2 x 9 = 120), according to the list I made soon after we started,

a copy of which is appended in a note....The nine in (carriage) Number 8 were all seafaring men from the coast of Maine. Each freight wagon, or "prairie schooner," had blazoned on its white cover a name presumably suggested by the fancy of its driver, I remember only these four: Prairie Bird, Tempest, Albatross and "Have You Saw the Elephant?" ...

There were in the corral about 300 mules, which, after hitching upleft a herd of sixty to be driven loose... But the proprietors, unfortunately for us, instead of buying mules "best adapted for the trip"... had purchased at a cheaper rate young and soft mules that had never been broken to harness. The result was that, owing to the heavy loads and frequent spring rains, the wagons often sank to their hubs in the soft prairie, and the unseasoned mules soon began to show shoulder galls and exhaustion. The to intensify the wrong done to us, before we got a hundred miles on our way the proprietors, through greed to double their gains, decided to start a second train, and as a nucleus of it they detached three or four wagons and most of our loose mules; and Allen, who was with us to that point, left us there under Turner's control, and went back with the confiscated mules and wagons to organize the new train. (The company's second train apparently left in June.)....

Page 32 -...Each passenger mess was to drive its own team. Passengers and crew all told made a total of 161 souls in the train at the start. (22- ...cross checking the lists and entries in Reid's and Searl's diaries, ... approximately 131 passengers and 40 crew members makes total about 170 men.)

No pen can adequately describe our start. Half a dozen circuses in one would have been tame in comparison. not one of our 300 mules (except an old bell mule, the leader of the herd), had ever had a bit in its mouth or a collar on its neck....The mules had not been consulted about it when they were brought from their native heath, Kentucky, and they soon made it manifest that they had not given their consent to the ceremony... they had so many ways of objecting to the process that they seemed to have reserved that particular mule trait (kicking) for later stages ...
Page 33 - The corral formed an amphitheater of about two-thirds of an acre. All hands were piped to their respective posts, the gap through which the herd entered was strongly roped behind them and the fun began. A vaquero would single out a victim and throw his lasso. if it missed, it would send the whole herd galloping around the arena. If it caught, the galloping went on the same, or faster if possible, with the vaquero and his assistants, on

Page 33 - The corral formed an amphitheater of about two-thirds of an acre. All hands were piped to their respective posts, the gap through which the herd entered was strongly roped behind them and the fun began. A vaquero would single out a victim and throw his lasso. if it missed, it would send the whole herd galloping around the arena. If it caught, the galloping went on the same, or faster if possible, with the vaquero and his assistants, on the shorter "interior lines," tugging at the lasso with all their might, to make their "catch" heave-to, or, failing at that, to lasso his feet and throw him broadside, when half-a-dozen of them pounced upon him to stop his struggling and force a bit into his mouth and a collar over his head. That accomplished, he would be taken to the nearest wagon wheel, firmly haltered there, and then harnessed ready for hitching to a wagon....It was a sight to see their wild leaps and contortions to baffle their captors.... From the carriage tops and other points of vantage the passengers looked down for hours upon the exciting contest - ... sometimes for the man and sometimes for the mule - wherever some feat of special agility or daring on either side was recognized. Towards the last, when the arena was well nigh cleared, Mose Mallerson, the wagon master, a young man of great nerve and splendid physique, was giving chase to a particular mule that had been very hard to conquer. Time after time he had shaken loose from his tormentors and set them at defiance. Then all at once Mose sprang at him like a tiger, clasped his arms around his neck, seized his ear with his teeth, and letting go with his arms, held on to his ear with his teeth alone. The startled animal ran like lightning with Mose's body streaming through the air like a ship's pennant in a high wind, - and so they went, mule and man,

Page 34 - round and round the ring - the spectators cheering wildly - till at last, completely conquered, the mule stopped in its mad career, and submitted to be bridled and harnessed without further protest.

*** May 9, (Rice's) 8 miles from Independence

At last mules enough to man all the wagons were harnessed. tents were struck and loaded up, and all was ready for the move.... So much time was consumed in the circus performances that the sun was setting ion the west before the last wagon had left camp; and at the same time the leading wagon ion the procession wheeled into its place in a new corral to form our camp for the night - only one mile from our starting point.