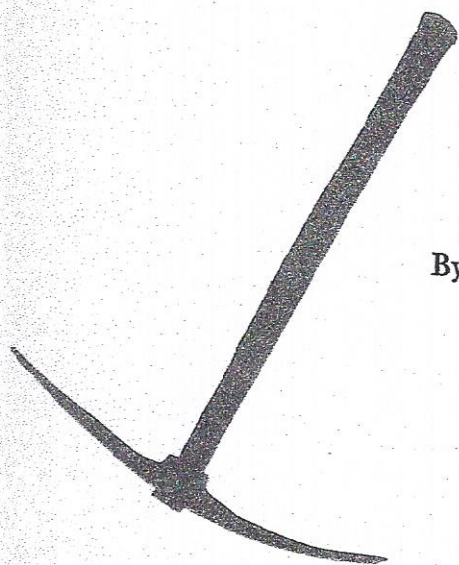


# OVERLAND *to California*

By WM. G. JOHNSTON



A MEMBER OF THE WAGON TRAIN FIRST TO ENTER  
CALIFORNIA . . . IN THE MEMORABLE YEAR OF 1849

FOREWORD BY  
JOS. A. SULLIVAN

1 9 4 8

BIOBOOKS  
OAKLAND, CALIF.

buying up and training out teams and accustoming ourselves to camping out. We now sleep on the floor with nothing but our blankets, all in one room....There are more than 300 Californians here yet and they are nearly all camped out 2 to 3 miles from town. We are greatly surprised to find William Pettibone and his Sandusky Company here, **CAMPING OUT ABOUT 8 MILES FROM TOWN.**

March 24, Saturday

Johnston: Spent the morning packing groceries and other provisions in the sacks recently made....will greatly reduce our load....will prove serviceable in our travels..being light and easily handled.

March 25, Sunday

Johnston: "A thick coating of ice was found on the water bucket beside our tent door....We visited some new neighbors today, encamped a short distance off..They invited us to become their companions on the intended march...we concluded that it would be highly advantageous to unite with them. Another cold night."

March 26, Monday

Johnston: Had a letter from home;

Daniel : Edwin Bryant had assembled forty-two men, in Louisville, ready to depart for California

March 27, Tuesday

Johnston: Working in the camp making picket pins. "this evening there was rain,..."

March 28, Wednesday

Johnston: "Rain..when we awoke...In a few hours it ceased, but the air was chilly, and mud abounded in an unpleasant degree. By noon the sun came out, which it became pleasant....McBride surprised us with an excellent cake of his baking. Our first warm bread we have had...Rain fell heavily through the night, easing about daybreak."

March 29, Thursday

Johnston: Bought two more mules. Received letters. Day pleasant.



March 15, Sunday

Johnston: "We spent the day reading and in taking short walks in the neighborhood."

March 19, Monday

Johnston: "Appearance of an approaching storm in the afternoon led us to dig a deep trench around our tent, and to place our goods under secure cover. But the clouds passed harmlessly by."

March 20, Tuesday

Johnston: Went a mile or two distant to the Big Blue River to fish. Made the acquaintance of a Mr. Irvin, formerly of Pennsylvania, who invited them for the noonday meal and showed them the way through the forest to their camp site.

Members of the party purchased eight Spanish mules from a dealer, Mr. Irwin. Paid \$72 1/2 for each.

March 21, Wednesday

Johnston: Went to Irwin's farm to brand their mules with a diamond K, <K>. Members brought a piece of muslin to make sacks for their provisions now packed in boxes and barrels.

March 23, Friday

Johnston: Members went to Independence to get mail; others went to the corn fields to hunt prairie chickens. No letters and no game.

? Preparations for the Overland Journey to California in 1849: A series of letters from to his wife----:

Independence, Missouri, March 23rd, 1849, My Dear Wife: I am on the extreme frontier of the United States being only 12 miles from the Indian Territory. We arrived safely on yesterday. We are now on the last and only turning point of our journey; when the fainthearted and doubting can turn back if they choose; but this line passed the only course is onward to the end. But we have none such in our Company that we know of. If Sharp and Caldwell come up with our wagons from Cincinnati as is expected daily, we shall be in full force....We are boarding in a private family at \$2.25 per week, when we intend camping out until it will be safe to start out o our journey, which will not be before one month from this time and perhaps six weeks. This seems like a long time to me but we shall occupy the time profitably in

March 30, Friday

Johnston: "grass grows slowly....prevailing expectation is that in about ten days its growth will be sufficient to allow us to start on our journey. News that Captain Wm. J. Ankrum, and others, tore up Independence. They intend to start from St. Joseph.

March 31, Saturday

Johnston: "Lowry Adams, grandson of Mr. Rice, owner of the plantation on which we are encamped, is anxious to emigrate with us, in the capacity of teamster. He complains of ill-treatment on the part of his grandfather, and proposes to run off. To this we are unwilling to assent, but will accede to his proposition if he will first notify the old planter,.... "

April 1, Sunday

Johnston: "Whilst taking a walk with Mr. McBride over the neighboring prairie, we visited the camp of Col. Russell, composed of a large party, among whom we had numerous acquaintances, with whom we spent some pleasant hours."

Gray: At Independence ( Gray was from New York, member of Newark Overland Co., 37 strong. The journals kept by uncle and company leader, General John S. Darcy and friend, S. M. Meeker were lost.)

Johnson, Johnson/McCoy Independence, Missouri, Two miles out and Encamped. April 1st, 1849, My Dear Almira:....Yesterday afternoon we moved two miles out of town and commenced camping out, taking with us some ham, hard bread, coffee, sugar, pepper and salt. Last night we lay in our tents for the first time. I experienced no injury, not the least. I took no cold and I feel very well except for the richness of food creates a little nausea at the stomach, but I will soon overcome that. We have had very favorable weather since we arrived and if the present prospect continues we may be able to start by the 15th of the month. We gave up the idea of buying oxen...we may now purchase the very best mules the country can afford....



April 2, Monday

Johnston:" A cold rain fell upon us whilst we prepared breakfast....McBride and myself rode to town this morning to exchange one of the mules...We dined at Noland House...The little town was crowded with people, oxen and mules. The stores were jammed with customers; whips were cracking in all directions; and the utmost confusion prevailed....I returned alone. It was still raining, but I was enveloped in an India rubber coat, and but for the miry road, would not have been greatly inconvenienced by the storm....Lowry Adams having concluded to remain with his grandfather, I made a number of inquiries as to teamsters... I found a number of Pittsburghers preparing to emigrate, among them Messrs. Joseph C. McKibben, James B. Mitchell, A.W. Brockway, Harry Meyers and Thomas Kennedy...it was still raining.."

Bryant (Daniel): Arrived at Independence, and was encamped on Neville Ross farm, where he was buying mules from a large number of Santa Fe traders present

Gray: At Independence

Josselyn: The "South Zanesville Company" of '49's was composed of 10 members. They left Zanesville April 2, 1849. Each of the ten men put \$200 in a pool for expenses. Each furnished a team of horses and a wagon, fully equipped with camp utensils, beds, wagon tools, etc. They went westward over Ohio's roads to Cincinnati, thence by steamboat to Independence.

E. B. Farnham: Left Cumberland, Ohio , through Zanesville and to go up Missouri River to Independence.

April 3, Tuesday

Johnston: "All night long the rain continued to fall, and fell unceasingly through the day (part of party) sat shivering in the tent..(some) preferred working in the rain. Gathering stones we built a substantial fireplace; and when this was finished went with our axes to a clump of hickory saplings, and laid in a large supply of fire wood."

Gray: At Independence

Price: Hugh Morgan Price and three others had left St. Louis an the steamer, Mary Blane, on April 3, 1849

Shombre: It began to rain last night about 12 and all night & day. We had a time getting breakfast in the rain....Start for Independence 3 miles in the rain and mud....the road is throng with men, mules, oxen, waggons & carrig's....I went to town in the rain ....

April 4, Wednesday

Johnston: Mr. Edwin Bryant and members of his company have just reached Independence, and intend camping near the town, while awaiting the growth of grass."

(Bryant-Daniel reported Bryant had reached Independence, April 2.)

Gray: At Independence

Shombre: Morning cool, temperature 45. A man in the next camp very sick. After breakfast go gunning in the bluffs. Up the river is very romantic..Sick man worse. Took some cold bred and meet for supper. Evening lovely. Made me think of home & friends.

April 5, Thursday

Gray: In Camp No 1 near Indep+

Shombre: Morning fine. Conclude to move off the river...Committee to find a location and one to get a teem....We travel 1 1/2 miles south of town, the finest country I have seen, find camp ground. Lots of tents, men, women and children. All for California. Return and find boys moving to top of hill. Sick man dead, poor fellow buried by his men in a lovely place....

April 6, Friday

Johnston: Rain fell during the night, and again heavily about noon. Clearing up, I undertook to do some laundry work...received to-day from Colonel Sam. W. Black, some letters of introduction; one to General Bennett Riley, Military Governor of California, and another to Persifer F. Smith, commanding the Pacific Division....Rumors are prevalent of cholera having broken out among some emigrants encamped near Independence."

Gray: In Camp No 1 Indep+

Shombre: Morning fine but cool, temperature 48. Much pleased with our new camping ground. ..Had better bred. Men all have good apatite..Great time messing off...3 of us go fishing up the river. Did not get a nibble...



April 7, Saturday

Johnston: A reporter for the St. Louis "Republican" paid us a visit, taking down our names for publication...As a result of today's hunt...three squirrels and a wood duck brought in..Again we had rain in the evening.."

Gray: In Camp No 1 Indep+, wrote home

Price: Landing 3 miles of Independence, arriving a 4 P.M. This evening we laid our bodies in an old stage coach or wagon bed. Rainy. Disagreeable and muddy. Hard beginning for California boys. Missouri River full of sand bars and snags. All the way up its banks are very broken, rocky & hilly. (Corrected) Now and then a flat cottonwood marshy bottom.

Johnson, John Independence, Missouri April 8th 1849, My Dear Wife:  
....We have now been in camp eight days and I have not felt more hearty or better for two years past than I do now....There are now 1100 Californians in Independence, 700 of whom are yet to arrive and then many of them will go from different parts of Missouri....I can sleep soundly all night..I feel well and active and am increasing in strength every day. We have a very fine camping ground within 10 to 15 rods of a good spring of water and 1 and 1/2 miles from town. Some of us are in town every day. We have purchased meat for our outfit, consisting in part of 750 pounds of side meat smoked, 1000 lbs. of navy (hard) bread, 600 lbs of flour, 200 lbs. coffee, 100 lbs. rice, 300 lbs. of sugar, 8 bushels of dried apples and peaches in equal proportions, 12 lbs. of tea, salt and pepper, etc. etc, well supplied for nine months after we leave Independence.

Shombre: Morning fine but cool, temperature 49. We have concluded to move to another camping ground. Send for some of our (8) mules which are 2 1/2 miles south of town. Some not broke, had a great time getting them harnessed...and pull together.... visit neighbours and was asked for tea. They had corn bread and sugar in their tea....

April 8, Sunday

Johnston: Our Pittsburgh friends dined with us to-day. At dusk a rain storm began, accompanied by loud peals of thunder and vivid lightning, continuing after night.

Gray: In Camp No 1 Indep+

Price: Arrived at Independence the 8th. This night we lay under a shed in the suburbs of town.

Shombre: Morning damp and cool, temperature 44. All in tolerable health. Had a good breakfast. Called on a neighbour camp and found them to be Hoosiers from Indiana.

April 9, Monday

Johnston: "As rain continued falling we ate breakfast in the tent. When the rain ceased a heavy wind swept the prairies, increasing to a gale towards night."

Gray: In Camp No 1 Indep+

Price: This evening we rented a house of Mr. Joseph Stone at one dollar per month.

Good health enjoyed among us in Independence. Here F. Price had a spell of sickness, cold settled on the lungs and measles connected with cold. Here we found the virtue was in cold water, its effects producing good health immediately.

Independence is situated in a rolling and fertile country containing about 1600 inhabitants. Articles of provisions and clothing about as cheap as in Ohio. Business is conducted on quite a busy scale here. Cattle, horses and mules somewhat cheaper than in Ohio or Sty. Louis. Plenty to be bought.

Shombre: Morning cloudy, temperature 44. Took a ramble. Came up a heavy rain, took shelter under a large projecting rock. Took out my journal and wrote proceedings of the previous day...myself and 2 others took a net and went fishing but bad fishers....returned to camp 3 PM tired and hungry, nothing cooked and no woman to cook....The wind is very high from the northwest makes our tents quiver..

April 10, Tuesday

Johnston: "....spent the day hunting in the woods, and on our return to camp we brought nine squirrels as a result of the tramp."

Gray: In Camp No 1 Indep +

Price: In Independence

Shombre: Morning cool & frosty, temperature 38. ...We are preparing to move to our tenting place west of Independence 2 miles on our road thither. I called Col. Gilpin...he showed me his maps and routes....Reached new camp, 3 o'clock P M, a beautiful place in a wood pasture on a nice elevation



sparsely covered with beautiful forest trees and covered with grass close to a fine spring... the sweet songs of native tribes of feathered songsters which was cheering...

April 11, Wednesday

Johnston: "One large cat-fish was the sum of to-day's fishing in the Big Blue River....decided the mess should be performed by each one in turn, for a month at a time...arranged by drawing cuts."

Gray: In Camp No 1 Indep+

Price: In Independence

Shombre: Morning fine, temperature 43. Elected officers.

April 12, Thursday

Johnston: "Rain fell steadily throughout the day, so we clung closely to the shelter of the tent; occupying our time mostly by reading and writing."

Gray: In Camp No 1 Indep+

Price: In Independence

Shombre: Morning pleasant but cloudy. Our smiths go to work to fix waggons. Helped ketch a wild mule, got on to ride. It was my first adventure on a jack ass & it was amusing. Took out through the woods and away we went.....Saw a chief of Caw, a sqaw, 2 popas and some others. Chief in full costume looked savage.... Rains all afternoon, stay in tent and write...

Johnson, John/McCoy Brothers - "We moved last Friday (April 12th) to present encampment, a very fine one, 8 miles from Independence, on the Santa Fe Road from which place I am now writing. Here water, wood, corn and wild grass are abundant, which furnishes us the opportunity to try our hand at cooking... Stevenson and I have made us a good mattress and pilow to be laid in our wagon (filled with corn husks and over a light board of pine.

Kelly, William -

### April 13, Friday

Johnston: "Scouring the country around for a mule which strayed off, gave us employment for the day; but without success."

Gray: In Camp No 1 Indep+

Price: In Independence

Shombre: Night cold and windy, temperature 29. Morning very cold, ice 1/2 inch thick...Committee appointed to have waggon altered by wagon maker and carpenter....some breaking and branding mules...3 PM went to town and invited to address the emigrants....

Johnson, John / McCoy Brothers- 8 miles out

Brown, John E., MEMOIRS OF A FORTY-NINER, By his daughter, Mrs. Katie E. Blood, Parkersburg, W.Va., (1907)

(Evidently on a boat) page 6 -

April 13, Friday - "We passed Jefferson, the capital of Missouri... We also passed Boonville, the intermediate point of land route to Independence....The nights are cool, and on Friday night it was very cold.

### April 14, Saturday

Johnston: "Ice fully half an inch in thickness was found in our water bucket this morning....At nine o'clock the neighboring camps of Paul and Johnston struck their tents, to begin the march westward....becoming impatient at our delay, they concluded to proceed without us....Whilst at dinner, a blinding snow storm came up, lasting an hour...McBride...in search of the lost mule, returned this evening, having found it tied to a fence about a mile east of Independence."

Gray: In Camp No 1 Indep+, Ice 3/4 of an inch in thickness

Price: In Independence

Shombre: Night cold and windy, temperature 29. Very cold, ice 1/2 inch thick, ground froze....Name on mail list but they could not find the letter...This is the day of the parade....the orator has declined....they want me to fill his place...marched to the public square in a considerable snow storm....



Johnson, John / McCoy Brothers- 8 miles out

Brown: (p. 6) (On boat) On Saturday afternoon, the piston of the engine broke, which caused a delay for repairs of three hours.

April 15, Sunday

Johnston: Captain Maury and Stewart, our fellow travelers on the steamer Sacramento, and several others of their friends from Louisville, dined with us to-day, after which they rode out to the Big Blue River, intending to form a camp there. Several of our party accompanied them to assist in the selection of a site. On our way we stopped at the camp of Colonel Russell, and were hospitably entertained by the gentleman and others. Whilst there, Mr. Edwin Bryant, who had been at the river selecting ground for his company, rode up, and with him and Dr. Clinton I returned to camp, where I found Messrs. Mitchell and Kennedy, who were paying us a visit.

Johnson, John / Mc Coy Brothers 8 miles out

Gray: In Camp No 1 Indep+

Price: In Independence

Last night was very cold, at 1/2 past 5 the thermometer stood at 24. There was a hard freeze and the wind blew from the northeast steady for 36 hours ...After breakfast five of us concluded to go to West Port, 10 miles west. Crossed the Blue(river) about 3 miles west, country broken, not so good ...Stayed there all night...

Brown: (on boat) p. 6

April 15, Sunday, Just one month since I left home, and how many things have I seen....Alas! my face is turned to the West, and Fate, sad Fate pushes me along....We passed a beautiful prairie this morning, which was dotted here and there with a little shanty, the home of a western pioneer.

Swain, William, THE WORLD RUSHED IN, THE CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH EXPERIENCE, J.S. Holliday, Simon & Schuster, (New York), Chapter III, The Great California Caravan, page 111:

By the third week of April, emigrant scouts reported to their company captains that the prairie to the west looked dry enough for the wagons to pass and the grass high enough for the teams to graze....Most wagons had packed



and unpacked their wagons; with few exceptions they loaded them too heavily - extra axletrees and wheels, sheet-iron stoves, anvils, chains, personal clothing, boxes of medicines, shovels, pickaxes and gold-washing machines; and quantities of foodstuffs - barrels of flour, sacks of sugar, salt cornmeal, beans, coffee, salt pork and saleratus. Under the traffic of hundreds of wagons pulled by six and even eight oxen or mules, the trails became deeply rutted, in some places quagmires. Axles cracked, wheel rims tore loose from spokes, wagons sank deep in the mud to be pulled out and were abandoned. Within a few miles of the camps and westward for many miles, companies .... lightened their loads .... news of this booty ... attracted townsfolk from St. Joseph and Independence ... to take what the Californians had purchased only a few weeks before.

April 16, Monday

Johnston: "An Illinois company, which has been encamped in our neighborhood, to-day took up its line of march. We had a visit this morning from a number of Kansas Indians - "Kaws....among them was a chief, two squaws, a roach (young warrior)." (This is a long story..the essence..the Indians had documents of various types, many having no relation to the Indian....They asked for sugar but was given a cup of molasses into which they, one by one, dipped their fingers, much satisfied....they were also given some bread and tobacco..had to be driven away at the point of a musket.)

Gray: In Camp No 1 Indep+

Price: In Independence

Shombre: Morning cool. Expected to get a bed last night but was disappointed. Got a hard bunk but slept tolerable well. Bought some moccasins..Stopped at the Blue to fish but not a nibble....Heard the Centerville company had arrived...Got some cornmeal and had cornbread for supper...

Brown: April 16, On Monday, we went at a good rate and passed a small town named Brownsville.

Johnson, John McCoy Brothers Monday, April 16th, (Letter to wife): We have packed our wagons and have only a few things to get. We have also divided our teams.... By an individual who has just visited our camp we learn that our guide for our train requires us to be in readiness on Monday morning, the 30th. He leaves his residence on Sunday, and calls that his starting point but will not reach our encampment before Monday....WE MOVED LAST FRIDAY TO PRESENT ENCAMPMENT, A VERY FINE ONE, 8 MILES



FROM INDEPENDENCE ON THE SANTA FE ROAD from which I am now writing. Here water, wood, corn and wild grass are abundant, which furnishes us an opportunity of trying our hand at cooking....Our wagons are now all packed and our mules apportioned to each wagon.... Instead of a Buffalo robe, which will spoil by the way if it gets wet, Stevenson and myself have made a good mattress and pillow to be laid in our wagon; the load only fills it to within six inches of the top of the box. Over this load we laid a light board of pine and on this floor we spread our mattress, which with our blankets makes a first rate bed. I made the mattress and prepared and filled it with corn husks in one day and laid on it that night for the first time.

\*

(Cannot find date when Kelly arrived in Independence, date when he purchased animals, when Easter Monday is, and why I have April 16 as date he was at Rice's ????)

Kelly, William J.P., went to the residence of Col. Ralston to purchase our mules, who had several hundred, principally of Mexican breed, out of which we made a selection of forty-five, being six for each team, and three spares for each wagon as relief animals. We also purchased three riding horses for each mess, making fifteen, and a bell-mare to keep the mules together...they form a peculiar attachment to a bell-mare, which they will follow through fire and water.

Easter Monday we went to Col. Ralston's for the animals..this is the point where our troubles began...It was tolerably late before we got our five teams hitched up and ready for the road; but we got into line, a finely mounted and accoutred little troop, a man on each side of every wagon, in the plain but handsome uniform, we looked rather gay....WE TRAVELED EIGHT MILES, taking up our quarters near Colonel Russell's rendezvous, who was to lead a large company across the plains that season ...Next morning we proceeded over twelve miles of magnificent country to the Line...

April 17, Tuesday

Johnston: "The tide of emigration westward increases, and almost hourly we have fresh evidences of this, as wagon after wagon, some drawn by oxen and others by mules, roll past. Our proposed guide, Jim Stewart....sends us occasional greetings, always telling us to be in no haste. He says that parties starting thus early are making woeful mistakes, as there is no grass to sustain their animals,...Daily we witness the breaking in of mules by emigrants who go past, and thus have a foretaste of what is in store for us. Plunging, kicking, throwing off the uncomfortable gear, lying down, rolling and running off, with heels striking in every direction....All hands are at work to-day laying in a fresh supply of wood for fires...I also made leathern cases for my pistol and hunting knife, which are to be carried on a belt around my waist in the regular



backwoods style. With a wooden stocking I covered my tin canteen, as in this way when carrying water on the march it can be kept cool, even when exposed to the rays of the broiling sun...lastly I cast bullets for my fire-arms, moulding enough for a seven-year's war."

"Colonel Russell's large train began its march to-day."

Johnson, John / Mc Coy Brothers 8 miles out

Gray: In Camp No 1 Indep+ (Total of 13 days in Camp No 1)

Price: In Independence

Shombre: Morning cold, temperature 36. Some of our boys got up 18 mules & went to the river after the Richmond boys. H Hanna & myself went to town and then took a walk on the Santa Fe road. We bot some gingerbread and went along the street with it under our arm eating it. Returned to camp 12 noon. Fried some corn fritters they were good to!...Our boys broke one of their wagons....

Brown: April 17, Tuesday, we arrived at Independence, landing in the morning, and we were the whole day in getting out our goods, and making camp on the brink of the river. Cooking supper seemed quite a difficult matter and night found us very tired. I spent a very uncomfortable night, but one watch was kept as thieves are the only expected visitors.

April 18, Wednesday

Johnston: "Among the many teams that rolled past to-day were those of our friends Brockway, McKibben, etc. A large number of government wagons from Santa Fe went by. These will probably be sold in Independence".....our party returning from Mr. Irwin's brought with them eight mules and three horses.....one of the mules strayed off...

"A lot of oxen, about sixty in number, were driven past us to-day; some were yoked together, but the greater part having no restraint, seemed wild and uncontrollable, fighting and goring each other, pulling down fences, and cutting antics generally. We obtained quarters for the mules in Mr. Rice's barnyard."

Johnson, John / McCoy Brothers 8 miles out

Gray: In Camp No 2, 8 miles out from Independence  
(not sure when he came here)

Price: In Independence



Josselyn: Arrived at Independence Landing at day light and spent the day in getting up the bluff. Camped just up the hill. Day fine.

Shombre: Rain, most cold, thermometer 27. After breakfast had great time dividing mules among the messes. I got a good team of 6 mules....One mess broke the tongue of their wagon....I am to speak in town on T. D. Wood....try to fix up a little but look hard. Sure to appear before the ladies...

Brown: p. 6

April 18,..On Wednesday, we moved our camp one-half a mile beyond the town by the Santa Fe road. Our waggon looked very trim and the mules in fine condition. My horse has been feeling fine for the long rest. I went into Independence in the afternoon and found it a great place for business. It is the trading-place of the Mexicans and hunters, who meet here every Spring and exchange their wares, and purchase goods. The town is full of waggon shops and from these is done a great business, and I am told much money is made. The town has a population of fifteen hundred people. Independence is to be our starting point and we will spend a week in preparing to make our journey.... We bought eight mules at Sixty dollars each and were pleased with our bargain. The mules were broke to harness every day, affording us much amusement as on-lookers. They are very stubborn ( p. 7) and it seems a question which two will pull together. Finally they mate, but not so for four. Each waggon is drawn by four mules. The forward ones kick the back couple and cause great commotion. This delay is annoying.

The waggon have been overhauled and flour bought and packed. We await here until Wednesday.

April 19, Thursday

Johnston: ...."We also entertained members of Col. Russell's company.. Mr. McBride astonished us at dinner by setting before us a pot of apple dumplings..."

Johnson, John / Mc Coy Brothers 8 miles out

Gray: In Camp No 2, 8 miles out from Independence

Price: In Independence

Josselyn: Spent the day in packing our goods. Weather fine.

Shombre: Morning fine but cold and frosty....went to town expecting a letter and waited for the mail. Two hours and got no letter. Left sad and



disappointed. Over anxious to hear from home....Returned to camp, some breaking mules, some in tents, some by fires, some gunning. Music in Richmond camp, it was sweet & soothing.

Elijah Bryan Farnham: Landed at Independence Mo it is a town of about 1500 inhabitants. it is rich and fine country about here. we were here and in the neighbourhood until the 8 of May making preparation for our long journey.

April 20, Friday

Johnston: "The passing of emigrant trains westward bound is become so common an occurrence each day as to be no longer a novelty, and to note the fact would be both wearisome and monotonous. About forty wagons, mostly drawn by oxen, went past us in the course of a few hours to-day, while large numbers going other roads, of course escape observation.

Our neighbors in general gathered around our camp fire to-night, and with song and story until near mid-night we passed the hours cheerily."

Johnson, John / Mc Coy Brothers 8 miles out

Gray: In Camp No 2, 8 miles out from Independence

Josselyn: In camp all day putting things in order. Weather fine.

Price: April 20th moved into the country 2 miles south of Independence. Having bought our mules a day or two prior to this time we were preparing our harness, feeding up our mules &c, the number of mules bought were 5, but finding they were insufficient I bought a pony of the Indians on Kansas River.

Shombre: Morning lovely, temperature 53. After breakfast lassoed & hitched up our mules and had some fun, drove them to town. There was an Odd Fellows procession. A great throng in town. The ladies look fine. Had the pleasure of an introduction to and spent a few hours with some of them whom I found to be intelligent. Interesting as much so as in any country, the society, the business, the country, the soil. All inviting in this section.

April 21, Saturday

Johnston: "Camp business took me to Independence this morning. Noise and confusion reigned supreme there. Traders, trappers and emigrants filled the streets and stores. All were in a hurry, jostling one another and impatient to get through with their business. The salesman were overworked, but good nature aided them in preserving their tempers. Mules and oxen strove for the right of way.



"Who" and "haw" resounded on every side; while the loud cracking of ox goads, squeaking wheels and rattling chains, mingled with oaths of teamsters.

Our guide, Jim Stewart, for the first time visited our camp, staying over night."

Johnson, John / Mc Coy Brothers 8 miles out

Gray: In Camp No 2, 8 miles out from Independence

Josselyn: Left camp and went into Independence and found it to be quite a business place. Fine weather.

Shombre: Morning lovely, temperature 50. men oiling harns, fixing boxes in waggons & our last man arrived. Putney, of Sager, brought a lot of letters. Great time over them. Poor me got none. Centerville boys returned with their mules....in evening went to town, bot some sugar.

April 22, Sunday

Johnston: "A large company of Mexican traders from Santa Fe went by. Some of their wagons were drawn by as many as ten mules."

Gray: In Camp No 2, 8 miles out from Independence

Josselyn: Stayed in camp all day. Weather fine.

Shombre: Morning lovely, temperature 56. Good breakfast, good wash, shave & prepared to go to church. Fixed the best I could but wished for my better cloaths....Thot of home and friends. How I would love to see them.

Johnson, John / Mc Coy Bros. Independence, April 22, 1849,  
My Dear Wife: We have had very cold and unpleasant weather for five or six days past which has very much retarded the grass growth and consequently we shall not leave tomorrow.... We find here prevailing among all of the hunters and pilots the same superstitious notion that Sunday is the most favorable day to leave port or start on a long and adventurous voyage or journey. Hence nearly all of them are bent on starting on Sunday....I believe the Sandusky City Company, left Monday the 16inst....We are yet in Camp, nearly in readiness to depart....

April 23, Monday

Johnston: "A hard rain began falling in the night, continuing through most of the day,...."

Johnson, John / Mc Coy Bros 8 miles out

Gray: In Camp No 2, 8 miles out from Independence, wrote home

Josselyn: Rain nearly all day which prevented us from being in no hurry put it off until the next day.

Shombre: Morning raining, temperature 59. Got in the rain, fire out of wood, rain pouring down, poor prospect for breakfast, had to make bread in the rain. Two of our men brought some fish home....

Johnson, John Independence, Missouri, April 23, 1849, My Dear Wife: I had just come on horseback EIGHT MILES FROM THE COUNTRY where we are camped, through the rain to mail the enclosed letter, written yesterday, and to get one from you as I told our Company I looked for a letter this morning and not before....Since my last writing I believe not a case of Cholera or anything that resembles it has occurred this side of the landing (3 miles from Independence on the river; we are 8 MILES OUT OF INDEPENDENCE AND SOUTHWEST).

April 24, Tuesday

Johnston: "Among the tide of emigrants to-day was a large company from Cincinnati, well equipped. They wore uniforms similar to those of Uncle Sam's soldiers. Their wagon beds were made of iron, light and portable, and it is claimed for them that they will be found specially suited for crossing rivers, not requiring caulking to make them water-tight.

"A letter from ex-Governor Boggs, of Missouri,...advises certain of his relatives to drop everything and start for the land of gold.

"Three more mules, a recent purchase, were brought to camp this evening.

"We are completely surrounded by camps of emigrants, and to-night another large party from Steubenville has been added."

Johnson, John 8 miles out

Gray: In Camp No 2, 8 miles out from Independence



Josselyn: Left camp at 8 o'clock and drove 6 miles and camped three miles S W of Independence. Fine day.

Shombre: Morning lovely. Nature begins to appear, more like spring. Was appointed to buy some flour.....went to P O, looked all over it but turned in sorrow away being disappointed..returned to camp to find all buisy preparing to move a few miles to another camp on the Santa Fe road. 2 of us went fishing...

#### April 25, Wednesday

Johnson, John / Mc Coy Bros. 8 miles out

Gray: In Camp No 2, 8 miles out from Independence

Josselyn: Left camp at 8 1/2 o'clock and drove to Mr. Rice's (6 Miles) where corn was plenty at 1.25 per bll

Shombre: Morning sweet and lovely. All preparing for another camp....We travelled 8 miles south of Independence over a fine country. Entered the first prairie 4 miles south of Independence. The K (camp) lay southwest and (road) very crooked. The country well improved, good farms, beautiful and fertile. Pitched tents in a grove, a lay camp already there....

#### April 26, Thursday

Johnston: "Edwin Bryant's company with one hundred and fifty pack-mules went past us this morning all looking in fine trim.

(Bryant- Daniel): "On the date of Edwin Bryant's departure there was gathered in Independence approximately 1,500 emigrants and the number was swelled hourly by new arrivals. Specific attention was focused on the Bryant's party which numbered forty-eight men. It was provided with eleven tents, one wagon, an India rubber boat capable of rescuing and bearing the wagon body, a medicine chest, hospital stores and other necessities. Each man had three mules for his own use, with three extra to each mess of four, and was armed with a rifle, a pair of holster and a pair of belt pistols. They carried provisions enough to sustain them for 120 days."

Johnson, John / Mc Coy Bros. 8 miles out

Gray: In Camp No 2, 8 miles out from Independence

Josselyn: Drove back 1 mile to a smith shop and got our tyre cut. Fine day.

Shombre: Temperature 26, morning fine. Got my thermometer broke, very sorry for it. 4 of our mules got out last night and strayed off. Some of our men are out looking for them, all in different camps. One man sent to find a camping ground, are preparing for the journey. Mr. Bryant of St. F. went past with his train of pack mules, 180 in number, and 80 men. ..Fine country south; the country northwest is more broken, timber scarce; off to the southwest the prary (prairie) extends as far as the eye can see. The boys had some good singing last night.

#### April 27, Friday

Johnston: "We spent several hours shelling corn in Mr. Rice's barn; a laborious operation. The mode was this: the edge of a shovel was so placed so as to rest upon, and project over the side of a wooden box, while the sheller, sitting astride the handle, drew the ear of corn athwart the shovel's edge; the loosened grains falling into the box.

"..we harnessed the mules and made a trial trip. The animals were refractory, and not at all pleased with the restraint put upon them. Everyone seemed to be suddenly possessed of a dozen legs, and each one of these so set as to be able to strike simultaneously to all strike in all directions. They turned themselves constantly to all points of the compass, and had their inner and outer sides been reversed, I would scarce think such changes would have excited surprise.....

"Our march will begin tomorrow. To-day ends the sixth week of camp life, attended much of the time with great discomfort,...

Johnson, John /Mc Coy Bros. 8 miles out

Gray: In Camp No 2, 8 miles out from Independence

Josselyn: In camp all day working at wagons, fixing ox tongue, etc. Fine day.

Price: 27th April moved out to Mr. Rice's 8 miles from Independence. Here Capt. McCaddon of the Zanesville Company died with the cholera.

In laying in provisions we determined in nothing but the real substantial of life. Our provisions consisted of 600 lbs. flour, 440 lbs. bacon, 227 lbs. crackers, 25 lbs. rice, 20 lbs. sugar, 18 lbs. coffee, 1 lb. sassafras tea, 85 lbs. salt for selves and mules.



Shombre: Morning lovely. A meeting was called for the purpose of taking into consideration the propriety of sending home for flour...concluded to send back to town to buy some more articles..One of our men, Sanders, is sick. Heard of 2 of our mules. Took a walk over the prairie. The road on both sides lined with tents & waggons, men, women, children....6 oclock P M our mules all found, glad of it. The Santafee road is one continual throng of emigrants. Going to a stream cold (called) blue (Blue river), 8 miles on.

April 28, Saturday

Johnston:" The greeting of a bright sun this morning seemed to augur well for the commencement of a lovely day....The corn shelled yesterday had to be put into sacks, weighed , and placed in the wagons. Then the harnessing began, with experiences about similar to yesterday. Next we struck our tent, and wrapping the canvas around the poles, flung all into the wagon; then strapping the mess chest to the tail-board, and hanging the camp kettle below, we finally cracked whips and started

"The two wagons of Captain Pye's mess took the lead, getting off at ten o'clock. We got started about an hour later. Our mules bothered us greatly. When only a few rods from camp, they came to a dead halt in an insignificant ravine. Neither mild persuasion nor severe drubbing for a while had the effect of making them pull together. But when our patience had fairly oozed out, when our strength was about gone, and it seemed as if no more exertion could be put forth, they started off themselves, and walked quietly on as if nothing had happened.....

"Fresh troubles, constantly occurring, gave us little chance to observe the beauties of nature. but one flower in the vast plain did not fail to attract notice. Upon an eight-by-ten shanty on the roadside, which some enterprising individual had erected, and in letters as large as the house itself, was chalked the one word: "WHISKY!"

"At three o'clock we reached Blue River, a stream about ten yards wide, and three feet deep at the crossing. Its current was swift, with a gravelly bottom. On either side of it was a belt of timber, and quite a large number of emigrants were encamped in these woods....We had much difficulty in crossing the Blue River, for its banks were deep and precipitous. Our mules refused to enter the water.... the neighboring camp a yoke of oxen, which pulled the wagons high up on dry land with wonderful ease. While fastening a chain from the ox-yoke to the axle-tree of our wagon, I became thoroughly drenched and chilled to the innermost bones.



"At six o'clock we reached the frontier line of Missouri, which marks the separation between civilized and uncivilized life..."

Johnson, John / Mc Coy Bros. 8 miles out

Gray: In Camp No 2, 8 miles out from Independence

Josselyn: Hitched up and drove 8 miles to Blue River; before leaving Rice's we bought corn enough to feed our teams for 6 to 7 days thinking the grass would be good enough for grazing by the time the corn was out. Weather fine.

Shombree: Cool. Meeting called....to sell 4 young mules...2 broke ones ...2 of our men bot to ride through

Reid, Bernard: Bernard Reid and companion, Brewster, left St. Louis....On the 28th of April we embarked on a steamer (Sacramento ?) for Independence, reaching it on the fourth day) (Footnote indicates it was probably, May 4). (p. 26) On the steamer I had made the acquaintance of Dr. Sylvanus M. E. Goheen, a prominent physician from Belleville, Illinois, and his brother, Rev. Davis Goheen, of the same place, who were going on our train (Pioneer Train) to California.... 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 belonged to the Pioneer Train. On learning that we did he said he had 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. (p. 27) (...we nursed throughout the night, when he died)....Dr. Goheen came to ask us to assist in caring for his brother, the minister (they did, "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 had been engaged as guide for our train, was lying sick with cholera....."We went to his room and remained about two hours, when he died."....In the death of Black Harris our train suffered an irreparable loss, as his intimate knowledge of the regions we were to (p.28) traverse and his experience in surmounting such difficulties as we were sure to encounter, would have been of incalculable value to us.

At our camp ( referring to page 27, "preparatory to our going into camp about eight miles out on the prairie" ) 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 and equipped, but on the 8th of May ....



April 29, Sunday

Gray: In Camp No 2, 8 miles out from Independence  
Wrote home

Josselyn: Remained at Blue River all day. Weather fine.

Price: 29th very cool weather, rainy nearly every day. 8 miles from Independence the country is beautifully interspersed with prairie and timber. well watered with fine springs. Limestone soil.

Shombree: Morning cool and dull....11 oclock 2 of the K (camp) boys came to camp with the melancholy news of the death of Thos Hannah. I immediately went up and found them in deep dejection....

Johnson, John /McCoy Bros ENCAMPMENT EIGHT MILES S.E.  
INDEPENDENCE MISSOURI, April 29, 1849, My Dear Wife: ....  
Gov. Boggs, the ex-governor of Missouri, says there are no poor in California and need not be, that the poorest count their gold by the thousands and he advises his two sons in business here to quit all however much they are making and come to California; speaks of his two little boys picking up 20 pounds of gold (about \$4000) in a few days, etc. .... A correspondent of the St. Louis Republican was here getting a list of all the Companies and the names of each person going to California and we paid for and directed the number of his papers containing the list to be sent to us at L. Sandusky. .... The paper published in Independence is doing the same thing.

We have just heard the Sandusky City Company have gone 50 miles beyond the Kansas river and stopped for want of grass and had to send back to Kansas river for corn for their animals...they have lost five of their mules, leaving them only eleven head of mules and horses.

April 30, Monday

Gray: In Camp No 2, 8 miles out from Independence  
Wrote home

Josselyn: Left camp at 9 o'clock and drove to Lone Elm 16 miles. Weather fine. Good roads but water scarce.

Price: At Rice's, 8 miles from Independence

Shombree: Sat up part of the night with the corpse. It was very stormy and cold all night....helped to dig grave...10 oclock he was placed in the coffin and conveyed by the (herse-horse), followed by 40 of his friends and neighbours with sad hearts.....

Johnson, John/McCoy Monday Morning, April 30, 1849 (Letter to his wife); ... So date our departure, May 2nd, 1849. It is now settled that tomorrow morning we break up our present encampment and move up to the main road in readiness to fall in the next morning with the mule train that will overtake us.

Murrell, George McKinley - Camped 8 miles from Independence, bought supplies (?), James O. Hill died here

## MAY 1849

May 1, Tuesday

Gray: Started in earnest at 10 O'clock, a beautiful day, but very cold at sunrise, road good, with exception of a few steep hills & some sloughs, two of our 8 wagons broke their tongues, detain+ 2 hours to repair them and the whole afternoon ( this other) . Stop+ this other side the Big Blue, had dinner & then moved forward 3 miles & encamped; Slept in the common stock wagon, on the anvils & spades & this wagon the common property of the C+ received no attention particular has no curtains & the storm consequently beat in, wetting my companion & myself pretty well, awoke with lame back & a pain in the side. The name of this place is call+ "Point of the Woods" - water scarce & little wood. Distance third day 12 miles Making from Independence 20 miles

Price: At Rice's, 8 miles from Independence

Murrell, George 8 miles out

Buffum, Joseph Curtis At Rice's, bought corn

Prichet, John - Had left from Wayne County, Kentucky; by boat to Independence with a company of 57 men and 10 wagons powered by mules and horses. Came to Rice's, 8 miles from Independence, started out on the Santa Fe road. (When did they join the Hagerstown Co.? )



Shombree: Slept last night with H. Hannah at Mr. Hills. A bed felt natural and I slept well. That that would be the last feather bed I would get soon...For the 1st day of May it was the coldest I ever felt. We were very busy in getting off. The Centerville boys had some trouble with their asses but they and the Richmond boys arrived at our camp in safety. The road is thronged with emigrants moving on every day from every state.

Johnson, John /McCoy IN CAMP 8 MILES S.W. OF INDEPENDENCE 9 A.M., May 1st, 1849, My Dear Wife: .... According to appointment the rest of our travelling company arrived here tonight and encamped with us ready for a start in the morning .... we are not anxious to start in the morning as the weather has been very cold and the grass has not grown sufficient yet; but we have brought enough corn to take with us to last ten days when we expect the grass will answer. It is not so cold tonight and we are having a warm rain...

May 2, Wednesday

Buffum, Joseph Curtis, left Rice encampment

Prichet, John - at Rice farm

Price: At Rice's, 8 miles from Independence

Shombree: We had a fine rain last night with much thunder & lightning. Begins to look like spring. Our sick men better. We took our asses out to graze on the prairie. It was poor grazing. Some of our men are making hobbles to hobble our asses. We bot 6 yoke of oxen to drive along, at \$30 per yoke. They may do us for beef after we get there. Some of our men are in rather poor spirits, others fine.

Brown: (p. 7)

May 2nd, Wednesday. All was in readiness to start. I rode my horse most of the day, but took my turn at the four-in-hand late in the afternoon, driving six miles to Rice's where corn was bought. It was a most beautiful and fertile country. For miles around as far as the eye can reach over the plains, is a waving mass of green, dotted here and there with ploughed fields and cottages, - a beautiful sight for man to behold.

Johnson, John/ McCoy May 2nd, 1849 WE are hitching up to leave. Boren goes to the Post Office. If I get your letter by tomorrow's mail it will be acknowledged.

In haste, Your Loving Husband, and Adieu (L.E.B.)

Murrell George 8 miles out



May 3, Thursday

Prichet, John, left Rice farm

Price: At Rice's, 8 miles from Independence

Brown, at Rice's

Shombree: Appearance of rain. All bustle & hurry to strike our tents for another camp. All move tolerable well. We travelled 12 miles southwest over a rolling prairie on a crooked road. Crost (Crossed) blue R. (Blue River). It winds through a rich narrow valley covered with tolerable good timber. We also crost a rocky creek, broad flat rocks form its bed. Plenty good stone all along. The country well improved. 10 oclock the most sudden hard rain I ever saw. It came down in torrents....The Centerville boys stopped to get something done. One of their horses got away with gears on and ran all over the prairie....finally got him...pitched our tents just over the (B? S? ) line to the west. Appears an eternal expanse of prairie.

Brown: (p 7)

May 3, Thursday We remained in our comfortable camp all day Thursday, doing little jobs and quite enjoying the camp life. We took turns caring for the stock and cooking, and at night each unroll their blankets, the waggons are placed on each side of the fire, and the mules are tied together, three feet apart. Only one man keeps a four-hour watch at night.

We expected to start on Friday (May 4), but awoke to find our camp almost deluged in water by the night's rain. The rain continued and rendered the cooking of breakfast and duties most difficult and disagreeable.

We settled with the Treasurer, and found that each man's share is \$186.66, the whole outfit costing \$1120.00.

Murrell, George 8 miles out

May 4, Friday

Brown, John, at Rice's

Price: At Rice's, 8 miles from Independence

Shombree: The rain fell last night in torrents. Just poured down. Our little fire was out, the wood was wet, and raining, things gloomy for the first morning out of the states. We have now passed beyond the bounds of civilization. There is a dogery close to our camp which has been full all day of any taking the last spree. Some of our boys are tote..and all day I went back to E.B's C. All in good spirits. people are going on all in the rain

Murrell, George 8 miles out



May 5, Saturday

Brown, John E., broke camp and drove three miles..then three miles to a beautiful spring....

Price: 5th May left Rice's and travelled 4 miles then encamped till Monday morning

Shombree: Heavy mist, looks dreary. Some of our men went back to help.....over some bad hills. 11 o'clock they arrive. We all string out making quite a show; 10 wagons, 57 men, 81 horses, mules, oxen, 3 dogs. With this train we bid farewell to civilization and our native states.....

Brown: (p.7)

May 5, On Saturday, I went with Taylor to town and bought several things. Received several letters....I became unwell, caused from eating a very hearty dinner in town. The premonitory symptoms of cholera made their appearance, so Dr. Stone gave me a great quantity of Laudamum, but without good results.

Murrell, George 8 miles out

May 6, Sunday

Murrell, George 8 miles out

Price: 4 miles from Rice's

C. Dulaney: Charles Dulaney, letter to his brother Robert L. Dulaney, Camp Bryant, Jackson County, Missouri, May 6, 1849

"Bryant and company looked upon the adventure of crossing the plains as a lark, and before they left Missouri they gave a Kentucky barbecue and asked their Missouri neighbors to share it with them. Women of the community were invited as special guests. A brief program was organized, and it was expected that one of the ladies would make a sweet little speech, and Calhoun Benham would respond. The Kentuckians, adaptable though they were on such occasions, were not prepared for the turn of events. Charles Dulany of Louisville described for his brother Robert in Clarke County, Illinois, the fiasco. A "gentle dame," he said, arose and delivered verbatim Daniel Webster's Bunker Hill Address. He thought it about as appropriate for the occasion as would be a discussion of the emancipation question with an Arab Bedouin....It was replied to by Calhoun Benham,...This was too much, the party immediately got down to the business of eating and drinking. Both Kentuckians and Missourians got as drunk as lords and were unable to dance or accompany the women home....Dulaney observed that "The most

unpleasant feature in our day's festivity was that Benham & others got to fighting, tho, fortunately none were injured, thus ended this eventful day...

"With aching heads from drinking and fighting at their farewell party on departing civilization, Bryant started up the California Trail toward the South Platte..."

May 7, Monday

Murrell, George 8 miles out

Price: Travelled 8 miles, encamped near Big Blue

\*\* Route unknown..John O. Boggs, Lewis Jones, John Bartleson, Major Hickman, "crossed the plains with ox teams (Possibly with Hudspeth train)"

Brown: (p. 7)

I felt better on Monday, but much alarmed, as there have been six deaths in surrounding camps from cholera. The dread has surely taken a lodgment, and all thoughts are turned to checking it in camps.

May 8, Tuesday

Murrell, George 8 miles out

Price: Travelled 7 or 8 miles, King Bolt crossed into Territory at 4 P.M.

Brown (p 7) The next day (after Monday) I felt better, so we broke camp and drove three miles ( ) where we waited until Taylor drove up with the other wagons. I am unable to do anything, but the Doctor thinks I will get well with due care, but I feel very weak.

When Taylor came, we drove three miles to a beautiful spring where we set camp, and we remained until all was ready to start. These many delays are annoying. (Cook says this was Hart Grove).

Reid: (p. 30) - (Had stayed several days in camp in preparations).... but on the 8th of May orders were given to strike tents and begin to move. (May 4 or 5 to 8)

Our wagons were new and well-built, and were brought from St. Louis by steamer, hauled out to camp and arranged as a "corral" or oval enclosure, with a roped gap or gate at one end, into which the mules could be driven for protection in case of an 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 on 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 they 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 by six mules, and some of the heavier ones by eight. The passenger wagons were to be 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 = 66 + 15 + 21 + 18 = 120)

....(p 31) 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 the driver. I remember only these four: Prairie Bell, Tempest, Albatross and "Have You Saw the Elephant? ...

There were in the corral about 300 mules, which, after hitching up the requisite number for the wagons, left a herd of about sixty to be driven loose as a reserve to draw from ... But the proprietors, unfortunately for us, instead of buying mules "best adapted for the trip" as their prospectus, 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 in the soft prairie, and the unseasoned mules soon began to show shoulder galls and exhaustion....

(p. 32) No pen can adequately describe our start.... 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. To initiate them, one by one, into their new degree, by the ceremonial of being bridled and harnessed, proved to be a "riding the goat" of the roughest kind. The mules had not been consulted about it when brought from their native heath, Kentucky, and they soon made manifest that they had not given their consent to the ceremony. I do not mean to imply that when the time came they were "kickers" in the literal sense. They had so many other ways of objecting to the process.... 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 sent 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 of 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 would pounce on to 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 harnessed ready for hitching to a wagon....From the carriage tops and other points of vantage the passengers looked down for hours upon the exciting contest ...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 Moses 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, - ... till at last completely conquered, the mule stopped in its mad career, and submitted to be bridled and harnessed without further protest.

At last enough to man all wagons were harnessed. Tents were struck and loaded up, and all was ready for the move. one by one the wagons started, but not without dissent on the part of the mules ... So much time was consumed in the circus performances that the sun was setting in the west before the last wagon had left camp; and at the same time the leading wagon in the procession wheeled into its place in a new corral to form our camp for the night - only one mile from our starting point.

\*\*\*\*Note by Roberta Bonnewitz: This same story may be found in *Overland to California with the Pioneer Line, The Gold Rush Diary of Bernard J. Reid*, edited by Mary McDougall Gordon, Second Printing (1987) Illini Books, University of Illinois, published by agreement with Stanford University, with contains valuable footnotes intermingling the accounts of other passengers which bolster, confirm or deny the events that were recorded.

E. B. Farnham: May the 8th This morning our train of 8 waggons on the long continuous journey before us. We had 29 yoke of cattle in all. And our loads was 2500 to a waggon consisting of provisions for all of us besides 2 years clothing for each. This morning saw a company that had buried a husband last night burying his wife this morning. Took the old Santee Fe road.Saw but one tree in todays travil. pasture here is good and there is a large range of it. made 12 miles and kamped. (Cook - Russell's 1846 camp and Camp Bryant in 1849.)



May 9, Wednesday

Murrell, George 8 miles out. preparing to leave in the morning

Price: Travelled 6 miles. Today we spent in unpacking and repacking; finding our load too heavy and we commenced selling and throwing out unnecessaries.

Reid: (p. 34) Next morning (Wednesday, about 9 miles from Independence) the performance of yesterday was repeated on a milder scale, and so on from day to day until a better understanding between man and mule came to exist,

...

Our larder was supplied at first with a good variety of provisions for the journey, such as sea biscuit, flour, pinole ( a sweetened meal of parched corn), bacon in the shape of hams, shoulders and "side-meat," salt fish, cheese, beans, coffee, sugar, tea, salt, molasses, dried apples and dried peaches. Each carriage had a cooking and table service on a plain scale, stored in a box attached to the rear of the wagon bed. Every fifth day, army fashion, the commissary dealt out to each mess its allotment of rations according to the number of mouths to be fed, and the passengers took turns in cooking or arranged for that among themselves. ...

(page 35) I kept no diary until May 24th, but a week earlier I made the following brief notes of that day's events, evidently intending to enter them into my diary ...

Woolley, Lell Hawley (Turner-Allen Pioneer Train) 40 wagons, 150 mules, 150 passengers

Farnham: This morning at 7 O C started again over the prairie. during the day found one good spring and found rain water several times in pools. Went 14 miles camped in sight of timber

May 10 - Thursday

Murrell, George Left Rice campground

Price: Travelled 6 mi. Moderate distance; passed Lone Elm

Brown: (p 7) Brown has Friday, May 10th

On Friday, May 10th, we struck camp and drove three miles to Little Blue (Big Blue), where we again sat down to wait until Saturday for Means and Wilson. I rode about two miles. I bought a Comanche pony for \$60.00 in order that one might ride her.

## May 11 - Friday

Brown: (p. 7) ? May 11, Saturday

On Saturday, Taylor and Harris went to Independence in the morning to purchase articles and get our letters, as this was the last chance of receiving any until we reach the mine. I sent by Taylor many letters, and he returned in the evening with a number from home.

The Buncome Co., the Carson Co., and the Wilson Co., passed this evening, and we followed them in the early morning.

## May 12 - Saturday

Brown: (p. 7) Sunday, May 12

We rose very early this morning and found Taylor very sick. We regret breaking camp and following train, while Taylor is in this condition. Reynolds, of Buncombe, was also taken ill with cholera, and we fear he is very ill.

May 13 - Sunday

May 14 - Monday

Brown (p 7-Tuesday, May 14th

Tuesday, May 14th. We made an early start in a very heavy rainstorm, and when out a mile, the tongue of my waggon was broken through by the stubbornness of the mules, and we were compelled to unhitch and make a new tongue, but caught up with the camp at night. Taylor is very ill with the cholera. I began to feel very unwell in the evening so Sunday we remained in camp as so many were ill. The Kentucky Company joined us.

May 15 - Tuesday

May 16 - Wednesday

Brown (p 8) Wednesday, May 16th we crossed the line of the U. States. We drove 12 miles to a very good camp and were joined by Schaffer of North Carolina. We passed a new made grave of an emigrant. The country is beautiful and green.

Swain: (Page 111) On May 16 the Wolverine Rangers broke camp, their oxen slowly pulling the eighteen wagons onto the rutted trail crowded with other companies' wagons, headed for Independence, where the Santa Fe Trail led southwest across the sweeping prairies. Swain and his sixty-one companions knew from rumors and various reports from St. Joseph that they (page 114) were making a late start - they did not know the lead companies had passed Fort Kearny (315 miles to the northwest) on May 7 and 8. (Page 118)



May 16, 1849. This morning we started for Independence - breakfast over and all ready by eight o'clock. We traveled smoothly into town where we stopped about three hours while the company all went shopping. With our wagons regularly numbered, we made a grand appearance. (Using axle grease, the members had printed "Wolverine Rangers, Mess No. -" on each wagon cover. In other companies "the wagon covers are nearly all painted with the names of owners, and their residences. many of them have various mottoes and devices ..." such as Wild Yankee, Rough and Ready, Live Hoosier, Never Say Die, Patience and Perseverance, and Have You Seen the Elephant? "Others have drawings - a sprawling eagle or a huge elephant, a tall giraffe, a rampant lion, or a stately ox, done in charcoal or black paint with an artistic skill that is bold if not accurate.")

I went to the post office and got a letter from George, in which he advised me to come home if we had the prospect of having cholera on the plains.....

We left Independence about noon on the Santa Fe road, which for four miles is very hilly. The road, wet at this time, is very bad.

We crossed bad bridges and a short pitch without an accident and (page 119) came on to the most pleasant locations for farms that I ever saw. The country is very undulating ... grand in its conceptions and gives light countenances to all our mess who are commenting upon its grandeur.

We encamped eight miles from Independence.

#### May 17 - Thursday

Brown: (p 7) On Thursday we passed the Pioneer line but at dinner they passed us. One of the mules got loose and I had a fine ride in catching him. We drove to the forks of the road (one goes to Santa Fe and the other (right) to Oregon). We camped near an Indian hut (deserted)....

Swain: (page 119) This morning the camp was tardy in its movements, wishing to give the teams a chance to eat ... We traveled through a country similar to that of yesterday. The road is getting hard, and if it were not for the ups and downs it would be good. Just at sunset we passed a deep, thickly wooded hollow and then raised a long hill, where we encamped just on the border of the plains and just on the line of the Indian Territory....