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Roberta

JULY 1995 SUPPLEMENT
TO
ARCHIBALD RICE'S PLANTATION
CAMPGROUND, 8 MILES FROM INDEPENDENCE
ON THE
SANTA FE, CALIFORNIA, OREGON PIONEER TRAILS
IN THE SPRING OF 1849

Since the first compilation made by Roberta L. Bonnewitz, January, 1995, Mr. Walter Cook, a local historian has continued to find diaries and references to persons, outfits and companies camping at the Rice Plantation. In all, he has located thirteen references to travelers stopping here.

In this supplement, sources will be mentioned from 1845, 1847 and several more from the 1849 Gold Rush period.

The entry in "The Diary of Jacob R. Snyder," of Monday, ¹⁸⁴⁵ 12th May was brief: "Left Independence 12th. The party all in high spirits. Three wagons. Encamped 8 miles out and about 2 o'clock in morning were obliged to get into one wagon on account of rain. Tent not finished." (1)

In the letter of Chester Ingersoll, (2) ¹⁸⁴⁷ "Independence (Missouri) May 1, 1847, he stated he was about 8 miles from Independence letting his animals rest where the grass was sufficient to feed them for two days. The land around Independence was uneven and timbered but there were crops of corn, hemp and wheat. Coming five miles west he had entered a rolling prairie with a scarcity of water and wood.

The additional diaries, of 1849, were continuous stories of the amusing, trying and sometimes deadly ritual of breaking in the stubborn, little Spanish mules. One dealer, in Independence, had a pen in which "professionals" drove the animals and, in frustrating times, used the technique of biting the mule in the ear to subdue him.

John Brown, on May 2nd (1849), drove six miles to Rice's where corn was bought. He thought the plains with "waving masses of green, dotted here and there with ploughed fields and cottages" to be a beautiful sight to behold. (3)

In May, 1849, Bernard J. Reid (4) and Lell Hawley Wooley (5), members of Turner, Allen and Co's Pioneer Line, (reports differ in numbers), reported there were forty wagons, one hundred and fifty mules, and about one hundred and fifty passengers had spent some time eight miles out and watched the taming of the stubborn mules which were wild and unbroken.

In May, on Easter Monday, William Kelly and his twenty-four companions, dressed in plain but handsome uniforms, marched by the five wagons, drawn by teams of six animals, travelled eight miles to camp near Colonel Russell's rendezvous. (6) William Johnston, in his diary, mentioned Russell's encampment near his campsite on the Rice plantation. (7)

Ten persons were in the McCoy-Johnson group who wrote many letters, April 10 to May 2, from their encampment 8 miles southwest of Independence. As many other emigrants, they often rode back to Independence to send and receive letters knowing this would be their last opportunity to hear from their families for many months. (8)

William Swain, a member of the Wolverine Rangers, started from Independence on May 16, 1849. Each of the eighteen wagons tops were painted with names of owners and residences. There were also various mottoes and pictures. The first four miles out of Independence were described as hilly, bad road, bad bridges and then came the opening into the grand prairie. That night they encamped eight miles from Independence. The next day they travelled west to the "vast open prairie." (9)

Archibald Rice died October 14, 1849. To this date, no records have been found of persons camping here in later years. Perhaps the division of his estate, changing of ownership of land, lack of corn crops sent the travellers one to two miles further down the trail.

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