

spider skillet, this was set in a bed of hot coals and then covered with more coals. A real feast when they were browned to perfection. Cornbread was fixed the same way. A huge iron pot hung over the campfire filled with vegetables and some kind of meat. This supplied enough food to satisfy the hungry crowd.

After Supper the men cared for the horses and checked for any needed repairs for the coming day. Soon all were fast asleep. Children slept in the wagons and adults in tents.

The young men of the group rode on horseback or walked and went on ahead of the wagons, looking for game which was plentiful, such as rabbits, squirrels, quail or other game available. This was delicious when prepared over an open fire and we always had fresh meat. Some times we bought bacon for ten cents a pound from people along the way.

We found after a few days, we could travel 24 or 25 miles per day without tiring the horses too much. The feed boxes were fastened on the back of the wagons and they were fed grain in them. At night the horses were turned loose to graze along the trails and throughout the entire trip, they seldom strayed more than a few yards from the wagons and come morning, they were always near, eagerly awaiting their grain and they seemed anxious to get into harness for more travel.

After a few days we reached St. Louis and the wide Mississippi. The bridge which, I believe, is called Eads Bridge, was a wonder to behold and we children were made to ride in the wagons when we crossed it. There had been an accident on the bridge, a man hauling manure with a one horse wagon, had the misfortune to have his horse struck and killed by a street car. We had to wait until it was removed which took the remainder of the day to get across the city. Then we made camp for the night. Our first one hundred miles had been made without any trouble and we had almost nine hundred more to go (as the crow flies).

Our journey across the state of Missouri took us through the beautiful Ozark Mountains, valleys of breathtaking beauty, storms, flooded streams and unbridged rivers. Some of the rivers we forded - others we crossed on ferries hung from large cables stretched from shore to shore. Men with long poles, poled our belongings across. These ferries were long enough for two wagons and teams. Yes, these were the good old days, but don't get me wrong. I like it better the way we have it today.

The farther west we went the more narrow the roads. They became only trails when we reached Indian Territory.

Evening in our camp was always a gay time, the mountain boys and girls would come for miles around when a campfire was sighted, bringing fiddles, banjos, and guitars, or anything they had to make music with. Then we all joined in and sang songs until late in the evening. In those days people were not afraid of strangers and enjoyed visiting and talking.

One evening when preparing to make camp, a negro stranger rode hurriedly into camp and warned the menfolk not to stay on the East side of the river but to get across as quickly as we could to higher ground. Off into the river the teams waded, the water belly deep to horses, the footing very treacherous and the water swift. The horses sensed the danger and slowly felt their footing and at last we were safe on the other side. We moved on up the mountain side to make camp where we could be safe in event of rain or flash flood. While mother was fixing breakfast the rain came, water rushing down the mountain side. Mother's campfire was washed out from under the old spider skillet full of biscuits and kids were soaked as well as featherbeds and everything else. The river we had crossed the night before, had become a raging torrent throughout the valley. It took days to get everything dried out.

We children had walked almost every mile, there was so much to see and the wagons were too tame for us. We explored side trails and roadsides, chased rabbits and, of all things, Tarantula spiders. When we turned and ran, they chased us, but not one bite did we get. We were lucky as we were all barefooted too.

One, never to be forgotten, episode was when Mr. Meeks drove over a huge ant hill and turned his wagon over, breaking dishes, spilling flour, sugar and all the needed supplies. We all laughed until our sides almost split, except Mrs. Meeks, who didn't