

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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'Overland Mail Days'

The President of the United States has issued a Proclamation for the Overland Mail with a greeting from the nation. It is a valiant tribute to the sturdy pioneers of a century ago who engineered the longest overland mail route in the world and operated it successfully for three years.

The Governors of seven Overland Mail States - Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California - have proclaimed "Overland Mail Days." Beginning at Tipton, Mo., yesterday, Sept. 16, and ending in San Francisco, Oct. 10, the festive dates will coincide with the dates a century ago when the first westbound stage crossed the state concerned.

Dwight D. Eisenhower was born at a little Overland Mail town down in Texas, just over the Red River. When the Centennial Caravan crosses the Red River, it will pause at the town of Denison, to render a pioneer's salute to the President who was born there.

In the Caravan there will be a highway chapel, a highway post office, an anvil unit, stagecoach and four state units. The anvil unit will consist of Butterfield's covered wagon and traveling blacksmith shop and a museum operated by "desert-tanned Clampers of California's E Clampus Vitus aristocracy," with Clamper A. Ferris in charge, firing Anvil Salutes all the way down the 2,800-mile trail.

In the state units California will have an exhibit of Overland Mail books and authors, sponsored by the California committee. The chapel unit is a 28-foot trailer, outfitted as a frontier religious exhibit. It will be Caravan headquarters for the 24-day trek across the "desert trail." On Sundays, before leaving the overnight Corrals at Durant, Fort Stockton and Gila Bend, the day and the week will be opened by an Overland Chapel Service. Chaplain of the expedition is Parson Charles F. Arnold of Tulsa, Okla.

Two weeks after the completion of the first Butterfield Mail journeys between St. Louis and San Francisco, Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, New York, Oct. 23, 1858, carried an illustrated record of "one of the greatest and most important achievements of the age," the Overland Route to California.

He said some profound things in this editorial that we might well sit up and take note of today, ". . . with the fact staring the world in the face that a wagon route created by private enterprise has pioneered the overland route to California, the public will demand a more rapid and more certain means of transit to . . . the Pacific."

"All of the great enterprises which bring wealth and honor to our country are originated by individuals, and the government lags on behind. . .

"Along this great Pacific route will spring up stations and villages and . . . locations will rise up to an importance but little dreamed of . . . except by a few shrewd speculators. . ."

"The indomitable perseverance and wonderful sagacity of our people are justly subjects of national pride. No understanding is so difficult, no project so hopeless, but men are found ready to rush in and prove to the world that nothing is impossible to the strong will and irrepressible energy of free men."

The Butterfield Overland Mailbag, published in Vol. I, No. 5, this piece of news: "in 1941 the first unit of the Highway Postal Service was placed in commission on a run between San Francisco and Pacific Grove. James F. Cooper was made Honorary Co-clerk in charge of the initial run."