

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

September 29, 1958

### **Overland Mail Bag**

The Butterfield Overland Mail Bag should be going through Texas today with two corral stops, Dell City and El Paso; on Sept. 29 and 30. The run from Tipton, Mo., the centennial anniversary of the first Overland Mail, will take 24 days to reach San Francisco, a distance of 2,800 miles, with mail collections at 198 post offices en route.

While the Butterfield Stages traveled day and night, with stops only for meals and change of teams, the Caravan will of necessity stop overnight at the completion of each day's run. The day's stage will approximate that of the first stagecoach. In California, where the roads were good, the Caravan on occasion will make over 200 miles a day. In Texas, where they were very bad indeed the Caravan will make less than 50 miles on its slowest day.

The Caravan will make up of units from various states and cities. Headquarters Unit, a mobile chapel, the "Little Brown Church of the Butterfield Trail," is from Tulsa, Okla. The Concord Stage and a four-horse hitch belong to John D. Frizzell of Oklahoma City. Hugh Park, Country Editor of Van Buren, Ark., Press-Argus, will sponsor a pioneer printshop, and publish posters and other material en route.

From Huntington Park, Calif., will come the Covered Wagon Blacksmith Shop and Butterfield Museum, entered, by Al Ferris, a Clamper of Platrix Chapter. From San Diego will go the California exhibit of Overland Mail Books and Authors, sponsored by the California Committee and the class in San Diego History. Among other exhibits will be a showing of "Westward the Overland Mail" . . . historic pictures of the Butterfield Trail, highway pioneering, and the story of the U. S. Mail.

While the Caravan Staff expects to be hosted at most of the corral towns en route, and other cities where they present program material, Ben Dixon, chairman of the California committee, announces that the organization is not taking any chances. Standard fare on the old Butterfield Trail was flapjacks, bacon, and beans. The Centennial Caravan will have a chuck wagon in its makeup, equipped with a plentiful supply of flapjacks, bacon and beans for emergency purposes.

In San Francisco, when the Caravan arrives the ceremony will revolve about the issue of a 4-cent Overland Mail Commemorative stamp. The city will don festive attire, the Western Cover Society will hold a big convention, philatelists from all over the country will storm the gates, and Postmaster John F. Fixa will have his staff selling and cancelling and cacheting first day covers from early morning until night closing time for all the stamp window.

First day ceremonies will be held in the rotunda of the Civic Center at 11 a. m. when the Caravan arrives from Missouri. It will leave San Jose at 7 o'clock and roll up Highway 101 collecting philatelic mail at 13 post offices in three hours. It will enter San Francisco on El Camino Real at 10:30, and under police and sheriff's escort, will roll up Market street to the Civic Center just in time for the ceremony.

A Concord Coach, Pawnee Bill's old Wild West Circus Overland Mail Coach, with a four-horse team, coming all the way from Missouri by trailer will unload and carry the bag of centennial mail from St. Louis to the entrance. There Clerk William D. Corell of the Highway Post Office, will turn it over to Asst. Postmaster General George Siedle, who in turn will hand it over to San Francisco's postmaster.

And the Highway Unit? It is the old Highway Post office No. 1, called back into service after retirement from a total postal run of nearly one million miles. And something else: This old veteran of the highway service made its first run in California. And not only in California, but on Highway 101, between San Francisco and Pacific Grove, in 1941.