

Elizabeth Falby Lutes

A detailed narrative dictated to Lida Kimsey Rule in 1923 by Grandma Lutes about th exodus from Georiga to their ultimate settlement in Platte, Missouri.

AKAKVwoman originally shared this on 25 Feb 2012

"scangrandmalutes." Ancestry <https://www.ancestry.com/mediaui-viewer/tree/35263064/person/18779705207/media/e5cc3258-0bdc-4c4a-abc9-a41e8f544d04?indiv=try&h&db>. Accessed 5 Aug. 2023.

da G. Kule (W. C. Kule) 1871
Smithville, Mo.

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— Kansas City
University

Wagon Train From Georgia.

The sun was just coming up over the ridge, to the east that Monday morning in ^{the month of} September, 1854. A group of people were standing together under the spreading poplar and magnolia trees, out in front of the old home. They were singing an old hymn with sad, faltering voices. A passage of scripture had been read and prayers offered for the caravan about to embark, on their long journey to the west coast.

The ^(Joseph T.) Dules and Bailey families were leaving Sugar Valley, Georgia, where they had lived happily, having had many pleasant associations with their friends and neighbors there. There had, of course, been many hardships too but they were shared also, which made them seem easier to bear. All of this group

(The original copy)
Summer 1949
Grandma; Elizabeth Kinney
Tall, this to me in 1928.

were staunch Methodists feeling their convictions deeply. Religion had always been to them the very staff of life.

This breaking away from homes and all familiar things and places was not easy. All of the Lutes and Bailey children had been born herein this quiet little southern valley. The two families had been such close neighbors, and for so long, that they seemed like one big happy family.

Joe, the oldest of the ^{eight} ~~same~~ Lutes children, had, ^{in March} ~~about~~ ~~before~~ ^{before} ~~joined~~ ^{wagon train} joined a caravan going west to the Oregon Country. He wanted an opportunity to seek his fortune in the far west and also thought he could not live the rest of his life where he had suffered an unhappy love affair. He had established a mountain home high up above the Columbia River ^{near Skamokawa, Wash.} where the

climate and soil made fruit growing a promising occupation. He was happy there and thought the country held many opportunities for anyone.

Mother Lutes had grieved constantly for her son since he had gone west, thinking she might never see him again. She had never been a strong woman. The decision to join him was finally made after the Baileys agreed to go too. The Bailey's goal, however, was the California mining country. In order to take only their most treasured and necessary possessions, they had to provide three huge covered wagons, and two carry-alls (vehicles somewhat like carriages) drawn by plodding oxen. There were also two ponies to be ridden by the scouts ahead of the rest of the party.

So, this morning, after the

last notes of the hymn—"God Be with You till We Meet Again" died away, and tearful good-byes were said, Mother and Father Lutes and the ~~eight~~^{seven} children, and Mother and Father Bailey and their four children began their long, hard journey through wilderness, across rivers and plains, and over mountains, to say nothing of passing through the territory of savage Indian tribes who were unfriendly to the white men. The adults realized to some extent what lay ahead.

The women and girls climbed to places in the carry-alls, while the men and boys were to take turns at driving the oxen. To ^{the} covered wagons and going ahead on the ponies, scouting the trail for the wagons to go.

The country became more and more mountainous as they went on northwest. The route was by

way of Lookout Mountain, which lay southwest of Chattanooga, just over the state boundary in Tennessee. People, traveling up or down the Tennessee River used to always land at the site of Chattanooga in order to avoid the dangerous rapids in the stream. The name, Chattanooga is an Indian name meaning "rock pointing in the air", and refers to Lookout Mountain. From the top of which the members of this train were able to see into seven different states. To do so is quite possible when the day is clear. The Cumberland Plateau was almost entirely covered with jagged timber, mostly cedar, and oak. The going was hard at this point. The slopes were very steep, and consisted of loose shale rock in places. This made the trail very dangerous.

The party did not hurry because they felt it was much easier and wiser to take a little more time. The

animals would be much better off and so would they.

The trail, for the most part, was well cleared but here and there it was sometimes necessary to chop down brush or second growth timber that was in the way of the wagons.

Occasionally, stops of a day or two were made if an unusually inviting spot was found where there was a clear stream or a good spring. Such stops gave everyone and the teams rest, and the children had more fun too than usual. From the start they had felt the journey was a thrilling adventure and were filled with excitement and curiosity and had been anxious to start.

Every available chance, they picked grapes or berries or just went exploring, sometimes almost getting lost.

But there was work to be done too.

The women and girls cooked and washed. Lizzie, (which was short for Elizabeth) the oldest girl in the Lutes family always helped the women with these chores, while Billy, the oldest of the Bailey children helped with the teams and wagons and also with hunting game.

The clothes were washed at the stream by rubbing them across the rocks, then spread out on bushes to dry.

Often, when game was especially plentiful, deer, wild turkeys, grouse, and prairie chickens were brought in and cooked. A bountiful feast followed and what was left was taken along next day. When short stops were made there was never time for cooking such things that required long cooking, nor was there much time for hunting.

Because these families were deeply religious and had never

failed to keep the Sabbath in their lives, the train always made camp every Saturday evening about four o'clock. They rested and worshiped on Sunday, giving thanks and singing praises to God for looking after them thus far and asking for guidance and help for the rest of the journey.

Maybe several other trains would pass them, going ahead on Sunday, but these good people did not believe they lost anything by doing as they did, but rather felt that much was gained. They always boasted that before that week had ended, — they had always overtaken the trains that had passed them on Sunday.

The trail was an almost continuous climb most of the way after leaving Sugar Valley, through most of Tennessee, then across Kentucky and the corner of Illinois it became easier because

it was mostly downhill leading them to the great Father of Waters.

Most of the travelers in those days crossed the Mississippi River at Cape Girardeau by ferry-boat, for the bridge now at St. Louis, had not been built at that time.

The sight of that great river drove fear into the women and children's hearts. They had never seen anybody of water to compare with it. The crossing of the Tennessee ^{Ohio} River had been more simple than this would be. The boys, on the ponies had gone ahead into the river. The oxen followed with the wagons, which floated behind them.

At Cape Girardeau, the wagons and carry-alls were drawn onto the giant raft-like ferry-boats by laying planks down for a gang-plank. Then, the wheels had to be removed so the wagons would stay in place after the crossing started.

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Next, the oxen were unyoked, then led, with the ponies, by the men and boys on to the other ferry-boat. It seemed a long time before the other shore on the Missouri side was reached. There was a unanimous feeling of relief — the worst of their long journey was over. The mighty river had been crossed in safety.

They turned northwestward again. When they had gone about one hundred miles the trail began to rise again. They were getting into the Ozark foothills, a most beautiful section. Leaves had been touched by the artist, Jack Frost, until they made a riot of color that seemed almost miraculous.

Nights were almost cold now, a warning that winter was not far off. Their goal now was Platte City, Missouri where ^{Uncle Philip Lutes} Father Lutes had a brother living. He was a cabinet-maker, by trade, and

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Before long, they saw the plains ahead of them. They were leaving the Ozarks behind. Everyone was becoming "travel weary" by this time. But, the fact that now it was just a little more than two hundred miles to Platte City kept their spirits up. The warnings of coming winter were growing stronger each day. Often they longed for shelter from the late fall rains that had begun to fall rather frequently.

They passed through Warrensburg; then continued

on northwestward, crossing the Big Muddy, the Missouri River, at Westport Landing, so called because it was a landing place for the steamboats. This site was the later Kansas City, Missouri.

^{the} ^{Missouri} The ferry took them across to the opposite shore at Parkville, in the same manner that they had crossed the Mississippi at Cape Girardeau, only the distance was not nearly so great.

They were now only about eighteen or twenty miles from Platte City. ^{at Westport Landing} ^{Philip & Aunt Pauline} ^{and} ^{the} ^{time} As it was getting late in the afternoon, camp was made, on the spot, and the last days journey was started bright and early the next morning.

This was just the day before Thanksgiving, when the tired wagon train pulled into Platte City. They were overjoyed to see

familiar faces again. The Platte City Luteses were just as glad to see their old friends and relation from Georgia, where they had once lived.

It proved to be a real, honest-to-goodness Thanksgiving Day for all. They were happy to be here, and gave thanks to God for his guidance and protection all the way from Sugar Valley, Georgia.

Christmas, too, was spent together, with everyone having a good time. Soon, the days were getting colder, - true to what Mother Lutes would say "When the days begin to lengthen, the cold begins to strengthen."

Then it was that the children and young folk enjoyed sleighing and skating parties, usually followed by corn-popping and taffy-pulls. The older folk often

met together for prayer-meeting.

When the thaws began in February, thoughts turned to going on West. They had been well cared for, had enjoyed their stay in Platte City, but now were a little impatient to get to their final destination. Preparations were made when a letter from Joe arrived. He told them that reports were that the trek westward was becoming more hazardous every day because of the fact that the Indians were so enraged by the vast numbers of white people settling in their lands and killing off the game on which they were dependent for their food, that they were attacking ^{almost} every ^{wagon train} caravan possible along the way.

The trip held many other dangers, too great, he feared for his loved ones to attempt. He had wanted them to come, but he

feared for their safety, knowing too that his mother was not strong — she might not live to reach her son, and that none of them felt they could bear.

After reading the letter and hearing rumors from other reliable sources, the Lutes family became convinced that it might not be wise for them to continue on to Oregon.

The Bailey boy, Billy had always claimed Lizzie Lutes as his "girl" even when they were small children back in Georgia. She was the oldest girl in her family and he was the oldest boy in his. He loved her dearly and pled with her many times on the trip from Georgia to Platte City and during the winter there, to stay in California and marry him instead of going on to Oregon. She had never given him her

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answer.

Now, it seemed the crisis was at hand. The Baileys were going on despite the fact that the Luteses had decided to stay in Platte County and buy a homestead. Gold still loved the Baileys on.

Lizzie didn't want to hurt Billy but she finally told him that the answer would have to be, "No". She told him also that she liked him and respected him but did not love him enough to leave all of her people and go with him. She was quite sure and did hope that he would find someone deserving his love someday.

There were sad farewells again - this time, in Missouri, and old friends parted as they had in Georgia, the past September.

It was Monday morning in March, 1855. The sun was just peeping over the hill. Scripture

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was read, prayers offered, and their favorite hymn sung - "God Be with You Till We Meet Again". There were tears in every eye and every voice as they sang together for the last time.

Two covered wagons and one carry - all rolled westward after goodbyes were said. They would land at Fort Leavenworth on the Kansas side after crossing the Missouri once more. From there on the trail would indeed be a long lonely one unless they could join with other wagons going their way. This is what they hoped to do. Even then, the journey would be dangerous enough. However their strength lay in numbers, they felt sure.

The Bailey family were never heard of again. It was thought they must have been killed by Indians, or met with some other sort of foul play on the

way. They felt sure they would have sent some word to them at Platte City or to the folk back in Sugar Valley, Georgia.

[The Lutes family in this story was my paternal grandmother's family. The oldest girl of the family, ^{Elizabeth} "Lizzie", was my grandmother. Mother and Father Lutes were my great-grandmother and great-grandfather. [I suppose the reason I happen to be living in Missouri today, is because "Lizzie" Lutes stayed, married and reared her family here ^{in Platte County} instead of going to California as Billy Bailey wanted her to].

Missouri

Footnote

[The part about the Indians is a bit fictitious, however, I have heard Grandma tell how her mother's people had lived neighbors to some Cherokees in N. Carolina. They traded clothes to the Indians for venison hams occasionally, and one day a young Indian squaw did take a fancy to one of the babies and even did offer to trade].

Lida Elizabeth Kinsey, Rule