

FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION IN THOUSAND SPRINGS VALLEY

Prepared by Don Buck

Gold rushers took the birth date of the republic, barely 75 years old, very seriously and a time for solemn celebration. Where at all possible, overlanders would stop for the day, prepare a special dinner with whatever they had left, accompanied by fiddle playing, dancing, firing of guns, and importantly, orations commemorating the sacred occasion. One such celebration was recorded by 49er Amasa Morgan, a member of the Banner Company, while camping in Thousand Springs Valley. For this "Great National Day," Morgan, whose spelling and punctuation were not unusual for his time, wrote a particularly descriptive account, rendered with feeling and sincerity.

"This morning we ware called early and soon was ready and on our way we wished to come to better grass & water that we might be able to celebrate the Day after traveling [to] hot spring valley 16 miles we came to a comfortable place our mules was soon out to grass – our Tents up and all went to preparing to celibrate this Great National Day = Col Jarrod's Train and another small train from Illinois haveing joined us we each one I believe consider that we are Brothers although some are formerly from France, England, Ireland, Scotland Canidy but now bound together by the Bonds of our national Union and that we are the children of one common Father = these and the thrilling thoughts that find their way in to our bosoms give us a union of feelling that is not always found under more favorable circumstances – haveing had a good Short Cake for supper Mr Morrison of Col Jarrods train was called upon to deliver an oration all haveing quenched their thirst with soda water we all sat down in the grass to listen to our speaker – this was a scene worth beholding – surrounded by the wild woodman with mountains all around us – a little band of adventurous – away from our nation our Families and friends here on this little consecrate spot are about to Celibrate the birth day of our Country's Independence – while the speaker dwelt upon the Glorious deeds of our fore Fathers all was silent except here and thare a sob from someone whose over warmth had betraida a tear He spoke up on the History of our country and warning all to be true to the declarration wich has with stood so many changes of nations wether it is because thare is such a wild scenery around us that makes the subject seem so holy – or that we are far away from our country and friends I cannot say – but thare we sat with grass higher than our heads everyone with their eyes on the speaker = the picture is worthy of the artists Pencil – the wildness of the country our mules feeding in the small valley the wagons near the trail with the Tents pitched and our speaker only standing to break the silence This being over and a campfire prepared and while the mountain Echoed back the music of the violin and while the dance was going on in the wildness of the scene and its excitement we forgot temporally all things Else"

[Note: The Morgan diary was recently donated to the Bancroft Library by a direct descendent of Amasa Morgan, great-granddaughter Janice Morgan of San Jose. This transcription is faithful to the original diary.]