

embark from each state, travel along the well-known trails (Santa Fe Trail, Oregon Trail, Appalachian Trail, etc.) of their ancestors, and converge together at the Valley Forge National Historic Park to celebrate on July 4, 1976. Pennsylvania bought and gave a wagon to each state/state governor to use as the official state wagon and underwrote the project. Private wagons were welcome to join. Encyclopedia Britannica produced scrolls to be carried from town to town by the wagons, where residents could sign vowing their “rededication to the principles of the Declaration of Independence.”

Azusa, California residents Larry (AKA Gabbie) and Pauline Asmus had become actively involved in their suburban community’s Bicentennial programs. While attending California’s State Bicentennial Conference, Mr. Asmus volunteered to be a part of the Wagon Train. When California’s interest, and funding, waned in the months leading up to the trip, the Asmus family, opted to take over, and Mr. Asmus became the Wagon Train Manager. Seeing the trip as a once-in-a-lifetime event, Mr. and Mrs. Asmus took their youngest children (Renee, Christina, and Paul; eldest daughter Ramona did not go on the trip) out of school, and set out on the Santa Fe Trail January 1, 1976 from Pasadena.

Well-planned and scheduled, the Santa Fe Trail Wagon Train traveled around 20 miles per day, and stopped at predetermined destinations where they were welcomed with (and provided) entertainment and parades provided by their host cities/towns. As they moved through each state along their path, more wagons (including official state wagons) joined. On the 183rd day of their journey, the wagon trains united at Valley Forge, and prepared for the celebration the following day, which included a visit from President Gerald R. Ford. (For a semi-complete list of each stop, see the appendix attached at the end of this finding aid.)

Following the trip, and their return to Azusa, the Asmus family found that their vision of life had so altered that they could not readjust to suburbia. Leaving their home in Azusa, the family relocated to a small logging community 50 miles north of Lake Tahoe, Westwood, California.

The Larry and Pauline Asmus papers document their participation in the Santa Fe Trail Wagon Train through articles written by Mrs. Asmus, and accounts written by friends and other participants in the Wagon Train. A significant portion of this

collection is dedicated to clippings from local newspapers en route to Valley Forge, which Library staff made preservation copies of, and remained faithful to Mrs. Asmus' arrangement. Souvenirs collected by the Asmus family over the course of the trip are also included, along with three hardcover books (two of local areas visited by the Train; one a yearbook of the Wagon Train). In addition, correspondence (official and unofficial), programs/pamphlets, and unused scrolls and certificates complete this collection.

Some donated items have been transferred to other areas of the Library, as well as to the Ford Museum in Grand Rapids. Photographs, along with a video, were placed in the Library's audiovisual holdings. A complete inventory of transferred audiovisual materials, together with about 72 photocopied snapshots including Mrs. Asmus' accounts, can be found in the "Transferred to AV" folder in this collection. and placed in the "Audiovisual Materials" folder of this collection. A listing, with descriptions, of three dimensional souvenirs and artifacts transferred to the Museum can be found in the "Transferred to Museum" folder of this collection.

Related Materials (February 2004)

Related open materials on the Bicentennial Wagon Train and the celebration that took place July Fourth in Valley Forge, PA, can be found in: the files of Milton E. Mitler (White House Coordinator of Bicentennial Matters); files and/or papers of Robert T. Hartmann (Counselor to the President); files of Gerald L. Warren and Margita E. White (White House Communications Staff); files of John O. Marsh (Counselor to the President); files of Gwen A. Anderson (Assistant to White House Counselors Dean Burch and Robert Hartmann); Presidential Speeches and Statements (Reading Copies); files of Paul Theis and Robert Orben (Editorial and Speechwriting Staff); files of Sheila R. Weidenfeld (First Lady's Staff); and files of Eric Rosenberger and Douglass Blaser (White House Press Secretary's Staff).

Related open materials on the Bicentennial can be found especially in: files of Andre Buckles and Stephen McConahey (Domestic Counsel Staff); and White House Central Files categories FG 75 American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, FG 370 American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, GI 3 Gifts to President (includes Bicentennial) and PR 8-1 American Bicentennial Celebration.

Last Modified Date

2024-04-09

Audiovisual Materials, 1975-1977.

Primarily photographs documenting the Asmus family's participation on the Bicentennial Wagon Train, especially along the Santa Fe Trail. The "Scrapbook" subseries of photographs were removed from the Asmus family's scrapbook, which still contains textual material such as newspaper clippings and itineraries from the trip. Some artifacts were removed from the scrapbook and transferred to the Ford Presidential Museum. Also included are a collection of lithographs of presidential portraits, and a VHS tape of home video taken on the Bicentennial Wagon Train.

Audiovisual Materials, 1975-1977.

Status	Title
OPEN	View container list for this series

Subject File, 1975-1977.

(Boxes 1-4, 1.6 linear feet)

Memoranda, maps, schedules, souvenirs, and correspondence collected by Larry and Pauline Asmus before, during, and following their participation on the Bicentennial Wagon Train Pilgrimage to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania in 1976. A sizable portion of this series is made up of clippings and periodicals from a variety of news sources, especially local newspapers en route.

Arranged alphabetically by subject and chronologically thereunder.

Box 1 - Subject File

Status	Title
OPEN	Appalachian Wagon Train
OPEN	Awards & Proclamations
OPEN	Clippings - Before the Trip
OPEN	Clippings - January
OPEN	Clippings - February
OPEN	Clippings - March
OPEN	Clippings - April (1)-(2)
OPEN	Clippings - May (1)-(2)

Box 2 - Subject File

Status	Title
OPEN	Clippings - June (1)-(2)
OPEN	Clippings - July
OPEN	Clippings - After the Trip
OPEN	Correspondence
OPEN	Event Planning Workbooks/Guide/Pamphlet
OPEN	Maps & Schedules (1)-(2)
OPEN	Official Letters
OPEN	Oregon Trail Wagon Train
OPEN	Periodicals - "Bicentennial Times"

Box 3 - Subject File

Status	Title
OPEN	Periodicals - "The California Bicentennial Quarterly"
OPEN	Periodicals - "Equestrian Trails"
OPEN	Periodicals - Reproductions
OPEN	Periodicals - "Stable Gossip"
OPEN	Periodicals - "Vo-Tech's Tongues"
OPEN	Personal Writings - "Across the Nation in a Covered Wagon 1975 - 1976" by Grace "Bunny" Ritchie
OPEN	Personal Writings - "Chapter 1: Decisions, Decisions!!!" by Mary Lee
OPEN	Personal Writings - "Chapter 2: We the Unwilling...Now Attempt the Impossible..." by Mary Lee
OPEN	Personal Writings - "The Pinecone Press"
OPEN	Programs/Pamphlets (1)-(2)
OPEN	Scrolls/Certificates/Public Notices
OPEN	Souvenir Calendar
OPEN	Souvenirs
OPEN	Souvenirs - Booklets
OPEN	Souvenirs - Booklets (Arizona)

Box 4 - Subject File

Status	Title
---------------	--------------

OPEN	Souvenirs - Booklets (California) (1)-(2)
OPEN	Souvenirs - Booklets (New Mexico)
OPEN	Souvenirs - Booklets (Pennsylvania) (1)-(2)
OPEN	Souvenirs - Yearbook
OPEN	Transferred to AV
OPEN	Transferred to Museum