

## Wells History: 3rd Installment

### WELLS TREK WEST

Grandma Sarah 'Sally' Wells suffered from what was then commonly called "Dropsy." Arizona was reputed to be very healthful and for this reason they decided to leave San Antonio. Well in advance of their departure, men were hired to construct a special wagon for Grandma's travel comfort including special springs on her bed. Jeff said the wagon was about 40' long and about 7' wide. It required four horses to pull ordinarily, however on some of the steeper pulls, it took as many as eight horses. The interior boasted a wood stove, two beds, two rocking chairs and a small table. It was well built with strong steel braces and boarded siding up about a foot or two that then went out over the wheels to form a bench for seating the children. The oversized tail gate was hinged at the bottom to let down backwards to form a 7' by 8' table for eating. When up, the gate covered storage space for utensils, food, etc. in shelves across the rear of the wagon.

It was Jeff's job, at 10 years old, to keep a good supply of wood in the box for the stove located at the forward, right-hand side of the wagon. There were steps hinged over the left-front wheel so that Grandma could get in and out easily. Jeff and some of the others preferred to just raise the canvas and jump out.

Hilry\* and "Sally" had 15 children by 1900, but three had died, Maria, May and Harrison. The oldest daughter Elizabeth A. [Lizzy] had married 'Judge'



**Grandma Sarah and Grandpa Hilary about 1908. Rube on top tossing hay.**

Bouldin. Another daughter, Ida, married Bill Terry. These families did not go to Arizona until about 1904. According to Jeff, Sam was already in Arizona and had settled in John Long Canyon, on the west side of the Chiricahua Mountains.

The children at this time were Ed, 22; Rube 20, John, 17, Earl, 15; and the five small children, from ten to two years. Plans were made to sleep the five youngest in Grandma's wagon.

According to Jeff there were three regular sized covered wagons in addition to Grandma's. RG Wells said there were seven covered wagons in addition to Grandma's. He was 20 at the time, so he was probably more accurate. The discrepancy might also be explained by Jeff meaning their family had three other wagons. Because other people traveled with them. RG said that Luther and some of his family came out at the same time, and a "Cliff Whately" and Jeff remembers 'a rough character in his early twenties, Cliff Mitchell, travel-

ing with them. The older boys took turns driving the other wagons and Grandpa usually drove Grandma's.

According to RG, the Wells contingent started west on February 12, 1900. Even though the doctor said she would never live to reach Arizona. On the contrary, before she reached Arizona she was up and cooking for the large group. Even with the added convenience and comfort of her special wagon, there were 13 mouths to feed each day, five of them growing young men with appetites whetted by fresh air and exercise. The only girl, Pearl, was two years old. Dishes had to be washed, clothes scrubbed on a wash board when there was water enough to be had. Jeff said there was no great hurry in their traveling. Sometimes when Grandma's health was extra poor, they would stop for a few days.

It is hard for those of the younger generation to comprehend the tedious mode of travel of those times. Try to visualize averaging only 10 to 12 miles of travel per day. You can set up camp and look back to where you started from some 12 or 14 hours before. A car can travel in one hour's time what then took a week.

### LODGING CHOICES:

AMERICAN BEST VALUE INN & SUITES 520-432-2293

We're trying to negotiate rates here. They have rooms regular rooms and 8 King suites, with kitchens and microwaves.

SAN JOSE LODGE 520-432-5761 All rooms left have 2 Queen beds for \$85 per night. They charge \$10 more for each additional person and/or pets. They do have a small restaurant.

COPPER QUEEN HOTEL 520-432-2216

We couldn't get any discount on rates here because of the hotel's popularity. Their rates start at \$115 and range up to \$150 per night. But it is such a famous old landmark, with incredibly good food in their restaurant, you might just want to go ahead and stay here.

SHADY DELL RV PARK 520-432-3567

If you want a unique experience, stay in one of these 11 renovated 1940's-1950's Airstreams trailers. The park has been written up in Arizona Highways, Washington Post, Frommer's Budget Guide and Bon Appetit and the rates are budget: ranging from \$40 to \$95 or stay in the 38' beached yacht for \$125 per night. The photos of the interiors look charming—but small!

#### BED & BREAKFASTS

There are a number of charming Bed & Breakfasts but some are all ready full for that weekend. You can get information online on Bisbee's webpage:

[http://www.bisbearizona.com/www/features/lodging\\_detail.php](http://www.bisbearizona.com/www/features/lodging_detail.php)

#### WE NEED A HEAD COUNT FOR MEALS

So please let us know even if you don't need a room