

Q. I don't know about that, [laughs]

A. [CO] Will your people come here for temple rites?

A. [LO] I hear differing reports from my LDS friends. Some say you more or less have to go to the temple in your area. Others say, "I don't think so. You can go to other ones too."

Q. [KM] You have temple districts, but you can go to other temples.

A. [LO] Do you feel that more will be coming here because it is a historic temple?

Q. [JP] Probably. Do you have any other comments or observations you would like to make for the record?

A. Oh. I think that is probably enough.

Donald Elbert Pidcock

Cory don, Iowa

Birthday: October 15, 1917

Interview on November 7, 2001, in his home by Diana Johnson Thelma Pidcock, Jed Briggs, and Jeff Johnson also present

A. [Donald Pidcock] My name is Donald Elbert Pidcock, and I have a nickname, Pid, the first three letters of my last name. That's all that I have heard most of the time since I can remember. So Pid is what I usually go by.

Q. [Diana Johnson] We are here to talk about the trails that were discovered where "Come, Come, Ye Saints" was written. What can you tell us about the history of that trail? How did you come to be interested in finding that?

A. I retired from working for the postal service in 1981. We had been interested in archaeology and local history. Prior to that, we had been recording archaeological sites—Indian village sites—with the State Historical Preservation Office, for several years before, so we were interested in history as such, and particularly local history.

As I say, I had just recently retired, and Loren Horton, our state historian at that time, and the lady from the state archaeology office, Debbie Zeiglow, were interested in the Mormon Pioneer Trail. They were thinking that they

were going to research the exact route of the trail and maybe write a report on it. They didn't actually know much about it, but they were holding some meetings along the way as it was convenient for them, hoping to get some feedback from people who did know something about it. I attended a couple of those meetings, and I got hooked on it.

Not long after that, there was a change in the administration of the State Historical Office and a cut in its funds. So this project was put on the backburner for a while. It turned out to be quite a while. I had just gotten interested in it, and so I asked them if they minded if I went out on my own to do some research pertaining to the trail. They gladly gave me what little information that they had accumulated, which wasn't much. They said, "Yeah, go ahead and see what you can do."

I wasn't as ambitious as they were. I wasn't going to research the entire trail across the whole state, but I was going to concentrate on Wayne County, particularly where the song was written. I didn't have much to go on. I had very few diary entries that they had accumulated and knew that supposedly the song was written in the southern part of Wayne County, near Locust Creek.

I found out that the LDS Church had thought back in the 1920s that someone should find where the song was written, and they sent somebody to research it. They gave up. Then some more people worked on it in the 1930s and the 1940s, and they gave up. Then about 1970, the Mormons were thinking about putting a display in a museum in this area pertaining to the writing of this song. They didn't want to put it in some museum and later find out that it was written in a different county.

They designated Dr. Stanley Kimball, who you may be acquainted with, a professor of history at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville. He was chosen to research where the song was written. He worked on it for a couple of years and gave up as to the exact location, but he said, "It was written in Wayne County. Go ahead and put the display in the Wayne County Museum." It is in there now. I hope you get to see it sometime. That's the story of the background for it.

I knew these things, and so I got to driving the area down in the southeast corner of the county where the song supposedly was written and walking some areas. But I didn't get very far. The LDS Church at that time seemed like it was not as free on giving out diary entries and information to people such as me as they have been since—since they found out that we were genuinely interested and did not have an ulterior motive.

So I didn't have very much to go on, but then I found an old map. I found out that this county was surveyed one year after the Mormon Pioneers came through, except for the southern tier of townships.

You as a historian probably know this: Iowa and Missouri had a border dispute at that time. Missouri claimed about ten miles of what is now Iowa. Wayne County had been Indian territory up until the fall of 1845. The Mormons came through in April of '46, six months after the Indians left.

So I found an old map of Monroe Township, which is in the southeast corner, and it showed two trails. It was made in 1851. That was the area that was in the border dispute, and it wasn't surveyed until '51. Then I found out that the original surveyor's notes for the county existed somewhere. I finally found the original surveyor's field notes and the accompanying maps that he drew pertaining to what he found. That was a big help because there were virtually no trails through Wayne County until the Mormons came through.

There is one exception to that. People who thought they were in Missouri settled in what is now the Lineville area, the southwest corner of Wayne County, thinking they were in Missouri. Their trading point was Ottumwa, some seventy miles to the northeast. They drove livestock from the Lineville area to Ottumwa for market and then brought back goods that came up the Des Moines River in the steamships. So they had established a trail from Lineville to Ottumwa. Yet when it was established, most of it went across Indian Territory and the so-called Disputed Territory. Other than that trail and a very few trails in the southeast corner, where people were thinking they were in Missouri, these were the only trails in the entire county.

When I found the old maps and the surveyor's field notes, that gave me something to go on, because there weren't an awful lot of things other than that trail. Then I did get a few more diary entries, and from that I started

walking the fields. Knowing exactly where the surveyor said there was a wagon road or a trail or whatever, I looked to see if anything still existed. A few places in the county do still show remnants of the pioneer trail. Now they aren't easy to see, and if conditions aren't right, you'll never find them.

When conditions are right, such as early spring, if the snow is melting off and the snow is all gone except in the low places, you can figure out where the trail is. There's a picture that shows one of those places. As you can see, everything has melted off except in the ruts, and the ruts only need to be a couple of inches deep in order for it to show. That's one of the places where it does still show.

I found different places such as this. Then, comparing what diary entries I had with walking the fields and finding such places as this, I thought I was getting onto the right information. Well, I retired from working for the postal service in January of '81, and I started looking for this type of stuff sometime not long after that. It was probably in '82, I started walking the fields. In two or three years, I thought I knew where the song was written.

I went to Nauvoo and asked if someone could either confirm or deny that I knew what I was talking about, because I thought that it should be marked. I said that I wanted to put up a marker locating the place where the song was written. Well, no one can confirm or deny because nobody knows where it was written. I argued with them for a while, and finally they gave me some telephone numbers to call to see if I could do anything further.

Eventually, I got in touch with a Mr. Glen Leonard, who you may be familiar with. At that time he was, I think, curator of the Mormon museum of history in Salt Lake City, Utah. When I gave him my story, he said, "No, nobody can confirm it. Nobody knows where it was written. Different people have looked, and they've never found it, so no one can tell you whether you're right or wrong." He got to the point that he finally said, "I'll give you the name and address of a man who represents us in historic matters in that area. If he says that you're correct, then we will say that you're correct." This person was Dr. Stanley Kimball from southern Illinois.

Well, I had been in touch with him before. I got in touch with him again. I told him my story, and he was interested, but the research he had done did not match with mine. We corresponded by letter and telephone and so forth for two or three years. He thought the trail and the song were farther north than where I said.

Eventually, he came from southern Illinois to here [Iowa] to check out what I was finding. Well, we cussed and discussed and didn't come to any conclusion. So it went on for a while longer. Then he came back again after we had sent a lot of information back and forth.

He came a second time, and I took him to some of the places where I was sure that the trail was and where it showed faintly under the right conditions. I tried to get him to come in March before the vegetation got up. I have no reputation as a researcher, as you probably are aware. I had never done anything like this before. He couldn't come until June. I said, "I don't think you'll ever be able to see remnants of the trail in June because the vegetation will be knee high, and it doesn't show that well." I was a little bit nervous about taking him down and trying to show him the place.

We drove to one of the places down in the southeast part of the county. I said, "Let's walk over here on this hillside and see what we can see." We got over there, and I said, "Let's stop and look. Do you see anything that looks like a trail?" Well, the vegetation was knee high. He said, "Of course I do. I'm standing right in the middle of it! I know what I'm doing. I've done this for twenty-five years. We're standing right in the middle of the trail." Then I felt better that he was going to agree with me. But he still didn't acknowledge that it was the Mormon Trail. It was too far south for him.

Then, after I told him that the surveyor's notes existed and that the surveyor at the time he was surveying the county line between Wayne County and Appanoose noted that in the middle of section 12, "trail running northeast to southwest, the new Mormon or California Trail," I said, "The new Mormon Trail has to be referenced to the fact that it was the trail going west, because when the Mormons left Far West, Missouri, and were run out of Missouri, they went back and bought the little town of Commerce, Illinois, later to be known as Nauvoo. Some of the people, somebody wrote, were wanting to get out of Missouri and came up into the wilds of Iowa near Locust Creek and east to Nauvoo, or rather, east to Illinois. Then when they were going to Salt Lake City, or what turned out to be Salt Lake City, they retraced part of that trail coming this way, but, not wanting to get back into Missouri, they left the trail about the time

they came to the Wayne County line. Where the surveyor's notes said 'New Mormon or California Trail,' it made sense that it was the new Mormon Trail and the California Trail. The '49 gold rush people had used the same trail."

I finally convinced him that that was where they entered the county. If they entered there, then these other places made sense. It went on I don't know how much longer. Finally, he was convinced, and we agreed to send an article to the *Ensign* to be published. He put it in the mail, but he made a mistake—he kept reading. He found one diary entry that said when the song was written they were camped on West Locust Creek. West Locust was a few miles further west than where I said the song was written. Then he contacted Salt Lake City and said to hold up and not to publish anything until we straightened this out.

It went on for another year, and we found absolutely nothing else that matched that. Later I found out that, and as I said, this area had not been surveyed at the time the Mormons went through; there had only been some crude maps drawn of it. One of those maps did not show Locust Creek at all. There was no watershed there on this particular map. Some maps had the streams in the wrong places, running in the wrong directions, rivers in the wrong counties.

Then one map drew one line up into Wayne County in that area, and instead of drawing the four branches of Locust Creek, it called this one line West Locust Creek. So someone apparently knew at that time that it was referred to as West Locust Creek. This one diary entry said that they were camped on West Locust Creek, which they weren't. Well, we finally straightened that out and came to the conclusion that maybe we knew what we were talking about. He came here a third time from southern Illinois, and we spent the day driving the area down there. He said we were looking for a place that a distant cousin of Stanley Kimball's wrote in his diary at the time they came through, describing the place where they were camped.

This distant cousin, if you are familiar with the history, was a man by the name of Smithies, an adopted son of Heber C. Kimball, a convert from England. He had a knack for describing the places where they were. Wherever they were camped at the time that the song was written, according to him, "A beautiful timber to the east, a beautiful timber to the south, and to the north looks to be upgrade all the way." I said, "Stanley, that's exactly where I've been telling you that the place was."

We drove all afternoon down there looking around, and that was the only place that fit the description. The ruts of the trail came up within about a half mile from there and had made a turn. So anyway, it was getting to be evening. Thelma had fixed supper for us that evening, so we came up to have supper. Then we got out all the information he had accumulated over twenty years, set it out on the dining room table and we reviewed all of that until about 11:00 P.M. that night. Finally he said. "Well, that's got to be the place. Let's just shut up our books and go to bed."

We sent the information to the LDS Church in Salt Lake City, and from there we were working on getting a marker deal. Well, it's a long story of the marker deal, but we were going to get a marker through the State Historical Organization—one of the regular state markers used on such places. We ran into problems, and that fell through.

Q. What kind of problems did you run into? Just the fact that it was for the Church?

A. No, the way it turned out, Loren Horton, whom I said that I had worked with previously, was going to promote this marker through the state historical group. We had everything worked out. He said, "I'll have to run it through the committee. They meet Wednesday, but they'll approve it because they have never turned anything down that we have worked on like this. It's a matter of formality. Then we will order the marker." They met on Wednesday, and on Thursday he wrote me a letter. They turned thumbs down. They said they wanted nothing to do with it, period.

Q. Did they give an explanation? A. No, he had no explanation. I found the explanation much later. The explanation was that Loren Horton's head of this committee had been at odds. They were feuding a little bit. The head of the committee, who was going to present it to the committee—he was the one who said they turned thumbs down on it—wanted absolutely nothing to do with it. I found out afterwards that he never did present it to them. It wasn't anything that pertained to the LDS Church. I thought maybe there was some feeling there. It turned out that it was not.

Then I contacted Glen Leonard at the museum in Salt Lake City and told him what we had run into. I said, “I have no money to purchase a marker. I have a place we can put it. and I can get the manpower to do the actual setting.” So Glen Leonard said, “You find the place where we can put the marker near where the song was written, a place where it will not be difficult to find, and a place that will not grow up to weeds and brush and get to be an eyesore. The Church will furnish the marker, and I will send it to you if you will put it up.” That’s what happened, and on July 1, 1990, we held the dedication down where the marker is.

The marker is just outside the fence of the T’harp Cemetery, a country cemetery. I suppose this little area, when the cemetery was laid out, was the parking lot for team and buggies. Anyway, it was a place that people could find because the cemetery is there. It is a place that is kept mowed and is kept looking nice. As near as we can tell, it is directly across the road from where the camp was at the time the song was written.

Now then, we do not say that we can put a chair or a stone or a stump and say that William Clayton sat on this when he wrote the song. What we do say is that this ridge, directly across the road from the cemetery, was the site of the Locust Creek Camp #2, which was where the camp was at the time that William Clayton wrote the song, give or take one hundred yards or two hundred yards or whatever. The song was written on this ridge.

We like to think that it was written directly across the road, but one of the history professors at Brigham Young University, Bill Hartley, called me one day and talked at length, saying, “Pidcock, I don’t think the song was written directly across the road from Tharp Cemetery. It was written about two hundred yards farther south.” I said, “Bill, I’m not going to argue with you at all about two hundred yards. We don’t claim to know the exact spot. We claim that we know the ridge that they were camped on. If there were a hundred wagons, say, they were not all camped in one little spot.”

Hosea Stout wrote that when they were camped at the Chariton River crossing, which would be back in the next county, that the wagons were strung out for about a half mile. Well, if they were strung out for a half mile when they got on over here, it’s hard to tell where William Clayton’s wagon was. Anyway, we have convinced the LDS Church and the National Park Service that we are correct in the ridge that the campsite was on. From there, then, I did go ahead and trace the trail entirely across the county.

Of course, they came into Wayne County at the southeast corner, near the ghost town of Genoa, and set up camp shortly after they got into the county on April 3. That camp was called Hickory Grove or Hickory Ridge.

Here’s where they came into the county from Appanoose County, and here’s where I am convinced that Hickory Grove or Hickory Ridge was. They stayed there on the third, fourth, and fifth of April. It rained constantly. It was very muddy, very disagreeable, [shows on a map]

Q. Do you know what year that was?

A. That was April 3, 4, and 5 of ‘46. This stream that runs right there is the east fork of Locust Creek. They then went down the long hill to the west to the stream, and under the right conditions you can make out the ruts down that long hill. They crossed the east fork of Locust and made an abrupt right turn to the north. Someone said, “We must go further north. We do not want to get into Missouri, and we’re already into the disputed territory.” So they made the abrupt right turn up another ridge to the north and for a quarter of a mile, through forty acres. The trail still shows, not like a sore thumb, but under the right conditions you can make it out.

I asked the land owner if he knew what this old trail was, and he said no. He said, “I know that there was a trail there. I figured it was people logging the timber in the area, probably.”

I said, “Well, would you believe that it is the Mormon Trail?”

He thought a little bit and he said, “Well, maybe it is.”

I said, “What’s the history of the ground?” He said that it had been covered with some brush and scattered timber, and he had bulldozed the timber out and field-disked the ground and receded it. He said it’s never really been plowed. So that’s the reason the trail still shows across that area.

Then the trail came on up on that ridge and stopped on a rather high but wide ridge, and that was where Locust Creek Camp #1 was. As I said, it was rainy, very disagreeable. Mud was axle-deep to the wagons. They were there for a week—April 6 through 12. Brigham Young observed the anniversary of the birthday of the founding of the Church while they were there, the sixteenth birthday.

The mud got so deep with all the wagons, the livestock they had, the rain and so forth, that they cut limbs from the trees and laid them down to put their blankets on them so their bedding wouldn’t sink down into the mud. It got so disagreeable that they couldn’t contend with it anymore. Then someone wrote in their diary, “Today we moved one half mile west.” They moved out of one mud hole up onto another ridge, crossing a fork of the middle fork of Locust.

That half mile west was down through what is now a timbered area, and in the early spring before the vegetation gets out, even though there are trees in the middle of the trail, you can still make out where the trail went down through this timbered area. They crossed the middle fork, which comes into a Y, and then crossed just to the east side of where the two streams connect to make a middle fork. North, up onto the ridge again, which is Locust Creek Camp #2, was where the song was written. So that’s the story of the area down there.

From there on it gets a little difficult to determine exactly where they went. They had intended to go west and then north and establish a settlement. But it had rained so much, and the report was that to go west and cross the streams would be difficult and dangerous because the water had washed out the temporary bridges they had built. But Brigham Young sent a rider out to check the condition of the only road, the trail from Lineville to Ottumwa, which the early settlers had established.

They sent someone out to check the condition of the road, which was northwest of where they were. Well, then working backwards, you knew that they were at Garden Grove. Working backwards, it was determined that they did intersect with this road from Lineville to Ottumwa. The question was, Where did they intersect it? I walked the areas trying to find out—I found the Lineville to Ottumwa road and where it crossed Jackson Creek. I thought, well, that would be the logical place for them to go from Tharp Cemetery.

So I walked the areas. I found a few unmarked graves right up in this area. Only one grave was known, of a member of the family who originally had the land. The other graves, I didn’t know who they were. So I walked the area adjacent to that, a bean field that had been harvested, and picked up a handful of broken crockery and a couple pieces of dishes. I showed them to Loren Horton, the state historian, asked him what time period they represented. He said, except for one piece, they would all fit the 1830s to 1840s time period, which would be the time period when the Mormons came through.

So, based on the unmarked graves, the pottery I found for a campsite, I determined that they probably went up and intersected this trail in that spot. They crossed the Jackson Creek and followed it about seven miles back to the southwest, until they crossed a fork of Medicine Creek. Then they left that existing trail and turned northwest again towards Garden Grove. There was another campsite or two along the way, and one of them was kind of interesting. Right north of where Bob White State Park is now, as I said, it had been raining and muddy and was very disagreeable at the time they came into the county. The vegetation was prairie grass, which would grow up to six or eight feet high and laid over and dead during the winter, but by the time they got up to that area it had quit raining and it had dried off. This prairie grass presented a fire hazard. Somebody looked up and saw a big smoke coming and knew that there was a prairie fire coming. Well, a prairie fire and a wagon train wouldn’t mix very well. There are two versions of what they did.

One version is—“We intentionally burned off an area and put our wagons on there to escape the flames.” The other version is—“We hurried across a small stream to use it as a fire barrier.” Well, perhaps some of them did one

thing and some of them did the other thing. But that had to be the stream that has since been dammed up to form the lake in Bob White State Park.

Now then, when the reenactment came in 1996, reenacting the pioneer trail, the group attempted to camp on the same spots the pioneers did. They did set up camp at the Chariton River crossing camp. They camped where the song was written. They camped where this prairie fire was and all the different places. They did camp in the same places the pioneers did camp. From there they went on up and crossed Muddy Creek, and the trail split up there.

I talked to the person who owned the land where the trail went up, and he said that when he moved there, it showed, very plainly, but he had plowed it and farmed it a number of years, and it no longer showed. But it did split. One arm of it went down past a big spring, crossed Steel Creek, and went up a steep hill. The other arm of it crossed over farther to the north and went down a gentle slope, crossed the stream and went up another gentle slope. The two arms came together when they crossed over into the next county, Decatur County, west.

The picture that I showed you here, where they went down past the spring and crossed the creek, it's a wide bottom, and then this hill is much steeper than what it shows in that picture. The ruts still showed very plain on that hillside. It did not make sense to us that they would have gone up that steep of a hill. Usually they would go around or avoid a steep hill coming zigzag or something else.

Then we got to checking our notes and our surveyor's notes, and that was exactly where the surveyor said the trail went. Then we got to thinking about a diary entry. I don't remember who wrote it: "Sometimes in crossing the streams and the bottoms in the mud, we would put on as many as six or eight teams of oxen to cross the muddy bottoms." If they put on six or eight team of oxen to cross the muddy bottom, there would be no reason to unhook and go around the steep hill. If they had that many oxen, they would go another two hundred yards up to the top of the hill before they unhitched. Well, that's where this picture is, on that hillside.

Q. What was your reasoning for wanting to find that?

A. My reasoning for wanting to find the trail and where the song was written?

Q. What sparked your interest for that?

A. Well, as I said, we had been working as amateur archaeologists for several years before that.

Q. Was it a group of people or just yourself?

A. We belonged to the state organization, the Iowa Archaeological Society. We were hunting out Indian camp sites, village sites, and recording them with the State Archaeology office and the State Historic Preservation office. The reason for that was that if an area is going to be disturbed, such as for building a road or a lake or whatever, and using any government tax money, the archaeologists have a right to check that out to see if there's anything they can learn before it's destroyed. If they don't know that there's anything there, then they've got to do all their researching. But if somebody such as Thelma and I will hunt those places out and record them with the state, then when this project comes up for this spot, "Oh yes, Pidcock says there's an Indian village site right there." They know it's there already, see.

That's the reason that we were doing this archaeology deal along with the fact that we enjoyed collecting Indian relics.

And so, archaeology, of course, is a branch of history, and as I said, we were interested in local history. That's the reason we got sidetracked off onto this.

I had known for a long time that the so-called Mormon Trail went through Wayne County. Well, anybody you talk to says, "Oh yeah, yeah, it's such and such a place." Well, the next person, "Yeah, I know where it is. It goes behind granddad's old bam," and so on. "Oh no, no it isn't there. It's up in the north part of the county." Well, I got interested to find out where in the dickens it does go. I thought, "Well, I'll see if I can find out."

As it turned out, probably all of those people were right because, there isn't just a Mormon trail. There were dozens of them. At least two of them go across our Wayne County: the one that we just talked about. The other one later came in over near the town of Moravia, across the north part of our county where now the ghost town of Confidence is. Bethlehem, Millerton, Cambria, and New York and the little towns across the north part of our county have all been established since that north trail came through. In other words, when the Mormons came through and established trails through the county, that opened it up for other people coming in, who established towns and village sites and staked out claims and farms and so on. So, what the trail has done is open up our county for settlement. But we have the two trails that do cross our county here.

Of course, there's another segment of that trail that goes in the next county to the north. It goes through the town of Chariton and on west, and then comes back down to Garden Grove. Then of course, there's the so-called handcart trail, which was a few years later, that went from Coralville to Salt Lake City with people pushing handcarts.

When we reenacted the pioneer trail in '96. along with the covered wagons and the horse riders and so forth, we had six different families that pushed handcarts on this reenactment. They had a hard time. It was hot—it was in June and July. They pushed their handcarts and went right along with the wagon train.

Sidelight along with that, when they came into the county down near Genoa, on this reenactment, we had officers from the sheriff's department to escort them clear across the county, which took three or four days. We also had an ambulance crew that stayed with them in case of emergencies.

They had just gotten into the county and stopped to feed their horses and to have lunch when the ambulance crew, looking them all over, picked out two girls and said, "You girls are in trouble. You are about to pass out." They were two girls who were not used to walking. They decided to walk with the group that day, and it was, I suppose, close to 100 degrees—they were dehydrated. The crew ended up taking one of them to the hospital and giving her saline solution all afternoon. She went with the train the next day but not walking. She rode in one of the wagons. That was one of the experiences we had as they came through on the reenactment.

Q. What kind of results or future do you see for the area now that it's located?

A. I don't know that there's anything other than tourists. We do have a good many tourists who follow the marked trail, and a lot of them, including busloads of people, stop at our museum. Since it has been marked and it's been advertised and people are aware that there is a display pertaining to the writing of the song here in the museum, it has increased the tourist trade quite a bit.

As an example of that, busloads of students travel from Brigham Young University in Utah to Nauvoo, but up until about three or four years ago they didn't seem to know that there was anything between Council Bluffs and Nauvoo. The bus driver on one of those occasions learned that there was a display in the Wayne County museum, so he diverted off of Highway 34, the usual route, came down and stopped at the museum. He spread the word, and we have had many busloads of students stop there since then. He made the statement, "I'll never drive through on 34 again." Every busload he brings stops and sees the display.

So the tourist deal has picked up remarkably. Another thing: back in Depression days, the early '30s, jobs were scarce, and the government made work to support people. One of those programs was the so-called WPA—Works Progress Administration. Another of them was the Civilian Conservation Corps, the CCC camps. One of the projects they worked on at that time was marking the pioneer trail as near as they knew where it went. Wooden signs said “Mormon Trail.” Lettering was engraved into the sign, made out of hardwood—either oak or walnut.

They erected, I think, a hundred or so of those across the state of Iowa. The signs were made in the WPA camp near Dubuque, Iowa, in the northeast corner of the state, and they were erected by the Civilian Conservation Corps, a group of young men who put them where they thought the trail went. They knew such places as the Chariton River crossing. They knew such places as Benton’s Port and Keosauqua and Garden Grove, but they just put them in between those places, where they hoped the trail went.

Well, it turned out that some of them were in exactly the right spots. Others were as much as five miles in error. When we were getting ready for this reenactment, the sesquicentennial of the state of Iowa and the pioneer trail, we made replicas of those wooden signs, which had virtually all disappeared over sixty-some years. And so either they had deteriorated and rotted away, or some Brigham Young University student had picked them up for a keepsake, [laughs]

Q. That doesn’t happen. [laughs]

A. That doesn’t happen? I’m glad to hear that, [chuckles] But anyway, they had virtually all disappeared, so we made replicas of those signs and put them where the trail crossed each county road in the county. There were thirty-two places where the trail did cross county roads.

We did not put them on state highways, because you have to get special permission to do that, so we did not put them on the state highways, but we marked the county roads and on a very hot, humid June day in '96, five of us. Four men and a woman dug by hand—with posthole diggers—thirty-two holes and set the posts to put these replica signs up where the trail crossed the roads. Some of those, again, have disappeared. Of course, I always blame you-know-who, but it is probably the local vandals that get them, but then I enjoy blaming Mormon students, [chuckles]

Anyway, several of those signs are still up as well as some others. I’m not sure who done it, whether it was the National Park Service or Mormon Trail Association or who, then later put up metal signs. So you will maybe see a wooden sign on one side of the road saying Mormon Trail, and maybe a metal sign on the other side of the road directly across from each other marking Monnon Trail. That’s the reason there would betwo of them. One is locally in our county; we’ve made the replica wooden ones and put them up. Later, the others were put up by somebody else.

Q. Do you know where we could find a sign on the way home? One of the wooden ones?

A. Yes. I’ll show you if we go down where the song was written. I’ll show you two or three of them. We do have, in the museum here—which is closed for the season now except for special occasions—a couple of the originals that were made in the early '30s. The others you will see out on the roads are the replicas we made.

Q. Is there anything you know about the early Saints in Nauvoo? Have you heard any stories, or do you know anything about that?

A. When I was trying to research what I did, I read a number of the books that were available. Some of them were printed by Mormon historians, and some of them by anti-Mormon historians. So you've got conflicting stories. So yes, I have read things regarding the settlement at Nauvoo.

As I think I mentioned, when the Mormons went back from Far West, Missouri, they bought what was the little town of Commerce, a settlement of about twenty houses and several hundred acres of land. That was in 1838 and '39. Then, by 1846, that little town of about twenty houses had grown to a town of somewhere between ten and twelve thousand people.

We have been there since and have gone through several of those buildings. I was aware that the temple was started and not completed before the people left to go west. I say the people—the first people. The ones who were still there completed the temple and dedicated it. Then not long after that, the temple caught fire. Yes, I'm aware of some of the history of Nauvoo.

Q. Where do your ancestors come from? Do they come from this area?

A. My family people came from Pennsylvania. Thelma's family came from Kentucky. To my knowledge, none of them were connected with the Mormon movement. You will not find very many Mormons in this immediate area.

A. [Thelma Pidcock] There's only one family in town, isn't there?

A. [DP] One family here in town and one up here in the little town of Cambria. Those are the only two Mormon families I know of in the entire county. The closest church I'm aware of—there may be one in Centerville. I'm not sure about that. The one I'm aware of is in Osceola, which is about fifty miles northwest of here. I have been in that church.

A. [TP] We've been up there once or twice, or just once, I guess.

A. [DP] Did I mention that when we had the dedication of the marker down at Tharp Cemetery, a quartet from that church sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints"?

Q. Did anybody come from Salt Lake to any of the dedications?

A. No, I don't think there was. Only Dr. Stanley Kimball, who represented the people historically for this area. And as I say, he was a history professor at Southern Illinois University. He was here, and there were a few Mormons from the Des Moines area and so on. But as far as I know, there was nobody from the Salt Lake area.

The display in the museum was put in as a cooperative deal between the Church and the local historical group in 1973. It has been upgraded some since then, but that was when Dr. Kimball researched and said yes, it was written in Wayne County, but he didn't know where. That's when they put the display in here.

A. [TP] It's a real good display.

Q. Is there anything else that you would like to say?

A. [DP] One thing I might mention, which probably doesn't interest you too much. In the reenactment in '96, a number of programs were done in connection with it. One program was a songfest in the town of Seymour, which is in our county, not far from where the trail came in. We had a songfest there commemorating the writing of "Come, Come, Ye Saints," and we were going to have a fifty-voice choir. Well, one of the people from the state said. "Oh, you can't do that. Fifty voices—no, no, no. This is the sesquicentennial: 150. Have a 150-voice choir." So we ended up with a 150-voice choir, held at the football stadium at Seymour, and had a real songfest.

Dr. Stanley Kimball was the speaker for the evening, and the choir sang the "Come, Come, Ye Saints" song two or three different times. I received a plaque along with that.

[Thelma shows the plaque, shaped like a wagon]

A. Another program was at Alorton in connection with when the Mormons were camped where the prairie fire was. A whole evening's program reenacted early history of Wayne County and so forth. The people who were on the wagon train and the pushcarts were there. That is on video. I don't know whether any of them are still available or not, but the dedication at the Tharp Cemetery is on video. Commemorating the writing of the song was reenacted, and it's on video. I don't think any of those are available anymore. I have one, but I think they were all sold out.

Q. Are there any other concluding remarks that you would like to make regarding the trail?

A. Oh, I don't know what it would be. I have sometimes—well, you see, this dragged out. I started this researching probably in '82, and it was July of 1990 before we finally did the dedication. As you can imagine, I ran into a number of things that might have made me stop, and I have made the statement different times, "If I had it to over again, I wouldn't." But I am glad that I did research.

Since the place has been marked and the place has been advertised and so on, it definitely has made a difference in our tourism. So yes, I'm glad that it had been done.

A. [TP] But you couldn't do it again, [chuckles]

A. No, I can't walk and do that stuff anymore. I'm glad that it was done, and if I had not done it, I don't know who would have. I don't think there was anybody else at that time, anyway, who was interested enough to put in that time, and people who hold a full-time job couldn't do it. I had just recently retired from the postal service, and so the

interest in local history got me going on it. I've been asked, "Why did you work at it that long?" Well, my wife has the answer to that. She says I'm too darn stubborn to quit.

Stanley Kimball said that he threw in the towel three different times, and if I hadn't kept kicking him all the time, he never would have got on it again. But I guess we prodded one another and kept at it until we finally came to the conclusion where it was written and so forth. Are there any other questions?

Q. Nope. I think we've done it. Thank you.