

AN INTERVIEW WITH PAULINE FOWLER

Interviewer: Niel Johnson (corrections in parentheses) - (FINAL – Ross Marshall– 6/15/20)

(proofed by Mary Conrad)

NJ: This is Niel Johnson and Harold Smith is here with me helping out on January 30, 1997, and we are interviewing Pauline Fowler and she has an anecdote here about Harry Truman. I think we'll start out with that. [interview done at OCTA HQ – see pg 17, 18]

PF: It's about his death. I was director of archives for the Jackson County Historical Society for a number of years. All of our collections and books and everything were housed in the Truman Library basement. And when I came in the north door and you turn a corner and go down a long series of steps in the basement there's a long hallway there. Then I had to turn left into the vacant space where all our books and things were stored. And so this was in 1972. I don't remember. Did he die...he died December 25.

NJ: December 26.

PF: The 26th I mean in 1972. So this was about a week before that time. So December 25 tells you the day I came down the steps, probably a Monday. As I came down the steps I saw a whole bunch of telephones sitting next to the wall on the floor. There must have been 15 or 20 of them sitting on the floor. I thought, "What in the world is going on?" I looked around and there was one of these cases where all of these...one of those (unclear) that they flip were located. There was a man with his back to me working on all of those electrical connections. I thought, "Well, they must be going to have a press conference and they are getting all the phones for the media." So I went on in my office and it wasn't very long before I learned we were going to have to leave. This was probably two weeks—I said one week but it was probably two weeks. And I had been working on the move up to the courthouse. Bu we were not ready to move yet. And we got word down that we had to be out of the Truman Library on Friday. And I thought, "Well, I guess I can make it." So I put my shoulder to the wheel and we got almost everything ready to go. And we moved out into the new offices on Friday and President Truman died on the 25th.

NJ: 26th.

PF: 26th. I'm sorry. The day after Christmas. All of those telephones that were down there were for the reporters who knew by then...This was a couple of weeks, you see, before he was going to pass away. They were getting ready for it. And nobody knew anything about it except me.

NJ: Phones. The reporters were expected to use them.

PF: It was quite a surprise.

NJ: We are going to ask you about your experiences with the Historical Society but first before we do that, I might mention here that our main purpose is to get some background on your involvement with the local chapter of OCTA, the Trails Head Chapter, what

involvement you had with that. But let's get a little genealogy. We need to ask you again to give us your full name, including maiden name, birth place, birth date, and your parents' names.

PF: My name is Pauline Siegfried Fowler. My father's name was Mark Harrison Siegfried and he was born in Illinois. My mother's name was Madge Craig Siegfried and she was born in Iowa, Burlington, Iowa. They met and married in Independence in the house in which I lived my early days and up until after I got on my own. The house was built by my Grandfather Craig. It was a family home, so when Grandpa Craig died my mother and father moved into Independence to look after my Grandmother Craig from Illinois, which is where they were living. I was born in Independence in 1911, August 13, 1911, in the old Independence Sanitarium. It was on Van Horn. It was called (unclear) Avenue then.

NJ: It became Van Horn and then Truman Road. Where was your house located?

PF: The home, which is still standing, was at 1417 West Walnut Street. It remained in the family until after my mother died, who was 91 when she died. My father was 86 when he died. The house then went out of the family. But it is in pretty good shape. I go by every once in a while.

NJ: Did you have brothers and sisters?

PF: I had three brothers, no sisters.

NJ: What were their names?

PF: My eldest brother was Craig, Averill Craig, but he was called Craig Siegfried. His wife was Melinda Dawson Siegfried. They had two children, a boy and a girl, Tom and Susie, whose real name was Nora Kay. My next brother was just younger than I and his name was Samuel Cedric Siegfried. He was an attorney here in Independence, born in Independence and raised here. He had his education in Independence. My youngest brother was named Charles Mark Siegfried and he is still alive. The others are dead. He lives in San Antonio, Texas, and is married to a Swiss citizen. She is a conservator of art museum (unclear). So about six months out of the year they are in Switzerland for seminars, teaching classes and doing repair work over there, the same as she does over here. And he runs her business for her. Cedric's family has dispersed. They have one daughter still here, who is handicapped, a boy, who is in Des Moines, and a girl, who is married with three children, who live in Connecticut. Craig's family, he has a daughter and her child who are dead. That was Susie. Tom, their son, lives in Florida.

NJ: Will you give me your wedding date and who you are married to?

PF: Yes. I was working in San Francisco and I met my husband there. We are a railroad family. My maternal family were all railroad people. I didn't have any reason to do so, but I went to California to be on my own. My uncle, my mother's brother, Charles, who lived with his family in San Francisco, I went to visit them. While I was there I got a job

and I got a job with the railroad, the Western Pacific Railroad. I don't remember what year that was, but it was probably 1934 or '35, somewhere along in there. I worked in two or three jobs in the railroad offices. That was their headquarters there. It was there that my husband showed up as the secretary to the vice president and general manager. I was a floor below him. There was a string of offices there. And my uncle was in the last one in that string of offices and the general manager was right here at the head part of it. So I would come up to see Uncle Charley and I heard about this new person coming in. So I thought, "Well, I'll scope him out." So I did. He was sitting at his desk typing and all I could see was his profile. And he had a great big boil on his neck, from the change in water, I guess. Then I had a very good friend who worked with my uncle in the offices. And he got me a date. And that's how I met my husband, Frank. His name was Franklin Curtis Fowler. He never liked the name Franklin. No one in the family knew where it came from.

NJ: Did I get a wedding date from you?

PF: No, I didn't give you a wedding date. September 22, 1937.

NJ: How about your children?

PF: Stephen Eric Fowler was born April 14. He will be 54 this April, whenever that was...1943. My daughter's name is Kristin Coleen Fowler North. She was born in '46 in Kansas City. Both children were born in Kansas City.

NJ: Would you summarize your education for us?

PF: I was real lucky to begin with. In my thinking I owe a great deal to a teacher. There was a lady here in town who was the teacher in my Sunday school. She was Mrs. Clifford Smith. Everybody called her Miss Tessie. Before I was able to go to school, Miss Tessie had gone to Switzerland and studied under Annis Montessori and came back and opened a class in the church that I attended. I was one of her pupils. She used Annis Montessori's programs for teaching and I became interested in learning. It was a really wonderful exposure. I don't remember all that she did. I don't have any recollection of why that is so. But I never forgot the feeling of learning that she gave me during that time. Then I went on to first grade. My father enjoyed history, but it was all church history. And he would hunt things up in his books and I liked to read. I don't think the boys ever got the reading bug like I did. I really enjoyed reading.

NJ: What church was this?

PF: The RLDS Church. My father was one of the presiding bishopric. I was telling a young man who came to see me not very long ago how much my family contributed toward my development in many different ways. Today we were discussing the lack of respect today's children have. I said, "My father loved my mother with a very generous love. And he urged her to do everything she could and wanted to do. So she was one of the very liberated persons. She was an editor, she raised four children. Of course her mother was living there and so she always had a built in babysitter because Grandma was a

widow. But he was so proud of everything she did, you would have thought he had done it himself. And she was such a wonderful support for him. My father said to me one day, "You know, Polly, you mother isn't afraid of anything or anybody. She will face down anybody if she thinks she's right." And he encouraged her to develop her own...So I got the influence of doing what I wanted to do and what I felt like I should do but with the respect and affection for learning that I don't think the boys got. I don't think they got that same feeling.

NJ: Your mother was born in Burlington, Iowa, you said.

PF: Yes.

NJ: Was she RLDS?

PF: Yes.

NJ: She was up in Burlington?

PF: It was a funny thing. She took photographs. She worked with glass plates. And she took photographs all the time. She went to birthday parties, she went to dinner parties. She enjoyed taking photographs. She learned to take photographs from the (unclear) my cousin in Ohio, who wanted to marry her. He was a photographer. He wrote and told her what chemicals to buy, how to use it, what to do. So she learned by mail how to do photography.

NJ: She used glass negatives. What's happened to those? Do you have any idea?

PF: Well, unfortunately my brother took them without my knowing it. And I don't know where they are.

NJ: Maybe they will show up.

PF: I would hope so.

NJ: Okay, now getting up to the trails history and your interest in it. Do you want to tell us how you became involved? Wait a minute. Before we do that, let's do this little reminiscing about the Jackson County Historical Society, which preceded it. It had been formed earlier and then kind of faded away. Then it was reorganized in 1959. Harry Truman was one of those who encouraged the organization of this society and had a hand in its beginnings. How did you get involved?

PF: I just bought my membership in 1959. It was 50 cents. I went up to the first meeting they had. As far as I know, it was the first meeting. I really don't have much of a recollection, except that it was '59 or '60. I could be wrong, but I think it was '59 when it was reorganized. I thought, "Oh, this sounds like fun." My father was always digging around in history, you know. He had a fine library. I had begun to accumulate the interest in books. So that's how I got started.

NJ: Do you remember who approached you?

PF: I did it on my own. Nobody approached me. I read about it in the paper that it was coming up, you know.

NJ: You became a charter member of the society there.

PF: Yes.

NJ: Then I notice that in 1960 you became a member of the archives committee.

PF: That's right. Alberta Constant was appointed director of the archives. She wasn't the first one. What was the girl's name? It was one of the Allen sisters. Harriet Kellogg was the first one, the first director of archives. But she wasn't there very long. Alberta took it over. She asked me to come in as one of her committee members.

NJ: Do you remember who else was on that committee, besides yourself?

PF: No.

NJ: You and Alberta then...

PF: I helped her out. I gave a lot of time to it when she was open.

NJ: What was the intent of that committee?

PF: Collection. Howard Adams was the president. He was just wonderful, a great contributor to, a vivacious interest in the collection of the historical remembrances and books and genealogy and families and all of the things that went with it. He was collecting from eastern Jackson County.

NJ: You mean outside of Kansas City.

PF: Outside of Kansas City.

NJ: How did he go about that? Do you have any idea?

PF: He was Adams Dairy Farm.

NJ: What was his first name again?

PF: Howard, Howard Adams. He is in Washington and has been for many years now. He was working with the art museum there. So I became friends with him and with his secretary after Alberta gave it up. Alberta was only there about a year. She talked to me one day and she said, "Where have you had training in this kind of work?" I said, "Well, I haven't had." She said, "You had some training in library then." I thought for a while. Where did I get training? Oh, yes. The church had a library started and I worked in that library in the old Kelley home, which is a parking lot now for the auditorium at the east corner of River Boulevard and Lexington Street.

NJ: The house was converted into a church library.

PF: Yes. It wasn't a church library. It was just a library like this.

NJ: But the RLDS...

PF: The RLDS started it. And I worked in there for one summer, for nothing, of course. And I don't even remember who the boss was. But somebody started me on learning how to take care of the books and this kind of stuff, so I had the routine in my mind, which has proven so valuable to me all the rest of my life.

NJ: Your time as a librarian over here, of course.

PF: The discipline was great. But it wasn't discipline. It was fun.

NJ: But now you're collecting not just books but you're after papers, documents.

PF: Yes. And we had wonderful people on the committee. There were about 15 or 20. I can't remember now. I can't even remember the name of them under me.

NJ: You became chairman of that committee after Alberta left?

PF: Yes. Alberta left after about a year.

NJ: Do you remember some of your instructions, what you were permitted to do?

PF: We were setting up—how will I put it? I don't remember. I really don't remember how we did it. Oh, I do too. We went to the AASLA.

NJ: The American Association of Study of (unclear).

PF: From them we got a method by which they recommended the archives be handled. And that was slick. It was a wonderful idea. It was geared better than any other method I ever...

NJ: Do you remember doing a roster, log for every collection that came in, that you would identify in a journal, in a sequential order?

PF: Oh yes, I had one of those books about that tall and about that wide. There were two of those in which most of my entries went. There was one other book that Harriet Kellogg had started. Incidentally, under Harriet Kellogg I helped her develop two exhibits over at the Kansas City Museum when they were opening up. We put on an exhibit for the Boone cabin and for an apothecary shop. We were the only two who were doing that at the time. I had forgotten about that until just now. But I was trained. I wasn't trained. It was all set up by Alberta. And so all I had to do was understand. And it was like falling off a log, no problem at all.

NJ: How did you let people know that you wanted papers? Did you put notices in the newspaper?

PF: Yes. The committee helped. They would collect for us. Then people would call in from St. Louis. Some of the stuff I went through collecting was just awful. From basements...

NJ: How about Mrs. DeWitt? You know, that is one of the better known collections. Roger DeWitt. How did you get ahold of that one? Do you recall how you got ahold of that collection?

FW: One of the great presidents. She was the president of the Society. And she was interested. I was in and out of her house many times and over there for lunch. And we talked about what to do and how to do it, what was needed. In the meantime, I took every seminar, every education facility in Kansas City and elsewhere that I could find to know more what archives were about. What's the name of the man who wrote the book that the Truman Library used as a basis for so long?

NJ: Do you mean Phillip Brooks?

PF: No.

NJ: Shallenberg?

PF: Yes, Shallenberg. The boys over at the Truman Library. Phillip Brooks told me I could use any of the people over there that I needed to. He was very generous with his own time. He was a really great help. And then Dr. (unclear) came in and there was one person who helped me when I needed help. Peter...Shoot. Sorry, I can't...

NJ: The archivist at the library?

PF: Yes.

NJ: I know the one you're talking about.

PF: He's in Chicago now. I correspond with him every year at Christmas.

NJ: Is that right?

PF: I've never lost track of him. He was such a sweet man. If I needed (unclear) he would come and help me or he would be available to help me.

NJ: Especially, how did you describe the collections? Did the Truman Library archivists help on that? The way you described your collections. Where did you...

PF: Followed the AASLHO record keeping form. It was all changed when somebody came in after I did. They didn't understand what I sort of instituted.

NJ: The procedures?

PF: Yes, everything was changed. Then it was changed again...

NJ: Using cards, building a card catalog for your description, or was it like...

PF: I had the original record for the collection. If I heard about somebody who might have something, then it was my job to collect, get it if I could, which I did. And then I would come lugging it back in and there were several times the Truman Library helped me because some of those collections were in terrible shape and at that time the Truman

Library had a fumigation closet. And they offered to let me fumigate some of those. I opened up one and there was a flat mouse in there. I was not happy.

NJ: By the way, I imagine some of those collections dealing with local history and you wanted to cover as much local history as you could I suppose, so there wasn't much that you rejected. You were pretty open and accepting of whatever was offered. But I imagine some of them, did they get into the history of the trails? Did they relate to the trails?

PF: Not much. People who gave us... Sometimes the people whose collections we took were involved with the trade in some form or another. Now there are a few letters from one of the Waldos and some of their invoices.

NJ: The Duhring letters, you know those letters (unclear) on exhibit at the (unclear) Historical Society Museum out in Oregon City. The Duhring papers. These were people who were here in 1849 in the gold rush. Can you guess how many letters may be in the Jackson County Historical Society collections that relate to the Oregon-California or the Santa Fe Trails?

PF: No, I couldn't guess, but they came in under me or closely thereafter. After I left I was gone because I took a job. I had both kids in college at the time. So I was asked to take a job as an industrial librarian in an office there in Kansas City. That enabled me to earn some money.

NJ: What company was that?

PF: Vendo

NJ: Oh, Vendo Corporation. How many years were you there with them?

PF: I was there, I don't remember.

NJ: Twenty years?

PF: I was gone four or five years.

NJ: So you weren't involved with archival work?

PF: No. Then I went back to it. They asked me to come back to it. So then I was there again for about four or five years.

NJ: With the archives?

PF: Yes.

NJ: With the County Historical Society?

FW: No, with this historical society. I had my own committee.

NJ: Were the collections still with the Truman Library?

PF: No, by then they had been moved. I had to move them. I had to plan the whole layout of the archives and get all of the things packed and accounted for. When we moved, the girls were moving us from the Truman Library to the Jackson County Courthouse, covered 14 tons of material.

NJ: Fourteen tons moved into...

PF: I never forgot it. I had it all laid out. It just killed me. I thought it was so nice. Then I found out I couldn't do it because the courthouse wouldn't support the weight.

NJ: On the second floor?

PF: No, this was on the first floor. And so I had to switch the whole plan and do it over again and put all the stacks in the new part, which is on the west side, which was built right on the ground, on the concrete.

NJ: Right on the foundation.

PF: Yes, the newer structure. The older structure was where the vault was. The whole plan went kaput and I had to sort of make do with what we had.

NJ: Now those collections are stored on two floors, aren't they?

PF: Oh, yes. Now I think they've got most of them in caves, which I deplore.

NJ: Oh, they do? One of the caves?

PF: Yes. I don't think it is a very good idea.

NJ: How long were you there?

PF: All together I was there six years, or eight, seven. I don't remember. Six or seven years.

NJ: What year would you have finished at that place?

PF: I don't even know why I finished, why I quit. Oh, I must tell you. I was getting paid the huge sum of \$10 if I kept the place open on Monday. Then on Thursday I had the committee and that was gratis. Well, there was no money coming in. And I thought, "Well, how can I help myself and help the Society make some money?" This is a sad tale. So I thought, the letters kept coming in wanting research done. I thought, "Well, I can do the research." So I would take the letters and go over on Fridays, for nothing. I didn't tell anybody about it. I was just doing something that I liked to do and was helping the archives. So I'd go to the County Courthouse and to the library and wherever I had to go to do the work. And I got so interested in the research aspect rather than the keeping of the things, although I learned how to do one on one stuff and how to prepare in a drum to take care of the papers so that they didn't fall apart. But I loved it. I just loved it. So I began to charge the people who wrote in for the sake of the archives, five dollars an hour. I kept strict care of how many hours there were at five dollars an hour. Nobody raised a question about it. So then I took two dollars and a half for myself and gave the archives two dollars and a half, which I thought was fair. Because it was my

time and I was contributing that to the Society. Well, one day the treasurer of the Society showed up and he said, "I understand you have been earning some money and you haven't been turning it in." I said, "Well, I've been turning it in to support the archives. We have to have paper and carbon paper and all this stuff. So it is one way of earning it. And the other half I've been keeping because I have been doing the work to collect it." "You can't do that." It never occurred to me that I was doing anything wrong at all. It was free gratis. It was my time. So I quit doing it. There wasn't any other answer.

NJ: Didn't find a way to get around that.

PF: I think, but I still don't remember how come I wasn't there any longer. I don't know what happened.

NJ: You probably got disgusted.

PF: I think that's true. I think maybe my husband put his foot down. He said, "Polly, I know you like to do this, but can't you do something where you will bring some money in?"

NJ: What kind of questions did you deal with? Do you remember, can you tell me what kind of questions you were getting?

PF: Not much genealogy. It was history.

NJ: Who did what, when, and where?

PF: Yes, and how come Independence was the headquarters and who was here and what sources do we have.

NJ: Their answers were put in writing, the outgoing letters. Were those letters ever saved? Are they available?

PF: Yes, should be.

NJ: For reference use?

PF: Should be. I don't know what happened to them after I left because the whole process was changed.

NJ: When you left, was that the mid '70s or?

PF: Yes.

NJ: In the mid '70s, you'd say.

PF: Now let me think.

NJ: The bicentennial was in '76. Does that help then?

PF: I was gone by then. I wasn't there then. It was in the '60s when I left.

NJ: At the end of the '60s because you had that four-year interval at Vendo. So now you are out of the history business, so to speak. Did you take another job then?

PF: No.

NJ: So you were home.

PF: Yes.

NJ: Were you doing research and reading then?

PF: Yes.

NJ: In what kind of history?

PF: Anything, as long as it was local history.

NJ: When did you get more directly involved in the trails side of it?

PF: As soon as OCTA was organized and as soon as the Santa Fe Trail Association was organized. Then I became more slanted, more focused on the trails. Because by then I had pretty well established a good library on the local history and I was at a point where I needed to interpret the growth of the county and of the city.

NJ: Did you ever help Pearl Wilcox with (unclear)?

PF: No. Pearl's writings all came later, her books did. I was gone and she did her own research entirely, as far as I know. She used the archives a lot.

NJ: Heavy emphasis on clippings, collection, newspapers.

PF: I remember coming back, when I came back the second time I found that the lady who was in charge had trouble with her feet, so it was hard for her to walk around on the concrete floor. To save her feet, she had the archive committee take in clippings and put them in with these very rare papers. I like to die when I got back there and found that out. So the first thing I had the committee do was to go through every box in that whole collection and take out all the clippings that were dated after 1964. And I got a little bit of flak from the committee on that score.

NJ: Getting those acidic papers away from...

PF: Oh, yes. It just hurt me terrible. Of course the training that I had had was all at my own expense. Nobody ever...

NJ: Preservation work certainly means you don't put acidic papers next to important originals. I notice here that I have a letter you wrote to John Lastchar at the National Park Service in 1982 and you are thanking him for his reply to your inquiry of 3 August 1982. This had to do with the marking of the Oregon National Historic Trail that was being planned. Was 1982 the year you really got back into the trails side of this?

FW: That's probably true. When the local organization was founded and I joined.

NJ: Are you talking about the local or the national organization?

PF: I meant locally the national organization.

NJ: The first charter meeting was here.

PF: Yes, that's right.

NJ: In Independence. You were there for that original meeting of OCTA [1983]?

PF: Yes.

NJ: Who was chiefly responsible for bringing those people together for the first meeting?

PF: I think the person who had most influence on me was Barbara Magerl.

NJ: Okay. So she's the one who approached you.

PF: Yes.

NJ: Had she been approached by Greg Franzwa, do you think?

PF: Well, Greg had been to see me because he was in the process of writing his books

NJ: The Oregon Trail Revisited.

PF: Yes.

NJ: Do you remember when he approached you on that?

PF: Very early on.

NJ: That was before these other things happened.

PF: I'd have to look at the book. I don't know when the book was first published. But I have a file about that thick of correspondence with Greg Franzwa.

NJ: Do you remember when the first year of that was?

PF: No.

NJ: About '82?

PF: Somewhere in there because he wanted pieces of information that I had in my head that I had found with my work in the archives, you see. I had absorbed it.

NJ: Now he heard about your work in answering inquiries to the Historical Society.

PW: I don't know. I don't think that's where it came from. I think he got it from...I don't know where he got my name. I don't know how he got my connection, but I was the only connection he had.

NJ: He knew your knowledge of the trails, the location of the trails.

PF: And Independence history.

NJ: But you don't know how he knew that.

PF: I don't remember, if I ever knew.

NJ: Had you already written something about this?

PF: It might have been something I had written.

NJ: What would you have written for? Did you contribute articles to the Jackson County Historical Journal?

PF: Oh, yes.

NJ: Do you remember when your first article appeared there? Was that something that might have got his attention?

PF: No, I don't think so. It might have been.

NJ: What did you write about?

PF: I know one of the things I remember writing about was the house at 1400 North Main. When Young Matrons bought that house, I wrote an article about its history. I checked out a lot of its history. And I wrote an article for the Historical Society. As director of archives, I was contributing to the Historical Society publication all the time, making reports for the Historical Society.

NJ: So this article was dealing with the history of a house.

PF: Yes.

NJ: And you don't remember when your first article on the trails might have been.

PF: I don't remember that, no. But Greg Franzwa cabbaged onto me and I to him. If he had a need for answers I would hunt up a specific question.

NJ: Where did you find the information?

PF: Without knowing the question, I can't tell you. I could go to the archives. I went to the county court records.

NJ: The County Historical Society archives, the county court records. Like plat maps?

PF: No, the court records.

NJ: The judicial court or the administrative?

PF: Well, it was all one in the early days. Then it was legally separated in the state of Missouri. I do have an article on that. Then I also wrote for "Gone West," a publication that kind of burgeoned up and then disappeared. And off and on, I don't remember...

NJ: What seemed to engage your attention as far as the trails history is concerned?

PF: Independence and Jackson County. Early Independence and Jackson County history is what I mostly...

NJ: That always kept cropping up.

PF: Yes. It's where my best expertise is, I guess, up to about 1850.

NJ: So you worked with Greg Franzwa for his book. Was that your first major research project on the local trails?

PF: Yes.

NJ: So in 1982 there is a plan for this Oregon National Historic Trail. I notice here in March a letter from Daniel (unclear), regional director of the United States Department of the Interior National Park Service mentions that the comprehensive management use plan, "Oregon National Historic Trail recently submitted to Congress by the Secretary of the Interior." You were getting involved in a very early phase of that project. (unclear) National Historic Landmark.

PF: Yes. I was a charter member of the Historical Society, a charter member of Santa Fe Trail Association. It was then called the Santa Fe Trail Council [yes]. I have a commendation from the Council for the work I did.

NJ: When was this?

PF: After OCTA.

NJ: Okay, this is after OCTA.

PF: After OCTA came in, I was a charter member of OCTA.

NJ: How many people were in that first meeting? [I am going to assume they are still talking about OCTA, because the SFT Council first met in Trinidad, NM in 1986 and then in Hutchison, KS in 1987 when it became the Santa Fe Trail Association]

PF: I don't know. Maybe 20 or 30. (There was well over 100)

NJ: They met here in Independence. Where was the meeting place?

PF: I can't remember where it was. I think it was at city hall. (it was the Sermon Center) [this whole section about the first meeting of OCTA is puzzling – unless she wasn't there. Actually, that is the way the first charter members came in was to be there.]

NJ: Oh, down at city hall.

PF: Of course it wasn't that city hall.

NJ: No.

FW: Or was it?

NJ: Then you went out to river road and cement city [LaFarge Cement Co property – but it has been recently sold to Central Plains Cement Co.] to take a look at where Wayne City once stood. Did you go over there and look down...

PF: Oh, of course, yes. I tried to run that down and went to Blue Mills.

NJ: Did they go to Blue Mills on that first...

PF: I don't think that's where they went. That's too far. I don't think they went out there that first session.

NJ: What did they ask you to do?

PF: I don't think...

NJ: Or what did you volunteer to do?

PF: I don't think anything. I just was on the membership list. When they wanted questions answered, somebody would call me or they would refer somebody to me because there wasn't anybody else. I just filled a hole.

NJ: So you were getting inquiries.

PF: Oh, yes. I still am.

NJ: So you were an active member of OCTA at the beginning.

PF: Yes.

NJ: Apparently, about two or three years later, 1985, there is a reference made here to establish a local chapter, the Trails Head Chapter. We have some memoranda here about those first gatherings. But I don't believe I see your name on them. So for instance on November 12, 1985, there was an organizational meeting called. This seems to be the first one. At the Cave Spring Interpretive Center.

PF: I was there.

NJ: November 12th, '85.

PF: You must understand me a little bit. I am not a leader. I really don't want to be president or vice president. I will sometimes be secretary and sometimes treasurer but I'm not a person who likes the limelight.

NJ: But you are willing to nominate others.

PF: Yes, that's right and give 'em heck.

NJ: I don't see the results of that first meeting in the papers I have access to.

PF: Have you talked to Barbara Magerl?

NJ: Yes. We are going to interview her again. [this is a reference to Barbara apparently not being satisfied where her first taping on July 23, 1996. She apparently discarded that tape and did another on May 11, 1998, which is the one we have in hand]

PF: I think she'll be a load of information.

NJ: Yes, in fact we are going to redo the interview. We've already done one and she in the meantime has gotten more papers together. So we are going to do another one. [see above] On Thursday February 27th 1986, another organizational meeting called by...Let's see who actually called it here. It was at the Cedar Roe Library, Michael Duncan, chairman, planning committee, OCTA. Do you remember that meeting?

PF: Mike Duncan, my goodness yes, oh, yes.

- NJ: He's the one who put this memorandum together dated February 11th, 1986. It says, "To all OCTA members. Executive committee chosen to implement organization of a local chapter of OCTA met at 11:30 a.m. at the Rodeway Inn, I-35 and Metcalf, etc."...January 22, 1986 with the following present: Chairperson Mike Duncan, Elaine McNabney, Ross Marshall, Peggy Smith, Richard Nolf, Barbara Bernauer. Now it doesn't have your name on here. Do you remember if you went to that?
- PF: I don't remember if I went to it or not. I doubt if I did because it was in Kansas City and I didn't know my way around in Kansas City very well. [Rodeway Inn on Metcalf is in Overland Park]
- NJ: So that one you may have missed.
- PF: Besides which I had two kids at home.
- NJ: This actually looks almost like minutes. No, these are recommendations. It's an agenda that he's put with this. At some point then you did get active in the local chapter.
- PF: Yes.
- NJ: Did you help write the bylaws or anything like that?
- PF: Yes, I was on the bylaws committee [yes, with John Leamon, Barbara and me, if I remember correctly] two or three times [could be – need to check that out] when we were having tugs of war. That's where I really got especially friendly with Barbara Magerl. Of course she lived over in Overland Park. She would get out here more than I would get somewhere else. We go clear back to the original because she was very generous with her time in those original meetings. She was knowledgeable and a creator. I enjoyed her leadership very much.
- NJ: So even though you didn't want to be an officer in the organization, you were willing to do what?
- PF: Be what I was, be a researcher and an historian. That's a word I don't use very often, but I don't know any other word to explain what I was doing, which was finding out about things and helping other people with what I could.
- NJ: Did you have anything to do with Trails Head Tidings, the newsletter?
- PF: No. Now that is much more recent.
- NJ: July of '87. [correct – Vol 1, #1] It mentions Greg Franzwa's resignation, for instance. In the meantime, I guess they were doing treks. Is that one of the things they were sponsoring? Did you help organize the treks?
- PF: Yes, I did, but I don't think we had them very early on. Well, we had...They were not treks as we think of them today. Everybody hopped in in his own car with two or three other people in the car. We'd have a whole caravan of cars to go traveling over a certain route.
- NJ: Did they have a map, an explanatory map?
- PF: I think sometimes we had what I call throwaways, things that we passed out.

NJ: Did you put those together, these guides or whatever they used?

PF: No. They were just given out to people who had paid their fee to go on the trip. At first there were no fees, not until they began to get a bus. They began to consolidate the group. Then they had to hire a bus. Then they had to charge for it. So the rest of the time you furnished your own transportation. But we always had a leader. We always had stops where we could point out pieces of history, people, places and things that happened.

NJ: Blue Mills Landing. Would you say you've done more research on that than anybody else?

PF: Yes. It has quite a history. I haven't written it out. [unfortunately, Polly didn't write much]

NJ: Bit and pieces. When are you going to put them in a narrative?

PF: Should be, because it's not just the Blue Mills Landing. It goes clear back to pre county time, that landing does.

NJ: Wayne City, you've done special research on that too?

PF: Yes, some.

NJ: That first so-called railway [the Independence and Missouri River RR – wood rails]. Truman mentions the remnants of that railway being torn up when they paved. It would have been in the late '20s, I suppose, or the early '30s. What happened to those pieces? Wouldn't it be something to have remnants? [went bankrupt in 1852-long time ago]

PF: I think (unclear) probably had them. I think that he had some of them.

NJ: Somebody should check that out if it is possible.

NJ: The Trails Head.

PF: To preserve remnants of the Oregon-California Trailhead, which is what this place was and the people on it. A matter of preservation and making it available.

NJ: And describing it.

PF: And collecting it and describing it and making it available.

NJ: Yes, either researchers, documentation work or publications.

PF: And then of course we wanted to have a national organization to corral all of the information that we could so we'd have outlets to dispense our own information as well as to get information about the trail itself and get it back into a central core.

NJ: Have you accomplished pretty much what you expected to do?

PF: I think so, yes. As a matter of fact I believe two or three things. I think Greg Franzwa probably had a great deal to do, his book had a great deal to do with a core of interest. And the next thing was this particular building [were they in the NFTA or the old lab bldg.? (OCTA HQ – 1989)] with these offices given to them had more to do with the

development of the interest in this area in the Oregon-California Trails Association and its development nationwide, which came after Franzwa went before the United States government.

NJ: You probably remember like I do this first meeting they had here in this building [NFTC or OCTA HQ] to make plans for this center. And then you and I and Ben Zobrist were put on a committee to edit the script for the orientation (unclear) west. Dan Haupt was another one of course and we had several others involved from the state offices. So that gave you another chance to dig into the records and you did some of the detail here on the local trails to Independence, the trails. I did kind of the larger picture and we put these two together in the paper as part of the planning document.

PF: Yes, I still have that. You know, I have all of that stuff. Solomon Claybaugh.

NJ: But now about these records. Where did you find your most useful information?

PF: The most useful information that I have ever used and almost everything I know about the development of the trails, either OCTA or Santa Fe, is based on the history of Jackson County and Independence. It is found in the court records.

NJ: Where are they located?

PF: They have been or were all along in the courthouse. But...

NJ: Which courthouse?

PF: The big courthouse, the one on the square.

NJ: The courthouse here in Independence.

PF: It ought to be called the Truman Courthouse since he built that building. That's what it should be but they can't get rid of the Jackson County. So it's the courthouse on the square, generally speaking. And then they built that squalid courthouse over there on Kansas Street. They threw out tons of records. I cried. I couldn't stop it. At that time my dear, dear friend, he was the historic officer for the county parks.

NJ: Landahl?

PF: No, not Landahl. He [who?] worked under Landahl. Oh my goodness. Anyway, he would come into the office. He was near death. He would walk in carrying this big oxygen thing rolling it on wheels. He could hardly talk. He would come into the courthouse where I was and he would sit down and talk to me, when he could get his breath back. But he was so concerned because nobody in the county knew what they were doing. And truckloads of stuff were going out and were lost.

NJ: And the county historical society wasn't offered these or at least offered a chance to...?

PF: Yes, they were. I was not consulted.

NJ: In other words, you didn't know about it until after it happened.

PF: That's right.

NJ: That they had trashed this material.

PF: I knew this was going on. I said, "How do I go about getting any of it?" "Well, Polly, I'm finding out about it myself," he'd say.

NJ: These were official county records of...

PF: I don't know what they threw away. I don't have any idea what they threw away. I went over several times with Eric to the storage place in Kansas City. And there's where we uncovered payroll records that are signed by Harry Truman, which are extremely valuable. But nobody seemed to care about it. And I think they threw them out.

NJ: Well, what documents did you find that were the most helpful to you in your research?

PF: Well, it's the early, what I'd say... 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, I think, in the county court record. This is the court record, the judges of the court. Of course until '49 if the parents was governed by the county court...

NJ: Administrative court, which three people, presiding judge, and eastern and western judges.

PF: That's right. So everything that was done, was accomplished, was through the effort of the county court.

NJ: Now you're talking about the administrative court rather than the judicial court.

PF: That's right.

NJ: And the minutes...

PF: They had a circuit court in addition.

NJ: Yes, the circuit court.

PF: In addition.

NJ: Was that the one on the second floor courtroom?

PF: Yes. But the Brady courtroom was later. Well, that's one of the things that I published, the history of the courthouse because I had that. Oh, that was a job to find that because I had to go through all the county court records to try and find that, what happened.

NJ: Are they in the County Historical Society archives now?

PF: I don't know where they are. If they haven't been tossed out, they are out in the caves. They put all this stuff out in the caves.

NJ: Okay, this is the official county government's records that are in the caves. And those are the ones you were using on the history of the courthouse. Did anybody think about making copies, either Xerox or microfilm copies for the County Historical Society?

PF: The Historical Society didn't have a copier in the archives. I didn't have anything. I didn't have a budget. I didn't have anything. I had absolutely nothing and they (unclear) at me because I was trying to...

NJ: You were copying by hand the information that you found. You were not able to Xerox.

PF: That's right. And then when you go to the courthouse and you find the book, and you want to copy it, that's the only way you can copy it. At least as far as I'm concerned because I can't pay their fees.

NJ: Those are the official county records.

PF: Yes, I just can't afford their high cost of copying because they are all oversized books.

NJ: Did you find probate records useful at all?

PF: They're different. Yes, very useful. Yes, if you died intestate, you see, it was in the county court records. There was nothing to probate. It's in the records. They held a sale, but that was it.

NJ: Would they have an inventory too?

PF: That came under the probate when they inventoried it. And it would go on sometimes for 20 years and more. It was just unbelievable to me.

NJ: The earliest records involving the trails here in the county, would they be these early plat books with the field notes?

PF: Not in the ones they have here.

NJ: Surveyors?

PF: The ones that you can find that are the earliest county survey records are...They have copies of them at 103 North Main in the county surveyor's office. But the originals are housed in Rolla, Missouri. So I've been down to Rolla several times and I have a bunch of...I spent a lot of money in recent years trying to get copies of pertinent maps out of Rolla.

NJ: Do you have these in your personal papers?

PF: Yes, I have a whole room.

NJ: Are they going eventually to the County Historical...

PF: No, I'll not give them to the Historical Society. I don't think...They'll go to Eric and then he will know what to do with them. Because he's the historian too. And he's a very good writer. He helps me with my writing now.

NJ: Did the local chapter ask you to contribute to its newsletter then, The Trails Head Tidings?

PF: No.

NJ: Your main activity with the Trails Head as such would have been to line up these...?

PF: I was on their board for a while. Twice, I think. [Polly was only on committees] We would meet and discuss what was to be done. That's in the local minutes what we did. When we had socials, I was always part of the social planning. But it was getting the organization off the ground and moving to secure its place in the whole of the route.

NJ: Lou Schumacher and Walter Cook, did they become members of the Trails Head in the early...

PF: No.

NJ: More recently.

PF: Very recently.

NJ: How about Walter Cook?

PF: Walter Cook is unmarried and lives with his mother and has a deep interest in history, in researching. And he does a good job of researching. But he invariably comes to the wrong conclusion. And I'm sorry because he is so...

NJ: He is intense, isn't he?

PF: Yes. But he jumps to what he wants it to be. And if he can force it in that direction he will do so. And he disagrees with everybody else. Because he's sot, if I may use the word, in his conclusion.

NJ: Now he used the same materials as you have.

PF: Oh yes.

NJ: How about Lou Schumacher? Has he used the same materials pretty much?

PF: Lou and I have worked together ever since before we got involved in the organizations. He called me on the telephone out of the blue. He was concerned about where the trail ran down by his property down there. I helped him all I could. We had two or three talks, you know, like we would. Then I didn't hear from him for a long time. Then all of a sudden he popped up again. And we've been friends for such a long time. And I have enjoyed his friendship. He's very accurate, very careful. There is no fooling around with Lou. He's going to see that it gets down exactly right. Now he has something of which he's very proud and rightly so. But it's like he found it, but it's always been in use. And I used it but I didn't put it together the way he has. The development of the recording of the trails and the streets and where they went. He's a man who was trained to be an engineer. I'm not. So he goes about his work from an engineering standpoint. And he found and worked back where I was working forward from the early period.

NJ: Whenever there was some kind of legal action needed, like an easement or let's say a roadway through property or whatever, that would have to be acted upon by the administrative court or the judicial court?

PF: The administrative court.

NJ: The administrative court. So in the records or minutes of those...

PF: It was all set by the state law, you see. When the county was formed they were given specific actions which had to be taken in an orderly fashion by the county court, which was appointed by the governor.

NJ: Where are those minutes and records located? How did you get access to all of those?

PF: Well, they've been in the county courthouse.

NJ: In the archives or the county government or they may be in the caves.

PF: I think they are in the caves now. Of course I really don't know. I haven't been out there.

NJ: You haven't copied those particular things.

PF: No. But you see when they set up, the lawyers got their fingers in the pot. As usual, the lawyers messed things up. I hope you're not a lawyer.

NJ: You objected.

PF: They separated the jurisdiction into two courthouses and two divisions as Kansas City grew. And the lawyers didn't want to come to Independence. They are still fighting that battle. They don't want to come over here to do their practicing. So the dividing line was the Blue River. So everything west of that had to have a jurisdictional center and that's when they put in the courthouse. They had a courthouse down there on the landing. And then of course as the town grew up...

NJ: That was kind of a branch, wasn't it?

PF: Yes, that's right. So now in order to find out anything after let's say 1850... I don't know. I'd have to go back to see when that division was made. We're still the county seat. People don't understand how much weight that has. When it comes to politics, it is the county seat. And everything goes through the county seat, or should go through the county seat. Kansas City is still a satellite. But all of those records couldn't be housed out here and couldn't be handled out here because Kansas City grew so much faster, you see. So they built the other courthouse and have kept the two courthouses going. But you still have to...I have to go over to Kansas City to research at the courthouse.

NJ: How far back do those records go that they have there? Are you dealing with land deeds, for instance?

P:F Yes. Of course that is generally my expertise.

NJ: But they have deeds over here too in the annex.

PF: Annex to what?

NJ: To the courthouse here, the one on Kansas Street.

PF: That's the courthouse.

NJ: Yes, that is the working courthouse.

PF: That's the courthouse. Then the annex is the part on this end, as far as I know. What have we got? An annex courthouse to what? Because there is no political entity in the courthouse on the square. There's nothing of a jurisdictional character at all. No records, no nothing there.

NJ: They have voting.

PF: The commission for...is there, yes.

NJ: But all these land deeds are down there in Kansas City at the Kansas City courthouse, the deed books.

PF: No. Those that pertain to certain areas are over there. They have copies of some of them over there. But let me tell you, at the time of the WPA they hired people to copy the handwritten copies. Well, I don't know who the people were and I don't like to speak ill of the dead, but they were illiterate in reading Spenserian handwriting. And you cannot, unless you're like I am, who had read the original and knows these families and what their names were and how they were spelled, you can't interpret those records. Well, Joanne Chiles Eakin, who is a very fine historian, and she publishes the genealogical stuff she had taken a copy, she has printed, she has published a printed copy of the first letters of the county court. But as I say, unless you know who they're talking about...And the names are misspelled or just left out and they have left whole lines out when they were typing real fast because they were apparently paid by the page. I don't know how they paid them. But anyway they are better than nothing. I recommend that anyone who is doing any history on the city of Independence and Jackson County be sure and get a copy of that book because the early records are invaluable. And I couldn't work without them.

NJ: Now if you were going to follow, let's say chart the path of the trails, you would maybe look for the land deeds or deeds of properties through which the trails passed.

PF: Yes, you have to. And the reason you have to is because the county court wasn't here, nothing or nobody. And the first trails were Indian trails, no question about it. I know where they went. The reason I know is because I know the county records. And after the county was formed and the jurisdiction fell on the county court to say we will maintain roads, certain roads. The only two roads that crossed the Blue were the two roads that were maintained, that is the two county roads that crossed the Blue were maintained by the county court. There were other roads that crossed the big Blue but only these two were maintained. The rest of them were just paths.

NJ: The two that were maintained would have been the main early trails.

PF: That's right. It would have had to be.

NJ: Was one of those (unclear)?

PF: Yes.

NJ: And the other would have been...

PF: The first one was the one, well, no, we can't say that. The first one was the one that went up 27th and Topping. That was the road to the garrison. [this route was never the overland Santa Fe Trail, even though there have been some markers on it – it was a local road only].

NJ: Is the swale still there? There's evidence...

PF: Oh, sure.

NJ: The first one was there? That seems it is a little far north.

PF: Don't forget, they were following the Osage Trace. It came up through Lexington all along the river. It came up through where the town of Independence was and it split off. One went to 27th and Topping the other one went southwest.

NJ: The one that went through New Santa Fe?

PF: That goes later. That wasn't the same one. No, that still didn't get that...

NJ: That 27th and Topping. Is that part of the Sibley Survey, that first survey?

PF: I can't remember whether Sibley went up there or not. I should, because that's one of my most measured efforts was Sibley Survey [no, because 27th & Topping road was never the SFT]. I never heard anything about Sibley until I started working on it. All of a sudden...

NJ: Was it Brown? Was it Sibley? [most of this page of

PF: Brown was the surveyor, one of the surveyors. conversation is

NJ: So that was one of the first. inaccurate about the trails]

PF: It was the first road.

NJ: But you said there were two branches. That was one and the other went south.

PF: It forked off at the square in Independence and went southwest.

NJ: And that crossed the Blue at Red Bridge.

PF: (unclear) ford. Fishtrap Road is what it was called.

NJ: And then apparently later, because, you know, Truman mentioned Solomon Young always freighting out of Santa Fe in the late '50s I suppose.

PF: Well see, the Blue Springs road is one that I've been trying for years to get a handle on. But it's very hard because it was a very early trail. And it came...Oh, I drive over it and I

can't remember the name of it. But anyway it is east of Independence and went down and around like that down to (unclear)'s land or close to (unclear) land. That's the New Santa Fe (unclear).

NJ: Now in 1843 was the first major migration over the trail. They apparently assembled just a ways west of Watts Mill or what was Fitzhugh's Mill at the time. (questionable)

PF: Now there was a mill there before Fitzhugh but nobody knows that but me. (?)

NJ: I'm wondering is there information about how they got to that location. A lot of them, I think, came out of St. Louis, probably came by steamboat to Blue Mills or Wayne City landing.

PF: Yes.

NJ: Then apparently instead of assembling here in Independence went on down and assembled on the other side of the creek. (what creek – the small one at NFTM?)

PF: They came from so many different directions, certain of the wagon trains did. You're talking about emigrant trails, emigrant trains, right? You're not talking about the traders.

NJ: No.

PF: You're talking about the emigrants. So this is going to be '43 or later. And by then, let's see. How am I going to put it? First of all a wagon and six oxen would take up 100 feet. If a wagon train were only composed of 25 wagons, that takes more than a mile, toe to tail on the oxen. So you couldn't all assemble in Independence. You had to camp. You had to get your stuff all together and then get the wagon loaded and then meet out on the prairie. That's why we have rendezvous that are scattered from here to yon. They did this for a long time here in Independence. But after the influx when it got so heavy, the traffic was so heavy you couldn't do it. And there is a letter in the archives that says the country is white with tents for about 10 miles around, or words to that effect. (not accurate) I wouldn't want to be quoted on that particular quote. But the 10 miles struck in my mind, that there were tents for 10 miles around the city. Well, people would get off the boat, and that's one of the things that happened with Blue Mills Landing. It never went out of business. Wayne City went out of business. It was flooded out. But Blue Mills never was. So Wayne City, it was too hard to pull a loaded wagon up that hill. And that's why in 1849 the railroad [the Independence and Missouri River RR – wood rails]. tried to go around that (unclear) of land and come up through there along a diagonal course, so that they could get around that big hill. But Blue Mills never had that trouble. Now Wayne City [Upper Independence Landing - the landing area] – (Wayne City itself on top of the hill was not platted until 1847) was washed out in 1826 (?). It was washed out again in 1844. It never recovered from the 1844 flood [yes, it did!].

NJ: That was a huge flood.

PF: Yes.

NJ: That changed the course of the Missouri in a lot of places.

PF: Yes. Every time we have a flood in this area it's always caused by the Kaw [not necessarily]. Because the Kaw begins clear out in Kansas and it starts flooding and when it gets down here as it tries to make its way into the Missouri. It's really tough right there where the Missouri comes downstream and makes that curve. It has to cut somewhere, so it cuts on this side. There were a whole number of...

NJ: What information or what hasn't been written or published yet about, let's say, Independence or Jackson County's role in the trails that needs to be published or should be publicized?

PF: I wish we could. There were so many citizens of Independence who made their fortunes in the Santa Fe trade. There were others, many others, who were content to have their businesses here in Independence and remain here as families. But they were farming families. In my opinion, if you will read the county records you see the growth of the population moving in the direction to take care of the pattern of the trading of the immigrants and the traders. So to begin with there wasn't anybody here except those who were here before there was a county. And there were people here. There is proof that there were people in Independence in the area here before there was a county and before there was a county seat. So then you have Howard County and then there is another county in there and then Lafayette County and then Jackson finally. They were all carved out of one another. And so there were farmers. Most of them were farmers. As soon as the people began coming in from Kentucky and Tennessee, and many came overland to begin with. After Lewis and Clark and then somebody else came through here. Anyway there were some other explorers who came down and had to do with the trading at that time in 1805, I believe (no – at least 10-15 years later). So that the people who were in Lafayette County were doing a good job of settling here, but they were all settling next to the Missouri River. Because the only way to reach this area was to come up the river. The best way was to come up the river. And so there were little mills all over the place in Jackson County. Lots of mills, grist mills and (unclear) mills, not (unclear) mills but (unclear) mills. Then you began to get the artisans who came in, the saddle makers, the hatters. There was a hatter here in the 1840s. The merchants, the (unclear). The French were here early on, you see, and the Mexicans had already been up here. It's all mixed up together. If you don't watch out you get compartmentalized and I think that's Walter Cook's problem. One of his problems is he doesn't see enough of the whole picture to know when he's right and when he's wrong. I'm not able to either a lot of the times because in times past I have come to the wrong conclusion, but hopefully not very many of them have been.

NJ: That is because you have all these things interacting with each other.

PF: I have always gone on the assumption that I am not the end result. Somebody's going to come after me and use my work and say, "Well, she was right up to this point. But I found out from the Huntington Library that such and such tells me that this didn't happen.

- NJ: Are you satisfied that the trails as they've been charted in recent years, especially by you and Lou Schumacher, that those as accurate as we are probably going to be able to get? Or do you see that there maybe is still information?
- PF: No, a man (unclear) that's not me. Anyway, Franzwa has his finger in the pie. But there's a man in Kansas City who's a very good researcher, Craig Crease. I've been an admirer of his researching. He does a real good job. And he writes well. And he uses, as he says, "I use only original sources." And he will use the word compelling...(unclear). In his words, "It's compelling that this is so." Well, that's just fine. But then at the same time and I can give you a good example. When Becknell, the man who is called the father of the Santa Fe Trail, came through here, he went to Fort Osage to visit with the factor (George Sibley) at the fort. And neither he nor the factor made any mention of the meeting in their journals. And so Craig turns down when I say that one of the reasons why Becknell went up there was because Sibley had already been out surveying. In 1816 he'd been over the trail. He'd been out there surveying for the Indian Territories. Then he would be out there in '25 later. But he had already been out in Kansas and he knew his way around. Well, why wouldn't he go up there and pump him full and get everything he could from this man who knew it all. He'd been on the frontier since 1808. Well, shoot, he knew about the trails and where to go and what to do and certainly Sibley was willing to give him...But Craig takes issue with it. When I say it stands to reason that Sibley mentored Becknell's route through Jackson County. (unclear) sources and didn't neither one say anything about it. "Well," I said to somebody, "What were they doing all evening and all the next morning, sitting there staring at each other?" It certainly is a fair assumption that they discussed the route.
- NJ: I think if you let the reader know that you're an inference, and of course it is not provable one way or the other, but you're drawing a logical, reasonable inference. They still can make up their own minds. You haven't deceived them.
- PF: Somebody somewhere has got a letter from Sibley or someone at the fort who says that they were there discussing that. Somewhere that letter is going to turn up. Because Sibley wrote a lot of letters. And there's going to be a letter that's mailed between the 1st and the 15th (September, 1821? – none are known).
- NJ: In other words, you never assume that all the literature, all the documentation has been discovered that can be discovered.
- PF: No.
- NJ: There's always something to be discovered.
- PF: Always something that could come on, yes.
- NJ: Well, we are getting close to the end of our two-hour tape and probably close to your endurance here. But is there anything that you want to end with?

PF: With OCTA, once I got with Santa Fe Trail and got working with that end of the history and OCTA had grown into a national aspect and it was so far distant. I went to the first three, I think, conventions. But it got too involved for was interesting to me. I didn't want all that distance to have absorb and work with. I wanted to work this that I could work with. And so my interest, my interests haven't fallen off but my actions and my activities have fallen off with OCTA people. I've concentrated on...

NJ: In other words you don't want to spend the time and effort traveling long distances. You want to remain focused on Jackson County. You say there is plenty of history right here.

PF: Oh, yes. I'll never get it all uncovered. I have a friend from Germany who came over and got in touch with me. And he just loves the trails. He's a real buff. He goes...One year he'll go clear to Oregon over the Oregon Trail. The next year he goes over the Santa Fe Trail. Last year he was with Oregon. When he called me from Salt Lake City, he said, "Oh, Polly. That's a long ways."

NJ: A fellow from Germany.

PF: Yes, a very nice man. His wife doesn't want to travel in the United States. But she loves Italy. The family spends their vacations in Italy. But he comes every other year and goes...

NJ: That's it. We have people from foreign countries who come over here.

PF: He speaks very good English. And he corresponds if you can print. He can't read the script. And I can't read the German script, of course. But he and I correspond pretty well together.

NJ: And he's not the only one. Remember those Englishmen who flew the Oregon Trail?

PF: Oh, yes.

NJ: We appreciate you taking this time with us, Polly.

PF: Well, I'm glad to do it if I've helped you.

NJ: Why sure.