

# Kids' KOrner

## Kids Enjoy Traveling On Wagon Train

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LIGONIER (Westmoreland Co.) — Everyone looks forward to summer vacation. That is especially true for Travis and Ashleigh Beal who are ages 10 and nine and live in Zelinger, and Luke Smithbower, 10, who lives in Loretto.

All three of these kids were a part of the 1994 Appalachian Wagon Train, which traveled from New Baltimore to Ligonier.

Travis and Luke rode on Appaloosas while Ashleigh's transportation was a Shetland pony.

There were just three of the 130 children who participated in this year's wagon train parade.

Everyone has a lot of fun on the parade and Travis, Ashleigh, and Luke enjoy making new friends as well as meeting up with the friends they made last year.

This was the 25th year for the wagon train to be held. Each year, the horses, covered wagons, and a few buggies travel 70 miles in Pennsylvania.

Twenty-five years ago, it began in New Baltimore and ended in Ligonier. This year, it followed that same route.

In addition to the fun, there is a lot of work involved with the train. Everyone has to help with the chores and Luke says, "I don't always like the food, but I'm hungry enough to eat it anyway."

Each night, the horses must be washed down, especially if the weather is hot, and brushed. And,

of course, they must be fed. All that walking makes them very hungry. Each family carries its own horse feed along on the ride.

Because this is a pioneer ride, everyone must wear a Pioneer-type costume. Girls wear long dresses and bonnets, the boys wear fringes on their jeans, and coonskin or wide brimmed hats.

In every way possible, the wagon train copies the life of the original pioneers who traveled west in covered wagons to make a new life in a new land.

By imitating the lifestyle of the pioneers, Travis, Ashleigh and Luke learn how difficult it might have been to have traveled on horseback for months at a time.

On Monday, the train left New Baltimore and traveled 14.3 miles. Each day they traveled between 14.3 and 16 miles until their destination at Ligonier was reached.

In the evening, after the ride is over for the day, everyone enjoys different kinds of entertainment.

On Sunday, there was a gospel quartet that sang. Monday's evening fun was a contest for the ugliest man, the nicest beard, the prettiest bonnet, the best young man's hat, and the best young lady's bonnet.

On Tuesday, everyone had a pig roast dinner and a square dance.

Wednesday night there were wagon train games and on Thursday, a big 25th anniversary celebration.

Friday night is talent night and

anyone can participate by singing, dancing, or displaying some type of talent.

On Saturday, after a parade through Ligonier there is marshmallow toasting around a campfire.

Each year, the wagon train members carry a bag of mail presented to them at the beginning by the postmaster of that town.

It is to symbolize the mail that was often carried west by the wagon trains. Since there was no mail deliveries in the mid 1800s, friends and family who remained in the east had to send letters to their friends who had moved west in any way possible.

When California was admitted to the union in 1848, it took six weeks for the news to reach California.

Then, in 1860, the first Pony Express began. The very first Express run was from St. Joseph to Sacramento and took 10 and 1/2 days. President's Lincoln's inaugural address was delivered in a record-breaking Pony Express ride of seven days, 17 hours.

It was sometimes very lonely and difficult for those who had traveled west by wagon train not to be able to communicate with those they had left behind.

This is just one of the history lessons Travis, Ashleigh, and Luke learned in their week-long journey.

All three are looking forward to next year's trip.



Luke Smithbower rides an Appaloosa in the Wagon Train.



A scene from the wagon train evening entertainment. Truckloads of hay are everywhere to provide food for the animals.



Travis Beal and his sister, Ashleigh, ride in the Wagon Train with 130 children.

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