

**Early Santa Fe, Oregon and California Trails**

**In Jackson County Missouri**

**Based on first hand documentation**

EARLY SANTA FE, OREGON AND CALIFORNIA TRAILS  
IN JACKSON COUNTY, MISSOURI  
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There are early maps of the trails in Jackson County, Missouri, (1) however, these are very small and unmarked as for sections and make it difficult to trace exact location. The first usable source is that of William H. Miller in 1843. (2) The trails were identified, at that time, because Township 48, Range 32, was unsold government land and not surveyed at the time Jackson County was formed. While surveying, Mr. Miller did make references to the Road to Independence, Road from Independence to Harrisonville, Road to Santafee, and Santafee to Independence Roads. (3) All these roads were going in a southwesterly direction from Independence.

Eugene T. Wells, (3) quoted Charles Joseph Latrobe, an Independence visitor, in 1832, who recognized the commercial importance of the town and of the trail he wrote: "A little beyond this point (Independence), all carriage roads cease, and one deep black trail alone, which might be seen tending to the southwest, was that of the Santa Fe trappers and traders," (4)

Wells continued in his report: "Independence was the rendezvous point for the emigration in 1838 and in the succeeding years was the major outfitting point for that area....In 1844, an estimated \$50,000 was spent in Independence by the Oregon emigrants. The succeeding year (1845) the local merchants stocked outfits and goods for 8,000 emigrants to the Northwest." (5)

"In 1846 business transactions into Independence with the Southwest opened early, and another successful year was predicted." (6)

"The roads into Independence are lined with wagons, but weather conditions were unfavorable." (7)

Another report on road conditions: "The first five miles of the road leading from Independence to the Trace, we found in a Vary bad condition for wagons. We have passed several emigrants and two large Santa fe wagons badly stalled, notwithstanding the latter had six yokes of oxen each to draw them. This may prove another reason for Westport being made the point of rendezvous hereafter, unless the evil be remedied soon." (8)

The Jackson County Court responded to the challenge on August 30, 1836, County Court Minutes, page 196: The undersigned two reviewers named within the order to examine a change in the road proposed by Gan Johnson would



report....that we have examined the same....viz, beginning at the South end of James Chambers lane, thence running South one-half mile, thence due West three-fourths of a mile to a lone tree, where it will intersect the old road, we believe the rout with same improvement may be made practicable.....James Kinsey and Josiah Wallace....Which said report is by the Court here received and then the road declared a public highway, on the conditions said Johnson at his own expense make said change a good road and agreeable to the law respecting roads and highways."  
(9)

By 1838, Gan Johnson and his wife deeded 40 acres of land, (SW 1/4 of NE 1/4, Section 27, Township 49, Range 32) to the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. This later was often referred to as the "Presbyterian Campground", in court records, in petitions for road improvements on the trails.  
( Book F, page 132, Jackson County Court Records)

Searching and recording road changes require researching abstracts for property owners at the time of a petition. The county identified the location by the name of the owner and not by section and township. This is time consuming and difficult to find and this is one of the causes of incorrect locations. We are still searching some spots.

Before W. H. Miller had surveyed Township 48, Range 32, in 1844, many persons had settled upon the land through pre-emption claims. Along the Santa Fe Road were these persons later to be mentioned in court records and diaries; George Rhoades, Barnett Noland, Reuben Mockbee, David Vance, Archibald Rice, Jesse Barnes, William Montray, George Vernon, John Milliron, and others.

Few diaries are found of the 1846 period. Susan Shelby Magoffin recorded in her diary ( ) these events: "And after dinner between the hours of 3 and 4 we left the little village of I(ndependence) for the residence of Mr. Barns, a gentleman some ten miles this side of that place. here we procured a night's lodging preparatory to a final departure .... On Thursday morning (Thursday, June 11th) we left Mr. B's at an early hour....Now the Prairie life begins.... Our mules travel well and we jogged on at a rapid pace till 10 o'clock, when we came up at the edge of the last woods.."  
(10)

A letter from William H. Glasgow to "My Dear Ellen", Thursday 4 June, (1846) SantaFe road 16 miles from Independence expressed his disgust with traveling conditions: "The first day we got but 3 miles from town with half of our waggons the other half we left mired in devious mudholes strung along for a mile behind. On Sunday morning we started and



got on pretty well until dark overtook us at MR. BARNES' place 8 miles from town where we encamped and placed our animals all in his pasture. It commenced pouring down rain soon after dark and the next morning the roads were so slippery & muddy that we could not stir about 12 o'clock however I rode over the road for 4 miles selecting good places to cross the mud holes..." He continued with the rainy conditions and soft and slippery hills.(11)

In 1846, Edwin Bryant, decided to go West for health reasons. He proposed to travel with a party organized by Col. William H. Russell, on part of the Oregon route, then on to San Francisco. Edwin Bryant, Robert T. Jacobs, Robert Ewing, George Louis Curry, and former governor of Kentucky, Lillburn Boggs were among the emigrants. Col. Russell was elected to command the emigrant group.(12)

Edwin Bryant, former co-editor of the Louisville Courier, was writing a trail journal, recording precise and detailed accounts. His book, WHAT I SAW IN CALIFORNIA, was published in 1848, world wide publicized, encouraged travelers to follow and use his book as a guide.

Bryant's descriptions are vivid and long, so excerpts will be made of his observations. MAY 5, 1846, in Independence ....the beauties of spring are unfolding...alterations to our wagon were not complete....determined to stay on the spot until they were finished....did overtake the wagon, about a mile from its starting point, where I found it stalled in the mud.... finally a negro man with a well trained yoke of oxen, hitching his team to ours....we were "set afloat again....attempting to cross a causway....we were stalled a second time....A MR. ROSS, of Independence, passing at the time, acted as master-teamster....performed his duty to admiration. The oxen seemed willing to obey him... (13)

MAY 6 (1846) As we approached what is called the Blue prairie, the road became much drier and less difficult .... Having alighted from my horse to gather some (flowers) ....my saddle turned, and my horse threw me with great violence to the ground ....At two o'clock we reached encampment, composed of the wagons of Colonel Russell and the family of MR. WEST, emigrating to California. The wagons numbered in all about fifteen .... our oxen were released to feed upon the prairie .... A log house, the residence of a MR. MILLIRON, an emigrant from this country from Virginia, was situated about half a mile from our encampment. We visited this house soon after our



encampment. The family, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. M and several sons and daughters, have resided here, on the outskirts of civilization, four years.... About five o'clock, P.M., a very black and threatening cloud....discharged rain.... accompanied by flashes of lightning and crashing peals of thunder .... The capacity of the log-house in which we had taken lodging for the night, was confined to two small rooms; and of men, women, and children, all counted, there were some fifteen persons to be accommodated.... We resumed our march in the rain....We travelled about four miles to a small creek which is called, "Blue Creek,".... (14)

George T. Curry, with Edwin Bryant, wrote this letter to the St. Louis REVEILLE, "On the Trace," May 6, 1846: Old Friends of the Reveille: Here I am, at noon, on the sixth of May, at "Russell's Encampment," twelve miles from Independence, on the Santa Fe Trace, trying to write you a few lines, which, I fancy you ought to term "A letter from the inside of a wagon," for a regular storm prevails over the prairie around us, and I am forced to the inside of a wagon, using the bottom of a wash tub for a desk....(15)

The places and persons that Edwin Bryant had visited in 1846 would be visited again in his 1849 trip. We believe "Russell's Encampment", in 1846, and "Camp Bryant", in 1849, were in the same area, on 40 acres of government owned land, in Section 25, Township 49, Range 32 near of stream of water, enough pasture and water suitable for a large number of animals.

The family of Virgil Pringle moved from Connecticut, in 1804, to St. Louis and established a library and literary society there. His brother-in-law, Orus Brown, had migrated to the Willamette Valley, Oregon, in 1843. He persuaded other family members to also migrate there.(16)

The Pringle family and others left St. Louis, Wednesday, April 15, 1846 for Oregon, driving their teams across the state. By May 4th, they completed ferrying their stock across the Missouri River. Pringle proceeded to purchase bacon for the trip and some fine flour from Blue Mills. He commented that the flour would pass the Boston market. On May 7th they drove 8 miles to Independence, finished their outfit and encamped 4 miles beyond Independence. May 8th, they drove 12 miles to the Blue and encamped for the water was too high to cross. "The country today is very different from any I have seen, it being prairie, quite rolling or broken, and rocks in ledges. The soil good, interspersed with springs and patches of small timber." (17)

In 1849, Independence merchants were beseeched with inquiries concerning the advantages of crossing the continent from Independence, Westport or St. Joseph. The merchants requested Col. William Gilpin to make a reply. This was published in the newspaper, Warsaw Saturday Morning Visitor, February 3, 1849. (18) He began; "Independence now, for twenty years, the emporium of the commerce of the prairie, possesses indisputable and peculiar advantages over all other places, as the point of rendezvous and final embarkation for emigrants and travellers going to the Pacific."

In his article, Gilpin listed the shops, mechanics, available supplies and equipment that could be found there. By the number of diaries of that period, it is evident that the emigrants responded to this article published throughout the eastern states.

"About this time Independence became the focal point for California gold rush emigrants. Before the opening of spring in 1849, many gold seekers were in town and the business men were making every attempt to have plenty of supplies on hand for outfitting. The local press called attention to the advantages of independence as a starting point:..... that the fact is that the route from which this place has almost invariably been preferred by traders and emigrants since the promotion of Santa Fe trade, and since the first commencement of emigration to Oregon and California." (19)

In the February 14, 1849 issue of the St. Louis UNION paper emigrants were told that Independence had the advantage of a better road via Santa Fe, and the emigrants could leave two weeks earlier than St. Joseph because of earlier grass. (20)

Continuously property owners were enclosing their farms and asking the courts to move the roadways to the section lands. (21)

Booklet entitled, "Archibald Rice Plantation Campground, 8 miles from Independence on the Santa Fe, Oregon Pioneer Trails in the Spring of 1849", compiled by Roberta Bonnewitz, January 1995, will be inserted to avoid repetition of materials.

The above mentioned booklet emphasizes the continued use of the trails in the southwestern part of Jackson County. There were encampments all along the trail. There were wagons coming from Santa Fe and wagons going West. These statements are documented by the diaries published and located in historical archives.



William G. Johnston was in the county for 41 days , from March 15th to April 28th, and camped on the Rice farm. He recorded that on April 1 while he and a companion were taking a walk over the neighboring prairie, they visited the camp of Col. Russell, composed of a large party. He later mentioned that Mr. Edwin Bryant had arrived in Independence (April 6) and intends to camp near the town, while waiting the growth of grass. April 15th Johnston accompanied some friends searching for a campground near the Big Blue River. On their return they stopped to visit with Col. Russell. While there, Edwin Bryant rode up. He had been at the river selecting ground for his company and 150 mules. (22)

On April 28, Johnston and company reached the Blue River, at three o'clock. The stream was about ten yards wide, and three feet deep at the crossing. Its current was swift. Their mules, at first, refused to enter the water so the help of a yoke of oxen they were pulled high up on dry ground. On reaching the frontier line of Missouri.... they encamped on the farm of a Mr. Lipscomb, where they confined their animals in his barn for the night.(23)

James A. Pritchard arrived in Independence April 22d. His company was advised to wait until the grass had grown. He lamented that this advice delayed them for 10 to 12 days and they were unable to select good camping grounds. They continued to wander around until "on the 2nd of May we found ourselves some 13 miles from Indipendence." (24)

Henry Shombree, on Tuesday, April 3rd, liked the land in Jackson County but was already tired of dow for breakfast and meat and dow for supper. Members of his company were ill. Their time was occupied in breaking in the wild mules. Party members changed campgrounds often. April 25 they "travailed 8 ms south of Ind over a fine country.... The country well improved good farms beautiful on prar good timber scarce. ....Mr Bryant of St. L went past with his train of pack mules 180 in number and 60 men. ... Thurs 3, preparing to strike our tents for another camp ground all move tol well we traveled 12 ms SW over a rolling prairie on a crooked road great blue R. It winds thro a rich narrow valley covered with tol good timber we also crost a rocky creek, broad flat rocks forms its bed plenty of good stone all along ...." (25)

Charles Dulaney was a member of Edwin Bryant's group. On May 6th, 1849, from Camp Bryant, he found time to write to his brother, Robert L. Dulaney. He writes that they had left their last encampment (about 1 mile from Independence) about 10 days ago. He had been detailed alternately and

sometimes daily to herd the mules on the prairie. He was now writing by the light of a dirty, greasy lamp probably his last letter for a long time. His group intends to leave Tuesday or Wednesday en route for California. Some of the party had left earlier and now there were about 42 men.

Because the Bryant party expected to leave "civilization" within a short time, they decided to have a barbecue & invite the fair dames of the neighbourhood to unite in the festivities of the day. They made extensive preparations & bid, the "gals" far and near to their fandango. Unfortunately, a storm and spiked punch bowl upset the party and fights began. (26)

For many years, on the United States Geological Survey maps, (USGS Grandview Mo.-Kans.), in NE 1/4 of NW 1/4, Section 25, Township 48, Range 33W, south of 91st street, Kansas City, Missouri, has appeared the word "Bryant." Research has revealed no former owner by the name of Bryant. This area is near the former Milliron property. The Montray Spring Branch has large flat rocks suitable for a good crossing. Census records show there were a number of possible "girls very good looking, & clever enough in their plain, unsophisticated way." Swales and campground site may be the "Camp Bryant," of 1849. (27)

A large wooden sign, with the word "Bryant" on it, appeared on a 1929 Kansas City Southern Railroad survey plat, approximately 350 feet north of the present 93rd street, on the 26.5 acres, property of Mrs. Georgia E. Zimmerman. The sign was located by a swale coming up the hill, north to south, from the campsite area, which is south of the spring branch, known historically as Montray Springs Branch. (28)

No longer do Jackson County persons need to read figures of thousands of emigrants arriving each year in the county seat, Independence, and disappear from sight until found in Indian Territory. They did stay here in camps. They wrote glowing accounts of the type of soil and often wondered if they should remain here. There may be many more accounts found to resolve where the original trails were and how long their importance took a place in the history of our nation. Let us not yet carve our history in unyielding granite.



## NOTES

1 Reference for maps:

Sectional Map of Mo., Hutawa, 1844  
Colton's Map of Mo., 1861

2 Jackson County, Mo. 1843 land survey by W. H. Miller

3 Ibid

4 Wells, Eugene T., THE GROWTH OF INDEPENDENCE,  
MISSOURI, 1827-1905, "Bulletin of the Missouri  
Historical Society, 16 (October 1959), page 35

5 Ibid, page 38

6 MISSOURIAN REPUBLICAN, March 26, May 21, 1846

7 Wells, page 42

8 Liberty TRIBUNE, October 10, 1846; St. Louis UNION,  
January 1, 1848

9 Jackson County Court Minutes, No. 81416, page 196,  
August 30, 1836

10 Drumm, Stella M., THE DIARY OF SUSAN SHELBY MAGOFFIN,  
1846-1847, DOWN THE SANTA FE TRAIL AND INTO MEXICO,  
University of Nebraska, (Lincoln and London, 1926, 1962),  
pages 1 and 2

11 Gardner, Mark L., BROTHERS ON THE SANTA FE AND CHIHUAHUA  
TRAILS, EDWARD JAMES GLASGOW AND WILLIAM HENRY GLASGOW,  
1846-1848, University Press of Colorado, P.O. Box 849,  
(Niwot, CO 80544, 1933), pages 82 and 83, Notes 32 and 33,  
page 143

12 Bryant, Edwin, WHAT I SAW IN CALIFORNIA, University of  
Nebraska Press, (Lincoln and London, 1848, reprint 1985)

13 Bryant, Chapter II, pages 19-20  
also Jackson County, Mo. Land Records, Book G, page 272,  
Warranty Deed, dated Nov. 5, 1840, Thomas W. Mitchell  
and wife, Martha to Lawrence N. Ross, W 1/2 of NW 1/4,  
12-49-32, and E 1/2 of NE 1/4 11-49-32  
Book E, page 90 Index 1, page 124, Probate and Common  
Pleas Court, Estate of Lawrence N. Ross, letters of  
administration, October 1856. Inventory included above  
mentioned real estate except 9 acres off of North end.

- 14 Ibid, pages 21-25
- 15 Morgan, Dale, DIARIES AND LETTERS OF THE CALIFORNIA - OREGON TRAIL, Volume II, "George T. Curry Letter," The Talisman Press, (Georgetown, Calif. 1963), loaned by Central Missouri State College, Warresburg, page 513
- 16 Ibid, Volume I, "Diary of Virgil Pringle", pages 163 to 166
- 17 SATURDAY MORNING VISITOR, Warsaw, Missouri, Saturday Morning, February 3, 1849, Letter by Col. William Gilpin, Independence, Mo., January 8th, 1849", page 1
- 18 Wells, page 43
- 19 JEFFERSON INQUIRER, March 31, 1841
- 20 Wells, page 44
- 21 JACKSON COUNTY COURT MINUTES, Jackson Court House, Independence, Mo. :  
No. 83844, April 1, 1842....mark out road from Camp Ground, through fencing of Brooking, corner of Mockbee's fence on the old Santafee Road, passing farm of A Rice, through enclosure of Jesse Barnes and William Montray, line of stakes near enclosure of Thomas Shelton, near house of Ivinighe Lucas and J. Yager, with present road near north west corner of John Holloways fence to said Rock Ford on Big Blue. Ordered to open 30 foot road and declare a public highway ....  
No. 89624, October 1847 ....change of 205 yards on land of Alvin Brooking ....Santafe Road to be on better ground....  
No. 85961, May 1844 - petition of George T. Vernon for change in Santafee Road ....from E line of Section 24m 48-33, in SW direction to a lone Black Jack, thence to William Montray's Spring Branch, crossing it 80 yards below a cottonwood on said branch, between Thomas Jenkins house on said branch and thence in a south west direction .... with line of stakes to Santafee Road north of Hart Grove. Ordered and declared a public highway 20 feet wide .... old road to be vacated  
No. 87195, June 1845 - George T. Vernon proved to satisfaction of court that the change in the Santafee Road granted to him in May Term 1844 has been opened according to law and is now in good condition for traveling  
August 1849, Road District #41 ....begins at forks of Santa Fe and Slusher Mills Road .... thence with Santafe Road by Nolans, Rhoades, Rice and Barnes to forks of the



Santafée and high blue road at north east corner of McKinney's farm. George Rhoades appointed overseer to keep road 40 feet wide

- 22 Johnston, William G., EXPERIENCES OF A FORTY-NINER, A Member of the Wagon Train First to Enter California in The Memorable Year of 1849, Newberry Library, (Chicago - Illinois, MDCCCXCII)., pages 20 through page 35
- 23 Ibid, Page 52
- 24 Morgan, THE OVERLAND DIARY OF JAMES A. PRITCHARD FROM KENTUCKY TO CALIFORNIA IN 1849, Fred A. Rosenstock, The Old West Publishing Company, (MCMLIX), pages 54 -55
- 25 Shombre, Henry, DIARY OF HENRY SHOMBRE, Kansas State Historical Society, (Topeka, KS) pages 8 through 16
- 26 Letter of Charles Dulaney to his brother, Robert L. Dulaney, May 6th, 1849, Camp Bryant, Jackson Co., Mo. 2 pages Bancroft Library, University of California, (Berkeley, CA 94720)

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Ibid, Morgan, Volume II, "George T. Curry Letter, May 6, 1846"

Shombre, Henry, DIARY OF HENRY SHOMBRE, Kansas State Historical Society, (Topeka, KS) Typed copy of microfilm. Copy of original at National Frontier Trails Center, Independence, MO.

Wells, Eugene T., "The Growth of Independence, Missouri, 1827-1850." Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society, 16 (October 1959)



# ARCHIVAL MATERIAL

Miller, Wm. H. L. General reference to Wm. H. I. Miller's Surveyors notes, April 1843, Missouri State Archives, P O Box 778, Jefferson City, MO 65102 County: Jackson, Record: Surveyor's Notes, Vol. 516, pages 300-342 F 508

United States Geological Maps, USGS Grandview, MO-Kans Reference: "Bryant", Section 25, Township 48, Range 33, Jackson County, MO.

Kansas City Southern Railroad Survey Plat, NE 1/4 of NW 1/4, Section 25, Township 48, Range 33W, 1929

## ADDITIONAL MAPS:

Bonnewitz, Roberta L. Hand drawn map of Sections 23, 24, 25, and 26 in Township 48, Range 33W, showing landowners in 1849

Miller, William H., partial, Jackson County, Missouri Survey Map, July, August, 1843, Township 47, Range 33W, showing road, (a)" From Santa Fe to Independence, also (b)"From Harrisonville to Independence," often confused with Santa Fe Road.

Sacks, Alex F., County Surveyor, 1933 Road Map of Jackson County, Missouri, red line showing areas of our study

APPARENT TRAIL REMNANTS IN JACKSON COUNTY, MO.

TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, 1995

In the backyard of the home at 9058 E. 65th street, Raytown, MO, are faint depressions and some in the yard to the north of the home. These closely align with Miller's 1844 survey, going in southwest direction from "Y" intersection of Blue Ridge and 63rd street, touching Elm, 65th street, and possibly going westward about Rose Lane.

Miller's survey map appears to put the trail west of Archibald Rice, across Blue Ridge. It takes some imagination to see possible ruts on a rocky hillside in the western part of Floral Hill Cemetery.

Two sets of trail ruts are between 84th and 85th and Manchester. The first set is on the south slope behind the soccer field of the Blue Ridge Christian Church, 8524 Blue Ridge, crossing Manchester. The second set continues up the hillside to 85th street.

Visible ruts are on the southern part of the Benjamin Ranch, 6401 East 87th, some ---- yards further to the southwest are the swales leading from "Russell's Encampment," or "Camp Bryant" going in a southwesterly direction to 93rd street. The camp site was on government owned property until purchased by Mrs. Mary Blanton, in 1853.

The swales at Minor Park have long been acknowledged.