



OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION

GREATER KANSAS CITY - CONVENTION 2000

August 7-12, 2000

Beyond the Wide Missouri



INDEPENDENCE ROUTE TOUR

INDEPENDENCE TO LONE ELM CAMPGROUND

INDEPENDENCE ROUTE - TOUR D

OCTA Convention - August 2000

The Big Blue River

The Big Blue River valley to our left was the first hurdle for wagon trains starting at Independence. The Independence Route of the Santa Fe, Oregon, California Trail went basically south on the ridges between the Little Blue River east of Independence and the Big Blue River, both of which came from the south and a little west to drain into the Missouri River. They had to decide where to come off the ridge and cross the Big Blue River. The early crossing of the Big Blue was 151st St. at the state line. Later, the preferred crossing in the 1840's and 1850's was at the 'Red Bridge crossing' at 110th St.

There was a difficult crossing near 27th & Topping used as a local road from Independence to the Indian Agency at 45th and State Line starting in the late 1820's. Until it was bridged about 1850, wagons avoided it. After the bridge was built, it continued to be used as a local road.

The ridges between the two rivers

Between the Big Blue River and the Square at Independence is a series of ridges between the creeks. At the top of the Blue Ridge looking east on 23rd Street, it is easy to see the hills and valleys ahead. This is why the trails do not run east-west in our area. All the streams run south-north to drain into the eastward flowing Missouri River.

At Rock Creek is Hill Park with Frank James' grave (d. 1915). After his trial and acquittal, he married a local school teacher, Ann Ralston. This was their family farm; in fact Frank and Ann lived in the large white family farmhouse on Sterling just north of 23rd Street. She is buried with him in the small stone cemetery in Hill Park (d. 1943).

After passing Ralston St., notice Westport Rd. running at an angle. This is the Independence-Westport Road that crossed the Big Blue at 27th/Topping.

The Battle of Westport in October, 1864

The Battle of Westport was the focal battle of Confederate General Sterling Price's attempt in 1864 to divert the Union's attention from the siege around Richmond. Price (known affectionately by his troops as 'Old Pap') had been Governor of Missouri from 1853 to 1857. By 1864, he weighed about 350 pounds and wasn't able to sit a horse, and instead rode all summer and fall in a carriage. Nevertheless, he recruited a ragtag army of Arkansas Volunteers and headed north into Missouri in an apparent attempt to reach Ft. Leavenworth.

Price crossed the Little Blue River in eastern Jackson County on Friday morning, October 21, 1864. He battled his way across Independence, up and over every ridge as discussed above, against General Blunt's troops and camped on Rock Creek Friday night. The Union thought Price might try to cross into Kansas City at the 27th and Topping crossing discussed above, or maybe near Truman Road (15th St.) on Saturday, October 22, 1864. But he crossed down at Byram's Ford (63rd St.) under extremely heavy fire, with General Alfred Pleasanton in pursuit. Price sent Jo Shelby, the magnificent Cavalry General, toward Westport to hold the Union Army, while he made his escape Sunday afternoon to the south on the Military Road with all his wagonloads of booty. Thus ended the three-day Battle of Westport.

The Truman Home

On the southeast corner of Delaware and Truman Road, it was built in 1867 by George Porterfield Gates, Bess Wallace Truman's grandfather (Harry's wife). Although Bess came from a well-to-do family, Harry did not. The Gates family were part owners of the Waggoner-Gates Mill which is now the National Frontier Trails Center. This was the only home Harry ever owned. He was famous for taking his daily walk along the surrounding city streets.

The Liberty Street Route from the Upper Landing

-This was the early route to the Square from the Upper Independence Landing (also known as the Wayne City Landing). This was the connection up to the town of Liberty on the north bank of the Missouri River, thus its name. Liberty was founded in 1821, before the strip south of the River that contains Jackson County all the way down to Arkansas was purchased from the Osage Indians in 1825. Independence was founded in 1827 and settled on a name that was noble sounding like Liberty. Liberty's county was Clay County, named after Henry Clay, architect of the 1820 Missouri Compromise which allowed Missouri into the Union. Not to be outdone, Jackson County was named for the hero Andrew Jackson, who was elected President in 1828.

The Upper Independence Landing

Founded soon after the startup of Independence in 1827 (although the exact date is obscure), the Upper Independence Landing was one of two landings serving Independence; the other being the Blue Mills or Lower Independence Landing to the northeast. However, by the early 1830's the Upper Independence Landing dominated over the Blue Mills Landing for traffic bound for the new county seat at Independence.

The Upper Independence Landing (also known in later years as the Wayne City Landing) saw many of the people destined for the west climb its rocky bluff over the three decades of its existence. In 1833 Jotham Meeker, Baptist missionary, brought the first printing press used in the state of Kansas (then Indian Territory) ashore here at this landing. In 1838, Missionary Cushing Eels and his group stepped ashore here on their journey to their mission near Walla Walla, WA. Thousands of emigrants for Oregon and California started their journey west right here in the 1840's. '49ers struggled up this bluff in the great exodus to California in 1849.

The great flood of 1844 caused some damage to the landing, although it continued to receive considerable use throughout the 1840's. Through the 1830's, Independence was the main outfitting point for Santa Fe traders. But through the decade of the 1840's, as the opportunities for commerce continued to expand to Santa Fe and the stream of emigrants headed for Oregon and California increased, Westport and its river landing at the foot of Main Street eight miles west of here began to provide serious competition for Independence. By the 1850's, the Westport Landing largely supplanted the Independence landings.

The landings along the Missouri River competed vigorously. The Upper Independence Landing competed with the older Blue Mills Landing (ca 1832 - 5 miles east and much easier), Liberty Landing also east of here, and especially with Westport Landing at the Town of Kansas. The 1844 flood washed everything away, but the Landing built back.

In 1849, Independence merchants financed a mule-drawn railroad around the bluff through Sugar Creek, to make it easier for emigrants and freight, called the Independence

and Missouri River Railroad. This was the first such railroad in Missouri; it was not a successful operation and shut down in 1852.

Wayne City was platted in 1847 on the bluffs, but never amounted to much, especially after cholera victims were housed in the so-called 'Pest house'. Foundations of some of these structures still exist on the bluff.

The actual landing area was near the Lafarge Cement buildings down to the east of the overlook where the marker is. The trail went up in a draw between the overlook and LaFarge. Today's road is constructed on a sidehill, which the wagons could not do.

The Missouri River was much different 150 years ago. It was not channeled and leveed into a straight clear channel as it is today. It covered much of the flood plain as pools, channels, oxbow lakes, with a main channel that was full of sandbars, tree stumps and other debris. In the spring it flooded violently and during some years in the fall and winter, it could be waded and crossed easily. The water was slower moving, dirtier, shallower, and usually froze over in the winter, which it could never do today.

Francis Parkman in 1846 said *"Parties of emigrants , with their tents and wagons, were encamped on open spots near the bank on their way to the common rendezvous at Independence."*

William G. Johnston arrived in the spring of 1849 aboard the Sacramento and said *"...we reached a diminutive village glorying in the name of Wayne City, the landing place for the town of Independence, which lay four miles inland. Two hours later, having deposited us and our goods on shore.....we busied ourselves in putting the wagon together, as for convenience of transportation they had taken it apart when shipped at Pittsburg".*

A person known only as 'C. M. S.', writing from Independence on March 31, 1853 (at about the end of the Oregon-California Trail migration from here) said *"[Independence Landing is.....] graded and set with stone, and accessible at all stages of water. The road up the bluff is also graded, and now nearly McAdamized."* (Note: 'macadam' is an early name applied to road surfaces that were hard packed and contained broken stone or gravel.)

The River Boulevard Route from the Upper Independence Landing

This was the main route down to the Square in later years, after the trees were cleared and the route improved. The gully just north of the Mt. Grove Cemetery is where the horse/mule railroad entered onto the trail on River Boulevard.

At Waldo and River Boulevard was Harry Truman's boyhood home. Built in 1886, it was bought by John and Martha Truman in 1895 when Harry was eleven. They lived here six years, so Harry's teenage years were spend here. The Truman Home is just a couple of blocks southeast of here. The trail has swung toward the Square from River Boulevard and is a few blocks east of here.

The Trail makes a wide sweep from River Blvd toward the Square. It goes close to William McCoy's house on Farmer Street, built by him in 1856. He was Independence's first mayor in 1849, when Independence was finally incorporated.

Independence Square

The Square was platted in late 1826 by John Bartleson (the Bidwell-Bartleson party), Richard Fristoe and Abraham McClelland. It was situated on the highest ground in the whole area. Water supply was no problem because this hill is surrounded by springs. For this reason it was an intersection of early Indian trails.

When the road around the square was built, it called for the tree stumps to be no more than eight inches high, which was the normal road building specification of the time.

Ironically, our two principal outfitting towns of Independence (three miles) and Westport (four miles), were located away from the Missouri River. Westport was located on the road from Independence to the Indian Agency at about 45th and State Line.

The Courthouse

Some say the Courthouse Rock in western Nebraska on the Oregon-California Trail was so named because of this Courthouse, but everyone else's hometown courthouse) probably looked similar.

This final structure was completed in 1933 during Harry Truman's term as Jackson County Presiding Judge, with many additions through the years starting in the 1830's. We will see the original 1827 log courthouse later, which was built as a temporary structure a block southeast of here.

The Oregon Trail markers

At the northwest corner of the square is the magnificent granite Oregon Trail marker erected by the County in 1948. Not quite as magnificent, but still meaningful, is the small Oregon Trail National Park Service logo marker facing west, dedicated in 1986 by the Trails Head Chapter of OCTA as the first one on the trail. Trails Head Chapter has just replaced this logo.

Andrew Jackson statue.

Although there was some sentiment to call Jackson Count 'Blue County', Richard Fristoe, one of the early leaders here, had served under Jackson in New Orleans, and his brother Thomas married Andrew Jackson's daughter Nancy.

The Daughters of the American Revolution Santa Fe Trail marker

The 1909 DAR Santa Fe Trail marker is one of a series of 29 from Franklin to the Kansas state line. The Daughters of the American Revolution have marked countless historical sites and trails across the country in their 100+ years of existence. The Santa Fe Trail project began in Kansas just after the turn of the century to mark the trail while it was still reasonably fresh, having been used into the 1870's. Money was raised by the Kansas Chapter and 96 stones were placed all across the state in the 1906-1908 period. Soon after, the Colorado Chapter placed 27, and New Mexico placed about 20 on the Santa Fe Trail. The Missouri Chapter in 1909 had 28 of these larger rectangular stones (plus one special one in Buckner) made for the Santa Fe Trail and they were all placed from its starting point in Franklin to the Kansas border by 1912. They were all dedicated on the same day in May, 1913. Similar markers were placed on the Boonslick Road from Franklin to St. Charles and were dedicated in October, 1913. Also, similar markers were placed on the El Camino Real which was the early road along the Mississippi River from St. Charles to the 'bootheel' near Carruthersville. They were dedicated in 1917. Thus, the DAR has placed a continuous line of markers from the southeast corner of Missouri all the way to Santa Fe.

Jackson County Pioneers marker

Joseph Boggs - Part of the Boggs family

Isaac Drake - Later the coroner

William Moore - Early settler in Little Blue valley

Ledston Noland - Part of a family of early residents in Jackson County that included

Smallwood Noland who bought the log courthouse in 1831 and sold it to Algernon Gilbert the next year. Smallwood led, unsuccessfully, a party of men in 1849 to

find gold 160 miles west on the Kansas River. Smallwood also owned the Noland Hotel on the north side of the square.

Maj. George Champlin Sibley - Factor at Ft. Osage and completed the Sibley survey of the Santa Fe Trail for the U.S. Government in 1825-27

Mary Easton Sibley - George's young wife.

Wm Miles Chick - One of the earliest residents of the county. Bought John Calvin McCoy's trading post in Westport in 1836 and built a residence and warehouse at Westport Landing (Town of Kansas) in 1843, and was the first postmaster of Town of Kansas.

Richard Fristoe - One of three first county judges, state legislature, grandfather of Cole Younger.

Lilburn Boggs - Early governor of Missouri, who said in 1838 that he could not 'protect' the Mormons any longer. They immediately fled from north central Missouri to Nauvoo, Ill. In 1842 he was mysteriously shot to death through his house window. His son Thomas founded Boggsville on the Santa Fe Trail near Las Animas Colorado, which has been now been substantially restored.

Jacob Ragan - One of the fourteen founders of Town of Kansas.

Lynchburg Adams - Born in Lynchburg, VA, his farmhouse still stands near Atherton

Samuel Lucas - Helped lead an expedition to Santa Fe in 1827 that included fourteen-year-old Kit Carson. Later was a county judge.

Harry Truman Statue

On the east side of the square, national politicians often speak in front of it.

On the northeast corner of the square is the Clinton Drugstore, where Harry had his first sweeping job as a boy. On down the street to the north is the 1859 Jail on the right where Frank James and William Quantrill were held prisoner.

The trail from the Blue Mills Landing and both the Liberty and River Boulevard routes came to the Square. From the Square, two routes went south. One went on down Main Street on the east side of the Square, veered to the east onto Noland Road, and made a sweep to the west to join the other route at about 41st and Chrysler. The most used route went south along Liberty Street toward the Bingham-Waggoner House and south along McCoy Street. However, the entire area was full of campgrounds and wagon trains forming up, because there were springs all around. A large spring was located between the Square and the National Frontier Trails Center. A grist mill operated by John Overfelt, whose 1850 brick house at Pleasant and Walnut still exists, was on the creek which emanated from that spring.

The square was surrounded by blacksmith shops and stores of all kinds that met the outfitting needs of thousands of emigrants and Santa Fe Trail traders and freighters.

George McKinstry in May of 1846 said *"I find that the best place to fit out is at Independence. Oxen can be had at \$25 per yoke, mules or horses from \$30 to \$40 per head, flour this year \$4 per barrel"*.

Francis Parkman in May 1846 said *"The town was crowded. A multitude of shops had sprung up to furnish the emigrants and Santa Fe traders with necessities for their journey; and there was an incessant hammering and banging from a dozen blacksmiths' sheds, where the heavy wagons were being repaired, and horses and oxen shod"*.

Andrew Duhring said on May 5, 1849 *"In Independence I was lucky to meet what is considered here with very good accommodations, a room and part of a bed, a table, what is good enough for me at 75 cents per day board. The last two nights, we have been sleeping six persons in a small room with two beds"*.

"The town is mixed up and full of people I believe from every state of the Union, all dressed in the different equipments for California. Indeed, it looks more what I have imagined like a Mexican town. Many are old, hardy mountaineers that go as guides or teamsters to the different companies...."

"Coffee houses and groceries are crowded, and the many intoxications I meet with is really distressing to a great extent. This place must reap a great harvest from the long delay all have been subjected to, on account the weather having been long and very cold and the grass not sufficiently grown to justify any to start before the 10th of May".

Robert Weston Blacksmith Shop

At the southwest corner of Kansas and Liberty Streets, this was the last surviving blacksmith shop from trail days. It was built around 1830 and torn down in the 1920's. Robert Weston, son of the builder ran it for many years and it was typical of the extensive wagon-building operations in Independence.

Hiram Young

Hiram Young was a Tennessee slave whose master paid him for his work. He bought not only his own freedom, but also his wife's and they came to Independence. He built a carpenter shop for building wagons on north Liberty Street and became famous among the westward travelers for the quality of his wagons. His shop was burned in the Civil War as he sought safety in Fort Leavenworth. He rebuilt and became wealthy enough to begin a school for black children. A park and street are named after him.

He is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery with the inscription: "After leading a useful life, d. Jan 22, 1882, aged 59 years". His wife Matilda is also there, d. Feb. 23, 1896, aged 72 years.

The 1827 Log Courthouse

Now located on Kansas Street just west of Main, it was built on the southeast corner of Lexington and Lynn Streets in the fall of 1827 for \$150 by contractor Daniel Pennington Lewis and his slave Sam Shepherd, who later escaped and died in Lawrence at 105. It was 2-room 18'x36' structure with a 'puncheon' floor (split logs hewed one side). 'Temporary' until a permanent one on the Square could be built, it had a tall metal steeple on top, which made it unique locally.

Mormon Algernon Sydney Gilbert purchased it in December, 1831 from Smallwood Noland and lived in it and ran an attached store. The store was burned by locals in 1833 during the Mormon purge. The original structure survived and it was moved to its present location in 1916. A schoolhouse was later attached to the back, and this addition still remains. Harry Truman (as Jackson County Presiding Judge) had court proceedings in it in 1932-33.

The Mormon properties

On the various corners of Walnut and River Boulevard are properties of various branches of the Mormon Church that speak of the history of the Mormon Church in Jackson County.

The Mormon Church under Joseph Smith Jr. migrated here in 1831 from Ohio and bought 63 acres from Jones Flournoy, whose house (1826) is across the street to the north (moved there from another location). Smith dedicated this site as the new Temple site. However, the Mormons were ran out of Jackson County in 1833 to north Missouri and all their farms and property including this site was essentially forfeited. Smith was killed in Nauvoo in 1844 and many of the Mormons (LDS) went to Salt Lake under the leadership of Brigham Young in 1846-7.

After the Civil War, a group of Mormons called the Hedrickites returned and bought this Temple site property and began an independent branch called 'The Church of Christ, Temple Lot', which still exists on this property today. In recent years, an arsonist burned the wood frame building and this is a replacement building. Many of the Hedrick family is buried in a small family plot in eastern Independence. The original cornerstones have been relocated and marked on the square block of the Temple site lawn, which is the northwest corner of Walnut and River Boulevard.

Independence is the National Headquarters of the Reorganized Latter Day Saints Church (now known as the Community of Christ). This is the branch that remained loyal to the founder Joseph Smith family after his death, and didn't go to Salt Lake in 1846-47 from Nauvoo, Ill. The RLDS Church was organized in 1873. The cornerstone of the Stone Church on the north side of Lexington was laid by Joseph Smith III in 1887. On the northeast corner of Walnut and River is the RLDS Temple, completed in 1994. On the southwest corner is the RLDS Tabernacle, finished in 1962.

On the southeast corner of the intersection is a Utah Mormon (LDS) Visitor Center and Church.

Swales south of the Bingham-Waggoner House

These swales were discovered in 1999 by John Mark Lambertson, Director of the National Frontier Trails Center. Though fairly faint, these seven or eight swales are located in the right place and apparently on a lot that has not been cultivated. Ironically, no one before had thought to carefully examine this ground for trail remains.

By the early 1840's, the trail had been directed along Osage, Linden and McCoy streets, but before that time the wagons were not prevented from taking this short cut across private property. At that time, the city limits of Independence were Pacific St.

The Bingham-Waggoner House itself was built ca. 1856 by John Lewis, who had owned the property since 1845. Artist George Caleb Bingham bought it in 1864 and had his studio in a small separate building here (now gone) where he painted his famous painting Order #11. He sold the property in 1870. It was bought by the Waggoner family in 1876, owners of the Waggoner-Gates Mill across the street where the NFTC is today. The City of Independence bought it from the family in recent years and it is open for regular tours.

Swale near Santa Fe Trail Park

South of 31st Street just south of the park on a vacant lot owned by the RLDS Church is a swale going up to the southwest. About 100 yards farther southwest there is a faint swale visible down toward Santa Fe Terrace into the trees, merging with Santa Fe Trail Street. Before a couple of houses were built in recent years, this was a continuous swale of 250 yards.

The Trail on Blue Ridge Boulevard

Starting on about 44th Street the Independence Route of the Santa Fe, Oregon-California Trail is essentially on Blue Ridge Boulevard. Blue Ridge Boulevard is located on the Blue Ridge which comes from the north-northwest. The trail comes in riding the ridge from Independence Square. At this point the ridges meet and the trail follows the Blue Ridge for the next forty blocks or so (about five miles).

In recent years, several green Boy Scout Santa Fe Trail signs (only 5-6 left) have been erected all along Blue Ridge Boulevard. Just recently, the City of Raytown has installed some new blue *Santa Fe Trail 1849* street signs as well.

The William Ray blacksmith shop site (built ca. 1849) was located near 63rd and at Raytown Road. It was the beginning of the City of Raytown, named of course for Ray.

Rice-Tremonti House

On the southeast corner of 66th and Blue Ridge Boulevard is one of the oldest wood frame houses in the Kansas City area. Built 1844 by Archibald Rice on this 160 acre claim he had owned since 1836, it was a frequent stop by trail travelers to camp and buy goods.

Matt Field, stopping at the 1839 house (that preceded this one by a few years) October 29, 1939 “.....got a Christian supper of Bacon, Corn bread and milk at Farmer Rice’s....”

Amos Josselyn, April 25, 1849 “Left camp at 8 ½ o’clock and drove to Mr. Rices (6 miles) where corn was pleanty at 1.25 per bll.”

A lot of 1849 diaries mention the house, but when Archibald died in 1849, the son Coffee owned it from 1850 on, and he discouraged emigrants from stopping here. He blamed a couple of 1849 cholera deaths on the emigrants. So there are no more mentions of emigrants stopping here after 1849.

Coffee raised his family here. His wife Kitty had a slave named ‘Aunt Sophie’, who did the cooking in her cabin. She was highly thought of by the community and died in 1896. The log cabin on the property is called ‘Aunt Sophie’s cabin’, but its authenticity is not certain. As a result, for many years, the property and house was known for Aunt Sophie.

Coffee died in 1903 and Judge Joseph Lowe owned it. He was the first President of the National Old Trails Association and was instrumental in supporting the DAR in marking the Santa Fe Trail across Missouri. Harry Truman became President of the NOTA in 1924 and served several years.

Dr. Louis Tremonti bought it in 1930, had his medical practice here, and added some rooms onto the house. The Friends of Rice-Tremonti was formed to raise funds to purchase the house from Dr. Tremonti’s widow in 1988 and preserve the home. They continue to operate it. Now a Raytown City Park, it is a Certified Site on the Santa Fe and California National Historic Trails.

Cave Spring Park and Interpretive Center

The Park was originally a part of the Barnes farm, which was a stopping point on the trail. The Barnes farmhouse was located about 100 yards east on about 72nd Street. It may have been operated after 1849 by a Col. Grant as a store and tavern. The house burned in the early 1920s.

The spring is not mentioned in any diary accounts, but almost certainly was a campsite for trail travelers. The name Cave Spring was applied to the area around 1900 and the DAR marker on Blue Ridge Boulevard carries that name on it, having been erected in 1913. The trail is on Blue Ridge running between the Park and the Barnes house location.

This property was owned in the 1870’s by Solomon Young, Harry Truman’s maternal grandfather, who had earlier been a freighter on the Santa Fe Trail, and from whom Harry undoubtedly learned to appreciate frontier history.

The Development of the Kansas City area Frontier Trails Network

The Santa Fe Trail went through two decades of change in the Kansas City area before evolving into its final form by about 1840. In the early years of that decade it also became the route of the Oregon Trail and California Trail.

1821-1827

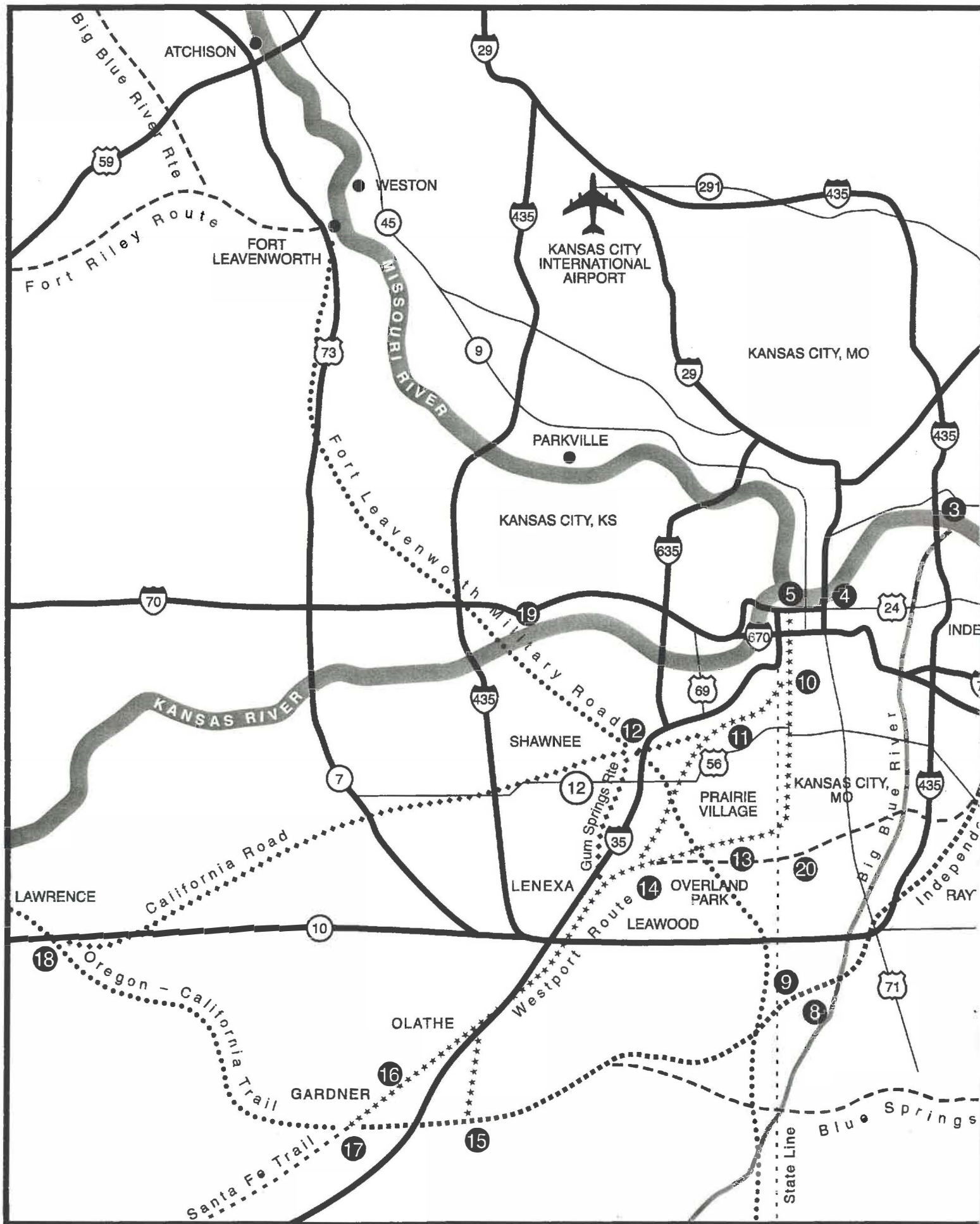
In 1821 the young American Republic found itself extended from the Atlantic to the Mississippi, with a tenuous sliver of frontier extending cautiously westward along the Missouri River from its mouth near St. Louis. Along this string of small Missouri River settlements was Franklin, precariously situated in the Missouri River flood plain across from present day Boonville in the center of the state, and on the River in western Missouri was Fort Osage, established in 1808 as a government "factory" post set up for Indian trade. The area we know today as Kansas City (and Independence and Westport) was in a wild and undeveloped state in 1821. Fort Osage anchored the northeast corner of present day Jackson County. The Chouteau's small fur trading post near the mouth of the Kansas River anchored the northwest corner. The Missouri River meandered unrestricted along the north boundary and the Big Blue River flooded out every spring. By virtue of the 1808 Osage Indian Treaty which allowed Fort Osage to be constructed, Jackson County was still in Osage Indian hands and would not be available for settlement until the 1825 Treaty was completed.

In 1821, the year William Becknell and five companions from the Franklin area blazed the Santa Fe Trail, there were two routes in use in this area. One route proceeded south from near Fort Osage, following the ridge east of the Little Blue river, to a common rendezvous point for traders from the Franklin area called the "Blue Spring" (in present day Blue Springs). This trail continued south, crossing the Little Blue river near present day Grandview, crossing the Missouri border and the Big Blue River at present day 151st Street, and continuing to the famous Round Grove Campground in today's Johnson County, Kansas.

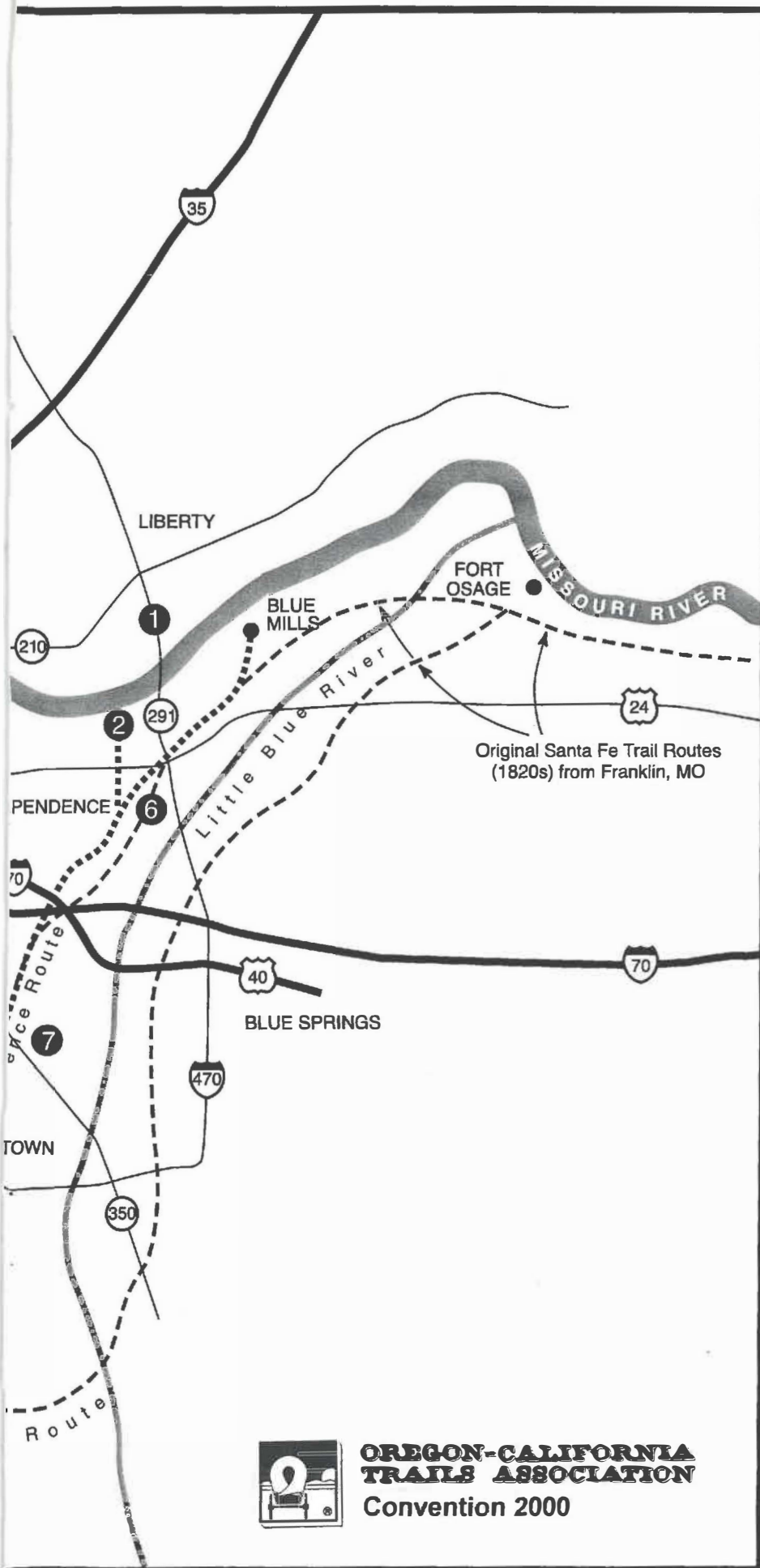
The other route of the Santa Fe Trail in this early era ran west from near Fort Osage, crossed the Little Blue River and turned southwest to run on the ridge east of the Big Blue River, stayed east of the later (1827) location of Independence and continued southwest through present day Raytown. It finally turned west to cross the Big Blue River in today's Swope Park and crossed the State Line near today's 79th Street. It continued through Johnson County, KS where it met the other route near Round Grove (later, and more commonly known, as Lone Elm Campground).

1828-1839

By 1828 with the founding of Independence the previous year, the Independence Route of which we are more familiar had begun to evolve. Santa Fe traders began to bypass the "Blue Spring" route east of the Little Blue River. Instead they began to favor a route which followed the old northerly route out of the Fort Osage area, but instead of turning west in today's Raytown to approach the Big Blue River, the traders continued on south along the "Blue Ridge", continuing southwest and meeting the old route from the Blue Spring west of present day Grandview, effectively cutting off the old route east



Kansas City Area Frontier Trails Network



- 1) Liberty Landing
- 2) Upper Independence
(Wayne City Landing)
- 3) 1821 Chouteau Post
- 4) 1826 Chouteau Post
- 5) Westport Landing
- 6) Independence Square
- 7) Rice-Tremonti House
- 8) Minor Park Swale
- 9) New Santa Fe
- 10) Westport
- 11) Shawnee Indian Mission
- 12) Gum Springs
- 13) Harmon Park Swale
- 14) Strang Park
- 15) Lone Elm Campground
- 16) Elm Grove Campground
- 17) Trail Junction
- 18) Bluejacket Crossing
- 19) Grinter House
- 20) Nine Mile Point on
early Santa Fe Trail

* Map not to scale

of that point. This new route continued to cross the Big Blue River like its predecessor, near the intersection of today's 151st Street and State Line.

By 1834 Westport had been founded four miles south of the Missouri River, and twelve miles west of Independence near the Missouri border. At about the same time the landing on the Missouri River was discovered by John C. McCoy near the foot of Grand Avenue and the levee in downtown Kansas City. With the discovery of this "Westport Landing" some twelve miles upstream from the Upper Independence (Wayne City) Landing, traders who chose to unload their goods here could avoid the troublesome and sometimes dangerous crossing of the Big Blue River that bisected the county.

The route from the Westport Landing ran south through present day downtown Kansas City, meandering generally between Grand and Broadway of today, and continued into Westport. Two routes exited out of Westport, one meandering south to meet up with the route coming off the crossing of the Blue River in today's Swope Park and crossed the State Line at about 79th, and the other route going west-southwest out of Westport continuing past the Indian missions located just west across the Missouri line.

By the early 1830s Independence had gained favor as the main outfitting point for Santa Fe traders, over other points to the east. But as the decade closed, and as the outfitting opportunities for commerce expanded to include outfitting for the Rocky Mountain fur trade and emigrant wagon trains destined for Oregon, Westport began to provide serious competition for Independence.

1840-1860

By 1840 the Santa Fe Trail had evolved into its final basic form in the Kansas City area, and by 1841 these maturing routes were sustaining traffic from Oregon and California emigrants, as well as Santa Fe traders and freighters.

The trail southwest out of Westport past the Indian missions remained essentially the same. However, the crossing of the Big Blue River in today's Swope Park fell into disuse in the 1840s. Thus the route that meandered south from Westport now crossed the Missouri line at about present day 69th street, cutting off the old State Line crossing a mile farther south.

The trail out of Independence also ran two routes. One coursed southwest out of Independence, merging with the other Independence route near today's 66th and Blue Ridge Boulevard. The other route ran south out of Independence, entering present day northeast Raytown, and continuing southwest, turning south again near today's 66th Street to follow the Blue Ridge. The trail continued down the Blue Ridge Boulevard corridor, meandering southwest to the crossing of the Big Blue River in today's Minor Park near Red Bridge Road. The trail continued southwest and crossed the Missouri line at about present day 122nd Street, thus cutting off the old Blue River crossing at today's 151st Street in favor of this new "Red Bridge" crossing downstream.

In the main these were the routes as traveled after 1840, and in fact are the delineations by which these trails are most commonly considered. The great Santa Fe, Oregon, and California Trails marked these later routes as their traces until the Civil War drove the main trailheads north of the Kansas City area. With the end of the Civil War in 1865 the railroads moved the main trailheads farther and farther west.

85th and Manchester Swale

This swale is story of both a defeat and a victory. Until recent years this swale was part of a continuous swale for nearly ¼ mile through this property and running diagonally across the soccer field on the east side of Manchester, where there used to be trees, walking paths, and the gully was natural. However, the owner, the Blue Ridge Bible Church, has bulldozed the remaining swales on their property in several stages ending in 1999, leaving only this swale west of Manchester.

This 1¼ acre property with the spectacular swale on it is now owned by Cave Spring as a result of their fund raising effort and the generosity of Gwen Holt, the executor of her mother's estate. Completed in 1999, the three-year effort to purchase this site began before the last destruction of the swale by the Church, so this segment becomes even more meaningful now. It's now a Certified Site on the Santa Fe, Oregon and California National Historic Trails, the only such site in the nation that carries all three National Park Service Certifications.

Schumacher Park

Schumacher Park is now a Kansas City Park on land donated by Lou Schumacher, recipient of OCTA's 1990 Friend of the Trail Award. There are no trail remains on the property, but the early trail went diagonally across the property to the southwest.

The exhibits now on display are the result of a cooperative project between the National Park Service and Kansas City Parks and Recreation Department. They depict the various cultural and social groups using the trail.

Heart Grove Campground

Located just southwest of Bannister Mall in the 'triangle' formed by I-435 and Highway 71, this campground was located on the Heart Grove Creek which passes through this picturesque valley.

-Hiram O. Miller, en route west with the Donner party, May 14, 1846 wrote "*Camped at 'Heart Grove' Jackson County near the Indian line twenty two miles from Independence on the Big blue.*"

The trail at this point has come off the continuous line of ridges running from Independence. The trail comes up from Heart Grove Creek near the communications tower and near the overpass over I-435 heading southwest toward the Big Blue (Red Bridge) Crossing. In fact, some diaries mention they are coming off the ridge. We have recently found considerable lengths of swales in the woods east of Blue River Road as the trail comes down through that undisturbed ground toward the Red Bridge Crossing.

The Big Blue River (Red Bridge) Crossing

East of Blue River Road the trail came down off the system of ridges that runs between the Little Blue River valley and the Big Blue River valley and descended toward the southwest down a big hill that is undisturbed timber and contains several swales. West of Blue River Road, trail is running east-west about 100 yards north of Red Bridge Road and bends back to the northwest and crosses the Big Blue River about 250-300 yards north of the Red Bridge. There has been a 'red' bridge at this site since the first one was built in 1859 by George Todd and his father. George was one of Quantrill's chief lieutenants. This is at least the third red bridge at this site.

Issac Wistar, May 6, 1849 recorded "*There is a large camp below us on the Blue, badly afflicted with cholera, of which five have died, two of them last night*", and on May

7th he wrote *"There is quite a populous graveyard at the crossing of the Big Blue, and numerous single graves along the trail."*

Calvin Graham, May 1st, 1853 said *"Left camp went 7 miles to the Big Blue River crossed went one mile and encamped.....plenty of wood & water.....here is blacksmith shop.....the Blue is pretty high but ford able."*

Edmund Hinde, April 26, 1850 wrote in his diary *"About 7 o'clock we decamped on our way for the Blue River. On the road we discovered the Hind Axeltree had given away which was in one sence fortunate had it broke when out from all timber we would have been in a nice predicament. Altho broke we took in our food and crossed Blue River and sent back for a new one..... We are now only three miles from the plains and then we leave all settlements."*

Minor Park Swale

From the Big Blue River Crossing the trail went along today's Kansas City Southern's RR tracks and turned southwest up the swale in today's Minor Park. This swale is probably the most magnificent one in the Kansas City area and runs for about 150 yards up the hill.

There is a DAR marker at the top of the swale placed about 90 years ago. The interpretive exhibits were placed in the Spring of 2000 and were a partnership project of the National Park Service and the Kansas City Parks and Recreation Department.

New Santa Fe

Located just east of State Line on Santa Fe Trail Street (about 122nd), this village sprang up in the 1840's as a 'last chance' entrepreneurial effort for trail travelers before they entered Indian Territory. This was not an outfitting village in the usual sense, but there was an assortment of businesses here including a blacksmith shop, tavern, etc. Here the Independence Route of the Santa Fe-Oregon-California Trail crossed into 'Indian Territory' until 1854 when Kansas Territory was established and opened for settlement. Emigrants were essentially leaving their country by crossing this line; and besides that, they were entering 'Indian Country'. Nearly all diarists mentioned this poignant event.

New Santa Fe was incorporated in 1852 but absorbed into Kansas City about 1900.

The Cemetery contains what appears to be a faint swale plus the graves of Dabney Lipscomb, who owned the land here, and the graves of son Nathan, who died in 1846, and wife Susan, who died in 1849.

The interpretive exhibit was placed in the Spring of 2000 and was a partnership project of the National Park Service and the Kansas City Parks and Recreation Dept.

John E. Brown on his way to California in 1849 recorded *"May 16th we crossed the line of the U. States."*

Joseph Sedgley on his way to California in 1849 recorded on Tuesday May 22 *"We forded the Big Blue River, crossed the Missouri State line, and camped on the prairie, in the Indian Territory. We passed five wagons bound to Santa Fe, and met one wagon bound home, the men having died of the cholera. We have passed many graves of the victims of that terrible scourge, which is raging all around us."*

William G. Johnston, also on his way to California in 1849 recorded on Saturday, April 28 *"At six o'clock we reached the frontier line of Missouri, which marks the separation between civilized and uncivilized life." "Here alongside the farm of a Mr. Lipscomb we encamped, and by permission used an enclosure near his barn for confining our animals...."*

W. W. H. Davis on his way to Santa Fe in 1853 recorded that they encamped on the prairie at a small settlement called New Santa Fe near the western border of Missouri.

Indian Territory

Present-day Kansas was established as Indian Territory with Congress passing the 1830 Indian Removal Act, which called for all tribes in the Eastern U.S. to move to west of the Missouri Border. Non-Indians were prohibited from living west of this line, therefore there were no towns west of here. Until 1854 no towns could exist west of the border, which is the reason why the Santa Fe, Oregon, and California Trails started in Independence and Westport; the last places to buy wagons, animals and outfitting supplies. This 'wall' existed until the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 which opened the Kansas and Nebraska Territory for settlement.

The Indian Treaty money and annuities greatly fueled the growth of Westport, Town of Kansas and even Independence.

When the tribes were moved to Indian Territory, their reserves were long and narrow strips of land extending west from the state line for 100 miles or more. The Indians preferred to have access to the trading posts such as Westport, but also wanted access to buffalo hunting grounds farther west.

The state line is the same today as when it was surveyed by Joseph Brown in 1823 as the western border of the state of Missouri.

The Fort Leavenworth Military Road

Note the KCAHTA Fort Leavenworth Military Road marker just west of State Line. The Fort Leavenworth Military Road went from Fort Leavenworth south to Fort Scott and Fort Gibson as part of the string of forts from Fort Snelling near Minneapolis to Fort Jessup in Louisiana, which were built after the 1830 Indian Removal Act to keep the Indians on the west side of the border and the whites on the east side. Contracts were let for road building between the forts, so the Military Road was actually a constructed road.

The Military Road is different from most of the frontier trails. The other trails, although called 'roads' by the people that used them, basically went the natural way along the ridges, etc. on the easiest route. No construction improvements were made until the latter stages, like some bridges, for instance. The Military Road was built according to military specifications by contractors who bid for the contracts. The surveys for the road were completed in 1838 and the Commission, which included Zachary Taylor (Mexican War hero in 1846 and elected President in 1848), Stephen Watts Kearny and Nathan Boone (son of Daniel), advertised for construction bids for various segments of the Road. Bids were received in September 1839 and one of the contractors for the 85-mile long segment from Fort Leavenworth to Trading Post was Daniel Morgan Boone (brother of Nathan) and John Bartleson.

The specifications for the Military Road called for *"timber to be cut down to a reasonable width, wet and marshy places to be rendered passable, cheap bridges to be erected where fords did not exist, the center to be built up as necessary, and the tree stumps to be cut to no more than eight inches high"*. Not exactly a superhighway! But it was typical of road building specifications of the time.

The Fort Leavenworth Military Road later became a part of the Santa Fe Trail, especially as a connection to it for troops destined for the Mexican War starting in 1846. It also became a part of the Oregon-California Trail. The Military Road, in place by 1839, served very quickly as another route for emigrants to go west to Oregon or

California. They would outfit at Westport and go west to Gum Springs, catch the Military Road to Fort Leavenworth and then go on the Military Road from the Fort that led to Marysville, KS and on to Fort Kearny and Fort Laramie.

The Military Road became of less importance after the Kansas-Nebraska Act opened the area for settlement. Now the Military opened roads running to the new forts (Riley, Hays, Harker, Wallace, etc.) farther west, and the north-south road was unneeded. However, it was used as a route to Oregon and California north from Gum Springs through the mid-1850's and as a local and regional road after that.

Kansas City Area Historic Trails Association markers

Watch for KCAHTA 'Independence Route' markers on section lines all the way along the Independence Route in Johnson County, Kansas. The Kansas City Area Historic Trails Association has just last Fall marked the Independence Route in Kansas with a grant obtained from the KC150 Legacy Fund. These markers bring the total to about 330 markers erected in Johnson, Wyandotte and Leavenworth Counties by KCAHTA in recent years, marking the Independence Route, the Westport Routes, the Fort Leavenworth Military Road and the California Road. These markers were precisely located using information researched by KCAHTA members, principally Lee Kroh, from the original survey field notes and maps done by the U.S. General Land Office in 1854-56 after Kansas Territory was established. These trails were noted very precisely as they crossed each section line. The section lines are one mile apart in each direction and are still the exact same survey lines by which all land ownership is described throughout most of the United States.

The 'Treeless Prairie'

Immediately after crossing State Line, the Independence Route enters the 'treeless prairie'. Zebulon Pike, Stephen Long and others in the early 1800's called this land the 'Great American Desert'.

Note the 'M' plates in the intersections as we turn, the surveyor's marker for the section corners, which are unchanged from the original 1856 General Land Office Surveys. 'M' stands for the surveyor's word 'monument' which denotes a section corner. These section corners in Johnson County are exactly in these intersections because the survey was done before roads were built and they were built right on the section lines. Not so in Jackson County, which was being settled and surveys were done early, in segments, by different groups.

In fact, Jackson County, Missouri is different from any county all along the Santa Fe, Oregon or California Trails, because it was substantially settled before the trail was in heavy use. The trail was not free to go where it wanted to like all through the west in Indian Territory or open lands. There were settlers, farms, fences, and a county court that designated streets and roads. The court was petitioned often by landowners who objected to the trail coming through their land. The court also changed the designated streets and roads for the trail quite often. That is why many maps will show the trail making 90 degree turns in many places. That is where the county roads were, and the farmers were farming and fencing their farm land.

Bleeding Kansas

At 135th and Mission Road is the 1877 Oxford School which is to be moved, but the future site is indefinite at this point. The school is named for Oxford Township, which

received some of the heaviest illegal 'cross-border' voting in 1855 which elected the 'Bogus Legislature'. This was a pro-slave legislature in Kansas Territory, although the territory was occupied predominately by free-soil residents. At one time, Kansas Territory had two legislatures, one pro-slave, one free-soil, until the issue was finally resolved by 1858. This choice of whether to be slave or free was allowed by the provisions of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, a provision that had also been allowed the new Territories of New Mexico and Utah as a part of the California Compromise of 1850.

Feelings ran high along the border and danger was everywhere. Many died in local skirmishes that gave rise to the name 'Bleeding Kansas' in the late 1850s. Some historians claim the seeds for the Civil War were sown here. The local violence did not stop when the Civil War began, but continued up to the time of the Quantrill Raid on Lawrence in August, 1863 and the resulting Order #11 issued by General Thomas Ewing of the Army of Missouri.

Lone Elm Campground

On the southeast corner of 167th and Lone Elm Road is the location of one of the most mentioned campground along the entire Oregon-California Trail by diarists. Lone Elm was one of the most famous frontier trail camp sites and rendezvous points, and for a good reason. In the almost four decades of its use, starting in 1821, thousands of Santa Fe traders, Oregon and California emigrants, soldiers, mountain men, 49ers, and missionaries came this way...William Becknell, John Fremont, the Donner party, Kit Carson, Francis Parkman, all spent time here at Lone Elm.

This trail camp was first known as Round Grove, named by the earliest traders to Santa Fe. By 1827 it shared duty with Elm Grove 2.25 miles northwest on the same Cedar Creek. (And often mistaken for each other). By the mid 1840's the great old tree was gone, used for firewood, but such was its fame that sporadic reports continued through the 1850's of its existence.

Some of Lone Elm's fame is attributable to Newton Ainsworth, the first owner of this land in post trail day, and a tireless promoter of Lone Elm and his farm. In fact, he called his farm 'The Lone Elm Farm'. He was instrumental in the placement of the DAR marker here in 1906, which continues to grace the spot today.

June 11th, 1846 Susan Shelby Magoffin records in her magnificent diary *"There is no other tree or bush or shrub save on Elm tree, which stands on a small elevation near the little creek or branch. The travelers always stop where there is water sufficient for all their animals. The grass is fine every place, it is so tall in some places as to conceal a mans waist."*

Samuel Rutherford Dundass, April 30, 1849 recorded in his diary *"We arrived before sunset at lone elm encampment, and stopped for the night. The encampment is so called from an elm tree that stands almost in the bed of the small stream affording water of tolerable quality. It is the only tree for miles around, and is an object of curiosity to all who pass by.....the night was very cold and windy, but our days labor had prepared us.....with bedding of Buffalo skins and blankets."*

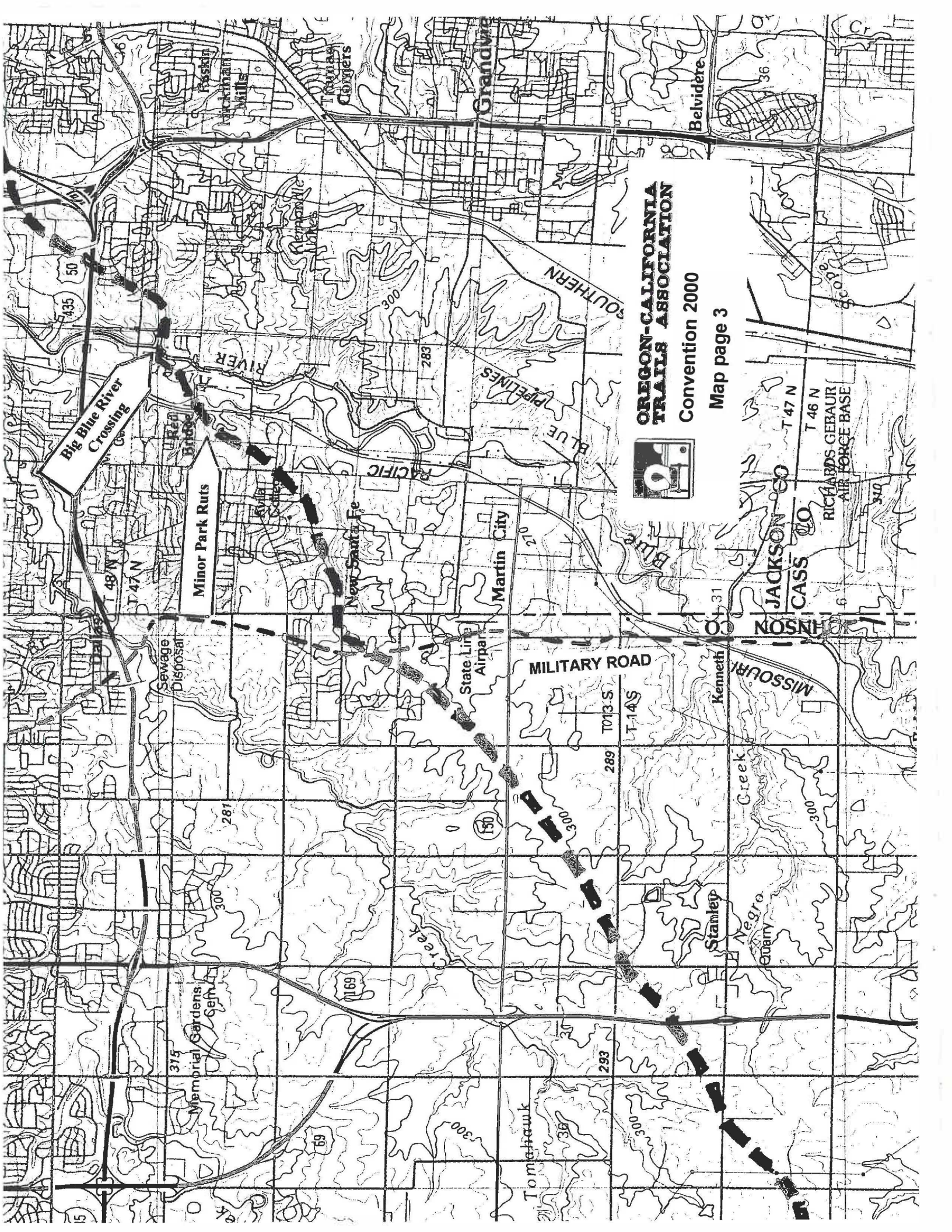
The reason why the Lone Elm Campground and Elm Grove Campground were so popular was not because they were magnificent locations or had a lot of water or forage. The reason was that trees were there. Elm Grove was first known as Caravan Grove and Lone Elm was first known as Round Grove. These names explain the uniqueness of these sites: they had groves of trees in this treeless prairie.



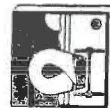
**OREGON-CALIFORNIA
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Map page 2



**OREGON-CALIFORNIA
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Map page 3

