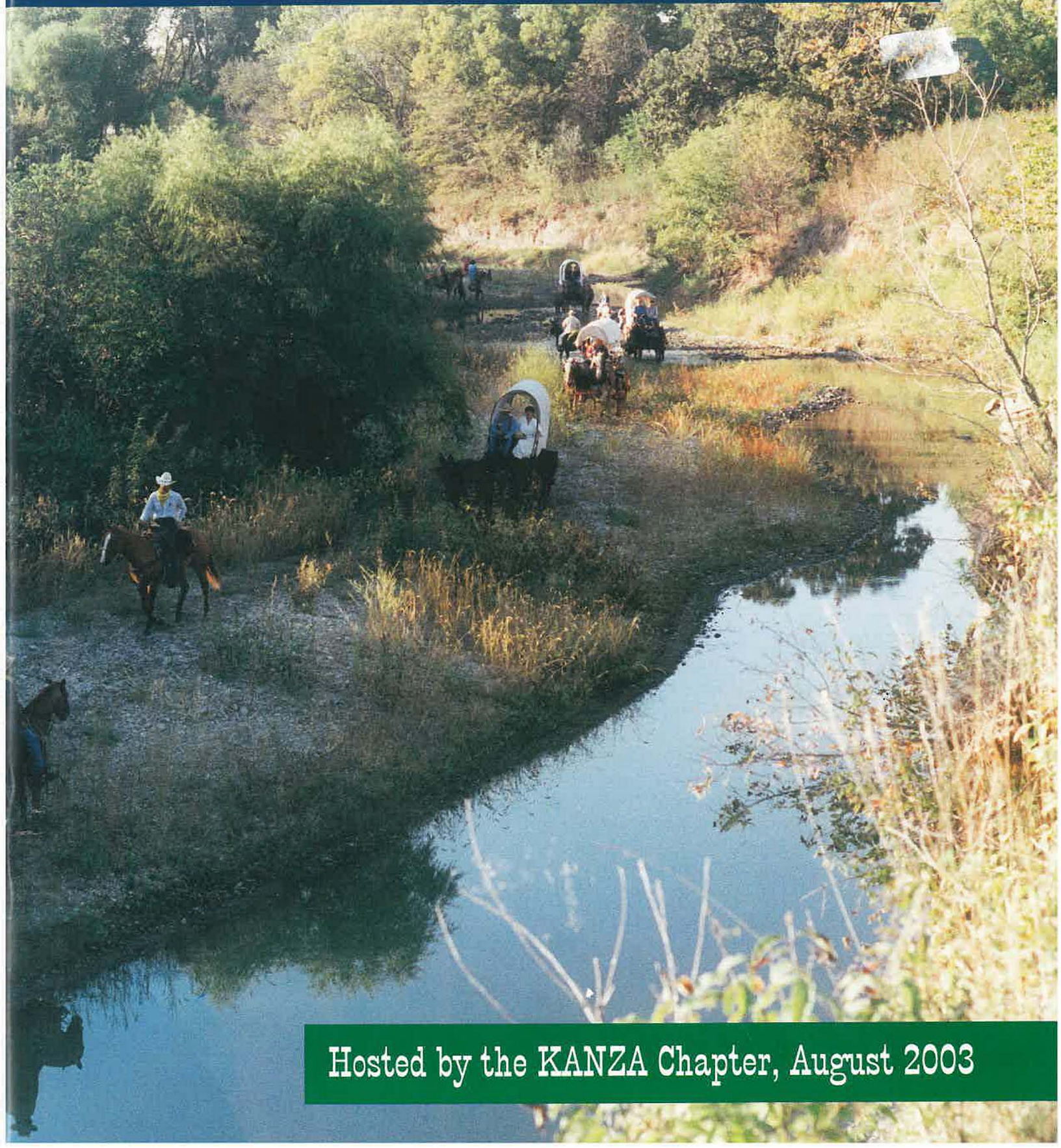


# 21st Annual Convention Oregon-California Trails Association



Hosted by the KANZA Chapter, August 2003



# Welcome to KANZA Territory

We want you to enjoy your stay in Kansas. We are providing this booklet for your convenience and to be used for referencing in the future. Please remember that Kansas can be very hot and humid. Please take precautions while you are on these tours. Be sure and use some type of insect repellent, preferably with Deet, but do not apply on the bus.

The KANZA Rutnuts have "found," measured and marked many of the visible swales that are still in existence today.

Rutnuts 1996 - 2003  
Ken Martin - Chairman  
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Ernie and Ella White  
Bob and June Woodyard  
Jim and Marian Bradley  
Mike Philbrick  
Don Cooper  
Barb Pretzer  
Jim and Rosemary Forst  
Pat, Alicia, Donovan, Kiera and Shea Keegan  
Vern and Carol Osborne

Thank you for joining us on these tours. We hope you found the tour interesting and informative. If you have any information or comments, please share them with us.

- Ken and Arleta Martin and Glenn Larson, tour committee

## Landowners; Rights

In KANZA country, most of the trail sites are on private property. Unlike the western United States where much land is public, nearly all land in Kansas is privately owned. The swales have been preserved not only because of the graces of Mother Nature, but because of the conscious and intentional actions of landowners. True, some of the land is best suited to pasturing cattle and the pressures on the trail remnants are minimal. Other land could be cultivated, yet landowners made the decision to not cultivate, or in some cases to cease cultivation. On arable land the pressures on the trail remnants are immense. In cultivated land the swales will eventually disappear. Most importantly, the rights of private land owners must be respected. Trespassers will cause landowners to eventually deny permission to all who want to see the swales. You must ask permission from landowners before going on their property. Thank them gratuitously for their permission and thank them for preserving the trail.

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## Cover photographs

The photograph on the front cover was taken by Ken and Arleta Martin near Westmoreland. The photograph on the back cover was taken by Barbara Burgess in 1999 at Alcove Spring.



[www.kanza-octa.org](http://www.kanza-octa.org)

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## ~ Tour Guides

**Tour A Kaw River Crossing**

**Tour B Cannon Ball Run**

**Tour C Between the Blues**

**21st Annual Convention**

**Oregon-California Trails Association**

524 South Osage Street, Independence, MO 64051

[www.octa-trails.org](http://www.octa-trails.org)

**Hosted by the KANZA Chapter**

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Written and designed by Barbara Burgess, Ph. D.

[www.barbburgess.com](http://www.barbburgess.com)

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wagon wheel ruts in the prairie, marks of their spades at river crossings, abandoned possessions beside the road and the graves of their dead at campgrounds. They carved their names on rocks and tree trunks and they dug campfire pits in the prairie sod.

The Independence Road from Topeka to the junction of the Independence Road and the St. Joseph Road are explored in Tour A Kaw River Crossing, Tour B Cannon Ball Express and Tour C Between the Blues. This tour guide booklet contains information and maps for all three tours. It describes the points of interest along the trail including locations, history and quotes from journals, letters and recollections written by the pioneers who traveled this road.

### Quotes from the journals, letters, recollections

Quotes from travelers who wrote about their trail experiences are included to describe what the pioneer travelers saw and experienced along this leg of the trail. More than 80 trail pioneers recorded their experiences along the Independence Road in journals, letters and recollections.

In quoting excerpts from these pioneer writings, the spelling, capitalization and paragraphing have been standardized in order to improve the readability for the modern reader. This was necessary because the records themselves are diverse. They are written in a variety of grammatical styles and by well-educated and uneducated writers; the typescripts were made by different transcribers and the journals were published in books that were edited in a variety of grammatical styles from 1850 to 2003.

### Sources

The quotations from the journals, letters and recollections are taken from the manuscript when the primary source is available, from a typescript or from a published version when the manuscript is not available. I have added references to Louise Barry's *The Beginning of the West 1540-1854* published by the Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka in 1972, so readers can learn more about the history of the trail in Kansas. This book is a valuable research tool.

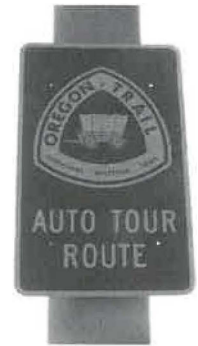
### Trail signage in Kansas

Kansas has adopted two methods of marking the trail. In 1985 the Kansas Legislature passed a bill that authorized the Kansas Department of Transportation to mark all locations where the Oregon/California Trail travels on public highways and crosses public highways. Three hundred and thirty-three signs were installed to mark these places, so modern travelers can find the exact locations of the trail as it crosses public highways.



The second type of signage identifies a driving tour of the Oregon/California Trail in Kansas. Modern travelers can follow the approximate route by following these auto tour signs. This signage program was installed to support the 1993 national celebration of the 150th anniversary of the first large emigration to Oregon and California in 1843.

To follow Tours A, B and C on the highways marked for the driving tour, one can start in Topeka and follow the highways as follows:



Follow I-70 west out of Topeka to Carlson Road (road to Willard and Rossville)

Follow Carlson Road north to US-24 at Rossville

Turn west on US-24 in Rossville

Follow US-24 west to K-99 at Wamego

Turn North on K-99 at Wamego

Continue north on K-99 through Westmoreland to Frankfort

Turn west on K-9 at Frankfort

Continue west on K-9 to US-77

Turn north on US-77

Map by Glenn Larson





# ~ TOUR A ~

## KAW RIVER CROSSING

Point of Interest 1.  
Kansas Museum of History  
Center for Historical Research  
Koch Educational Center –  
Potawatomi Baptist Mission

6425 SW 6 Avenue , Topeka, KS  
NW 1/4 of Section 32, Township 11  
Range 15E in Shawnee County

This tour begins at the Kansas State Historical Museum and Research Center located on the west edge of Topeka and on the south side of the Kansas River. The museum traces the history of the state and has several displays that focus on the Oregon/California Trail.

The restored Potawatomi Baptist Mission is on the grounds of the museum. This mission building was built by the Baptist denomination 1 1/2 miles west of Papan's ferry just after the Potawatomi were moved to a 30-mile square reserve stretching from Topeka westward almost to Wamego in 1847. The Potawatomi replaced the Kansa who had sold their Kansas River lands to the U.S. government and moved to a small reservation near Council Grove.

The Independence Road ran through the center of this Potawatomi Reserve. The Kansas River bisects the reserve. With settlements at Union Town on the south side of the river and Indianola and St. Marys north of river, the Potawatomi people frequently traveled back and forth across the river between their settlements. They often needed to ford or ferry people and supplies across the river.

The Baptist Potawatomi Mission was constructed near a new branch of the trail that led travelers to the ferry at Union Town. The Union Town ferry quickly became popular during the Gold Rush in 1849 when travel became heavy, and traffic jams developed at Papan's Ferry, the most popular ferry on the Independence Road during the 1840s. (Barry 180, 301)

The Baptist denomination established

this new mission in 1849. The stone mission building is now named the Koch Educational Center. (Barry 741)

Reverend Johnston Lykins, who was both a physician and missionary, was appointed to serve as missionary to the Potawatomi in February 1843, and in 1847 he moved with the Potawatomi people to their new reserve in the Kansas River Valley. Lykins had a record of many different activities with the Indians including physician, missionary, and editor of the Siwinwe Kesibwi (Shawnee Sun) the first periodical printed in Kansas and the first newspaper printed exclusively in an Indian language (Barry 283).

The mission was about one and one half miles from the main branch of the trail and even closer to the new branch of the trail that led to Union Town. Some of the gold rushers described the mission in their journals. Forty-niner Sam McCoy saw the mission while it was under construction.

"May 23, 1849. We passed the Baptist Mission to the Potawatomis which presented a motley frontier scene with its few log houses built on the banks of a small stream" (Barry 890).

James Payne visited the mission the next year. "May 10, 1850. We started off this morning in the rain but not so cold as it has been. Up to this time, it has rained at least half of the time, and we have suffered greatly from cold and wet, but the season of the year must soon bring a change. We reach the ferry of Kaw River early in the morning. I find here a large government establishment; a fine stone building three stories high with the necessary teachers for educating the children ... The ferryman told me that some of the squaws were well educated. I saw some that appeared to be tasty in their dress.



*Photo by Barbara Burgess*

The original stone building of the Potawatomi Baptist Mission has been restored and renovated. Today it is the Koch Industries Educational Building.

"We were detained at the ferry nearly all day, so many were in ahead of us. I took hold and helped ferry until we got across, which was about an hour before sunset, and after crossing we go up the river some four miles and camped on the bank. Very cold tonight."

Madison Moorman visited the mission school a few days later and wrote, "May 20, 1850. We arrived at the Potawatomi Manual Labor School half a mile from the ferry of the Kansas River, and one hundred miles from its mouth by land, at 11 o'clock. It is a Baptist Mission, superintended by a Mr. Saunders. The school was established in 1848 by the Baptist denomination, assisted by the general government. The government, besides the amount (I did not learn how much) for its establishment, donates annually \$4500. The buildings are very good, built of stone and of ample capacity for the accommodation of 100 pupils. It is situated in a most beautiful and healthy place, convenient to an abundance of timber and excellent spring water. There were 54 pupils under tuition and a good many more were expected in a short time. The most of them were half breeds."

Outbreaks of cholera interrupted activities at the Baptist school, and in January 1852 there was an outbreak of smallpox, both diseases experienced by the Euro-American travelers traveling on the Independence Road. The activities of the mission were curtailed during the epidemics, but the mission school remained active until the Potawatomi Reserve was opened to settlement and many of the Potawatomi people moved in 1869.

## Point of Interest 2. Archeology dig at Hard Chief's Village

### Hard Chief's Village 1830 - 1848

According to the report published in the Journal of the Kansas Anthropological Association, Vol. 8 No. 45 1988, the site of this village is on a high upland ridge overlooking the south bank of the Kansas River and about 1 1/2 miles west of the mouth of Mission Creek, near the present day community of Valencia, Shawnee County, Kansas. Archeologists supervised a dig at the location of Hard Chief's village in 1987 and excavated an earth lodge that was 27 feet in diameter. A hearth was centrally located and an extended entryway was on the south side of the lodge. Archeologists determined that this Kansa

earth lodge village had been occupied from around 1830 to 1848. The village contained between 50 and 100 *earth lodges*.

From 1831 to 1846, travelers on the Independence Road visited Kansa villages, a trading post, and a Methodist Mission for the Kansa on Mission Creek on the south side of the Kansas River while they waited their turn to cross the river on Papan's Ferry that was 8 miles downstream.

One village was located on a hill overlooking the south bank of the Kansas River on the west side of Mission Creek (NE 1/4 NW 1/2 Section 28, Township 11 Range 14 east in Dover Township). The leader of this village was Kah-he-qp-wah-che-hah or Hard Chief. This village comprised 100 lodges and 500 or 600 Kansa people. A second village was located about 1 1/2 mile from the Kansas River, also on the west side of Mission Creek. American Chief was the leader of this village of 20 lodges and 100 people. A third Kansa village, Fool Chief's village was on the north side of the river. The Kansa people lived in these villages along the river valley from about 1830 to 1848.

Travelers visited these two villages on the south side of the Kansas River. Asahel Munger camped near one of the villages in 1839. "May 8, 1839. After traveling Tuesday and part of today we came in sight of the Conzas (Kansa) village, camped within 2 1/2 miles of it. This village is a cluster of mud houses, built round, running up to a point leaving a place for the smoke to go out."

In the same caravan, F. A. Wislizenus visited the Kansa village. "May 1839. The whole village consists of 50 to 60 huts, built all in one style, in four somewhat irregular rows. The structure is very simple. On a mound, arched frame of poles and bark, earth is placed with grass or reeds; at the top in the middle an opening is left for light and smoke; in front, at the ground, a similar opening as an entrance; and the shanty is finished. At the open door there is usually a reed-covered passage, extending a few steps into the street. There are about twelve cut braces inside the house; the fireplace is under the opening in the roof; at the side are some bunks of plaited strips of wood. The whole is rather spacious." (Barry 368 - 369)

Going west with the fur traders in 1841, Rufus Sage was interested in a Kansa chief he saw in 1841. "September 7, 1841. Having listened to his story, I began to survey his strange companion. He was a village chief of the Kansas (Caw) tribe, and the first of his race I had ever seen so nearly dressed in his native costume. In person he was tall and stout-built with broad shoulders and chest, brawny arms and legs, and features evincing the uncontaminated blood of the Aborigine. His hair was closely shaved to the scalp, with the exception of a narrow ruff centrewise from forehead to crown, so trimmed it



stood on end like the bristles of a warring hog; then his whole head and face were so lavishly bedaubed with vermilion, our experienced city belles would doubtless have considered it an unpardonable waste of that useful material!

"A string of bears'-claws, tastefully arranged, encircled his neck, while ample folds of brass wire above the wrists and elbows furnished his armillary, and from his ears hung rudy ornaments, some of silver, others of brass or iron cruelly distending the flexible members that bore them. A dirty white blanket drawn closely around the shoulders enveloped the body which with a breechcloth and leggins formed his sole covering. A bow and arrows, slung to his back by a strap passing over the left shoulder and under the right arm, were his only weapons. A belt, begirthing the waist, sustained his tobacco-pouch and butcher-knife, and completed his attire and armament.

"Thus habited appeared before us the Caw chief, holding in one hand the lead-rope of his horse, and in the other the wing of a wild turkey, with a long-stemmed pipe, carved from a hard red stone, handsomely wrought and finely polished. Taken altogether, he presented an amusing spectacle — a real curiosity." (*Rocky Mountain Life* by Rufus Sage p 24)

Pierson Reading first met Kansa people on the south side of the Kansas River (near Topeka), and spoke with them. He wrote in his journal, "May 26,

1843. In the evening were visited by some of the Kansas Indians, some of the fine looking men, but filthy and many nearly naked, their heads shaved, leaving only a scalp lock, which is plaited with beads. Met with one who spoke the English and French languages very well. They are preparing to send out a war party against the Pawnees. The Kansas number about 3,000 souls, living in villages on the River.

"May 27, 1843 ... were visited by many of the Kansa Indians; they are very fond of trinkets. In the afternoon I paid a visit to a village about one mile distant from our camp, composed of about 25 lodges, each lodge being about 40 feet long, 15 feet wide and 10 feet high, with an oval shaped roof. They are made by placing poles in the ground over which is laid wide strips of bark. Several families live in each. The same buffalo robe which they wear in the day serves as their bed at night. Most of the men were absent hunting. Found the squaws engaged in dressing skins. They gave me to eat a root growing on the prairie which is about the size and shape of a hen's egg. It is both palatable and nutritious and serves the Indians as an excellent substitute for bread. It is very white and is called by the French 'le pomme blanc' or white apple."

Traveling with Lt. John Fremont, Theodore Talbott met some Kansa people and visited a Kansa village. "June 3, 1843. We nooned in the



Photo courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society

This is a drawing of Fool Chief's Kansa Village drawn by George Lehman from a sketch by Nicholas Point. Fathers Pierre Jean de Smet and Point visited the village in 1841. De Smet wrote that he saw about 20 of these structures in the village. Each measured about 120 feet in circumference.

neighborhood of a Kansas village and were accordingly visited by all the men, women and children it could boast of. The men are generally of good size, well built and for the most part well armed with rifles which they handle to advantage. Their heads are closely shaven, with the exception of a single tuft called the scalp lock, and this they decorate with feathers,. They paint the face, head and body with vermillion, in all the variety of rings, streaks and stripes. The women are of low stature and not over clean, perhaps from their multifarious household duties, in which the men take no part, hunting and warring being their sole occupations.

"They are all great rogues and inveterate beggars. Their houses are circular and well built. Thirty or 40 feet diameter, holding each upwards of 25 persons with ease. They have an aperture in the roof for the smoke to pass out, the hearthstone placed in the middle of the apartment. These Indians receive a regular stipend from the government and there are extensive fields of grain cultivated for their use at expense of the United States. The present chief of this village is 'the little turtle, he holds highly commendatory letters from Father de Smedt. He wears his hair long and as this is the sign of mourning, he must have lost a very near relation.

"The nation is divided into three tribes, that under the 'American Chief' counts 50 wigwams, the 'Little Blue 30 and the 'Yellow Banks' 20 wigwams. The total number of souls is somewhere about 2,000. More than 400 of them are young active warriors."

## Point of Interest 3. and 4. Hudson and Fitzgerald Swales

Hudson Swales  
SE corner of Section 30 Dover  
Township - R 14 E T 11 S  
Shawnee County

*These Class A swales are 4 wide.*

Fitzgerald Swales  
NE corner of Section 25. Dover  
Township R13E T11S, Shawnee County

*There are two Class A swales, 1,298 feet of swales, which are 3 wide. -Ken & Arleta Martin*

## Point of Interest 5. Herbert Reinhard Green Memorial Wildlife Area site of mass Indian burial

Located west of Topeka near Willard  
Shawnee County

This area was the site of the Potawatomi village called Union Town from 1848 to 1859. There are some beautiful swales on the south side of this park.

The upper ferry near Union Town became popular during the 1849 gold rush when the traffic on the Independence Road reached record numbers. A new branch of the road to Oregon and California developed in 1849 as the rush of people tried to avoid the traffic jam at Papan's Ferry. This branch followed along the south side of the Kansas River to Union Town, a new Potawatomi village.

Union Town was named by Colonel A. J. Vaughn in a letter he wrote to Indian Agent Richard Cummins on March 7, 1848, "I have accordingly stuck my stake and christened it Union Town." The site was on a hillside near the center of the newly created Potawatomi Indian Reserve. The town was built to serve as a trading post for the Potawatomi people. (Barry 737-8)

Thomas Stinson built the first building on the site in April 1848. It was used as the trading post.

In their journals and letters California gold rushers documented the growth of Union Town.

Samuel Dundass was an early visitor in 1849 . "April 22 1849. The village is constituted of a few Indians huts and log cabins, with two or three small stores, reasonable in their prices considering the difficulty and distance of transportation." (Barry 795)

Forty-niner William Kelly also described Union Town. "April 22, 1849. The trading post is a small hamlet, composed of some half-dozen shops, and a little straggling suburb of wigwams. The shops are kept by white men, licensed to supply the Indians around with the flimsy, fantastic, and trumpery articles they require." (Barry 795)

James Pritchard described his rationale for going to Union Town. "May 7, 1849. We had to travel 16 miles to upper ferry or three to the lower ferry. What we lost on this side by traveling to the upper ferry we gained on the other and as nearly all the emigrants were going to the lower ferry, we took the upper one. And one mile before striking the Kansas River is a mission and a trading post called Potawatomi. There are several white families living there and some 4 or 5 stores, blacksmith shop etc. A



number of the Indians are living in the village. We called a halt of an hour or such a matter in the town and let the boys trade a little.

"We reached the river about 12 and crossed at 3 p.m. There was two ferry boats, one kept by a half breed Indian (Michegan) and the other by a white man. This river is about 120 yards wide with a strong bold current, the water is rather turbid. "

The town continued to grow, and by 1850 was home to 300 or more people. Emigrant John Snyder described the town in his letter, "May 1850. The town consists of about 50 log houses with a population of 300 nearly all Indians. The government has stationed at this post a physician, two blacksmiths, a wagon maker, two gunsmiths, and circular saw mill." (John F. Snyder manuscript KSHS)

Martin Vivian visited the town in 1850 and had an interesting theory about the town's name, "May 6, 1850 ... At the Caw upper ferry there is a little town called Union from the Union of the Potawatomi and Shawnees. There is also a government agency and trading post there and several stores. This little town is situated in a beautiful prairie eminence 1/2 mile from the ferry of the clear and beautiful Kansas which is about 200 yards wide, marked along its margin and some of its bottoms with skirts of timber which in an extended view of the unmeasured plains around appear as a dark irregular streak in the distance."

The ferry near Union Town was started in 1849 for the benefit of the Potawatomi people. The unpredictable Kansas River divided the Potawatomi Reserve and separated the Potawatomi villages on the north from those on the south, so there was a lot of traffic back and forth across the river.

This ferry operated from a location near Willard to the mouth of Cross Creek in present day Rossville, Shawnee County. According to records the ferry was located in Section 1115, Township 11 south, Range 13 east in Wabaunsee County. (Barry 952)

The gold rushers described this ferry in their journals. William Kelly wrote, "April 22, 1849. One of the white traders built what they call a scow, a large flat bottomed boat capable of carrying a wagon loaded together with the team - a very unwieldy craft, propelled with long poles and clumsy oars, we chartered her for the occasion rather than run the risk of fording." (Barry 795)

By May 1849, this upper ferry on the Kansas River had become popular with the travelers going to California. In a letter, George Mifflin Harker wrote, "May 18, 1849 ... passed on to the ferry a half mile distant and proceeded to cross our teams, which we accomplished without accident ... The ferry man here informed me that he had crossed about 700 teams already this season. He has, or rather the company, two small boats propelled by poles, and is very successful in passing over teams safely." (Barry

795-6)

Another forty-niner Kimball Webster also described the ferry. "June 4, 1849. The ferry boat is made from hewn planks framed together, bearing a very strong resemblance to a raft. The river is about 650 feet in width, with a rapid and muddy current."

In the next year a stream of gold rushers continued to use the ferry at Union Town. Robert Chalmers described the crowded ferry. "May 15, 1850. Went 12 miles, passed Union Town. A few Indian huts and two or three stores kept by traders were scattered along the way. Arrived at the ferry and camped, for there were so many wagons there that we could not get across till morning. We drove the cattle down to the river to drink, and they all got mired ... It proved quick sandy clay. We had a good deal of trouble to get them out. We unyoked them and drew them out with ropes.

"May 16. Went 2 miles. Ferried our wagons and forded our cattle and laid up half a day to let our cattle recruit after their mire."

Tragedy struck the residents of the new town as an epidemic of cholera spread among the residents in 1850. The illness was widespread in this year and caused many deaths of emigrants on the trail who probably brought the disease west to Union Town. To escape the illness, most of the Indians fled from the town. Some residents returned but fled again when other epidemics attacked the people living in the village.

By 1853, the town was mostly deserted according to John Fremont, who wrote, "October 25, 1853. Went to Union Town and nooned. This is a street of log cabins. Nothing to be had here. Some concern for our animals and a piece of cheese for ourselves. Lots of John Barleycorn which the men are about consuming." (Barry 1181)

Charred remains of the old town have been found in the area, and some of the former residents of the town lie buried in a little cemetery on a scenic hill nearby. The family grave monument of Joseph Napoleon Bourassa is a prominent landmark in this cemetery just as he was a prominent Potawatomi leader in the 1850s and 1860s. Bourassa often met with emigrants and is mentioned in several journals.

Oregon Trail traveler E. A. Tompkins was impressed by Bourassa whom he met near Union Town in 1850. Tompkins wrote, "1850 ... I had a long interview with an educated Potawatomi by the name of J. N. Bourassa who informed me that he was writing a book containing the history, usages, superstitions, and peculiarities of the Indians in general and his own tribe in particular. He appeared well qualified for this enterprise being possessed of a liberal education and also the varied customs of the North American Indians, he had already 300 pages of foolscap covered with his narrations."

## Point of Interest 6. Bourbonnais Creek

This creek crosses the county road about two miles east of St. Marys.

Once the travelers crossed the Kansas River, they followed the Kaw valley west. Travel along the river was reasonably easy. The travelers enjoyed hunting, fishing, and gathering berries. Cross Creek located near the present town of Rossville and Bourbonnais Creek, just east of present St. Marys were difficult to cross in some years.

Forty-niner William Johnston described this section of the trail. "May 5, 1849. The march resumed (after crossing Cross Creek) our way led over a low, flat, marshy ground. We also encountered some small streams the crossing of which gave us trouble."

Another traveler on his way to California also described these creeks. James Pritchard wrote, "May 8, 1849. We crossed a number of creeks and mud holes, with steep banks. We passed an Indian village about 9 a.m. where there was a saw mill, and a temporary bridge thrown across a bad muddy creek by an old Indian who charged us 25 cents apiece for our wagons."

Two days later Jasper Hixson wrote in a letter, "May 10, 1849. We traveled up the Kansas some distance over a beautiful bottom. The Potawatomi live on this bottom. We encamped on Mill creek traveling 20 miles. Here is a circular saw mill, owned by a half Indian- this was quite a novel scene after traveling five days in an Indian country to come to a large farm and an excellent saw mill."

In his diary entry for the same day Hixson named one of the people he met. "May 10, 1849. Peter Bullbony a half-breed Indian and French resided here. He owned or at least claimed and exercised authority over 30 miles square of as fine land as a crow ever flew over. He had a number of comfortable hewn-log cabins, a circular sawmill, etc." (Hixson diary)

Another forty-niner William G. Johnston described the saw mill. "May 5, 1849. The march resumed, our way led over a low, flat, marshy ground ... A sawmill was passed which had probably been erected for sawing the lumber used in the mission houses (St. Marys Mission). Near the mill were a number of huts constructed of the boughs of trees and covered with bark."

In the next year, James Payne reported that the Potawatomi people had improved the crossings at these creeks. "May 11, 1850 (just after crossing the Kansas River) Made an early start this morning,

following the course of the river. In our travel we find many improvements made by the Indians. Passed three toll bridges, made across ravines. They, I presume, would have no legal right to charge, but they were made across bad places and the charge was so small that all paid them. We passed a sawmill today, worked by horse power, and I saw a team of seven yoke of oxen breaking prairie and doing fine work. I find that there are a good many white among the Indians. The squaws are the most modest of the two; they appear shy and distant while the white women will show a brazen front."

## Point of Interest 7. Indian Pay Station at St. Marys

First and Mission Streets in St Marys,  
Pottawatomie County, Kansas.

At about the same time the news of the California gold discovery reached the United States, the fathers Feliz L. Verreydt and Maurice Gaillard, Patrick Regan, four ladies of Sacred Heart headed by Mother Lucille Mathevon, and Indian boy named Charlot, and Joseph Bertrand arrived at the place they called the St. Marys Mission. The site had been selected in June by Father Verreydt; and then on August 16, this party had left the Sugar Creek mission in Linn County and arrived at St. Marys on September 9, 1848.

At the new mission, two log houses were completed in December; the west building was assigned to the nuns to house the girl students. It was two stories high and had five rooms. Five male boarding students and about the same number of girls became residents at the St. Marys Mission that winter. A small temporary chapel was erected and first used on November 12th. Joseph Bertrand built



This is an old photograph of the pay station. The old Potawatomi pay station is now a museum. The St. Marys Mission 1848 - 1869 was nearby.

a large double log cabin, so there were some four or five buildings in use by the Mission during the first winter, and the school appeared well established by the summer of 1849.

Beginning in 1849 most journal writers mentioned the St. Marys settlement. Travelers purchased grain, beef, and other supplies here, and often traded or purchased livestock and had wagons repaired some worshipped in the chapel.

Forty-niner William Johnston described the new mission. "May 5, 1849 ... A catholic mission established among the Potawatomis was passed, the houses belonging to it presenting appearances of comfort and neatness. Around one, a long, low structure used as a school house, a number of Indian lads were playing, much after the manner of our white boys in the states."

John Prichet mentioned the cross and a bell in his journal, "May 17, 1849. This morning we passed a Catholic Mission station among the Potawatomis, several Indian cabins, a small log house with a cross nailed on the end of it was the church I suppose; and near it between two poles set in the ground was a bell to call the savages to worship."

James Mason attended Mass at the mission in 1850. "May 9, 1850. Passed the Catholic mission, heard the priest say Mass."

George Read met the priest at St. Marys. "May 9, 1850. We left camp this morning at 8 o'clock. Passed several bad fords. Traveled up the Caw River all day. Passed the Missionary Station about 1 o'clock. Conversd with the Priest. I took him to be a German. We made an effort to trade horses but I found him a little too hard. We saw here a large collection of the Potawatomi warriors, assembled to have a war dance over two scalps of their enemies the Pawnees, a tribe which is situated on the Platte."

In his letter date May 22, 1850, Dr. John Snyder described the settlement. "After leaving the Kansas (River) ten miles, we arrived at the Potawatomi Mission established here by the Catholics ... it is very neat looking place, consisting of 3 or 4 two story log houses belonging to the church and about 20 small log huts. The Indians here have large farms and seem to be very industrious. We met many Indians here in a tolerable state of civilization, being able to read and to write. This nation about 4,000"

Other journal writers described the mission as flourishing and prosperous in 1850. Madison Berryman Moorman wrote, "May 21, 1850... About 15

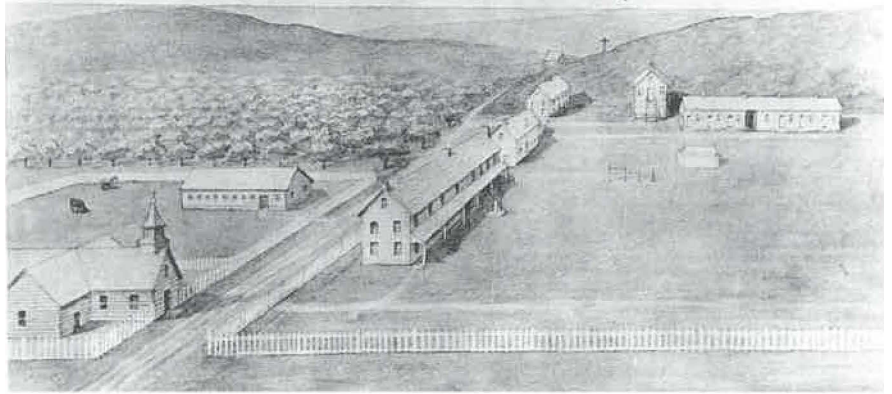


Photo courtest of Kansas state Historical Society, Topeka

This sketch shows the old St. Marys mission sometime in the 1850s. None of these original buildings is standing. The journal writers described the mission buildings and often stopped here.

miles from the Baptist mission is one belonging to the Roman Catholics. From its appearances, it dates further back than the other and seemed to be quite a flourishing condition. A great many of the Potawatomis live around and have nice fields. Game in the way of wolves, prairie chicken, plovers, gofers, and rattlesnakes abound, especially the latter. The number we assassinated was from three to five a day taking no pains to find them nor killing all we saw."

On May 31, 1851, John B. Miede, S.J. who was Vicar-apostolic of the Indian territory east of the Rocky Mountains and a titular bishop, arrived at the St. Marys Mission. He selected a wooden house at this place as his residential headquarters. Bishop Miede described St. Marys in a letter that he wrote in January 1852. "...cholera, fevers of every kind and small pox have made great ravages among our Indians this year. The Potawatomi Tribe comprises 3,500 Indians dispersed in small villages over 30 square miles of land. (In St. Marys) is found the schools, the farm, and the big folk of the countryside namely the doctor, the horse shoer, a few traders, and a number of mixed blood families who know a little of reading and writing. The Indian families who surround us each have their log house, their herd of livestock, and a field sufficient for their support ..."

In September 1852, Father John B. Duerinck reported that St. Marys Potawatomi Mission consisted of 170 fenced acres, 95 of which were under cultivation, sixty acres had been planted to corn, 25 acres to oats, six acres to potatoes, and the balance to turnips, hemp, and buckwheat. The Mission also raised cattle.

The growth and developments at St. Marys Mission are documented in the travelers' journals.



John C. Fremont's fifth expedition to the West passed through St. Marys Mission on the Oregon Trail on October 26th, 1853. In his notebook this famous explorer described it, "About 2 o'clock reached the pretty little Catholic Mission of Saint Marys. The well-built whitewashed houses with the cross on the spire showing out above them was already a grateful sight. On the broad bottoms immediately below are the fields and houses of the Pottawatomie Indians."

Celinda Hines also described St. Marys in 1853. "May 16, 1853 Rained in the a.m. and hailed the largest I had ever seen. Passed the Catholic Mission of the Potawatomis. Found there, to our surprise, quite a pleasant looking village there."

The mission continued to be a crossroads of both cultures and travelers. The mission grounds became the Potawatomi Indian agency headquarters when in 1857 the Potawatomi Indian agency was moved to St. Marys and a building constructed. Four years later the Indian agent W. W. Ross requested permission to add on to the "present pay station, the only improvement belonging to the government on the Potawatomi reservation."

Kansas statehood on January 29, 1861, brought changes to the Potawatomis living on their reserve on the Kansas River Valley. A treaty was signed to remove the Potawatomi people and to open their reserve up for settlement. Under the terms of the treaty signed November 15, 1861, the Potawatomis had two choices. They had to decide whether they wanted to become landowners of their individual allotments or to be part of a group that would retain land in tribal ownership and move to Indian Territory (Oklahoma).

The Indian agency had to ask each of the 2,259 Potawatomi people to make a choice and then compile two lists. Only 451 moved with the tribe to the new reservation. The ones who claimed allotments stayed in the Kansas River Valley to become farmers.

A reporter for the *Daily Kansas State Record* described the final Potawatomi payment day on October 29, 1870.

"The scene at St. Marys Mission was probably one of the most utterly forlorn, dismal, and miserable spectacles ever witnessed. It had been raining, and



Photo from the Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka

Some Potawatomi families lived in houses near the St. Marys Mission. This is a photograph of one of the houses with the unidentified family standing outside.

the one long street of St. Marys, which is as yet innocent of sidewalks, was a swamp, trodden into black, slimy stickiness and nastiness by the feet of men and horses.

"The place of payment was the old government agency, near the Catholic Mission buildings. The building is a one-story edifice, built of stone, and once made some pretensions to comfort and taste, but the picket fence has been broken down, the fancy cornice is destitute of paint, and the premises generally bear an air of decay.

"The two low, dirty, smoky rooms were devoted to the business of payment. In one of them, the paymaster had his station. The other room was occupied by the paymaster's clerk, the interpreter and the lieutenant in command of the guard of men from Fort Riley; the rest of the space was occupied by the white men, traders, and others having demands against the Indians. Louis Vieux, familiarly called 'Uncle Louis Vieux, stood in the doorway acting in the capacity of marshal, crier, and sentry.

"The name of the person to be paid was read from the various rolls by various persons, till it finally reached Mr. Vieux who sang it out from the door, with a long, loud and exceedingly bitter cry, and with a fearful accent on the last syllable; after which the person called for, if present and sober, appeared and received his or her share."

## Point of Interest 8. Riley Creek Crossing and Swales

On the Oregon Trail and Wilmet Road  
Section 31, St. Marys Township in  
Pottawatomie County.

*Here are 740 feet of swales which are 2 wide  
on both sides of the road. Swales near Creek  
210 feet of swales, two wide on both sides of the  
road. The landowner is Lundin. -Ken and Arleta  
Martin*

## Point of Interest 9 Westar Energy Oregon Trail Nature Park

The Oregon Trail Nature Park, built in  
1993, is located on the Oregon Trail Road  
west of St. Marys. Follow US-24 to mile  
marker #339 and turn north to Oregon  
Trail Road then west.

The Oregon Trail Nature Park includes a  
shelterhouse and three self-guided trails, one of  
which overlooks the Kaw Valley and the old  
Independence Road. Along the trails hikers can see  
up close the varieties of native grasses and forbs that  
constitute the tallgrass prairie. Big Bluestem, indian  
grass, little bluestem, switchgrass and sideoats grama  
are some of the native grasses. Black samson,  
butterfly milkweed, prairie coneflower, sunflower  
and dotted gay feathers are some of the wild flowers  
that visitors can see.

The mural painted on the silo depicts the history  
of this area and includes scenes of the trail.

From the bluffs one can view the Kansas River  
Valley for several miles.

Signage along the trail helps interpret the history  
and geology and the flowers and wild life than may  
be seen here.

A modern shelter house and clean restrooms are  
available here.

## Points of Interest 11 and 12. Louis Vieux Cemetery 49'er Cemetery Red Vermillion River Crossing

Follow US-24 west; turn north at mile  
marker #335 and then west on Oregon  
Trail Road.

The Oregon Trail headed west from St. Marys  
Mission following the hills that border the river  
valley on the north. There were two routes, not far  
apart, on this section of the trail. One route  
followed the hills and was used in very wet years  
when the lower but easier route along the river  
bottomland was too wet and muddy to be traveled.

In 1849, James Pritchard said there were two  
roads. After crossing the Kansas river at Union  
Town. He noted in his journal. "May 8, 1849. At 3 pm  
we reached the big Vermillion. About 1 mile before  
reaching the river, the bottom road and hill road as  
it is called came together. The hill road is said to be  
the best early or of a wet time." This name stuck and  
today the road that roughly follows the Oregon Trail  
is called the "Hill Road" by local residents but has  
recently been named the Oregon Trail Road.

## Louis Vieux Cemetery

Before reaching the river, modern travelers must  
pass the Louis Vieux cemetery. According to  
cemetery records, 29 people are buried here between  
1857 and 1872, including Louis Vieux and members of  
his family and a few friends. Charlette Vieux, wife  
of Louis Vieux, died in April 1857, and her burial is  
the oldest marked grave here. She died April 13, 1857.  
The most recent burial, Margaret Thurber age 2  
years, occurred in October 1872. The grave of Louis  
Vieux, who died May 3, 1872, is marked by the  
largest monument in this cemetery.

This old cemetery has been vandalized several  
times, and each time it has been repaired by  
interested neighbors and Pottawatomie County  
workers. The original grave markers are badly  
damaged but have been reinforced and remain in  
place.

Louis Vieux was not the first person to live on the  
east side of the Vermillion River. An earlier resident  
was described in a letter written by Dr. John Snyder  
in who was traveling west on the trail in May 1850.  
Snyder wrote in a letter, "Ten miles farther [from the  
St. Marys mission] we camped at the Little

Louis Vieux was an influential man in what would become Kansas from 1847 to his death in 1872. His descendents gathered for a family reunion to dedicate the Louis Vieux Elm at the crossing of the Red Vermillion River. They came from all over the nation, and some still live in Topeka. Jim Thorpe, the Olympic athlete, is a descendant of Louis Vieux.



Photo from the Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka

Vermillion. I have found a Frenchman with his family living in a small log house and was called in by him 'professionally' to see a sick child — I prescribed for it, and the next morning had the satisfaction of finding it much better. We met many Indians here in a tolerable state of civilization, being able to read and write. This nation (the Potawatomi) number about 4,000."

The Louis Vieux Cemetery and the Vieux crossing were named for Louis Vieux who moved to this river crossing in about 1857. Vieux moved his family from Indianola on Soldier Creek, north of Topeka, to this site at the western edge of the Potawatomi Reserve. Louis and his wife Charlotte had seven children, some of whom attended school at the St. Marys mission. Charlotte died in 1857.

Vieux remarried after Charlotte's death, then his new wife Mary died after giving birth to twins in 1859. Later Vieux married another woman named Mary.

Part French and part Potawatomi, Louis Vieux was one of the earliest farmers and businessmen in the area. He came to Kansas in the fall of 1847 with about 1500 Potawatomi people and settled on the newly created 30 mile square Potawatomi Reserve in the Kansas River Valley that stretched from near the present Topeka west to the Vermillion River.

He operated a toll bridge on the Vermillion River, sold provisions and livestock to travelers and to the military at Fort Riley. He was joined by other family members in these activities.

Vieux was a leader among the Potawatomi people.

He was listed as a "headman" on the roll of Potawatomi allottees in 1867. The Potawatomi people were uprooted when Kansas became a state in 1861. Given the option of owning land individually or participating in tribal ownership by the treaty between the Potawatomi and the United States government, Vieux recorded a patent for 315 acres along the Vermillion River and became the first owner of the land at the Vermillion River crossing.

Vieux was a businessman and land speculator. He recorded a deed for land that included the townsite of Louisville in 1860. He bought shares in the water-powered grist mill on Rock Creek in Louisville.

Vieux continued to manage numerous business ventures until his death in 1872. He was buried on his farm in the family cemetery located on a hilltop on the east side of the Vermillion. The following obituary appeared in the May 9, 1872, Kansas Reporter, a newspaper published at Louisville.

#### "Death of Louis Vieux"

"One of our oldest, most respected and useful citizens is gone to his final rest. Louis Vieux died at his residence in this city (Louisville) last Friday afternoon the third after a painful illness of several weeks.

Mr. Vieux was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, January 1, 1810, and was 62-years old at the time of his death. He was several years an Indian trader and emigrated to Council Bluffs, Iowa in 1836 and Indianola, Kansas in 1837. In 1856 he removed to his farm on the Vermillion River in this country, where he resided until he took up his residence in this city last fall. He was, we believe, of French and Indian birth, and one of the principle headman of the Pottawatomie tribe of Indians from his arrival of full age to within the last two or three years, when the tribal relations of the major portion of the Potawatomis ceased by their being naturalized and becoming citizens. But his habits and mode of living were exclusively those of the whites, and his dealings were extensive with both white and Indians. Honest and generous in every impulse of his heart, he had the entire confidence and respect of all, and was beloved by hundreds. He was everybody's friend. He settled difficulties among the whites and among the Indians, and between the whites and Indians, even though it drew largely upon his time and means to do so. An his benevolence was limited only by his means which were not small. No man, woman, or child, either red, black, or white ever appealed to him for help in time of need and was turned away empty. He was public spirited, also, and contributed liberally to the support of churches and schools, and making public improvements.

The death of no man in this community could



have brought greater sorrow or caused more universal mourning than his. His remains were followed to the grave last Sunday morning by a procession of from eight to ten hundred people and buried on his old homestead on the Vermillion about three miles from town; and everyone present felt that a personal friend as well as a public benefactor had gone."

Before the Potawatomi people moved into the Kansas River Valley, the Kansa people lived here. During the 1840s a Kansa village was downstream from the Vieux bridge. This village and its inhabitants near the mouth of the Red Vermillion were visited by travelers and described in journals written between 1841 and 1846.

In 1841 John Bidwell saw the village. "May 21, 1841. Our oxen left us last night, and it was 9 o'clock before we were all ready to start. Passed considerable stream called Vermillion, a branch of the Kansas. On its banks was finer timber than we had heretofore seen, hickory, walnut etc. The country was prairie, hilly and strong; we passed in the forenoon a Kansas village entirely deserted on account of the Pawnees, encamped by a scattering grove, having come about 15 miles."

Fremont found a deserted Kansa village at the mouth of the Vermillion in 1842 while he was exploring the country between the frontiers of Missouri and the South Pass in the Rocky Mountains. Fremont wrote in his journal, "June 18, 1942. Halted for dinner on the banks of one of the many little tributaries to the Kansas which look like trenches in the prairies and are usually well timbered. After crossing this stream, I rode off some miles to the left, attracted by the appearance of a cluster of huts near the mouth of the Vermillion. It was a large but deserted Kansas village, scattered in an open wood, along the margin of the stream, on a spot chosen with the customary Indian fondness for beauty of scenery. The Pawnees had attacked it in the early spring. Some of the houses were burnt, and others blackened with smoke and weeds were already getting possession of the cleared places. Riding up the Vermillion River, I reached the

ford in time to meet the carts, and crossing, and encamped on its western side."

Three years later Joel Palmer found people at this village on the Vermillion. "May 17, 1845. We traveled 18 miles over a high, rolling prairie, and encamped on the banks of Little Vermillion Creek in sight of a Caw village. Our camp here replenished their stores; and although these Indians may be a set of beggarly thieves, they conducted themselves honorably in their dealings with us; in view of which we raised for their benefit a contribution of tobacco, powder, lead, and c, and received in return many good wishes for a pleasant and successful journey."

Edwin Bryant was in the same wagon train with McKinstry and

described the river crossing in more detail. "May 22, 1846. The trail along which we have traveled today has been dry, compact and easy for our teams. It runs over high undulating country exhibiting a great variety of rich scenery. As the traveler rises the elevated swells of the prairie, his eye can frequently take in at a glance a diameter of 60 or 80 miles of country all clothed at this season with the deepest verdure and the most luxuriant vegetation. We encamped for the day on what is called by some Black Paint Creek by others Sandy, a tributary of the Kansas River. The bottom on either side of the creek is timbered with large and handsomely shaped oaks.

"Mr. Kirkendall and myself were two or three miles in advance

of our train, when we commenced winding through the ravines of the bluffs, in order to descend to the bottomlands bordering the stream. We were met here by four young Indians, apparently riding a race. They were mounted on fat ponies, which they urged forward at their highest powers of speed, until coming up to us they drew their horses in, and



Kansas State Historical Society  
These three Kaw chiefs went to Washington after the Civil War and met with the U.S. Indian commissioner, who was advising them to go to a new home. Al-le-ga-wa-ho was the head chief of the Kaw people. Kah-he-ga-wa-ti-au-gah, known as "Fool Chief," was a famous warrior and influential chief. The third man is Wah-ti-au-gah.

passing by a short distance, wheeled about and rode along at our side to the bank of the stream. Here we met some 40 or 50 more Indians, and we soon discovered that about two miles below there were two large Kansas villages.

"One of those whom we met at the creek was a very handsome young man, a chief, whose dress was much more cleanly and of better materials than his followers or associates. He carried in his hand a small looking-glass which he consulted with great frequency and earnestness, evidently much pleased with his personal appearance. A profusion of bone and tin trinkets ornamented his ears, and nose, and neck. A medal with the likeness on one side of John Tyler, President of the United States, was suspended on his breast. On the other side there was a device of a pipe and a tomahawk, and the following inscription, 'Peace and Friendship.' This Indian appeared to have great influence over the young men of his tribe. I did not learn his name.

"Our train came up and encamped, and it was not long before the two villages appeared to be entirely emptied of their men, women, and children. The camp was filled and surrounded by them. They numbered probably some four or five hundred. Those who last came from the villages were mostly in a wretched condition, so far as their clothing was concerned. An exceedingly foul blanket, more than half worn, and sometimes in tatters, with a pair of leggings, constituted their suits of garments. A large portion of the men were well-proportioned and above medium stature; and the countenances of many were prepossessing and intelligent, if not handsome. Some of them wore their hair long, and it presented a tangled and matted appearance. The heads of others, probably warriors, were shorn close to the skin, except a tuft extending from the forehead over the crown of the head down to the neck, resembling the comb of a cock. The faces of many were rouged, so in a fanciful manner, with vermilion. The eyelids and lips only, of several, were painted; the cheeks and ears of others, and the forehead and nose of others. There appeared to be a great variety of tastes and no prevailing fashion. I noticed that the ears of a great number of the men were bored with four large holes in each, so large that the finger could be passed through the perforations, from which were suspended a variety of ornaments, made of bone, tin, and brass. Small globular and hollow buttons, with balls in them, were strung around the neck or fastened to the leggings of others, so that every motion of the bodies created a jingling sound.

"Such as rode ponies were desirous of swapping them for the American horses of the emigrants, or

of trading them for whiskey. They all appeared to be most unblushing and practised beggars. There was scarcely an object which they saw, from a cow and calf to the smallest trinket or button upon our clothing, that they did not request us to present to them. Bread, meat, tobacco, and whiskey, they continually asked for; and the former we gave to them, the last we had not give - and if we had it we should not have given it.

"Among these very troublesome visitors was Ki-he-ga-wa-chuck-ee, words importing the rashly brave or fool hardy. This personage is a principal chief of the Kansas tribe. His wife accompanied him. He appeared to be a man of about 55 years of age, of commanding figure, and of rather an intellectual and pleasing expression of countenance. I presented his squaw, whose charms were not of the highest order, with a dozen strings of glass beads, with which she and her spouse seemed to be much delighted. They both spoke and said, 'Good! very good!' A turban; a soiled damask dressing gown of originally brilliant colors, but much faded; buckskin leggings and moccasins, composed the dress of Ki-he-ga-wa-chuck-ee. He wore the usual quantity of bone and tin ornaments about his ears and neck, and the little jingling buttons or bells on his legs. His face was painted with vermilion."

The Kansa were removed from the Kansas River valley in 1847 and were settled on a new reserve near present Council Grove. The Potawatomi people moved into their new 30 miles square reserve, occupying some of the same area.

## 49'er Cemetery

NW 1/4 Section 24 T9, R10E, in Louisville Township, east side of Vermillion River

Sometime in May 1849, a cemetery was started along the east side of the Red Vermillion. As many as 50 travelers may have been buried there beginning in May 1849. Only one marked grave remains on the bank of the Red Vermillion. It reads: "T. S. Prather - May 27, 1849." Some of the people buried here died of cholera in this year, but other burials came in later years and with people probably dying from other causes.

Jackson Thomason was on his way to the California gold fields when he described these graves. "May 19, 1849. Left our camp by sunrise for the purpose of crossing Vermillion before other trains could get in ahead of us and to make a stretch of 24 miles and learning that there was no wood nor water for that distance. Vermillion is a small creek

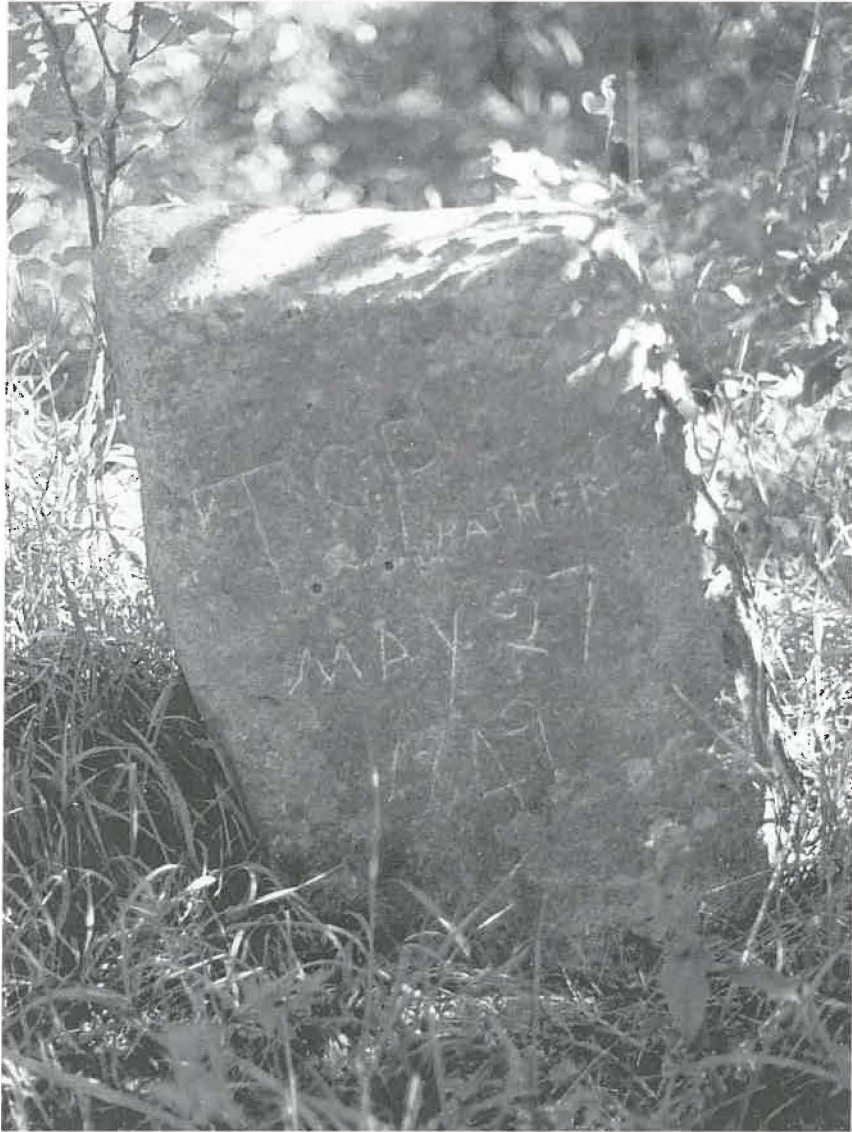


Photo by Barbara Burgess

The T. S. Prather gravestone marks the location of the burials on the east side of the Red Vermillion.

20 steps wide and a rough one to cross with heavy loaded wagons ... Passed two fresh graves this morning."

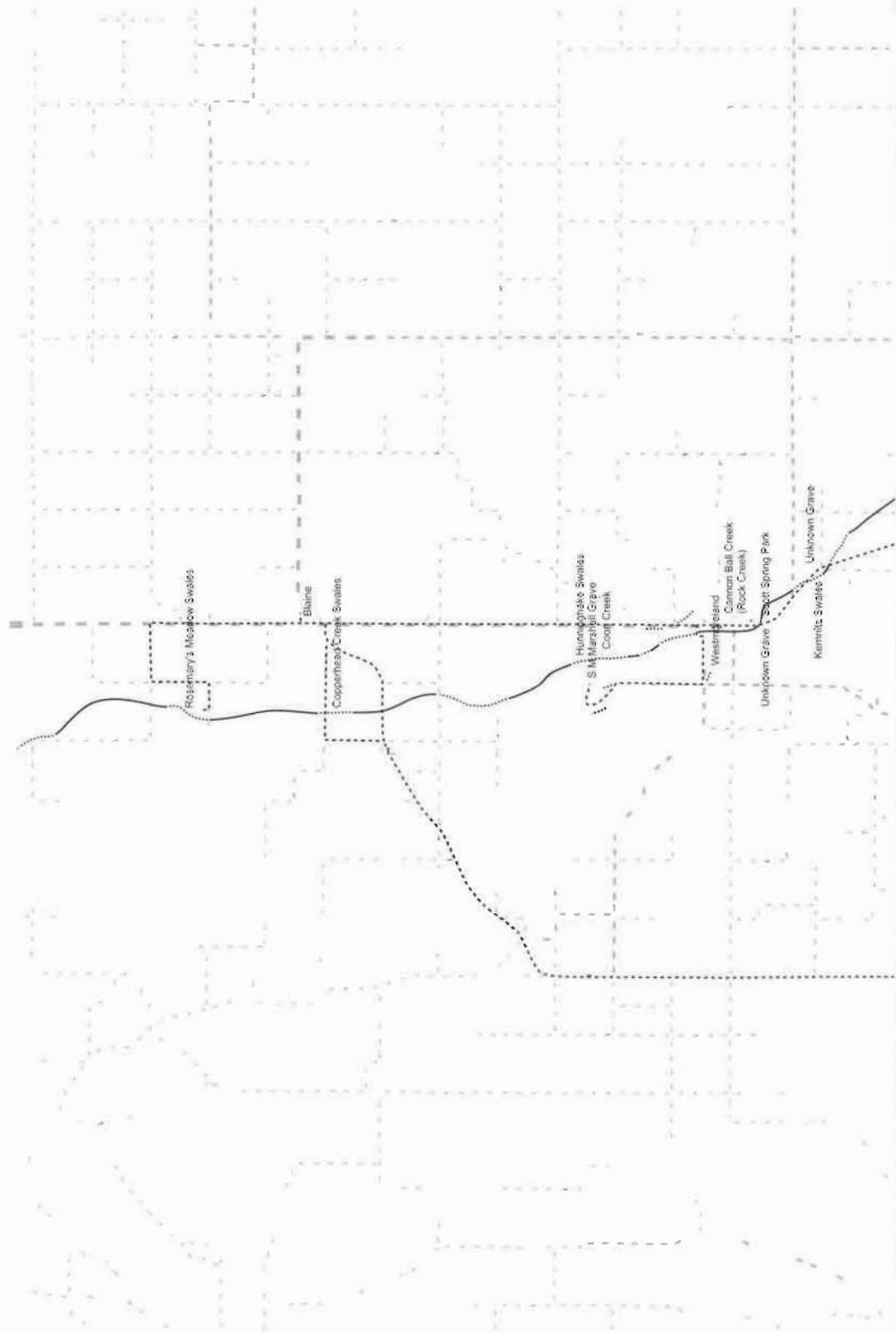
By the end of May in 1849, six graves were located on the east bank of the Red Vermillion according to David Dewolf's diary. He wrote, "May 31, 1849. We next crossed the little Vermillion which has very steep banks and rapid current. On the bank of this stream were 6 graves, all died with cholera and out of a company of seven for Tennessee."

Other people were buried here at this campsite in the following years, but no records of these burials or the circumstances of their deaths have been found. Residents in this area report that they saw as many as 50 headstones in the 1930s, but most of these stones disappeared.

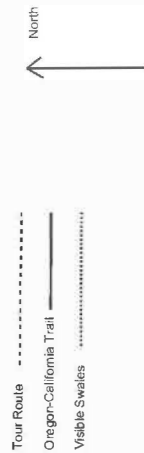


# Tour B Cannon Ball Run

Map by Glenn Larson



■ Cannon Ball Run  
■ DCTA Convention 2003



Cannon Ball Run  
OCTA Convention 2003

# ~ TOUR B ~

## Cannon Ball Run

### Point of Interest 1 Red Vermillion River Crossing

The Red Vermillion River crossing was an important landmark on the Independence Road. This crossing was the place where travelers turned north and left the Kansas River Valley and headed across the prairie to the Platte River.

The name of the Red Vermillion River was often confused by the overland journal writers. The confusion over the name of this river was due to the fact that another river, located farther north on the trail, was also named the Vermillion. This southern Red Vermillion is a tributary of the Kansas River, while the northern Black Vermillion is a tributary of the Blue River. Today the southern Vermillion is called the Red Vermillion or Little Vermillion and the northern Vermillion is called the Black Vermillion or Big Vermillion.

This river crossing was often a challenge for the emigrants because the banks of the river were steep, and the river could be a raging torrent after a heavy rain.

The spades and picks of many travelers had improved this river crossing over the years, but the soft earth banks were eroded after each flood, and the wagon ramps on its banks needed constant repair. Sometimes wagons upset in the process of descending or ascending the steep river banks, and some wagons became stuck in the muddy banks.

Because of the importance of this trail landmark and the challenge of the river crossing, many overland journal writers described the Red Vermillion River in their letters and diaries. One of the earliest journals that clearly identified this river crossing was written by William Marshall Anderson as he journeyed west to the fur trader rendezvous in 1834. Anderson wrote: "May 10, 1834 ... Four hundred miles from St. Louis and 700 from Louisville and home — the thought itself is misery. In spite of my suffering, I have admired exceedingly, the very beautiful and fertile country around us. Grass, grass, grass everywhere, but not a deer or buffalo in sight. We are tented tonight on the Vermillion, which sends its waters to the Kaw."

John Townsend, a trained zoologist, was at the river crossing in the same year with a caravan led by Captain Wyeth and Milton Sublette. Townsend wrote, "May 20, 1834. We encamped in the evening on a small stream called the Little Vermillion Creek where we found an abundance of excellent catfish,

exactly similar to those of the Schuylkill River. Our people caught them in great numbers. Here we first saw the large ravens (*Corvus corax*). They hopped about the ground all around our camp, and as we left it, they came in pell-mell croaking, fighting and scrambling for the few fragments that remained."

Traveling with the emigrant wagon train heading for the West Coast, Rufus Sage wrote, "May 14, 1841. We passed the 14th encamped at Big Vermillion, for the purpose of procuring a quantity of hickory for gun sticks and bow limbs ... We were also careful to provide an extra quantity of ox-box, axletrees as a resource in case of accidents or breakage ... In this vicinity, a species of shrub (designated as 'red root' by our voyagers) became quite abundant. The red root is highly esteemed as a substitute for tea."

The Donner party crossed here in 1846 in nine wagons from Illinois belonging to James F. Reed and George and Jacob Donner. They were traveling with Edwin Bryant's party.

Some of William Swaim's party bathed in the Vermillion. "June 1, 1849. About noon today we crossed the Red Vermillion. It is a fine, clear stream running over a stony bottom. It was delightful to see the little minnows glide through the swift, clear water, to hear its murmur and taste its cooling drought. Some of the men bathed in it."

### First Bridge over the Red Vermillion River

The first bridge over the Vermillion River was built by Charley Dean according to a July 19, 1906, article in the Westmoreland Recorder written by W.F. Hill. Little information is available about Dean or about the construction of this bridge.

Some research suggests that this bridge was built to facilitate the transportation of building materials and troops to Fort Riley in 1853. The Fort to Fort Road, the military road from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Riley, followed part of the Independence Road to the Red Vermillion River crossing. (Barry 1150) The Fort to Fort Trail left the main branch of the Independence Road and then veered south on the west side of the Red Vermillion and headed toward present day Louisville and then to Fort Riley. The Independence Road turned north after crossing the Red Vermillion River and headed toward the Platte River.

The first evidence that a bridge had been built over the Vermillion appeared in an 1853 journal. Celinda Hines confirmed the existence of a bridge in her brief journal entry for Tuesday, May 17, 1853. Hines wrote, "Crossed the Vermillion — bridged."

Rebecca Ketcham also described a bridge over the Vermillion in 1853. She wrote, "Sunday, May 29, 1853. The night before we camped four miles the other



side of Vermillion Creek. There is a toll bridge over the creek, but Mr. Gray thought best to give the man a half-dollar and ford the creek. He says there are rivers and creeks the other side of the mountains where there are not bridges or ferries, and he wants his teams and man and sheep to get used to fording before we get there beside saving money.

"The Vermillion is the worst stream we have crossed. The banks are so steep and muddy and rocky. It was not very wide nor as deep as some we have crossed, but ran very swift. We had to take a slanting course so that we were some little time in crossing, though it was narrow. I looked at the water a little before I thought what I was doing, and the first I knew I was feeling sick as death. But in going up the bank, when we went out I got a start that made me feel any thing but faint. The bank was very steep and some muddy. One of the horses had no shoes on and slipped and stuck in the mud so that I thought for minute they could not draw us up, but Mr. Gray touched them with the whip, and they took us out in a hurry. Camilla was on the horse then, and I imagine she felt a little scared."

## Pawnee Boundary

For the travelers, the Red Vermillion River marked the boundary between two Indian nations. In historic times, the Pawnee, to the west and north, were not always friendly with their Kansa and later their Potawatomi neighbors to the south and east of the river. The Pawnee people had a reputation for being troublesome. The travelers on the trail changed their daily routines after they crossed the Red Vermillion due to the perceived new danger from the Pawnees.

Goldrusher James Payne described how his caravan began taking extra precautions with their livestock when they camped on the Red Vermillion and entered Pawnee country. "May 11, 1850. We made about 25 miles today and camped on the banks of a stream called Vermillion. Are

now upon the line between the Potawatomis and Pawnee, the latter a hostile tribe. While we are passing through this country it will be necessary to be watchful. Our horses are all brought close together after dark, and a line of sentries placed about them, each man having about 100 feet to walk, and the wagons are all put close together."

The Kansa missionary records and Indian agency reports chronicle several fights between the Kansa and the Pawnee in the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s. The travelers on the Independence Road also described battles in 1841, 1843 and again in 1850 in their journals.

In 1843 Peter Burnett and his party of emigrants met and visited with Kansa people who told him about a fight with the Pawnee people. He wrote in a letter, "June 5, 1843. We this day met a war party of Osages and Kansas Indians, consisting of about 90 warriors. They all rode ponies, were painted, and their heads shaven, and had one Pawnee scalp, with the ears still to it, and full of wampum. This scalp had tolerably long hair upon it, and they had divided it into some five or six different pieces, some with an ear to them, and some with part of the cheek."

In 1850, the Pawnee people were involved in a battle with both Potawatomi and Kansa men. This battle was witnessed and chronicled by travelers in several wagons trains spread out along the

Independence Road in May. A play-by-play account of this battle comes from combining the reports of all of the travelers.

At Union Town, James Mason heard a report about the battle and wrote:

"May 8, 1850. Passed Union Town; got some pie and milk. Crossed Caw river and encamped 3 miles back. Got word that the Potawatomis and Pawnees was at war some 16 miles."

Other travelers participated in some of the events surrounding the skirmishes between the Pawnee and Potawatomi men. James Payne was camped near the St. Marys Mission and wrote that some members of his party attended the Potawatomi War Dance near the wagon train camp.

"May 12, 1850. Today we shall rest or at least lay by. We will have a sermon at 11 o'clock, but I think the preaching will fall through. Too little attention is paid to it. The most of us are graining our horses, washing our clothes, cleaning and loading our guns and revolvers, or doing

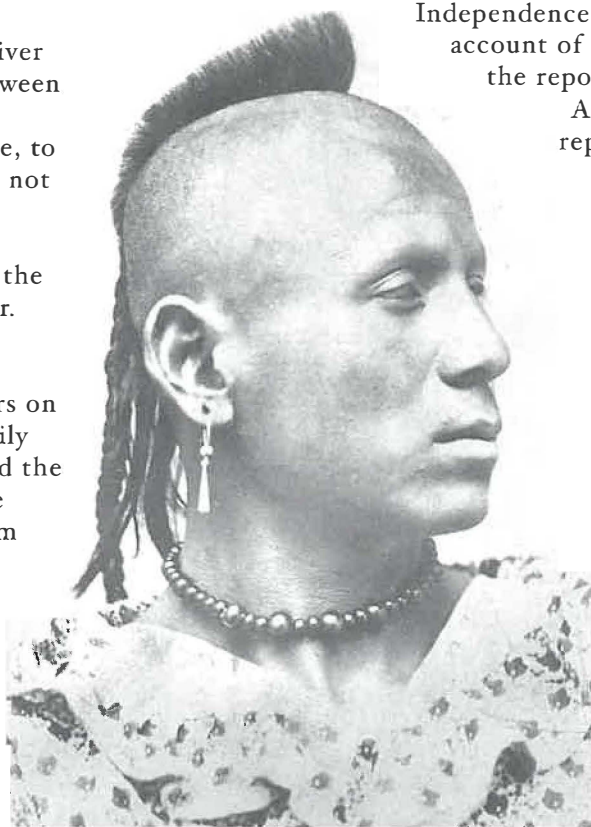


Photo from Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka

This unidentified Pawnee man was photographed at Junction City in 1867.

Big bluestem is one of the native grasses in the tallgrass prairie.



Photograph by Barbara Burgess

some odd job. It is intended that all shall carry their arms about them while we are passing through this nation. They are at war with the Potawatomis, and the latter being friendly with the whites, they (the Pawnee men) would do anything to annoy them (Potawatomi men).

"There was a fight between the two tribes the other day and the Potawatomis brought home two scalps. It all happened near this place and last night they had a war dance. It drew a crowd of the boys, who went to see the fun and the scalps, but I had no curiosity to go."

Alpheus Graham went to the dance. "May 13, 1850. (Camped on north side of Kansas River) A party of Indians came to us and invited us to dance on the other side of the river. Thirteen of us went. The wind was blowing and the waves running very high and nothing to cross in but an open flat boat, but we made the trip in spite of the wind or tide. The ball held all night (May 12), we were very well treated. The Indians all talk English and dress in the latest fashion; some of the squaws are handsome."

The people in one wagon train witnessed some of the battle. Henry Stine described it in a letter. It is not clear where this took place. (Letter Dated June 3, 1850). "We have nearly passed through the Potawatomi tribe of Indians, they are friendly and have missionaries stationed among them, they have joined with other tribes for the purpose of carrying on war with the Pawnees, a savage and dangerous tribe.

"The other day five Potawatomis chased eight Pawnees right through our train at the top of their horses' speed, and the next day we heard that they had killed two of the Pawnees."

## Louis Vieux Elm

Near the west bank of the Red Vermillion stands a living witness to nearly 300 years of history. This American Elm spread its branches near the old trail and probably provided shade for travelers who camped or nooned on the west side of the Red Vermillion.

For a number of years this tree stood as the proud largest American Elm in America. It survived many lightening strikes, high winds and diseases as it grew to record size. Then in 2000 vandals decided to set off fireworks in a hollow branch and nearly destroyed this record sized giant.

This tree was named for Louis Vieux, the first owner of the property along the Red Vermillion, when it was dedicated and recognized as the largest American Elm in the nation. Descendents of Vieux came from all over the United States and gathered under the branches for their first family reunion during the ceremonies.

## West of Red Vermillion River

On the west side of the Vermillion, the Independence Road struck out north by northwest across the hills following the hydrographic divides. Leaving the Kansas River Valley was like leaving an old friend to the trail travelers. For several days the valley had provided firewood and water and comfortable conditions.

Travel was generally pleasant and fast from the Vermillion River to the Rock Creek crossing (south of Westmoreland). In the hills, there were fewer streams and creeks to cross which meant fewer obstacles, but there were also fewer trees and water sources. Springs and small creeks provided the water here, and the tall prairie grasses supplied nourishing grazing for the livestock.

John C. Fremont noticed the hilly terrain. "June 19, 1842. Quitting the river bottom, the road ran along the uplands, over a rolling country, generally in view of the Kansas from eight to twelve miles distant."

Edwin Bryant described the prairie northwest of the Red Vermillion. "May 23, 1846. Our route from the creek (Vermillion) continued over an open and rolling prairie, broken by small branches and ravines the last of which are now dry, but seem to serve as aqueducts to convey the water from the rolling plains to the principal streams in rainy seasons, or during the melting of the snows early in the spring."

## Points of Interest 2 and 3. Steinberger and Blume Swales

Steinberger Swales  
Section 15, Louisville Township,  
Pottawatomie County

*Blume Swales*  
Section 10, Louisville Township, Pottawatomie  
County

Ruts of the old trail are etched on many of the hillsides between the Red Vermillion River and the Big Blue Crossing or Independence Crossing (in Marshall County). Some of the ruts are grass covered and barely visible as shallow indentations in the native grasslands. On other hillsides the erosion has accented the old ruts, and a century and a half of rain and melting snow have run downhill in the ruts and washed away the top soil to create ditches. The route of the Independence Road can be traced across parts of Pottawatomie County on aerial photographs where the old ruts appear as faint shadows.

## Point of Interest 4. Goehring Swales

Section 9 Louisville Township, Pottawatomie  
County.

*One swale is one mile long.*

## Flint Hills and Red Rocks

Flint covered hilltops, native tall grass prairie and the large quartzite boulders mark this part of the Independence Road. Travelers described the large red boulders left on the hillsides by glaciers, while deer, elk, plover, curlew, and sometimes a buffalo were pursued by the hunters and provided a new variety of meat in the diets of the travelers.

The Flint Hills are well known landscape. A combination of native bluestem prairies grass and its topography and geology makes this region unique. Trees are scarce in the Flint Hills due to prairie fires and the effects of periodic droughts. These grasslands have remained stable for nearly 10,000 years. The flinty gravel makes the soil difficult to plow so much of the landscape remains in native grasses.

Permian age limestone that mark these hills contain bands of chert or flint. The gravelly soil that



Photo by Barbara Burgess

Quartzite boulders decorate the hillsides from the Kansas River north. These boulders were brought to Pottawatomie County by glaciers. This photo was taken in 1980 near the Marshall gravesite west of Westmoreland as Barbara Burgess and her son Mike were photographing the trail through Pottawatomie County.

blankets the rocky uplands slows the process of erosion. (Read more about the Flint Hill in *Kansas Geology* edited by Rex Buchanan)

John C. Fremont described these boulders in his journal. "June 19, 1842. Large boulders of a very compact sandstone and of quartzite of various shades of red were scattered along the hills; and many beautiful plants in flower, among which the *amorpha canescens* was a characteristic enlivened the green of the prairie. At the heads of the ravines I remarked occasionally thickets of *salix longifolia*, the most common willow of the country. We traveled 19 miles and pitched our tents at evening on the head waters of a small creek now nearly dry but having in its bed several fine springs."

Several journal writers were curious about the red quartzite rocks that glaciers had transported south to these hills. Forty-niner Henry Shombre noted in his journal, "May 18, 1849. "... passed some fine smooth red granite rocks."

Henrietta Chiles also described the large red boulders. "May 21, 1850. Passed through a beautiful prairie country interspersed with creeks bordered with timber that gave a pleasant appearances to the scenery. There is a kind of rock called the lost stone between a pink and a purple color that is in this prairie. There are seen some large rocks at a place while there is no sign of any others near or even small pieces but look like they were laid on a bed of bluegrass."

Kansas geologist Rex Buchanan described these boulders. "The boulders are composed of red



quartzite of Precambrian age, a type of rock that is not found at the surface anywhere in Kansas. Its closest outcrop is approximately 200 miles north in southeastern Minnesota and eastern South Dakota. There great boulders and millions of tons of other rocky debris were picked up by ice sheets as they ground slowly southward. The debris was dumped in Kansas when the glaciers melted." (Kansas Geology edited by Rex Buchanan page 37)

Seeing the tallgrass prairie was a new experience for many travelers on the Independence Road. The wide vistas, rolling hills covered with tall grasses was awe inspiring for many journal writers.

The burning of the prairie was documented by some travelers on the trail. Between the Red Vermillion and Rock Creek, some travelers found the grass had been burned in 1849.

William Johnston described a prairie fire. "May 7, 1849. (West of the Vermillion) The grass along the route today was poorer than any seen for some days; Indians or perhaps mischievous emigrants having recently burned it off by setting fire to the old, dry crisp grass which burns readily, while the young tender crop is also licked up by the flames."

A week later Charles Glass Gray witnessed the prairie on fire. "May 15, 1849. (We were) within about 100 yards of a prairie, which was on fire and burning with a tremendous noise, but we had no fear of it as we were on the opposite side of the road."

## Point of Interest 5 Roushi Grave Site

Located about three and one half miles



Photo from Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka

The original Roushi headstone shown in this photograph is at the Kansas Museum of

southeast of the Rock Creek Crossing on the NE 1/4 of the NW 1/4 of Section 32, Township 8 S Range 10 E in Union Township, Pottawatomie County. (Barry 845, 818)

People were buried along the Independence Road, and some of the marked graves became landmarks. West of the Vermillion, one grave was noted in journals, perhaps because the name of the deceased was carefully etched on the stone headstone.

In early May 1849, Lewis Shutterly described the burial of Henry Roushi, who was buried along the trail before the party reached Rock Creek. "May 8, 1849 ... Drove 15 miles over bad roads, dined on crackers, water and raw flitch (like bacon). At 15 minutes past 2 o'clock Henry Roush (Roushi) died of bilious fever. Taken sick at Independence. Delirious from the time first taken. From Illinois. Left wife and 5 children. Buried in the evening 100 yards to the right of the road near a ravine. The funeral deferred until Wednesday morning the 9th."

Jasper Hixson noted this same grave. "May 10, 1849. On 11th we passed the grave of an emigrant with this inscription, 'Henry Roush of Ill, died May 8, 1849.'" (Weekly Tribune, Liberty Missouri on June 8, 1849)

## Point of Interest 6. Kemnitz Swales

Section 10 Pottawatomie Township,  
Pottawatomie County.

*One swale measures 1980 feet, three other measure 975 feet which does not include the creek crossing. -Ken & Arleta Martin*

## Point of Interest 7. Scott Spring, Rock Creek Crossing and Campground

South of Westmoreland on K 99

The ford on Rock Creek was the main trail landmark in this area. Improvements at this ford had been made as early as 1827 when the fur trading company crossed here on their return trip to the east. James Clyman, a fur trader and mountain man who had traveled with the fur trading

expedition on the old trail in 1827, said that he and others in that early caravan had worked on the ford with their spades and picks. In later years, Clyman and other members of that expedition who piloted wagons over the road made reference to their earlier experiences at this crossing

Men in the 1827 caravan, including James Clyman and William Sublette, named it Cannon Ball Creek. The explorers and fur traders continued using this route in the following years. By 1834, the name Cannon Ball Creek was being used on maps and in travelers' diaries to identify the creek south of the present city of Westmoreland.

William Marshall Anderson was traveling with a fur traders expedition, when he recorded this entry in his diary, "May 11, 1834, crossed Cannon Ball creek on a bridge (in a wagon trail) made by Captain Sublette four years ago."

Years later in 1844, Clyman was piloting a wagon train with 350 Oregon bound emigrants. His diary of this trip records that on June 23 they "struck the Oregon Trace on Cannon Ball Creek - great joy at finding the trail and a good ford ..."

The next day he wrote, "Today struck our old trail made on our return from the mountains in 1827 when I had the honorable post of being pilot. Some points look quite familiar although I never passed but once and that time nearly 17 years ago."

James Clyman was on the trail again in 1846, when he and a small party were heading east. Clyman wrote in his journal on July 11th, "... nooned that day at Cannon Ball Creek."

The name Rock Creek was first used in the journals written in 1846. The journal writers in this year described the creek as they camped at night or nooned on the banks of the creek. They mentioned the excellent water from the springs and the creek that attracted the travelers to the area. Water from the springs and creek refreshed the thirsty travelers and their animals.

## Scott Springs

Many travelers were excited to find abundant water when they reached the ford on Rock Creek. In addition to the creek, several springs provided clear water in this vicinity. While the livestock were watered at the creek, the springs provided clean water for the people.

The springs in this area were not given names in the journals written by the travelers, but today one



Photo by Barbara Burgess

Erwin Scott points out the trail ruts in his pasture south of Westmoreland in this photograph taken in 1970s. Scott's grandfather, who came to the U. S. from Scotland, bought the land in 1870. The farm has stayed in the family for four generations. Marian and Jim Bradley now farm the land.

spring is well known as Scott's Spring. This spring was named after Adam and Elizabeth Scott who purchased the land south of the creek in 1870 and farmed the area. Four generations of the family have continued to live on this farm. Today Marian (Scott) Bradley and her husband Jim continue to live and farm the land south of Rock Creek where Scott's Spring and trail ruts remain to mark the route of the old trail.

Edwin Bryant was at the Rock Creek campground when he wrote, "May 24, 1846. The first five miles of our march was over a rolling prairie country, dotted with occasional clumps of timber. We then crossed a creek with a rapid and limpid current, flowing over a rocky and gravelly bed. This stream would afford fine waterpower for mills. The banks above and below the ford are well supplied with oak, elm, and linden trees, of good size; and the land, which on the western side rises from the creek in gentle undulations, is of the greenest and most luxuriant vegetation. We found here, gushing from a ledge of limestone rock, a spring of excellent water, from which we refreshed ourselves in droughts that would be astonishing to the most fanatical cold water advocate.

"Rising from the bottom of this stream, upon the tableland, the scenery for a long distance to the north eastern bank of the rivulet, a chain of mound-shaped bluffs stretches far away to the right and the left, overlooking the gentle slopes and undulations on the western side."



George McKinstry also found spring water near the creek. On Monday, May 25, 1846, he wrote, "... camped on the prairie near a beautiful spring the finest water on the plains thus far."

Richard Owen Hickman camped near the creek and wrote, "(Entry dated May 16, 1852) ... camped on Rock Creek opposite a high bluff which was covered with beautiful cedar."

The Westmoreland area continued to be a major campground and a rest stop for travelers on the Independence Road. Then the campground became a town and a post office, businesses and homes were built on the site of the campground.

## Point of Interest 8. S. M. Marshall Grave Site

Section 21 Township 7 Range 9  
Pottawatomie County

As travel on the trail increased, grave markers



Photo from the Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka

The original stone is in the Kansas Museum of History. The grave site in Pottawatomie County has been marked.

began to appear to mark the burials of travelers who died and then were buried when their party. Later parties noted the graves.

In 1849, Henry Shombre mentioned graves. "May 18, 1849. We crossed a fine clear running creek (Rock Creek) and a large encampment on its bank. Camped two miles from it; grass but poor 'graves'."

David Dewolf counted 11 graves in one day's travel that included Rock Creek. He did not list the names on the headstones. "June 1, 1849. Got an early start on high rolling prairie, passed several small streams and in one we saw some fine fish ... we passed this day 11 graves of Californians."

The grave of an unknown person is located just south of Westmoreland near the Scott Spring. To mark this burial a modern gravestone has been erected which reads "Here lies an early traveler who lost his life in quest of riches in the west."

Forty-niner Reuben Cole Shaw recorded two deaths and burials but did not give specific details about the location. He wrote, "June 22, 1849. Crossing a beautiful prairie between the Kansas and the Platte ... Professor Nye and D.W. Hinckely die of cholera ... and at high twelve buried in one grave over which we erected a neat and substantial cairn."

Two men named Marshall were buried along the trail north of the Rock Creek crossing. On a hill about one and one half miles north of the Rock Creek crossing, a man named S. M. Marshall was buried on May 27, 1849. An inscription "S. M. Marshall, Wadesboro, Kentucky Died May 27, 1849" is etched on the headstone. (Barry 818, 845)

The second man named Marshall was buried along the trail farther north along in Marshall County near the Black Vermillion crossing. This grave site has not been marked. (Barry 513)

James Clyman recorded the death and burial of this man in his diary. "June 27, 1844 ... Mr. Sublette's party consists of 20 men, 11 of whom are sick and traveling for health; one of which died and was buried the morning about 15 miles east of this (near Big Blue). Poor fellow Marshall by name. His fair companion accompanied him from St. Louis and tenderly watched over him to Independence where they separated. Kind companion, her worst fears are realized. Her husband's bones rest quietly forever on the bluffs of oak creek where no noise disturbs his rest but the carol of summer wild birds and the nightly howl of the lonely wolf."

Six years later William G. Johnston saw this grave and wrote, "May 8, 1949. Climbing the hills bordering the valley of the (Black) Vermillion, we were once more on the wide extended plains; a vast expanse of green beneath, measureless as the blue canopy overhead. On the brow of the hill was a lonely grave-intensely lonely; as much so as a grave in mid-ocean. A simple wooden cross on which was painted "John Marshall, St. Louis" marked the spot



where was laid one who perhaps had been bright in hopes as any of us when he began his journey. It's a cruel place to die."

## Point of Interest 9. Copperhead Creek Swales

Section 32, Clear Creek Township,  
Pottawatomie County.

*S*wales are three wide in the pasture, left then right. The owner's name is Ryan.  
-Ken and Arleta Martin

## Point of Interest 10. Rosemary's Meadow

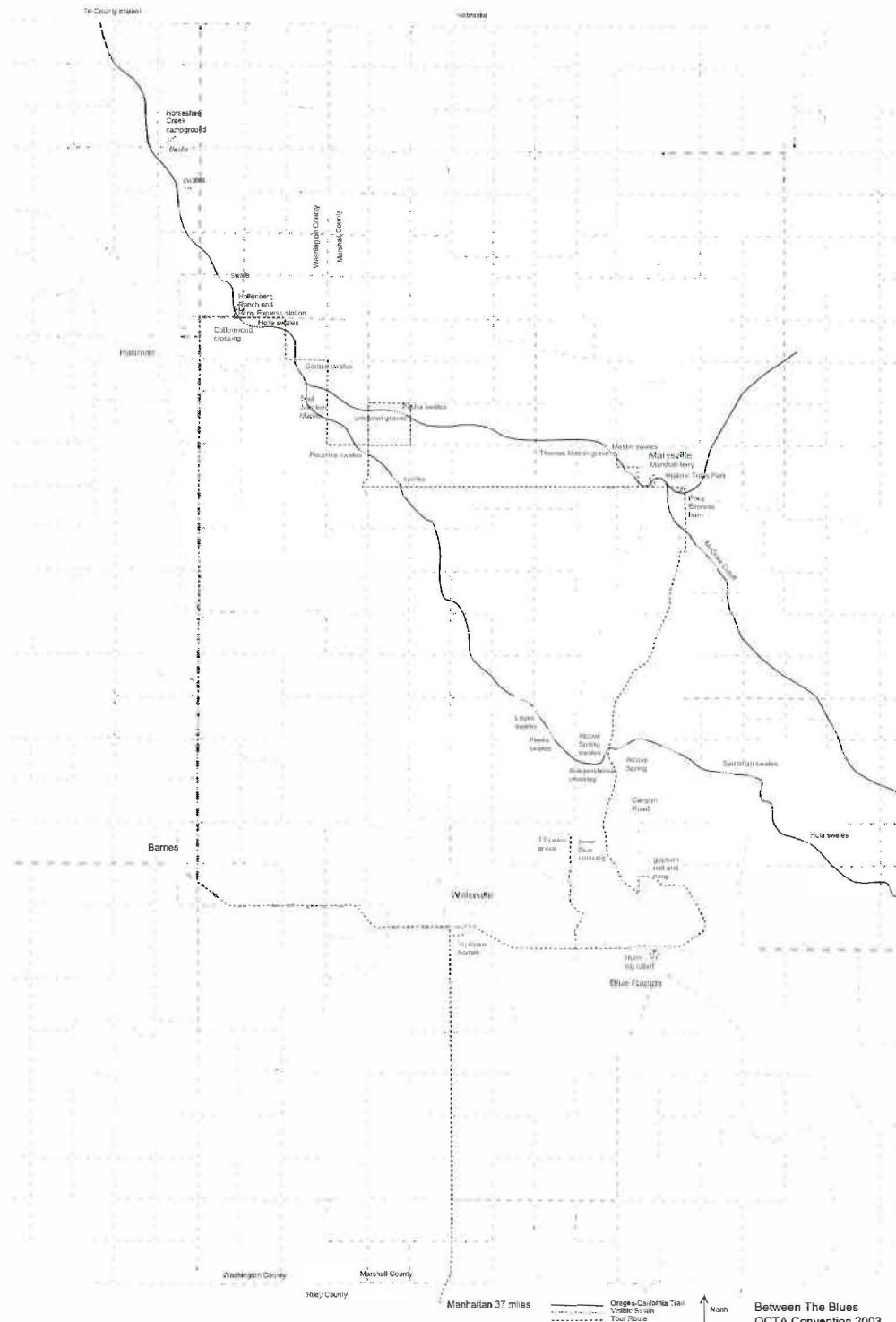
Section 17 Clear Creek Township,  
Pottawatomie County.

*I*n this location are a total of five swales which measure 3,080 feet. The swales cross three properties in this area. The owner here is O'Connor. -Ken and Arleta Martin

# Tour C Between the Blues

Map by Glenn Larson

Between The Blues  
OCTA Convention 2003



Between The Blues  
OCTA Convention 2003

# ~ TOUR C ~

## Between the Blues

Marshall and Washington Counties  
Leave Manhattan, take 77 north  
through Waterville, turn east towards  
Blue Rapids

### Tour C. Introduction Black Vermillion Crossing

While this tour does not cross the Black Vermillion River, the Independence Road crossing of this river was usually mentioned by the journal writers and this was an important landmark. For this reason this river crossing deserves some description.

From the Rock Creek crossing to the Black Vermillion River, the journal writers saw a prairie with few trees and few distinctive landmarks. Jackson Thomason found the travel on this leg of the Independence Road easy. "May 21, 1849. We resumed our journey this morning very early. Found the road good but rolling. An abundant supply of wood and water all the way. Reached (the) Big Vermillion (Black Vermillion) about 3 o'clock p.m. Crossed the same without any difficulty 16 miles from our last camp and 29 miles from Little Vermillion ... The country passed over today is generally rolling and the soil good."

After Rock Creek, the Black Vermillion River was the next landmark on the Independence Road. The steep banks of this river caused problems for the wagons. Every year the travelers had to dig down the banks to make ramps down the banks for the wagons.

E. A. Tompkins identified the location of their crossing. "1850 ... The latitude of the point where we crossed the Big Vermillion is said to be 39° 45.8' north and longitude 96° 32.32.35" west from Greenwich."

Many wagon trains and caravans camped near the river while they prepared their wagons for crossing the ford on the Black Vermillion. While they camped, they explored the area and found bee trees. They also fished and bathed in the river.

Like the Rock Creek crossing, the ford on the Black Vermillion River was pioneered in 1827 and was an early landmark on Sublette's Trace. James Clyman called it Burr Oak Creek, while others called it the Bee because they found honey bee trees nearby. The name Vermillion was confused with the Red Vermillion or Little Vermillion that empties

into the Kansas River which travelers had crossed a couple days earlier. The Black Vermillion empties into the Big Blue River, which in turn empties into the Kansas River.

In the early years of the trail, William Marshall Anderson was traveling with a party of fur traders. He wrote that his expedition named the river the Bee. "May 11, 1834. Camped nearly 25 miles from our yestereens resting place, on a stream which empties in to the Blue River, of the Kansas, which we call Bee River, from finding a bee-tree near our tents — accident or some circumstance which has occurred to the trappers, has given names to all the points and streams of the country."

Nine years later Oregon immigrant Pierson Reading remembered the wolves and deer. He called it the Black Vermillion, "June 5, 1843. Left camp early; passed through a hilly prairie country with no timber. Crossed a creek called Black Vermillion. Saw five deer and several large wolves."

James Clyman had called it Burr Oak Creek in 1827 when he piloted the returning fur caravan over the Sublette's Trace, and he still called it by that name when he returned in 1844. "June 24, 1844. Rolled out at sun rise and at 11 reached Burr Oak creek, a deep dirty creek about 10 rods wide. All the banks and bottoms having been overflowed. Found the date of Mr. Gillham's company having crossed 4 days previous. Crossed over in 2 hours, although we had to let down our wagons down a steep slippery bank by hand.

"Today struck our old trail made on our return from the mountains in 1827 when I had the honorable post of being pilot. Some points look quite familiar although I never passed but once and that time nearly 17 years ago, our evening camp in particular."

Edwin Bryant's company of emigrants found the river difficult to cross in 1846. They had to prepare the banks so the wagons could cross the river. Bryant wrote, "May 25, 1846. Our route today had been over a more broken country that I have seen since entering upon the prairies. The timber fringing the margin of Vermillion Creek, seen in the distance, has been the only relief to the nakedness of the country, with the exception of two or three solitary trees, standing isolated on the verdant plain. We reached the Vermillion about noon. The bank of this stream on the eastern side was so steep, and the ford in other respects so difficult, that we were detained several hours in crossing it.

"The Vermillion is the largest watercourse we have crossed since leaving the Kansas. Its current is more rapid that has been usually exhibited by the streams of these prairies, and would afford very good waterpower. The timber at this point on its banks is about a quarter of a mile in width, and consists chiefly of oak and elm. It has been reported to be



abundantly supplied with a variety of fish. Ewing and Nuttall, who encamped with an emigrant party here last night, caught two good-sized catfish, but none of a different species."

In 1849, the gold rushers bathed and fished in the waters of the Black Vermillion. William G. Johnston wrote, "May 8, 1849. From 4 o'clock until 11 our march was over a treeless prairie when at the latter hour we struck Vermillion Creek, a stream 40 feet in width with pebbly bottom, beautifully clear and skirted with timber. Its banks at the fording place were fearfully steep and from 20 to 30 feet in depth. Each wagon had to be lowered with ropes and with these and the mules combined dragged to the opposite bank. A short distance beyond we encamped one hour for our morning meal, turning the mules loose to graze at will on some good pasturage near by ... In the Vermillion, as in two or three other of the larger streams of late, we cast our net for fish; and it seems curious that in these virgin waters we uniformly met with no success. A bath in the Vermillion during our rest was enjoyed by many of the company."

Gold rusher Isaac Wistar wrote, "May 29, 1849 ... reached the banks of the Big Vermillion. This is a wide and considerable stream, but with a hard bottom, and not too deep to ford now, though evidently rising ... Under these circumstances we decided to cross at once. We soon cut some blocks on which we raised the wagon beds about 16 inches, being as much as the standards would bear. Then chaining together the two wheels on each side, we lowered the wagons down the long and steep but straight descent, and got them safely through the river, which came up to the raised wagon bodies and found an easy, good, straight ascent on the other side. We moved on a mile and camped to give our fishermen a chance to try the stream but the freshet prevented successful fishing, though we made an honest effort till dark, but which time the river had risen to an impassable height."

## Point of Interest 1.

### Big Blue River

### Ruts

### Pioneer Graves

Waterville township Section 12 Vering property

*This is the location of the Lower Blue Crossing. There are beautiful swales coming up out of the river, and they align with swales in a pasture on the east side of the river. These*

*swales continue on in a pasture to the northwest that continues on and links up with the branch which comes out of the Independence Crossing/ Alcove Spring area.*

*There is a small unmarked Pioneer Cemetery. Only one gravestone remains, which reads: T. J. Lewis died No the 13<sup>th</sup> 1866." Here the National Park Service conducted a ground survey, which registered positive. The property owner, Mr. Vering received OCTA's Friend of the Trail Award in 2000. He will tell the story of the Cemetery at the site. —Ken and Arleta Martin*

## Point of Interest 2.

### Blue Rapids

On US-77/K-9 in southwest Marshall County

**B**lue Rapids was founded and settled in 1869 and 1870. The first gypsum mine in Kansas was started near the town. Georgia-Pacific Corporation currently owns and operates a gypsum mine nearby. The town is located at the junction of the Little Blue River and the Big Blue River.

## Point of Interest 3.

### Alcove Spring

### Canyon Road

Elm Creek Township Section 33

**F**rom the Black Vermillion to the Big Blue River, the Independence Road crosses rolling hills, following the more level hill tops that form the hydrographic divide. Without big streams to cross, the travelers made good time on this leg of their journey.

Travelers on the Independence Road cross two Blue Rivers. The first Blue River is located between Independence and the Missouri state line. This is the second Blue River and is commonly called the Big Blue. It empties into the Kansas River.

On his trip east in 1841, Rufus Sage was delayed at the Big Blue for several days by high water, but he found the place delightful. "October 1841. Leaving Big Vermillion, we traveled rapidly the two days subsequent and arrived at the north fork of the Blue – a large and deep stream, tributary to the Kansas. We were here detained till the 24th (October) – the creek being impassable on account of high water.

However the beauty of the place and variety of its landscape scenery served in a great measure to alleviate the weariness of delay. The country was most agreeably interspersed with hills, uplands, and dales, amply watered and variegated with woods and prairies attired in all the gaudy loveliness of wild flowers ... The great abundance of deer, turkey and other game in the vicinity also contributed their share of amusement and enlivened the interval of detention."

Edwin Bryant described this leg of the trail. "May 25, 1846. Between this and the Big Blue, on the trail, there was said to be neither wood nor water, and consequently our water casks were filled, and a supply of wood placed on our wagons, sufficient for fires at night and in the morning. We encamped this afternoon on a high elevation of the prairie, about five miles west of the (Black) Vermillion.

"The ridges over which we had marched today, have generally exhibited a coarse gravel of flint and sandstone, with boulders of the latter, and of granite. Distance 15 miles."

## Alcove Spring

The Alcove Spring area was a camp for many parties even before 1846 when Bryant, McKinstry and named the spring and carved the name "Alcove Spring" and their initials on the rock ledge. As early as 1843, wagon trains camped nearby. Matthew Field's party nooned at the spring. "(near the Big Blue) ... we made our short 'nooning' at the edge of the timber, where we found cold water gushing from the rock and sparkling in the sunbeam as it leaped into the creek below." (Field p. 38 also in *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, Dec. 3, 1843.)

Edwin Bryant and other members of his party were charmed by the place. Bryant named it Alcove Spring, and George McKinstry carved the name 'Alcove Spring' on a rock. Other members of the their party carved their initials and date on rocks.

George McKinstry wrote, "Saturday May 30th have been at work at the boats as the river falls slowly and the banks muddy. The boats are launched and are being annexed and will try to cross the first division today. About a mile from camp up the spring branch on the right hand fork is a most beautiful spring and a fall of water of 12 feet. Mr. Bryant of our party has named it the 'Alcove Spring.' The water is of the most excellent kind. The spring is



Photos by Barbara Burgess

These two photographs of Alcove Spring illustrate the different appearances of the site. In dry years the spring flows at the base of the fall, but no water goes over the falls. After a rain, a waterfall appears. The rock ledge at the top of the falls continues to weather, crack off and fall into the creek bed below.

surrounded with ash, cottonwood and cedar trees ... I this day cut the name of the spring in the rock on the table at the top of the falls."

Bryant also described naming the spring. "May 27 "This afternoon, accompanied by several of the party, I strolled up the small branch, which I have previously mentioned as emptying into the river just above the ford. About three-fourths of a mile from our camp we found a large spring of water, as cold and pure as if it had just been melted from ice. It gushed from a ledge of rocks, which composes the bank of the stream, and falling some ten feet in length, ten breadth, and three or four in depth. A shelving rock projects over this basin, from which falls a beautiful cascade of water, some ten or twelve feet. The whole is buried in a variety of shrubbery of





Top photo from Kansas State Historical Society  
Bottom photo by Barbara Burgess

These two photos illustrate how the weathering process is affecting James F. Reed's initials that were carved into a rock ledge at Alcove Spring. The bottom photograph was taken in 1998 several decades after the top photo.

the richest verdure, and surrounded by small mound-shaped inequalities of the prairie.

"Altogether it is one of the most romantic spots I ever saw. So charmed were we with its beauties that several hours unconsciously glided away in the enjoyment of its refreshing waters and seductive attractions. We named this the 'Alcove Spring, and future travelers will find the name graven on the rocks, and on the trunks of the trees surrounding it."

## Grave of Sarah Keyes

The burial of a 70-year old Sarah Keyes became a landmark near Alcove Spring in 1846. Edwin Bryant memorialized it by writing a moving description of the death and burial in his journal. His journal was published and used as a guidebook in future years.

Bryant wrote, "May 29. Last night Mrs. Sarah Keyes, a lady aged 70, a member of the family of Mr. J.H. Reed of Illinois, and his mother-in-law, died. Mr. Reed, with his family, is emigrating to California. The deceased Mrs. Keyes, however, did not intend to accompany him farther than Fort Hall, where she expected to meet her son who emigrated to Oregon two or three years since. Her health, from disease and debility of age, was so feeble, that when she left her home, she entertained but faint hopes of being able to endure the hardships of the journey. Her physicians had announced to her that she could live but a short time, and this time she determined to devote to an effort to see her only son once more on earth. Such a mother's affection! The effort, however, was vain. She expired without seeing her child.

"The event, although it had been anticipated several days, cast a shade of gloom over our whole encampment. The construction of the ferry boat and all recreations were suspended, out of respect for the dead, and to make preparations for the funeral. A cottonwood tree was felled, and the trunk of it split into planks, which being first hewn with an axe and then planed, were constructed into a coffin, in which the remains of the deceased were deposited. A grave was excavated a short distance from the camp, under an oak tree on the right hand side of the trail. A stone was procured, the surface of which being smoothed, it was fashioned into the shape of a tombstone, and the name and age, and the date of the death of the deceased, were graven upon it.

"At 2 o'clock p.m. a funeral procession was formed, in which nearly every man, woman, and child of the company united, and the corpse of the deceased lady was conveyed to its last resting place in this desolate but beautiful wilderness. Her coffin was lowered into the grave. A prayer was offered to the Throne of Grace by the Rev. Mr. Cornwall. An appropriate hymn was sung by the congregation with much pathos and expression. A funeral discourse was then pronounced by the officiating clergyman and the services were concluded by another hymn, and a benediction. The grave was then closed and carefully sodded with the green turf of the prairie, from whence annually will spring and bloom its brilliant and many-colored flowers. The inscription on the tombstone, and on the tree beneath which is the grave, is as follows, 'Mrs. Sarah Keyes, Died May 29,



1846; Aged 70.”

George McKinstry, with the Bryant party, also described the death and burial of Sarah Keyes.

“Friday May 29th. The creek fell some 3 1/2 feet last night and the company have concluded to wait for the creek to fall before crossing. Last night I mounted guard from 11 to 1 o’clock. About daylight this morning Mrs. Keyes, the mother of the wife of Mr. Reed of Illinois died of consumption-aged 70. (She) had been sick for a long time, has been blind and deaf for some time past. Her son-in-law Mr. Reed is on his way to California. She was to meet an only son from Oregon. The funeral took place this evening at 2 o’clock which was attended by every member of the company ... The grave is under an oak tree beside the Oregon road about 1/4 mile west (east) of Blue Earth River ...”

Thirteen-year-old Virginia Reed also described the burial in a letter she wrote to her cousin. Reed’s description is personal and emotional because Virginia Reed was writing about the death of her grandmother. “Letter dated July 12, 1846. We came to the Blue. The water was so high we had to stay there four days. In the meantime gramma died. She became speechless the day before she died. We buried her very decent. We made a headstone and had her name cut on it and the date and year very nice. And at the head of the grave was a tree. We cut some letters on it. The young men sodded it all over and put flowers on it. We miss her very much. Each time we come to the wagon we look at the bed for her.”

In her recollections, written 45 years later, Virginia Reed described her grandmother’s wagon and the alterations that were made to accommodate Sarah. “Grandmother Keyes, who was 75 years of age, was an invalid, confined to her bed. Her sons in Springfield, Gersham and James W Keyes, tried to dissuade her from the long and fatiguing journey, but in vain, she would not be parted from my mother, who was her only daughter. So the car in which she was to ride was planned to give comfort. The entrance was on the side, like that of an old-fashioned stage coach, and one stepped into a small room, as it were, in the centre of the wagon. At the right and left were spring seats with comfortable high backs, where one could sit and ride with as much ease as on the seats of a Concord coach. In this little room was placed a tiny sheet-iron stove, whose pipe, running through the top of the wagon, was prevented by a circle of tin from setting fire to the canvas cover. A board about a foot wide extended over the wheels on either side the full length of the wagon, thus forming the foundation for a large and roomy second story in

which were placed our beds. Under the spring seats were compartments in which were stored many articles useful for the journey, such as a well filled work basket and a full assortment of medicines, with lint and bandages for dressing wounds.

“Our clothing was packed — not in Saratoga trunks — but in strong canvas bags plainly marked. Some of mama’s young friends added a looking-glass, hung directly opposite the door, in order, as they said, that my mother might not forget to keep her good looks, and strange to say, when we had to leave this wagon, standing like a monument on the Salt Lake desert, the glass was still unbroken. I have often thought how pleased the Indians must have been when they found this mirror which gave them back the picture of their own dusky faces.

“Grandma Keyes improved in health and spirits every day until we came to the Big Blue River, which was so swollen that we could not cross, but had to lie by and make rafts on which to take the wagons over. As soon as we stopped traveling, grandma began to fail, and on the 29th day of May she died. It seemed hard to bury her in the wilderness, and travel on, and we were afraid that the Indians would destroy her grave, but her death here, before our troubles began, was providential, and nowhere on the whole road could we have found so beautiful a resting place. By this time many emigrants had joined our company, and all turned out to assist at the funeral. A coffin was hewn out of a cottonwood tree, and John Denton, a young man from Springfield, found a large gray stone on which he carved with deep letters the name of ‘Sarah Keyes; born in Virginia,’ giving age and date of birth. She was buried under the shade of an oak, the slab being placed at the foot of the grave, on which were planted wild flowers growing in the sod. A minister in our party, the Rev. J. A. Cornwall, tried to give words of comfort as we stood about this lonely grave.” (*Across the Plains in the Donner Party* by Virginia Reed Murphy page 15)

The grave of Sarah Keyes became a landmark, and her grave was described in many journals in the years after 1846. Perhaps her death and burial were notable because of her age or perhaps her death was remembered because her family traveled with the Donner family that met disaster later in 1846 as the party was caught in the mountains of California by an early winter storm. Many members of

this party died of starvation before reaching their destination. Or perhaps it was the moving description of her death and burial in Edwin Bryant’s guidebook.

After 1846, the grave of Sarah Keyes and the Alcove Springs became well known landmarks on the trail and were mentioned in many journals. On his



way to Oregon Edward Smith camped at Alcove Spring and wrote, "May 14, 1848. Repaired the wagon and started at nine, traveled about 14 miles and encamped on the right bank of the Big Blue River near a fine spring of very cold water. Here we passed the grave of a very old lady who had died here and was buried on the left bank of the river under a hickory tree about one foot in diameter, on the right hand side about 4 rods from the road. The name was inscribed on a tree is Sarah Keyes aged 70 years. Died in May 1846."

The grave was noted by 49ers. Jackson Thomason saw the grave and wrote about it. "May 22, 1849 ... Reached Big Blue by 3 o'clock p.m. and crossed without any difficulty. Big Blue is about 100 yard wide with clear running water. Has some very fine fish in it. Red Horse and others passed two fresh graves one yesterday and one today of Mrs. McKays who died in 1846 ... Camped one mile after crossing the latter river in good grass."

Gold rusher William G. Johnston also noticed the grave in 1849. He mentioned that he was reading the guidebook of Edwin Bryant. "May 9, 1849. A short way from camp this morning, we came to a wooden tombstone marking the grave of Mrs. Sarah Keyes, aged 70, who died May 29, 1846. Mr. Bryant mentions the death and burial of this lady in his work; and the little headstone served to determine our locality; for by it we knew we were nigh the Big Blue River. We found here also one of the kind of post offices peculiar to the plains – a stick driven into the ground in the upper end of which, in a notch, communications are placed, intended for parties following. A letter in this post office was found addressed to Captain Pye. It was from Captain Paul, giving information that at this place his driver, John Fuller, had accidentally shot and killed himself whilst removing a gun from a wagon. The mode was the usual one – never yet patented, and ope to all – the muzzle was towards him and went off of itself.

## Independence Crossing of the Big Blue River

**T**he Big Blue River was a major obstacle in years when it was swollen by spring rains. When the river was running high, some parties had to build crude boats to take their wagons across. Edwin Bryant's party built a ferry to transport their wagons across the high water. "May 26, 1846. The Big Blue in its present state, at the ford, is a stream about one hundred yards in width, with turbid water and a strong current. A large quantity of drift is floating on its surface. The timber on it at this point is about half a mile in width and is composed of oak, cottonwood, walnut, beach and sycamore. The trees

are large, and appear to be sound and thrifty. A small spring branch empties into the main river, which here runs nearly from the north to the south, just above the ford. The waters of the branch are perfectly limpid, and with a lively and sparkling current bubble along over a clear bed of gravel and large flat rocks. In the banks and the bed of this small stream, there are several springs of delicious cold water, which to the traveler in this region is one of the most highly prized luxuries. Should our government determine to establish military posts along the emigrant trail to Oregon, a more favorable position than this, for one of them, could not be selected. The range of bluffs on the eastern side of the river, about two hundred yards from it, overlooks and commands the entire bottom on both sides, forming a natural fortification ...

"The afternoon has been devoted, by the female portion of our party, to the important duty of 'washing.' I noticed that the small branch was lined with fires, kettles, tubs, and all the paraphernalia necessary to the process of purifying linen. The Big Blue is said to abound in fish, but its exterior height has prevented much success with our anglers. A catfish about three feet in length was taken this evening by one of our party.

"The river has continued to rise rapidly since our arrival here, and at sunset the muddy waters were even with its banks. It is not probable that we should be able to ford it for two or three days. The two companies immediately in advance of us, were so fortunate as to reach the stream last night before the great rise took place, and we saw them on our arrival wending their way west, over the high and distant ridges.

"May 27, 1846. A terrific thunder storm roared and raged, and poured our its floods of water throughout a great portion of the night. But for the protection against the violence of the wind, afforded by the bluffs on one side and the timber on the other, our tents would have been swept away by the storm. The whole arch of the heavens for a time was wrapped in a sheet of flame, and the almost deafening crashes of thunder, following each other with scarcely an intermission between, seemed as if they would rend the solid earth, or topple it from its axis. A more sublime and awful meteoric display, I never witnessed or could conceive.

"The river since last night has risen several feet, and there is now no hope of fording it for several days ...

"May 28. The river having fallen only 15 inches during the night, after breakfast the whole party capable of performing duty were summoned to repair to a point on the river about half a mile above us, to assist in the construction of a raft to ferry our wagons over the stream. The response to this call was not very general; but a number of the men

armed with their axes, adzes, and a variety of other mechanical tools, immediately assembled and repaired to the place designated.

"May 30. The river having remained stationery during the night, and from the frequency of rains there being no present probability of its falling so as to be fordable, the business of completing our ferry boat was resumed with energy at an early hour. This work being finished, the nondescript craft was christened the 'Blue River Rover' and launched amid the cheers of the men. She floated down the stream like a cork, and was soon moored at the place of embarkation. The work of ferrying over was commenced immediately. Much difficulty, as had been anticipated, was experienced in working the boat, on account of the rapidity of the stream and the great weight of many of the wagons. The current was so strong, that near the shore, where the water was not more than three or four feet deep, the strength of a man could with difficulty breast it.

"One of the canoes was swamped on the western side in drawing the third wagon from it. The damage, however, was soon repaired and the work resumed. Nine wagons and their contents were safely ferried over during the afternoon.

"May 31. The business of ferrying resumed at an early hour, and continued with vigor until nine o'clock at night, when all wagons, oxen and horses were safely landed on the western bank of the river, where our corral was formed. The labor has been very severe, and sometimes dangerous; but was rendered still more disagreeable by a very sudden change in temperature. A chilling wind commenced blowing from the northwest at four o'clock, p.m. Soon after dark masses of clouds rolled up, and it rained violently. At six o'clock the thermometer had fallen 48 degrees, and our men, many of whom have been standing in the water the whole day, when they came into camp were shivering as if under the influence of a paroxysm of the ague."

McKinstry, who was in the party with Bryant, described the boats that they built. "May 28, 1846 ... We labored industriously the entire day in making dugouts. Two large cottonwood trees were felled, about 3 1/2 or 4 feet in diameter. From these trees canoes were hollowed out, 25 feet in length. The two canoes are to be united by a cross-frame, so as to admit the wheels of our wagons into them. Lines are then to be attached to both ends, and our watercraft is thus to convey our wagons over the river, being pulled backwards and forwards by the strength of the men."

The Big Blue was high again in 1850. Edward Alexander Tompkins described his experience crossing the river. "About 25 miles farther west (from Black Vermillion) brings the traveler to the Big Blue River, which is about 10 rods wide and so deep that floats or rafts are indispensable for crossing it with

wagons and baggage. Several persons are drowned at this crossing every year. At the time we crossed, I should judge that full 300 men, women and children were assembled at the point when all deemed it the place for building their (illegible) ferries. At least 50 head of cattle and 1000 horses and mules were endeavoring to pass over and such horrid noises caused by the braying of asses, lowing of oxen, screaming of women and children with the fiendish cursing and swearing shouts in all languages by furious madmen was enough to (becraze?) the greatest stoic in all christendom."

Henry Stine described high water in a letter. "June 17, 1850. At the Blue River, we stopped three days. Fixed up a blacksmith shop and gave wagons a general overhauling and also to make a raft. The river being too high to ford and very rapid, we had to fix ropes from bank to bank and let the raft swing across by the action of the current. The first wagon sunk the raft in about five feet of water, we got it out without damage."

In some years the travelers could drive their wagons and livestock across the river. In the advance party, Virgil Pringle was more fortunate than Bryant and was able to cross even though the river was rising. "May 20, 1846. Wednesday pushed ahead for Blue River, the foremost of the caravan reached in time to cross; found it rising fast. Twenty wagon(s) crossed, the remainder detained by the water Thurs. and Fri., which was much to our advantage, our teams recruiting, more overhauling provisions and fine.

"Sat. May 23. Occupied this day in crossing the Blue River by fording; raised our wagons by placing blocks between the beds and bolsters and went over dry. Camped on a beautiful spring branch on the right bank of the river. A child born in the camp this night, it being an addition to the family of Aaron Richardson ..."

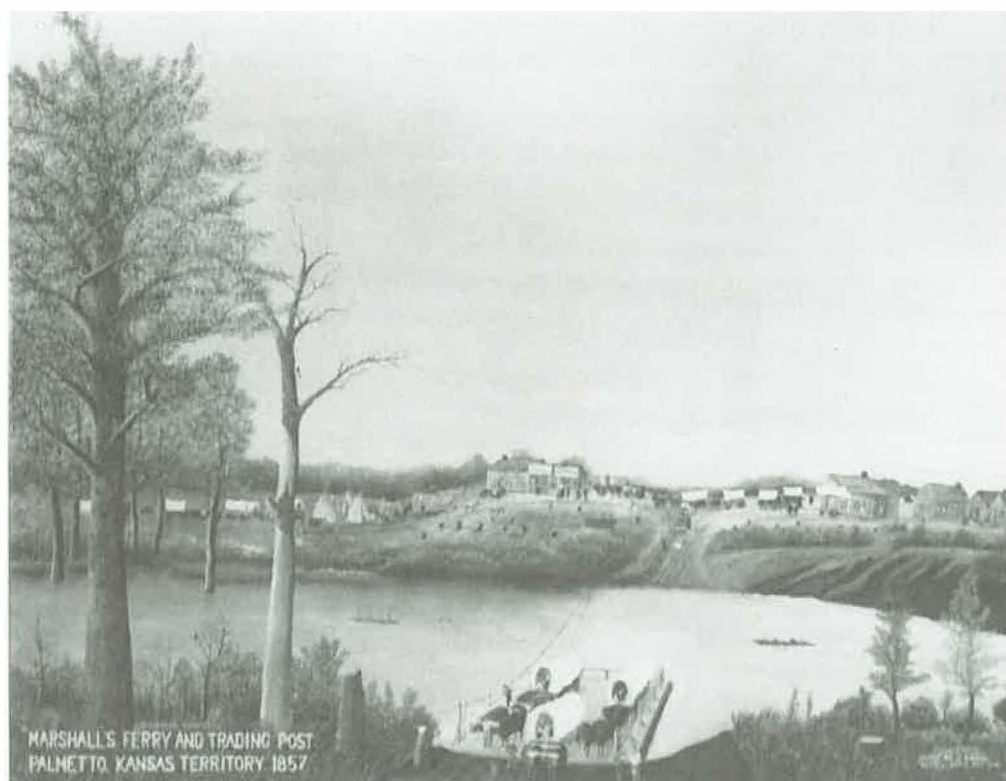
In 1849 many companies were able to ford the river. James Pritchard's party was able to ford the river. "May 10, 1849. This is a large stream with a bold current and gravelly bottom. We had here to lower our wagons down with ropes, which consumed the balance of the evening in crossing all the train. The soil is very fine on this river, and the bottoms are well timbered. This will doubtless become a fine farming country and that before many years. Here we encamped for the night."

Isaac Wistar also forded the river without incident. "May 20, 1849. Sunday brings no rest today. We are so elated at our good conduct yesterday, in camping on the right side of the obstructive stream, and the weather is so threatening, that we decided to push on with a train of 10 Indiana and seven Mississippi wagons, by whom we camped last night, 12 or 15 miles to the Little Blue (Big Blue) so as to cross it today, if possible. We reached and crossed it



Oscar Axtell painted this view of the old ferry and river crossing at Marysville. The artist based his painting on descriptions furnished by pioneers Robert Y. Shibley, John B. Ellenbecker and Otto J. Wulfschleger. This original painting is on display in Marysville.

Photo from Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka



about 1 p.m. descending the eastern side with the aid of ropes and surmounting the far bank without much difficulty. At our crossing, it was about four feet deep and 80 yards wide, with a large island in the middle, and a rapid current. Both trains camped together not far beyond, and one mess caught four fine cats, but mine went fishless, for which I received plenty of sarcasm and abuse, especially from those who had never yet caught, or tried to catch a fish."

## Point of Interest 4. Marysville

### North on East River Road to Marysville

**M**arysville is the county seat of Marshall County. It is located near the Big Blue River of northern Kansas.

Marysville, known as Marshall's Ferry until 1854, was founded by Frank Marshall. The town was named for his wife Mary, and the County bears their name. This section of trail is on the St. Joe Road.

## Point of Interest 5. Historic Trails Park

### Northwest of Marysville.

*A replica of the old rope ferry that carried travelers cross the Big Blue River has been constructed in this park. The Marysville ferry was operated by Frank Marshall until 1864 when it was replaced by a bridge.*

**B**y 1852 a ferry service across the Big Blue was started by Francis J. Marshall to serve travelers on the Fort Leavenworth – Fort Kearny military road and the St. Joseph Road, which joined the Independence Road eight miles west of the Big Blue River.

Thomas C. Lewis used the ferry and quoted prices charged in 1852. "May 7, 1852. Friday fine morning. Early start. Got to the Big Blue. It had raised in the night. Ferried over. Charged \$3 for each wagon, 25 cents for each stock, 25 cents passengers ..." (Barry 1068)

Some travelers on the Independence Road elected to follow this new route to take advantage of the ferry service in years when the river was high. J. D. Randall's party used the new ferry service. "May 20, 1852 ... Passed over very rough rocky road a part



Photo by Barbara Burgess

This reproduction of the Marshall Ferry is displayed in the Historic Trails Park in Marysville.

of the time this day and crossed Big Blue. There is a ferry here when the water is up, but the ford is good now. There are three white men here keeping the ferry and are fixing for a store and stopping place for the mail. Plenty of wood. Some large cottonwood trees."

In 1853 the river was flooded again. Celinda Hines and her party, who were traveling on the Independence Road, elected to use the ferry at Marysville after finding the high water at the Independence crossing. "May 19, 1853. Camped near the Blue ... We could not cross the river for high water. Mr. F's (Ferguson) company were making a raft ...

"May 20, 1853 ... Mr. F's raft went downstream. River continued to rise. We washed in a ravine. People camped in every direction, waiting for the water to fall. Impossible to cross unless it did.

"May 21 1853. Very warm. Concluded to go north to the ferry (at Marysville) about seven miles.

"May 23, 1853. Remained in camp because our turn had not come the Blue. Many camps in sight.

"May 24, 1853. Struck our tents and went to the ferry. Many wagons were before us, some who were booked before us and some who were not ..."

Rebecca Ketcham's party used the ferry in the same year. "May 31, 1853. The river is not very wide but quite deep and muddy. The bank where they cross is quite steep on both sides and mud was awful. The wagon in going down to the boat laid out from it sometimes stood almost on end. We all walked down to the boat and stood on one end of it while we went over. One of the wagons got stuck in the mud and they had to borrow two yoke of oxen to get it out."

## Point of Interest 6. Northwest of Marysville Thomas Mastin Grave

Swales in area: Marysville Township  
Section 30 Ellenbecker property

*The only information is available on the grave marker. Several OCTA members and others have searched the Internet and elsewhere and cannot find any additional information. There are swales to the northwest, which we cannot reach with the tour buses. -Ken and Arleta Martin*

## Point of Interest 7. Pencenka Swales

Travel to Bremen Road  
Logan Township Sec. 30

*This is on the Independence Road branch, a mile before you reach the junction of the trails. Ken and Arleta Martin*

## Point of Interest 8. Pacha farm swales and 2 unknown emigrant graves. -Ken and Arleta Martin

Logan Township Section 20

*This section of trail lies on the St. Joe Road before we reach the "trails junction." There are nine visible swales in a pasture of virgin prairie, which has never been tilled. The National Park Service conducted a Ground Survey in this area and received positive readings. Mr. and Mrs. Pacha were the 2002 recipients of OCTA's Friend of the Trail Award. -Ken and Arleta Martin*



## Point of Interest 9. Trails Junction

**E**ight miles northwest of the Independence crossing of the Big Blue is the point where the Independence Road and the St. Joseph Road merge. Most journals mention this trail landmark.

Edward Smith noted it in his journal. "May 15, 1848 ... during the day we struck the emigrant route from St. Joseph. Fresh tracks as if 200 wagons had passed a few days before."

In 1849 travelers who were rushing to the gold fields found a real traffic jam at this intersection. James Pritchard was alarmed by the heavy traffic. "Friday May 11, 1849. By noon today we came to where the St. Joseph Road and Independence Road came together. It was alarming to see the long strings of wagons that were on the road. I counted just passing before us as we came into the St. Joe road 90 ox teams in one string. As far as the eye could reach forward and back, the road was just lined with them. It would appear from the sight before us that the Nation was disgorging itself and sending off its whole inhabitance."

The intersection was crowded again in the next year. George Willis Read described it. "May 13, 1850. We were all up early. All hands busy. Started out half past seven. Had a very pleasant day. Passed the Big Blue. A very beautiful stream, water clear and rapid. We were very fortunate in passing it at low water. We all passed it safely. We came into the St. Joseph Road today. I think it better than the Independence Road. From the most reliable information I can obtain, there must be one thousand wagons on the road from here to St. Joe. We are encamped tonight three miles from the intersection of the Independence and St. Joe Roads."

A few days later Martin Vivian was bothered by the dust stirred up by the traffic. "May 16, 1850. Traveled 12 miles and camped near the junction of the Independence Road and St. Joe road, on a high prairie. Here the wagons were strung thick as far as the eye could reach and having had no rain since the 6th the clouds of dust from them were disagreeable."

Days later Madison Moorman also complained about the dust and traffic. "May 25, 1850. About 12 miles from the starting, we intersected the St. Joe Road that was literally alive with the immense multitude of emigrants. The road was dusty and we happened to come in, in the rear of an unusually large ox-train. We had hard work to pass it, and no little did it fatigue our train."

The trail here continued to be crowded in 1852. Peter Hickman described the traffic. "May 17, 1852 ... at 2 o'clock we came to the junction of the Independence and St. Joe roads. We are just coming into the crowd of emigration. As far as the eye can reach to the east and to the west, nothing is to be seen but large trains of wagons and stock."

J. D. Randall saw potential for agriculture in the fertile bottomland. "May 21, 1852. This morning it is raining, and we start at about 9 a.m. The road is rough about two miles; then we enter on a fine piece of farming land. At about 4 p.m. we pass the junction of the Kansas Independence and St. Joseph Roads two and one-half miles this side Cotton Wood Creek. Only middling camping."

This junction of the two trails marked the end of the Independence Road and the end of the road that started at St. Joe. The two trails joined together to form the main branch. Here also the tallgrass prairie began changing. Buffalo and antelope were seen for the first time. A shortage of wood developed as trees grew scarce. New problems faced the travelers as they headed for the Platte River. This was the end of the first leg of the 2,000 mile journey to Oregon or California.

## Point of Interest 10. Cottonwood/Hollenberg Station

4 miles north of US-36 on K-148, one mile east on K-243



Photo by Barbara Burgess  
Gerat Henry Hollenberg built this log building near the Cottonwood Creek on the trail. This building served as a ranch home, a stage station and a station on the Pony Express.



Two miles from the trails' junction the Oregon/California trail crossed Cottonwood Creek. Journal writers noted that the character of the country began to change dramatically during the next few days of travel.

Travelers on this stretch of trail often met parties of Pawnee, Kansas and Potawatomi who were on hunting trips and battle missions. Travelers saw and hunted elk, deer, antelope and wolves and fished in the rivers. William Anderson wrote that he saw his first elk near the Big Blue River, and Ashal Munger said that his hunter (Paul Richardson) shot a doe elk here in 1839. Elk sightings in this vicinity were not mentioned after the 1830s.

The first permanent resident west of the trails' junction was Gerat Henry Hollenberg, who built a log building and moved his store and residence from the Black Vermillion to this site in 1858.

Hollenberg had moved to the United States from his father's farm near Hanover, Germany. In addition to his farming experience in Germany, Hollenberg also brought with him experiences from frontiers on three continents. He went to mine gold in California in 1849 and then left for the gold fields in Australia. His next adventure took him to the mines in Peru.

After his gold mining adventures, Hollenberg came to Kansas in 1854 and settled on the Black Vermillion River where he opened a small store and sold supplies to travelers on the trail. Sometime in 1857 he decided to move west on the trail and built the log Cottonwood Ranch house.

This move seemed to coincide with his entry into new business ventures and with his marriage in May 1858 to Sophia Brockmeyer, who had been born in Prussia.

In his new ranch home, he began operating a stage station for the Hockaday Company which was purchased by William Russell and the freighting company of Russell, Majors and Waddell sometime in 1859. This company started the Pony Express mail service in April 1860 from St. Joseph to Sacramento, California.

The Hollenberg or the Cottonwood Station was one of the stations where the Pony Express riders changed horses. Hollenberg provided services for the Pony Express during the 19 months that the Pony Express service operated.

Hollenberg was involved in diversified business enterprises. He became a large scale land speculator and real estate agent, a newspaper owner/editor, a station manager/agent for the Russell, Majors and Waddell Stage Line, and a ticket agent for the Great Anchor Line Trans-Atlantic and Mediterranean Steam Ship Company, a state legislator and organizer of an immigration society. All of these activities were coordinated and managed by Hollenberg. The immigrants that he brought to Kansas were offered employment as workers for the stage company, as

farm workers, as laborers in construction work on the homes and businesses in the area.

Later Hollenberg was successful in attracting the railroad to locate its tracks near the town he was developing.

Hollenberg's business activities ended with his death in 1874, but his influence can still be seen in the community today as descendants of many of the immigrants he brought to Kansas continue farming the land that their great (and great, great) grandfathers purchased from Hollenberg.



