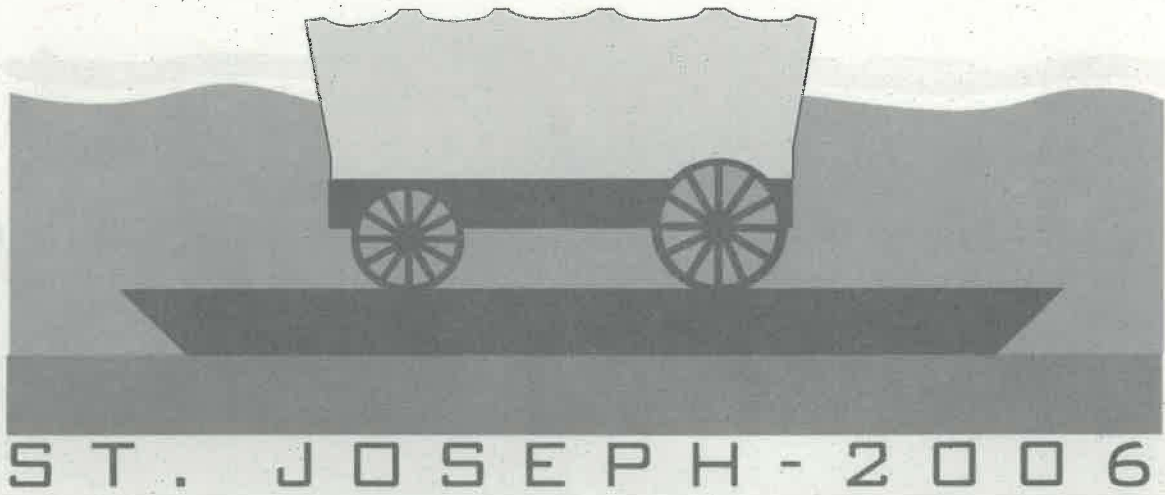


RIVERS, PLAINS, AND WAGON TRAINS



OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION

Oregon-California Trails Association

August 8 - 12, 2006

Hosted by Gateway Chapter

Souvenir Booklet

OREGON TRAIL - CALIFORNIA TRAIL - PONY EXPRESS TRAIL - LEWIS AND CLARK TRAIL

Welcome to Convention 2006!

Thank you for coming to historic St. Joseph, a city that saw tens of thousands of nineteenth-century westward-bound travelers. Their sights were set on many of our nation's National Historic Trails on "Rivers, Plains and Wagon Trains" including the Lewis and Clark, Oregon, California, Mormon Pioneer and Pony Express Trails.

But in addition, St. Joseph's history is rich in other stories as well including fur trappers, Indian removal, merchants and outfitters, settlers, the Civil War and magnificent old mansions. This booklet includes some of these other stories that will enable the reader to have a wider perspective of the historical heritage of St. Joseph.

Thanks to each of the writers who researched and wrote articles for this booklet; and to Jackie Lewin and John Atkinson for their logistical support in producing it.

We hope you enjoy this booklet and your stay in St. Joseph.

Ross Marshall, Editor

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HISTORY OF ST. JOSEPH, MISSOURI

Clyde Weeks



St. Joseph, circa 1850

To learn the history of St. Joseph, Missouri, one must go back to the year 1826 at which time a French Canadian fur trader, Joseph Robidoux III, set up a trading post in what was then Indian territory. This was done while he was an employee of John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company. He was paid \$1800 per year. He first built his trading post on Roy's Branch, near the Waterworks Road. One year later he moved his post south to the mouth of Blacksnake Creek at about 2nd and Jules. The place became known as Blacksnake Hills and later as Robidoux Landing. By 1830, Robidoux bought out the Astor interest and became an independent trader.¹

This area was well suited for trade with the Native American Indians. The bluffs surrounding the area were sacred meeting grounds on which no blood could be shed. They believed that the souls of their departed would be carried from the hills to the Great Spirit of the setting sun. The name for the place was La-No-Wah, or Sunbridge.²

While Robidoux had permission of the U.S. Government to be here doing business, he did not own any land because it all belonged to the Native American Indians. The government in 1836-37 purchased a triangular shaped piece of land comprised of two million acres for \$7500 from the Iowa, Sac and Fox tribes. This was added to the northwest corner of Missouri.³ Robidoux received 160 acres on which he raised hemp.⁴

By 1843, Joseph Robidoux was 60 years old and had decided to lay out his town. To do so, he had a competition between two surveyors, Frederick Smith and Simeon Kemper. Kemper's plan featured wide streets, alleys, and parkways. He planned to name the town 'Robidoux' in honor of its founder.⁵ A copy of the plan has never been located. Smith planned a town with narrow streets like they had in his native Germany. Those running north and south from the Missouri River were named Water Street (now Prospect), Levee Street (now Dewey), Main Street, Second Street, Third Street and up to Sixth Street.⁶ Those going east and west were named for Robidoux's wife Angelique, and their children Messanie, Sylvanie, Charles, Edmond, Felix, Francis, Jules and Faraon.⁷ The northern most street was named Robidoux for the family. He named the town 'Saint Joseph' in honor of Joseph Robidoux's patron saint, Saint Joseph.⁸ Some say Smith's plan was chosen because Robidoux would have more land to sell due to the narrow streets.⁹

On July 26, 1843, Robidoux filed his plans and Blacksnake Hills officially became Saint Joseph, Missouri.¹⁰

While Joseph Robidoux did not want to waste his land on wide streets, he was generous by donating one-half of a block for a market square, one-half block for a public church, a quarter block for a public school and a quarter block for a Catholic church.¹¹ Later, when the county seat was moved from neighboring Sparta, Robidoux donated a full block as the site of a future courthouse.¹² Lots were sold to the public at \$150 for corner lots and \$100 for inside lots.¹³

In 1845, nearly 950 emigrants passed through St. Joseph on their way to Oregon. In 1846, there were 274 wagons and at least 1350 persons setting out on the Oregon-California Trail from St. Joseph.¹⁴ St. Joseph was one of the principal 'jumping-off' places, along with Independence, Westport and Council Bluffs. Gold was discovered in California in 1848 and the next year, in 1849, as many as 30,000 emigrants passed through St. Joseph. According to one source, a total of 1508 wagons used the several available ferries to cross the river as they started their journey.¹⁵

Due to a lack of facilities to care for the many families coming to settle in Robidoux's new town, Robidoux in the early 1840s constructed a row of single-room apartments which came to be called Robidoux Row. People of the 'right quality' could live in a one-room apartment until their house was completed. An addition was constructed on the east side in the 1850s.¹⁶ Also to meet the needs of the new arrivals, he constructed a steam mill.¹⁷ His son Jules was the first person licensed as a ferryman running a ferry across the Missouri River in this area in 1839.¹⁸

In 1857, Robidoux's wife Angelique died and he moved to Robidoux Row where he would make his final home and watch his town grow for the next ten years.¹⁹ His sister Pelagie helped care for him as he was almost totally blind.

The 1850s saw the expansion of the railroad. The first railroad to cross the state of Missouri was the Hannibal and St. Joseph, which ran between the two cities and was completed in 1859. It was reported that Joseph Robidoux drove the final (gold) spike.²⁰

Soon after the completion of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad, St. Joseph was selected as the eastern terminus of the Pony Express because mail could be carried across the state on the train and then by put on the ponies to be carried to California.²¹

St. Joseph was also involved in the Civil War. Missouri was a border state, since much of the population came from the South. However, the state did not secede, remaining under Union military control. Military units from Missouri fought on each side, sometimes brother against brother. There were no battles fought here, but since many of St. Joseph's residents came from Kentucky and Virginia, we did have curfews, martial law, and a careful observation of anyone supporting the South. Our mayor, Meriwether Jeff Thompson left to fight for the South and became known as the 'Swamp Fox'. An earthen fort was built atop Prospect Hill by Union forces called Fort Smith. This helped

them keep an eye on the city and on the Missouri River, a major traffic way. It took some time for the city to overcome the effects of the war.²²

Joseph Robidoux was now reaching his eighties and was unable to get around easily, often using a cane. He had been losing his eyesight since he was 56 years old and had only a few teeth left.²³ On May 26, 1868 he made his usual trip around his beloved town and returned home deciding he needed some rest. He died at 1:30 a.m. on May 27, at Robidoux Row at 3rd and Poulin.²⁴ At the time he died he was nearly blind and broke, but he had seen his town grow from his one log cabin to a town of 20,000 population.

His city of St. Joseph paid due respect to its founder. All business houses were closed during his funeral and the stores were draped. A procession of 85 vehicles, fifty horsemen and hundreds of pedestrians proceeded from the home of Jules Robidoux, where the funeral was held, to the Calvary Cemetery.²⁵

Although its founder and leader was gone, the city of St. Joseph continued to grow. Its golden age was from 1885 to 1900. Since the turn of the twentieth century the city has maintained a population between 75,000 and 80,000.

¹ Trish Bransky, Brochure as a reprint from *St. Joseph Magazine*, undated; page 2

² Ibid; page 2

³ Sheridan A. Logan, *Old Saint Jo*, 1979; pages 15-16

⁴ *History of Buchanan County*, 1881; page 405

⁵ Sheridan A. Logan, *Old Saint Jo*, 1979; page 24

⁶ Orral Messmore Robidoux, *Memorial to the Robidoux Brothers*, 1924; page 150

⁷ Sheridan A. Logan, *Old Saint Jo*, 1979; page 24

⁸ Trish Bransky, Brochure as a reprint from *St. Joseph Magazine*, undated; page 3

⁹ Robert Willoughby, *Robidoux's Town*, 1997; page 21

¹⁰ *History of Buchanan County*, 1881; pages 405-406

¹¹ Ibid; page 406

¹² Orral Messmore Robidoux, *Memorial to the Robidoux Brothers*, 1924; page 123

¹³ Sheridan A. Logan, *Old Saint Jo*, 1979; page 24

¹⁴ Clyde M. Rabideau, *Joseph Robidoux: The Family Patriarch*, 2005; page 172

¹⁵ Ibid; page 191

¹⁶ Ibid; pages 196-197

¹⁷ Clyde M. Rabideau, *Beaver Tales*, 2002; page 63

¹⁸ Orral Messmore Robidoux, *Memorial to the Robidoux Brothers*, 1924; page 104

¹⁹ Clyde M. Rabideau, *Joseph Robidoux: The Family Patriarch*, 2005; pages 203-204

²⁰ Orral Messmore Robidoux, *Memorial to the Robidoux Brothers*, 1924; page 123

²¹ Clyde M. Rabideau, *Joseph Robidoux: The Family Patriarch*, 2005; page 207

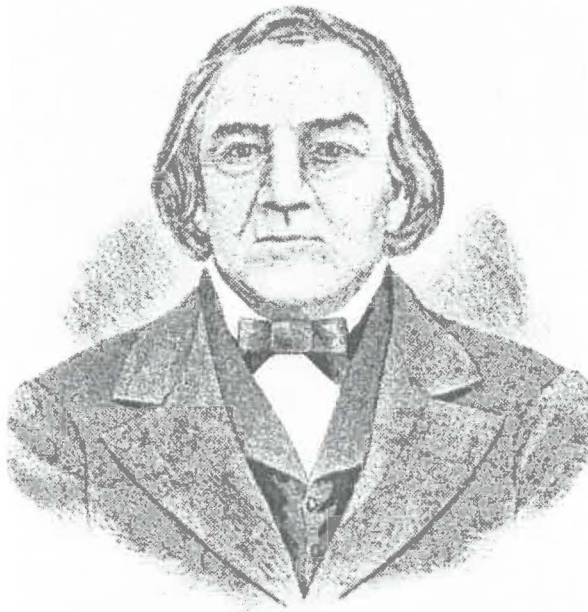
²² Robert Willoughby, *Robidoux's Town*, 1997; pages 95-102

²³ Orral Messmore Robidoux, *Memorial to the Robidoux Brothers*, 1924; page 279

²⁴ Ibid; page 151

²⁵ Ibid; pages 152-155

Clyde Weeks is a St. Joseph historian, past-president of the St. Joseph Historical Society and currently is the Executive Director of the Robidoux Row Museum.



The upper pictures show Joseph Robidoux III at different stages of his life, courtesy of Clyde Weeks. Below, courtesy of Michael and Margaret Fisher, are pictures of the remaining segments of Robidoux Row. On the left is the north wall at the time restoration began and at right is the current restored appearance. It is now the Robidoux Row Museum and is open to the public.

JOSEPH ROBIDOUX III

Clyde Weeks

Although Joseph Robidoux III was the equal of Manuel Lisa, Pierre Chouteau, Jim Bridger and other giants of the western fur traders, he has received very little mention in history books. This could be due to several reasons. First of all, researching the name Robidoux can send you in all directions. There are at least 75 different spellings of the name. The original version did not even end in an 'x'. Also, although the Robidouxes were literate they did not keep journals. Many journals of other traders just say, "met a Robidoux" without any mention of a first name.

To add to the confusion, there were four Joseph Robidouxes. Sometimes Sr. and Jr. were used, but to help modern historians we have added Roman numerals to make it easier to identify which Joseph we are speaking about. Roman numerals were NOT used at the time these men lived.¹

The story of Joseph Robidoux III begins many years before his birth with the arrival of Andre Robidou (no 'x') in Quebec City in the mid-1600s.² Andre was the first Robidou to set foot on the North American continent. He would later move his family to the Montreal area.

Andre's great-grandson Joseph I was born in 1722 and became a shoemaker. He married and his first child was named Joseph II. After his wife died, the two Josephs left for St. Louis and arrived there in 1770. Within a year, Joseph I died leaving his twenty-year-old son Joseph II to carry on. In 1782 he married Catherine Rolet (sometimes spelled 'Rollet'). Their firstborn child was a boy named Joseph III, the subject of this article³, who would later have six brothers and three sisters. The brothers who would figure in the fur trading business were Francois or Francis, Isadore, Antoine, Louis and Michel.⁴

At the age of sixteen, Joseph III made his first trip up the Missouri River in 1799. He was accompanied by Captain William H. Ashley and Rene Auguste Chouteau.⁵

Joseph stopped at the mouth of the Kaw River (present-day Kansas City) and established a trading post there, trading with the Missouri, Iowa, Sac and Fox tribes. After six months he headed up the Missouri River toward their destination, Council Bluffs. On the way, he passed the St. Michael's meadow which would later become the present-day site of St. Joseph.

In 1803, Joseph III was sent by his father to set up a trading post at Fort Dearborn (later Chicago), but the traders located in that area did not want competition. It is believed they stirred up the Indians who destroyed Robidoux's trading post. Joseph III barely escaped with his life.⁶ He then returned to St. Louis to help his father who had a store to supply trappers, traders, and explorers. In fact, in 1804, Lewis and Clark purchased a large part of their equipment and supplies from the Robidouxes in St. Louis.

In 1805, Joseph III's father was becoming ill and was going blind, a malady the sons were to inherit.⁷

Joseph III married Eugenie Delisle in 1806. It was during that year that Robidoux met Lewis and Clark on their return trip. They met near the Little Blue River below Kansas City. Lewis and Clark did not care for Robidoux and were not friendly to him. In their journals they refer to him as Mr. "Bobidoux".⁸ It is not certain if this was a slam or an error was made in transcribing the journal. Robidoux was warned not to degrade the American government in the eyes of the Indian as they believed his brothers had done.

Joseph and Eugenie had twins. The girl died after one year. The boy was named Eugene Joseph but was baptized as Joseph Eugene; therefore he was known as Joseph E. Robidoux through his life.⁹ He would be the only son to carry on the fur trading business.

In 1809, Eugenie dies leaving Robidoux with a young son. Family historian Clyde Rabideau has just discovered that Joseph III returned to Council Bluffs and married an Otoe woman. They had a child born in 1811 and he was named Joseph. This caused much confusion, so he was known as 'Indian Robidoux', while his half-brother Joseph E. was referred to as just 'Robidoux.'¹⁰ In early 1813, a daughter was born to Joseph III and the Otoe woman in Council Bluffs. Her name was Mary (Many Days).¹¹ She would later marry Chief White Cloud of the Ioway tribe.

Joseph III married Angelique Vaudry on August 13, 1813. Exactly one year later she gave birth to twins; Messanie, a daughter who lived only one day, and a boy named Julius Caesar (later he would be called Jule or Jules). Another son Farron (now spelled Faraon) was born in 1815.¹²

The next year, 1816, Joseph would lose his post in Council Bluffs. He built another trading post for the Missouri Fur Company near present-day North Omaha. It was known as Fort Robidoux until Joseph left for the Blacksnake Hills (St. Joseph). The post then became Cabanne's Post when Jeane Cabanne took over.¹³

Rudolph Kurz relates a story showing Robidoux's ingenuity. It seems Manuel Lisa had a trading post near Joseph's and they both traded with the Pawnees in Council Bluffs. They agreed not to take advantage of each other, but Manuel Lisa had no intent of sharing the trading with Joseph. One day when the Pawnees were about to come and trade, Lisa made a visit to Joseph to try to distract him, but Robidoux was not to be fooled. When Lisa arrived he suggested they have a drink, but he claimed that because of his gout he could not climb the ladder into the cellar to get the bottle. Lisa volunteered to go down. As soon as Lisa was down the ladder, Joseph let the door fall shut and put a heavy cask on top of it. Lisa was finally released after Robidoux finished his trade with the Pawnees.¹⁴

Joseph was also in the slave trading business as he purchased in 1818 over \$3500 worth of items from the pirate Laffite, including 20 slaves.¹⁵ He had two slaves that we know of. One was Jeffrey Deroin who in 1822 sued Joseph for his freedom. After a ten-year struggle, Joseph finally gave Jeffrey his freedom. The other was a man named Poulite (often referred to as Hypolite), who helped raise young Joseph E. Robidoux.¹⁶

During the 1820s, three more children, Felix, Edmond and Sylvanie would be added to Joseph's family. During this decade, his brothers Louis and Isadore traded along the Santa Fe Trail and in Santa Fe. Francois managed a store in St. Louis and then headed to the Yellowstone area. Brother Michel established a trading post near Ft. Laramie. Joseph was coordinating the operation from his post in Council Bluffs.¹⁷ To help them trade with Mexican citizens without restrictions, Louis and Antoine married Mexican women.

Charles Robidoux became the last child born to Joseph and Angelique in 1831. Twenty years later he would be killed while playing a prank on a storekeeper in St. Joseph.¹⁸

In 1837, Louis reached California and was drafted as a guide for Col. Stephen Watts Kearny in the Mexican War. Later, Louis would acquire vast land holdings. His ranch later became the town of Riverside, California. Mount Robidoux near San Bernardino is named for him.¹⁹

In 1848, the Robidoux moved their trading post from Ft. Laramie to the Scotts Bluff area. This gave them a better location to trade with the emigrants traveling on the Oregon Trail. The area where the trading post was located became known as Robidoux Pass.²⁰

A license to trade at Scotts Bluff was issued to Joseph Robidoux in 1849. However, Joseph remained in St. Joseph, letting his brother Francois, son Joseph E. and other family members run the post. Of course, this was the beginning of the gold rush to California and this was an excellent location to take advantage of the migration.²¹

The archaeological investigation began with the opening of the first square in the center of the yard. No mechanical means was used for removing the dirt. The excavating was done systematically by square with trowels, whisk brooms and/or shovels. The dirt was moved in a wheel barrow to just outside the north boundary line of the property where it was stored for backfilling when it was needed, or hauled away.

The volunteers learned in short order that this project was going to be a monstrous task when they found the first grade that accommodated the ground floor of the east building approximately three feet or more below the surface in the center of the yard. For the most part it was covered with about two feet of loess yard fill. This fill was probably deposited in the yard during the middle 1860s when Third Street was raised above the flood plain of Blacksnake Creek. This creek flowed near Robidoux Row during the Robidoux Period. The well curb was built up to accommodate the yard fill that was deposited in the yard. Apparently, the well was abandoned after the fill was put in the yard. Possibly it was when the cistern was dug, because the well was covered over with a yard fill deposit that might have come from digging the cistern. The well was excavated down to the water table level to salvage artifacts during the 1976 archaeological dig.

During the 1974 digging period, eight privy pits were excavated completely to salvage artifacts also. Four of the pits which were located just inside the north boundary line of the yard originated from below the yard fill deposit. One of these four apparently accommodated dwellers of the center building before the east building was built, because another pit associated with the east building overlapped the earlier pit. The other three pits below the fill were the first pits associated with the east building.

As far as could be determined, no other outbuildings existed in the yard other than the privies during the Robidoux Period. This and other factors helped to determine that the ground floor of the east building was used for utilitarian purposes, or storage, rather than serving as living quarters. Floor remnants of outbuildings were uncovered barely below the present day surface of the yard, but they were not used during Robidoux's time.

After the weeds were removed, the damage to the walls and floors of the archaeological excavations from the freeze-thaw of winter and rains of spring were repaired with trowel and shovel. The archaeological investigation resumed in June 1975. That year eight archaeological squares along the east side of the yard, five squares next to the building, and part of the squares next to the west retaining wall, were excavated.

Evidence of post holes unearthed along the east side of the yard confirmed that the yard was protected by fences during the Robidoux Period. The original fence and gate near the gallery, or porch, was removed and replaced after the yard was raised to coincide with the raising of Third Street. This fence was removed some time after the Robidoux Period. Cement blocks bordered the yard prior to the archaeological investigation.

The east side of the yard was well-scarred with water pipe trenches. Numerous corroded water pipes were uncovered which were not associated with the Robidoux Period. An imprint of the end of what was assumed to be a horse watering trough which extended out toward Third Street along the east side of the yard was discovered below the yard fill. Brick bats were scattered around the end of the trough in the yard. Nearby was an eight feet deep drilled hole which appeared to be a water source or an attempt to find a water source. Apparently, this was a trough where people passing by Robidoux Row could water their horses.

No excavating was done next to the east building until after the badly deteriorated north side of the building was taken down because of the danger of the wall falling when the dirt was pulled away from it. After the wall was removed, archaeological volunteers began at the east end of the eight feet wide area that once contained a gallery or porch and excavated to the west end. wall retained the upper center building yard. This wall also supported the west end of the gallery. Supports for the gallery were seventeen feet apart.

Approximately three feet of overburden covered the remnants of the ground floor of the gallery. A limestone retaining wall was found. It extended eight feet to the north from the building. The top was flush with the ground floor of the gallery. It supported the northeast corner post support for the gallery. When the fill was put in the yard, the wall was raised two feet. At the time this was done, apparently a post was added next to the building for additional support for the gallery, because the wall addition was built around it. Two footings for center post supports were discovered. While the retaining wall at the east end of the gallery held back fill under the ground floor, another limestone

Remnants of a diagonally-laid brick floor were uncovered. The floor was laid on fine white sand. The floor edge was finished with a border. The bricks in front of the east and west doorway were heavily worn. Those in front of the center doorway were not. This seemed to confirm that the center doorway that existed at the time of the archaeological investigation was not an original door. No evidence of a stairway was found that indicated there was originally a stairway to the upper gallery deck and main floor of the east building from the gallery ground floor, but a flat strip of iron found in an appropriate place at ground level at the west end of the gallery area suggested that it might have been a footing for a stairway.

Remnants of a two-foot-high brick wall was found on the edge of the gallery ground floor. Apparently, this wall was installed when the yard was raised with fill. Three stairwells surrounded the three doors at the ground floor level of the gallery and there was no gallery or porch upper structure at the time of the archaeological investigation. This suggested that the complete gallery might have been taken down at that time and the bricks from the brick wall could have been used in the stairwells.

In the southwest corner of the yard next to the gallery area and west retaining wall was the remains of the first midden, or ash and refuse place during Robidoux's time. It appeared the dumping ground was moved to the northeast corner of the yard by Third Street after the fill was deposited in the yard. Later on, the well, cistern and privy pits became refuse receptacles after they were abandoned. When the privy pits in the northwest corner of the yard were filled, dumping continued in that area of the yard, creating a build-up of that corner of the yard.

The restoration of Robidoux Row by the St. Joseph Historical Society has returned the gallery ground floor and the yard, from the building to the original stone well thirty feet north of the building, to the Robidoux level of the yard. The rest of the yard has been refilled and landscaped.

Most of the descriptive details found during the archaeological investigation in the gallery area that pertained to the Robidoux Period have been incorporated into the restored gallery or porch. Robidoux Row stands restored as closely as possible, within the present environment to the original Robidoux Row. It is now the Robidoux Row Museum operated by the Saint Joseph Historical Society and dedicated to the life and times of Joseph Robidoux.

Michael and Margaret Fisher are well-known archeologists in the midwest who have worked on countless projects through the years. Michael is a past president of the Missouri Archaeological Society and current president of the St. Joseph Archaeological Society.

THE LEWIS & CLARK EXPEDITION of 1803-06.
The Corps of Discovery from St. Joseph to the Bend of the Missouri River
Pete Cuppage

Homeward Bound-1806

After traveling over 4000 miles of rivers and mountains the Corps of Discovery returned in dugout canoes to familiar land in September, 1806. On September 11, 1806 the expedition passed by the Big Nemaha River in southern Nebraska and camped a few miles below Nodaway Island, which is about ten miles north of St. Joseph. They made *"40 miles only"* that day. The Corps saw wolves and "barking squirrels" (prairie dogs). They killed two deer and were eating well again. While they were bothered by fewer mosquitoes, the Missouri River was running fast and contained numerous snags. But nevertheless, the Corps was averaging 40-60 miles daily coming downriver, in contrast to 10-15 daily miles going upriver previously.

On September 12 they met two pirogues containing trappers coming upriver. The Corps stopped at *"St. Michl. Prairie"*, at the site of present-day St. Joseph. There they met Robert McClellan, who had been an Astorian and had returned overland with Robert Stuart in 1812. They also met Joseph Gravelines, whom they had first met at the Mandan Villages in November, 1804, and had employed him as an Arikara interpreter. Clark recorded *"we found Mr. Jo. Gravelin the Ricaras enterpreter whome we had Sent down with a Ricaras Chief in the Spring of 1805"*. Gravelines was returning to the Arikaras with a letter from President Jefferson apologizing for the Chief's death, accompanied by Pierre Dorian, Sr., who had also been with the Expedition earlier. Most importantly, he had a little whiskey which he shared with the men!

On the next day Clark developed an upset stomach, which he relieved by drinking chocolate. In this fertile area the Corps noted several species of trees, including: cottonwood, sycamore, ash, mulberry, elm, walnut, hickory, hornbeam, papaw, willow, and many grape vines.

On September 14, the Corps met another three boats coming upriver from St. Louis. They obtained provisions and some much appreciated whiskey. They camped at Leavenworth Island and *"Sung Songs until 11 oclock at night in the greatest harmony"*.

On the following day, September 15th they passed the mouth of the Kansas River and stopped about one mile further downstream on the south side to rest the men. Both Lewis and Clark climbed up the hill to enjoy the view of what we know as Kansas City, Missouri and Kansas City, Kansas and the confluence of the Kansas and Missouri Rivers where they had camped June 26-28, 1804.

They continued to meet boats and learned that the Corps had long been given up by the government as lost. However, Jefferson still held hopes for their return. The Corps of Discovery finally arrived in St. Louis on the 23rd of September, 1806. They were greeted enthusiastically and wined and dined. The journey was officially concluded.

In spite of over three years time and 8000 miles, the Lewis and Clark Expedition became a landmark in American History. Although no practical Northwest Passage was identified, the Louisiana Territory and portions of the Pacific Northwest were accurately mapped, the geography was described, numerous new flora and fauna species were identified, peaceful relations were opened with several Native American Tribes, and the Corps remained in general good health. A truly remarkable expedition, especially since only one man died, Sgt. Floyd in August of 1804.

EARLY TRAVELERS ON THE MISSOURI RIVER

Craig Crease

Long before 1826, when Joseph Robidoux set up the little trading post along Blacksnake Creek that became the city of St. Joseph, travelers were coming through this area on the mighty Missouri river.

The first incursions up the Missouri in this region were by the French. One document in the French archives from the 1720s describes it, stating that the Missouri... *"divides into several branches which water a vast extent of magnificent countryside, as rich it is said, in mines as it is abundant in all kinds of animals. There are a number of nations, populous enough, established on its banks who are quite warlike. One could draw many beaver and other furs from that section."*¹ First noted by French explorers Jacques Marquette and Louis Jolliet in 1673, and described by Marquette as *"a river of Considerable size, coming from the Northwest, from a great Distance,"* the Missouri river is actually about 2,500 miles long. Marquette, like Americans Lewis and Clark who would follow him some 131 years later, was seeking a water route across the continent and to the Pacific. *"I hope by its means, he said, to discover the vermillion or California sea."*²

In 1714, the first definite and detailed exploration of the Missouri river took place under the command of Frenchman Etienne Venier de Bourgmont. Although it is not known exactly how far Bourgmont came up the river, fellow explorer Le Page du Pratz who knew Bourgmont well, stated that he ascended the river for eight hundred leagues. Certainly Bourgmont's later descriptions of the Missouri as far as the Arikara villages, some six hundred leagues up the river, indicate a long distance foray.³ In 1724, after founding Fort Orleans on the left bank of the Missouri near present day Brunswick, MO., Bourgmont made his second and more well-known trip up the Missouri, although he traveled by land while his split force ascended the river. It appears on this trip he came no farther up the Missouri than near the mouth of the Kansas River in Kansas City.⁴

In 1739, brothers Pierre and Paul Mallet traveled from Fort De Chartres on the banks of the Mississippi in Illinois, up that river to the mouth of the Missouri and then westward up the Missouri and through this region and on north to the mouth of what they referred to as the Panimahas River (today's Niobrara River in Nebraska). From there they traveled westward to the land of the Pawnee, and then finally turned southwest to be greeted by astonished Santa Fe officials on July 22, 1739. The Mallet expedition encouraged the French further to explore the Missouri River and other routes to Santa Fe.⁵

By 1746, Fort de Cavagnial was established by the French on the Missouri, in the Salt Creek valley just north of modern Leavenworth. Reporting on the Missouri river, French Governor Kerlerec stated *"...Fifty leagues further up are the Kansas, where Fort Cavagnolle is located, which consists of a circle of piles which encloses some bad cabins and huts. The officer there commands seven to eight garrisoned soldiers and some traders."*⁶

In 1751, another precursor to the Santa Fe Trail occurred. Jean Chapuis and Louis Feuilli followed the river from its mouth (at modern St. Louis) westward to Fort de Cavagnial, and proceeding the next spring for a trading trip to Santa Fe via the Pawnee and Comanche nations.⁷ By 1764, with the end of the French and Indian War and the cession of the trans-Mississippi Louisiana territory to the Spanish, official French command and control of the Missouri river in this region ended, and Fort de Cavagnial was abandoned.

Although Spain gained control of the Missouri River after 1764, it would be many years before Spain would gain a good working knowledge of its full course. As late as 1785 Governor Miro's report to the Commandant of the Provincial Interior revealed Spain's limited knowledge of the Missouri River. This situation changed however, with the explorations of Jacque D'Eglise, who between 1791 and 1793 made numerous trips up the Missouri and through this area and on to the Mandan villages (in) South Dakota, where he held the trading franchise as granted by then Governor-General Carondelet.⁸

In 1792, the Missouri Company was founded by Jacques Clamorgan and a group of Spanish principals, to engage in the fur and Indian trade on the Missouri River. Jean Baptiste Truteau led the first expedition of this "Company of Explorers of the Upper Missouri" in 1794, under orders to ascend the Missouri to the Mandan villages and build a fort and establish a trading agency, in which he was successful. He returned to St. Louis in 1796.⁹

Scotsman James Mackay came to Spanish Illinois in 1795 and, for reasons now obscure, took Spanish citizenship and became the chief field agent for the Missouri Company. Like Marquette many years before him, and Lewis and Clark shortly after him, Mackay traveled up the Missouri through this area, seeking a water route to the Pacific.¹⁰

In 1800, Spain returned the Louisiana territory to France in a secret agreement, and much to their chagrin France turned around and sold it in 1803 to the young and ambitious American nation in the famous Louisiana Purchase that doubled the size of the nascent country overnight. Thomas Jefferson sent out several expeditions to both explore the contours of and validate the possession of this huge tract that he had just purchased. The most famous of these, the Lewis and Clark expedition, came up the Missouri and through the area of modern St. Joseph in July, 1804. On July 4, 1804 they entered today's Buchanan County, where William Clark recorded in his journal after passing the mouth of a small bayou which led to a lake "*The great quantity of fowl in this Lake induced me to Call it the Gosling Lake.*" Several days later one of the men became "*very sick, Struck with the sun*". Lewis and Clark noted the location of a prairie they called "St. Michul" in their journals. Today, modern St. Joseph sits on "St. Michael's Prairie". And on their return downriver in 1806, they met Indian trader Robert McClellan here, who told them that "*he was instructed to make every inquirey after us.*"¹¹

So it can be seen, from these few examples of French, Spanish, and American explorers on the waters of the Missouri for many years before Joseph Robidoux first set foot in the area that would become St. Joseph, that there were indeed, many early travelers on the Missouri River.

Endnotes

¹ *The Jolliet-Marquette Expedition, 1673* by Francis Borgia Steck, 1928

² Steck, *ibid.*

³ *Before Lewis and Clark*, by Abraham Nasatir, P. 12-14

⁴ Nasatir, *ibid.*

⁵ *Along Ancient Trails: The Mallet Expedition*, by Donald Blakeslee, Intro.

⁶ Nasatir, *ibid.*, P. 52

⁷ Nasatir, *ibid.*, P. 42

⁸ *The Beginning of the West*, by Louise Barry

⁹ Nasatir, *ibid.*, P. 86-87

¹⁰ Nasatir, *ibid.*, P. P.93-98

¹¹ *The Journals of Lewis and Clark*, Edited by Elliott Coues

SENTINEL ON THE MISSOURI: FORT LEAVENWORTH

Craig Crease

Few great American military forts are as tied to the opening of the West in general, and as tied to the great historic frontier trails in specific, as is Fort Leavenworth.

It was founded in May of 1827 as "Cantonment Leavenworth" by its namesake, Col. Henry Leavenworth. Col. Leavenworth was following orders to take four companies of his regiment and *"ascend the Missouri, and when he reaches a point on its left bank near the mouth of the Little Platte river and within a range of twenty miles above or below its confluence, he will select such position as in his judgment is best calculated for the site of a permanent cantonment."* On May 8, 1827 Col. Leavenworth wrote his commanding officer from his camp at the mouth of the Little Platte river *"there was not a good location on the left bank of the Missouri for a cantonment within the limits prescribed, but that on the right bank 20 miles upstream there was a very good site for a cantonment."* Mountain man and Indian Agent John B. Dougherty was also instrumental in helping Leavenworth choose this better site on the right bank up on the bluff and out of the flood plain.

Fort Leavenworth as it was known by the early 1830s was founded primarily to help protect and safeguard the Santa Fe Trail, the new international trade route with Mexico's colonial Santa Fe that had been opened in 1821 by William Becknell and a handful of men from the Franklin, MO area.

Almost immediately after its founding it began to fulfill this mandate. By 1829, just two years after the fort's founding, soldiers from Fort Leavenworth led by Major Bennett Riley conducted the first military escort of the traders spring caravans bound for Santa Fe. Throughout the 1830s the fort would provide this safeguarding function for the protection of all travelers on the Santa Fe Trail against the incursions from and confrontations with roving bands of Indians. Of some concern were the Kansa and the Osage Indians...however the traders' greatest concerns were for the Pawnee and especially the Comanche and Kiowa.

Col. George Croghan described the fort on March 31, 1829 *"A great deal has been done, much more in truth that could have been expected of a garrison so reduced by sickness; still the work is not half accomplishe.....a good hospital has been erected, and four houses originally intended to quarter one company each (though now occupied by officers) have been put up and nearly completed."*

Two other events in the early years cemented Fort Leavenworth's long term ties to the settling of the American West along the historic Santa Fe, Oregon, and California Trails. In 1827, along with the founding of the Fort, the little village of Independence, located four miles south of a solid rock landing on the Missouri, was founded as the county seat of Jackson County, MO. And in 1834 its upstart sister Westport raised her head some twelve miles further west than Independence, snug up against the state line, and with its own fine rock landing four miles north on the Missouri river. Both would serve as the great trailheads for the Santa Fe Trail, the Oregon Trail, and The California Trail and the waves of people who came off the Missouri river and down these frontier roads. Watching over it all as guardian of this rush of people to the west was Fort Leavenworth.

By the late 1830s a frontier military road was created ...a road connecting forts along the western border of Missouri with Fort Snelling in Minnesota at the north end and Fort Jesup in Louisiana at the south end. These forts and this military road were to form a line for the so-called "Permanent Indian Frontier", a plan essentially to remove eastern Indian tribes west of the line, and keep all other people on the east side of the line, a condition mandated by the passage of the 1830 Indian Removal Act by the U.S. Congress.

This artificial “wall” existed until 1854 when the Kansas-Nebraska Act was passed and the territory was opened up for settlement. Until 1854 no towns could exist west of this border (today’s Missouri state line), which is the reason the Santa Fe, Oregon and California Trails used Westport and Independence as important trailheads; they were the last places to buy outfitting supplies, wagons, and animals.

In Missouri and Kansas, the segment of the road from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Scott (established in 1842 at the crossing of the road on the Marmaton river in southeast Kansas) is known as the Fort Leavenworth Military Road. It actually became part of the Santa Fe Trail, especially as a connection for troops in the Mexican War in 1846 to reach the Santa Fe Trail “proper” some thirty miles south of the Fort. The Fort Leavenworth Military road was also used by a good many emigrants who outfitted in Westport and traveled a few miles west to get on the Fort Leavenworth Military Road in present day Shawnee, KS and then follow it north to the Fort and then on into the west from there. Starting down the Fort Leavenworth Military Road to fight in the Mexican war, Private Philip Gooch Ferguson entered in his diary July 9, 1847 *“We accordingly started about ten o’clock today, having drawn our arms a (musket and holster pistol each) at the fort.....The first night we camped on the Kansas river the clear, swift stream, and being embarked on our long and dangerous journey, our thoughts lingered on the scenes we were leaving behind, the comforts of civilization, the friends of youth, and the pleasures of home. To these we were bidding farewell, perhaps forever....”*

As emigrant traffic to Oregon and California exploded in the 1840s, new landings on the Missouri were utilized, including the rock landing on the bluffs below Fort Leavenworth.

Thousands of people seeking their destiny in the west, and innumerable wagons loaded with freight for outfitting this fort as well as many others from Fort Riley to Fort Union came up off this river landing. The giant freighting company of Russell, Majors and Waddell supplied many of the forts in the west from a base here at Fort Leavenworth. A huge swale up the bluff remains from this traffic. John Keegan, the foremost British military historian, described it in 1995 *“I stared in bemusement at the scar for a long time.....The Leavenworth scar opens the story of the greatest event in modern American history, the departure of the migrants, from the temperate, forested territory of the Atlantic east to the Great Plains, the Rocky Mountains, and the Eldorado of the Pacific coast...the scar...remains as the single most graphic relic of the westward movement.”*

In 1854 the Kansas-Nebraska Act opened the territory, and naturally a town almost immediately came to be in the spring of 1854 in the shadow of Fort Leavenworth.

“...it has always been asserted that the Govt’s land extended three miles south of here on the Missouri...But now, a company composed partly of army officers and partly of citizens, have entered upon the lower part...and laid out a town, nineteen workmen have been employed the past week to clear away the brush and bushes, who are paid \$1.50 per day each, and boarded.” stated a person known as “Out West” writing from Fort Leavenworth on July 17, 1854. Thus was the inauspicious beginning of the city of Leavenworth, KS.

Through the Civil War and the Plains Indian Wars that followed, Fort Leavenworth continued to play an important role. Its strategic value was confirmed when Gen. Sterling Price swept westward across the state of Missouri in 1864 with a huge Confederate and Southern Militia force in a bold attempt to capture the trailheads of Westport and Independence, and more importantly the federal garrison at Fort Leavenworth. This would have effectively given the South complete control of the Santa Fe Trail and the American Southwest, as well as the Missouri River and American Northwest above Fort Leavenworth. Price was turned back at the Battle of Westport, sometimes referred to as the “Gettysburg of the West”, and Fort Leavenworth was saved for the Union.

The little Memorial Chapel at Fort Leavenworth is a poignant reminder of Fort Leavenworth and its involvement in the Indian Wars. Almost a hundred memorial tablets of soldiers who died in actions and battles in the Indian Wars and others hang on the walls of this chapel. The 7th Cavalry marker is the largest, honoring casualties at the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

Today Fort Leavenworth continues its 179 year military tradition. Functioning as the U.S Army's Command and General Staff College, the fort prepares officers for duty all over the world. The beautiful grounds of the fort reflect that not only is this the oldest continuously functioning fort west of the Mississippi...but also that it is a crown jewel among all the forts that illustrate our proud American heritage.

Craig Crease is a well-known historian of the American Westward Movement. His research of primary documents relating to the overland trails has contributed significantly to current trail scholarship. He presently serves as President of the Kansas City Area Historic Trails Association.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ATCHISON, KANSAS

Stan Lawson

Kanza Indians were the first known residents in what is now the Atchison area. Evidence of their "Great Village" was observed by the Lewis and Clark expedition when they camped just north of present-day Atchison on July 4, 1804, near a stream they named Independence Creek. The Kanza ceded their lands in a treaty with the United States and agreed to move west and south.

In May 1854, the Kansas and Nebraska Act opened this land for white settlement. Nearly three months later, a group of Platte County, MO residents selected the westernmost bend in the Missouri River because it was approximately twelve miles farther west than other points in the Kansas Territory.

George Million had already settled in the area in the 1840s. Living on the Missouri side of the river, he operated a store, trading with Indians for fur and buying hemp to ship down river. He operated a thriving ferry and outfitting business during the gold rush. When the bill passed, he squatted on the present site of Atchison and built a log shanty.

On July 11, 1854 a town company was formed and the fledgling town was named for David Rice Atchison, a prominent U.S. Senator from Missouri who was a staunch pro-slavery advocate. On September 21, when the town company held its first sale of lots, Sen. Atchison spoke, welcoming people to the territory but urging that abolitionists be kept out.

Pro and antislavery immigrants often did not settle in clearly segregated communities, but tended to cohabitate, so that they were frequently close neighbors. This occurred because of business opportunities. A Yankee presence in predominately pro-slavery Atchison resulted from one of the last investments of the New England Emigrant Aid Company, which was organized to "dot Kansas with New England settlements." Its directors saw potential profit in having a settlement on the Missouri River.

Samuel Pomeroy, a company agent, found the Atchison Town Company short of capital and willing to sell a controlling interest in the city. In a touch of irony, he bought the local newspaper that was the leading voice of pro-slavery forces two years before.

The early years in Atchison were marked by strife. Pro-slavery settlers in Kansas organized the "Law and Order" party, and Atchison was their stronghold. Pomeroy won over the pro-slavery side by distributing aid during the Border War troubles of 1858-60 and the drought of 1860. Pomeroy became the first mayor of Atchison, by a coin toss. Southern and free-state men had agreed to compromise in local affairs by allowing one side to have four councilmen and the other three councilmen and the mayor. The free-staters won the coin toss and thus the mayoral office. This compromise was another critical key to the success of Atchison.

Coming to a truce over the slavery issue no matter how tenuous would not have been possible if Atchison's shipping and commercial advantages had not made it worth the efforts. City leaders were able to entice about 800-1000 Mormons to cross the river and outfit themselves at Atchison. This early connection with overland travel and outfitting helped establish Atchison's commercial roots and it grew when other river towns withered.

Atchison was particularly suited by its geography for the steamboating and outfitting trade. It had one of the best steamboat landings on the river, the best wagon roads leading west, and was several miles closer to Denver than other river towns. By landing at Atchison for outfitting, travelers could save themselves twelve overland miles – a day's journey. In early days at least two steamboats landed at the Atchison levee daily.

Atchison's prominence as a staging point for overland freighters was settled when the Overland Stage Line and the line for Salt Lake City-based freighters chose Atchison as the eastern terminus. The first two lines, Livingston, Kinkead and Co. and Hooper & Williams, located in Atchison in 1855. It became even more important when the U.S. Post Office made Atchison its headquarters and starting point for western mail in 1861. Stage coach lines also added to the economic prosperity. The stagecoach line from Atchison to Placerville, CA became one of the longest and most important stagecoach lines in the country. Stage lines departed from the city's Massasoit Hotel.

Figures from the period reveal Atchison's prominence as a commercial center. In the summer of 1858, 24 wagon trains consisting of 775 wagons, 1,114 men, 7,963 oxen, 142 horses, 1,126 mules transported 3,730,905 pounds of merchandise from Atchison to Colorado, Utah, and Santa Fe. Daily stagecoaches left for Leavenworth, Lecompton, Lawrence, Topeka, and Iowa Point. Russell, Majors and Waddell sent out Central Overland California and Pikes Peak Express coaches three times a week. During the liveliest period of overland trade, 1859-1866, perhaps 250,000 people left from Atchison.

During this period, the city's population nearly doubled to approximately 4000 in 1859. Residents thought they had the next St. Louis or Cincinnati on their hands. The Mormon trade was regarded as the greatest of all western markets because the population of the Salt Lake Valley, already estimated at 20,000 to 30,000, was still growing.

An additional economic boost occurred in 1862 when gold was discovered in Montana. Because the only means of transportation was the Missouri River, steamboating experienced a revival. Atchison prospered during this period as the cost of shipping merchandise was figured on the pound, and shipping rates were exorbitant.

Following the Civil War, westward shipping of freight continued almost unabated and the levee was extended. Thirty-one freighters were operating in the city. The year 1865 was one of the greatest in the overland freighting business in Atchison. Trade began to dwindle thereafter, however. Atchison was well situated in terms of distance and trails west to Denver and Salt Lake, but it was not as well located to take advantage of trade to the Southwest. It also was too far south on the river to garner a good proportion of the Montana trade. To grow, a town needed to be in line with major cities like Chicago or St. Louis, and Atchison wasn't.

The boom days of overland trade was over by the late 1860s, but residents still had reason to be optimistic. In 1860, the Atchison & St. Joseph Railroad linked Winthrop, MO, directly across the river from Atchison to St. Joseph, the western terminus of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad. A ferry crossed the Missouri to deliver passengers and freight from the east to the wagon companies to be transported to the west. Ground was broken for the construction of the Atchison & Pike's Peak Railroad in June 1860. Upon completion, it was renamed the Central Branch Union Pacific.

The Atchison, Topeka, & Santa Fe Railroad was incorporated by an act of the Kansas Territorial Legislature on February 11, 1859, with \$150,000 raised in Atchison as the financial base. By about May 1872, the line was completed from Topeka to Atchison.

In 1870, nine passenger trains by four different railroads stopped daily in Atchison. The Atchison & Nebraska Railroad, completed in 1872, ran along the Missouri River and connected with the main line of the Union Pacific at Columbus, Nebraska. In 1872, eight different railroad lines terminated within Atchison, and four connected on the Missouri side. The railroad years were the true boom years, when industries came to Atchison, the large whole firms developed, and the commercial life of Atchison reached its peak. Some industries figured prominently in the growth of Atchison during the railroad years, such as grains and milling, and the lumber business.

Industries that supported the railroads grew as well. In 1872, the city enticed Captain John Seaton to move his foundry from Alton, Illinois, with \$10,000 in bonds. The foundry occupied an entire block and was the largest west of St. Louis. By 1894, the foundry employed 2,000 men and did work all over the west. During the 1870s, only two Kansas cities – Leavenworth and Topeka – were more important than Atchison as a manufacturer in the state.

Atchison's geographical location as a river town eventually contributed to its decline. Although Atchison recognized the need for rails to supplement and eventually displace river traffic, its river location was a handicap in railroad development. Expansion was possible in only one direction – westward. For all towns on the west bank of the Missouri river, a railroad bridge was imperative. The river, which gave these cities their early advantages, also cut them off from eastern connections with Chicago and St. Louis.

The town that was first with such a facility would gain an important lead over its rivals. Kansas City was first, dedicating its bridge in July 1869. St. Joseph followed, but Leavenworth and Atchison lagged behind. Leavenworth built its bridge three years before Atchison. Even this short period of time gave it important advantages. Atchison was reduced to emphasizing the efficiency and speed of its ferryboats. The failure of Atchison to bridge the river before 1875 dealt a severe blow from which it was unable to recover.

Stan Lawson is Director of Marketing for the Atchison Chamber of Commerce.

1844 - THE FIRST MIGRATION FROM THE ST. JOSEPH AREA

Jackie Lewin

Between the major emigration years of 1840 to 1860, approximately a half a million people went west along the Oregon-California Trail. The first public emigration began in 1841 with the 70 members of the Bidwell-Bartleson train. Half of these would end up in Oregon, and the other half would go to California. The first large emigration was in 1843, which is the year that the National Park Service has chosen to mark as the beginning of the Oregon Trail emigration. That first big migration, which involved three separate trains, numbered almost a thousand people and 5,000 cattle.

However, 1844 was an important emigration year, too, for several reasons. Since a provisional government has been established in Oregon in 1843, 1844 was the first entire year in which the settlers' ownership of land in Oregon could be recognized even semiofficially. The 1844 emigrants to Oregon were the first to number over 1,000. Also, the 1844 emigrants to California were the first to find a way over the central Sierras - the route later used by the majority of the gold hunting 49ers.

By May 26 all of the 1844 trains were underway. The four wagon trains of the 1844 migration were:

Stephens-Murphy-Thorp Party: They crossed the Missouri River at Council Bluffs and followed the north side of the Platte River through present-day Nebraska and eastern Wyoming. Their group would split with some going to California and some to Oregon.

Ford Party: They crossed at Independence and headed for Oregon. At times during the journey to Oregon, this party would be intermixed with the Gilliam train.

Andrew Sublette Party: This was a small group including a few Catholic missionaries. They left from Westport with present-day Colorado as their destination.

Gilliam Train: The train left from the St. Joseph area with most of the wagons crossing at Caples Landing, which is present-day Amazonia. Whatever crossing site they used, all of the wagons joined together about twenty miles to the west of St. Joseph. Their destination was Oregon. However, a few people did split off and head for California. One of the party members was James Marshall who in 1848 found gold at Sutter's Mill - triggering the gold rush to California.

1844 was an important year to St. Joseph because it was the first year in which wagon trains jumped off from the new town. St. Joseph had officially become a town in August, 1843. The route from St. Joseph was miles shorter than that from Independence and avoided the major hazard of crossing the Kansas River. The 1844 Gilliam Train opened the St. Joe Road to the Nemaha River and then turned south to join Burnett's Trace (the Independence Road) on June 5 just east of the Big Blue River and near the Black Vermillion. Their exact route from the Nemaha to the Burnett's Trace is not known.

Before the journey, Cornelius Gilliam wrote on May 15, 1844, in a letter from St. Joseph that those in his train would be "48 families, 108 men (of whom 60 are young men), 323 persons, 410 oxen, 160 cows (11 of which are team cows), 143 young cattle, 54 horses, 41 mules and 72 wagons." A later count was that there were 216 men and families that went to Oregon and 17 with their families that branched off to California. Two died along the way. Numbers vary by account and location on the trail.

The spring of 1844 was an unusually wet and rainy one. The 1844 *Baptist Missionary Magazine* reported, "Kansas. . . spring opened very early; but after about three weeks of pleasant weather in March, rains commenced, and continued up to the 1st of June so constant as to render it quite impossible to plough or plant." By mid-June, some bottom land along the Missouri River was twelve feet under water. When the water eventually subsided, crops and fences had been washed away, along with outbuildings and livestock. Topsoil was also washed away and sand (sometimes several feet deep) was left behind. Formerly rich farmland was barren. Thousands of families reportedly were made homeless. The oral history of Indians of the region told of floods, but none had been as bad as the flood of 1844. This had to be a depressing and difficult season to travel in what would be eastern Kansas. Emigrant John Minto recalled in his diary that in the first two months of the trip, only eight days were without rain.

The same flood virtually washed away the fledgling Town of Kansas (today's Kansas City) that was located basically around Westport Landing.

Some of the people who made the 1844 journey from the St. Joseph area were:

The Henry Sager Family had moved several times before coming to Missouri in 1838. After expressing an interest in Texas, Henry decided instead to go to Oregon. His wife had heard a great deal about Oregon from talk in the neighborhood and she may have been the deciding factor. Both the Sager parents would die before the train reached Oregon. Their seven children were taken to the Whitman Mission in Oregon Territory and were present at the Whitman Massacre in 1847. The three Sager boys were killed in the massacre.

The Reverend Edward E. Parrish had been collecting all types of information about Oregon. He was interested in Oregon's "climete, rivers, & its fertility & productive qualities." He was 53 years old - twice as old as the average Oregon emigrant. Coming from Ohio, his family reached Andrew County, MO in December 1843. There, in Savannah, he met Cornelius Gilliam and joined the camp of people waiting to cross the Missouri River and head west. It was only then that he considered himself committed to the trip. He wrote: "So this 16th day of April settles the question: whether Edward is going to Oregon or not."

John Minto was only 21 when he announced at a family Christmas dinner in Pittsburgh, PA that he intended to journey west. His family had immigrated to the United States in 1840 from a coal mine area in England. In Pennsylvania, the coal mine where Minto worked had been shut down by labor unrest, and Minto thought the lead mines of Dubuque, IA looked like a good place to seek a job. However, when he reached St. Louis, he changed his destination to Oregon. Having no possessions except a gun, he hired on as a helper to the Morrison family.

Robert and Nancy Morrison and their six children lived in Andrew County, just 10 miles north of St. Joseph and two miles east of the Missouri River. Many of their friends came to bid them farewell, and on the last Sunday before the family left their home, "the tables were set four times for dinner" to accommodate the many visitors. When one visitor asked Morrison why he was going, he answered, "I allow the United States has the best right to that country and I am going to help make that right good." He added, "I am not satisfied here. There is little we raise that pays shipment to market; a little hemp and a little tobacco." Mrs. Morrison, however, was not in full agreement about making the journey.

The following are selected quotes describing the journey of the Gilliam Train as they crossed the Missouri River and traveled through today's Kansas:

Missouri River Crossing:

Catherine Sager wrote, "arrived at the crossing, where we found a number of wagons ready to cross. We waited here for several days; then the word was given that all was ready for the crossing, and we drove down. Many of the emigrants had friends who had accompanied them thus far and now bid them a long farewell. Some wept for departing friends, and others at the thoughts of leaving all they held dear for a long and uncertain journey, and the children wept for fear of the mighty waters that came rushing down and seemed as though it would swallow them up; so that taken altogether, it was a sad company that crossed over the Missouri River that bright spring morning."

Missouri River Bottoms:

B.F. Nichols wrote that his first day's travel "was noted, particularly, for the mud and slush encountered while crossing a low tract of land that we were compelled to traverse. There was ample evidence of the difficulties experienced by those who had preceded us. Here and there were sections of logs which had been used as a fulcrum, and long poles for levers to pry the wagons out of the mud."

Mosquito Creek Campground:

Reverend Parrish arrived at the Mosquito Creek campground on May 10, 1844. He wrote, "arriving safely. . . all in fine spirits." However, B.F. Nichols did not spend a pleasant night at Mosquito Creek. He recalled that the "night was bad; one of the worst storms raged and the wind blew a gale. . . All this long night I lay sick nigh unto death, my father and Charles Smith holding the tent to prevent it from blowing down upon me as I lay inside. It was not thought that I could live until morning."

Wolf River Crossing:

Reverend Parrish on May 13, 1844, "News soon arrived of the loss of the Wolf river bridge. . . It is now pretty well cleared off, near noon." The next day they tried to cross the Wolf River in a raft. But this effort failed, and they finally had to build two canoes for the wagons to sit on. It took a week to cross the entire party across the Wolf River.

Iowa Indians near Wolf River:

John Minto was impressed with the Iowa Indians camped nearby. He remembered: "I took a few hours to go with Captain Morrison to the barrack-like building of the Iowas to purchase some of their dried corn. The house was some one hundred and twenty feet long by twenty-four feet wide. A space of eight feet wide was sunk to within ten feet of each end, and within this sunken space the family fires were built."

Iowa, Sac and Fox Mission:

John Minto visited the Mission on Sunday, May 12. "The missionary preached to those who would listen, and gave bibles to those who would take them; while at no great distance others were noisily racing horses with Indians of their sort." Minto also described a conflict with the Indians near the Mission and Agency: "On the morning of the twenty-second we had our first Indian trouble. It was found then that six cattle, all first class, had been cut out and driven towards the agency. The flush young grass afforded a trail that we followed at a brisk trot. The Indians had killed and divided four of our animals before we overtook them; then they ran to the agency, leaving two more killed."

Gilliam demanded that the cattle be replaced from the Indian allotment and Indian Agent Richardson agreed.

Great Nemaha Sub-Agency:

In the area of the Agency, the Gilliam Party decided to form a government. B. F. Nichols described the procedure: "the officers were elected according to military rule. . . The rival candidates stood apart in an open space, and those voting, taking place in line with their candidate at the head. When all had formed into line, the number in the respective lines determined who had been elected. This was repeated for each office. . . We were governed, some of the time, by strict military rule." Catherine Sager added that "each company was organized into a military body, and guards set and every precaution taken to prepare against attacks by the Indians. For a few weeks the company drilled of an evening after camping; and at sundown the drum was beaten to call out the guards; but as the novelty wore away. . . the custom was entirely dropped.

The St. Joseph train voted to call itself the "Independent Colony" and following military guidelines, elected Cornelius Gilliam as General and Michael Simmons as Colonel. The train was then divided into 4 parties, each led by its own Captain. The Captains were Robert Wilson Morrison, William Shaw, Allen Saunders and Richard Woodcock.

Cedar Creek Campground:

On May 21, 1844, Rev. Edward Parrish recorded a happy event. "Last night we had a wedding in camp. Mr. Martin Gilliam to Miss Elizabeth Asabill by E.E. Parrish. Both young. Hope they may do well. Preparing to make an early start, but the cattle are not all up. Indians accused of driving them off. Indians not guilty - cattle found."

At this point, the 1844 train left the path of the St. Joe Road and headed south to meet the Independence Road east of the Big Blue River.

Big Blue River:

The 1844 emigrants reached the Big Blue River on June 19. Due to high water, the group had much difficulty in crossing. There were several near-drownings. Reverend Parrish wrote, "We landed on the Big Blue a little past one o'clock with eleven wagons. The prospect for fair weather is now flattering, but we are water-bound again, as the Blue is still out of its banks." The next day they looked for some canoes that an earlier group of wagons had used. Parrish continued, "Found both rolled out and fastened together, with oars on and ready for use. James Owens came near being drowned while swimming the river to get the canoes out of the drift. He cramped while swimming. Thank God for his escape." The last wagons and cattle crossed the Big Blue on June 25.


The 1844 emigrants continued on their journey. The "Independent Colony" had pioneered the eastern part of the St. Joe Road. Because of the difficult terrain they had followed by dropping south and on to the Big Blue River, later travelers scouted and found a better route. This less circuitous route developed into the St. Joe Road used by the Gold Rush emigrants.

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'49 Gold Rush News

Special Supplement to the 1849 St. Joseph Gazette

Prepared especially for the OCTA Convention, 2006, St. Joseph, Missouri



California Fever,
UP TO BLOOD-BOILING HEAT!!!
THE subscriber, being most furiously and tremendously attacked with the above incurable Fever—and as no home-made medicine can cure him, but only the inhalation of the pure California atmosphere, wishes to sell, at a bargain, a half dozen BRICK HOUSES, and a dozen Lots in St. Joseph, and 400 Acres of first-rate land in the neighborhood of the town. Those who wish to purchase, either with cash or country produce, call and try, as I will sell said property at half its value, if I cannot do better.
JOHN JASPER INTFELD.
St. Joseph, January 12, 1849.

In the fall and winter of 1848, St. Joseph, Missouri, a frontier river town barely six years old and boasting a population of 1800, began preparations for 1849 emigration. What they never imagined was that by June 1849, 17,000 adventurers¹ would pass through their town hoping to strike it rich in California.

St. Joseph citizens first heard of the gold discovery from news articles that began appearing in the *St. Joseph Gazette* in October 1848. Although most didn't believe the reports, doubt was dispelled when Sutter's employee Widmer travelled through on an errand to guide Sutter's family back over the plains to California.² (Kurz, 46) In January 1849 the first gold seeker appeared in St. Joseph. The first to arrive were two New York speculators who had ridden a sleigh 3000 miles overland to reach the frontier. (Kurz, 46)

¹ The March 30 *St. Joseph Gazette* reported: "From what we can learn from the emigrants here, we should not be surprised if ten thousand persons started from St. Joseph this spring." By May 4, the editor updates his forecast with, "Up to 12 o'clock yesterday, there had been 8318 persons who had made this a point of departure for the plains; and from what we can learn, we should not be surprised if five thousand more landed here in twenty days. We do not think it an extravagant assertion to say that at least EIGHTEEN THOUSAND PERSONS will leave the frontier between this place and the Bluffs..." Scholars today estimate that 30,000 made the trip in 1849 from all points on the frontier.

² Later, when Sutter's family decided to take the Panama route, Widmer showed himself back in St. Joseph conducting a company for the gold fields.

By February competition sprang up among Missouri River towns and jumping off sites. The newspapers fueled the rivalry by printing articles promoting the advantages of their particular town and spreading rumors about the other sites. The editors hoped that other newspapers, east and north, would reprint the promotional stories thus enticing the emigrants to select their city to outfit and jump off. William Ridenbaugh, editor of the *St. Joseph Gazette*, began a weekly column on the advantages of St. Joseph over Lexington, Independence, Westport, Weston, and Fort Leavenworth.

By the time the Missouri River opened to navigation in February thousands of adventurers poured into town, many from the dozen or more steamboats that arrived weekly at the wharf³ below Francis Street unloading people, mules, horses, cattle, wagons, and commodities.

Rudolph F. Kurz⁴ exclaims, "The city was packed so full of people that tents were pitched about the city and along the opposite bank of the river in such numbers that we seemed to be besieged by an army." (Kurz, 46)

These adventurers, all hoping to be the first to the gold, still had to wait as much as two months until spring brought grass sufficient to support their stock. They whiled away their time learning to drive oxen/mule teams and partook of the local entertainment, mainly in drinking and gambling, where one wagon master gambled away the company's funds instead of buying their outfit. Kurz called it a "jolly, stirring time." "Attempts to drive obstinate wild ass caused, frequently, a great hullabaloo... They might jerk and pull as much as they pleased, the ass would not budge until they had mastered the art of driving the right way." Even oxen "gave occasion for much cursing and swearing" (Kurz, 47).

³ Bill Bumpkin, perhaps a fictitious character, in an open letter to his wife up in the Grand River valley printed in the March 16, 1849, *St. Joseph Gazette* reports. "Lots of boys bound for Califormy is cumin here every day, and the steamboats is continually cumin up puffin and blowin and bellowin like wild cats, and such a rushin down to the warf as there is 'mong the citizens, you never did see the like of it"

⁴ Kurz was a Swiss artist in America to study and paint Indians. He arrived in St. Joseph in 1848 and stayed in the town about 18 months.



Potawatomi at Missouri River

Kurz, 1848

The Indians took it all in from their vantage point on either side of the river. The various tribes of Potawatomi, Fox, Kickapoo, Iowa and Oto were often at the landing crossing the river in the ferryboat. The emigrants were in "horror" of the Indians and evidently didn't feel much safer around the townfolk. As Kurz saw them, "They went about the streets heavily armed. They never failed to carry pistols...and long knives in their belts. The inhabitants of St. Joseph, on the contrary, had more to fear from the adventurers than they had to fear from US!" (Kurz, 47)¹

While excitement and bustle was the order of the day, the townfolk seemed quite pleased with the deportment of the emigrants. The City Council minutes show the city fathers were more concerned about maintaining the wharf than with security. Kurz remarked that "in proportion to the promiscuous throng...there was not much quarrelling, horse stealing or swindling:" (Kurz, 46). A lone article printed in the April 20, *St. Joseph Gazette* alerted citizens that "During the past week, several attempts have been made by robbers to break into house. On last night, a trunk was broken open on board a boat at the landing and rifled of its contents. Another was robbed and thrown in the gully below the bridge. Our citizens should keep a sharp look out."

Ridenbaugh, the news editor, routinely complimented the emigrants: "Among the emigrants here, we notice many men of intelligence and enterprise" and "They all look like the right kind of men for so long a journey...worthy and respectable young men, and go

¹Bill Bumpkin describes the emigrants: "some of the new cumers bound for Californy is queer lookin' reglar green uns jest from t'other side of the Alleganees, who look as tho' their muthers didn't know they was out —wantin' to see Ingins and axin all sorter silly questions."

well fitted out for the journey⁶." Not to be left out; "There are in this company four very intelligent ladies⁷."

The Mechanicsville and California Mining Company, from Evansville, Indiana, landed from the steamboat *Defector* on the 10th inst. about 11 miles below this place, (the boat not being able to reach this place owing to a run in the river,) and are now encamped 4 miles below town. This company are going with ox teams and wagons, are completely armed and equipped, and provided with twelve months provisions. They will leave so soon as the grass on the prairies will afford grazing for cattle. The following is a list of the members:
JOSHUA W. STAPLETON, President.

Most emigrants hoped to leave for the plains within a few days of arrival, after having outfitted. The grass, however, refused to grow. As waiting in the city meant paying citizens rent for use of house lots and stables, they dispersed themselves to camp on the hills north and meadows south of town, and the west bank of the river where forage were free.

Despite the March 21 *Gazette* claim that "Its merchants and other business men, have become proverbial for their liberal, frank, fair and honest manner of doing business, for their urbanity and gentlemanly deportment to all strangers; and their ardent desire to see no emigrant depart dissatisfied"⁸, emigrants looking to outfit found prices fluid. Kurz reported that farmers simply "advanced their prices higher and higher with each new band of adventurers. A bushel of corn, formerly only 14 cents, advanced to \$1...Ham, formerly from 3 to 7 cents per pound, was now 12 cents; butter from 8 to 25 cents. Oftentimes bread could not be had at all." (Kurz, 46)

⁶Referring to DI Wilmans and brother, AD McDonald, John Warfield, Mr. Lansdale, & others who left on May 2 for the gold fields

⁷In a company from Cass County, IL who also left on May 2 with 35 wagons and 120 men. ... (May 4, 1849 *St. Joseph Gazette*)

⁸On April 13, the Weekly Report for the St. Joseph Market claimed, we feel confident in asserting, that from no point in the west will the same number of persons start across the Plains, so well and so cheaply provided for, as those who leave St. Joseph.

Look Here!!!
CALIFORNIA & OREGON EMIGRANTS,
Attention All!

Should golden placers all prove addle,
 Fear not, just do what else you can,
 Emigrants' easy riding saddle,
 Will make you still a happy man.

And whilst on your long and weary route,
 This truth I will not varnish,
 If stalled, I reckon you'll come out,
 If you have an ESOLIAN harness.

But I make Saddles, Bridles, Harness, and Mat-
 tingales much better than poetry, and am de-
 termined not to be out done in selling the
 neatest, cheapest, and most substan-
 tial work, that can be found in
 Missouri. I therefore offer
NOT ONLY GREAT

But the Greatest Bargains for Cash!!!!

I'll warrant the leather and stitches,
 Are both firm and secure,
 You may go over hedges or ditches,
 'Twill hold all the time to be sure.

Remember to give me a call before purchas-
 ing elsewhere, as I am determined to sell good
 articles as cheap, as to please all who want to buy.
"COME ONE, COME ALL"

WILLIE M. ENGLISH.

On the west side of Main street, one door below
 the Mansion House, St. Joseph.

The town indeed provided for most everything an emigrant could desire. They could choose from 20 dry goods stores, 4 hotels, 8 blacksmith shops, 5 wagon shops, 2 steam grist mills, 3 drug stores, 2 tinner's shops, plus saddlers, shoemakers, tailors. That winter the farmers had packed the meat from 11,500 hogs. The steam and water mills boasted that they had milled enough flour to "feed the whole of California for five years." The farmers who had provided mules and oxen to the Army in the west claimed that "the war having ceased there are thousands now to be disposed of."⁹

Look Here!—The "India Rubber Man"

is now in St. Joseph with a large stock of goods, which he is selling very low. You will find him at Conner's tin-shop on Main Street. Emigrants who want any article in his line should call immediately, as his stay is limited to a few days.

Ho! For California!!

M. M. GOODYEAR will leave Fort Kearny **M.** for California as soon as practicable. He will furnish transportation for baggage, riding animals, either mules or horses, (having a large number of animals which he brought through with him last fall,) provisions, lents, &c. for 12 or 15 persons, on liberal terms. None need apply but those who are willing and able to go ahead. For further particulars apply at this Office, at the Mansion House, or of the subscriber.
M. M. GOODYEAR.
 St. Joseph, April 11, 1849.

When emigrants arrived in town the first items they needed to procure was the current and past issues of the *St. Joseph Gazette*. Inside they would could review the clever ads merchants posted peculiar to the emigrant trade. Not only could they find information about goods for outfitting but also lodging, gold test kits, and pilots forming wagon trains. Since you wouldn't want to leave for the dangers of the journey without having your picture taken, an emigrant could find several daguerreotype studios happy to mail his picture back home.

Daguerreotype Portraits,

A s natural as life, and larger than any ever ta-
 ken here. Those who wish to obtain a beau-
 tiful likeness of themselves separate, or in groups
 will do well to call at Mr. Cowd's Daguerrean
 Rooms, at the Edgar House. Emigrants who
 wish to send their miniatures to their friends, can
 do so. by mail, at a trifling expense. [Apr 13th]

From the *Gazette* the emigrants searched for the most current news from the gold fields.

THE FEMININES FOR CALIFORNIA.—A N.
 York letter, of Tuesday evening, says:

"I hear that Mrs. Farnham is succee-
 ding very well in her enterprise, and that
 there is every prospect of her having half
 of her cargo, if not two-thirds of her cargo
 (about four hundred tons of women) by
 the first of next month.

"The gold diggings will ship to us their
 treasures, in the shape of gold dust, and in
 return we shall send them women. This
 is a great country!"

⁹ St. Joseph Gazette, February 13, 1849

Of immediate importance were reports from persons arriving from the plains traveling east. These persons sometimes described the condition of the road, the availability of grass, interaction with Indians. They

reported on the number of emigrants they had met on the road, how far out they were and the health and condition of the companies. Emigrant companies could use these reports to decide when to start across the plains.

FOR CALIFORNIA.—The steamer "Consignee" arrived at St. Joseph on Saturday evening last, with over 250 persons on board, for California. They form one company, commanded by Capt. W. J. ARKIN. They are well armed, and provided with suitable clothing, implements, &c. and go out, for the express purpose of making fortunes, either by gold digging or speculation. This company brought with them some 70 wagons, between 80 and 90 head of mules, and nearly 100 tons of merchandize, clothing, gold digging and washing implements, &c. This is the largest, best organized, and most complete company that has reached St. Joseph. We learn that the company, a few days since, separated into four different messes.

The *Gazette* attempted to list companies who jumped off for their gold adventure from St. Joseph. In actuality, only a small percent of the names of individuals who left were published, but those companies who provided details immortalized their members to the joy of genealogists. These reports often included where they were camped, their state of enthusiasm, and how they were equipped, and the date they left on the journey.

OFF FOR CALIFORNIA
The Sucker Company from Illinois, mostly from Alton and its vicinity, comprising 40 teams and 120 members, including 8 ladies and 4 children. Most of the teams have four yokes of oxen, and carry from 2,200 to 2,400 lbs. each. They have an India rubber boat, all the necessary tools, arms and ammunition with an old and experienced mountaineer, in the person of Mr. David Adams, for a guide. The following is a list of the company:
H. Buffum, J. Salce, J. C. Post, A. Stevens

Cholera visited St. Joseph with the emigrants, but in 1849 it was not as bad in town as it would become on the trail itself.¹⁰ Steamboats with cholera victims aboard were required to land their parties above the town. A May 25 report in the *Gazette* listed five victims, one of which was a citizen.¹¹ Even Rudolph Kurz lost his assistant to the disease.¹²

We learn by a gentleman who came passenger on the steamboat "Mary" to this place, that forty-seven persons died of cholera on her way up the river. The "Mary" has gone above with her passengers, and will probably land them a few miles above this place.

The emigrants began leaving for the plains about April 12, according the *Gazette*, when the Buffalo Exploring and Mining Company jumped off. The prudent ones had already crossed the river and were waiting on the west bank for the right time. Two ferries operated continuously from the St. Joseph wharf; Duncan's ferry operated four miles above the town. Other ferries between St. Joseph and Council Bluffs crossed emigrant companies who started their journey by going north along the east bank of the Missouri River. By April 27, the *Gazette* reported at least 600 wagons had crossed at St. Joseph and 300 at Duncan's ferry.

¹⁰ Mr. Gilmore, an emigrant who abandoned his journey and returned to St. Joseph, gave this report in the May 25 *Gazette*. "A large number of emigrants had died with the Cholera, and disease was still among them. In one encampment over night eight persons died. From what Mr. Gilmore could learn on his return, he thinks upwards of two hundred emigrants must have died on the plains—and sickness still among them. . . Mr. G. remained a few hours with the pack-mule company from this place. A few of the members had been sick, and a young man, by the name of Samuel Wilson, formerly a resident of this place, died with the Cholera." (*St. Joseph Gazette*, May 25, 1849)

¹¹ "During the past week, five cases of Cholera have terminated fatally in this place. Two brothers, Thomas and Daniel Pepper, from Green county, Kentucky, died of Cholera, the one on Sunday evening, and the other on Monday morning. On Saturday morning, an emigrant whose name we did not learn, died very suddenly—and on Tuesday morning, a boy about 14 years of age. On Wednesday morning, Mrs. A. Houston, wife of Mr. Robt. Houston, died after a few hours of sickness. This we believe embraces all the cases in St. Joseph since our last publication. Four of the above persons are emigrants." (*St. Joseph Gazette*, May 25, 1849)

¹² "my young partner who slept in the same bed with me had such a severe attack that his convulsions awoke me. He died; I remained in good health still. (*Kurz*, 48)

As emigrant companies left, more arrived. On May 4, the newspaper reported "Every boat that arrives at the wharf is crowded with emigrants for the gold regions. Within the last few days several hundred wagons have come through by land, from Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin. Up to 12 o'clock yesterday, there had been 8318 persons who had made this a point of departure for the plains..." On May 11, the paper reported 13,000 had passed through the town, "wending their way to the gold region." By May 18 the report was "A few emigrants are still here who will leave in a few days."

On June 15, the Gazette made good on their promise to estimate the emigration numbers. "The wagons that crossed the river at this place, by ferry and steamboats, numbers 1508, at Duncan's ferry, four miles above St. Joseph, 685, at Bontown, Savannah, and the ferries as far up as the Bluffs, say 2000. This makes the number of wagons 4193. A fair average would be about four men, and eight mules or oxen to each wagon. From this statement it would appear that there are 16,772 persons on the plains—besides 33,544 mules and oxen. A number of emigrants, anticipating some difficulty in getting through with wagons, went with pack mules, which would probably increase the emigration to at least 17,000, and the number of cattle and mules to at least 34,000. From the best information we can get, about ten thousand persons have left Independence, which will increase the number of persons to 27,000."¹³

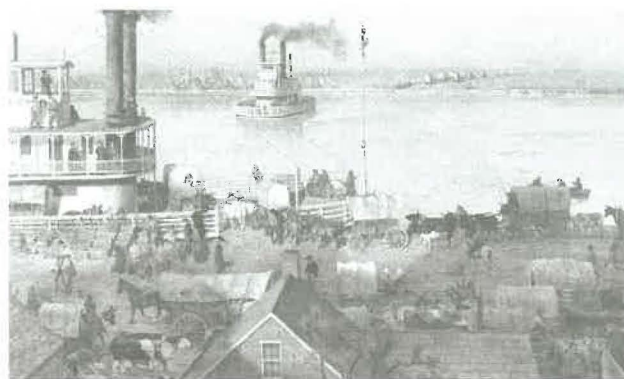
By June, St. Joseph was reduced to its 1800. Rudolph Kurz remarked. "The quiet that followed this hubbub was almost unbearable. To make the contrast all the more noticeable, most of the tradespeople were off on new speculation and the farmers were busy on their lands making preparation for the next migration to the west."

But remnants of the emigration hung around. It was July before the cholera left St. Joseph. The Indians were not as lucky. On June 22, the Gazette reported via a trader at the Bluffs, "a large number of Indians at that point lately died of Cholera, and that is still prevails among them to an alarming extent."

Would-be adventurers, whose funds proved insufficient for the trip, hung around looking for

work and hoping to make the 1850 season. Construction workers were in demand. In September, the Gazette boasted, "since March last, there have been 123 buildings erected in this place, as follows: 51 brick, 47 frame and 25 log houses; 3 brick and 2 frame stores; 2 steam mills, one brick and one frame; 1 brick Brewery; 6 brick and one frame ware-houses; 4 frame shops; 2 frame offices; 3 brick, one log, and 9 frame stables; 11 additions to house, and 2 rope walks...during the present fall, some twenty or thirty houses will be erected."

The city was poised to do it all again. In 1850, the emigration would swell to 55,000. Spring was late in coming and many took off before the grass was high enough, taking forage with them. Mary Colby writing a letter on May 6, 1850, exclaims "I could not begin to tell you how many their [are] in St. Joseph that are going to Oregon and California but thousands of them it is a sight to see the tents and wagons on the banks of the river and through the country they are as thick as camp meeting tents 20 or 30 miles and some say for 50 miles...the St Joe paper states that 20 thousand has started from their to California this spring." (Holmes, 48)



St. Joseph Waterfront, illustration by John Falter in Old Saint Jo by Sheridan Logan.

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Article compiled by: Marilyn Bryan, Gateway Chapter member and former Treasurer of OCTA

¹³ An earlier estimate predicted 4350 wagons. "It is calculated that every eighty wagons will occupy one mile of the way and the entire train of 4350 wagons, will be a moving column of FIFTY FIVE MILES in length. Suppose the same number leave Independence, and you have a train of wagons on the prairie, upwards of one hundred miles in length." (*St. Joseph Gazette*, May 18, 1849)

St. Joseph Gazette

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1849

THE BEST STARTING POINT TO CALIFORNIA

The following communication from the pen of our fellow citizen, M. Thompson, Esq. contains many useful suggestions to California and Oregon emigrants. We most cheerfully comply with the request of Messrs. Brent, Frame, Richardson, Somerville, Barrett and Ball, who have requested it of Mr. Thompson for publication, and give it a place in our paper:

It is a well known fact throughout the United States, that the great thoroughfare from the States to California and Oregon, is by the South Pass of the Rocky Mountains through North Western Missouri. There are four points of departure, the road from all of which converge towards one point, namely Grand Island on the Platte river, where they meet and are one from there on. These points of starting are Independence, Westport, Fort Leavenworth; and St. Joseph. St. Joseph is the only town among them on the river, as Fort Leavenworth is only a Military Post. By referring to the map, person who are unacquainted with the Geography of this part of the country, can see that the Missouri comes in from the North west. St. Joseph is above Independence sixty miles in a direct line, and thirty miles further west. Westport and Fort Leavenworth are between St. Joseph and Independence, but they offer no inducements to emigrants, as Westport is but a village, and Fort Leavenworth a military post in the Indian Territory—therefore, the two great points for outfitting and starting, are St. Joseph and Independence. I would say nothing derogatory of Independence, but a plain statement of the advantages with St. Joseph possesses naturally must prove that it is the most suitable point.

The road from Independence runs west by south, the west by north, then north west, crossing in the course the Kansas river and various branches which empty into the Kansas, all of which are troublesome, especially the Kansas, which is well known to all who have ever crossed it to have the most dangerous quicksand bottom of any river in the west. This road then follows the course of the Blue river, and for the first two hundreds miles crossed more bottoms and streams than all the rest of the route together.

From St. Joseph there are two roads, either of which is better than the one from Independence.

First the road by the Iowa Mission which is nearly straight from here to Grand Island. This road crosses the river immediately opposite St. Joseph, into the Indian territory, where the companies can organize, elect their officers, &c. supply omissions in outfit, and have free grazing. This road crosses Wolf River between here and the Mission, which river is neither difficult nor dangerous. After leaving the Mission, which is only thirty miles from here, the road follows the main divide of the prairie, which is high and dry until it is intersected by the road from Independence, which point of intersection is one hundred and thirty-five miles from St. Joseph, and two hundred and five from independence—thus proving at once a distance of eighty miles in favor of St. Joseph. From this point of intersection to Grand Island, the road from each place is the same.

Now, the advantages of this road over the Independence road is seen at a glance. It is eighty miles shorter, crosses but one stream, besides the Missouri, enters immediately into free grazing, while road from Independence is twenty miles to grazing, eighty miles longer, and crosses several streams and bottoms, which will be troublesome in the spring.

The other route from St. Joseph, and the one I prefer, is the one by the mouth of Platte, formerly called Fort Kearny. On this route various advantages are secured which, besides being more pleasant, will shorten the time from ten to twenty days. The facts in regard to this route should prove conclusively to every man, who has any idea of the inconveniences of travelling on the plains, that it has advantages which to a majority of those that emigrate, and who will mostly be men that know nothing of the "take care of yourself" life on the plains, which cannot be balanced by any other route. It recommends itself particularly to those who wish to start early, and make a quick trip.

These advantages are, 1st, the first hundred miles is through a rich and well settled country, where feed can be had as plenty and cheap as any where in the United States, so that persons can start a week or ten days before grass, and should they reach the mouth of Platte before grass they can feed until it appears. 2^d, From the mouth of Platte to Grand Island is just two hundred miles, and the road which lies along the Platte, is kept in good order by the military who are constantly travelling it, which will save nearly a week to the first parties who have to build bridges, &c. On the other routes. This week, and the week gained before grass, will give the emigrant two weeks advance of those on the other route from St. Joseph, which route has a week the advantage of the Independence route, in distance alone, which makes the Platte route from 10 to 20 days better than the Independence route.

These facts, which are facts, should prove conclusively that St. Joseph has decided advantages in respect to route, over the other points, but it has also other advantages which are not of much less importance to emigrants. St. Joseph is only two hundred miles from Hannibal, with a good road all the way. There are also good roads to every town of note on the Mississippi. It is immediately on the river, so that emigrants from the western States can come direct here by water. Emigrants from Iowa, Wisconsin, Indiana and Illinois have roads to this place, which have been travelled for the last three years by Oregon and California emigrants, who have universally made St. Joseph their starting point. It may be well to state that the emigration from Lexington and the towns on the river below Independence, and on the same side of the river, will all cross the river and come through St. Joseph, where they will recross and take the St. Joseph route.

For the advantage of persons, at a distance, who are not aware that St. Joseph is a town, but think it merely what it is called on the maps, Roubidoux Trading Post, I will give a few facts in relation to it, and in comparison with Independence.

St. Joseph is situated on the Missouri river, in Buchanan county, opposite the Indian territory. It is about 130 miles above Independence by the river, and about 60 above Fort Leavenworth; it is 65 by land from Independence, and 30 from Fort Leavenworth; 200 from Hannibal; 350 from St. Louis.

Independence is what is called in the west, an old town. It is indebted to, and still depends entirely upon the Santa Fe trade for its prosperity and support. There is no country back of it; there is no trade for it, except the Santa Fe. While St. Joseph is a new town, not yet six years old. Its situation is far superior to any town on the river, and its unprecedented growth has depended entirely upon its natural advantages and resources; and is indebted to no foreign cause for its increase. Its bone and muscle are within itself, and its blood is furnished by a vast tract of country to the north and east. The whole Platte Purchase, with the exception of one county, centers its trade in St. Joseph and with the honest rivalry of its merchants and mechanics and the cash system, which is universal, goods are sold lower and work done cheaper than in any town in the west.

St. Joseph is the largest town in North Western Missouri, and the fourth in the State. It has 1800 inhabitants, 20 stores, 4 hotels, 8 blacksmith shops, 5 waggon shops, 2 steam grist mills, 2 steam mills, 3 drug stores, 2 tinner's shops, and saddlers, shoemakers, tailors, &c, &c. in proportion. 2 common and one steam ferry boat will be in active operation in the spring. Our steam mills and water mills throughout the country can furnish flour, and there has been enough meat packed by the farmers to feed the whole of California 5 years. The sales of merchandise in 1849 will not fall short of \$350,000. The amount of wheat purchased by the merchants and millers in 1848 was about 60,00 bushels, and there has been slaughtered by the packers in town this winter 115,000 (sic, 11,500) hogs. The Platte Purchase, and a few counties below, have been furnishing the thousand of oxen and mules used by Government for the army in the west and the war having ceased there are thousands now to be disposed of.

Parties who would rendezvous at St. Joseph need not be fearful about purchasing oxen, mules or waggons, while every thing else necessary for an outfit is abundant.

I will now recapitulate the advantages of St. Joseph.

1st. The route by the Missouri is the shortest from any town in Missouri to Grand Island.

2^d. Immediately in front of the town you enter Indian territory and free grazing.

3^d. The route by the Platte is the safest, less trouble, and quickest time.

4th. St. Joseph is the most accessible point from all parts of the Union.

5th. Oxen, mules, and waggons are cheaper.

6th. Flour and meat are cheaper.

7th. Dry goods and groceries are cheaper.

8th. You pass through the prettiest and most growing town in the world, except for San Francisco, where we are all going.

It may be well to add a price current of our market for the benefit of the eastern States:

Waggons,	25	a	90	Molasses	35	a	50
Mules	35	a	60	Osnaburg	10	a	12
Oxen	30	a	45	Shirting	8	A	10
Flour,	175	a	200	Powder	30	a	35
Bacon	2	a	3	Rice	6	to	7
Sugar	5	a	7	Crackers	\$3	per bbl	
Coffee	7	a	9				

And every thing else in the same proportion. So I earnestly advise, and the citizens cordially invite all emigrants to give out town a call as they pass to the golden land of California.

Compiled and edited by Marilyn Bryan

PONY EXPRESS STATIONS IN KANSAS

Jackie Lewin



Sketch by George Flett from St. Joseph Museums Archives.

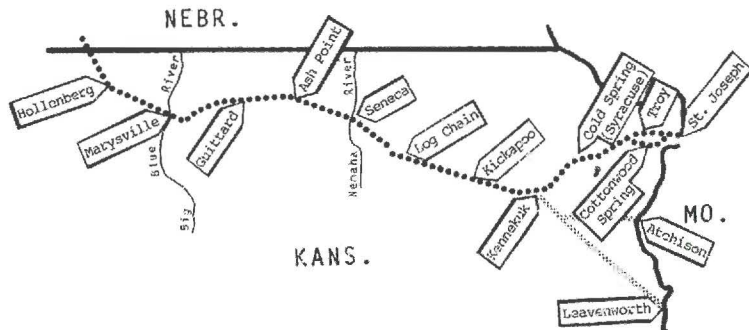
St. Joseph is well known as the eastern terminus of the Pony Express, the famed trans-continental mail delivery of 1860-1861 operated by the Central Overland California and Pikes Peak Express Company. Between St. Joseph and Sacramento, CA, there were approximately 156 stations. Relay stations, where the riders changed horses, were needed every ten to fifteen miles along the approximately 2000-mile route. Home stations, where a new rider took over, were placed every 75 to 100 miles. This article deals with the section of the trail through Kansas. Along this part of the trail were ten relay stations and one home station. The

entire trip through Kansas took the riders about fourteen hours.

Upon leaving St. Joseph, the rider and horse boarded the ferry to Elwood, a small town located in the Missouri River bottoms on the Kansas side. From there, the trail followed an old rock road across the thickly wooded bottoms for five miles to the bluffs. In August 1861 Sir Richard Burton took this road by stagecoach. He described it as *"A deep tangled wood - rather a thicket or jungle than a forest. . .strongly suggestive of chills,-fever and ague."* Today, that area has been cleared of trees.

At the bluffs, the trail split. It is likely that the southern branch, which went to Cottonwood Spring, was used during the early part of the Pony Express and later, the northern branch which went through the town of Troy became the more popular.

By looking at the map you can see the names and locations of the stations in Kansas. Following is a brief description of each station.



Ten stations were located along the Pony Express Trail in Kansas.

Cottonwood Spring: This first station in Kansas on the earlier used route was on the old Pottawatomie Trail which had also been used by the earliest emigrants to Oregon and California. Local residents claim that a part of the original station was incorporated in a house that was built on the site (N.E. Sec. 26, T3S, R21E). That house is still standing today.

Troy: Located on the later used route, the station in Troy was at the Smith's Hotel at today's northeast corner of First and Myrtle Streets. Leonard Smith, owner of the hotel, was asked by the Central Overland California and Pikes Peak Company to build a barn for five horses. Nothing remains at the site. However, there is a monument, commemorating the relay station) on the Courthouse square at Troy a few blocks to the east. Troy was established as a town site in 1855.

Cold Spring: Near the 1860 town of Syracuse (Sec. 1, T.4S, R. 19E), this station may also have been known as Lewis. The local school house was near the trail and children looked forward to seeing the Pony Express rider. Traveler Sir Richard Burton described Cold Spring Station as being run by a widow in a *"log-hut, which ignored the duster and the broom."*

Kennekuk: Just before the station at Kennekuk, the Pony Express trail joined up with the existing freighting and stagecoach trail from Atchison and the military road from Fort Leavenworth. The town of Kennekuk had been platted in 1859 and, prior to that, was the headquarters of the Kickapoo Agency, a trading post and a mission. A hotel had also been in operation at Kennekuk since 1848 to accommodate the overland traffic and, by 1860 the town had a population of 100. Today, a granite stone (Sec. 3, T5S, R17E) marks the site of the relay station which was operated by Tom Perry and his wife. Mrs. Perry's skill as a cook was well-known to stagecoach passengers.

Kickapoo: The station of Kickapoo (Sec. 14, T4S, R15E) was situated on Plum Creek in the Kickapoo Indian reservation. Within site was the Presbyterian mission and school which had been built in 1851. The station was operated by Noble Rising and W.W. Letson. Today, the land has been plowed and all traces of the relay station are obliterated.

Log Chain: There are two theories as to how the name of Log Chain came about. One is that it is a corruption of the name of Locknane Creek which ran by the station. The other is that the marshy bottomland caused problems for wagons on the military road in crossing the Locknane Creek. Wagon chains often broke during the difficult crossing - hence the name Log Chain. In 1861 Noble Rising built a house at Log Chain (Sec. 19, T3S, R14E) which was used as the relay station. Today, the house, although in an altered form, still stands.

Seneca: The first home station reported by Pony Express rider Charles Cliff was at the town of Seneca. (Other home stations used at different times were Guittard Station and Marysville.) Seneca consisted of well-constructed buildings that came into sight as the rider topped the hill to the east. The station keeper John Smith had been operating a hotel in Seneca since 1858. In addition, the hotel served as a restaurant, school and a home to the Smiths. One visitor commented that Mrs. Smith's housekeeping was so good that the *"floor was clean enough to eat off it."* Today, a boulder at the corner of 4th and Main streets in Seneca (Sec. 34, T2S, R12E) marks the site of Smith's Hotel.

Ash Point: Ash Point (SW corner, SE 1/4, Sec. 8, T2S, R11E), a town which at its peak in 1860 had a population of 30, was at the junction of the route the Pony Express was following and a branch of the California Road from St. Joseph. Storekeeper, John O'Laughlin, was also the station keeper. Sir Richard Burton wrote in 1860 of seeing "hang-dog Indians, squatting, standing, and stalking about" at Ash Point. The town died in the late 1870s and today all that remains is a marker placed in the 1930s.

Guittard Station: George Guittard immigrated from French-speaking Alsatia to Kansas in 1857. He built a hotel and stage station on Vermillion Creek. This was the first permanent settlement in Marshall County. Guittard's (Sec. 4, T2S, R9E) was one of the best and most well-known road ranches on this part of the route. Sir Richard Burton wrote at Guittard's in August 1860, *"I saw for the first time, the Pony Express rider arrive. . ."* Although the house was razed in 1910, the lumber was used to erect the present residence on the same site. In 1931 the old Oregon Trail Memorial Association erected a monument at the site. After Guittard Station, the terrain in Kansas begins to change. The ground becomes rockier and the prairie begins to give way to the plains.

Marysville: The next station was at Marysville (NW ¼ Sec. 33, T2S, R7E), a town established by Frank Marshall in 1854 on the Big Blue River. The rider entered the town and stopped at the post office and nearby barn. Then he went on to Shibley Knoll where Robert Shibley operated a rope ferry over the Big Blue in times of high water. Otherwise, the river, which was normally about 50 feet wide and two and a half feet deep, was easily forded by the rider. Within recent years, Shibley Knoll traces were obliterated in highway and railroad construction. However, the city of Marysville operates a Pony Express museum in the old barn which served as the station.

At Marysville, the Pony Express Trail joined with the St. Joe Road. The St. Joe Road had been running north of and parallel to the Pony Express Trail. About eight miles northwest of Marysville, the Pony Express Trail and the St. Joe Road were met by the Independence Road. Settlements began to thin out and would soon give way to miles of lonely trail.

Hollenberg Station: The last station in today's Kansas was Hollenberg (SE corner Sec. 3, T2S, R5E) near Cottonwood Creek. Gerat Hollenberg immigrated from Hanover, Germany, in 1823. In 1849 he went by wagon train to California and came past this location. After traveling to Australia, Peru and back to New York, he decided to move west in 1855. He settled on Cottonwood Creek and built the first house in Washington County. In 1860, he had an impressive road ranch which supplied clothes, food, livestock and livestock feed to emigrants. Today, Hollenberg Station is extremely important since it is believed to be the only unaltered Pony Express Station on its original site. The original building and nearby interpretive center are under the administration of the Kansas State Historical Society.

Seven miles past Hollenberg Station, the Pony Express Trail left Kansas (Kansas became a state in January 1861) and continued on through six more modern-day states to Sacramento, CA. Although the Pony Express was a financial disaster for its owners, it was successful in proving that the Central Route could be traveled all year round and marked the way for the transcontinental railroad across the mountains. It united the east and west during the first year of the Civil War by carrying important communications between Washington and the government officials and Union men in California. And it provided a dramatic chapter to the western history of the United States.

The Pony Express Trail and its stations in Kansas is a significant segment of the Pony Express National Historic Trail, one of the sixteen National Historic Trails that make up the National Trails System as designated by the United States Congress.

THE FIRST PONY EXPRESS RIDER

Jackie Lewin

It is a documented fact that the Pony Express left from St. Joseph, Missouri, on April 3, 1860. A crowd assembled in St. Joseph to watch and a brass band played as the mail was packed in the cantinas. There were 49 letters, 5 telegrams and some special edition newspapers printed on tissue paper and wrapped in oiled silk. However, the details of that historic event are cloudy due to the lack of company records and leave room for speculation on the part of historians. As a result, it may have been safer to 'ride' on the Pony Express than it is to 'write' on the Pony Express!

One of the issues that has led to controversy over the years, particularly since 1900, is the identity of the first rider to leave from St. Joseph. A number of names have been put forth over the years - Alex Carlisle, Charles Cliff, Gus Cliff, Johnny Fry, Jack Keetley, William Richardson and Henry Wallace, to name a few. Most of these are easily discounted, and the debate settles down to Johnny Fry or William Richardson as having the honor of being the first eastbound rider. This article is the result of my research into the subject.

On April 7, 1860, the *St. Joseph Weekly West* reported, "*The rider is a Mr. Richardson, formerly a sailor, and a man accustomed to every description of hardship, having sailed for years amid the snows and ice bergs of the Northern ocean.*" It is not known who wrote the article. Was it a person familiar with the people in St. Joseph? Anyway, this is the only place where Richardson is identified as the first rider. On the other hand, one might point out that no news article mentioned the name of Johnny Fry or anyone else. Why would Fry be the one receiving the credit as the first rider?

In 1913 the Daughters of the American Revolution were preparing to place a monument in Patee Park designating the Pikes Peak Stables (now the Pony Express Museum) as the starting point for the April 3, 1860 ride. Despite numerous eyewitness reports of Johnny Fry being the first rider, the DAR chose to go with the newspaper account. This caused quite a controversy in St. Joseph. Another Pony Express rider, Charles Cliff, was so angry that he refused to come to the DAR monument unveiling.

In 1923 the controversy again surfaced in St. Joseph. This time the eyewitness accounts were given a closer look and the St. Joseph Historical Society named Johnny Fry as the first rider. They also determined through public records that Billy Richardson was only ten years old in 1860.

Some of these eyewitnesses were:

—Robert Strickland (later a rider): "I saw him ride out of the stables in St. Joseph astride a little chestnut mare."

—Mary Alicia Owen (member of St. Joseph pioneer family and historian): "Why, everyone always knew the first rider out was Johnny Fry. My father saw him go. Johnny had a little racing mare of his own and won most of the races run along the river bank but he didn't ride his own horse."

—Mrs. Lewars (Fry's sweetheart in 1860) said she waved to him as he rode past on that first ride. She said he told her he had to keep his pony in the stable because the crowd was pulling hairs out of her mane and tail.

—Michael Whalen (later a Pony Express rider) was at the April 3 event and said the first rider was Fry.

In 1923, Glen Bradley, history professor at the University of Toledo and author of *The Story of the Pony Express* written in 1913, was contacted for his opinion. His response was: "I arrived at the conclusion that Johnny Fry was the first pony rider out of St. Joseph; this conclusion as you have observed, is consistently set forth in the book on pages 32 and 106, and I still maintain that Fry was

the first rider. In fact, no evidence has ever come to my attention that would warrant changing my asserting. . . Mr. W.E. Connelley of Topeka [Kansas Historical Society] holds the same opinion, which is further corroborated by certain citizens in n your community who were eye-witnesses, it seems a little strange that any of your local historians would seek to deprive Fry of his honor.”

Finally, in 1938, Billy Richardson spoke out. He had been out of St. Joseph for many years and was older when he heard of the controversy. He died in St. Joseph in 1947 at age 96. He would have been 9 or 10 years old in 1860. In a St. Joseph newspaper article near the time of his death, Richardson stated: “‘A writer billed me as the first Pony Express rider but that’s not so’ explained Billy to his friends. ‘Johnny Fry was the first rider. It just happened that my brother, Paul Coburn, was the manager for the Pony Express here and he accidentally threw the mail pouch on my pony instead of Frye’s. We set off down the street with the ponies hooves clattering and my pony carrying mail. Down at the ferry, however, the mail was transferred to Frye’s mount. He was the one who deserved the credit.’”

Upon researching county records, I did find that Billy Richardson was a ward of Bella Hughes, one of the directors of the Central Overland California and Pikes Peak Express Company and

that Paul Coburn was Richardson’s half-brother. Paul Coburn was an employee at the Pikes Peak Stables. This would certainly be reason to place young Billy Richardson at the stables at the time of this historic event.

Unfortunately, Johnny Fry was not able to speak for himself. When the Civil War broke out, Johnny resigned as a Pony Express rider and became a civilian scout of the Union Army. He was killed in an ambush by Quantrill’s guerrillas near Baxter Springs, Kansas, on October 6, 1863. He was 21 years old.

Sifting through the surviving information as to the identity of the first rider, I feel that it seems clear that Johnny Fry is the only one that withstands the tests of checking out the details. Unless and until other substantiated information is brought to light, Johnny Fry deserves the honor of being the first eastbound rider of the famed Pony Express.



Johnny Fry

THE PONY EXPRESS IN ST. JOSEPH

Travis Boley

When the Pony Express first rode on April 3, 1860, the entire nation was caught up in the excitement and fanfare of the moment. Today, 146 years later, the Pony Express is still celebrated as a pinnacle moment in American history, and its story and mythology shapes how many of our citizens still view the American West. Though the Pony rode into history with its last ride in November 1861 a mere 19 months after its first gallop west, the memory of these intrepid boys and men who made the mail delivery service a reality lives on in the foreground of the American consciousness.

Because St. Joseph was an established city on the edge of the United States in 1860 and served as the terminus of the Hannibal-St. Joseph Railroad, Pony Express founders Russell, Majors, & Waddell selected the town as the beginning of the route west. Today, many sites that serve as reminders of days past still stand. While you're in St. Joseph, be sure to visit many of the sites related to the Pony Express that still remain.

The **Pony Express National Museum**, housed at the site of the original Pony Express stables, is located at 914 Penn Street. The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1970, though the brick you now see was originally replaced in 1950 and expanded in the 1990s. The original building was built of pine, measured 60x120 feet, and housed approximately 200 horses. Today, visitors can explore a state-of-the-art 10,000 square foot facility that tells the story of the Pony Express, from beginnings through bankruptcy right up through modern-day mythology.

Located directly across the street from the Pony Express Museum is the **Pony Express Monument**. The stone marker, erected in Patee Park on April 3, 1913 by the Daughters of the American Revolution, was dedicated by supposed riders William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody, "Cyclone" Thompson, and Charlie Cliff.

The **Patee House**, located two-and-one-half blocks east of the stables at the corner of 12th & Penn, served as the general office for the Pony Express in 1860-61. Originally built as a hotel in 1856-58, the Patee House often housed Pony Express riders and Pony Express founders William Russell and Alexander Majors. The hotel is now a multistory museum that tells the story of St. Joseph, which includes some of the story of the Pony Express. Also located on the grounds of the museum is the house in which Jesse James was assassinated.

Visitors can also see the **original ferry site** that westbound Pony Express riders would use to cross the Missouri River into Kansas, while eastbound riders used the ferries to get back to Missouri. Two ferries, the *Bellemont* and the *Elwood*, carried riders from a site near modern-day Jules or Francis Street to the town of Elwood, Kansas. Today, a monument marks the site in River Front Park, located under the I-229 elevated highway.

The **Pony Express Memorial Statue** is located on the east side of downtown St. Joseph, just west of City Hall at the corner of 9th & Frederick. The statue, designed by Herman MacNeil, depicts a rider astride his horse and was erected in the spring of 1940.

Travis Boley is the Association Manager for the Oregon-California Trails Association and was formerly the director of the Pony Express Museum in St. Joseph. His hometown of Lexington, Missouri served as the headquarters for Russell, Majors, & Waddell, the founders of the Pony Express.

150 YEARS AGO
1856: A YEAR OF TURMOIL ON THE FRONTIER
John Mark Lambertson

Geography, politics, and available modes of transportation dictated that the outfitting towns for the Oregon and California Trails be dotted along the Missouri River on the far western boundary of the State of Missouri. As early as the 1840s, Independence, and later, Westport, St. Joseph and other communities thrived on the trade brought by trail emigrants embarking on their adventures to the Pacific coast.

This robust economic climate and business focus did not end, but was certainly disrupted, by volatile political developments which exploded on this western border in the middle of the 1850s. Tensions between southern slave holding states and the growing abolitionist movement in the North had been growing for decades. Each side was wary and suspicious of the other as they maneuvered around the political hot topic of slavery. An uneasy truce was made as early as 1821 with the Missouri Compromise which kept an even balance of free and slave states by the admission of Maine as “free” and Missouri where slave holding was allowed. But strong ideologies and emotions continued to inflame passions on both sides as America developed westward.

Missourians were alarmed when the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 opened up those territories to the west for potential free-state status. In a new policy of “self-determination”, the new settlers of Kansas could vote to outlaw slavery in that territory. Already bordered by free states on the east and north, many Missourians felt threatened by the prospect of being encircled by abolitionists who might aid runaway slaves, or apply pressure for abolition in the state.

The result was a political contest at the ballot boxes in Kansas. When Northerners raised funds to send antislavery sympathizers to settle the new territory, Missourians rallied to lead parties across the border to forcibly take over polling places, elect pro-slavery candidates, and then return to their homes in Missouri. The result was what was called the “Bogus Legislature”, made up of pro-slavery sympathizers, but which was declared valid and began to run the affairs of the territory. In the fall of 1855, free-state settlers established their own provisional state government, drafted a constitution and elected a legislature, but as it was not legally recognized and only existed on paper. Throughout this confusion, individual acts of threats, intimidation, horse whipping, and even tar and feathering of adversaries increased.

The year 1856 saw the worst of the hostilities, however. It opened with new immigrants coming in armed with rifles, and funds being solicited from abolitionists to help fortify the settlers. Rifles were shipped to the territory in boxes marked “Bibles”, and as Rev. Henry Ward Beecher’s church was instrumental in the effort, the firearms became known as “Beecher’s Bibles”. Pro-slavery leaders responded with a call to slave states for reinforcements, and three hundred Southern men entered Kansas under the leadership of Colonel Jefferson Buford.

By May of that year, a United States District Court judge held session in the pro-slavery capital of Lecompton and indicted numerous prominent free-state leaders for treason. Among those who were taken into custody was Kansas’s first territorial governor, Charles Robinson. During the course of making arrests in the free-state stronghold of Lawrence, the posse sacked the town and burned many of the prominent structures including two abolitionist newspapers and the Free-State Hotel.

One of the fiercest abolitionists in the territory who was enraged by the attack on Lawrence was John Brown. With news of the town's destruction, he enlisted the help of some of his sons and other followers and laid plans to wipe out some of the pro-slavery men who lived near them in the valley of Pottawatomie Creek. Following a branch of the California Trail from southern Missouri, he and his men descended on the cabins of five men and brutally killed them with swords.

The 'Pottawatomie Massacre' was widely reported in eastern newspapers and signaled the start of a 'war' along the Missouri-Kansas border. The first face-to-face battle between armed troops followed on June 2, at the Battle of Black Jack near present-day Baldwin City. Captain Henry Clay Pate and his men were taken prisoner while trying to capture John Brown and his men. It can be argued that this was actually the first battle of the American Civil War between pro and antislavery forces.

Immediately after, free-state men attacked a blockhouse near Franklin in an unsuccessful attempt to capture a cannon. When Governor Shannon issued a proclamation for both sides to disband, soldiers from Ft. Leavenworth marched in to disperse the two sides. The Missourians violated their pledge to return home, however, and attacked the town of Osawatomie. By August the free-state men regrouped and attacked four pro-slavery strongholds. While the Missourian marauders were known as "Border Ruffians", their Kansas counterparts, who looted, burned, and helped runaway slaves escape in Missouri, were called "Jayhawkers".

Throughout these months of attacks and retaliation, the territorial government repeatedly intervened to stop bloodshed but with only temporary success. By the end of August, Governor Shannon had resigned and pro-slavery Daniel Woodson took over acknowledging the territory was in open rebellion. Numerous isolated incidents of threats, burnings, lootings, and shootings were taking place all along the border. Ragtag armies clashed again at the "Battle of Osawatomie", where one of John Brown's sons was among the dead, and also at Hickory Point. The new governor, John W. Geary, took charge in September and through vigorous efforts was able to restore some order to the chaos, in what had become known as "Bleeding Kansas".

While the political battles for Kansas' future continued, the armed confrontations were largely concluded in 1856. After several more years of wrangling, Kansas finally entered the Union as the 34th state—a free state—in January of 1861. Shots would be fired on Fort Sumter just three months later. During the declared war, more guerrilla warfare, lootings, burnings, and armed battles would be fought along the border. Lawrence would be leveled again in 1863 with 150 citizens dead, and federal forces would retaliate by establishing martial law in the border counties of Missouri, forcing many to flee and dozens of homes burned. But in reality, the South's loss of the Border War along the Missouri frontier was a harbinger of the outcome of the full Civil War.

Books about this period include:

The Birth of Kansas, by G. R. Gaeddert, 1940

Bleeding Kansas, by Alice Nichols, 1954

False Claims Corrected, by G. W. Brown, 1902

History of Kansas, by John N. Holloway, 1868

History of the State of Kansas, by A. T. Andreas, 1883

John Brown and the Legend of Fifty-Six, by James C. Malin, 1942

The Kansas Conflict, by Charles Robinson, 1898

Kansas: A History of the Jayhawk State, by William Frank Zornow, 1957

Kansas: A Pictorial History, by Miller, Langsdorf and Richmond, 1961

THE CIVIL WAR AND ST. JOSEPH

Sarah Elder

According to history, the United States Civil War began April 12, 1861. For many residents of Missouri and Kansas the war began in 1854 after the Kansas-Nebraska Act was passed. This Act allowed for the creation of the Territory of Kansas out of the huge Nebraska Territory, and repealed a section of the Missouri Compromise that kept slavery from expanding north of the 36° 30' line. Now, the question of slavery could be decided by popular sovereignty.

Immediately, abolitionists began arriving in droves. Missouri Border Ruffians began crossing the border into Kansas Territory to vote in elections to ensure that it would become slaveholding. History has named this time period 'Bloody Kansas', 'Bleeding Kansas', or the 'Border War'.

The involvement of St. Joseph and Buchanan County in the Border War was not great. This was most likely due to the fact that the Missouri River proved to be an excellent barrier. It could and did freeze solid in the winter and could be forded on foot or horseback, but it was extremely dangerous; occasionally crossed by escaping slaves, willing to risk everything for freedom. However, the mere threat of attack was enough to terrify everyone.

The most well known Border incident involving St. Joseph occurred in 1859. John Doy, a doctor in Platte County, was arrested in Platte County, and charged with slave stealing. He was convicted after a change of venue trial at the Buchanan County Courthouse. Shortly after his conviction, a group of men from Kansas Territory arrived at the jail, posed as a posse turning in a horse thief. Once inside the jail, they imprisoned the jailer and freed Dr. Doy, escaping back to Kansas Territory before anyone in St. Joseph knew what had happened. Citizens were outraged and somewhat of a panic ensued as rumors flew that John Brown himself had been the leader of the posse. What was not known at the time was the John Brown was back east, planning a raid on Harper's Ferry. The confusion was most likely due to the fact that the poor jailer was named John Brown. (*Buchanan County History*, 1881)

Matters eventually calmed down and the city returned to normal routines. City leaders decided to try to keep things as neutral as possible. Even in the election of 1860, it was the compromise candidates, Stephen Douglas and John Bell that received the most votes, while the 'extreme' candidates, Abraham Lincoln and John Breckinridge, did poorly.

On April 20, just after the fall of Fort Sumter, southern sympathizers in Missouri joined forces and raided the Federal Arsenal in Liberty, stealing arms, ammunition and gun powder. (*Official Record*, Series I, Vol. 1) Many of the items were brought to St. Joseph and locked up in cellars, supposedly near the Market Square.

Hundreds of men came to the city as volunteers for the southern cause, and set up camps near the Patee House. One of the men in command was M. Jeff Thompson. Jeff Thompson came to St. Joseph in 1847 and became involved in many enterprises and careers. In 1859, he was elected mayor and gave a rousing speech to send off the first rider of the Pony Express. He did not seek re-election, most likely because he believed that war with the North was inevitable. Thompson held many offices in various organizations, including colonel in the State Militia.

As men in Northwest Missouri and in St. Joseph proper gathered to support the

South, Thompson, as a colonel and Inspector for the Fourth Military District of the Missouri Militia (this district was made up of fifteen counties in Northwest Missouri), took command and spent his days drilling his men and hoping some federal soldiers were on their way. Thompson would eventually get his chance to fight federal soldiers, but it would not be in St. Joseph.

On May 21, 1861, Thompson decided to leave St. Joseph and head south. As he went through the city both Union and Confederate (palmetto) flags were flying everywhere. Fear and distrust were so prevalent that the schools were closed and would remain so until after the war. During all this flag waving, a new postmaster arrived. John L. Bittinger was a Republican supporter and had been appointed postmaster of St. Joseph. He felt that the Unionists in town were not getting the support they deserved from the Federal Government. Bittinger decided to fly the Stars and Stripes from the roof of the post office on Second Street. At first, when Thompson was told of Bittinger's plan, he said he didn't care, but when he actually saw the flag, he snapped, due in no small part to the fact that he was inebriated. In his memoirs he admits to being drunk, but claims his enemies made him that way. Thompson climbed a ladder on the outside of the post office, went up to the roof, cut the flag down, slapped it against the building, then let it fall, whereby the Southerners in the crowd promptly tore it to pieces. Hearing about what was happening, Thompson's supporters came to his aid and the flagpole was then torn from its base and thrown into the river. The men then turned their sights on other United States flags in town. (*Official Record*, Series I, Vol. 3, and *Buchanan County History*, 1881)

The next stop was Turner Hall or the Turnverein, which was a meeting place for German citizens. A blacksmith Union man named Robert Bradshaw got there first. He locked the doors, then he and others positioned themselves at the door. Thompson stopped the men before they actually reached the Hall, and Alonzo Slayback approached Bradshaw. Slayback asked Bradshaw if he would lower the flag in the interests of keeping the peace. Bradshaw eventually agreed, but stated he would fire a salute to the flag before lowering it. As he appeared on the roof, the crowd threatened to shoot him. Slayback pulled his own gun and threatened to kill the first man to shoot at Bradshaw. Bradshaw cheered the flag, fired six shots in salute and safely lowered the flag. The flag would remain hidden until the end of the war. (Filbert, p. 24)

Two days later, M. Jeff Thompson left St. Joseph and would not return until some years after the war. Thompson was later named general by his own men and won a certain amount of notoriety and respect from Ulysses S. Grant as the Swamp Fox of the Confederacy.

Shortly after the post office incident an ordinance was passed declaring that no flags - Union or Confederate- were to be flown in town. (*Council Minutes*, May 28, 1861). On June 10, 1861, Federal troops arrived from Fort Leavenworth and set up camp just south of the Patee House, and started flying the United States Flag. The next day the flag was moved to the cupola of the Patee House, which had become their headquarters. The City Council demanded the flag be lowered in accordance with the No Flag Ordinance. The commander, Captain Alfred Sully, categorically refused to do so. Faced with the might of the Federal Army, the Council backed down and repealed the ordinance. (*Buchanan County History*, 1881; Filbert, p. 28; & *Council Minutes*, June 11, 1861)

Also in June, the Second Iowa Infantry marched to Hannibal, then took the train to St. Joseph. Arriving on June 15, they set up camp along the Missouri River south of town.

Meanwhile, the Iowa troops continued to protect the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad and keep St. Joseph under Federal control. It was during this time that John Landis gathered up the arms and ammunition stolen from the Liberty Arsenal and smuggled it out of town. Landis then headed south to join Sterling Price, and became commander of the Landis Battery.

In late July 1861 the Second Iowa was ordered to St. Louis leaving only a few Federal troops in town. Rebel camps began to spring up everywhere, so many in fact that in August 1861, the Union Commander for Missouri, John C. Fremont declared Missouri to be under martial law. Men carrying weapons without authority were to be court martialed and/or shot. Slaves belonging to people found to be disloyal to the Union were to be freed. At this time, with growing numbers of Confederate sympathizers and a dwindling Federal contingent, James Craig was still trying to maintain a 'cool and inactive' attitude in St. Joseph. He asked commanders on both sides to leave St. Joseph alone. Craig pointed out that since the Federal troops had left, there had been virtually no trouble. At first, leaders on both sides agreed, but St. Joseph was still an important transportation center, had plenty of merchandise, and was too valuable a site to be left alone. (Filbert, p. 34)

Things came to a head in late August when the last of the Union troops were ordered to head toward Lexington to head off General Sterling Price and his army. The volunteers from Gentry County headed north to Iowa for reinforcements while Southerners under John Boyd, who had been camped outside St. Joseph, marched into town and captured the two remaining Federal recruiting officers. The *Gazette*, still in operation at this time reported that "*The boys behaved well, were very quiet and were received with evident manifestations of joy by the citizens.*" Since there were no longer any Union troops in town, many of the Unionists left town, crossing over to Elwood, taking as much of their property as they could. Merchants with Southern sympathies turned over their goods to the Confederates. Rebel militias from Andrew County entered the city during the first part of September and general looting began. If doors were locked, they were broken open. Reports estimated that the Confederates loaded approximately twenty-five wagons of clothing, groceries, hardware, and boots, and took every weapon and any horse that was available. During this time railroad service on the Hannibal and St. Jo had been either disrupted or completely suspended. Passengers were wounded by gunfire, and one boy from Hannibal was killed by snipers. On one occasion the train was fired at so much that the conductor found bullet holes all through his clothing. (Filbert, p. 38)

By September 3, full service had been restored and the train was bringing passengers and mail for the Pony Express. Around 11:15 p.m., as most of the passengers were trying to sleep, the train approached the bridge that spanned the Little Platte River about 10 miles east of the city. To the engineer, the bridge appeared secure so he continued forward. Halfway across, the bridge collapsed. The locomotive flipped over as it fell followed by the freight cars, mail car, baggage car and two passenger cars carrying about 100 people. Some of the people were buried or crushed under the furniture while others were thrown out of the cars and found among the timbers. The cause of the collapse of the bridge was soon apparent. Person or persons unknown had burned through the lower timbers of the bridge. The damage was invisible from the top and the weight of the train did the rest. (*New York Herald*, September 7, 1861)

The baggage master Abe Hager headed to St. Joseph for help. Along the way he found a handcart. He also found a smaller bridge that had been burned with a railroad tie securely attached to the rails to derail any oncoming trains. Another train was dispatched to the site and when the train pulled into St. Joseph, the depot was used as a morgue, and the Patee House and other hotels were used as hospitals.

Several soldiers from Fort Leavenworth were killed as were doctors and businessmen from the St. Joseph area. Several St. Joseph businessmen were wounded. For the most part, the city was in a state of shock, although a woman with southern sympathies, after seeing the body of the conductor was quoted as saying, "*No matter, he was but a miserable abolitionist.*" (Filbert, p. 42)

About one week after the Platte River Bridge disaster, approximately 1100 men from the 16th Illinois were ordered to St. Joseph, still under Confederate control at the time. Confederate leaders knew that their stay in St. Joseph couldn't last because the Union men were starting to fight back, so the Confederates pulled out and headed south to join Sterling Price for his attack on Lexington. Charles B. Wilkinson, editor of the *St. Joseph Herald* and a staunch Union man wrote "*Not a cheer welcomed their dread approach, nor their long prayed-for exit. They were the last Confederate soldiers that ever entered St. Joseph.*" (*Buchanan County History*, 1881)

Before the 16th Illinois arrived, men from a Kansas unit arrived. These men were less than disciplined. They went through St. Joseph on their own little looting spree. Businesses closed mainly because they had nothing to sell. Reports estimate that losses were between \$40,000 and \$75,000 (Filbert, p. 48); roughly \$680,000 and \$1,275,000 today.

The men of the 16th Illinois already had a reputation for being drunk and disorderly, looting, and just general bad behavior. Everywhere they went in Northwest Missouri, they just missed the Confederates reported to be in the area, but they stayed for the looting. When they returned to St. Joseph under the command of Colonel Robert Smith, they were ordered to 'police the countryside.' Translation: wholesale looting. On September 21, *The New York Tribune* printed an eyewitness report: "*Between the Secessionist thieves and the Jay-Hawkers, this town was nearly stripped of everything, and today the city is a solitude. The town is ruined for the present.*" (Filbert, p. 50)

In late September 1861, the 52nd Illinois Infantry joined the 16th and they set up camp on Prospect Hill - A hill north of the business district that overlooked the Missouri River to the west and the city to the east. The soldiers built an oblong circle of earthworks and named it Fort Smith. Men who were accused of or found to be guilty of Southern sympathies were often put to work building the works. According to the *Buchanan County History* by Chris Rutt, the earthworks were still visible in 1904. In the 1881 *Buchanan County History*, the author tells the following story. One December morning in 1861, the people on 3rd Street heard a loud whizzing noise overhead. A few minutes later there was another whizzing noise and a crash. They discovered it to be projectiles being fired from the cannon on Prospect Hill toward a target on the side of France Hill, two miles away in a direct line over the city. The first cannon ball went slightly more than halfway to the target before burying itself under the platform of the Hannibal and St. Joseph passenger depot. The second shot again went halfway to the target, tore through the cupola of Frank West's livery stable on Fourth Street, crashed through a bowling alley, hit the street outside, bounced 100 feet, and hit a fence post before burying itself under an outhouse. After this occurrence, a signed petition was presented to Col. Smith asking that he notify civil authorities before opening fire on the city again, so that women and children could be evacuated (*Buchanan County History*, 1881)

In St. Joseph, at Fort Smith at Christmas time a young Illinois soldier named J.W. Reese, wrote to his sister about some happenings in town and in the area. *"In this place yesterday there was a Secessionist Shot at Hank and Missed him. The Ball went through his Jacket Collar he not more Than Shot till his guts were hanging on the ground fore the instant he fired Hank yanked him by the Collar and cut him half open. The man died this morning and last night I got in a row and Cut a man's head half off he is at the hospital his head was cut till you could see his Brains. Ther is a man or to killed here every day"*. (Letter to Henrietta Reese, Collection of St. Joseph Museum)

Recently, the site of Fort Smith has been rediscovered and an archaeological dig is underway to discover if there any items dating back to 1861. There are tentative plans to turn it into a Civil War Site.

St. Joseph suffered a great deal while the military was here. Soldiers used window frames as firewood, they used the Odd Fellows Hall at Fifth and Felix and the Christian Brothers College at Thirteenth and Henry as housing. They also made use of Beno's Billiard and Bowling Saloon. This establishment was located on the east side of Main between Francis and Jules. Before the war, Beno's was the local hang out for young men. Its walls were lined with gilt-satin paper, had frescoed ceilings, carved counters, and marble topped tables. In 1862, Beno's was used as a stable for Union cavalry horses. (*Buchanan County History*, 1881)

When the troops left, the commissary closed, and the bars, saloons, and the houses of ill repute experienced a serious economic downturn. The *Herald* reported that *"Never in the history of St. Joseph have we been cursed with so great number of loose women as at present. At night they may be seen emerging from their dens, to walk the streets and make night hideous with hooting, yelling and cursing..."*. Property values were also declining, those businesses that didn't particularly cater to the soldiers had stagnated, many merchants had headed west because of the blockade along the coast, and the Mississippi River essentially blocked goods getting through.

As far as the army was concerned, St. Joseph was no longer a hotbed of secessionists. However, this wasn't completely true. The local Union commanders in Northwest Missouri and the rest of the state knew the real conditions. Men were being murdered for even the appearance of southern sympathies and guerrilla activity was increasing.

In August 1863, William Quantrill and his raiders attacked Lawrence, Kansas. Although unlikely, John Bassett, provost marshal for Northwest Missouri District, believed that the original target was St. Joseph. (Filbert, p. 104) There is a story that arms and ammunition were stored for Quantrill's use in a family farm. The farm was located where Parkway School is now (29th & Duncan) and was owned by the Sallee Family. Although there is little evidence to support this, there may have been some connection between the family and Quantrill, because the youngest daughter was named Quantrill. In later years, she would be referred to as Aunt Quantie.

Still, the federal government believed what it was hearing from Union men in St. Joseph and Missouri, and continued to pull regular troops from the area, leaving in control a militia whose loyalties were suspect. In his pamphlet, *Union Men and Their Sufferings, in North-Western Missouri: The Remedy: Secrets of Rebels Exposed*, Bassett wrote that:

"Murders by slow torture-death by sudden violence-desolation by arson and robbery, all of which Union men have endured in Missouri, rather than commit treason against their Government, entitles our surviving soldiers and citizens, who have been loyal and active friends of the Administration from the time the first hostile gun was fired by traitors, to more consideration from the President of the United States, than they have yet received". (Filbert, p. 111)

While things appeared to be turning around for the Union Army in the east, as far as Bassett was concerned, things were in pretty bad shape in and around St. Joseph.

In the winter of 1864, a famous actor was snowbound in St. Joseph. While waiting out the storm at the Pacific Hotel, this man was asked if he would be willing to provide an evening of recitations. On January 5 this actor performed scenes from Shakespeare's plays and read poems, including "The Charge of the Light Brigade". Although the theatre was cold, the young man took his money and left town January 9 traveling by sleigh. Within a year his name would appear in newspapers nationwide as the assassin of Abraham Lincoln, John Wilkes Booth. (Filbert, p. 111-112)

By the end of the war roughly 2000 men from Buchanan County had joined the Union Army and about the same amount joined the Confederate. These numbers do not necessarily take into account the men who joined the guerrillas or the militia. St. Joseph was a long time recovering from the Civil War. The town needed to reestablish its reputation as a commercial center. Eventually business returned, and the city grew and thrived as one of largest, busiest, and wealthiest of towns in Missouri.

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Ellis Cross

As I wander the neighborhoods I sometimes find immense stone gates opening only to a vacant lot, or to a modern apartment development. But these instances are rare, because remarkably most of the fine homes are still standing. Why have they survived? The answer lies in the history of the region. Other cities such as Kansas City, Omaha, and Des Moines experienced the same boom in trade, growth and expansion in the later quarter of the nineteenth century. Continued growth overwhelmed the wealthy neighborhoods, replacing beautiful homes with business buildings or early apartment complexes. In St. Joseph, growth remained stagnant; our population has not grown significantly since 1890. While the retraction of business investment over many decades has had a debilitating effect on our current economy, the spin-off benefit is that many of our historic neighborhoods have been spared.

A decorative horizontal separator consisting of a continuous series of small, repeating triangular or sawtooth shapes.

319 N. 20th Street

58

The Davis House is the centerpiece of the Harris Addition National Register Historic District, its imposing bulk and tall tower rising well above its lesser neighbors, and dominating the view from its quarter block corner location on busy Faraon Street.

The two and a half story house is a mass of projections and gables built upon a rock-faced, battered stone foundation. It is, however, the corner tower with its plethora of detail and design features that attracts one's attention. The tower is capped with an exceptionally tall, detailed, stamped-metal "witches hat" roof, above an open porch supported on large squat terra cotta columns. The second story employs richly carved pilasters of white limestone and a white-painted stamped metal frieze to contrast with the dark red of the brick and terra cotta. Tall windows at the first level look onto a five-faceted projecting open porch, reinforced with massive buttresses between round arched bays. A double-leaf entry door opens out of the round base of this corner tower onto the extensive porch paved with decorative English encaustic tilework.

One cannot help but notice the wealth of unusual detail worked in terra cotta on the west face of the building. It is apparent why the greatest use of relief carving is on the west face when the late afternoon sun sets up light and shadow, accentuating the variety and detail of deeply carved features. The single round-headed window at the first floor has a magnificent stained glass transom and richly carved lintel with a centered lion's head keystone. Tall panels with an owl and stork figuring prominently in the design flank the window. Dragons writhe at each side of the second story window. Scattered about are panels in fanciful floreate patterns. The west wing rises to an exquisite wall dormer whose shape is created out of white limestone and stamped metal. The interior continues the ornamental diversity of the exterior with intricately carved oak staircase and newel posts, fireplace mantels, stained glass, and pocket doors.

Randolph Davis did not get to enjoy his house for long. After his death in 1894, his widow sold the house to Albert J. August, a well-known clothing merchant. Over the decades the house passed through many hands until sometime in the 1930s when it suffered the fate that befell so many of the great mansions: it was converted into a boarding house. In recent years the house has been restored back to a large single-family home, though much work remains to be done.



JOHN LEMON HOUSE

517 N. 5th Street

The John S. Lemon House, built in 1871, is the finest surviving Second Empire style mansion in St. Joseph and is one of the best examples of the style to be found in the region. The Lemon house sits on a small corner lot surrounded by many like-sized mansions built on the Missouri River bluff overlooking downtown and recognized today as the Robidoux Hill Historic District.

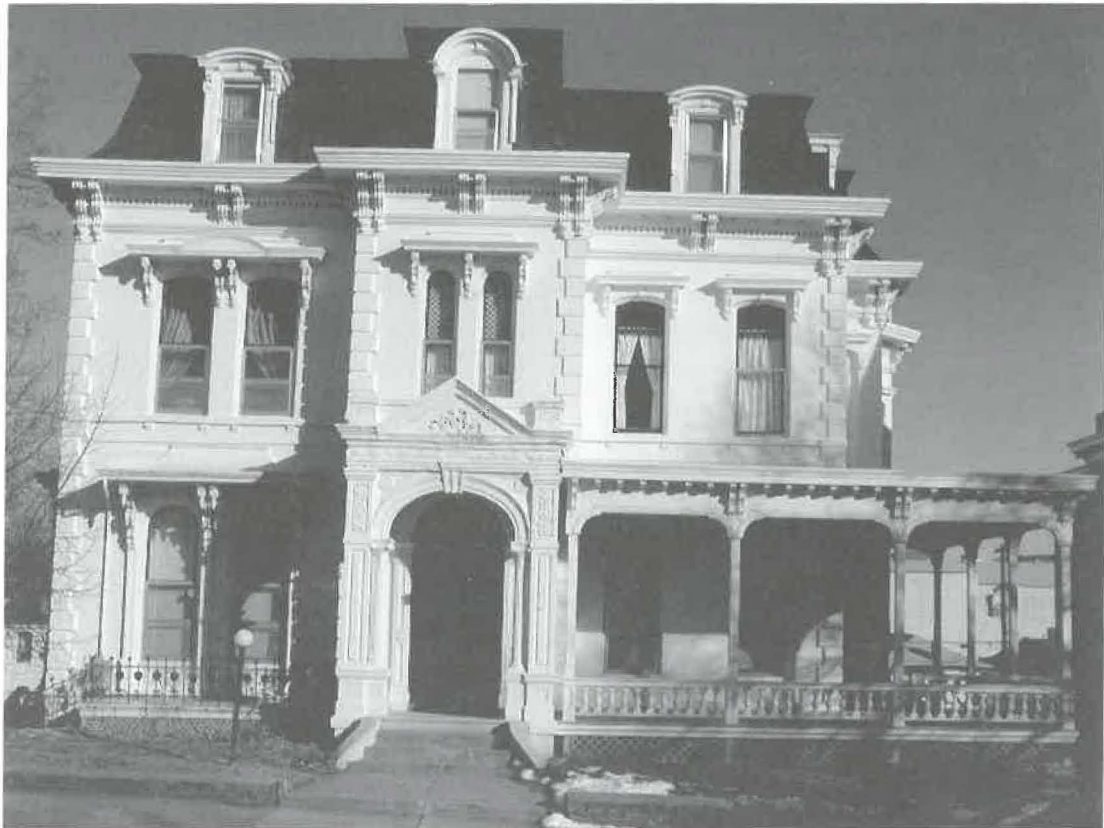
Lemon amassed a small fortune during the Civil War as a wholesale merchant parlaying his stake into a large fortune with the sale of the firm in 1873. With the capital realized from the sale and the additional fortune of his former partner's estate for which he was trustee, Lemon began the Tootle-Lemon Bank, where he would remain president until his death in 1904.

The Lemon house is actually the product of two major building phases, each of different style. The first construction phase dates to 1871 with the completion of the structure and façade in Second Empire style designed by the architectural firm of Stigers & Boettner. The sweeping lines of the Mansard roof are punctuated with richly detailed wall dormers above an exuberantly moulded cornice and paired brackets. The projected central entrance pavilion is a major element of the Second Empire style with its distinctive roof line, and centered dormer, resembling a tower without actually being one. The primary paired door entry is recessed behind a carved stone archway over which is a carved stone portico with abundant finely crafted detail. Flanking the pavilion are offset wings, each with symmetrical window bays and with stone corner quoins meant to contract with the brick construction. Unfortunately the whole is painted white so the contrast is muted. A wood frame porch extends from the portico and wraps around the south side.

There is a pattern played out along the facade differentiating the wing setbacks which is most unusual, beginning with a relatively simple window treatment to flamboyantly elaborate from right to left. Each window has an elaborate hood treated in a different manner. On the south face of the house, far recessed from the main façade, there are no brackets even though visible from the street. The next two window bays have shallow brackets; the central pavilion has a deep hood and larger brackets. At the extreme left hand bays the brackets are larger still at the second story, with exceptional massive brackets at the first story. Horizontal layering, a common design element of the time and style, is emphasized with different window lintels: half round at the first floor and segmental at the second floor. On the north street side is a single story polygonal bay window with a plethora of wood carved detail.

In 1889 Lemon commissioned the architectural firm of Eckel and Mann to design a large addition to the rear of the existing house. The addition mimics the cornice detail, and window treatment of the earlier house, a somewhat unusual decision at a time when the earlier Second Empire style had fallen far from favor in preference of the Queen Anne. The rear wing added an entirely new stair tower and numerous rooms. The original stair was removed and the resulting space turned into a broad entry hall in the new style. The entry hall is paneled in quarter- sawn oak with a massive fireplace at the end. A turn in the hall gives way to the new stair tower with its rope turned balustrade, carved, paneled, and spindled woodwork. Tall stained glass windows rise from the landing and are also found at the second floor landing. A huge ornamental dining room was added and the formal parlor entirely remodeled with an unmatched flamboyance and extravagance of detail. Even the service quarter was completely revamped, adding numerous unique features one of which warrants inclusions as its survival is remarkable. In the era before the residential use of mechanical refrigeration equipment, ice was used to keep food from spoiling. In the first floor kitchen there is a room with a marble floor beneath which is an insulated room where ice was kept. The ice was intended to keep the marble cool enough for food stored in the room above.

John Lemon's widow lived in the home until 1915, but then passed through a succession of owners, though the house remained remarkably unaltered. Early in the 1980s the house came on the market once ore and was sold to a developer who converted the large house into apartments. Fortunately, the conversion was done with far more grace than ordinarily found and the house today is in excellent condition with few alterations from its original appearance on the interior or the exterior.



ADAM SCHUSTER HOUSE

703 Hall Street

For sheer wealth of ornamentation and detail expressed in the flamboyant Italianate style, there is no equal to the mansion built in 1881 for Adam Schuster. The two-story house is constructed of brick, but faced with stone carved in a masterful display of the stonemason's artistry and the skill of the architect, Edmond Jacques Eckel, as a designer. Not surprisingly the client is an interesting study as well.

The house was built at the peak of success for the selfmade millionaire Adam Schuster, who was born in 1837 in Rhenish, Prussia. At the age of 20, he immigrated to America to join an uncle who owned a store in nearby Savannah, MO. In 1865, Schuster moved to St. Joseph, where he became a principal in several wholesale trading firms, eventually forming the wholly owned A.N. Schuster and Company. His interests extended into banking and at one time he either organized or was president of five different Kansas banks. In addition, Schuster raised livestock in Texas and Arizona. An 1883 article described "Col. Schuster" as being not just a leading businessman in St. Joseph, but also "of the great and growing West". The wedding reception held at the house in 1884 for one of his daughters was considered to have been one of the leading social occasions of its time.

The house was built on a multiple-acre site on the pre-eminent Hall Street, soon to be surrounded by other mansions in a collection without equal in St. Joseph. The site is on a gentle rise of ground adjacent to the business district to the south, but with a steep fall to the north to what was even then a poor collection of homes around a huge brewery next to Blacksnake Creek.

The house presents a formal and symmetrical façade to the street with chamfered bay windows flanking the centered entrance portico. The three windows at each level of the bays utilize a conventional treatment for the Italianate style, half-round arches at the first floor and segmental arches at the second. The detail of the stonework is phenomenal with engaged columns, carved capitals, spandrels, and deeply incised mouldings. The entry portico, not surprisingly, displays the most striking wealth of carved stone detail. Virtually every surface is covered with deep incised detail, raised twisted rope patterns, swirling floreate-carved brackets, and mouldings in a profusion that defies description. It has a flat roof with corner pedestals (which probably supported a missing balustrade).

The entrance portico is centered below a large single window at the second story, which in turn is centered below a single roof dormer, which in its turn is centered below the tall wood-frame roof belvedere. All are carved in a riot of detail. The rigidly formal façade is further emphasized by the stone-pillared gateway at the sidewalk with its remnant of a stone-carved balustrade.

The roof is low-hipped and decorated with an ornate metal cresting. The roof eaves and cornice are, as one would expect, copiously ornamented, but with a mixture of materials. The deep, moulded eaves and the coffered, moulded and dentiled frieze are of wood, while the beautifully scrolled console brackets are glazed terra cotta. The uniformity of design extends even to the placement of the tall chimneys rising from the roofline, but at either side elevation the equilibrium of design intentionally breaks down. Wings jut from each side, chamfer-shaped to the left and square to the right, with wood porches conforming to the variant shapes.

The interior is as interesting and decorative as the exterior. The double-leaf entry door leads into a rather small entryway with a polychrome tile floor. Another set of doors leads into the main center hall that features a huge stairway against the back wall. The curved winding stair has an ornamental brass light fixture atop the newel post. The ceiling is painted with a light sky blue and clouds. Around the outside edge are bare light bulbs, a vestige of the era when having interior electric lights was still a novelty and an extravagance afforded only by the wealthy. The floor of the back stair hall is of patterned tessellated marble. Woodwork throughout is a heavy carved dark walnut. At one time many of the plaster walls were decorated with stenciled borders and the tall ceilings were hand-painted. Recent remodeling has exposed this painting and much of it is being restored.

Adam Schuster and family lived in the house until 1896 when the house was sold to William W. Wheeler, a wealthy wholesale merchant who resided here until his death in 1925. The house passed through a number of hands over the ensuing years, though the house remained remarkably unaltered. Deferred maintenance began to take its toll on the soft stone carving, terra cotta brackets, wooden porches and ornament. Happily, the present owner has undertaken the expensive task of a complete restoration.



Ellis Cross restores historic homes in St. Joseph and with his wife owns four of them. He is on the Board of Directors of Preservation Inc. and President of the Friends of the Museum Hill Mansion, which currently houses the St. Joseph Museum.

SOME OF THE BETTER-KNOWN CHARACTERS WHO HAVE BROUGHT FAME, FORTUNE OR NOTORIETY TO ST. JOSEPH

Gary Chilcote

St. Joseph is known around the world as the place where the Pony Express started and Jesse James stopped.

But there were a lot of famous (or infamous) people who spent some time here along the way, ranging from Walter Cronkite and Jane Wyman to Hanging Judge Isaac Parker and Eminem.

Jesse James wasn't the first, but probably the best-known for putting St. Joseph on the map. Not a native of St. Joseph, he chose this city as his hideout November 8, 1881, and was shot and killed here April 3, 1882 by Bob Ford.

While the investigation was still going on at the nearby World's Hotel (now Patee House Museum) writer Oscar Wilde told of looking out his hotel window at the auction of Jesse's possessions at the James Home on a nearby hill. Wilde said he looked to the west (it was northeast). Perhaps he hadn't yet sobered up from his inebriated lecture the night before.

Abraham Lincoln caused no stir when he passed through St. Joseph twice in 1859 before he was elected president and became famous. Perhaps more significant was in January, 1864, when actor John Wilkes Booth was snowbound here for several days.

It was too bad for the nation that the snow melted. Booth left St. Joseph by sleigh, and assassinated Lincoln 15 months later.

Jeff Thompson came to town with the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad and became a popular surveyor and a railroad president. He was mayor the day the Pony Express started April 3, 1860, but left town in 1861 to become the Confederacy's "Swamp Fox" general. Jeff returned 15 years later, succumbing here September 7, 1876, the same day the James-Younger Gang was wiped out in Northfield, MN.

Isaac C. Parker came to St. Joseph in 1859, married a St. Joseph girl and served as prosecutor, a presidential elector voting for Lincoln, and a St. Joseph Congressman. When he lost the Republican nomination for the U.S. Senate, Parker was named federal judge for Oklahoma Territory. As the "Hanging Judge" of Fort Smith, AR., Parker hanged 160 men before his judgeship was abolished.

Also not from St. Joseph but marrying a local girl was author Eugene Field, who courted teenager Julia Comstock. In the social event of the year, they invited their wedding party to St. Louis with them, and twenty took them up on the offer. Field was then working for the St. Joseph Gazette. In 1875, when Patee House Hotel fell on hard times, Field wrote of the now National Landmark, "Immense in proportions, fine in design, but located exactly where it should not be, it is at once a glory and a shame to the city."

St. Joseph produced three Missouri governors, but not in the last century and a quarter. Robert M. Stewart was governor 1857-1861, often inebriated and once during a party fed his horse oats out of the grand piano at the governor's mansion.

Willard P. Hall, a former Congressman and general from St. Joseph, became governor in February, 1864, when governor Gamble slipped and fell on the capitol steps. The last governor from St. Joseph was Silas Woodson. St. Joseph did produce the first woman governor of Wyoming, Nellie Taylor Ross, who later was the first woman to head the U.S. Mint.

Television personality Walter Leland Cronkite was born in St. Joseph 89 years ago, but spent only a year in this city except for occasional visits with his grandfather and father, who were both dentists here.

John B. Stetson made bricks in St. Joseph. A flood wiped him out about 1860, and he moved back east and began making hats. A century later the Stetson hat factory relocated to St. Joseph for a few decades before closing.

St. Joseph produced such people as Kansas City's political boss Tom Pendergast (1872-1945) and actresses Jane Wyman (Sara Jane Fulks), who was President Reagan's first wife, Ruth Warrick of "All My Children", and Betty Garrett of "Laverne & Shirley."

In the entertainment world were Arthur Pryor, trombone player for John Phillip Sousa, Coleman Hawkins, jazz saxophone player, and Marshal Mathers III, better known as Detroit's Eminem.

St. Joseph claimed fame when cartoonist Fred Harman drew the "Red Ryder" comic strip and when Gazette editor Chris Rutt invented "Aunt Jemima's Pancake Flour."

But it was hotel builder "Lucky John" Patee who went broke after the Civil War, and sold his defunct hotel in a nationwide lottery. When 100 tickets came back unsold, he bought them himself, only to win back his own hotel! One hundred fifteen years after his death, actor Jack Palance came here to feature "Lucky John Patee" nationwide on Ripley's Believe It or Not!

Gary Chilcote is the long-time Museum Director at the historic Patee House Museum

Notes: