



**OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION  
27<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONVENTION**

**August 18-22, 2009  
Loveland, Colorado**

**Hosted by  
Colorado-Cherokee Trail Chapter**

*Convention Booklet*



# **Cherokee Trail to the West, 1849–1859**

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**Compiled and Edited by Susan Badger Doyle  
with the assistance of  
Bob Clark, Susan Kniebes, and Bob Rummel**

# Welcome to the 27th Annual OCTA Convention Loveland, Colorado

## *About the Convention*

The official host motel, Best Western Crossroads Inn & Conference Center, is the site for the meeting of the OCTA Board of Directors on Tuesday, August 18. The remaining convention activities and the boarding and disembarking of convention tour buses will take place at



OCTA activities will be in the Thomas M. McKee 4-H, Youth, and Community Building on the south side of Arena Circle at The Ranch.

## Raffle and Live Auction



There will be a live auction on August 20. Our auctioneer is OCTA member John Winner. The annual raffle will also be conducted throughout the week.

### BOOK ROOM/EXHIBIT ROOM HOURS

Aug 18	6:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m.
Aug 19	9:45 a.m.–6:00 p.m.
Aug 20	4:30 p.m.–6:30 p.m.
Aug 21	8:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m.

### REGISTRATION/INFORMATION DESK HOURS

Aug 18	9:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m.
Aug 19	7:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.
Aug 20	7:00 a.m.–8:30 a.m. 4:00 p.m.–6:30 p.m.
Aug 21	7:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m.
Aug 22	7:00 a.m.–10:30 a.m. 4:00 p.m.–6:30 p.m.

# A History of Loveland, Colorado

*By Kenneth Jessen*

Settlers in the Big Thompson Valley were scattered on small farms along the banks of the river. To the west of present-day Loveland was a community started in 1858 by Spanish-speaking Mariano Medina. Medina ran a trading post and operated a toll bridge over the Big Thompson River. The small settlement went under various names, including Miraville, Merival, Big Thompson, and Mariano's Crossing. In 1862 it became a stage stop on the Overland Stage Line, and in 1868 a post office was established under the name Namaqua.

Another settlement near Loveland was located about a mile to the southeast. It took the brand name of the flour produced by a mill constructed in 1867 by Andrew Douty and was called St. Louis.

When David Barnes and his wife, Sarah, lived in the boomtown of Golden, they became friends with the incomparable William Austin Hamilton Loveland. Loveland was a merchant, one of Golden's founders, a member of the Territorial Legislature, and President of the Colorado Central Railroad. Loveland invited David and Sarah Barnes for the first trip over the Colorado Central between Golden and Denver.

In 1873 Barnes and his family moved to a 320-acre farm north of the Big Thompson River and began raising wheat. In 1877 Barnes was delighted to hear that Loveland had secured the money to extend the Colorado Central from its terminus Longmont to Cheyenne. The survey for the railroad went through his family's wheat field.

Barnes reacted immediately to the news by platting a new town on an 80-acre site. Some suggested that it be called "Barnesville," but Barnes picked the name "Loveland." Barnes also donated the land for the railroad's right-of-way.

After he harvested his wheat in November, Barnes laid out Loveland's streets. The *Fort Collins Courier* boldly announced, "Loveland has risen from a bare field of stubble in 77." The *Boulder County News* reported, "Loveland – Prospects of New Town – Wonderful Wheat Land – Light Taxes."

In October a couple of Colorado's pioneer merchants, Lewis Hertizinger and S. B. Harter, took a gamble on the new town and purchased lots 22, 23, and 24 in Block 14 from David Barnes for \$350. Hertizinger and Harter immediately began work on a substantial two-story brick building, the first such structure in Loveland. On the ground floor, they opened a mercantile business in January 1878. They sold dry goods, including hardware, clothing, furniture, stoves, and some groceries. Built at a cost of \$4,500, the two merchants grossed \$29,000 during their first year of operation. The second story of the Hertizinger and Harter building was purchased for \$1,000 by the Grangers for use as their Grange hall. This old store is still standing on the northwest corner of Cleveland Avenue and Fourth Street.

When Loveland was founded, residents of nearby St. Louis realized that their town could not survive without rail service. Shipments of farm products were hardly practical over the area's primitive wagon roads, which were passable only in good weather. Thus, many St. Louis merchants moved their businesses to Loveland.

The Colorado Central erected an 80-by-30-foot brick depot in Loveland that was completed in December 1877. It was located on the west side of the tracks close to Fourth Street. Unfortunately, trains stopping at the depot blocked traffic. The depot, built at a cost of \$2,000, had a ticket office, passenger waiting room, and freight room. This structure was replaced in 1902 by the present depot, and the bricks from the old depot were used for the sidewalk.

Loveland's success was in part due to the construction of the Colorado Central linking Denver and Cheyenne. The town had an ample supply of good water from the Big Thompson River. Lots could be purchased for \$3 to \$7, payable in installments over a five-year period. As proven by David Barnes, the area was ideal for growing wheat. Barnes dug an irrigation ditch, further increasing the area's agricultural potential.

In a little over a year after its founding, Loveland had a population of 250. A second mercantile business, owned by G. W. Krouskop, opened its doors along Fourth Street. Krouskop was one of the former St. Louis merchants who elected to move his business and entire store to Loveland. Dr. Taylor also moved his small frame office to Fourth Street. On the northwest corner of Railroad Avenue and Fourth Street, Mrs. Hopkins



operated a small hotel and boarding house with sixteen rooms. Other businesses included a drugstore, shoe store, barbershop, watchmaker, meat market, and billiard hall.

Visitors were impressed by the two small churches in early Loveland. As written by a reporter for the *Fort Collins Courier*, "As one enters this lovely little village, the first thing that attracts his attention is the beautiful Presbyterian Church." This church once stood on the southwest corner of Fourth and Lincoln and was constructed of brick in the Gothic style. It had stained-class windows, and a chandelier was suspended from the center of the sanctuary's ceiling. On the next block, at Third Street and Lincoln Avenue, was Loveland's second church, belonging to the United Brethren. Loveland grew at a steady rate, and by 1885 its population reached 900. By this time, it had a weekly newspaper, the *Reporter*.

For a more extensive look into Loveland's history, visit the Loveland Museum/Gallery at Fifth Street and Lincoln Avenue. Within the museum, historic rooms and shops have been recreated, including Mariano Medina's cabin. In addition, the museum has an excellent display on the Great Western Sugar Company.

**Kenneth Jessen** is best known as the author of *Ghost Towns, Colorado Style*, a three-volume set covering over 600 town histories. His other books include *Out the Back, Down the Path: Colorado Outhouses; Railroads of Northern Colorado; Thompson Valley Tales; Eccentric Colorado; Colorado Gunsmoke; Bizarre Colorado; Estes Park: A Quick History; Georgetown: A Quick History; The Wyoming Colorado Railroad; An Ear in His Pocket; The Great Western Railway*; and last year, *Rocky Mountain National Park Pictorial History*.

In addition to books, Jessen is the author of more than 1,200 illustrated articles plus several booklets. His column on Colorado ghost towns and regional history is featured weekly in the Sunday edition of the *Loveland Reporter-Herald*. He is a contributor to *North Forty News*, *Colorado Time-Table*, and *Colorado Central Magazine*. Jessen has made over a half dozen appearances on *Colorado GetAways* (KCNC Channel 4) and also had a monthly radio show on Clear Channel KCOL 600AM. In addition to these activities, Jessen gives tours of the area's ghost towns.

A life member of the Colorado Railroad Museum, Jessen is twenty-five-year member of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club, a Centennial member of the Colorado Historical Society, and one of the founders of the Western Outlaw-Lawman History Association. He is also a patron of the San Luis Valley Historical Society. Other memberships include the Estes Park Area Museum and the Westerners. Jessen has served as a volunteer for Larimer County Parks and Open Space as well as the Loveland Museum. He has also completed thirteen years on the Loveland Public Library Advisory Board and the Cultural Services Advisory Board as appointed by the Loveland City Council.

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## OCTA's *In Pursuit of a Dream* will premier at the Rialto Theater Wednesday Evening



The Rialto Theater in the 1920s.



The Rialto Theater today.

# Trails of Eastern Colorado

*Article, Maps, and Photographs by Lee Whiteley and Jane Whiteley*

*The Rocky Mountains are placed as a barrier of safety to keep people from crossing thru country, the abode of wild beasts, where human beings would never thrive.*

—Unknown Senator, 1830

Wagon routes in present eastern Colorado were dictated by the rugged Rocky Mountains and the two major rivers flowing east from them, the South Platte and Arkansas. Prior to the Colorado gold rush of 1859, wagons avoided the mountains, and instead took a north-south route along the front range of the Rockies, the western edge of Stephen Long's vast "Great American Desert."

After the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, military expeditions were sent west to explore the new United States Territory. Captain Zebulon Pike ascended the Arkansas River into present Colorado in November 1806. He called the landmark mountain named for him "Grand Peak" and "Blue Mountain." He attempted to climb Pikes Peak but, because of deep snow, poor equipment, and few supplies, he was unsuccessful. His map labeled the peak "Highest Peak" and erroneously showed the South Platte River running to the northeast base of the mountain.

When Major Stephen H. Long's expedition ascended the South Platte River in 1820, he naturally mistook present Longs Peak for Pike's "Highest Peak." The expedition continued up the South Platte River to the base of the Rocky Mountains at Waterton Canyon. Captain John Bell, official journalist for the expedition, noted: "We arrived within 1/4 of a mile of the gap between the mountains, where issued the South west branch of the river Platte, beyond which there was no possibility of advancing with horses. . . . [We] are now to proceed along the base of the mountains to the South and until we strike upon the Arkansas river, on the way, to examine particularly the high Peake of the Mountains described by Pike." Botanist Edwin James and two other members of the expedition were successful in climbing Pikes Peak. They were also the peak's first careless campers, for their campfire started a small forest fire. James also discovered Colorado's state flower, the Blue Columbine.

From the present town of Pueblo, the expedition returned east, with one group following the Arkansas River and another following the Canadian River. Bell's map of 1821 labeled Longs Peak, the predominate feature of Rocky Mountain National Park, "Highest Peak." Pikes Peak was noted as "James Peak." The map also labeled the plains east of the Rocky Mountains "Great Desert," a term which was soon expanded to "Great American Desert." This label delayed settlement, even further exploration, of the plains east of the Rocky Mountains between the Arkansas and South Platte Rivers.

## The Santa Fe Trail

The 1835 Col. Henry Dodge expedition followed the same basic route as Stephen Long. On his sparse map was "Pikes Peak" and "Bent's Trading Post."

The completion of Bent's Old Fort on the Arkansas River in fall 1833 made popular the "Mountain Branch" of the Santa Fe Trail. This route ascended the Arkansas River then, seven miles west of Bent's Fort, angled southwest to cross Raton Pass south of Trinidad.

Ten years earlier, the "Cimarron Branch" of this great "trail of commerce" followed twelve miles of the Cimarron River in south-eastern Colorado.



Bent's Old Fort opened on the Mountain Branch of the Santa Fe Trail in 1833. Living history programs at the 1976 reconstructed fort represent the 1846 trail period.



## The Trappers Trail

With the rise of the fur-trade era in the mid 1830s, a north-south pack trail called the Trappers Trail connected Taos and Santa Fe with Fort Laramie on the Oregon-California Trail. This trail connected civilian trading establishments on the Rio Grande, Arkansas, South Platte, and North Platte Rivers. The southern section was also known as the Taos Trail. The Trappers Trail passed the four trading forts along the South Platte River north of present Denver: Forts Lupton, Jackson, Vasquez, and St. Vrain.



The adobe walls of Fort Vasquez were rebuilt as a WPA project in the 1930s.

To supply these forts, the first wagon road along the front range of the Rocky Mountains was blazed, running up the Arkansas River to Pueblo then north to the forts. The road ascended Fountain Creek, the largest tributary of the Arkansas River, then Jimmy Camp Creek, to the "Arkansas-Platte Divide." This road then descended Russellville Gulch and Cherry Creek to the South Platte River. The trail over the Divide was also known as the Jimmy Camp Trail, named for mountain man and trader Jimmy Daugherty. His well-documented campsite was eight miles east of present Colorado Springs. A second western branch of the Trappers Trail crossed the Divide via Monument Creek and Plum Creek.

Travelers on the multi-use Trappers Trail included civil engineer E. Willard Smith, 1839; German physician Frederick Wislizenus, 1839; John C. Frémont, 1843; Stephen W. Kearney, 1845; and Francis Parkman, 1846. Also in 1846, a detachment of Mormon emigrants known as the "Mississippi Saints" traveled the Trappers Trail from Fort Laramie to Pueblo. There they spent the winter, and returned north via the same route in the spring of 1847. The decline of the mountain man era was noted by William Franklin while traveling from Fort Laramie to Bent's Old Fort in 1845: "Passed St. Vrain's Fort. . . . A few miles brought us to Luptons Fort and we passed two others during the day. These are all deserted now, the trade having become too small to support them."



Living history programs are presented at the South Platte Valley Historical Society's reconstruction of Fort Lupton.



A marker stands at the site of the fort opened by the Bent and St. Vrain Company in 1837.

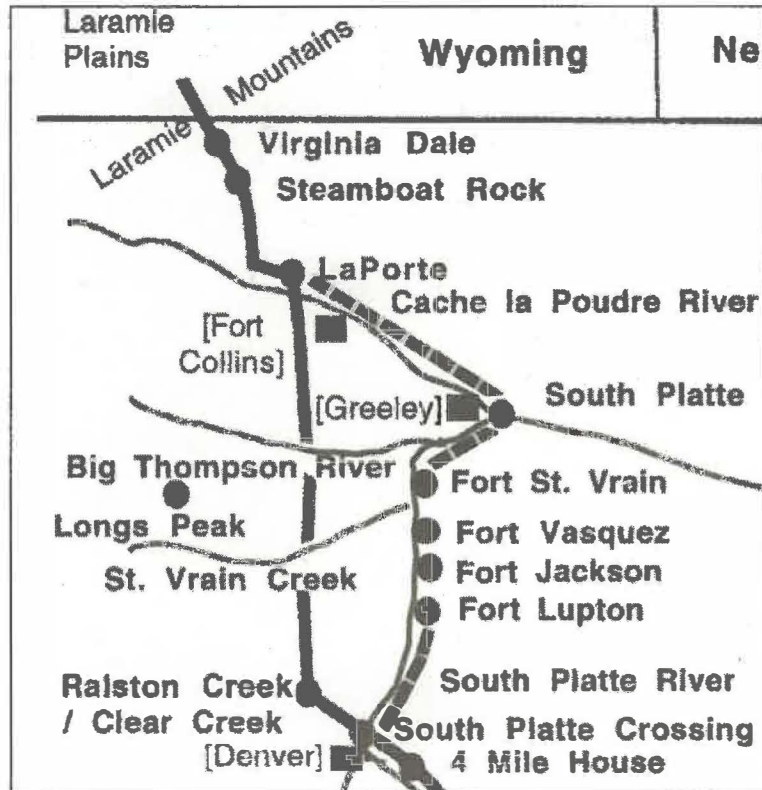
### The Cherokee Trail

The Cherokee Trail was named for Cherokee Indians who traveled from northeastern Oklahoma to the goldfields of California in 1849 and 1850. Traveling west past Bent's Old Fort along the Santa Fe Trail, they continued up the Arkansas River to Pueblo, then followed the east branch of the Trapper's Trail to the forts of the South Platte River. John Rankin Pyeatt noted in 1849: "From Pueblo to St. Vrain on the south fork of the Platte, a distance of 140 miles, we had a good road and down the Platte to the mouth of another stream [Cache la Poudre River, east of present Greeley] that runs in on the other side of the Platte 17 miles, we had an old trail. . . . We set out from this place without road, trail or guide through the plains and hills." While the Trappers Trail continued north to Fort Laramie, the newly-blazed Cherokee Trail ascended the Cache la Poudre River, then crossed the Laramie Mountains into the Laramie Plains of Wyoming. It continued west to Fort Bridger on the Hastings Cutoff/California Trail.

Additional goldseekers in 1850 followed the 1849 Cherokee Trail to present Denver. Here they crossed the South Platte River and traveled due north to join the 1849 branch at present Laporte. John Lowery Brown, a Cherokee, noted: "Came to the South fork of the Platt River. Made a raft and commenced crossing the waggons . . . Left the Platt and traveled 6 miles to Creek . . . we called this Ralston's Creek because a man of that name found gold here. [June] 22: Lay Bye. Gold found." The 1850 Cherokee Trail crossed the Big Thompson River four miles west of downtown Loveland. Here at Namaqua was the trading post of Mariano Medina, trapper, scout, and pioneer. The Cherokee Trail made the long journey north specifically to avoid the Rocky Mountains of Colorado.

The Cherokee Trail was used to move livestock to California. Ellen Hundley, traveling west to east along the trail in 1856, noted passing eleven wagon trains, several with up to 1,000 head of cattle and sheep. A year later Robert M. Peck, member of the Major John Sedgwick military expedition, observed at the confluence of Cherry Creek and the South Platte River, site of present Denver: "This part of Kansas territory was literally a 'howling wilderness,' with little indications of it having been occupied or traversed by white men, except the old wagon road we have been traveling, with here and there a stump or a few chips by the roadside, as the mark of some California emigrant."

While all travel on the Cherokee Trail was made by people "only passing through," Peck's "howling wilderness" was to change in 1858 when goldseekers returned to the streams of Colorado's Rocky Mountains. William Parson, member of a Lawrence, Kansas, gold-seeking party, commented west of Bent's Old Fort: "Soon after leaving Bent's, we caught the first view of Pike's Peak. We stopped the train and took a good long look. Moses stood upon a mountain and gazed upon his promised land; and we stood upon the Plains and gazed upon our mountain. . . . It was to us everything. It stood for the whole country, from Mexico to our northern line. It represented gold, and plenty of it; it spoke of influence, power, and position in our middle age, and ease and comfort in our decline. I think that with the first view of the celebrated mountain we felt the first quickening of a definite purpose."



Cherokee Trail/Overland Trail landmarks in north-central Colorado.



Point of Rocks is located at the Cherokee Trail crossing of West Kiowa Creek northeast of Colorado Springs.

### The Oregon-California Trail

With the discovery of gold in the mountains west of Denver in 1859, traffic increased along the South Platte River. A variation of the Oregon-California Trail crossed the extreme northeastern corner of the future state of Colorado. From the main road six miles east of Big Springs, Nebraska, the new trail ascended the South Platte River to Lodgepole Creek and the "Upper California Crossing." Here the trail crossed the river and ascended Lodgepole Creek back into Nebraska and rejoined the main road near Courthouse Rock. This variation was followed in 1860 by the Pony Express and the first transcontinental telegraph a year later. The Union Pacific Railroad followed this new transportation corridor through Julesburg, Colorado. Its nine miles of track in



Colorado was completed in 1867. Horatio Jackson followed this railroad during his transcontinental automobile trip in 1903.



Pony Express and Old Julesburg markers sit near Ovid, site of the Oregon-California Trail's "Upper California Crossing" on the South Platte River.

### The Smoky Hill Trail

It is astounding how rapidly we learn geography. A short time since, we hardly knew, and didn't care, whether the earthly elevation called Pike's Peak was in Kansas or Kamtchatka. Indeed, ninety-nine out of a hundred persons in the country did not know that there was such a topographical feature as Pike's Peak. Now they hear of nothing, dream of nothing, but Pike's Peak. It is the magnet to the mountains, toward which everybody and everything is tending. It seems that every man, woman, and child, who is going anywhere at all, is moving Pike's Peakward.

—*St Louis News*, March 17, 1859

Beginning in 1859, goldseekers began moving "Pikes Peakward" on the Smoky Hill Trail. This trail was a wagon road blazed specifically for the Colorado gold rush. Used by goldseekers, stagecoaches, and freighters, the route was later followed by a railroad and a transcontinental auto highway.

The wagon trek across the plains started in Missouri River towns like Atchison, Leavenworth, Westport, and Kansas City. Men and supplies could take steamboats to these various towns, then outfit for their overland voyage west. The Smoky Hill Trail cut across the wide-open plains between the Arkansas and South Platte Rivers. It was the shortest route between the Missouri River and Denver, but not the easiest or safest. The western end of the trail had three distinct branches but all led to Denver, not Pikes Peak. "America's Mountain" was simply one of the few landmarks in the then western Kansas Territory.

The first stagecoaches to the new town of Denver arrived on May 5, 1859, and ran on the not-entirely-appropriate name of the Leavenworth & Pikes Peak Express Company (L&PPX). It ran to Denver, sixty air-miles north of the peak.

Four L&PPX passengers published accounts of their trip to the "Pike's Peak goldfields." Horace "Go West Young Man, Go West" Greeley helped popularize the term "Pike's Peak" for anyone heading to or returning from the Colorado gold district. After arriving in Denver, Libeus Barney and five friends organized the "United States of America, Pike's Peak, Platte River, Great American Desert Gold Seekers and Diggers Company."

Albert D. Richardson noted: "Thus far no gold has been discovered within sixty miles of Pike's Peak; but the first reports located the diggings near that mountain, and 'Pike's Peak'—one of those happy alliterations which stick like burs in the public memory—was now the general name for the whole region." Henry Villard, the fourth L&PPX passenger, echoed the idea of the "Pikes Peak" name: "It is improbable that the euphonious alliteration, that its popular name forms, will ever be dropped. People will continue to go to 'Pike's Peak,' and the gold fields of the Rocky Mountains will be known as the 'Pike's Peak Regions' for all time to come."

The west end of the L&PPX's original route, roughly from present Limon to Denver, followed what would become commonly known as the Middle or "Starvation Branch" of the Smoky Hill Trail. Claims were made in 1859 that the Smoky Hill Trail was the best route to the Pikes Peak goldfields. It was the shortest route, but it lacked the dependable water, grass, and game of either the South Platte or Arkansas River routes. Once the westbound traveler reached the head of either fork of the Smoky Hill River, he was on his own to find his way to the South Platte River or Big Sandy Creek, an affluent of the Arkansas River. This caused many hardships including a well-documented case of cannibalism.

A statement in the *Rocky Mountain News* on April 11, 1860, was concise and direct in the assessment of the Smoky Hill Trail: "Three routes will be traveled next summer. The Arkansas by those from the South and Southwest, the Smoky Hill by the foolhardy and insane, and the Platte by the greatest mass of the emigration." Later that year, the newspaper still had reservations about the new trail. On October 26, 1860, they reported:

Almost daily we are applied to for information concerning the various routes of travel from Denver to the borders of eastern civilization.

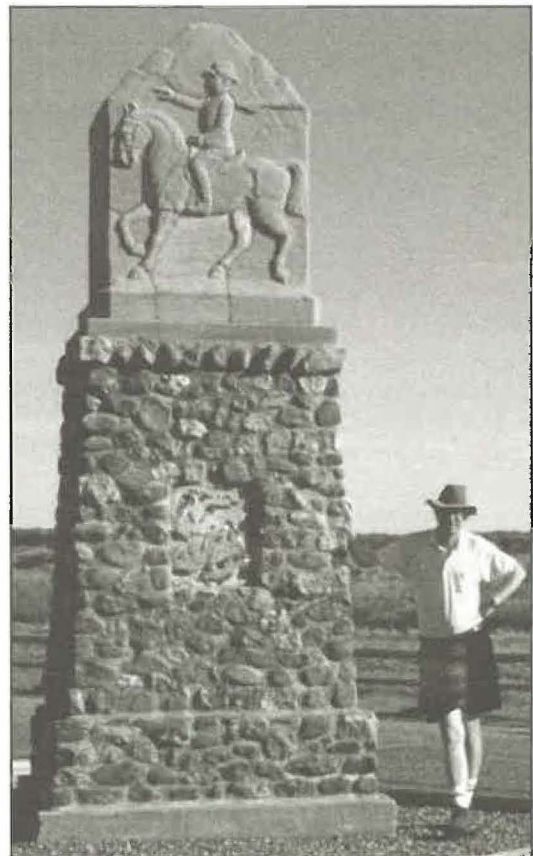
[Platte River route] The large number of heavy laden wagons bringing provisions, machinery, and other cumbersome freight from the Missouri River to Pike's Peak, has so cut up the road that in some places the sand is from one to three feet in depth.

[Smoky Hill route] The road is no doubt a good one, and shorter than the Platte, but the scarcity of water on some parts of the road, and the great abundance of Kiowas and other reptiles, militates against its popularity. It may be a good route and possibly will be much traveled next season, but its chances are not very brilliant.

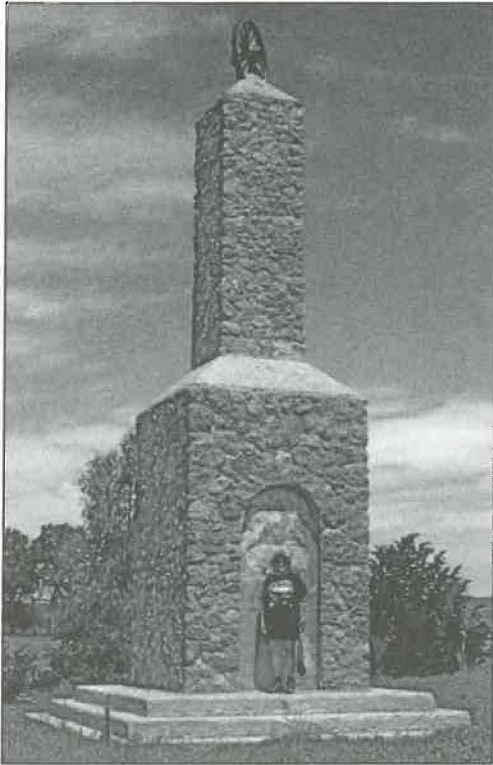
[Arkansas River-Cherokee Trail route] The Arkansas is without doubt the finest natural road leading into the region. It is however much longer than either of the others from the river to Pike's Peak. To sum up, then, the Platte is the best known, and the most sandy; the Arkansas is the longest, but the firmest; and the Smoky Hill has the most claimed for it, but is, as yet, a via incognita. Choose ye for yourself which ye shall follow.

The Civil War halted most travel on the Smoky Hill. David Butterfield began a new Smoky Hill Trail stage and freight service in 1865. The official name of the company was "Butterfield's Overland Despatch" (BOD). He used the possessive apostrophe and chose the alternate spelling of "dispatch," meaning "an organization or a means for the fast and efficient sending of messages or goods."

The BOD road survey of 1865 was led by Lt. Julian Fitch of the U.S. Signal Corps, who reported: "The advantages of the Smoky Hill route over the Platte and Arkansas must be apparent to everyone. In the first place it is one hundred and sixteen miles shorter to Denver . . . emigration, like a ray of light, will not go around unless there are insurmountable obstacles on the way. In this case, the obstructions are altogether on the Platte and Arkansas routes." The BOD used what became known as the "South Branch" of the Smoky Hill Trail. Theodore Davis traveled the BOD in 1865. He wrote an article in the June 1867 issue of *Harpers Weekly* that brought national prominence to the trail.



The Horseman Monument, seven miles west of Cheyenne Wells, is on the 1865 South Branch of the Smoky Hill Trail.



Butterfield sold his enterprise to Ben Holladay in March 1866. Holladay moved the route to what would become known as the “North Branch” of the Smoky Hill Trail. He sold the business to Wells Fargo in November 1866. The business was then in turn sold to the U.S. Express Company.

The Wagon Wheel Monument, eleven miles north of Kit Carson, is at the intersection of the 1866 North Branch of the Smoky Hill Trail and the Texas-Montana Cattle Trail.



Trail historian Merrill Mattes stands in the trace of the combined Cherokee Trail/Smoky Hill Trail South Branch in present Cherry Creek State Park. Photograph taken in 1948, before the construction of Cherry Creek Dam. Photograph courtesy of the US Army Corps of Engineers.

## The Overland Trail

The Leavenworth & Pikes Peak Express was moved north in summer 1859 when William Russell purchased the Salt Lake City mail contract, which required that the route pass through Fort Laramie. A branch line ran from Julesburg to Denver along the South Platte River. The name of the operation was changed in February of 1860 to the Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express Company (COC&PP). The Pikes Peak name remained in the title but the route was now even farther from that landmark peak.

Ben Holladay, the “Stagecoach King,” purchased the COC&PP in March 1862. He changed the name to the Overland Stage Line. He received permission to move the stage line south from the Fort Laramie to the South Platte River route. Denver refused to pay a share of the cost to bring the road through its town, so only a branch line followed up the South Platte. This spur split off the main line at Latham, originally called Cherokee City, east of present Greeley. The main line continued up the Cache la Poudre River and over the



Laramie Mountains, following the general route of the 1849 Cherokee Trail. This “transportation corridor” was used as early as 1825, when fur trader William Ashley traveled west. The Union Pacific Railroad even considered this same corridor for inclusion in its transcontinental railroad line.

A new mail contract in 1864 required that Denver be on the Overland’s main line. Holladay abandoned the South Platte road west of Fort Morgan in favor of the shorter “Fort Morgan Cutoff,” a cross-country route that entered Denver from the east. This new trail crossed the South Platte River and followed the general course of the 1850 Cherokee Trail.

Holladay rerouted his mail route to the Smoky Hill Trail after he purchased Butterfield’s Overland Despatch in March of 1866. The modified west end of the Smoky Hill Trail would become known as the trail’s “North Branch.” This road joined the Fort Morgan Cutoff at present Bennett.



Pristine traces of the Overland Trail are visible below Signature Rock.

## The Railroads

With the completion of the Union Pacific Railroad to Cheyenne in 1867, mail was carried to Denver by stage from Cheyenne. The Denver Pacific Railroad was completed from Cheyenne to Denver in June 1870. Just two months later, the Kansas Pacific Railway was completed to Denver over the Smoky Hill route. The final spike was driven August 15, 1870, just east of Strasburg. The *Rocky Mountain News* noted on September 4 of that year: “We are no longer isolated. We belong to the nation and to the country. The Missouri river is no longer the frontier. Omaha and Leavenworth no longer preside over the great far west. There is a ‘New West,’ growing and prosperous, situated on the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains, of which Denver is the commercial queen, and for which the Kansas Pacific is now the grand highway.” Travel by train was quick and easy but was expensive. Because of the cost, many still traveled by wagon, but often followed the railroad for safety, mail, and supplies.

## “Auto Trails”

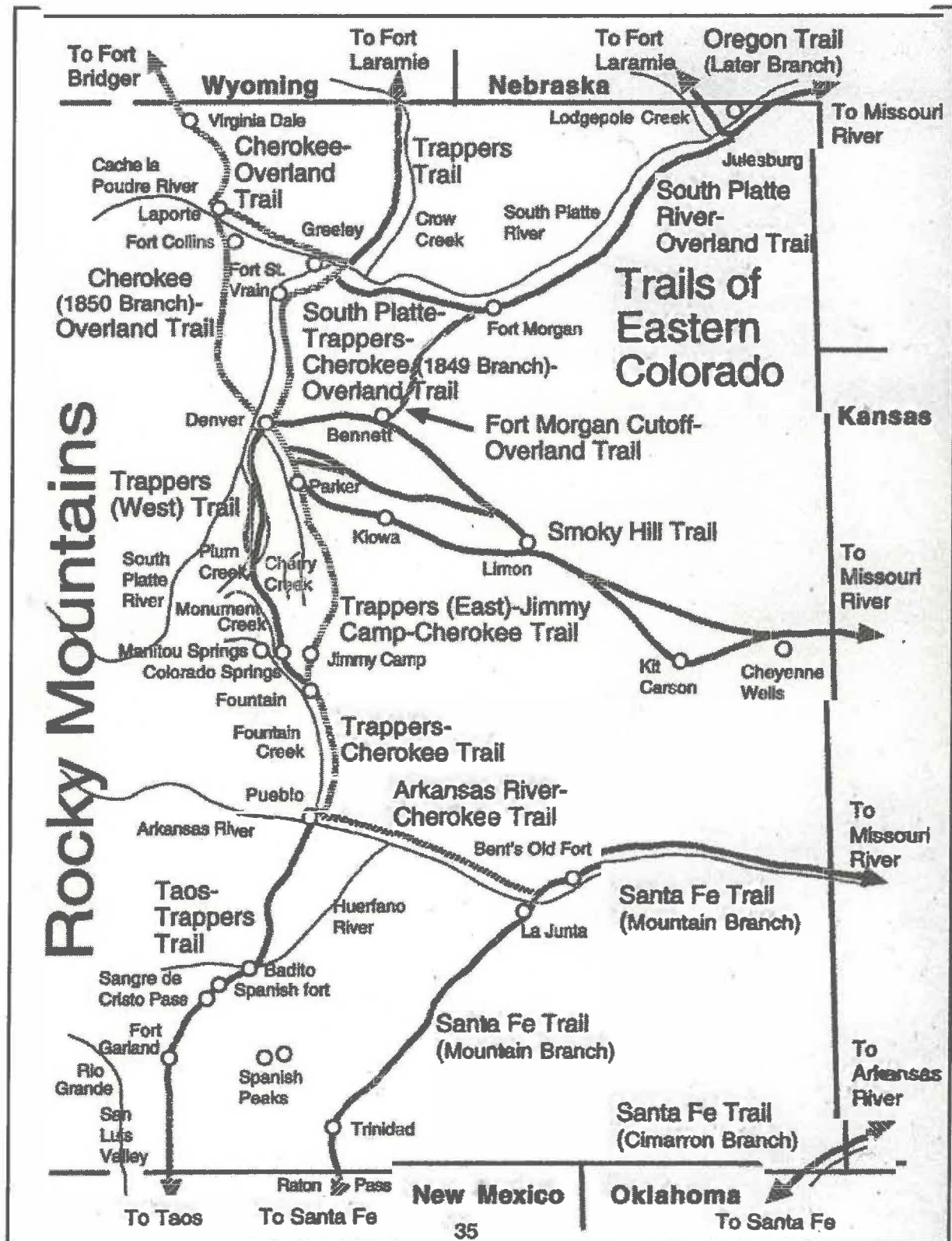
Trails they were called in pioneer days. The name sticks, but the mud doesn’t. Graveled highways and hard-surfaced stretches have taken the place of the beaten brushwood and rut-marked roads. And it’s over these highways that the endless lines of auto tourists are pouring into the Skyland State [Colorado].

—*Colorado Highways*, June 1923

Just as the railroads followed closely the wagon roads, so the first automobile roads followed the railroads. The earliest “auto trails” were little more than railroad service roads. The short-lived 1913 “Colorado Loop” of the Lincoln Highway followed closely Holladay’s 1864 Overland Trail through Colorado. Just like the stage line, the highway returned north to Wyoming to avoid the Rocky Mountains of Colorado.

Horace Buker wrote in *Sunset*, the *Pacific Monthly*, June 1921: “It appears that all Kansas not detained by age, illness or the authorities make an annual pilgrimage to Pike’s Peak or bust.” And travelers continue to come, ever “Pikes Peakward!”

# Eastern Colorado Trails





# The Overland Trail

*By Kenneth Jessen*

Until railroads were constructed in Northern Colorado, the Overland Trail was the most important single development in transportation. It connected settlements and provided a practical route for freight and mail, yet it lasted only eight years as an active route. All that remains today are faint ruts along the foothills, a few markers, a small swing station, and the Virginia Dale home station. A lot of what was once the route of the Overland Trail is now covered by highways and housing. Dirt roads cover other parts, yet certain sections of the original trail north of Laporte are still visible.

During the 1840s, the Oregon Trail through central Wyoming over South Pass was the primary transcontinental wagon route. In 1849 Captain Stansbury looked for a shorter route. Intrepid trapper and mountain man Jim Bridger boasted to Stansbury that he could find just such a route. Bridger discovered the Bridger Pass route over the Continental Divide located about ten miles south of Rawlins. Mud made this route impassable in the spring. Despite its disadvantages, the California gold rush brought thousands of would-be prospectors west over the Bridger Pass, 150 miles shorter than the Oregon Trail route to the north.

The U.S. Army began using this route in 1858 and made many improvements, including the construction of bridges. During this same year, gold flakes were discovered in the streams along the foothills of the Rockies in Dry Creek near the confluence of Cherry Creek and the South Platte River. This discovery resulted in the founding of Golden, Denver, and Auraria. At the time, the area could be reached over the Smoky Hill route from Kansas and by the Santa Fe Trail from the south. A primitive trail also followed the South Platte River from Nebraska.

Russell, Majors, and Waddell purchased an existing Oregon Trail stage line in 1860 and named it the Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express. More stations were added and equipment improved, but the line failed financially. Ben Holladay purchased the line at auction in 1862 and continued its operation. Holladay simplified the name to the Overland Stage Line.

Within months, Indian attacks over a wide-spread area brought all movement to a halt. Soldiers that once guarded the Oregon Trail had been pulled away by the Civil War. In the meantime, John Gregory hit a vein of rich gold ore near Central City starting a gold rush to the Rockies.

To reopen the line and serve the emerging Colorado market, Holladay was granted permission by the Postmaster General to move the line south. His surveyors confirmed that the Bridger Pass route was practical. They also established a route using the Cherokee Trail running north and south along the foothills from Denver. In July 1862 Holladay moved his stagecoach route south and asked one of his agents, Jack Slade, to pick a location for the division point. Slade picked a beautiful valley formed by Dale Creek and named it for his wife Virginia. Other stations were also established at this time, including Laporte.

At this point, it might be well to mention how the Cherokee Trail got its name. There were two separate prospecting parties from Georgia, both including Cherokee Indians. The first party was led by Captain Lewis Evans in the spring of 1849. The party followed the Cache la Poudre River to the Laramie Plains. In spring the following year, the second party under the direction of Captain Clement Vann McNair blazed a trail north from Cherry Creek along the base of the foothills. In 1861 Larimer County was established by the Territorial Legislature in Golden, and the Cherokee Trail was named the Territorial Road. However, at the time it was not a road or even a well-defined path, but it became the first official passage through Larimer County.

Starting at Julesburg, Holladay's new stage road followed the South Platte River to Latham. Originally called Cherokee City, Latham was located southeast of present Greeley. From Latham, the road used the north bank of the Cache la Poudre River to Laporte. It then continued into Wyoming, much the same route traveled by today's U.S. 287. The Overland Trail skirted north of Elk Mountain (very close to today's I-80), then over Bridger Pass to Rawlins. From that point, the Overland Trail went west across the Red Desert to the Point of Rocks.

Coincident with this change, Camp Collins was established near Laporte along the Cache la Poudre River. The purpose of the fort was to provide military protection against Indian raids. At the same time, Fort Halleck was established north of Elk Mountain in Wyoming.

In June 1864, a flood inundated Camp Collins forcing military officials to consider a new site. A new location picked was down stream on a bluff, well above the flood level, and was named Fort Collins in honor of Lt. Col. William O. Collins. The new fort was located along the south bank of the Cache la Poudre River, and the route from Latham was changed to follow the south side of the river.

The first home station (where passengers could purchase meals and where horses were changed) south of Laporte was at the crossing of the Big Thompson River at the residence of pioneer settler Mariano Medina. Spanish-speaking Medina arrived in 1858 and built a small community consisting of a store combined with a saloon, his home, several cabins, and a stone fort. The place was known by various names including Miraville, Marianne's Crossing, and Mariano's Crossing. After a post office was opened in 1868, it was named Namaqua by the postmaster. The next station to the south was at the crossing of the Little Thompson River near the Cross farm south of present Berthoud.

The Overland Trail was not a single road such as today's highways. Parallel routes were used depending on conditions. For example, there was a second branch starting at Laporte north to Park Creek. It followed Park Creek then turned west over a ridge south of Steamboat Rock and down the Devil's Washboard to Stonewall Creek where it joined the other branch of the Overland Trail. At the most northerly point of the Park Creek route, the Denver-Cheyenne wagon road was built directly to Cheyenne. Along this route there were several stations, including Round Butte and Spotswood Springs.

To a great degree, mail contracts supported the stage line. In 1864, to meet stipulations for a new bid, the Postal Service required that the line be moved about four miles east of Namaqua to Washburn Station. Washburn Station was the home of Judge Washburn and was about a mile southeast of present Loveland. This new route came north from the Little Thompson Station to Washburn Station, then to Sherwood Station on the Cache la Poudre River. It followed the river through Fort Collins, Laporte, and into Wyoming. A few months later, the Overland Trail was moved back to its original location.

The stagecoaches selected by Ben Holladay were built to last and not for comfort. They were fabricated in Concord, New Hampshire. They were made of oak, with steel reinforcing, and weighed one ton. The coach was suspended on leather bands, which acted as shock absorbers. The wheels were massive with thick steel rims. The boot on the back held the luggage and mail sacks. The strong box was placed under the driver's seat. The windows could be closed with leather curtains, which only kept out some of the dust and cold. The coaches also had sand boxes. The driver could release sand on the wheels to improve breaking on steep grades. Travel was bone jarring, dirty, and very uncomfortable. Stops were required at home stations to allow passengers to stretch, get a bite to eat, and momentarily recover from the ride.

Although a stagecoach of this type would hold nine passengers, three had to sit in the middle with no back support. One additional passenger could ride on top in the driver's box. Based its schedule, coaches operated through the night over some portions of the Overland Trail. Holladay's Concord coaches were typically pulled by six mules or six horses. The stamina of the mules made them the animal of choice. Depending on the terrain, a coach could maintain an average speed of 8 miles per hour. Between the home stations were swing stations where the teams of mules or horses were changed.

In June 1866 the military announced that it would abandon Fort Collins. The location, however, had great potential, and in 1873 the town of Fort Collins was surveyed around the old military buildings. The abandonment of the military fort may have prompted Holladay to sell the Overland Stage Line to Wells Fargo. The latter company made a number of improvements including a new swing station at Spring Creek and a barn at Namaqua.

As mentioned above, stagecoach travel was uncomfortable and slow. In addition, to keep a stagecoach line operating required a great deal of labor and livestock. Railroads quickly precipitated the end of this kind of travel. The Union Pacific reached Colorado in June 1867 at Julesburg. This brought Denver within thirty-three hours of a railroad by stage along the South Platte River. On November 14, the tracks of the Union Pacific entered Cheyenne. Northbound traffic shifted to the Denver-Cheyenne road. A Colorado financed railroad was built in 1870 directly from Cheyenne south to Denver through Union Colony (Greeley). This brought to an end long-distance commercial horse-drawn stages and freight wagons.

When the rails of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific were joined at Promontory, Utah, in 1869, the mail contract that supported the stage line was shifted to the railroad. For local traffic, however, it was shorter to use the Overland Trail through Virginia Dale to Laramie than the Denver-Cheyenne road. In 1877 the Overland Trail was relegated to secondary importance when the Colorado Central constructed its line from Longmont through Loveland, Fort Collins, to Cheyenne.



## Larimer County Stage Stations on the Overland Trail

**Virginia Dale Station** was the division point and a home station where travelers could purchase meals. It was constructed in 1862 under the direction of the notorious division agent Jack Slade and named for his wife's maiden name, Virginia Dale. The structure has seen many different uses since its days as a stage station. It is currently located on private property.

**Cherokee Station** (also called or Stonewall or Ten Mile) was a swing station where horses or mules were changed. It was located west of Steamboat Rock on Ten Mile Creek, at the base of the Devil's Washboard, where the Park Creek branch met the main Overland Trail. The station was probably burned to the ground by Indians. The station site is marked but is on private property on the west side of U.S. 287.

**Bonner Springs Station** was a swing station constructed in 1862 and named for Bonner Springs, Kansas. The station was located to the west of present U.S. 287 near the eastern base of Eagle Rock and stood until 1872 when it was moved by local ranchers for use as a ranch house. Nothing remains today.

**Laporte Station** was a home station, located where the stage line from Latham joined the Cherokee Trail from Denver. Laporte had not only a stage station but also a saloon, grocery store, and several homes. It was settled by French-speaking trappers in 1844 and was originally called Colona. During high water on the Cache la Poudre River, a ferryboat carried stagecoaches and wagons to the other side. The stage station burned to the ground in 1928.

**Sherwood Station** was a swing station that was constructed at the Sherwood ranch on the north bank of the Cache la Poudre River, about halfway between Latham and Laporte. When the line was moved to the south side of the river, a new swing station was constructed.

**Spring Creek Station** was a swing station located west of Fort Collins, east of the Spring Creek dam. Today, a primitive log structure sits on private property near the Overland Trail. Much debated by historians, the structure could have been the Spring Creek swing station.

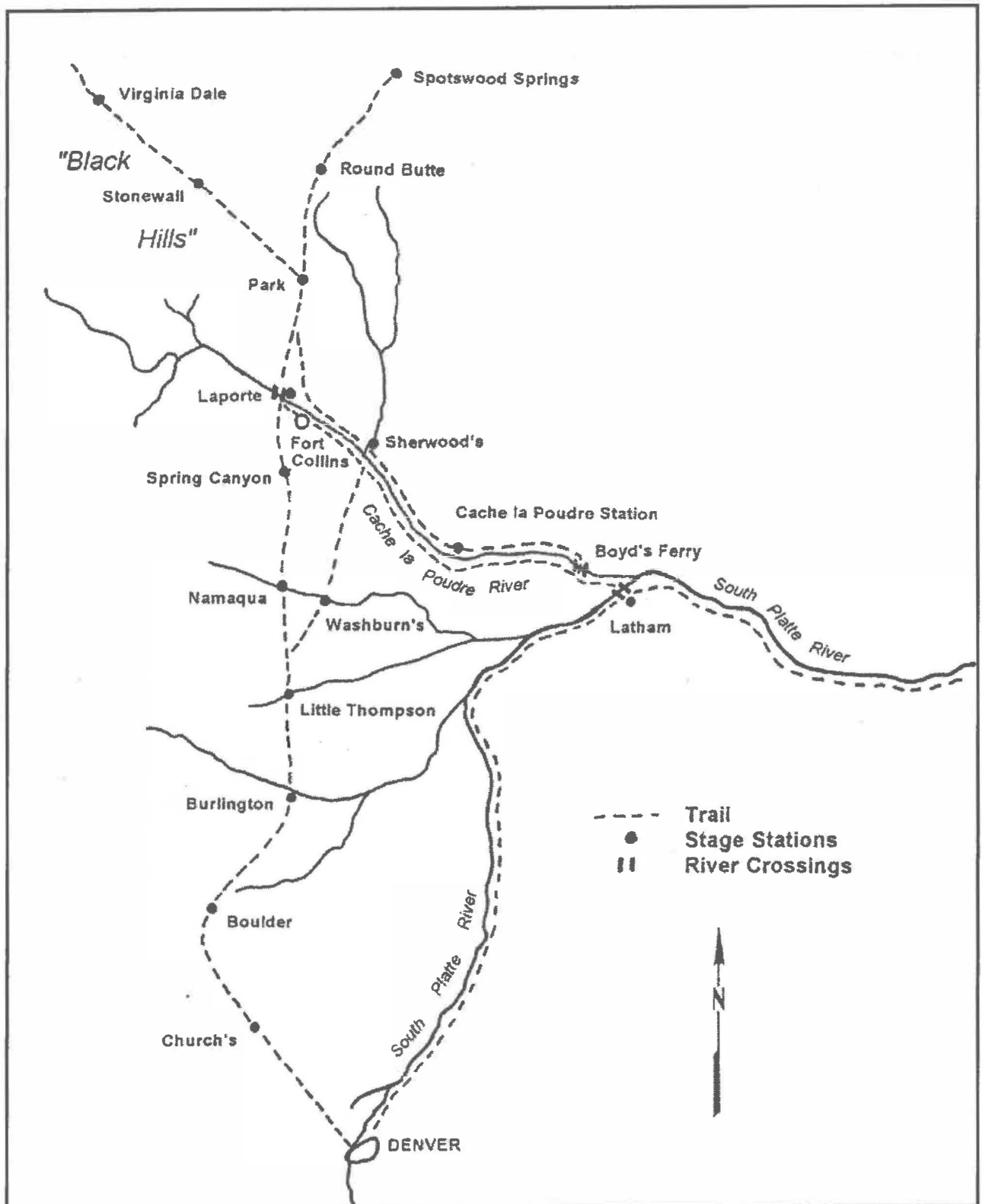
**Namaqua Station** (also called Miraville or Mariano's Crossing) was a small settlement west of the present town of Loveland, which was occupied prior to the arrival of the Overland Trail. The first settler and founder was Mariano Medina, who arrived in the area in 1858. The settlement included a combination saloon and store, several cabins, and a stone fort. Medina operated a toll bridge over the Big Thompson River. When a post office was established in 1868, the postmaster named it Namaqua. The station and all other buildings were on private property and were razed many years ago by the landowner. Some of the original logs, which might have comprised Mariano's home, were used to reconstruct his cabin in the Loveland Museum.

**Washburn Station** was used for only a few months before the Overland Trail was moved back to Namaqua. Other than Judge Washburn's log cabin, it is not known what facilities existed at this station.

**Little Thompson Station** was a home station located south of Berthoud on the Cross ranch west of County Road 15A. Little is known about the fate of the stage station or even its physical size. In recent years, historians have tried to find the precise location of the station, but nothing definitive has been discovered. The crossing of the Little Thompson was determined in 2008, along with the discovery of a well located on the north bank that could have been used at the swing station.

**Park Creek Station** was ten miles north of Laporte on the alternate branch of the Overland Trail. The first stage station was built of logs and had a tunnel from the station to the barn that could have been used as an escape route during Indian raids. When the original station was burned to the ground by Indians, a second station was built. A marker placed near the site is all that remains.

# The Overland Trail through Larimer County



Map developed by Jason Marmor, Fort Collins.

# The First Stagecoaches to Denver

*Article and Photographs by Dorman Lehman*

On May seventh of 1859, Denver's streets saw stagecoaches for the first time. The Leavenworth & Pikes Peak Express Company line, started by William Russell of the military freighting firm of Russell, Majors & Waddell, had arrived. The stages started westward on the existing military road from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Riley, then blazed a new trail across western Kansas into Nebraska to meet the Republican River and followed it southwest to its source near present Hugo, Colorado. From there the trail went northwest around the bend of Big Sandy Creek, northwest to cross Kiowa Creek, and on to meet Cherry Creek twelve miles from the company's log office at Blake and F Streets in Denver.

The route of the L. & P.P. Ex. coincided with the Smoky Hill Trail from Hugo to the bend of Big Sandy Creek. The section from the Big Sandy to Kiowa Creek was known as The Starvation Trail in recognition of its extreme dryness, which claimed the lives of two of the three Blue brothers when they traveled the trail on their way from Illinois in 1859.

The Denver area was badly in need of a morale and economic boost, and the stage line met those needs. However, when patronage was not as high as expected, the number and frequency of stages was reduced. Also an expected U.S. mail contract was not forthcoming, so Russell purchased an existing contract via the Platte River in June and relocated his stations and personnel to the Platte. There were rumors that some passengers and express were stranded on the original route during the relocation. The new route followed the South Platte through Julesburg and Fort Morgan to Latham Station [Greeley] where it met and followed the Cherokee Trail past "Forts" St. Vrain, Vasquez, Jackson, and Lupton on into Denver. Later the route was shortened by the Fort Morgan cutoff, which brought stages into Denver from the east.

Although the L. & P.P. Ex. was operating at capacity, its receipts fell short of expenses. By October Russell had to admit to his partners that the stage line was bankrupt. The freighting firm that took over the stage line changed its name to Central Overland California and Pikes Peak. The C.O.C. & P.P. became known to the employees as "Clean Out of Cash and Poor Pay." Even with Russell's formation of the Pony Express in April 1860 and extensive loans, the stage line failed and was sold to Ben Holladay in early 1862.

Horace Greeley was one of the passengers on the last stage on the original route. He then continued on to California, but he left Colorado with these [edited] words:

It is likely that fashionable spas and summer resorts will be located among the Rocky Mountains and the area will swarm with a hardy, industrious population that will require millions worth of food; every thing that can be grown here will command triple or quadruple prices for years. As to gold Denver is crazy; for the sake of the weary, dusty, footsore thousands I passed on my rapid journey I pray that gold may be found here in boundless extent and reasonable abundance. For the very mothers who bore them would hardly recognize their sons now toiling across the plains.



L. & P.P. Ex., Wamego, KS; S36, T9S, R9E.



L. & P.P. Ex., Ionia, KS; S36, T4S, R9W. Photograph



Photograph by Dorman Lehman.



L. & P.P. Ex., Norton, KS: S27, T2S, R23W. Photograph by Dorman Lehman.

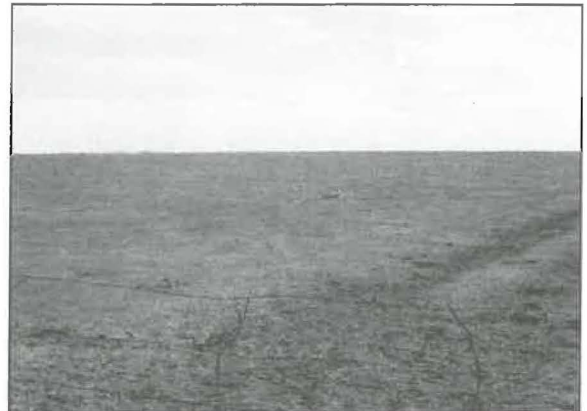
by Dorman Lehman.



L. & P.P. Ex., near Flagler, CO; S38, T8S, R50W. Photograph by Dorman Lehman.



L. & P.P. Ex., NE of Kiowa, CO; S34, T7S, R61W. Photograph by Dorman Lehman.



L. & P.P. Ex., near Flagler, CO; S30, T8S, R49W. Photograph by Dorman Lehman.



L. & P.P. Ex., Kit Carson County, CO; S24, T6S, R46W. Photograph by Dorman Lehman.



L. & P.P. Ex., Smoky Hill Trail, T5S, R65W, Aurora, CO. Photograph by Fred Crowle.



**Dorman Lehman** is a charter member of OCTA, a retired museum director, and has been researching the L. & P. P. Ex. since 1974. He resides in Greeley with his artist wife and currently works part time at the Greeley Museum.

## Joseph Alfred "Jack" Slade

Born January 22, 1831, Carlyle, Illinois; died March 10, 1864, Virginia City, Montana

# Slade's Trail Today

*By Dan Rottenberg*

In early 1859 Jack Slade was appointed a division agent for what subsequently became the Central Overland stage line; that fall he was transferred to its most dangerous division with instructions to "clean up the line." Over the next three years Slade proved himself a ruthless and fearless leader, capturing bandits and horse thieves and driving away hostile Indians and outlaw gangs. In the process he kept the stagecoaches and the U.S. Mail running, and helped launch the Pony Express, all of which helped keep California and its gold in the Union on the eve of the Civil War. In March 1860 Slade was ambushed, shot multiple times, and left for dead by the trader and suspected horse thief Jules Beni at Julesburg. Beni fled the area, but Slade survived to seek revenge. In a notorious and controversial incident in August 1861 at Cold Spring Station, Wyoming, Slade (or more likely one of his men) killed Beni.

In July 1862 the Overland's new owner, Ben Holladay, moved the North Platte stage route to the Cherokee Trail route to the south. Slade was appointed division agent for the stretch between Latham (and later Denver) and Elk Mountain, Wyoming. He built his headquarters at a central spot he named Virginia Dale for his wife Virginia. But at this point, after more than three years as "the law west of Kearny," he apparently cracked and degenerated into a dangerous drunk. In November 1862, after he engaged in a drunken shooting spree at the Sutler's store at Fort Halleck, Wyoming, Slade was arrested and jailed by a cavalry detachment in Denver. Ben Holladay's lawyer negotiated Slade's release, and the Overland Stage Company dismissed him on November 15, 1862.

In spring 1863 Slade moved west to Fort Bridger, where he set up as a contract freighter. In June he led a freighting outfit to the newly-discovered gold fields of Alder Gulch, Idaho (now Montana). There Slade and his wife established a dairy ranch in the Madison Valley and a homestead a few miles from Virginia City. Although Slade became a local hero by leading a 350-mile freighting expedition to recover vital cargo, he soon resumed his unruly drunken habits. After a two-day binge in Virginia City, a vigilante posse from Nevada City hanged Slade on March 10, 1864.

Whether Jack Slade was a good man or bad is no longer the primary concern in the towns and hamlets where he spent most of his days. In an age when tourism can make or break many a small community, the vexing question for civic boosters in these places is: Should we feel pride in this local son, or shame?

The original settlement called Julesburg, where Jules Beni shot Slade in March 1860, was burned down by Cheyenne Indians in February 1865. The present town of Julesburg, Colorado, established in 1880 some five miles upstream from the original, is actually the fourth place to bear that name. On my first visit there in 1995, I found no monument to the man who kept the mails moving—only a 1960 Pony Express Centennial plaque bearing this inscription:

### JULESBURG, COLORADO

Jules Beni, after whom Julesburg is named, was the station master for the Pony Express and Overland Stage. He was killed by Jack Slade, who later became a notorious gunman.

Julesburg seems to have awakened historically only since that plaque was erected. The Pony Express Centennial in 1960–61 led to the formation of the Fort Sedgwick Historical Society, which has since created two impressive museums, one of them in the old Union Pacific railroad depot. Throw in the antique car



museum and the preserved 1940s bandstand developed by Lee Kizer, Julesburg's former mayor, as well as the Colorado Welcome Center just a mile up the Interstate, and you have a tourist attraction waiting to be discovered.

Perhaps most impressive to a historical researcher is Julesburg's Documentation Project, a serious effort to separate fact from fiction about the origins of local structures. To this end, since 1990 volunteers have photographed old buildings, scoured documents, and conducted oral history interviews. "Everybody here exaggerates everything," explained Betsy Marquardt, whose primary job is public health nurse of two counties. "That's why we're doing this."

Because Julesburg was Colorado's only Pony Express stop, a local farmer and Sedgwick County commissioner named Jim Stretesky was chosen one of eight vice presidents of the national Pony Express Centennial celebration. The plaque describing Slade as a "notorious gunman" was largely his doing.

"The way I see Slade," Stretesky explained to me, "he wasn't a lawman; he didn't arrest people. But he kept them under control so they wouldn't shoot each other. He had friends, so he must have been friendly. But he had a devil-may-care personality. As time went on his personality got worse, and soon people couldn't put up with him. I've known people like that—they'll get in a fight over nothing. He was that sort of guy." Before sending me on my way, Stretesky offered me a Julesburg souvenir: A ceramic "Jule's ear" distributed as a memento at a civic dinner.

Slade's headquarters at Horseshoe Creek Station stood about two miles south of the present village of Glendo, Wyoming. Of the small complex Slade built there—a station, a barn and several houses—only one building survived when I first visited in 1995. That structure formed the central core of the stone farmhouse belonging to Betty Lancaster, who arrived there from Nebraska with her cattle-rancher husband in 1945. "It's really been something living along here," said Mrs. Lancaster, a widow with elegantly high cheekbones, turquoise eyes, and earrings to match.

Shortly before we moved in, an elderly man asked if he could look down our well. He said, "I know there's a bucket and Slade's pearl-handled pistol down there"—and he was right. It had been preserved under water all that time, in perfect condition.

At the end of the meadow is the "sweathole," where we've found big bunches of lead. Apparently that's where they loaded their bullets. When we started digging ditches and sewers, we found a tunnel down five or six feet, heading from the field to the house—maybe for protection from Indians.

We think of these people as being without much ingenuity—that they just built a shack and lived. But we found some foundation rocks from the Pony Express—slabs six inches thick by fifteen inches long by ten inches wide. And there's an old cistern here that they used to pipe water down to the barn. And of course, the mail was better than some of the service we get now.

Slade's headquarters complex at Virginia Dale, Colorado, was abandoned by the Overland Stage Company in 1868. In the years that followed, the Slades' former home in the main station house functioned as a store, then a post office, and eventually as a community center. In the 1920s it was the scene of dances, which traditionally ended (just like the earlier dances on the prairies and at Virginia City) with the serving of a midnight supper. By that time the only items left in the building were a few chairs and a china cabinet with rounded glass doors, filled with old photos and other memorabilia, including a shriveled ear that, the label claimed, had once belonged to Jules Beni.

Virginia Dale can still be found on maps today, but the village itself has vanished along with that disembodied ear. Yet remarkably, Slade's original station house still stands, a mini-museum in excellent condition, about a mile off U.S. 287, nestled within the very same fairy-tale valley, mountains, and creek that greeted Slade when he first found the spot in 1862.

The log building—nineteen feet wide and about fifty-six feet long—owes its survival to two factors: the diligent preservation efforts of the Virginia Dale Community Club and the difficulties involved in visiting it. Although the community club owns it, the building is surrounded by private property. Guided tours by club members can be arranged free of charge by appointment. The site is open to the public twice a year, and on these occasions, club members raise funds as well as public awareness by peddling booklets, souvenir mugs, and T-shirts. A mile or so up the highway is a roadside picnic area where, until a few years ago, a more extensive marker advised travelers that "Joseph Slade, the notorious outlaw, was division master of the old stage division, which was located at this place."

For my latest visit, in the spring of 2007, my guide was Ken Jessen, a retired Hewlett-Packard engineer living nearby, who has fashioned a second career as an author of western books and articles, among them a biography of Slade. “This is what Jack Slade saw,” he said with an enthusiastic sweep of his arm. “He was probably smitten by this beautiful valley.”



Virginia Dale Stage Station in the 1930s. Courtesy of the Virginia Dale Community Club.



Virginia Dale Stage Station in 2008. Courtesy of the Virginia Dale Community Club.

Over a fence post we chatted with Edith Schroyer, who with her husband Bill has owned the surrounding property—they call it the “Flying S Ranch”—for thirty-five years. She professed bemusement at the disproportionate attention the place commands. “In Montana they call it ‘Custer country,’ but Custer was only there for thirty days,” she reflected. “And they call this ‘Slade country,’ but Slade was only here—what?—six months?”

From his perspective as a former middle-management executive, Jessen offered me his take on Slade: “As I see him, Slade was a responsible manager who happened to be an alcoholic. I had a couple of guys like that working for me at Hewlett-Packard. We’d send them off to a clinic for a few weeks of rehab and they’d come back fine. But in the Old West the only response was to hang him.” After Slade degenerated into a brawling and dangerous drunk, he was hanged in Virginia City, Montana, in 1864.

I arrived at the Montana Historical Society, just across the street from the state capitol in Helena, under the misapprehension that Slade was just as anonymous there as are most residents of New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia, where I have spent most of my life. Yet Bob Clark, the head librarian, tuned into my wavelength as soon as I uttered Slade’s name. The special property of Montana history, Clark explained, is that “it’s all so recent, and the population’s so small, that there’s a certain shallowness to it—the same subjects and people keep coming up again and again.” In this context, he said, Slade holds a special place in the hearts of the Society’s librarians: “We once got a phone call from an old lady who asked, ‘Was Slade a good man or a bad

man?' We were delighted. We don't often get to speculate on metaphysical questions like that. Usually our callers just want facts."

Thanks to a unique combination of factors—dry weather, civic apathy, and plain luck—nearly all of Virginia City's original 1863 buildings have survived to the present day, where the resident population hovers around 130. Any visitor today can easily retrace Slade's steps on his last fateful two-day drunk in March 1864. You can walk into the stone building of the Pfouts & Russell general store where Slade was arrested, see the rear stairway where he was taken out, stand at the corral behind the store where he was strung up from a cross-beam, and peer toward the rise on the Slade toll road two miles to the northeast, where Virginia Slade came thundering over the horizon on "Billy Bay." For many years the hanging of Slade on March 10, 1864, was re-enacted annually by local residents, complete with a local equestrienne performing Virginia Slade's wild ride. Tourists continue to visit the cemetery, where notable pioneers like Thomas Dimsdale and Chief Justice Lew Callaway's parents sleep not all that far from the five road agents who were lynched together in January 1864 by the vigilantes.

By my second visit there in 1995, the old Pfouts building had become Rank's Drugs. "Slade's ghost still haunts the place," I was told by Grace Quilici, who owned the drug store for three years before opening a restaurant on Wallace Street. "He's knocking things off the shelves and laughing."

Slade's toll road to the Bozeman Trail and his tollhouse overlooking the Madison Valley survived into the mid-1950s, when a rancher fed up with trespassing tourists tore up the road and dynamited the house; all that remain today are the corners of the foundation and some of its timbers. The Virginia Hotel where Slade's body was laid out was destroyed by fire in 1937. But the tiny clapboard house on Van Buren Street where Virginia Slade kept her husband's pickled remains still stands. An actress named Zina Hoff, who lived there until her death in the mid-1970s, delighted in telling her neighbors, "Whenever he comes out, I tell him, 'Get back in your coffin or I'll let the alcohol out. Then you'll really be in a pickle!'"

"Everything in Virginia City is related," says the local historian John Ellingsen, a history curator for the Montana Heritage Commission. "It all pieces together like a jigsaw puzzle." Yet Ellingsen is the first to acknowledge that the pieces don't necessarily fit. "Slade was friendly with the vigilantes," he notes. "That's what makes this hanging so remarkable. A lot of the vigilantes didn't approve of that hanging one bit."

Because Virginia City's streets are unpaved and muddy much of the year, residents routinely remove their shoes when entering their homes. This barefoot informality preserves the chummy intimacy of the place. "Life here is so laid back," I was told by Roger Williams. "It's just a wonderful place to live. You never worry where your kids are." Williams, it turned out, was a great-grandson of the vigilante Benjamin C. Williams (no relation to the vigilante leader James Williams). I found him living in Nevada City, where the miners had assembled to arrest Slade. Roger Williams seemed untroubled by the irony that, for two years in the early 1980s, he had himself lived in Virginia Slade's little house on Van Buren Street. It was "real comfortable," he pointed out.

The vigilantes, he readily conceded, "undoubtedly made a few mistakes. It always seemed to everybody that they got a little over-zealous. They were just as much outside the law as the people they hung. They weren't much venerated in those days. And obviously Slade didn't do anything to justify stretching his neck here." Roger added that his own great-grandfather didn't mention his vigilante experience "until he was on his deathbed" in 1913. With a shrug, Roger added cheerfully, "My favorite quote is, 'History is merely a lie agreed upon.'"

At Alder, nine miles to the west, I found Matt Stiles, a grizzled rancher who grew up among cousins and uncles who had grazed cattle near Slade's ranch on the Madison River. His great-grandmother, Stiles said, arrived in Virginia City on the day Slade was hanged. "I got the impression she wasn't sure the right side won that tussle," he added. Still, Stiles professed sympathy for the vigilantes and none for Slade: "As far as I'm concerned, he had it coming. Anyone who terrorizes a town—he should be hung. Slade wasn't anybody's fool. He said he was drunk and didn't know what he was doing—he tried to buy everyone into his good graces—to hell with him!"

"There seems to be an effort to discredit the vigilantes," Stiles added. "But they worked with what they had to work with at the time. I like to think the reason my house is unlocked today is that people knew there'd be good swift justice. I'd like to see more justice like that. We might stretch the neck of an honest man, but we'd keep more honest men honest, too."

Jack Slade left no descendants, and the bloodline of his father, Charles Slade, ended with the death of Charles's sole grandson, Richard Slade, in 1880. But Charles Slade had seven siblings, so Jack Slade's blood



relatives surely still abound, even if many of them eluded my search. Carolyn Dennis Kress of Sterling, Nebraska, a collateral relative of Slade's stepfather Elias Dennis, told me she had once heard from a Richard Russell Slade, who said he was the great-great-great-grandson of William Slade, one of Jack Slade's uncles from Alexandria.

One Slade relative whom I stumbled upon inadvertently is the Leavenworth historian Carol Dark Ayres, author of *Lincoln and Kansas*, the definitive work on Lincoln's visit there in 1859. In the course of chatting with Ayres I recalled that Slade's mother habitually referred to herself to herself as "Mary Dark," after her maternal grandmother, and I asked Ayres about her own Dark family's origins. She subsequently sent me a Dark family tree published in 1973, and sure enough, Carol Ayres and Jack Slade are both descended from a John Darke, born in Oxfordshire, England, in 1667. Jack Slade and Carol Ayres are fourth cousins, thrice removed.

Slade's half-brother, Elias Dennis Jr., had four children who reached adulthood; and one of those children, Harmon S. Dennis, had four adult children of his own. His grandson, also named Harmon Dennis, was eighty-four and living in Horseshoe Bend, Arkansas, when I located him in 2006. Thanks to two modern miracles, the Internet and the telephone, it took just a matter of minutes to connect me to Jack Slade's grandnephew, once removed.

But the family historian these days is Harmon's son, Larry Dennis, who was living in a Dallas suburb when I reached him. Larry has attempted, unsuccessfully so far, to trace Elias Dennis's ancestry beyond his birth in 1812. Larry also paid a historical research visit to the Clinton County Historical Museum in Carlyle, Illinois, where, he joked, "They almost shunned me when I told them who I was. Elias Dennis is still unpopular there."

Larry mentioned the twenty acres that Charles and Mary Slade had donated to Clinton County for a courthouse in 1825. "You know," he added mischievously, "under the terms of the deed, if the county seat ever moves away from Carlyle, that land goes back to their descendants." In fact, such a scenario almost came to pass not too long ago. In the early 1990s, the Clinton County Courthouse, erected in 1849, failed to meet new state and federal guidelines for wheelchair accessibility. When the Clinton County Commissioners reluctantly voted to raze the building and replace it, civic boosters of the nearby town of Breese offered the county fifteen free acres of land plus other incentives to move the county seat to their town. Ultimately their offer was declined, and a new courthouse opened in Carlyle in 1999.

Larry Dennis seemed unaware of this turn of events and unconcerned about the missed opportunity. "I'm not sure I'd take that land back," he remarked. "It's not worth much now. It's just a typical little farm town." A sign on the north edge of town reads "Welcome Aboard! Carlyle" and is illustrated with a sailboat to promote the large recreational lake nearby. "Welcome to Carlyle—Title Town—State Champs 81-88-89-96-97" announces the sign outside the junior high school a bit farther down. "Home of the Carlyle Indians" advises the sign at the high school next door.

Carlyle today is actually a neat little town, full of well-preserved Victorian homes. But a stranger passing through finds no overt clue of Carlyle's founding family or of its most controversial son. The 1859 suspension bridge across the Kaskaskia River, which replaced Charles Slade's ferry, has been carefully preserved as a pedestrian crossing, but it is named not for the Slades but for another famous local native, the Korean War general William F. Dean.

At the Clinton County Historical Museum, housed in the former mansion of the Slade family's in-law, the Illinois Chief Justice Sidney Breese, Jack Slade's presence is familiar but also awkward. "I wish Carlyle were remembered for someone better than an outlaw," lamented Mary Meyer, one of the society's active volunteers. "We have notable people, but they're not necessarily as well-known as Jack."

But Slade did indeed have at least one champion in Carlyle, as I discovered on my first visit there in 1995. Jack's youngest sister, Virginia, had spent the last seven years of her life boarding with a Carlyle widow named Sarah (Mrs. Patrick) Flanagan. Sarah Flanagan's granddaughter, Catherine Flanagan, visited her grandmother and Virginia every Saturday. When Virginia died in December 1911, Catherine was thirteen. When I visited her in Carlyle in March 1995, Catherine Flanagan Goodwin was a month shy of ninety-seven: the world's last living link with the Slade family.

I arrived at Mrs. Goodwin's home expecting to find a barely sentient invalid. Instead I found an alert and gracious woman, perky in a ruffled blue silk blouse, blue skirt and necklace, and above all passionate about Jack Slade. She referred to Slade on a first-name basis and spoke as if his hanging had occurred only the previous week. "It was a shame," she said. "A shame. They claimed he was a gentleman when he was sober.

But he was a gentleman all his life, really. Those spells that he had—that wasn't Jack." Slade turned to drink, she insisted, because "it bore on his mind that he killed so many men out West and during the [Mexican] war. If it had been now, they'd have put him in a Veterans' Hospital."

After serving me tea and cake, Mrs. Goodwin disappeared briefly into a rear bedroom, re-emerging minutes later with neatly bundled stacks of letters she had received over the years from other writers who, like me, had fallen under Slade's spell. One stack contained letters from Dabney Otis Collins, an advertising manager for the *Rocky Mountain News* who had spent years researching Slade's life in the hope of writing a biography, only to produce a heavily fictionalized story for *Argosy Magazine* instead. In October 1962 Collins poured out his frustration with the publishing business in an apologetic letter to Mrs. Goodwin: "Stories for men's magazines must necessarily be of a sensational nature. That's what the men want when they settle down to read after a hard day. Also, and very important, that's what the editors want, too."

Four years later, when Collins reprinted his article in booklet form with the sensationalized title, *The Hanging of 'Bad' Jack Slade*, he took pen in hand to apologize to Mrs. Goodwin again:

I want you to know that the title of my Slade booklet was *Argosy's*, not mine. I have never considered Jack Slade a bad man. . . . Slade was a victim of vigilantism and whiskey. He was no killer except in the line of duty. . . . I think I have done more research on this man than anyone, and am now doing a full-size book on him. It may do something to soften the brand of hell stamped on him by Mark Twain and many others.

The letters from Collins—who never finished his intended "full-size book"—continued until 1978, each letter eerily reflecting my own determination to rescue Slade from his historical limbo. I was following a well-trod path here.

"You know," Kate Goodwin said, "sometimes I wonder if Jack is trying his best to get a message to some of us to exonerate him. I want to exonerate him, and that's what Dabney Collins wanted, too. You must have seen something good in him to be here. It seems it just won't die." Now this woman from another century fixed her gaze upon me, as if passing me a torch handed down to her by others. "A lot of people will say, 'That's just an old woman,'" she said. "But it's not. There's something pulling at us, because Jack didn't know either one of us. If there's any kind of communication between the Earth and Jack, there must be—it comes up too often."

Although Slade's widow designated Carlyle as his final resting place, his body has remained in its "temporary" grave in Salt Lake City for more than 140 years. "The irony is that Maria Slade didn't want her husband buried on boot hill with the five road agents hanged by the Vigilantes," John Ellingsen remarked to me in Virginia City. "She wanted him to receive a decent burial. So now tourists come year after year to see the graves of the road agents, and Slade's grave is unknown and forgotten."

Correcting this injustice by honoring Virginia Slade's instructions would be expensive and logistically challenging. It might also be inappropriate: Slade was really a man of the West, not Illinois, and in any case he no longer has family in Carlyle. But these objections may be beside the point. If Slade helped save the Union, and if Mrs. Slade helped save him for a few more years than he otherwise might have survived, it would seem incumbent upon grateful Americans to carry out her wish.

But the greatest impediment to moving Slade's coffin is this: Slade's grave is unmarked. His zinc-lined coffin rests today with some 360 other unidentified bodies in a pauper's field, perhaps a third the size of a football field, near the southwest corner of Salt Lake City Cemetery. In the center of this well-manicured grassy lawn lies a single military headstone bearing a small cross above this inscription:

JOSEPH A SLADE  
ILLINOIS  
CO A 1 REGT ILL FOOT VOLS  
MEXICAN WAR  
MARCH 9 1864



But who is really buried beneath that stone, and who placed the stone there is unclear—not to mention who supplied the erroneous death date, which was actually March 10. Even Slade's gravestone, it seems, remains a mystery. Slade's actual grave, says the cemetery's sexton, is about twenty feet east and fifteen feet south of the marker.

Jim Stretesky, the late county commissioner from Julesburg, once suggested a possible solution to the mystery of locating Slade's grave. Slade's coffin, unlike most coffins, is lined with tin, he reminded me. Therefore, "The only way to find it is with a metal detector." But would Slade's coffin contain sufficient tin to be detected? Stretesky nodded affirmatively. "In those days, they put it on pretty thick," he said. "It doesn't rust away."

So one very hot weekday in July of 2007, I drove to the pauper's field at Salt Lake City Cemetery to examine Slade's grave stone and the site for myself. With me were the Slade aficionados Nan Weber Boruff and Georgia Weber, Milwaukee-born sisters who moved to Salt Lake in the 1970s. Nan is the author of two biographies as well as a leader of Elder Hostel training groups and an actress who performs one-woman historical shows, sometimes accompanied by her guitarist husband. Nan's sister Georgia, as a probate researcher, spends much of her time tracing genealogies at the Mormons' Family History Center. They are serious historians, but with their flowing dresses and free spirits, these zaftig sisters remind me of hippie earth mothers from the 1960s.

For this occasion Nan has brought along her metal detector. We are determined to locate Slade's grave once and for all. We begin at Slade's headstone in the middle of the field, and work our way out from there. Twelve feet to the right—that is, south—of Slade's stone, the detector starts clicking, and the indicator registers "metal or foil." We have hit pay dirt. We drop a marker at the spot.

Now our remaining task is just a matter of canvassing the rest of the field, to be sure this spot is unique. In a few other places the detector registers "screw caps." To the left of Slade's marker the detector does pick up an indication of "metal or foil" along a long straight line—but this, we realize, must be a buried sprinkler line, not a coffin. By a process of elimination, the original spot to the right of Slade's stone must be Slade's grave.

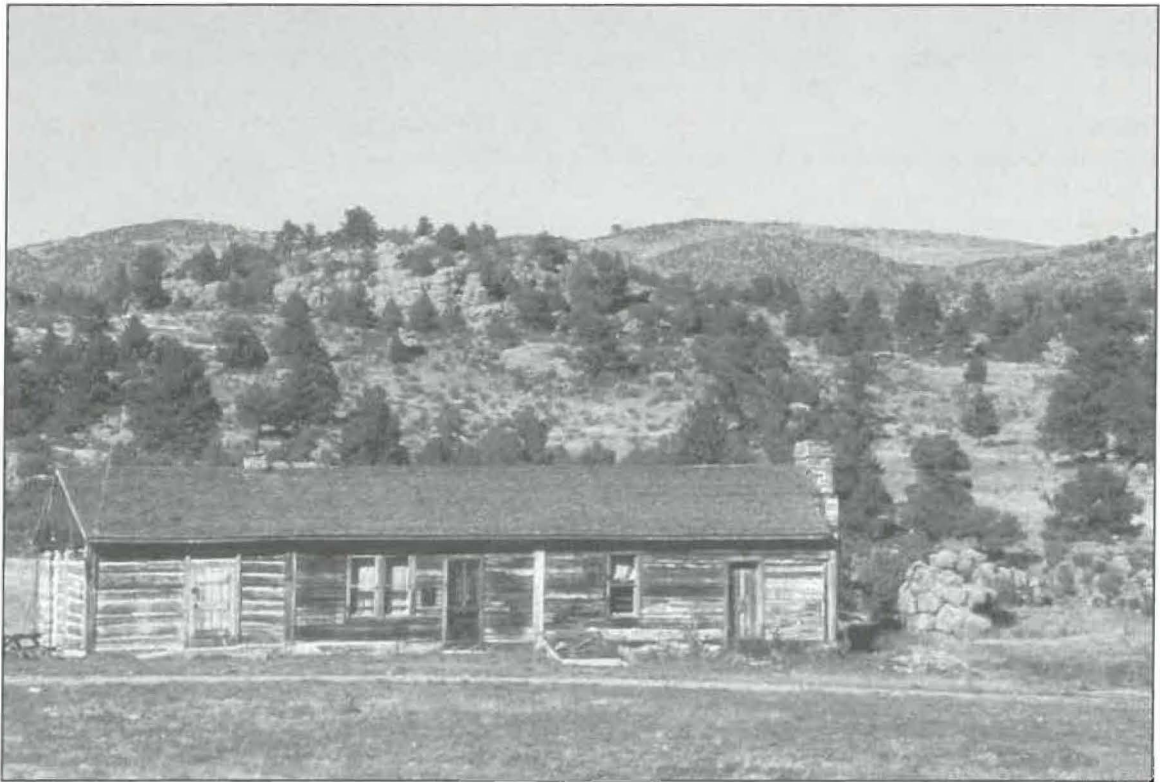
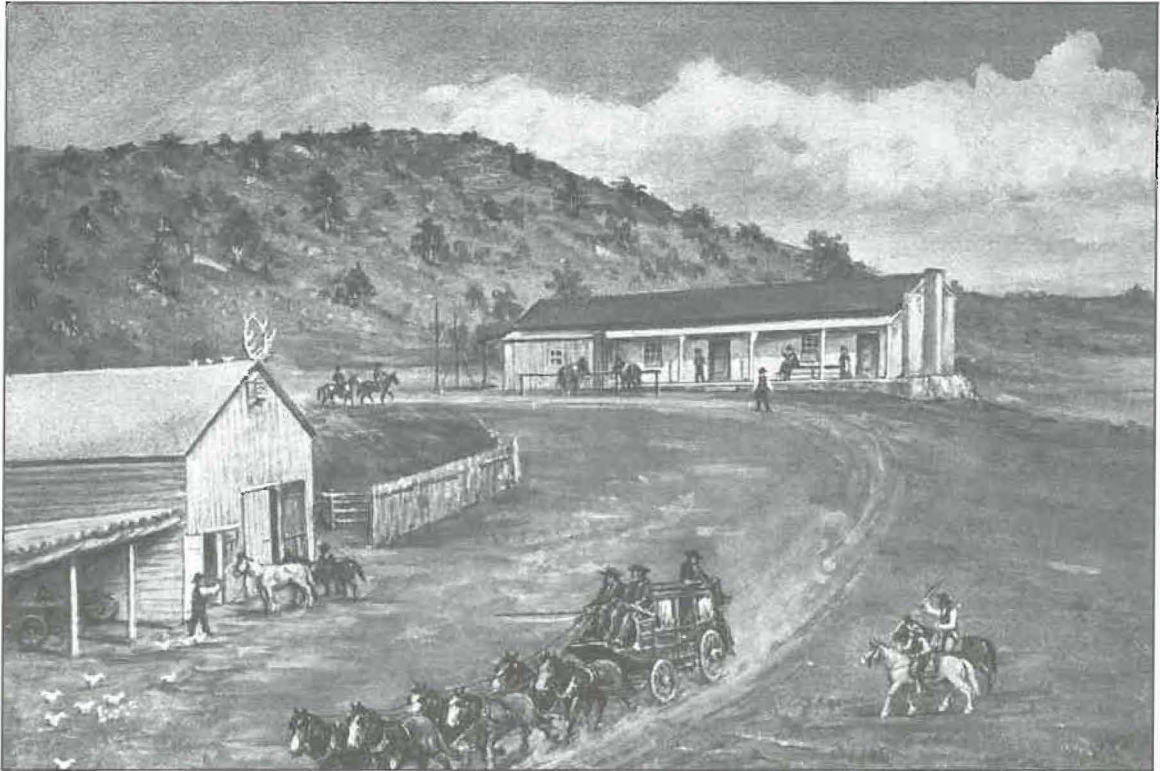
We return to the spot where we left our marker. Like the first explorers at the South Pole, we can hardly contain our excitement. Slade lies immediately beneath us; we are the first to have found him in more than 140 years. To confirm our discovery, we run Nan's metal detector across the spot once more. This time, the detector registers.... nothing.

Whatever set the detector off the first time, apparently, was not a zinc-lined coffin but something less substantial and closer to the surface. "Coffins are buried six feet down," Nan reasons. "My detector might not be strong enough to pick up something that deep." We will have to return, with a more powerful detector, some other day. In the meantime, all we can say with certainty is that our man lies buried somewhere beneath this field. In death as in life, the real Slade continues to elude us.

**Dan Rottenberg** is a convention speaker, and a full biography is included with the other speakers. His recently published book on Jack Slade is *Death of a Gunfighter: The Quest for Jack Slade, The West's Most Elusive Legend* (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2008).

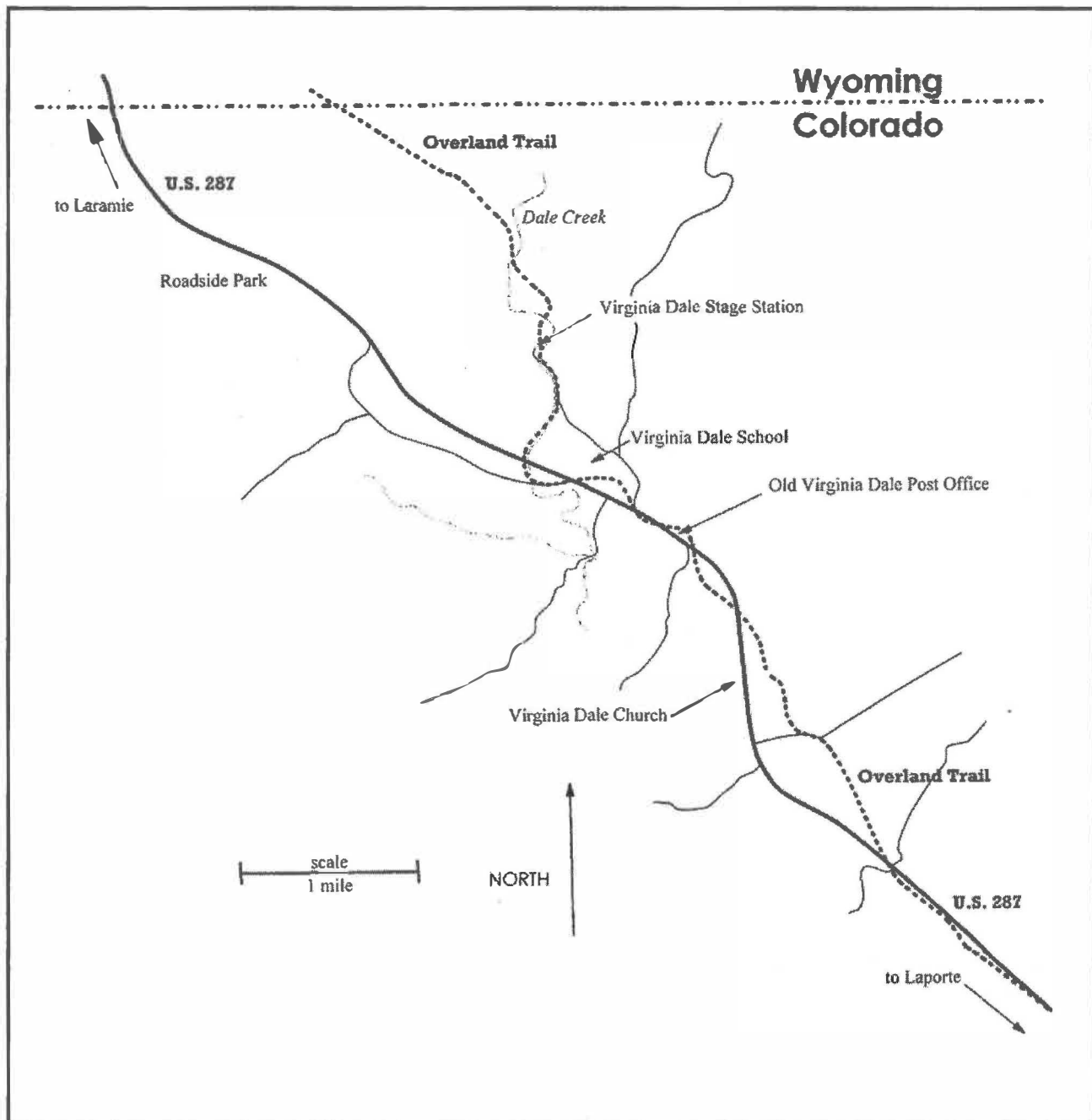


## *Virginia Dale Stage Station: Then and Now*



*Top:* Painting by William Henry Jackson. Photograph courtesy of Howard R. Driggs Collection, Gerald R. Sherratt Library, Southern Utah University; William Henry Jackson Collection, Scotts Bluff National Monument, SCBL 277. *Bottom:* 2008 photograph by Ray Schoch.

## The Overland Trail in the Virginia Dale Area



Map by Kenneth Jessen.

# Convention Tours

## TOUR A: THE CHEROKEE/OVERLAND TRAIL TOUR

This full-day tour will visit Sherwood Station, Fort Collins Military Post site, and the Overland Park Swing Station marker. This tour will also view the Cherokee/Stonewall/Ten Mile Swing Station site, the setting for Louis L'Amour's novel, *The Cherokee Trail*, and the noted landmarks Steamboat and Tug Rocks.

Lunch will be served at Virginia Dale Station by the ladies of the Virginia Dale Community Club, where "Mark Twain" and "Virginia Slade" will be present. The return will be along the foothills route through Laporte and the Cache La Poudre River crossing, past the Spring Canyon Swing Station, and back to The Ranch.

Guides for this tour include Peggy Ford and Wayne Sundberg, accompanied by trail experts Ken Jessen and Dan Rottenberg.

## TOUR B: THE CHEROKEE/OVERLAND TRAIL TOUR—WITH A HIKING SEGMENT

This full-day tour will be similar to Tour A, but certain areas will be omitted because of the extra time needed for the hiking segment. After leaving The Ranch, the tour will view the Sherwood Station site, the Fort Collins military fort site, and the Overland Park Station marker. The two-hour hike will begin through some Overland Trail ruts to tipi rings and Signature Rock. The hike is about one-mile each way. The bus portion of the tour will resume with a visit to Virginia Dale Station where lunch will be served by the ladies of the Virginia Dale Community Club, where "Mark Twain" and "Virginia Slade" will be present.

The buses will return to Loveland along the foothills route through Laporte and the Cache La Poudre River crossing, past the Spring Canyon Swing Station, and back to The Ranch.

Guides for this tour include Peggy Ford and Wayne Sundberg, accompanied by trail experts Ken Jessen and Dan Rottenberg.

## TOUR C: FOUR FORTS ALONG THE SOUTH PLATTE RIVER TOUR

This full-day tour will visit the sites of civilian fur-trading posts along the South Platte River Trail, which was used by mountain men, military expeditions, Mormons, emigrants, gold-seekers, and homesteaders starting in 1820. The posts—Fort Jackson, Fort Lupton, Fort St. Vrain, and Fort Vasquez—were active during the mid-to late 1830s and were built, owned, and operated by such well-known frontiersmen as Lancaster Lupton, Peter Sarpy, Henry Fraeb, Louis Vasquez, Andrew Sublette, George Bent, and Ceran St. Vrain. The posts were part of the north-south Trappers-Taos Trail that linked Bent's Old Fort and Santa Fe on the Santa Fe Trail with Fort Laramie on the Oregon-California Trail. Fort Vasquez is now a full-size replica reconstructed on its original site in the 1930s by the Works Project Administration (WPA).

Displays and re-enactors will bring the fur trade era to life. Lunch will be at Fort Lupton, owned by the South Platte Valley Historical Society. The tour will end with a visit to Latham, also known as Cherokee City, at a point where several trails crossed the South Platte River.

Guides for this tour are Carol and Vern Osborne and Lee Whiteley.



## **TOUR D: LOVELAND/BERTHOUD TOUR: TRAILS ACROSS THE THOMPSON VALLEYS**

The Berthoud segment of this trail tour will include a view of the Cherokee and Overland Trails corridor through Little Thompson Valley toward Horsetooth Rock, near Fort Collins; a view of the area of the 1850 Cherokee Trail campsite on the Little Thompson River; a view of the 1870s home of Major John Kerr, Overland Trail division superintendent; and a short historical reenactment at the Berthoud Town Park.

Highlights of the Loveland segment will include a visit to the site of Mariano Medina's fort and cemetery at the Cherokee Trail (subsequently Overland Trail) crossing of the Big Thompson River, known as Namaqua. This part of the tour will also include a stop at the Lakeside Cemetery in Loveland for the dedication of the relocated grave of H. L. W. Peterson, a pioneer who was killed and originally buried beside the Cherokee-Overland Trail in 1854. Watch for volunteers in period dress along the way, and enjoy a horse-drawn covered wagon ride and cemetery re-enactments.

A sit-down lunch will be provided at the Loveland Museum and Gallery. The museum's trail artifacts will be exhibited and The Rocky Mountain Map Society's antique maps will be displayed in the lunch room.

Members of both the Loveland and Berthoud Historical Societies will be your tour guides.

# **Tours A and B**

## **The Fort Collins Military Post**

### **Its History was Peaceful**

*By Wayne Sundberg*

Before the coming of white inhabitants to what is now Larimer County, Indians used this land. First, Folsom people hunted prehistoric animals here, and later came Indians of the Plains Culture—Arapaho and Cheyenne. During the first half of the nineteenth century, mountain men passed through the area on their way to the rich fur-trapping grounds of the Poudre Canyon. There are accounts of fur trappers and traders occasionally camping in the Laporte area during the 1830s and 1840s.

According to a popular legend, one group of fur traders made camp in the area in 1836 when a late spring snowstorm hit. They found it necessary to leave some of their supplies behind if they were to continue their journey, and it was from their “cache of powder” that the Cache la Poudre River got its name. Antoine Janise, then twelve years old, was a member of that party. However, Janise was not here before 1844, and the river already had the name “Cache la Poudre” when Colonel Dodge came through the area in summer 1835.

Janise and some other men organized a town called Colona in 1858 and built several cabins. By 1862 the town had been moved a mile east and renamed Laporte, French for “the door,” most likely because the town is at the entrance to the Poudre Canyon. The new location made use of a good river crossing, and the route of the Overland Stage Line passed through the town.

Primarily to provide protection for the stage lines, soldiers of the Ninth Regiment, Kansas Volunteer Cavalry, were sent in late summer 1862 to build a small military post just west of Laporte. The *Rocky Mountain News* of the time used the name “Camp Collins” to identify the outpost, in contradiction of later accounts indicating that the camp had no name until 1864, when Ohio troops named it for their commander, William O. Collins.

The Kansans left the region the next year, when troops of the First Colorado Volunteer Cavalry took over the camp. In spring 1864, the Colorado cavalrymen were ordered to duty elsewhere because of Indian raids, and Companies B and F of the Eleventh Regiment, Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, were assigned to Camp Collins.

Lt. Col. William O. Collins, commanding Fort Laramie, ordered Capt. William Evans to take the two companies, then at Fort Halleck, into Colorado Territory. They reached Camp Collins in May 1864. The town offered little more than whiskey to relieve the sameness of daily patrol duty. Several times, Captain Evans threatened to declare martial law if the storekeepers failed to restrict the sale of liquor to his soldiers. But drunkenness was soon to be the least of his worries.

The winter had been a severe one. Rain and snow continued into June. A cloudburst far up Poudre Canyon on June 9, 1864, spelled the end for Camp Collins. Side canyons and small streams fed volumes of water into the channel of the Poudre. The mass of water reached the mouth of the canyon late that night and swept down on the camp. Most of the cabins and much of the military equipment went down the river with the flood. Fortunately, none of the soldiers were lost. When morning revealed the toll, Captain Evans sent word to Fort Laramie and then ordered Lt. James W. Hanna to take a patrol downriver and find a new site on which to build a post.

Joseph Mason met Lieutenant Hanna’s party and pointed out a spot across the river from his own homestead. Colonel Collins inspected the site in early August and, finding it more advantageous than the original location, drew up a description of the new area in Special Order Number One, attached a plat of the proposed fort, and sent his recommendations on the Gen. R. B. Mitchell, commander of the District of Nebraska. Colonel Collins then ordered construction to begin on what he called a “permanent” post.

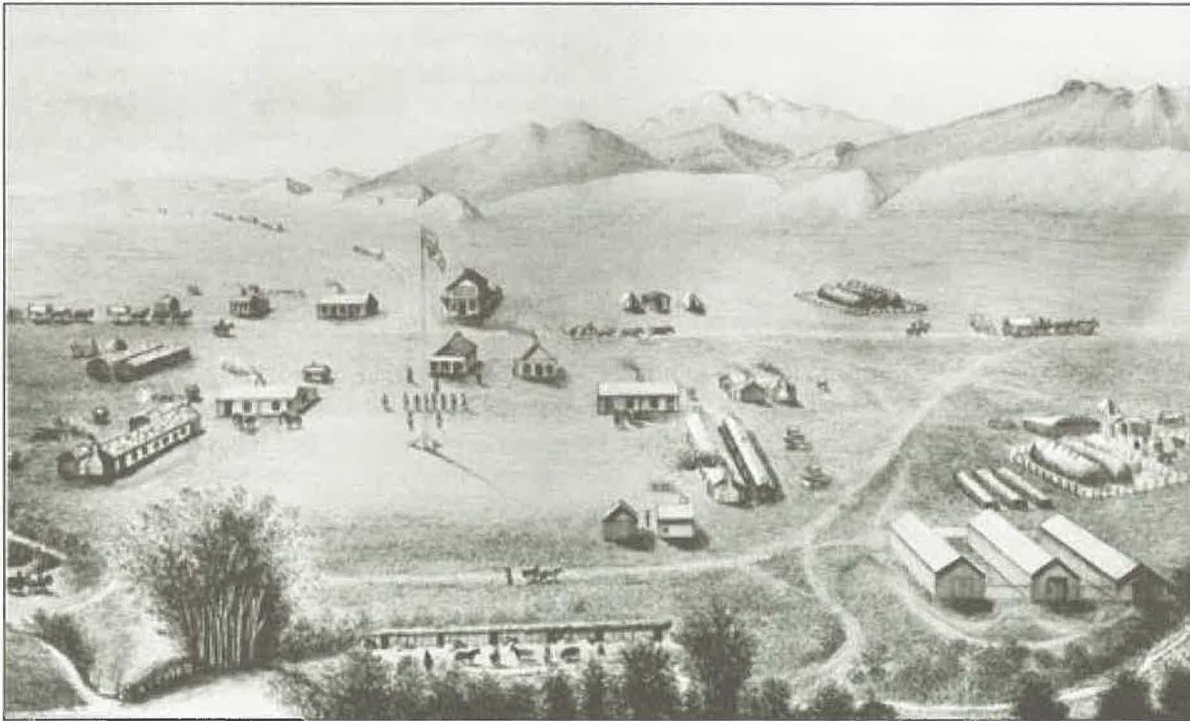
Soldiers were sent to the foothills to cut logs for the troop barracks, officers’ quarters, and stables. Windows and hardware were ordered from Denver. Boards and shingles came from a sawmill west of Laporte. Two government surveyors sent from Denver mapped out an area of over 6,000 acres, the Fort Collins Military Reservation. The post was to have ample room for future expansion. By mid-October the fort was completed, and the command moved from Laporte. Orders were now headed “Fort Collins, C.T.”

The post occupied only a few acres near the northwest corner of the military reservation. The fort itself consisted of two troop barracks, each with a separate mess hall; two cabins to house the officers; two large stables; a guard house; a commissary and quartermaster's supply building; and a post hospital. The main buildings were grouped around a 300-foot-square parade ground. Completing the post was a temporary sutler's store built by Joe Mason and Henry Chamberlain. A private house, the home of Lewis and Elizabeth Stone, served as a dining place for the officers. (This is the Auntie Stone cabin now in Fort Collins's Lincoln Park.)

Duty at Fort Collins could best be described as "boredom on the frontier." There were endless miles of patrol duty to be ridden, horses to be kept in condition, and hay to be cut and stacked. Punishment for breaking military rules could mean a day or more in the small guardhouse. Occasionally, reports of Indian war parties reached the fort, but these were either false alarms or were from too far away to concern the Fort Collins command.

In 1865 and 1866 additional buildings were constructed as units came and went. Then in mid-1866 an important visitor sealed the fate of the Fort Collins military post. Gen. William T. Sherman, on an inspection tour in the West, visited the fort and recommended that it be abandoned. The settlers fought the decision in letters and meetings, but the Indians were no longer a threat, and the Overland routes no longer needed guarding. In March 1867 the order was handed down: move the troops to other posts, dismantle what can be moved, and open the land to settlers. The first two orders were quickly carried out. By fall Mrs. James Hanna, bride of the former soldier, reported only about a half dozen of the buildings still standing. Opening the land to settlement took five years because of governmental red tape.

Finally, in 1872 the War Department disclaimed any further need for the land, and settlers were allowed to take up homesteads. The Larimer County Land Improvement Corporation surveyed and platted the town of Fort Collins in 1873. The new town included the few remaining fort buildings and some that had been built privately in the intervening years. From this beginning came the town of Fort Collins we know today.



*Old Fort Collins, 1865. Fort Collins Museum.*

**Wayne C. Sundberg**, Fort Collins, is a retired secondary social studies teacher, journalist, and local historian. He is the author of *Historic Fort Collins, Travelin' Trails: The Overland Trail in Northern Colorado*, and numerous articles on Fort Collins history. His video presentation *Wanderin' Through Fort Collins Past-Part 3* is online at [atlas.fcgov.com/WanderinPart3/msh.htm](http://atlas.fcgov.com/WanderinPart3/msh.htm).



# Colonel Collins was Lawyer, Soldier

By Wayne Sundberg

*Excepted from the Fort Collins Triangle Review*

William Oliver Collins was born in Somers, Connecticut, August 23, 1809, a descendant of English settlers who came to Massachusetts in the 1630s. He completed his basic education at Wesleyan Academy in Wilbraham, Massachusetts, and graduated from Amherst College in 1833. After the death of his wife that year, he moved to Hillsboro, Ohio, where he apprenticed to study law with two different law firms. He received his law degree from Cincinnati Law School and was admitted to the bar on September 8, 1835, at the age of twenty-six.

At Hillsboro, Collins involved himself in many civic and commercial ventures. He served as prosecuting attorney for Highland County from 1837 to 1840. He helped organize the first turnpike company in Ohio, and he served on the boards of two railway companies for several years. William married Catherine Wever in 1843, and they had three children: Caspar, Mary, and Josephine. Mary died when she was only six years old.

The outbreak of the Civil War led Collins in an entirely unexpected direction. He was a member of the State Senate of Ohio when the war began, and he immediately asked permission to raise Union troops. Granted a commission as a colonel, he quickly recruited the First Battalion of the Ohio Volunteer Cavalry. However, shortages of horses and equipment caused the Secretary of War to delay commissioning the battalion. Collins then accepted a lesser commission of a lieutenant colonel and recruited the Sixth Regiment, Ohio Volunteer Cavalry.

The troops received orders to report to Major General Halleck on March 13, 1862, and were assigned to Fort Laramie in Dakota Territory. Colonel Collins's command stretched from east of Fort Laramie to South Pass, and from the South Platte in the Colorado Territory to the present Montana border. The Ohioans, who had joined the army to fight Confederates, now found themselves confronted by antagonistic Sioux and Cheyennes and miles of treeless plains.

Colonel Collins was popular with the troops and commanded their respect and loyalty. He dealt with Indian tribes in a fair and forceful manner that showed both compassion for and acceptance of their way of life. He was no desk-bound commander, preferring to be in the field with his troops.

In summer 1863 Colonel Collins and his nineteen-year-old son Caspar returned to Ohio to recruit more troops. The new regiment, the Eleventh Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, arrived at Fort Laramie on October 10, with young Caspar carrying a new commission as second lieutenant. Part of the regiment took over Camp Collins, near Laporte, Colorado Territory, in May 1864. Colonel Collins made two visits to the post. First, in August 1864, he came from Fort Laramie and designated the site of a replacement fort for the post that had been destroyed by floods. He returned in late September and altered his original plan for Fort Collins.

Troops under Colonel Collins escorted wagons and stagecoaches on the Overland Trail, explored new and safer routes for travel, furnished escorts for railroad survey parties, built a number of outlying military posts, maintained the telegraph line, and fought several battles with the Plains Indians. In addition, Collins studied plants and animals and gathered weather information for the Smithsonian Institution.

Colonel Collins left his command at the end of February 1865 and returned to Ohio, and he received his discharge papers on April 1. However, the tragedy of the war was not over for his family. Lt. Caspar Collins was killed in an engagement with a large party of Sioux and Cheyennes at Platte Bridge Station on July 25, 1865.

After the war, William O. Collins returned to his law practice in Hillsboro. He was involved in educational causes and was a tireless worker in the St. Mary's Episcopal Church. He died in Hillsboro on October 26, 1880.



# Virginia Dale Abounds in Folklore

By Wayne Sundberg

Excerpted from the Fort Collins Triangle Review

Picture, if you will, a peaceful glade tucked away in the foothills. A small stream meanders through, providing water for wild and domestic animals. Grass for grazing is abundant, and pine trees dot the hillsides. Samuel Bowles, editor of the *Springfield (MA) Republican*, described such a place in a letter he wrote while passing through northern Colorado in June 1865:

Virginia Dale deserves its pretty name. A pearly, lively-looking stream runs through a beautiful basin, of perhaps one hundred acres, among the mountains . . . fronted by rock embattlement, and flanked by the snowy peaks . . . it is difficult to imagine a more lovable spot in nature's kingdom. (Samuel Bowles, *Across the Continent* (1866), 57–58.)

Bowles was describing Virginia Dale and the little valley where the Virginia Dale Stage Station was when he visited—and still is.

Originally called Rocky Ridge, the area abounds in legends and folk tales, many concerning its most infamous early resident, Joseph Albert “Jack” Slade. It is said that Slade renamed the area for his wife, Virginia, whose maiden name was Dale. Slade was appointed division agent of the Overland Stage Company in 1862. He had a large home station built that year on a knoll overlooking Dale Creek.

Stories of Slade and his escapades are as colorful as any in western folklore. He has been described as a gentleman when sober, and a murdering maniac when drunk. He supposedly shot Jules Beni, a former employee of the Overland Stage Company, and to have cut off his ears. Legend says Slade wore one of the ears as a watch fob. Other stories link Slade to a band of outlaws who regularly robbed the coaches of the Overland Stage Company.

Samuel Clemens met Slade on a cross-country stage trip in the early 1860s as a boy of eighteen. He later described meeting Slade when his party was dining at one of the stage stations:

The most gentlemanly-appearing, quiet and affable officer we had yet found along the road in the Overland Company's service was the person who sat at the head of the table, at my elbow. Never youth stared and shivered as I did when I heard them call him Slade!

Here was romance, and I was sitting face to face with it! . . . Here, right by my side, was the actual ogre who, in fights and brawls and various ways, *had taken the lives of twenty-six human beings*, or all men had lied about him! I suppose I was the proudest stripling that ever traveled to see strange lands and wonderful people. (Mark Twain, *Roughing It* (1872, 1972), 96.)

Slade later offered young Clemens the last cup of coffee in the pot. Clemens politely refused, but Slade insisted and gave it to him anyway. Clemens wrote, “I thanked him and drank it, but it gave me no comfort, for I could not feel sure that he would not be sorry, presently, that he had given it away, and proceed to kill me to distract his thought from the loss. But nothing of the kind occurred.” (Ibid., 97.)



Illustration of Mark Twain meeting Jack Slade by Benjamin Clinedinst for the 1899 edition of *Roughing It*.

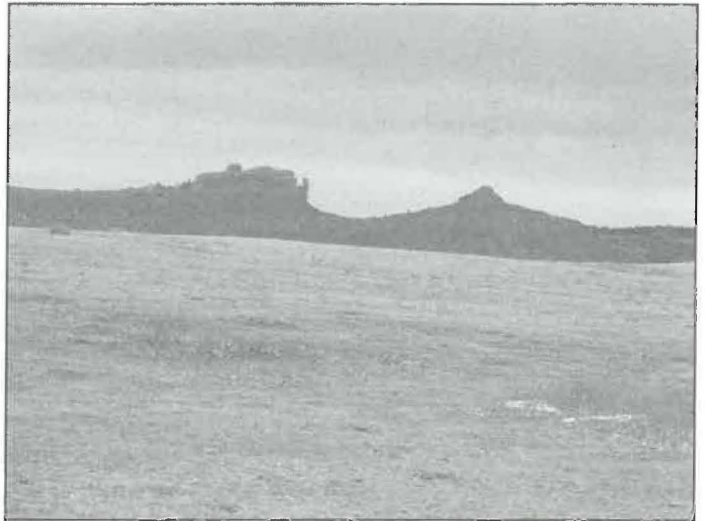
Slade later was fired by the stage company for some of his drunken escapades. He died at the end of a hangman's rope in Virginia City, Montana, in 1864. The Overland Stage Company sold the property to S. C. Leach, the last station agent, in 1868 after the Union Pacific Railroad reached Cheyenne in 1867. It became a store and the post office for the area. After U.S. Highway 287 bypassed the structure in the 1920s, it fell into disuse. It was deeded to the Virginia Dale Home Demonstration Club in 1950 (now the Virginia Dale Community Club), and they used it as a meeting place.

The general appearance of the station and its surroundings is much the same as it was when Samuel Bowles described it in 1865. Virginia Dale is the only Overland Stage Station to survive virtually intact. It is an important link to our historic past.

NOTE: The Virginia Dale Stage Station was designated on the National Register of Historic Properties in 1985. Stabilization and preservation of the building was funded by a grant from the Colorado State Historical Society in 1996.



"Mark Twain," portrayed by Hugh Bingham, will visit with Tours A and B at Virginia Dale. Photograph by Wayne Sundberg.



Overland Trail landmarks, Steamboat Rock (l.) and Tug Rock (r.). Cherokee Station site is in the foreground. Photograph by Wayne Sundberg.



Tour B will hike through these Overland Trail ruts, seen from the top of Signature Rock. Photograph by Wayne Sundberg.



# Tour C

## The Four Trader Forts of the South Platte River

Attempts to trade with Santa Fe were made from the earliest days of the United States buying the Louisiana Purchase. Spain was determined to control all trade and squelched these efforts; however, in 1821, when Mexico gained independence from Spain, this policy was reversed (for a while). William Becknell's very successful trade excursion in 1823 began several years of lucrative trade along the Santa Fe Trail.

Independent trappers scoured the southern Rockies, but getting their pelts to the market in St. Louis was a challenge. A few Mexican merchants bought the trappers' pelts and grubstaked them for another year, and a few trappers joined a caravan on its way to St. Louis.

The route along the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains was known first as the Trapper's Trail. It was used by French trappers in the late 18th and early 19th century to travel south to winter in Taos and trade with the locals. Later it was used by American trappers for the same purpose. They preferred Taos to Santa Fe as the law in Taos was less restrictive than in Santa Fe. Taos was a great agricultural area—flour, vegetables, horses, mules, cattle, sheep were produced—all needed commodities in the north. Taos was also famous for its beautiful women and the whiskey (called “Taos Lightning”) made from locally grown wheat.

During the 1820s American trappers worked the Rocky Mountain region gaining great knowledge of the area and its people. Beaver pelts had been their quest with great success until about 1840 when the market fell due to the popularity of silk hats. Interestingly, the local Native Americans established somewhat of a peace among themselves about this time, which coincided with shift from beaver to buffalo robes. The Indians did the major portion of the work—the men did the killing, the women prepared the hides, and the trappers became traders carrying goods to the Indian camps to trade for the hides. This land was the home of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians; however, other tribes, the Sioux and occasionally the Pawnee, came to trade as well.

The trading forts began to be established in the early 1830s—Fort Laramie on the North Platte River and Bent's Fort on the Arkansas—near the Indian hunting grounds, creating a convenient place where the Indians could bring buffalo hides and other pelts to trade for a greater variety of goods. Some trading posts were established by former trappers, but business men from the east came west to take advantage of the opportunity as well. All of the forts were built of adobe as that was the most available building material; the other advantages of adobe are that they are cool in summer, warm in winter, almost fireproof, and easily defended. All four forts were commercial adventures and were never military forts. With so many trading forts in the area, it was inevitable that not all of them could survive.

These forts transformed the “trails” into “roads” as wagons began to move goods to the “forts” and the hides and pelts to the settlements. When the trading forts were established, the trail became known as the South Platte River Trail. When the Cherokee used a portion of it on their way to the California gold fields, it became the Cherokee Trail, and that's how we know it best today.

The following order of fort information below is as we'll see them on our tour, not according to age, importance, or activity.

### **Fort St. Vrain (1837–1846)**

This fort was established by the Bent, St. Vrain & Co. It was the largest of the four forts along the South Platte River and was built in the same pattern as Bent's Fort on the Arkansas River. Its official name was Fort Lookout, but as Marcellin St. Vrain was the proprietor, it was always called Fort St. Vrain, and that name stuck. Another name used was Fort George, as George Bent was involved in its construction. The site was chosen for the availability of clay soil, the possibility of drawing the northern Cheyenne away from Fort Laramie, and to compete with the rendezvous for the “free” trapper trade.

Marcellin St. Vrain, youngest brother to Ceran, was always considered a gentlemen of great integrity. He married a Sioux woman, with the hope of trade with them as well. The traders running the trading forts competed vigorously among themselves for the trade, with alcohol becoming one of the trade items used as a way of binding the Indians to a particular fort. However, a better method was to marry into the tribe.

Fort St. Vrain entertained some interesting visitors during its life. John C. Frémont came twice—the first time in 1842 and again in 1843. His arrival in 1843 was on the 4th of July, and Marcellin prepared a feast in celebration and served some ice cream. This became one of the legends of the West, and ice cream socials were held on the site in the early days of settlement. Frémont wrote on July 4, 1843: “About noon . . . we arrived at the fort, where Mr. St. Vrain received us with his customary kindness.”

Some interesting quotes from others who came through the area:

Twelve miles below Fort Lancaster we passed Fort George, a large trading post kept up by Bent and St. Vrain. . . . At this time, fifteen or twenty men were stationed there, under the command of Mr. Marsalina St. Vrain.

—Rufus B. Sage, September 2, 1842

About noon we reached “Fort George” or as it is more commonly called “St. Vrain's Fort”. . . . The Fort is built on an elevated level near the river. It is built of “adobes” or unburnt brick and is quadrangular, with bastions at the alternate angles so arranged as to sweep the four faces of the walls. The main entrance is guarded by heavy gates and above by a tower.

—Theodore Talbot, July 14, 1843

At noon we rested under the walls of a large fort. . . . It was now abandoned and fast falling into ruin. . . . Our horses recoiled in terror from the neglected entrance, where the heavy gates were torn from their hinges and flung down.

—Francis Parkman, August 1846

From Pueblo to St. Vrain on the south fork of the Platte . . . we had a good road. . . . We made a ferry boat at St. Vrain's ft. out of planks that we found there and took it down to the crossing.

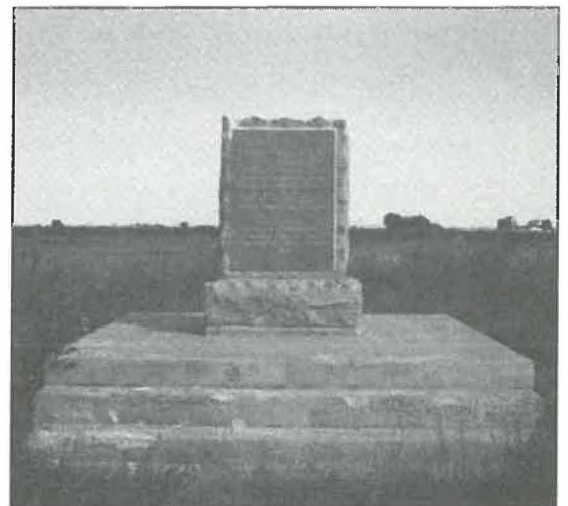
—John Rankin Pyeatt, June 1849

During its years of operation, the caravan would leave with its cargo in early spring heading south to Bent's Fort, where the hides would be readied for the trip to St. Louis. There would be four or five wagons, but as they traveled south the caravan would grow as wagons from the other forts joined in for common security; mail would also have been part of the cargo. They began to close the forts in the summer when the trade was almost nonexistent and to open them in the winter when the hides and pelts were their best.

After ending operations in the area, upkeep was not well done, so many considered Fort St. Vrain abandoned before it was officially closed by the company. For a few years, the deteriorating buildings, no doubt, hosted many a traveler as the location was a good camping site.

Charles Bent was killed in the “Taos Uprising” in 1847, and George died that year of illness. Marcellin St. Vrain left the area and returned to his home in St. Louis, and Ceran sold his share of the company to William Bent in 1849. William came north to St. Vrain for a while, making repairs and doing some trading with the Indians as well as trading tired out animals to emigrants for fresh ones. He returned to the Arkansas River site and built the new Bent's Fort, as the “old” site had been destroyed when he blew it up. He destroyed it because he was upset over the offer he had received from the U.S. Army, which wanted to purchase it for their use.

The site is now privately owned and is located four miles southwest of Gilcrest on Weld Co. Rd. 40, which is usually accessible on the county road. A granite monument was dedicated at the site in 1952.



### **Fort Vasquez (1835-1842)**

This fort was established by Louis Vasquez and Andrew W. Sublette in 1835 and was the first of the four forts to be built. They sold it to Lock & Randolph in 1841, and it was abandoned in 1842. It was also a post for trading buffalo robes and beaver hides with the Arapaho and Cheyenne Indians. It served as an emigrant station after the 1859 gold rush and as a stage station for Ben Holladay's Overland Stage Line. Civil Engineer E. Willard Smith, traveling west with one of the caravans taking supplies to the forts in 1839, made these comments in his journal:

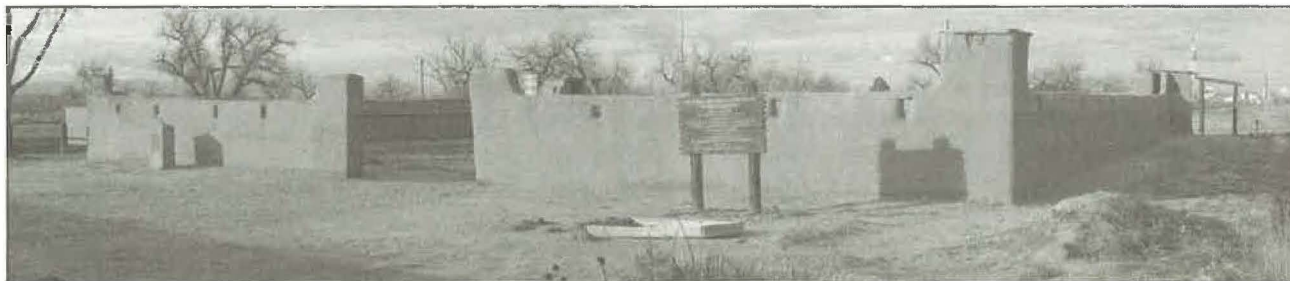
Left Independence Aug 6th 1839. The party, at starting, consisted of 32 persons, under the command of Messrs. Vasquez & Sublette. There were four wagons loaded with goods, to be used in the Indian trade, drawn by six mules each. . . . There were also, with us, a Mr. Thompson who had a trading post on the Western side of the Mountains.

31<sup>st</sup> [August]. . . . Mr. Lupton encamped with us today as well as last night. He is trying to keep up with us, but probably will not succeed, as our mules can travel much faster than his oxen.

7th. [September]. . . . We ate our dinner at a creek called Fontaine Quiboulle, boiling Spring. . . . This is a famous resort in the winter for the Arapahoe and Shian Indians. The traders have houses here for trading with them in winter.

13<sup>th</sup> [September]. Today about four o'clock, we passed Mr. Lupton's fort. A little after five we reached our destination. Our arrival caused considerable stir among the inmates. A great many free trappers are here at present. The fort is quite a nice place, situated on the South fork of the River Platte. It is build of daubies or Spanish bricks [adobes] . . . quite durable . . . the fort is opposite Long's Peaks.

Fort Vasquez is located one mile south of Platteville, between the traffic lanes of US Hwy. 85. It is currently owned by the Colorado Historical Society. A visitor's center and museum is open daily in summer and Wednesday through Sunday in the winter. Hours are 9:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m.



### **Fort Lupton—also know as Fort Lancaster (1836–1840)**

Lancaster P. Lupton established this fort. Faint traces of the wall's foundation can still be found. He was an interesting character, beginning his career as an army lieutenant after graduating from West Point. He resigned his commission in 1836 and moved west, having been attracted by the trade activity. He, like so many of the mountain men, married a Cheyenne woman. He later established a trading post near Fort Laramie, but got into trouble with the authorities for selling alcohol to the Indians. Some interesting quotes about Fort Lupton follow:

the trading establishment of Mr. Lupton. His post was beginning to assume the appearance of a comfortable farm: stock, hogs, and cattle, were ranging about on the prairie; there were different kinds of poultry; and there was a wreek of a promising garden, in which a considerable variety of vegetables had been in flourishing condition, but it had been almost entirely ruined by the recent high waters.

—John C. Frémont, 1842



passed St. Vrain's Fort . . . a few miles brought us to Lupton's Fort and we passed two others during the day. They are all deserted now, the trade having become too small to support them.

—Lt. William B. Franklin, July 21, 1845

Twelve miles farther on [from Fort St. Vrain], near the spot where we encamped, were the remains of another fort, standing in melancholy desertion and neglect.

—Francis Parkman, August 1846

we passed the ruins of 3 old abandoned trading posts, a few miles apart, which I was told were formerly called respectively: Forts Lupton, Lancaster and St. Vrain, after their several owners. They seemed to have been abandoned several years, nothing remains but the crumbling 'dobe walls.

—Robert M. Peck, 1857

Fort Lupton is located one mile north of present Fort Lupton, Colorado, west of US Hwy 85. The South Platte Valley Historical Society is in the process of building a replica very near its original site, and they offer interpretive tours.

### **Fort Jackson (1837)**

Henry Fraeb and Peter A. Sarpy established Fort Jackson, which was financed by the American Fur Company. An interesting quote by Rufus B. Sage on September 2, 1842, states: "Between this point [Fort Vasquez] and Fort Lancaster, I noticed the ruins of another trading post, much dilapidated in appearance, and nearly leveled with the ground."

Sarpy and Fraeb took advantage of Marcellin St. Vrain's youth and lack of experience in the fur trade the first year he was there and purchased all the hides he'd traded for at a discounted price. In the meantime, William Bent and Ceran St. Vrain decided that they needed to buy Fort Jackson. A few months later, while Ceran was in St. Louis, he visited the American Fur Company offices and made an offer. The depression of 1837 and the devastation that smallpox had caused on the northern tribes, which caused a loss in trade, made the American Fur Company open to discussion and the deal was made. Agreement was also reached that Bent, St. Vrain & Co. would not venture to the North Platte to trade with the northern tribes and that the American Fur Company would not trade along the South Platte River. So, the life of this fort was very short.

This site is currently on private property. It was located approximately four miles south of Platteville, Colorado, and west of US Hwy 85. The exact site is unknown.

### **Latham (early-day Cherokee City)**

This site served as a stage stop for about one year in 1863–64 and was named for Senator Milton S. Latham from California. It is located a little below the mouth of the Cache la Poudre River as it flows into the South Platte River. The one building in the area was a substantially built one-and-one-half story log structure. Its location was important as it was at the junction of the branch stage line to Denver, and stages made close connections east and west. It also served as a storehouse for supplies for three divisions, and this made it the most important way station on the Overland Stage Line route between Atchison, Kansas, and Placerville, California. As a stage station of such importance, a lot of mail was dispatched through it that was destined for California, Salt Lake, and other important sites in Nevada and Montana. Overland Stage Line employee, Frank A. Root, recalled his duties at Latham:

At Latham there arrived daily from Atchison a sack or two of mail for Denver, one sack for Fort Bridger, one (sometimes two) for Salt Lake, one each for Virginia City and Carson City, Nev., one for Placerville, one (sometimes two) for Sacramento, and nearly every day, for six days in the week, two for San Francisco. In addition there was a way mail for the principal offices along the route, to be opened at each post-office west of Marysville, on the Big Blue river, in Kansas. No paper mail from the east went overland to Placerville, Sacramento or San Francisco except that paid for at full letter rates—ten cents for each half ounce—it being all carried by ocean steamer and across the Isthmus. The paper mail for Denver

and Salt Lake and for points in Montana and what is now Idaho was carried by the stage. That for Nevada, California, Oregon and Washington went from New York by the Isthmus route.

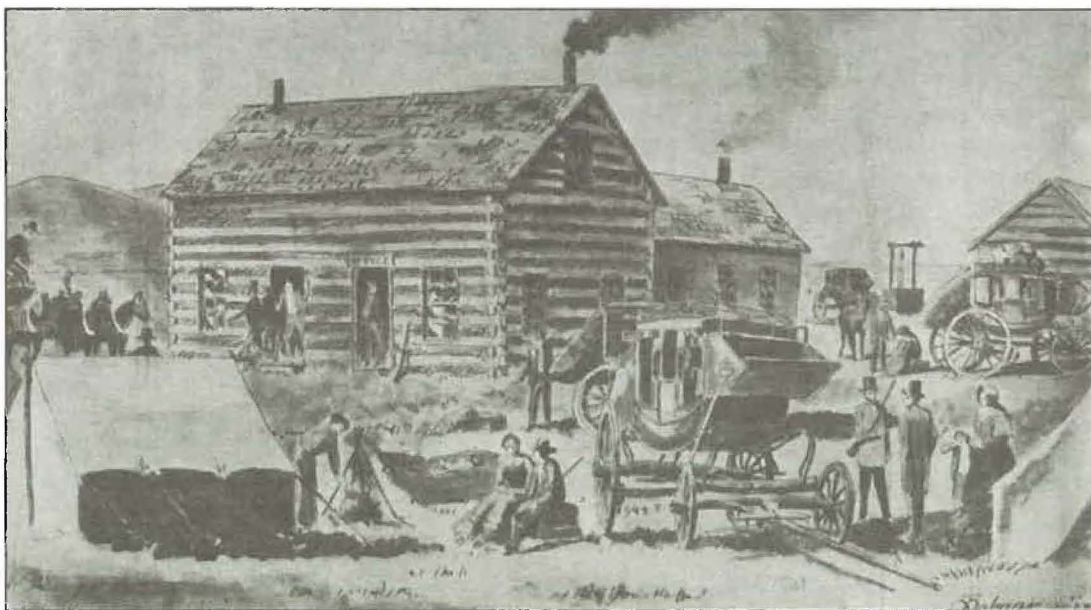
My duties as local mail agent at Latham were to take off every sack of mail from the west- and east-bound stages, note the condition of each sack, compare the tags, check off the way-mail bills, being careful to note the errors, if any, and, after signing the bill, to send it in an official envelope to the department, at Washington; also to make out a new way-mail bill, and then reload the sacks for their destination—the Pacific or Atlantic. Almost invariably there was three or four times more mail going west than there was east-bound. Usually the mail-bags for the Pacific slope filled both the front and rear boots of the stage-coach.

The Colorado mails, after reaching Latham from the east, were loaded onto the Denver stage, while those for the west went across the South Platte, the river being forded at Latham, except when the high water made that an impossibility. Coming from the west, the sacks of mail from Denver were, for the time being, deposited in my office at the station and taken to the Missouri river on the first regular daily east-bound coach from California, one of which usually left Latham immediately after supper every evening, according to schedule. When it happened that three stages were standing in front of the office at Latham at one time—the passengers waiting for a “square meal”—it was by all odds the busiest station on the road between Atchison and the Rockies. (Frank A. Root and William Elsey Connelley, *The Overland Stage to California* (1901): 588–89.)

Quoting Frank A. Root again:

The overland stage route changed its route from Lodge Pole creek, opposite old Julesburg, to near the site of Cherokee City post-office—Latham—140 miles west of the old crossing. The new crossing of the south fork of the Platte was a short distance below the mouth of the Cache la Poudre, thirty-five miles east from Laporte.

After the change to the new route the stages forded the South Platte at Latham station and followed up the Cherokee trail along the Cache la Poudre to Laporte, which was made a “home” station on the stage line. (Root and Connelley, 350–51.)



*Latham Station During the Indian Excitement.* Illustration from Frank A. Root and William Elsey Connelley, *The Overland Stage to California* (1901): 346.

Latham is located about 60 miles northeast of Denver and about 5 miles east of Greeley near the mouth of the Cache Le Poudre River. It is now on private property.

In 1844 “Taos Lightning” became a concern, causing the government to establish an Indian agency in the area. It was called the Upper Platte and Arkansas Agency, which included an extremely large physical area,

and its responsibilities were large as well. The agency was to license and regulate traders, monitor the liquor trade with special concern for Mexican imports, protect emigrants, and safeguard entities from one another. Thomas Fitzpatrick was named as the first agent, and he set up his operation at the new Bent's Fort on the Arkansas River. He was a long-time friend of William Bent and was well-known and highly regarded by all the mountain men.

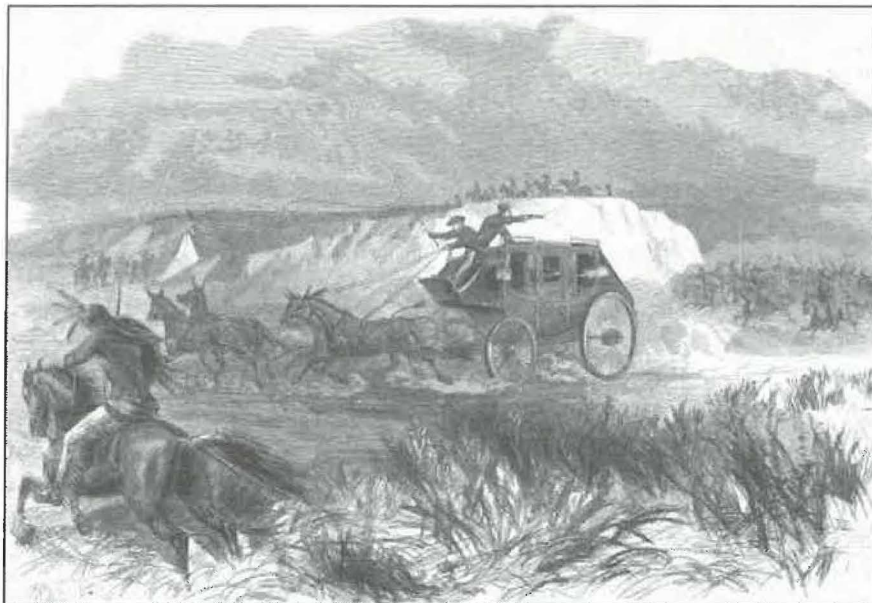
During his ten years of service as Indian agent, Fitzpatrick spent a lot of time at Fort St. Vrain mediating concerns with the Arapaho and Northern Cheyenne. His tenure was successful in many ways, as he was also generally respected by the Indians. He was very instrumental in achieving the Fort Laramie Treaty in 1851 where a "Grand Council" of about 10,000 Indians gathered to approve the treaty. Fort Laramie was unable to sustain such a large gathering, so it was moved several miles east to Horse Creek.

This treaty provided safe travel for emigrants and granted lands between the Arkansas River and the North Platte River to the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes. In addition, U.S. military posts were authorized to build roads. An annuity of \$18,000 per year was guaranteed for fifty years, which was later changed by Congress to fifteen years. One-third of the annuity goods were to be delivered to Fort St. Vrain for distribution.

When Fitzgerald died in 1853, he was succeeded by John W. Whitfield, who found the territory too large and overwhelming. The tribes he was to deal with were daunting as well. His arrival at Fort St. Vrain coincided closely with the Grattan Fight, which happened near Fort Laramie, giving him a major situation to deal with immediately. The Grattan Fight, many believe, was the incident that ignited the decade of the Indian wars.

The huge area and the many different Indian tribes made Whitfield's job too much for one man, so in 1855, the agency was divided into two—one in the north (the Upper Platte Agency) and one in the south (the Arkansas Agency).

The troubles in the north caused the agent there, Thomas Twiss, to plan to move to the site of St. Vrain and create a separate agency to the Cheyenne and Arapaho. Since the intent of the Fort Laramie Treaty was to keep the Sioux, Arapaho, and Cheyenne south of the North Platte River, the St. Vrain location seemed a more logical place. However, the Sioux were not included in Twiss' recommendation to the Department of Indian Affairs; he simply wanted to close the agency at Fort Laramie, which was the most convenient location for the Sioux. This recommendation was never acted upon. Fort St. Vrain never became an agency headquarters, but it did serve as a distribution point during the 1850s.

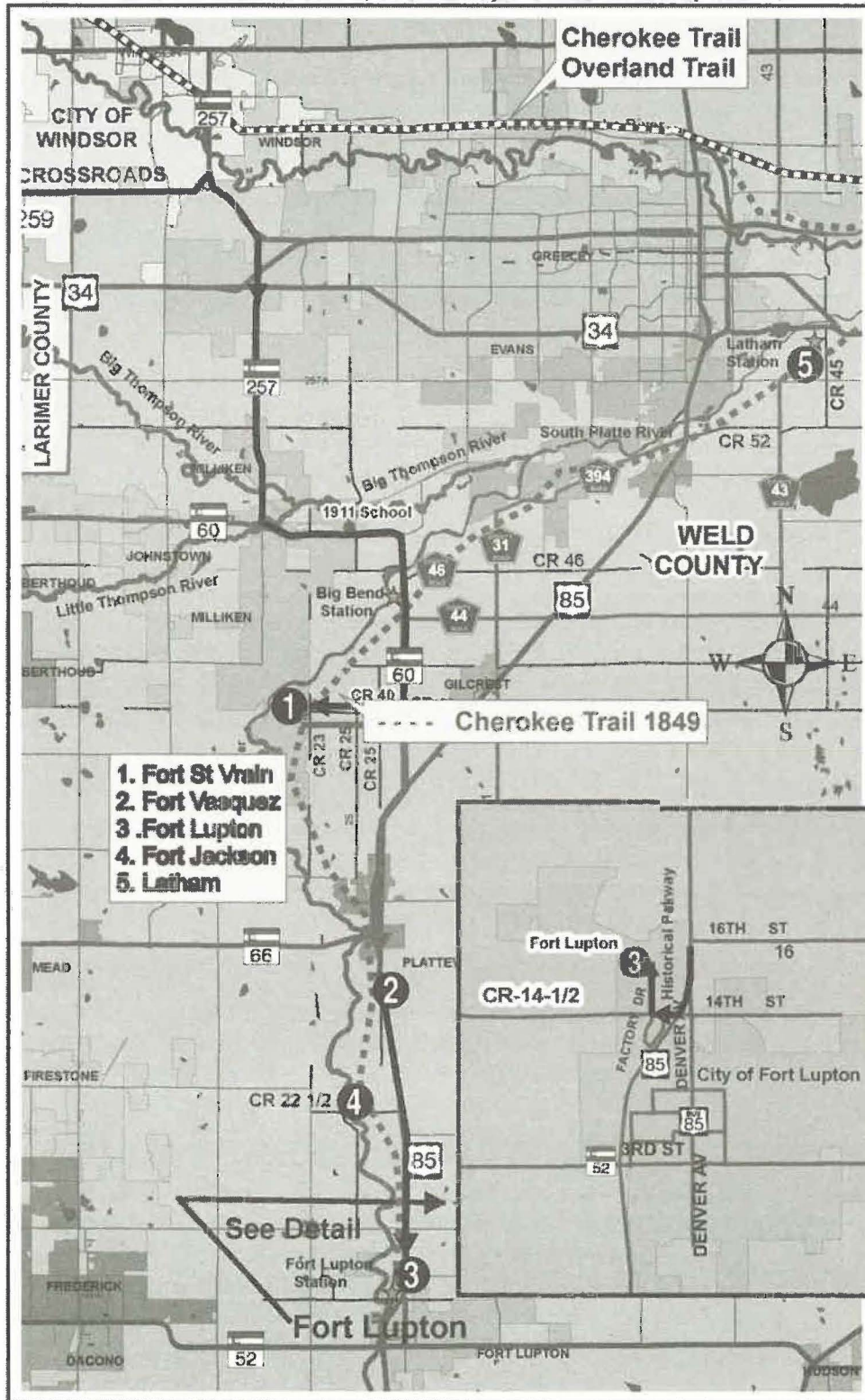


*Indians Attacking Butterfield's Overland Despatch Coach. Harper's Weekly (April 21, 1866): 248.*

## Tour C Map



# Tour C: Fort St Vrain, Fort Vasquez and Fort Lupton



# Tour D

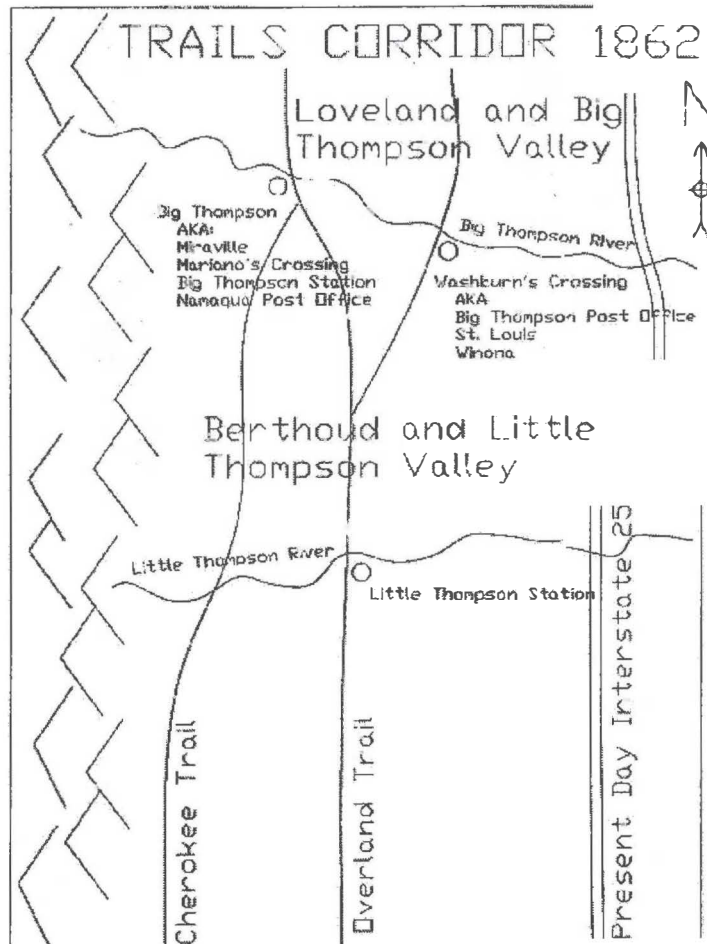
## Loveland-Berthoud Tour

### Trails Across the Thompson Valleys

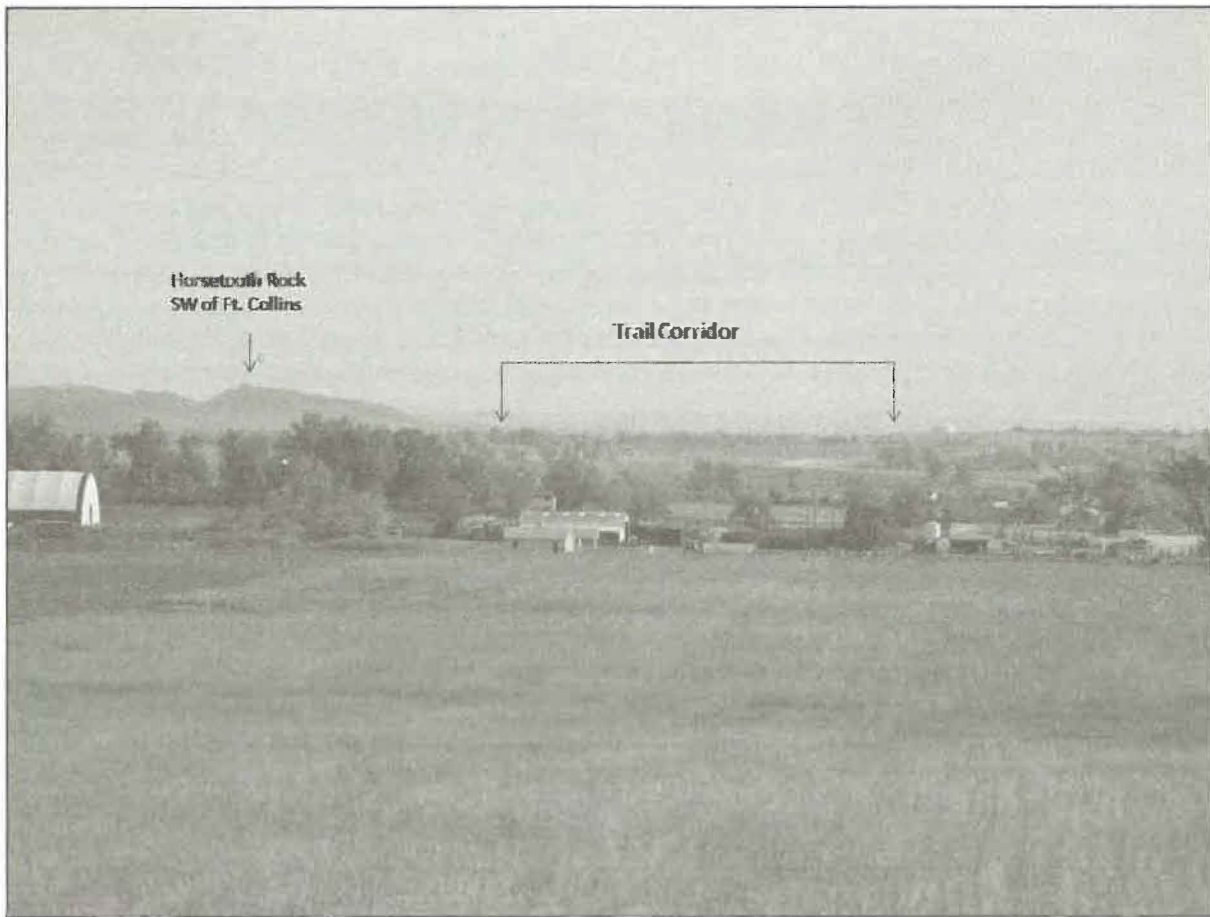
On a clear day, you can see forever, or so it seems. A view as far as the eye can see is what was seen by the many people who traveled over these trails. Even today, on one of those beautiful clear days, you can see from the Thompson Valleys north to the Wyoming state line.

Nestled between the majestic Rocky Mountains and the rolling plains was and is the perfect path to travel north and south. Sheltered by the mountains with rivers along the way to stop at, the trails were the most convenient path to follow. Known by many names including Trappers Trail, Cherokee Trail, and Overland Trail—and later the Lincoln Highway and Interstate 25—they carried Indians, mountain men, traders, animals, emigrants, gold seekers, and general travelers between the eastern states, Santa Fe, and Fort Laramie. The paths may have been within a few miles of each other, but they all had the same purpose: to expedite travel between New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming.

Early on, the trail carried people on foot, then by horse, mule, wagon, and stage coach. As time passed, modern forms of transportation took over the trails, and they became roads and highways. Today, remnants of the old trails, camp grounds, stage stops, and settlements can still be seen along the trails.



## BERTHOUD AND LITTLE THOMPSON VALLEY



Trail corridor looking north from present Yellowstone Road and U.S. Highway 287 in south Larimer County.

**View of the Cherokee and Overland Trail Corridor.** The view from Yellowstone Road about 200 yards west of U.S. Highway 287 provides a vista of the corridor that contained the Cherokee and Overland trails as they coursed their ways north through the Little Thompson, Big Thompson, and Cache la Poudre Valleys. The landmark "Horsetooth Rock," nearly twenty miles in the distance, marks the general vicinity of present Fort Collins and the point where trails diverged to various destinations in Wyoming.

The earliest account of travel on the Cherokee Trail through the Little Thompson Valley presently known to exist occurred in June 1850. James Mitchell, in the Edmonson party, wrote:

14 [June] Fryday a Soon Start in hopes of a good days travel and in a few miles was detained by another bad creek we all got over again without loss our crse north aggain we were Scarce ever out of Sight of antilopes and 10 ["Several" cross through] of them were killed our gides Brother in law a young Snake Indian got hurt badly by his faling with [while?] in presuit of a wounde antilope in the evening we had another daingerous bad creek to cross the gide calls it Sadly because he found a Saddle on it long ago we camped up in the edge of the mountain on a little creek runing east, the water cold from the Snow" [Little Thompson River near Berthoud, Larimer Co., Colorado]. (Fletcher, Fletcher, and Whiteley, *Cherokee Trail Diaries*, Vol. II, 295.)

Mitchell's diary entry seems to indicate that the Cherokee Trail hugged the foothills on its course through the Little Thompson Valley. Government survey maps show subsequent roads, including the Overland Trail, were located two to three miles east in more open terrain.



**Little Thompson Crossing.** While trails crossed the Little Thompson Valley at several points within the three- to four-mile trail corridor, it is generally accepted that a crossing, campground, and stage station were located on the banks of the Little Thompson one-quarter mile west of present U.S. Highway 287.

On September 2, 1886, the stage station at the Little Thompson Crossing was the setting of an incident recalled by Frank Bartholf in the *Fort Collins Courier*:

After drinking Slade mounted the stage and ran the horses over to the Little Thompson station, when one of them laid down, played out. I was keeping the station for my brother-in-law, who had gone up into the hills to bring down his wife. As the stage drove up I went out to unhitch the horses. The driver made some remark to me and I answered him pretty short. Biff! Something struck me across the right eye. I turned quickly and looked straight into the barrels of two revolvers. I had never seen Slade before, but I knew right away that we were introduced. After I went into the stable he went over to where a couple of young fellows were camped and threatened to shoot one of their horses, and finally did shoot a dog laying under their wagon. Then he kicked their coffee pot over, put out their fire and went off. All this time two fellows with guns stood there and watched him. He afterwards wrote me a letter of apology, saying he thought I was the agent, and he did not allow any of his agents to cuss him.



According to oral histories of Little Thompson Valley, farmers who lived in the vicinity of the Little Thompson Crossing reported that the trail crossed the river in the area where today two trees bend toward each other to form an arch.

**Unknown Grave at the Little Thompson Crossing.** Located on private land in the vicinity of the Little Thompson Crossing lies an unmarked grave that may be linked to travel on the trail during the 1850s and '60s. Local oral histories hold that the occupant was a young man who died at the crossing and that the grave was disturbed by area youths in the 1940s.

The property owner and volunteers from the Berthoud Historical Society “capped” the grave in May 2009 to mark its location. Private parties are not given permission to visit this “last resting place” of an early pioneer.



Located on a bluff a short distance from the trail crossing on the Little Thompson River, this originally unmarked grave commands a spectacular view of Mt. Meeker and Longs Peak.

**Major John Kerr.** Native Virginian John Kerr established a homestead in the Little Thompson Valley in 1876. Kerr's intimate knowledge of the valley dated to the early 1860s when he was employed by Ben Holladay to oversee the segment of the Overland Stage Line that extended from Denver to Salt Lake. Kerr set up each station on the line, including a "swing station" on the banks of Little Thompson River where teams of fresh horses were hitched to stagecoaches for runs north to Namaqua or south to Burlington.

Kerr made his residence in the Little Thompson Valley from 1876 to 1893. Upon Kerr's death the Fort Collins, the *Courier* noted:

His was a brave, adventurous spirit and in early manhood we see him wending his way to the then far west. He arrived in St. Joseph, Missouri, in 1849, just at the height of the overland rush to the California gold fields. The following year he made his first trip across the plains with a train of bull teams loaded with merchandise, billed to Livingston & Kincaid, the pioneer traders of Salt Lake City. The venture, though extremely hazardous, was successful, and continuing in the business he made a round trip from the Missouri river to Salt Lake each succeeding year for eight years for the same firm, his freight bills often running as high as from \$50,000 to \$56,000. In 1859 he was engaged in transporting government supplies from Independence, Missouri, to Salt Lake City for Gen. Sidney Johnson's army, then employed in keeping the Mormons in subjection. His route lay up the North Platte via Fort Laramie and the South Pass. It was a wild country in those days, infested with savages who made frequent attempts to capture his train, but never with success. His reminiscences of those exciting times were intensely interesting and if printed would read like a romance.

While making the crossing at Green River in 1853, he fell in with Old Jim Baker, W.T. Shortridge and Harvey Jones, the acquaintance ripening into a warm and enduring friendship. Of these four and intrepid pioneers and frontiersmen but two are left to recount the thrilling scenes in which they had a part, Old Jim Baker, who is passing a quiet old age at his home on Snake river, and Mr. Shortridge of this city... When Ben Holladay moved the Overland stage line to Denver in 1863 Mr. Kerr was selected to take charge of the line from Denver to Salt Lake. He established all the stations on the road, purchased the stock and



supplies and employed the men. His orders were to see that the mail never failed to go through on time and he carried them out to the letter. While in charge of the line he never missed a trip or failed in getting the mail through according to contract. Everything was run on a high pressure system in those days. Competent men commanded wages ranging from \$200 to \$300 per month and everything else was in proportion.

**Pioneers of the Little Thompson Valley Monument.** In May 1937 a teacher and a group of students who opened the rural Red Rock School in 1881 erected a granite monument along the highway southwest of Berthoud to commemorate “the labors of the men and women who blazed the trails that others might more easily follow.” Engraved with an image of pioneers and a covered wagon, the monument was placed at the intersection of present County Road 4E and U.S. Highway 287.

At the monument’s unveiling, pioneer citizen Charles L. Wilson remarked, “The Overland Stage road in the early fifties and sixties came down onto the Little Thompson and crossed the creek just a few rods west of this marker, and on the old campground on the creek many relics have been found.” Contrary to the estimation of Mr. Wilson, who arrived in the area in 1880, the road was first used by the Overland Stage Company in 1862.

The marker’s remote location led to a lack of maintenance that caused the marker to be moved to Berthoud Town Park in the 1940s. The marker has remained in that location since that time and continues to memorialize the “trail heritage” held dear by the pioneers of Berthoud and the Little Thompson Valley.



Originally located at the present-day intersection of Larimer County Road 4E and U.S. Highway 287, the Pioneers of the Little Thompson Valley Monument may now be seen in Berthoud Town Park.

## LINCOLN HIGHWAY CONNECTION

Pioneer trails served a need for travel and commerce. Motorcars came of age in the early twenty century, and auto trails evolved into America’s first highways. Today’s U.S. Highway 287 follows the historic Lincoln Highway.

Currently a section of South Garfield Avenue in Loveland, this road was originally a section of the 1913–1915 nationwide Lincoln Highway, America’s first coast-to-coast rock highway. The Colorado Loop was a branch on the New York to San Francisco route that ran through Denver, recognized by the Lincoln Highway Association briefly, before withdrawing its recognition in 1915. Although officially removed, this recognition continued for years on maps and in business references along the Colorado route. Lincoln Avenue in Loveland was named in 1908, previous to the highway running through town on it in about 1913–1915.



LOVELAND	323	LOVELAND
<h1>The Lincoln Hotel</h1> <p>R. E. AUSTIN and L. E. AUSTIN Proprietors EUROPEAN PLAN</p> <p>Loveland's Newest and Best Hotel. Opened August 6, 1917 32 Rooms, All Modern—12 Rooms with Bath; 20 Rooms with Shower Bath Rates 75 Cents and Up</p>		
LOVELAND		COLORADO
<p>Langham J I, autos and supplies. <b>LARIMER COUNTY BANK &amp; TRUST CO.</b> Geo W Foote pres, J Wesley Jones vice-pres, A A Ferguson vice-pres, J M Cunningham cash, I. B Blair asst cash. <b>LARIMER COUNTY CO-OPERATIVE MILK CONDENSERY CO.</b> Charles Wetzel pres, A R Dohmer vice-pres, Ray E Mathews sec-treas &amp; mgr.</p> <p>C. J. Langston      R. J. Langston</p>  <p><b>The Lincoln Highway Garage</b> (Incorporated) Langston &amp; Son, Props. Best Equipped Shop for Repair Work of all kinds. Automobile Accessories, Oil and Gas. <b>AUTO LIVERY</b> PHONE LARIMER 1607 311 Lincoln Ave.      Loveland, Colo.</p> <p><b>LINCOLN HIGHWAY GARAGE,</b> Langston &amp; Son props, autos, storage, repairs, livery.</p>	<p>Leibel J W, barber. Lightner C E, billiards, cigars. Lincoln Avenue Garage, E A Gnoch sec-treas. <b>LINCOLN HOTEL,</b> R E &amp; L B Austin props. Loomis F W, groceries, fuel and feed. Loveland Bottling Co, Frank Davidson prop. Loveland Buggy Top Co, C Vientana mgr. Loveland Chamber of Commerce, C E Clark sec. Loveland Creamery.</p> <p><b>The Loveland Elevator</b> GRAIN, RAY, FRED AND FLOUR Car Lotz &amp; Specialty VELVET FLOUR LUCAS BRANDT, Mgr. Telephone Larimer 381</p> <p>Loveland      Colorado</p> <p><b>LOVELAND ELEVATOR THE,</b> Lucas Brandt mgr, hay, grain, feed and flour.</p>	

The Lincoln Highway Garage/Auto Livery was located at 311 Lincoln Ave.



Colorado Lincoln Highway section in Campion, between Berthoud and Loveland, 1913.

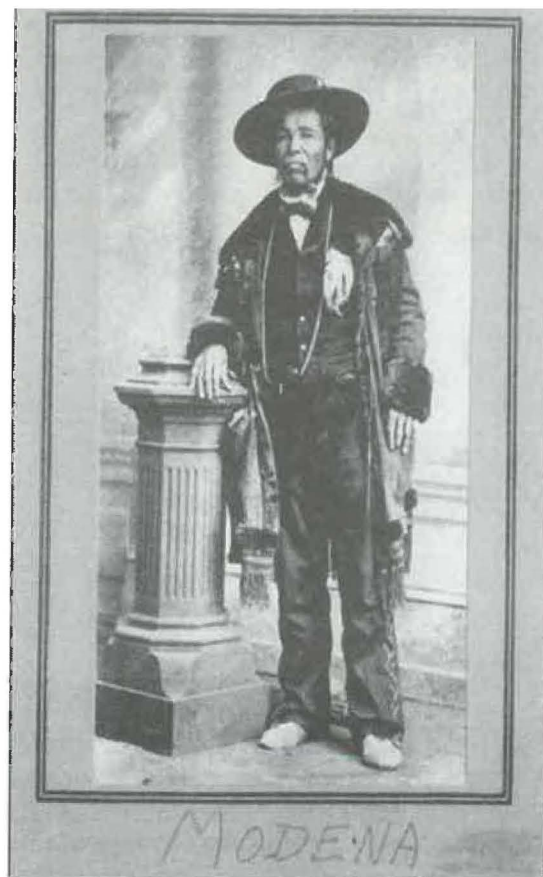


The Campion section of the Lincoln Highway sports the last of the 1948 county bridges.

## LOVELAND AND BIG THOMPSON VALLEY

**Mariano Medina, the first permanent settler in the Big Thompson Valley.** In 1858 Mariano Medina established the first permanent settlement on the right (south) bank of the Big Thompson River, where the lay of the land necessitated that the Cherokee Trail and the later Overland Stage route merge. Mariano's complex consisted of a traditional Spanish-style plaza surrounded on three sides by his neatly whitewashed log home, trading store, saloon, corrals, and eventually a post office. The settlement was originally called Miraville, then Mariano's Crossing, Big Thompson Crossing, and, finally, today's name Namaqua, after Sauk Chief Black Hawk's beautiful daughter. It grew to about one hundred people, some of whom were former mountain men with their Indian wives, as was Mariano. Mariano is credited with establishing the first business, first school, first church, and first consecrated cemetery in the valley. He was an excellent horseman and traded travelers' worn out stock for healthy animals he had fattened on abundant river-bottom grass. When the Overland Mail route was put through in 1862, his crossing was designated as a home station. The significance of this first community of "Indians and Mexicans" was discounted by later white settlers. No trace of the valley's first settlement remains today.

The spelling of his name has taken several forms. His first name was Mariano, and the correct Spanish form of the fairly common surname is Medina.





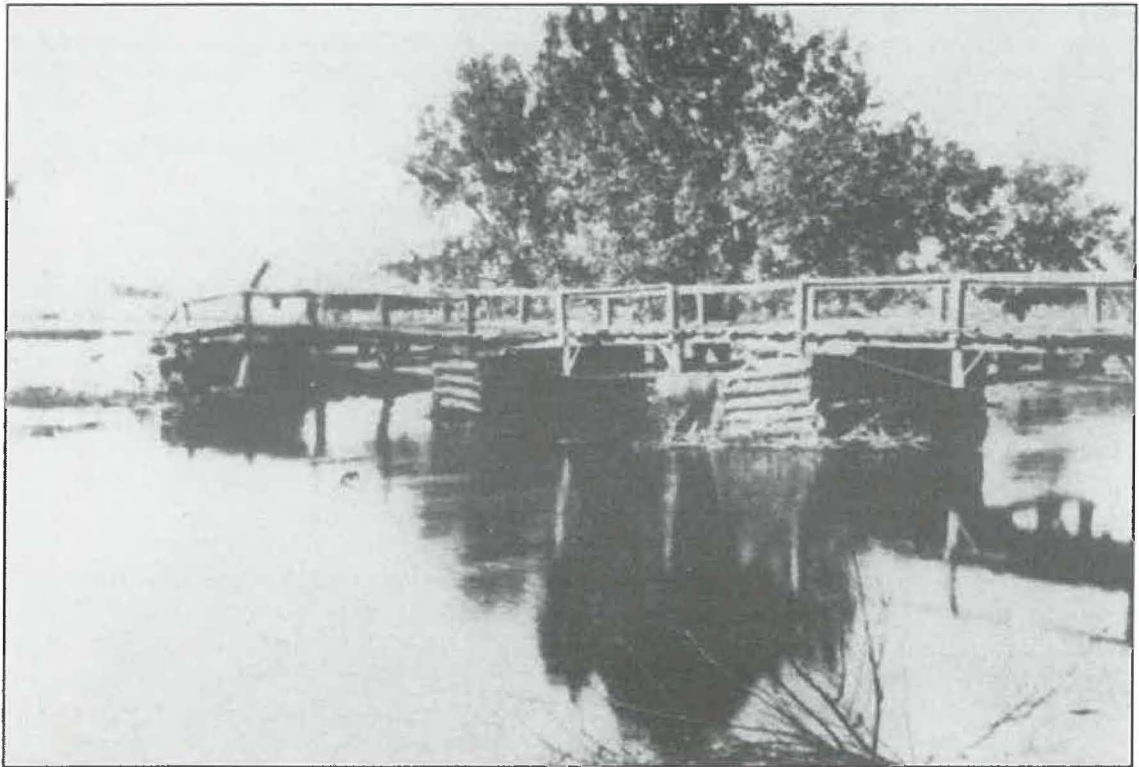


Early photograph of Mariano Medina's cabin on the south side of the Big Thompson River. The cabin was torn down in 1956, and some of the original logs were used to reconstruct the cabin in the Loveland Museum/Gallery.



Early photograph of the trading store/saloon and Namaqua post office on the north river bank.





Mariano Medina's Bridge on the Big Thompson, looking southwest from the north bank.

Mariano built a substantial toll bridge that withstood several floods. He charged from 25 cents to \$1, and fenced his land so that travelers must use his toll bridge in times of high water. The modern bridge is about two hundred feet downriver from the site of Mariano's toll bridge. Namaqua Road is slightly east of the original trails and heads more directly north, while the trails veered northeast after crossing the river.

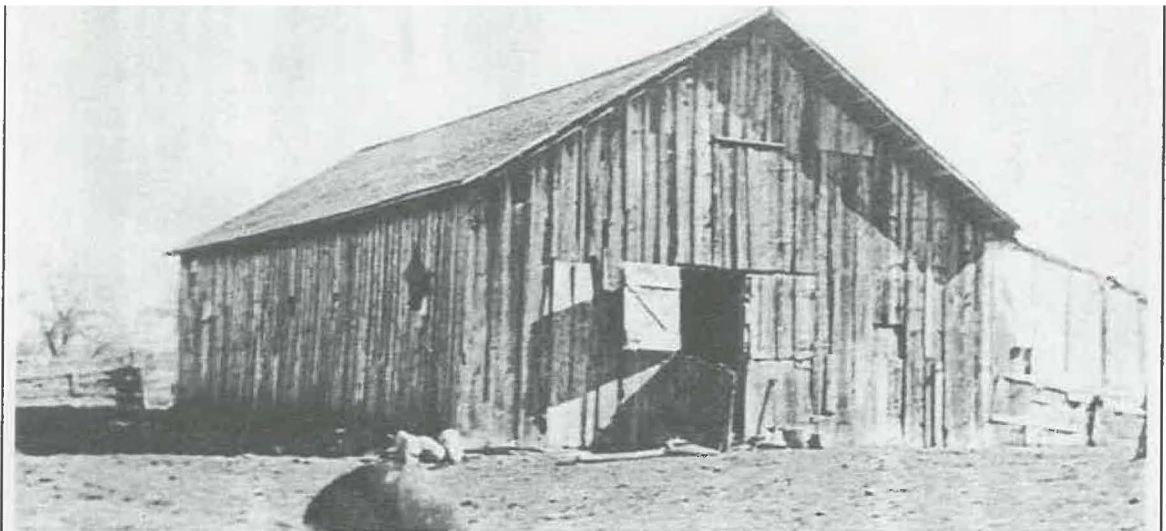


Photo by H. J. M. De la Cruz, Loveland, Colo.

OLD WELLS FARGO STAGE BARN BUILT IN 1866  
Located three miles west of Loveland, Colorado

Wells Fargo built a barn on the left (north) bank of the river after purchasing the Overland Stage Company in 1866.



Mariano Medina situated his family cemetery on higher ground south of his settlement and on the east side of the Cherokee Trail. It was surrounded by a rock wall and measured about 12 x 20 feet.



Memorial Marker in Namaqua Park.

The only known graves today are those of Mariano Medina's family and one family friend; but many agree that there were more graves in the past. The cemetery was viewed with curiosity mixed with respect by settlers and travelers, who expressed surprise at finding it so well kept in such an uncivilized land.

The earliest grave was of a family friend prior to 1864, followed by two of Mariano's children in 1864. Its 12 x 20 foot stone walls were kept neatly whitewashed, and its entrance was an ornately arched gate topped by a blue cross, a symbol of his Catholic faith. In all there were eight burials. In 1878 Mariano had to be buried outside the walls because there was no room inside. A young son by his second marriage was buried next to his father. In 1942 headstones were placed at the graves in respect for the area's first permanent settler. In 1960 the walls were torn down by the county coroner under court order and five graves were reported moved, along with a pioneer memorial marker, to Namaqua Park, across the road from Mariano's home.

Although the county coroner's report listed Mariano as one of the graves re-interred there, research has shown Mariano's grave was among those not moved from the original location. In 2003 an awareness project was started to bring attention to mistakes that may have been made in 1960. Fortunately, the Medina Cemetery escaped development for 151 years. Then when the cemetery was seriously threatened by development in its 151st year, three members of the Loveland Historical Society joined forces with preservation of the last vestige of the earliest settlers in mind, and now, with the help of many, such a plan was put in motion in 2009.

## DEATH ON THE CHEROKEE TRAIL

According to the earliest formal history of Larimer County published in 1911 by Ansel Watrous:

A lonely grave on the banks of the stream, three miles west of Loveland, bears witness that one adventure-some young man had found a final resting place. A headstone at this grave still bears the inscription:

To the Memory of  
H.L.W. PETERSON  
Aged 24 Years  
Was Killed by Lightning  
June 13, 1854

Nothing is known of his history, or of the companions who accompanied him on his fatal trip.

Until recently, that was all that was known about H. L. W. Peterson, whose remains were relocated to Loveland's Lakeside Cemetery in 1947. Thanks to new research, OCTA is dedicating a plaque to honor and recognize Peterson as a trail pioneer and adventurer, a brave young man killed in the pursuit of his dream.

The OCTA plaque, dedicated in August 2009, tells the rest of the story:

Bound for California via the Cherokee Trail, Calvin Hall Holmes, with seven wagons, nineteen drovers and about a thousand head of mostly Texas cattle, left Rogers, Benton County, Arkansas, on April 25, 1854. Travel was heavy that year, but in his diary Calvin soon wrote, "pass[ed] the foremost train."

On June 11 they arrived at Denver and crossed the South Platte River. Striking due north on a route developed in 1850 by Capt. Edmonson's Arkansas train, on June 13 they arrived at the Big Thompson River in present Loveland, Colorado. On that date Calvin Holmes recorded: "This day we experienced a most awful scare when the Lightning struck five of our own men. Killed Mr. Peterson and one ox." On June 14 he wrote: "Buried Mr. Wilson Peterson on a mound on the Prairie." The headstone inscription read: "To the Memory of H. L. W. Peterson Age 24 Killed by Lightning June 13, 1854."

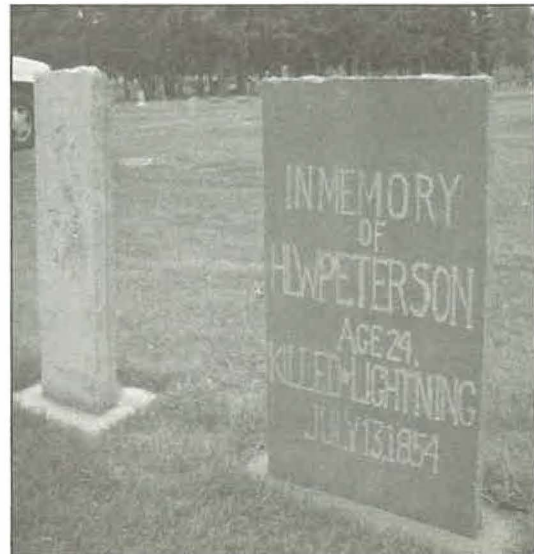
Many years later Holmes's wife Ella wrote of the event: "... our teams and cattle were knocked down and many of our men, one whom we left sleeping by the stream where he was killed."

The marker, just north and east of old Fort Namaqua on the north bank of the Big Thompson River, was replaced at least once, in 1940, by historian Harold Dunning. In 1947 Larimer County coroner Carl W. Kibbey removed Peterson's remains to Lakeside Cemetery, Loveland, Colorado. The current headstone is a replica of the original.





Original site of pioneer H.L.W. Peterson's 1854 grave, near the southeast corner of US Highway 34 (W. Eisenhower Blvd.) and Namaqua Road.



Relocated headstones of Mexican Joe (left), recently identified as José Rosendo, and H.L.W. Peterson (right) at Loveland's Lakeside Cemetery.

### TRAIL PIONEERS BURIED AT LAKESIDE CEMETERY

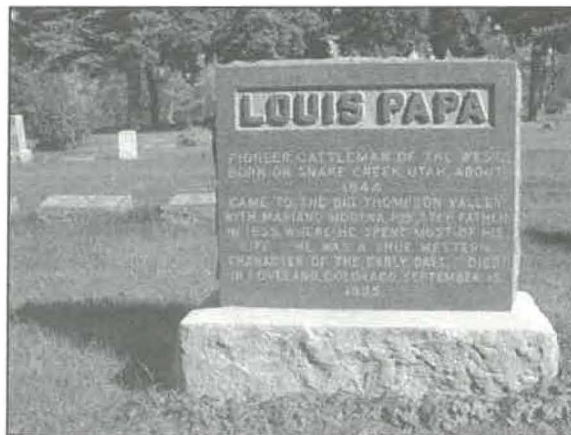


**Frank Bartholf** was born in Utica, New York, and moved to Colorado's Big Thompson Valley in 1861 as a teenager. Soon afterward, Frank was "introduced" to Jack Slade, the notorious Overland Stage Company

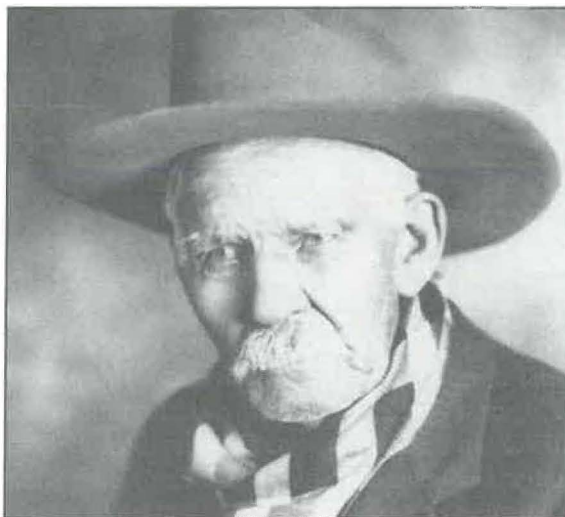
agent. Slade had a reputation as a mean drunk and a killer. Legend has it he carried a dead man's ear in his vest pocket as a watch fob—at least that's Mark Twain's story. Mr. Bartholf tells his story:

I was keeping the station for my brother-in-law, who had gone up into the hills to bring down his wife. As the stage drove up I went out to unhitch the horses. The driver made some insulting remark to me and I answered him pretty short. Biff. Something struck me across the right eye. I turned quickly and looked straight into the muzzles of two revolvers. I had never seen Slade before but I realized at once that we were introduced. Slade afterwards wrote me a letter of apology, saying he thought I was the agent and that he didn't allow any of his agents to "sass him." (Ansel Watrous, *History of Larimer County, Colorado*, 1911.)

Ambitious, business and civic minded, and generous, Bartholf was instrumental in the growth of Colorado's Big Thompson Valley. He organized, sponsored, and financed Bartholf Hose Team #1, Loveland's first fire department. It has been said that he eventually owned practically half of Loveland, including the A&B Opera House, Atkins Place, the Bartholf Block, and the Bishop Building, plus extensive land holdings in northern Colorado, Montana, Wyoming, and Canada. At the time of his death, Frank Bartholf had built himself up as one of the wealthiest men in the Loveland.



**Louis Papa**, a step-son of Mariano Medina, was born in Utah Territory and died in Loveland at about age 91 shortly after mistaking lye for lard. He rode for Frank Bartholf, who gave a plot in his family's burial ground for Louis' grave. Louis was Loveland's last link to the valley's first settlement and its last tie to the true Old West.

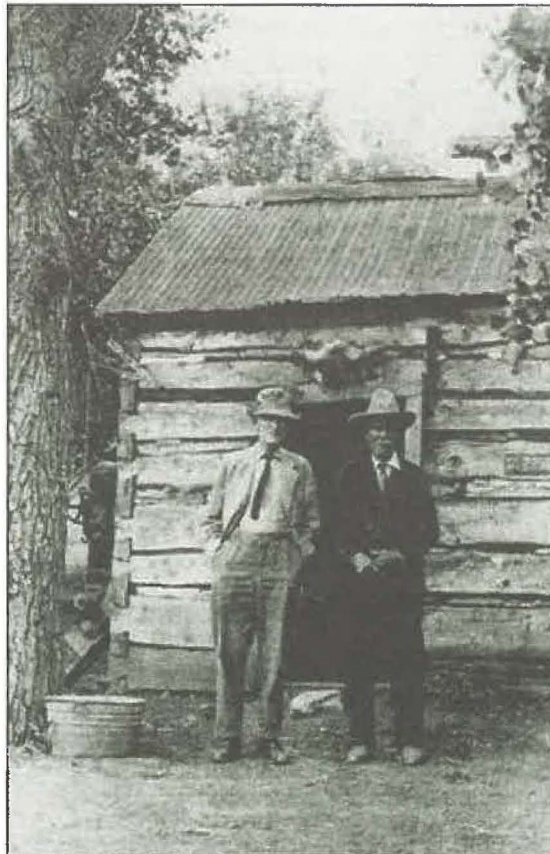


Louis Papa.



**Lucas Brandt** was born in Ohio and came to the Big Thompson Valley in 1867. He hauled the lumber used to build the Wells Fargo stagecoach barn at Namaqua and became a lifelong friend of Mariano Medina and his step-son, Louis Papa. Later Lucas served on the school board, as state representative, and as Loveland's mayor. An invaluable resource for the early history of the area, he worked with historian Harold Dunning to record and mark the history of Loveland and the Big Thompson Valley.

Proud of his service in the Civil War, Lucas was a member of a local fife and drum trio known as the Spirit of Seventy-Six, which led many parades. He died at the age of 94, the last Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) veteran to die in Loveland. He outlived his friend Louis Papa by only one year.



Lucas Brandt and Louis Papa were lifelong friends.



# Convention Speakers

## **Wesley Brown, “How the 1859 Gold Rush Put Colorado on the Map”**

Wesley Brown has been a collector, student, and author of old maps for thirty years. He confines his map collecting to two areas: the earliest world maps up to the year 1540 and the exploration and settlement of Colorado from the sixteenth through twentieth centuries. A Denver resident, he co-founded the Rocky Mountain Map Society in 1990 and served as its President for its first seven years.

Brown has served on the Steering Committee of the Philip Lee Phillips Society, the national map and geography society of the Library of Congress, for ten years, including three years as Co-Chairman. He has also served on the Council of the Society for the History of Discoveries. He has long been associated with the Denver Public Library, including eight years as one of its mayoral-appointed Commissioners, where he served as President and where he is still active in acquisitions for the institution’s important western history collections. He has published several papers on maps.

## **Don Erickson and Kevin Reddy, “Building the Road from Fort Riley to Bridger Pass”**

Don Erickson owns Imaging Exploration in Littleton, Colorado, specializing in international geological mapping for petroleum exploration. Kevin Reddy is a geologist for Brown Operating and does petroleum exploration out of Casper, Wyoming. Both have been active in living history for many years, portraying the Corps of Topographical Engineers to the public and teaching several interpretive sessions on the subject for the National Park Service. Watch for them in the debut of *In Pursuit of a Dream* on Wednesday evening.

## **Jack and Pat Fletcher, “Cherokee Trail Through Time: Fort Gibson to Fort Bridger 1849–1869”**

Jack and Pat Fletcher are both Colorado natives and graduated from Colorado State University and the University of Northern Colorado, respectively. They are authorities on the Cherokee Trail, having started their studies in 1983. This trail crossed northeastern Oklahoma, central Kansas, up the Front Range in Colorado, and west to Fort Bridger in Wyoming. The Fletchers’ research has uncovered over 100 documents pertaining to this trail. They have authored and co-authored five books pertaining to the trail and Colorado.

Jack is a former science professor and has served on OCTA’s board. Pat has taught history and geography at colleges in Canada and the United States and has supervised teachers at Eastern Washington University. She is newly-elected to the OCTA board. Both continue to work in mapping, marking, and preserving the Cherokee Trail remnants, including serving on working committees with the Bureau of Land Management and energy companies. Both are lifetime members of the Santa Fe Trail Association and charter members of the Smoky Hill Trail Association.

## **Jerome A. Greene, “A Military Perspective of the Great Sioux War, 1876–1877”**

Jerome A. Greene is a retired National Park Service historian and curator now living in Arvada, Colorado. He is the author of fifteen books, most dealing with the Indian wars, including, *Stricken Field: The Little Bighorn since 1876* and *Indian War Veterans: Memories of Army Life and Campaigns in the West, 1864–1898*. He has interests in American Indian history, nineteenth-century military history, and government-Indian relations.

## **Johanna Harden, “From Rufus Sage and Blackfoot Cave to the Cherokee Trail and East Cherry Creek Ranches: The Rest of the Story”**

Archivist Johanna Harden’s presentation will give OCTA members the knowledge, insight, and encouragement that they need to be proactive in identifying and saving historic sites along the trails in cooperation with landowners and government agencies. Special emphasis will be placed on the Blackfoot

Cave site. Here pre-history is being revealed by the archaeological dig in progress on the Douglas County Open Space Blackfoot Cave Site.

This is a unique opportunity to share the outstanding success of the collaborative efforts of Griffis Group Investments, Douglas County Open Space, Colorado Archaeological Society, and Douglas County History Research Center—Douglas County Libraries. Annette Gray, Cheryl Matthews, Ian Griffis, and Neil Hauser will participate in the presentation.

#### **Michael Landon, “A Continuous Line of Stock and Wagons: A Reappraisal of the 1857 Overland Emigration”**

Michael Landon received degrees in history and political science from UCLA and a Masters in Public History from California State University, Sacramento. He is an archivist for the Church History Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In that capacity, he has acquired documents, conducted research, and assisted in a variety of projects related to the Mormon Trail and other historic western trails. He co-authored *Trail of Hope: The Story of the Mormon Trail*.

Michael will illustrate the significance of the Cherokee Trail and discuss the size and composition of the 1857 emigration. He will also discuss previously published works regarding the trail within this time period with the new insights from recent research.

#### **Bill Meirath, Alfred Vigil, and Sharon Danhauer, “Mariano Medina: A Legend in His Own Time”**

Mariano Medina (1812–1878) was as famous in his time as many of the mountain men better remembered today, but his legacy has been nearly forgotten. He settled on an old trappers’ trail on the Big Thompson River near what is now Loveland. His colorful and adventuresome life is the stuff of which legends are made.

Bill Meirath is a member of the Loveland Historical Society. He is a fur trade, trails, and local history enthusiast. Through his vision and tenacious research, he has generated a preservation movement to save an almost forgotten local site.

Alfred Vigil retired from a 35-year career with Hewlett-Packard. He is a hard-working volunteer and member of the Berthoud Historical Society with special interests in local history, archaeology, trails, and maps.

Sharon Danhauer is an avid history enthusiast and interpreter. She is on the Board of Directors for the Loveland and Berthoud Historical Societies. She has taught Colorado history for a local private school and has compiled a state history for home-schooled students.

#### **Michael Moore, “Going North and South: Colorado's Trapper Trail”**

In addition to lecturing, Mike Moore has been a staff writer for *On The Trail* magazine for the last eleven years. He has written over 120 articles in many different magazines on the fur trade, early western exploration, and the people involved in it. His fourth book, *A View to the West*, was published in February. Mike is a member of the Western Writers of America and appears in the movie *In Pursuit of a Dream*, being premiered at this convention.

#### **Dan Rottenberg, “Jack Slade”**

Dan Rottenberg has been the chief editor of seven publications, most recently *broadstreetreview.com*, a cultural arts website he launched in January 2006 with the support of the University of the Arts. He is also the author of ten books, most recently *Death of a Gunfighter*, published in October 2008 by Westholme Publishing.

From 2000 to 2004 he was editor of *Family Business*, an international quarterly magazine dealing with family-owned companies, where he remains senior editor. From 1996 to 1998 he was editor of the *Philadelphia Forum*, a weekly Philadelphia opinion paper that he founded. In 1993 he created *Seven Arts*, a monthly magazine based in Philadelphia. From 1981 to 1993 he edited the *Welcomat*, a unique Philadelphia-based weekly opinion forum, now known as *Philadelphia Weekly*.

Rottenberg wrote an editorial-page column for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* from 1978 to 1997. He has written more than 300 articles for such magazines as *Town & Country*, *Reader's Digest*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Forbes*, *Civilization*, *American Benefactor*, *Bloomberg Personal Finance*, *TV Guide*, *Playboy*, *Rolling Stone*, *Chicago*, and many others. He served as a consultant in 1981 when *Forbes* magazine launched its annual "Forbes 400" list of wealthiest Americans. His syndicated film commentaries appeared in monthly city magazines around the U.S. from 1971 to 1983.

Earlier in his career he was executive editor of *Philadelphia* magazine, managing editor of *Chicago Journalism Review*, a *Wall Street Journal* reporter, and editor of the *Commercial-Review*, a daily newspaper in Portland, Indiana.

### **Colleen Sievers, "Partnership Projects in Trail Recordation and Preservation"**

Colleen is currently the Lead Archeologist for the Bureau of Land Management Field Office in Rock Springs, Wyoming. She worked for both private and academic cultural consultants before joining BLM five years ago. She will provide examples of partnership projects that are recording, monitoring, and preserving historic trails in southwestern Wyoming. The strengthening of these partnerships is key in the conservation and protection of the trail remnants and their associated landscapes. Illustrations of volunteer efforts between BLM and OCTA will include studies of the Overland Trail, the Cherokee Trail, and the National Historic Trails, including the Sublette Cutoff.

### **Lee Whiteley, Keynote Address: "Pathways to Gold: Colorado's Cherokee Trail, 1849; Smoky Hill Trail, 1859"**

Lee Whiteley is a fourth-generation Coloradan. He has written several books and articles about the various trails through Colorado, including *The Cherokee Trail: Bent's Old Fort to Fort Bridger*. Besides being a member of OCTA, Lee is a member of the Santa Fe Trail Association, the Smoky Hill Trail Association, the Union Pacific Historical Society, and the Lincoln Highway Association.

This illustrated presentation provides an introduction and overview of the major wagon roads of Eastern Colorado. Emphasis will be placed on the 1849–1850 Cherokee Trail, the multi-use road connecting the other primary Colorado trails: the Santa Fe Trail, the Taos Trail, the Smoky Hill Trail, and the Overland Trail. This presentation will include a summary of those who used the trails, landmarks, present-day preservation, mapping, and educational projects.



***See You Next Year!***

**OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION  
28th ANNUAL CONVENTION**

**August 10–14, 2010  
Elko, Nevada**



## Workshops

### **EXTREME MAKEOVER: PRAIRIE EDITION**

From simply dressing in period-style costume as a volunteer to creating an in-depth living history character, this session offers suggestions and tricks-of-the-trade in establishing a strong foundation for costumed living history programs. The workshop is conducted by Jane Leche, John C. Luzader, and Mark Gardner.

Leche is a public affairs specialist with the United States Forest Service. She has been involved in theater and period music groups and was an extra hand in *In Pursuit of a Dream*. Luzader worked for the Interpretive Center in Baker City, Oregon, and is currently working for the Interpretive Center in Elko, Nevada. He has been involved in living history for over 45 years. Gardner is a respected historian and a specialist in nineteenth-century music. He has also written guides and other publications for the National Park Service.

### **HELPING OR HURTING?—ISSUES FOR OCTA IN TRAIL ARCHAEOLOGY**

Join with other OCTA members in seeking ways to structure OCTA guidelines and future policies in regard to archeological finds, trail mapping, access, and data confidentiality. Leslie R. Fryman, National Trails Preservation Officer, will preside during the discussion. Fryman will be joined by OCTA Mapping Chairman, Dave Welch, and others, as they seek your knowledge and input on trail preservation.

### **NATIONAL HISTORY DAY**

Promoting National and State History Day and cooperating with participants is a way that OCTA may connect with youth. Learn about the program and how to get your OCTA chapter involved in your state's program. The National, Wyoming, and Colorado program models will be explained. On the panel will be Rick Ewing, Associate Director of the American Heritage Center; Dick Kean, Assistant Coordinator, Wyoming History Day; Christine Sundberg, the Colorado State Coordinator; and Susan Gustin, the Assistant Colorado State Coordinator. Pat Fletcher, OCTA Board member, will be the moderator.

### **PARTNERING WITH FEDERAL AGENCIES ON YOUR TRAIL PROJECTS**

Officials from the National Park Service (NPS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), United States Forest Service (USFS), and the Fish & Wildlife Service (F&WS) discuss their work, their respective areas of responsibility, projects, and assets. Included in this discussion will be ways in which assets and projects may be shared with volunteers from OCTA and other trail organizations.

### **PLANNING CHAPTER DEVELOPMENT AND MEMBERSHIP**

These chapter basics will be discussed by Ross Marshall and Duane Iles. Chapter presidents, all chapter membership chairpersons, and anyone interested in membership and chapter development should attend. The agenda will include discussions of how membership is handled locally and nationally, ways to improve the interaction between chapters and the national office, strategies for increasing OCTA membership numbers, review of board actions as they pertain to the local chapters, and a review of all issues that involve chapters.

### **ROCKY MOUNTAIN AREA RESEARCH**

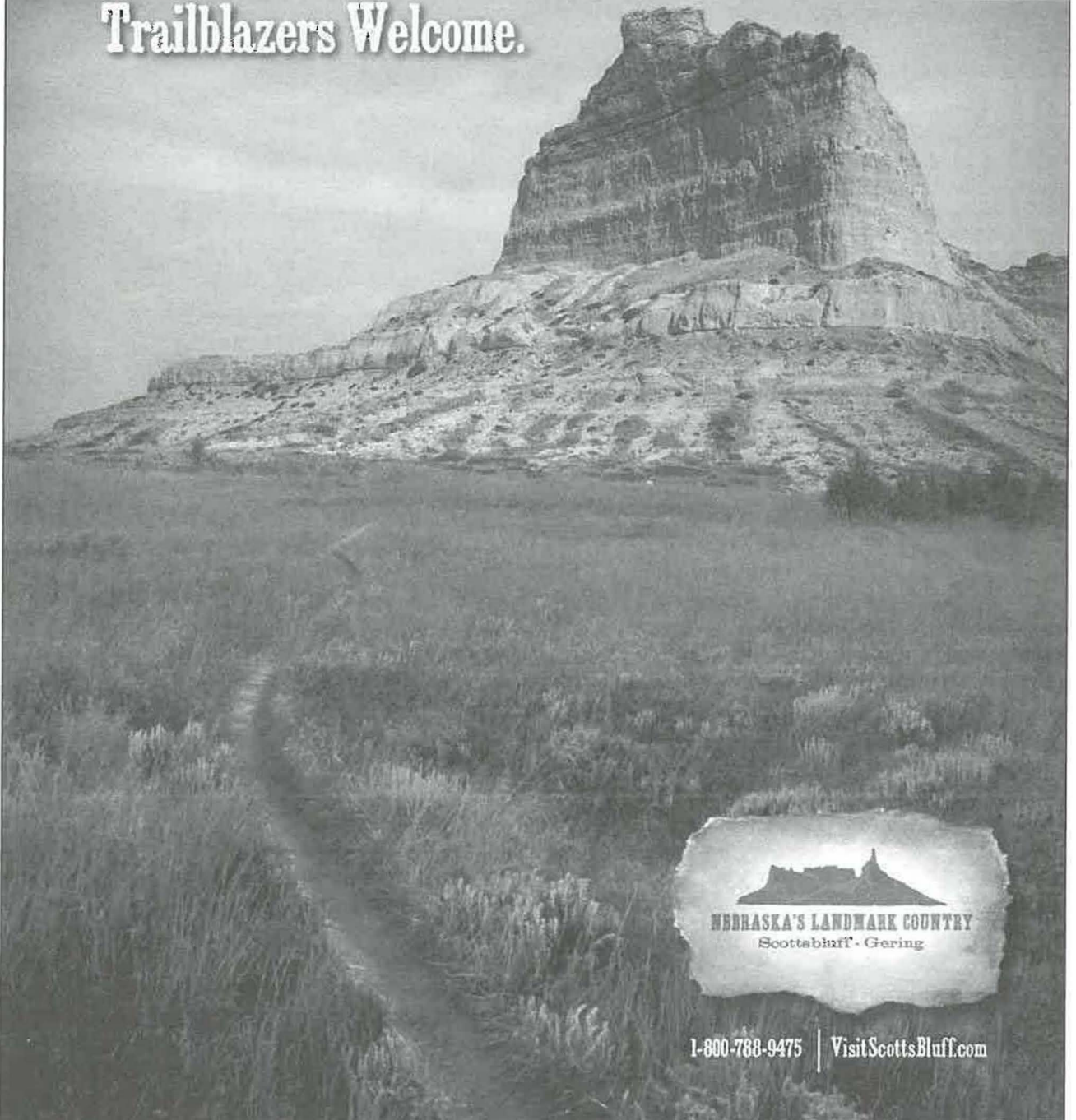
This panel presentation will discuss research collections or special collections held by each library/archive and how to access this material. The panel will include Mark Greene, Director, American Heritage Center and OCTA Library, University of Wyoming; Tamsen Emerson Hert, Collection Development Department, University of Wyoming Libraries; Wendell Cox, Western History & Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library; Johanna Harden, Douglas County Archives; Mike Landon, Archivist, Family and Church History Department, LDS, Salt Lake City, Utah; and panel moderator, Barb Netherland, North Platte Valley Museum, Gering, Nebraska, (and OCTA Board member).

### **SUCCESSFUL CONVENTIONS**

Jim Budde will give a short presentation on OCTA's convention goals and review some of the critical factors that have contributed to the success of past conventions. Attendees will be encouraged to participate in the discussions and raise questions. Chapter members who have been assigned a convention or those who are contemplating sponsoring a future convention will find this workshop helpful in their planning.



Trailblazers Welcome.



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# OCTA'S RECENT

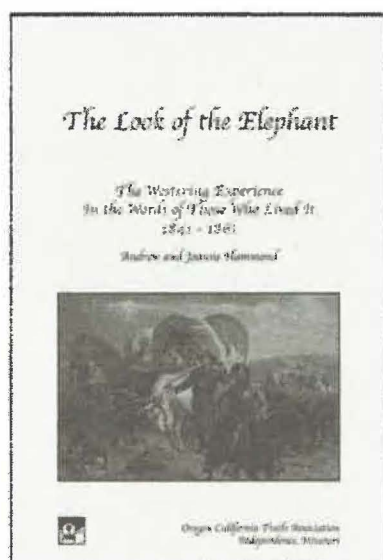
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## *The Look of the Elephant*

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*In the Words of Those Who Lived It, 1841-1861*

by Andrew & Joanne Hammond



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Keynoted by maps, overviews of the trails and jumping off places, and thumbnail biographies of the diarists, *The Look of the Elephant* puts the reader at the side of the men and women who surrendered comforts of the known in the middle of the 19th Century for the unknown promises of a future in an untamed wilderness.

Diary excerpts are organized chronologically by principal trail routes and retain the original writer's spelling, punctuation, and manner of speech. You will feel as if you are along for the journey.

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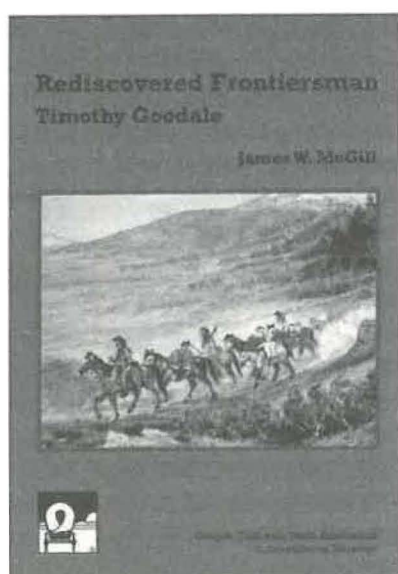
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# BOOK PUBLICATIONS

## Rediscovered Frontiersman: Timothy Goodale

by James W. McGill



*An important new biography and trail history*

**Timothy Goodale (1810-1869), and the Oregon Trail cutoff** that bears his name, loom large in the history of the West and overland travel. Author James W. McGill has rescued the man and his work in this thoroughly researched, comprehensive account of a remarkable western frontiersman, his Indian wife, and the trail he pioneered.

Goodale sought adventure and a new life in the West when he left his boyhood home in Putnam, New York, in 1830 at age 19. Beginning as a fur trapper and trader throughout the West, he learned the routes of the Indians and shared their lives. He associated with Kit Carson, John C. Frémont, Frederick Lander, and many other notable westeners.

*Rediscovered Frontiersman* tells Goodale's adventurous tale until his tragic death in 1869, and the after story of his Lemhi Shoshone wife, Jennie, and descends its from the Goodale's youngest daughter, Mary Winona. At various times he was an explorer, mountain man, hunter, cattle and sheep drover, guide, surveyor, road builder, trading post operator, ferryman, Indian emigrant relations mediator, U.S. mail carrier, and Indian representative to the U.S. government.

The opening of the Goodale Cutoff in 1862, a mining trail to the goldfields in the mountains of Eastern Oregon and the Boise Basin in Idaho, is recounted in detail. Detailed maps illuminate that story.

### Rediscovered Frontiersman:

### Timothy Goodale

by James W. McGill

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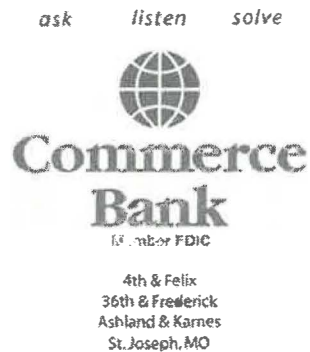
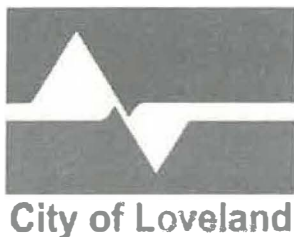


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## 2009 OCTA Convention Schedule

August 18–22, 2009

All events will be at The Ranch unless otherwise noted

### Tuesday, August 18

6:30 a.m.–7:45 a.m.	Chapter Presidents' Breakfast at <b>IHOP</b> , 5450 Stone Creek Circle
8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.	OCTA Board of Directors Meeting at <b>Best Western</b>
9:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m.	Registration/Information Desk open
6:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m.	Book Room open
7:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m.	Welcome Reception with No-Host Bar and Entertainment

### Wednesday, August 19

7:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.	Registration/Information Desk open
9:45 a.m.–6:00 p.m.	Book Room open
8:00 a.m.–9:45 a.m.	Opening Ceremonies and General Membership Meeting
10:00 a.m.–11:15 a.m.	Keynote Speaker: Lee Whiteley, "Pathways to Gold"
11:45 a.m.–1:15 p.m.	Agency Appreciation Luncheon
1:45 p.m.–2:30 p.m.	Speaker: Colleen Sievers
2:30 p.m.–3:15 p.m.	Speakers: Pat Fletcher and Dr. Jack E. Fletcher
3:15 p.m.–4:00 p.m.	Speaker: Wes Brown
4:15 p.m.–5:00 p.m.	Chapter Meetings
5:00 p.m.	Dinner on your own
6:00 p.m.–6:45 p.m.	Guided Walking Tour of Loveland to the <b>Rialto Theater</b>
7:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m.	Premiere of <i>In Pursuit of a Dream</i> at the <b>Rialto Theater</b>

### Thursday, August 20

7:00 a.m.–8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.–6:30 p.m.:	Registration/Information Desk open
7:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m.	Bus Tours: A: Cherokee Trail and Overland Stage Route Tour B: Cherokee Trail and Overland Stage Route Tour & <b>HIKE</b> C: Four Forts/South Platte River Tour D: Loveland/Berthoud Tour
4:30 p.m.–6:30 p.m.	Book Room open
5:30 p.m.–6:30 p.m.	Hour with No-Host Bar
6:30 p.m.–9:00 p.m.	Awards Dinner and Live Auction

### Friday, August 21

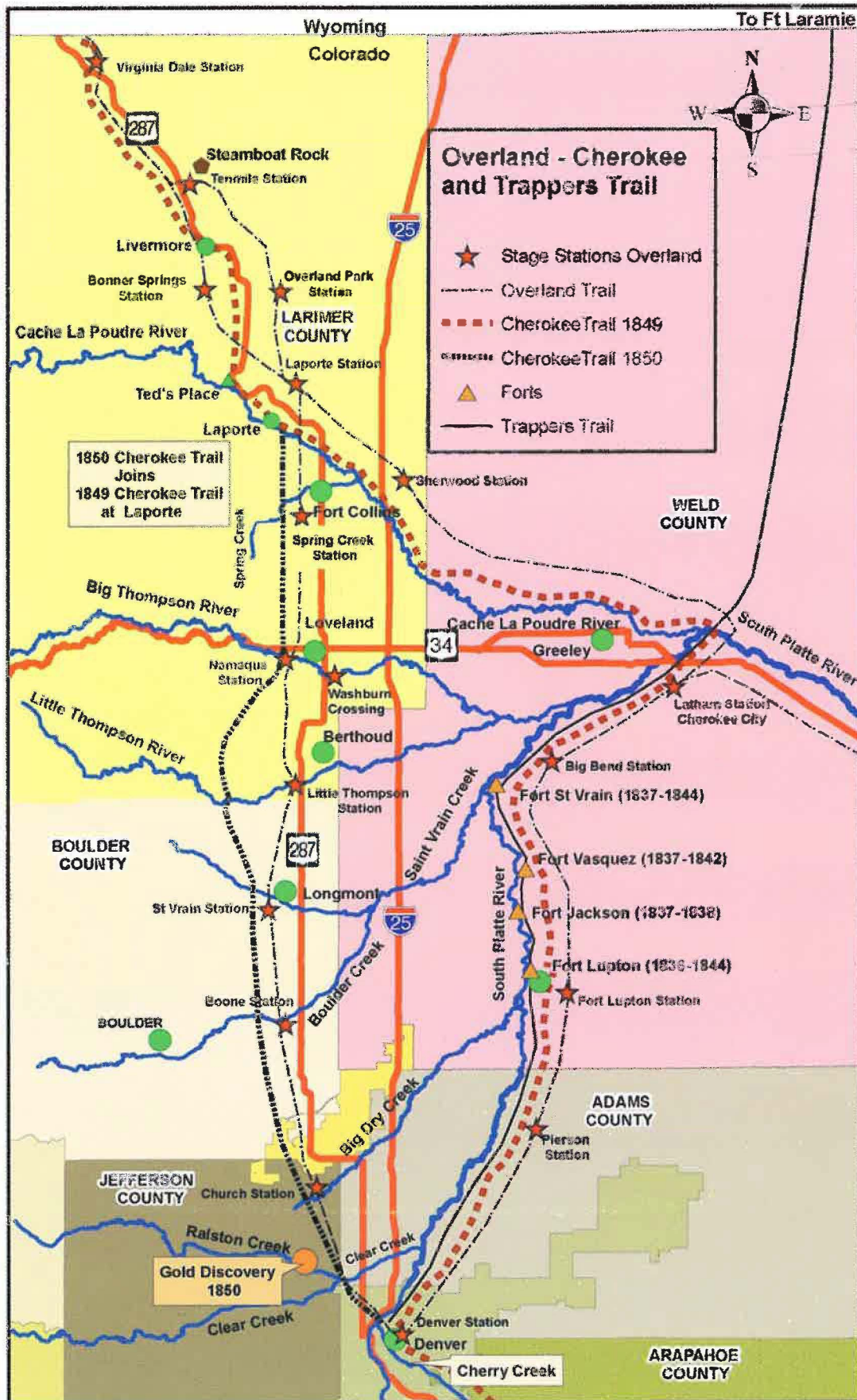
7:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m.	Registration/Information Desk open
8:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m.	Book Room open
8:00 a.m.–8:45 a.m.	Speaker: Jerry Greene
8:45 a.m.–9:30 a.m.	Speaker: Michael Landon
9:45 a.m.–10:30 a.m.	Speakers: Kevin Reddy and Don Erickson
10:30 a.m.–11:15 a.m.	Speakers: Johanna Harden, Annette Gray, Cheryl Matthews, Ian C. Griffis, Neil R. Hauser
11:45 a.m.–1:15 p.m.	National History Day Luncheon
1:45 p.m.–2:30 p.m.	Speaker: Michael Moore
2:30 p.m.–3:15 p.m.	Speakers: Bill Meirath, Alfred Vigil, and Sharon Danhauer
3:30 p.m.–5:00 p.m.	Workshops
5:00 p.m.	Dinner on your own
6:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m.	Authors' Night with No-Host Bar and Entertainment

### Saturday, August 22

7:00 a.m.–10:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.–6:30 p.m.:	Registration/Information Desk open
7:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m.	Bus Tours A, B, C, D
6:00 p.m.–8:30 p.m.	Barbecue with Entertainment

## Notes

# Early Colorado Trails



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