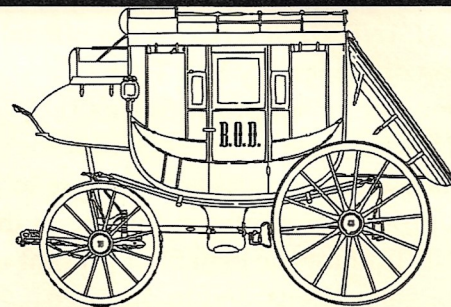


OVERLAND DESPATCH



Volume XII No. III

Remember the Smoky Hill Trail

Spring 2020

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Most if not all of you are probably familiar with the book "Trails of the Smoky Hill" by Wayne C. Lee and Howard C. Raynesford. The book is an excellent source of information on the history and location of the Smoky Hill Trail and details many historical and colorful events that took place on the trail. The book is also full of pictures and illustrations that help bring the trail to life.



Howard C. Raynesford was instrumental in marking the trail from Fort Ellsworth in Ellsworth County, Kansas to the Colorado line. Markings were by setting stone posts along the route of the trail as the trail crossed country roads and highways. Each post bore the inscription B.O.D. The book indicates that the trail was marked over a distance of 220 miles.

The epilogue to Mr. Raynesford in the book notes that his project took several years to complete and when completed he was "almost 90". I believe we have members in our association with the knowledge, talent and drive similar to Mr. Raynesford.

My wife and I first became aware of the Smoky Hill Trail Association through a phone

call from a friend, Kay Homewood, who inquired if I would be willing to join the association and serve on the board. My wife and I are both amateur history buffs and it was somewhat surprising that we were not aware of the association and its connection with Russell County.

We joined and shortly thereafter attended our first annual members conference. While the conference programs were interesting and informative, the most impressive thing I took from the conference was the conversations I overheard between members and those members' participation in the conference programs. I was then and continue to today to be so impressed with the individual talents and knowledge that our members bring each year to our conference.

For our association to grow and thrive we need leaders with historical information, talent and the time to devote to our projects. Many association's officers have expressed a desire to pass their leadership roles over to another. I struggle to find the time that should be devoted to the association's business and mission. I also lack the historical information and talent that I believe exists among members within this organization who could better promote the association's mission and goals.

Our association is strong and will continue. The annual conferences for me, and I hope for you, is a highlight of the year. There are many of you among our association that certainly have the talent, information and perhaps the time to take on a leadership role. I ask each of you to seriously consider taking on a leadership role. Please contact

OVERLAND DESPATCH is the official publication of the Smoky Hill Trail Association, Inc., a nonprofit, 501(c)(3), corporation chartered in the State of Kansas. Primary missions of the Association are to preserve, protect, promote, and interpret the Smoky Hill Trail for the benefit of present and future generations, and to promote awareness of the historical legacy associated with the remnants and locations that represent the historic trail and Butterfield's Overland Despatch (BOD) and its successors as well as the railroad that replaced the overland trail. Letters and articles are welcome and can be sent via email to the newsletter editor at <rjwilh@gmail.com> or via USPS at **Smoky Hill Trail Association, PO Box 978, Hays KS 67601**. They become the property of SmHTA and may be edited or abridged at the editor's discretion. All rights reserved.

Membership in the Association is open to all individuals, families, institutions, and businesses. Annual dues are \$25.00 for individuals, \$30.00 for families, \$40.00 for nonprofit organizations, \$50.00 for businesses, and \$100.00 for patrons. Life membership, individual or family, is \$500.00 (may be paid in quarterly installments during one or two years). Membership fees should be sent to **Smoky Hill Trail Association**, at the address above. Other donations are always welcome.

President:

Ken Cole, Russell, Kansas

Vice President:

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Dawn Allaman, Wallace, Kansas

Mary Andersen, Limon, Colorado

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me or any other officer or board member with any questions or interests you may have regarding the same.

Next stop Limon, Colorado,

Ken Cole, President

Smoky Hill Trail Association



MEMBERSHIP

Our Association currently has 187 members. As you all know, membership renewal is due at the beginning of each calendar year, so if you have not renewed, please do so at your earliest convenience. If you aren't sure whether or not you are current, take a look at your address label on your newsletter. It should have the year through which you are paid up. If it says anything other than 2020, you will need to renew. If you still aren't certain, contact your newsletter editor at the email or USPS address (in the box immediately to the left of this column) and he will look it up in our records. A third option will be coming up in another month or so when we will begin sending letters to all who have not renewed. So, you can help us keep our Association expenses down by renewing before you get the letter.

If you feel that we are incorrect in our record-keeping (always a possibility), and have renewed, just let us know and we will make the necessary changes and updates.

An interesting side note is our Facebook page. We currently have 328 followers!



NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

The editor welcomes any articles, comments, or suggestions to be included in the next or any future edition of the *Overland Despatch*. Deadline for the next issue is **May 31, 2020**. It is requested that your submissions be sent to the newsletter editor either by US mail or E-mail by that date (addresses in box on page two). Thank you.

Bob Wilhelm

Editor



NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Smoky Hill Trail Association Archives is not only available for your research, but we also accept donations to the archives. If you have items relating to the historic trail, or to the current association's meetings, conferences, etc., the SmHTA

Archives will add them to the collections.

A recent donation from Sam Chestnut of Quinter was a pretty big one, and by big, I mean the size of the items! We now have aerial township maps for the various



counties that the trail crossed, and a few have been marked as having the trail run through it. The maps have not been processed, but if you want to stop by and take a look at them, please feel free to do so. In fact, I may need some help in identifying the counties where the photographs were taken.

I hope that some of you have had the chance take a look at the Smoky Hill Trail Association Finding Aid that I mentioned in the last newsletter. I have already had a member stop by to get a copy of an article he found by looking through the finding aid. I gave the main URL in the last newsletter, but here are the specific URL's to the three finding aids relating to the archive:

Donna Malsom Library - <http://archivesspace.fhsu.edu/repositories/3/resources/33>

Dorman Lehman Collection - <http://archivesspace.fhsu.edu/repositories/3/resources/32>

Smoky Hill Trail Association Archive - <http://archivesspace.fhsu.edu/repositories/3/resources/31>

Patty Nicholas
Smoky Hill Trail Association
Archivist



SNIPPETS FROM THE JUNCTION CITY UNION

June 22, 1866—The Lawrence Tribune says: Gov. Crawford informed us on Sunday, during his stay in town, that he should send some arms to the settlers on the western frontier, immediately on his return to Topeka, yesterday. Very many of the settlers on those frontiers are entirely unarmed, and exposed, we fear, to the horrors of the Indian war. The recaption of these arms will pnt [*sic*] them in a position at least of partial defense.

—The Topeka Record says: On the 4th of April, an ox train for Hollidays Overland Co. started from Grasshopper Falls for Denver via Smoky Hill route. On the 8th inst., or in three months and four days the same train on its return reached Junction City without the loss of an animal. No such time was ever made on the Platte route, and we think a trip was never made on it without the loss of more or less stock. This shows, which is the best route to Colorado.

—Last Saturday as we learn from the Council Grove Democrat, attention was called to the fact that the Santa Fe Stage Company had drawn off all their stock and coaches, and left in the old stage barn, at Council Grove, over two tons of mail, a good portion of which was loose—the sacks having been taken off—and a large quantity having the appearance of being there for some time, as it was pretty well covered with litter. A portion if it is directed to his Excellency, the Governor of New Mexico. Faithful mail contractors they are indeed.



LEAVENWORTH AND PIKE'S PEAK EXPRESS COMPANY, 1859, SHORT-LIVED RIVAL OF THE SMOKY HILL TRAIL

by Leo E. Oliva

The 1859 gold rush to western Kansas Territory, now Colorado, created needs for new transportation routes and services to connect the settlements on the Missouri River with the new town of Denver and the mining camps. Gold was first discovered on Cherry Creek and reported by Cherokee Indians heading to California to seek gold in 1850, but nothing came of that. In July 1857 some prospectors found gold there, and there was a minor rush to the Rocky Mountains in 1858 when more gold was found in the mountains.

The big rush came in 1859 when an estimated 150,000 people crossed the plains to mine the gold or mine the miners (business people understood there was more money to be made by supplying the miners than seeking the gold). New trails were opened through Plains Indian country between the Platte and Arkansas rivers, a region where the tribes had enjoyed continued freedom to live, hunt, and enjoy sacred places without Euro-American penetration. That all changed in 1859, resulting in renewed Indian resistance as routes were opened along the Smoky Hill, Saline, Solomon, Republican, South Platte, and other rivers.

The need for public transportation to move people, freight, and mail spurred entrepreneurs in the Missouri Valley to seek new routes that were shorter than following the Arkansas River to Pueblo and then north to the mines, or following the Platte and South Platte rivers to the Denver area. The first of those businesses to provide a stage and mail service along a route between the Platte and Arkansas rivers was the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express Co. which operated briefly in 1859 before financial troubles

and mail contracts forced the business to reorganize and move to the Platte River route.

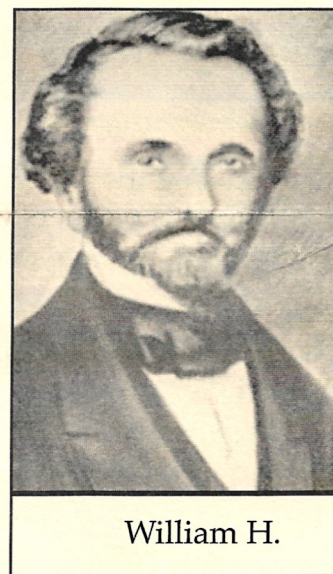
As the Pike's Peak [*today the correct spelling is Pikes Peak, but in 1859 it was Pike's Peak, and the company also used the apostrophe as printed here*] rush developed, the towns along the Missouri River began to advertise as outfitting points and the place to begin the best route to the gold fields across Kansas Territory. Atchison, Leavenworth, St. Joseph, Westport (Kansas City), and others hoped for a piece of the business.

Leavenworth had an advantage. It was near Fort Leavenworth, established in 1827, a major shipping point for military supplies to Fort Riley, via an established road that could be used by the Argonauts heading west. It was also the headquarters for major freighting companies carrying military supplies and commercial freight over the Santa Fe and Oregon-California trails (including Salt Lake City). The freighting firm of Russell, Majors & Waddell (William H. Russell, Alexander Majors, and William Waddell) which started at Lexington MO

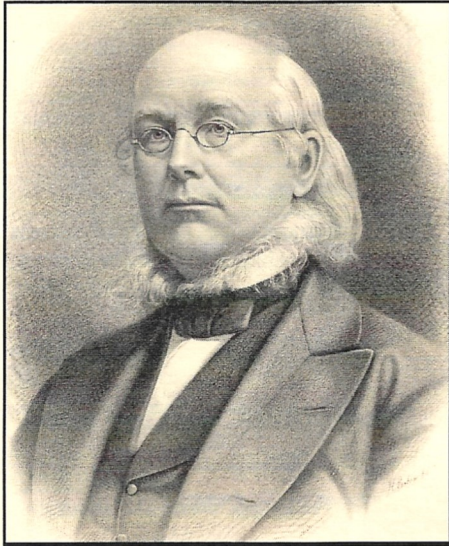
then moved to Leavenworth, had some 4,000 wagons and 40,000 oxen engaged in freighting.

Horace Greeley, publisher of the *New York Tribune* and leading advocate for the new Republican Party who came to Kansas Territory in 1859 to assist with the organization of that party in Kansas and then traveled on to Denver and San Francisco (published a book of his trip in 1860), figures largely in this story. He wrote the following:

"Leavenworth is, of course, much the largest place in Kansas. . . . Russell, Majors & Waddell's transportation establishment, between the fort and the city, is the great feature of Leavenworth. Such



William H.



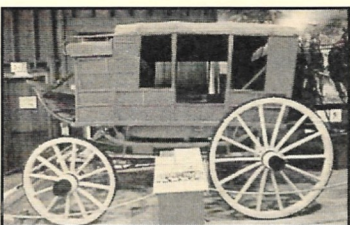
Horace Greeley

acres of wagons! such pyramids of extra axletrees! such herds of oxen! such regiments of drivers and other employees! No one who does not see can realize how vast a business this is, nor how

immense are its outlays as well as its income. I presume this great firm has at this hour two millions of dollars invested in stock, mainly oxen, mules and wagons. (They last year employed six thousand teamsters, and worked forty-five thousand oxen.)”

Russell’s partners were cautious and thought the proposed Leavenworth and Pike’s Peak Express Co. might cost too much, not have enough business to pay, and could be harassed by the Plains Indians. Those predictions were only part of the reason the line was short-lived. The main reason had to do with the mail contracts, noted later. Russell joined with another Leavenworth freighter, John S. Jones, to establish the new stage line, hoping to help fund it with a mail contract. They were not awarded a contract to carry mail to Denver; that contract was held by John Hockaday for a route from St. Joseph, Missouri, via the Platte and

South Platte rivers to Denver. Jones and Russell later purchased that route. Jones, Russell & Company purchased 50 new Concord mud wagons (later added



Concord Mud

10 more), 125 other wagons, 543 mules and horses, and other equipment, hired employees to establish the route and the 27 stations from Leavenworth to Denver, provided buildings and tents for the stations, and hired men and couples to manage the stations. It was all done with borrowed money. Remarkably, they did all this in a couple of months.

By early March 1859, the Leavenworth and Pike’s Peak Express Company had made arrangements for the survey of a route to Denver, a 7-man party led by Col. William J. Preston. C. F. Smith kept a journal of the survey team which left Leavenworth on March 15. Following the Fort Riley Military Road they camped at Easton (Station 2), 13 miles out. The next day they located Station 3 at Ozawkie and camped at Indianola. On March 17 they located Station 4 at Silver Lake, passed through St. Mary’s Mission (Station 5), and camped on Vermillion Creek. On the 18th they passed through Manhattan (Station 6) and camped at Ogden. They were at Fort Riley the next day and passed through Junction City (Station 7) and camped at Chapman’s Creek (Station 8). They followed along creeks to the Solomon River, reached on March 21, which they followed for the next few days, taking the North Fork.

It snowed 6” the night of March 27 and the party reached Prairie Dog Creek the next day. There they saw Indians for the first time. They continued west-northwest over what they described as “an excellent road,” crossed Sappa Creek on March 30, met a party of Cheyenne, and camped on the Republican River.

They followed the South Fork of the Republican River for several days, then turned west-northwest, crossing streams that flow into the South Platte River. They camped on Bijou Creek on April 5. The next day they crossed Kiowa Creek and camped late on the South Platte. They arrived in Denver City April 7. They measured the route as 687 miles, Leavenworth to Denver.

Smith described the settlements: “Denver has

of Cherry Creek and the South Platte. Auraria, on the opposite side of the creek, contains some 100 cabins. The population of both places was estimated at about 500 inhabitants. The population of all the towns, and including the persons in the mines, is estimated at about 2,000." That population would increase exponentially during the coming year.

The survey party started back on April 9, seeking a better route to the South Fork of the Republican. In eastern Kansas Territory some of the survey team joined parties heading to establish the stage stations, guiding them to the sites.

Meanwhile, the company sent out 40 wagons with 120 men and women, and 200,000 pounds of equipment and supplies to establish and occupy the stations. They traveled in two units, one leaving Leavenworth on March 28 and the other on April 1.

Merchants at Atchison, not wanting to be left out as an outfitting point on the Missouri River, laid out the "Parallel Road" to connect with the Leavenworth and Pikes Peak Express at Station No. 11 near present Ionia in Jewell County. This project was headed by F. G. Adams and the route was surveyed by E. D. Boyd. There is no record that this road was used for any public transportation to Denver, and it may not have been used by individuals making the rush to the Rockies. But it is on the map and likely would have been used had the Leavenworth and Pikes Peak Express lasted more than 90 days.

The stage stations were operated, where possible, by families rather than just a few men, usually with four to six men and sometimes women to take care of the livestock and change the mules when coaches arrived, prepare meals, and provide sleeping accommodations at the overnight stations. When the stations were all established, there were reportedly 108 men and women at the stations (not counting Leavenworth and Denver), some 800 mules, 25

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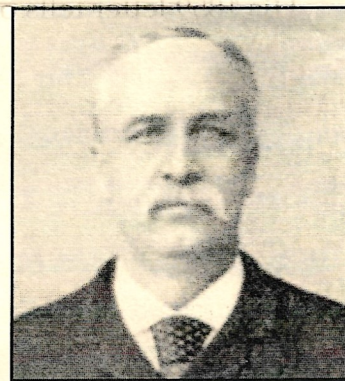
wagons, and a few spare Concord mud wagons (available in case of emergencies) situated along the 687-mile route.

In addition to the men and women at the stage stations, the company hired about 100 drivers, plus herders, blacksmiths, harness repairmen, messengers, division agents, and laborers to load and help deliver supplies to the stations. Two mud coaches were sent on each trip to haul passengers, express, mail (they carried mail without a contract with the government, charging a fee to the sender), and provide assistance to each other in case of danger, muddy roads, and breakdowns. The company planned to have coaches departing from each end on a daily schedule.

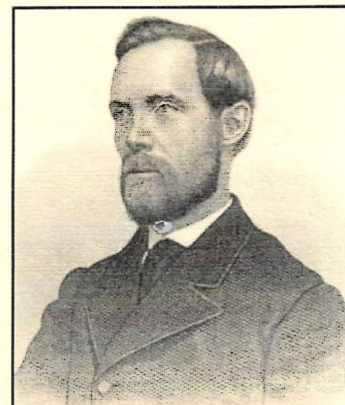
Everything was ready to go on April 18, 1859. Passengers received three meals per day. From Junction City westward, they slept in tents or in the mud wagon. The cost was \$125 per person and they were limited to 20 pounds of baggage, with a charge of \$1.00 per pound over that weight. Emigrants were also traveling along the same road, so the coaches were not alone.

Three newspapermen traveled the Leavenworth and Pikes Peak Express during the next few weeks: Henry Villard, Albert D. Richardson, and Horace Greeley (the latter two on the same coach from Manhattan to Denver). In addition, prospector Libeus Barney was a passenger on the first pair of mud wagons to make the trip from Leavenworth to Denver in April-May 1859, and he wrote letters to his hometown newspaper in Bennington VT.

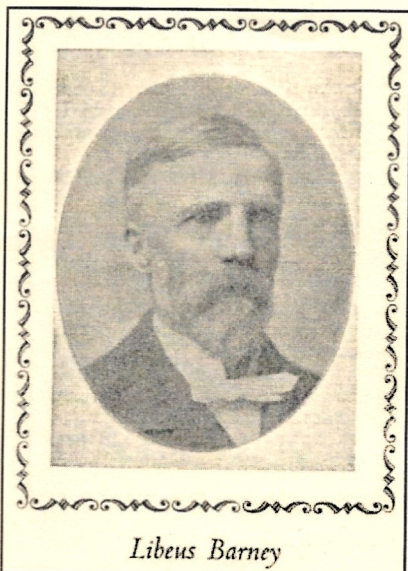
His letter dated at Denver, May 11, 1859,



Henry Villard



Albert D.
Richardson



Libeus Barney

described his travels. He was with the party that helped rescue Daniel Blue and heard his story of starvation and cannibalism on the Smoky Hill Trail.

Barney was 30 years old when he traveled to Denver. He later

became a merchant and real estate agent in Denver, making his fortune by supplying the miners instead of risking everything in a search for gold. He spent most of the rest of life in Denver, became wealthy, and was a civic leader in the city. He moved to New York City a few months before his death in 1899 at age 69.

His 1859 letter tells of his venture on the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express. After traveling from New York via St. Louis to Leavenworth, he commented on the rush to Pike's Peak: "Thousands are leaving here daily and in every variety of way the mind can conjecture." He and three other passengers made the first trip to Denver on the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express, leaving Leavenworth on April 18 and arriving at Denver May 7. He gave brief accounts of some of the stations, but Richardson and Greeley gave more detailed reports, noted later.

Barney's party was delayed by snow, rain, and waiting for the survey party. One day the "mules gave out this afternoon and we were compelled to walk the last 12 miles to the station." They met up with some 50 emigrants on the Smoky Hill Trail, and Barney described their condition: "They were indeed objects of compassion. Some of them started with horses, some with mules, and some with oxen, but the

most of them now were without either, their teams having been deprived of food and water, perished, and their wagons were burned to cook with. Many were sick and sought shelter from the frosty nights beneath their few remaining wagons. Full 300 miles from any house, without fuel, save a scanty supply of wild sage, (very much resembling our garden sage), and destitute in almost every particular, it is not to be wondered at, that they should all repent and even curse the day their folly sent them on this desperate chase for filthy gold. One of the lady emigrants here became a mother. Her child lived but a few hours, was buried upon the margin of a convenient brook, which from this circumstance, has taken the name of Infant Creek."

On May 4 Barney's party met Daniel Blue, whose tragic story he was the first to report: "An Indian [later identified as Arapaho] brought into camp this evening a man he had picked up the day before in an almost dying state. The man gave the following account of himself."

Quoting Blue: "Two brothers of mine, myself and five others left Whiteside County, Ill., the latter part of February last for Pike's Peak. Leaving Kansas City, Mo., the first of March with a pony for packing our provisions, we pushed on for the Eldorado. After being out for a few days the pony, for want of food and drink, became exhausted and died. We were then compelled to carry our own grub, which we continued to do until it was all consumed, then we had no resource left but the scanty game our guns could supply. Soon, however, this failed, for our ammunition became exhausted.

"Four of our company now started ahead to find, if possible, a settlement. A Mr. Roach and my brothers were left behind, being already too weak for pioneers. By and by the strength of Roach failed him and starvation looked us all full in the face. We killed our dog one day and devoured him; next day Roach died of starvation, and upon his corpse we subsisted till it was consumed to the very marrow in its bones. My eldest brother, conscious he could last but a little longer implored us to feed upon him as

soon as he should die, and travel as fast as possible while he lasted, and endeavor to find a settlement, and if fortunate enough to find our way out, then return to our once happy homes, and for the love you bear a brother, forget not my bereaved widow and fatherless children. He died and we devoured him. Next my younger brother died, and was eaten by me. After consuming the flesh, gnawing the bones, and breaking them for their marrow, horrible to relate, but oh! how desperate is hunger, I mangled the skull, and breakfasted upon my brother's brains!"

Barney continued the story: "When the Indian found him he lay upon his back, nearly blind and too weak to get a drink of water from the creek but a few yards distant. In the morning the conductor and I went with him and the Indian, and found the remains of the younger brother as he related. The bones, which were perfectly fleshless, lay in a little bough house, and the head about fifty yards from them, the skull broken and brains absent; thereby corroborating the story thus far. We buried the skeleton remains, the flesh of which had preserved a brother from starvation, and left the wolf to howl his funeral dirge, and the prairie winds to sigh his requiem. We then took the poor, bereaved, heart broken, weak, disconsolate, half-crazed, remaining brother back to the camp and left him to recruit. Their names were Rule [Blue], Charles, Alexander and George [Daniel], if I remember rightly. They have a father and mother living in Illinois. This story is dreadful, even at second hand, but to hear the wild and almost distracted brother relate it was heartrending in the extreme."

Barney's party pushed on to Denver, arriving May 7. He noted, "This marvelous city contains about 150 log cabins, some with roofs, and more without." He tried prospecting without success and turned to the business of

supplying the miners.

Henry Villard wrote a report of his trip, via the second pair of mud wagons headed west from Leavenworth to Denver, for the *Cincinnati Daily Commercial* (dated at Denver City, May 17, 1859), a general overview of his trip. Villard, 1835-1900, emigrated from Germany to the U.S. in 1853 at age 18. He changed his name from Ferdinand Heinrich Gustave Hilgard to Henry Villard. He became a newspaper correspondent, later entered business, and served as president of the Northern Pacific Railroad. He died in 1900. He deserves mention but the accounts of Greeley and Richardson provide details cited here.

Horace Greeley, 1811-1872, was the founder and editor of the *New York Tribune* in 1841, which became the most widely-circulated newspaper in the nation, promoted expansion and the settlement of the West, was active in politics (supporting railroads, homestead act, socialism, temperance, women's rights, and anti-slavery), and was a strong supporter of the U.S. national government. He was candidate for president in 1872 on the Liberal Republican ticket and the Democratic ticket in a failed attempt to defeat U. S. Grant. He hired talented reporters. He was the first editor to hire and encourage women reporters, including the feminist Julia Archibald Holmes who became his Southwest correspondent in New Mexico in 1861.

He helped found and name the Republican Party. He came to Kansas Territory to help organize the Republican Party at the convention in Osawatimie in 1859 before heading west to the gold fields of present Colorado and on to California. He and Richardson met on that trip across Kansas Territory, and Greeley later hired Richardson as one of his reporters. He supported Abraham Lincoln for president, although Greeley wanted a stronger stand against slavery. He broke with President Grant over Reconstruction and corruption. He lost to Grant in a landslide in 1872. His wife died five days before the election and Horace died exactly one month later.

Albert Deane Richardson, 1833-1869, was a

journalist, author, reporter on the Civil War, well-known for his western travels before and after the Civil War, his Civil War reporting, capture and imprisonment in Confederate prison camps, his escape, a biography of Ulysses S. Grant, and being shot two different times by the jealous husband of his second wife. He and Horace Greeley traveled in the same mud wagon on the Leavenworth & Pike's Peak Express Co. line in 1859. Richardson became a reporter for Greeley's *New York Tribune* after that trip.

Richardson and Junius Henri Browne were fellow reporters for the *New York Tribune* during the Civil War. They witnessed several battles, were captured at Vicksburg, and spent 593 days in seven Confederate prisons before escaping from Salisbury Prison in North Carolina. They traveled over 200 miles through Confederate territory with three other escapees and safely reached Union lines in January 1865. During the war Richardson's wife and daughter died. The story of the two reporters is told in Peter Carlson's *Junius and Albert's Adventures in the Confederacy*, 2013, a book worth reading.

Richardson is most remembered, however, for how he died. After the Civil War and the death of his wife and daughter, he met Abby Sage McFarland, an actress married to Daniel McFarland, an alcoholic and abusive husband who had connections to New York criminal elements and Tammany Hall. She left her husband and lived with Richardson who protected her while she tried to obtain a divorce, not easy in that era.

Vice-President Schuyler Colfax recommended she move to Indiana where divorce laws were less restrictive. Daniel McFarland shot and wounded Richardson in March 1867. He survived. Daniel shot him again in November 1869, and Richardson died a week later. Sage had obtained a divorce by

then and she and Richardson were married in the hospital before he died. The wedding was performed by Rev. Henry Ward Beecher. McFarland was acquitted, traveled west, and drank himself to death. Sage lived until 1900.

Greeley did not take the Leavenworth and Pikes Peak Express from Leavenworth to Manhattan. He left Leavenworth on May 24, a day ahead of Richardson, and took what he called the "Ft. Riley Stage" that ran from Leavenworth to Junction City because he wanted to stop for visits in Topeka and Manhattan before heading on to Denver. He took the Leavenworth and Pikes Peak Express from Manhattan, boarding the mud wagon on which Richardson was a passenger on May 27, 1859. They traveled together to Denver.

Both described the route from Leavenworth to Junction City, the established military road. What they wrote about that eastern end of the Leavenworth and Pikes Peak Express is not as significant as what they wrote about the route beyond Junction City.

Richardson described how they traveled: "May 25. — I left Leavenworth by the overland mail carriage built in Concord, New Hampshire, known as the Concord wagon. In a dozen localities its manufacture is imitated with more or less success but never equaled. . . . It is covered with duck or canvas, the driver sitting in front, at a slight elevation above the passengers. Bearing no weight upon the roof, it is less top-heavy than the old-fashioned stagecoach. . . . Empty, it jolts and pitches like a ship on a raging sea; filled with passengers and balanced by a proper distribution of baggage in the 'boot' behind, and under the driver's feet before, its motion is easy and elastic. Excelling every other in durability and strength, this hack is used all over our continent and throughout South America. Two coaches, each drawn by four mules, leave Leavenworth daily and make the entire trip together, for protection in case of danger from Indians."

Conclusion in the next *Overland Despatch*. 

MORE FROM THE *JUNCTION* CITY UNION

June 23, 1866—The Smoky Hill Route.

Mr. Collier, editor of the Miner's Register, Central City, Colorado, thus speaks of his trip home:

"In a few days the coaches will cease to run from Atchison, but will run from the western terminus of the Omaha [*sic*] and Wyandott [*sic*] branches of the Pacific road.

When this is done all overland travel will go by the way of the Smoky Hill and St. Louis, as there will be an unbroken railroad communication by this route, while the Omaha branch does not connect eastward. The Smoky Hill Route is now conceded to be the shortest one of the two. While it is not fully stocked and regulated, and will not be perhaps for a month to come, the coach on which we came made better time than that which left Atchison at the same time, our actual time of traveling from Topeka to this place, being less than five days, and that of the same coach from Atchison less than six. From the terminus of the road, the trip to Denver will hereafter be readily made in four days. The coach route is rolling, and consequently much better for freighting than the Platte, which is nearly level. There is no sand worth mentioning along the entire distance. The road is hard but not yet worn quite as smooth as that along the Platte. The scenery is beautiful, especially through the chalk belt, which extends for two hundred miles in Western Kansas and Eastern Colorado. The bluffs of chalk, often seventy-five or a hundred feet high, are cut into grotesque figures, resembling ruined cities and ancient towers. Through the whole distance the scenery is very fine.

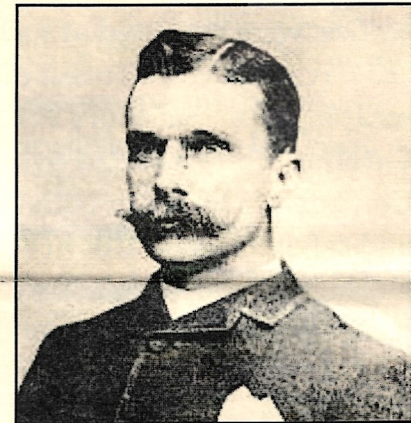
The completion of the railroad to Fort Riley leaves but four hundred and fifty-six miles by measurement to Denver, and cuts off

the worst portion of the mud. Of course our freighters will gain immensely by taking this route. The supply of grass is excellent, and that of wood and water fair for the plains. Every year will make our separation from the East less, and will increase the certainty of our success. The railroad from Kansas City to Cameron, on the Hannibal and St. Joseph railroad, is also likely to be completed this summer and will give a connection with Chicago."



THE GREAT UNION PACIFIC TRAIN ROBBERY

The notorious outlaw and gentleman bandit Sam Bass masterminded the greatest railroad robbery of all time. It was also the first robbery experienced by the Union Pacific Railway. Although the crime took place in Nebraska and Sam Bass met his end in true outlaw fashion during a shoot-out in Texas with a contingent of Texas Rangers, the story has a Kansas, and Smoky Hill Trail/Union Pacific/Kansas Pacific connection.



Bass, born in Indiana in 1851, became an orphan at the age of 12, being raised by an uncle. At the age of 18, he ran away and went out into the world to make his fortune. He tried his hand at various jobs including working at a saw mill in Mississippi, as a cowboy in Texas, and even worked for a sheriff doing odd jobs like fence building, sawing firewood, and caring for livestock. His work with various animals led him to develop a keen interest in "the sport of kings." Acquiring his horse, known as "The Denton Mare," earned him a nice income but it was a short-lived distraction lasting just two years before the horse became too old to race. It was then that he took up a life-long friendship with

Joel Collins. Together, the two men began to look for a job that suited their work ethic of little physical labor and high pay. They soon hit upon a plan to go into partnership with a group of ranchers, offering to move their herd of cattle from Texas to the railhead in Dodge City, Kansas. Moving a large herd of cattle north might have been hard work but the potential payoff was large. Reaching Dodge City, the two men decided to continue on to Nebraska where the price for selling the cattle was greater. The decision netted the cattle sale a price of \$8,000. But rather than returning the profits to the group of ranchers, the two men took the money and headed to South Dakota where, depending on the source, they either tried their hand at freighting, prospected for gold, or simply gambled it all away! Whatever the case, this was the beginning of



Sam Bass at far left, Joel Collins at far right. The other two men are Joe Collins (L) and John E. Gardner (R)

their life of crime and they ended up in Deadwood South Dakota. At this point they took up with a group of similarly-minded n'air-do-wells and began robbing stagecoaches in the Black Hills, becoming known as "The Black Hills Bandits." But, like kids with their

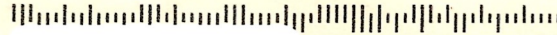
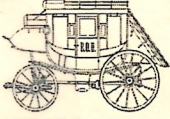
first jobs, the money they pilfered from innocent passengers was spent almost as soon as they got it. After about a half dozen robberies, they became bored with the small return on their investments and his upon the idea of robbing a train.

Late in the evening of September 18, 1877, they accosted the station-master at Big Spring Station, Nebraska and forced him to signal the Union Pacific train to stop. One of the gang's members pistol whipped the express messenger trying to get him to open the safe but it was on a time lock that could not be opened until the end of the trip. So, they looked elsewhere for anything of value and happened upon several boxes. Breaking them open they found the boxes contained \$60,000 in newly-minted \$20 gold pieces (nearly \$1.5 million in today's dollars). They also absconded with \$1,300 from the male passengers. It seemed their nefarious activities did have their limits and they took nothing from the women passengers. (The train was also carrying a load of silver bars worth much more than the gold but the gang felt they were too heavy to transport and so left them.)

The gang took their ill-gotten gains and headed south, stopping only long enough to divide the gold six ways, at which point the gang members headed off in different directions.

The men were all masked during the robbery but when one of them was crawling across a coupling, six guns in each hand, and his mask slipped down. A passenger recognized him as Joel Collins. Word was spread to be on the lookout for Collins and members of his gang.

James Berry was captured. A man named Nixon presumably escaped to Canada and was never heard of again. Jim Murphy was captured but turned informant, helping the Texas Rangers locate Bass. Bass established another gang in Texas and got back into the stagecoach-robbing business. As previously noted, he was shot and mortally wounded in a shootout in Round Rock, Texas on July 19. He died two days later on his birthday, July 21, 1878. After his death, Bass became somewhat of a legend in Texas, having a road



named after him in Round Rock, Texas, which also holds a re-enactment of his shootout during their annual Frontier Days. Another nearby town, Rosston, Texas also holds a Sam Bass Day on the third Saturday in July each year.

Now for the Smoky Hill Trail connection to this story:

When the gang split up, Collins and fellow gang member Bill Heffridge headed south, down Texas way. But they didn't get too far. Ellis County, Kansas sheriff George Bardsley was given orders from the U.S. Army to take a contingent of troops from Fort Hays and begin searching for the bandits. A locomotive and several cars were put at their disposal so they headed down the railroad to the west.

In the early hours of September 26, two men rode out of the fog and approached Buffalo Station (now Gove, Kansas) on the line of the Kansas Pacific Railway. The men asked the

station master if there was a store where they could buy some food. They were told the manager of the section house might have some to sell, but as the fog began to lift, the men noticed the soldiers encamped nearby. Then Sheriff Bardsley walked over to talk to the men. Collins had no idea he had been identified during the robbery but he got nervous at the sight of the sheriff. Bardsley asked Collins and Heffridge to come with him for questioning and they all headed toward the encampment. Collins, figuring the game was up, turned to Heffridge and is reported to have said, "Pard, if we are to die, we might as well die game," at which point the two drew their revolvers. Bardsley also drew his pistol and shot Collins through the heart. One of the soldiers, Private Charles Sloan, Company G, 16th Infantry, shot Heffridge, killing him.

The bodies of the two men were taken to Ellis where they were buried. About a year after their deaths, a woman came to Ellis and took Collins's body to Texas.

