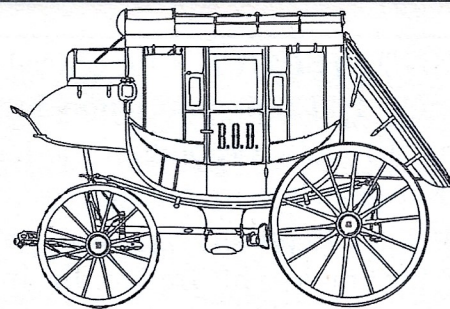


# OVERLAND DESPATCH



Volume IX No. 1

*Remember the Smoky Hill Trail*

Fall 2016

## LOOKING BACK AS WE MOVE FORWARD

by "The Cowboy" Jim Gray

When making plans to attend this year's 10th annual conference be sure to allow an extra day. Typically, folks finish out the conference Sunday noon and rush off for home. You won't want to do that this time! While the schedule for the conference is filled with exciting things to do both Friday and Saturday, we have saved the best for last. For decades the site of Fort Fletcher has been closed to visitors. Fort Fletcher is without doubt one of the most exciting Smoky Hill Trail sites you will ever visit! Sign up for the Sunday afternoon tour and delay your return home for a day. Stand on the very spot where Theodore Davis sketched "Fort Fletcher" for Harpers Monthly.

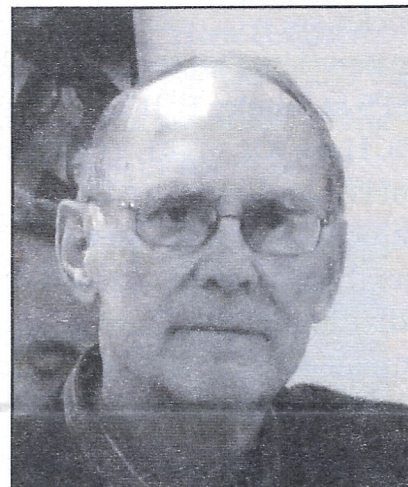
Investigate not one, but three lime kilns. And witness the amazing earth works, like no other existing

today along the B.O.D. Take my word for it. You will be glad that you took the time to walk the historic grounds of Fort Fletcher!



## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

This will be the farewell column of my presidential tenure. It has been an interesting ride. I have enjoyed the liberty of being allowed to write about whatever interested me. I hope you, the readers, have found something interesting in what I have had to say.



You should have received, or will soon do so, the brochure for the upcoming annual conference. I encourage you to peruse it and plan to attend. Jim Gray has assembled an exciting line-up of speakers, content, and tours. The visit to the site of old Fort Fletcher is a once-in-lifetime opportunity. Having a big event on Sunday is a break from the traditional schedule of past conferences. I urge you to avail yourself of this chance to visit one of the seminal venues in the history of our trail and assure you that you do not want to miss it. Also, the tour on Saturday promises a fun time, with visits to other historic sites along the Smoky Hill Trail, accompanied by historical characters from the time period and an evening Chuck Wagon Cookout under the stars. You should notice the capacity of the bus tours is 56. I urge you to get your reservation in early.

*(Continued on page 2)*

**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](mailto: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:**

Elton Beougher, Hays, Kansas

**Vice-President:**

Kay Homewood, Russell, Kansas

**Secretary:**

Mike Baughn, Brewster, Kansas

**Treasurer:**

Danny Lattin, Lawrence, Kansas

**Newsletter Editor:**

Robert Wilhelm, Hays, Kansas

**Directors:**

Ken Cole, Russell, Kansas

Jim Gray, Ellsworth, Kansas

Steve Parke, Pueblo, Colorado

Craig Lilak, Wilson, Kansas

*(President continued from page 1)*

I personally have enjoyed the opportunity offered by my research into the activities and personages of the Galvanized Yankees. This was a unique group of individuals. Their stories are fascinating. I hope you enjoy the journey as much as I have.

See you on October 14, 15, and 16. Happy Trails!

Elton Beougher

President

Smoky Hill Trail Association



## THANK YOU...

Members provide a vital connection to the development of Smoky Hill Trail Association's progression in preserving the trail. The board and the committees listen to what members say and constantly review our strategy. Asking you to either become a member or to continue your membership is about more than paying annual dues and membership levels. It is about your feedback, support, and strength in numbers. Our efforts will help provide greater access to the history of the trail for future generations.

To refresh your memory, all memberships expire December 31, of each calendar year. For example, a new membership or renewal at conference time will be valid through December 31, 2017.

Again, thank you for your support. See you at the conference.

Kay Homewood,

Membership Chairman



## NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The deadline for articles to be included in the next edition of the Overland Despatch is **November 30, 2016**. Please have your articles, announcements, notes, etc. sent to the newsletter editor either by US mail or E-mail by that date (addresses in box at left). Thank you.

## MYSTERY OF THE WOLF HELPER

*(The following article first appeared in the December 13, 2015 issue of "The Way West" and is published here with permission of the author, Jim Gray.)*

The Sand Creek Massacre in southeast Colorado was perhaps the greatest act of infamy ever committed by American troops in time of war. Most of the men were away hunting buffalo to feed their families. The troops were actually Colorado militia commanded by Colonel John M. Chivington. An estimated one hundred fifty men, women, and children were killed and mutilated in the cold morning attack of November 29, 1864. Some of the women stayed with their husbands to help them fight.

In the book "By Cheyenne Campfires," author George Bird Grinnell relates a story of survival told to him by the women who lived it. Living in our modern age their story may seem fanciful, however, even today, the mysteries of nature can try the imagination. The story of "The Wolf Helper" is one of those mysteries.

Two She-Wolf Woman and Standing In Different Places Woman were sisters. They also shared the same husband. Grinnell did not name the young warrior who was severely wounded in the fight. His wives had stayed with him in spite of the fact that each woman also had a daughter to care for, one ten years old and the other six. They had gotten past the soldiers to find a place to rest on the prairie. The husband, realizing that he was about to die urged his wives to continue on to the hunting camp on the Smoky Hill River to save their daughter's lives.

Grinnell did not say how long they remained with their husband however it must have been several days before they reluctantly left him to his fate. The people scattered widely as they fled toward the Smoky and the late departure of the two sisters left them entirely alone with

their daughters on the high plains of eastern Colorado. They luckily had their robes to protect them from the windswept winter cold. They had no food, but they had their knives and one small axe.

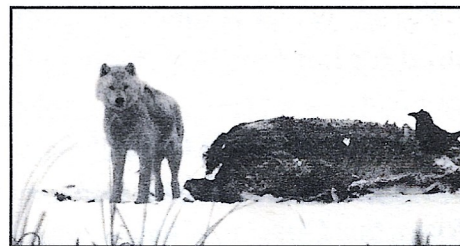
At a dry river channel they found rose berries that were pounded into flat cakes. They were still somewhere west of the hunting camp. Their moccasins were worn and their feet were suffering as they slowly traveled downstream with their children in tow.

After about a week of travel they found a hole in a bluff near the river bank. That night they sat up in the hole with one robe under them. Their children were lying between them. All were nestled under the second robe for warmth. In the darkness something came into the hole. Then the light of the moon silhouetted a large wolf standing in the opening. Although frightened they remained silent and the wolf quietly laid down in front of them.



The next day the wolf walked along with them.

When they stopped to rest the wolf would lay down. The flat cakes were gone and in desperation the elder sister said to their visitor, "Oh Wolf, try to do something for us. We and our children are nearly starved." The wolf listened, rose to his feet, and jaunted off to the north. When he returned he seemed to beckon them to follow. From the top of a distant hill



they could see the carcass of a buffalo in a little draw. A pack of wolves sat silently by without feeding.

The women and children ran to the carcass and began to eat their fill without cooking. All the while the wolves waited. They cut off pieces and made packs from the hide to carry as much as

*(Continued on page 4)*

(*Wolf Helper continued from page 3*)

they could. When they were finished the wolves "fell on it and began to eat it quickly, growling and snarling at each other."

Each day the wolf traveled with them. Each night he lay down in their camp. One night something approached the camp breaking sticks as it came near. The wolf suddenly arose and began to howl "a long drawn-out cry." Suddenly the pack of wolves rushed in and began to fight the mysterious intruder. The women and their children ran onto the prairie.

The following morning when the wolf came to them, the elder woman, realizing they were lost, asked the wolf to help them find the hunting camp. Again he trotted off. When he returned he was carrying a big piece of dried meat. After eating the meat the women followed their friend to the abandoned camp. Their people had left the dried meat for anyone who might come in late.

They still did not know where the new camp was. A heavy snow had covered the tribal departure. The snow did not deter the wolf. He led them north, staying with them and caring for them until they reached the winter Cherry Creek encampment northwest of present-day St. Francis, Kansas. The wolf stopped at the top of a hill overlooking the valley. After reuniting with their people the elder sister who had talked to the wolf brought him some meat. After he had eaten she told the wolf that he could go back to his old ways.

That evening when she returned to the hill she found only tracks in the snow as evidence of The Wolf Helper who cared for her family in their time of need on The Way West.

("The Cowboy," Jim Gray is author of the book "Desperate Seed: Ellsworth Kansas on the Violent Frontier." He is also the Executive Director of the National Drovers Hall of Fame and serves on the Board of the Smoky Hill Trail Association. Contact Kansas Cowboy, Box 62, Ellsworth, KS 67439. Phone 785-531-2058)



## AIR TOWNS AND THEIR INHABITANTS

By W.E. Webb

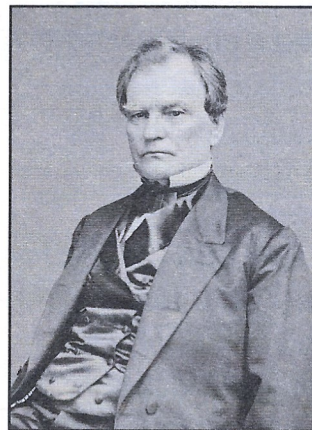
(From *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 51, Issue 306, November 1875) Part 4.

*Webb's account of towns along the Kansas Pacific Railway continues in Sheridan, Kansas, with some of the characters he met:*

Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill, whom I met often on the plains, much more fairly deserved their names. The former I knew first as a teamster, then bar-tender, and finally scout. He certainly knew more about the plains than any one I ever met. Wild Bill, during the years that I was cognizant of his actions, filled at intervals the positions of scout, saloon-keeper, refugee, and sheriff. The number of persons I knew him to kill was five, three at Hays and two at Abilene. It seems as if such men as Bill were designed by Providence to act as a sort of carnivore for keeping down the increase of their species. In all of my residence upon the frontier, during which time sixty-two graves were filled by violence, in no case was the murder otherwise than a benefit to society. The dangerous class killed within its own circle, but never courted justice by shedding better blood. Orderly people looked on with something like satisfaction, as at wolves rending each other. The snarl was the click of a revolver, and the bite followed the bark. These were the men who gloried in snuffing out a candle or a life at thirty paces.

I remember one instance in which the power of mind over the brute force represented by these characters was oddly developed. The writer was one of a party which embraced Senator "Ben Wade," [1] and which had paused for a night's rest at

(Continued on page 5)



Benjamin Wade

*(Air Towns continued from page 4)*

the new town. Retiring to our rooms in the hastily constructed hotel, we listened on the creaking beds to the strange sounds around. The partitions between apartments were but six feet high, and sound flowed freely over the whole floor. Under the window was a tumult of drunken Texans, and a man in some far-off room was having a desperate struggle with his boots. They were tight, and he was "tight;" and after a fruitless struggle we heard him crawling between the sheets with the remark, "If the landlord wants them boots off, let him come and take them off himself." We knew when any body was turning over, or when a brush was laid down in any part of the house. Every creak and stamp and snore was reported faithfully to our ears. Presently there arose an unusual brawl in the office below, and up the main stairs came stumbling a drunken Texan. He knew that Senator Wade was in town, but had no idea he was in this particular house. We could hear him all the way up anathematizing the Senator, and Fate in a wild freak plunged him into the room adjoining "honest Ben's." Sprawling upon the bed, our Texan, in drunken accents, commenced informing the powers of the night that he wished the Indians would "scalp old Ben Wade," as he had no business "comin' into this yere country." Over and over again was the wish loudly expressed, to the annoyance of all on the floor, but none dared remonstrate. Soon the Senator's bed creaked ominously. We were alarmed. Ohio wrath was evidently rising, and visions of bloody encounters with long-haired Texans came before us. As the rude speech again came forth, a deep voice issued out of the Senator's castle. Slowly and emphatically, as if addressing his colleagues, came the words, "Old Ben Wade had rather be scalped by the Indians than kept awake all night by the twaddle of a drunken fool." Texas was struck dumb. The physical bully quailed from unexpected contact with the intellectual giant. Up to that moment

none of the guests had known of Mr. Wade's presence. As the silence continued in the Texan's apartment, there came subdued snickers from all around, then one bold laugh, and immediately after a chorus of cheers and shouts from every sleeping-pen. In the midst of these the man from the tall grass country shuffled down stairs.

Among Sheridan's very peculiar characters the strangest one was known as Jesso--a shrunken little figure, with a humped back and shriveled left hand. On the deformed trunk rested a well-balanced head, with quick, full eyes, and a face very difficult to read. In it was a touch of humor, much of bitterness, and a suggestion of malice. When Nature painted the face, she had, like an artist hurried at her work, touched up the rough features with suggestions of passions in so faint an outline that you broke their thread of character whenever attempting to grasp it. This man was one of those contradictions in life whom it would have been unsafe to judge by either phrenological or instinctive rules. In the frontier vernacular, he "wouldn't do to swear by." His name was taken from his favorite expression, "Jes-so." At first I had thought it a corruption of Jesse, until I noticed his strange use of the two words. Every thing, whether it was a matter of dinner or a death, was "Jes-so." Had you flung the lie in his teeth or given him a blow, he would have first said, "Jes-so," and then pierced your heart with a bullet.

This hero had first appeared in Sheridan as conductor of a Mexican wagon train. With him came a young girl, rather fair to look upon, and bearing the fiery dash of the sun-land in her eyes. It transpired that she was one of the many foundling waifs of New Mexico, and had been raised from childhood by the dwarf. His shrunken hand was the result of its being crushed under a heavy wagon wheel while its companion was pulling the child out of danger. Whether he had for the girl other than a step-father's love will never be known. He had brought her thus far east to be away from the wretched immorality of New Mexico. Bad enough himself, yet he would not

*(Continued on page 6)*

*(Air Towns continued from page 5)*

see the young life so dear to him sink down in that terrible whirlpool. Jesso was jealously watchful, and the girl spoiled and capricious. With some of the beauty of Mexico's maidens, she had all of their coquetry. Before his life had measured out one brief week in Sheridan the dwarf enjoyed two fights on account of the adopted daughter. Ere a fortnight passed she was missing one bright morning, as was also a light-fingered "Bunny," or "Bonny," the hero of one of the previous quarrels.

It was a bad sight to see the dwarf that morning. He crept around town like a wild-cat whetting its claws on the gravelly soil, and preparing to spring. Ruggles, the postmaster, asked him if he should pursue, and he gasped out a wicked, merciless "Jes-so." There was "more of hell," the P.M. said, in that look than he had ever expected to see on earth. The eyes had the red madness of a soul on fire. They were windows reflecting the dull glare of leaping flames within. Before noon Jesso had left town. Perry, the hotel-keeper, gathering moss-agates on the buttes, saw him, like a wolf upon a trail, steal off among the ravines along the Santa Fe road. Two weeks afterward a Mexican train arrived in town, and the wagon-master reported the following occurrence. Near the crossing of the Purgatory his men, while grazing the oxen, came upon two dead bodies thus grotesquely situated:

There was an old feed-box for a table, and on each side sat a corpse--one of a woman, the other of a man. Evidently placed in a sitting posture after death, their heads had fallen close together, and the hands, which lay upon each other, covered a Catholic prayer-book. The work of murder had been bunglingly done in the case of the girl, as if the slayer's hand had half refused the task. The wagon-master even thought from the clotted blood on her hair and the character of the wounds, that she might have fallen while warding off from her companion the blows of the sudden night attack. It was a ghastly marriage the

murderer had performed, in uniting the stiffening fingers of the sorrowful couple while Death stood by as priest. The dreadful coolness of the avenger who could thus slay, and then arrange the dead in mimicry of marriage, belonged peculiarly to the plain.

It was a month or more before Jesso returned to Sheridan. Interest in the matter had then died out, and I do not know whether any questions about it were ever asked. The dwarf drank and fought and gambled, and was one of the "characters" as before.

---

[1] Benjamin Franklin "Bluff" Wade was a Republican Senator from Ohio, serving from 1851 to 1869. He was considered a radical as he supported women's right to vote, rights for trade unions and equality for African Americans. His biggest claim to fame was that he was President pro tempore of the Senate during the impeachment hearings for President Andrew Johnson. Since Johnson had no vice-president, Wade was next in line to be president should Johnson have been impeached. It was said that many voted against impeachment simply because they did not want the controversial Wade to become president.

*This article will conclude in the next issue.*



## THE STRANGE CASE OF CHARLEY PARKHURST, STAGECOACH DRIVER

*(The following was contributed by member Lem Marsh. Much of this story is from the Max Redline website and as odd as the story may seem, it is true!)*

Western stagecoach companies were big business in the latter half of the 19th century. In addition to passengers and freight, stages hauled gold and silver bullion as well as mining company payrolls.

Stage robbery was a constant danger and bandits employed many strategies to ambush a

*(Continued on page 7)*

(Charley continued from page 6)

stagecoach. Thieves rarely met with much resistance from stage drivers, since they had passenger safety foremost in mind. The gang was usually after the money box with its valuable contents. Passengers were seldom hurt, but they were certainly relieved of their cash, watches and jewelry. Before the completion of the transcontinental railroad over Donner Pass in 1868, the only transportation through the Sierra was by stage. Rugged teamsters held rein over six wild-eyed horses as they tore along the precipitous mountain trails. The stagecoaches were driven by skilled and fearless men who pushed themselves and their spirited horses to the limit.

One of the most famous drivers was Charles Darkey Parkhurst. Parkhurst was born in New England in 1812 but spent much of his youth in an orphanage from which he eventually ran away, finding work as a stable hand and learning to handle horses. By 1852, Parkhurst was in California where he spent 15 years running stages, sometimes partnering with Hank Monk, the celebrated driver from Carson City. Some of the routes he drove over were Stockton to Mariposa, San Juan to Santa Cruz and "the great stage route" from San Jose to Oakland.

Over the years, Parkhurst's reputation as an expert whip grew. From 20 feet away he could slice open the end of an envelope or cut a cigar out of a man's mouth. Parkhurst smoked cigars, chewed wads of tobacco, drank with the best of them, and exuded supreme confidence behind the reins. His judgment was sound and pleasant manners won him many friends.

One afternoon as Charley drove down from Carson Pass the lead horses veered off the road



Hank Monk

and a wrenching jolt threw him from the rig. He hung on to the reins as the horses dragged him along on his stomach. Amazingly, Parkhurst managed to steer the frightened horses back onto the road and save all his grateful passengers.

During the 1850s, bands of surly highwaymen stalked the roads. These outlaws would level their shotguns at stage drivers and shout, "Throw down the gold box!" Charley Parkhurst had no patience for the crooks despite their demands and threatening gestures.

The most notorious road agent was nicknamed "Sugarfoot." When he and his gang accosted Charley's stage, it was the last robbery the thief ever attempted.

Charley cracked his whip defiantly, and when his horses bolted, he turned around and fired his revolver at the crooks. Sugarfoot was later found dead with a fatal bullet wound in his stomach.

In appreciation of his bravery, Wells Fargo presented Parkhurst with a large watch and chain made of solid gold.

In 1865, Parkhurst grew tired of the demanding job of driving and seeing that the railroad was taking much of the business from stage lines, he quit the job of driving and

opened his own stage station. Eventually he sold the business and retired to a ranch near Soquel, California where he farmed and cut trees. The years slipped by and Charley died on Dec. 29, 1879, at the age of 67.

A few days later, the *Sacramento Daily Bee* published his obituary. It read; "On Sunday last, there died a person known as Charley Parkhurst, aged 67, who was well-known to old residents as a stage driver. He was, in early days, accounted one of the most expert manipulators of the reins who ever sat on the box of a coach. It was discovered when friendly hands were preparing him for his final rest, that Charley Parkhurst was unmistakably a well-developed woman!"



(Continued on page 8)



(Charley continued from page 7)

Once it was discovered that Charley was a woman, there were plenty of people to say they had always thought he wasn't like other men. Even though he wore leather gloves summer and winter, many noticed that his hands were small and smooth. He slept in the stables with his beloved horses and was never known to have had a girlfriend.

Charley never volunteered clues to her past. Loose fitting clothing hid her femininity. She weighed 175 pounds, could handle herself in a fistfight and drank whiskey like one of the boys.



It turns out that Charley's real name was Charlotte Parkhurst. Abandoned as a child, she was raised in a New Hampshire orphanage unloved and surrounded by poverty. Charlotte ran away when she was 15 years old. Shortly after

arriving in California, she was kicked by a horse and lost the use of her left eye, which led to the nickname of "One-Eyed Charley" or "Cockeyed Charley," the patch helping to conceal her face. She soon discovered that life in the working world was easier for men, so she decided to masquerade as one for the rest of her life. The rest is history.

Well, almost. There is one last thing. On November 3, 1868, Charlotte Parkhurst cast her vote in the national election, dressed as a man. She became the first woman to vote in the United States, 52 years before Congress passed the 19th amendment giving American women the right to vote!



Bronze marker dedicated to Charlotte (Charley) in Soquel, California

