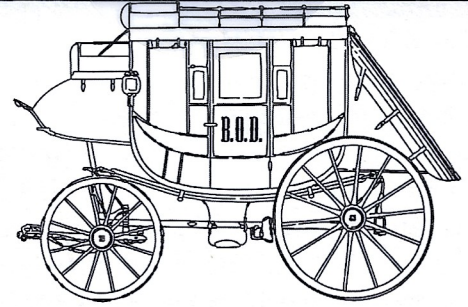


OVERLAND DESPATCH



Volume XI No. IV

Remember the Smoky Hill Trail

Summer 2019

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Work is under way planning our association's annual conference to be held at historic Fort Wallace in Wallace County, Kansas. The conference will be held from Friday, October 18 to Sunday, October 20, 2019. The schedule of speakers and events is being developed as well as information on accommodations.

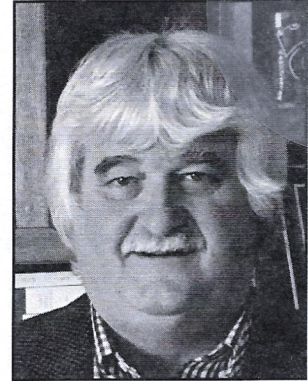
Each year as our annual conference approaches, I wonder what topic, item or event will be addressed that will not only educate and entertain, but surprise.

There always seems to be one or more topics or speakers at each conference that not only provides new and interesting information, but explores something that is new or surprising to me.

For me last year one of the highlights was the tour of the underground railroad hosted by Richard Pitts, executive director of Wonder Workshops.

I am a native of Central Kansas, spent four years at Manhattan going to Kansas State University and still did not realize the extent to which the underground railroad was active within the Riley and Wabaunsee Counties near Manhattan. While the tour and the sights were impressive, perhaps what was most impressive was our host, Richard Pitts, and his knowledge not only of the local history of the underground railroad, but of the history and culture of the people in and outside the United States as it related to human slavery and the slave industry.

Participants in that tour were given the opportunity not only to see and visualize the historical properties, but were invited to think and consider the mind sets of the people during the development of the human slave industry and what attitudes and personalities could permit it to develop, continue, flourish and ultimately be brought to an end.



Mr. Pitts provided me with a list of books that he suggested could be reviewed by "anyone interested in reading in more detail about history from a prospective not usually taught in classrooms." The following is a partial list of those books:

African Mother of Western Civilization by Yosef ben-Jochannan

New Dimensions in African History by John Henrik Clarke

Black Mother: The years of Our African Slave Trade: Precolonial History, 1450-1850 by Basil Davidson

Ethiopia and the Origins of Civilization by John Jackson

The White Slave by Fanny Howe

The Slave Community by John W. Blassingame

Black Slaves, Indian Masters by Barbara Krauthamer

What wonders will we discover at Fort Wallace that have not yet been revealed? To discover those please join me with your fellow members of the association at our annual conference in October.

Also, just a reminder that annual membership dues for 2019 became due the first of

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.

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Ken Griffin, Hays, Kansas

William Howe, Oakley, Kansas

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the year. Please check the mailing label to this edition of the Overland Dispatch. The label will indicate the year to which your membership has been paid. If you have not yet renewed your membership, please do so today as this organization can only continue to exist with the support of its members.

If you have not yet renewed your membership for 2019, please do so today. Membership dues should be sent to the following address:

Smoky Hills Trail Association
P.O. Box 978
Hays, KS 67601

Membership dues are listed at Page 2 of this issue of the Overland Dispatch. Thank you.

Next Stop Fort Wallace!

Ken Cole, President

Smoky Hill Trail Association



NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

The editor welcomes any articles, comments, or suggestions to be included in the next or any subsequent editions of the Overland Dispatch.

To be included in the September issue, please have admissions to the editor no later than **August 31, 2019**. 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

SMOKY HILL TRAIL A SUCCESS

Junction City Union, August 19, 1865.

We have just received the following telegram, Atchison, August 10, J.C. Vaughn, *Leavenworth Times*. The Smoky Hill Trail Route is a perfect success. The following dispatch from Eaton has just been received:

Denver, August 7, 1865. To D.A. Butterfield—The expedition has been a perfect success. It is the best road from the Missouri River to the Mountains. There is living water every five miles, except from the head of Smoky Hill to the head of Sand Creek, a distance of twenty-one miles. Grass and wood are abundant. The whole route distance from Leavenworth to Denver is 585 miles. Shall arrange for building station from here.

(Signed) Isaac E. Eaton.

This route will now be stocked with all possible dispatch.

D.A. Butterfield

Gen'l Sup't B.O.D. Co.



PAWNEE SCOUTS KILLED 150 YEARS AGO

By Deb Goodrich

Had the leaders of the Pawnee Tribe realized what had been done to the bodies of their fellow tribesmen on Mulberry Creek, they might not have allowed other warriors to serve in the U. S. Army.

According to the Pawnee accounts, in January 1869, fourteen Pawnees, all of whom had been discharged from their service as scouts, were traveling on foot from their reservation through Kansas to trade and visit with the tribes in the Indian Territory. They stopped at a farm near Salina and asked for

potatoes and flour. While there, two soldiers came by and examined their discharge papers. They returned with other soldiers who opened fire on the Pawnees. They fled to a nearby canyon/cave on Mulberry Creek. The Pawnees said nine warriors were killed and five escaped. The survivors returned to bury their comrades.

Fears of the settlers in the region were understandable; raids throughout western Kansas were brutal and frequent in the late 1860s. Settlers made no distinction between the tribes—all Indians were alike.

Famed Scout Frank North (photo at right) was present when the Cheyenne leadership called for a council with Indian Agent Charles Whaley. They were outraged by this treatment of peaceful Pawnees, who had committed no violence against the whites. They demanded an audience with the Great Father in Washington. Some feared the Pawnees would retaliate, but they did not. Instead, they put their faith in the government that something would be done—some justice would be achieved, and North continued recruiting Pawnee Scouts.

All the while, Army Surgeon D. C. Fyer was exhuming six of the slain Pawnees. He severed their heads, boiled them, and prepared them for study. They were later sent to the Army Medical Museum for further analysis. Thusly, thousands of native remains were collected at the directive of the Army's Surgeon General, and the museums in Washington began to display the skulls and skeletons to a curious public.

I highly recommend *War Party in Blue: Pawnee Scouts in the U. S. Army* by Mark Van De Logt, University Press of Oklahoma, 2010. It is well-written and thoroughly researched, and brings these stories to the foreground, giving the Pawnees a well-deserved place in history.



BAYARD TAYLOR'S TRIP TO COLORADO

Bayard Taylor (January 11, 1825 — December 19, 1878) was a poet, author, literary critic, diplomat, translator, and world traveler. He was born in Pennsylvania and was the fourth son or a wealthy Quaker farmer. When he was 17, he got work as a printer's apprentice and Rufus Wilmot Griswold, a famous critic and editor of the time, encouraged him to write poetry. His first book of poetry was published when he was 19 and was successful enough that he was able to travel to Europe. He sent accounts of his travels to newspapers and magazines making him a well-known and popular writer. As his fame spread, so too did his travels, spending time in Africa, the Middle East, and the Orient, all the while writing exciting and well-received accounts of his wanderings. He became friends and colleagues with Horace Greeley, Commodore Matthew Perry, and Mark Twain, among other notables. He returned to America in 1864 and in 1866 he traveled to Colorado. As with his other travels, he wrote regularly describing his experiences and they were published in a variety of newspapers, one of which was the *Junction City Union*. The letters were later compiled into the book *Colorado: A Summer Trip*.

The following accounts are picked up as he is getting set to leave Junction City, headed west along the Smoky Hill Trail toward Denver.

ANOTHER LETTER FROM BAYARD TAYLOR. About Junction and the Smoky Hill Route.

Correspondence of the N.Y. Tribune.

After my arrival at Junction City the rains which had flooded all Eastern Kansas, stopping

stages and railroad trains alike, ceased entirely, and the weather became clear and fine. Although my main object in visiting Junction was to secure a good night's rest before setting out on the Plains. I was immediately requested to lecture that evening. There was no hall, and only. One having been recently

burned, no church yet completed; no announcement had been made—but in these far western towns nothings impossible. A store building, just floored and plastered, without windows, and indeed, occupied by carpenters at work, was selected, planks carried in for seats, a temporary platform built, messengers sent around to give private information to the people, and in two hours time, lo! there was a good audience assembled.

All Tuesday I waited vainly for the Overland stage coach. The accounts from down the Kaw Valley represented the streams as being impassable, and toward sunset the enterprising population considered that my delay was now so far extended as to warrant a second lecture. With less time for preparation they achieved the same result as the first night; and, truly I have rarely had a more agreeable audience than the hundred persons who sat upon the planks in that unfinished store building. What other people than the Americans would do such things?



Bayard Taylor, 1877

While at Junction I witnessed a very interesting experiment. The bluffs of magnesian limestone behind the town precisely resemble in color and texture, that which forms the Island of Malta. In the quarry it has a pale buff tint, with a soft, cheesy grain, which may be cut with a good hatchet or sawed with a common hand saw; yet after some exposure to the air, it becomes hard, and assumes a rich warm color. Messrs. McClure and Hopkins of Junction had just received a sawing machine, driven by horsepower, and several rough blocks were awaiting the test. Nothing could have been more satisfactory. The saw cut through the stone as easily and steadily as through a block of wood, dressing a smooth face of 18 inches square in exactly two minutes. The supply of stone being inexhaustible, this is the beginning of a business which may make the future cities of Kansas and Missouri the most beautiful in the world.



Junction City, ca. 1867 (Legends of America)

I stated the population of the place at 400 or 500 but I am told it is nearly 1,000, each building representing thrice the number of inhabitants as in the East. So I hasten to make the correction, for nothing annoys these frontier towns so much as either to understate their population or underestimate their prospective importance. Junction City will soon be the

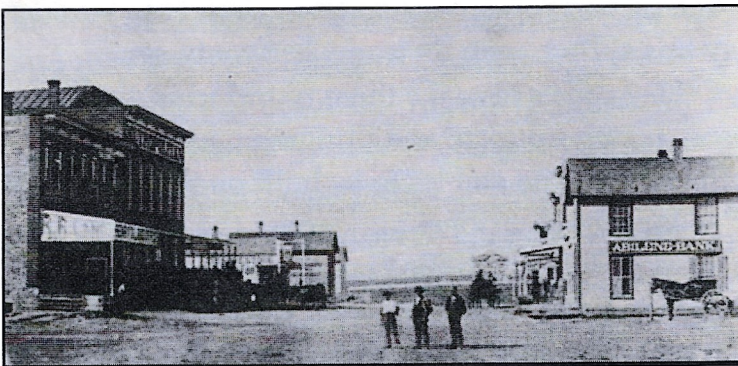
terminus of railroad travel and the starting point of the great overland freight business, which will give it certainly a temporary importance. The people, I find, desire that the road shall run up the Republican Valley, in order to secure at least the New Mexican trade for a few years; but this is not a matter to be decided by local interests or wishes. The distance thence to Denver by the Republican route would be 139 miles longer than by the Smoky Hill route.

Another comfortable night at the Eagle Hotel, and Wednesday came warm and cloudless, without any sign of the stage. Mr. McClure kindly offered to drive me to Salina, the last settlement on the Smoky Hill Fork, 45 miles further, and we set out soon after breakfast. The road along the bottom being too deep, we took that leading over the rolling country to the north. Climbing through a little glen to the level of the bluffs, we had a charming backward view of the junction of the rivers, with the buildings of Fort Riley crowning the wooded slopes beyond; then forward, over may a rolling mile of the finest grazing land in the world. Two miles further we found a train of wagons just starting with supplies for the stage stations along the line. Mr. Stanton, the superintendent, informed me that he had come through from Denver to Fort Riley this spring, with ox teams in twenty-seven days. He expects to make three round trips' this season, taking up corn, and bringing back lumber for the houses and stables to be built on the line.

We had occasional views over the bottoms of the Smoky Hill, which the people claim are even richer than those of the Law Valley, but that seems impossible. Twelve miles of pleasant travel brought us to Chapman's Creek, the first stage station. Here however the stream was nine feet deep, and the people at the ranche informed us that we would have to take a ford two miles higher up. It seemed to me better to return to Junction and await the stage there than to risk missing it by leaving the main road; so we put about and retraced our journey.

At noon when we had reached the bluffs and were thinking of dinner, what should we see but the stage at last, driving toward us from the town! Hunger, then, was to be my first experience on the overland journey. We turned out of the road; I alighted with my baggage and awaited the approach of a face well known in the Tenth-st. Studio building. There were two passengers but neither of them was my friend. In fact, the driver shouted to me, before he pulled up his horses, "Your friend didn't come." One of the passengers handed me a letter from the agent at Topeka, informing me that Mr. Beard would probably not be able to reach that place for three or four days, on account of the floods. My arrangements in Denver would not allow me to wait, so I deposited myself, blankets and baggage, in the stage, and was fairly embarked for crossing the Plains.

I traversed, for the third time that day, the route to Chapman's Creek. The water was still rising, and we therefore, tried the upper ford, and successfully. [*sic*]. The road beyond this descended from the Smoky Hill, and that river. The soil was, indeed, of wonderful fertility, though but little of it, as yet, is under cultivation.



Abilene, Kansas, 1875 (Kansas Memory)

Toward sunset we reached the village of Abilene, or Abeline (how or whence the name was derived I cannot imagine, unless it is an abbreviated corruption of "Abe Lincoln") and here I determined on having something to eat. Upon questioning a stalwart fellow who hung

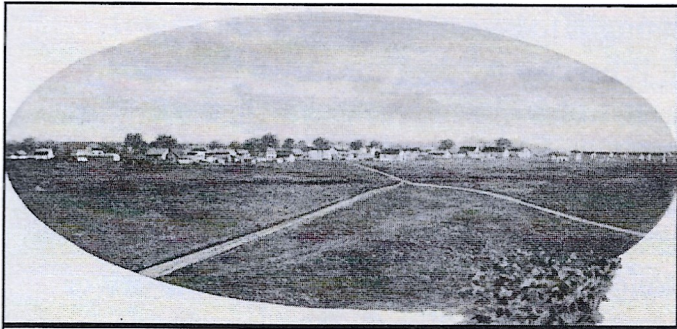
upon the coach while it was crossing Mud Creek, he declared, with emphasis, "It's the last *square meal* you'll get on the road!" My experience of a "square meal," therefore, is that it consists of strong black coffee, strips of pork fat fried to a sandy crispness, and half baked, soggy, indigestible biscuits. For these I paid the square price of \$1.

The sun set—there was no moon—and our coach made toilsome progress over the muddy bottoms the Solomon Fork. Musketo [*sic*] began their attacks, and thenceforth worried us the whole night. About 10 o'clock the driver commenced an imitation of the bark of the coyote, which, it appeared was distant signal of our approach to the ferryman at the Solomon Crossing. It was too indistinct to note anything but the dark mass of timber on either side, and the gleam of water between; but from the length of time we occupied in crossing, I should judge that the stream is a hundred yards wide. The bottom land along the Upper Solomon is said to be equal to any in Kansas, and emigration is fast pouring into it as well as along the Republican and Saline.

I should not wonder if "The Great American Desert" should finally be pronounced a myth. In my school geographies, it commenced at the western border of Missouri; now, I believe it is pushed some 250 miles further West, leaving some of the finest agricultural land on the globe behind it. So far, I had found the reverse of a desert, I determined, therefore, to be on the lookout, and duly note its present point of commencement.

What a weary drag we had that night over the deep mud between the Solomon and Saline Forks! Either sleeping and stung to inflammation [*sic*], or awake, weary and smoking in desperate defense, two or three hours passed away, until the yelping and howling of the driver announced our approach to the Saline. In the dark, this river appeared to be nearly equal in volume to the Solomon. Its water is so salt as sometimes to effect the taste of the Smoky Hill at Junction City.

Nine miles more in the dark brought us to Salina, a village of 200 or 300 inhabitants, and the end of settlement in this direction. Our driver kept us waiting two hours for a new bit for one of his bridles, and in this interval I snatched a little sleep. Of Salina I cannot say that I really saw anything but I learned that it contained several stores and two physicians. The two or three houses near the tavern were shanties of frame or logs. Travelers west of Topeka are expected to sleep two in a bed and several beds in a room. It was only through the courtesy of the landlord at Junction that I was exempted from this rule. In other respects customs are primitive, but not rough. People wash themselves more frequently than elsewhere (because it is more needed,) and there is as much cleanliness in the cabins, all circumstances considered, as in many hotels which I have seen. I even noticed one man in Kansas, who carried a



Salina, Kansas, 1867 (Kansas Memory)

tooth-brush in his pocket, which he pulled out now and then, to give his teeth a dry brushing.

On leaving Salina, the road strikes due west across the rolling country, to cut off the great southern bend of the Smoky Hill. Two or three miles terminated the mud and mosketos; [*sic*] we struck a dry, smooth road, a cool, delicious breeze, and great sweeps of green landscape, slowly brightening with the dawn. Distant bluffs and mounds broke the monotony of the horizon line and the gradual gentle undulations of the road were refreshing both to

the team and the passengers.

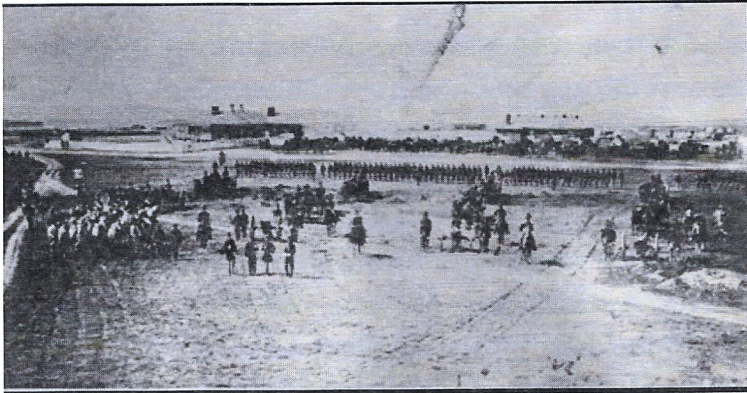
By six o'clock we reached Pritchard's the next station, 16 miles from Salina. Here there was a stable of rough stones and mud, and a cabin cut out of the steep bank, with a crude roof of logs and mud. I was surprised by the sight of a pretty little girl of seven, and on entering the cabin found a woman engaged in getting our breakfast. The walls and floor were the bare soil; there was a bed or two, a table, two short benches for seats, and a colony of tame prairie dogs in one corner. I asked the little girl if she would not like a companion to play with, but she answered: What a western woman she will make!

Water was furnished plentifully for our ablutions, breakfast resembled the "square meal" of the preceding evening, with the addition of canned peaches, and we resumed our seats with a great sense of refreshment. The air of this region seems to take away all sense of fatigue; it is cool and bracing, even at mid-day. Soon after starting, we saw a coyote sneaking along a meadow on our left; then a huge gray wolf, at which one of my fellow passengers fired without affect. He trotted away with a disdainful air, stopping now and then to look at us. At the same time a rattlesnake gave an angry signal by the roadside. There was no longer a question that we were now beyond civilization.

The limestone here gives place to a dark-red sandstone, which crops out of the ridges in rough, irregular walls and towers. Although rising to no great height, they never the less form picturesque and suggestive features of the landscape; in the distance they might frequently be mistaken for buildings.

The flora seems also to undergo a change. The grass was everywhere starred with large crimson anemones, a variety of the *helianthus*, with golden blossoms, a velvety flower of the richest brown and orange tints, white larkspurs and dark-blue spider-wort. For many a league the country was one vast natural garden of splendid bloom.

There were places where a single flower had usurped possession of a quarter acre of soil, and made a dazzling bed of its own color. I have seen nothing like it, save on the hills of Palestine, in May.



Fort Harker (originally called Fort Ellsworth),
1867 (Kansas Memory)

After leaving Clear Creek, 14 miles further, we approached the Smoky Hill. Two companies of the 2d U.S. Cavalry were drawn up on the plain. Looking out, we beheld the encampment of Fort Ellsworth ahead of us. At present [*sic*] this is but a collection of temporary log barracks and stables, but the foundations of a permanent post have been laid on the rising

ground a little further from the river. We only stopped to deliver mails, but I had time for a brief interview with Lieut. [*Charles Harris*] Lester, and a glass of excellent beer from a barrel in the sutler's quarters. Gen. [*Innis Newton*] Palmer was inspecting the progress of the new fort, and I did not see him. Everybody—especially the private soldiers—were anxious to hear



Gen. I.N. Palmer
(Library of
Congress)

about the Finian movement. *

There had been no Indian troubles on the road, but the officers seemed to anticipate troubles from the continued absence of Indians from the country. The old trappers consider that withdrawal of intercourse, on the part of the Indians, indicates preparation for an attack. The Smoky Hill route I find, [*sic*] is regarded with a little uneasiness this year, on account of the troubles last Fall. The traders and trainmen from Santa Fe represent that the tribes of the Plains are *not* in amiable mood; and I confess I am therefore surprised that a thoroughfare so important as the Smoky Hill route is not more efficiently guarded. As far as I can learn, the difficulty seems rather to lie in the existence of a mongrel band of outcasts from of various tribes, half breeds and a few whites, who are known, collectively, under the name of "Dug Indians." [*sic*] Most of the atrocities heretofore committed, are charged upon this class, which ought to be extirpated at once.

When we reached the station at Buffalo Creek, 10 miles from Fort Ellsworth, the driver surprised me by saying: "Here's where the attack happened, three weeks ago!" I had heard of no attack, and was informed by the agents of the line that none had occurred. The account the driver gave was, that a band of 40 (Pawnees, he supposed) had stopped the coach, attempted to upset it, and made various insolent demonstrations for a while. One passenger, who made a show of resistance, was knocked down with a club. "There was a Commodore [*sic*] aboard," said the driver; "he was terribly scairt, [*sic*] and a woman, and *she* was the coolest of 'em all." "This band is supposed to be under the command of Bent, a half-breed, son of the famous old frontiersman.

At the next station, Lost Creek, (15 miles) we found a small detachment of soldiers posted. This looked threatening, but they assured us that everything was quiet. Thenceforth, indeed we

ceased to feel any anxiety; for, on a ridge, two miles away, we saw our first buffalo—a dozen dark specks on the boundless green. Before night small heads of them grew quite frequent, making their appearance near us, on both sides of the road. They set off on a slow, lumbering galop [*sic*] at our approach, their humps tossing up and down behind each other with the regular movement of small waves. Several shots were fired from the coach, but only one took effect, wounding a huge bull in the shoulder. It is this wanton killing of their game, simply in the way of amusement which so exasperates the Indians. On the Smoky Hill bottoms, toward evening we saw the largest herd, numbering some 400 or 500 animals. The soldiers at Lost Creek shot two or three the previous day. They had a quarter hanging upon the stake, but the meat both looked and smelled so disagreeably that I had no desire to taste it.

Antelopes and prairie dogs also make their appearance in large numbers. The former were mostly single or in pairs, leaping nimbly along the elevations, or lifting their graceful heads in curiosity and watching us as we passed. The prairie dogs sat upright at the doors of their underground habitations, and barked at us with a comical petulance [*sic*] Toward evening their partners, the owls, came forth also to take the air. The rattlesnakes, I presume, were still indoors, as we saw but two or three during the whole journey.

After passing a small stream near Fossil Creek, the driver suddenly stopped the team and jumped down from his seat. He stooped down over the water, started

back, took courage, and presently held up to view a turtle which would weigh twenty-five or thirty pounds. The creature kicked and snapped viciously; as he was suspended by the tail, nor was his odor attractive; but such a prospect for soup does no often arrive in this land of salt pork and indigestible biscuit, so he was tumbled into the boot, and the cover strapped down over him. For several miles, we on the back seat could hear him scratching behind us, but when the boot was opened at Big Creek Station, lo! No turtle was there. The driver's face was a picture of misery and disgust.

As the cool, grateful twilight came down upon the boundless swells of grass and flowers, I examined my sensations, and found that they were of pure, peaceful enjoyment in the new and beautiful world which I now beheld for the first time. The fatigue, so far, was trifling; the fear of Indians had disappeared; the "square meals" had, somehow or other, managed to digest themselves; and I heartily congratulate myself on having undertaken the journey.

Here I leave you, 175 miles west of Fort Riley, in the center of what once was "The Great American Deserts."

B.T.

* *The Finian Movement was organized in 1858 in Ireland and the United States and was intended to forcibly achieve Ireland's independence from England. Many soldiers in the U.S. Army were Irish immigrants. Ed.*

(The September issue of the "Overland Despatch," will continue with Taylor's description of his "Trip Across the Plains to Denver." It was originally published in The Union on August 4, 1866.)



COMANCHE CROSSING LINKS AMERICA BY RAIL!

A quick check of the history books will tell you that the Transcontinental Railroad was completed across the United States on May 10, 1869 when the "golden spike" was driven into the tie joining the Union Pacific and Central Pacific rail lines at Promontory Point, Utah. There are several things wrong with this bit of history, however. First, there wasn't just one spike. There were actually four. Two were made of 17.6 karat gold but only one was at the ceremony. A third spike was made of a low-quality gold, silver, and iron. A fourth was made of silver.

None of these spikes, which were, after all, meant to be ceremonial, were actually driven into the railroad tie. Oversize holes were drilled into which the spikes were dropped, then removed and presented to various officials of the railroad. Leland Stanford and other dignitaries, were credited for driving in the "final stake." However, once the ceremony was completed, the spikes were removed and then iron spikes were driven in their place by a nameless railroad worker, probably Chinese.

In addition, the meeting of the two rail lines did not occur at Promontory Point but rather at Promontory Summit, an area thirty miles north of Promontory Point.

And, oh yes, this event did not actually join the east coast and west coast by rail. That occurred almost a year and a half later on August 15, 1870 in eastern Colorado when the Denver Pacific railroad, building east from Denver, met the Kansas Pacific Railroad building west. They met at a spot called Comanche Crossing near the present-day town of Strasburg, Colorado.

When the celebrated Union Pacific met

the Central Pacific, there was still a gap in rail service between Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska. The reason for this gap was the the Missouri, River. No railroad bridge had been built across the river at this point, necessitating freight and passengers disembarking and crossing the river by ferry before once again boarding the train.

South of this gap, a rail bridge *was* being built across the Missouri River at Kansas City. It was completed on June 30, 1869. This was significant because the Kansas Pacific (originally called the Union Pacific, Eastern Division) had its railhead on the west side of the Missouri River. On the east side was the Pennsylvania Railroad that was connected via the rail system in the eastern United States, to Kansas City. The bridge thus connected the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Kansas Pacific. Important to this issue was the fact that the Pennsylvania Railroad was designed as a feeder line to the transcontinental system and was connected to the Union Pacific building west from Omaha.

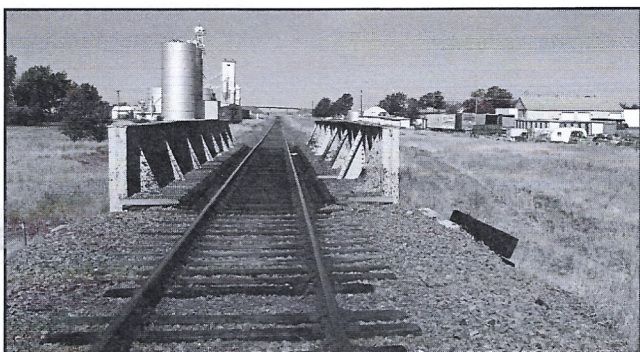
Meanwhile, the Kansas Pacific was building west toward Denver and the Denver Pacific Railroad was building north toward Cheyenne, Wyoming where it would connect with the Union Pacific. This occurred in June 1870. Businessmen in Denver were anxious for the Kansas Pacific to reach their city and so railroad construction crews began frantically building east from Denver with the goal of connecting with the Kansas Pacific.

By August 14, Denver Pacific crews had reached the town of Bennet, Colorado and Kansas Pacific crews had made it to Byers, Colorado. A distance of 10 1/4 miles separated the two railroads. At 5:00 a.m. the next day, August 15, the race was on! To provide some incentive, the foremen of the two lines placed a barrel of whiskey at a spot named Comanche Crossing, which they determined to be the midway point. Whether this liquid prize worked to spur the workmen on, and which team might have claimed the liquid trophy, was not recorded but the two railroads approached one another furiously laying track, hooking up at 2:53 p.m. They had built

at the "break neck" speed of about 1/2 mile per hour (the average speed of laying track was between one and three miles a day)! With the last spike driven in place at Comanche Crossing, a complete, unbroken path of rail service existed from the east coast to the west coast, thanks to the Kansas Pacific and the Denver Pacific Railroads.

It wasn't until March 22, 1872 that a railroad bridge was built across the Missouri River between Council Bluffs, Iowa and Omaha, Nebraska, linking the Union Pacific and Central Pacific.

The town of Strasburg, sprang up at the site of the rail connection, in 1908. It was named after John Strasburg, one of the railroad officials who helped join the two railroads. The town boasts 2,447 people (2010 census) and includes The Comanche Crossing Museum (photo below) filled with artifacts commemorating the historic event.

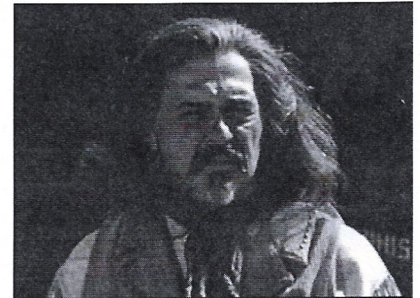
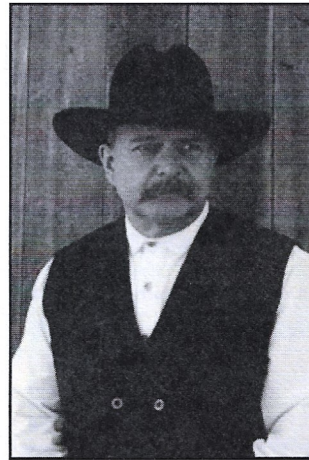


TRAILS TO RAILS CELEBRATION JULY 12-14 LOGAN AND WALLACE COUNTIES

Contact Deb Goodrich for more information
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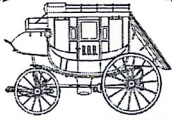
Stage coaches will once again travel the Smoky Hill Trail as the Butterfield Trail Museum at Russell Springs and the Fort Wallace Museum at Wallace join forces for "Trails to Rails," July 12-14. The weekend's activities will celebrate the arrival of the railroad 150 years ago which marked the end of the Butterfield Overland Despatch stage line.

Special guests for the event will be western writer, Monty McCord (below left), and actor/historian Peter Sherayko (below right). Many fans will be familiar with Sherayko from the movie "Tombstone."



On Friday evening, July 12, the stages will make camp at Russell Springs. Supper will be served and there will be an outdoor screening of the docudrama, "Thof's Dragon." The next morning, Saturday, July 13, breakfast will be served and the stages will depart shortly after 8 a.m. CDT. The stages will stop for lunch at the location of the old Henshaw Springs Station at the Bertrand Ranch and continue on to Pond Creek Station at Wallace.

Cavalry will escort the stages and a map will be provided to the public with a schedule and optimal locations for viewing the stages.



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Also on Saturday, Russell Springs will host a Draft Horse Competition in the arena beginning at 10:30 a.m. CST.

Throughout the day at the Fort Wallace Museum, interesting history demonstrations will be set up on the museum grounds.

Michelle Martin, author and actress, will be performing at the Fort Wallace Museum at 2 p.m. An original play, Hell on Wheels by Marla Martin (photo above), will be staged at 4 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. MDT.



Sunday, July 14, there will be a memorial service at the Fort Wallace Cemetery for Dr. Theophilus Turner (photo at right), the post surgeon at Fort Wallace who along with post scout William Comstock, discovered a plesiosaur fossil

in 1867. Dr. Turner became ill and died at the fort July 27, 1869.

Tickets are required for the stage but many events are free or by donation. For more information, follow both museums on Facebook or call the Fort Wallace Museum at 785- 891-3564

or the Butterfield Trail Museum at 785-751-4242. The event has been organized by the Guardians of Fort Wallace and the board of the Butterfield Trail Museum.

