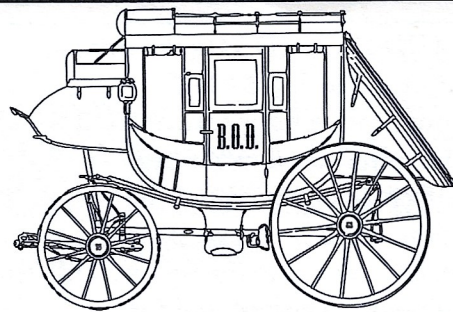


# OVERLAND DESPATCH



Volume X No. 2

Remember the Smoky Hill Trail

Winter 2017

## PHOTOS FROM 2017 CONFERENCE

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

### Cairns.....along the trail.

If you missed the conference at Burlington, you missed out on a lot of great presentations about Catastrophes and Calamities along the Smoky Hill Trail. Hopefully, no one found the realities of trail life too depressing. The visit to the "Well" and the stage station cave, near Cheyenne Wells, by horse drawn wagon, no less, was fun and informative. Our hosts, who we can't begin to thank enough, were exceptional. All of that, plus spending most of the rest of the time in a tavern (Old Town in Burlington) will leave us with good memories, to say nothing of the great conversations that took place.



Elton Beougher decided that he had had too much fun with conferences, (remember Russell, Atchison, Hays, and Burlington) he decided to take his place on the board as Past President. Elton will remain active with the association, which we are all thankful for. Ken Cole replaced Kay Homewood as Vice President. Kay will also remain active. We want to welcome Dee Saddler, who will join Steve Parke and Robert Wilhelm, as a Director. Mike Baughn, Secretary and Danny Lattin, Treasure, will continue to fill those positions. Jim Mayhew is the new President.

We must remind you, we need your membership. If you haven't already done so, please update your membership. May we also suggest that

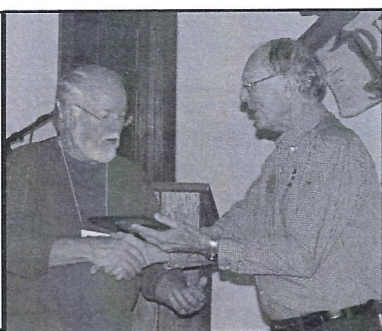


The Burlington Fairfield motel gave the Association a big and very visible Welcome on their marquee.



Our programs and membership meeting were held in the intimate setting of the Saloon at Burlington's Old Town

President Elton Beougher presents Tanner Mayhew at Award of Merit for designing the new Smoky Hill Trail Association brochure, during our annual membership meeting



Rayetta & Bart Addy received an Award of Merit for being our "right hand people" in Cheyenne Wells helping to organize this years' event

Continued on page 3



**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:**

Jim Mayhew, Abilene, Kansas

**Vice-President:**

Ken Cole, Russell, Kansas

**Secretary:**

Mike Baughn, Brewster, Kansas

**Treasurer:**

Danny Lattin, Lawrence, Kansas

**Newsletter Editor:**

Robert Wilhelm, Hays, Kansas

**Directors:**

Steve Parke, Pueblo, Colorado

Dee Saddler, Sharon, Kansas

you gift a friend with a membership? Our membership fees are very reasonable. You received four very informative newsletters a year. Why wouldn't your friends want to take part in what you have enjoyed for some time? And yes, if every member gifts a friend with a membership, we will have reached our yearly membership goals and you won't have to read about it in the next newsletter. Really, we need to double our membership...Thanks!

Being new in the job, I need for you to tell me your thoughts and ideas for the future. Please email me at [mayjay08@att.net](mailto:mayjay08@att.net) or text me at 785-200-4413.

The Board hasn't finalized the 2018 conference location, but it appears it will be in Manhattan Ks. (Oct 19,20, & 21, 2018) We would like volunteers to work on the conference committee.

Lastly, we still have a Director's position open. If you would be interested in a leadership position, email me before the 20 Jan 2018 meeting.

Coming soon, you will be able to like us on Facebook.

Enjoy the Holidays, and we will see you on the Trail!

Jim Mayhew

President



## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

The Smoky Hill Trail Association welcomes the following members who have joined since our last newsletter was published:

Barbara Berry, Colorado

Richard and Lynn Cassidy, Colorado

John Downing, Connecticut

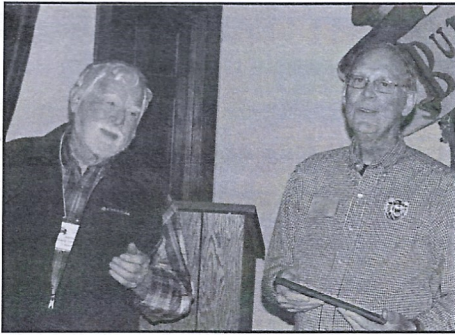
Ken Weidner, Kansas

Welcome All!

## NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The deadline for articles to be included in the next edition of the Overland Despatch is **February 28, 2018**. 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.





Jim Mayhew, our current president, receives an Award of Merit for his substantial help in planning the Burlington Conference

## REFLECTIONS ON THE 2017 SHTA CONFERENCE: THE SMOKY HILL TRAIL AS A CORRIDOR OF CLASHING CULTURES

By Steve Parke, November 2017

Two award-winners were unable to attend the conference. Butch Hapes was awarded the Howard C. Raynesford Lifetime Achievement Award and Rayne Kern received an Award of Merit.

While listening to the various presentations on our 2017 Conference theme “Calamities and Catastrophes on the Smoky Hill Trail”, I pondered the significance and meaning of the trail. One could ask this question from a historical or contemporary perspective. I like to mix it up.

We tend to focus on the Trail as part of American westward expansion and especially those years in which the Trail’s expansionist activity was most dramatic, the 1860s and 1870s. But through our Conferences and a wide range of presenters over the last 10 years, we’ve looked at other time periods, too. We’ve looked at the Trail as an evolving transportation corridor of which we still have firsthand experience today. We’ve seen an economic development corridor from the days of the Gold Rush to the cattle pools, town developers, agricultural businesses, oil industry, and today’s consumer goods outlets on I-70. And from the beginning it was a communication corridor from the Pony Express through the telegraph, railroad mail cars, telephone lines, USPS, and now a fiber optic backbone cable.

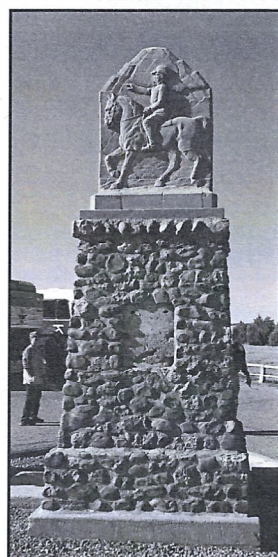
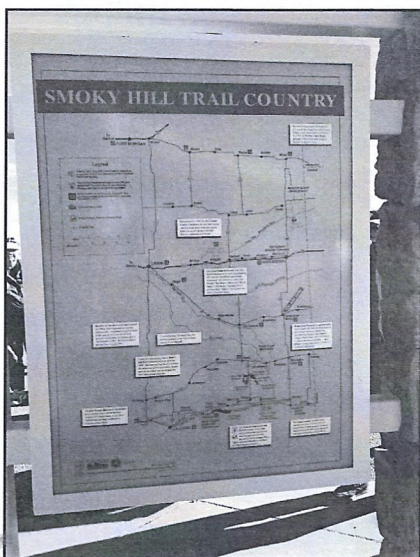
Another way to view the route emerged as I listed to this Conference’s presenters; it’s a cultural corridor. We’ve acknowledged this from the beginning as SMTA programmers have addressed the cultural conflict between the native peoples and westward expanding European Americans. We’ve oft reviewed this, a tragic cultural clash in the corridor and in America as a whole, and grieved its victims.

When I left Western Kansas at age 18 for further education, I was then surprised at how others referred to the region, the land along the Trail. They noted, generally speaking, that it was a good place to either



Conference attendees swarm over the “Well” of the Cheyenne Wells stage station along the BOD

A wayside sign and monument to the Smoky Hill Trail located at the junction of US Highway 385 and US Highways 40/287 just outside Cheyenne Wells, Colorado. Erected by the Colorado DOT in 1997 and maintained by the Eastern Colorado Historical Society





fly over or drive through at night, i.e. following the I-70 route. I learned to use this opportunity to reference Wizard of Oz characters, click my heels, and get a laugh. Flashing forward to today, I now see the Trail as not just the avenue of Westward Expansion cultural clashes but as a corridor of on-going cultural transitions, identities, and sometimes clashes, albeit certainly not as tragic as the first. I suppose many want to see the length of the Trail from Kansas City to Denver as representing one culture, i.e. America, rural America or whatever, but I see an ever-evolving, historical layering of differing cultures. Sometimes they clash; sometimes they complement and support each other. Naming and acknowledging this is important even if painful or disturbing, especially if we want to further promote the trail and seek national trail designation.

Western history buffs know about the clash between range cattlemen and fencing farmers but in due time many were both farmers and stockman. And then all along the evolving Trail route the new settlers were of many varied European ethnicities as well as multigenerational European American stock. Regional cultural identities developed, determined in part by the mix of European American ethnicities, landscape, and local economic drivers. A racial mix as part of the corridor's developing culture was diminished when native people were pushed out or moved elsewhere.

I raise the cultural issue to bring us back to ourselves. The challenge of promoting yesteryear's Trail is that today the length of the trail still embodies a cultural clash. Some of us with Trail roots may even present ourselves as clashing. Think about it. How many people today would travel for the topics of our most recent conference, i.e. the 1867-1868 Kansas cholera epidemic, shell fragment forensics at the Kidder

battle site, or Theophilus Turner's dinosaur dig at Twin Buttes to name a few?

In the spirit of Kansas folk art, I believe it's OK to be uniquely curious and creative, even eccentric. The World's Largest Czech Egg in Wilson, KS, is worth the mile trip off I-70 to see and so is the large than life Buffalo Bill sculpture in Oakley, KS. And I am struck by the juxtaposition of the Pioneer Monument in downtown Denver and the homeless, lingering souls oft gathering round. These are just a few of today's notable cultural markers on the Trail to be acknowledged, clashing or not. Can you name some more?

Today's challenge is to lift up the Trail and its evolving history, its cultural uniqueness, and our interest in such without discounting those elsewhere who are different or with differing perspectives. This may require some adaptations on our part to grow our inquiries, numbers, and mission. But foundationally the remnants and artifacts of the Trail remain and for our purposes, they have a connection to the struggles of every heartfelt human journey today.

Somehow we need to celebrate, educate, and advocate for the Trail to those "flying over" or "driving through", introducing them to yesteryears and today's trail people, all of us of an evolving culture moving about across the same awesome landscape. Just like yesteryears trail pilgrims, we too are on quests that sometimes bring great challenge and fear, i.e. midst different peoples, tough economies, or the forces of nature. But we continue to make this journey with others within the same geography.

In our own small ways let's increase Trail focused cooperation while decreasing the calamities and catastrophes along the way. I hope that's not too eccentric!

Steve Parke  
Pueblo, Colorado





## PRESERVING THE HISTORIC ROAD CONFERENCE

Preserving the Historic Road is the leading international conference dedicated to the identification, preservation and management of historic roads. The 2018 Conference will be held in historic downtown Fort Collins and will celebrate twenty years of advocacy for historic roads and look to the future of this important heritage movement that began in 1998 with the first conference in Los Angeles. The 2018 conference promises to be an exceptional venue for robust discussions and debates on the future of historic roads in the United States and around the globe. Don't miss important educational sessions showcasing how the preservation of historic roads contributes to the economic, transportation, recreational, and cultural needs of your community.

The planning committee for Preserving the Historic Road 2018 has issued a formal Call for Papers for presentations at the September 20-23, 2018 conference. Interested professionals, academics and advocates are encouraged to submit paper abstracts for review and consideration by the planning committee.

The planning committee is seeking paper abstracts that showcase a number of issues related to the historic road and road systems such as:

**Future** directions and approaches for the identification, preservation and management of historic roads to identify priorities for the next twenty years of research, advocacy and action.

**Historic** and scenic roads as elements of sustainable design and environmental stewardship, or as resources to mitigate the effects of climate change,

**Historic** and scenic roads as mechanisms for community advocacy and economic development,

**Practical** and successful examples of

historic road inventories, safety innovations, preservation policy, transportation policy, pavement and materials science, highway maintenance, technical conservation methods, and risk analysis for historic roads,

**Historic** road structures and systems, roadside architecture, cultural landscapes, viewshed management, rural roads conservation and suburban sprawl issues,

**Recent** past topics, such as the US Interstate System, and the impact of road development on culture, race, travel, land planning and the economy in the second half of the twentieth century,

**Historic** and scenic roads as instruments of tourism development, interpretation, and road history,

**Thematic** interpretations of the historic road or of road culture as seen from alternate disciplines (American Studies, Cultural Geography, Native American Studies, etc.),

**Colorado** specific examples of any of the topics presented above, and

**International** examples of any of the topics presented above.

Further information on Abstract submission guidelines can be found by going to the official conference website at: <[www.historicroads.org](http://www.historicroads.org)> or by going to their Facebook page Preserving Historic Roads.

*(Information submitted by member Steve Parke)*



## FORSYTH SCOUT 150TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION

This year is the 150th anniversary of the founding of the famous Forsyth Scouts, who fought the Battle of Beecher Island, Colorado Territory in September of 1868, many of who were from the Lincoln, Ottawa and Ellsworth county areas.

The Fort Harker Guardhouse Museum and the Ellsworth County Historical Society are in the initial planning stages of a reunion in August 2018 at old



Fort Harker in Kanopolis, Kansas. If all goes as planned, this would be followed up with gatherings at old Fort Hays and Fort Wallace and eventually Beecher Island, Colorado.

Descendants of the Forsyth Scouts and relief column, amateur and professional historians, period historical re-enactors who wish to participate and anyone interested in the history of this time period on the Kansas frontier and Indian wars are invited to attend.

This year it will be in an air conditioned building on the old Fort Harker grounds.

We hope to see everyone later this summer.

For further information and updates, please contact:

Greg Heller  
at [fortharkerguardhousemuseum@gmail.com](mailto:fortharkerguardhousemuseum@gmail.com)

1-316-785-472-5733

or

Mike Day at [meili416@sbcglobal.net](mailto:meili416@sbcglobal.net)

1-316-304-1452

*(Information submitted by member Lem Marsh)*



## WEB SITE UPDATE

Our official website person is very busy this time of year for him, so I don't have anything to report on the progress of the website. I can tell you that my goal is to add the following changes to make our site more user-friendly:

\* Create a shopping cart – this allows SHTA to accept payment for annual dues, items from our online store and reservations for our annual conferences.

\* Create an online storefront – spotlighting Leo's books, t-shirts and promotional items, maps of the trails and eventually western art of the area. Store the archived quarterly newsletters on the site giving access to members only

\* Create picture albums for each conference we have had in the past

\*Link to other trail association sites to create a network.

Eventually we can share news about our designation legislation and give members and update of what we have accomplished.

The only thing I have accomplished so far is a Facebook page under the name of "Smoky Hill Trail Association" showing the few pictures I have and created an event for our annual conference in Manhattan on October 19, 20 and 21st. Hotel location and times TBA at a later date.

Dee Saddler

Website Committee Chairperson



## FINANCIAL REPORT 2017

Balance brought forward:	\$11,984.89
Income in 2017:	\$ 4,147.11
Expenses in 2017:	\$ 3,355.14
Balance:	\$12,776.86

Danny Lattin

Treasurer



## ATCHISON DAILY CHAMPION

*November 30, 1865*

**Attack on the B.O.D. Line.**

**Six men killed by Indians:**

We learn from A.W. Spaulding, Esq., of the B.O.D. Co., that on Sunday last the Indians made a descent on Downer's Spring and Bluff Stations, on the Smoky Hill Route, burning one coach with express matter, the stations and goods stored in them, and killing six men; among the killed was Fred Merwin, messenger in charge of the coach burned. The names of the other persons are not given.

The Indians who made the attack are supposed to be the same savages who recently passed the Overland Route going South, and for a



time interrupted travel on the line by their depredations. They are thought to be the bands called "Dog Soldiers," of the Arapahoes, Cheyennes and Apaches, that went North and joined the Sioux after the Sand Creek affair. The places of their attack are opposite the big bends of the North Platte and Arkansaw, [sic] and near the head waters of Walnut creek.

Gen. Brewster, Vice President of the B.O.D. Co., was just beyond the scene of the attack. A letter from him informs the Company that the depredations caused no interruption in the line or the regular trips of the coaches. The stock which the Indians run [sic] off was at once replaced by mules taken from a supply train on the road. The energy of the Company will speedily place the line in thorough repair.

This is but another instance of the pressing demand for troops on the Plains, and the neglect of the Government to provide, by suitable force, against the depredations of hostile bands of Indians. The vast commerce of the Plains has already been seriously crippled, and if something is not quickly done will be almost totally destroyed, by these repeated depredations. Ten thousand cavalry should be along the three great Overland Routes to-day, [sic] but instead of this we have but a scattered, insignificant force of soldiers, demoralized by what they esteem an act of gross injustice in keeping them in service after our civil war has closed, and, as they claim, their term of enlistment has expired. Dissatisfied and uneasy at their retention in service, they are useless and burdensome of the work they ought to do, and they should be at once mustered out and their places supplied by willing volunteers or regulars, who will be efficient and active in preventing the depredations of the savages and quick to attack and punish them for the wrongs they do. Hundreds of valuable lives have been sacrificed and millions of dollars worth of property destroyed for want of a force adequate to protect

the lives of the greatest commerce of the country. The Government is doing great injustice to the Western States and Territories if it fails any longer to neglect sending a force adequate to conquer the hostile bands of Indians who swarm over the Plains, and force them to be peaceable.



## LEAVENWORTH DAILY CONSERVATIVE

Thursday, November 2, 1865

Smoky Hill Route.--One of Butterfield's coaches left here yesterday for Denver, with a full load of passengers.

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A Government post has been established at Big Creek, on the Smoky Hill, fifty miles from Ellsworth, called Fort Fletcher.

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Sioux Burial Customs.--Numerous scaffolds [sic] on which the Sioux bury their dead were seen in the valley. Anxious to know something of their funeral customs I examined several.

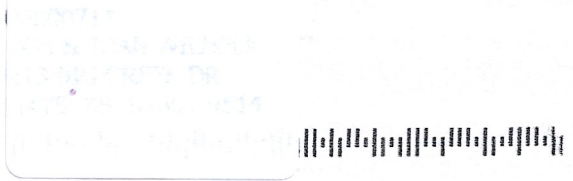
They are built of four posts set in the ground firmly, at the angles of a square. Between each pair of posts near the top is lashed a stout pole and across these, making a platform, are laid a number of others. Each pole is lashed to every one adjacent by stout rawhide thongs, making a platform some twelve or fifteen feet above the ground on which the body--wrapped in robes and supplied with a bag of red paint, if a warrior the arms of the deceased are put with him also, and such things as he may need in the happy hunting ground--is laid, and well lashed down, so that wolves nor wind can disturb him.

Often a buffalo is killed and placed under the scaffold, that he may not want for meat.

Friday, November 3, 1865

Butterfield Route to Colorado.





The enterprise and energy that have characterized the proprietors of this superior route over the plains, ought to be well rewarded, and we have no doubt will be. The line is now permanently established, and magnificent coaches and excellent horses are starting from here every day. The shortest, quickest route to the West, with everything new and strong, we hardly see how there can be any hesitation in selecting Butterfield's Dispatch [*sic*] as the most desirable conveyance now crossing the plains. The ride is hard enough in all conscience, but everything that ingenuity could do, or money purchase, to make it as easy as possible, Butterfield has done. Freight and express matter also will be forwarded sooner than by any other route.

*Friday, November 10, 1865*

departed for their Native Wilds.

Kit Carson and Col. Bent left Atchison on Tuesday for New Mexico, via the Smoky Hill Route--Both have trapped along the Smoky and

Republican when Beaver skins were worth 8 or \$10 apiece. Things have changed since that time.

*Friday, November 17, 1865*

Smoky Hill Route.

We were yesterday favored with a call from Col. Isaac E. Eaton, who has just returned over the Smoky Hill Route with the pioneer train. He says that station houses and barns have been built along the route and everything established in comfortable condition for the traveler, and is well guarded by troops. He has superintended the erection of the buildings along the route and other matters essential to its permanent establishment. Our citizens may be thankful for this great and safe thoroughfare to Denver. It is shorter, being only five hundred and sixty miles to Denver, and is in every way just such a connection with that city and the vast wealth of that region as we have long needed.

*(Newspaper articles were supplied by avid researcher and former board member Sam Chestnut.)*

