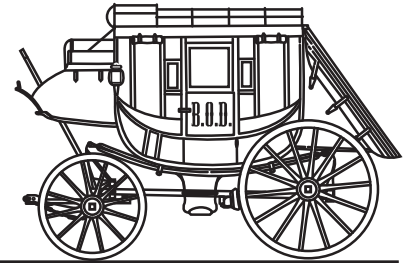


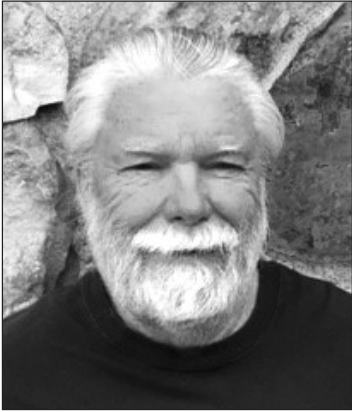
OVERLAND DESPATCH



Volume XVI No. I

Spring 2024

Remember the Smoky Hill Trail



“Hello!” to all the Smoky Hill Trail Members, as this is my first letter to all of you, I thought it would be a good idea to introduce myself with a short biography.

You can reach me at 719-740-0284, or my e-mail anderbasin@aol.com. I have to admit, I don't live in front of a computer, so don't read them every day, but I will get back to you as soon as possible. I would like to say “Thank You” to Jim and Pattie Mayhew and Mike Baughn for all their efforts in making the Association stronger.

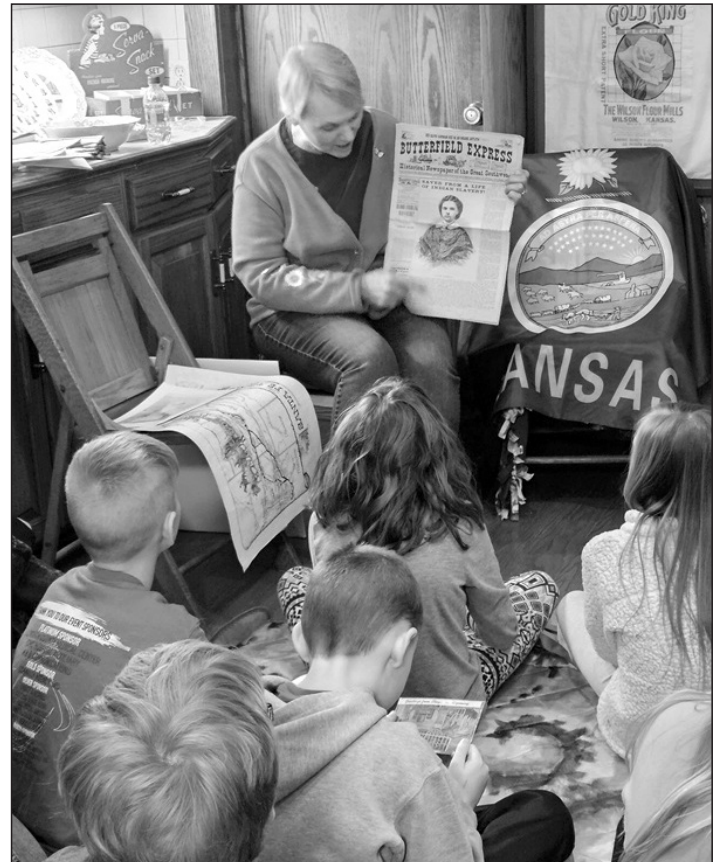


Robert Andersen
Smoky Hill Trail Association
President

I was born, raised and still live at Genoa, Colorado, approximately 30 miles north of where the trail is still visible in some places. I went to college at Colorado State University for 2 years, before being forced to quit for reasons beyond my control. It all worked out for the best, as I met my wife Mary at that time, and will celebrate our 46th anniversary this year.

We have operated a dryland wheat farm since we got married, then added a sporting goods retail store 35 years ago. We added another farm to our operation in 2000, keeping me busy with farming and running Outback Sporting Goods. In 2023 we rented out approximately 70% of the farm ground to family members so the family farm continues. During those years Mary worked for the Colorado State Patrol in the Port of Entry Division for 30 years.

We got involved with the Association when a lady from Nebraska recommended going to a conference, discovering we knew very little about the Smoky Hill Trail Association. That first conference in Hays got us “hooked” and haven't missed a conference since. I hope to instill that same feeling in others, getting more people interested in this important piece of Kansas and Colorado history. My goal as President is to increase our membership and continue to put on memorable and historically significant conferences each year. Those are my goals, but I can only do them with your help. Since this is my first-time being president of an association, I will make mistakes, so please remember we, everyone on the board, are trying.



On Kansas Day, Wilson Elementary Students visited the Wilson Heritage Museum and listened to Mrs. Cherilee Ward, local historian, present information on the Smoky Hill Trail, located one mile south of Wilson, Kansas.

Students, along with their families, were encouraged to locate the four Smoky Hill Trail/Butterfield Overland Despatch markers, east and south of Wilson.

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to the Trail.

Dianne & Wayne Lenhart
Clay Center, KS

Helen Olsen
Council Grove, KS

Steven Knowles
Hays, KS

Chris Hartman
Grainfield, KS

Michelle Sankale
Centennial, CO

Sheri Martin
Grinnell, KS

Brian Smith
McHenry, IL

Daniel Diepenbrook
Lawrence, KS

Editor: It is my endeavor to bring to our readers the stories and tales that depict the early ways of life on the Smoky Hill Trail. The following is such a story and it is exquisitely writing by renowned author and poet, Bayard Taylor. This story is from his book - *Colorado: A Summer Trip*, published in 1867. He writes about his trip from Philadelphia to Denver, crossing the Smoky Hill Trail and returning back across the state of Nebraska.

For our newsletter, only his writings from Kansas City to Denver will be shown. Due to the length of his writings it will require that I split the story over two newsletters. If you wish you can read the book in it's entirety on these websites: Open Library at https://openlibrary.org/works/OL1147162W/Colorado_a_summer_trip - OR - the Library of Congress at <https://www.loc.gov/item/rc01000442/>

First a little history about James Bayard Taylor.

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 historical 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 submitted to smokyhilltrailassn@gmail.com or mailed to the address below.

Submissions become the property of SHTA and may be edited or abridged at the editor's discretion. All rights reserved.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Association is open to all. Members receive the **OVERLAND DESPATCH** newsletter quarterly. Memberships are on the upcoming calendar year until December 31. Annual dues are:

- \$25.00 for Individual
- \$30.00 for Family / Living at same address
- \$40.00 for Institution / Nonprofit Organizations
- \$50.00 for Business
- \$100.00 for Patron (Support the Organization)
- \$500.00 Lifetime Membership*

* May be paid in quarterly installments during one or two years.

Membership fees may be paid through PayPal using email address: smokyhilltrailassn@gmail.com or mailed to the address below. Other donations are always welcome and appreciated.

Smoky Hill Trail Association
PO Box 978 / Hays, KS 67601

SHTA OFFICERS

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Newsletter Editor: Tanner Mayhew, St. Joseph, MO

Bayard Taylor (1825-1878)

Author, Poet and Travel Writer.

Bayard Taylor produced popular chronicles of his journeys at home and abroad, as well as novels and collections of poetry. He traveled to the Middle East, India, China, and Japan in 1851-1853. After his return he published three literary volumes called: *The Lands of the*



Saracen; or, Pictures of Palestine, Asia Minor, Sicily, and Spain. These marked his pinnacle as a travel writer

Bayard's first novel, *Hannah Thurston: a Story of American Life*, was published shortly after his return to America in 1863. His second novel was called; *John Godfrey's Fortunes; Related by Himself: a Story of American Life*, in 1864.

He also spent the year of 1865 working alternately on his poem, *The Picture of St. John*, and a novel, *The Story of Kennett*, which were published in 1866. Both of these works received favorable reviews.

As a poet, he was very popular, with a crowd of more than 4,000 attending a poetry reading once, which was a record that stood for 85 years.

In September of 1869 Bayard accepted an emeritus position at Cornell University in German literature.

In 1870, his last novel, *Joseph and His Friend: a Story of Pennsylvania*, was published. Bayard considered this to be his most successful novel, although it was not well received by the general public.

...On reaching Kansas City, the train runs directly to the levee, and the traveler is enabled to go directly on board the Leavenworth boat, thus escaping the necessity of stopping at the hotel. I was very grateful for this fact, and having already seen the forty miles of cotton-wood and yellow mud between the two places, took my state-room with an immense sensation of relief. We reached Leavenworth at nine o'clock, in three days and ten hours from Philadelphia.

This is the liveliest and most thriving place west of the Mississippi River. The overland trade has built it up with astonishing rapidity, and it now claims to have a population of 25,000. Kansas City, its fierce rival, having suffered more than one blockade during the war, Leavenworth shot into sudden prosperity; but now that trade has returned to its old channels, Kansas City expects to recover her lost ground. It is a subject of great interest to the people of the two places, and many are the speculations and predictions which one hears from both sides. As to the present ascendancy of Leavenworth, however, there is no question. The town has both wealth and enterprise, and its people seem to me to be remarkably shrewd and far-seeing. In the course of three or four weeks the two places will be connected by a railroad which follows the west bank of the Missouri.

The Union Pacific Railroad (Eastern Division) opened its branch road to Lawrence in May, and trains now run regularly upon it, connecting with the main line for Topeka and — San Francisco. One of my objects in visiting Colorado being to take a superficial view of both railroad routes to the Rocky Mountains, I decided to go out by way of Fort Riley and the Smoky Hill, and return along the Platte to Omaha, in Nebraska. My first acquaintance with the Pacific Railroad, therefore, commenced in Leavenworth. The train starts from a rough piece of ground outside of the town, follows the bank of the Missouri for six or eight miles, and then strikes inland through a lateral valley.

Here commence my new experiences. I have never before been west of the Missouri River. Let me now see what is this Kansas which for twelve years

past has been such a noted geographical name — which has inspired some thousands of political speeches, some noble poems, and one of the worst paintings that mortal eye ever beheld. The very repetition of a name, even in the best cause, some times becomes a little wearisome. I frankly confess I have so often been asked, "Why don't you visit Kansas?" that I lost almost all desire of visiting Kansas. Now, however, I am here, and will see what there is to be seen.

We gradually rose from a bottom of rather ragged-looking timber, and entered a broad, sweeping, undulating region of grass. Cattle were plenty, pasturing in large flocks, and there were occasional log-cabins, great fields of corn where the thrifty blades just showed themselves above a superb growth of weeds, and smaller patches of oats or wheat. Everybody complained of the incessant rains, and this accounted for the weedy condition of the fields. The soil appeared to be completely saturated, and the action of the hot sun upon it produced almost visible vegetable growth.

Here I first witnessed a phenomenon of which I had often heard, — the spontaneous production of forests from prairie land. Hundreds of acres, which the cultivated fields beyond had protected against the annual inundation of fire, were completely covered with young oak and hickory trees, from four to six feet in height. In twenty years more these thickets will be forests. Thus, two charges made against Kansas seemed to be disproved at once, — drought and want of timber, the former being exceptional, and the latter only a temporary circumstance.

The features of the landscape gradually assumed a certain regularity. The broad swells of soil narrowed into ridges, whose long, wavelike crests generally terminated in a short step, or parapet, of limestone rock, and then sloped down to the bottom-lands, at angles varying from 20° to 30°. Point came out behind point, on either side, evenly green to the summit, and showing with a wonder fully soft, sunny effect against the sky. Wherever a rill found its way between them, its course was marked by a line of timber. The counterpart of this region is not to be found in the United States; yet there was a

suggestion of other landscapes in it, which puzzled me considerably, until I happened to recall some parts of France, especially the valleys in the neighborhood of Epernay. Here, too, there was rather an air of old culture than of new settlement. Only the houses, gardens, and orchards were wanting.

As I leaned on the open windows of the car, enjoying the beautiful outlines of the hills, the pure, delicious breeze, and the bright colors of the wild-flowers, the bottom-lands over which we sped broadened into a plain, and the bluffs ran out to distant blue capes. Along their foot, apparently, the houses of a town showed through and above the timber, and on the top of the further hill a great windmill slowly turned its sails. This was Lawrence. How like a picture from Europe it seemed!

A kind resident met me at the station. We crossed the Kaw River (now almost as muddy as the Missouri), and drove up the main street, one hundred feet wide, where the first thing that is pointed out to every stranger is the single house left standing, when the town was laid in blood and ashes, in August, 1863. Lawrence has already completely arisen from her ruins, and suggests nothing of what she has endured. The great street, compactly built of brick, and swarming with traffic; the churches, the scattered private residences, embowered in gardens; the handsome college building on the hill, indicate long-continued prosperity, rather than the result of nearly ten years of warfare. The population of the town is now about 8000.

This afternoon my friends took me to Mount Oread (as I believe the bluff to the west is named), whence there is a lovely view of the Wakarusa Valley. Mexican vaqueros were guarding their horses on the grassy slopes, and down on the plain a Santa Fe train of wagons was encamped in a semicircle. Beyond the superb bottoms, checkered with fields and dotted with farm-houses, rose a line of undulating hills, with here and there an isolated, mound-like "butte," in the south. It was a picture of the purest pastoral beauty.

A little further there is a neglected cemetery where the first martyrs of Kansas — Barbour among them — and the murdered of Lawrence lie buried. The stockades of the late war,

and the entrenchments of the earlier and prophetic war, are still to be seen upon the hill. So young a town, and such a history! Yet now all is peace, activity, and hopeful prosperity; and every one, looking upon the fair land around, can but pray that the end of its trial has been reached.

As I recrossed the Kaw in order to take the train to Topeka, I felt that my stay in Lawrence had been too short. The day was warm and cloudless, with a delightful prairie breeze, and the softly tinted dells beyond the Wakarusa invited excursions. The main street of the town began to swarm with farmers' wagons, pouring in from the rich country to the south; the mechanics were at work upon new buildings in all directions; the fans of the windmill on the bluff were whirling merrily, and all sights and sounds spoke of cheerful occupation. Fortunately, the people of Lawrence do not expect their place to become "the greatest town in the West, sir!" — so they are tolerably sure of a steady and healthy growth for a good many years to come.

I reached Topeka — twenty-nine miles by rail — in an hour and a half. The road is laid along the Kaw bottoms, on a grade as nearly level as possible. The valley has an average breadth of five or six miles, and the uplands on the north and south terminate in a succession of bluff head lands, which, with a general family likeness in their formation, present a constantly changing variety of outlines. The lateral valleys repeat the features of the main valley, on a smaller scale. Sometimes the bluffs retreat so as to form a shelving

semi-basin, or amphitheater, a mile or two deep, — a grand concave slope of uniform green, set against the sky. At intervals of two or three miles the road crosses tributary streams of the Kaw, flowing in narrow, sunken beds, the sides of which are fringed with trees. The landscapes have a breadth and harmonious beauty, such as I know not where else to find in the United States, outside of California.

Indeed, there is much in Kansas to remind one of California. These hills, now so green, must be a golden brown in the autumn; the black soil takes or loses moisture with equal rapidity; the air has the same keen, bracing flavor of life; and there seems to be some resemblance in the meteorological conditions of the two countries. Certainly, next to California, this is the most attractive State I have yet seen.

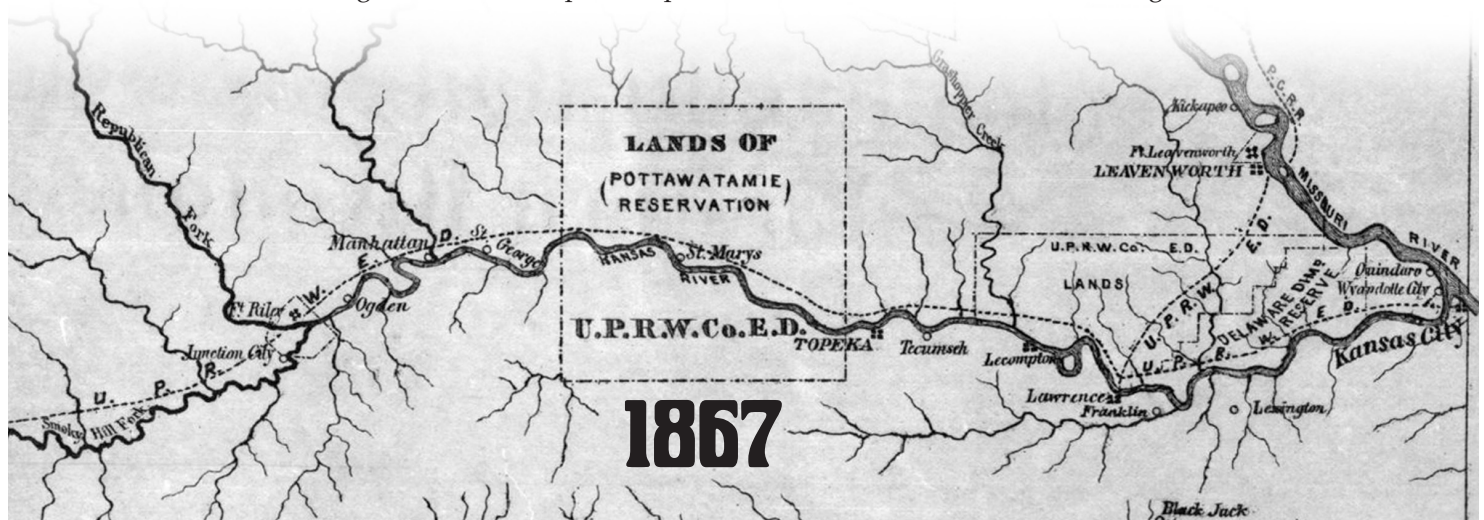
The grain-fields along the Kaw bottom were superb. I have seen no corn so forward, no wheat so close and heavy headed, this year. The farmers were taking advantage of the day to work their corn-fields, the most of which were in sore need of the operation. Rank as is the wild grass of this region, the imported weeds have a still ranker growth. Last year's fields are completely hidden under crops of "horse-weed," every fence-corner has a grove of giant datura (Jamestown-weed), and the roads are lined with tall ranks of sunflowers. I saw no garden that was entirely clean, and, what struck me with more surprise, no attempt at an orchard. The beauty of the country lies in its natural features; cultivation, thus far, has not improved it.

Topeka, at present, is the end of

passenger trains on the Pacific Railroad. In another week, however, they will run daily to Waumego, thirty-five miles further, or one hundred miles west of the Missouri River. We landed at a little cluster of shanties, newly sprung up among the sand and thickets on the north bank of the Kaw. Here an omnibus was in waiting, to convey us across the pontoon bridge — or rather two bridges, separated by a bushy island in the river. Beyond these the town commences, scattered over a gentle slope rising to the south for half a mile, when the land falls again toward a creek in the rear. I found comfortable quarters at the Capitol House. Mr. Greeley's "vanishing scale of civilization" has been pushed much further west since his overland trip in 1859.

Topeka is a pleasant town (city ?) of about 2500 inhabitants. The situation is perhaps not so striking as that of Lawrence, but it is very beautiful. Unfortunately, some parts of the place are destitute of water, which must now be hauled for the supply of families. There seemed to me to be a greater number of substantial private residences than in Lawrence. The building-stone — a buff-colored magnesium limestone, easily worked — appears to improve as we ascend the Kaw. It is found everywhere in the bluffs, and the handsomest buildings one sees are those constructed of it.

After calling upon Governor Crawford, and all the other State officers, — of whom I have to record that they are very amiable and pleasant gentlemen, — a friend treated me to a delightful drive into the



adjacent country. Land, he informed me, is rapidly rising in value; a farm adjoining the city on the east has just been sold for two hundred dollars per acre. The high price of grain for several years past, and the present rise in real estate, have been of great benefit to Kansas, enabling both farmers and speculators to extricate themselves from their former embarrassments.

It rained heavily during the night, and in the morning the roads were changed from dust to mud. Nevertheless, as I had arranged to take the overland coach at this place, thus saving myself twenty-four hours of fatiguing travel, I engaged a livery team for Manhattan, fifty-five miles west of Topeka. But I would advise any stranger visiting Kansas to make himself independent of livery-stables, if possible. The prices are rather more than double what they are in California. From Topeka to this place, my expenses for livery teams have averaged half a dollar per mile!

Leaving Topeka at nine o'clock, with some promise of better weather, we crossed to the north bank of the Kaw, and after floundering for a mile or two among mud-holes in the timber, emerged upon the open, grassy level of the valley. The sun came out bright and warm; the bluff capes and sweeping hills glittered in the light, fading from pure emerald into softest violet; tufts of crimson phlox, white larkspur, spikes of lilac campanulas, and a golden tinted cenothea flashed among the grass; and the lines and clumps of trees along the streams were as dark and rich as those of an English park. The landscapes were a continual feast to the eye, and each successive bend of the valley seemed to reveal a lovelier and more inspiring picture.

The larger streams we crossed — Soldier Creek and Cross Creek — did not issue from close ravines between the bluffs, as is usual in this formation, but each rejoiced in its broad rich belt of bottom-land, stretching away for miles to the northward. Most of these creeks are spanned by bridges, where a toll of from fifteen to twenty-five cents is charged. Their waters are clear and swift, and good mill sites are already being selected. The advantages of the State, both in regard to wood and water, seem to me greater than has heretofore been represented.

After a drive of twenty-two miles, we reached a neat, whitewashed cabin, with the sign: "Hotel, A. P. Neddo." The landlord was a giant half-breed, remarkably handsome and remarkably heavy, familiarly known as "Big Aleck." He has four hundred acres of superb land, and is accounted wealthy. Big Aleck furnished us with a good dinner of ham, onions, radishes, and gooseberry-pie. Among the temporary guests was an Irish teamster, who had a great deal to say about Constantinople and the Sea of Azof.

Within four miles of Topeka commences the Pottawottamie Reservation, which extends westward along the Kaw for twenty or thirty miles. Many of the Indians are now obtaining patents for their share of the land, in order to sell to emigrants, and in a few years, doubtless, the entire reservation will thus be disposed of. Here and there a wretched cabin and a field of ill-cultivated corn denotes the extent of Pottawottamie civilization. We met a number of Indians and squaws on horseback — one of the latter in a pink dress and wearing a round hat with upright feather, and her hair in a net. A little further, we came upon a mounted band of twenty or thirty, all drunk. My driver showed a little uneasiness, but they drew aside to let us pass, and a few hoots and howls were all the salutation we received.

St. Mary's Mission is a village of a dozen houses, with a Catholic chapel, on this reservation. My eyes were here gladdened by the sight of a thriving peach orchard. The house and garden of the priest, in their neatness and evidence of care, offer a good model to the Protestant farmers in this part of Kansas, whose places, without exception, have a slovenly and untidy aspect.

We had a drive of fourteen miles from the Mission to the village of Louisville, on Rock Creek. The road swerved away from the river, occasionally running over the low bluffs, which gave me views of wonderful beauty both up and down the Kaw Valley. Every mile or two we passed wagon or mule trains, encamped near springs of water, their animals luxuriating on the interminable harvest of grass. I was amazed at the extent of the freight business across the Plains; yet I am told that it has somewhat fallen off this season. I have

seen at least two thousand wagons between Lawrence and this place.

The view of Rock Creek Valley, before we descended to Louisville, was the finest I had, up to that point. Even my driver, an old resident of Kansas, broke into an exclamation of delight. The village, at the outlet of the valley, had a tolerable future before it, until the railroad established the new town of Waumego, two and a half miles distant. In another week, the latter place will be the starting point for the overland coaches, which will give it a temporary importance.

The bottom of Rock Creek is a bed of solid limestone, as smooth as a floor. Just above the crossing, a substantial dam has been built, which furnishes a good water power. We did not stop here, but pushed on toward Manhattan, over the rolling hills to the north, whence we looked out upon grand distances, dark under the gathering clouds. By seven o'clock, the thunder drew nearer, and there was every indication of a violent storm. I therefore halted at Torrey's, a farm where the Overland coach changes horses, and was no sooner housed than the rain came down in torrents. The cabin furnished plain fare, and a tolerable bed, although the storm, which raged all night, leaked in many places through the roof.

Rising this morning at five o'clock, I found no abatement of the rain. We were soon sodden and mud-splashed from head to foot. The road, however, on the uplands, was beaten hard, and we made such good progress that we were at Manhattan, eight miles, in time for breakfast. This town, of five hundred inhabitants, is situated at the junction of the Big Blue with the Kaw. North of it rises the Blue Mound, a bluff three hundred feet in height, whence the view is said to be magnificent. There are five churches in the little place, and a mile in the rear, on a ridge, is the State Agricultural College, which already has one hundred and thirty pupils. The houses are mostly built of the beautiful magnesian limestone (resembling the Roman travertine), which gives the place a very neat and substantial air. This was all I could notice in the interval between breakfast and the harnessing of a new team for this place. With a Manhattan

merchant as guide, I set out again in the dismal storm, slowly making headway through the quagmires of the bottom-lands.

I remarked that the bluffs were higher as we advanced, the scenery more varied and picturesque, and if possible, more beautiful. The wild-flowers grew in wonderful profusion and richness of color. I was surprised to see, at the foot of one of the bluffs, a splendid specimen of the yucca filamentosa, in flower. We crossed the Wild-Cat a swift clear stream, with magnificent timber on its bottoms, then Eureka Lake (a crooked slough dignified by that titled and after making ten very slow miles, reached Ogden, a German settlement, with a dozen houses, one brewery, and three beer-saloons. Here I saw one field of one hundred and twenty acres of superb corn, completely enclosed by a high stone wall.

More muddy bottom came, then low rolling hills, and in another hour we saw the buildings of Fort Riley, crowning a hill, two miles in advance. Before reaching the Fort, we passed the site of Pawnee, noted during Governor Reeder's administration, in the early days of Kansas. Except two stone houses, the town has entirely disappeared. The Fort is charmingly situated, the sweep of bluffs around it being seamed with picturesque, wooded ravines which descend to the Republican Fork. No wonder it is a favorite military station. I should have enjoyed it more but for the discouraging rain and the interminable mud.

We crossed the Republican on a floating bridge, and drove through three miles more mud to this place which occupies a rising ground at the base of the triangle formed by the Smoky Hill and the Republican Forks. It has four or five hundred inhabitants, good hotel (the Eagle), and a handsome weekly newspaper, "The Junction City Union". Buildings — nearly all of stone — are going up rapidly, and trade is very brisk, in anticipation of the place soon being the temporary terminus of the Pacific Railroad. Passenger trains will reach Fort Riley by the first of August, and then a great part of the Overland business will no doubt be transacted here instead of Leavenworth.

I must close, to catch the mail. The

Denver coach has just come in. A through passenger, a fresh, rosy-cheeked boy, informs me that all is quiet along the route. To-morrow the coach I take will be here, and you will next hear of me from some station on "the Great American Desert".

UP THE SMOKY HILL FORK.

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, the only one having been recently burned; no church yet completed; no announcement had been made — but in these far-western towns nothing is impossible. A store-building, just floored and plastered, with out windows, and, indeed, occupied by carpenters at work, was selected; planks carried in for seats, a temporary plat form 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?

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 handsaw; 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 horse power, 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 eighteen 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.

I stated the population of the place at four or five hundred, but I am told it is nearly one thousand, 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 under state 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 one hundred and thirty-nine 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, forty-five 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 many 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 Kaw 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 ranch 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 Street 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. The road beyond this descended from the Smoky Hill, and followed the broad, level bottoms of that river. The soil was, in deed, of wonderful fertility, though but little of it, as yet, is under cultivation. 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 one dollar.

The sun set, — there was no moon, — and our coach made toilsome progress over the muddy bottoms toward the Solomon's Fork. Mosquitoes began their attacks, and thence forth worried us the whole night. About ten o'clock the driver commenced an imitation of the bark of the coyote, which, it appeared, was a distant signal of our approach to the ferryman at the Solomon Crossing. It was too indistinct to note anything but the dark masses 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 the 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 two hundred and fifty 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, 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 affect the taste of the Smoky Hill at Junction City.

Nine miles more in the dark brought us to Salina, a village of two or three hundred 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 can not say that I really saw anything, but I learned that it contains 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 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 nearly 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 mosquitoes; 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 team and passengers.

By six o'clock we reached Pritchard's, the next station, sixteen miles from Salina. Here there was a stable of rough stones and mud, and a cabin cut out of the steep bank, with a rude 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, — "I think I have more fun with the horses and prairie-dogs!" 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 effect. 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 formation 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 nevertheless form picturesque and suggestive features of the landscape: in the distance they might frequently be taken 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 lark spurs, and dark-blue spiderwort. 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.

After leaving Clear Creek, fourteen miles further, we approached the Smoky Hill. Two companies of the Second United States Cavalry were drawn up on the plain. Looking out, we beheld the encampment of Fort Ellsworth ahead of us. At present 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 Lieutenant Lester, and a glass of excellent beer from a barrel in the sutler's quarters. General Palmer was inspecting the progress of the new fort, and I did not see him. Everybody — especially the private soldiers — was anxious to hear about the **Fenian** movement.



The Fenian Brotherhood was an Irish republican organization founded in the United States in 1858 by John O'Mahony and Michael Doheny. Members were commonly known as "Fenians".

In 1867, members of the Fenian movement staged a rising across Ireland in rebellion against British rule. Though militarily a disaster, the rising had profound historical consequences for Ireland.

There had been no Indian troubles on the road, but the officers seemed to anticipate trouble from the continued absence of Indians from the country. The old trappers consider that withdrawal of intercourse, on the part of the Indians, indicates preparations for an attack. The Smoky Hill route, I find, is regarded with a little uneasiness this year, on account of the troubles last fall. The traders and train-men from Santa Fe represent that the tribes of the Plains are not in an 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 various tribes, half-breeds and a few whites, who are known, collectively, under the name of "Dog Indians." 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, ten 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 forty (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 aboard," said the driver; " he was terribly scairt; 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 (fifteen 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 herds of them grew quite frequent, making their appearance near us on both sides of the road. They set off on a slow, lumbering gallop 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 four or five hundred animals. The soldiers at Lost Creek had 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 made 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 under ground habitations, and barked at us with a comical petulance. Toward evening their partners, the owls, came forth also to take the air. The rattlesnakes, I presume, were still in-doors, 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 leaned over the water, started back, took courage again, 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 very attractive; but such a prospect for soup does not 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 bound less 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, some how or other, managed to digest themselves; and I heartily congratulated myself on having undertaken the journey.

Here I leave you, one hundred and seventy-five miles west of Fort Riley, in the center of what once was "The Great American Desert."

CROSSING THE PLAINS

At Fort Ellsworth....

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE



In August of 1864, soldiers from the 7th Iowa Cavalry, under the command of 2nd Lt. Allen Ellsworth, established a fort four miles southeast of the site that eventually became Ellsworth. The city of Ellsworth was incorporated in 1867.

TRAVELING THE SMOKY HILL TRAIL IN 1859

A comparison of travel across the Smoky Hill Trail - eight years prior to Bayard Taylor's journey.

The directions printed in newspapers to the Gold Mines (shown at the right) seems to tell where the "The Great American Desert " started at that time. Once you reached the Smoky Hill Fork, you basically were on your own.

The article (below) suggests to the excitement of "gold fever" and the exodus west of the time.

It must have been a sight to see!

The Kansas News - 1859

One of our citizens who just returned from Leavenworth informs us that the rush of emigration through that place for the Gold Mines is far beyond the anticipations of any one. The number of strangers in town at any one time last week was estimated to be five thousand, while hundreds were leaving for western and central Kansas every day.

The Kansas Herald of Freedom
February 26, 1859

Route to the Gold Mines.

The route to the gold mines is through Lawrence by the way of Junction City and Smoky Hill Fork. The following is an accurate table of distances by this route, which is universally conceded at this time to be the best, and one over which a daily line of stages will run after the first of April:

From Lawrence to

Big Springs	15
Tecumseh	5 20
Topeka	5 25
Silver Lake	8 33
St. Mary's Mission	10 43
Louisville	16 59
St. George	8 67
Manhattan	8 75
Ogden	10 85
Fort Riley	5 90
Junction City	2 92
Kansas Falls	6 98
Chapman's Creek	6 104
Amistead	10 114
Big Sand Spring	3 117
Solomon's Fork	5 122
Saline Fork	11 133
Mulberry Creek	5 138
Head Smoky Hill Fork	388 526
Pike's Peak, or Mouth Cherry Creek	30 556



Ellsworth, Kansas 1867

Courtesy Boston Public Library

Jacob Leman served with the Pequea Rangers during the Revolutionary War. After the war he married and went into the brewery business. He and his wife, Catharine, had ten children. Their eldest son, **Henry Eichholtz Leman**, was born March 8, 1812, in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Henry attended a number of private schools in Lancaster gaining a practical business education. At the age of 16 he served as an apprentice working for Melchior Fordney, a well known gun manufacturer in Lancaster.

U Fordney produced rifles in Lancaster from 1807 until he was murdered by an insane man with an axe in 1846.

Henry worked hard learning the art and skills of gunsmithing for three years with Fordney. Wanting to perfect his gun making talents, he decided to move to Philadelphia and go to work as a journeyman for gunsmith, George Tryon. Tryon's gunshop made arms for the Indian trade. Making "Trade muskets" or "Northwest flintlock guns" as they were called was a competitive business. There were many American gunsmiths competing against trade rifles being imported and shipped West for trade with the Indian tribes.



Henry Eichholtz Leman

Leman Rifle Works

In 1834 Henry returned to Lancaster and started his own business of gun making calling it the Leman Rifle Works. Henry's gunsmithing knowledge provided him with the skills to produce a competitively priced quality Pennsylvania rifle to compete against import trade. He produced 250 rifles during the first year of operation. Fifty of those first pieces were sold to John N. Lane from St. Louis for use in the Indian trade. In 1837 during Van Buren's administration he received his first government contract for 1000 rifles. The rifles were flintlocks with 42-inch barrels. Each rifle had a woolen cover and included a mold, wiper and charger. The price was \$14 each.

It is important to note that when Henry started making flintlocks it was during the transition period in the evolution of firearms. The percussion cap firing mechanism was in use for field hunting. At that time the two ignition methods were debatable.



**FLINTLOCK - Top Marked Barrel
H. R. LEMAN LANCASTER PA.**

An astute business man, Henry noted past orders from the American Fur Company, but he hadn't received any orders from them lately. Seeking to grow, he sent a letter that offered to manufacture rifles at the following prices:

Single trigger-pan, lock, checkered and engraved \$12; with long tang breech \$12;
Warranted equal to any manufactured. Plus an offer to send a sample for inspection.

However, Henry never heard back from them. A few years later in 1843 Henry personally contacted Ramsey Crooks, the head of the American Fur Company. He conveyed to Mr. Crook that their business would be aided and the Indians would benefit if he were permitted to manufacture guns for the fur company.

During this time Leman and other American gunsmiths, such as Golcher, Derringer, and Tryon, were supplying the Indians, hence taking over the market previously held by the imported foreign gunmakers.

By 1850, the flintlock era had passed in the East, but not in the West where the Indians were concerned. It was about this time percussion cap type rifles were being made at the Leman Rifle Works. These are the rifles that they became famous for. However, the Indians preferred the flintlock muskets over other makes available at that time. The Leman company continued to supply the flintlocks annually to the tribes. From 1856 to 1860 they produced approximately a quantity of 6,500 "Northwest" flintlock guns for the Indian trade in addition to a wide variety of civilian rifles.

Leman's forge and rifle boring mill was located on the east bank of the Conestoga River. The stock and lock works were made in a factory in Lancaster. Henry abandoned the mill on the Conestoga in 1850 and built a new steam powered factory in Lancaster. During this time

the company employed 34 persons. The new factory could produce several thousand rifles per year.

In 1851 at the age of 39 Henry married Anna Dubois, age 23. Their family grew with a total of six children. Two of the sons went to work in the business.

The following years were busy times due to the gold rushes and westward expansion. The Lemman rifles achieved a reputation of being some of the best rifles for the frontier. In 1860, Henry employed 62 workers and produced 5000 rifles that year.

Leman Rifle Works also did considerable work in altering arms from flint to percussion. The conversion work of these rifles proved to be as successful as the sales of early muskets.

Henry did not become involved with producing arms for the Civil War but did produce some weapons for militia use. His main factory product was sporting rifles. Many large caliber rifles were made, but the majority of these guns were produced for the average public and were of small caliber.

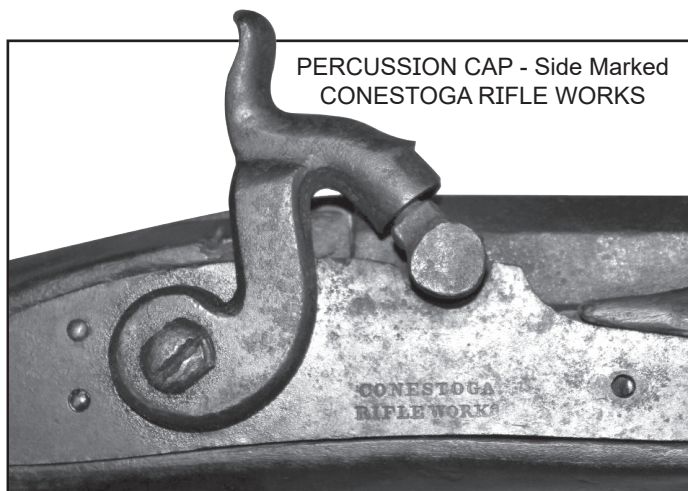
After the Civil War, business was strong as the country focused on settling the west. Several Indian treaties involved presenting those Indians with muzzle loading weapons.

Leaman designed a short-barreled, large-caliber, inexpensive model known as the "Lancaster Rifle" specifically designed for buffalo. This rifle became extremely popular with the government and companies that traded with the Indians on the Western plains. Leman's rifles probably killed more American buffaloes than any other arm in history. He occasionally received buffalo meat and skins in trade for them. These Lancaster guns were immensely popular when the market was at its height on buffalo robes, and were singularly the favorite weapons of the Western Indians. It has been said that it

was possible to barter with the Indians for almost any of their possessions, but never for their Leman rifle.

Orders continued for rifles in both full and half stock varieties from private individuals, companies, and the government, until Henry's death. Henry died on May 12th, 1887, in his seventy-sixth year. Henry Leaman was the most productive of any of the Lancaster riflemakers. During the 53 years of production his factory produced more than...

... 100,000 guns.



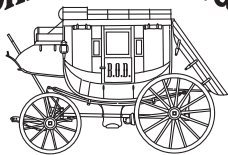
Henry Leman took pride in his products, and all of his well made rifles were stamped "H. E. Leman, Lancaster, Pa." If he was obliged to take orders for cheap, inferior arms, or if any of his standard pieces had flaws, he marked these "Conestoga Rifle Works." This trade title was also used on special orders on which, for one reason or another, he did not care to place his name.

H. E. LEMAN

PERCUSSION CAP
Engraved and Side Marked
H. E. LEMAN



Smoky Hill Trail



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Five miles west of Fort Ellsworth *we were fairly in the buffalo range, and, for miles in every direction as far as the eye could see, the hills were black with these shaggy monsters of the prairie, grazing quietly upon the richest pasture in the world. Should I estimate the number of buffalo to be seen at one view at a million, it would be thought an exaggeration, but better authority than myself has estimated them at millions, or as being greater than all the domestic cattle in America. Truly it has been said that the Smoky Hill is the garden spot and hunting-ground of America. Following along on the high, level bench before spoken of, erecting mounds at every station, our route lay over a fine, rich and fertile soil, bountifully supplied with wood, water and grass, and every thing necessary to make a good wagon road or railroad.*

Excerpt from an

1865

Newspaper Article



Questions, Ideas, Comments, Newsletter Articles

Email To: smokyhilltrailassn@gmail.com

Or Mail To: Smoky Hill Trail Association

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SPREAD THE WORD

Suggest to your friends to Join the Smoky Hill Trails Association!

Ask them to register at: www.smokyhilltrail.com/membership

Topeka Tribune - March 1859

YOUTHFUL PIKE'S PEAKERS. To such an alarming extent has this gold mania spread that even boys, mere children have caught it, and are leaving their homes for Pike's Peak. Two of these young adventurers called at our office one day last week, en route for the mines. They were from Iowa, had walked two hundred and fifty miles, and intended footing it through. They were illy provided for the trip, their only outfit consisting of a knapsack of "fodder," a rusty rifle and a willing spirit. Blood and bottom will tell.



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