

- **Malcolm Conn 1831 - 1898**

Malcolm Conn was a major figure in trade along the Santa Fe Trail. His Stone Store sat right on the Santa Fe Trail. He was also involved in the SFT trade in Westport prior to his move to Council Grove. Malcolm Conn was born to James Clay and Mary Conn in Baltimore County, Maryland on December 12, 1831. A 1850 Maryland census lists James C. Conn as a farmer and having real estate worth \$6,000. It also listed Malcolm as living at home and his occupation was that of a clerk. In 1855, he left Maryland to seek employment in Westport, which had become the jumping off point for the Santa Fe Trail. It is believed that he went to work clerking for Silas P. Keller. Keller was located on Main Street competing against traders Kearney & Bernard, A.G. Boone, Baker & Street, J.G.



Hamilton, and Edward Price. After only spending a year in Westport, Conn moved to Council Grove, Kansas Territory, in the middle of the Kansa or Kaw land in 1856. Council Grove was a booming opportunity for trade not only with the Santa Fe Traders, but also the Kaw Tribe. Conn may have been sent by Keller, who was a stock holder in the Council Grove Town Company when it was organized in 1857. In 1858, The "Stone Store" or "Conn Store" as it has been referred to for many years, was built. It was believed to have been built by the partnership of Conn, Hill & Munkres. He bought out the partnership with Hill and Munkres in 1859. In 1860, Conn was one of the wealthiest citizens of Council Grove. In the census of that year, Conn was listed as having a personal estate of \$10,000. William Shamleffer, who later owned the "Stone Store" reminisces about Conn's store in the early 1860's, "The merchant had to hustle with business customers all day, and then entertain them royally at night; for some of them came hundreds of miles to trade, and the business house had to furnish many of them with sleeping quarters, place to cook their meals, corrals in which to keep their stock, and open access to corn cribs.... Plainsmen, hunters, trappers, wagon bosses, soldiers, bullwhackers, broncho[sic] busters, long lines of prairie schooners, and heads of horses, mules, and cattle were the attraction of the passing day....In his stock were found every known variety of goods for use on the frontier, from ox yokes and repairs to cambric needles, from small boxes of pills to barrels of whiskey." On May 4, 1863, Dick Yeager and his band of Missouri guerillas camped near Council Grove, intent on destroying the town. Conn, who had known Yeager as a Santa Fe freighter before the war, went to the camp and persuaded him to spare the town. Conn was able to persuade Yeager to spare Council Grove, but Yeager's band the went to Diamond Springs and raided Howell's stage station, killing Howell and wounded his wife. In 1864, Conn advertised that he would close his mercantile business by December of that year and requested that all accounts be settled. Conn sold interests in his business to C.N. James and William Shamleffer and between 1866 and 1870 sold them his remaining interests. In 1870 Conn becomes a Cattle dealer and 1880 he became the proprietor of the Barnum Hotel in Kansas City. Conn eventually owned hotels in Webb City, Mo., Little Rock, AR: and Lawrence KS. Conn died in Lawrence of stomach cancer on February 28, 1898, at his most famous hotel, the Eldridge House.