



Paul Bentrup (1917 – 2003)

Paul Bentrup was born in 1917 to Charles and Louise Bentrup. A lifetime resident of Kearny County, Kansas, he attended two years at the University of Minnesota. He served in the U. S. Army from July 1936 to June 1937. After the service, he returned to Kearny County where he worked as a farmer and as the “old shepherd”.

When Paul’s father, Charles, purchased land near Deerfield, Kansas, he realized that a section of the Santa Fe Trail was on his land. Before his father died, Charles made it clear to Paul that this section of the Trail known as “Charlie’s Ruts” was to be kept open to the public for all time. Paul was a faithful caretaker to

these ruts along Highway 50 west of Deerfield, and one of the best friends the Trail ever had. He donated 10 acres of land containing most of Charlie’s Ruts to the Kearny County Historical Society with the understanding that the land would be open for the public to walk in the ruts. Paul kept a mailbox at the turnout for the ruts and kept it supplied with a variety of historical information and a notepad for people to “sign in”. His car was always loaded with Trail information which he readily shared.

Paul was the first person to register for the first Symposium held at Trinidad, CO, in 1986. SFTA awarded him an Award of Merit in 1986 and in 1987 he was named the first SFTA Ambassador. That award has since been renamed as the Paul F. Bentrup SFTA Ambassador Award to honor his achievements. For many years Paul was active along the Trail, recruiting new members, encouraging travelers to visit historic sites, and welcoming modern travelers who chose to see the Trail from horseback, mule, wagon, or on foot. When Paul passed away in 2003, he donated his Santa Fe Trail books and research materials to the SFTA and are housed at our headquarters at the Santa Fe Trail Center, Larned, KS.