



Seth M. Hays (1811- 1873)

The great grandson of Daniel Boone, and a cousin to Kit Carson, Seth Millington Hays was born on April 23, 1811 in Callaway County, Missouri. When he grew up, he was living in Westport (now Kansas City), Missouri. In April, 1847, two Santa Fe Trail traders -- Albert G. Boone and James G. Hamilton -- established a trading post on the Kaw reservation, by virtue of their Kanza Indian trading license. They placed bachelor Seth M. Hays in charge to build the store and trade with the Kanza tribe. Hays became the first white settler of what would later become Council Grove, in Morris County, Kansas.

Hays built a log cabin on the north side of the old Santa Fe Trail near the west bank of the Neosho River close to where the Commercial House later stood. The cabin served as both a store and a dwelling, which housed Hays and his African-American slave named Sarah Taylor, who was familiarly called "Aunt Sally." Within five years Seth Hays bought out Boone and Hamilton and traded under his own name. In 1857, he put up a larger building to accommodate the Santa Fe Trail traffic. He also took on a business partner by the name of G. M. Simcock, and the business was named S.M. Hays & Co. The establishment served citizens as a trading post, and a variety of other things. In 1859, with hundreds of travelers coming through Council Grove on their way to find gold in the Rocky Mountains, business was booming. By 1860, times were so prosperous that the newly formed Council Grove Town Company began selling lots. On January 29, 1861, Kansas entered the Union as a free state. "Aunt Sally" was freed, but, chose to remain with Hays.