

# "Did You Know"

by  
David Clapsaddle

During its fifty nine year tenure, what is now commonly called the Santa Fe Trail was generally known as The Road to Santa Fe or the Santa Fe Road. Such was in keeping with the language of the 19th century in which an unimproved route was called a road. In the South, an unimproved route was called a trace, a graphic description of terrain impacted by the traffic of vehicles and animals, not unlike the ruts still visible in all five states traversed by The Road to Santa Fe. On the other land, an improved route in the past century was called a highway, so called for the soil and rock being removed from the drainage ditches on both sides of the road and layered on top of the roadbed, thus elevating its height.

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Among the trade items brought back to Missouri following his first trip to Santa Fe in 1821 were jacks and jennies, forerunners of the famous Missouri mule. In short time, the mule replaced the horse as the preferred draft animal on the Santa Fe Trail. The mule had several advantages over the horse: (1) The mule was not so susceptible to diseases as horses; (2) the mule required about one half the amount of grain to supplement grazing as the horse and (3) the mule was less prone to harness sores than the horse due to its short hair.

In 1829, But. Maj. Bennet Riley experimented with oxen in the first military escort of freight wagons on the Santa Fe Trail; and by the early 1830's, the ox superseded the mule as the draft animal of choice on the Santa Fe Trail. The reasons were several: (1) Oxen costs less than half the price of mules; (2) the cost of outfitting oxen was much cheaper than outfitting mules. A yoke (\$5.00) and a chain (\$5.00) was all that was required for a yoke of oxen as compared to harness for a span of mules costing \$25.00; (3) oxen could subsist by grazing. No grain was needed to supplement their diet as in the case of mules; (4) the split hoof of the ox spread to provide better traction than the single hoof the mule. Such served well, especially in the sandy of stream beds and the slippery embankments of river crossings; and (5) Indians

did not value oxen as they did horses and mules. Finally, if an ox became lame, he could always be butchered and eaten.

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As the Santa Fe Trail departed its original terminus at Franklin, Missouri, it followed the wooded valley of the Missouri River westward to the present day Missouri Kansas border. There, the trail turned southwest through the tall grass prairie dominated by big and little blue stem to present day McPherson County. From that point, the blue stem began to fade into buffalo and gamma grasses; and upon reaching Walnut Creek in present day Barton County, the trail was without question in short grass country. Where there was buffalo grass, there were buffaloes, and where there were buffaloes, there were Indians.

Prior to reaching Walnut Creek, travelers had little need to be concerned about difficulties with Indians; but beginning at Walnut Creek, sentinels were posted at night, and the wagons began to travel four abreast. Such a configuration had several advantages over traveling in single file; In case of Indian attack, each set of four wagons could quickly assemble into a diamond of defense; In case a wagon broke down, the remaining wagons in the caravan did not have to circumvent long line of wagons common to a single file; Such a configuration prevented Indians from cutting off the last few wagons bringing up the rear. Ruts showing the four abreast configuration are replete in many trail locations. One such set of ruts are located adjacent to the north city limits of Larned on the Bob Jost property. Anyone wishing to view these ruts should contact this writer. Please do not trespass on the property.

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Coon Creek originating in Ford County flows north through Edwards and Pawnee County and empties into the Arkansas River near Garfield where it was crossed by the Wet Route of the Santa Fe Trail. The Dry Route of the Santa Fe Trail crossed a tributary of Coon Creek three and a half mile west of present day Kinsley, Kansas, called in the historic period Big Coon Creek. Modern maps label the main channel of the

Cook Creek, Big Coon Creek and this tributary Little Coon Creek. To confound the matter further, the Dry Route also crossed Coon Creek south of present day Spearville at a site called Little Coon Creek which was actually a part of the main channel.

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At least five separate locations on the Santa Fe Trail are called Points of Rocks. Perhaps the best known of these landmarks is the Point of Rocks situated about fifty miles west of Clayton, New Mexico. There in 1849, Apaches attacked a little caravan belonging to the James White family. Ann White and her small daughter were captured. During an ill fated rescue attempt by troops from Fort Union, Mrs. White was killed by her captors. The little girl was never heard from again.

Another Point of Rocks is located some three miles west of Dodge City, Kansas. This formation, nearly destroyed by highway construction in 1981, was the proposed rendezvous site for Texas freebooters who came north to raid Mexican caravans on the Santa Fe Trail in 1843. There Charles Warfield was to meet John McKaniel and his band of Missourians recruited to serve in a paramilitary force, reportedly at the behest of the Republic of Texas.

A third Point of Rocks is found three miles west of Pierceville, Kansas. Near this location in 1867, Sister Mary Alphonsa Thompson died enroute to Santa Fe accompanied by four other nuns and Bishop Jean Lamy.

The fourth Point of Rocks is near Middle Spring eleven miles north of Elkhart, Kansas. Undoubtedly this promontory was a landmark for the wagoners. However, no trail period literature speaks to its presence.

The fifth Point of Rocks is near Bent's Old Fort where the Cheyenne/Arapaho Agency was established in 1864.

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People in the lore of the Trail often find it difficult in identifying ruts. The reason for such is that they are predisposed to think in terms of tracks, two strips the width of a wagon rim (called a tire in the historical period) spaced three-to-four feet apart, the width of a wagon axle. Such would exist only with

the recent passage of a wagon over an area not given to much traffic over an extended period of time. Ruts take the form of depressions, sometimes called swales, about the width of a wagon box with an embankment on either side. In some areas, the embankments between the ruts have been leveled by increasing traffic and/or erosion so that a single rut may be many yards wide.

Ruts tend to become more pronounced when located at a slope where wheels were braked causing the wagon to skid, thus cutting more deeply into the terrain. Ruts located on slopes are also more prone to drainage thus allowing for increased erosion.

Further southwest in New Mexico, the lack of rainfall prevents the formation of grass roots which retard the erosion of the ruts. Thus, in such arid areas, the sides of the ruts take on a ragged, vertical appearance. Consequently, such ruts are difficult to distinguish from small streams whose banks have been cut away by heavy rainfall.

Because of the impaction of the soil, a different type of vegetation often grows within the ruts than in the immediate area of the ruts. Also, because the ruts collect extra moisture, the grass tends to green much earlier within the ruts than adjacent areas. Such differentiation makes ruts quite easy to spot in early spring. Another aid in the identification of ruts is light snow which drifts into the depression area producing broken ribbons of white across an otherwise winter brown pasture.

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Fort Atkinson, originally called Camp Mackay, was first organized at the middle crossing in 1850. Later it was moved down the Arkansas to a point one half mile west of the Fort Mann site. Later known as New Post and Fort Summer, it was finally designated as Fort Atkinson in 1851. Soldiers, not particularly fond of the place, referred to the post as Fort Sod and Fort Sodom. It was abandoned in October 1854.

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The Santa Fe Trail landmark called Point of Rocks located four miles west of present day Dodge City was largely destroyed by highway construction in the early 1980's. Approaching from the east, the modern day traveler has difficulty in recognizing any particular geology which gave rise to the location's name.

However, approaching the landmark from the west, today's traveler can easily observe the stony terrain from which the location's name was derived. The marker for this site has been prepared and will soon be placed, a combined project of the Wet/Dry Route and the Fort Dodge/Dodge City Chapters of the Santa Fe Trail.

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Returning to Missouri from its 1823 trip to Santa Fe, the Stephen Cooper party brought back 400 jacks, jennets, and mules, a quantity of beaver, and a considerable sum of species. A jennet, also known as a hinny, is the offspring of a male horse and a female donkey. A mule is the offspring of a male donkey and a female donkey. A mule is the offspring of a male donkey and a female horse. While jennets were not used on the Santa Fe Trail, the mule quickly superceded the horse as the preferred beast of burden.

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During his first two trips to Santa Fe, William Becknell crossed the Arkansas River east of Walnut Creek and pursued a course south of the river to the present Dodge City area. During his 1821 journey, Becknell traversed what we now know as the Quivira National Wildlife Refuge. There, Becknell encountered animals never previously seen by his eyes; prairie dogs, jackrabbits, and wild horses. Becknell shot a prairie dog but declared its flesh to be "strong and unpalatable."

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The Daughters of the American Revolution Santa Fe Trail markers placed in the early part of the century give the dates of the trail as 1822-1872. There remains a dispute as to the trail's date of origin. Some contend the date of 1821 should be used as that year William Becknell, setting out to trade with the Indians of the Southwest, ultimately disposed of his trade goods in Santa Fe. Others contend that 1822 is the more appropriate date because in that year Becknell intentionally set out to trade in Santa Fe. There is argument on both sides of the issue. However, the last year of 1872 is not plausible as the trail finally ended its 59 year tenure in 1880 when the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway constructed a 15 mile spur from its Mainline northward into Santa Fe. The choice of the 1872 date is unfortunate regardless of the unusual logic that in 1872 the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway reached the Colorado line. Such has no significant relation to the closing of the Santa Fe Trail even in Kansas. In the summer of 1868, the Union Pacific Railway, Eastern Division reached Sheridan, Kansas and the little city in present Logan County became the eastern terminus of the Santa Fe Trail

dispatching merchandise, mail and passengers down a newly developed road to Fort Lyon. Thus, overland traffic on the Santa Fe Trail east of Fort Lyon ceased. Regardless, the 1822-1872 dating is still retained and used (or should one say misused) Time and time again even the official road map of Kansas sports these dates not to mention countless markers, many of which have been placed in recent years. Please join me in pressing for the historical accuracy of the most basic parameters of the Santa Fe Trail.

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The term "crossing" is used in two separate ways in trail conversation. The most frequent use refers to the ford of a stream such as Coon Creek crossing. The other use refers to a length of the trail which traversed a specified region such as the Middle Crossing. The Middle Crossing was one of several routes which ran from the present day Dodge City/Cimarron/Ingalls area southwest some fifty miles to the Cimarron River. Many writers confuse the issue by stating that a particular crossing was located a specific location on the Arkansas River i.e. the lower crossing was located at the mouth of Mulberry Creek. What needs to be said in this regard is that the lower crossing originated at the mouth of Mulberry Creek.

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The distance between the wheels of a train and those of a wagon are precisely the same, four feet, eight and one half inches. This phenomenon results from rails being built according to the specifications used to construct horse drawn trams whose measurements were taken from wagons. This need for measurement goes back to the days of the Roman Empire when chariots were built to universal specifications so the rutted roads of the ancient kingdom could be accommodated.

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## The Arkansas River, Navigatable or Not?

In late Spring of 1843, Bent, St. Vrain and Company floated five wagons load of buffalo robes down the Arkansas River in shallow draft boats constructed especially for the voyage. Some where en route, the boats were stranded on sand bars; and wagons were

dispatched to retrieve the hopeless voageuis and their reluctant cargo. In 1872, the river's navigability was once again tested. The following from the Topeka Daily Common-wealth was provided to the Traces by the ever alert Ed Carlson, one of the Chapter's long distance but energetic members. *11 July: Correspondence to the Commonwealth dated Great Bend 06 July, "The A.T.&S.F.R.R. track is laid within thirteen miles of this place and a week hence we shall be rejoicing, doubtless, in welcoming the iron horse to our city. The railroad company are building a boom across the Arkansas river at the mouth of the Walnut, about three miles below here, for the purpose of holding a large amount of railroad ties that are to be rafted down the Arkansas from the mountains, and distributed at this point." Did the railroad ties reach the Walnut, or did they too become stranded by the fickle, ever changing crossing the Arkansas River?* Perhaps, future research will tell.

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In the early days of the Santa Fe Trail, the hooves of oxen were shod in moccasins of raw buffalo hide. Later, the oxen were shod with steel shoes, each foot requiring two separate shoes due to the split hoof of the oxen. Oxen were difficult to shoe because unlike the horse or mule it is impossible for a bovine to stand on three legs. Thus, in settlements, Farriers used a windlass to elevate the ox while the shoes were attached. Away from such a device on the trail, the oxen had to be placed on the ground, their legs tied, and the shoes nailed on.



**"Ox Sling"**



## "Shoeing an Oxen"

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### "A Timbered Terrain"

Again, Ed Carlson has provided *"Traces"* with an interesting item from an early edition of the *Kinsley Graphic*.

*If fires could be kept away from the river for five years, there would be quiet a heavy belt of cottonwood timber along that stream, from one end of the valley to the other. The young trees come up every spring, and thrive the whole season and until killed by fire. It is just so along the Coon and in all the low or damp places in the valley. In breaking up the old fields in the spring, many of them are just literally covered with young cottonwoods. Now, when the country becomes thickly settled, prairie fires will be kept out and these young trees will have a chance to grow. There is no question but what time will come when this country will grow its own fuel. Both up and down the Arkansas river there is an abundance of timber, and trees such as cottonwood, elm, plum and a few other varieties, have no enemies in this climate but the prairie fires. Even the Pawnee, twenty five miles east of us, the Saw Log or*

*Buckner, fifteen miles west, and all the streams thirty to forty miles south, were well supplied with timber until it was cut down and hauled off by settlers. The Forts Larned and Dodge have been supplied with wood for the past twenty years, cut from the little creeks mentioned, and there is no calculating the timber used up by the travel over the Santa Fe Trail for years and years. Plant trees and take care of them after they are planted, is all that is required to grow timber in this country.*

Kinsley Graphic

Saturday 24, January 1880

This contemporary account does not agree with many of the "Uncle Joe" stories which have been told and retold over the past several decades. However, it does square with first hand accounts of the period found in diary and journal accounts.

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George Bent wrote Joseph B. Thoburn on July 12, 1911:

"Black Kettle has no grandchildren living as he never had no children during his life."

Bent's testimony should put to rest the claim of some who contend they are the Chief's descendants.

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## "Jones Point Confirmed"

Some six miles southwest of the Pawnee Fork crossing at present Larned, Kansas, the Dry Route of the Santa Fe Trail reached the location where Michael and Lawrence Smith, employees of the Hall and Porter Mail Company, were killed by Kiowas on September 24, 1859. Marking that site is a bronze plaque mounted on a limestone post which reads Jones Point, the name of the location according to James Brice, a fellow stage company employee of the Smiths. Your editor was pleased to read in the August 1998 Wagon Tracks the October 22, 1858 diary entry of Charles W. Finley: "Left camp early and breakfasted at Buffalo wallow west of Big Coon, suppered near Jones Point." Observe that Finley, also then Hall and Porter employee, makes reference

to Jones Point. It is helpful to have this second source to confirm Brice's testimony.

Prior to the advent of the Concord coach on the Santa Fe Trail in the early 1860's, mail and passengers were transported in several wagons, whatever number was required to haul mail, baggage, and equipment for camping and cooking. Such a retinue employed as many as eight men: drivers, outriders, and conductor. The conductor who sometimes shared the driving was ultimately responsible for the welfare of the passengers and safe and timely delivery of the mail.

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## Chief/Peace Marker

Many writers, both 18th and 19th century, mistakenly identified significant warriors as chiefs. George Bent clarified this notion as follows:

The whites have the wrong idea about Indian Chiefs. Among the Plains Indians a chief was elected as a peace and civil officer and there was no such office as war chief. What the whites call war chiefs were only warriors of distinction. Roman Nose was never a chief, and Red Cloud, at the height of his fame, was only a distinguished warrior. When he was elected chief he lost most of real power. Some of these so-called war chiefs were often headmen of the soldier societies, and when matters of importance came up the chief usually referred them to these warrior societies for settlement, and so they really had more power than the chief. But the Indian idea of a chief is not a fighter but a peace maker. About 1832 High-back Wolf, a great Cheyenne chief, ran out of his lodge to help some relatives in a village quarrel; he was stabbed to death. The Cheyennes said he deserved this; he was a chief and had no business to fight even in aid of his closest kinsmen.

Life of George Bent Written From His Letter, P. 324

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At some unknown date, freight wagons on the Santa Fe Trail began to utilize a practical addition. That invention was a steerhide strung beneath the wagon to haul fire wood should the caravan reached a campsite bereft of either wood or buffalo chips. This simple but useful accessory would later be adopted by cattle men for use with the chuck wagon. The cowboys called the steerhide a cuny, a corruption of the Spanish Cuba, cradle. A fitting title, the steerhide did resemble a cradle of sorts, suspended beneath the wagon box.

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Not until the 1840's did freight wagons used on the Santa Fe Trail have a braking system. Prior to that time, the wheels would be sometimes locked in place by chairs when the wagon was making steep descent.

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The Cheyenne Indians did not present much of a threat to the encroaching whites until 1857 when Col. E. V. Sumner's troops attacked a village of Northern Cheyennes. Sumner then ordered that annuity goods for Cheyennes stored at Bent's New Fort be distributed to other tribes, and caused the lead, powder, and flints designated for the Cheyennes to be thrown into the Arkansas River. Prior to that time, the Bents' influence had promoted a good relationship between the tribes and European-Americans; but subsequent to the Sumner incident, the relationship began to deteriorate culminating in the so-called Indian Wars of 1864 onwards.

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**Many issues ago**, this column provided information regarding a contraption which was used to shoe oxen. The contrivance rigged with a belly sling and a windlass was used to elevate the ox, thus rendering him immobile while shoes were nailed to his hooves. Such a procedure was useful as a bovine unlike an equine has much difficulty in standing on three legs. Recently, this writer had the opportunity to visit the Mount Pleasant Shaker Village in Kentucky. There, one of the staff related that this type of contraption was referred to variously as a ox press, an ox sling, or shoeing stalls. The latter designation was confirmed a few days later by an old fellow in Virginia who described his father shoeing oxen on their family farm. He said, "We put them in the stalls." At least we now know what to call the contraption.

(Note from Larry E. Mix)

I believe that this is what David is talking about. I took this picture several years ago at the Hays House Restaurant in Council Grove, Kansas, this picture is in the lobby.



There is also a painting of the same contraption as David calls it in the Kaw Mission, also in Council Grove, Kansas. This picture was taken at the Santa Fe Trail Symposium in 1999.



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In 1821: Missouri gained statehood. Mexico won its independence from Spain. William Becknell opened the Santa Fe Trail. Moses Austin led American colonists to the Texas province of Mexico.

In 1835: William Becknell moved to Texas. David Crockett, en route to the Alamo, Conferred with Becknell at his Clarksville, Texas home.

In 1836: Texas revolutionaries were victorious over Mexican forces. William Becknell organized Texas volunteer company, the Red River Blues.

In 1856: William Becknell died at Clarksville, Texas.

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As early as 1822, American traders continued south of Santa Fe 580 miles to Chihuahua City to market their merchandise. Such trade prospered through the 1840's. Maybe the Road to Santa Fe might also be called the Road to Chihuahua.

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## **Boyd's Rancho**

Samuel Parker established a trading rancho at this location in 1865. Changing hands several times, the rancho was owned by a Mr. Wagginer in 1867 when Indians burned the buildings and drove off the livestock. The next proprietor, A. H. Boyd, constructed a toll bridge at the nearby crossing and built a sod house from which he engaged in cattle trading and freighting in addition to the usual sales associated with trading ranches. In 1873, Boyd partnered with George B. Cox to operate a hotel in the infant town of Larned. In the same year, the partners moved to Dodge City to open the Dodge House. Subsequently, Boyd filed a homestead on the rancho property and brought family members from Illinois to farm the acreage.

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## **Parker's Rancho**

At this location in 1864, Samuel Parker established a trading rancho. In the following year, he opened another rancho near the dry route crossing of the Santa Fe Trail on the Pawnee River three miles upstream from this point. Parker continued to operate this rancho for several years before moving to Fort Supply, Indian Territory, where he served as the post's hay contractor.

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## **"The Pawnee River"**

This is the first in a series of articles prepared by your editor concerning use of an often mentioned stream associated with the Sante Fe Trail, The Pawnee River in Kansas.

From its headwaters in northwest Gray County, Kansas, the Pawnee River flows some fifteen miles northeast to bisect the southeast corner of Finney County and continues eastward through Hodgeman County before making an abrupt northern turn to clip the southern corner of Ness County. From that point, the stream turned to the southeast returning to Hodgeman County and thence eastward through Pawnee County where it empties into the Arkansas River near Larned. Along its ninety-odd mile course are located several sites of historic note: The Cheyenne/Sioux village in Ness County destroyed by order of Major General Hancock in 1867; the Pawnee Fork crossing on the Fort Hays/Fort Dodge Road where the trading ranche established in 1869 was later operated by George Duncan; Fort Larned in Pawnee County, established as Camp on Pawnee Fork in 1859; and The Dry Route crossing of the Sante Fe Trail three miles east of the fort where Samuel Parker established trading ranch later owner by A. H. Boyd. Other Pawnee County sites include the location of Parker's original ranch six miles east of The Dry Route Crossing and the crossing of The Wet Route on the Santa Fe Trail about one half mile further east.

Beyond the significance of the sites mentioned in the above, the stream provided a pathway for historic expeditions. In 1845, Captain John C. Fremont left the Santa Fe Trail at the mouth of the Pawnee and followed its course westward to its headwaters before turning northwest to the Smoky Hill River. In 1852, Lt. Israel Woodruff conducted a reconnaissance of the area between the Kansas and Arkansas Rivers to locate sites for military posts and new route for the Santa Fe Trail. In so doing, he followed the Pawnee southwest toward the Arkansas. In 1855, Lieutenant Francis T. Bryan led an expedition from Fort Riley to survey a new road to the Arkansas. At the Smoky Hill crossing near present Kanapolis, Kansas, the expedition turned southwest to Walnut Creek and on to the Pawnee, tracing the latter to its headwaters before turning south to strike the Arkansas at recently abandoned Fort Atkinson.

In connection with the Woodruff expedition, the Pawnee River (most often known by the time as Pawnee Fork) took on a new designation. In exploring the area, Woodruff identified three streams which he called the north fork, the middle fork, and the south fork. The north fork, he called Heth's Branch honor of Second Lieutenant Henry Heth, then stationed at Fort Atkinson.

This stream is now called the Pawnee River. The middle fork which emptied into the north fork was named Buckner's Creek in honor of Captain Simon B. Buckner, also assigned to Fort Atkinson. The south fork which empties into Buckner Creek was labeled Schaaf in honor of Brevet Second Lieutenant John T. Schaaf. another Fort Atkinson officer.

## The Pawnee River

By  
David Clapsaddle

This is the second of a series of articles related to the Pawnee River.

At its headwaters in Gray County, the Pawnee River (Pawnee Fork) is a little trickle, but at its confluence with the Arkansas River near Larned, the stream takes on much larger proportions. During the historic period, the Pawnee emptied into the Arkansas near the railroad trestle bridge at the south edge of Larned adjacent to the bridge which now spans U.S. 56. There was the crossing of the Santa Fe Trail which was recognized as a ford fraught with danger and difficulty. Normally the Pawnee was not deep; but during the spring, the stream was swollen to great depths and widths.

So flooded was the Pawnee in 1844 that a Bent-St. Vrain caravan was held up at the crossing from April 23 to May 21. Similar difficulty was experienced by the command of Col. Stephen Watts Kearny who arrived at the Pawnee on July 4, 1846 during the onset of the Mexican War. The stream being impassable, Kearny waited until July 16 when he, "Caused trees to be felled across the deep, rapid current. On the trunks of these trees, the men passed over. In this manner, the principal loading of the wagons was transported." On the same day, Lt. William H. Emory's squad of topographical engineers made the crossing on a raft; and on September 9, the Mormon Battalion camped on the west bank of

the river after a harrowing crossing. Sgt. Daniel Tyler described the incident well.

On the evening of the 9th, we encamped on a stream known as Pawnee Fork, the crossing of which was very difficult, and occupied much time. Each wagon had to be let down the bank with ropes, while on the opposite bank from ten to twenty men with ropes aided the teams in pulling the wagons up. The water was muddy, very much like that of the Missouri River.

The Mormon experience was a repeat of a crossing in 1844 described by James Josiah Webb.

The second day after, we arrived at Pawnee Fork, and, as the crossing was very difficult, we concluded to turn out, repair the road, and prepare for crossing the next morning. The east bank must be from twenty to thirty feet above the water and very steep so much so, that we were compelled to lock both hind wheels, hitch a yoke of good wheelers to the hind axle, and all the men that can be used to advantage to assist in holding back and prevent the wagon from turning over. Even with all these precautions, accidents frequently happen, and the descent is so rapid the teams get doubled up and oxen run over.

The next morning we began crossing; and when the wagons were about half across, one of Wethered's wagons turned over into the stream. The west bank was steep but not so high as the east one. Yet we had to double teams to get out and make a short and very difficult turn up the stream; so the wagon fell into deep water and bottom up. All hands took to the water and in two or three hours succeeded in getting dry goods and wagon to camp on the opposite bank. The next two days were spent in opening the goods, and spreading them on the ground to dry, repacking, and loading up. Two of the best hunters were sent out to kill meat and brought in a large amount, a part of which was jerked and hung around the wagons to dry.

The record is replete with references such as those cited in the above which attest to the Pawnee as presenting one of the more difficult crossings in the entire length of the Santa Fe Trail.

This is the third of a series of articles related to the Pawnee River.

In the first installment, the Pawnee River was traced from its headwaters in Grey County to its confluence with the Arkansas River near Larned, Kansas. The second article described the Santa

Fe Trail crossing at that confluence as one of the most difficult on the entire length of the trail. This third and final article will speak to the various names used to designate the stream in the early part of the 19th century.

In July 1820, Captain John Bells party, separating from Major Stephen Long's exploratory expedition, followed the Arkansas River eastward to the Pawnee River which he called Vulture Creek.

In 1821, while William Becknell was making his inaugural trip to Santa Fe New Mexico on the south bank of the Arkansas River, the trapping party led by Hugh Glenn and Jacob Fowler were pursuing the north bank of the Arkansas. On October 20 of that year, the party arrived at the Pawnee. Fowler, without question, one of the 19th century's worst spellers, recorded in his diary that the party crossed the "poney River." In 1839, the celebrated Matt Field, recorded the Spanish designation of the Pawnee, "Rio de Panamas." Five years later, Rufus Sage reported that the Indians called the stream Otter Creek because of the abundance of otters found along its course.

In a generic fashion, many 19th century writers, referred to the stream as a creek. Such persists to this day with local Larnedites referring to the Pawnee as the creek to distinguish it from the Arkansas which they call the river.

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