



## Santa Fe Trail Association

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Independence MO 64050

SFTA Website: [www.santafetrail.org](http://www.santafetrail.org)

## December 2009 MRO Newsletter



### Holiday Dinner & Meeting

2:00 p.m.,

Sunday, December 13

At Roger & Sandy Slusher's Home  
1421 South Street, Lexington, MO

Bring a salad, side dish or dessert plus any family members and prospective MRO members.

To find the Slusher's house, take I-70 to the Route O Lexington exit, go north on O, then 13, then Business 13 past first light to first stop sign, and go right to 1421 South

OR

Take US 24 east to Lexington then north on Business 13 to first stop sign, then right to 1421 South.

## DEDICATIONS IN THE RAIN by Roger Slusher

For my column this time, I'd like to tell you about our October 25<sup>th</sup> dedication of three stone markers at Tabo Creek, Grand Pass, and Arrow Rock. As some of you know, it turned out to be a very rainy day so we quickly had to go to my plan B, which involved moving all programs inside. About 15 members and guests braved the weather and attended all three events.

At Tabo Creek the Rasa family, which rents my family farm, has a retail produce building just up the hill so we met under their porch. After a few announcements, I gave a talk about the history and importance of the Tabo crossing. In a later issue, I'll do an article based on that talk.

The group then moved onto the little town of Grand Pass where we met in the Methodist Church just behind our new marker. We were warmly greeted by the minister and two members of the congregation. I gave an introduction to the site where swales remain in the cemetery behind the church. Again, in a later article, I'll give you more details.

After my talk, MRO member John Belshe of Warrensburg, who grew up in the area, described the early history of Grand Pass, with emphasis on some of the prominent families. In pouring rain, we then moved onto Arrow Rock.

We had intended to meet at the site of Todd's Landing below the town where Rich Lawson, a Missouri SFTA board member from Warrensburg, has developed a private park that includes our third new marker. However, the rain made the steep drive impossible so Rich generously invited us to meet at his log house, which is practically an historical museum with emphasis on the Santa Fe Trail.

Warmed by a fire, hot cider, and delicious cookies, our group was treated to Rich's comments about Todd's Landing, which was the original crossing at the Arrow Rock. William Becknell crossed there, and it continued to be a major crossing of the Missouri River for many years. Rich has found much evidence of the flint that gave the site its name and of the crossing location nearby. It could not have been a more perfect ending to our day, even though we had to drive home in the rain.

**I want to wish everyone a wonderful holiday season, and I hope you can join Sandy and me for the MRO Christmas dinner, meeting, and music on December 13.**

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL APPEAL

It's that time of year! The Holiday Season is upon us bringing much joy and celebration. The Season also brings extra stress on the pocket book. Now come organizations expecting membership dues to be paid for next year. And so it is with the Missouri River Outfitters Chapter as well as the national Santa Fe Trail Association.

Delaying payment of even \$10 per year family membership dues is tempting. Unfortunately, some who have every intention of keeping up with their membership dues occasionally forget to write that check to the MRO Chapter.

Membership dues are the only source of income for routine chapter expenses such as printing costs and postage for the quarterly MRO Newsletter. Here are some statistics for 2009:

Newsletter Expenses for 2009:	
Postage =	\$172.00
Printing =	\$222.55
Total Expenses =	\$394.55
Income from Dues =	\$355.00
DEFICIT =	(\$41.55)

Newsletters are sent to SFTA officers, board members and chapter presidents. It is not expected that those folks pay membership dues to every chapter that sends a newsletter. The mailing list also includes several who paid dues in recent years but not for 2009. The Treasurer intends to improve on the system of informing members when they are behind in their dues!

Membership forms can be found as inserts in this Newsletter. If you choose to write one check for both the Chapter and Association dues, MRO will forward your SFTA membership to national headquarters in Larned. It is also possible to renew your SFTA membership via the association website: [www.santafetrail.org](http://www.santafetrail.org).

**Please renew your membership in SFTA and MRO as soon as possible.**

## BUS TOUR OF SANTA FE TRAIL IN CENTRAL AND WESTERN MISSOURI

By Mary Conrad

On May 16, 2009, MRO trail travelers followed various routes and/or spurs of the Santa Fe Trail from Marshall, Missouri to Independence, Missouri. The tour guides on this bus tour informed the modern travelers of the trail information known to date and of the continuing research. As noted in another article in this newsletter, historians still need to uncover more data before an adequate understanding of the Santa Fe Trail of Missouri is developed.

Before leaving Independence, the May 2009 bus tour stopped in front of the Samuel Owens-William McCoy House. Both Owens and McCoy were early movers and shakers of Independence. Then the bus headed east on I-70 for about an hour so the modern trekkers would be able to begin to follow the Santa Fe Trail westward at about Marshall, Missouri. While the bus headed eastward on the interstate, Ross Marshall provided commentary about the acquisition and exploration of the Louisiana Purchase, the settlement of Missouri, and the development of the Santa Fe Trail.

After the Louisiana Purchase, European American settlers immediately began moving into Missouri. However, when Meriwether Lewis took charge of the territory, he ordered them out. Only when William Clark negotiated a treaty with the Osage Indians in 1808 did settlement become legal. With the outbreak of the War of 1812, Indians allied with the British conducted raids on pioneers in central and western Missouri. Many European American settlers then retreated to the east. The flow westward did not become heavy again until about 1817.

On the bus trip eastward, both Marshall and Roger Slusher talked about the effects of the War of 1812 and of the development of the Santa Fe Trail. When the bus reached Lafayette County, Slusher (a Lexington resident) began to give more of the explanations.

Before 1821, European American traders cautiously traveled into the American Southwest which was part of Mexico and

controlled by Spain. Oftentimes they stayed to the north of Santa Fe in the mountains. Since Spain did not want European American traders in Mexico, sometimes soldiers successfully captured these traders and placed them in Mexican jails.

In 1821 William Becknell of Franklin, Missouri, facing bankruptcy, formed a trading party which left Missouri on packhorses. Becknell's timing contained an element of luck. Sometime after the pack train had crossed into what had been Spanish territory, Mexican soldiers welcomed the trading party since the Mexicans just had won their independence from Spain.

Due to this serendipitous timing, Becknell is considered the father of the Santa Fe Trail. Actually another European American trading party arrived in Santa Fe just two weeks after Becknell's group, but McKnight and James had taken a longer route (down the Mississippi, up the Arkansas to central Kansas, and then by packhorses to Santa Fe).

When the bus reached the Highway 65 exit, the bus proceeded northward to the Weinreich ruts north of Marshall. The original Santa Fe Trail route is north of the present town of Marshall which was not platted until after Santa Fe trade was underway. At some point, a branch of the trail into the new town of Marshall developed.

The modern trekkers stopped to see the pronounced Weinreich ruts in a pasture near a trail rock crossing of a creek. Many did not venture much into the pasture on that May day due to the mud created by heavy rains.

The bus then headed for Malta Bend where a DAR Santa Fe Trail marker is located. The Missouri River is quite a distance from this town. The bus continued westward to Grand Pass where the modern travelers disembarked to see trail swales in the cemetery near Grand Pass Methodist Church along Highway 65. The main Santa Fe Trail actually could have been on the nearby high ridge, but the extant swales likely are remains of a spur that travelers used to go to the large freshwater spring and into the community of Grand Pass, so named because wagons could pass between the Salt Fork and Missouri rivers in this area.

The tour began to follow Highway 24 westward from Grand Pass. The trail route likely went

through the business area of Waverly and then turned south about a mile. Shortly after passing the Baltimore Bend Vineyard at 27150 Highway 24, the bus came to a tall communications tower. That tower is roughly the location of where the route of the Santa Fe Trail rejoins Highway 24. Then the trail route more or less runs along Highway 24.

At Dover the route of the present Highway 24 would have been called Dover Road in the nineteenth century. The Dover DAR marker is located where a school once stood. In that town, the trail route would have gone southward on the present Wall Street before angling westward to the south of a winery, formerly a Catholic church. The trail then crossed through the front yard of a brick plantation house that now is in a state of disrepair. In the nineteenth century, many of Roger Slusher's relatives lived in this area west of Dover.

The Thomas Shelby family owned land just to the west of Slusher lands. Thomas was a cousin of Gen. Joe Shelby of Waverly. The Santa Fe Trail went in front of the Hicklin plantation house before the trail left the route of Highway 24, went northward through a draw, and made a dog leg back into Lexington. Martin Lane, a northeast-to-southwest diagonal road on the east side of Lexington, is where the Santa Fe Trail would have entered Lexington on Dover Road.

Upon entering Lexington, the bus stopped in the downtown for all the MROers and guests to eat on their own before returning to the eastern edge of Lexington to resume following the route of the trail. From Dover Road, the trail would have headed to South Street which was the original main street of Lexington. From South and 13th, the trail cut across what is now downtown Lexington to head toward the Missouri River. Slusher pointed out many Lexington sights before the bus went by the Missouri DAR Madonna of the Trail as the bus moved toward the lower landing where a Lewis and Clark marker can be seen.

The bus driver then backtracked to begin following the lower river route of the Santa Fe Trail along Highway 224. Nineteenth century travelers would have taken this lower route nearer the river only when the river was not swollen from heavy rains. When passing the building of the Pecker Wood Club, a former

twentieth century drinking establishment on Highway 224, the modern travelers saw the marker for the Santa Fe Trail Simpson spring. Continuing westward, the bus crossed the Little Sni-a-Bar and the Big Sni-a-Bar. The small stream likely was not an obstacle to trail travelers, but the large one certainly would have been. Shortly after crossing the big Sni, the modern travelers entered Wellington where a DAR marker is located in a city park.

The modern travelers left that town on Highway 131 to head toward the route that had followed on high land. Trail researchers are not exactly sure where nineteenth century travelers crossed from the lower to the upper route to rejoin the main route of the trail. The bus crossed Highway 24 and turned onto the graveled Santa Fe Trail Road. The modern trekkers disembarked south of Napoleon at the property of MROer Lowell Burns where swales are both in the front and in the back yards of the Burns property.

The main trail route is to the north of the Burns property on a ridge, so trail swales on that property and on the adjoining land likely resulted from travelers leaving the trail to procure water or were a feeder road.

Most trail researchers think the trail route continued westward on that ridge to the north. However, the nineteenth century travelers intending to stop at Ft. Osage may have taken a road that curves northward. The May 2009 travelers followed that old road to Buckner where the bus went north to Ft. Osage. The Buckner and Ft. Osage DAR trail markers are the only two that are larger than the other 27 DAR Santa Fe Trail markers in the State of Missouri.

After stopping to view exhibits at the relatively new Ft. Osage Education Center, the bus followed Blue Mills Road. Some trail researchers think the route of the trail was about a mile north of this road while others place it farther south.

The bus passed Six-Mile Church, so named because the surrounding community was outside the six mile restricted zone around Ft. Osage. When the tour crossed the Little Blue River, Marshall told about the nineteenth century Blue Mill. Sometime between 1828 and 1832 the Aull Brothers from Lexington

constructed a mill on this river. The mill would have been a half-mile to the north of Highway 24. The location of what remains of the foundation can be found at 3101 Lentz Road, where Lentz dead ends. A millstone from that old mill now can be seen in front of the National Frontier Trails Museum in Independence.

Continuing westward on Highway 24, the bus stopped west of the New Salem Church where a DAR marker sits on county property. The Santa Fe Trail Association and the National Park Service hope to place an interpretive kiosk at this location.

The bus then moved toward Independence to end the travel for the day. Many MROers on the tour hope to learn more about the Missouri segment of the Santa Fe Trail. Many are anxious to know more about what researchers can uncover about trail activity in central and western Missouri in the 1830s and later.

## THE STATE OF MISSOURI SANTA FE TRAIL RESEARCH

By Mary Conrad

For years, the accepted historical scenario involving the development of the Santa Fe Trail has been as follows. The Santa Fe Trail originated in Franklin, the western edge of Missouri settlement in central Missouri in 1821. As settlement moved westward, the eastern trailhead of the trail moved westward too--to Boonville, to Arrow Rock, and to Independence by the late 1820s. The eastern route of the Santa Fe Trail became just a local road when Independence became the trailhead.

Various Missouri researchers are questioning the above standard explanation. MROers Roger Slusher and Rich Lawson are among these questioners. Slusher has found the 1860 census of Lexington lists many occupations that could be consistent with the presence of active Santa Fe trade emanating from Lexington in 1860.

The accepted scenario also includes the following tenet. When Independence became the trailhead, trading to and from central Missouri no longer would have been efficient or cost effective. Thus trade goods coming from or going to central Missouri would have been transferred to steamboats at Independence.

Could this long-time historical thinking be wrong? How do the "inconsistent" facts found by Lawson, Slusher, and others fit? A few thoughts to ponder are delineated. If a wagon trader from Lexington or Arrow Rock owned his trading business, including the wagons, but did not have ownership in a steamboating company, transfer of goods at Independence or Westport may not have been cost effective if the items were intended for stores in central Missouri. Further, the transfer of goods to a steamboat may have caused the loss of valuable time. That might have been especially true for traders when the trailhead was not right on the Missouri River. Lastly, historians, scientists, and anthropologists who study the history of the adoption of technology find that the adoption of a new technology rarely occurs simultaneously.

MROers will continue to follow the unfolding of the historical scenario of the Santa Fe Trail in Missouri as researchers uncover pertinent facts that indicate continued Santa Fe Trail activity after the late 1820s.

## MEMBER JANE MALLINSON SHARES NEWS CLIPPING

Longtime MROer Jane Mallinson promoted recognition of the Upper Independence Landing, also known as Wayne City Landing, for years before LaFarge North American Inc. and the National Park Service partnered with numerous entities to develop an interpretive park at the Wayne City Landing overlook. That park was dedicated in October of 2008.

Obviously Mallinson continues to be interested in that historical area. She wishes to share a newspaper clipping from the Liberty Weekly Tribune of July 30, 1852.

### **Fatal Affray At Wayne City.**

While the candidates were speaking at Wayne City on Thursday last, a difficulty occurred between G. W. Reynolds and John Blythe, (both somewhat in liquor). Reynolds stabbed Blythe three different times, twice in the shoulder and once in the abdomen, cutting and letting out his entrals. He died on last night about 11 o'clock. Reynolds is in custody.



## **Holiday Dinner & Meeting**

**Sunday, 2:00 pm, December 13, 2009**  
**Roger & Sandy Slusher's 1840s Home**  
**1421 South Street**  
**Lexington, MO**

**MRO Newsletter**  
**4706 Brookwood Terrace**  
**St. Joseph, MO 64506**