



Santa Fe Trail Association

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National Frontier Trails Museum
118 W. Pacific
Independence MO 64050

SFTA Website: www.santafetrail.org

February 2010 MRO Newsletter

Historic Maps of the Santa Fe Trail

By John Schumacher of the USGS

2:00 pm, Sunday, March 14, 2010

National Frontier Trails Museum
118 W. Pacific, Independence, MO

On Sunday afternoon of March 14th at 2:00 at the National Frontier Trails Museum in Independence, John Schumacher of the U. S. Geological Survey office in Rolla, Missouri, will share his expertise on mapping and in particular he will show how to overlay various maps together. Trail historians have a variety of maps and often would like to see how various roads and sites fit together. Schumacher will show digitally how the Sibley survey of the Santa Fe Trail, the first Jackson County survey, and the Hickman survey of the Independence area in the 1870s can be overlaid onto a modern map. Many will be interested to see where various nineteenth century sites appear on a modern map. The overlaying also will show if the various early maps are in agreement.

A few months ago the Missouri River Outfitters of the Santa Fe Trail Association, with significant assistance from the National Frontier Trails Museum, organized the production of a DVD. This DVD and accompanying bibliography constitute a how-to guide on researching the Santa Fe Trail in the Independence area.

The March 14th program will give a taste of what is available on the DVD as Schumacher's explanation of overlaying maps is one of many expert research hints included in the video production. At the March program, attendees also will be able to look at some actual primary documents, including two township plat maps, the Hickman survey, and a road petition ledger book. The public is invited to this March 14 program. Copies of the DVD and bibliography are on sale in the gift shop of the Trails Museum.

TABO CROSSING on the SANTA FE TRAIL

By Roger Slusher

[Note: This is the talk given at the dedication of the new MRO sandstone marker at Tabo Creek east of Lexington on October 25, 2009.]

Tabo Creek is probably named after a French trapper named Tabeau. However, popular legend says it is a corruption of "terre beau" which means "beautiful land" in French, if you don't know that land is female in French, making it "terre belle" to be proper. Anyway, the mouth of the creek on the Missouri River is known to have been a trading location for the French and early American settlers with local Indian groups. It is not known when a small settlement was first established at the mouth and on the bluff above, but it is thought that the name Mount Vernon was a corruption of "mont vert" meaning "green hill" or "green mountain."

Mount Vernon was surely in existence in 1819 when Washington Irving, the author of such stories as "Rip Van Winkle," visited the area and declared that Tabo Grove was the "strawberry bed" of Missouri. After the Missouri Compromise of 1820, Mount Vernon was made the county seat of Lillard (now Lafayette) County. It then stretched from Saline County to the border with the Osage in what is now central Jackson County.

The first county court (now called county commission) was held on January 22, 1821 in the home of the Justice of the Peace. The home of tavern keeper Adam Lightner held the first meeting of the circuit court on February 21, 1821; a grand jury that day presented their first charge against a man for trespassing plus assault, and he was fined five dollars and costs. The population of the county at that time was already 1,340.

In April of 1821 the county court licensed the same Adam Lightner to operate a ferry across Tabo Creek, since it was wide and there was no rock crossing; they also appointed overseers to maintain the Osage Trace or trail from the eastern boundary of the county to Fort Osage. Lightner paid two dollars for the license; he was allowed to charge three cents for each person, horse or cow, two cents for each hog or sheep, twenty-five cents for each cart or carriage, and thirty-seven and one half cent for each wagon

and team. The ferry was basically a raft pulled by man or horsepower across the creek.

In July of 1821 Lexington area settlers had successfully petitioned the county court to open a road to their ferry from Mount Vernon. Then in September, William Becknell of Franklin and several men with pack mules opened the Road to Santa Fe by following the Osage Trace west from Todd's Landing at the Arrow Rock through the Grand Pass to Tabo Creek.

Becknell probably used the ferry at Tabo and then took the Trace to Fort Osage, skirting Lexington by a few miles to the south, before heading west. In 1822 and thereafter, he and most other traders probably went through Lexington, because in October of 1821 the county court declared a road south from Lexington to the Trace was the "nearest and best" route to Fort Osage. Lexington was actually platted in 1822 and became the new county seat in 1823. The log courthouse and jail were built by Col. Henry Renick, father of Strother Renick who was one of the first Santa Fe traders from the Lexington area.

Traders from this area exchanged such local goods as tinware, beeswax, hemp rope, tobacco, and whiskey as well as iron goods and cloth from the East, for Mexican silver, mules, donkeys, and leather. Mexican traders also came north to this area. The effects of that international trade showed up in such ways as the Lexington jail being called the "calaboose" until the late 1800's. Also, Strother Renick served as an interpreter when a Mexican trader named Joseph Ralph Savilla was tried and hanged for murder at the courthouse and jail in 1842.

The town of Mount Vernon slowly declined, and now the only known remains are some red foundation stones in front of the Lexington Historical Museum. They were collected by my father, Elliott Slusher, many years ago when the last house on the site was torn down. There is one surviving photograph which shows a log barn that was once considered to be the county courthouse in Mount Vernon.

As for Tabo Creek crossing, my ancestors bought the area around it when Christopher Slusher, Jr., brought his family from Virginia in 1828. He gave the land on this side to his son Thomas who built a house across the highway.

Tom operated the ferry there sometime before the Civil War, probably when an early covered bridge washed out just before the California Gold Rush and during the movement to Oregon.

Another covered bridge was built, but it was burned by federal troops during the Civil War; it was replaced by the county in 1867. That last covered bridge washed out in 1927. A temporary bridge was quickly built, but it was destroyed by an ice jam a month later. A suspension plank then spanned the creek until another temporary bridge was built. By 1932 a concrete bridge and the concrete National Old Trails Road, or Highway 24, was completed. A popular dancehall and filling station with convenience store called Tabo sat next to the bridge for many years. Since the concrete bridge kept flooding, the current, much higher bridge was built a few years ago.

In the meantime, the Daughters of the American Revolution decided to mark the route of the Santa Fe Trail; that effort really helped to preserve the memory of the important trade and travel route to the West. This pink granite marker was placed on this side of the creek near the first concrete bridge sometime after 1912. In 1928 Harry Truman, then a judge of the Jackson County Court and the national chairman of the Old Trails Road Association, dedicated Missouri's "Madonna of the Trail" monument in Lexington. One statue was placed by the DAR in each state with western trails to honor the role of women and children in western settlement. When the old bridge was replaced, this marker was placed near the "Madonna" in Lexington. However, due the efforts of the DAR and the cooperation of the Missouri Department of Transportation, it was replaced here near Tabo a few years ago.

Now the Missouri River Outfitters Chapter of the Santa Fe Trail Association has placed a new marker to draw more attention to this site and to explain the importance of this crossing on the Trail. We also appreciate the cooperation of MODot, and we appreciate your being here to help us dedicate this effort of our group to see that the "Santa Fe Trail Lives On."

April 16 -18, 2010: SFTA Board meeting, Elkhart, KS

MRO HOLIDAY GATHERING

By Mary Conrad

On Sunday afternoon of December 13, 2009, 23 MROers gathered at Sandy and Roger Slusher's restored 1840s home in Lexington, Missouri. As usual, no one was left wanting for food at this annual covered dish affair!

After the eating, the MROers held a general meeting. John Atkinson presented the treasurer's report. President Roger Slusher reviewed various 2009 Board actions. MRO hopes to receive a SFTA \$500 educational grant for the production of a driving brochure. MRO will continue to place stone posts. Placement of a stone marker at Neff Tavern has not yet occurred since the landowner wants help restoring the smokehouse at the site. The Board has ordered 20 copies of rules and regulations of running a wagon train, plus more T-shirts.

The South Howard County Historical Society plans to place a bronze relief of the early settlers Z. Gray, K. Carson, G. C. Bingham, and W. Becknell who all had connections to the era of the Santa Fe Trail. At this December meeting, MROers voted to donate \$150 to South Howard Historical Society for this project.

Slusher elaborated on a few other items of interest. MROers can help promote the Santa Fe Trail through a number of tourist programs, such as the Freedom Frontiers area of western Missouri and eastern Kansas and the scenic byway in Missouri running through nine counties from Boonville to Ft. Osage. The Santa Fe Trail Association (SFTA) will republish the Santa Fe Trail paper placemats, but first SFTA wants suggested revisions to the design and the text. Also SFTA has asked each chapter to look at its own website to recommend revisions to the SFTA webmaster.

This annual gathering always is a time for lots of socialization and some business. As the out-of-town MROers drove from Lexington, many holiday lights brightened the overcast atmosphere of the late wintry afternoon.

September 16 – 24, 2010: Trail Rendezvous, Larned, KS

MRO MEMBERSHIP REPORT

As of February 15, paid membership for 2010 in Missouri River Outfitters Chapter stood at 32. That number is 15 less than the final total membership for 2009. If you have not yet paid the modest \$10 membership dues, please renew as soon as possible.

Not sure if your MRO dues have been paid for 2010? You may contact Treasurer John Atkinson by phone at 816-233-3924 or by email at Atkinson@stjoelive.com.

IS YOUR SFTA MEMBERSHIP CURRENT?

[Note: The article below was originally published in *Wagon Tracks* and is reprinted here by permission from the February 2010 Newsletter of the Dodge City/Fort Dodge/Cimarron Chapter.]

Your membership helps support the mission of the SFTA to preserve and protect the Trail. Membership revenue helps provide funding for programs, exhibits, historical tours, and research related to the Santa Fe Trail.

The benefits of an Individual/Family membership are:

- The Santa Fe Trail Association membership card
- A subscription to the Santa Fe Trail Association quarterly journal, *Wagon Tracks*.
- Opportunities to attend the premier Association event, the SFTA Symposium.
- The opportunity to meet others with a common interest in the Santa Fe Trail.

In addition, Business/Institutional partners receive:

- The Santa Fe Trail Association logo to place in your window to identify you as a business/Institutional member.
- A listing of your business/institution in *Wagon Tracks*.
- Listing on the Santa Fe Trail Association website, www.santafetrail.org.
- A link to your business/institutional website from the SFTA website, if you so like.

- And most importantly, word of mouth recommendation by SFTA members!

As a member of the Santa Fe Trail Association, your contribution safeguards our heritage for generations to come. This will allow our children and our children's children to enjoy the history of the Santa Fe Trail. Each membership is an important voice as an advocate for Trail preservation and education. "The Santa Fe Trail Lives On!" can continue only with your ongoing membership support.

Membership forms for both MRO and SFTA may be found on the facing page.

MRO TO RECEIVE "EDUCATION GRANT"

The Missouri River Outfitters Chapter has been awarded a \$500 "education grant" made possible through the Santa Fe Trail Association's cooperative agreement with the National Park Service. The grants "are designed to help chapters 'educate' the public about their chapter and the public about the Santa Fe Trail." MRO's project, spearheaded by Roger Slusher and Ross Marshall, will be an auto-tour brochure for the eastern end of the Santa Fe Trail.

All SFTA chapters are eligible to apply for the education grants. Other chapters that have so far been awarded grants include Quivira Chapter, the End of the Trail Chapter, and the Cottonwood Crossing Chapter. Quivira Chapter will also create an auto-tour brochure and End of the Trail will develop a membership recruitment brochure. Cottonwood Crossing will produce two tri-fold brochures – one to contain a detailed map of the SFT in Marion County and another about the chapter and membership information.

HARRY MYERS BACK ON THE JOB

SFTA Association Manager Harry Myers was hospitalized on January 6 and subsequently had coronary bypass surgery. Harry says he is "recovering well" and "will be back out on the road shortly".

Membership Application



New Member Renewal

Ruth Olson Peters, Treasurer
Santa Fe Trail Center
1349 K-156 Hwy
Larned, KS 67550

The Santa Fe Trail Association

Membership Categories
(check one)

Enroll me as a member for the year 2010

- Benefactor \$1,000
- Patron \$100/year
- Business/Institution \$40/year
- Family \$30/year
- Individual \$25/year
- Youth - 18 or under \$15/year

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

E-mail Address _____

All memberships expire on December 31

Check here if you are willing to serve on a committee

Please make checks payable to: Santa Fe Trail Association

“The Santa Fe Trail Lives On!”

—Dr. Marc Simmons Keynote Address
Charter Symposium (Trinidad, CO, 1986)



MISSOURI RIVER OUTFITTERS CHAPTER OF THE SANTA FE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

Membership Application for the year 2010

Name: _____

Street: _____

City, State ZIP: _____

Phone(s): _____

E-mail: _____

Dues: \$10.00 per year
(Individual or family)
Make check payable to:
Missouri River Outfitters

Mail to: John Atkinson,
Treasurer MRO
4706 Brookwood Terrace
St. Joseph, MO 64506



Historic Maps of the Santa Fe Trail

2:00 pm, Sunday

March 14, 2010

National Frontier Trails Center

118 W. Pacific, Independence, MO

MRO Newsletter
4706 Brookwood Terrace
St. Joseph, MO 64506