

Trails correspondence

Section 2, Pages 31 - 47

Letters, accounts, correspondence, and reminiscences of trails. Some trails covered are the Chisholm, California, Palo Duro, Jones and Plummer, Oregon, and the Butterfield Overland.

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Today, the Turnpike Authority--taking due note of the heavy impact this trail exerted on the historical development of Kansas in its pioneer days--is paying tribute to the bright memory of Jesse Chisholm and his work, as well as to other epic events of a stirring period in the Winning of the West.

Jesse Chisholm, born of a Scotch father and a Cherokee mother in Tennessee in 1819, was far from being the ignorant half-breed as he has been often called. All the known records reveal him to have been an enterprising man--sober, honest and industrious. By the early 1930s, he was trading out of Fort Smith with tribes of the wilderness to the west--among them the Wichita Indians.

He built his first trading post in the Creek nation and married a Creek girl. As he could speak half a dozen Indian languages, his services were often in demand as a guide. He is reported to have interpreted for the Kiowas at the big Medicine Lodge peace conclave.

Chisholm's friendly relations with the Wichitas at a later post he established on the north fork of the Canadian led to him becoming an adopted member of that tribe. It could not have been with an eye to business--as sharp as his Scotch blood made him--for when the Wichitas went into exile, he went with them.



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The wichitas, who were no match for their powerful enemies, the Chickasaws and the Kiowas, retreated into Kansas in 1861 and settled along the Neosho River in what is now Woodson county. Three years later, they relocated themselves on rich bottom land near where the Arkansas and the ~~Little~~ Little Arkansas flow together--and called it Wichita.

This act, of course, gave the name to what is now the first city of Kansas, population wise. In the fall of 1867, the Wichita^A returned south into Indian territory to a new agency which the government established for them on the Washita River.

Jesse Chisholm came along with the Wichitas to the Arkansas river village and established a ranch between the two streams, three miles above their junction. In the spring of 1865--about the time when Robert E. Lee was surrendering to U. S. Grant at Appomatox Courthouse--he laid out a wagon road from his ranch to what two years later became the Wichita agency on the Washita--a distance of 220 miles.

He was no engineer but followed an excellent grade--and built a passable highway for the transport of his trade goods.



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The line which the road followed subsequently became and is still known as the Chisholm Trail. It began at the Arkansas River on the north and ended at the ^{Wichita} ~~Wichita~~ agency on the south. This was Jesse Chisholm's contribution to the legendary and mythical trail, which sprouted offshoots and extensions to such ^{an} ~~extent to such an~~ ~~extent~~ extent it was said to run all the way from San Antonio, Texas, to the pens of the wild and unruly cow town at Abilene.

The rout of this trail has aroused much controversy. As for Chisholm having opened a road all the way to the Red River, as some contend, he had no reason to do so. His wagon road was built simply for the purpose of hauling his trade goods to the Poncas and Osages, and accepting furs and buffalo robes in return. While he probably bartered for cattle, and owned considerable head from time to time, he was in no sense a cattleman.

It is likely that supporting trails which ran into this road were given the name of Chisholm--and its route did extend across Kansas from the state line to Wichita. But it did not continue north to Abilene or Ellsworth or Newton--which ~~were~~ were gaudy cow towns in those days--and whose unsavory records have become the theme of song and story.



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Principal points on Chisholm's route were Wichita, Clearwater, Caldwell, Pond (Round Pond) creek, Skeleton ranch, Buffalo Springs, mouth of Turkey Creek, Cheyenne (southern) agency and on to the Wichita agency on the Washita. When the Rock Island later built into Oklahoma, it followed the Chisholm Trail almost its entire length,

Jesse Chisholm died in agony at his north Canadian post in Indian Territory March 4, 1869, of cholera morbus, caused by eating bear's grease that had become poisoned by being melted in a brass kettle. Today we would describe his illness as ptomaine poisoning. This was the end of a good man--honest and honorable--who never remotely suspected that history had reserved a spot for him.

Meanwhile, the Kansas cow towns flourished with their evil excesses, as each became a rail head when the railroads spread their iron web into the west. First, there was Abilene; then Ellsworth; after that, Newton, whose glory was brief; and then Wichita. The outward record of all of them was much the same--and in the nine years between 1867 and 1876, thousands of Texas longhorns came up the trail to feed their furnaces. ~~It is true that many of the cattle drovers from the south used the Chisholm trail for their drives. But they also employed various other supporting routes~~



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It is true that many of the cowmen from the south used the Chisholm trail for their drives. But they also employed various other branching traces and short-cuts--which were mistakenly called Chisholm--and so the real extent of Jesse's road became magnified and confused in the public mind.

Finally, only Dodge City was left with open rail head--and began its romantic days of gun play and the uninhibited antics of the Texas cow hands. It was rivalled in its glory by only one town--Caldwell, the Border Queen, which lay astride the Chisholm Trail where the famous trace emerged from Indian territory and crossed the line into Kansas. For a dozen years, Caldwell had wallowed in the dust kicked up by a million passing longhorns bound for a far-away market.

Caldwell was not a cow town--if that term is used to designate a point to which Texas cattle could be marketed and shipped. It was a Trail Town--wild, lawless and apparently destined to garner only the crumbs that fell from the table of the rich Texas cattle trade. As late as 1879, the nearest rail head was at Wichita, 60 miles away.

By the spring of 1874, Caldwell was getting tough. Its proximity to the Kansas-Indian Territory line appealed to the outlaw who was on the



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dodge. Once across the line, he was comparatively safe. Cowboy bad men, forerunners of such organized gangs ^{as} ~~was~~ the Daltons and Doolins, were already looting banks and sticking up trains. Between forays, Caldwell offered them a haven.

The lawless element gathered in Caldwell differed in marked degree from the undesirables with which Abilene and its sister towns had to contend. Caldwell was overrun with horse thieves, rustlers and criminals of every shade. It seemed that every hillbilly in the Cherokee country had a patch of corn which he made up into "white mule," and ran it across the border into Caldwell's saloons. This tendency was responsible for the complaint that more bad whiskey was sold in Caldwell than in any other town in Kansas.

The raw little settlement became a fitting out point for buffalo hunters and the shipping of hides, as well as a convenient stopping place for freighting outfits doing business in the Territory. Its greatest days of prosperity came in the early 1880s, ~~wh~~ by which time the town had undergone a severe drought, an epidemic of chills and ague and the scourge of the grasshoppers.



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Caldwell reached the peak of its importance ~~as~~ as a Texas cattle stopping point in 1883. Even before that time, the law-abiding element had begun to be severe with known offenders--and the grim Judge Lynch ruled over a number of impressive occasions.

Wellington, the Sumner countyseat, 27 miles to the north, was little menaced by the human trash which infested Caldwell. Its growth ran along a comparatively even course, stimulated by town lot sales, and it emerged into a healthy, progressive community.

Both Caldwell and Wellington, however, served as jumping-off places for the runs for free land in Oklahoma--first in 1889, and four years later, for the "strip," in 1893. Their colorful early history, therefore, is indelibly marked by these ~~later~~ important episodes as the American Southwest took strides toward firm and sure development.

It seems, in retrospect, that the Chisholm wagon road, or trail--built by a man of simple purpose for straightforward commercial trade--became at length a stream of violence. This trail, as well as all the contributing byroads which bore its name, was touched by ~~the~~ unadulterated evil as the men who trod its courses allowed their baser passions to run free without due and lawful restraint.



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Yet all the ugly story of marauding along the cow trails and the wickedness of the cow towns was perhaps a necessary part of the birth pangs of the new civilization arising on the lovely Kansas plains. Long before the true-hearted among the early Kansas settlers were able to set up some semblance of law and order, however, the age-old differences between the farmer and the drover had driven deep their implacable wedge.

The cowmen--a sturdy and independent breed--wanted all outdoors in which to drive and graze their cattlex--oceans of native range grass then free for the taking. But the farmer, looking ahead into the glowing future, insisted upon an agrar^a_Ain use of the land, under fence, for proper cultivation of crops and richer rewards.

Long before the longhorns ceased coming up the dusty trails, the first sharp collisions had occurred between these two irreconcilable forces. Rows of barbed wire fences around select segments of soil had stopped the free roving of cattle. The tales of the turbulence and bloodshed that accompanied disputes of this nature are not a part of gaudy television epics today--but, in essence, they demanded far more heroism and stamina on the part of some of the men involved than did the picturesque deeds of the two-gun fighters.



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Then, in 1874, came the Mennonites from the steppes of Russia--tall, heavily-bearded men of Old Testament types, who first settled thickly in the area about Newton. Far more important than their coming was that they brought with them their hard, Turkey Red wheat whose prowess they had thoroughly tested in their home land.

From their graphic demonstration that this wheat could be grown successfully and abundantly on the smiling upland plains of Kansas, came about what has been perhaps the state's most signal achievement in the past 100 years--the gaining of its unassailable reputation as being the greatest wheat-growing area in the nation.

Sumner county, which experienced bloodshed and turmoil in its first years, today basks in a grove of wheat. Year after year, this county produces the golden grain in such quantity that it almost perennially ranks in first position in wheat-production among the state's prodigal producers.

So, after the vivid and adventurous years of its youth--only a century or less ago--this section of Kansas has flowered into riches--by virtue of the fertility of its soil, from discovered treasures in its underground, and from the strong institutions which it has established.

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Today, the Kansas Turnpike--a stalwart and rapidly-growing artery of modern traffic transportation--honors itself and the region through which it passes by dedicating a bronze symbol of enduring historical significance to the achievements of those lusty men who passed this way long ago.

As the Chisholm Trail, with its rough and rude overtones, contributed helpfully to the creation of a high order of civilized existence, so--we must feel sure, I believe--will the Kansas Turnpike, in these piping times of peace, exercise and convey powerful benefit to the gleaming future of a mighty land whose innate strength and resources have been but barely touched.

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CHISHOLM TRAIL.

In 1836 Jesse Chisholm came up the Arkansas river to the present site of Wichita, Kansas, to locate alleged gold buried at the junction of the Big and Little Arkansas Rivers by a party of Frenchmen. In 1861 Black Beaver piloted 750 U. S. Troops under command of Col. Emory from Fort Washita across northern Indian Territory and southern Kansas to the Santa Fe Trail north of Newton and headed them north east to Fort Leavenworth to fight for the Union cause instead of surrendering to the Confederates. While he was gone his home was burned together with the original copy of the treaty written in William Penn's own hand-writing with the Delaware Indians of which tribe he was a member.

Black Beaver was never reimbursed for his loss although Colonel Emory promised him he should be if same was destroyed during his absence. Jesse Chisholm was a half breed son of a Scotchman, who had married a Cherokee Indian. He could talk 14 Indian languages besides English and Spanish and came north to the present site of Wichita with loyal Indians driven out of the Indian Territory at the beginning of the Civil war.

Black Beaver and Chisholm were close friends and no doubt the fleeing Indians followed closely the route followed by the retreating troops under Col. Emory.

When the war was ended James R. Mead and Jesse Chisholm formed a co-partnership to trade with the Indians and took goods from Wichita south over the Black Beaver route and returned with other goods taken in pay therefor. This lasted two years before it was used as a cattle trail that gave it its name. The Wichita Indians were removed from Wichita territory to Washita Indian Territory over this trail by U S troops.

Chisholm creek in Wichita was so named because he took a claim on it. Chisholm died in 1868 on the North Canadian from eating poisoned bear's meat. Senator R. L. Owens of Oklahoma and Gen. Sam Houston were related to him. He was rated as one of the noblest of men as was Black Beaver.

From 1867 to 1877 the Chisholm Trail, sometimes called the Abeline Trail was used as a cattle trail and extended from Abeline, Kansas to Corpus Christi, Texas, and was the greatest cattle trail in the world. It was located through Newton, Wichita, Caldwell, Enid, Hennessey, Tuttle, Yagon, Terral and into Texas. The locating engineers found the Chisholm Trail the straightest and most practical route across Oklahoma and in 1911 it was logged and accepted as part of the Meridian road from Newton to Chick Chickasha and later accepted as the permanent location of the Meridian road from Chickasha to Bowie, Texas. From near Jefferson, Oklahoma to Bowie, Texas, 230 miles it hardly varies three miles from straight line and uses the pass between the Arbuckle and Wichita mountains over the tracks made by the chover of cattle

[Notes sent by John C. Nicholson,
Newton, Kan., June 16, 1947]

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*J. A. Root.
Jan. 6, 1937*

The St. Joseph emigrant road ran west from Elwood, through Troy, and joined the Fort Leavenworth military road at Kennekyk, where the Kickapoo Agency was located. From this point westward the road was known as the old Military or California road. The St. Joseph road was also used by the Pony Express while it lasted. From Elwood westward the Pony Express reached Troy, Cold Springs, Syracuse, and joining the Military road at Kennekuk. From this point on the highway ran by way of Kickapoo, Granada, Log Chain, Seneca, Laramie Creek, Ash Point, Guittard's, Marysville, Hollenberg, and thence up the Little Blue valley to the Platte river.

The old Oregon Trail started from Independence, Mo., and followed the Santa Fe Trail southwest to a point near present Gardner, in Johnson county, Kansas. From there it turned northward, thence west, traversed Douglas county and entered Shawnee, crossing the Kansas river at Papan's ferry on site of present Topeka from 1842 to some time in 1844, when the great flood swept the ferry away. During later years the river was crossed at a point a little north and west of the Baptist Pottawatomie mission, a few miles west of Topeka, this being known far and wide as "The Great Crossing." Three ferries were in operation at one time in this immediate vicinity. A blacksmith shop, in connection with the mission, afforded travelers a chance to get their horses and cattle shod, and their wagons repaired before starting out on the long journey overland.

A third crossing was just beyond old Uniontown, where the only rock bottom ford on the river was known. This was about one and a quarter miles upstream from Uniontown, near the mouth

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of Cross Creek and south of present Rossville, formerly known as Cross Creek post office. From there the road ran up the Kaw valley, past St. Mary's, across the Vermillion river a few miles east of present Louisville, Pottawatomie county, thence to the northwest, across the corner of Westmoreland, and on to the Big Blue river, the old road crossing that stream at a point about five miles below present Marysville, known as the Independence Crossing. The newer road ran up the river and crossed at Marysville, then followed up the valley of the Little Blue past Hollenberg, Washington county, the last station in Kansas, and on to the northwest to the Platte river at Fort Kearney.

The grasshopper plague you mention occurred in 1874. The following year the crop of young hoppers hatched out and flew away. There had been grasshopper visitations in Kansas during pre-territorial days, and many times after. But the 1874 and 1936 crops of hoppers were the worst.

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(Butterfield's Overland Dispatch)

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Ellis, Kansas
Dec. 10, 1939

Mr. Geo. Root
Topeka, Kansas

Dear Mr. Root: I just received a short time ago the map of the Butterfield Trail for the book, "The Overland Trail" and I thank you very much and am sorry you had so much trouble in finding it. It was evidently sent to Hays but finally reached me. Which reminds me that I was to send you the locations of some of the stations on the Trail, and here they are-

Shows on map	Fort Fletcher (Ellis)	S.E. $\frac{1}{4}$	2-15-20 W
Shows	Big Creek (Sta) Ellis	N.E. $\frac{1}{4}$	5-15-17 W
	Lookout x	S.E. $\frac{1}{4}$	36-14-19 W
	Louisa Springs x	N.E. $\frac{1}{4}$	2-15-20 W
	Stormy Hollow x	S.E. $\frac{1}{4}$	25-14-21 W
Shows (REGO)	Bluffton	S.E. $\frac{1}{4}$	22-14-22 W
(Mgo) Shows	White Rock x	S.E. $\frac{1}{4}$	19-14-22 W
Shows	Ft. Downer	N.W. $\frac{1}{4}$	15-14-24 W
	Ruthton (Mgo)	N.E. $\frac{1}{4}$	2-14-25 W
Shows	Castle Rock (Sta) Gove	N.E. $\frac{1}{4}$	31-13-25 W

I notice on the map a trail running from Junction City to Denver, north of the BOD which I presume is the one that crosses the Sappa north of Gem, and if so can you tell me anything about it? I am hunting dope on a massacre of a party there and some knowledge of when and by whom this trail was used might help to get its setting.

With all good wishes to you and the force for a merry Christmas and again thanking you for the map,

Yours, Howard C. Raynerford

P.S. You may be interested to know that while in K.C. I secured Vols. Six, Seven, Eight and Nine of the Collections at different places for a total of \$7.50 and they are all in fine shape.

X

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Oct. 6 2003

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KANSAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Patricia A. Michaelis Director
6525 S/W 6TH Ave,
Topeka, Ks. 66615-1099

Some time ago I received a topographical map from the Franklin County Historical Society showing the California Road running through Lane, Kansas. It was incorrect where it was drawn and I will give every one the information I was given by Mr. J. Baker who came to Lane first in 1854 with his father, before John Brown ever came to Kansas.

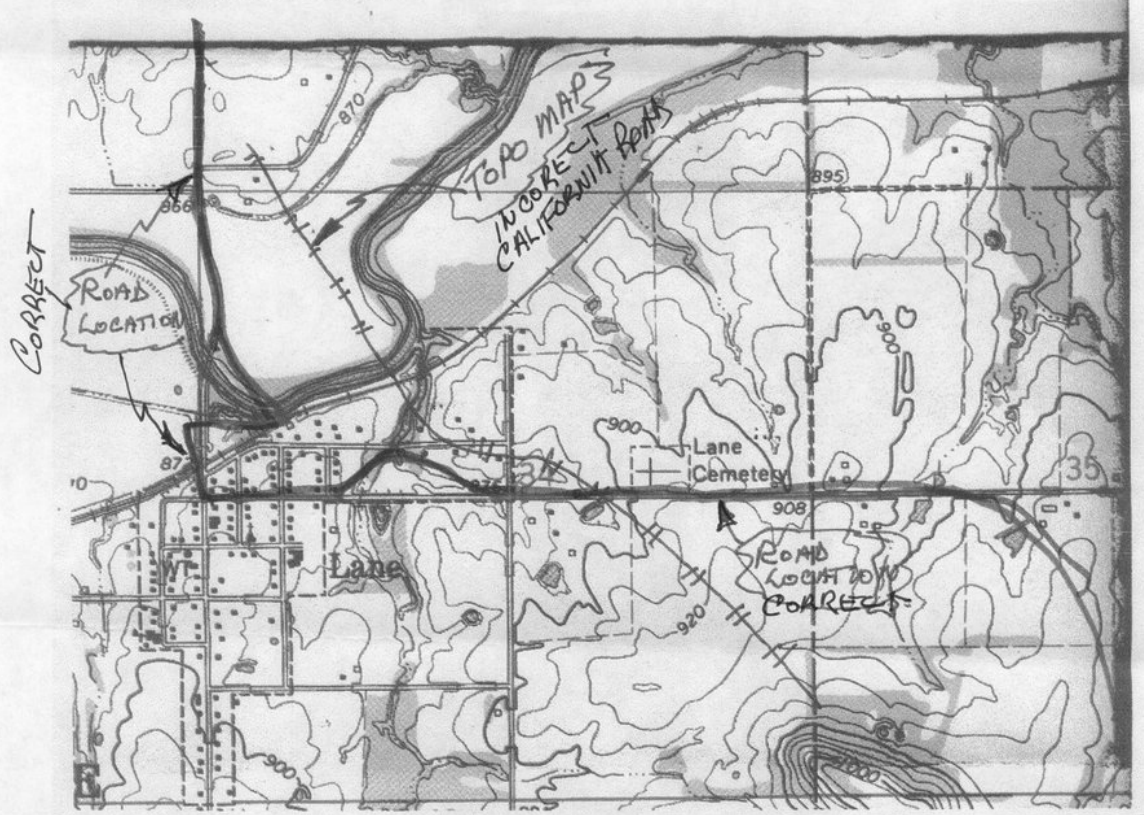
The Dutch Henry Crossing was the only place you could get across the Pottawatomie Creek, I know, I have driven teams of horses and wagons across it, I drove model-T-fords which was difficult and we always took our Model A Fords down to Dutch Henrys Crossing to wash them it was all rock bottom. Going out the north side it was through the mud, going out the south side it was up a steep hill. Maps enclosed with the correct road location.

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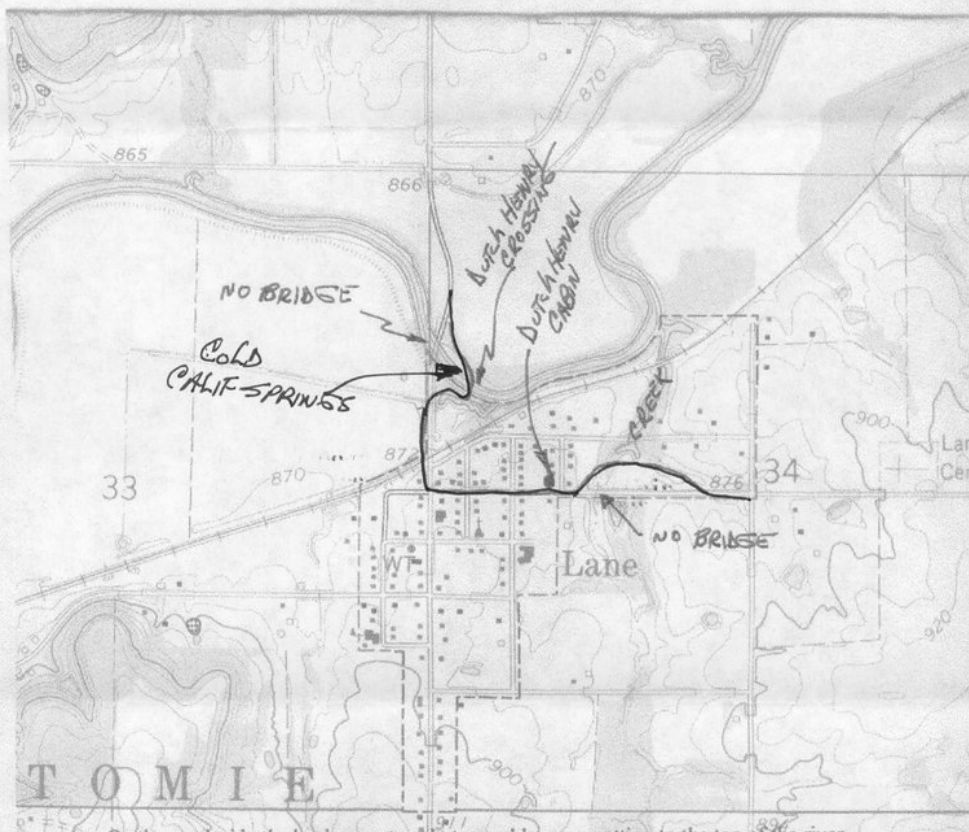
The Topo map showing the California road through the Lane area is wrong. Dutch Henry Crossing was at near the present day dam and the only place wagons could get across the creek because of the rock bottom and the water was about six inches deep, the gentle slope from the north. The south side of the creek had about a twenty foot bank and when you got on top of that bank you had to detour west to avoid another deep creek then south into Lane. Where the map show the crossing it was mud three feet deep on the north side and the creek at that point the creek was about five feet deep and the river banks on the south were about fifty feet high and when you would get on top of that bank the map shows you dropping off in to the branch about fifty feet deep. Now this was a wagon trail and they could not possible travel this route, you could not even ride a horse this route, let alone take a wagon where the maps shows, it had to be at Dutch Henry Crossing which is well established.



Then the Topo map show the California Road leaving Lane going in a S/W direction, up a one hundred foot steep hill that was difficult for me to ride a horse up and for a wagon impossible, they went east a quarter of a mile and there was a gentle incline, this is where my research tells me the California road was. Mr. J. Baker travel this road and this is where he told us it went.. The Topo Map is Ok, but who ever drew the California road

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The information shown on this map of Lane Ks. Was given to Eileen Baker and my self in about 1938, by Joshua Caleb Baker b/1869 Lane Ks. Died 1947 Osawatomie Ks, married Emma Deathridge of Greeley, father came from Indiana in 1854. Grandfather to Eileen my cousin stated this was the only road in 1854. Coming from the north the road angled S/E to the Pottawatomie creek, the rock bottom of the creek allowed wagons to get across.



On the south side the bank was steep but passable upon getting to the top of the river bank you had to turn west to avoid another small creek then south again into the Lane area. Then east about ¼ mile and then you came to the branch which must be crossed, you angled N/E down a gentle slope across the branch and then back east again...

Buo