

## TRAILS HEAD HISTORY PART #9 – SEPT 2019 THRU JUNE 2020

### SEPT 2019

#### **OCTA CONVENTION IN SANTA FE**

Hosted by the Southern Trails Chapter, the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual OCTA Convention was the first OCTA convention in the Southwest and it was a great success!

Headquartered at the wonderful Hotel Santa Fe in Santa Fe, NM on **September 3-8**, over 250 were registered. The usual assortment of informative trail tours, speakers on southern trails, excellent dinners, live and silent auctions plus awards presentations were offered.

The Southern Trails are numerous and include four National Historic Trails – Santa Fe, Juan Bautista De Anza, El Camino Real De Terra Adentro and Old Spanish.

However, the emigrant trails direct from Santa Fe to California are not NHTs. Those southern trails were opened basically in 1846 by General Stephen Watts Kearney and Philip St. George Cooke's Mormon Battalion and used greatly during and after the 1849 Gold Rush. The 1858 Butterfield Overland Mail Route used the trail also.



**Dick Nelson**



**(l-r) Lee Black, Gary Werner, Bill Martin**

Above is **Dick Nelson**, past Trails Head Chapter President, managing the Awards Ceremonies which he has been doing for a decade. He has now retired from that assignment. He has also been on the OCTA Board of Directors for six years, but has now completed his terms.

Trails Head member **Pat Traffas** had also completed her two years as OCTA President. However, Trails Head member **Jean Coupal-Smith** has been elected to the OCTA Board. Trails Head member **Sandra Wiechert** continues as OCTA Secretary. Also, Trails Head member **Travis Boley** continues as OCTA Association Manager.

Pictured above on the left is **Lee Black**, past Southern Trails Chapter President, new OCTA President and Coordinator for the Convention, plus **Bill Martin** on the right who is past president of OCTA and former editor of the Overland Journal, presenting the Distinguished Service Award to **Gary Werner**, who is the Executive Director of the Partnership of the National Trails System. This was one of the highlights of the convention!



One of the events at every convention is chapter meetings (see above). Trails Head always has a good number of members at each convention.

However, the Santa Fe Hotel did not have meeting rooms for each chapter this time and so Trails Head, Gateway and Kanza Chapters met together in the hallway! **President Lila Aamodt** (pictured in white above) led the half-hour meeting and did a great job!

About 27 attended. Among the Trails Head members present were **Lila, VP Jean Coupal-Smith, Shirley Coupal, Treasurer Kelly Breen, Dick and Ruby Nelson, Allen and Sandra Wiechert, Pat Traffas, Jackie and Jerry Lewin, Larry Short, Arnold Cole, Charlie and Mary Weickert, Audrey Elder, Gary Hicks, and Shirley and Ross Marshall.**

All were reminded to submit their Volunteers in Parks totals of hours and expenses which helps National Park Service secure Federal appropriations which funds 42% of OCTA's budget.

The KC markers survey was mentioned. The survey resulted in a new program called Marker Monitors which ensures volunteers occasionally will clean and check the status of trail markers across the Kansas City metro

**Lila** said that the 2019 Santa-Cali-Gon celebration held every Labor Day weekend had more historic trails emphasis than usual.

**Audrey** mentioned **Lila's** recent calling of Trails Head members to come to the Red Bridge event More calling should continue to be done. A good meeting!

Also, **Pat Traffas** led a post-convention car caravan tour of several sites in New Mexico and many Trails Head members went on it.

One of the principal stops was Point of Rocks in northeast New Mexico which was a striking and familiar site on the Santa Fe Trail.

That site, some 60 miles east of Clayton, NM is owned by long-time SFTA member and leader **Faye Gaines**, who has welcomed visitors for decades at this site on her ranch.



Pictured above is Trails Head **President Lila Aamodt** with Point of Rocks in the background. Josiah Gregg, who lived in Independence for a time, traveled the trail to Santa Fe several times in the 1830s and 1840s and recorded this site in his diary noting that it also had a spring nearby. Countless trail travelers stopped there for water.

About a couple dozen people went on this post-convention car caravan. **Pat's** a great leader!

## PLANNING MEETING

Trails Head held a planning meeting on **Sunday, October 27 at 2:00 p.m.** at **Marshall's** house. Present were **President Lila Aamodt, Secretary Mary Conrad, Treasurer Kelly Breen, Sandra Wiechert** and **Ross Marshall**.

**Kelly** reported a balance of \$7362.06 in the account.

Membership Chair **Ruby Nelson** was absent, but **Lila** reported the chapter now has 86 memberships with one new member.

**Mary** said since she has been regularly attending Gateway Chapter meetings, she may be filling a liaison position between the two chapters like **John Leamon** did over 20 years ago when he was on executive committees of both Trails Head and Gateway Chapters.

The group reviewed upcoming events and discussed the necessary plans and preparations. Upcoming is Trails Head annual meeting on November 16. **John Forbes** will be the speaker on the history of the migration of Indian tribes into Kansas after the 1830 Indian Removal Act. **Lila** passed around a list of names of infrequently attending members and various ones at this planning meeting selected names to call.

December 7 at Drumm Farm is a joint meeting of Trails Head, MRO and KCAHTA.

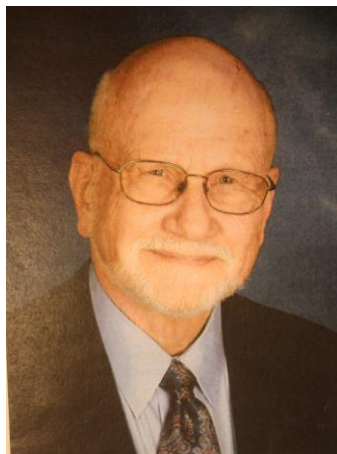
The annual OCTA Board meeting and Symposium will be in Yuma, AZ **February 21-23**.

**Lila** discussed the markers list she has made by using **Ross's** list but deleting everything but markers names and locations. She is preparing to enlist "monitors" to start checking periodically and reporting findings on all the markers. **Mary** said she has a list of Military Road markers to send to **Lila**. Eventually Trails Head will have the markers listings on the chapter website.

## ALLEN WEICHERT PASSES OCTOBER 29

**Allen Wiechert**, Preservation Committee Chair of Trails Head Chapter passed away **October 29, 2019** as a result of an accident involving his automobile two days previously.

**Allen** had been especially involved in Lawrence with identifying, preserving and educating about the route of the Oregon-California Trail through Lawrence where he and wife **Sandra** live.



It was always a pleasure to be around **Allen** and have him attend various OCTA and chapter meetings over the past years.

He was a very active individual and was part of Lawrence Historic Resources Commission and also of the Lawrence Preservation Alliance.

His wife **Sandra** has been part of the Trails Head Executive Committee for several years and she is also OCTA National Secretary.

Trails Head members will sorely miss **Allen**.

## ANNUAL MEETING HELD NOVEMBER 16

The Trails Head Annual Membership meeting was held at Trailside Center, 9901 Holmes, at 10:00 a.m. Saturday, November 16. 18 members were present.

**President Lila Aamodt** called the meeting to order and greeted everyone. She thanked everyone for all the help she had received in her first year as Trails Head president. She also was sad to report the death of **Preservation Committee Chair Allen Wiechert** on October 29.

**Vice President Jean Coupal-Smith** is now a member of the OCTA Board of Directors.

**Secretary Mary Conrad** related she has been attending OCTA Gateway Chapter meetings in St. Joseph as a sort of liaison between the chapters.

**Treasurer Kelly Breen** reported a bank balance of \$7585.06.

Membership Committee Chair **Ruby Nelson** was ill and could not attend, but **Lila** reported the chapter has 86 members.

Awards Committee Chair **Ross Marshall**, along with **Mary Conrad** and **Dick Nelson** as members, announced that the chapter Meritorious Achievement Award is to be presented to **Craig Crease**. **Craig**, for over 30 years has been an outstanding leader in the Kansas City area and beyond in working on trails research, historical markers authorship, leading trail tours and all kinds of other trails projects.

For the last decade **Craig** has lived in Myrtle Beach, SC, but he continues to be a great leader.

The Distinguished Partner Award was presented by **Ross** to the National Frontier Trails Museum received below by **Ana Delgado**, NFTM's Tourism and Administrative Assistant. NFTM has partnered with Trails Head Chapter and other local and national trails groups in helping to host meetings and conventions, assisting with trail research, preservation, interpretive markers, and promoting National Historic Trails locally and across the nation.

Below is **Dick Nelson** on the right who received the Trails Head Award of Appreciation from **Ross** in recognition of his many years of personal leadership with OCTA as a board member and awards chair, and with Trails Head as an officer including President, plus working on trails,





markers projects, meetings, etc. in the Kansas City area for many years.

The last award, a Distinguished Partner Award, was given in memory of **Lou Austin**, who passed away **August 27, 2019**. **Lou** was a longtime leader for historic trails in south Kansas City for decades.



**John Forbes**

**18 members present**

**Mary Conrad** then introduced **John Forbes** (above), longtime volunteer at the Shawnee Indian Mission, who spoke about the 1830 Indian Removal Act and the many Indian Missions established in the Kansas City area.

Because of the ongoing strife with Indian tribes in the eastern part of the U.S. and the fact that in all the wars, including the French and Indian War, the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, the tribes were often on the opposing side, the 1830 Indian Removal Act was passed by Congress.

Some portions of tribes had already started moving west like some of the Shawnees, who received a huge land grant in 1825 that stretched almost to Topeka, Kansas

Because some portions of tribes like some of the Shawnees were “Transitionalists”, they had adapted to the European-American traditions and more easily adapted to the new locations.

Some portions of tribes were more “Traditionalists” and didn’t adapt quickly to the transitions.

The tribal moves opened the door for missionary opportunities by many churches. Among these were the Methodists, who supported Reverend Thomas Johnson in 1830 to establish the Shawnee Methodist Mission just north of the Wyandotte County line in Turner, KS. In 1839, Johnson moved the mission to Fairway at 53<sup>rd</sup> and Mission Road to be near Westport where Indians were trading. The existing mission buildings near Westport were built in 1839, 1842 and 1845. They are still in use.

The Shawnee Baptist Mission was built in 1832 by Isaac McCoy and Johnston Lykins at 49<sup>th</sup> and Nall. That building has long been gone.

In the spring of 1836 the Society of Friends (more commonly known as Quakers) erected three buildings at about 61<sup>st</sup> and Hadley. In 1845, the large permanent Mission building was erected. The building was torn down in 1919.

When the Kansas-Nebraska Act was passed in 1854 to open Kansas for settlement, the missions began to fade away. That was the end of a part of the American national history.

Good job by **John Forbes**!

## **ANNUAL HOLIDAY LUNCHEON HELD**

For the second year, Trails Head Chapter, Missouri River Outfitters Chapter and Kansas City Area Historic Trails Association held a joint holiday celebration on **Saturday, December 7**.



**Lila Aamodt and Gary Hicks**

Hosted by MRO Chapter, attendees met at the large Drumm Farm Center for Children facility at 3210 S. Lee's Summit Road in Independence at **11:30 a.m.**

Everyone enjoyed a wonderful buffet luncheon in a great upper room setting (above). About 26 were in attendance. After the luncheon, **MRO President Anne Mallinson** opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Trails Head **President Lila Aamodt** reviewed the Trail Head markers survey project and presented her map above that revealed the trail marker locations in the Kansas City area. **KCAHTA President Gary Hicks** also is holding it.

**Gary Hicks** (pictured below) reviewed the progress on digitizing the Lee Kroh collection of quadrangle maps by Kansas Historical Society costing about \$3000. The project funding has been donated by KCAHTA members inspired by an "unknown person" who offered to match up to \$1000 in donations. Unknown to **Gary**, that person was his wife **Louise**, who made the announcement below!



**Gary and Louise Hicks**



**(l-r) Larry Short, now SFTA President, Lila Aamodt, Anne Mallinson, Gary Hicks and Travis Boley**

**Gary** also announced approval by National Park Service to furnish eight wayside exhibits: four replacements at Independence Landing, one replacement at Harmon Park, and new ones at Shawnee Mission, Rice-Tremonti House and Westport.

**OCTA Manager Travis Boley** announced that he has obtained a \$6000 grant for the design of a Trails Head Chapter website. Trails Head member **Gina Sifers** will be leading that rather elaborate design for a website and has already started it.

**Travis** obtained a similar grant for the design of the Gateway Chapter website that was completed in 2019.

**Larry Short**, now President of Santa Fe Trail Association, announced that MODOT has given approval for the Santa Fe Trail local tour route signage to be installed in Missouri. Much of the signage is now in place in Kansas and will extend all the way to Santa Fe before long.

KCAHTA will host the 2020 Holiday event for the same three KC historic trail groups.

## **NPS APPROVES EIGHT WAYSIDE EXHIBITS**

Following almost two years of seeking help concerning some of the Kansas City area waysides needs, mostly led by **KCAHTA President Gary Hicks**, the National Park Service in Santa Fe approved five Kansas City area sites proposed by KCAHTA for eight new or replacement wayside exhibits.

These eight waysides will be developed and manufactured under the Five-Year Memorandum of Understanding signed between Kansas City Area Historic Trails Association and NPS in **April 2018**, which was also engineered by **Gary** to replace the prior Five-Year MOU that had expired.

Following is the list of approved waysides:

1. **Rice-Tremonti House**, 66<sup>th</sup> and Blue Ridge Blvd, Raytown MO – on the Independence Route and the 1820s Santa Fe Trail Route
2. **Shawnee Indian Mission State Historical Site**, 53rd and Mission Road, Fairway, KS – near the North Branch of the Westport Route
3. **Pioneer Park** in Westport at Broadway Boulevard and Westport Road, Kansas City, MO
4. **Harmon Park**, 78<sup>th</sup> and Fontana, Prairie Village, KS on the North Branch of the Westport Route (a replacement wayside)
5. **Independence Landing**, at north end of River Boulevard in Sugar Creek, MO on the Santa Fe-Oregon-California Trails beginning in the 1830s to the 1860s (four replacement waysides)

The magnitude of this project will require significant effort in **2020** by Trails Head, Missouri River Outfitters Chapter and KCAHTA, in a partnership with NPS and its new contractor, the 106 Group, who will be doing the digital layout on the panels. NPS has always done the layouts in the past, but with all the NPS retirements in the last year or so, NPS is operating fairly shorthanded at the present time.

The locals in the past always have done the basic trail history and research for the texts on the Kansas City area waysides, but with this new 106 Group hired by NPS, Kansas City area historic trail leaders will need to emphasize the above issue with NPS and 106 Group. As most all know, only locals really know the local trail history!



**Harmon Park wayside in Prairie Village on the Westport Route South Branch. Placed in late 1990s and will be replaced. December 18, 2015 picture.**

Several locals including **Ross Marshall, Gary Hicks**, led by **Craig Crease**, will be starting work right away on the information and maps that each wayside will require.

NPS and the 106 Group will be coming to Kansas City in the second week of **March** to look at the sites and to discuss the various aspects of the job.

This new NPS approval is very good news and many in the Kansas City area historic trails community look forward to acquiring these new waysides on local trail sites. Some future wayside requests may also be made under the MOU.

## **2020**

### **TRAILS HEAD CREATING A NEW WEBSITE**

Thanks to a grant obtained by **OCTA Manager Travis Boley** (who is also a Trails Head member), and the expertise of several Trails Head members on history or websites who are working very hard on it, the second Trails Head website should be completed about **September, 2020**. The first Trails Head website, of limited nature, was developed before the 2000 OCTA Convention hosted by Trails Head.

The grant enabled the hiring of **Gina Sifers** (a member, fortunately, of Trails Head) to lead the crafting and layout of the Trails Head website. And Trails Head member **Jean Coupal-Smith** is savvy about websites also and has been the coordinator of the chapter website project.

Trails Head Chapter was founded in **1986** and **Ross Marshall** has been working on Trails Head history for several years and had over 100 pages of narrative completed up through **1997** as of **January, 2020**.

**Mary Conrad** has a huge amount of historical documents about Trails Head and she is a historian by virtue of being a librarian for much of her life. **Mary** typically organized chapter history to provide a sort of indexing of Trails Head records that was completed **March, 2020**. Trails Head President **Lila Aamodt** also contributed additions to the website.

The four Trails Head members (**Jean, Lila, Ross** and **Mary**) are hard at work and have continued to send an enormous amount of info and pictures to **Gina** for use on the website. Work on documents for the website will continue so that **Gina** can complete it by **September, 2020**.

### **PLANNING MEETING**

On **Sunday January 5, at 2:00 p.m.**, Trails Head's Executive Committee met at **Nelson's** house. Present were **President Lila Aamodt, Vice President Jean Coupal-Smith, Secretary Mary Conrad, Treasurer Kelly Breen, Dick** and **Ruby Nelson, Sandy Wiechert, Ross Marshall** and **Gina Sifers**, of Bella Media Services, who is a Trails Head member.

Most of the meeting was focused on reviewing and planning the website construction with **Gina** leading the discussion with her laptop tilted so that all could all see it. The following segments of the website were discussed in no particular order:

- Trails Head Mission statement
- Online books
- Speakers Bureau
- Events calendar
- Link to OCTA calendar contest



- Membership page – including what, where, why and how to become a member
- Donations page
- Welcome page
- Discover the trails
- Interactive maps
- Kansas City hiking trails
- History of Kansas City area historic trails
- Links to other OCTA chapter websites
- Trail Markers – **Ross** has already sent **Gina** 150 pictures
- Trail pictures gallery
- Trails Videos
- Trails Head Chapter history
- Lists of all the tours Trails Head has sponsored
- Diary quotes

By 4:30 p.m. the Trails Head planners were ready to adjourn! Those present planned to meet again on **January 26** to review the website again and also to plan events for **2020**.

## PLANNING MEETING

Trails Head met at 1:30 p.m. on **Sunday, January 26** at **Jean's** House. Present were **President Lila Aamodt, Vice President Jean Coupal-Smith, Secretary Mary Conrad, Treasurer Kelly Breen** and **Ross Marshall**.

**Kelly** did not have all her information with her, so could not give us an updated balance.

**Jean** reported **Sandy** said her daughter was finalizing the design of the Trails Head logo.

**Jean** reported that she had delivered certificates of appreciation to St. John Paul II students **Lucy Herrold** and **Mirabelle Sullivan** for their winning entries in the contest for the **2020** OCTA calendar.

**Mary** reported on her work with Barstow School, which is at 103<sup>rd</sup> and State Line. Barstow has purchased the old HyVee building at 122nd and State line. Barstow hopes to house an early childhood center there and to incorporate trail activities into the new facility. When **Mary** and **Anne O'Hare** met with **Todd Nelson** and **Kellye Crockett** on **January 13**, they hoped that remodeling the building would be done by **2021**.

**Mary** and **Anne** hope to replace the NPS-logo Oregon Trail sign that was placed there on State Line in **1985**. In addition, the four of them would like to place in the parking lot a wayside exhibit about the Oregon Trail through the immediate vicinity.

**Lila** said she has about ten volunteers to be Marker Monitors.

**Ross** reported that he is sending more trail pictures to **Gina**. Also, he will continue to write Trails Head history. **Mary** is working on topical listings and subheadings of events, meetings, officers, etc. in Trails Head history.

The group discussed the feasibility of a bus tour this year, without reaching a conclusion.

Also discussed was a chapter membership meeting on **April 4** and the annual meeting on **November 7**, both at Trailside Center at **10:00 a.m.**

The planners discussed having an event for National Trails Day. Maybe it would be a joint meeting at National Frontier Trails Museum.

In addition, a picnic at Sapling Grove Park in **early August** was discussed. **Ross** will check on the availability of the park on that date.

## TRAILS HEAD MARKER MONITORS

About a year ago, Trails Head **President Lila Aamodt** suggested there would be great value in having periodic inspections of all the wayside exhibits and other trail markers in the Kansas City area. The chapter had never been focused on that idea, but Trails Head has been aware of the great work that Kansas City Area Historic Trails Association has done for over 20 years while checking the KCAHTA signage.

KCAHTA has about 350 brown “Trail Crossed Here” signs in Johnson, Wyandotte and Leavenworth Counties on the Santa Fe, Oregon and California Trails as well as the Fort Leavenworth Military Road and the California Road. KCAHTA has had 20 or more *Signmasters* that quarterly check their own lists of markers for condition of the signs and if any are missing.

Using the list of sites, from the **summer of 2019** three-day survey of all Kansas City area trail markers, **Lila** started contacting Trails Head members and fairly quickly came up with a good list of volunteers. They are **Audrey Elder, Jim and Annette Howk, Jean Coupal-Smith, Dan Sturdevant, Colette Fleming, Drew Bodner, Diane Wright-Cook, Kelly Breen, Eva Allen, Dick Nelson and Lila.**

Anyone else that would like to participate can contact **Lila.**

The three-day survey of **2019** showed that the Kansas City area has nearly 100 wayside exhibits and kiosks, plus dozens of limestone posts with trail logos and texts on them at 60+ sites from Fort Osage to Gardner Junction.

The Marker Monitor site visits, twice each year, will involve cleaning the markers and inspecting them for any scratches or vandalism, which is rare, but it does occur. Checking for aging, fading, etc., that would lead to the necessity of replacing the markers is also part of the biennial reports.

Good work **Lila!** And compliments to all those that have volunteered to do this project of checking on markers that Trails Head probably should have started years ago.

## OCTA MID-YEAR BOARD MEETING AND SYMPOSIUM HELD IN YUMA, AZ

OCTA for the second time (also **2009**) held its Mid-Year meeting in Yuma, AZ on **February 20-23**. OCTA also held its **2019** Convention in Santa Fe and the its **2018** Mid-Year meeting in Gila Bend, AZ. These locations are in the Southern Trails Chapter Territory, and even though not on the California National Historic Trails (yet), a lot of emigrants went to California through Santa Fe and west on the southern trails to the Yuma crossing.

The heaviest used crossing of the Colorado River was at Yuma. The Southern Trail, Beale Road, Kearny Route, Mormon Battalion, Butterfield Overland, etc. all crossed at Yuma and even the Old Spanish Trail and Juan Bautista de Anza from Mexico also crossed there.

Seven members of Trails Head went to the meetings, tours, and some even saw the Royals play a pre-season game – and they won!



Over 120 people were present for all or a part of the activities.

Above is the Thursday Strategic Planning Workshop held at the Shilo Inn Hotel where all OCTA participants stayed. OCTA **Association Manager Travis Boley** is seated at right. OCTA updates its Strategic Plan every five years and a lot of useful changes were made in the plan.

Friday was the mid-year board meeting held in the same room, headed by **OCTA President Lee Black**, who did a good job.

On Friday evening, symposium attendees went to the Sanguinetti House Museum for the opening reception, which was very interesting, plus music entertainment.

Saturday was a series of speakers at the hotel followed by a banquet dinner with speaker **Tina Clark** who spoke about the Yuma crossing.



Above are Trails Head attendees (l-r) **Lila Aamodt, Ross Marshall, Travis Boley, Jean Coupal-Smith, Dick Nelson, Sandra Wiechert and Ruby Nelson**. **Jean** is on the OCTA Board and **Sandra** is OCTA Secretary. The Trails Head participants took part in a Sunday bus tour of Yuma, led mostly by **Travis**.

The Trails Head attendees are standing in front of the Colorado River at about the trail crossing site. The river is making a gradual swing to flow south again after its bend to the west. This is a mile-long bank area that has been converted into a wonderful park with statues and lots of interpretive markers.

On Monday some returned to Phoenix, but **Ruby, Jean, Dick and Ross** (above at right) stayed an extra day to watch the Royals at the Surprise, AZ spring training park. It is a marvelous small two-level ballpark, seating maybe 12,000.

Phoenix has become the spring training site for about half of the Major League teams. There are 15 spring training parks (and 15 teams) that operate there. The other 17 still train in Florida.

Nice weather, great fun and companionship, and a very good OCTA Board meeting and Symposium!

### **30 YEARS AGO: SAVING HARMON PARK IN 1989**

Up until **1985**, the four acres that I (**Craig Crease**) later established to have a swale of the Santa Fe Trail from Westport, was owned by the YMCA on 79<sup>th</sup> Street adjacent to the property. It was leased as park land to the city of Prairie Village for 1\$ per year. In **1985** the YMCA sold the 4.3 acres to a developer who had plans to build apartments or condominiums on the land.

Prairie Village residents, led by **Oscar and Eleanor Eggers** (who lived on Delmar across from

the park), started a drive to save the 4.3 acres as park land. The citizens attended the first Planning Commission meeting on the Harmon Park issue and protested against building apartments or condominiums on the land.

The city rejected the developers plan. Then the developer came back with a plan to build 22 cluster homes on the property. The **Eggers** organized a group called Citizens To Save The Park, and this group included about 200 active members. Local lawyer **Glen Froelich** worked for the group pro bono.

When the City Council voted against rezoning the land, the developer gave up on the cluster home idea and tried to sell the land to a nursing home developer, who backed out when met with opposition from Citizens To Save The Park. The developer then decided to try to build single family homes on the land.

Which brings this story to the **summer of 1989**, when several things happened. That year **Roe Taliaferro**, a strong backer of green space, was elected mayor of Prairie Village. And I entered the fray in June, when I saw a piece on the evening news about the citizen's struggle to save the land, and realized it was the same spot where I had been researching a remnant of the Santa Fe Trail from Westport for some time.

I contacted **John Leamon** to come and look at my documentation and at the actual swale on the ground. We contacted the Kansas State Historical Society, who checked it out as well. I contacted NPS Superintendent **David Gaines** in Santa Fe and reviewed the documentation with him and we agreed it was a good candidate for the new Site Certification process that the National Park Service was developing.

At that point I contacted the Prairie Village mayor, the parks department, and the **Eggers**. I was met with a somewhat skeptical initial reception by the city at first, although the **Eggers** and the Citizens To Save The Park thought I was a gift from above.

That was a characterization not shared by the developers and their attorneys, who thought that I had been brought into this battle by the other side all too conveniently at the eleventh hour.

There was another pragmatic impediment to saving the land: the city did not own it. To get control of it, they would have to purchase it from the developer. To do so they would have to develop a bond in the amount of \$600,000 to purchase the land, and it would be subject to a vote of Prairie Village citizens. Further, the city's own attorney predicted various possible legal peril if the city proceeded to buy the land, not the least of which was that the land would have to be condemned to compel the developer to sell it to the city.

Finally the day came for the city council to vote yes or no on buying the land. It was reported that 300 people attended this meeting. I recall they were spilling out of the doorway trying to hear what was happening. Two television stations and several newspaper reporters were there, as well as the **Eggers** and some key members of Citizens To Save The Park. The attorneys for the developer were there in force, of course. **John Leamon** was there with me. Over thirty people that night stepped up to the microphone to address the city council, most for saving the land, but a few against it.

I spoke to the council about the trail swale on that hill and its historic importance. There was a tension in the room, as the council was going to have to make a decision that was very important for the city, and bring to a close this battle over the land.

When at last the mayor asked if anyone else wished to speak, a dramatic moment occurred. An elderly gentlemen in overalls and a flannel shirt stepped up to the microphone, and without identifying himself, said something to the effect of *"It seems to me that the citizens of this city want to save this land, and save the old trail that sits upon it. So to get things started, I will pay*



*\$10,000 of the cost to buy it.”* Then **William Deramus**, president of the Kansas City Southern Railroad, ambled back to the rear of the chamber, walking by a stunned group of people!

Then each council person spoke. Several spoke against it, pointing out the heavy financial cost and the possible legal ramifications. Almost the last council person to speak was **Ben Munday**, not only a councilman but also the chairman of the Parks and Recreation Committee. His impassioned speech about the city's obligation to save the physical history on that hill being the most important thing to consider, carried the day.

The vote passed, the city obligated itself for \$600,000, the land and the remnant swale of the Santa Fe Trail from Westport was saved, and the rest is history, literally.

The location became the first Santa Fe Trail site certified in the state of Kansas by the National Park Service, and the first certified in the Kansas City metropolitan area. The city built a pavilion for picnics, and a walkway to a wayside exhibit overlooking the swale with a painting by **Jim Hamil**, well known Johnson County artist. The name of the southern portion of the park was changed to Santa Fe Trail Park. So now, thirty years later, new generations can still come and walk in history's footsteps on that hill. *Written by Craig Crease*



**Harmon Park wayside in Prairie Village on the Westport Route South Branch. Placed in late 1990s and will be replaced. December 18, 2015 picture.**

## **NATIONAL PARK SERVICE STUDY**

After many years of work by **Superintendent Aaron Mahr** and the rest of his NPS staff, the lengthy 4-Trails Study has been submitted to Congress, seeking Congressional approval of all of the NPS recommended added routes to the California, Oregon, Mormon Pioneer and Pony Express National Historic Trails.

No guarantee that action will be quick. Time may pass as Congressional sponsors are sought.

The legislation would officially add the Westport Routes to both the Oregon and California Trails in the Kansas City area. (It already is a part of the Santa Fe National Historic Trail.) A few decades ago the Oregon National Historic Trail was approved as just one line from Independence to Portland, Oregon, and the California Trail was defined only on that Oregon Trail single line.

The 2020 bill proposes to add a network of roads to that single line.

## **PLANNING MEETING**

Trails Head Executive Committee met again at **2:00 p.m. on Sunday, March 8** at **Nelson's House**. Present were **President Lila Aamodt, Vice President Jean Coupal-Smith, Secretary Mary Conrad, Treasurer Kelly Breen, Dick and Ruby Nelson, Sandy Wiechert, Kirstin Novak, Gina Sifers and Ross Marshall.**

**Kelly** reported \$7556.28 in the chapter account.

**Ruby** reported 85 members

**Lila** said that **Travis Boley, Gary Hicks, Ross Marshall, Craig Crease, Larry Short** and herself will be meeting with the 106 Group and National Park Service reps this week on **March 10-12** to show them the local trail sites where the eight new and replacement waysides will be placed, and to start planning the project.

Professional Graphic Designer **Kirstin Novak, Sandy's** daughter, was with the Trails Head planners to finalize her Trails Head logo design. The planners had made some previous suggestions and all those were included in **Kirstin's** draft. **Jean** said the Trails Head Chapter should copyright or trademark the logo. She and **Kirstin** can complete the application. The design was approved unanimously. Also approved was her invoice for \$300.

**Lila** said that **Pat Traffas** has agreed to be Trails Head's preservation officer that would involve marking, mapping, monitoring trails markers and advocating for historic trails. **Lila** said two OCTA MET (Mapping Emigrant Trails) mapping workshops would be held in New Mexico and Elko during this year. Those mapping events were cancelled due to COVID-19.

A discussion was held about MET mapping and **Ross** said MET mapping was developed by California Chapter because California and New Mexico was not mapped by the GLO government process in the mid-1850s. In Kansas, GLO maps are not only easily available, they are accurate and were used by **Lee Kroh** when he did all of his quadrangle maps for this area.

Not only that, but **Ross** said the MET systems have changed several times and will again – a very frustrating situation for anyone wanting to use it. **Ross** said the chapter has very little need for the MET systems because Trails Head researchers know exactly where the trails were!

The group decided not to pursue MET at this time, but encouraged those interested to learn more about it.

Most of the rest of the meeting was devoted to the Trails Head website reviewing and planning.

**Gina** displayed an introductory film on her laptop developed about trails in the northwest. The film is not suitable for Midwest trails, so she will replace it.

She displayed a lot of the photos **Ross** had sent to her. **Ross** said he is also working on the chapter history, which will be large.

**Gina** said she would need everything by July to be able to finalize by the end of September.

## TRAILS HEAD LOGO



In 35 years of existence, Trails Head has never had a logo, but now the chapter does!

Pictured is the confluence of the Missouri and Kansas Rivers and oxen and a wagon climbing up from the river bank. Also, note the small logo of the Oregon-California Trails Association in the lower right corner. Impressive work!

### **NATIONAL PARK SERVICE AND 106 GROUP VISITED KANSAS CITY**

On **March 10-12, 2020** the above groups visited the Kansas City area to review the five trail sites National Park Service had approved a few months ago for three new and five replacement waysides from the list of seven sites that Kansas City Area Historic Trails Association submitted to NPS earlier for their consideration.

This work is being done under the five-year MOU agreement that Kansas City Area Historic Trails Association, led by their **President Gary Hicks**, and National Park Service had agreed to about a year ago.

Because of NPS retirements and also now in a strategy of having fewer employees, NPS has moved from handling wayside digital work and layouts to subcontracting with outside companies to do that work, like the 106 Group from St. Paul, Minnesota.



**Looking southwest toward the Shawnee Indian Mission West building: (l-r) Carol Wendler (NPS), Craig Crease, SIM Director Jennifer Laughlin, Lila Aamodt, Nick Roll (NPS), Cory Donnelly (NPS), Chris Evans (106 Group), Julie Davis (106 Group), Gary Hicks, and John Forbes with SIM. Not pictured: Larry Short (SFTA President) and Travis Boley (OCTA Manager) who also attended for part of the site visits.**

**Carole Wendler** of NPS (above at left) was the lead person during the site visits of the group and she did a very good job as the team leader.

On **March 11 and 12** everyone in the car caravan visited each of the sites for up to two hours each. All involved discussed the exact or revised locations for each wayside, trail history of each site, how the story should be told, graphics, maps, etc.

The Kansas City area historic trail participants felt the two members of the 106 Group, **Julie Davis** and **Chris Evans**, displayed impressive skills regarding how the information should be arranged on the waysides, digital skills, etc.

The new and replacement waysides will be designed and perhaps even installed this year, and will be located at:

1. Rice-Tremonti House at 66<sup>th</sup> Terrace and Blue Ridge Blvd in Raytown, MO. (new)
2. Shawnee Indian Mission at 53<sup>rd</sup> Street and Mission Road in Fairway, KS. (new)
3. Harmon Park at about 78<sup>th</sup> Street and Delmar in Prairie Village, KS. (replacement)

4. Independence Landing, Sugar Creek, MO. (four replacements)
5. Pioneer Park at Westport Road and Broadway in Kansas City, MO. (new)

Pioneer Park was one of the sites that **Gary Hicks, Craig Crease** and **Ross Marshall** proposed in the list submitted to NPS, but it was not chosen by NPS in the top five to come and examine.

The site that NPS had chosen as one of the five to visit was the crossing of the Blue River near Gregory Boulevard on the early 1820s route of the Santa Fe Trail. But the site was not a good accessible location for a marker and also is not actually a part of the Santa Fe National Historic Trail. It is a historic route, but was only used for an early short period in the 1820s.

So the decision was made to go to the next one on the list which was Pioneer Park.

Yes, there were some “lively” discussions about the substitution of the site like any partnership will have at times, but **Carole** supplied good leadership in the matter and everyone involved is on the same page for this project and in the future.

It is of great value to have this longstanding partnership with the National Park Service over all these decades and currently with Superintendent **Aaron Mahr, John Cannella, Carole Wendler**, and others in the NPS Santa Fe office.

In the weeks before this group met at the sites in the Kansas City area, **Craig Crease** worked very hard on research and text that could be used on each of the eight waysides. And this information was distributed before the visit. It was very good work by **Craig!** No big surprise, because he is still the prime expert on the Kansas City area local trails.

The Kansas City area historic Trails people look forward to working with NPS and the 106 Group to complete the texts, pictures, maps, etc. that are needed on the eight wayside exhibits.

## **2020 TRAILS HEAD MARKER MONITORS**

The following is the list of Marker Monitors, as of **May, 2020**, who have volunteered to work on the project conceived by **President Lila Aamodt** in 2019. Below each name are the markers they will check on or clean as needed.

A small number of the listed sites or markers are not our trail markers, but are related to trails.

### **Monitor #1 - Audrey Elder**

- 1--Fort Osage
- 2--Buckner kiosk and stone markers
- 3--Salem Park
- 4--Upper Independence Landing
- 5--Mallinson Winery/home
- 6--McCoy Park
- 7--Independence Square
- 8--National Frontier Trails Museum
- 9--Bingham-Waggoner Estate

### **Monitor #2 - Jim and Annette Howk**

- 10--Santa Fe Trail Park
- 12--Boy Scouts miniature wagon
- 13--Raytown H/S MRO post
- 14--Blue Ridge Elementary MRO post
- 15--Rice-Tremonti House
- 16a--Klein Park/Barnes-Enclosure/Cave Spring



- 16b--Marion Park – Hart Grove Creek Crossing (future wayside)
- 17--Wieduwilt Park
- 18--Hickman Mills School

**Monitor #3 - Annette and Jim Howk**

- 19--Schumacher Park
- 20--3-Trails Transit Center
- 21--Powder Mill Bridge
- 22--Hart Grove Park
- 23-25--Minor Park and bridge
- 26--Watts Mill Park 26/27 - Trailside Center
- 27--St. Thomas More Church MRO post
- 28--Avila signs and posts
- 30 & 31--Wornall Road signs and posts
- 32--New Santa Fe cemetery markers
- 33--DAR monument on State Line
- 34--Jim Bridger

**Monitor #4 - Jean Coupal-Smith**

- 57&58--Mahaffie House & Heritage Center
- 59--BNSF RR Bridge
- 60--JoCo Courthouse
- 61--Elm Grove
- 36--Gardner / Elm & Shawnee Streets
- 37--Two DAR mnts at Elm & Wash. Sts., Gardner, KS
- 38--Hist Soc building at Main & Oak Sts., Gardner, KS
- 39--Bray House, Gardner, KS
- 40a--Gardner Junction
- 40b--Lanesfield School
- 35--Lone Elm Park

**Monitor #5 - Dan Sturdevant**

- 41--Town of Kansas Landing (Westport Landing)
- 42--Ilus Davis Park

**Monitor #6 - Colette Fleming**

- 43--Crown Center SFT plaque
- 44--Penn Valley Park
- 45a--Westport 3 plaques on Kelley's Bar
- 45--Pioneer Park
- 46--Chouteau SFT marker
- 47--Intercontinental Hotel plaque

**Monitor #7 - Drew Bodner**

- 48--Nymph Park
- 49--Weltner Park
- 51--Harmon Park/Santa Fe Trail Park
- 52a--A Day on the Trail (Downtown)

Overland Park waysides)

**Monitor #8 - Lila Aamodt**

50--Shawnee Indian Mission

**Monitor #9 - Diane Wright-Cook**

52b--Pioneer Crossing Park

**Monitor #10 - Kelly Breen**

53--Sapling Grove Park

54--Strang Park

**Monitor #11 - Eva Allen**

55--Overland Park Heritage Trail

**Monitor #12 - Dick Nelson**

56--Flat Rock Creek Crossing

This is a very important project and long overdue in implementation. Trails Head Chapter extends its appreciation to **Lila** and to each of the volunteers as listed above.

**A DAY LOOKING FOR TRAIL SWALES**

On **May 6**, **Craig Voorhees**, **Mary Conrad**, **Gary Hicks** and **Ross Marshall** started from Highway 10 west of Lawrence and went west on Highway 40 about two miles, turned north a mile and parked. See the red line of the Oregon- California Trail entering onto Highway 40 at the lower right corner of Map #2.

That is where the group's cars parked, at that intercept.



**Map #1**



**Map #2**

The trail goes west right alongside of Highway 40 for about three miles and then goes across the south end of Coon Point. (on Map #2).



Above is (l-r) **Gary Hicks**, **Craig Voorhees** (the guide for the day) and **Mary Conrad** pointing southwest from Highway 40 to four or five adjacent swales.

Then each drove a mile or so west and saw some swales near Coon Point Park and read some signs there. It is about 1½ miles east of the “Coon Point” on the map. A mysterious location!

Again each drove a couple of miles west and walked in some swales near a house. A mile farther west we did the same thing. **Craig** had permission from residents to walk in the swales.

By that time, the four were on Map #1 and they stopped a couple more times to look at swales.

All the swales the group saw on **May 6** were close to highway 40 and easy to find, especially with **Craig’s** earlier explorations. The grass was fairly tall. Swales would be much more vivid during the winter when the grass is shorter. But they still were quite visible.

The four then drove through Big Springs and left the trail – note Map #1 where the red trail line departs from Highway 40. The group continued west a mile or so, then followed Hwy 40 north a mile, then west about 1½ miles to where the red trail line meets Hwy 40 at the upper left hand corner of map #1.

The four turned into a house on that corner, which belongs to **Leo Pellant**, an old friend, who has allowed bus tours and visitors to stop at his house for a long time to view the magnificent swales that go by his house. These three swales are several feet deep.



Above at left, is three side-by-side swales, one at right, one at left and one at far left with **Leo Pellant's** house in the background at right. **Leo** was a member of Trails Head for many years.

Above at right is **Gary Hicks, Mary Conrad, Craig Voorhees** and **Leo Pellant**. The swales are to the left and his house in the background. The camera is looking east at the swales just before they cross the road to the left to head northwest toward Topeka. Note on Map #1 where the red trail line crosses the corner of Highway 40 as it turns north.

**Craig Voorhees** lives in Lawrence and is a member of Trails Head Chapter. For the last three or four years he has been searching out swales on this stretch of the Oregon-California Trail and also along the California Road (Westport to Lawrence Road). He has been very generous in sharing maps, pictures, etc. of his work.

**Craig** has also been a valuable partner with the Kansas City Area Historic Trails Association as several of the KCAHTA members have been preserving and assembling **Lee Kroh's** quadrangle maps under **Gary Hicks'** leadership, subsequent to **Lee's** death in **February, 2019**. These maps will be digitized by the end of 2020 and then stored at the MidAmerican Nazarene University Library in Olathe. The digitized maps will be available online for the public to access through the Kansas Historical Society online digital archives "Kansas Memory".