



DOUGLAS COUNTY, KANSAS

DEVIL'S BACKBONE

W.H. Brady

1854, from letter of 1906 November 5

“... I remember seeing a way bill for emigrants to California, starting from Independence, Missouri. ... [After the Santa Fe Trail and California Trail split,] the California Trail went northwest by Spy Bucks, Waukarooosa, and the Devil's Back Bone, on which the State University now stands, overlooking the city of Lawrence.”

*****When the Santa Fe Trail still was active with travelers, Brady settled in Kansas. After emigrants had crossed the Wakarusa River, they needed to traverse a large hill to the northwest. Now that challenging hill is on the University of Kansas campus in Lawrence. Many now call this campus feature “the Mt. Oread ridge”. **Source:** Brady, W.H. “Brady's Letter” [letter read at 1906 dedication of Lone Elm DAR Santa Fe Trail marker since Brady unable to attend], *Lone Elm Marker, Lone Elm CampGround, Santa Fe Trail Monument, Erected 1906* [booklet does not give publisher, but trail historian Craig Crease thinks this was published privately by Newton Ainsworth; *WorldCat* indicates this was reprinted from *Olathe Register* of November 13, 1906], quote on 6th unpagged page.

Almira Cordry

1915

“The [DAR] marker at Lone Elm tells of a famous campground under an immense elm (which has long since disappeared), and which marks the dividing point of the travel toward Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the California travel. The latter went northwest by way of the Wakarusa and “the Devil's backbone,” where the University of Kansas now stands, at Lawrence.”

*****Kansas Daughters of American Revolution (DAR) member Almira Cordry authored a book to give an account of the Kansas DAR marking of the Santa Fe Trail in the early years of the twentieth century. Cordry wrote this book soon after completion of that state project. Even though this book details the Santa Fe Trail marker project, the author does mention that a trail for the California-bound did break off from the Santa Fe Trail in Kansas. While Cordry says that this dividing point is Lone Elm Campground, the junction of the Santa Fe Trail and Oregon-California trails was not at Lone Elm, but was less than ten miles from Lone Elm. That junction now is known as the Gardner Junction, and a mini-park commemorates that junction west of Gardner on Highway 56. Cordry's references to Wakarusa [crossings] and the Devil's Backbone



were sites on the Oregon-California trails coursing west/northwest across what is now Douglas County. **Source:** Cordry, Almira. *The Story of the Marking of the Santa Fe Trail by the Daughters of the American Revolution in Kansas and the State of Kansas*. Topeka, KS: KSDAR with prologue and addendum, 1996 [reprint of Topeka, KS: Crane & Company, 1915], quote on p. 103.