



## LEAVENWORTH COUNTY, KANSAS

### TOWN OF LEAVENWORTH & FT. LEAVENWORTH

Ft. Leavenworth was established in 1827, and the town of Leavenworth developed south of the fort after Kansas was opened for settlement in 1854. Over time a myriad of roads developed for the comings and goings of the Army. Emigrants and traders used these roads when convenient. Just a few of these included the Liberty to Leavenworth Road; Military Road from Ft. Snelling, Minnesota to Ft. Jesup, Louisiana, which included Ft. Leavenworth to Ft. Scott Road after the early 1840s; alternate road west and north to Blue River to join Oregon Trail; Military Road from Ft. Leavenworth to Ft. Riley; and the Leavenworth Road to Ft. Kearney. These and other roads going to and from the fort added to the network of available nineteenth-century roads which extended well beyond Leavenworth County.

#### **Kansas Weekly Herald**

##### **1854 September 15**

“It is scarcely necessary to speak of the Beauty of Fort Leavenworth, or the surrounding country, for its peculiar advantages for a great commercial city have been known, by all who have ever ascended the Missouri River to this ancient fort. The town joins the Military Reserve, and has a rock bound front on the river, with a gradual ascent, and gentle undulation for miles around. That this beautiful place is destined to be the Capitol and Metropolis of the rich and fertile Territory of Kansas, no one who knows anything of its geographical position, or of the country surrounding it can doubt. It will be the starting point for the Caravans of immigrants and merchandise to New Mexico, Utah, California and Oregon for centuries, or until a Rail-Road is constructed to those distant States. The western terminus of this road must be Leavenworth”.

\*\*\*\*\*The selection of a site for the town by the fort included a “rock bound front on the river”. Wagon trains already were coming and going from Fort Leavenworth before Kansas was opened for settlement. When that opening came in 1854, promoters obviously saw land right beside the active fort as a place to develop a town and to promote the coming and going of commercial and emigrant wagons not only to nearby Kansas areas, but also to reaches farther west. This 1854 news article is promoting such, but does recognize that at some point the wagons will be replaced by railroad cars. **Source:** King, Marsha K. *Results of Phase IIIa Archival Investigations at 14LV389 in the Leavenworth Landing Project Area Leavenworth County, Kansas*. Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1996, quote on page 16.



## **Marian Russell**

### **1856, from 1954 memoir**

“Slowly the red oxen moved onward and the stately wagon followed us as if impelled by the white sails behind them. The end of the trail drew nearer and nearer. One day the smoke of Fort Leavenworth could be seen ahead of us. A cheer went up from the drivers. I think both Will and I regretted that we had come to the end of the trail. We had loved the feel of the grass under our feet and the sound of the wind and the waters. The trail had been our point of outlook upon the universe. The blue sky above us had been bread and meat for our soul. If you have ever followed the old trail over mountains, through forests, felt the sting of the cold, the oppression of the heat, the drench of rains and the fury of winds in an old covered wagon you will know what I mean. It was late in November before mother got us in school in Leavenworth. This time sent me to a Young Ladies Seminary that was conducted by a Presbyterian minister, the Reverend Luther. Mother had said, “I want you to go to a Protestant school this time. You must not grow lop-sided in a religious way. You have received training under the Catholics, now I want you to go to a Protestant school. ...”

Brother Will did not enter school this year. It was necessary that he help mother a bit with the living. ... He was past thirteen, he said, and going on fourteen. He obtained employment in the newspaper office of the Leavenworth Times. The editor of that paper was Colonel Anthony, brother of Susan B. Anthony. ...”

\*\*\*\*\*Marian was 11 years old when her mother and older brother Will moved from Santa Fe to Leavenworth. Marian’s mother was a single mother and found jobs in Santa Fe, Leavenworth, and elsewhere. This mother moved her family a number of times. The memoir of Marian Russell is considered a classic in Santa Fe Trail literature. **Source:** Russell, Marian. *Land of Enchantment: Memoirs of Marian Russell along the Santa Fe Trail*. New afterword by Marc Simmons. Albuquerque: Univ. Of New Mexico Press, 1981 [earlier edition 1954], excerpt on pp. 71-72.

## **Marian Russell**

### **1856-1860, from 1954 memoir**

“Four years we spent in Leavenworth. For Will they were four studious ones for after the first winter he attended school, helping Colonel Anthony only in the evenings and on Saturdays. I carried on my work and became Reverend Luther’s “little heretic.” Once a year the children were taken up the river on a picnic outing. ...They were a bit like the old days on the trail. ...”

So four years went by in Leavenworth and I am eleven, then twelve, thirteen, fourteen and fifteen. Long years filled with the lust of young life and with growing. In the acquisition of more or less useless knowledge, soon to be forgotten, my childhood passed away. ...”

We did not lose touch altogether with our friends in Santa Fe. Though mail service by wagon train was slow, being months in transit, still letters did come and were read and reread by all of us. Sometimes Will and I would sit together under an elm tree in the side year [yard] letting our nostalgia run riot. We wondered if ever again we would see New Mexico with its Indians and



Mexicans. We wanted another mess of goat meat seasoned with Mexican chile. We wanted to see the sisters, and go once more to the chapel...we wanted to go back west like so many of our elders.”

\*\*\*\*\*Marian Russell’s memoir is considered a classic among Santa Fe Trail enthusiasts. Russell’s mother, her brother, and herself traveled on the Santa Fe Trail a number of times as the memoir delineates. **Source:** Russell, Marian. *Land of Enchantment: Memoirs of Marian Russell along the Santa Fe Trail*. New afterword by Marc Simmons. Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1981 [earlier edition 1954], excerpt on pp. 75-76.

**Daniel R. Anthony**  
**1857 June 5**

“Boat *F. H. Aubry* Friday 6 P.M. June 5, 1857 Jefferson City

Dear FATHER

I reached here this day at 3 P M leave at 8 ½ P. M. by this boat for Leavenworth—will reach there at about Monday noon if we [don’t] run on too many sand bars—It now looks as though the boat would be crowded—nearly full now and the St. Louis Express has not yet arrived—Most of the passengers are Kansas bound—very few are going to Nebraska—A Leavenworth man on board says Leavenworth now has a population of nearly 5,000 Suppose he enlarges some upon the fact—he says there are already four or five Banking offices there—

The general opinion seems to be that it will be the largest town in Kansas....”

\*\*\*\*\*Anthony did write his father on June 10<sup>th</sup> that he had arrived in Leavenworth that day at ten o’clock (does not say a.m. or p.m.). Kansas Territory was opened for European-American settlement in 1854. Anthony is a Kansas-bound settler, and he says in letter that most on board are the same. Anthony does indicate some of the passengers are going farther to Nebraska. Those going to Nebraska could have been going to settle in Nebraska or could have been going farther west. *The Kansas Historical Society Quarterly* does give the name of the steamboat as “*F. H. Aubry*”, but this could have been the steamboat *F. X. Aubry*. A capital “X” easily could have been mistaken for a capital “H”. The man *F. X. Aubry* became well-known for setting speed records by riding horses fast on the Santa Fe Trail. A 2019 issue of *Missouri Life Magazine* says that a steamboat was named after this famous speedster soon before his death in the summer of 1854. The *Glasgow Weekly Times* of April 14, 1853 (p.4) indicates that a brand new steamer named *F. X. Aubry* soon would begin servicing the Missouri River. **Source:** Anthony, Daniel R. “Letters of Daniel R. Anthony, 1857-1862”, edited by Edgar Langsdorf and R. W. Richmond, *The Kansas Historical Quarterly*, 24(1): (spring 1958), 6-30, letter on pp. 8-9.



## **Randolph B. Marcy**

**1859**

“From Fort Leavenworth to Santa Fe, by the way of the upper ferry [Uniontown Ferry] of the Kansas River and the Cimarron.”

\*\*\*\*\*At the request of the U.S. War Department, Randolph Marcy compiled a guidebook for overland travelers. The author listed 18 possible itineraries. This one basic itinerary is on page 255, and the specific crossings and camps are given on pages 260 to 263. **Source:** Marcy, Randolph B. *The Prairie Traveler: A Handbook for Overland Expeditions*. Williamstown, Mass.: Corner House Publishers, 1968 [reprint of New York: Harper & Brothers, 1859, 1<sup>st</sup> edition], quote on p. 255.

## **Randolph B. Marcy**

**1859**

“From Leavenworth City to Great Salt Lake City.”

\*\*\*\*\*At the request of the U.S. War Department, Randolph Marcy compiled a guidebook for overland travelers. The author listed 18 possible itineraries. This one basic itinerary is listed on page 255, and the specific crossings and campgrounds are given on pages 266 to 273. **Source:** Marcy, Randolph B. *The Prairie Traveler: A Handbook for Overland Expeditions*. Williamstown, Mass.: Corner House Publishers [reprint of New York: Harper & Brothers, 1859, 1<sup>st</sup> edition], quote on p. 255.

## **Marian Russell**

**1860 spring, from 1954 memoir**

“The Spring of 1860 found us still in Fort Leavenworth. ... One morning when we three [Marian, her bother Will, and their mother] were eating breakfast at a small round table and Will and I were talking about the wonders of Santa Fe, she pushed her chair back quickly and stood up to say, “Keep still! I am as homesick as you are. I can stand no more of this talk of the plaza. We are going west again as soon as ever I can get passage in a wagon train for us.

Will and I whooped like Comanche Indians. We ate no more breakfast....

We secured passage this time in a large Government train of two-hundred wagons. The wagon master was a Mr. Hamilton. The train was sufficiently large that we did not feel much fear of the Indians, beside that Uncle Sam had been busy erecting forts along the trail. At these forts soldiers were stationed to protect the traveling public. By this time I felt quite grown-up for I was fifteen and Will was seventeen. I remember how he insisted on cluttering up our limited space with the heavy books he was bringing.

I also remember the light-heartedness of our start in the early dawn. Before noon two of the wagons, discouraged when they got out on the prairies, and by the fears of the women, turned



back to Fort Leavenworth. When they turned back...we both broke in to what I realize was heartless laughter. ... We began at once looking for old camping places along the trail and would explain with delight when we came upon them. We drove with us a herd of horses and cattle and for that reason made haste slowly. ... We traveled ... in four great columns. When night came the outer columns drew in together while the inner two angled outward, wagon lapping wagon, thus making the round corral for the mules and horses. ...”

\*\*\*\*\*Marian and her brother Will could look for “old camping places along the trail” since they previously had traveled the Santa Fe Trail with their mother. **Source:** Russell, Marian. *Land of Enchantment: Memoirs of Marian Russell along the Santa Fe Trail*. New afterward by Marc Simmons. Albuquerque: Univ. Press of New Mexico, 1981 [earlier edition 1954], excerpt on pp. 77-78.

### **Louisa Cook**

#### **1862 early June**

“On the plains of Nebraska 230 miles from Leavenworth City June 11<sup>th</sup>/62 [1862]

My Dear Mother & sisters

Though far from home not many hour[s] pass that I do not think of you & as I have a few leisure moments I will occupy them in writing to you & as usual will refer to my journal I wrote to you and Emma from Leavenworth City just before we left there which was the morning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June. The first night that we camped at Leavenworth two of our mules strayed away and we were hindered for some time by that event though two men were out constantly in search of them they were gone for over a week.

June 3<sup>rd</sup>. The mules which strayed away a week ago were brought in having been found 70 miles from here on the Kansas river. After an early breakfast we broke camp & came out about 13 miles from Leavenworth where we camped near a creek for the night. Our train consists of an omnibus drawn by 4 mules a coach & 4 2 baggage wagons drawn by 4 each & 1 wagon drawn by 2 mules & 3 men & one woman (Mrs. Smith) who ride in the saddle. Our road is hard & smooth but is over a constant succession of hills.”

\*\*\*\*\*Louisa Cook was in a wagon train headed to Oregon. Two of the mules of the Cook wagon strayed from camp at Leavenworth and were not found for a week. Since Louisa says “first night that we camped at Leavenworth”, this seems to indicate that the Cooks camped at Leavenworth during the week of searching for the two mules. Louisa does mention that one woman in wagon train is riding “in the saddle”, so that woman is not walking or riding in a wagon. **Source:** “Letters from the Oregon Trail, 1862-1863: Louisa Cook”, 27-57, letter on p. 30, in Holmes, Kenneth L., editor. *Covered Wagon Women: Diaries & Letters from the Western Trails, 1862-1865*, Vol. 8. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1999 [reprint of 1989 edition].



## **Louisa Cook**

### **1862 June 15, from letter of 1862 June 20**

“[While Oregon-bound wagon train was in Nebraska, a reference to stage traveling to and from Leavenworth was written on] June 15<sup>th</sup>. Sabbath day finds us on our way at ½ past 5 as usual with prospects of a pleasanter time than we had the 2 days which were so intolerably hot. We meet or pass the stage daily which runs on the Leavenworth-San Francisco route. The stage stations are from 15 to 25 miles apart. We passed by the beginning of one to day [sic] a tent with a half finished pole house close by. One of our horsemen rode up to ask for fresh water & was told that all the wood & water they had was brought 10 miles. Some of the houses are made of boards some of poles & then again of sods laid up like brick work. ... After traveling 27 miles we came to the Platte river a little off from which we camped for the night. ...”

\*\*\*\*\*Louisa Cook was in a wagon train headed to Oregon. Cook included this journal entry of June 15 in a letter dated June 20<sup>th</sup> and with the location as “On the plains 90 miles from Kearny”. Cook gives some details of the Leavenworth to San Francisco stage which she observed in Nebraska. **Source:** “Letters from the Oregon Trail, 1862-1863: Louisa Cook”, 27-57, quote on p. 34, in Holmes, Kenneth L., editor. *Covered Wagon Women: Diaries & Letters from the Western Trails, 1862-1865*, Vol. 8. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1999 [reprint of 1989 edition].

## **James C. Hall**

### **1863 June 18 or 19 to 20, from 1911 memoir**

“... In 1863, I was a Freshman in College at Baker University, and had run down health, so that my friends ... advised me to go out on the plains to “rough it.” So ... a classmate several years older than myself, went with me to Leavenworth, and there we hired with Irwin & Jackman, Government contractors, who were just starting a train of supplies for Fort Union New Mexico, to drive in the outfit....

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of June, 1863, after working a day or two in loading the wagons, the cattle for the expedition, about 320 head, were driven into a pen, and we, 26 drivers, were ordered to yoke our teams. They were a wild lot of steers—some of them had never had a yoke upon them, and some of them were Texas steers whose shining horns glanced threateningly in the sunshine. The order was, first, for each man to yoke his leaders, and then after this was done by all, we then yoked our wheelers, and then, at leisure, we each yoked the four pair for the swing. The point was to yoke the more kindly, trim and biddable cattle for leaders, being sure that they knew something about the yoke—and then for wheelers we sought out the heavy sturdy fellows, for they had not only to carry the wagon tongue, but to hold the wagon back going down the hills. Anything would do for the swing, and we yoked the high-headed nimble footed fellows, for, when they were once hitched in, they were powerless for mischief, and their efficiency often depended upon their ability to handle themselves.



I had been shut up in sedentary life for awhile [sic] and was pale ..., so the rough frontiersmen, with whom I was matched ... laughed at the idea of my going into that corral to yoke a team, but I had been reared on a farm; had broken and handled cattle.... I knew the points of a steer, and came out of the corral with a team as good as any of them.”

\*\*\*\*\*When the Santa Fe Trail still was active with travelers, James Hall’s father established a claim on Ottawa Creek about a mile south of the Santa Fe Trail in Douglas County, Kansas. James grew up on that farm, and “...when the weather and wind were favorable, ... [the James family] could hear the crack of the murderous whips, and the shouts of the drivers” who were traveling on the Santa Fe Trail (p. 50). **Source:** Hall, James C. “Personal Recollections of the Santa Fe Trail”, *Kansas Magazine*, 5(1): (January 1911), 49-55, quote on p. 51.

### **James C. Hall**

#### **1863 early September, from 1911 memoir**

“...Our wagons were empty....

In the early part of September, we drove into Fort Leavenworth, and turned over the remnant of our teams and outfits. Received our pay of Twenty-five dollars a month and returned to our homes, to learn that Lawrence had been sacked by Quantrill, and some out of our own families, murdered in the raid.”

\*\*\*\*\*When the Santa Fe Trail still was active with travelers, Hall’s family settled on a farm one mile south of Santa Fe Trail in Douglas County. While a college student, Hall had spent the summer of 1863 as a wagon driver with a wagon train that went to and from Ft. Union on the Santa Fe Trail. **Source:** Hall, James C. “Personal Recollections of the Santa Fe Trail”, *Kansas Magazine*, 5(1): (January 1911), 49-55, quote on p. 55.

### **Mary Ringo**

#### **1864 May 19 & 20**

“May 19, Thursday. I got up and prepared breakfast and started again. We traveled two miles and come to the Missouri river at Leavenworth and here the children have the pleasure of seeing a steamboat. We were detained a short time waiting for the Ferry-boat being on the opposite side we got across in safety. A gentleman by the name of Owen drives the mules up in the city for me while Mr. Ringo helps Johnny with the oxen here. We get our groceries and other necessities for our comfort and then drive about four miles and camp for the night, prepare our supper and go to bed and slept much better than I did last night, we got a stable for our mules and both the oxen for which we pay fifteen cents a head.

May 20, Friday. We remain here waiting we have our family wagon tires cut and by noon Mr. Tipton and Mr. Cirby’s families overtake us, we then hitch up and travel out as far as the eight



mile house and camp for the night. Mr. Tipton was so unfortunate as to get their wagon wheel broke which will detain them a short time and just after we get into camp Dr. Moores [sic] family came up.”

\*\*\*\*\*The Ringo family members left their home in Liberty, Missouri on May 18. The first day the family traveled 10 miles and then reached Leavenworth on the next day. This family likely traveled the Leavenworth to Liberty Road. Mary Ringo does mention the “eight mile house” beyond Leavenworth. The editor Kenneth Holmes says that the California-bound families traveled the Leavenworth Road from Leavenworth, Kansas to Fort Kearney, Nebraska. **Source:** “The 1864 Journal: Mary Ringo”, 199-231, excerpt on pp. 204-205, in Holmes, Kenneth L., editor. *Covered Wagon Women: Diaries & Letters from the Western Trails, 1862-1865*, Vol. 8. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1999 [reprint of 1989 edition].

### **Leavenworth City Directory and Business Mirror for 1865-1866 1865**

“The immense transportation of freight from Leavenworth, westward, is conclusive evidence of the natural advantages of her position. Nothing is more novel to the dweller in the East, when he first visits the far West, than the sight of one of these Government trains, or fleet of prairie schooners, as the plainsmen term them, drawing its lazy length along the prairies. ... One of these trains is composed of from fifteen to fifty wagons, each carrying from two and a half to three tons of freight, and drawn by four to six yoke of cattle, or spans of mules.”

\*\*\*\*\*A municipal business directory obviously intends to promote a city. This promotion does mention the volume of government trains and prairie schooners. The latter term could refer only to commercial wagons of traders or that term also could refer to the wagons of both traders and emigrants. **Source:** King, Marsha K. *Results of Phase IIIa Archival Investigations at 14LV389 in the Leavenworth Landing Project Area Leavenworth County, Kansas*. Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1996, excerpt from business directory on p. 20.

### **John Morrill 1865 December 25**

“Fort Leavenworth KS Dec 25/65 [1865]

...

Dear wife & Children

I wish you A merry Christmas, we are here all safe & Sound. Started from Larnad [sic] Dec 7<sup>th</sup> and arrived here about noon to day [sic]. We had a cold time most of the way. Yesterday & to day [sic] it has thawed so as to make it quite muddy as there is but little snow here. But when we started from Larned there was 8 or 10 inches of snow no road & very cold. I understand that the





mercury was down to 16 to 22 most of the time on the first half of our march & a very cold high wind which made it very uncomfortable. Indeed nearly  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the men froze themselves some & some quite bad & when I look back it is a wonder that some of them did not perish. ... I looked upon Leavenworth this morning.... It is now understood that we shall muster out Wednesday if so shall not remain here long. You had better direct your next to Madison Wis. As I am in hopes they will hurry us home. The men from our vicinity are well. I found 2 letters here for me directed to Larnerd [sic] was glad to find them but they were rather Old. I presume there are several others floating around for me. ... I am in hopes we shall reach Wis about Jan 1<sup>st</sup> if we are mustered out so as to leave here the last of this week. I shall not write you again until we arrive at Madison. ...”

\*\*\*\*\*This letter shows that Fort Leavenworth often was a temporary waystation for soldiers going to and coming from western forts via the Santa Fe Trail. Morrill does spell Ft. Larned three different ways. **Source:** Morrill, John. “Winter on the Plains”, *Wagon Tracks*, 33(2): (February 2019), 26-27, letter on p. 27.