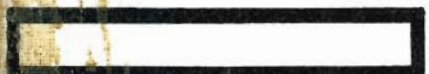


**THE EMPORIA STATE**



**RESEARCH**



**STUDIES**



THE GRADUATE PUBLICATION OF THE EMPORIA KANSAS STATE COLLEGE

**A Detailed Study of  
the Aubry Cutoff  
of the Santa Fe Trail  
and Fort Aubry.**



**BY**

**EUGENE P. BURR**

v. 23 #1

# *The Emporia State Research Studies*

EMPORIA KANSAS STATE COLLEGE

EMPORIA, KANSAS 66801

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EUGENE P. BURR

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Volume XXIII

Summer, 1974

Number 1

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THE EMPORIA STATE RESEARCH STUDIES is published quarterly by The School of Graduate and Professional Studies of the Emporia Kansas State College, 1200 Commercial St., Emporia, Kansas, 66801. Entered as second-class matter September 16, 1952, at the post office at Emporia, Kansas, under the act of August 24, 1912. Postage paid at Emporia, Kansas.

EMPORIA KANSAS STATE COLLEGE  
EMPORIA, KANSAS

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Cover Sketch of Francis X. Aubry –  
Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society

Some of the maps appear more than once to assist the reader in following the Aubry Cutoff.

“Statement required by the Act of October, 1962; Section 4369, Title 39, United States Code, showing Ownership, Management and Circulation.” **The Emporia State Research Studies** is published quarterly. Editorial Office and Publication Office at 1200 Commercial Street, Emporia, Kansas. (66801). The **Research Studies** is edited and published by the Emporia Kansas State College, Emporia, Kansas.

A complete list of all publications of *The Emporia State Research Studies* is published in the fourth number of each volume.

# A Detailed Study of the Aubry Cutoff of the Santa Fe Trail and Fort Aubry

by

Eugene P. Burr \*

## I. SANTA FE TRAIL

For students of the American West, one of the most important and interesting areas of study is the Santa Fe Trail. This early American freeway ran from Westport, on the western boundary of Missouri, through an area now encompassing Kansas and part of Oklahoma, Colorado, and New Mexico. The settlement of the western portion of Kansas, as well as partial settlement of the other states, came directly from establishment of the Santa Fe Trail and its subsequent use. Origins of the trail were largely economic. Hundreds of wagons loaded with goods in Missouri made the trek to Santa Fe, where the eager New Mexican populace from Santa Fe, Taos, and the surrounding areas paid premium prices for the merchandise.

While most of the trading was done in the Santa Fe-Taos area, records exist telling about tradesmen who ventured as far south as Chihuahua and Durango in Mexico. The remote geographic location of Santa Fe was the chief contributing factor to the success of the trading business. It was on the extreme northern edge of the Spanish Empire in the New World, and later, after 1821, of the Republic of Mexico, serving throughout as the seat of government for the New Mexico Territory.

Santa Fe was a considerable distance from any close trading center, and supplies had to come chiefly from the internal provinces by way of Vera Cruz or Durango. Lines of communication between Santa Fe and these towns were quite poor. The overland distance was some two thousand miles to Vera Cruz through the deserts and rough mountains of northern Mexico. Goods were carried by pack-train, which considerably limited quantity.<sup>1</sup>

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\* Mr. Burr is a member of the faculty and Assistant Principal of Dodge City, Kansas, High School. This study originated as a master's thesis in 1971 under the direction of Professor Walter W. Butcher in the Division of Social Sciences, Emporia Kansas State College.

<sup>1</sup> Bliss Isley and W. M. Richards, *Four Centuries in Kansas* (Wichita: The McCormick Mathers Company, 1936), 87. There are many studies of the Santa Fe Trail. Three good summary accounts of the early years may be found in Robert W. Richmond, *Kansas, A Land of Contrasts* (Saint Charles, Missouri: Forum Press, 1974) 41-47; William Frank Zornow, *Kansas, A History of the Jayhawk State* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), 55-60; and Leo E. Oliva, *Soldiers on the Santa Fe Trail* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 3-24.

People of New Mexico had always wished for faster, safer, and more frequent trips to the South, but they never came. They were quick to realize that trading with the Americans was faster and offered better quality goods at a cheaper price. They literally pounced upon the wagon trains as they arrived. The American traders, in turn, quickly saw that fortunes could be made in a short time, and many traders set out with just that purpose in mind.

A specific time of origin for the Santa Fe Trail is nowhere recorded. It is known that Frenchmen crossed the high plains to trade in Santa Fe in 1739, 1749, 1750, and 1751, but few of these venturers were allowed to return to the Mississippi river area from which they had come.<sup>2</sup> The Spaniards usually jailed these early traders and this, no doubt, was a deterrent to others who might have attempted trade in these early years. When Spain acquired the Louisiana Territory, a naturalized citizen, Pedro de Vial, was commissioned to blaze a trail between St. Louis and Santa Fe. In 1792 Vial traversed almost exactly the route that was later known as the Santa Fe Trail. Secrecy and caution veiled his journey, however, and it did not stimulate immediate large-scale commerce. That condition did not occur until the route was re-discovered and tested by Americans some thirty years later.<sup>3</sup>

The American encroachment into Santa Fe began when James Purcell conducted an expedition there in 1802, and then Jean Baptiste Leland, a French creole, followed in 1804. The real impetus to a flourishing trade with Santa Fe came about three years later, in 1807. At this time, Captain Zebulon Montgomery Pike returned from expeditions up the Arkansas River and was captured by the Spanish authorities. The subsequent publication of the accounts of his experiences created great interest.<sup>4</sup>

In 1812 an expedition of about twelve men set out under the direction of Robert McKnight, James Baird, and Samuel Chambers. They followed Captain Pike's directions, reached Santa Fe, and were arrested as spies. They spent the next nine years in confinement at Chihuahua and Durango, and were finally released in 1821. Those able to return to the United States spread their story. Other men were inspired to consider similar journeys for the purpose of trading with Santa Fe and thus capitalizing on the potential wealth.<sup>5</sup>

On September 1, 1821, William Becknell started from Franklin, Missouri, with a pack train of mules loaded with goods to sell. He was going to Comanche country to do his trading. Becknell's train followed

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<sup>2</sup> Josiah Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, ed. by Max Moorhead (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), 9, note 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12.

the trail across the prairie as far as the big bend of the Arkansas River. The traders then followed the river west to the Rocky Mountains. Upon reaching the mountains, on November 13, 1821, they were met by a Mexican army patrol. The patrol escorted them to Santa Fe and they arrived there on November 16, 1821. At Santa Fe, they heard news about Mexico's recent separation from Spain. This spelled the end of Spain's restrictive trade policy. Becknell was allowed to freely sell his merchandise, and, in doing so, recorded a considerable profit. He then returned to Missouri with the information that Santa Fe and all of New Mexico would welcome commercial exchange with tradesmen of the United States.<sup>6</sup>

Becknell's favorable reports led directly to other expeditions, including a second mission by Becknell himself in 1822, famous because wagons were first used.<sup>7</sup> On this trip Becknell also scored another first when he tried to establish a more direct route to Santa Fe. He attempted and completed a crossing of the southwest Kansas area from the Arkansas River to the Cimarron River, followed that river, and then proceeded to Santa Fe.<sup>8</sup>

The Santa Fe Trail ran through harsh, rugged land. The eastern portion of the trail was in hilly country, making travel difficult, but containing abundant streams ensuring fresh drinking water. More formidable were the plains of Western Kansas and Eastern Colorado and New Mexico through which most of the trail ran. The farther west the land, the more level it became, until, as it reached the Rocky Mountains, it was but a great plain, arid and stark. This plain was dominated by its lack of trees, sandy soil, and shallow rivers, drying up in the spells of drought that so frequently occurred. Water became the most precious commodity to the adventurers who made crossings of this Great American Desert. This area was also the hunting ground for several Indian tribes. As the traders moved across these hunting grounds, they became a definite threat to these Indians, and the conflicts that developed between the two groups were severe and violent.

In order to avoid Indian conflicts, the traders were continually searching for newer and safer routes to Santa Fe, with some of the new routes developing into major cutoffs of the main trail. As a rule, these cutoffs offered shorter distances to cover, hopefully less Indian encounters and more plentiful water supplies.

One such branch of the trail divided from the main trail at a point about twenty miles west of the 100th meridian (presently the sight of Cimarron, Kansas), while the regular route continued on westward to Bent's Fort in Bent County, Colorado. The Cimarron Cutoff, as it was called, is also known as the water scrape. The supply of water on the Cimarron Trail was notably scarce. After leaving water on the Arkansas

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 15, especially see notes 13 and 14.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.

River, travelers had to cover sixty-six miles until they again reached water, this time at a point on the Cimarron River. Nevertheless, the Cimarron Cutoff became extremely popular. Even though it was dry and subject to Indian attacks, it was considerably shorter than the regular route and this feature was highly prized by the traders. They wanted as short a route as possible to the wealth of Santa Fe and then wanted the fastest route home again so they could reload their wagons and go after more money.

A dedicated young man who helped to make the West more accessible to the East was one who searched the area along the Santa Fe Trail to find an even faster and safer route to Santa Fe. His name was Francois Xavier Aubry. He continued exploring until he found what he considered the best route to Santa Fe, and he continued to use this new route on all his trading ventures to Santa Fe thereafter. The shortcut he established was more accessible to water and there was less Indian trouble along it than on the regular Cimarron Cutoff. This cutoff, known as Aubry's Route, an army fort and a town named in his honor, and Aubry himself combine to make one of the most interesting stories of the settlement of the West.

## II. F. X. AUBRY

The name of Francois Xavier Aubry must surely be near the top of any list of men who figured extensively in the history of the southwestern United States. He succeeded in leaving his mark all across the Great Plains area, and a cutoff on the Santa Fe Trail, an army fort, and a western Kansas town, all bear his name.

Aubry, whose first name is often referred to in the more Americanized form, Francis, and whose last name appears in three ways, Aubrey, Auberry, and, most frequently, Aubry, was a French Canadian. He was born in Maskinongé, a village on the St. Lawrence River in western Quebec, on December 4, 1824. Little is known about Aubry's early childhood, although he received an elementary education, and then due to the financial hardship of his parents he took a job in a near-by town, leaving it to go to St. Louis, where he arrived in 1843 at eighteen years of age. Clerking in a store did not appeal to Aubry, and he next appears in Independence, Missouri. Shortly, he was starting his own commercial enterprise of freighting cargoes to Santa Fe, New Mexico.<sup>1</sup>

Aubry made his reputation in this era by making quick trips between Independence and Santa Fe. He accomplished these trips by

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<sup>1</sup> Ralph P. Bieber, ed., *Exploring Southwestern Trails, 1846-1854* (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Company, vol. VII of *Southwest Historical Series, 1931-1943*), "Introduction," 38-39.



changing horses every hundred miles or so. He had previously left the horses stationed along the way for use when traveling in the opposite direction.

As a regular trader on his own, Aubry went twice to Santa Fe in 1847, making rapid journeys, although his commercial gains were modest.<sup>2</sup> Returning to Independence on January 5, 1848, he managed to cover the 780 miles between Santa Fe and the Missouri trading center in a little over fourteen days.<sup>3</sup>

Also in 1848, Aubry ventured again to Santa Fe with a cargo train and then left for the return trip, alone, on May 19, reaching Independence in only eight days and ten hours — a very impressive record.<sup>4</sup>

The Independence *Expositor* published an extra on May 29 to herald Aubry's feat. On June 3 the St. Louis *Republican*, reporting his arrival in that city on the previous evening, wrote of Aubry's "unexampled" traveling that "he lost, from detention by the Indians [near Pawnee Fork], more than a day [also lost his "baggage, provisions, packages of letters, &c.], and really made the distance . . . in seven days"; . . . that he "killed three horses and two mules [by hard riding]"; walked 40 [about 30!] miles [to Fort Mann, where he got a horse]; was three days without provisions; slept "only four or five hours on the route."<sup>5</sup>

Again in 1848 Aubry went to Santa Fe with a wagon train and then left there, on September 12, alone. He reported changing horses some seven different times and he reached Independence on September 17 in the amazing time of only five days and sixteen hours. The Aubry legend also includes a story about Aubry's being so very tired from going without sleep that he actually strapped himself into his saddle for a period of forty hours, at the end of the trip, in order to keep from collapsing and falling off the horse. Some of the drama, excitement, and hardship encountered by Aubry, in that speedy September ride, was reported over a century ago by the *Missouri Republican* on the day of his arrival:

On his way he had to swim every stream, was delayed by the transaction of business at Fort Mann, with his own teams which passed that way, and with the various parties of troops; and beside breaking down six horses and walking 20 miles on foot, he made the trip, traveling time only counted, in about four days and a half! During this time he slept two and a half hours and ate only six

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-41.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>4</sup> Louise Barry, *The Beginnings of the West, Annals of the Kansas Gateway to the American West 1540-1854* (Topeka, Kansas State Historical Society, 1972), 753-54.

<sup>5</sup> Barry, 754.

meals. It rained upon him 24 consecutive hours, and nearly 600 miles of the distance was performed in the mud, and yet, what is strange, the rain did not reach Council Grove. . . . We learn from Mr. A. that he made some portion of the trip between Santa Fe and Independence at the rate of 190 miles to the 24 hours. He had no one to accompany him.<sup>6</sup>

This trip earned Aubry the title, "Skimmer of the Plains."<sup>7</sup>

Aubry also received the title of Colonel, apparently honorary and bestowed upon him out of respect for his authority as a wagon master. This title was used in a recent 1954 item in the *Ulysses News* entitled "Old Graves Mark Historic Crossing Over Bear Creek." Here it was stated that in "1851 and 1852 Colonel Aubrey had a small garrison of troops stationed on the south side of the Arkansas River . . . . He was protecting wagon trains on the Santa Fe Trail."<sup>8</sup> Although the title was used, this is the only military reference to him, however, and the opinion that Aubrey's title was one earned while in military service is not supported by available sources.

It has been suggested that the motivational force behind Aubry's feats of speed and daring stem from his physical characteristics. He was five feet four inches in height, although some say five feet two inches, and he was described as having "small hands and feet."<sup>9</sup> More likely, however, he was just extremely energetic and took great pride in his personal accomplishments. Howard Bryan, of the *Albuquerque Tribune*, gave this account of Aubry:

Francis X. Aubrey was one of the most popular men in Santa Fe a century ago.

This dapper young French-Canadian . . . was equally at home on a dance floor or in a boxing ring. He was a graceful man of remarkable endurance and agility — a trail blazer and a record setter.

Francis X. Aubrey was described as a "boon companion and a dashing cavalier — popular among the men and more than popular among the women." He could speak several languages. He was a dead shot with a pistol or a rifle.<sup>10</sup>

The only available sketch of him shows him to be bearded and with a mustache. It is said by some authors that he had brown eyes and was extremely alert, with a Gallic temper.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Barry, 775-76; This ride is featured in David Dary, "The Crazy Bet and Fantastic Ride of F. X. Aubry," *The Kansas City Star Magazine*, January 23, 1972, 18, 21, 23.

<sup>7</sup> Barry, 775.

<sup>8</sup> "Old Graves Mark Historic Crossing Over Bear Creek," *Ulysses News*, June 17, 1965. Also see discussion in text in Section III at footnote 1.

<sup>9</sup> Howard Bryan, "Off the Beaten Path," *Albuquerque Tribune*, April 22, 1954.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

Aubry's title, "Skimmer of the Plains," was certainly no detriment to him as an enterprising young businessman engaged in carrying freight across the Great American Desert. He apparently had all the business he could handle and managed to guide as many as three trains a year from Independence to Santa Fe, and then back again. (See Figure One.)

On June 12, 1850, Aubry left Santa Fe with another wagon train of merchandise and reached Independence on July 3. On this trip, however, he had chosen to leave his company of forty-two men, ten wagons, and 200 mules at Cottonwood Crossing (about 185 miles from Independence) two days earlier.<sup>12</sup> Aubry had ridden the last part of the journey alone and as quickly as he could. Perhaps the old spirit for adventure via fast riding had overtaken him, or perhaps he just wanted to add some diversity and excitement to an otherwise routine trip. The usual newspaper sources reported Aubry's arrival at Independence, pointing out that Aubry traveled the last "125 miles of this distance in *twenty hours and a half.*"<sup>13</sup>

Aubry's stay at Independence this particular summer was short, lasting only about a month. He must immediately have set about assembling another wagon caravan to take to Santa Fe. Various newspapers, in recording the arrival of travelers from Santa Fe, published accounts of meetings on the trail to Santa Fe, and Aubry was already on the trail a month later. Several newspapers reported that:

Eastbound travelers who left Santa Fe in mid-July (and reached Ft. Leavenworth in mid-August) . . . [later] met Francis X. Aubry's train at Big Bend of the Arkansas . . . .

The eastbound mail which left Santa Fe August 1 met . . . Aubry's wagons at Lower Cimarron Springs . . . . Aubry reached Santa Fe some time in mid-August, in 36½ days from Independence. Of his round trip it was reported: "The wagons were absent from Santa Fe 77 days being 21 days less than any previous trip."<sup>14</sup>

With his final caravan of that year, Aubry then returned to Independence where he spent the ensuing winter months. As soon as the weather improved, he assembled another wagon train of commodities and on or about March 10, 1851 he left Independence once again. This is recorded as apparently the first merchandise train on the trail in 1851.<sup>15</sup>

Aubry sold his goods in Santa Fe and promptly assembled another cargo of merchandise to sell in Independence. This trip was to prove

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<sup>12</sup> Durham, Kansas, is now located at the point Aubry referred to as Cottonwood Crossing.

<sup>13</sup> Barry, 950-51.

<sup>14</sup> Barry, 956.

<sup>15</sup> Barry, 985.

FIGURE ONE

## SUMMARY OF SOME OF AUBRY'S TRIPS DURING THE HEIGHT OF HIS CAREER AS TRADER AND EXPLORER ON THE SANTA FE TRAIL

Date of Departure	Destination	Route	Date of Arrival	Days in Route
Dec. 22, 1847	Independence	Cimarron	Jan. 5, 1848	14
May 19, 1848	Independence	Cimarron	May 27, 1848	8
Sept. 12, 1848	Independence	Cimarron	Sept. 17, 1849	5
June 12, 1850	Independence	Cimarron	July 3, 1850	23
July 14, 1850	Santa Fe	Cimarron	August 18, 1850	36
March 10, 1851	Santa Fe	Cimarron	?	?
April 23, 1851	Independence	unsuccessful attempt to find new route	May 12, 1851	19
June, 1851	Las Vegas, New Mexico	Cimarron	Sept., 1851	60+
Sept. 19, 1851	Independence	Aubry	Oct. 11, 1851	22
Oct. 24, 1851	Santa Fe	Aubry	?	?
Dec. 31, 1851	Independence	Aubry	Feb. 5, 1852	36
March, 1852	Santa Fe	Aubry	?	?
April 11, 1852	Independence	Aubry	May 8, 1852	27
May, 1852	Santa Fe	Aubry	July 3, 1852	?
July 31, 1852	Independence	Aubry	August 25, 1852	25
Sept., 1852	Santa Fe	Aubry	Oct., 1852	?

The sketchiness of the early portion of the summary is due to the fact that only Aubry's "fast" trips gained him fame enough to have dates accurately recorded. The regularity established in the latter part of the summary comes about as Aubry regularly used his route and the speed of his wagon trains was something for newspapers of the day to write about.

one of the more interesting of Aubry's trading career. Aubry left Santa Fe on April 23 and reached Cold Spring (see reference in Section III) in the Oklahoma Panhandle on April 29. Aubry chose to leave the regular Santa Fe road about two miles northeast of the spring and attempted a new road running in an east-north direction. He was hoping to find a better trail to the Arkansas River. Aubry hoped that by choosing a new route the wagons could avoid the dreaded Jornada (a trip over the extreme dry area of the Cimarron Trail) and reach the river faster. But this trip, thought to be his first try at shortening the Santa Fe Trail, was unsuccessful. A contemporary account said, based on Aubry's journal:

On the 2d [May] they arrived at the [Arkansas] river, their animals having been two days without water. The last day the party

had no water to drink, and they traveled through sand and a hot sun, and had to drink the blood of the Antelope.<sup>16</sup>

On May 4 Aubry reported passing thirty lodges of Cheyenne Indians on their way to a peace council at Fort Mackay. The next day, upon reaching the fort, which was located about two miles west of present Dodge City, Aubry and his party witnessed a gigantic gathering of Indians. The Indian lodges crowded both sides of the Arkansas River for fifteen miles and the chiefs were sitting in council with the United States representatives. Bvt. Colonel William Hoffman was commandant. Aubry appeared on the scene just as the chiefs of the various Indian tribes and Colonel Hoffman had completed the ritual of smoking the pipe of peace.<sup>17</sup>

A few days farther along the trail Aubry's spirit for adventure again overcame him. After seeing his wagon train safely to the Cottonwood Crossing, he rode swiftly on ahead to Independence and arrived there in a total of nineteen days travel from Santa Fe. He completed the final approximately 200 miles of his trip in two days plus one hour.<sup>18</sup>

Aubry spent the next six weeks in Independence leisurely rearing a wagon train. He departed in late June with his second wagon train of the 1851 season. This trip was plagued with illness — namely, cholera that raged throughout the towns and settlements of the Great Plains at this time. Many wagon caravans were stricken with cholera; Aubry's was no exception. The July mail party reported seeing Aubry and his company west of Council Grove at 142 Mile Creek, and said that Aubry and hands who had been sick were well now. The August mail party, upon arriving at Independence near the end of August, mentioned seeing Aubry's train at the crossing of the Arkansas River and said they had been told by Aubry's group that the cholera among them had just subsided. A correspondent to the *Missouri Republican* gave the place of the meeting with Aubry as ten miles above Lower Cimarron and someone from Aubry's company, in a letter to the *Republican* dated August 8 and written at the Arkansas Crossing, said that they had been bothered quite extensively with cholera. It reported ten cases of the disease between Pawnee Fork and the Arkansas Crossing but said that only one person had actually died from the disease.<sup>19</sup> Many deaths are recorded in Plains history from cholera, and it is easy to understand the dread that must have accompanied Aubry's company when the disease was detected among them.

The illness, coupled with the fact that the summer of 1851 found Kansas rivers and streams all flooding, must have made this particular trip the most difficult of Aubry's career. The group was delayed several

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<sup>16</sup> Barry, 999.

<sup>17</sup> Barry, 997.

<sup>18</sup> Barry, 999.

<sup>19</sup> Barry, 1015.

times by sickness as well as by the elements of nature. This is illustrated by the fact that on August 23, the mail party arriving at Independence, reported having met Aubry at the Arkansas Crossing a few days earlier. It had taken Aubry's group about sixty days to go only half the distance to Santa Fe; he normally covered the entire distance to Santa Fe in only forty days.

Aubry disposed of this trainload of wares in and around Las Vegas, New Mexico, and once again assembled his wagons for the return trip to the northeast. This trip became very important to the history of the Santa Fe Trail, for Aubry attempted and established a new route between Cold Spring and the Arkansas River Crossing. This route was subsequently traveled by many wagon trains and became known as "Aubry's Trail." Aubry had left Las Vegas on September 19 and probably reached Cold Spring about September 25. Leaving Cold Spring, the group struck out in a new direction. Several Missouri newspapers commented on the venture:

Aubry (and train) has left the Santa Fe Trail (about September 25?) at Cold Spring . . . and traveled "from 10 to 40 degrees east of North" to the Arkansas, finding (as reported) "an excellent wagon road, well supplied with water and grass, and avoiding the Jornada and Cimarrone [Cimarron] trail altogether."<sup>20</sup>

A few days out of Independence, Aubry again chose to beat his wagon train to its destination. Leaving the merchandise train once more at the Cottonwood Crossing, Aubry covered the distance from there to Westport at a rate of a little over 100 miles per day, riding his favorite mare, Dolly.<sup>21</sup>

Aubry again wasted no time between trips. He reached Independence on October 11 and immediately began making arrangements for stock to take to New Mexico. He was ready to leave in less than two weeks, which was record, or near-record, time. This was the third merchant train of the year to New Mexico for Aubry. With his caravan in tow, he struck out once again in the now very familiar southwesterly direction of the much-worn Santa Fe Trail. The first recorded information concerning this trip comes from the *Missouri Republican*, October 28, 1851. It reported Aubry's location as ten miles west of the Cottonwood Fork, in present Marion County, Kansas.<sup>22</sup>

It is interesting to note now that Aubry's train was not met by the November mail party. Aubry had utilized his new route, the one he perfected on the previous trip in September and October. The Missouri-bound mail party, however, reported his location farther along the trail, and it described Aubry's train as getting on well.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Barry, 1042-43.

<sup>21</sup> Barry, 1042.

<sup>22</sup> Barry, 1046.

<sup>23</sup> Barry, 1046.

Aubry sold the merchandise in Santa Fe and remained but a short while. Attempting travel during the winter months with loaded wagons was nearly unheard of, and considered quite impossible, but no so to Aubry. Never content, he did not hesitate to ignore the threat of inclement weather, and in the middle of winter, on December 31, 1851, he departed with a twelve-wagon caravan and a complement of men. Aubry's craving for the daring ruled his actions once again. Upon reaching Cold Spring, he selected still another route to the Northeast. This time he crossed the Arkansas River at a point higher up than usual. His party experienced very intense cold weather, recording temperatures of sub-zero readings on several occasions. On both January 18 and 19 the temperature dipped to minus twenty degrees. One night the party camped on an island in the Arkansas River and cut through two feet of solid ice without finding water. They struggled through snow up to eighteen inches deep. Nevertheless, they managed to get to Independence on February 5, presumably with a large amount of specie, and without losing a single mule. The *Missouri Republican* designated Aubry "the most daring traveler on the prairies."<sup>24</sup>

On February 14 Aubry went to St. Louis, Missouri, and shortly thereafter the *Missouri Republican*, questioned Aubry about the possibility of his having discovered a newer and better route to the southwest. Aubry said, however, that he did not consider this route as good a trail as was his former one.<sup>25</sup>

By this time Aubry's name was well known throughout the Midwest. Many wagons traversed "Aubry's Route" (Aubry's Trail) and people referred to the trail's crossing on the Arkansas River as "Aubry's Crossing." Located near this crossing was a spring, also known as "Aubry's Spring." He was, perhaps, the only wagon master daring and skillful enough to attempt and successfully complete a winter trip. A modern historian has referred to Aubry as "intrepid and indefatigable"<sup>26</sup> in describing his immense energy and drive. He could not be idle. In fact, in only two short weeks after his arrival in St. Louis, Aubry was back again in Independence and ready with a full wagon train of goods to take to Santa Fe. His was the first wagon train bound for New Mexico in the 1852 year.

He reached Santa Fe, arranged his trading business, and left again for Independence on April 11. He arrived there on May 8. The *Occidental Messenger*, official newspaper in Independence, added its applause for Aubry's accomplishments. Referring to the fact that this was Aubry's second arrival in Independence for that particular year, it said, "As a traveler . . . Aubry has not an equal in the Union."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Barry, 1064.

<sup>25</sup> Barry, 1064.

<sup>26</sup> Barry, 1064.

<sup>27</sup> Barry, 1089.

This trip found Aubry still exploring and trying to find the best route between Santa Fe and the Missouri border. He traveled his regular "Aubry Route" to the Arkansas River, but once across the river sought a newer route. According to the *Occidental Messenger*, one William S. Allen accompanied Aubry, and historians have assumed that it was Allen who corresponded with a larger newspaper, *The Missouri Republican*, supplying some notes about this exploration of Aubry north of the Arkansas River. Among other things, he said,

Leaving Santa Fe . . . we pursued the usual route as far as Cold Spring. Two miles northeastwardly of that point we turned off, and shaping our course north by east, reached the Cimarrone river at a distance of 7 miles from the Spring. Crossing it, we proceeded on a general course N. 25 E. to Bear Creek, touching it at a bend 25 miles from the crossing of the Cimarrone. . . . [After following down Bear creek for some 20 miles] we crossed over to the Arkansas, in the direction N 20 E., 15 miles distant, striking that river 12 miles above Choteau's Island and 58 above the point where the Cimarrone road crosses the Arkansas . . . .<sup>28</sup>

Aubry apparently then made guinea pigs out of this wagon train, for once across the river he departed from the regular route. The correspondent wrote,

Mr. Aubry, being satisfied that a still further saving of distance could be made on this side of the Arkansas, determined to test the point, on his present journey, by leaving that river some miles below his crossing. The point chosen was five miles below Elk Island, and twenty-five miles above the Cimarrone Crossing.

From this point we set out on the 25th ulto., our general course being N. 25 E. . . . Next day they came to "Buffalo Creek," . . . [and several days later] found themselves, not near the mouth of Pawnee Fork, as anticipated, but "at the Big Bend of the Arkansas" . . . and learned that the stream they had followed was Walnut Creek. . . .<sup>29</sup>

Aubry was apparently well satisfied with these explorations and considered this road very good, but he felt it would be even better if the United States government would establish military posts at Walnut Creek and near Cold Spring.<sup>30</sup> Considering such adventure under the circumstances surrounding these explorations, historians have perhaps not even credited Aubry with having the bravery and skill which he obviously possessed. His confidence in himself and his abilities ap-

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<sup>28</sup> Barry, 1089.

<sup>29</sup> Barry, 1089-90.

<sup>30</sup> Barry, 1090.



parently never wavered. He did not hesitate to take an entire wagon train over foreign terrain, and he evidently was so sure of his capabilities as a scout and trail guide that failure was inconceivable.

Perhaps, in Aubry's experiences, there was more danger in the contraction of the uncontrollable diseases of the time than from the wilderness and the Indians. Cholera plagued his caravan for the second time, and Aubry again had to contend with the epidemic proportions the illness reached within his group.

May found Aubry again on the trail, heading for Santa Fe. Near Plum Buttes, about June 12, Aubry's train was encamped with cholera raging heavily in it. *The Missouri Republican* reported on June 25 and 26 that seventeen cases of cholera had occurred at one time in Aubry's train, but went on to say that due to Aubry's careful attention to his men, only one of them had succumbed to the illness.<sup>31</sup> Elsewhere in the same issue, the arrival of another trader was noted, and he reported that he had met Aubry's caravan and that it "was progressing very well, the sickness in his party having abated. . . ." <sup>32</sup> The June mail party reported meeting Aubry's train between the Coon Creeks and said that it was getting along very well.<sup>33</sup>

Aubry and his company finished the venture to Santa Fe and were ready again to leave there on July 31. The Independence-bound August mail party which was on the Aubry Trail about the same time, overtook Aubry's party at the Arkansas Crossing. They had utilized Aubry's Route between Cold Spring and the Arkansas River, and after their arrival at Independence reported to the *Occidental Messenger* that they found Aubry's route a most excellent one for both summer and winter travel.<sup>34</sup> The *Messenger* issued further compliments, "Aubry deserves praise for making it out so successfully, and in spite of all opposition and danger, opening up a way so useful to all who cross the plains."<sup>35</sup>

Aubry's company arrived in Independence, this time on August 25. The trip from Santa Fe had taken a mere twenty-five days. It was reported that they brought in "25,000 in specie and \$30,000 in drafts."<sup>36</sup> On this mission, Aubry carried copies of the *Santa Fe Gazette Extra*, dated July 17, 1852. This issue contained an article written by Aubry, in which he replied to Bvt. Capt. John Pope, topographical engineer, in defense of his discovery of the new road which he had established between Cold Spring and the Arkansas River. Pope was publicly making a claim as the discover of what was called "Aubry's Route." The *Gazette Extra* editorialized,

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<sup>31</sup> Barry, 1097.

<sup>32</sup> Barry, 1097.

<sup>33</sup> Barry, 1097.

<sup>34</sup> Barry, 1121.

<sup>35</sup> Barry, 1121.

<sup>36</sup> Barry, 1123.

"The probability is that civilians will generally call it Aubrey's Route, while the military will designate it as Pope's Route." The *Occidental Messenger* . . . of June 26 (?) had stated: "We Learn from our exchanges and other sources, that Captain Pope disputes with Aubry the right of discovery to his new route."<sup>37</sup>

Aubry was apparently not too impressed by the claims made by Pope. He had been known to travel the route as early as 1850 while Pope's explorations did not begin until a year later. Aubry's Route was the name bearing fame, and notes of the people traveling with him leave little doubt that he was the original determiner of the cutoff.

Aubry began his last journey on the Santa Fe Trail about mid-September, 1852. The Independence-bound October mail party reported meeting Aubry at "Aubry's Crossing" on about October 10.<sup>38</sup> Aubry reached Santa Fe and the next account of his whereabouts comes in a letter written by New Mexico's governor, William Carr Lane. The letter, dated November 16, 1852, stated,

(Aubry) sets out tomorrow, for California, via the Mexican state-Sonora, with a flock of sheep. He appears to be restless, when stationary, & only contented, when making these appalling Journeys.<sup>39</sup>

Aubry made a successful sheep-selling trip to California and kept a careful diary of this journey. A year later he took another similar trip and again kept a diary. Why he did not keep a careful diary while exploring the Santa Fe route is not known; or, perhaps, if he did keep notes, they have been lost. Certainly a realm of worthwhile information could have been obtained from such a record and much clarification of the early history of the cutoff and the Santa Fe Trail itself could have been documented.

At any rate, Aubry's flamboyant days of exploration were soon to end. Just prior to his departure on his second sheep-herding trip to California, Aubry was interviewed by Richard Hanson Weightman, good friend of Aubry, and the publisher of the *Amigo del Pais*, an Albuquerque newspaper. It was in the fall of 1853 and Weightman told Aubry that he planned to publish an account of Aubry's first trip to California in his newspaper. When it appeared, however, the article was not just an account of Aubry's travels. It was apparently quite abusive of Aubry's character and reputation, and it "ridiculed his personal attractions."<sup>40</sup> A copy of Weightman's article reached Aubry while he was still in California, and he set about immediately to return to New Mexico. He arrived there during the middle of August, and on August

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<sup>37</sup> Barry, 1123.

<sup>38</sup> Barry, 1125.

<sup>39</sup> *New Mexico Historical Review*, III (1928), 190.

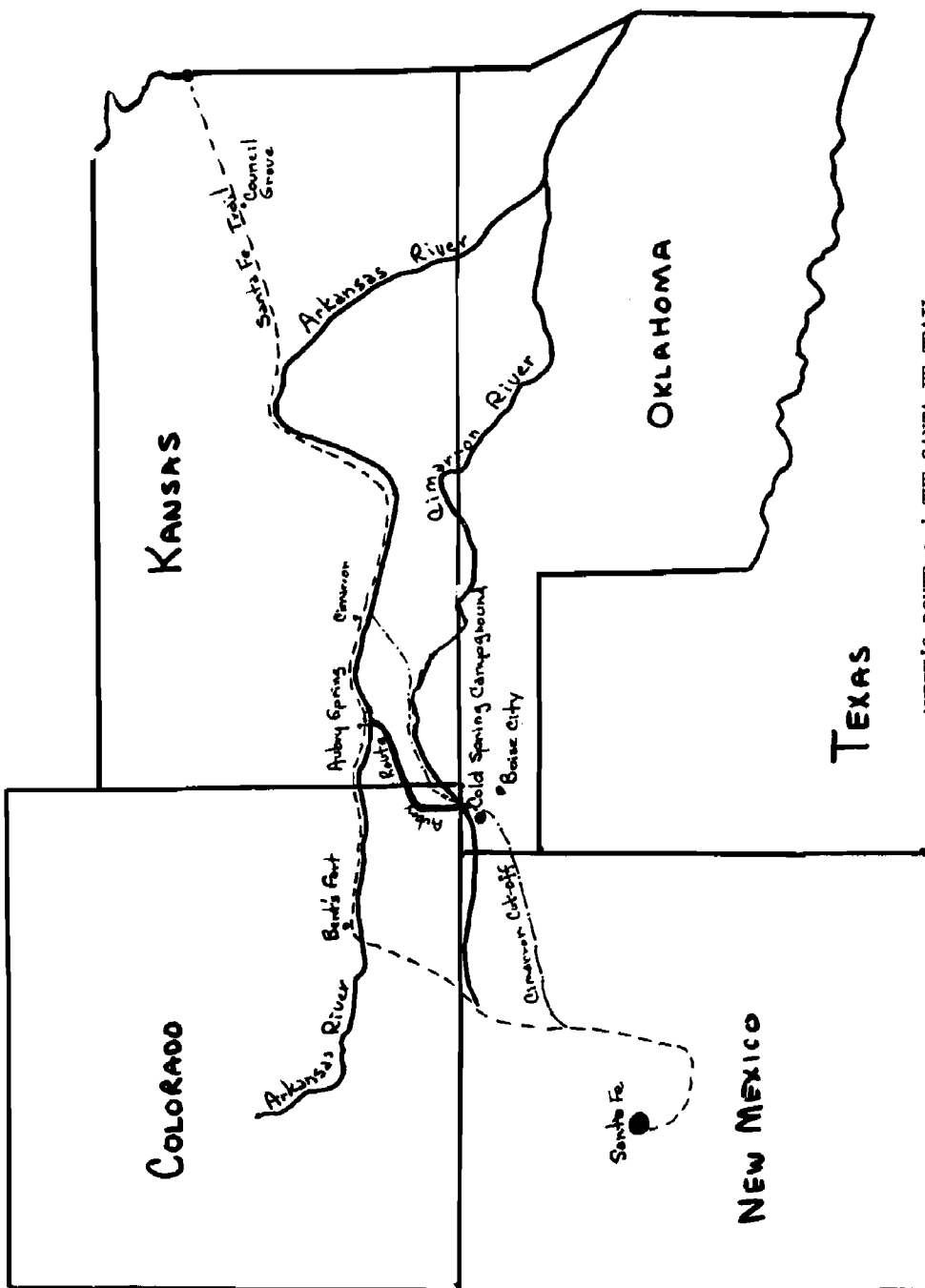
<sup>40</sup> Bryan, *Albuquerque Tribune*, April 22, 1954.

20 confronted Weightman at a local bar, Moncure's Saloon. While Weightman and certain of his associates tried to convince Aubry that the article was written just for fun and to play a joke on Aubry, Aubry was not convinced. During an ensuing conversation, drinks were thrown at Aubry, who then drew a revolver. One account says that a bullet prematurely exploded, but whether it was just accidental or fired, a bullet did pierce the ceiling of Moncure's Saloon. Weightman retaliated by drawing a Bowie knife and stabbing Aubry severely. Aubry died of the stab wounds a short while later. It is no doubt true that his temper matched his quick wit. Justice later saw fit to acquit Weightman of the murder charge on the claim that he was acting in self-defense. The same personal qualifications which led Aubry to become one of the great men of the Santa Fe Trail days also, in all probability, caused his premature death at only twenty-nine years of age.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Walker D. Wyman, "F. X. Aubrey, Santa Fe Freighter, Pathfinder and Explorer," *New Mexico Historical Review*, VII (1932), 9-10; Bieber, ed., *Southwestern Trails*, "Introduction," 59-61; Hobart E. Stocking, *The Road to Santa Fe* (New York: Hastings House, 1971), 235, 238.

III. THE AUBRY ROUTE



AUBRY'S ROUTE and THE SANTA FE TRAIL

The old Aubry Route, or trail, developed as a result of the ambitions of F. X. Aubry in constantly searching for new and better routes to the Southwest. He liked and used the Cimarron Cutoff on the Journadas Route of the regular Santa Fe Trail, but he also recognized its weaknesses. He, as most of the travelers who used this part of the trail, realized that the sixty-six miles between the Arkansas River and the lower spring of the Cimarron River were very dangerous, because the Indians in the area regarded it as their own hunting ground. These Indians did not hesitate to attack the travelers as poachers trespassing on their land. The problem led Aubry to begin his search for another route, preferably one with less distance between watering points and less trouble from the Indians. Although he traveled many new routes and made several fast rides between Santa Fe and Westport, an exciting and notable one occurred in September 1851. At this time, he successfully traversed a new route between the Cimarron Cutoff and the mountain route.

The discovery of his trail and his motive for its discovery have been subjects of much speculation. The most widely accepted version is given by Jay Baugh, editor of the Johnson, Kansas newspaper who prepared a "Synopsis of Stanton County" for the Stanton County, Kansas, Pioneer Day Program held on May 14, 1960. In his synopsis, Mr. Baugh asserts that

Colonel Francis Aubry was bearing military dispatches from Santa Fe in 1850, coming up the Cimarron Crossing Trail, or the dry route of the old Santa Fe Trail, through Grant County, when hostile Indians forced him back to the west. He made an encircling trip and discovered Bear Creek, east of the Colorado line, and angled northeast until he came to Choteau Island in the Arkansas River, where the French traders had established a post, later near Hartland and a few miles west of Lakin. That was in 1850. In 1851, Colonel Aubry set up a small garrison of troops on the south bank of the river off Choteau Island and escorted wagon trains southwest over the trail he had established the year before.<sup>1</sup>

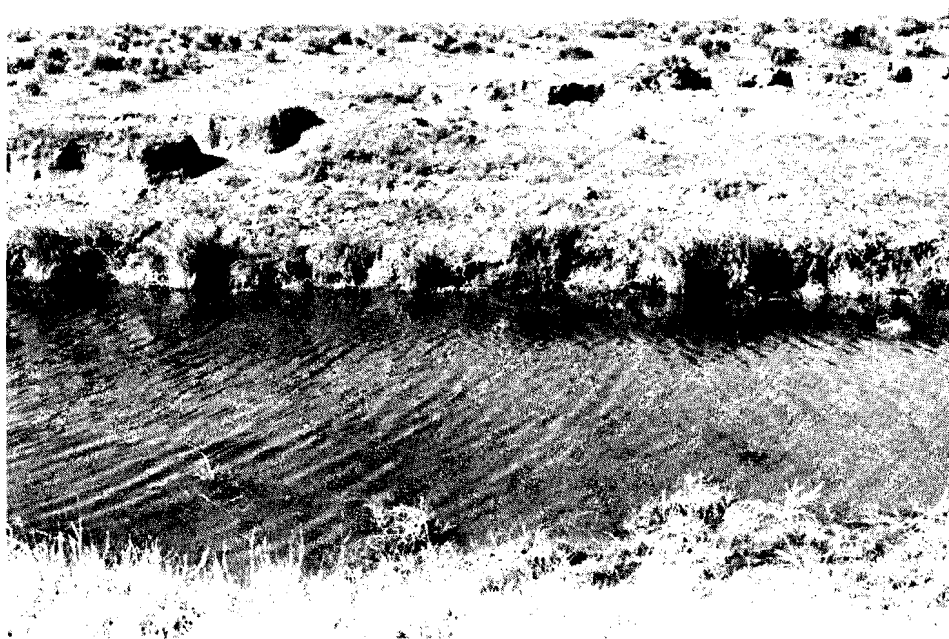
While this version is widely accepted, it is not necessarily entirely accurate. In 1848 and 1849, Aubry was actively engaged in the Westport-Santa Fe trade. In his attempts to set new speed records between the two towns, he took many different routes other than the regular Cimarron Cutoff and the Bent Fort Route of the Santa Fe Trail, although he did use the Cimarron Route most frequently. He was continually on the look-out for a better and faster route between Westport and Santa Fe, especially in the area Mr. Baugh mentions, and while he

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<sup>1</sup> Jay Baugh, "Synopsis of Stanton County" (paper read at Stanton County Pioneer Day program, Johnson, Kansas, May 14, 1960). (Mimeographed, Stanton County Library, Johnson, Kansas.)

may have originally found the route that became known as Aubry's Route by accident, it was not necessarily, as has been suggested, so that he could get military dispatches through the Indians or so he could personally escort wagon trains in the area. He did, on occasion, in these early years carry United States mail on his fast rides, but only to show that he could get it through faster than the regular mail, and to prove his speed to doubters by verification of postmarks which he had carried. He never established a post south of Choteau Island to escort trains over his trail. He did encourage others to use his trail simply because he was convinced that it was the best and safest route.<sup>2</sup>

This trail, known appropriately as the Aubry Route, had two termini—Cold Spring on the south and Aubry Spring on the north. The trail cut through the present counties of Hamilton and Stanton in Kansas, Baca in Colorado, and Cimarron in Oklahoma. It followed the same general direction as the present Highway 270 and 27, running south from Syracuse, Kansas to Johnson, Kansas; 160 from Johnson, Kansas to Springfield, Colorado; and 287-385 running south from Springfield, Colorado to Boise City, Oklahoma. It was a better cutoff than the



Shown above is one portion of Aubry Spring. It is located on the David Brownlee farm, just east of Syracuse, Kansas. A test revealed that the spring still pumps 1,400 gallons of water per hour, probably as much as it did in Aubry's time. It has never been known to go dry, not even during the dust bowl days.

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<sup>2</sup> A recent, interesting account is Leo E. Oliva, "The Aubry Route of the Santa Fe Trail," *Kansas Quarterly* (Spring 1973), 18-29.

Mountain Route of the Santa Fe Trail and the Cimarron Route because it was better watered. Nowhere along the trail was the distance between water more than thirty miles, meaning the travelers were assured of having water at least every other day. Also, there was less Indian trouble. The area was barren without natural shelter, contributing to a lack of game, and thus not suited for Indian hunting grounds. It was also somewhat shorter, and Aubry thought it easier to travel than the Cimarron Cutoff. The trail did not flourish, however, because travelers were anxious to take available cutoffs for shortening the long journey, and they usually chose the first one they came to—in this case, the Cimarron Cutoff. Most travelers continued to use the Cimarron Cutoff even though the Aubry Trail was well established. Aubry used his Route exclusively, and this usage, combined with others who did choose it, led to its recognition as a route to Santa Fe.

The wagons cut very deep ruts into the Southwest's sandy soil and they were destined to remain there for a long time. Elam Hilty, a retired school teacher and former county commissioner of Stanton County, vividly remembers the old wagon tracks, Hilty, whose stint in public office was in the 1920's and 1930's, has lived in Johnson, Kansas most of his life. He said the tracks were plainly visible when he moved there in 1905. He remembers the passage of the "herd laws" in Stanton County in the late 1920's, and how the land was nearly all plowed under by 1930. The wagon ruts, easily seen until this time, unfortunately were plowed under too and may now be seen only in isolated places. According to Hilty, most of the early settlers were brought there by the Aubry Trail<sup>3</sup> and it was instrumental to the settlement of the area.

Stanton County saw its first influx of settlers in about 1885 and several towns developed along or near the Aubry Trail. Among them were Mitchellville, 1887; Edwin, 1886, and Westhaven, 1887. None is still in existence. The trail continued to serve as a supply route for these towns and for the rest of Stanton County, as well as to those living in Cimarron County, Oklahoma. It was used for travel by the settlers, and most homesteaders had wagon roads leading to the main road, the Aubry Route, if they were not located adjacent to it. The trail was their lifeline to the railroad and to civilization for many years.

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<sup>3</sup> Statement by Elam Hilty, personal interview.

The old Aubry Route broke off from the main Santa Fe Trail at a point where the Aubry Spring is located and where Fort Aubry was built. This is in the northeast quarter of section 23 (T24S R40W), about a half mile off the county road running east and west from the old town of Mayline.<sup>4</sup>

The point is seven miles east of Syracuse, Kansas and about 400 yards north of the Arkansas River. It is fifty yards southwest of the barn on David Brownlee's farm.<sup>5</sup> The trail crossed the Arkansas River in the middle of the southwest quarter of section 23 (T24S R40W) and moved on south into the sand hills that still abound in the area, beginning on the southern bank of the river. The river during Aubry's time offered no real obstacle to the travelers as it was very shallow and its banks were low at this point, and without trees. There are considerable changes in the area now. Syracuse's city dump is located just west of the crossing and trees and other vegetation now line the river banks.

The sand hills to the south of the river proved to be a formidable foe to the wagons, but were by no means insurmountable. Today there is still a five mile deep strip along the southern edge of the Arkansas River composed of low hills of soft sand, without trees, but covered with sagebrush and prickly pears and occasionally patches of buffalo grass. As the trail crossed into these hills, it became difficult to follow. It spread out into many separate branches as much as a mile apart in some places. The main trail, however, moved from the middle of the southwest quarter of section 23 (T24S R40W) across the river into the middle of the northwest quarter of section 26 (T24S R40W). Avoiding the marshy area that lay along the river to the west in sections 21 and 22 (T24S R40W), it moved south toward the sand hills.

It then moved into the middle of the southwest quarter of section 26 (T24S R40W) and into the middle of the northwest quarter of section 35 (T24S R40W), followed a southerly direction into the southwest quarter of section 35 (T24S R40W), approximately 350 yards from its western edge and gradually farther west to its southwest corner. From here it went into the northeast quarter of section 3 (T25S R40W) at its extreme northeast corner, continuing its southern route. Upon entering this quarter, the trail began its ascent into the sand hills and left the river bottom area. The path it followed took it through a natural break in the hills. They are lower at this point and there are

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<sup>4</sup> For economy of space the legal descriptions of the route of the Aubry Trail will be written for example as follows: the northeast quarter of section 23 (T24S R40W). The townships are numbered south from the base line which is the 40th parallel and also the northern boundary of Kansas. The ranges are numbered east and west from the Sixth Principal Meridian, a line running north and south through Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska. In Kansas this line runs roughly through Wichita.

<sup>5</sup> See Section IV.



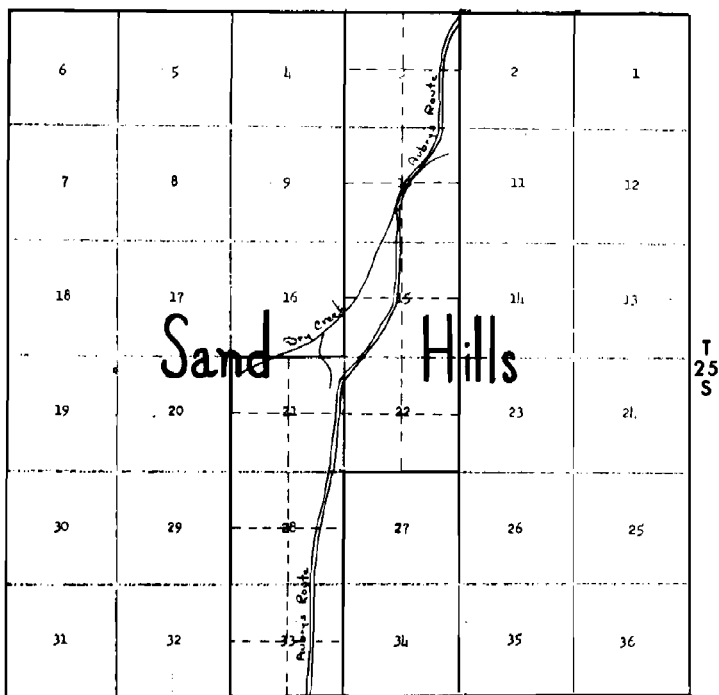


no steep climbs on the trail as it winds its way through the hills. The point where the trail enters the hills is easily found.<sup>6</sup>

From this quarter it then crosses into the southeast quarter of section 3 (T25S R40W) a little east of the middle of the northern edge of the quarter. It next crosses into the northeast quarter of section 10 (T25S R40W) a little to the east of the middle of its northern boundary, swinging a little westerly to the western part of the quarter. It crosses into the southwest quarter of section 10 (T25S R40W) at its extreme northeast corner. Moving along the eastern edge of this quarter, the trail moves into the eastern edge of the northwest quarter of section 15 (T25S R40W), through it, and into the southwest quarter of section 15 (T25S R40W) approximately 50 yards from the eastern border. After swinging west, it moves in the southwesterly direction across this quarter coming out at the southwest corner, approximately 150 yards from its western edge and just catches the northwestern corner of the northwest quarter of section 22 (T25S R40W).

It then moves into the northeast quarter of section 21 (T25S-R40W) approximately 90 yards from its northern edge. It moves along

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<sup>6</sup> One may travel south out of Syracuse, Kansas on highway 270-27, turn east at the first road (the old river road) on the south side of the Arkansas River. Follow this dirt and gravel road approximately seven miles until a dead end and then turn right on the road there. The old trail followed this road almost exactly for the trip through the sand hills.

the eastern edge of this quarter for a distance of 350 yards and into the southeast quarter of section 21 (T25S R40W). The trail then goes into the northeast quarter of section 28 (T25S R40W), through it, and comes out about in the middle of the southern edge of it, then goes into the southeast quarter of section 28 (T25S R40W). It next runs into the northeast quarter of Section 33 (T25 S R40W) at about the middle of its northern boundary, and then through the center of the southeast quarter of section 33 (T25S R40W).<sup>7</sup>

The route now travels across the northeast quarter of section 5 (T26S R40W), turns gradually east, then goes through the southeast quarter of section 5 (T26S R40W) approximately seventy-five yards from the east edge and into the northeast quarter of section 8 (T26S-R40W). It moves gradually in a southwesterly direction through this quarter and enters the southeast quarter of section 8 (T26 S R40W) in the eastern part, and continues through the eastern part of the northeast quarter of section 17 (T26S R40W).

Upon entering this section, the trail will begin to cross the small tributaries of Little Bear Creek and Big Bear Creek. Its course will not be greatly influenced by them, however, as they are not large and are easily crossed. The countryside is now changing and becoming hilly in appearance.

It moves in a gentle western direction entering the southeast quarter of section 17 (T26S R40W) at the center of its northern edge, then south, and on to the middle of the northeast quarter of section 20 (T26S R40W) and turns southeastward on across this quarter. It then just penetrates the northeast corner of the southeast quarter of section 20 (T26S R40W) and moves from there into the southwest quarter of section 21 (T26S R40W), approximately 300 yards from the northern edge where it quickly drops south. It leaves this quarter at approximately the center on the southern edge. It goes at the southeast angle and then enters the northwest quarter of section 28 (T26S R40W) at the center on the northern edge and moves across this quarter to its southeast corner.

Here, it enters, leaves, and then just catches the northeast corner of the southwest quarter of section 28 (T26S R40W) before it enters the southeast quarter of section 28 (T26S R40W). Near the middle of the western half of this quarter, the trail joins with another trail that developed later.<sup>8</sup>

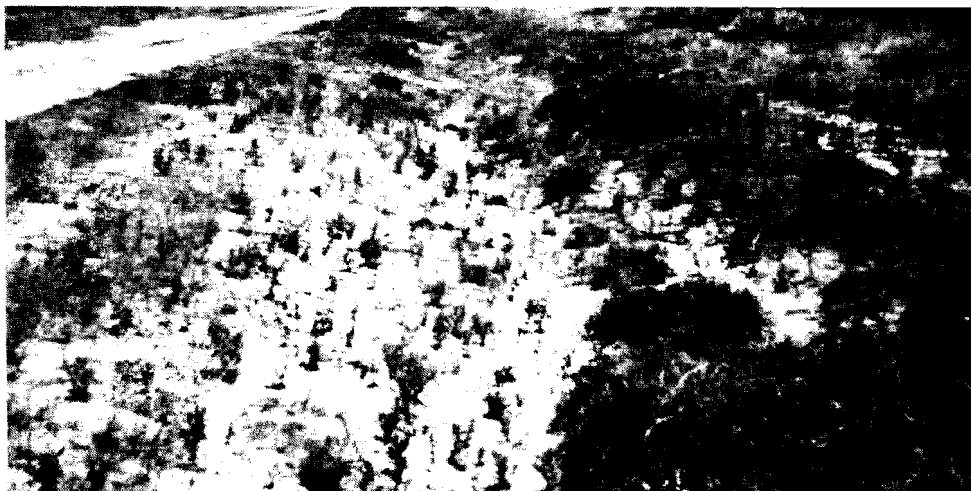
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<sup>7</sup> At this point the route is through the sand hills and on high ground. The trail runs approximately 200 yards to the west of the dirt road as it comes to a dead end at the section line. The section road just to the west is now closed and one must go one section beyond to follow the trail on its southern course. It will then be running east of the road approximately three-quarters of a mile and will be going generally in a straight southerly direction.

<sup>8</sup> This trail ran to the northeast to the old town of Aubry, now called Kendall. It was used much later in the history of southwest Kansas for trade between Kendall and Stanton County.

After this joining, the trail moves across this quarter to its southwest corner where it catches the extreme northwest corner of the northeast quarter of section 33 (T26S R40W). Then it moves to the south through the western portion of the quarter until it enters the eastern part of the southwest quarter of section 33 (T26S R40W) and moves south. It leaves this quarter and Hamilton County, Kansas in the eastern portion of its southern border and moves into Stanton County.

The trail enters Stanton County through the northwest quarter of section 4 (T27S R40W) in the eastern part, approximately 100 yards from the eastern edge of the quarter. It goes, then, south through this quarter, entering the eastern part of the southwest quarter of section 4 (T27S R40W). It then moves in a gradual southwesterly direction to a point approximately 100 yards east of the middle of its southern edge. The trail may be seen at this point as it travels in a north-south direction.<sup>9</sup>



Aubry's Trail ruts are still visible today in some places. Here they are shown as they appeared in the summer of 1970. The location is where the trail crosses the Hamilton-Stanton County line.

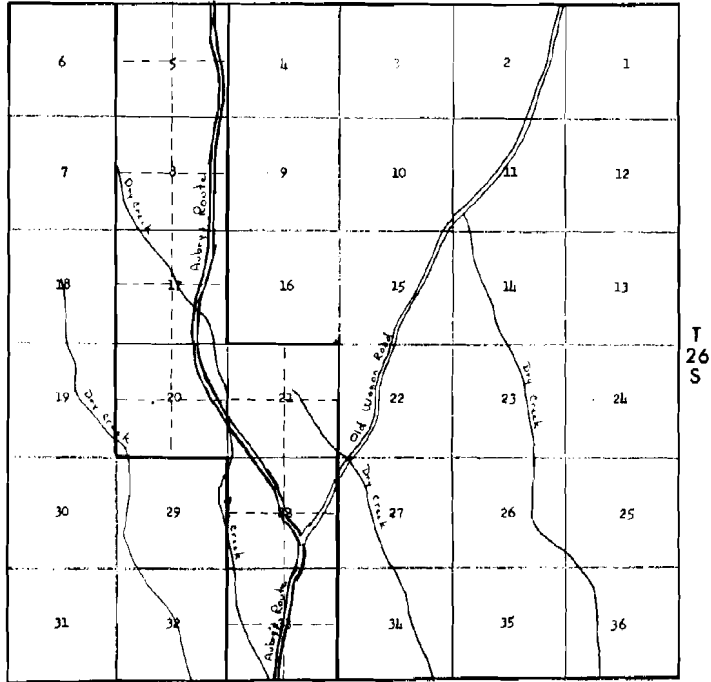
The trail next crosses the northern boundary of the northwest quarter of section 9 (T27S R40W). Just after entering this quarter at a point about fifty yards within the quarter, the trail crosses a small dry creek that is one of the many tributaries of Little Bear Creek. There is no vegetation along the banks of this creek and it remains dry except for during periods of rain, when it does flow freely for a time.

After crossing this dry creek, the trail crosses the southwest quarter of section 9 (T27S R40W), gradually moving in the southwestern direction to its southwest corner. The countryside in this area is striking in

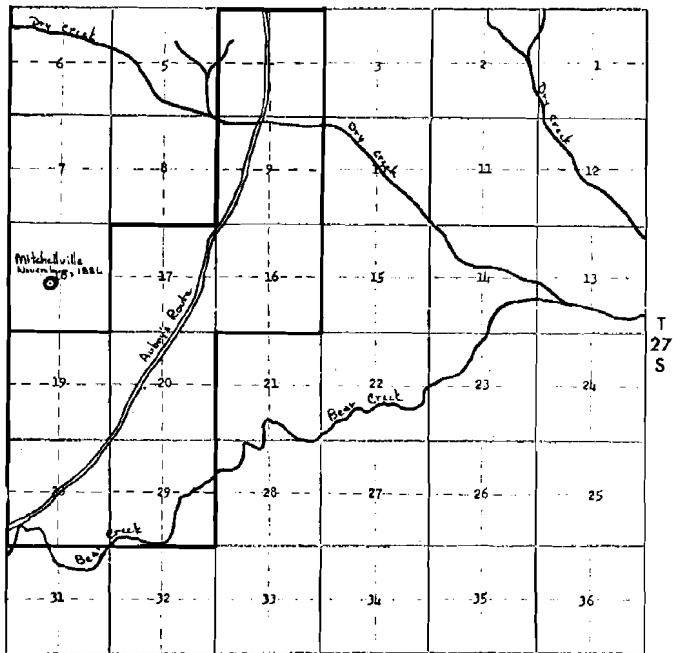
<sup>9</sup> This location is approximately ten miles north of Johnson, Kansas, on Highway 270-27, and four miles east on a dirt road, then just slightly north in a field.

AUBRY CUTOFF OF THE SANTA FE TRAIL

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its barrenness. The view is limitless; the only obstructions on the plain are the elevators apparent at Big Bow, which is approximately 18 miles to the south, and the one at Johnson, approximately 10 miles away.

It then just touches the northwest corner of the northwest quarter of section 16 (T27S R40W) before moving on into the northeast corner of the northeast quarter of section 17 (T27S R40W). The trail wanders south and a little bit west, leaving this quarter at its southeast corner and then going into the northeast corner of the southeast quarter of section 17 (T27S R40W).

At this point the trail veers in a west-south course to a point approximately 50 yards west of the center of this quarter.<sup>10</sup> Leaving this quarter, the route catches the northwest corner of the northeast quarter of section 20 (T27S R40W) before going on into the northwest quarter of section 20 (T27S R40W) and traveling toward the southwest to the center of the southern boundary of this quarter. It goes into the southwest quarter of section 20 (T27S R40W) and on over to its southwest corner where it enters the northeast corner of the northeast quarter of section 30 (T27S R40W). It crosses this quarter to its southwest corner and moves into the southwest quarter of section 30 (T27S R40W). Now the route will swing more westerly than southerly, and it will meet with Bear Creek.<sup>11</sup>

After meeting with Bear Creek the trail runs almost due west into the southeast quarter of section 25 (T27S R41W), entering at a point about in the center of the quarter's eastern boundary. It then turns southwesterly about 150 yards in, and goes to the southwest corner where it crosses into the northeast corner of the northwest quarter of section 36 (T27S R41W).<sup>12</sup> It moves on from this corner to southeast of the old town of Edwin.<sup>13</sup> The trail moves now into the northeast corner of the southeast quarter of section 35 (T27S R41W) and across it to the southwest corner. From there it runs into the northeast corner of the northwest quarter of section 2 (T28S R41W). It turns south and passes out of this quarter approximately on the center point of its

<sup>10</sup> At this point, the trail is due east of the ghost town of Mitchellville which was created in November, 1886. The location of the town was in the southwest quarter of section 18 (T27S R40W).

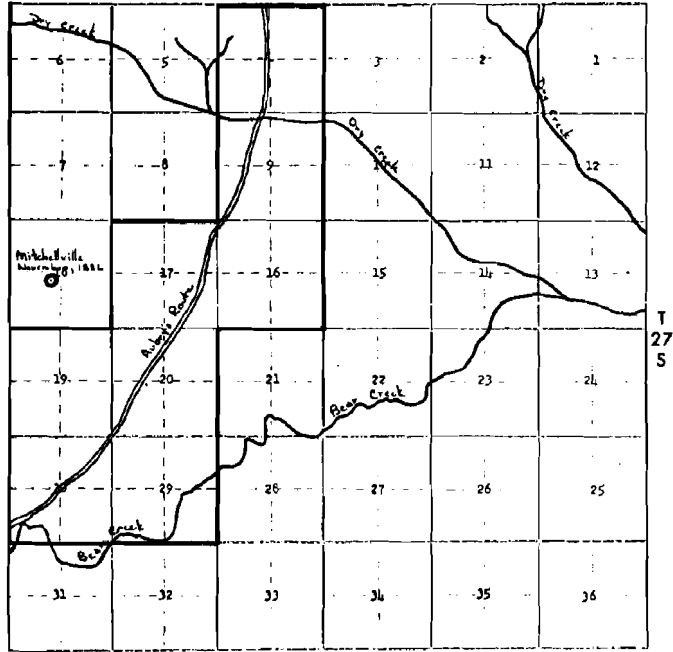
<sup>11</sup> Bear Creek is one of the few creeks winding its way through the sand hills. Beginning in Colorado, it travels in a northeasterly direction until it joins with the Arkansas River in Kearney County, Kansas. The creek is typical of the creeks and rivers of the area. It is dry most of the time except during periods of rain. Bear Creek, however, does have a few constant pools of water and along most of the length of it water may be found by digging. The creek has been known to flood the area surrounding it during heavy rainstorms.

<sup>12</sup> The trail at this point is almost exactly one mile east of Highway 27-270, and six miles north of Johnson, Kansas. There is a dirt road leading to a point where it may be viewed. The place may be easily identified because of the big sweeping bend of Bear Creek. The trail touches it at its extreme apex and then swings on westward, following the creek and staying on its north bank.

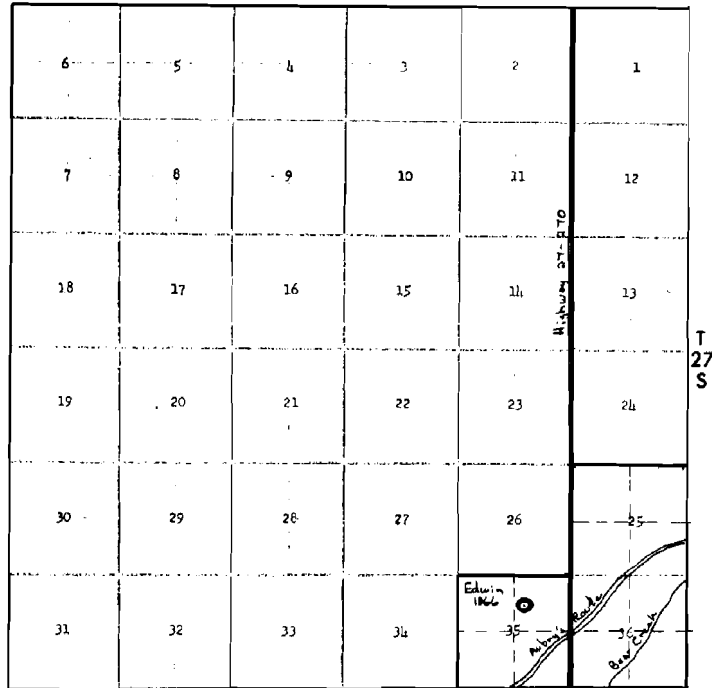
<sup>13</sup> At this point the trail is approximately five and one-half miles north of Johnson, Kansas where it crosses Highway 270-27. There are no visible ruts here.

AUBRY CUTOFF OF THE SANTA FE TRAIL

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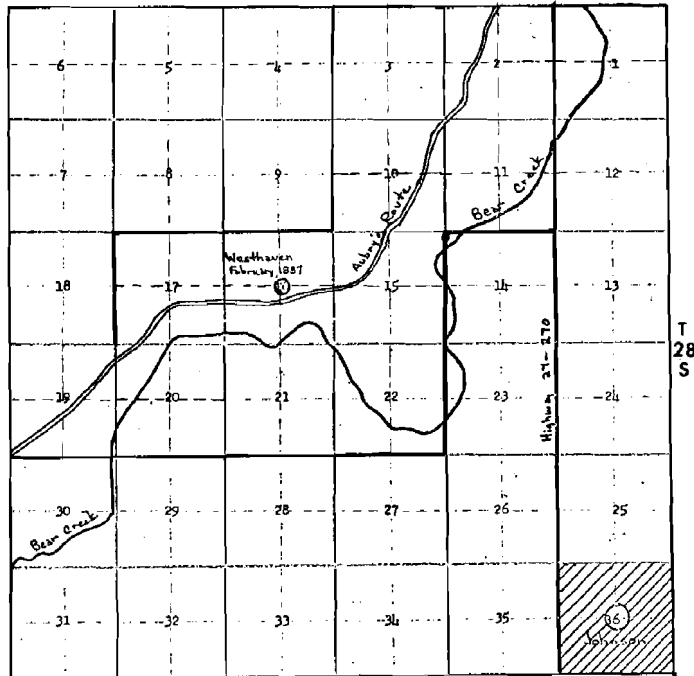


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southern edge. Going into the southwest quarter of section 2 (T28S-R41W) at about the center of its northern boundary, the trail crosses to the southwest corner where it moves on into the northeast corner of the northeast quarter of section 10 (T28S R41W) and on through it to a point a little east of the center of its southern edge. It then moves in a southwesterly direction cross the southeast quarter of section 10 (T28S R41W) and veers south along the western edge of this quarter to a spot about forty yards from its western edge on the southern boundary. It then moves along the southern edge to cross into the extreme southeastern tip of the southwest quarter of section 10 (T28S-R41W) and goes on into the northeast corner of the northwest quarter of section 15 (T28S R41W). The trail goes southwest across this quarter to the southern edge approximately fifty yards east of its center where it turns almost due west as it enters the southeast quarter of section 16 (T28S R41W). It goes west along the northern edge of this quarter and into the southwest quarter of section 16 (T28S R41W) at a point about 100 yards from its northern boundary. At this point the trail is running along the southern edge of the old town of West Haven.<sup>14</sup>

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The trail moves west across this quarter and into the center portion of the southwest quarter of section 17 (T28S R41W) and on farther west across it into the southwest quarter of section 17 (T28S R41W)

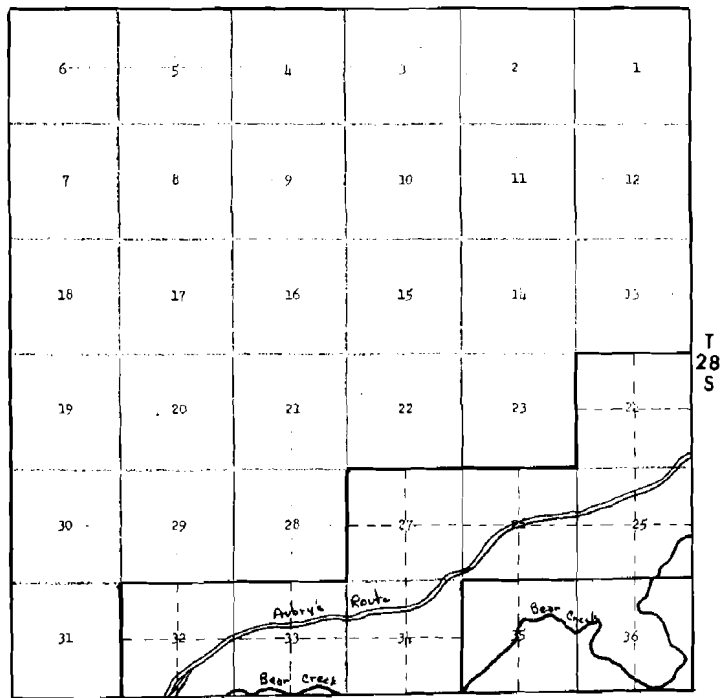
<sup>14</sup> West Haven, founded in February of 1887, is now a ghost town with no buildings standing to mark its location.



where it drops sharply south as it follows Bear Creek. It follows a course with Bear Creek into the northwest quarter of section 20 (T28S-R41W) and goes across this quarter, dropping slightly south into the northeast quarter of section 19 (T28S R41W) approximately 300 yards from its northern edge. Now it moves southwesterly into the northwest portion of the southeast quarter of section 19 (T28S R41W) and into the northeastern part of the southwest quarter of section 19 (T28S-R41W) approximately 300 yards from its northern edge. It goes across this quarter to a point about fifty yards from the southern border on its western edge.

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38a



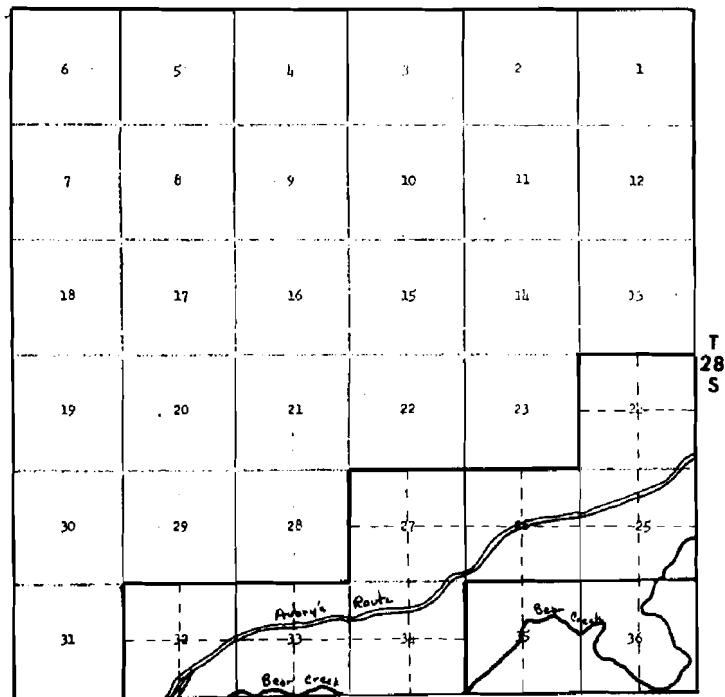
There, it crosses into the southeast corner of the southeast quarter of section 24 (T28S R42W) about fifty yards from the southern edge. It goes over the very tip of this quarter before moving on across the northern edge of the northeast quarter of section 25 (T28S R42W). It runs through this quarter in a southwesterly direction to a point at the center of the western edge of it and then going on into the northwest quarter of section 25 (T28S R42W). It goes across this quarter in a gentle southwesterly direction to the southwest edge approximately 175 yards from the south edge where it crosses into the southeast corner of the northeast quarter of section 26 (T28S R42W) where it travels on a westerly course to the southwest corner of the quarter.

There it moves into the southwest quarter of section 26 (T28S-R42W) where it moves in a southwesterly direction to its extreme southwestern corner. The trail catches just the southeastern corner of the southeast quarter of section 27 (T28S R42W).<sup>15</sup> Then it runs into the northeast part of the northeast quarter of section 34 (T28S R42W) and moves in a more westerly direction, then gradually south across the quarter.

It goes into the northwest quarter of section 34 (T28S R42W) and on into the northeast quarter of section 33 (T28S R42W), entering it about at the middle of its eastern edge. The Aubry Trail now runs west and a little south across the quarter, entering next the northwest quarter of section 33 (T28S R42W) a little south of center on its eastern boundary. It goes across this quarter on a course heading southwest and leaves it at its southwest edge. It passes into the northeast corner of the southeast quarter of section 32 (T28S R42W) and moves southwest across the quarter to its southwest corner. There it goes into the very tip of the southeast corner of the southwest quarter of section 32 (T28S-R42W).

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The trail proceeds into the northwest quarter of section 5 (T29S-R42W) about thirty yards from the extreme northeastern corner of the quarter. It then moves across the quarter in a southwestern direction to

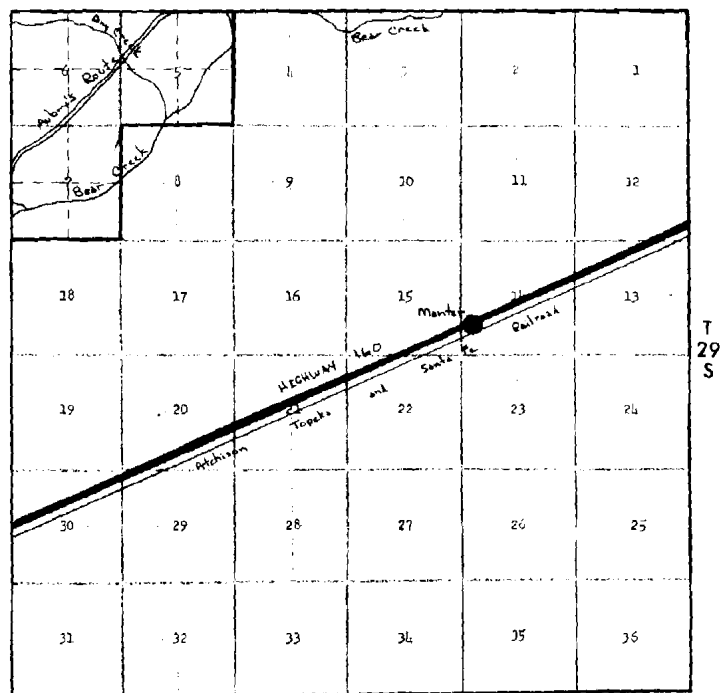
<sup>15</sup> At this point on the Aubry Trail, Manter, Kansas lies just four miles due south.

a point approximately twenty yards from the southwest corner of the quarter. At the place where the Aubry Trail leaves this quarter, it is crossing a dry creek bed that is another tributary of Bear Creek. The trail, since its connection with Bear Creek at the southwest quarter of section 30 (T27S R40W), has been running almost parallel with the creek and never goes farther away from it than a mile. At this point on the trail, for example, it is approximately one-fourth mile from Bear Creek.

After crossing this dry creek, the trail will just penetrate the southeast corner of the northeast quarter of section 6 (T29S R42W) before crossing into the southeast quarter of section 6 (T29S R42W) at a point approximately thirty yards from its eastern edge. It moves southwest to the southwest corner to a point about fifteen yards from the southern edge, and there it catches the corner of the southwest quarter of section 6 (T29S R42W).

Then it passes into the northeast part of the northwest quarter of section 7 (T29S R42W) approximately thirty yards from the eastern edge of the quarter. Moving in a west-southwest direction, the Aubry Trail crosses out of this quarter and pushes into the northeast quarter of section 12 (T29S R43W) at a point a little south of the center on its eastern edge. Here the trail drops south and only slightly west until it reaches the southern edge of the quarter in its southeastern part, about 150 yards from the eastern edge, and right on the southern edge. Now it comes to another dry creek, tributary to Bear Creek.

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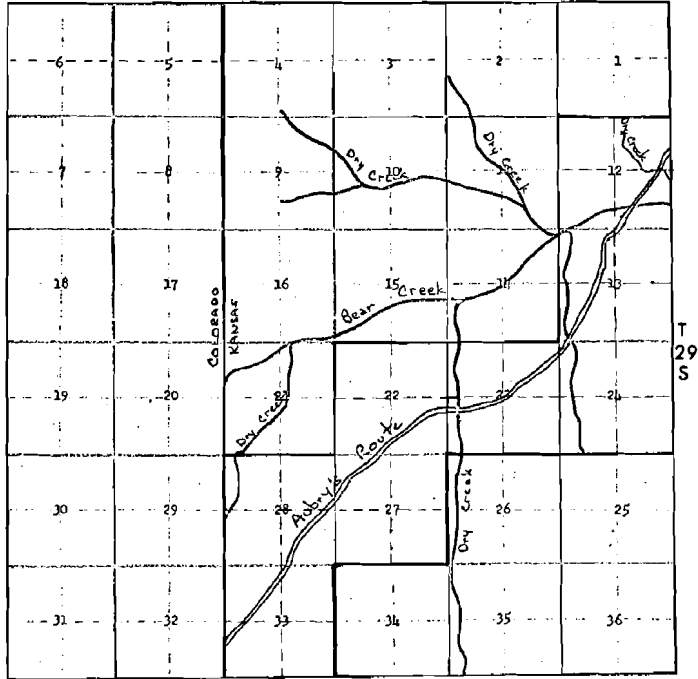


As the trail reaches this dry creek it splits into two branches. One branch of the trail follows Bear Creek on the west but this is not the main Aubry Route. The main branch drops south from the dry creek, crosses into the southeast quarter of section 12 (T29S R43W) and fords Bear Creek to its southern bank for the first time. This point is a little west of the mid-point from east to west and in the southern part of the quarter, about 300 yards from its southern edge. It runs southwest directly after crossing Bear Creek and moves away from it very quickly.

Catching just the northwest corner of the northeast quarter of section 13 (T29S R43W) the trail drops more south than west through the eastern part of the northwest quarter of section 13 (T29S R43W) to its southern edge, about 200 yards from the eastern boundary. Now it goes into the southwest quarter of section 13 (T29S R43W) and across it to the southwest corner at a point approximately thirty yards from its western edge. Here, Aubry's Route crosses another dry creek, also tributary to Bear Creek. From this point it goes across the northwest corner of the northwest quarter of section 24 (T29S R43W) and into the northeast corner of the northeast quarter of section 23 (T29S-R43W), running southwest through the quarter to a point approximately 100 yards from the southern boundary. Now it turns south, goes across the southwest corner of the quarter, and on into the northeast corner of the southwest quarter of section 23 (T29S R43W). It goes along its northern edge to a point approximately seventy yards from the western edge of the quarter. Here it meets and goes across another Bear Creek tributary.

Moving on west, the Aubry Route crosses into the southeast quarter of section 22 (T29S R43W) approximately sixty yards from the creek, and about 100 yards from the northern corner of the quarter. From there it goes still farther west and southwest across the quarter to a place about thirty yards from the southern edge, where it crosses into the southeast corner of the southwest quarter of section 22 (T29S-R43W). It moves on across the quarter into the northwest quarter of section 27 (T29S R43W) about 100 yards from its east edge and then southwest across the quarter to its southwestern corner. Then it crosses into and just catches the corner of the southeast corner of the northeast quarter of section 28 (T29S R43W) and from there on into the southeast quarter of section 28 (T29S R43W). Here it runs more south and goes to a point on the southern edge of the quarter, about fifty yards from its western boundary. Now it passes into the northwestern corner of the northeast quarter of section 33 (T29S R43W) and crosses just this corner into the northeast portion of the northwest quarter of section 33 (T29S R43W). It runs across this quarter to a point approximately mid-way between this quarter's eastern and western edges. There it passes into the southwest quarter of section 33 (T29S R43W) and then follows a course west-southwest to a point about mid-way from north to south on the western edge of the quarter. At this point the main Aubry Route is rejoined by the auxiliary route which had gone on along

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A view of Bear Creek, looking west, where the creek crosses the Kansas-Colorado border, just north of Saunders, Kansas on the state line road.

Bear Creek to the west.<sup>16</sup> At this point, also, the trail leaves Kansas and moves into Colorado's Baca County.<sup>17</sup>

The trail enters Baca County at the southeast corner of the northeast quarter of section 33 (T29S R41W) at a point about fifty yards from the southern edge of the quarter. Next, then, it moves in a southwesterly direction across the south boundary into the southeast quarter of section 33 (T29S R41W) and across this quarter southwesterly to a point on the western edge, 100 yards north of the southern boundary. Now it enters the southwest quarter of section 33 (T29S R41W) and, turning south, it moves across this quarter to a point on the southern edge about 100 yards from the eastern boundary.

Here it moves into the northwest quarter of section 4 (T30S-R41W). From there it goes across this quarter to its western edge mid-

### EXPLANATION

The reader will note certain discrepancies in the numbering of the ranges in Colorado and Kansas. For example, the westernmost range in Kansas is Range 43 west of the 6th Principal Meridian, while the easternmost range in Colorado is Range 41 west of the 6th Principal Meridian. Both states use the 6th Principal Meridian as the basis for their surveys.

According to William H. Teller, Chief, Branch of Cadastral Surveys, United States Department of the Interior, the confusion seems to stem from differences in the procedure used in making the original surveys. The West was not settled uniformly; consequently, certain isolated pockets of settlement remained unsurveyed. Guide Meridians were established to carry on surveying of the unsurveyed lands near the settlements.

The eastern boundary of Colorado was surveyed east from the Eighth Guide Meridian. This meridian runs north and south through Colorado roughly twenty miles east of Denver. Accumulative differences in measurement and normal corrections for convergence of meridians in all probability caused the discrepancy in numbering the ranges west from the 6th Principal Meridian in Kansas and east from the Eighth Guide Meridian in Colorado.

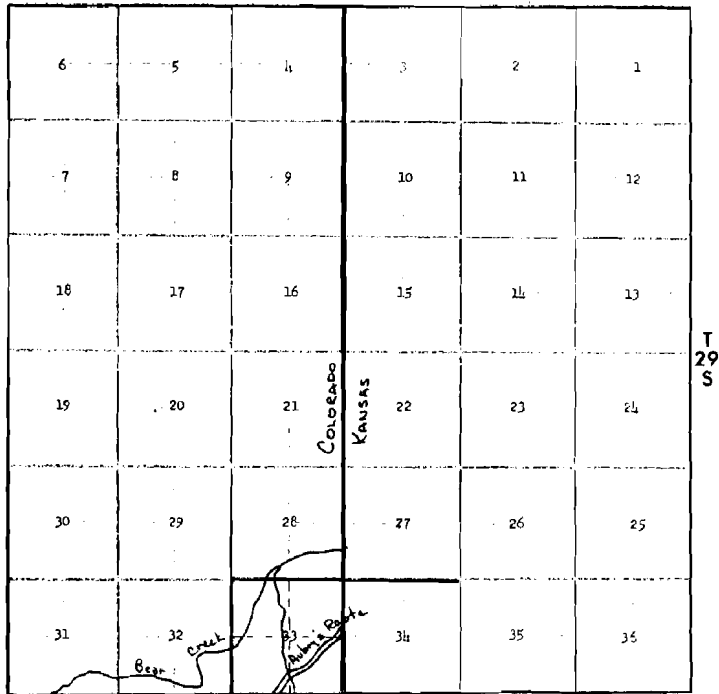
<sup>16</sup> The trail, at this point, is about one quarter mile north of present Highway 160 where it crosses the Santa Fe Railroad tracks near the elevators at Saunders, Kansas.

<sup>17</sup> The section maps of Colorado's Baca County are very confusing and as a result there are many problems involved in trying to pin-point exact positions in the county. The country clerk attributes the discrepancies to a poor original survey in the county. By utilizing field notes made by the original surveyor, however, the Aubry Route can be located.

AUBRY CUTOFF OF THE SANTA FE TRAIL

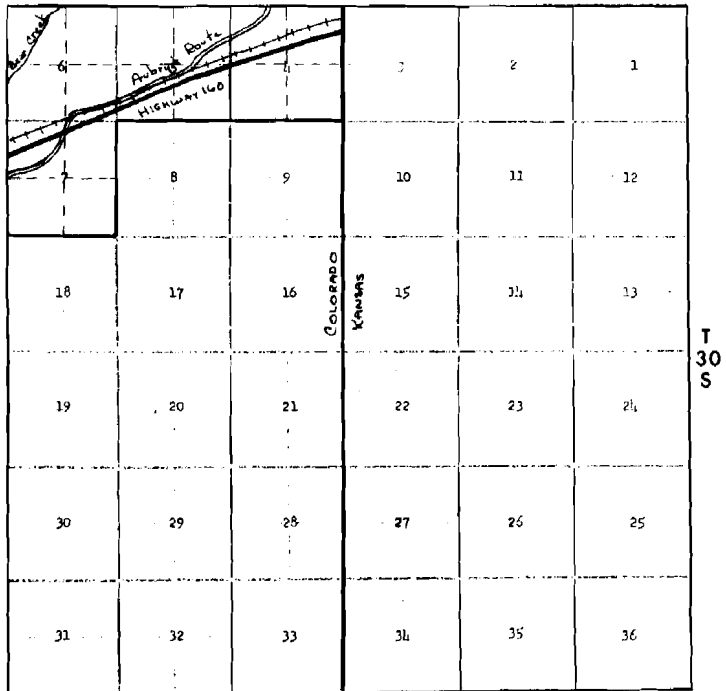
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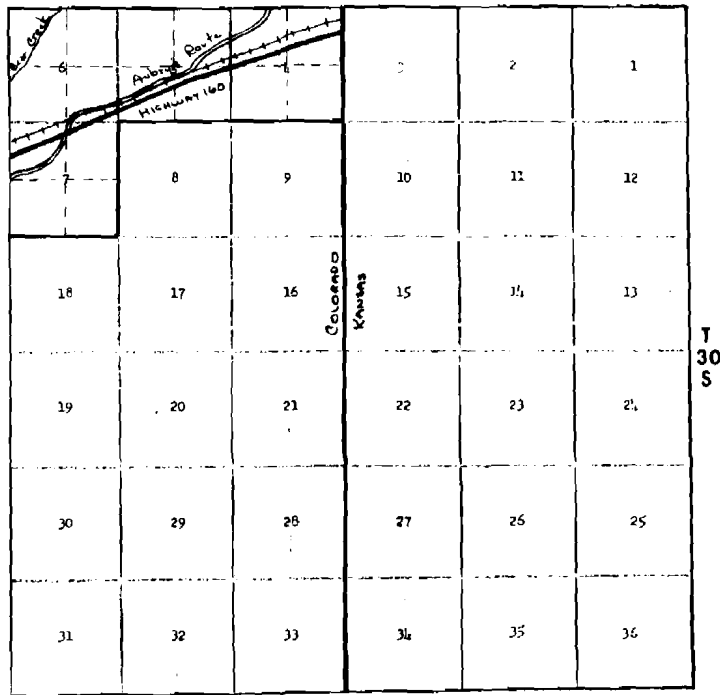
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way from its north and south edges where it moves into the northeast quarter of section 5 (T30S R41W) at about the center of its north to south boundary. It then goes southwest and south across the lower part of the quarter to a point approximately seventy-five yards from the western edge of the quarter where it drops into the northwestern corner of the southeast quarter of section 5 (T30S R41W). Just after entering this quarter, about ten yards inside the boundary, the trail follows almost exactly the Santa Fe Railroad tracks and moves on west. The point where it meets the railroad is about one mile after it enters Baca County. The trail follows the railroad across the northeast corner of the southwest quarter of section 5 (T30S R41W) at a position about seventy-five yards from its northern edge. It follows the present tracks of the railroad on southwest across the quarter to a point approximately 100 yards from its southern edge on the western boundary where it enters the southeast quarter of section 6 (T30S R41W). It travels along the southern edge of the quarter to a point seventy yards from the western edge of the quarter where it suddenly drops south across present highway 160 into the northwest corner of the northeast quarter of section 7 (T30S R41W), as Bear Creek abruptly makes a jog southward.

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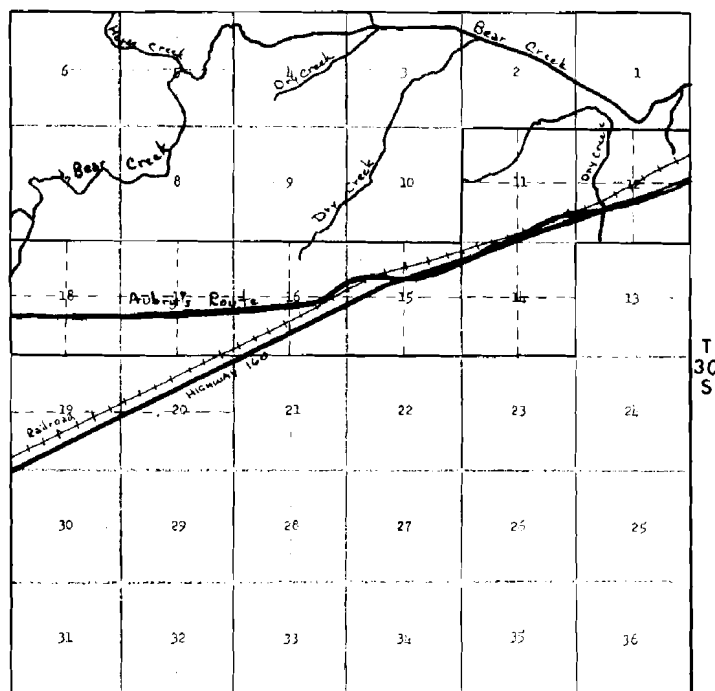
It turns again sharply west after entering this quarter and catches just the northwest corner before entering the northwest quarter of sec-



tion 7 (T30S R41W) at a position about twenty yards from its northern boundary. It then goes southwesterly across this quarter to its southwestern corner, staying south of the present highway 160, through the quarter.

After entering the southeast corner of the northeast quarter of section 12 (T30S R42W), about fifteen yards from its southern edge, it joins with highway 160, some twenty yards after entering the quarter. Moving across the southeastern corner of the quarter, the route enters the southeast quarter of section 12 (T30S R42W) at a position about fifty yards from its eastern edge. It travels southwest across the northern part of the quarter and stays on the same track as present highway 160. It goes into the southwest quarter of section 12 (T30S R42W) and travels approximately 400 yards into the center of the quarter to a place where the road intersects a dry creek.

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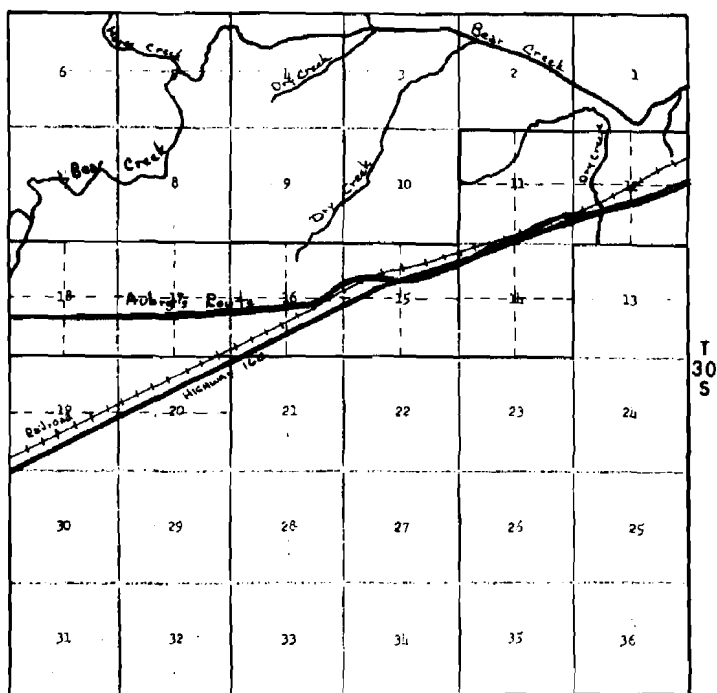


The trail then ventures slightly north, away from the highway, and moves west along the tracks through the rest of the quarter. It then enters the southeast quarter of section 11 (T30S R42W) along the same route as present railroad tracks and goes on along the southern portion of the quarter to a point 100 yards from the western edge of the quarter where the trails drops south, away from the railroad tracks and meets Highway 160 again. It moves west along this route with the highway, through the extreme northeast corner of the northwest quarter of section 14 (T30S R42W), and stays on the same route as the highway

as it moves southwest across this quarter to its western boundary. At a point about 300 yards from the northern edge, the route moves into the northeast quarter of section 15 (T30S R42W) and follows a southwest route across the quarter to its western edge, approximately 250 yards from the southern border. The trail gradually turns into a more westerly one at this place and moves away from the highway to follow, once again, the route of the Santa Fe Railroad tracks. It crosses the southern edge of the northwest quarter of section 15 (T30S R42W), moving along the tracks and striking the southeast corner of the northeast quarter of section 16 (T30S R42W) about fifty yards from its southern edge, on its eastern border.

Crossing the southeast corner of this quarter along the same route as the railroad tracks, the route then moves into the southeast quarter of section 16 (T30S R42W), remaining parallel with the tracks for only about 100 yards, then goes along its northern edge and enters the southwest quarter of section 16 (T30S R42W) at a point about seventy-five yards from its northern boundary, on the eastern edge. It moves now to the western edge of the quarter about 150 yards from its northern edge and runs into the northern part of the southeast quarter of section 17 (T30S R42W). The route moves almost due west through this quarter and on through the southwest quarter of section 17 (T30S R42W), the southeast quarter of section 18 (T30S R42W), and the southwest quarter of section 18 (T30S R42W).

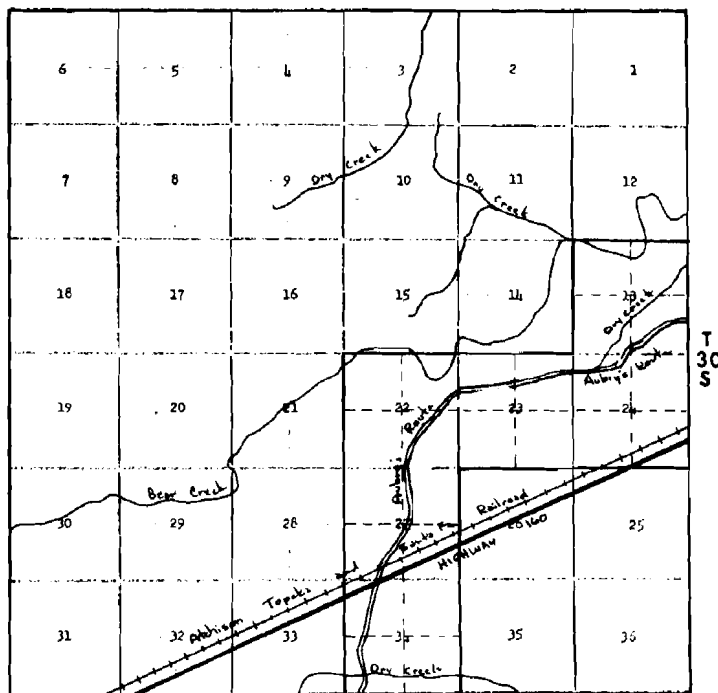
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As the trail moves into the southeast quarter of section 13 (T30S-R43W), it turns southwest and moves into the southwest corner of the quarter at a point approximately fifty yards from the southern edge, where it crosses into the southeast corner of the southwest quarter of section 13 (T30S R43W). It just touches the extreme corner of this quarter and then travels into the northwest quarter of section 24 (T30S-R43W, where it turn more westerly and leaves this quarter, going into the northeast quarter of section 23 (T30S T43W) at a position approximately 200 yards from the northern edge. It travels across this quarter in a gentle southwesterly direction, to cross into the northwest quarter of section 23 (T30S R43W) at about the middle of the eastern edge of the quarter.

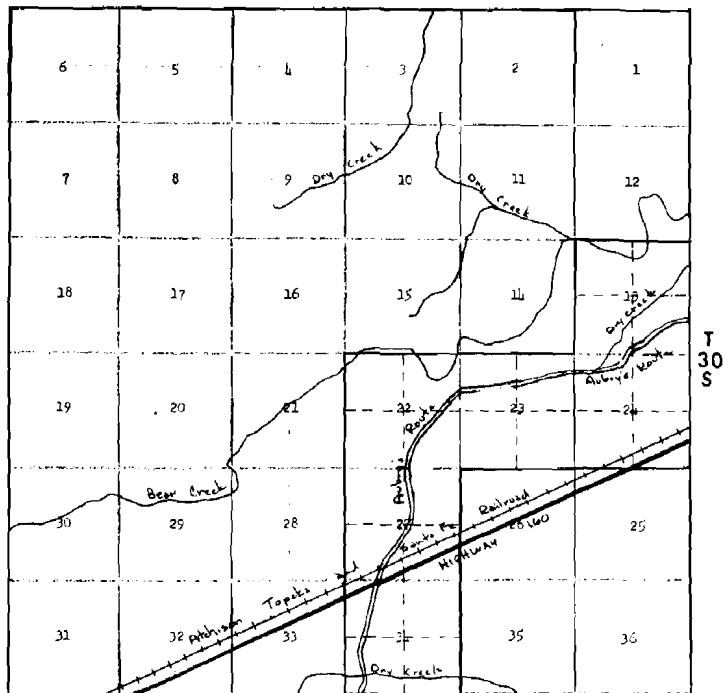
Once into this quarter, the trail turns more southerly and crosses into the southeast portion of the northeast quarter of section 22 (T30S-R43W). At this point the Aubry Route is very close to Five Mile Water Hole. This water hole is on Bear Creek and was a significant stop on the trail. It moves into the southeast quarter of section 22 (T30S R43W) and travels in a south-southwest course to a point about 100 yards from the western edge of the quarter. It then runs into the western portion of the northeast quarter of section 27 (T30S R43W) and stays approximately 100 yards from the border on the west of the quarter, goes through it to the southern edge, and there turns slightly west and catches the northwest corner of the southeast quarter of section

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27 (T30S R43W) before moving into the southwest quarter of section 27 (T30S R43W) at a point about thirty yards from its northern edge. It then runs along the eastern boundary of the quarter, gradually moving to a point a bit east of center of the quarter, where it then intersects the Santa Fe Railroad tracks and Highway 160.<sup>18</sup> It crosses the tracks and the southern edge of the quarter, then goes into the northwest quarter of section 34 (T30S R43W).

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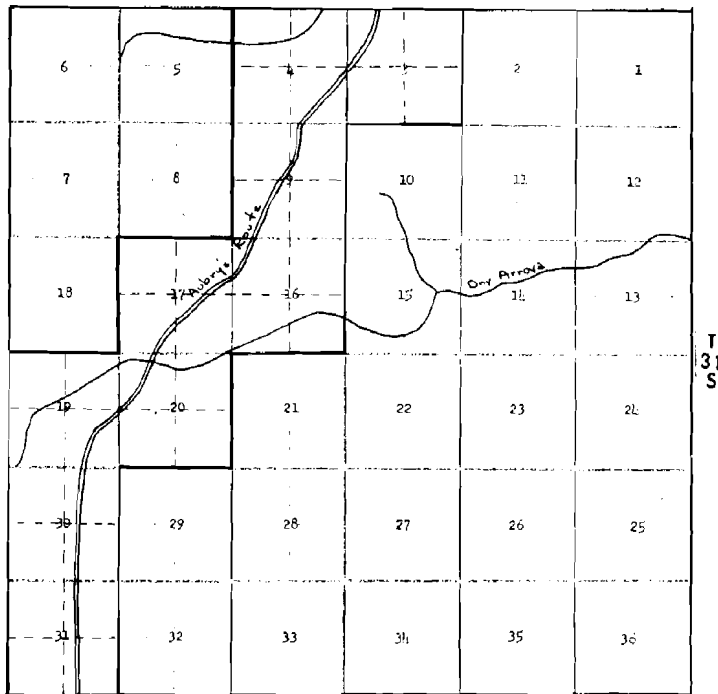


The trail then runs gently south-southwest through the heart of this quarter into the southwest quarter of section 34 (T30S R43W), through it, and into the northwest quarter of section 3 (T31S R43W). There it runs on southwest across the middle of this quarter to a position approximately 150 yards from its southern edge. Here the route turns more southwest and moves out of this quarter in its western part, and catches the northwest corner of the southwest quarter of section 3 (T31S R43W). The trail runs into the southeast quarter of section 4 (T31S R43W) about 100 yards from its northern border and then turns south to cross the quarter, going to a point about seventy-five yards from its western edge on the southern boundary. From there it moves across the edge and into the northeast quarter of section 9 (T31S R43W). As the Aubry Trail goes across the corner of this quarter, it strikes the west boundary of the quarter and turns south and follows the line to a position about thirty yards from the southern edge of the quarter. There it travels on west and penetrates the southeast corner

<sup>18</sup> Today there is a feed yard at this point.

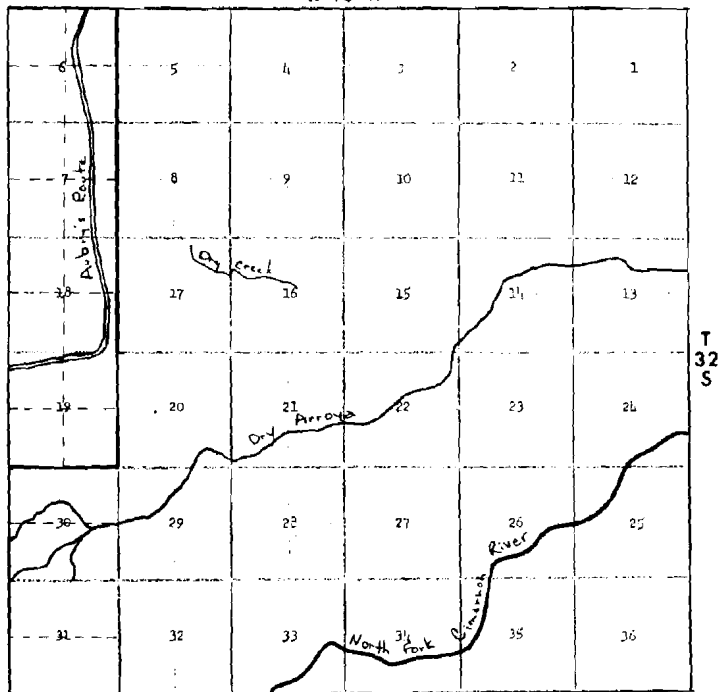
of the northwest quarter of section 9 (T31S R43W) and goes on into the southwest quarter of the section. It travels southwest across the southwest quarter of section 9 (T31S R43W) to a point a little west of center and then on into the northwest quarter of section 16 (T31S-R43S) and down into the west part, hitting the east edge of the northeast quarter of section 17 (T31S R43W) at a point approximately 300 yards from the southern edge of the quarter.<sup>10</sup> It runs across the corner of the quarter to approximately its middle and then goes south into the southeast quarter of section 17 (T31S R43W). It runs in a southwesterly direction through the northwest portion of the quarter into the southwest quarter of section 17 (T31S R43W). Once inside this quarter, the Aubry Route turns more south and drops into the northwest quarter of section 20 (T31S R43W) near its center. It then moves southwest across this quarter to its extreme southwest corner, there to cross into the northeast corner of the southeast quarter of section 19 (T31S R43W). It moves southwest across this quarter for about 400 yards when it turns abruptly south. It then stays approximately 200 yards to 300 yards east of the western edge of the quarter as it moves into and through the northeast quarter of section 30 (T31S R43W), then the southeast quarter of section 30 (T31S R43W), the northeast quarter of section 31 (T31S R43W), the southeast quarter of section 31 (T31S-R43W), and the northeast quarter of section 6 (T32S R43W).

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<sup>10</sup> Here the Aubry Route intersects the state-county highway running south from Walsh, Colorado at a point about three miles out of Walsh.

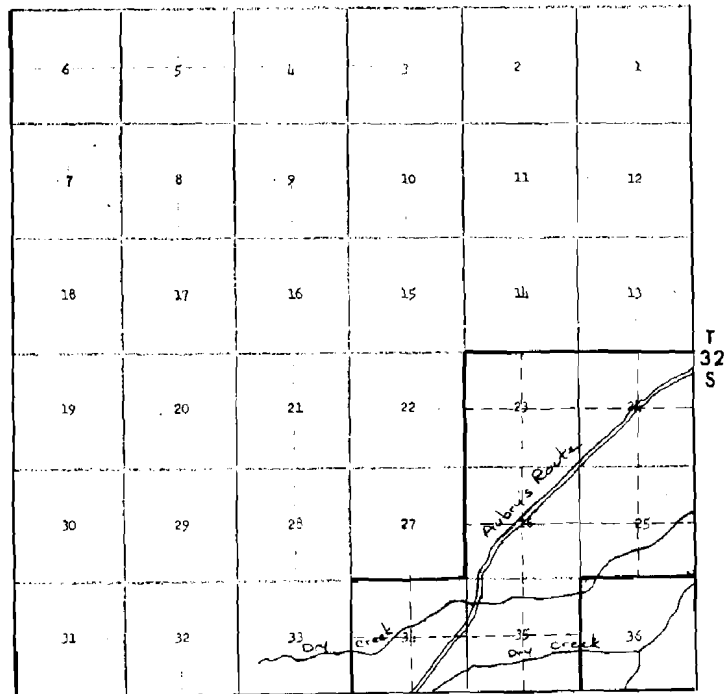
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The trail moves slightly to the west to about thirty yards away from the western edge of the quarter and stays at that approximate distance as it runs on to the southern boundary of that quarter. Then it runs into the southeast quarter of section 6 (T32S R43W) and moves gradually southeast and on into the northeast quarter of section 7 (T32S R43W) at about the center point on the northern edge of the quarter. It moves into the southeast quarter of section 7 (T32S R43W), through it, and into the middle of the north edge of the northeast quarter of section 18 (T32S R43W). There it goes more easterly on its still southern route in this quarter to a point approximately 150 yards from its eastern boundary. There it falls into the southeast quarter of section 18 (T32S-R43W). The Aubry Route moves farther to the east now as it goes through this quarter to about 100 yards away from its eastern edge. As it approaches the southern border of the quarter, it begins to bend to the west-southwest and as it touches the southern edge of the quarter it turns more sharply to the west and goes west-southwest across the northern edge of the northeast quarter of section 19 (T32S R43W). After entering this quarter in its eastern half, it leaves it in its northwest corner, moving on into the northwest quarter of section 19 (T32S-R43W) about thirty yards from its northern edge.

Dropping slightly south, the route moves across this quarter to exit it and pass into the northeast quarter of section 24 (T32S R44W), about 100 yards from its north boundary. Once in this quarter, the trail turns more southerly, goes across the quarter, and leaves it in its extreme southwest corner. Then it passes into the northeast corner of the southwest quarter of section 24 (T32S R44W) and runs diagon-

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ally across this quarter to exit in its southwest corner.

Moving on southwest, the trail again cuts diagonally across the northeast quarter of section 26 (T32S R44W) to its southwest corner before entering the northeast corner of the southwest quarter of section 26 (T32S R44W). In this quarter the Aubry Trail turns more south and leaves the quarter approximately ninety yards from its western edge, across the southern edge. Dropping into the northwest quarter of section 35 (T32S R44W) it then moves slightly to the west. At a point about 200 yards into the quarter, the route crosses one of the many arroyas of southwest Colorado. This particular arroya is actually a tributary of the North Fork of the Cimarron River. The country is beginning to be quite rough in this area, probably very hard on wagons which used the trail.

The trail moves on southwest from the arroya and leaves the quarter about 150 yards from the southern border, through the western edge. It just penetrates the southeast corner of the northeast quarter of section 34 (T32S R44W) before entering the northeast corner of the southeast quarter of section 34 (T32S R44W) and traveling southwest across the quarter to its southwest corner.

There it crosses into the northwest quarter of section 2 (T33S-R44W). Once in the quarter the trail moves more westward, and then moves to the northeast quarter of section 3 (T33S R44W) at a point approximately 100 yards from its southern edge, through its eastern boundary.

It then turns west-southwest and travels across the southern part of the quarter. At a point about thirty yards from the southern edge,

and about 100 yards from the western edge, the trail crosses another dry arroya which is also tributary to the North Fork of the Cimarron River. Moving on from the arroya, the route crossed into the southeast quarter of section 3 (T33S R44W) and cuts across it into the southwest quarter of section 3 (T33S R44W) about forty yards from its northern edge through the eastern border. It runs southwest across the quarter to its southern edge. At a point approximately 300 yards after entering the quarter, the trail crosses another dry arroya tributary to the North Fork of the Cimarron and from this quarter the trail runs into the northwest quarter of section 10 (T33S R44W) and moves southwest across the quarter to its southwest corner. There it crosses into and across the very tip of the southeast corner of the northeast quarter of section 9 (T33S R44W) before moving into the northeast corner of the southeast quarter of section 9 (T33S R44W). It crosses this quarter in a south-southwesterly direction to the center on the southern edge and then moves into the northeast quarter of section 16 (T33S R44W). It runs southwesterly to its southwest corner and passes out at a point about fifteen yards from the southern edge on the west border. Then it is in the southeast corner of the northwest quarter of section 16 (T33S R44W) and is crossing this corner into the northeast corner of the southwest quarter of section 16 (T33S R44W), where it turns more southerly and drops to the southern boundary of the quarter, about 200 yards from the eastern edge.

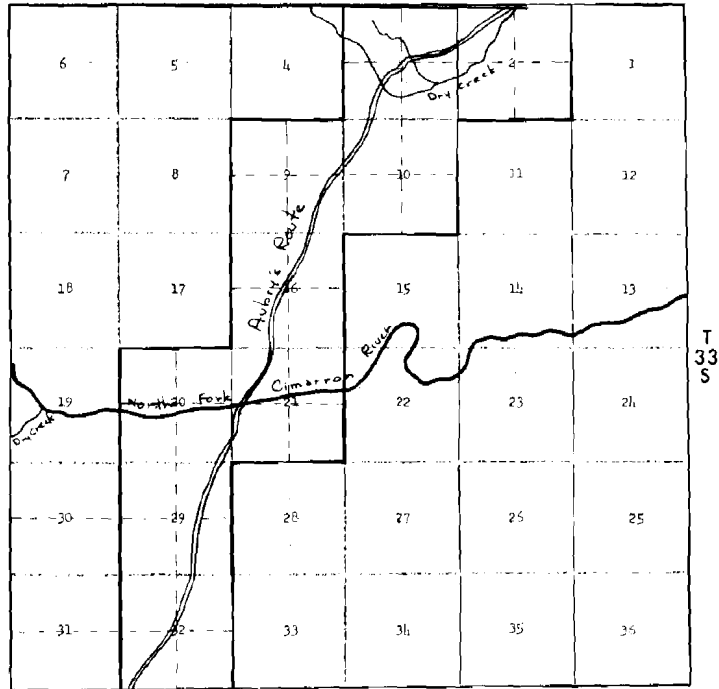
It then crosses into the northwest quarter of section 21 (T33S-R44W). The trail moves southwesterly to a point approximately seventy-five yards from the western edge of the quarter on the southern boundary. About twenty-five yards from the southern edge of the quarter, the route crosses the North Fork of the Cimarron River. The crossing of the river was not particularly hard for Aubry's wagon trains as it was barren of trees and the banks are shallow. The hardest part came in the hills surrounding the river and in crossing the multitude of tributaries.

After crossing out of this quarter and into the southwest quarter of section 21 (T33S R44W) the trail bends slightly westward and moves into the southeast quarter of section 20 (T33S R44W) approximately 300 yards from its southern edge. It then bends south-southwest again to move along the eastern edge of the quarter before turning toward the southern edge and going into the northeast quarter of section 29 (T33S-R44W) about 150 yards from its eastern edge. Now the route drops in a southern direction through this quarter to its southern edge, a little west of the center of the quarter and moves on into the southeast quarter of section 29 (T33S R44W) where it moves almost due south to the southern boundary of the quarter.

It next crosses into the northeast quarter of section 32 (T33S-R44W) at a point approximately 175 yards from the western border. Immediately after crossing into this quarter the trail turns southwesterly again and crosses out of the quarter at its southwest corner, approxi-



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mately fifteen yards from the southern edge. It moves into and across the extreme southeast corner of the northwest quarter of section 32 (T33S R44W) before entering the northeast corner of the southwest quarter of section 32 (T33S R44W) and moves across it to its southern edge. It leaves this quarter on the southern boundary at a point about eight yards from its western edge.

Now it crosses the northwest corner of the northwest quarter of section 5 (T34S R44W) before going on into the northeast quarter of section 6 (T34S R44W), about ninety yards from the northern border. It crosses this quarter in a southwesterly direction to a position about 225 yards from the eastern edge on the southern boundary. Here it moves into the southeast quarter of section 6 (T34S R44W), and goes across it to the southwest corner approximately fifteen yards from the western edge. Then it catches the extreme northwestern tip of the northeast quarter of section 7 (T34S R44W) before crossing on into the northeast corner of the northwest quarter of section 7 (T34S R44W). The trail here enters the very rough country that marks the approach to the Cimarron River on both sides. The roughness is from the many tributaries.

It moves diagonally across this section to its southwestern corner approximately twenty-five yards from its western edge on the southern border. Then it moves across the northwest corner of the southwest quarter of section 7 (T34S R44W) and on into the northeast corner

of the southeast quarter of section 12 (T34S R45W). Once in this quarter the trail turns more westerly than it has been running, but still generally moves in a southwestern course. Approximately 400 yards after entering this quarter the route comes to a dry tributary of the Cimarron River.

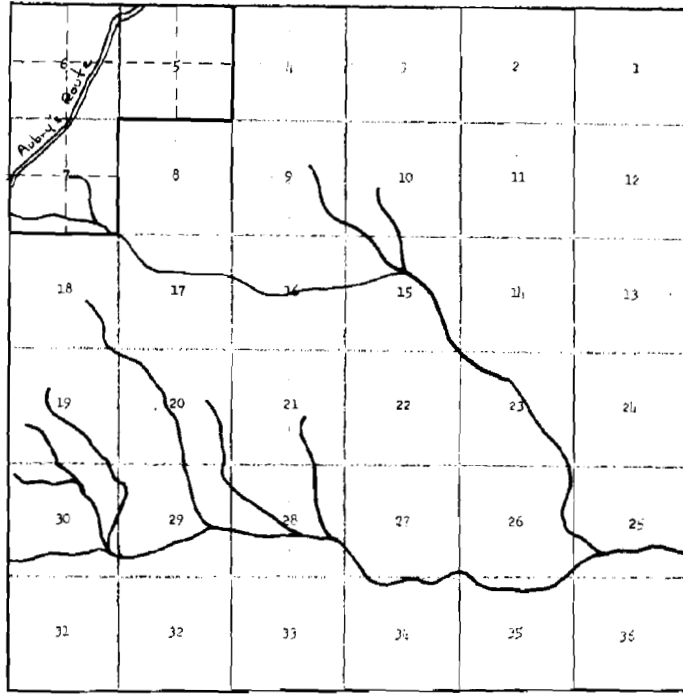
Advancing on westward, the trail crosses into the southwest quarter of section 12 (T34S R45W) across its eastern border about 200 yards from the southern edge. It moves southwesterly along the southern part of the quarter to a point 275 yards from the western edge where it drops into the northwest quarter of section 13 (T34S R45W) and across it to a point approximately 200 yards from the northern boundary on the western edge of the quarter.

There it crosses into the northeast quarter of section 14 (T34S-R45W) and once into this quarter bends to the south to pass on out through the southern edge about in the middle. It moves into the southeast quarter of section 14 (T34S R45W), where it turns slightly southeast in direction and goes across the southern border of the quarter, approximately 175 yards from its eastern edge. Now it runs into the northeast quarter of section 23 (T34S R45W) and runs more to the east to a point on its southern boundary about ten yards from the eastern edge. It drops into the southeast quarter of section 23 (T34S-R45W). The trail moves south, then, staying this close to the eastern edge of the quarter. It runs to a point approximately seventy-five yards into the quarter where it turns westerly again and moves away from the boundary. Approximately 400 yards after leaving the eastern border of the quarter the trail crosses another of the dry tributaries of the Cimarron River. After the crossing, Aubry's Route continues south-southwesterly to the southern edge of the quarter, a little east of the middle, where it falls into the northeast quarter of section 26 (T34S R45W) and moves, still in a southwesterly fashion, through the quarter. After traveling for a distance, about 600 yards into the quarter, the trail crosses another dry tributary of the Cimarron River, and then moves on southwesterly to go into the southeast quarter of section 26 (T34S-R45W) a little west of center. It proceeds in the same general direction to a point about 200 yards from the western edge of this quarter where it drops into the northeast quarter of section 35 (T34S R45W), moving closer to the western boundary of this quarter. It comes to within seventy yards of the western edge at its southern extreme and drops into the southeast quarter of section 35 (T34S R45W) where it follows the same general route.

Approximately 500 yards from the southern border the route crosses a dry arroya. After the crossing, the route enters the northeast quarter of section 2 (T35S R45W) and runs very close to the western border as it progresses through the quarter and into the southeast quarter of section 2 (T35S R45W) and through it, then into the western portion of the northeast quarter of section 11 (T35S R45W).

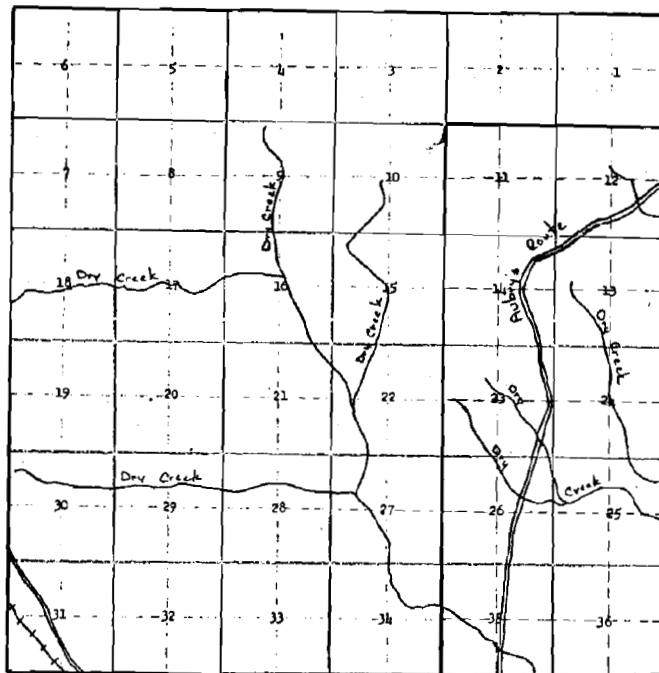
AUBRY CUTOFF OF THE SANTA FE TRAIL

BACA COUNTY COLORADO  
R 44 W



T  
34  
S

BACA COUNTY COLORADO  
R 45 W



T  
34  
S

Here the trail turns slightly west through the rough country and works its way across the southeast corner of the northwest quarter of section 11 (T35S R45W) and then on into the southwest quarter of section 11 (T35S R45W). It moves diagonally across this quarter to its southwest corner, where it goes over into the northwest corner of the northwest quarter of section 14 (T35S R45W). After going through this quarter the route crosses into the northeast quarter of section 15 (T35S R45W). About 450 yards after entering this quarter the trail moves into the area of a dry creek, crosses it, and then turns south following a small canyon that actually is a Cimarron River tributary.

The route moves to the south-southwest from the creek for approximately 300 yards and there it enters Cimarron County, Oklahoma.<sup>20</sup> Once in Oklahoma the trail continues to follow the canyon through much rough terrain and weaves its way across the northeast quarter of section 15 (T6N R5E).<sup>21</sup>

From this point the trail crosses into the southwest quarter of section 15 (T6N R5E) on its extreme northeast corner and follows the creek bed and canyon southwesterly to the southern edge of the quarter. At a point approximately 200 yards from its eastern edge, it crosses into the northwest quarter of section 22 (T6N R5E) and moves southwest through the quarter to a position about 300 yards from the western edge on the southern boundary where it goes over into the southwest quarter of section 22 (T6N R5E) and moves along its western border. It goes to the southern edge and there it crosses into the northwest quarter of section 27 (T6N R5E). At this point the route is running almost due south.<sup>22</sup> It gets gradually closer to the western border of the quarter as it progresses southward to its southern edge. At a point about seventy-five yards from its western edge, it crosses through the southern border of the quarter into the southwest quarter of section 27 (T6N R5E).

In this quarter the route moves slightly westward to run along the section line of the 27th section (T6N R5E) and across it to the northwest quarter of section 34 (T6N R5E) along its extreme western boundary. It is still skirting the creek canyon. The route proceeds to cross the quarter at its southern edge where the terrain begins to change. The rough hills begin to give way to the flat river bottom land that marks the approach to the river. At the point where the trail reaches the southern edge of the northwest quarter of section 34 (T6N R5E),

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<sup>20</sup> At the point where it crosses the state line the trail is approximately two and three-fourths miles east of the point where Highway 385-287, running between Springfield, Colorado and Boise City, Oklahoma crosses the state line. This is on the present Strong Ranch in Cimarron County, Oklahoma. In Oklahoma the terrain continues very rough as the trail moves toward the Cimarron River.

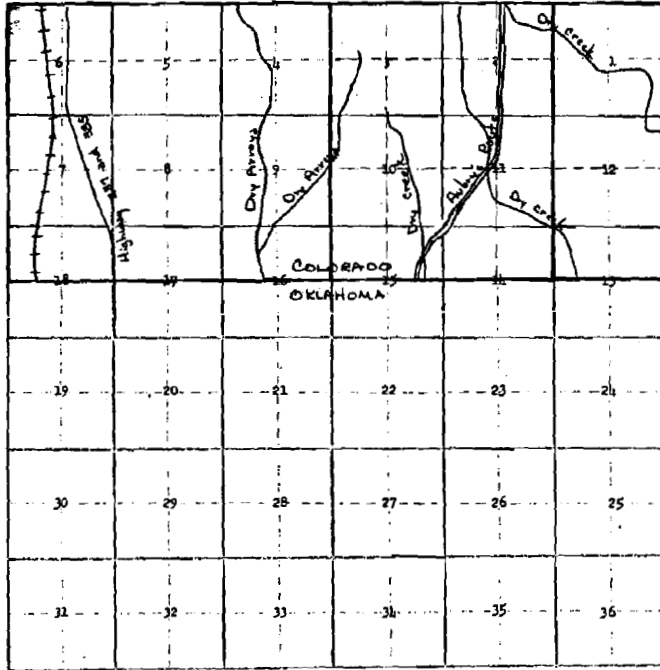
<sup>21</sup> The base line for surveying changes when crossing into Oklahoma. The southern boundary of the panhandle is used to measure to the north. Also, the west boundary serves as a meridian line (known as the Cimarron Meridian) for measurement to the east.

<sup>22</sup> At this point the trail is approximately three-quarters of a mile east of present Highway 3-287 and running parallel to it in a north-south fashion.

AUBRY CUTOFF OF THE SANTA FE TRAIL

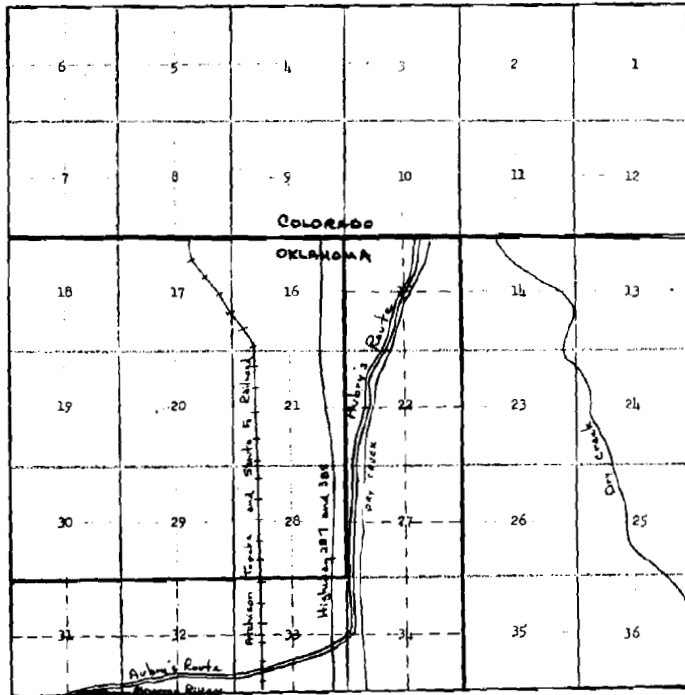
BACA COUNTY COLORADO  
R 45 W

54b



T 35 S

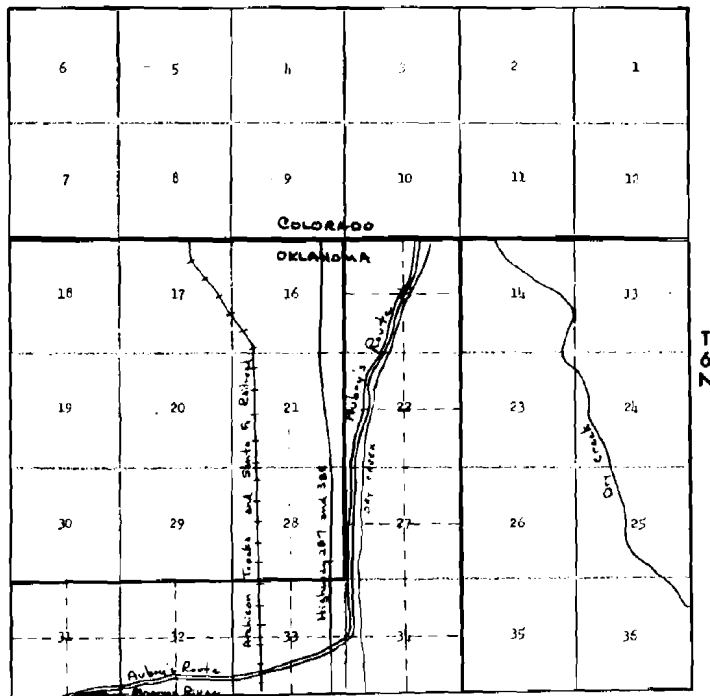
CIMARRON COUNTY OKLAHOMA  
R 5 E



T 6 N

it turns abruptly west-southwest and moves into the southeast quarter of section 33 (T6N R5E) and moves across it to a position on its western edge, about in the center. Then it goes on into the southwest quarter of section 33 and moves a little southwesterly through the quarter. It goes to its western border and then crosses into the southeast quarter of section 32 (T6N R5E), through this quarter to its western edge, and then into the southwest quarter of section 32 (T6N R5E). When the route enters the southwest quarter of this section it is running in a southwest-south course and by the time it reaches the western boundary it is only about thirty yards from its southern edge. As it moves into the southeast quarter of section 31 (T6N R5E), the trail strikes the dry Cimarron River. It continues on, almost in the river bed, for approximately 300 yards until the river bends south away from it. The trail then moves from this quarter slightly south to cross over into the northwest quarter of section 6 (T5N R5E) to a point where it is in the northwest portion of the quarter.

CIMARRON COUNTY OKLAHOMA  
R 5 E

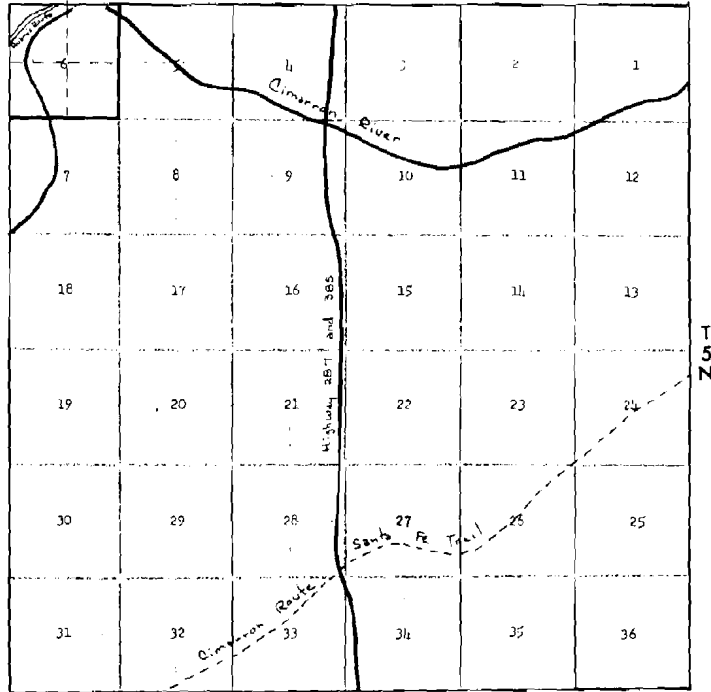


Here it is in the vicinity of Flag Spring where water was available the year around. From the spring the trail moves south-southwest into the northeast quarter of section 1 (T5N R4E) at its southeast corner. It then goes into the southeast quarter of section 1 (T5N R4E) in its eastern edge and moves to the south through the quarter to its southern edge where it moves into the northeast quarter of section 12 (T5N-

AUBRY CUTOFF OF THE SANTA FE TRAIL

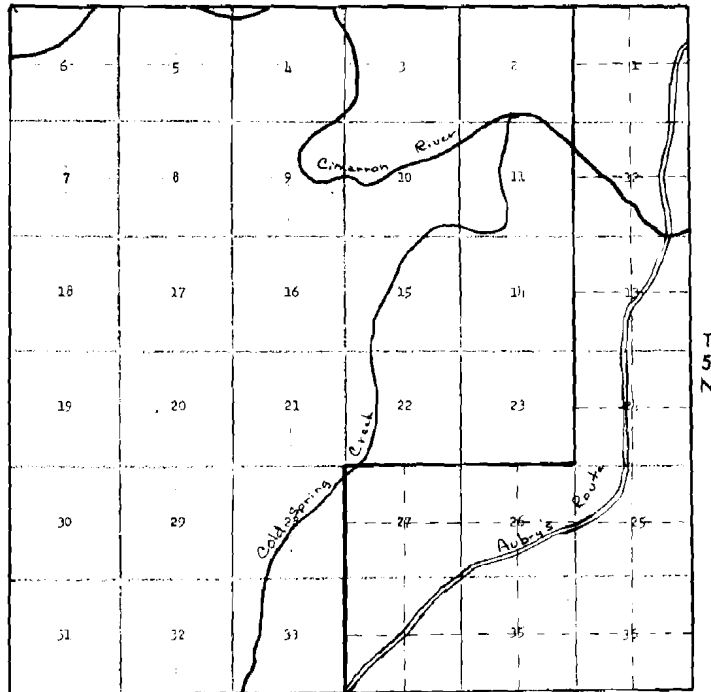
CIMARRON COUNTY OKLAHOMA

R 5 E



CIMARRON COUNTY OKLAHOMA

R 4 E



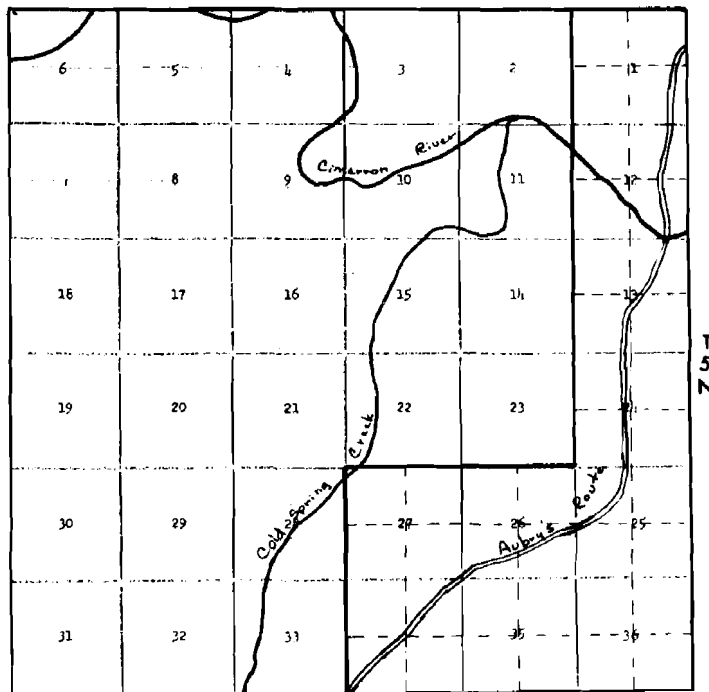
R4E). The trail then turns slightly southwesterly in this quarter and crosses it to its southern edge approximately 200 yards from its eastern boundary. It moves into the southeast quarter of section 12 (T5N R4E) and moves toward the river. The trail strikes the river and goes across it on the southern edge of the quarter, just as it enters the northeast quarter of section 13 (T5N R4E).

The trail moves on gradually southwest across the quarter to a point about 150 yards from the western edge on the southern border. There it crosses into the southeast quarter of section 13 (T5N R4E), moving still in a southwesterly direction. The trail goes into the southwest quarter of section 13 (T5N R4E) and moves south along the quarter's eastern edge into the northwest quarter of section 24 (T5N R4E), and goes through the rough terrain of this quarter to its southern edge.

Now it moves into the southwest quarter of section 24 (T5N R4E), still in very rough country. This is again approaching the Cimarron River, and on leaving this quarter at its southern edge, the trail begins a westward movement, yet south, as it climbs to a higher ground. It moves into the northwest quarter of section 25 (T5N R4E) at its eastern edge and leaves the quarter at its southwestern edge, crossing into the northwest corner of the southwest quarter of section 25 (T5N R4E). Then it enters the southeast quarter of section 26 (T5N R4E) in its northeastern corner. The trail moves west-southwest through this quarter to a position approximately 200 yards from its southern border.

## CIMARRON COUNTY OKLAHOMA

R 4 E

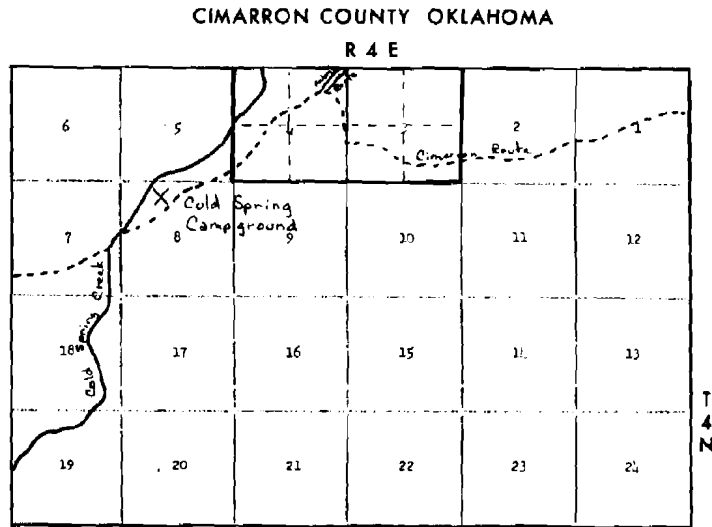




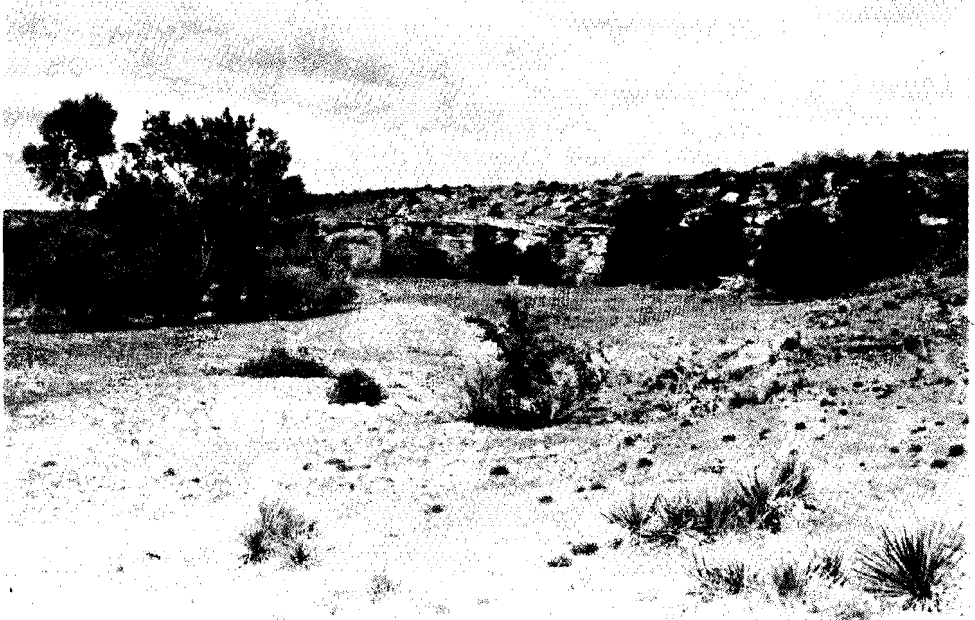
There it crosses into the southwest quarter of section 26 (T5N-R4E) and moves southwest to the southwestern corner of the quarter, where it goes into the northeast corner of the northeast quarter of section 34 (T5N R4E). It goes across this quarter to the southwest corner and there it enters the southwest quarter of section 34 (T5N R4E), goes across to its southwest corner, and moves then into the northeast corner of the northeast quarter of section 4 (T4N R4E).

In this quarter, after traveling southwest for approximately 200 yards, the Aubry Cutoff joins with the Cimarron Branch of the Santa Fe Trail. At this point the two trails are just two miles east of Cold Spring campground. This campground was widely used by travelers on the Santa Fe Trail and was a very welcome sight to all of them. The campground was, and still is, something of an oasis in the stark southwest. The Cold Spring furnished plenty of cool, fresh water, and lush grass abounded in the meadow around the spring. There was shelter available too, from a large stone overhang shielding the valley. Most travelers spent several days at this campground, resting their animals and themselves, and readying their equipment for the rigors of the rest of their journey.<sup>23</sup>

Many travelers, perhaps out of boredom, or maybe for amusement, or perhaps desiring to secure for themselves a permanent niche in the annals of Santa Fe Trail history, carved their initials, names, and addresses into the sandstone bluffs fluting the southwest edge of the campground. At any rate, the carvings are still intact, and they prove to all who visit the area that they, whose initials remain grooved, where there before.



<sup>23</sup> Cold Spring Campground now is located on private property, the Cross H Ranch, managed by Walter Tandy. The area is relatively untouched and much as it was a hundred years ago. The ranch is seven miles north and seven miles west of Boise City, Oklahoma, via county and private roads.



Looking to the southwest from the Cold Spring itself, the whole campground appears as shown. The area is like a shallow valley, very lush and green in comparison to the country in which it is located.



The constant supply of still, cool water, shown above, was a source of relaxation and refreshment for weary travelers on the Aubry Cutoff and on the Santa Fe Trail. This is Cold Spring itself, as it is in the Cold Spring campground area, located on the Cross H ranch, northwest of Boise City, Oklahoma.

## IV. FORT AUBRY

In the infancy of the Santa Fe Trail, the trader took his protection with him in the form of a side arm or a long rifle. Later, as the number of Americans using the trail increased and as the amount and value of goods transported on the trail multiplied, there was a growing demand for professional protection. The United States Army was asked to escort the traders across the rolling plains and to shield them from all the accompanying perils. Most of the trouble encountered by the traders came from the Indians and from trail bandits, but there were also cases of harassment by the Mexican government as well. Until the army began to offer escorts to the trains, there really was no law between the Missouri River and Santa Fe, except that law which was created as it was needed. There was only the tremendously spacious countryside where travelers were at the mercy of the elements, the Indians, and any brigands who might venture near.

The problems that developed with the Indians came mainly from marauding bands of renegades demanding tribute from a wagon train to insure it against attack. There were cases, however, of full-scale Indian wars, where tribes of Indians joined together to protect what they considered to be their land and their rights. In order to guard the travelers and traders along the Santa Fe Trail from these dangers, the United States Army built a series of forts and posts along the trail at several strategic locations. The forts, such as Larned, Dodge, and Lyon, etc., were permanent establishments with buildings constructed of field stone or native timber, if it was available. Some of these buildings are still in use today, for one reason or another.

In order to keep a good line of communication open and to gain the full measure of protection for the travelers, many smaller posts were established. These posts were, for the most part, simply temporary establishments and were never meant to become anything else, as is shown by the orders creating them. They were located at points along the trail where water was readily available and where they would be in a good position to serve the next post or fort along the way. Most of these posts had some permanent buildings constructed of native field stone, or, occasionally, timber. Because wood was generally scarce in the western portion of the plains area, posts in this area had to use sod, adobe brick, and even caves and dugouts. The jails were very crude, very small, and rough hewn. The jail from Fort Dodge, now sitting in the Boothill complex at Dodge City, Kansas, can testify to the crudeness of the jails during this expansionist period of the United States. It is a small, five by eight feet, rough-hewn log structure, only six feet tall, and containing three cells. Many of the jails used at these forts, however, were not even this glamorous. Often, they were merely open pits dug into the ground, perhaps topped with reeds or long prairie grass. All of the forts and posts used some tents to supplement the few permanent structures. Very few forts along the trail actually had the

wooden walls which are a part of the modern concept of the western American fort.

The forts were all built in a square arrangement that was most easily defended. All the buildings faced inward, looking upon a central compound area. In case of a prolonged attack by Indians, the fort could be enclosed with relative ease by the placement of loaded wagons in the open areas.

These posts and forts were all used by troopers during Indian uprisings, when the army would order a number of men to take up a specific position at one of them. Even while not in use by soldiers, however, the posts were used by others. Troopers, while on missions of one kind or another might camp there, as would caravans. Occasionally, Indians met at them, perhaps with government representatives, to talk. On many occasions they were used by travelers, military and otherwise, as havens at nightfall and in bad weather. Because they were always near potable water, they made good resting places for weary trail wanderers. They also became landmarks and were used in giving directions across the prairie.

Several of these posts were graced with the name of "fort" at different times during their existence. Occasionally, the location of a post rendered it to better use as a major fort, if its location was strategic during Indian troubles.

One such army post, that later became a fort, was known as Fort Aubry. It was situated at Aubry's Crossing of the Arkansas River and was an ideally placed establishment. This was the junction of Aubry's Trail and the Bent Fort Route of the Santa Fe Trail. There was always a constant supply of fresh water from an abundant spring which ran nearby. The spring, in fact, had gradually become known as Aubry's Spring, even before the establishment of the army post, because of its proximity to Aubry's Crossing and cutoff. It was Aubry's favorite campground whenever he was in the area. The post and later the fort naturally bore his name.

This chosen spot was on a desolate and long stretch of the Santa Fe Trail which had been subject to frequent Indian attacks. The Indians, hiding in the abundant sandhills which lay just south of the river, would strike out quickly against the wagon trains, and then, just as quickly, retreat back across the river and into the sand hills. Troopers stationed at this location could easily work out to Fort Lyon, approximately fifty miles to the west, and to Fort Dodge, about one hundred miles to the east. In addition, they could work south to the Cold Spring Campground and so protect travelers all along this portion of the trail.

The locality was first a campground, used by both the army and by travelers. During the 1830's and 1840's it was used to some extent, but during the 1850's, following the opening of Aubry's Route, it became the regular campground for all travelers in the area. In the 1850's Camp Wynkoop was created by the army at the site. It was used in the transportation of supplies to Santa Fe and Fort Lyon and

as a temporary resting place for troopers on long trips. During Indian outbreaks, troopers were sent to the site from both Fort Dodge and Fort Lyon, where they would remain until the trouble was squelched. They then would return to their home fort. Of course, what structures were located at Camp Wyncoop and later at the post would have to be cleaned out before they could be used. From time to time, ghost details of only a few men would be left at the camp to keep it clean and ready for immediate use. So, Camp Wyncoop could easily be converted into a more permanent establishment.

During the mid-1860's, particularly in 1865, the Indian wars became so intense and frequent in the area between Fort Lyon and Fort Dodge that it was deemed necessary to fortify some of the posts and camps between the two, in order to protect the travelers. Camp Wyncoop was one of those designated by the army to become a permanently manned fort.

On September 15, 1865, Major General W. L. Elliott, Commander of the District of Kansas, and stationed at Fort Leavenworth, sent a letter to the commanding officer at Fort Lyon. The letter contained Special Order Number Twenty and it authorized the establishment of a fort on the site of Camp Wyncoop and also prescribed that the name given the fort be "Fort Aubrey." The letter said, "The post to be established on Aubry's Crossing of the Arkansas, formerly Camp Wyncoop, will be known as Fort Aubrey."<sup>1</sup>

The letter arrived at Fort Lyon on September 20 and by September 25, Captain W. S. Parker, from Fort Leavenworth, and his group of ninety-two men and fifty-seven horses, were at the site. This group was Company "K" of the Thirteenth Missouri Volunteer Cavalry and it set about immediately establishing a permanent post. Captain Parker was the only officer with this group at the time of its occupation of the post.

Most authors mentioning Fort Aubry give Captain Adolph Wittman of Company "D", Forty-eighth Wisconsin Infantry, the credit for the establishment of the fort. Captain Wittman's group was accompanied by Company "K" of the Forty-eighth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry. On the first post return from Fort Aubry, however, dated October 10, 1865, the post was commanded by Captain Parker, Company "K", Thirteenth Missouri Volunteer Cavalry. Company "K" had been at the post for some time prior to the arrival of Companies "D" and "F" with Captain Wittman. In actuality, Captain Wittman did not arrive until October 10, 1865, as verified by the October 10, 1865 post return.<sup>2</sup> The date of the establishment of the fort has also been in question. Most sources give the time of establishment as early September, 1865, but actually

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Major General W. L. Elliott to the Commander of Fort Lyon, District of Kansas, September 15, 1865. (Letter appears in microfilm record of Aubry Post Return available from The National Archives of the United States, Washington, D. C.)

<sup>2</sup> Post Return from Fort Aubry, October 10, 1865.

the letter authorizing the creation of a permanent fort was dated, as previously stated, September 15, 1865, and it was not received at Fort Lyon until September 20, 1865.

There was one other officer carried on the rolls as absent without leave in Company "K", Thirteenth Missouri Cavalry, at the time of the establishment of Fort Aubry. Lieutenant Thomas Doyle was listed as A.W.O.L. on September 6, 1865, and he did not return to duty with his company until October 9, 1865. Per Special Order Number Forty-six, District of Kansas, Lieutenant Doyle resumed his stint in the cavalry at Fort Aubry.<sup>3</sup>

When he arrived at Fort Aubry, Captain Parker was in command of a troop of ninety-two men and fifty-seven horses. He was the only officer present with his company at the time of occupation of the fort. He had eight sergeants, eight corporals, two musicians, one blacksmith, and seventy enlisted men with him.<sup>4</sup> Captain Parker remained the commander of the fort until December 12, 1865, when he and his troops were ordered to return to Fort Leavenworth.

There was a steady build-up of troop strength at Fort Aubry throughout the months of early fall. On October 7, 1865, per Special Order Number Four, District of Kansas, Companies "D" and "F" of the Forty-eighth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry arrived. They came from Fort Lyon. Company "D" was, as mentioned, under the command of Captain Adolf Wittman. Captain A. J. Lumsden commanded Company "F." Together these companies added 140 men to the complement at Fort Aubry, including six new officers, ten sergeants, sixteen corporals, and 110 privates. Two officers with the companies were listed as absent. Of the total group, sixty-nine belonged to Captain Wittman's company while seventy-one were with Captain Lumsden's company.

Arriving with the two new companies was a welcome addition to Fort Aubry, as it would have been to any frontier fort. The new asset was Post Surgeon H. E. Zielley, Assistant Surgeon, Forty-eighth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry.<sup>5</sup>

On October 17, 1865, Company "D", Thirteenth Missouri Volunteer Cavalry, under the command of First Lieutenant T. J. Shinn, arrived to reinforce the garrison at the new fort. Their arrival was authorized by Special Order Number Twenty-four, District of Kansas. This group added three officers and seventy-four enlisted men to the fort complement. Those who held special duties were eight who were sergeants, eight corporals, two musicians, and one blacksmith. One enlisted man was lost immediately through a transfer to Fort Leavenworth. Lieutenant Shinn also brought forty-nine horses with him, bringing the total number of horses at the fort to 121.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Post Return from Fort Aubry, October 25, 1865.

<sup>4</sup> Post Return from Fort Aubry, October 10, 1865.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Post Return from Fort Aubry, October 20, 1865 .

These are the last reinforcements to arrive at Fort Aubry in October, and they made the total number of men there somewhere over 300. The names and duties of the officers stationed at the fort at this time appear in Figure Two.<sup>7</sup>

During the month of November at Fort Aubry, the number of men there remained fairly constant. The only fluctuations were normal, due to medical reasons or termination of service periods. At the end of November the same companies of men were at Fort Aubry as had been there at the first of the month and nine men had been lost due to normal causes. Four men were ordered discharged for disability, apparently due to non-combatant causes and two men were discharged for promotions. One man, Second Lieutenant C. Amman, Company "F", Forty-eighth Wisconsin Infantry, was carried on the roll, although he was ordered mustered out by Special Order Number 108, Headquarters Military Division of Missouri, dated September 4, 1865. One man was discharged by telegraphic order from the War Department.<sup>8</sup>

No major battles were recorded at Fort Aubry during this period, although the soldiers did engage in many small skirmishes with the Indians while out on patrol in the area and while on escort duty to wagon trains along the Santa Fe Trail. The final post return for the month of November shows the strength of Fort Aubry at 297 men and 129 horses. There are, in this group, four captains, seven lieutenants, twenty-six sergeants, thirty-two corporals, six musicians, four blacksmiths, and 208 privates. Also, at this time, Lt. Thomas Doyle had rejoined his company after being absent without leave and he resumed a position on the active roll. Lt. Amman had been mustered out.<sup>9</sup>

On December 3, 1865, Company "M", Second United States Cavalry, under the command of Lieutenant A. S. Adams arrived at the fort as per Special Order Number 117, Headquarters, District of Kansas. The order, dated November 17, 1865, came from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Lieutenant Adams's company consisted of himself as the sole officer, three sergeants, five corporals, and thirty-seven privates, for a total of forty-six men. This brought the total complement of troops stationed at Fort Aubry to 363 men in three companies of cavalry and two companies of infantry. He also added fifty-four horses to those already at the fort and that made a total of 182 horses there as of December 10, 1865.<sup>10</sup>

This same Special Order 117 also ordered Captain Parker and Lieutenant Shinn to take their companies "D" and "K" of the Thirteenth Missouri Cavalry to Fort Leavenworth.<sup>11</sup> They left Fort Aubry on December 12, 1865.

<sup>7</sup> Monthly Post Return from Fort Aubry, October, 1865.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Monthly Post Return from Fort Aubry, November, 1865.

<sup>10</sup> Post Return from Fort Aubry, December 10, 1865.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

FIGURE TWO

NAME	RANK	REGIMENT	COMPANY	DUTY
W. S. Parker	Captain	13th Missouri Cav.	"K"	Commander of Fort Post Hospital
H. E. Zielley	Assistant Surgeon	48th Wisconsin Inf.		
A. Wittmen	Captain	48th Wisconsin Inf.	"D"	Company Commander
A. J. Lumsden	Captain	48th Wisconsin Inf.	"F"	Sick at Post Hospital
T. J. Shinn	First Lieutenant	13th Missouri Cav.	"D"	Company commander
F. Davis	First Lieutenant	48th Wisconsin Inf.	"D"	Company commander
G. S. Rogers	First Lieutenant	48th Wisconsin Inf.	"F"	On duty with company
John Viets	Second Lieutenant	13th Missouri Cav.	"D"	On duty with company
J. D. Parks	Second Lieutenant	13th Missouri Cav.	"K"	A.A.G.M. Post
J. E. Brown (absent)	Second Lieutenant	48th Wisconsin Inf.	"D"	Adjutant
Fred Scuyler	Captain	13th Missouri Cav.	"D"	Assistant adjutant general per Special Order Number 66 dated February 10, 1865, from the War De- partment
Thomas Doyle	First Lieutenant	13th Missouri Cav.	"K"	Absent without leave since September 6, 1865.
C. Amman	Second Lieutenant	48th Wisconsin Inf.	"F"	Absent without leave since October 1, 1865.

Taken from Post Return from Fort Aubry received  
at District of Kansas, Fort Leavenworth on November  
9, 1865.



Captain Adolf Wittman then assumed the position as commander of Fort Aubry, following Captain Parker's departure, although the orders designating him as commander also indicate that it is to be a short tenure as he is to go to Fort Leavenworth in January. He was the senior officer at the Fort at the time and was in line to assume the responsibility of commander of the garrison. Fort Aubry, under Captain Wittman, then, consisted of Company "D" and Company "F" of the Forty-eighth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry and Company "M" of the Second United States Cavalry. This command had a total complement of six officers and 195 listed men, plus one assistant surgeon. This number remained constant through most of December. The monthly post return listed 198 men at the post and also gave all the names of the officers.<sup>12</sup> This list appears in Figure Three.

On January 20, 1866, the post received some reinforcements. Company "H", First Battalion, United States Infantry, was ordered to Fort Aubry by Special Order Number 149, Headquarters, Second District of Kansas at Fort Leavenworth. Company "H" was commanded by Captain Anson Mills and it included five sergeants, two corporals, two musicians, and fifty-nine privates. According to the order, Captain Mills was to replace Captain Wittman as the commander of the Fort.<sup>13</sup>

On January 21, 1866, Captain Wittman left Fort Aubry with Companies "D" and "F", Forty-eighth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry to Fort Leavenworth. Accompanying Captain Wittman was Assistant Surgeon H. E. Zielley. He was scheduled to be mustered out of the service at Fort Leavenworth.<sup>14</sup>

While at Fort Aubry, Captain Mills had under his command two lieutenants, twelve sergeants, seven corporals, three musicians, one blacksmith, and 104 privates. For the names and duties of the officers stationed at Fort Aubry at this time, see Figure Four.<sup>15</sup>

This reduced supply of troops was replenished on February 19, 1866, with Company "C", First Battalion, Eighteenth United States Infantry, under the command of Captain W. P. McCleery. This arrival had been pre-arranged by Special Order Number Four, dated November 21, 1865, which had also indicated Captain Wittman's tenure of command. Captain McCleery was the sole officer with his group of forty-six enlisted men. At the time of his take-over of the fort command post, he was responsible for five officers, seventy-five enlisted men, and sixty-five horses. A replacement for the post-surgeon position also came with him. The new post surgeon was Assistant Surgeon Joseph Kugler.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Post Return from Fort Aubry, January 20, 1866.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Monthly Post Return from Fort Aubry, January, 1866.

<sup>16</sup> Post Return from Fort Aubry, February 20, 1865.

## FIGURE THREE

NAME	RANK	REGIMENT	COMPANY	DUTY
A. Wittman	Captain	48th Wisconsin Infantry	"D"	Commander of Post
H. E. Zielley	Assistant Surgeon	48th Wisconsin Infantry		Post hospital
A. J. Lumsden	Captain	48th Wisconsin Infantry	"F"	Company commander
F. Davis	First Lieutenant	48th Wisconsin Infantry	"D"	On duty with company
G. Rogers	First Lieutenant	48th Wisconsin Infantry	"F"	On duty with company
A. Adams	First Lieutenant	2nd U. S. Cavalry	"M"	Company commander
J. Brown (absent)	Second Lieutenant	48th Wisconsin Infantry	"D"	Adjutant
J. Mix	First Lieutenant	2nd U. S. Cavalry	"M"	On recruiting duty

Taken from Post Return from Fort Aubry received  
at District of Kansas, Fort Leavenworth, January 10,  
1866.

## FIGURE FOUR

NAME	RANK	REGIMENT	COMPANY	DUTY
Anson Mills	Captain	18th U. S. Infantry	"H"	Commander of post
Axel Adams	First Lieutenant	2nd U. S. Cavalry	"M"	Temporarily attached to and commanding Company "M" and Acting Adjutant of post.
(absent)				
John Mix	First Lieutenant	2nd U. S. Cavalry	"M"	On detached duty at Carlisle, Pennsylvania

Taken from Monthly Post Return from Fort Aubry,  
dated January, 1866.

FIGURE FIVE

NAME	RANK	REGIMENT	COMPANY	DUTY
Anson Mills	Captain	18th U. S. Infantry	"H"	Commander of post
William McCleery	Captain	18th U. S. Infantry	"C"	Company commander
Axel Adams	First Lieutenant	2nd U. S. Cavalry	"M"	Company commander
Joseph Kugler (absent)	Assistant Surgeon			Post hospital
E. D. Harding	First Lieutenant	18th U. S. Cavalry	"C"	On detached duty at Fort Lyon
John Mix (transferred)	Second Lieutenant	2nd U. S. Cavalry	"M"	On recruiting duty
H. E. Zielley	Assistant Surgeon	48th Wisconsin Infantry		
A. Wittman	Captain	48th Wisconsin Infantry		
Alex J. Lumsden	Captain	48th Wisconsin Infantry		
Frank Davis	First Lieutenant	48th Wisconsin Infantry		
George Rogers	First Lieutenant	48th Wisconsin Infantry		
J. Brown	Second Lieutenant	48th Wisconsin Infantry		

Taken from Monthly Return from Fort Aubry, dated  
February, 1866.

The troop count of the monthly return at the end of February showed 180 men in service at Fort Aubry. There were two captains, three lieutenants, fourteen sergeants, seven corporals, five musicians, and 149 privates.<sup>17</sup> In the period of late January and early February there were numerous changes in officer personnel from the previous, more stable months of 1865. This is shown in Figure Five.<sup>18</sup> The reason for this is not apparent.

In the month of March, Fort Aubry was at a relatively stable strength. No new companies were added and none left. The only changes in personnel came about through desertions and normal discharges.<sup>19</sup>

Captain Mills was the only man stationed at Fort Aubry to receive a leave according to the post returns. On March 25, 1866, he began a leave and he remained absent until April 15, 1866, when post records ceased. During his absence, Fort Aubry was commanded by Captain William McCleery.<sup>20</sup>

In the eight months of its existence, Fort Aubry knew three different commanding officers, Captains Parker, Wittman, and Mills, and one acting commander, Captain McCleery. Troop strength varied from a high of 363 on December 12, 1865 to a low of ninety-two men on September 24, 1865. The monthly tally of troops at the garrison appears in Figure Six.<sup>21</sup>

The fort had the same problems as other frontier forts. The men were bored and lonely in camp, as is illustrated by the records showing the number of men currently in jail or deserting camp, and summarized in Figures Seven and Eight.<sup>22</sup> It was strenuous working at a frontier fort. It was also often dangerous, and there was considerable illness, with a high number of men continually on the sick list.<sup>23</sup> The monthly sick list tallies are given in Figure Nine.

It has been a fact in United States history that whenever the army has established a permanent fort in a frontier area civilians soon followed. Settlers were somewhat slow, however, in moving out to the Fort Aubry area. This was probably due to the harshness of the land.

One town, however, did spring up in the Fort Aubry locality. This was Mayline (also spelled Maline), and it was located to the north of the fort, in the southeast corner of the southwest quarter of section 18, T40W R24S. Mayline never really prospered as a town. Its main function, apparently, was to serve the fort area. In later years it was a way station for the mails which were hauled over Aubry's Route to the south, especially to Clayton and Springer in New Mexico. Mayline was

<sup>17</sup> Monthly Post Return from Fort Aubry, February, 1866.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Monthly Post Return from Fort Aubry, March, 1866.

<sup>20</sup> Post Returns from Fort Aubry, March 31 and April 10, 1866.

<sup>21</sup> Post Returns from Fort Aubry, September, 1865, through April, 1866.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

FIGURE SIX  
TROOP STRENGTH AT FORT AUBRY BY MONTHS

MONTH	ENLISTED MEN	OFFICERS	TOTAL
September, 1865	89	3	92
October	294	12	306
November	286	11	297
(December 12)			(363)
December	193	6	198
January, 1866	127	3	130
February	175	5	180
March	166	5	171
April	176	5	172

Taken from Monthly Post Returns from Fort Aubry.

FIGURE SEVEN  
NUMBER OF MEN IN ARREST AT FORT AUBRY

DATE OF POST RETURN	NUMBER
October 10, 1865	0
October 20, 1865	0
October 25, 1865	0
October 31, 1865 monthly report	0
November 10, 1865	0
November 20, 1865	0
November 30, 1865	1
November - monthly report	1
December 10, 1865	2
December 20, 1865	0
December 31, 1865	0
December - monthly report	0
January 10, 1866	0
January 20, 1866	0
January 31, 1866	6
January - monthly report - not available	
February 10, 1866	8
February 20, 1866	9
February 28, 1866	5
February - monthly report	5
March 10, 1866	3
March 20, 1866	2
March 31, 1866	3
March - monthly report	3
April 10, 1866	3
April 15, 1866	2

## FIGURE EIGHT

NUMBER OF MEN ABSENT WITHOUT LEAVE  
OR DESERTING FORT AUBRY

October 10, 1865	1	First Lieutenant Thomas Doyle (AWOL)
October 20, 1865	1	First Lieutenant Thomas Doyle (AWOL)
October 25, 1865	2	First Lieutenant Thomas Doyle (AWOL) Lieutenant C. Amman (AWOL)
November 10, 1865	1	Lieutenant C. Amman (AWOL) (Doyle returned November 7)
November 20, 1865	0	
November 30, 1865	0	
December 10, 1865	0	
December 20, 1865	0	
December 31, 1865	0	
January 10, 1866	0	
January 20, 1866	0	
January 31, 1866	0	
February 10, 1866	0	
February 20, 1866	0	
February 28, 1866	0	
March 10, 1866	5	Private Dunka (Deserted in a group Private Keazlett and took three horses) Private Piety Private Platt Private Knise
March 20, 1866	2	Private White (Deserted March 13 Private Willis and took three horses)
March 31, 1866	2	Private Mullins (Deserted March 27) Private O'Donnill
April 10, 1866	11	Three deserted April 8, 1866 Eight deserted April 9, 1866
April 15, 1866	0	Two apprehended from desertion.

in existence as a town through the 1870's, 1880's, and early 1890's. Today no buildings stand at the townsite. A few of the town's former buildings are still in existence, however. They have been transported from the townsite and are in use on nearby farms as barns and storage sheds.

FIGURE NINE  
NUMBER OF MEN ON SICK LIST AND  
IN HOSPITAL AT FORT AUBRY

DATE	ENLISTED MEN	OFFICERS
October 10, 1865	34	0
October 20, 1865	37	0
October 25, 1865	42	1
November 10, 1865	25	1
November 20, 1865	26	0
November 30, 1865	19	0
December 10, 1865	28	0
December 20, 1865	26	0
December 31, 1865	22	0
January 10, 1866	19	0
January 30, 1866	18	0
January 31, 1866	15	0
February 10, 1866	16	0
February 20, 1866	26	0
February 28, 1866	21	0
March 10, 1866	23	0
March 20, 1866	21	0
March 31, 1866	27	0
April 10, 1866	18	0
April 15, 1866	19	0

Mr. David Brownlee, who now owns and lives on the farm that occupies the site of Fort Aubry has an old building in use on his farm that probably came from Mayline. While Mr. Brownlee believes his barn is a part of old Fort Aubry, it more likely comes from old Mayline, where it could easily have been the stable, as it is that type of structure. It is of wooden frame construction, and this type did not become widely used in this area of Kansas until the late 1870's, well after the building of Fort Aubry.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> All wood had to be shipped into the area as it was very scarce. Even along the banks of the largest rivers of the area, the Arkansas and Cimarron, wood was not abundant. Traders and settlers found that in order to build their fires they had to resort to burning buffalo chips and they had to live in sod houses and dug-outs due to the lack of timber. Army practice was to use native stone, if available, for other fort buildings. I find it inconceivable to think that the army would use other materials for building at such a small post as Fort Aubry, when they did not see fit to use them at the large forts which were more permanent. It would be believable to think the barn came from Mayline, or, perhaps, was built at a later date.

The town of Aubry is a different story. In 1879 a group of people who were heading for Colorado decided that the area around and just east of Fort Aubry would meet their needs and so they decided to settle there. They formed their own town approximately six miles east of the Fort site and, appropriately, named their town Aubry.

Complications developed, however, with their choice of a name for the town. There was already a town named Aubry in eastern Kansas, and much confusion developed within the United States Postal Department. The citizens of the newer Aubry were faced with finding a remedy for the situation. Since they were reluctant to give up their chosen name of Aubry, they decided to keep it and merely change the name of their post office. They accepted the middle name of one of the town's founders, Francis Kelley, and so the name of their post office became Zamora.

The location of the town, too, caused its residents many problems. There was controversy over which county the town was located in, and where the county seat should be located. The town, nevertheless, has survived, and it is in existence today as Kendall, Kansas, in Hamilton County. It is approximately eleven miles east of Syracuse.