

# BOONE'S LICK HERITAGE QUARTERLY



**Artist's conception of freight wagons arriving in Spanish New Mexico on the Santa Fe Trail, which began in Old Franklin, Missouri, in 1821. *National Park Service illustration.***

## **Impact of Santa Fe Trail on Missouri's Economy**

*An Early Santa Fe Business Venture*

**BHS Fall Banquet and Program, 'Women on the Santa Fe Trail'**

**VOL. 24 No. 2 — FALL 2025**

**BOONSLICK HISTORICAL SOCIETY PERIODICAL**

## Wagon Tracks and Transcontinental Connections

EARLY EXPLORATION UP THE MISSOURI RIVER AND FAR REACHES of the Louisiana Purchase included the use of keelboats, pirogues and, later on, steamboats. Other defining artifacts of nineteenth-century expansion of United States territory, transcontinental trade and migration are foot paths, horse trails and wagon tracks etched into, but slowly fading from, the terra firma. Howard County, Missouri, encompasses the geographical intersection of two historic trails using these modes of transportation. After cessation of the War of 1812 and enactment of treaties that brought a halt to hostilities from Native Americans in Missouri Territory, much of the push west from east of the Mississippi River first followed the Boone's Lick Road/Trail from St. Charles to Franklin in Howard County, starting point for the Santa Fe Trail. Recognition of the Boone's Lick Road as a National Historic Trail—as with the Santa Fe Trail—is being pursued by the Boone's Lick Road Association, which was established in 2011 by Columbia resident David Sapp, who is serving as its first president.

The start of the Santa Fe Trail—initially a trade route—in 1821 at Franklin eventually led to its linkage at the western edge of Missouri with other historic trails that carried the bulk of migrating Americans westward: the California and Oregon Trails—trails the Mormons also followed partway as they sought final refuge from persecution in the Midwest by settling in the Great Salt Lake Basin of Utah. Preceding these trails carrying large-scale migration to the West was the Santa Fe Trail, a route of commerce and military transport that ultimately did become a way for people to relocate to the Southwest. The economic importance of the Santa Fe Trail, especially to the state of Missouri during the early to mid nineteenth century, is documented in the feature article (page 4) by historian Michael Dickey and by a sidebar feature (page 9) by author Lee Cullimore which tells of Santa Fe Trail trade expeditions mounted by Boonslick businessman Meredith Miles Marmaduke, who later become governor of Missouri (1844). As a military approach and supply route, the Santa Fe Trail also played a key role in the expansion of United States into the Southwest after the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848 and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and subsequently through the Gadsden Purchase in

the year 1853.

The more than 800-mile-long Santa Fe Trail also made possible transcontinental trade connections between the United States and Spanish Mexico, linking Howard County to the latter through the *El Camino Real de Terra Adentro*, Royal Road of the Interior Lands, that extended south from Santa Fe for 1,600 miles to Spain's colonial capital at Mexico City. Today, *El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro* is recognized and maintained by the U.S. Department of Interior as a National Historic Trail. It runs from the Espanola-Santa Fe, New Mexico, area to El Paso, Texas, where it originally connected to the Mexican portion of *El Camino Real*. For many centuries before the Santa Fe Trail reached New Mexico from Missouri, *El Camino Real* and connecting branches served tribes of indigenous peoples as trade routes.

### In Memoriam

Historian and educator Brett Scott Rogers, 66, of Boonville passed away on August 1 after a two-year battle with cancer. Rogers was a

longtime member of the Boonslick Historical Society and had served several terms on its board of directors, most recently as president.

Brett was born in Los Angeles on October 19, 1958. He graduated from New Franklin high school in 1976 and later received a bachelor's degree in secondary education, a master's in history, and completed all but the dissertation for a doctorate in history at the University of Missouri.

His thirty-five-year teaching career included Columbia College, William Woods University, Central Methodist University, and Missouri Valley College.

Brett's research in Missouri history and architecture included a collaborative statewide survey of Black schools from the Jim Crow era, funded by William Woods University and the state. It comprised hundreds of architectural drawings and photographs of endangered structures. In addition, he researched post-Reconstruction Black settlements, German beehive ovens, and the work of Missouri architect Ludwig Abt.

Survivors include Evelyn, his wife of thirty-five years; his daughters, Marnie and Phoebe; and his son, Noah.

— Don B. Cullimore



Map of the Santa Fe Trail from Franklin, Missouri, to Santa Fe, originally part of Spanish Mexico.

**Boone's Lick Heritage Quarterly** is published four times a year by the Boonslick Historical Society, P.O. Box 426, Boonville, MO 65233.

We encourage our members and others interested in history to contribute articles or other information of historical interest, including family histories, pertaining to the region. Please address all contributions and correspondence related to the periodical to the editor, Don B. Cullimore, 1 Lawrence Dr., Fayette, MO 65248, or email to: don.cullimore40@gmail.com, phone: 660-248-1732. Editorial guidelines may be obtained from the editor. Publication deadlines are February 1 for the March (Spring) issue; May 1 for the June (Summer) issue; August 1 for the September (Fall) issue; and November 1 for the (Winter) December issue.

**The Boonslick Historical Society** was founded in 1937 and meets several times a year to enjoy programs about historical topics pertinent to the Boonslick area. Members of the Society have worked together over the years to publish historical books and brochures and to mark historic sites. They supported the founding of Boone's Lick State Historic Site, marked the sites of Cooper's Fort and Hanna Cole's Fort and have restored a George Caleb Bingham painting of loan to The Ashby-Hodge Gallery of American Art at Central Methodist University, Fayette, Mo.

**Membership dues** are \$15-Individual, \$25-Family, \$50-Sponsor, \$250-Patron, \$500-Life. The dues year is January through December. Receive our quarterly publication, Boone's Lick Heritage, and attend annual Society events highlighting the region's history. To become a member, send a check made out to the Boonslick Historical Society, P.O. Box 426, Boonville, MO 65233.

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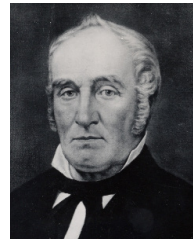
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William Becknell,  
Father of Santa Fe Trail

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Meredith Miles Marmaduke,  
Early Santa Fe Trail Trader  
and later Governor of Missouri

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Featured speaker: Historian Frances Levine is the former president and CEO of the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis. She also served as the director of the New Mexico History Museum and the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe, New Mexico.



By 1880, nearly six decades after the start of the Santa Fe Trail, the "Iron Horse" brought an end to the historic freight wagon trail.

*Illustration courtesy of Missouri DNR,  
Division of State Parks.*

# Specie, Sweat and Survival: The Impact of the Santa Fe Trail on Missouri's Economy

*By Michael Dickey*

**DURING THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY, THREE GREAT** overland trails led from Missouri to the far west: the California, the Oregon and the Santa Fe Trails. The first two were immigrant trails whereas the Santa Fe Trail was a route of commerce. After 1848, the Santa Fe Trail did carry emigrant traffic but it was still first and foremost a commercial trade route. Missouri Governor John Miller emphasized the importance of the trade in 1830: "Our trade to the northern parts of New Mexico continues to be prosecuted by our citizens and is an essential and important branch of the commerce of Missouri."<sup>1</sup> The idea of commerce between Santa Fe and the Mississippi valley predates 1821, the official beginning of the Santa Fe Trade. Itinerant French traders from the Illinois Country reached Santa Fe sporadically throughout the eighteenth century. The Mallet brothers made the most serious attempt in 1739, but lost most of their trade goods in a river crossing.<sup>2</sup> Spanish officials were suspicious of foreigners and the French traders faced confiscation of their property, arrest and expulsion. Consequently none of these ventures resulted in the establishment of regular commerce.

At the conclusion of the French and Indian War in 1763, France ceded the vast Louisiana Territory to Spain. Spanish dominion now stretched from New Mexico to the Mississippi River. Trade between Santa Fe and the new town of St. Louis appealed to some officials. The Governor of New Mexico sent Pedro Vial from Santa Fe to St. Louis in 1792 with the express purpose of opening a trade route. However, the Spanish government did not capitalize on his success. Spain still feared that trade would invite unwanted foreign influence into New Mexico, as the inhabitants of St. Louis were of French and now increasingly, American extraction.<sup>3</sup>

When the United States purchased the Louisiana Territory in 1803, interest in trade with Santa Fe was renewed. William Morrison of Kaskaskia, Illinois, sent Jean Baptiste



**Gov. John Miller**  
*Missouri State Archives*

LaLande to Santa Fe with an unspecified amount of goods. LaLande apparently sold the goods but failed to return to Kaskaskia with the profits.<sup>4</sup> St. Louis fur trader Manuel Lisa eyed the possibilities of trade with Santa Fe, but upon hearing the reports of the Lewis and Clark expedition turned his attention to the fur trade of the upper Missouri.<sup>5</sup>

The exploration of the Southwest by Lt. Zebulon Pike in 1806-1807 again piqued American interest in Santa Fe.<sup>6</sup> Spain continued its policy of isolation. Almost prophetically, they feared that American colonists would follow American traders resulting in the annexation of New Mexico. Like the French before them American trappers and traders entering New Mexico were subject to arrest, expulsion and the confiscation of their goods.

In 1809, Emmanuel Blanco led St. Louis traders James McLanahan, James Patterson and Ruben Smith to New Mexico. The party was imprisoned until early in 1812. In April of that year, another trading party under Robert McKnight left St. Louis for Santa Fe. The party was imprisoned until 1820 and did not return to St. Louis until the spring of



1821. When they got home, they described their ordeal, their disappointment in the government's half-hearted efforts to free them, but most importantly they speculated about the prospects of future trade in Santa Fe.<sup>7</sup>

The conclusion of the War of 1812 and the subsequent peace with Britain's Indian allies opened the way for a flood of emigration into the wilderness of central Missouri's "Boonslick Country." Towns literally sprang up in the wilderness overnight. The largest of these was Franklin, founded in 1816 on the banks of the Missouri River. By 1819, the town was second only in size to St. Louis and was the hub of trade, industry and commerce in the Boonslick Country. It was destined to play a crucial role in the development of the Santa Fe trade.

Excessive land speculation in the western states and territories led to price inflation by 1819. Nearly everyone was in debt as people rushed to buy on credit. Land was sold and resold over and over without actual payments being made. Finally, the bubble broke and the economy collapsed. The resulting depression known as the "Panic of 1819" was felt in Missouri Territory by the latter half of 1820. Emigration to the Boonslick Country halted, land was no longer marketable and farm produce had no buyers. Gold and silver coin or "specie" fled the country and prices fell. Merchants went bankrupt and many of the frontier boomtowns went bust, even disappearing off the map. Banks produced their own notes but most were unredeemable which led Missourians to distrust banks and their "soft money." Existing banks failed and no new banks were established in Missouri for another seventeen years.<sup>8</sup>

In this atmosphere of despair, one man in Franklin took desperate action to stave off prosecution for his debts. William Becknell took out an ad in the July 25, 1821, issue of the *Missouri Intelligencer* newspaper. It read in part, "An article for the government of a company of men destined to the westward for purposes of trading for Horses and Mules, and catching Wild Animals of every description, that we think advantageous to the company."<sup>9</sup> Each man was to stake \$10.00 worth of merchandise for the trip. The ad was a first step in what would become the first successful trading venture to Santa Fe with lasting economic consequences.

Becknell and several others with packhorses crossed the Missouri River near the Arrow Rock ferry on September 1, 1821. The expedition coincided with two events that would facilitate and foster regular trade between Santa Fe and the Boonslick Country: the admission of Missouri as a state and the establishment of Mexico as an independent republic. In contrast to earlier adventurers arriving in New Mexico, Becknell reported that on November 13th, "...we had the satisfaction of meeting a party of Spanish troops. Although the difference in language would not admit to conversation,

yet the circumstances attending their reception of us, fully convinced us of their hospitable disposition and friendly feelings."<sup>10</sup> Becknell also reported that the Governor of Santa Fe "...expressed a desire that the Americans would keep up an intercourse with that country..."<sup>11</sup>

Approximately two weeks after Becknell's arrival, St. Louis Merchants Thomas James and John McKnight arrived in Santa Fe via the Arkansas River. McKnight was primarily interested in finding his brother Robert who had failed to return from an ill-fated trade expedition of 1812. James however sought to dispose of surplus goods. Shortly after them, the Glenn-Fowler party, which had been trapping in the mountains, came into Santa Fe and did some trading.

Becknell recognized the opportunity at hand and returned to Franklin in January of 1822 planning a return trip

for the sole purpose of carrying trade goods to Santa Fe. Mr. H.H. Harris reminisced about Becknell's return. "My father saw them unload when they returned, and when their rawhide packages of silver dollars were dumped on the sidewalk, one of the men cut the thongs and the money spilled out clinking on the stone pavement and rolled into the gutter."<sup>12</sup> If the account is true, this would have been an electrifying sight in economically depressed Franklin.

In the spring of 1822, three trading expeditions left Franklin bound for Santa Fe. Becknell's party took three wagons loaded with goods, the first of many wheeled conveyances to be used on the trail.

New Mexico's policy towards foreign traders had changed for several reasons. Spain had consumed the raw resources of the province while returning little to the inhabitants in the way of finished goods. The economic poverty of the people was exacerbated by the official policy barring foreign traders. With independence, New Mexicans were now free to utilize their own resources to purchase manufactured goods. For example, the silver mines within forty miles of Santa Fe could now benefit the local populace instead of just the ruling elite in Madrid, Spain.

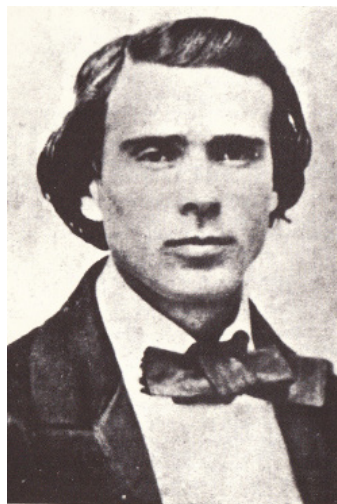
Conversely, economically depressed Missouri finally had an outlet for the surplus merchandise that had accumulated as a result of the Panic of 1819. Geography and topography also fostered the growth of trade. The distance from Franklin to Santa Fe was about 800 miles and the Great



**William Becknell**  
Illustration, BHS Archives

Plains was a relatively easy course to travel for most of the distance. This contrasted sharply with Vera Cruz, Mexico's official port of entry. It was nearly 2,000 miles from Vera Cruz to Santa Fe, all of it over rough and mountainous terrain.

The Boonslick Country being at the westernmost edge of American settlement was naturally poised to advantage of the new trade relations. Josiah Gregg reported in 1844 that,



**Josiah Gregg**  
BHS Archives

"The town of Franklin on the Missouri River...seems truly to have been the cradle of our trade: and in conjunction with several neighboring towns continued to furnish the greater number of these adventurous traders."<sup>13</sup>

Records indicate that some residents of Columbia, Boonville, New Franklin, Fayette, Glasgow, Jonesboro (Napton) and Arrow Rock had investments and connections with the Santa Fe trade well into the 1850s.

For the first six years or so, two thirds of the men on

the Santa Fe Trail owned their own trading goods. They were not necessarily involved in the trade full time and found it beneficial to sandwich a trip to Santa Fe between other enterprises, typically leaving in the early spring when traveling conditions across the Plains were optimal. Missouri merchants were the middlemen for goods purchased for the trade, usually at a 20- to 30-percent markup over Philadelphia prices. From the mid-1820s through the 1830s, St. Louis, Franklin and Independence merchants commonly advertised new shipments of goods in terms such as "expressly for the Santa Fe market."<sup>14</sup>

From 1822 to 1827, the yearly amount of merchandise taken to Santa Fe was approximately \$50,000 in eastern prices. From 1838 to 1843 the amount of merchandise exported was approximately \$200,000 annually.<sup>15</sup> In 1824, Franklin trader Augustus Storrs reported that this merchandise consisted of "Cotton goods, consisting of course and fine cambrics, calicoes, domestic shawls, handkerchiefs, steam-loom shirtings, and cotton hose. A few woolen goods, consisting of super blues, stroudings, pelisse cloths and shawls, crapes, bombazettes, some light articles of cutlery, silk shawls and looking glasses."<sup>16</sup>

Twenty years later, these types of goods still composed the bulk of trade items. Josiah Gregg in 1844 advised traders that at least half of a "Santa Fe assortment" should be made

up of domestic cottons and about equally divided between "bleached and brown" with a fourth of the assortment to be composed of calicoes and miscellaneous articles compose the rest of the cargo.<sup>17</sup>

While Missouri benefited most directly from the trade, clearly the cotton growing states in the South and textile milling states in New England derived some benefit as well. Missouri politicians many times used this wider appeal of the trade in hopes of gaining federal legislative and military protection of the trade. They constantly sought "drawbacks," the elimination of taxes and tariffs on items imported for use in the Santa Fe trade. Maritime commerce frequently benefited from "drawback" legislation and Missourians simply saw the Santa Fe trade as a logical extension of that protection.

The principal articles that were returned to Missouri were furs, livestock, specie and small amounts of raw wool. Coarse Mexican blankets were occasionally in demand on the frontier.<sup>18</sup> In some respects, the early Santa Fe trade was an off shoot of the fur trade. "Catching wild animals" or trapping had been one of the original reasons cited by Becknell's party for going west. The Glenn-Fowler expedition had returned to Missouri with beaver fur. Independent trappers operating in the southern Rocky Mountains used Santa Fe as a base of operations. For the first fifteen years of the trade, many returning caravans carried quantities of beaver and otter pelts. Plains Indian tribes sold raw buffalo robes to the New Mexicans, who in turn prepared them as robes for the Santa Fe trade. In 1843, Simeon Turley in Arroyo Hondo, New Mexico wrote to his brother Jesse in Arrow Rock, Missouri that he was shipping him "200 buffalo robes and a load of beaver."<sup>19</sup>

Of greater long-term consequence to Missouri was the livestock, consisting of horses, jacks, jennets, and mules. As early as 1823, the Cooper family of Howard County brought back over four hundred mules to Missouri. Those numbers increased in 1825 to 600 mules, in 1827 to 800 mules and in 1832 over 1,300 mules.<sup>20</sup> Missourians began crossing Mexican jacks with the fine mares they had brought with them from Kentucky and Tennessee thus establishing the mule industry in Missouri. By the 1850s, "Missouri mules" were widely shipped to the southern states for the use on the cotton plantations. Although large European jacks were being bred by this time, the mule industry clearly had its roots in the Santa Fe trade. By 1880 Missouri was the nations leading mule-producing state.

The importation of Mexican specie and bullion profoundly impacted Missouri's economic stability, far more than the importation of furs or livestock. There are no official statistics on the amount of bullion or specie imported into the state: traders fearing competition were reluctant to

report their profits. Letters from traders frequently reported poor conditions in the trade. "This trade is done as all will inform you" said one letter in the *Franklin Missouri Intelligencer*.<sup>21</sup> The paper was quick to declare that the writer was a man with no motive for misrepresentation. Another letter published in 1825 read in part, "On the whole it appears that there is little prospect of successful trade being kept up between the United States and this Province, except on a very limited scale indeed. The country has but few resources... They are very poor but very contented."<sup>22</sup>

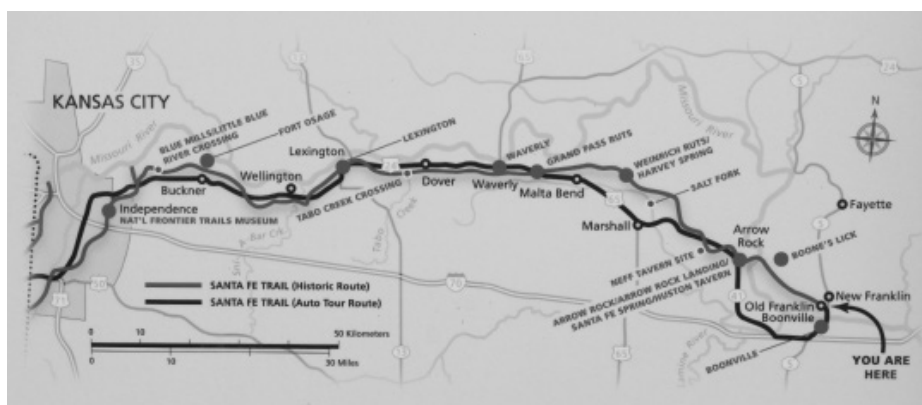
The *Missouri Advocate*, a St. Louis paper criticized the *Intelligencer* for belittling what was obviously an important industry to Missouri. The editor of the *Intelligencer* replied, "Our own citizens were the first to explore the route and find the market, and in our opinion, ought to reap the advantages resulting from the discovery. We have generally stated plain matters of fact, in regard to this trade, abstaining from all unnecessary embellishments or exaggeration, which could only have a tendency to attract the attention of the other states, and induce large bodies to engage in it, to the injury of our own citizens and the annihilation of the commerce by the glutting of the market."<sup>23</sup> The *Advocate* got the point and to protect Missouri's interests also began printing articles describing the "ruinous embarrassments" of the Santa Fe trade.

The market in Santa Fe itself did in fact become saturated rather quickly. However traders often took their goods into the interior states of Chihuahua, Sonora or Coahila merely using Santa Fe as the port of entry. Often they acted in partnership with or sold to Mexican firms who in turn conveyed the goods in the interior Mexican states. As early as 1826, Mexican merchants began coming to Missouri to purchase trade goods directly. The *Franklin Missouri Intelligencer* reported, "Six or seven substantial built waggons [sic] arrived in this place on Tuesday last, heavily laden with merchandise, on their way to new Mexico owned by Mr. Escudero, a native of that country... This may be considered as a new era in the commerce between Mexico and this country, and it is probable the example of Mr. E. will be followed by others of his rich countrymen who will bring hither large portions of their surplus wealth for the same purpose."<sup>24</sup> Josiah Gregg reported that by 1843, over half of the merchants in the trade

were Mexican nationals.<sup>25</sup> Regardless of who conducted the trade caravans, the Missouri economy was being enriched.

Profit margins for the traders fluctuated greatly. Like all business endeavors, there were setbacks, losses and cyclical variations in the market. Mexico often imposed high tariffs on wagons arriving in Santa Fe, cutting into profits. American Indian tribes sometimes struck caravans, especially those returning with livestock. Trader Meredith Miles Marmaduke, later a governor of Missouri, lost nearly all of his investment in 1828 when Comanches stole the livestock he was returning to Missouri.<sup>26</sup> (see article, page 10) However, despite such individual losses, the trade overall grew in profitability.

Alphonso Wetmore estimated that Becknell's second expedition made a profit of 2000 percent. In 1824, \$35,000 worth of merchandise netted \$200,000 for a profit of 300 percent. In 1832, Secretary of War Lewis Cass provided the Senate with a report estimating the profit margin of the trade averaging from 25 to 100 percent, dependent on conditions.<sup>27</sup> That same



year, Governor Miller reported that the trade, "...is believed to yield a greater gain than any other branch of industry employing the same amount of capital."<sup>28</sup>

As early as 1828, Governor Miller had stated, "That trade [Santa Fe] is one of much importance to this State; the principal part of the silver coin in circulation, particularly in the western part of the State, is derived from that quarter..."<sup>29</sup> Spanish and Mexican coin continued to be legal tender in Missouri long afterwards. For example, in 1840 Dr. Glenn O. Hardeman was charged a "bit" or 12 ½ cents in Mexican coin for a nights stay in the Arrow Rock Tavern.<sup>30</sup>

In 1824, Franklin merchant Augustus Storrs estimated the value of bullion and coin from Mexico at \$180,000 and furs worth \$10,000. Secretary of State Eaton reported profits from the Santa Fe Trade to include "at least \$200,000 in specie."<sup>31</sup> William Bent brought back \$100,000 in coin in 1832 and similar amounts were reported in the *Missouri Intelligencer* for the next three years.<sup>32</sup> Most of this money remained within the coffers of individuals or businesses.

By 1836, Missourians were demanding the creation of a bank in the state. The Bank of Missouri opened its door in 1837 as a specie-paying bank, refusing to issue paper notes

as many previously failed banks had done. It was soon recognized as one of the soundest banks in the nation and served as a bank of deposit for the United States Government. The bank with headquarters in St. Louis and branches in Fayette and Palmyra had intimate ties with the Santa Fe trade. The bank served as a place of deposit for the traders and simplified commercial transactions between the traders, merchants and eastern wholesalers. In 1839, a run on the bank was staved off when Santa Fe traders pumped \$45,000 of specie into it.<sup>33</sup> The *Arkansas Gazette* reported: "The state of Missouri is at this day the soundest in the Union in her monetary affairs. She is filled with specie; and the interior Mexican states have supplied it."<sup>34</sup>

By 1829, Franklin had largely been washed away by the Missouri River and direct Boonslick involvement in the trade gradually began to wane. By 1831, Independence was the main outfitting center for Santa Fe commerce and after 1843; Westport increasingly assumed that role. Concurrently, with this geographic change in outfitting points, the nature of the trade itself began to change. The number of individual proprietors decreased while the number of men employed in caravans as teamsters, hunters or salesmen increased. The traders' average per capita investment of goods rose from \$3,000 in 1829 to \$6,000 in 1839 and to \$15,000 in 1843.

In conjunction with the brokering services provided by the Bank of Missouri, the larger traders hired agents to purchase directly from wholesalers in Philadelphia. Rural Missouri merchant began to be cut out of the Santa Fe trade. Even though they were no longer conducting the wagon caravans themselves, many Boonslick residents continued to invest capital in these large corporate trade ventures.

During the War with Mexico from 1846 -1848, large freighting firms such as the Aull brothers of Lexington, Waldo and Hull of Independence and Alexander Majors in Westport were contracted by the U.S. government to supply the Army of the West. These and other large firms began dominating the commerce on the Santa Fe Trail. The days of the individual trader supplying three or four of his own wagons on credit from local merchants were practically over.

In 1846, approximately 414 wagons left Missouri carrying \$1,752,000 worth of goods. In 1850, over 500 wagons

went out from Kansas City alone and the total value of the trade was estimated at \$5,000,000. The Civil War seems to have created only a minor disruption to the trade. Colonel J.F. Meline who was touring New Mexico in 1866 said, "In 1865 there came into New Mexico from the States three thousand wagons belonging to traders alone exclusive of government transportation. This year there will be from five to six thousand wagons...Most of the large trains return empty."<sup>35</sup> These caravans were supplying United States military posts and the new American settlements in the southwest rather than trading with a foreign nation as in years past.

Despite this phenomenal post-war growth, the singular importance of the Santa Fe trade to Missouri was in fact declining. The state's post-war agricultural and industrial production had diversified and grown to the point that the Santa Fe trade no longer had a singular dynamic impact on the state's economy. The burgeoning cities of St. Louis and Kansas City were scarcely the specie starved Boonslick towns of forty years earlier. Furthermore, trail heads and outfitting points followed the advancing line of the railroads across Kansas, annually decreasing both the length of the Santa Fe Trail and the amount of Missouri commerce carried on it.

Technology and transportation spelled the end of the trade. In August 1867 this editorial appeared in the *Junction City Union*, "A few years ago the freight wagons and oxen passing through Council Grove were counted by thousands, the value of merchandise by millions. But the shriek of the iron horse has silenced the lowing of the panting ox and the old Trail looks desolate. The track of commerce of the plains has changed and with the change is destined to come other changes and more blessed."<sup>36</sup> On February 9, 1880, the railroad reached Santa Fe and the last vestiges of the Santa Fe trade were swept away.<sup>37</sup>

It is difficult to pinpoint the end of Missouri's commercial involvement in the Santa Fe trade. The diminishing of the trades' singular economic importance to the state was gradual, perhaps even indiscernible. However, it can be stated with certainty that the Santa Fe Trade helped lift the new state of Missouri from economic depression and provided a solid financial base on which to build for its future. Boonslick citizens were at the core of laying that foundation.



**Replica of a Santa Fe Trail freight wagon located on the north side of Arrow Rock State Historic Site. Photo by David Sapp**

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of the State of Missouri, edited by Buel Leopard and Floyd Shoemaker, The State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri 1922, Vol. I, p.151

<sup>2</sup>The Beginning of the West, Louise Barry, Kansas Historical Society, Topeka Kansas, p.21

<sup>3</sup>The Spanish in the Mississippi Valley, edited by John F. McDermott, University of Illinois Press, 1974, p.100

<sup>4</sup>The History of Missouri, Vol. I, David S. March, Lewis Historical Publishing, New York, 1967, p. 476

<sup>5</sup>Ibid

<sup>6</sup>Commerce of the Prairies, Josiah Gregg, edited by Max Moorehead, University of Oklahoma Press, 1954

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. p. 477-478

<sup>8</sup>March, History of Missouri, p. 375-377

<sup>9</sup>Missouri Intelligencer, July 25, 1821, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia

<sup>10</sup>Diary of William Becknell, Missouri Intelligencer, April 23, 1823, State Historical Society of Missouri

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>The Santa Fe Trail, R.L. Duffus, Longmans, Green & Co. N.Y. 1931, p. 68

<sup>13</sup>Commerce of the Prairies, Josiah Gregg, p.

<sup>14</sup>Santa Fe Trade in Missouri, F.F. Stevens, Missouri Historical Review, Vol. XI pp. 300

<sup>15</sup>Ibid p. 297

<sup>16</sup>Augustus Storrs to Senator Benton, Senate Document 7, 18th Congress, 2nd Session, New Mexico University archives.

<sup>17</sup>Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies p. 80

<sup>18</sup>March, History of Missouri p. 483

<sup>19</sup>Simeon Turley to Jesse Turley

<sup>20</sup>Missouri Historical Review, Vol. XI p. 304

<sup>21</sup>Missouri Intelligencer, June 4, 1825, SHSM

<sup>22</sup>Missouri Intelligencer, Nov. 5, 1825, SHSM

<sup>23</sup>Missouri Intelligencer, June 4, 1825, SHSM

<sup>24</sup>Missouri Intelligencer, June 9, 1826, SHSM

<sup>25</sup>Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies, p. 332

<sup>26</sup>Thomas Hart Benton to M.M. Marmaduke, Feb. 2, 1829, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Sappington Papers

<sup>27</sup>Missouri Historical Review, Vol. XI p. 301

<sup>28</sup>Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Missouri, p. 171-172

<sup>29</sup>ibid p. 137

<sup>30</sup>Arrow Rock, the Story of a Town, Its Tavern and Its People, by Charles Van Ravenswaay, Missouri Historical Society, 1959

<sup>31</sup>Missouri Historical Review, Vol. XI, p. 306

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid. p. 312

<sup>35</sup>Duffus, p. 255

<sup>36</sup>Ibid p. 258

<sup>37</sup>Ibid p. 267

*Michael Dickey recently retired after a long career as administrator of Arrow Rock State Historic Site in Saline County and the Boone's Lick State Historic Site in Howard County*

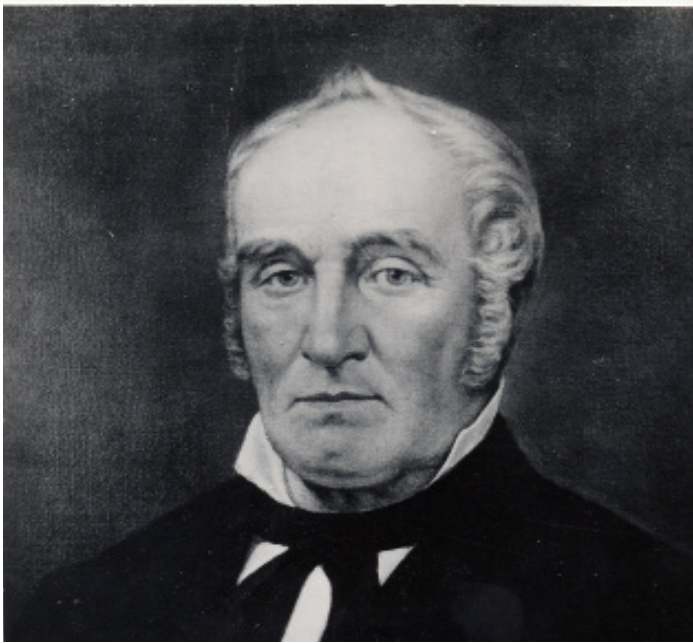
## An Early Santa Fe Business Venture

*By Lee Cullimore ©*

**LEAVING BEHIND THE DISMAL ECONOMIC CLIMATE OF** Virginia in late summer of 1823, Meredith Miles Marmaduke, businessman, farmer, and a future governor of Missouri, reached Franklin, Missouri, that October and spent the coming winter months preparing to “make a fortune” in the Santa Fe trade.<sup>i</sup> In the spring of 1824 he and Samuel McClure, also a recent transplant from Virginia, formed a partnership bearing their names for the purpose of trading in New Mexico. The terms of the partnership are unknown, but it’s likely that each man pledged to invest a specified amount of money with the profit from the venture to be divided in proportion to the investment. That was a considerable amount for the two to raise (both men lacking deep financial pockets), with payments going for goods to be traded, a wagon to transport them, horses and mules for draft animals and for riding, provisions taken along for sustenance, the tariff to be paid on the trade goods once they reached New Mexico, and a license to trade they would purchase from the Spanish governor. Their total investment probably approached three thousand dollars. An estimate of their expenditure for trade goods alone can be surmised from a partial list of merchandise on hand that was compiled after the partners had been in Santa Fe for seven weeks, goods that were taken to El Paso del Norte for sale there.<sup>ii</sup> Marmaduke placed the cost

of those goods at \$210.50 (anticipating a return of nearly \$700). Merchandise valued at that amount or more had probably already been sold by this time, with a greater amount likely retained in Santa Fe for continued trade there and in the outlying villages. In addition, soon after arriving at Santa Fe the partners acquired another trader’s stock for \$703,<sup>iii</sup> bringing their total investment for trade goods close to two thousand dollars.

In early May, before joining the summer caravan, the partnership expanded the scope of their Santa Fe venture. Marmaduke, whose Virginia background in the civil court system gave him considerable knowledge about legal documents, drew up a contract for Washington Sydnor that established Sydnor both as an individual trader and as an agent working in behalf of the firm of McClure & Marmaduke. The partners agreed to furnish Sydnor with \$250 worth of goods that he would select and buy in Franklin. They also agreed to “convey from this place to New Mexico all the cloathing [sic] & provisions which may be necessary,” or which Sydnor asked them to take, and to “. . . furnish him with provisions from this place onward in his journey, in such quantity and quality as is agreed upon by the Company generally [the ‘Company’ being the group of eighty-one traders and others leaving for Santa Fe in a few weeks], and



**Meredith Miles Marmaduke**  
BHS Archives

that they will on this journey render the said Sydnor such assistance from time to time as may be in their power. . . .” Sydnor was to provide transportation for himself and his trade goods. By this move McClure & Marmaduke acquired a third salesman, allowing them to trade in Santa Fe and at the same time in outlying villages, which were numerous in the region, where they would hopefully be ahead of their competitors.

The terms of the contract with regard to Sydnor’s responsibilities were very specific:

“... Washington Sydnor . . . agrees . . . that he will select, receive and convey the said two hundred and fifty dollars worth of goods from this place (Franklin Mo.) to New Mexico . . . and that he will travel with . . . McClure and Marmaduke from this place to that and that he will render to them all the assistance that may be required of him on this journey thro’, or that it may be in his power in promoting and facilitating the movement of the said McClure & Marmaduke from this to that place. . . . Sydnor on his part further . . . agrees that he will continue and remain with them, from and after his arrival in the said Country of Mexico, until he shall have succeeded in selling to the best advantage the goods which he . . . shall have conveyed thither. And that during all the time which he may be thus bound to remain and continue with . . . McClure and Marmaduke, that he . . . will render unto . . . [them] all the assistance that he possibly can, in endeavoring to aid them in selling and disposing of their goods, in every way that he can, both as interpreter of their Language, so far as he knows and also as relates to the

travelling [sic] and moving about from place to place after their arrival there [emphasis added].”<sup>iv</sup>

Sydnor also agreed that as soon as he sold the last of his merchandise he would reimburse the partners for the goods which they furnished him, and that he would “divide equally in half the whole amount of profits which may have accrued upon the sale of the aforesaid goods, and that he will then, at the same time, pay over to . . . McClure and Marmaduke the one half of the aforesaid profits, retaining to himself the other remaining half of the profits owing upon the sale of the goods. . . .”

Few documents from the early days of the Santa Fe trade exist and the contract shown above between Meredith Marmaduke, Sam McClure and Washington Sydnor is unique for its detailed description of the responsibilities of the parties. The success of their strategy, establishing Washington Sydnor as Marmaduke & McClure’s agent, isn’t known since nothing more is heard of Sydnor. The McClure and Marmaduke partnership remained active in the Santa Fe trade through the summer of 1827, as both became wealthy despite some losses. The two men continued to be close friends for the remainder of their lives.

## NOTES

i. In the spring of 1824, Marmaduke wrote to his friend, Henry Hungerford, in Virginia, suggesting that he join him in Marmaduke’s business venture to Santa Fe. Hungerford responded saying, “The want of capital in this country, and enterprise, will prevent me from engaging with you in your proposed project to make a fortune. I should like very much to be rich, but being deficient in the aforesaid [sic] requisites, together with a dreadful apprehension of the Indians, tomahawks & scalping knives, induces me at once, to say, I cannot accept of your proposition.” Henry Hungerford to Meredith M. Marmaduke, May 3, 1824. Missouri History Museum, Sappington and Marmaduke Collection, Box 1, Folder 2.

ii. Memorandum of goods in pack taken down the river Sept. 21st 1824 and ret. 10 Oct. 1824. State Historical Society of Missouri, Marmaduke Collection C1021, Folder 3. The river was the Rio Grande, and the trail over which the goods moved to El Paso is the Jornada del Muerto, Trail of the Dead, which parallels the river for much of the way. Vestiges of the old trail can still be seen in New Mexico today.

iii. The partners paid Francis P. Samuel \$703.73 for goods he had brought to Santa Fe, giving him \$500 in cash with the balance due the first day of January, 1825, in Franklin. Marmaduke to John Hardeman, August 5, 1824. Missouri History Museum, Sappington and Marmaduke Collection, Box 1, Folder 3.

iv. Attempts to trace Washington Sydnor have been unsuccessful, although there were Sydnor families living in Benton County, Missouri, in the 1830s. Memorandum of an agreement between McClure & Marmaduke and Washington Sydnor, May 5, 1824. Missouri History Museum, Sappington and Marmaduke Collection, Box 1, Folder 2.

*Editor’s note: The manuscript presented here is an excerpt from a chapter in a biography of Meredith Miles Marmaduke by Lee Cullimore and published by Friends of Arrow Rock: **To Make a Fortune in Missouri***



Historian Frances Levine is the former president and CEO of the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis. She also served as the director of the New Mexico History Museum and the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe.

**Join us Sunday, November 2nd, for the Boonslick Historical Society Fall Banquet being held jointly with the Boone's Lick Road Association at the historic Nelson Memorial United Methodist Church, 407 E Spring Street in Boonville. Reservations are due by October 24. A special program will be presented on "Crossings: Women on the Santa Fe Trail" by historian and author Dr. Frances Levine in a discussion of her book and the Santa Fe Trail, moderated by Dr. Tim Carson of the BLRA Board.**

"The Santa Fe Trail has a special allure in southwestern history—it was a road of lucrative commerce, military expansion, and great adventure. Because these themes are connected with the Santa Fe Trail in the American imagination, however, the trail is not often associated with stories of women. *Crossings* tells the personal stories of several women who made the journey, showing how they were involved with and affected by Santa Fe Trail trade. The Santa Fe Trail was a nexus of nations and cultures, connect-ing the northern frontier of newly formed Mexico with Missouri and the quickly expanding western United States, as well as with the many Indigenous nations whose traditional lands it crossed." —*Friends of Missouri State Archives*

The meeting will begin at 4:30 p.m., followed by a buffet dinner at 5 p.m. and then the program. Entrees being served by Shannon's Family Traditions include: Pork Loin, Parmesan Chicken, Scalloped Potatoes, Green Beans, Olive Garden Salad, Rolls and cake for desert. There will also be tea, lemonade and water. Attendees are requested to return the reservation form with a check payable to the Boonslick Historical Society (see address below). For more information, contact BHS Treasurer Sam Jewett by email at [samjewett@sbcglobal.net](mailto:samjewett@sbcglobal.net).

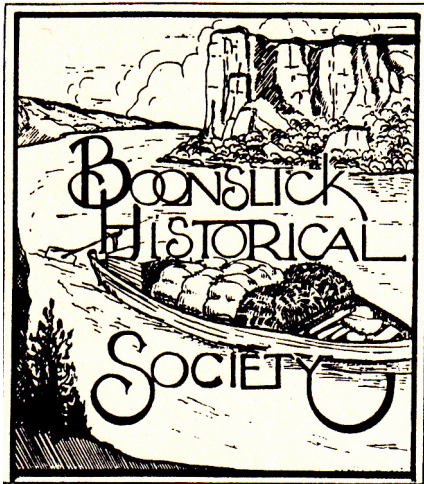
## **BOONSLICK HISTORICAL SOCIETY & BOONE'S LICK ROAD ASSOCIATION**

### **FALL BANQUET NOV. 2 RESERVATION FORM — \$23 A PERSON**

**Advance Reservations and Payment Required. Deadline is October 24. Return the form that was mailed to you or placed in the magazine binding with a check to: Boonslick Historical Society, P.O. Box 426, Boonville, MO 65233.**

**[Editor's Note:** The Boone's Lick Road Association and the Boonslick Historical Society are holding a joint meeting for the annual fall banquet, Nov. 2. Following is a description of the BLRA.]

The BLRA, incorporated in Missouri in 2011, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Our mission is twofold: First, we want to preserve and tell the fascinating stories of the first major road into the heart of Missouri. Secondly, we hope to secure federal recognition of this road as a National Historic Trail. We aim to be the most comprehensive and authoritative source for information and research into this historic trail. Our membership receives four quarterly newsletters that keep our members fully informed on events and stories about the Boone's Lick Road for just \$10 per year. Visit our website at [Booneslickroad.org](http://Booneslickroad.org) or follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/BLRA.org> to learn more or join. The Boone's Lick Road is now one of the Historic Legacy Trails of Missouri. —Dorris Keeven-Franke, BLRA President.



**Boonslick Historical Society**

P. O. Box 426

Boonville, MO 65233



**Artist's conception of workers unloading Santa Fe Trail freight wagons in Santa Fe, Spanish New Mexico.**  
*National Park Service illustration*