



Kansas State University Libraries
New Prairie Press

Symphony in the Flint Hills Field Journal

The Santa Fe Trail (Sandy Carlson, editor)

Trade Through Council Grove

Kenneth W. McClintock

Follow this and additional works at: <https://newprairiepress.org/sfh>

Recommended Citation

McClintock, Kenneth W. (2021). "Trade Through Council Grove," *Symphony in the Flint Hills Field Journal*.
<https://newprairiepress.org/sfh/2021/flinthills/4>

To order hard copies of the Field Journals, go to shop.symphonyintheflinthills.org.

The Field Journals are made possible in part with funding from the Fred C. and Mary R. Koch Foundation.

This Event is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences at New Prairie Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in Symphony in the Flint Hills Field Journal by an authorized administrator of New Prairie Press. For more information, please contact cads@k-state.edu.

TRADE THROUGH COUNCIL GROVE

Along today's limited access highways, signs announcing the approach of exits sometimes include the words "No Services"—i.e., no gasoline stations, no restaurants, no lodging, no stores of any kind.

Until 1847, Santa Fe-bound travelers leaving Missouri entered about 800 miles of "no services." They had to haul essential supplies with them and otherwise "live off the land."

In 1821, the overland trip to Santa Fe, began at Franklin, Missouri. As river ports were developed upstream on the Missouri River, the "jumping off" points moved west—to Arrow Rock, to Westport, to Independence. Trade goods purchased back east were shipped to these points by steamboats and offloaded for shipment by wagon train to Santa Fe. It was at these port cities that wagon makers, harness makers, blacksmiths, warehousemen, hoteliers and other businessmen prospered. But from there on, travelers were on their own.

In 1847, Council Grove became the westernmost location to obtain supplies to outfit a wagon train. Seth M. Hays, great-grandson of Kentucky frontiersman Daniel Boone, established the Boone & Hamilton trading post at the Council Grove campsite alongside the Neosho River crossing (just east of the present-day Hays House restaurant). Hays and his slave, Sarah "Aunt Sally" Taylor, became Council Grove's first permanent settlers. A prominent businessman, Hays also built in 1858-1859 a wood-frame store building, operating as S.M. Hays & Co.

The town grew as trail traffic increased. Chouteau brothers Frederick and Cyprian in 1848 constructed a log trading post. On July 1, 1850, the firm of Waldo, Hall & Co. began



1961 Santa Fe Trail Reride in Council Grove
Kansas Historical Society

carrying the United States mail between Independence and Santa Fe. The firm purchased a log structure, built as a blacksmith shop in 1848 by William Mitchell, blacksmith for the Kaw, and converted it into a mail station. The firm also obtained a license to trade with the Kaw.

In 1857, the Westport firm of Northrup and Chick built a small stone building, which was the last store westbound travelers passed leaving Council Grove. Save for a “trading ranch” in western Kansas with a very limited selection of merchandise, the “Last Chance Store,” as it was nicknamed, was the last chance to get supplies before reaching New Mexico. Other traders and merchants followed, offering about anything needed to outfit a wagon train or an individual traveler, from needles and thread, coffee and sugar, to ox yokes and wagons, mules and oxen, and everything in between. Wagon makers, blacksmiths, harness makers and others soon provided full services for Santa Fe freighters.

Outfitted for the journey, wagons steadily traversed what became a well-worn route across the grasslands. But even though the Santa Fe Trail was a primary prairie pathway for 45 years, it was just part of a progression from creek beds to trails to railroads and highways that spurred America’s commerce.

The heyday of the Santa Fe Trail through Council Grove ended in the fall of 1866, when the Union Pacific Railway, Eastern Division (later re-named the Kansas Pacific) reached Junction City. The next spring, freighters offloaded at the railhead and took the Fort Riley to Fort Larned military road to reach the Santa Fe Trail, bypassing Council Grove.

Kenneth W. McClintock is a fifth-generation resident of Morris County, where all eight of his great-grandparents and four great-great grandparents lived prior to 1900. Retired from the practice of law, Kenneth and his wife, Shirley, operate the Trail Days Café and Museum as volunteers at Council Grove.



Repeat and Shift: Badger
Kirsten Furlong