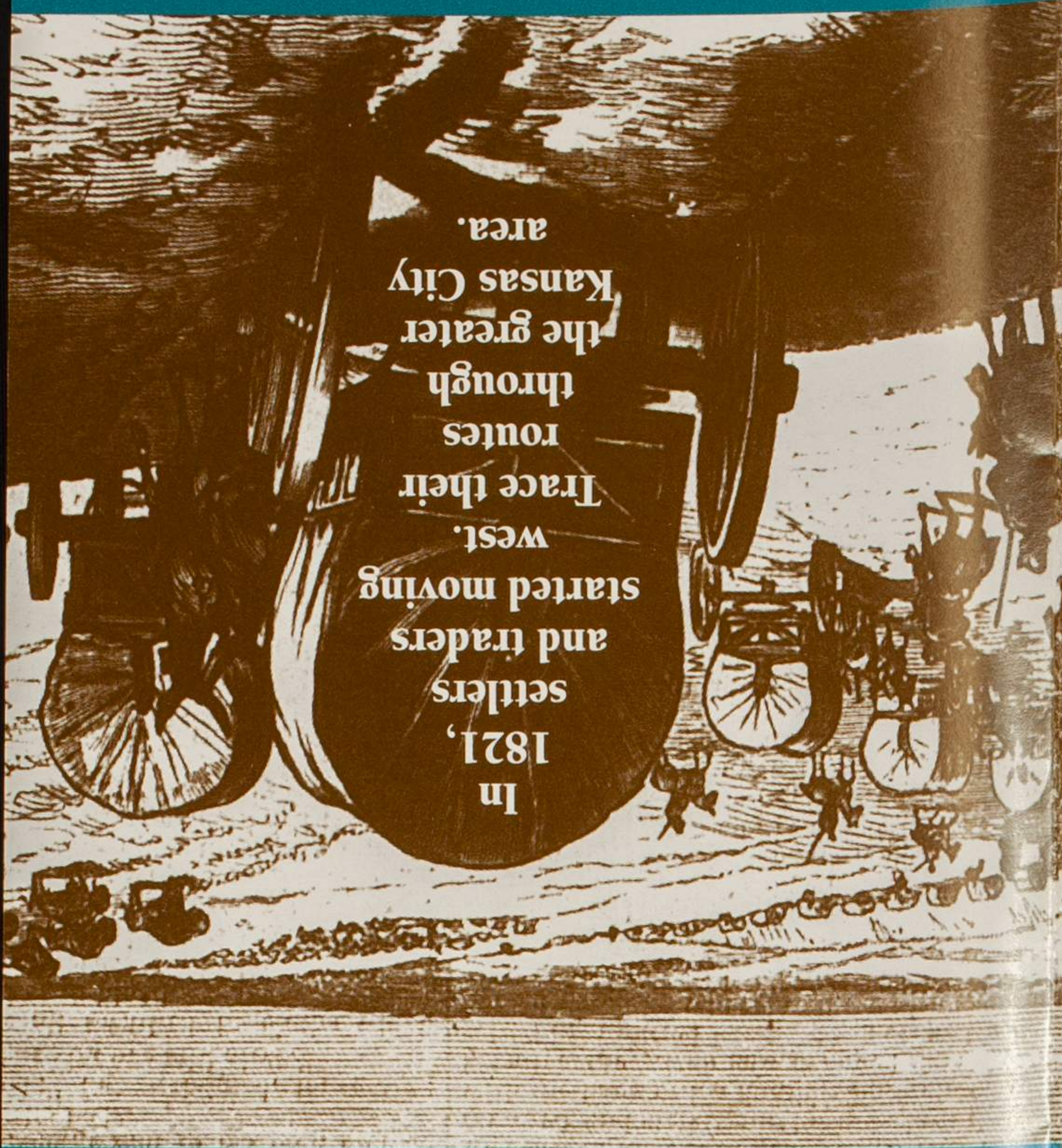


Relive the adventure.



The Santa Fe, Oregon, California and Military Trails

Kansas City Area Historic Trails

DISCOVER WHERE IT ALL STARTED...

Walk in the steps of the early pioneers who undertook America's greatest adventure—the settlement of the West.

During America's expansion in the 1800s, three renowned routes led the pioneers west: the Oregon, California and Santa Fe Trails. The area surrounding Kansas City provided supplies, marshaling areas, grazing land and water for thousands of settlers and traders who were beginning their journey west.

Branches of the trails ran parallel from "jumping off" towns such as Westport (now part of Kansas City) and Independence, Mo. Southwest of Gardner, Kan., the trails divided. The Santa Fe heading southwest, and the Oregon-California route heading northwest. The Oregon-California route split again in Wyoming.

Emigrant diaries describe hazardous river crossings, treacherous weather, sickness and wagon breakdowns as the wagon trains rumbled westward. They also describe beautiful prairies, wildlife and interesting rock formations.

Travelers on both trails averaged fifteen to twenty miles a day.

Oregon-California Trail

A quarter of a million emigrants traveled the Oregon and California Trails between 1842 and 1870, making this the greatest peacetime migration in the history of the world. Beginning in Independence as one trail—and ending at the Pacific Ocean—the trails stretched almost 2,000 miles across six states.

In the early years, the trip took four to five months.

Santa Fe Trail

One thousand years ago native people traded and traveled up and down the Arkansas, Cimarron and Canadian Rivers. Following the same route, Captain William Becknell left Franklin, Mo., on September 1, 1821, with a small cargo



loaded on pack mules. The next year he and others brought wagons over the same route, proving it could be done and blazing the way for the thousands who would follow.

A two-way commercial route linking Missouri and New Mexico, the Santa Fe Trail was the economic lifeline of the great Central and Southwestern United States. It was 900 miles long, and required a four-month round trip. In 1866, as many as 5,000 wagons traveled the Santa Fe Trail.

Frontier Military Scenic Byway

Between 1838 and 1845, a military road was constructed through the Indian Territory to connect Fort Leavenworth, in Kansas, and Fort Gibson, in Oklahoma. Fort Leavenworth was the first of the frontier forts assigned to protect travelers on the westward trails. The northern portion of the Military Trail was used by Fort Leavenworth troopers to get to the Santa Fe and Oregon-California Trails.

Today the prairie and civilization have reclaimed the original

military road. But modern Highway 69 and other connecting roads located near its original trace have been designated as the Frontier Military Scenic Byway, providing travelers with an interesting historic journey through eastern Kansas.

Discover where it all started...

Freight wagons and stately prairie schooners no longer rumble across the prairie. But buildings and other historical sites—the landmarks that guided the trail travelers—still exist.

The thousands of people, wagons and livestock created a recognizable road—as well laid out as any modern highway. In many places, the original ruts of the wagon wheels worn into the prairie grass are just as visible as they were over 100 years ago. Walk in the steps of the early pioneers who undertook America's greatest adventure—the settlement of the West.

Trace the trails through the greater Kansas City area by using the map and site descriptions on the fold-out. The following are also excellent attractions to add to your trail experience:

20. Kansas City Museum

3218 Gladstone Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64123 (816) 483-8300
Climb aboard a fully stocked covered wagon and handle the staples which would have been carried along the trails. Learn how wagon train families stocked their small, traveling homes.

21. Arabia Steamboat Museum

400 Grand Ave., (in the historic River Market)
Kansas City, MO 64106 (816) 471-4030
See 200 tons of preserved frontier supplies which might have been used by trail emigrants if the ship carrying this 1850s cargo had not sunk deep in the Missouri River. The side wheeler, the "Great White Arabia," has been raised and its cargo is on display.

22. Westport

4000 Broadway, Kansas City, MO 64111
(816) 561-1821
Renovated historic district where trail travelers outfitted their wagon trains. Now a popular entertainment and retail district with markers dedicated to the area's rich trails heritage.

23. Old Shawnee Town

11515 W. 57th St., Shawnee, KS 66203 (913) 268-8772
Originally known as Gum Springs, this restored and replicated

pioneer settlement was a popular overnight's stop on the trail branch linking Fort Leavenworth with the Santa Fe Trail.

24. Johnson County Historical Museum

6305 Lackman Rd., Shawnee, KS 66217
(913) 631-6709
Exhibits and hands-on activities depicting pioneer life on the plains including a display dedicated to the trails' experience in Johnson County.

25. The Prairie Center

26325 Prairie Center Rd., Olathe, KS 66061
(913) 856-8832
A stop at the Prairie Center will give visitors a look at the tallgrass prairie as it would have appeared to the travelers on the westward trails.

26. Wyandotte County Museum

631 N. 126th St., Bonner Springs, KS 66012
(913) 721-1078
Exhibits on local and regional history including special presentations on the Military Trails which ran from Fort Leavenworth through Wyandotte County.

◆ The ruts remain...

"The vast prairie itself soon opened before us in all its grandeur and beauty... The view of the limitless succession of green undulations and flowery slopes of every gentle and graceful configuration, stretching away and away, until they fade from sight in dim distance, creates a wild and scarcely controllable ecstasy of admiration."
Edwin Bryant, 1846

Although unused for over 100 years, the thousands of wagons that traveled the trails left a permanent mark on the region's landscape. Ruts and swales carved into the prairie by wagon wheels can be found at several locations throughout the area. You can enhance your enjoyment of the greater Kansas City trails experience with a stop at any of the trail rut sites listed below.

13. Fort Osage Park
105 Osage St., Sibley, Mo.
14. Schumacher Site
6601 E. 93rd St., Kansas City, Mo.
15. Fitzhugh Mill-Watts Mill Site
East of 103rd St. and State Line Rd. on Indian Creek, Kansas City, Mo.
16. Minor Park Site
Red Bridge Rd., east of 110th St. and Holmes Rd., Kansas City, Mo.
17. Blue Valley Park Site
27th and Topping, Kansas City, Mo.
18. Harmon Park Site
78th St. and Mission Rd., Prairie Village, Kan., near the pavilion.
19. Fort Leavenworth Wagon Cut
East of Memorial Chapel, on Riverside Ave. (On the Main Post walking tour.)

How to identify ruts and swales. Ruts and swales appear as wide depressions, which are heavily grassed over. The appearance of the vegetation in these wagon-cut with indentations differs from season to season. Its greener than surrounding grass in the spring; the surrounding foliage grows higher in the summer. In the fall, the vegetation in the ruts has a more copper-colored hue; snow settles into the ruts in the winter.

MISSOURI
WAKE UP TO

KANSAS
The secrets out!

10975 Benson, Suite 360
Overland Park, KS 66210
(913) 491-0123 • (800) 262-PARK (7275)

Overland Park
Convention and Visitors Bureau

Olathe, KS 66051
P.O. Box 98
(913) 764-1050

Olathe Convention and Visitors Bureau
Lenexa, KS 66215
11900 W. 87th St.
(913) 888-1414 • (800) 950-STOP (7867)

Lenexa Convention and Visitors Bureau
Leavenworth, KS 66048
(913) 682-4113 • (800) 844-4114

Leavenworth-Lansing
Convention & Visitors Bureau

Kansas City, KS 66117
P.O. Box 171517

Convention and Visitors Bureau
Kansas City, Kansas Area

Independence, MO 64050
111 E. Maple
(816) 325-7111

Independence Tourism Department

1100 Main St., Suite 2550
Kansas City, MO 64105
(816) 221-5242 • (800) 767-7700

of Greater Kansas City
Convention and Visitors Bureau

Information on additional attractions,
lodging and meals is available from these
Kansas City area tourism development agencies: