

Self-Drive Auto or Bicycle Tour of
the SANTA FE TRAIL
 IN LYON COUNTY, KANSAS

Please respect landowners' property and stay on the public roads. This tour may be taken from either east or west. **This guide starts from the east** at Wilmington in Wabaunsee Co. and ends at the Rock Creek crossing in Morris Co., with nine points of interest. Total length about 33 miles, most of it on gravel roads. → Public restrooms at Admire Jones Park, Allen businesses, and Flint Hills Trail at Miller, Admire, Bushong.

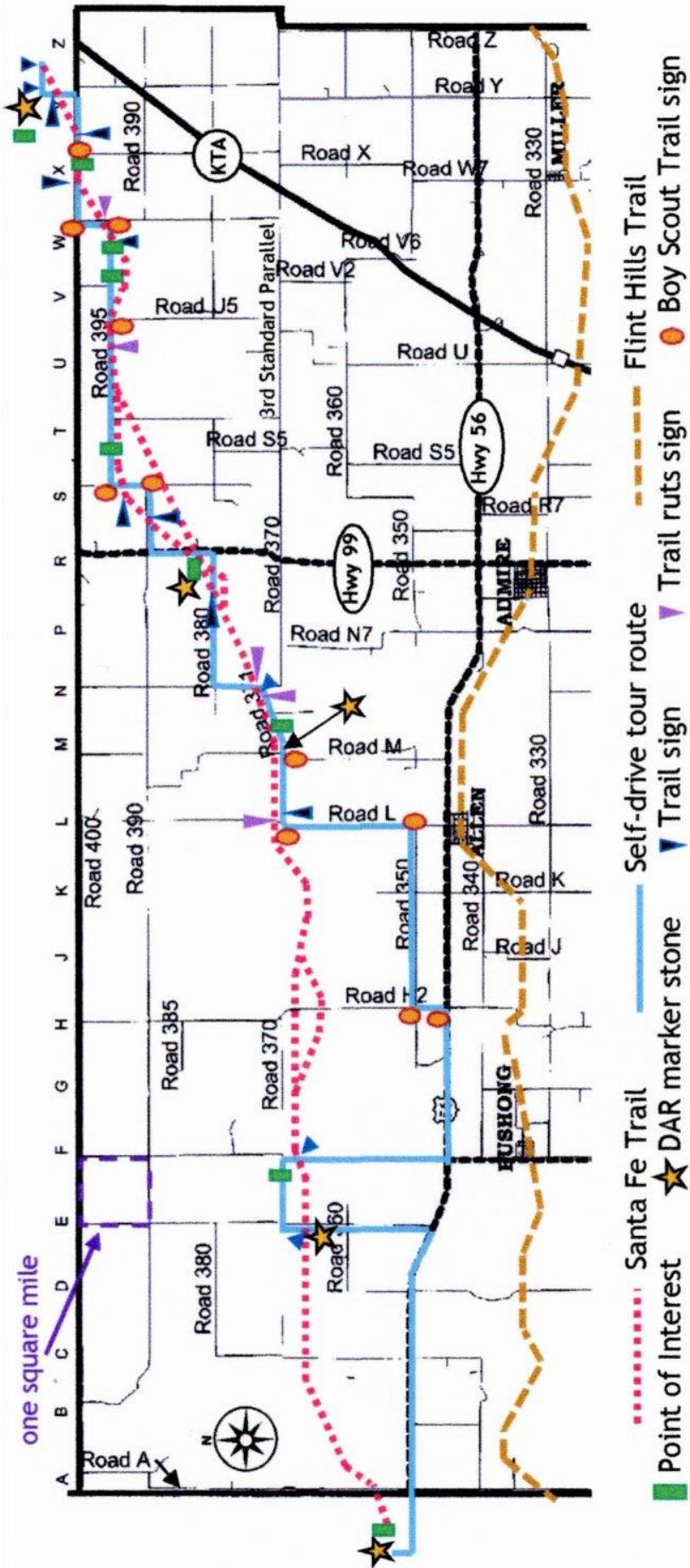
Trail Ruts – Often more than one swale, most are diagonal to the roads. Look for wide, curved troughs across ground in pastures that haven't been plowed, and ruts are most visible in late April-May after old grass is burnt off. Ruts are best seen at these points:

**Rd. W, east side fence posts curve with the rut **Roads E and F
 **east-west of 142 Mile Creek

THE TRAIL to Santa Fe, Mexico was initially used in 1821 by trader Wm. Becknell from Franklin, MO. Mexico had just won independence from Spain, and traders were welcomed; he had a profit of 1,500% from the sale of his goods. The U.S. military surveyed the Trail in 1825. By the early 1830s the eastern terminus had shifted up the Missouri River to Independence; by the 1840s it was Westport Landing at Kansas City. In 1848 Americans won the Mexican War, and Santa Fe was in the U.S.

From the east, the route crossed the Flint Hills, 78 miles thru Lyon, Morris and Marion counties. Lyon Co. is an area where the Flint Hills meet the NW of the Osage Cuestas (pron. *Kwestas*, means hills). With no definite line between these regions, it is grassland hills with arable land suited to crops, and Flint Hills with hard flint rock near the surface. In Lyon County the heyday of overland traffic was ended when the Trail was bypassed by railroads in 1866, although stages still brought mail until the early 1870s.

35-mile Bike Tour: Admire to Miller—Rd. Y to Wilmington—tour to Rd. L—Allen to Admire



Good places to **start this tour** at its east end: north on Rd. Y from Hwy 56, or take Hwy 31 to where it turns—east to Burlingame or north to Harveyville, go south there on the gravel Santa Fe Trail Road. Take this road south to turn west on the Wilmington Road, slow down and look for the Trail signs, and DAR marker in front of the school. In 1906 the Daughters of the American Revolution of Kansas started placing the markers and Oklahoma, Colorado and New Mexico DARs followed suit. Kansas stones were repaired and refurbished in 2006.

|(1) In July of 1850 the first stagecoach left Independence, MO for Santa Fe, with a one-way fare of \$250. **Wilmington** was a stage station; the town dates from 1856 at the junction of the Santa Fe Trail and the Leavenworth Military Road. It was an important stop on the 100-ft-wide Trail, 1/4 mi. west of Osage Co. and 1/3 mi. north of the Lyon Co. line in Wabaunsee Co. Its stores and wagon shop catered to Trail traffic; in 1858 a stone hotel was built, a school district in 1861, and in 1870 a church and stone schoolhouse, the only remaining structure from that busy period of growth and commerce. Its post office dated from 1857-1906.

From the Wilmington school turn south to the next intersection and turn west on Rd. 400 for 1 mile and start to continue west on the paved Rd. 400. At this point the grave site may be glimpsed just past the west side of the farmyard, in a field bordered by trees 150 yds. south of Rd. 400.

|(2) **Mexican graves** – Reported graves have long been the subject of speculation and legend. One version, known to be a tall tale, says a band of outlaws here in 1842 killed 27 Mexican traders and stole 500 mules and a treasure-box with \$75,000 in gold. The true history of this incident near Lyons, KS – not Lyon Co. – was an 1843 attack by Missourians on the wagons of a wealthy merchant from Santa Fe, and five Mexicans were killed. The possible burial site here may actually have been the final resting place of Mexican traders. Like many who risked the perils of travel in that era, their gravesites lie in the quiet beauty of the hills near the Santa Fe Trail.

Continue on Rd. 400 one mile, turn south on Rd. W. On the east side between the rut sign and fence gate, the fence posts follow the curve of the wagon rut as it angles across the road; look for parallel ruts here. This is one of the easiest places to view the ruts, and think about what made them. Continue and turn west onto Rd. 395. Pause here at the east end of Buttermilk Lane between Roads W & S, and note on the map that the Trail went south, probably to ford Log Chain Creek, then back north to the ford across Onion Creek.

|(3) In the section of the Trail that became known as **Buttermilk Lane** (it was also known as *Buttermilk Street*), local lore says it was so bumpy and “washboarded” that if a wagon had cream on it, the bouncing would churn it and separate the butter and buttermilk. Farmsteads were near each other here. The farm community of **Waushara** was named for a Wisconsin town from which some of the settlers had come. It had a post office 1858-1895 in a private home with a grocery store, also a school in 1863, then a church, all at Log Chain Creek crossing. The store bartered for items like butter, eggs and hides; excess could be taken on a long trip by wagon and traded at Topeka, a growing port city on the Kaw River. Waushara Cemetery to the southwest was later renamed Pleasant Ridge Cemetery.

|(4) Road 395 crosses several tributary streams that join Elm Creek to the southwest. On the Trail, **Log Chain Creek and Onion Creek** were streams to be forded that had no known stage station. Flat rock streambed crossings were a luxury; Log Chain was known for its muddy bottom where loaded wagons often got stuck in the deep mud. Heavy log chains were frequently used to pull the wagons out, and sometimes the chains broke under the strain. Onion Creek is about a mile west (*many today know this as Log Chain*), and was the subject of an 1867 diary entry: “Oct. 23—Daughter returned from the (post) office with a paper says a man was murdered at Onion Creek by a young man.” Local lore states that a carved rock is the marker of an incident at this crossing. A little girl wandered away from the

family wagon and they searched for her, but found only her bonnet. They sadly moved on, leaving the rock to mark her passing.

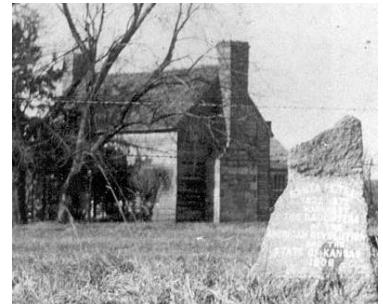
Continue on Rd. 395 to the only bridge on this road, at Chicken Creek. The Trail is nearby to the south, and runs parallel to the modern road here.

(5) Chicken Creek stage station, northwest of the stream crossing, was operated for a few years by Benjamin G. O'Dell and wife Betsy. Owned by the stage line company which had the mail contract and was headquartered near the Trail terminus in Missouri, such stations were established to support the stage coaches that took mail, goods and people through the area on regular schedules; each station had an operator hired to live there and do the stage work. Stage stations kept fresh horses to replace the exhausted teams coming in from the next station on the line. One diarist described the ride as "bouncing" along the road. The horses would be fed and rested until they were needed for another coach. The O'Dells with their large family had moved here in 1859, when the youngest of their 12 children was age 5. Like many stage operators, they also farmed. Son Orris ran a store to the west at Allen in 1862. Ben died in Oct. 1863, age 63, buried in Pleasant Ridge (Waushara) Cemetery.

Continue on Rd. 395 to Rd. S, turn south 1/2 mile, then turn west on Rd. 390 over to Hwy 99. Turn south on Hwy 99. On the roadside just before the bridge, the DAR marker is on a high pedestal at the end of the tree line that comes up out of the creek. The highway is widened there for a pull-off.

(6) Elm Creek was established NW of the crossing by Waldo, Hall & Co. in 1855 as an Overland Mail Station for their stage line; it was not a post office. A small log cabin was there when its first operator, James Thompson, arrived. Henry Jacoby was the station operator from 1857 to 1862. By that time a more substantial house (*shown here with the DAR stone circa 1910*) had replaced the cabin; its stone fireplace was said to have a space where the residents could take shelter in case of attack.

Jacoby and his young family were there under contract to the Santa Fe & Kansas City stage line the night of July 3, 1862 when A. I. Baker was murdered at Agnes City by Bill Anderson and friends. One of the stops on the bushwhackers' wild ride to escape back to Missouri was at Elm Creek Station, where they paused to fire dozens of shots into the heavy wooden door. Bill hoped to take revenge on Jacoby because he believed the station man to have had a part in the recent shooting death of Bill's father. The murderous gang ended their barrage of bullets and rode on after hearing noise from a nearby wagon train. Because of the raw violence of this incident, Jacoby moved with his wife and children back to Illinois before returning in 1879 to farm near Reading, where he died in 1908.



Continue across the bridge and turn west on Rd. 380, then 2 miles to turn south on Rd. N. Pause just past the house on the west side; this affords a good view of the creek valley to the southwest and the road winding through it. Just ahead on Rd. N, multiple swales of ruts crossed as wagons went down or up the hill. Turn west on Rd. 371 and pause before entering what was one of the busiest sites on the Santa Fe Trail.

The cemetery is on the small hill NE of the creek. South of the road, the house, store and cabins were along the general area where the fence is set back from the road. Note the history signs on each side of the creek, and the DAR marker stone is west of the creek.

(7) One Hundred Forty Two Mile Creek crossing was named by the early traders for its distance from a trail point near Ft. Osage, MO (east of North KC), measured by the military survey of 1825. Charles H. Withington (1816-1881) had been a blacksmith, then gunsmith for the Sac & Fox tribes since 1838. He moved his family to Council Grove when he became

a mail agent for Waldo, Hall & Company (1850-54) stagecoach line in 1852. He preempted his claim here in June after Kansas Territory was opened to settlement on May 30, 1854. The homesteading family built log cabins SE of the crossing for their home and a trading post. In 1855, Withington became postmaster of **Allen** PO, named for his pioneer friend Allen McGee. Early that year, he had two Neosho Rapids men who were on their way home with a new plow break a parcel of land for him. This was said to be the first broken prairie sod in the county.

Business thrived, and a wood-frame house replaced the family's log cabin. The store prospered, and as Trail traffic increased with hopeful settlers and the Pikes Peak gold rush (1858-late 1860), so did the scope and size of the store and amenities. Expansions included stables and corrals for the horses of Hockaday and Hall Stage Co. (1854-58), Hall & Porter (1859-60) and others, and a row of small cabin rooms to rent. At the peak of Trail travel 10 forges were active with shoeing horses, mules and oxen, and repairing metal wagon parts. The cabin hotel rooms often housed families of those who were checking out property claims in the Neosho Valley, often assisted by Withington. He offered a cemetery on the hill NE of the crossing for locals and travelers who died, 150 unmarked graves by one estimate.

A savvy entrepreneur who knew the struggles of wagon travel, Withington built a sturdy wooden bridge over his creek crossing and charged a 25¢ toll per wagon. Those who chose not to pay could use the natural ford to the north. The store at Allen was closed in 1866, when traffic declined as the railroads in this region were built farther west. Circa 1872, the toll bridge was sold to Lyon County and later replaced with a steel bridge. This entire site is now called Old Allen. In 1886 the farm community moved south with their post office and platted the present Allen townsite when the Missouri-Pacific Railroad was built through.

Continue west to turn south on Rd. L; then west on Rd. 350; then south on Rd. H2 to Hwy. 56. Turn west on the highway to Rd. F. Turn north on Rd. F up to the Trail rut sign, then on to turn west on Rd. 370, and pause near the bridge. The Anderson home was about 1/4 mile SW of the modern bridge, and the cave mentioned below was much nearer the bridge.

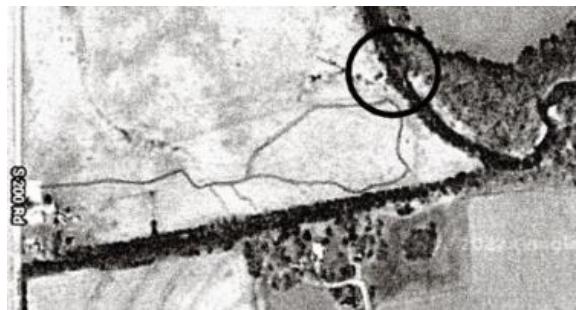
(8) Bluff Creek meanders to the SW through this hilly terrain, and its east bank has high rocky bluffs. Wm. C. Anderson moved his family from Kentucky to Missouri, then into Kansas Territory. In 1857 they homesteaded in Lyon Co. SW of the creek crossing on the Santa Fe Trail, where they farmed and sold provisions and whiskey to locals, Natives, and travelers on the Trail. Mother Martha was killed by lightning in June, 1860; both parents are known to have been buried in the cemetery on the hill at Old Allen, and probably baby Charles.

Son Bill, age 21 in 1860, farmed and took jobs in the vicinity, and made several trips over the Trail to Santa Fe working on freight wagons. They may have started as horse traders, but lured by easy money, Bill and brother Jim became known locally as horse thieves. They stole horses and sold them over a wide area, calling it their "pony business," and reportedly used a cave in the high creekbank to hide horses and change their color with shoe-blacking. One report says they changed a horse's color then sold it to the man from whom they stole it.

The boys' criminal activity escalated into bushwhacking in Missouri. In late 1861 Bill and Jim participated in a plundering raid led by former judge A. I. Baker, who owned the Agnes City trading store on Rock Creek west of the Andersons. Conflict arose in early 1862 between these neighbors when widower Baker called several times at the Anderson home and seemed interested in young Mary Ellen, age 16. The Andersons then learned that Baker was engaged to marry local teacher Annis Segur, age 17, without having told the Andersons that he was no longer interested in Mary Ellen. Her father's fury led to him getting drunk and going to Baker's Rock Creek home on May 12, 1862, intent on shooting Baker in revenge for his family's wounded honor. Baker shot and killed Bill's father as he started upstairs.

Wanted by most of the local settlers for their criminal activities, Bill and Jim escaped east on the Santa Fe Trail. Their sisters were soon moved to Missouri, abandoning the trading post home in Kansas.

Continue on Rd. 370 to turn south on Rd. E. Look for ruts at the Trail crossing sign, then continue to the Agnes City Cemetery, and the DAR marker next to the flagpole. Continue south and turn west on Hwy. 56. Proceed 1 mile past the county line Rd. A and turn north on (Morris Co.) S 200 Rd. At the end of the tree line and just past the house is a graveled, fenced area with story-boards about the Rock Creek site and the DAR stone. Parking is permitted, and visitors can take the walking path, a loop with story-boards about the events at the crossing. Walking distance about 3/4 mile. (See aerial photo, circle is possibly the crossing area.)



The events at Rock Creek given here ended in 1862, some months after Breckinridge Co. was changed to Lyon. Lyon County had gained miles of territory on the south and to reduce its size, in 1863 2 miles off the west side were transferred to Chase Co., then in 1864 2 miles were transferred to Morris Co., including this site.

(9) Rock Creek crossing was the site chosen by Arthur Inghram Baker for his home, store, and proposed town named for his mother: **Agnes City**. (He also got the township named Agnes City, but the cemetery and farm neighborhood of that name north of Bushong came later and have no connection to Baker's site.) Baker had worked as a blacksmith and trader with the Sac & Fox tribes, moving to Kansas with them from Iowa in 1846. In 1852 one of Baker's sisters wed T. S. Huffaker who ran the Kaw Mission school 1851-'54 in Council Grove, and Baker's widowed mother was hired as Matron at the school. Baker lost his trading license and in early 1854 built a log cabin at Rock Creek. When Kansas Territory was opened to settlement May 30, 1854, Baker was already in his home and he was Lyon County's first settler, homesteading on public land. The site would later prove to be on the Kaw Reservation.

A self-taught lawyer, A. I. Baker became a prominent citizen as the county was being organized. He was the first 8th District Justice of the Peace and first county probate judge, a politician, elected legislator, farmer, stockman, trader, postmaster, jayhawking raider, real estate land agent, newspaperman, and one of the town fathers of Americus. The store was near the Trail NE of the crossing, and north of that within a few years Baker replaced his cabin with a 2-story limestone house modeled on the Kaw Mission in Council Grove.

In his political career, on Jan. 13, 1855 self-taught lawyer Arthur I. Baker was commissioned 8th Dist. Justice of the Peace by Territorial Gov. A. H. Reeder. With no other local government established, Baker was the chief government official in a huge but sparsely settled area from the Kansas River on the north, south to the Cottonwood River, Osage River (probably the Marais des Cygnes) on the east, and to the west boundary at the Rocky Mountains. Later in 1855 Baker was elected to represent the 8th District, winning by a vote of 25-12. The pro-slavery "bogus legislature" blocked him from actually serving.

Lacking government buildings, Baker's house at Agnes City was the first site of the county court and was the county seat of newly established Breckinridge Co. in 1857. When Gov. Reeder called for a Congressional delegate election, he selected Baker's house as the place of election for the 8th District. Baker as probate judge was head of the Breckinridge Co. gov't, and held the first county commission meeting at his home on Sept. 3, 1857. In 1859 he resigned as judge, and that year was named postmaster of Agnes City.

Speculator and town promoter Baker, as land agent, specialized in obtaining land titles for town companies, and did that for Americus, Emporia and others. The Americus Town Company was organized June 1, 1857, with 16 members and Baker as president. He moved his law practice to Americus while involved with the town company.

In 1860, he had 75 acres of cropland and 85 acres unimproved, plus one of the largest cattle herds (2 oxen, 12 milk cows, 35 others) in the county. Prior to 1861 Baker used Kaw natives to herd cattle and do farm chores, paying them with sugar, flour and beef. It was a common practice of such traders on the trail to watch for sore-footed oxen pulling the wagons, and buy them for \$25 or \$35 apiece. They would keep the oxen a month or two to regain health, have them shod, then sell them for \$100 to \$125 each.

Lawless guerilla fighters, militant bands of vengeful killers, thieves who looted and burned homes and towns, all were initially labeled as Jayhawkers. Those who were eventually called bushwhackers were based in the slave-state of Missouri. They generally supported the Confederates, usually attacked anti-slavery targets, and were named for the way they operated—striking hard and fast from cover, then running to evade capture. Jayhawkers were their Kansas counterpart, with opposite politics but using the same tactics with the same level of viciousness. In late 1861, financial losses and crop failure prompted former judge Baker to lead a band of area men, including Bluff Creek neighbors Bill and Jim Anderson, on a jayhawking raid to southeast Kansas. They were successful and pleased to take their stolen loot home. Conflict between Baker and the Andersons led to Baker shooting the elder Anderson to death, and the remaining family left for Missouri (see *this guide (8) Bluff Creek*).

Freight traffic was reportedly heavy at this time, but there may have been few travelers at the Rock Creek crossing on the evening of July 3, 1862. Bill and Jim Anderson were seeking revenge, and with four others had arrived earlier near Agnes City. Waiting until dark, one of them lured Baker to go to the store cellar to get whiskey. Baker had remarried May 14, and his teen brother-in-law was clerking at the store and held the lantern for him. When they went back up the stone cellar steps, they were met with a barrage of bullets from the Anderson band. Mortally wounded, they were kicked down into the cellar. The trap door was closed and weighted with a heavy barrel, then the killers looted the store and set it afire. The boy managed to escape through a small window, but died the next day after telling neighbors his story. Baker, too large for the window, shot himself rather than burn alive.

The Anderson gang set fire to every building that belonged to Baker at Agnes City. Baker's young wife and others had fled from the house and hid along the creek when they heard the shots at the store. They had been making apple pies for the next day's celebration of Independence Day at Council Grove, and said later they could smell the pies cooking as flames consumed the house.

The killers raced east along the Santa Fe Trail, reaching Allen on 142-Mile Creek at about midnight. They burst into the store there and looted it while they related details of how they had killed Baker. Charles Withington, Orris O'Dell and Chauncy Inman were placed under guard in a log stable while the bushwhackers searched for firearms and set fire to a straw tick in the house. They threw a feather bed to burn on top of the fire and left, but the fire was smothered by the bed. The bushwhackers traded their tired mounts for the best of the fresh horses, released their prisoners, politely said good night, and continued east.

At Elm Creek station, the Andersons paused to shoot holes in the house door, wanting to kill agent Henry Jacoby, who as Constable had been involved in the events leading to the shooting of the Anderson's father. They were scared off by sounds from a wagon train nearby. Further east, they stopped at the stage station kept by Benjamin O'Dell at the Chicken Creek crossing. They told him what they had done to Baker as they exchanged horses, then raced twenty miles to the 110-Mile Creek station in Osage County, arriving about sunrise. By stealing fresh mounts from stage stations on the Trail, they rode over 120 miles to Missouri in less than 16 hours. The posse that pursued them on tired mounts had to give up the chase.

Bill and Jim Anderson rode with Quantrill, and Bill became a bushwhacker gang leader, earning the moniker "Bloody Bill" Anderson; he was killed by Union troops in 1864. Agnes City was not rebuilt, but A. I. Baker's legacy remains in the foundations of Lyon County.

This concludes the tour. For more about this and other county history, please visit the North Lyon Co. Museum in the Admire Community Center at 1st & Main in Admire, its website at nlchsmuseum.com; also the Lyon Co. History Center Museum & Archives at 711 Commercial St. in Emporia.

© 2022 North Lyon County Historical Society of Lyon Co, KS and
its representatives. All rights reserved.

