
Husband: Zerah French

Born: March 22, 1827 in: Willsboro Mountain, Essex County, New York
Married: July 28, 1848 in: Russell, Saint Lawrence County, New York
Died: January 18, 1890 in: Saugatuck, Allegan County, Michigan
Father: George French
Mother: Sally Freeman
Other Spouses:

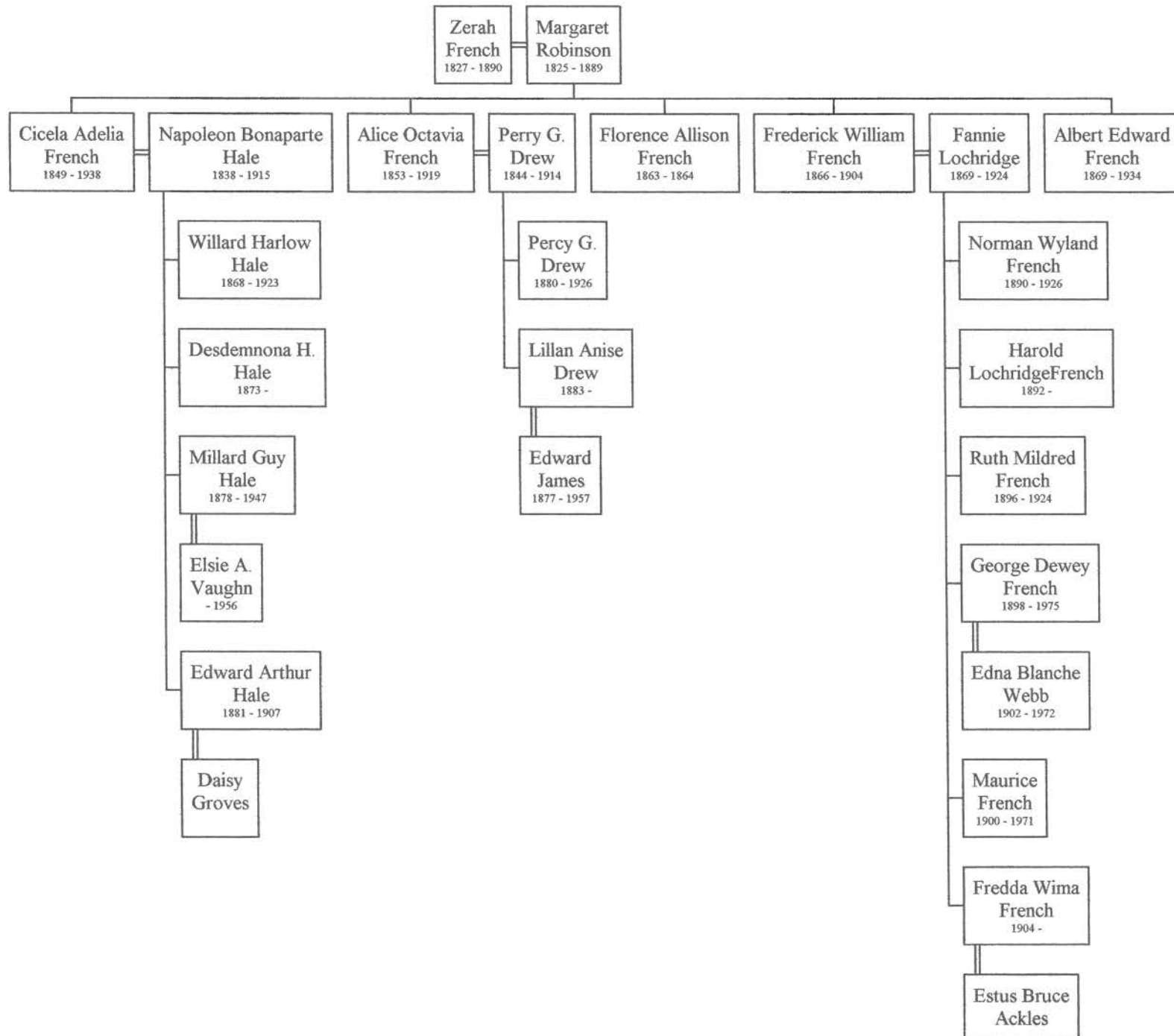
Wife: Margaret Robinson

Born: March 02, 1825 in:
Died: January 09, 1889 in: Slaughter (Auburn), King County, Washington
Father:
Mother:
Other Spouses:

CHILDREN

1 F	Name: Cicela Adelia French Born: August 25, 1849 Married: August 25, 1866 Died: June 26, 1938 Spouse: Napoleon Bonaparte Hale	in: Algoma Township, Kent County, Michigan in: Helena, Lewis and Clark County, Montana in: San Bernardino, San Bernardino County, California
2 F	Name: Alice Octavia French Born: May 17, 1853 Married: June 30, 1878 Died: August 23, 1919 Spouse: Perry G. Drew	in: Algoma Township, Kent County, Michigan in: San Bernardino, San Bernardino County, California in: San Bernardino, San Bernardino County, California
3 F	Name: Florence Allison French Born: January 07, 1863 Married: Died: July 29, 1864 Spouse:	in: Big Rapids, Mecosta County, Michigan in: in: Rosebud Creek, Montana Territory
4 M	Name: Frederick William French Born: October 15, 1866 Married: January 24, 1889 Died: February 09, 1904 Spouse: Fannie Lochridge	in: On the Missouri River, Dakota Territory in: Arlington Hotel, Seattle, King County, Washington in: Auburn, King County, Washington
5 M	Name: Albert Edward French Born: July 20, 1869 Married: Died: January 12, 1934 Spouse:	in: Black Earth, Dane County, Wisconsin in: in: Tiger, Pen Orelle County, Washington
6	Name: Born: Married: Died: Spouse:	in: in: in:
7	Name: Born: Married: Died: Spouse:	in: in: in:

Decendants of Zerah and Margaret French



McCasta County Pioneer

Big Rapids, Michigan

Friday July 15, 1864

Letter from Zerah French.

FORT LARAMIE, IDAHO TERRITORY,
June 18th, 1864.

Editors Pioneer:

Thinking the people of Big Rapids might wish to hear from our party, I now hurriedly pen a short history of our travels since leaving St. Josephs.

We crossed the Missouri river on the 25th of April, as the initiatory step to our journey to Idaho. The first day we broke down once, and went back to St. Josephs for repairs, got on our way five miles, and pitched our tent for the first time. The next day we broke a wagon tongue; managed to get on four miles when we discovered that the children of our company were all coming down with the measles. We lay in camp during two weeks of the worst kind of weather, when the measles having "played out," and the grass begun to start, we proceeded on our way westward, and reached Fort Kearney on the 24th of May, which is about 250 miles from St. Josephs.

The spring being unusually backward, the supply of grass for our stock was rather limited for the first 100 miles out; but we found corn in great abundance at about 50 cents per bushel that far on our journey. So we kept our stock in good condition until the grass got started, which was about the middle of May. After that time we were not troubled for wood, water or grass, till we left the Lit-

tle Blue River, 42 miles east of Kearney, when we took our leave of timber; and we have seldom had a stick since, excepting occasionally a stray stick of drift wood from the Platte, or a bit of red cedar from the distant bluffs; but we found an excellent substitute in "Buffalo chips," which we generally obtained with but little trouble.

We first strike the Platte at Platte city; and to give you some idea of what it takes to constitute a city in this remote region, I will give you a description of this one. I did not learn the number of the population, but there was one house and one stable; in the stable, they sold hay, when they had any, for from four to six dollars per cwt.; and in the house they sold bad whiskey for about fifteen cents per dose; and all this constitutes a "ranch," and in this case a city. Twelve miles further up the river is Fort Kearney. Kearney City a mile above the fort is a village of 300 inhabitants. A person in hearing of these forts might suppose there was something about them of a defensive or military nature, which is not the case, excepting a parade ground, and barracks for the accommodation of a few troops which are kept here to hold the Indians in check, which, by the way, were at the time of my passing through Kearney and Cottonwood, getting up a pretty "big scare." Some days we would hear there were 15,000 warriors camped on the

river near Cottonwood, and that two or three white men had been killed and the ranch men all driven off the river, and various other bug-bear stories, which had no foundation in truth.

I have traveled now some six hundred miles through the Indian country, and have yet only seen a few Ottos, a small tribe in Kansas, near Pawnee City, and a few friendly Sioux, several of which are now camped in sight of where I am writing. The only trouble they are to us is their begging, which is a great annoyance to emigrants, as they have the trade learned to perfection, and frequently stop a train of wagons almost by force for the purpose of begging from them.

There is however a strong probability that there will be trouble with the Indians on Platte river before the summer is over. The Cheyennes, a powerful tribe of war-like Indians, have for some time been threatening and are undoubtedly making preparations for war. They have already had one or two brushes with small parties of Colorado troops, and so far the soldiers have had rather the worst of it. I found along the south side of the Platte the ranch men were pretty badly frightened, and some have taken their families out to the States. One man who had traded with the Cheyennes very extensively for several years, told me that they were undoubtedly plotting mischief; the last time he was out among them on a trading expedition they were very saucy, and told him they were yet a very little friendly to the whites, but when summer came they were going to kill them all, which he said they seemed to think would be but a small job for them to perform at any time when it should suit their conven-

ience. I met Gen. Mitchel on his return from Cottonwood to Omaha. He had been out there to ascertain the truth of the matter in regard to the Indian difficulty, and upon arriving at Cottonwood he immediately telegraphed to Omaha for more troops to come on as soon as possible. But as yet I have not heard of Indians making their appearance on the river.

The Platte is the great institution of this whole region of country, from the Missouri to the Rocky Mountains. And nearly all the roads from the Missouri river to Colorado, California, Idaho, Salt Lake, &c., follow along the Platte and its branches for many hundred miles. At Kearney the river is about two miles in width, winding its way along among innumerable islands, and ever shifting sand bars. The general course of the river is pretty straight, and the road is seldom out of sight of it, which makes it very convenient for watering stock, &c., as all the other water in the Platte valley contains so much alkali that it is unsafe for man or beast to drink it.

The valley of the Platte is from six to ten miles in width, hemmed in with bluffs on either side, which increase in height as you go westward, until they look like miniature mountains, and reaching in many places along the north fork a height of several hundred feet, and assuming a variety of fantastic shapes, often resembling old ruins of castles, &c. There stands the solid perpendicular walls, with their towers and battlements, and occasionally a cedar tree at the top, which owing to their great height, look like some lonely sentinel keeping his solitary watch, as though fearing an assault from the thousands of migrants who are daily passing below.

We followed up the Platte till within 15 miles of the old California crossing, intending to cross the South Platte at Julesburg, and there take the Pole Creek road, which is a favorite route at present, but on reaching Sand Hill, about 160 miles west of Kerney, we found the river was not fordable at Julesburg, and making a raft of our wagon boxes ferried our stuff over the South Platte and followed up on the north side to the old California road, where we struck across to the North Fork, a distance of 17 miles, by way of Ash Hollow, thence up the south side of the North Fork to Laramie.

The roads on the South Platte are excellent, but we find them not as good since crossing. The valley of the North Fork is narrower, and the bluffs in many places reach down to the river, making the road both hilly and sandy. There is generally an abundance of grass, and stock is looking well on the road, considering the great rush of emigration which probably surpasses any thing ever before known on this continent. There was some days as high as 500 teams passed us when we lay in camp on the South Platte, and the next morning after we reached the North Fork, we counted 85 teams on the north side of the river, all in sight at one time, and this has been going on since February. I am told there was as high as 100 teams a day passed over the road in February.

Our party are all in excellent health and spirits, and we have yet to hear the first unfavorable report from the mines. Last night we camped for the first time in Idaho, and to-morrow we cross the Laramie Fork, which is yet between us and

Fort Laramie, and about five miles distant. There is about 100 wagons in sight this evening, mostly in small companies of about ten wagons. Each wagon has generally four horses or mules, or from three to six yoke of oxen, and from one to seven or eight men. Michigan is largely represented here, but I think Missouri beats all the other States; and I am sorry to say that a very large majority of the people crossing the plains are very disloyal, and many are avowed rebels.

When I reach the mines you will probably hear from me again. I forgot to mention before that the Overland Stage Company have now established a line of stages through to Bannock City. They have good teams and good coaches, and make as good time as stages usually do in any country. The fare is now \$450 from Atchison, Kansas, to Bannock City.

ZERAH FRENCH.

Montana Itinerary April 1864

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7 Left Big Rapids in a rainstorm. Stayed at halfway house near Big Prairie.	8 Arrived in a rainstorm at Bridgeton. Stayed overnight.	9 Arrived at Muskegon in a rainstorm. Stayed in a hotel.
10 Arrived in the rain at Grand Haven. Boarded steam propeller F. W. Backus; Capt. Chase.	11 Arrived late in Chicago due to spring weather conditions on Lake Michigan. Stayed in hotel.	12 Met teamsters with the other two wagons. Bought supplies. Stayed in hotel.	13	14	15	16
17	18 Arrived Saint Joseph, Missouri and camped.	19 Camped at Saint Joseph. Spent about one week outfitting.	20 Camped at Saint Joseph.	21 Camped at Saint Joseph.	22 Camped at Saint Joseph.	23 Camped at Saint Joseph.
24 Camped at Saint Joseph.	25 Crossed Missouri River. Fixed whiffletree. Camped near Walthena.	26 Fixed wagon tongue and moved two miles. Adelia sick with measles.	27 Camped Adelia and Alice sick. Severe wind and rain.	28 Camped Adelia and Alice still sick. Severe wind and rain.	29 Camped Adelia and Alice still sick. Severe wind and rain.	30 Camped Adelia and Alice still sick. Severe wind and rain.

French Montana Itinerary May 1864

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
1 Camped near Walthena. Adelia and Alice still sick. Severe wind and rain.	2 Camped near Walthena. Adelia and Alice still sick. Severe wind and rain.	3 Camped near Walthena. All three girls have measles. Severe wind and rain.	4 Traveled twelve miles to Wolf River. All girls now sick.	5 Stayed in camp. All three girls sick.	6 Stayed in camp. All three girls still sick.	7 Stayed in camp. All three girls still sick.
8 Stayed in camp. All three girls still sick.	9 Stayed in camp. Alice and Florence still sick.	10 Stayed in camp. Florence still sick.	11 Forded Wolf River. Left for Fort Kearny. Baby still sick.	12 Continued west toward Oregon Trail-Junction of the Ways.	13 Continued toward Junction of the Ways.	14 Continued toward Junction of the Ways.
15 Camped at Big Blue River.	16 Forded Big Blue River. Reached Oregon Trail junction.	17 Traveled north along Little Blue River toward Fort Kearny.	18 Continued along Little Blue River toward Fort Kearny.	19 Continued along Little Blue River toward Fort Kearny.	20 Arrived at Pawnee City.	21 Camped at Pawnee City. Indians wanted to trade horses for Alice.
22 Left the Valley of the Little Blue River and continued to Fort Kearny.	23 Crossed Summit Hill and arrived at Platte City on South Platte River.	24 Arrived and camped at Fort Kearny.	25 Left for Old California Crossing along southside of Platte River.	26 Continued toward Old California Crossing.	27 Continued toward Old California Crossing.	28 Continued toward Old California Crossing.
29 Arrived and camped at Cottonwood Springs. Talked with General Mitchell.	30 Left for Old California Crossing.	31 Continued toward Old California Crossing.				

Montana Itinerary June 1864

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
			1 Camped Sand Hill Stage Station. Platte River to high to ford.	2 Encamped, Platte River to high to ford. Formed French's wagon train.	3 Encamped, Platte River high to ford.	4 Encamped, Platte River to high to ford.
5 Encamped, Platte River to high to ford.	6 Began ford of Platte River.	7 Continued to ford the river.	8 Completed fording the river.	9 Left for Fort Laramie along Lower Ford Trail.	10 Arrived at Ash Hollow in the forenoon. Continued to Fort Laramie.	11 Continued to Fort Laramie.
12 Passed Ancient Bluffs. Courthouse Rock in view of camp.	13 Camped near Chimney Rock.	14 Passed Castle Rock. Camped at Scott's Bluffs.	15 Negotiated the Gap and continued to Fort Laramie.	16 Continued to Fort Laramie.	17 Camped at Fort Laramie.	18 At Fort Laramie. Posted letter about trip to hometown newspaper.
19 Camped at Fort Laramie.	20 Camped at Fort Laramie.	21 Left for Richard's Bridge. Camped at Warm Springs	22 Continued to Richard's Bridge.	23 Continued to Richard's Bridge.	24 Continued to Richard's Bridge.	25 Camped at Richard's Bridge.
26 Wagons gathered for Bozeman Trail.	27 Crossed North Platte River. Wagons left for Dry Fork of Powder River.	28 Camped at Dry fork of Powder River.	29 Camped at Dry fork of Powder River.	30 Camped at Dry fork of Powder River.		

Montana Itinerary July 1864

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
					1 Townsend organized.	2 Traveled along Dry Fork toward Powder River.
3 Continued along Dry Fork toward Powder River.	4 Continued along Dry Fork toward Powder River.	5 Forded Powder River. Camped three miles upstream.	6 Mend and bake day. Camped four miles upstream.	7 Fight with Cheyenne at South Fork of Powder River.	8 Buried dead. Traveled up North Fork of Powder River.	9 Camped at South Fork Crazy Woman Creek.
10 Camped at North Fork Crazy Woman Creek.	11 Camped at Clear Creek.	12 Camped at Piney Creek.	13 Camped at Prairie Dog Creek.	14 Camped at Goose Dog Creek.	15 Camped at Tongue River.	16 Mend and bake day. Camped on Tongue River.
17 Train killed 25 buffalo. Camped on Pass Creek.	18 Continued toward Big Horn River.	19 Arrived and camped at Big Horn River.	20 Forded Big Horn River and camped one mile upstream.	21 Mend and rest day. Camped on Big Horn River.	22 Camped on Big Horn River.	23 French Train formed. Camped on Red Lodge Creek.
24 Camped near Rosebud Creek watershed.	25 In camp. Florence sick with meningitis.	26 Camped near Rosebud Creek watershed.	27 Camped near Rosebud Creek watershed.	28 Camped near Rosebud Creek watershed.	29 Florence died. Buried near Rosebud Creek.	30 Negotiated Sanborn Hill. Forded Stillwater River.
31 Camped at Yellowstone River.						

Montana Itinerary August 1864

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19 Arrived and camped at Virginia City.	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF

ZERAH FRENCH

WRITTEN IN THE VILLAGE OF ROCKFORD

STATE OF MICHIGAN

DURING THE SUMMER OF 1867

Transcribed by _____
Edited and annotated August 2000 by
Jan-Marie McCabe [First cousin
5 times removed of Zerah French]

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ZERAH FRENCH - CHAPTER NINE

KIND RECEPTION

When we returned to Big Rapids in the fall of 1859, I found everything changed. Both in my affairs and the general aspect of the country. I found myself a poor man very much broken down in constitution and my fortunes sadly depleted. That was far from being the worst feature of the case. The village had grown in importance as well as size. I now met more new faces than old familiar ones; but what to me was most unaccountable, I met on every hand the most cordial reception and greeted to my old home with the most cordial friendship by both my old friends and new friends.

OUT IN THE COLD

I had now a great work to perform and I felt unequal to the task of performing it, but gaining strength from day to day, I was soon able to perform a good days labor which I did every day, Sunday excepted. I soon began to get my affairs into a shape for doing something again. I commenced making money from the day of my return to Big Rapids.

My first work was to lay out an addition to the town site and commence building a hotel which I completed in due time at a cost of \$3000. This was a fine house for a new country, and I kept it very successful for about two years. During the winter of 1863 and 1864 it was burned with all contents, my loss was heavy. I was insured for \$1500. I was by this disaster turned out of doors at the dead of night almost naked and in mid-winter. My wife had not yet recovered from her confinement. I took her in my arms and carried her to a neighbors house close by, where we gazed on the burning ruins which lit up the midnight sky for miles around.

A GOOD MEMORY

My poor wife wept bitterly as she watched the flames as they swept over our once beautiful home, devouring with relentless fury the hard earnings of a lifetime of toil and hardship. For in that house was nearly all our worldly gear. We did not save even sufficient clothes to cover our nakedness. I tried to encourage my wife by telling her how much better off we were then, even than we had been at an earlier period in our history. For said I, if we have no house now we have a very good barn, and I recollect when we had not even a barn.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ZERAH FRENCH - CHAPTER TEN

BROKE

After the burning of my house I was so completely broken up in business and crippled in means that I did not dare to undertake the rebuilding of my home, and I soon after conceived the idea of going to California with my family which now consisted of three children, the youngest, Florence Allison was born a short time previous to the fire. I had always entertained a very favorable opinion of that country and had long been anxious to visit it. And now being so much broken up in business I thought [it] would be a favorable time to make that rather grave experiment. So in the summer of 1863 I began to get my affairs arranged for a final parting for the far found land of gold, intending to start across the plains the following spring.

SAINT LOUIS

During the summer of 1863 I spent a good part of my time in Saint Louis, Mo. I was engaged in buying and selling condemned cavalry horses which business I followed til late in the fall with but indifferent success. But while in Saint Louis I formed the acquaintance of a gentle man from California by the name of "Buckland". He had been that country a great many years and spoke in very high terms of the country, which more strongly confirmed me in the determination to try my fortune in that golden land the following year. I returned to Big Rapids late in the fall fitted out some teams and went into a lumbering job during the following winter which proved a very profitable undertaking. Fortunately as it assisted me to fit out my expeditions for crossing "The Plains" of world wide renown.

THE DEATH OF ALEXANDER FRENCH

It was during this winter of 1863-64 that I received the sad news of my brother Alexanders untimely death. He was a young man of great promise, he entered the army at the commencement of the war. [He] had been wounded once and received a (Kearney) medal³⁰

³⁰ One of several medals issued or projected during the Civil War which did not have the regular authorization of the government. Major General Philip Kearney, commander of the First Division, Third Army Corps, was killed at the battle of Chantilly, September 1, 1862, and, on the 29th of November of that year, a meeting of officers who had served under him was held, at which a resolution was adopted to the effect that a "medal of honor" to be known as the "Kearney Medal" should be provided, to be presented to all officers who had "honorably served in battle under General Kearney in his division," this also applied to such soldiers as should be "promoted to the grade of commissioned officer previous to January 1, 1863."

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ZERAH FRENCH - CHAPTER TEN

for his gallantry, and after fighting sixteen hard fought battles on the peninsula at Bull Run, Chancellorsville [sic], Fredricksburgh [sic], and Gettysburgh [sic], and many more hard fought fields. Was finally mortally wounded in the Battle of Mine Run³¹. The news of his death fell on me like a thunderbolt. This was the first time that the cruel effects of this bloody unnatural and infernal war had ever been brought home to my own door. Though it was with sorrow I saw my two only brothers start for the war almost three years previous to this time. I did not repine or complain but felt they were only doing their duty and I was only sorry that I could not go myself. Never had I been driven to such madness before, never before did I sincerely regret having a family or friends in the world. But when this terrible news reached me it seemed to me that I would willingly give all I had in the world to be released from the natural ties that bound me to earth. That I might avenge myself on the murderers of my brother.

REASON RETURNING

Never before had I fully felt and comprehended the wickedness of a few Southern slave holders. Plunging this great, happy and glorious country into such as cruel and bloody war. Never before had I felt this terrible spirit of revenge rise up in my bosom like a thousand demons which seemed to say to me, go forth and amid scenes of blood and carnage let thy soul revel in deeds of desperation til the blood of thy brother shall be avenged. But after the first paroxysms [paroxysms] of rage had passed off and reason again took the place of passion and I beheld around me a loving wife and my innocent children whom I well knew had not only a right to demand but to expect of me protection and support, I felt the paramount duty that I owed them and silently bore my grief as best I could.

FOR CALIFORNIA

About the first of April 1864, we started for California. I started with my family and three hired men to drive team for me as I had fourteen horses which I sent over land to Chicago all but one span which I used to get to Grand Haven with where I took the boat for Chicago.

³¹ The Battle of Mine Run was fought from November 27 through December 2, 1863 in Orange County, Virginia. Casualties were estimated at 1,952 (US 1,272; CS 680).

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ZERAH FRENCH - CHAPTER TEN

From Chicago we went by rail to Saint Jo, Missouri³² shipping horses, wagons and also on the cars. My horses reached Saint Jo in rather a dilapidated condition, having been on the cars a long time without food and water, owing to some accident on the road.

IDAHO - GEM OF THE MOUNTAINS

At Saint Jo we spent about one weeks time in fitting out for our trip across the plains. While at this place the excitement was getting pretty strong about Idaho as [the] new gold region in the rocky mountains [Rocky Mountains]. Every day we heard some wondrous tales of the great wealth of the mines of that new eldorado [Eldorado]³³, and hundreds of men were fitting out and trains were constantly leaving Saint Jo by all the different routes heading to that far off land.

CHANGE OF PROGRAMME [PROGRAM]

The consequence of all this was I caught the contagion with the rest. A council of war was held by our party to decide the momentous question whether we should go [to] Idaho, (which means in English "The gem of the mountain") or California. The decision was unanimous in favor of the former place. We accordingly changed the programme [program] and made the necessary arrangements for changing our course to the "Northward". On the 25th day of April we crossed the Missouri River and were fairly on our way to Idaho. I had three teams of four horses each and two riding horses. I had one wagon loaded with flour. One with corn meal for feed and one I used for my family and their clothing and the necessary articles of camp equipage and provisions for our use on the long tedious journey before us.

³² In 1848, Council Bluffs, Iowa and St. Joseph, Missouri replaced Independence, Missouri as the leading jumping-off points of the Oregon Trail.

³³ The City of Gold, an imaginary place of great wealth and opportunity; sought in South America by 16th-century explorers

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ZERAH FRENCH - CHAPTER TEN

INCIDENTS BY THE WAY

We made but a short drive the first day having one break down before we were out of sight of St. Jo and had to return to town for a new Whiffletree³⁴ but finally reached a good camping ground and camped for the night. This was our first experience of camp life. Our second days journey was not quite as successful as the first, for on the first half mile we broke a wagon tongue but finally managed to get to a comfortable camping ground about two miles from the one of the previous night. But on arriving at this camping ground we found Adelia, our oldest daughter coming down with measles. We were now in a pretty bad fix, but we must make the best of it, so we pitched our tent surrounding it as much as possible with our wagons and here we remained for more than a week nearly all of which time it either rained in torrents or the wind blew "as twould blow its last" and it sometimes became necessary to not only secure our tent by tying it to the wagons, but it required all hands besides to keep it from blowing every thing to pieces.

KANSAS

This was Kansas and we got still more of it before we got through for on the 4th of May thinking we could move with our sick children, we started on our way and reached Wolf Creek, a distance of about twelve miles when we were again obliged to camp, as the children could not stand the jolting of our heavy lumber wagons. Addie was pretty sick. We remained at this camp about a week, the youngest child coming down in the mean time with measles. But we managed to keep very comfortable, notwithstanding the terrible weather which anoid [annoyed] us so much during our whole stay in Kansas.

THE PLAINS

We had a stove for cooking, a small sheet iron concern which I had made to order in Grand Rapids. With this we managed to keep our tent warm, and very comfortable and our children recovered from day to day and we soon found ourselves once more rolling along over the beautiful prairies and in a few days we were camped on the banks of the Platte

³⁴ The pivoted or swinging bar to which the traces, or tugs, of a harness are fastened, and by which a carriage, a plow, or other implement or vehicle, is drawn.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ZERAH FRENCH - CHAPTER TEN

River, a few miles below Fort Kearney³⁵. We were now fairly on the Plains which simply means the valley of the Platte which varies in width from ten to twenty five miles bordered on each side by high craggy and almost inaccessible bluff; wood to use a western phrase was now "played out" and we had to burn Buffalo chips for fuel and the only water to be had fit for the use of man or beast was out of the Platte. We had now our summers work before us, the same dull monotony from day to day, rolling on through clouds of dust, camping at night near the banks of the Platte.

³⁵ In 1848, a fort was established to provide protection for travelers heading west along the Oregon Trail. In its twenty-three years as the first U.S. Army Post on the Oregon Trail, Fort Kearney was never attacked by Indians.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ZERAH FRENCH - CHAPTER ELEVEN

SCENERY ALONG THE PLATTE

The scenery along the Platte is in many places very beautiful, the bluffs are in many places composed of a kind of soft sand rock which by the action of the water has been cut into a variety of fantastic shapes. Sometimes it assumed the form of some old ancient castle. There stood the monstrous walls hundreds of feet in height surmounted by turrets, towers and bastions³⁶. The few cedars scattered along the summit overlooking the broad valley below with the muddy waters of the Platte rolling on its way to the Missouri {River} til it was lost on the eastern horizon, looked like the faithful old warders keeping their lonely watch on these battlements of natures own building.

COURTHOUSE ROCK³⁷

Sometimes they had the form of more modern architecture, one rock of this kind was christened by the old California emigrants, Courthouse Rock, which some of our party concluded to visit it appeared to be about half a mile from the road. As it loomed up from the plain it looked like some huge building reared by the hand of man, but when the party reached it they found they had traveled some seven or eight miles. Yet this monstrous "Courthouse" all the time appeared to be close to us and it gave us no little uneasiness that our friends among whom were several Ladies should remain so long admiring the beauties of the Courthouse for they were gone all the afternoon. Being well mounted we feared some evil had befallen them as we were in constant dread of the lurking savage of whose depredations we were constantly hearing. There was another huge column of this kind of rock called Chimney Rock³⁸. We traveled in sight of this rock one and a half days before reaching it.

CHIMNEY ROCK

At first it looked about the size of a man standing away on the distant plains like some solitary wanderer winding his way to the land of gold, but on a nearer approach to it we

³⁶ Small towers at the end of a curtain wall or in the middle of the outside wall.

³⁷ Courthouse Rock, along the Oregon Trail, is located in the Platte River Valley about six miles south of Bridgeport, Nebraska

³⁸ Located some twelve miles west of Courthouse Rock, Chimney Rock signaled the end of the prairies as the Oregon Trail became more steep and rugged heading west towards the Rocky Mountains.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ZERAH FRENCH - CHAPTER ELEVEN

found if a hugh mass of sand rock probably between one and two hundred feet in height and resembling in shape an old chimney without the very agreeable accompaniment of a house to it. Such chimneys are all the fashion at the present days in many parts of the south. I suppose they are left as monuments to the Rebels who died in the "Last ditch".

These rocks are on the north Platte, we crossed the south Platte at Sand Hill station a little below the old California crossing.

CROSSING THE PLATTE

The river was high and the usual fords unpassable [impassible] and after waiting for near a week for the river to fall we finally dashed into it and ferried over our goods wagons and in wagon boxes. This was no small undertaking and we were three days in accomplishing that feat. Wading some of the time and swimming at other times. On the third day we swam our horses and mules across. Our party had now grown to a train of nine teams. We traveled together sometimes but finally we parted company and I reached the Platte river bridge some thirty miles above Fort Larimie [Laramie]³⁹, nearly alone with my own teams. On reaching this point we found a large concourse of people assembled waiting to make up a train of sufficient size to go through to the mines by what is known as the "Bozeman Cut-off", a road which passes through hostile Indian country for hundreds of miles but by taking it we should save some 500 miles. No small item to a weary traveler.

THE DRY FORK

We soon made up a train of sufficient size, and I paid the old Frenchman who owned the bridge \$15.00 for the privilege of crossing. Joined the train on the north bank and started on our way. A[s] "rough and rugged" as it afterwards proved. We drove out as far as the Dry Fork of Powder River some twenty miles where we waited for reinforcements as our guides considered it rather unsafe for us to proceed as there had been one train of some eighty wagons turned back by the Indians on this road the year previous. So we waited one day when another train joined us increasing our numbers to 369 men, 17 women, and 23 children, and making a train of over 150 wagons and over 1000 head of stock.

³⁹ Fort Laramie, Wyoming marked the gateway to the Rocky Mountains.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ZERAH FRENCH - CHAPTER ELEVEN

AN INDIAN FIGHT

We held a meeting and elected Captain Townsend of Wisconsin as our Captain and leader. He being an old Californian who had crossed the plains in an early day and had fought Indians in the Blackhawk⁴⁰ war. We now felt pretty safe from attack from Indians and moved on for Powder River, traveling slowly and cautiously, keeping out strong guards by day and night. We had traveled in this way in fancied security for three days when on the morning of the 7th of July as we were just beginning to move out of camp, we suddenly found ourselves surrounded by a great number of savages. It was a war party of the Cheyennes under the celebrated Chief "Spotted Cow". We were taken somewhat by surprise and had the Indians taken advantage of it they would have used us pretty rough but by the time the savages had made up their minds to commence hostilities we began to recover from our first surprise and found a sufficient number of men in the train that had the courage to get outside of the corral [corral], to keep the Indians at bay.

FIGHT ON POWDER RIVER

Gradually as we found we were not going to all be killed at once we took courage and made it pretty hot for the red skins. They resorted to all their usual Indian tricks and treachery. Setting the grass on fire about our corral [corral], they hoped to burn us out, but even our women turned out and fought fire and burned back from the corral [sic] showing much bravery and far more coolness than many of our men. Our Captain did not quite come up to our expectations and acted mostly on the defensive which gave the savages more courage than usual thinking we were afraid of them. The battle lasted from early in the morning til 3 o'clock P.M.

⁴⁰ The Blackhawk War (1831-1832) was a conflict in northern Illinois and Wisconsin between pioneer settlers and the Sac and Fox Indian Tribes. Sac Chief Black Hawk disputed an agreement made between members of his tribe and the United States government over the sale of the tribe's lands in Illinois, claiming members of the tribe had been given liquor before they signed the documents. Black Hawk was defeated in 1832 and placed on a reservation in Iowa.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ZERAH FRENCH - CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE INDIANS RETIRE

We lost four men, killed, and two wounded both of which afterwards recovered. The Indians lost a good many men but succeeded in getting all their dead off the field. They finding it to be a losing [losing] game concluded to retire from the contest (which they did in good order) without being pursued by us. Although there were several of us earnestly solicited [soliciting] Captain Townsend to let us follow them up that night and try to surprise them in camp and thus get satisfaction for our poor fellows that they had killed, but the Captain being not "on it" we were not allowed to go. We moved the train about four miles that evening and camped on a piece of open prairie high table land when [where?] we dug rifle pits and prepared for another attack which was never made. This was the last trouble we had with Indians on the journey.

BOZEMAN CUT—OFF

We found abundance of wood and water on this route and game in great variety and unlimited supply. We now began to reach the Buffalo country occasionally seeing one of these huge monsters grazing quietly on the distant hills; Elk, Deer, and Antelope were plenty. We crossed a great number of beautiful mountain streams abounding with speckled trout and on reaching what is called Little Tongue River, we found one of the most lovely valleys that ever I have seen. Thousands of acres of rich bottoms covered with the finest of grass. Nearly as high as a mans head. Here we rested one day for the benefit of our teams as well as men. We spent the day in prospecting for gold and speckled trout, which latter we found to our hearts content while our stock reveled in such feed as they had never before seen.

AMONG THE BUFFALO

With reluctance we left this beautiful valley and rolled on towards the Big Horn [River] of which the Tongue [River] is a tributary. Between these two streams we got among the Buffalo and what a sight. Here were Buffalo on every side of us as far as the eye could reach. Thousands on thousands, the hills were black with them and the valleys trembled beneath their tread. We killed great numbers of them using the meat of some of the choicest [choicest] of them which we found very good. I know of no animal that has haf [half] so

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ZERAH FRENCH - CHAPTER ELEVEN

terrible [terrible] a look or voice as the American Bison and when ever I shot one I kept very near my fleetest horse.

ACROSS THE BIG HORN

At length we reached the long sought for Big Horn and spent one day in fording it which we found to be a very difficult task as it is a wild mountain river, deep, broad, and swift. But we effected [affected] the crossing in safety and camped on its opposite bank where we rested for a day or two. Here our guides left us as that was as far as they knew anything about the country. I think I must give a short description of these two men; as they were a fair type of a very numerous [numerous] class. The old man whose name was Boyer was a Frenchman formerly from Saint Louis, but he had been in the mountains for thirty five years living with a squaw of some of the neighboring tribes of Indians, changing from time to time, to suit his own pleasure. He had witnessed many a bloody fray among the savages scarcely more savage than himself. When asked how many Indians he had killed in his time; [he] replied "By gar, I don no, I no count em". He showed the most reckless daring in our battle on Powder River.

TOO MANY SQUAWS

The other guide was a Mexican, about 30 years of age called Raphael, a small wiry fellow whose black eyes were constantly turning to keep from looking you in the face and whose sunburned features told too plainly of deeds of villainy [villainy]. For a long time I was much more afraid of him than of the Indians but on further acquaintance I found him very talkative and we became pretty good friends. I have whiled away many a pleasant hour listening to his tales of wild mountain life. He had been in the Rocky Mountains about 14 years and during that time had married fourteen squaws. He complained very much of the expense, saying to me one day that he might have been rich only for having so many squaws. He said it usually cost him two good ponies for a good squaw.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ZERAH FRENCH - CHAPTER ELEVEN

RAPHAELS STORY

Many times he said he would keep one but a few weeks before they would quarrel when he would order them to pack up their duds and leave. The longest he had ever kept one woman was two years. That was a Sioux woman which tribe he rather preferred. He spoke several Indian tongues and could Parle Francois [français] come un Francois [Français] meme⁴¹ although Spanish was his mother tongue. I was very much amused at his story of killing his first Buffalo. He says ["I was then only a boy, mounted on my mustang and armed with a trusty rifle, I was crossing the plains of New Mexico not very far from Santa Fe, when I fell in with a Buffalo and thought it a good time to try my luck on him for my first Buffalo."]

HIS FIRST BUFFALO

["It was a large bull and a ferocious looking brute but I gave him chase and coming up to him, fired my rifle, the ball taking effect. The maddened brute turned upon me. It was then my turn to retreat which I did in a most hasty and unceremonious manner but the Buffalo was in hot pursuit when an accident befell me which came well nigh [to] costing me my life. For in my flight from what appeared to me almost certain destruction. My way lay across a little gullie [gully] or deep, narrow ravine which I thought my horse could easily jump, but the poor animal being already so much fatigued with his long race, barely succeeded in reaching the opposite bank of the ravine, but stumbled and fell in the effort throwing [me] headlong a long distance from him. Fortunately I fell in the bottom of the gulch among the tall grass which completely concealed me from both horse and Buffalo. Here I lay for a long time in a state of almost mortal terror not daring to raise my head for fear of attracting the notice of the buffalo. But at length everything becoming still and quiet, I ventured to creep from my hiding place and crawling up over the bank cautiously looking about me for that terrible monster. I beheld a few paces from me all that remained of my faithful horse but he was literally torn to pieces; and a few [sic] paces from him lay stretched upon the prairie the huge carcass of his deadly antagonist. This was my first buffalo."]

⁴¹ Speak French the same as a Frenchman.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ZERAH FRENCH - CHAPTER ELEVEN

LEAVING THE BIG HORN

After remaining a day or two on the banks of the Big Horn [River], a part of the train concluded to secede from the main body and press onward to the mines. Accordingly about 150 of us started on our way and at the close of the first day we held a meeting of the train to elect officers. I had the honor of being chosen Captain by the unanimous voice of the whole party.

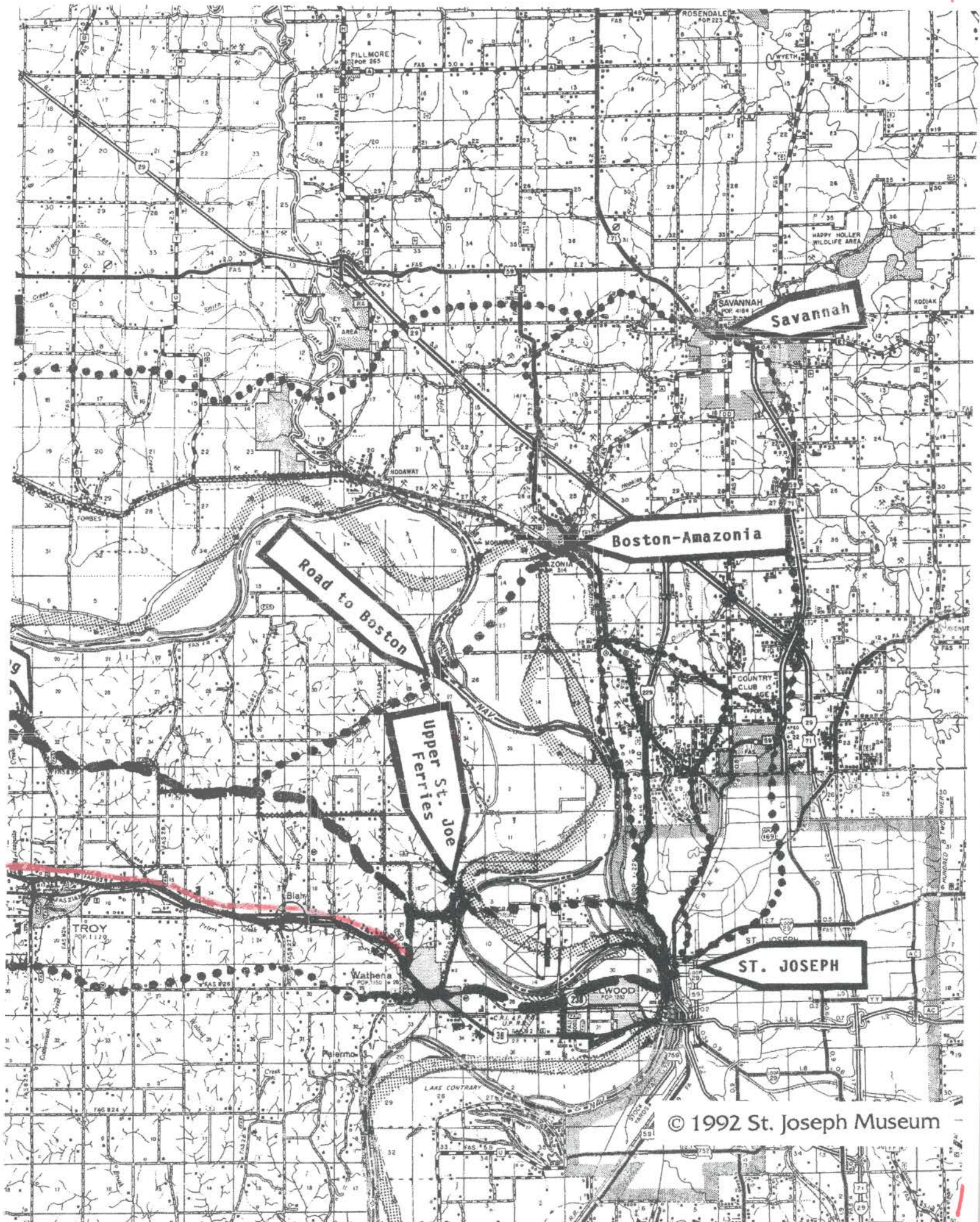
THE DEATH OF LITTLE FLORENCE

We now prepared onward much faster than we had ever done before, taking every precaution to guard against surprises by the Indians. We soon reached the Yellowstone [River] following up that stream several days, crossing Clarks [F]ork and many smaller tributaries of the Yellowstone.

On the 25th of July, our youngest child Florence was taken sick and in spite of all the skill of the physicians, kept getting worse. After suffering terribly for four days, she died. Her disease was congestion⁴² of the brain. This was a sad bereavement for us as she was an interesting child about eighteen months of age.⁴³ We buried her on the banks of a little creek near the road between Clarks Fork and the Yellowstone. After covering her little grave over carefully with stone to keep the wild beasts from digging her up, we again went on our sad and sorrowing way.

⁴² An excessive or abnormal accumulation of blood or other fluid.

⁴³ Per Zerah's family record, Florence Allison French was born on January 4, 1863 and died on July 31, 1864.



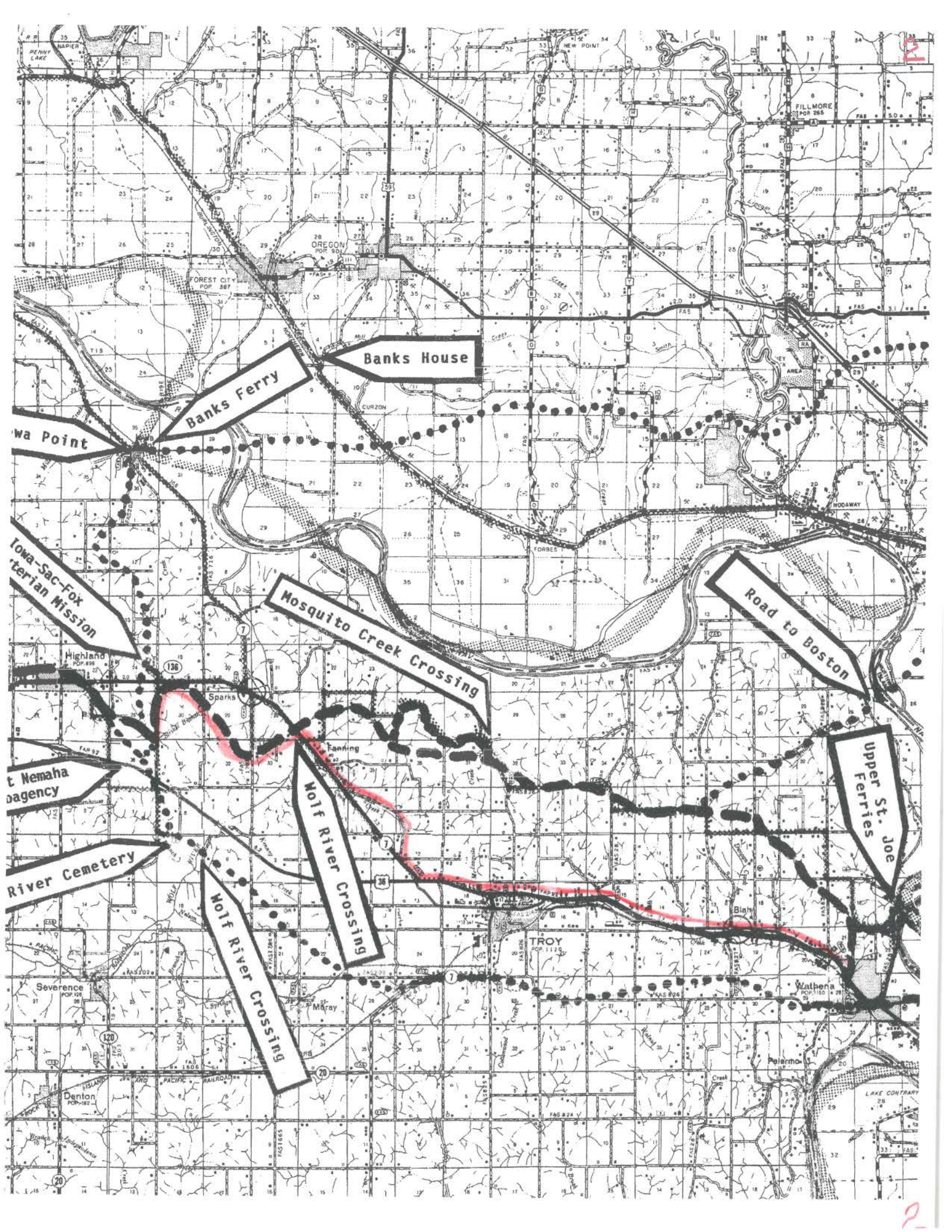
Savannah

Boston-Amazonia

Road to Boston

Upper St. Joe Ferrises

ST. JOSEPH



Banks Ferry

Banks House

Mosquito Creek Crossing

Road to Boston

Upper St. Joe Ferries

Wolf River Crossing

Wolf River Crossing

wa Point

Towa-Sac-Fox Terrestrial Mission

t Nemaha Agency

River Cemetery

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Denton

FOREST CITY
POP. 587

OREGON
POP. 9,211

FILLMORE
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Highland
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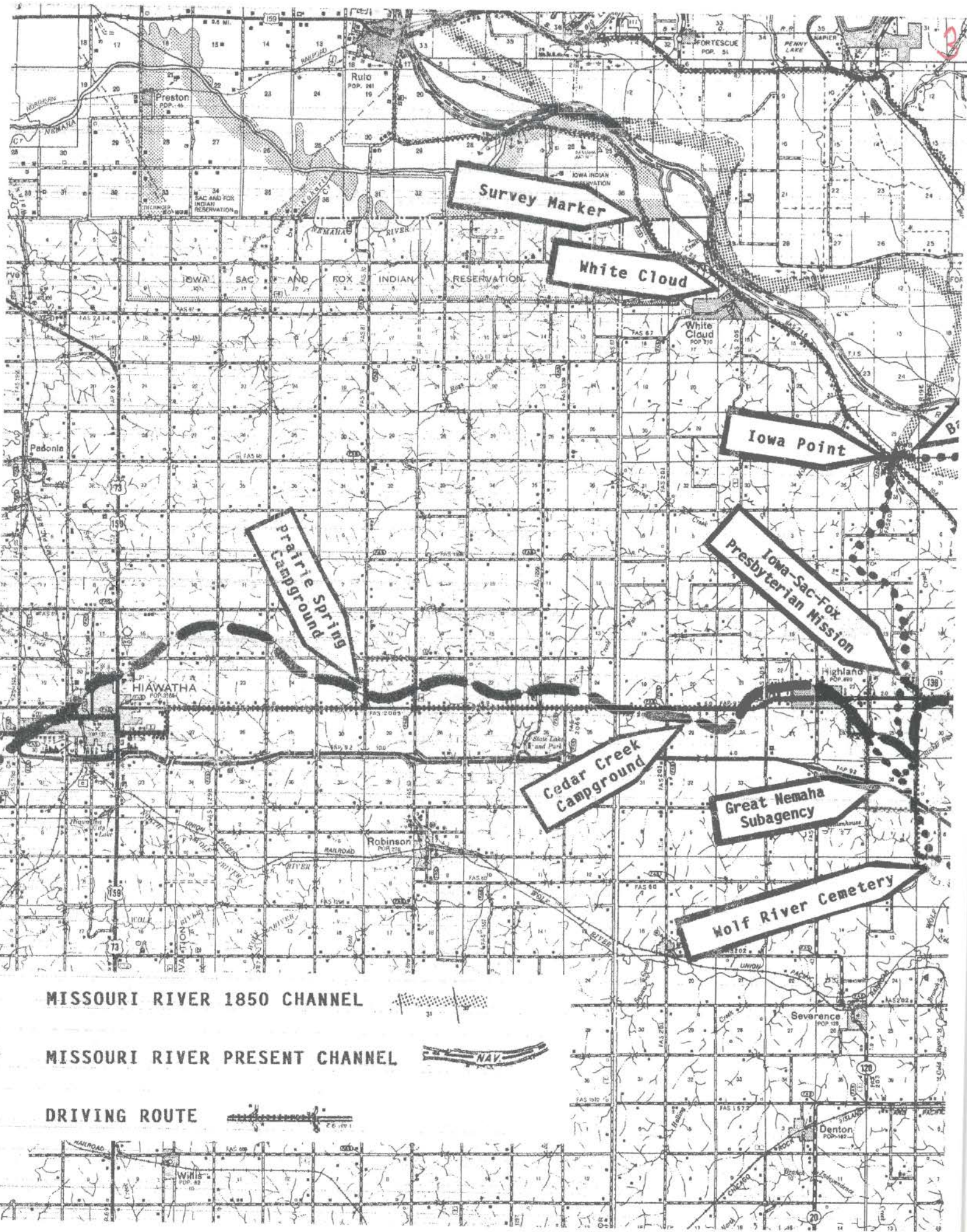
Sparks

Banking

TROY
POP. 1,129

Waltham
POP. 150

LAKE CONTRARY



Survey Marker

White Cloud

Iowa Point

Iowa-Sac-Fox
Presbyterian Mission

Prairie Spring
Campground

Cedar Creek
Campground

Great Nemaha
Subagency

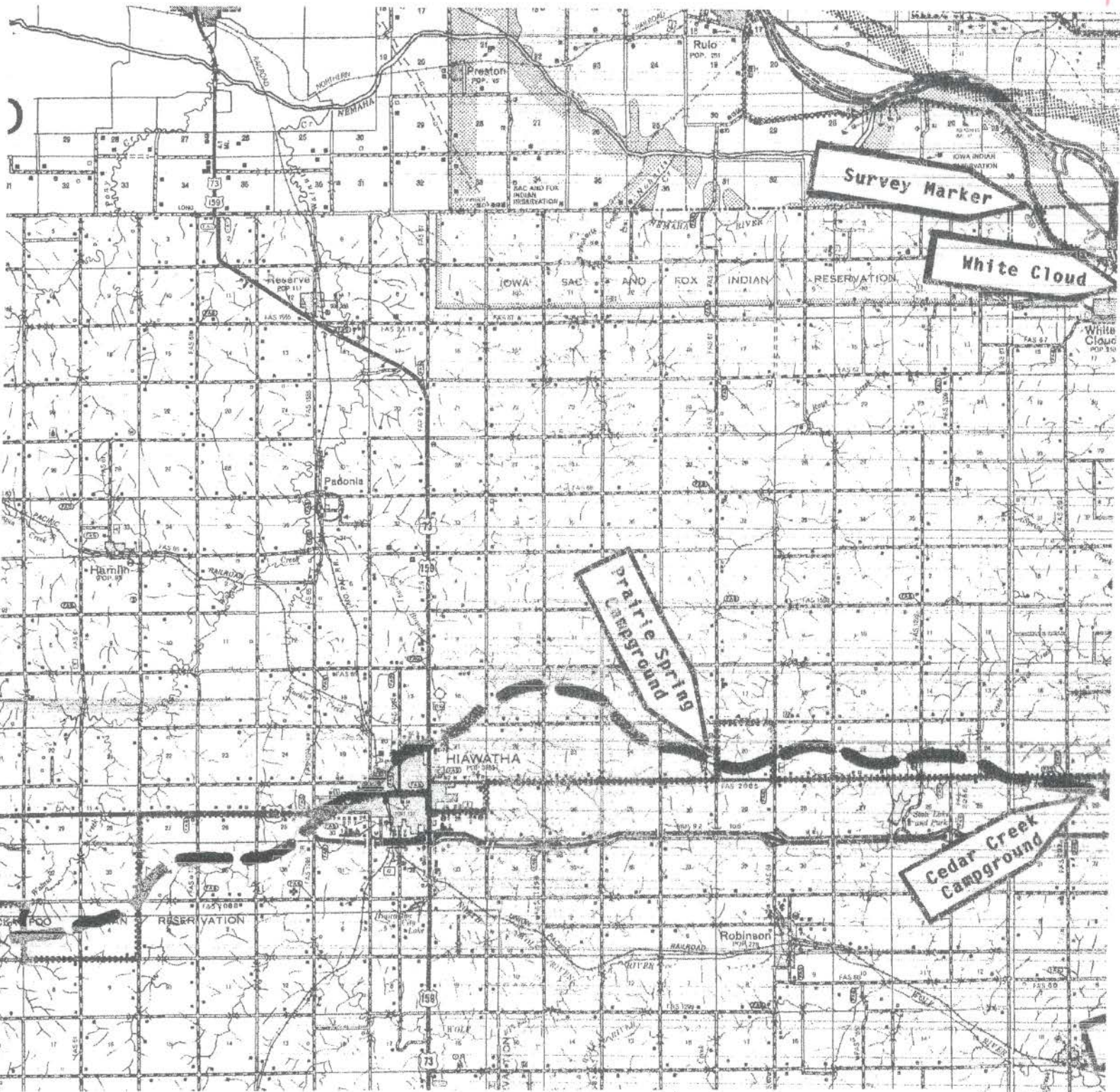
Wolf River Cemetery

MISSOURI RIVER 1850 CHANNEL

MISSOURI RIVER PRESENT CHANNEL

DRIVING ROUTE





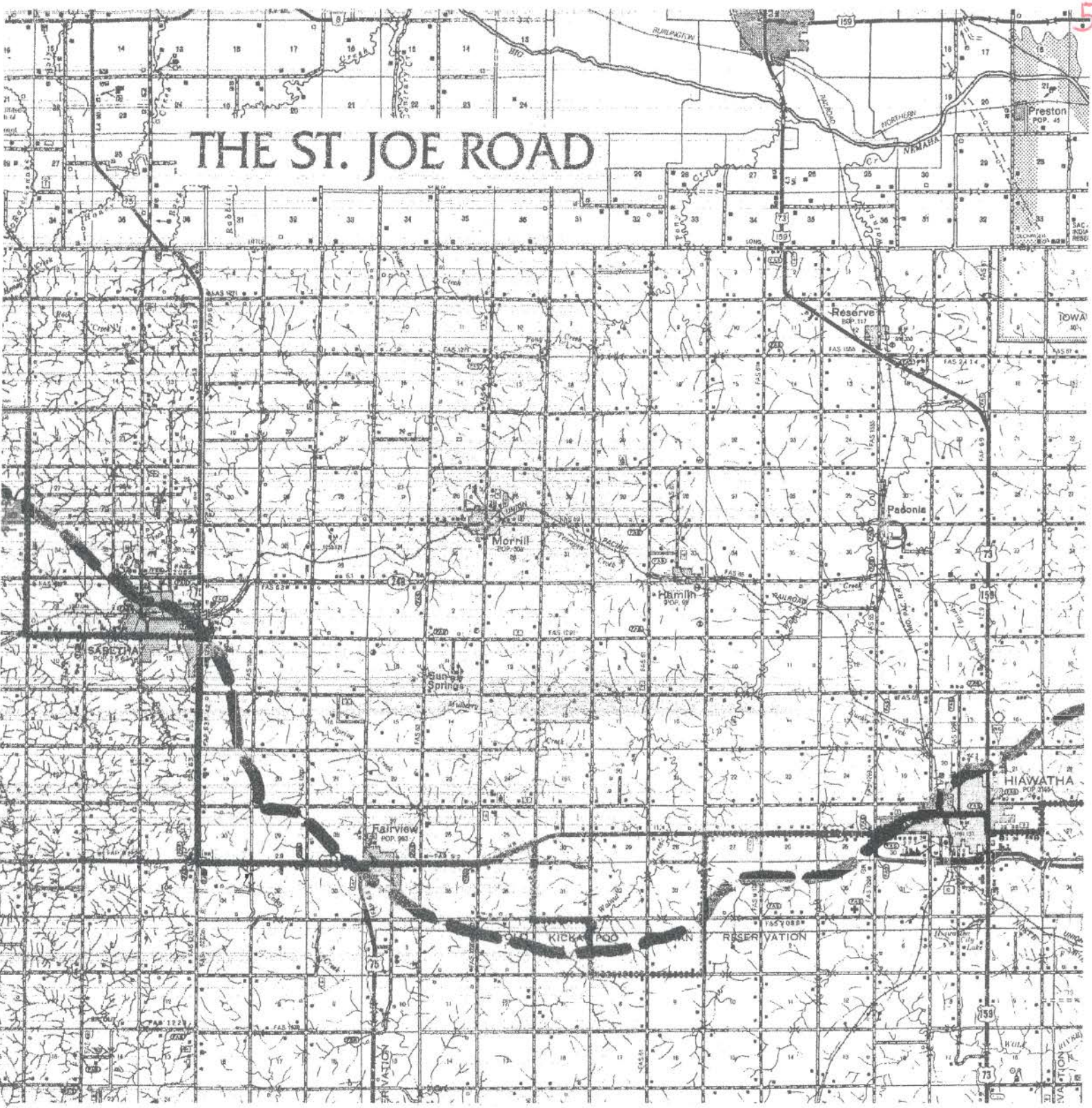
MISSOURI RIVER 1850 CHANNEL

MISSOURI RIVER PRESENT CHANNEL

DRIVING ROUTE

No change

THE ST. JOE ROAD



ST. JOE ROAD (OREGON/CALIFORNIA TRAILS)



MISSOURI RIVER

INDEPENDENCE ROAD (OREGON/CALIFORNIA TRAILS)



MISSOURI RIVER

OREGON/CALIFORNIA TRAILS



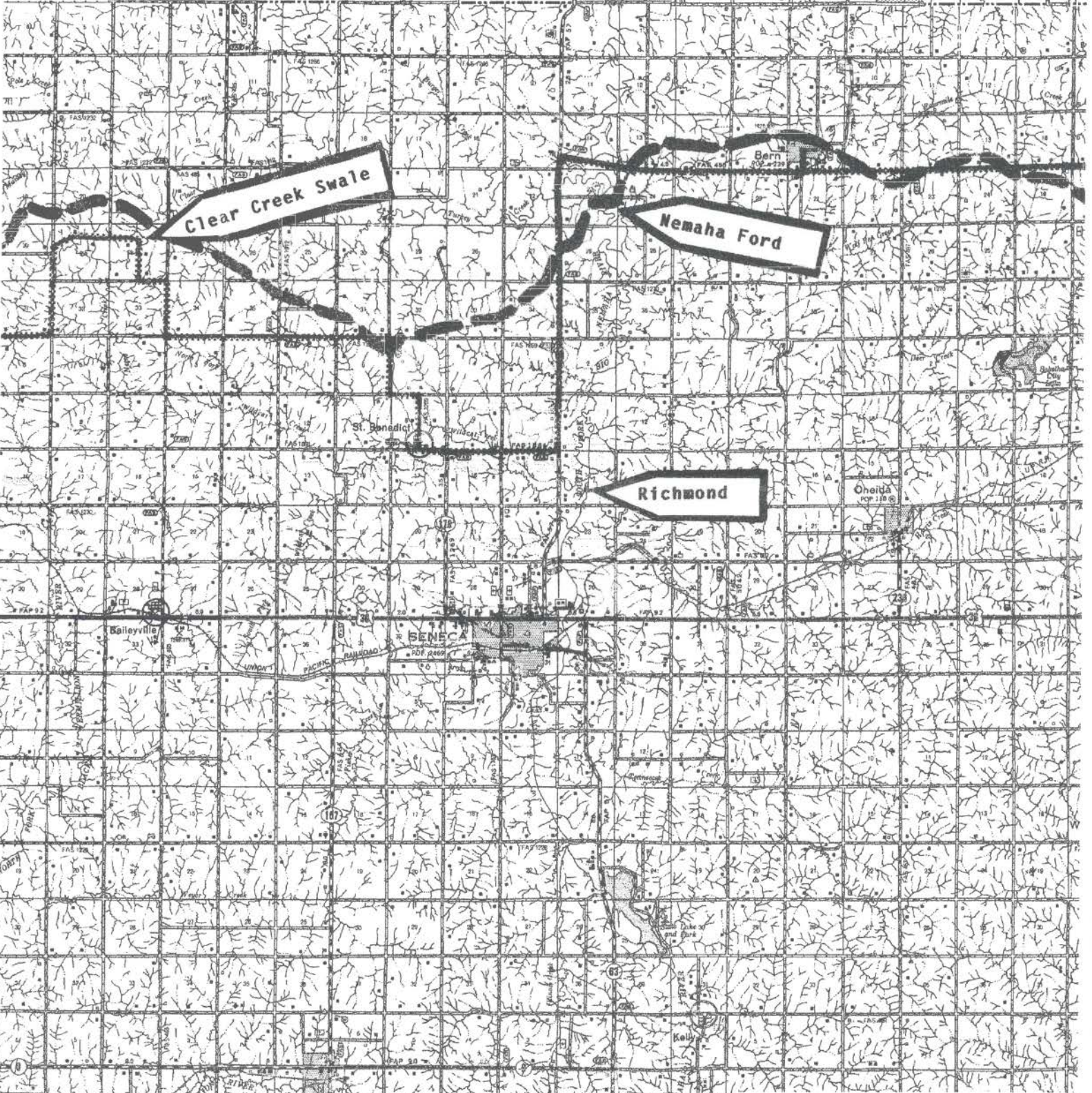
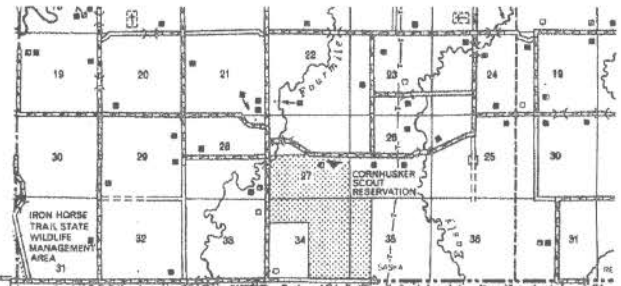
DRIVING ROUTE

FEEDER TRAILS

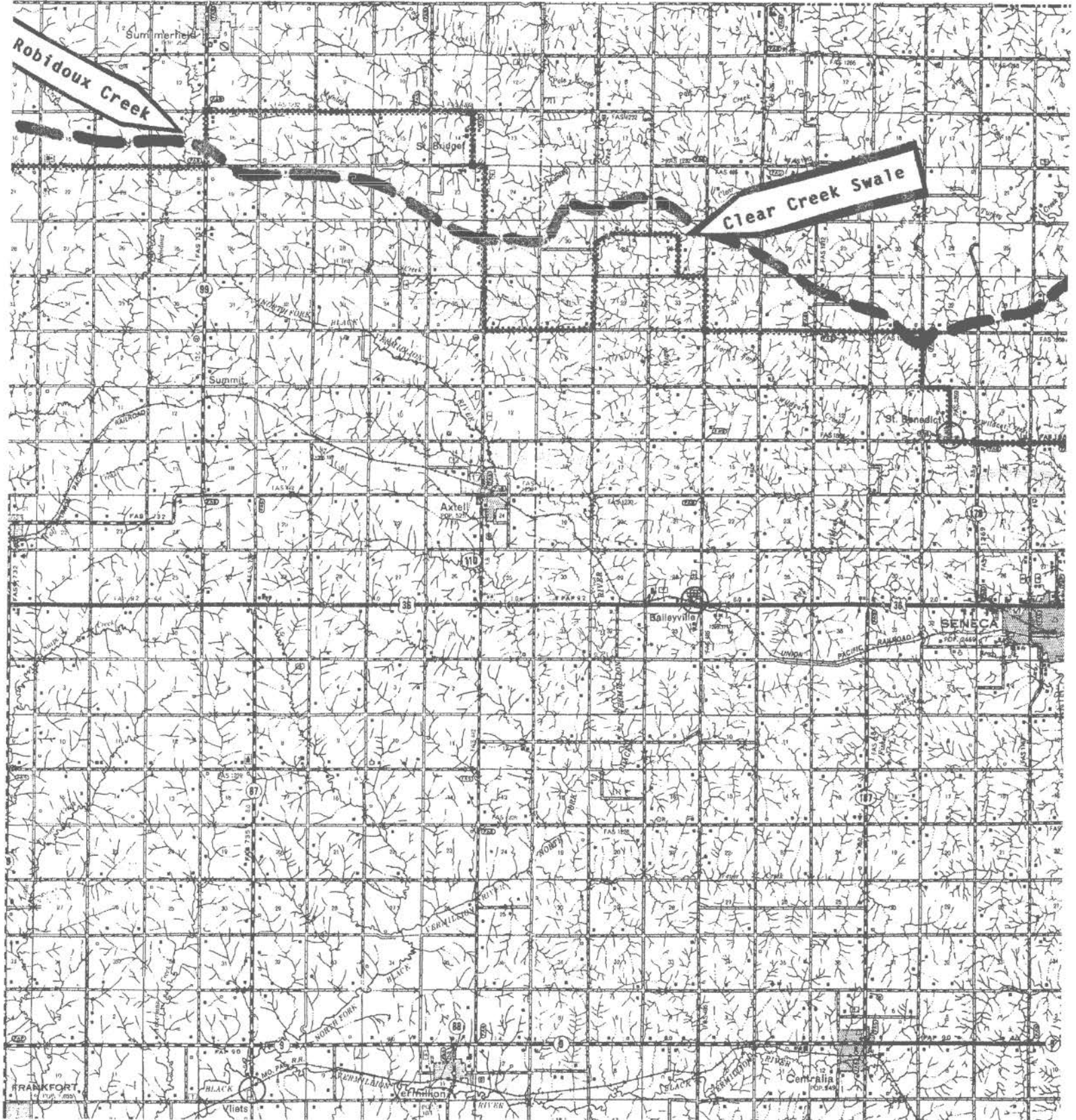


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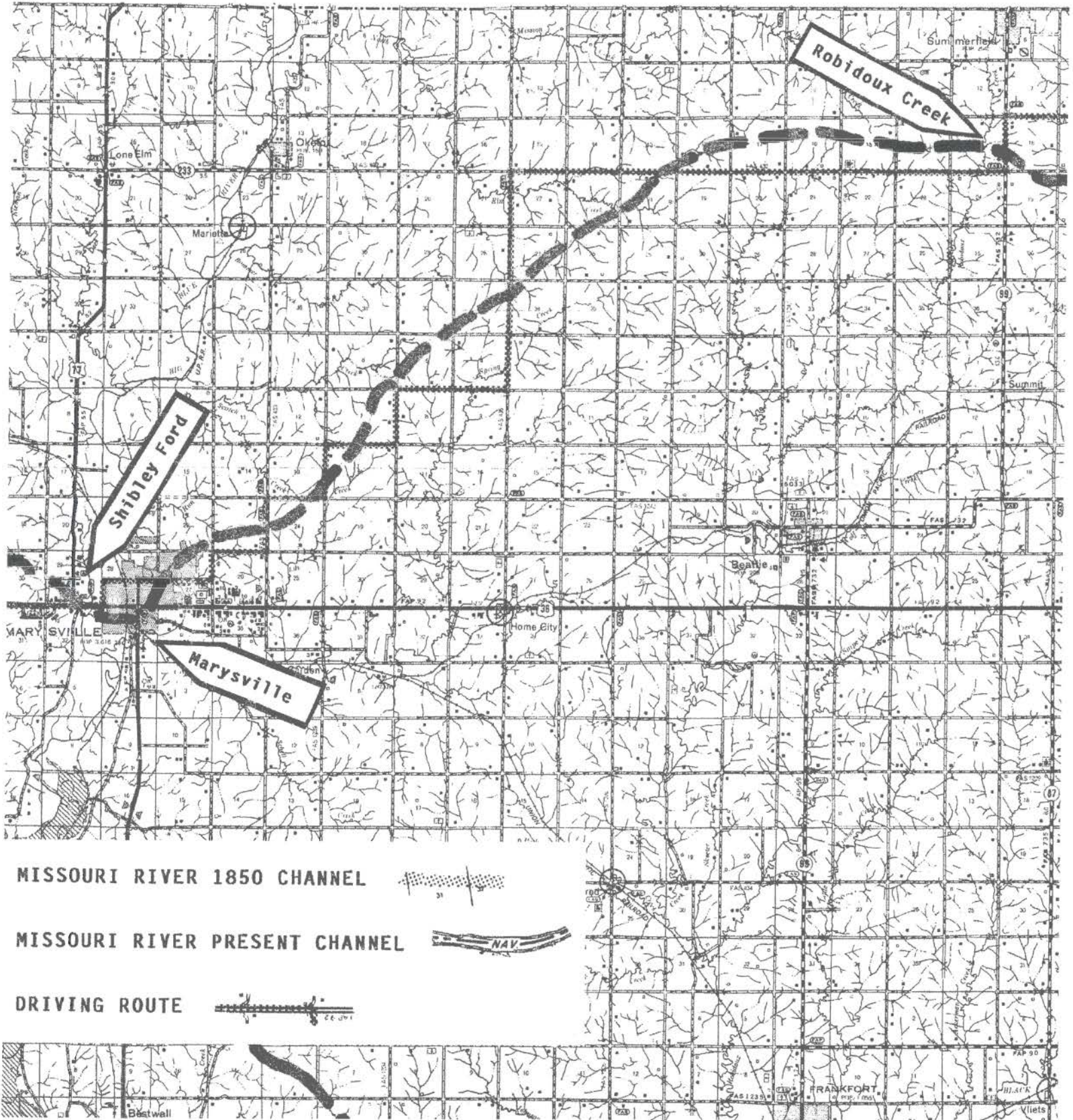
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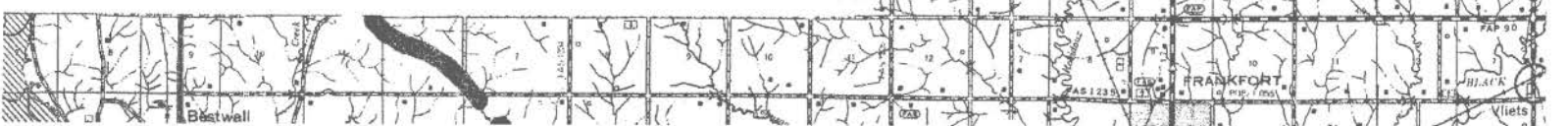
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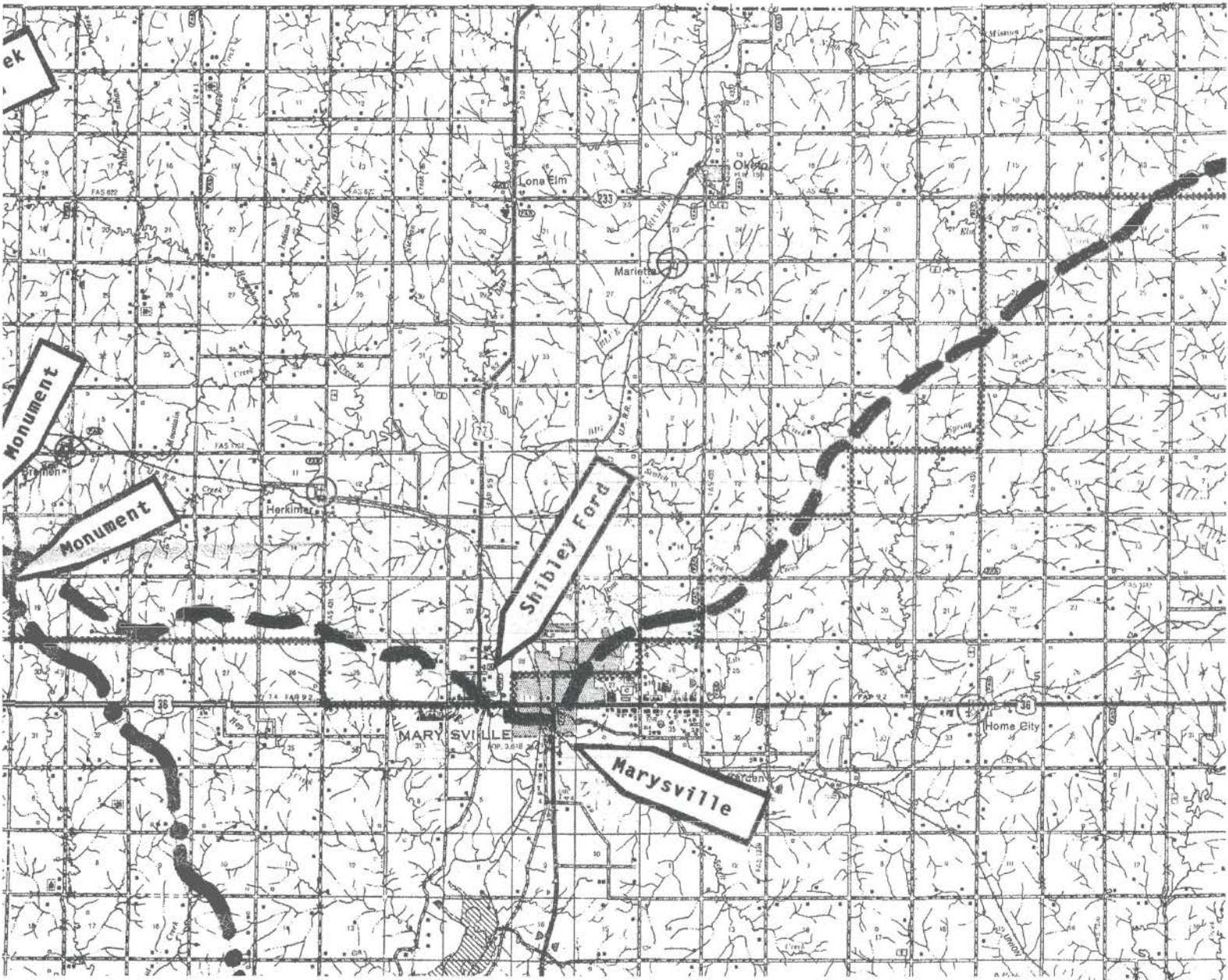
MISSOURI RIVER 1850 CHANNEL 

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MISSOURI RIVER 1850 CHANNEL

TRAILS) 

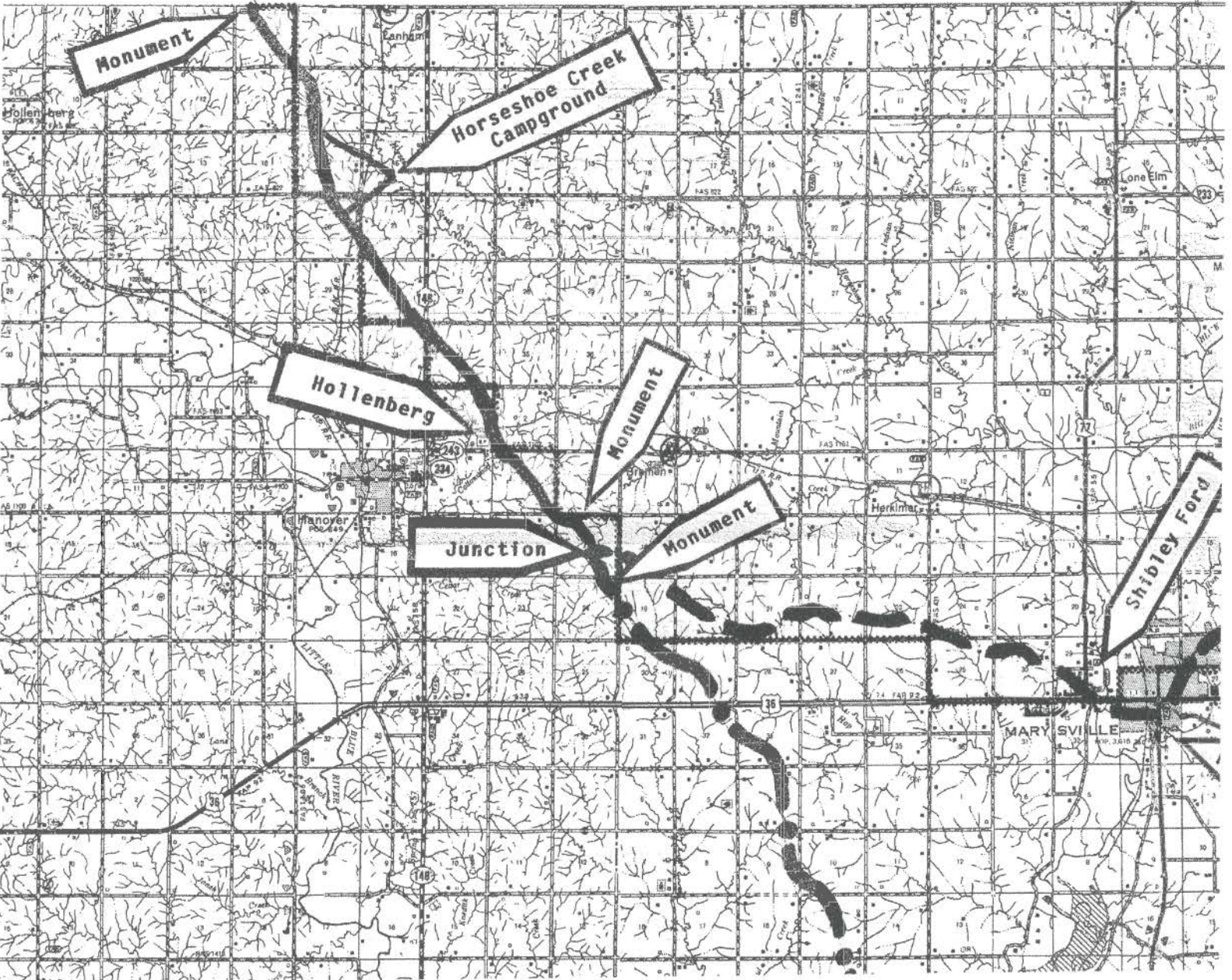
MISSOURI RIVER PRESENT CHANNEL





DRIVING ROUTE 

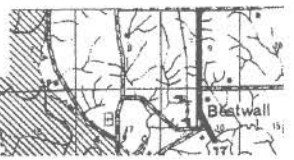


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THE ST. JOE ROAD



- ST. JOE ROAD (OREGON/CALIFORNIA TRAILS)  MISSOURI RIVE
- INDEPENDENCE ROAD (OREGON/CALIFORNIA TRAILS)  MISSOURI RIVE
- OREGON/CALIFORNIA TRAILS  DRIVING ROUTE
- FEEDER TRAILS 



SC 782

ARCHIVES

HALE, C. ADELIA FRENCH.

transcript copies

Reminiscences, c. 1929. 3 items (tps. copies).
San Bernadino, California resident. Mrs. Hale had
traveled with her family to Virginia City, Montana,
in 1864, and had later married a Helena jeweler,
N. B. Hale. The couple moved to California in 1874.
Her reminiscence concentrates on the trip to Montana,
but there is some comment on conditions in gold camps
of the period.

Donated by Nettie Kirkendall, Helena, Jan., 1934.
Formerly housed as Mns. Case B H13.

MEMORIES C. ADELIA FRENCH.

(Mrs. N. B. Hale.)

On April 7 1864 at Big Rapids, Michigan, Zerah French and wife Margaret and three children, Adelia not quite 15 years, Alice 11 and Florence 19 month. Father loaded all he thought we would need of the household goods into a covered wagon, with mother and two children in the wagon with father driving two big horses. I was put on one of the big grey colts to ride and lead the other.

They had just bought the colts and when they were passing in front of their old home, they found a pool of rain water. It had been raining all night before we started and was raining then as hard as it could. They walked right into the water and kicked and splashed until they were tired. I was badly frightened and used my whip to some purpose.

So we did get started on our long journey to California. We were two days going 80 miles to Muskegon, and it rained all the time we were on the road. We stayed all night there and took the boat in the morning for Chicago. The lake was in very bad condition. The ice was breaking up in fine pieces and thrashed itself into a fury.

Father had often crossed the lake on business, but had never seen it in such a wild state. He did not go to bed while on the boat, but walked up and down the passage in front of our state-room all night long. We were more than half a day late getting into Chicago. We went to a hotel and stayed a week while we were getting the provisions and groceries and some of the horses, wagons and covers.

I think some of the men and horses went around the lake while we

were crossing. He bought flour here to load his three wagons. At the hotel we were stopping at, there was a child who had the measles. I was so afraid I would take them from her that I would not go down that side of the building. When I did go to the dining room I went down the hall on the other side. I took the measles with me when I left there. While there we children were looking out of the window and saw Tom Thumb going by in his walnut shell coach, with a tiny colored coachman driving four goats. He had a coachman's uniform big as life.

Father was very busy all the time. I do not know if he bought all his horses in Chicago or St. Louis, as he had some of the horses. While in Chicago he bought a big tent. He had a big box four feet long and two feet square each way, filled with hard tack or army biscuit, like large thick crackers. Several small wooden boxes of crackers like we used to get long ago, like our soda crackers of today.

Later on at the end of the week, we took the train for Quincy, Illinois. I do not know how long we were on the train, but we got in town early in the morning. After dinner we crossed the Missouri River on a ferry boat, and landed at Quincy, Missouri. There we saw tons and tons of black bacon stacked up on the bank like cord wood, ready to be shipped up or down the river. A lot of Negroes were running back and forth on the bacon and we could not tell which was the blackest.

We had to take a great lot of bacon with us, but it was not black like that. The horses, 16 in number and all freight was loaded on the Hannibal & St. Joe Railroad. The freight train had a wreck and hurt my riding horse so badly we had to leave and trade her for a

5

cow in St. Joe, so we had some milk all the way. Here we finished buying all the necessary things we had to have. Such as a sheet-iron stove with two griddle holes and a good sized oven, also a large Dutch oven to help do the baking for a family of seven or eight. On that trip we would have to burn buffalo chips to cook with most of the time. When we did cross the river again it was nearly dark. We crossed on a ferry and I was so sick I could not hold my head up.

Father hurried and put the tent up and threw a blanket down on the grass and his saddle for a pillow. I was glad to lie down and rest. Mother went up to the big farm to get a hot drink for me. That was the measles. In the morning we moved some distance from the farm house, but were still on the big farm. We stayed a month before I was able to be moved. I think it rained every day during that time. The men had to dig deep ditches all around the tent, and hang blankets on the walls to keep it dry inside. Think of the expense of that month.

When they did start I was put on a feather bed in the wagon, but did not stay there long. We soon passed through a little place called Troy. There we saw a grocery store with strings and strings of tin dishes of all kinds hanging on each side of the door. The next thing I remember was when we camped on the big Blue River, a very pretty stream. I was sent to get a small pail of water. As I bent down to dip it in the river I looked up, and on a limb over my head was a great big spotted snake. I dropped my pail into the river and ran. It was a big gopher snake, but I did not care what kind of a snake it was.

This was Kansas we were in now. We traveled in this state some

time. One Sunday we were camped in a pretty grove of trees when a lot of friendly Indians came into camp and talked with father in a pleasant way. Then they caught sight of Alice and as she had very light hair, almost white they wanted her, right off. They offered their best pony for her and kept adding more ponies to their list. By this time we children were badly frightened, and ran into the tent and hid there. By this time father was frightened too. The Indians were very mad when they found they could not trade. He never tried to fool with the Indians again.

They went away after awhile. We were afraid they might do us harm but they did not. All this time we were nearing the Big Flat River. When we got to the river we found five covered wagons there waiting for a crowd, and we had three wagons. They held a meeting to decide just what they were going to do. They elected father captain, and he decided to go with the crowd to Montana instead of California.

Everyone went to work with a will to get ready to cross the river. They took our three wagon boxes off the wheels and emptied them of all their contents, and started to cork them, using every rag and sheet they could get in the train that could be used in that way. All hands turned in working nearly a week to make the wagon boxes water-proof. They were ready after awhile. Then they took long ropes and lashed two boxes together, then put the third box on top of the other two and tied all three together with ropes and tied ropes around the boxes and left long ropes from each corner of the boat.

They loaded the wheels on for the first trip, with several men holding the ropes and swimming and pulling. The river was a half mile wide and very deep and thick with sand. One could not see an

inch down into the water, and running like a mill race. The captain was 6 feet 2 inches tall and he did not touch bottom any time while swimming back and forth. The current was so strong they landed anywhere from half mile to a mile down on the other side of the river.

It took a week at least to cross, and nearly that long to get everything in shape again. The family went over with the last load with the cow tied to the back of the boat, so we could talk to her and thought maybe she would not be so frightened. Her eyes were bulging from her head, and we did not think she would ever get across but she did. Then they started with the stock, leading two horses and driving the rest in loose. They were badly frightened at first but the leaders kept right on, so they all followed. We did not lose any stock either.

I do not know how long we were there. We got started again after awhile. By the time we reached the north fork of the Platt River we had 369 men, 30 women, 18 children and 151 wagons. We were picking up covered wagons all the way. While going along the Platt we often met whirlwinds. I know we had our table or grub box set for supper. We had a square box maybe 3 feet across that we used to keep the dishes and cooked provisions in. We would put all on top the box with cover down, and dishes in piles so the men could help themselves. They would take their plate, cup, knife and fork and whatever they wanted on the table.

One night we had everything ready when the whirlwind struck our table and took every dish off over the bank into the river. At that time the captain saw what he took to be a large court house away out from the road. He started on one of his best horses and found a big sandstone block with all the loose sand blown away.

When he was ready to start for the train he was entirely surrounded with buffaloes, all pawing and bellowing. He started for the train riding fast and they kept ahead of him all the way. They ran like so many frightened cattle. They estimated the herd at about 1,000 head. We did not see any more on the trip.

They ran straight for the road and the train had to stop and let them pass. Someone shot one of the big fellows and he dropped on his knees in the middle of the road. From a cut with a big knife in the rump, the fat rolled out each side, but no one cut a steak from him, and we were all hungry for fresh meat. Our little French doctor ran with a knife and cut the foretop out between the horns to cover a foot stool with.

At that time we lost one of the men from the train. He went to hunt rabbits, sat down to rest and wait for the train. When he saw it coming he started to get up, pulled the gun toward him. It discharged, killing him.

It was at the north fork of the Platt that we saw the Pony Express. They had stations every ten miles at that time. The riders would come in on a dead run, jump off one pony and on to another and go again. I did not learn how often they changed the riders.

Here at the bridge we began to see signs of "Beware of Indians" on every stone or sand wall, or any place that was smooth enough to hold the painted signs. From that crossing we turned north towards the Black Hills. There is where we took the Bozeman cutoff through the Black Hills.

About this time a girl friend of mine had a birthday party. She made a cake out of sorgham molasses, flour and lard and no eggs. It was cake anyway, and all of us girls enjoyed it. I do

not know how long we were going in that direction, but we suffered greatly for fresh water. Most of the wagons carried barrels of water with them, on platforms built on each side of the wagon box. We did not have any fresh water for three days. The horses would hardly drink it at that time.

After awhile we saw a row of green trees and knew there must be water there, and there was. Everyone was running with cups and buckets to be the first one there. When they got there the water was boiling hot. There was another streak coming out of the hills a half mile farther on, that was ice cold.

We began to see prairie dogs all over the plains. They would pop up all over and bark at us, not unlike small dogs. We also learned how the Indians of that country cared for their dead. They built platforms with poles maybe 10 feet high and covered them with pole and brush. They rolled the body in blankets and put them upon the platform. When the blanket fell off, birds feasted on the body.

Someone killed an elk and it was divided among the neighbors as far as it would go. We had a big Dutch oven and I was sent out to get buffalo chips to heat the oven with and they make a very hot fire. Mother had the oven hot, then put the meat in with slices of bacon spread over the fresh meat. We did have a feast. That was the first fresh meat we had since leaving home.

Later on we had fish quite often, but no potatoes. We soon began to look for the Montana Territory line. We soon came to the Powder River and plenty of trouble. We did not go very far when we came to a mesa or bench that had no water or feed. It was dark when we got there, so we had to camp there all night. We had two Mexican guide with us and they were up as soon as it was light. They rode about

two miles and found a beautiful valley with a small river running through the center and feed dry, high and plentiful. They hurried back to the bench and got everyone out to get the teams harnessed and down to the grass and water. In the meantime, that is while the stock was feeding, everyone was hurrying to get breakfast and to be ready to start when the teams were ready.

A man who could not find his cow in the morning when the rest came down off the bench, went back for her while we were getting breakfast. The Indians saw him and chased him off the hill. They shot two arrows into his back and he rode back to camp with the arrows in his back. They curved or clinched around his backbone, and they had to be cut out by the doctors.

By this time we were getting ready to start up the canyon when a lot of Indians came down off the hills or mountains, riding into camp. When our captain shook hands with the chief, the Indian gave his left hand. A bad sign. As soon as they could the guides told the captain to be on guard, as the Indians did not mean any good to the white men. They begged for everything in sight. Food of all kinds. Tea, coffee, sugar, tobacco, hardtack and crackers. They could not get enough bacon. They wanted everything they saw. When they found they were not going to get any more, they piled all the food on their ponies and started up the mountain as fast as they could ride.

As soon as they were gone everyone hurried to get the teams started on up the canyon. Most of the horse teams were well up the canyon, when the Indians came down on all sides, whooping and yelling and setting fire to the dry grass. When the guides came up they said the Indians were coming and surrounding the valley, and for th

teams to turn back to the corrals as soon as possible. The drivers turned the teams and ran back to the corrals, as the ox teams had not broken their corrals yet. The horses went into the corral on one side of the other with horses all inside.

The Indians did not get on our side of the river. They saw the captain and several men on the upper side of the valley and ran their ponies to get to them. In the meantime the women were digging a ditch part way around the corrals. We children were bringing water in everything that would hold water, to make the ditch wet, or at least so the fire would not cross.

Then the women got together and started cooking anything they had to cook and sending it out to the men who were fighting. Mother churned while doing her cooking and had a little fresh butter to send out to the men for their lunch.

We never knew how many Indians were in the band, but there was a lot of them. They fasten themselves to their ponies when they go into battle. The guides were told afterward the Indians lost 14 warriors in the fight. After the Indians left, father came into camp and asked if anyone had seen Mokibben. He had not been seen since he turned his team back from the canyon. Just then Mc was seen crawling out of his wagon, where he had been hiding. He had barricaded himself with sacks of flour all around inside his wagon. The French doctor had been doing the same thing, in his own wagon.

After we got to the end of our journey, the doctor came out in the paper saying how he had ridden beside an Indian, holding the Indian by the hair until he killed him. The Indians are carried into camp if they are dead or alive by their ponies. We lost one man, but he

was not in the fight. He started up the canyon before the Indians showed up and he was shot full of arrows. There were 11 sticking in his body when he was found, and his body was so mutilated he could not be moved. He was rolled in his blanket, a grave dug and he was buried. We never knew his name.

We next came to Tongue River but it was not a bad one to cross. About this time three or four of the train people got homesick and turned back. They sold everything they could spare. One had a six griddle cast-iron stove and we traded our sheet-iron stove for it. They traded ox teams for horses and started back.

The guides thought they did not stand a chance of getting back. They were never heard of after they started, that we know of. The teams were all tired out, and feed would be scarce and plenty of Indians on the watch at all points.

Soon after that we came to the Rosebud River, a beautiful mountain stream, full of trout. The banks were covered with flowering shrubs of all colors. Every family was down on the banks doing their laundry, getting ready to move on next day. Our baby sister was taken very ill with brain-fever, and died. The train staying with us. There were two good doctors in the train, but it was too hot to do anything for her. She was 22 months old and cutting teeth.

Mother had folded a comforter and put it over the wagon cover and oil cloth over that, but to no good. The people in the train were all good to mother and tried to make things as easy for her as they could. Some of the men went around and got a small board here and there, wherever it could be spared, until they had enough to make a little coffin for her. She was buried near the Rosebud River. Someone who knew best, an old Californian, told father to put

large flat rocks all over the top of the grave or else the coyotes would dig the coffin up, and that was done. The train moved on two miles to get feed for the stock. I guess there were not many in the train who slept that night, as the coyotes howled all night. The next morning Benton Elliott and I saddled some horses and rode back to see what they had done. There was a hard beaten path all around the grave, but no place where they had tried to dig under the rocks.

The train went on again on its long journey. I do not know how far it was to the Big Horn River. That was the one we had to cross. The guides said the river was so deep we would have to raise our wagon boxes 14 inches on the axle before we could cross in safety with the goods in the wagons.

The river was a swift mountain stream, but not so very wide. The guides took hold of the bridles of the two up stream horses and lead them across so they would not go down with the strong current. There were two Germans with a light spring wagon and two small horses. They told the guides they would not raise their wagon boxes, and they did not. They drove down the steep bank into the river, and the last we saw of them, the wagon was rolling over and over with everything in it and the poor horses still hitched to it.

As there were 146 wagons, it took some time to get them all ready. I do not know how they did get along with the oxen. The next time we saw the Germans they were drying their powder in an old tin pie plate over a sheet-iron stove. You can imagine what happened. They nearly lost their eyes and hair. Everyone did get over somehow and we went on our way to our destination. We had been going some time on the road to Galiton Valley, when we came to a jumping off place.

The guides said we would have to take all the teams off the wag-

ons and drive them around on the steep hill with ropes. The German said they would not take their team off their wagon and they did not. They drove down that hill which was so steep a person could not stand up and walk down it. We had a beautiful view of the valley and saw a more civilized country than we had seen since we crossed the big river. This was Galliton County. Soon we were passing through Madison County. Father and mother found some old friends they had known in Edwards, New York, and had dinner with them. The train went on and we were in sight of the Yellow River for some time but did not cross it.

We went on for several days after we left the Yellowstone. I do not know how long. It seemed a very long time to get to our stopping place. We had heard about the sheriff and his four men being hanged a short time before for horse stealing, at Nevada City, Montana. There was Henry Flumer, the sheriff, George Ives and Boon Helem with two others but we did not learn their names.

We had arrived at our destination. It was the middle of August. There we saw tents all over the mesa, mostly of our own train that we had been with so long. When we got our tent up, we were less than a block from the five outlaws' graves.

Our family soon started for Bevin's Gulch where there were very rich placer mines for sale. Father traded the grey colts for the mine which had been salted, as the miners say. Just enough gold sprinkled over the rocks so a tenderfoot would catch sight of it. The mine next above father's was very rich, the same as his had been before it was worked out. So that was the last we saw of the big grey colts.