



Solomon Valley History

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TO THE SOLOMON VALLEY

by Kyle Peterson

The first pioneers came to the Solomon Valley via wagon trains to Kansas from the eastern United States. Usually landing in Atchison or St. Joseph at first, pioneers wanting to get to the Solomon Valley had several options in those early years. In 1865 when settlers first started to look at the valley for homesteads, husbands of families or scouts for the families needed to make their way to the Solomon Valley.

The most common way to go about this was for the gentleman to make his way from Atchison to Fort Leavenworth. He would then ride the stagecoach to Fort Riley. There he would rent a horse and supplies to scout out a place for settling. In many cases, men traveled back to Fort Riley and bought horses or oxen and supplies, traveled to Junction City to the Land Office to file a claim on land, and returned to the homestead to start the "proving up" process.

In a short time, they would either travel back to get their families or send for them. This is the key, "sending word back." To the early settlers of the 1860s, mail was a challenge. There was one important stop on the stage line that enabled the communication barrier, Station #10. This station was located northwest of Glasco. The settlement was later called Welcome. By 1867, a permanent post office was established there. This stop was the furthest west station for persons in the Solomon Valley.

This branch of the stage line was first run by the Pikes Peak Express starting in 1862. Then, in 1865, the Butterfield Overland Despatch took over the route. The stage ran a four-horse Concord stagecoach. In some cases, an 8-mule team pulled the coach. Always, four men accompanied atop the stage. Each man had at his side, one of the Colt's revolving rifles, in a holster below one of Colt's long revolvers, and in his belt a small Colt's revolver, besides a hunting knife; so that these four men were ready, in case of attack, to discharge 68 shots without having to reload.

A major negative effect to the Solomon Valley from the stage lines of that time was mass hunting. An estimated 250,000 buffalo were killed between 1865 and 1869. So enormous was the stage traffic in the 1860s that the buffalo became shy and hunters had to travel miles away from the line to find them. Many hunters stated that the Solomon Valley region and portions of southwest Kansas were the last good buffalo-hunting grounds in Kansas.

In state, Kansas companies had taken over the Kansas stage lines by 1871 and had extended routes past Welcome to other prospering towns in the Valley. By the 1880s, railroads were moving into the Solomon Valley. This was the beginning of the end for the stage lines. As towns grew and received post offices of their own, Welcome became a note in Kansas history. But, this first little stop at the beginning of settlement in the Valley proved to be an important one for many of our ancestors.