

# Jackson County



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## Wayne City Landing Marked

# Oregon-California Trails Group Join in Ceremony

By Jane Mallinson

The view of the Missouri River below was truly magnificent. A barge, a pleasure boat and a fisherman indicated the Missouri is in use in many ways.

The marker seemed secondary to the beauty of the river bottom scene on the hot afternoon of Friday, Aug. 19, when 200 persons gathered on the overlook at old Wayne City Road to view the marker unveiled by Mayor Jack O'Renck and myself.

The marker reads: "WAYNE CITY LANDING 1847, (Upper Independence Landing) The beginning of three Trails, California, Oregon and Santa Fe. Erected August 19, 1983, by the citizens of Sugar Creek and The Independence Pioneers Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution."

The flow of immigrants to Oregon and California and trade with Santa Fe began in Independence "Queen City of the Trails." All of these used wagons, goods and merchandise made obtainable through Wayne City Landing.

"It is not hard to imagine wagons winding their way up over this bluff," said Sugar Creek Mayor Jack O'Renck.

Sharon Brown of the National Park Service remarked how hard it must have been for women who wore long dresses and had small children to help along while the men tended the wagons up the steep switchback. Ms. Brown came from St. Louis to present her paper "Women on the Overland Trails" to the Oregon-California Trails Association at their charter convention held at the Sermon Center in Independence Aug. 19 through 21.

Special guests at the dedication ceremony were members of Oregon-California Trails Association who scheduled the landing marking as the first stop on their tour of historic trails sites in the Kansas City area. Twenty-three states were represented.

The program began with a flag ceremony by the Sugar Creek VFW

Post 3976. The invocation was given by Mrs. James L. Riggs, Regent of the Independence Pioneers Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution.

Pat O'Brien, historic preservation officer for Independence, pointed out the landing site below and explained how the wagons came up the steep cliff to start their trip to Independence Square where many joined up with others on the journey west for trade and settlement. He recalled that Independence had annexed the connecting area in 1857 upon the advice of William Gilpin, a real estate developer. When Gilpin failed to get financial backing he moved to Colorado where he became the first territorial governor. A school named in his honor, is now the Knights of Columbus Hall at 3029 N. River. Independence de-annexed the area in the 1880s.

Gregory Franzwa, author of *The Oregon Trail Revisited* and president of the Trails Association, praised the citizens of Sugar Creek for their interest in marking the beginning of the three trails, noting it was long overdue.

He also noted that the marker was paid for by the Sugar Creek Business and Civic Club and no federal money asked for. He complimented the Boy Scout Troop 234 from St. Ann's Church for their part in cleaning up the area, John Mallinson who cut the trees and cleared brush so the river could be seen, Missouri Portland Cement Company for the use of their land for the marker, and Hub concrete for donating the concrete for the marker.

"A wonderful community spirit, an example for other small towns to follow," Mayor O'Renck said in the unveiling.

"River towns represent an exciting part of our past. Before their replacement by railroads and interstate highways river towns were the main points of human contact and trade, and they remain a historical link with our past."

Cecil Curp of the Sugar Creek Business and Civic club, which funded the marker, told of civic involvement and thanked Portland Cement for the cooperation with Sugar Creek and for allowing the marker to be placed on the overlook.

When Mayor O'Renck closed the ceremony all who had cameras were busy taking shots of the river bottoms below and pictures of members of the Rocky Mt. Fur Traders Company. They had set up a tepee against the bluff and were in frontier costume to make a colorful background for the event.

On Jan. 24, 1983, the Sugar Creek Board of Aldermen, Charles Dumsky, Richard Evans, Stan Salva and Paul Wrabec, passed the resolution designating Wayne City town site and Wayne City Landing, located in the city of Sugar Creek, as a historical area.

In 1819 steamboats plied the Missouri River. When the first Jackson County Court met in 1827 a petition was filed to continue the ferry already in operation. A horse and rider could go across for 25 cents, a horse alone for 12½ cents, a cow for 12½ cents but sheep, dogs, hogs and goats only 5 cents.

In the 1830s, this was one of the sites from which the Mormons fled to Clay County when they were driven from Jackson County. The town site was officially platted July 3, 1847. The town had a livery stable, business houses, a hotel and homes.

The first railroad west of the Mississippi was from Wayne City Landing to a warehouse on the Independence Square. The site is so marked at 214 W. Maple. The rails were wooden and the cars were pulled by oxen.

When a long narrow sandbar formed across the landing site, riverboat captains would not unload there and went on to Westport. The town was abandoned and nothing remained of the once important river port.

Sugar Creek, not wanting to see this history lost and forgotten, decided to

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