

ARROW ROCK: ARCHAEOLOGY, HISTORY, AND RESEARCH

by Mary Conrad

Arrow Rock is a couple hours east of Kansas City. As one nears Columbia, Arrow Rock is only a few miles north of I-70. The settlement of Arrow Rock and the surrounding area of central Missouri occurred quite early in the nineteenth century. Some of Daniel Boone's sons owned nearby salt works early in that century.

The State of Missouri has been involved in the development of the salt works and of Arrow Rock as two designated state historic sites. In this process, numerous archaeological excavations have occurred over many decades. The exhibits in the state visitors center at Arrow Rock includes many recovered artifacts of prehistoric Indians, nineteenth century Indians, and various nineteenth century European American sites (including the salt works). There are enough exhibits, artifacts, and explanations to keep one looking for quite a while if one really ones to delve into the details.

In the last ten years, Tim Baumann, an instructor of anthropology, also has been conducting archaeological investigations in the Arrow Rock area. He now is in the midst of surveying the private properties of Arrow Rock.

Another researcher has entered the scene. Rich Lawson who has property in the vicinity of Arrow Rock recently joined KCAS. He also has joined the Santa Fe Trail Association. Lawson began studying old documents looking for references to his Arrow Rock property. While historians have known the Arrow Rock steamboat landing was east of the town, they have been uncertain about the location of the Arrow Rock ferry landing. By now, Lawson has found an incredible amount of primary documentation which likely perry landing on his property. If this is the case, this means wagons leaving Franklin on the early Santa Fe Trail crossed the river at Lawson's property. This possible crossing would be north and west of where the riverboat landing was located. If you are familiar with Arrow Rock, this would be north of the historic church which now is used as a summer theater.

Lawson also is pursuing the possibility that his property may be the reason for the name of "Arrow Rock." Oral tradition gives more than one reason for the name of the town. One version says Native Americans collected chert for arrowheads on the bluffs, and therefore the town became "Arrow Rock." Another version says that one of the bluffs in the area was shaped like an arrowhead, and thus the town was named "Arrow Rock." Lawson thinks he has found documentation referring to some of his property as the bluff shaped like an arrowhead. He now is clearing the bluff to expose the shape of the bluff.

Arrow Rock definitely is a place of interest for those interested in archaeology and history. The state visitors center at Arrow Rock definitely is worth a visit to see both prehistoric and historic artifacts.

IRISH CONNECTION TO ARCHEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION CITED

In the last KCAS newsletter, an article mentions that KCASer Rodney Staab has written six articles on the history of the Irish in the Kansas City area. This six-part series has begun to appear in the monthly newspaper Midwest Irish Focus. The first Staab article appeared in the September issue.

In the October issue of that newspaper, Staab's second article appears. Also in that issue is the article "Irish Leadership in Post-Civil War Kansas City." This article is about Patrick Shannon who not only ran a dry goods business with his brohter John, but who also became very active in local polittics. Patrick held various political offices, including that of mayor of Kansas City.

This article on Patrick Shannon does mention that the site of the J&P Shannon dry goods store was excavated in 1992 by the University of Kansas. This is the excavation often referred to as the Town of Kansas dig. Many years ago KCASer Eva Cook, who participated in that dig, presented a Town of Kansas program to KCAS.

BUCHANAN COUNTY IN IOWA, NOT MISSOURI

This fall the University of Iowa has been conducting excavations at the 1851 Richardson-Jakway House which was used as a stagecoach stop, inn, home, polling place, post office, farmstead and more in the defunct town of Mudville (Buffalo Grove), now located south of Aurora, Iowa, off of Highway W45.

This fall the University of Iowa put out a call for volunteers from the public. When seeing "Buchanan County", some interested volunteers may have thought this dig was somewhere near St. Joe, Missouri until looking further into the details.