

WILDERNESS EXPEDITION A FUN CHALLENGE

by Barbara Magerl

Sixteen people turned out on Saturday morning, November 4, in answer to Trails Head Chapter President Bill Bullard's invitation to our first chapter 'expedition.' Trails Head members met in the Wilderness Park section of northwest Johnson County, Kansas.

In 1996 or 1997, Raytown historian Walter Cook obtained the manuscript of an 1852 diary which told of using the Captain's Creek area as a campsite for a group composed of 13 wagons with 75 men, women, and children.

Because they took a day's layover there, the diary has a good description of the terrain, along with details on killing rattlesnakes along the creek! The inspiration for Trails Head's expedition was the description of a large rock with emigrants' names on it. Walter's interest led him to compare the description of the terrain from that diary with a 1940's photograph and a recent Johnson County government map, trying to pinpoint where he thought the rock might be.

Based on Walter's information, Sylvia and Charles Mooney did an advance check of the terrain several weeks prior to the expedition. Sylvia traced over the large Johnson County map and transferred Walter's primary points of interest to a small map which was given to Trails Head members at the November 4 gathering.

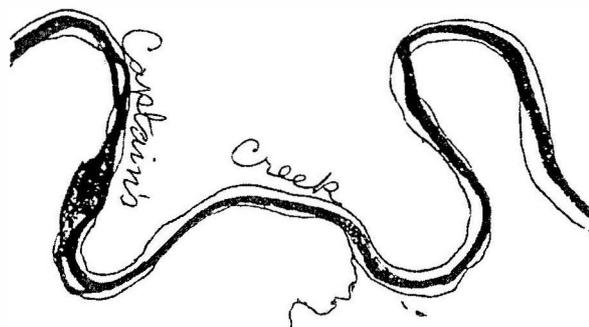
As "Expedition CEO," Bill began the adventure by dividing people into two teams to investigate the west side of Captain's Creek, sending one along the northern route of the trail and the other along the 1852 alternate or southern route. Eventually some members met and realigned, with part of the people crossing to the east side of the creek. The maps show a large space between the two segments and the reason is a large outcrop of stone, as attested to by Boy Scouts and their leaders camped at the site on our discovery day. Later groups of trains elected to keep south of the stone formations, which also cut a little distance off the trail.

Over brown bag lunches the group began to shed their warm gear - perhaps from the weather or perhaps from the warmth of their fervor. Members expressed a great sense of pleasure despite the lack of tangible 'finds.' Most of the group then visited the Prairie Center Cemetery which abuts Wilderness Park on the north, with a few hardy explorers setting out to the south for a quick wrapup before heading home.

The Chapter CEO was happy for the dedication of Trails Head expedition members: Henry Boppart, Judy and Jim Budde, Ona Gieschen, Lee Kroh, Jim Lee, Jeanne McGuire, Elaine McNabney, Howard and Barbara Magerl, Ross Marshall, Charles and Sylvia Mooney and granddaughter Tressie, and Peggy Smith.

"If we locate traces of the rock, it will be an historic find, indeed," Bill says. "We never assumed there would be a stone monument at the beginning of the trail." With guarded optimism, he remarks, "We think we have narrowed the search area, but with the rough terrain and changes over the years, it makes this a difficult search. Of course, if it was an easy search, earlier people would have already located it."

While the rock was not located, it did not diminish the enthusiasm! In fact, many found a renewed sense of purpose and camaraderie in the gathering. "This has been a great adventure," one said. "I can hardly wait to come back."



NOVEMBER 4TH SEARCH FOR ROCKS AND FOR SIGNATURES ON ROCKS



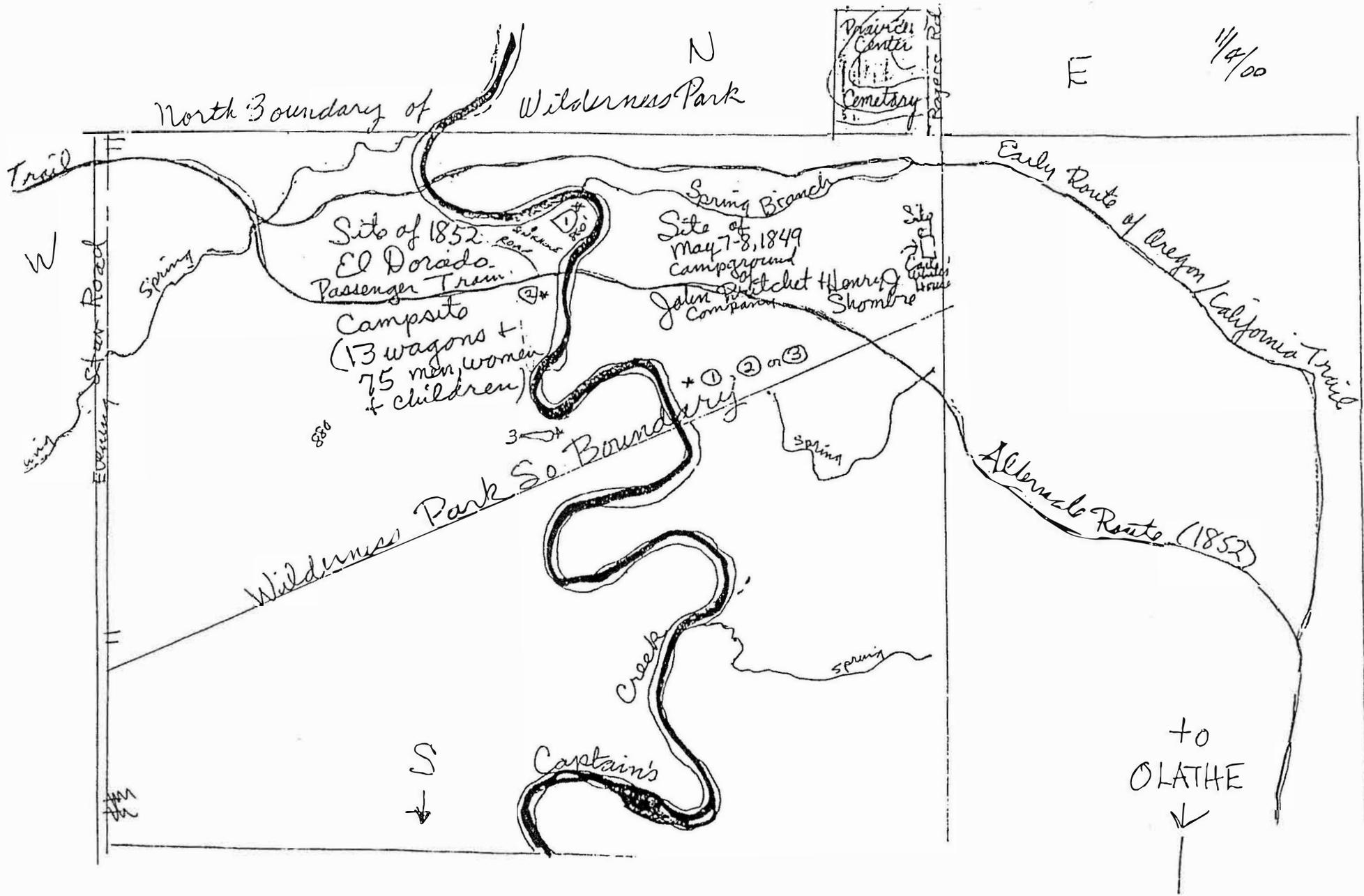
Photo by Ross Marshall

Lee Kroh, Sylvia & Charles Mooney at site of
Earl White house remains east of Captain's Creek



Bill Bullard giving instructions and explanations

Photo by Barbara Magerl



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