

Wood River Valley

Wood River ~ Shelton ~ Gibbon

*Follow the trail
of the early pioneers.*

Visit our area conveniently located in central Nebraska
with easy access from I-80 or Highway 30.

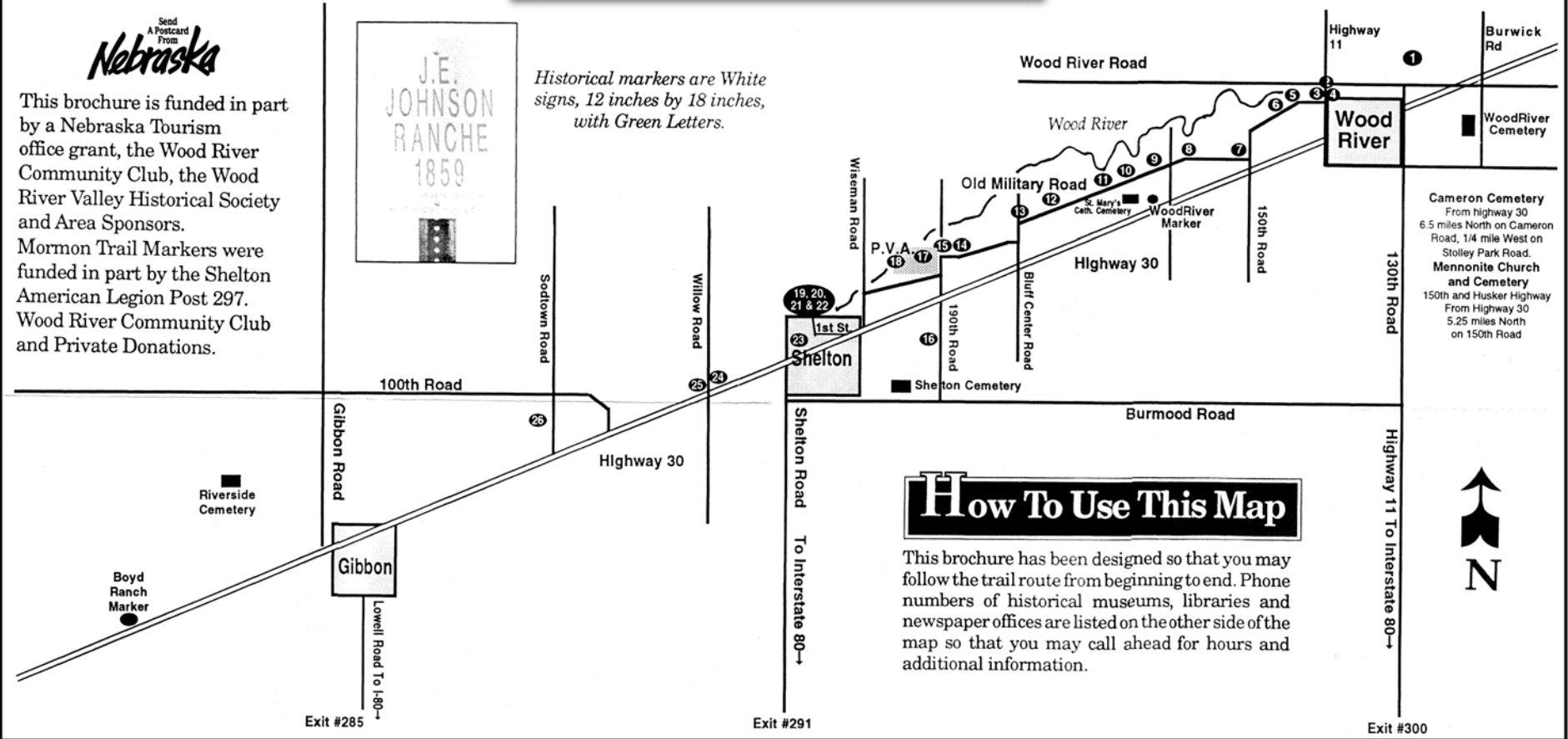
Wood River Valley Historical Brochure - 1988

Send
A Postcard
From
Nebraska

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Historical markers are White signs, 12 inches by 18 inches, with Green Letters.



How To Use This Map

This brochure has been designed so that you may follow the trail route from beginning to end. Phone numbers of historical museums, libraries and newspaper offices are listed on the other side of the map so that you may call ahead for hours and additional information.

The area described in this brochure is part of present day Jackson Township in Hall County and Shelton Township in Buffalo County. When the original Mormon Trail came through, there were families already established here. This helps explain how the Mormon travelers viewed the land and why some decided to remain and others decided to return to the area. For the entire route begin on 130th Rd. 1 I 4 north of Wood River Road east of Wood River and finish on Hwy. 30-3 miles west of Shelton on Sometown Rd.

1. SMITH-ANDERSON MASSACRE: In 1862 several members of the Smith and Anderson families were massacred by Sioux Indians near the Platte River. They are buried at this site.
2. PADDY FRANCIS BRIDGE: This is the first bridge site to cross the Wood River. According to Irish legend this site was haunted after a buffalo hunter was struck by lightning and then buried nearby.
3. TRAIL RUT MARKER 1923: This is one of six trail markers in Hall County which marks the actual path of the Overland Trail. The markers were erected in 1923 through the encouragement of Ezra Meeker.
4. MILLER & COMPANY RANCHE: The Irish Catholic Crean family came to Nebraska in 1859 after being hired as freighters by Joseph E. John-son. They traded their original claim, 2 miles west of Shelton for this site, the Miller Ranche in 1871. This ranche offered potatoes, hay, corn and general accommodations.

CONTINUE SOUTH ON HWY. 11 FOR 1/4 MILE TO OLD MILITARY ROAD, TURN WEST:

DURING THE 1997 CELEBRATION OF THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MORMON TRAIL, 600 MEMORIAL STAKES BEARING 6000 RIBBONS WERE REPLACED ALONG THESE SEVEN MILES OF OLD MILITARY ROAD FROM THE CORNER OF HWY. 11 TO CORNER OF HWY. 30.

SHELTON BOY SCOUT TROOP 142 AND PARENTS CONSTRUCTED AND PLACED THE MEMORIAL STAKES. THE RIBBONS WERE MADE BY BOY AND GIRL SCOUTS, 4-H CLUBS, 4TH GRADE CLASSES, FCE CLUBS, AND VARIOUS ADULTS. SOME STAKES ARE ON DISPLAY AT THE INTERPRETIVE CENTRE IN SHELTON.

5. LOG HOUSE: The log house, home of William B. and Carrie M. Smith Hollister was built in 1868. Later the house in front which partially hides the log house was built and connected at both levels. The log house became a summer kitchen. Mr. Smith had charge of the UP Telegraph office for one year, then became Wood River's station agent until 1883.
6. EDMUND O'BRIEN, 1861: Edmund and Ellen Collins O'Brien settled here in 1861. In 1864, three of their sons caught "Mormon Fever" from a young Mormon boy enroute to Salt Lake City. "Mormon Fever", probably diphtheria, was the local term given to any uncertain symptoms contracted from people on the trail.

- 7. CHIEF MANY BLANKETS ENCAMPMENT:** Chief Many Blankets and his Pawnee camped in this loop of the river twice a year during their annual migrations. In 1864, Chief Many Blankets saved Edmund O'Brien's last son by taking the boy back to his camp until after the other boys had died.
- 8. JOHN MAHER, 1862:** John Maher and wife, Elizabeth Collins Maher helped organize the area Catholic Church. Legend says it was John who suggested the lightning-struck buffalo hunter be buried near the Paddy Francis Bridge site.
- 9. ORIGINAL TOWNSITE OF WOOD RIVER:** Southward from this point is the original townsite for Wood River Station. On August 16, 1875 after nine years, it was vacated and moved to the present Wood River location. See the historical marker on Highway 30 for the story of moving the town.
- 10. ANTHONY MOORE, 1859:** In 1859 Anthony and Mary Collins Moore came from Joliet, Illinois. In 1861, the first Catholic services conducted by a traveling priest were held in their log cabin. This family lost a son to "Mormon Fever".
- 11. PATRICK MOORE RANCHE, 1859:** Patrick and brother Richard Moore pre-empted 160 acres in this section. In 1864, Patrick started a tuition school in his log cabin. Legend says that Patrick chose this area because it was very green like Ireland. Possibly because of being a freighter between Omaha and Fort Kearny, Patrick's ranche had a corral, general accommodations and good camping.
- 12. COTIONWOOD LAWN RANCHE, 1859:** This was Englishman James Jackson's ranche. He began a storekeeping career in 1859. He also was postmaster of the office called "White Cloud". He sold hay and corn and provided stabling and smithing for travelers. Traveling Methodist ministers conducted services at this place known as the "Preachers Roost". It is assumed that Jackson Township was named for James Jackson.
- 13. SWALE-TRAIL RUTS:** A piece of swale, visible wheel depressions left by wagons, still remains in this pasture.
- 14. CHARLES HUYLER RANCHE:** Charles and Sara Huyler, easterners, immigrated to this area with their five children after spending 10 years in Iowa. This ranche had stabling, wood, water and grass available. (Spelling of Huyler is found as Hyler and Hiler.)
- 15. DANIEL HANNON, 1869:** Daniel Hannon, Civil War veteran, immi-grated to Hall County from Kentucky in 1869 and built the Hannon house soon after arriving. Daniel and Mary Francis Hannon had six children.
- 16. NOLAN PATRICK LACEY, Mormon Family:** In 1861, Nancy Anna Hershey traveled on the Mormon Trail with her parents to Salt Lake City. She married Nolan Patrick Lacey at Fort Douglas, Utah, in 1869. After making their home in Salt Lake City, in 1878 the Laceys moved east to Nebraska making an ox-team trip on the Mormon Trail. They located on a timber claim in South Jackson Township.
- 17. TRAIL RUT MARKER-1923:** This marker now found on the Platte Valley Academy Campus is the western most trail marker in Hall County which marks the actual path of the Overland Trail, sometimes known as the California, Omaha, or Fort Kearny Trail.

- 18. THOMAS PAGE RANCHE:** English-Methodist farmer Thomas and Margaret Page immigrated to Illinois then to Nebraska. This ranche located on the western edge of the Platte Valley Academy Campus had corn, hay, stabling and a good camping ground.
- 19. FIRST STREET AND HWY 30, JOSEPH E. JOHNSON'S GARDENS, 1859:** Having large gardens, Johnson provided food for traveling Mormons. He also sold produce to gold seekers and other travelers, as well as to soldiers at Fort Kearny.
- 20. WATER WELLS:** The circular depression in the brick street marks one of the earliest wells in this area, likely Joseph E. Johnson's well.
- 21. JOSEPH E. JOHNSON'S RANCH E, 1859:** Brigham Young requested Johnson to start a settlement on the Wood River in 1859 when the Genoa, NE settlement was abandoned. Wood River Centre, now Shelton, was established by Johnson that year. Johnson left the area in 1861. According to Collins' Emigrant's Guide, he had a "post office and store".
- 22. HUNTSMAN'S ECHO, 1860:** In 1860, J.E. Johnson started the first Nebraska newspaper, The Huntsman's Echo, west of Omaha. His print shop, was often victim of buffalo break-ins. Reprinted copies of September 1860 Huntsman's Echo issue can be purchased locally at the Shelton Township Library or the Shelton Historical Interpretive Center for \$2.00 each.
- 23. SHEL TON, NE--WOOD RIVER CENTRE, 1997:** Joe Cole, Boy Scout Troop, 142, erected this wooden WOOD RIVER CENTRE sign in the UPRR Park for his Eagle Scout project. It was unveiled on May 6, 1997 as part of the ceremonies held for the 150th Mormon Trail Anniversary travelers. It cites Wood River Centre as being a Mormon Trail Freight Way Station in 1859.
- 24. EDWARD AND SARAH OLIVER, 1860 MORMON FAMILY:** The Oliver home can be viewed from Hwy. 30; but, the marker is placed 1/4 mile north on Willow Road. In 1860 the Olivers, Mormons, suffered a broken axle enroute to Salt Lake City. A green ash tree was used as a replacement, but it bowed after one mile of travel. They stayed that winter. In the spring, Edward continued on to Salt Lake City. Sarah and the children stayed here.
- 25. HENRY DUGDALE, 1860 MORMON FAMILY:** The Dugdale home can be seen from Hwy 30. The marker is 1/4 mile east on Willow Road. After spending the winter at Winter Quarters, the Dugdales spent two years in Genoa before moving on to settle west of the Olivers. The house, built in 1914, stands on the original site.
- 26. WILLIAM NUTTER, 1861 MORMON FAMILY:** In 1861 the Nutters returned to this area on the Mormon Trail which they had previously used enroute to Salt Lake City. Legend says this eight-sided house was built during the late 1800's to help protect the Nutters from Indian attacks; however, its unique construction allowed all rooms to become one grand room by moving the 16 foot sliding doors. The square top with an opening to the roof from the attic was not made for Indian lookout but only for decoration. This home was one of the first to share community social gatherings.

Today, the Ronald Lewis family of Shelton has the distinction of having ties to two early Mormon families. Ronald Lewis, son of Ralph and Dorothy Oliver Lewis, married Vicki Nutter, daughter of Richard H. and Grace Osler Nutter. Their children are Curt and Peggy Lewis.

The Wood River Cemetery and the St Mary's Catholic Cemetery at Wood River, Shelton's Cemetery, and Riverside Cemetery at Gibbon may be used to find grave sites of many early Mormon families as well as other immigrant families.

Latter Day Saints records five unidentified families living west of Shelton in 1859. Two of those families might have been James Dugdale, brother of Henry, and James and Michael Crean and sister, Catherine Francis.

For additional historical information, contact persons are:

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