

TEXAS JOURNEY

by Gerry Booth

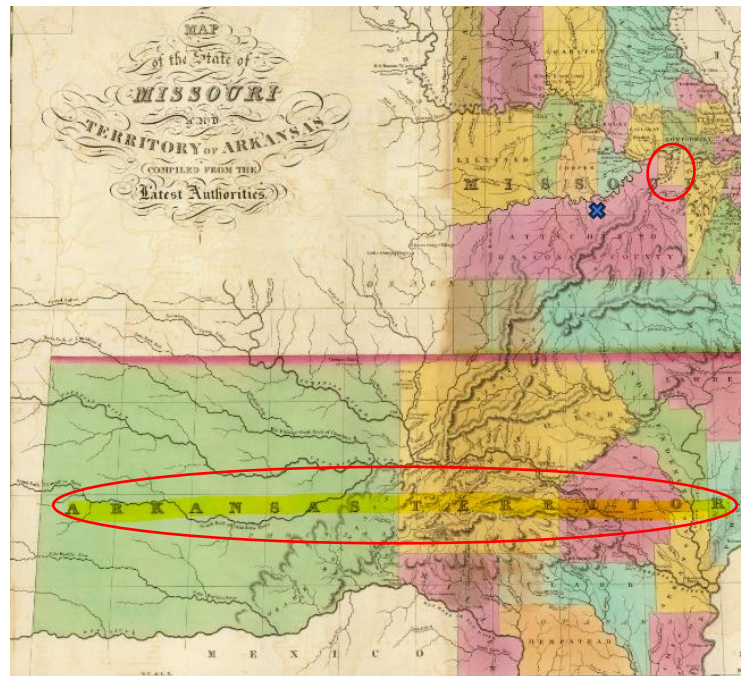
Left Cole County, Missouri

In the last article, the Shipmans left Howard County on June 5, 1821. Moses Austin who had suffered from exposure to the elements and lack of food after being robbed of his horses while trying to return home from San Antonio, died five days later, on June 10, 1821. Maria Austin wrote to their son Stephen F. Austin asking him to honor his father's wish which was for him to take over the business of forming a colony in Texas. Moses Austin had received permission to bring immigrants to Texas and had already requested that Stephen obtain and prepare a boat for immigrants to take from New Orleans to Texas. Stephen arrived in Natchitoches (Louisiana) on June 26, 1821. Don Erasmo Seguin and several other Spaniards joined him there to assist him with his colony. Austin then published a handbill that invited settlers to secure free land as members of his colony in Texas. The handbill spread through Missouri, Louisiana, and the Arkansas Territory.

The Shipmans must have heard the news because they became interested in changing their plans.

(I have tried to copy Daniel's story exactly as printed regardless of misspellings and other grammatical errors. If I add anything to the story for clarification it is bracketed [].)

Our friend [Reuben] Gage agreed to meet us at Mr. Harrell's where we all were to meet and hold a general consultation. The result was that Mr. Gage and his family was to go to Gasconade county; Mr. Harrell and family and two young men by the name of Jacob and George Nidever, and father and family to Arkansas.¹ So in two or three days we all made a general start on the 23rd of October, 1821 on our way to the far west. Mr. Harrell had a two horse wagon, which he drove himself, and also a four horse wagon, and three grown sons and one nearly so, and two Nidever brother, and out of all he could not get one wagon driver. So father, who was our wagoner, turned his



THE PLAN

The blue X is approximately the location of the consultation between Gage, Harrell and Shipman. The Gages planned to go to the area of the small red oval, and the Shipmans and Harrells planned to go to the area of the large red oval.

¹ Anthony Finley, *Map of the State of Missouri and Territory of Arkansas*, 1826

<https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~2365~250012:Map-of-the-State-of-Missouri-And-Te>

I have used the same map through the entire article, just enlarging different sections.

wagon over to me, and it was very little practice I had in driving a four horse wagon, but I drove it as far as they went with us.

The first day's travel was rather a poor start. I suppose not more than six or eight miles, through a heavy oak forest, deep gullies, muddy creeks, which caused our progress to be very slow, and the sun began to lower behind the western hills, I cannot describe my feelings; it seemed so lonesome and desolate to think what a perilous undertaking now lay stretched out hundreds of miles before us. So far in the future a little band, not an Isrealite band, but a Missourian band; not across the Red sea, but across the far western wilderness of the red savage, to try our fortunes in an unknown land to any of us, except the two Harrells, and they had a very limited knowledge of the country. Night began to close around us, so we pitched our tents for the night, and now was hurry and stir, each one to his own part of the play, some to heard the loose stock, and each teamster to take care of his team and gear, and some to fixing and making camp fires; all of this done then came on the female part of our little company, which was to prepare supper, which was relished finely. All being tired from travelling, it was not long before all seemed to be still, I suppose all was wrapped in sweet slumber, and as far as I know rested well.



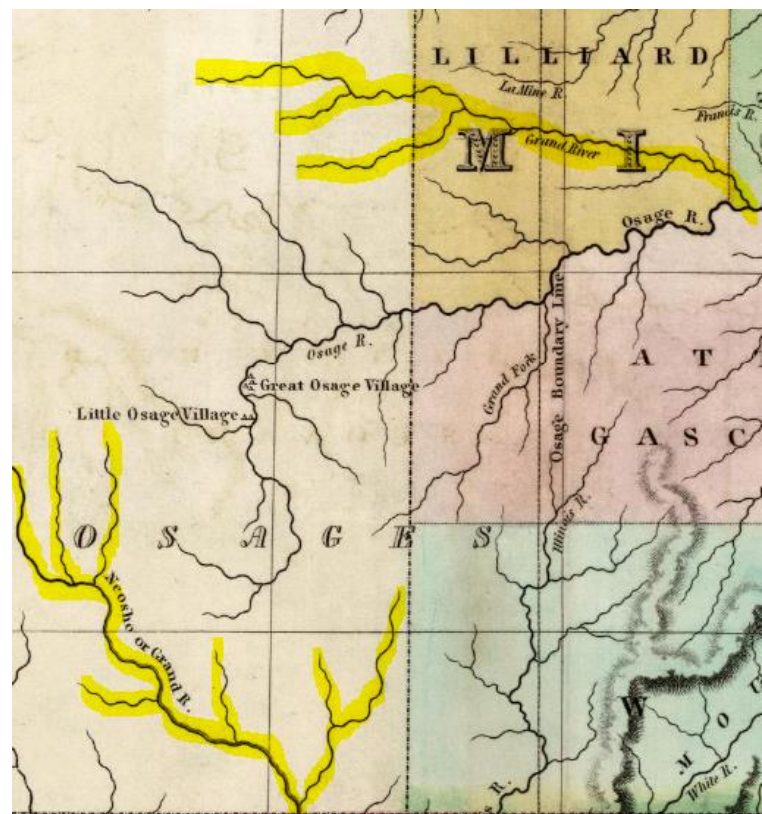
We were all up bright and early the next morning, and all at their post, fining and making ready for an early start on our long and uncertain journey. We soon fell into the road that lead off westward, up the Osage river; and having no idea of ever trying to write anything on the subject of our long and tedious trip, and never thought of making any notes, and it has been so very long since that I feel at a very great loss because I cannot tell more about the way and of the general appearance of the country, and what happened on the trip. There not being much road, I recollect we had some very bad creeks and gullies to cross; and some of them to bridge, and a great many muddy places we had to causeway. And on account of so much work to do on our road to enable us to travel, that our progress was very slow. After some days

travelling we came to the Osage river, and went up it until we reached one of Shotoe's establishments; he was agent for the Osage Indians. There father and Mr. Harrell traded, each of them a cow for a barrel of flour. We crossed the Osage river, traveled some distance up it, then struck off to the left, leaving the river to our right; and I think we traveled a westerly direction until we arrived at the dividing ridge between the Osage and Little Grand rivers, at which time and place it appeared like we had come into a different and more pure atmosphere; seemed to put new life in us all. When on that ridge there appeared to be stretched out in the far western wilds one of the most beautiful rich prairie counties I ever saw; it was so beautifully interspersed with long and narrow streaks of timbered creeks and branches, all appeared to concentrate into the Little Grand river, which we knew then by no other name than the Six Bulls, which made its way down through a rich prairie country, all of which was carpeted over with beautiful golden tinted sage grass, which lay spread out far over the western hills. It seemed to me that we then turned to our left, and soon came to that beautiful little river called Little Grand, we found it as pretty as it was represented to be; and after crossing it, although a little early, we concluded to stop for the night on the western bank, rather in a bend of the river, so that the river was on two sides of us. After we got all over and our camp fires arranged and everything taken care of, supper prepared and disposed of, and all our evening work finished, then we spent the balance of the evening in visiting each others wigwags or camps, which was common for us to spend evenings until bed time.

The area that encompasses Jasper County, Missouri was know to settlers as the "Country of Six Bulls." In this area the Spring River was the principal water source. It was a tributary to the Neosho River or Grand River. In the 1800s this river was called "Six Bulls River."

On the map you see two rivers named Grand River in the area where the Shipmans traveled. Daniel refers to a "Little Grand River." However, the map does not have a "Little Grand River." Daniel wrote, "the Little Grand river, which we knew then by no other name than the Six Bulls" clarifies that he was referring to the Grand River or Neosho River that runs through Jasper County.

The old gentleman Harrell was remarkably fond of singing, and hearing all sorts of songs, such as love, war and sea songs, and sometimes he would strike out on religious songs, and our eldest sister and one or two of my brothers, and

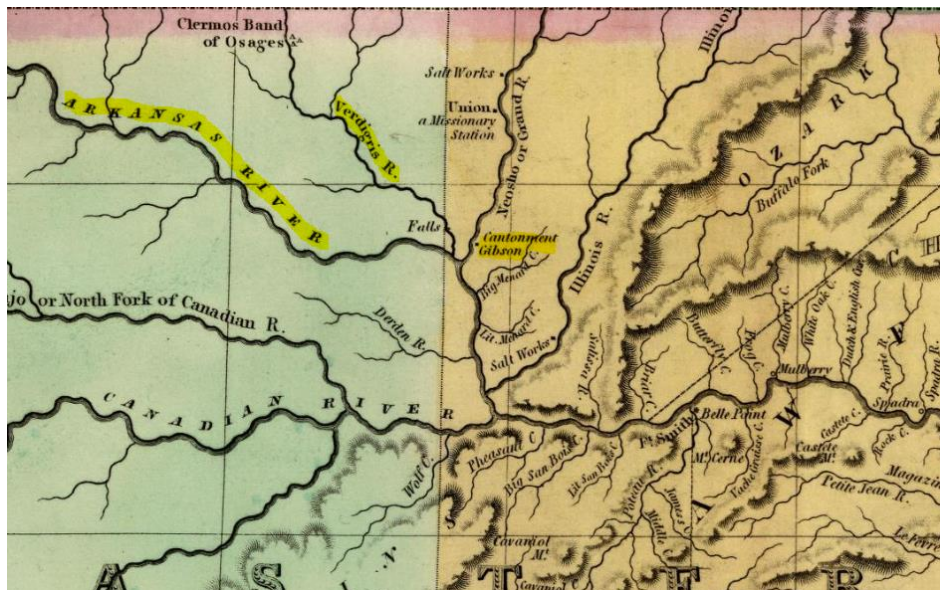


myself, were as fond of that kind of pastime as he was; sometimes his sons would join in with us. The old man was particularly fond of that kind of amusement and as lively as a boy. After our concert is over, then each one repair to his camp fire, then to bed; and in a few minutes all is still except the murmuring and rippling of the lovely little stream, rattling over the rocks and pebbles, which noise would, I think, cause one to think, if they did not say, what a vast wilderness we are in, and, comparatively speaking, only fairly started; and to think what a long and tedious journey still lie stretched out ahead of us — a little squad of wanderers — nearly all of our trip yet in the future, and to think how many of those wild red skin savages at time were wandering over the extended deserts of the upper Arkansas, Red, Colorado, Brazos and many other rivers, over which those savages would be liable to fall in with us at any time; and, if so, what could we expect of them but to be killed and robbed of what little we had — treacherous rascals! For there was only two families and two young men constituting our little company. It is true there was eight or nine families on our track, following along after us, but I do not believe we knew it at that time; for I do not think they came up with us until just before we got to the Arkansas river, and after they got up with us, they would stop and wait for us to go ahead, and make the way, which we had to do, as we traveled; it was seldom they would come up and help us.

We often had to cut our road through the creek bottoms. Sometimes we would fall into an old Indian or buffalo trail.

After travelling down this stream several days — I do not recollect how far, nor how many days we traveled — when all at once I saw a beautiful little bear, as black as such animals are apt to be, fairly streaking itself as fast as it possibly could in the open prairie; it appeared to have just passed out of a little thicket, and soon afterwards I saw a train of dogs in full pursuit, and soon they overhauled the bear and brought it to bay. It raised itself on its hind feet, and the way he sent the dogs tumbling was laughable to me, but I suppose it was not very funny for the dogs. Directly I saw George Nidever come charging up on his fine bay mare, and it seemed that the bear saw him coming, and let all hold go and met him as he came, and caught his mare by the paster between the fetlock and the hoof, and threw them whirling; mare, rider, bear and dogs appeared to be in a tremendous pile together. It appeared to be almost as quick as thought, I saw our friend George rise and very soon after that I saw the smoke issue from each end of his old fashion flint-lock gun, and soon all was still and quiet. Then we drove on to where they were, and looked at the dead bear, and, it being in the evening we soon found a camping place; took care of the bear meat, and as usual we took care of ourselves and rested until morning. Then as soon as we could make ourselves ready, we started again on our westward move. We did not go far

before we came to a farm that belonged to a Frenchman by the name of Revaugh. It appeared that Mr. Harrell had made his acquaintance in the state of Missouri ere we left there, and had bought some corn from him to be delivered at that place. We stopped and got the corn, and as this river run into the Arkansas river near where we calculated to cross, we concluded to, and did dig a large canoe, and put twenty bushels of corn in it, and two of us got into it and the land forces started with the wagons and stock about the same time we started with our water craft. Jacob Nidever drove my wagon. Mother did not like the exchange of drivers, for she seemed to think there was none she felt so safe with as myself. However she had to risk him for the time being. We got down the river about four miles and the water became so shallow that we were compelled to stop, so we run our boat ashore, made her fast and set out in search of the land forces. It was not long before we reached them, and after consultation, we decided for all to go on together, and let our corn rest until a more convenient season.



We traveled a few miles and came to a party of Missionaries who, I suppose had been sent there by some religious denomination for the benefit of the Osage and other Indians. There we bought two more barrels of flour. We went on a few miles and came to an Indian trader by the name of Barber; there we saw our first steel mill – we thought a great curiosity. We went on several miles further down the river and a small stream that runs into the Arkansas river about a mile and a half above Little Grand river, Fort Gibson. I think, now stands on the latter stream about two miles above the mouth. Mr. Barber gave us some directions how to find the crossing of the Arkansas river, and a good camping place above the mouth of the Verdigris, at a place known by the name of “Glenn’s old establishment,” a dilapidated old fort.

While there a party of us went back after our corn. We got there a little before dark, hobbled all our horses, except two we tied near the fire where we shelled our corn to put in sacks we had prepared for that purpose. Next morning we could find no horses, except the two we had tied; we looked around awhile on the surroundings, and from signs, we were satisfied they were stolen. We went back to camp and reported to father and Mr. Harrell; they went to Mr. Barber, the Indian trader, and hired his interpreter, who was an old Frenchman, to go to the Osage village, about eighty miles, in search of our horses. We waited a few days for the Frenchman; in the meantime we made another trip after our corn, and when we returned, some men came from Mr. Barber's going on a bear and turkey hunt, and wanted some of us to go with them. It so happened that I was not fixed to start immediately, and they proposed that they would go on; they gave me some directions how to find them. I got ready and started a few hours after they left. I went to where I thought was the place we were to meet; I could find no one nor any sign; the sun was down and it was getting quite dusky. I hollered at the top of my voice; I got no response; shot off my rifle, still no answer; by this time darkness was hovering low and close around me, and Ranter, my dog, seemed to be all the companion that I had at the time. I found there was no other chance but for me and Ranter to stay all night by ourselves, as we submitted to our fate cheerfully, knowing that I was alone with my dog, who I had very well trained; I could make him do almost any thing I wanted him to do. I slept tolerably well – better than I expected, as it was the first night I ever spent without some person with me. Next morning about as soon as I could see my way, I was on my way in the direction of the camp, which I soon reached. I now do not recollect how many days we stayed at that place. We concluded to move down the river a few miles on the southwest side.

In the meantime, back in Texas Austin was preparing his new colony for immigrants.