

## Early History of Pottawatomie Township, Franklin County, Kansas

Hand Written By Joseph N. Baker (1838-1915 or 1923?)

Copied by Eileen Baker, a granddaughter

*Joshua Baker (1812-1886) was born and married to Elizabeth Nofsinger (1817-1889) in Ladoga, Montgomery Co. Indiana in 1837. Their children, born in Indiana, were Joseph Nofsinger (or Nathaniel) Baker, William Baker, John T. Baker, Mary Jane Baker, Salome Catherine Baker, George Washington Baker, Eliza Jane Baker, and Francis Abram Baker, born in Missouri.*

On September 12, 1854, my father [*Joshua Baker*] packed his household goods into two covered wagons and started from Putnam County, Indiana, for what was then known as Kansas Territory. The weather was fine for traveling and camping out at night and we had a pleasant journey all the way.

On October 5<sup>th</sup>, we reached [*Little*] Santa Fe Missouri, a little town ten miles south of Westport, and stopped there for a few days with an old acquaintance named Gill. While there my Father decided that it would be best to rent a place and winter there as there was nothing in the territory to live on. After he had rented a place and made the necessary arrangements for the winter, the weather was very fine-- warm and dry. Therefore my Father, a cousin of mine named Williamson (who had come with us from Indiana) David Baldwin (a Methodist preacher that lived in Santa Fe) and myself, concluded to make the trip out in the territory and see how it looked. We loaded our wagons with provisions and feed for the horses and started for this part of the country having been informed that there was no land open for settlement then except a strip on the Pottawatomie Creek, which the government had bought from the Pottawatomie Indians.

So, after two days travel we came to what was then called the Dutch-Henry crossing (where Lane now is) on the Pottawatomie Creek.\* We had not seen a white man anywhere on the way until we reached the crossing. There we found three men who had been living there for twelve years. They were Germans and were brothers. Their name was Sherman—Peter, Henry, and William. Peter was the oldest and William the youngest. Henry seemed to be the head man.\*\* He could talk better English than the others and I suppose that is why the crossing was called Dutch-Henry crossing. Neither of them was married. They were living in a good hewed log house on the south side of the creek about one half mile east of the crossing. They were farming some land and had a fine herd of cattle and horses running on the range.

After looking around for a few days, we concluded to move our camp up the creek about two miles, near where Hanway's old lime kiln was located. We camped here for about two weeks and during that time my father, Williamson and the old man Baldwin located their claims. I did not take a claim as I was not old enough to hold one at that time. These three claims were the first taken in this part of the country and I think this strip of land was the only land that came in under the preemption law. A man had to live on the land, build a house and do some other improvements. Then he could take a witness, go to the land office at LeCompton and prove that he had complied with the law, pay \$1.25 per acre and

get a patent for it. There was plenty of deer and wild turkey here then and we had a fine time hunting while there.

We went back to Santa Fe and in the spring, Williamson and I came back to work on the claim. We cut logs and built cabins on the claims and we also cleared about two acres of brush land and planted potatoes, some corn and all kinds of garden seeds and I don't think I ever saw so much stuff raised on that amount of land before. My father and the family stayed in Missouri and raised a fine crop there and moved out to the claim in the fall.

During the spring and summer of 1855, immigrants began to come in and take claims along the creek and by fall there was quite a little settlement. During the years of 1855 and 1856 other parts of the country were opened up for settlement and in the spring of 1856 the county was surveyed first in townships and later on the sectionizers came along and located the section lines so the claim holders could see where their lines were and the number of the sections they were in.

I think it was in 1855 that we got a post-office at the crossing. It was named Shermanville after the Sherman brothers. We had to go to Missouri for everything we needed until about this time when an old man named Morse came in and opened a little store in a log cabin near the crossing. There was also a little store on Mosquito Branch, just north of the Bart Needham farm, run by two men named Weiner and Benjamin. These two men and a man named August Bondi laid out the town of Greeley and moved the store there.

It was not very long until another town was laid out just west of where the pumping station is now located, named it Mt. Gilid [Mt. Gilead], but it seemed that Greeley had the inside track and Mt. Gilid had to give way.

When we first landed in this country, my Mother was very much dissatisfied and wanted to go back. I could not blame her for it was a lonely looking country. She had left a good home in a good and well improved country, although they were among the early settlers of that country and spent many years of hard labor in making the home that they had left. But they had decided to sell out and come here in order that they might get land for their children.

After we had been here a few years and the country began to settle up, my Mother was better satisfied and they succeeded in getting each one of the children a quarter of a section of land and had the home place left. After the children were all grown and had left home, they sold the home farm and moved to Ottawa and were living there when Father died.

They raised eight children; seven of them were born in Indiana and one in Missouri. Brother William and Brother John are both dead. Brother William and Brother John were with me in the army. Brother William died in the army at Little Rock Arkansas in 1865. Brother William was a Lieutenant in Co. D, 12<sup>th</sup> Kansas Regiment. Brother John died at home with a cancer of the stomach in 1905. The rest of the

children are living yet. We do not appreciate what our parents did for us until after they are dead and gone, and then we can meditate over the past and see what they did.

In the winter of 1855, Uncle Burrell Baker moved here from Virginia and was well pleased with the country. He had a wife and one child then. He did not live here very long but went back to Virginia. He was a very strong proslavery man and when the Kansas troubles got to such a high pitch, he had to leave as many others did. When the war came, he was one of the very first in the southern army and fought for what he thought was right but never came back to Kansas.

It was some time before we had school houses and churches, and we did not have preaching very often. The old man Baldwin would preach occasionally at some private house. Our first acquaintance with him was the first Sunday that we were stopping with this man Gill in Santa Fe. He told us that there would be preaching in his yard that evening for he had made arrangements for the old man Baldwin to preach to his slaves. As I had been raised in a state where there were no negro it was quite a change when we got to Missouri. In the afternoon we all went to hear the old man preach and it was very different from anything I had ever seen or heard. The old man was trying to preach the gospel to the slaves and the slave-holder at the same time. Young as I was, I remember hearing something like this: "All men are endowed with inalienable rights, which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Now these slaves had life, and they seemed to have some happiness but they had no liberty.

This old man Baldwin had only been living there a short time, and he had come from Indiana too so it was almost like meeting with an old friend. The old man Baldwin had one son and one daughter. The son went with me to the army. He took sick and died at Paola before we went south. The daughter married a man named John Lanter and lived in Garnett. The old man lived with them until his death.

Now I come to the Kansas troubles and I have no desire to run into politics but will just state the facts as they were. It was a strife between the Free States and Pro-slavery parties. I hope no one will find fault with me for referring to certain events in order to show the true conditions of affairs from the first settling of the country until the beginning of the Civil War—admitting that both parties did many things that were wrong.

In 1852 the Democrats elected Franklin Pierce president. I was a Democrat then but not a voter. All of the appointments of postmasters and other officers for the territory were Democrats and the little post office at Dutch-Henry crossing was Democratic.

In 1856 James Buchanan was elected president and there was not much difference in the two administrations. I had now decided to leave the Democrats and join the Republican Party believing it to be a better party and I have not changed my opinion yet. I voted for Abraham Lincoln both times. I believe that all men have a right to their political and religious opinion and I have no fault to find with my neighbor because he has a different opinion from mine and I am willing to admit that he might be right and I might be wrong.

Now as early as 1855 the question began to be agitated whether Kansas should be a free or a slave state. It was very plain that it was and would be the important question that we would have to deal with. Some of the settlers were in favor of extending slavery and making it a slave state. Others were opposed to the extension of slavery and wanted to make it a free state. It was not very long until the question became very lively and it was known as the Border Ruffian War was on hand. The two parties were being organized into companies. Many settlers of both parties became alarmed and left the country. Those who stayed here had a rough time of it. Many of both parties were killed and their houses burned and their horses taken from them. The border counties in Missouri took an active part in the trouble by running in pro-slavery men and many of the old slave-holders came over and took claims and tried to hold them and live in Missouri. That did not seem to work very well. Their claims would be jumped and there would be trouble.

One case I will give:--There was an old slave holder who lived near Santa Fe who I was well acquainted with named Kerby. He came out here and took a claim at the Bondi Ford on the Marais des Cygnes and was holding it. A man named Baker came in from the east and jumped Kerby's claim and when Kerby came again he found Baker living on his claim. Kerby told him that he must leave but Baker refused. Kerby then went back to Missouri and got a company of men to come out with him to drive Baker off but when they got there they found that he would not drive. They decided to hang him and took him a short distance from the cabin and were getting ready when Baker asked permission to say a few words. His request was granted and when he concluded his remarks the captain of the company and one-half of the men stepped over by Baker and told Kerby that he must go home and not trouble Baker anymore and so he did. They were Masons. Baker preempted the claim and when the town of Stanton was laid out he moved there and put up a little mill to grind corn. It did not grind very fast but was the best we had then. Baker lived in Stanton until 1860. A cyclone passed over that part of the country and his house was blown down and he was killed.

Now the first killing that was done in this part of the country was the five men that were killed at the Dutch-Henry crossing in the spring of 1856. Wilkinson the postmaster, William Sherman, the old man Doyle and his two sons. They were taken out of their houses in the night and killed. These men were very radical proslavery men and were abusive and made threats about what they would do with Free State men. It seemed that they had a bitter hatred for Free State men and called them black abolitioners and said that they would drive them all out of the territory.

Now as I have stated both parties were organized in companies. There was a company in this part of the country called the John Brown Company. A few days before these men were killed it was reported that the border ruffians from Missouri were planning to burn the little town of Lawrence and they had not been gone very long when the two young Doyles went to the old man Morse's store and began to abuse him in a very rough manner—calling him a black abolitioner and said that they were going to drive all such men out of the country. Then they told him that they wanted his shotgun and the old man refused to let them have it so they got very mad and told him that they would give him five days to leave the country and if he was not gone by that time that it would not be very healthy for him. That evening there was a messenger sent after Brown and overtook him. After hearing of the threats that had been

made Brown decided to go back and he took a few of his men with him. The balance of them went on to Lawrence. Before the five days were up these young Doyles left the country and the old man Morse did not leave. The supposition was that Brown and his men were the ones that did the killing that night. They were not shot but were killed with some kind of cutlass. I did not see them but was told by my Uncle and my Father-in-law who helped to bury them that they were badly cut up. I think the intention was to kill Henry Sherman the same night but as he was not at home so they did not get him. Later on he was met on the road by Captain Homes' [Holmes] Company and one of the company shot and wounded him so he died in a few days. The worst of the troubles were in 1856.

In 1857 there was a large immigration from the East and the claims were all taken in this part of the country. There were other parts being opened for settlement but not by preemption. They were sold as trust land for the Indians. A great deal of this land was taken by men that came in from the East. We called them carpet-baggers. They bought the land for speculation and did not settle on it but went back where they came from. They were a draw-back to the country but there were men that had the nerve to stay and endure the hardships and make Kansas Territory a great state. They had many things to contend with besides the Border War trouble. They had the droughts, the hot winds, the grasshoppers and the chinch-bugs. The old settlers of 1854 and 1855 are getting very scarce.

In 1859 and 1860 the militia was organized and I belonged to a company that would meet and drill. Captain Rees was our drill master. He was a soldier in the Mexican War. As the border ruffians were still making raids over in Kansas we would be called down on the line to protect the citizens quite often. The last time that I was called out before I went into the army was down east of Paola. Here we fought with some of the ruffians and M.V. Jackson, the Father of our Attorney General, was wounded and had to have his leg taken off. This ended my Border Warfare.

I went into the army and was there three years so I was very glad when the war was over and peace restored. No one knows anything about the horrors of war but those that have had experience. The Border War continued on as late as 1862. Quantrill burned Lawrence. There had been large companies of men sent in for the purpose of voting at the elections. There was a camp of four hundred camped three miles west from Osawatomie called the Georgian Camp.\*\*\* They could not stay there very long so they went over into Missouri and I have no doubt but what they were a part of the company that burned Osawatomie. They came over in the night and got there about daylight and took the little town by surprise. John Brown was there but he had only about thirty armed men to fight the four or five hundred. They killed five of Brown's men and a number of others that were not with Brown. It was a hard fight. There are only three of Brown's men living now. I was not there but I saw the smoke and heard the firing. It was not known how many they lost in the fight but from reports they had several wagons loaded with dead and wounded men.

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*\*This was a creek crossing of the Ft. Scott/California Trail, a route that connected Indian Territory and the Ft. Scott area to the junction of the Santa Fe and Oregon/California trails in Johnson and Douglas Counties, Kansas Territory.*

*\*\*Henry Sherman had been employed as a farmer and stockraiser for the Pottawatomie Tribe when it was located in the Franklin, Lykins, and Linn county areas from 1837-1848. They were removed to the Topeka area in 1848. John Tecumseh (Tauy) Jones, was another employee of the Indian Agent for the Pottawatomies. He was the interpreter. He had built the "good hewed log house south of the creek" mentioned in this story but had sold it and moved further north in Franklin County onto the Ottawa Reserve when the Pottawatomies (and his job) departed the county. Dutch Henry had obtained the house. Henry Sherman had remained at the crossing, trading healthy cattle and horses for the jaded, lame ones of travelers on the Ft. Scott/California trail. It was suspected that he did a fair share of stock stealing, as well.*

*\*\*\*This group wasn't brought in just to vote. This was Jefferson Buford's company from Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina. Buford sold 40 slaves to finance this emigration to Kansas in order to tilt the balance of power toward the proslaveryites. He thought they would all make preemption land claims and then pay him back for his initial investment. That didn't happen. After serving as additional reinforcements for the Army and causing general mayhem in an already chaotic Kansas Territory, they straggled back to the South. Buford died in 1861 in his home town of Eufaula, Alabama.*