OVER HILL,

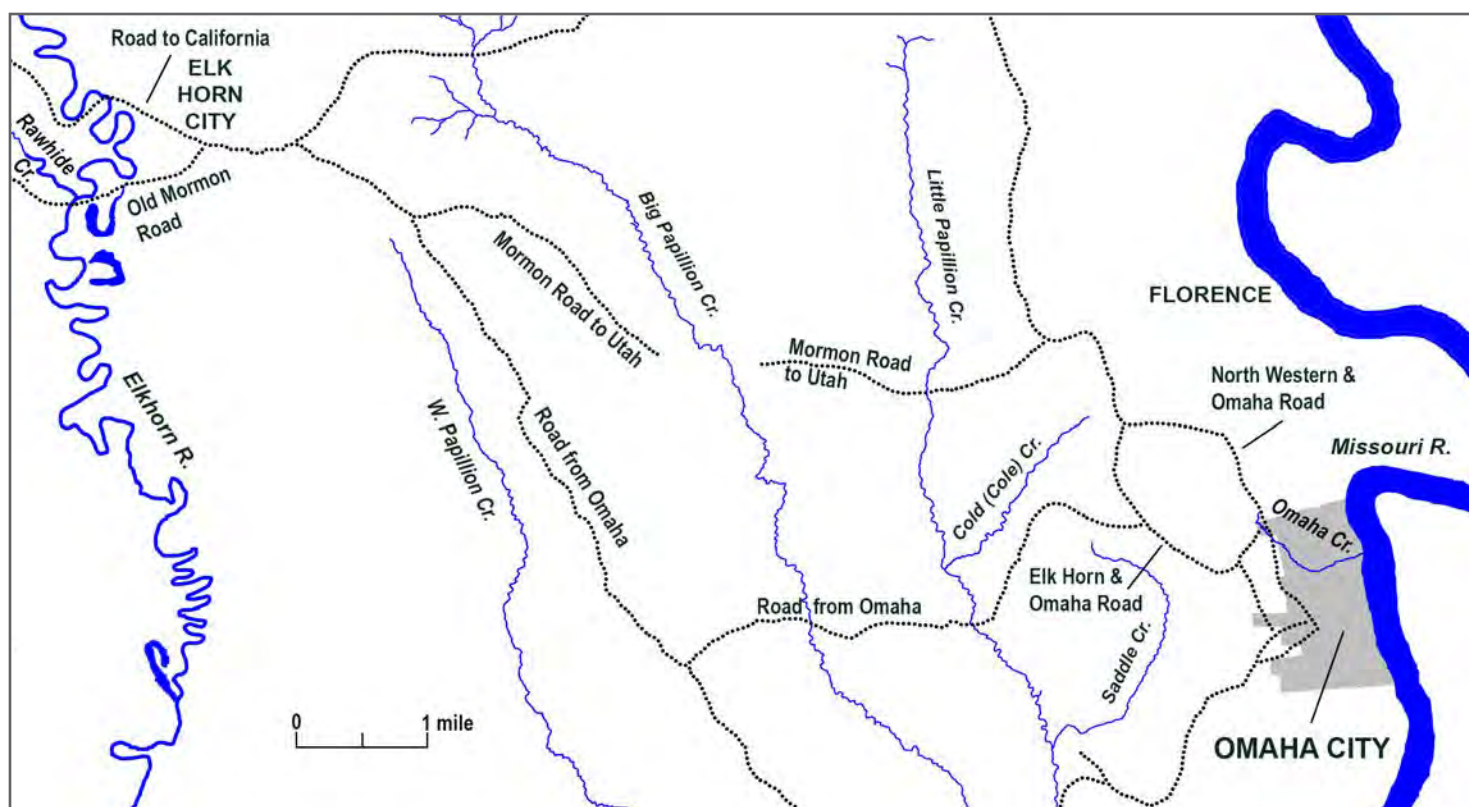## A NINETEENTH CENTURY BIOGRAPHY OF

BY JO WETHERILT BEHRENS

OVER DALE

OMAHA'S MILITARY ROAD NETWORK

Previous Page: Fig. 1. Believed to be the earliest known general photograph of Omaha, the view is from a road leading into town from the south. The Missouri River is in the background, and the large building at right is the Herndon House, an early hotel built in 1858 at Ninth and Farnam. HN RG2341-3-a

Above: Fig. 2. Major roads and waterways in Omaha and vicinity, based on 1857 survey maps.

I n April 1847, the Mormons—formerly of Nauvoo, Illinois, and soon to be residents in the Great Basin—headed west into the Platte Valley from temporary camps along the west side of the Missouri River at the northern edge of present-day Omaha, Nebraska. They had wintered there after an arduous trip across Iowa the previous spring. The first group of 148 men, women, and two children traveling in seventy-two wagons forged a trail across what would become Douglas County, Nebraska, crossing several streams and swampy swales until they reached the Platte Valley near present-day Fremont, Nebraska. Always traveling on the north side of the Platte River, the Mormon wagons continued westward, finally intersecting with the previously established Oregon Trail near present-day Guernsey, Wyoming. Called the Pioneer Band, this first group of Mormons arrived at the Great Basin in late July 1847[1]. Over the next two decades, over 150,000 Saints and other emigrants used that trail from the Missouri River into the Far West. From its starting point on the latter river's west bank, the path became indelible on the landscape of Douglas County, Nebraska, eventually being incorporated into Omaha's grid of streets as Military Road.

As they forged their route into the Platte Valley, the Mormons economized the energy of their travelers, as well as that of the stock that pulled their wagons, choosing paths around the bases of steep hills and through swampy landscapes that avoided deep streams. The trail's grade and surface were obviously created without leveling equipment; yet because each subsequent wagon train of Saints improved the path to ease the travel of their brethren who followed, the ruts quickly produced a visible ribbon on the landscape. At the difficult Elkhorn River crossing west of present Omaha, for instance, Mormon travelers established a ferry and landing which was left in place for the safety and convenience of travelers who came after them. Conversely, argonauts and users of other trails to the gold fields were known to damage such infrastructure in order to hinder arrival at the mines of potential competitors.[2] The improved route continued its importance to frontier residents of Omaha City after the town was established along the Missouri River in 1854. Miners, settlers, and travelers of all sorts purchased their overland travel needs in Omaha's fledgling economic center, then headed north and west on routes that accessed the Mormons' overland trail across northern Douglas County. While many of the trails predated the territory's formation, as the town's borders expanded to the west, travelers

created new roads that connected to the overland route from more western Douglas County points.[3] Heavy use of those trails by travelers led to the establishment of villages at logical resting places such as Elk Horn City and Fremont; Fremont grew, Elk Horn City died. And still later in the frontier period, the upheaval of the Civil War, coupled with Indian depredations on the Great Plains during that era, led to the military's use of the trails. In 1862, a traveler noted that west of "the city was the encampment of the military assignment, a miniature army designed and furnished by the government as an escort of emigrant trains through the country."[4]

For frontier travelers new to the region, the overland trail was easily located. In 1856, two years after Nebraska Territory opened, federal surveyors and cartographers came through the region; their first maps of the area clearly define the old Mormon trails (see figs. 2 and 3). Within the first year of the territory's settlement, the Army Corps of Engineers concluded that the route was more economical for shipping goods from the Missouri River to frontier posts than were the roads into the West from Fort Leavenworth. Thus, military engineers readily accepted the federal government's first appropriation of $50,000 to improve the route from the Missouri River, through northern Douglas County, and on to Fort Kearny, thereby creating Military Road.[5] As early as 1857, Lt. Gouverneur K. Warren—a civil engineer of later Civil War fame—recommended that the military use Omaha as its base of operations because it anchored the east end of the Military Road to Ft. Kearny.[6] However, only *after* the Civil War did the Army place its Quartermaster Depot at Omaha. Thus after 1868, from the munitions and supply warehouses in the Government Corral at Thirteenth and Webster streets, United States army troops used the Military Road to carry soldiering supplies to western posts needed to maintain the federal government's upper hand against the natives who were unwilling to relinquish their homes, and against frontier rowdies who preyed upon gullible immigrants.[7]

Because bridges across the county's rivers and streams were difficult to construct, the trails threaded their way through swampy swales that offered the best crossing spots, often lengthening the route between Omaha City and Fremont considerably. Eventually, short cuts that reduced travel time and allowed easier access to Military Road from Omaha developed; along the revamped access points, new villages such

as Benson evolved. The highway continued to prove its usefulness through the twentieth century, ultimately serving as a bypass for traffic headed into suburbs established north and west of the city. Thus, nearly 170 years after its valued path was established, the Mormon Trail, a.k.a. Military Road, remains on Omaha's grid of streets and highways. It is one of the city's "ancestor" routes. Like any forebear, the road has a character and a history that can be told from multiple perspectives; foremost among them is the geography of the path itself. Likewise, the road's surface and bridge infrastructure have an historical narrative, as do the economies of the Douglas County towns through which Military Road passed. What follows is a story about three nineteenth century periods of the road's history: the trail's geography as created by the Mormons; the path's evolution into a Military Road used during the Civil War; and the route's function in the evolving metropolis of Omaha.

One of Many Roads

Prior to the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in May 1854, the region west of the Missouri River was "unopened territory," unavailable for settlement by emigrants because Native Americans "possess[ed] the right of the soil."[8] The United States Supreme Court concurred in 1810, saying that the Indians right to occupy the soil was "certainly to be respected by all courts, until it is legitimately extinguished . . . ."[9] That occurred in June 1854, when the treaty between the United States government and the Omaha Indians was ratified. The territory officially opened, led by officials appointed from Washington, D.C. until territorial elections could be held. Both emigrants and immigrants quickly flooded into the region. They staked and registered their land claims with claim clubs. After the area was surveyed, their claims could be legally defined for purchase.[10] By November 1854, when the first census was undertaken, the population of the entire territory was calculated at 2,732 individuals in eight counties west of the Missouri River.[11] Every tool, wagon, grocery item, stove, and clothing item—even seed for crops—was manufactured or produced to the east, across the Missouri River. Consequently, almost immediately territorial residents clamored for federal help to construct roads that would facilitate acquisition of needed supplies.[12] Naturally, the most cost effective road construction resulted from the improvement of existing trails. And while the most logical local route to improve was the one
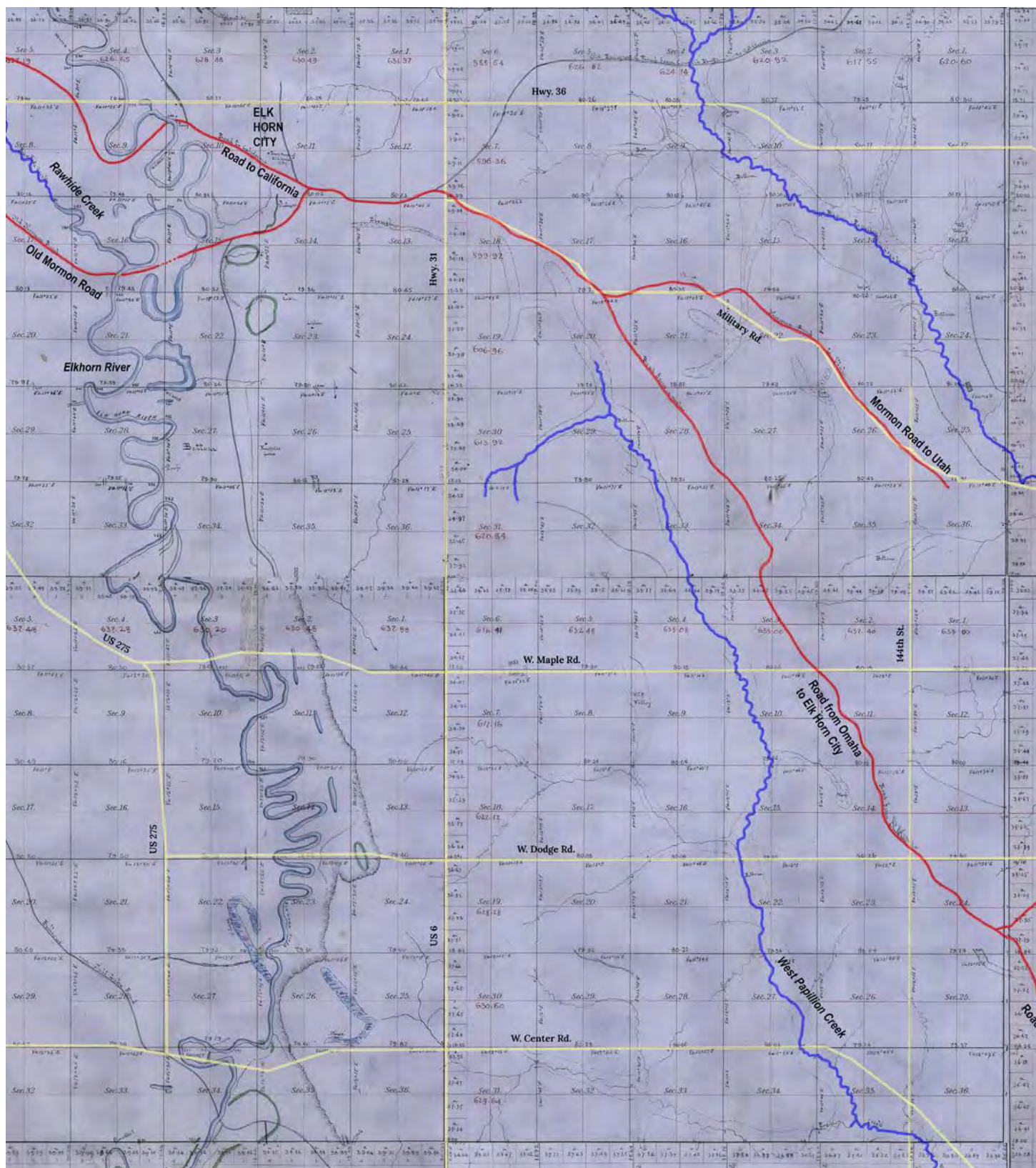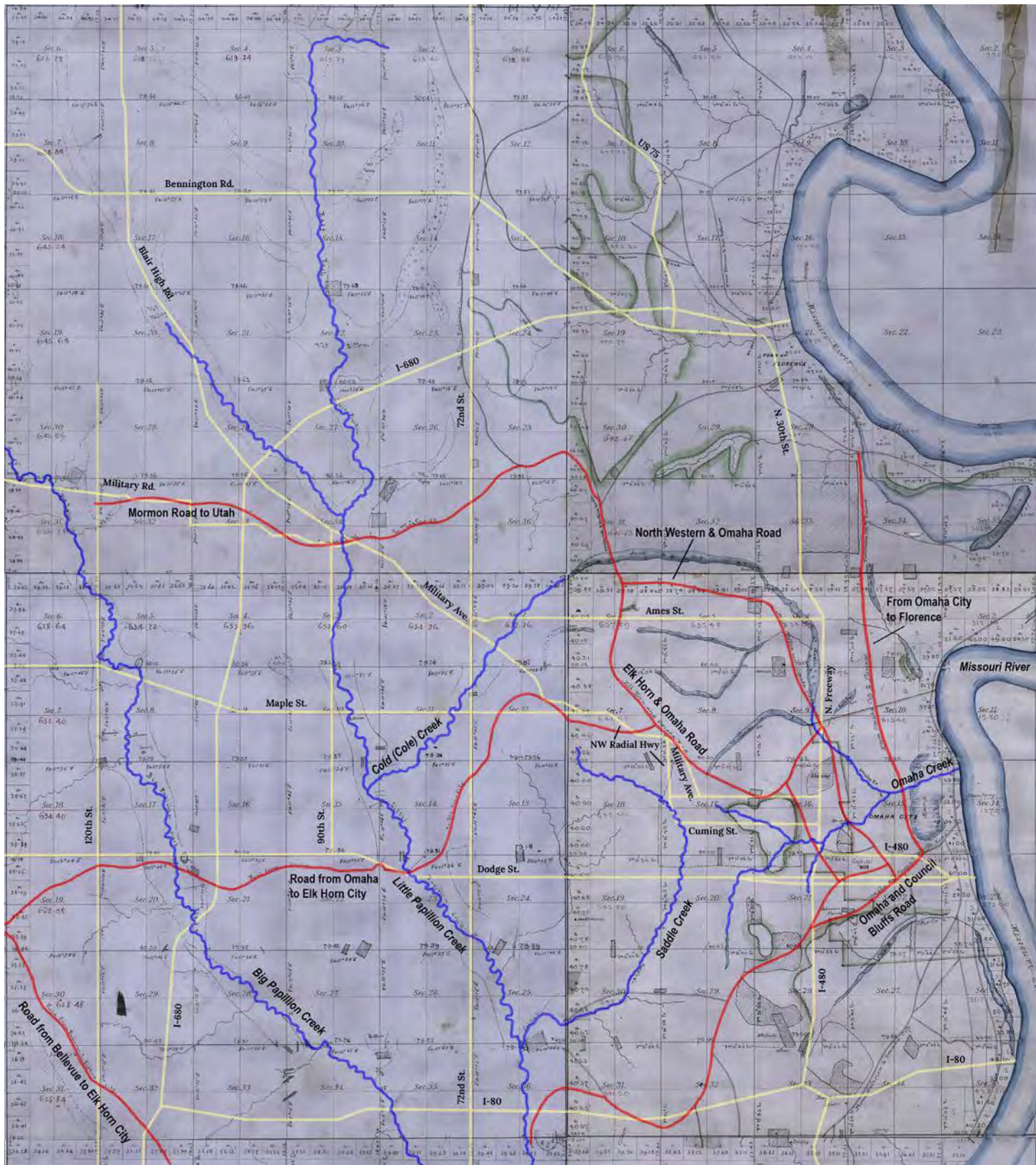
Fig. 3. Digitally highlighted composite map of Omaha and vicinity, combining 1857 survey maps with added highlights and labels (in bold type) of selected features: 1857 roads in red; waterways in blue; present-day streets and highways in yellow. Survey maps are from Nebraska State Surveyor's Office, www.sso.nebraska.gov.

Bennington Rd.

Blair High Rd.

I-680

72nd St.

N. 30th St.

US 75

FLORENCE

Russell River

Military Rd.

Mormon Road to Utah

North Western & Omaha Road

Military Ave.

Ames St.

From Omaha City to Florence

Missouri River

Maple St.

Cold (Cole) Creek

Elk Horn & Omaha Road

N. Freeway

NW Radial Hwy

Military Ave.

Omaha Creek

120th St.

90th St.

Cuming St.

I-480

OMAHA CITY

Road from Omaha to Elk Horn City

Little Papillion Creek

Dodge St.

Saddle Creek

Omaha and Council Bluffs Road

Big Papillion Creek

I-680

Road from Bellevue to Elk Horn City

I-480

72nd St.

I-80

I-80

created by the Mormons, the Saints' trail was one of three heavily-used wagon routes into the West that were accessible from the Omaha region, either directly or peripherally, in that era.

The oldest defined route made by Euro-Americans across the Great Plains was the Santa Fe Trail which had opened strictly for commerce after Mexico gained its independence from Spain in 1821. A second route was the Oregon Trail to the Northwest Coast, which was established in the 1830s; a California Branch was added after the mid-1840s. The last to be charted was the aforementioned Mormon Trail.[13] Each of those routes had multiple feeder trails that served additional departure points along the Missouri River. The Santa Fe and Oregon trails both left from Independence, Missouri, along the same path. Two days west of Independence, the common trail split. The Santa Fe Trail turned south and west into present-day New Mexico; the "Road to Oregon" headed northwest, terminating in Oregon Country. The latter route had been initiated by Rev. Jason Lee in 1834 when he established a mission for Flathead Indians in Oregon Country's Willamette Valley. The Oregon Trail entered what would become central Nebraska Territory between the Little and Big Blue rivers, south and west from present day Fairbury, Nebraska. The trail moved users north and west toward the Platte River Valley, where its path followed the Platte's south bank. West of Fort Kearny near Fort Laramie, travel shifted to the north bank of the North Platte River. [14] Still further west en route to Oregon, travelers crossed the spine of the Rocky Mountains along the South Pass, at an elevation of 7,500 feet. At that spot, overlanders were 947 miles from Independence and some 1,050 miles from their destination of the Willamette Valley settlement near Ft. Vancouver.[15]

The Oregon Trail became so popular that by 1860, the federal government had identified the road to Oregon as one of three officially numbered routes for use in shipping military goods across the Plains. Route 1 serviced posts along the Oregon Trail and Utah routes; Route 2 carried goods along the Santa Fe Trail to Fort Union in northern New Mexico Territory; and Route 3 was used by contractors carrying goods to present day New Mexico posts beyond Fort Union. Because Routes 1, 2, and 3 lay to the south of Douglas County, Nebraska Territory, when the federal government designated its first military depot in the territory, the facility was placed in Nebraska City, *not* Omaha.[16] It is therefore probable that the importance of the Platte Valley routes to the future city of Omaha resulted primarily from the overland trail popularized by the Mormons nearly a decade before Nebraska Territory opened. The path's obvious facility for crossing the Great Plains to the spine of the Rockies led to its 1862 selection by President Abraham Lincoln as the transcontinental rail route.

The Mormons were not the first to forge a path to the Platte Valley across present-day Douglas County. In 1835, Rev. Samuel Parker had traveled to Oregon expressly "to ascertain, by personal observation, the condition and character of the Indian nations" living on the Great Plains. Parker's route across present-day Douglas County mentions by name the creeks and rivers later familiar to users of the Mormon Trail: the Papillion River, the Elkhorn River, Shell Creek, and the "Loups fork" of the Platte River. In fact, Rev. Parker's 1835 travel into this relatively unknown region was probably to visit Baptist missionaries John Dunbar and Samuel Allis, then living near the Bellevue trading post.[17] However, the Mormons were most likely unaware of Rev. Parker's travels, and were instead striving to get to California or Oregon—anywhere west of the Rocky Mountains, while simultaneously avoiding any contact with Missourians, who had run them out of Independence over a decade earlier.[18] But the route used by Rev. Parker was essentially the same route taken by the Mormons and thousands of later travelers between 1847 and 1868.[19] The importance of the North Platte Valley path continued after the Civil War, when the Union Pacific Railway linked the settled East to the Far West following that same route.

Mormon Trail Connecting Routes from Omaha City

In the first years after settlement, a myriad of wagon roads dissected Douglas County's geography of rolling hills and streams, marshes and wooded areas, moving travelers north and west toward the county's western margin, the Platte River, and the North Platte River Road. Not only was the North Platte Trail the dominant route into the West, it was also the most direct route to Fort Kearny some 190 miles west of Omaha. To reach the Platte River from the west bank of the Missouri, travelers had to ford—or avoid—six sizable streams in Douglas County: Omaha Creek, Saddle Creek, Big and Little Papio creeks, Rawhide Creek, and the Elkhorn River. The trails twisted across the local landscape, avoiding difficult geographical

Fig. 4. Detail of 1857 composite map of Omaha, with added highlights and labels of selected features: 1857 roads in red; waterways in blue; present-day streets and highways in yellow; and Moses Shinn's claim in green.

Fig. 5. Northwestern Douglas County near present-day Elk City, shown in a digitally highlighted detail of 1857 survey map. Dodge family land claims are highlighted in green. See Fig. 6 for a sketch of the ferry.

features, such as the county's steep hills, to arrive at good fording places on the region's streams. An analysis of the mid-1850s Surveyor General's Maps of Township 15 N, Range 13 E, reveals much about the geography of the routes that carried travelers from Omaha City to the west edge of Douglas County. The surveyor's map also identifies the original boundaries of pioneer Omaha (see fig. 4).[20]

In Omaha City, the network of wagon roads began along the Missouri River; trails generally moved traffic diagonally south and west, parallel to Papio River drainage. One of the primary trails to the southwest was called the "Omaha and Council Bluffs Road." From this main route, a series of roads without known names radiated, surrounding the Territorial Capitol near present-day Twenty-second and Dodge streets. A road

on the south side of the building continued southwest for about a quarter mile, where it intersected a cut-off route going north and west through section 16 toward the "Elk Horn and Omaha Road." West of that intersection, the road passed between two land claims, then turned north and west again to avoid the steep inclines of Walnut Hill.[21] Near present-day Forty-ninth and Miami streets, the "Elk Horn and Omaha Road" intersected with the "Road from Omaha to Elk Horn City" (see figs. 3 and 4). The "Elk Horn and Omaha Road" continued north, north-westward until it connected to the "Mormon Road to Utah" that crossed the Elkhorn River as it continued west to the Platte Valley (see fig. 5).

Crossing the Elkhorn River in western Douglas County was difficult and dangerous. The original

Mormon Road had threaded its way through swampy lowlands where the Rawhide Creek flowed into the Elkhorn. The Mormons had obviously sought to remedy the problem of crossing the Elkhorn River and Rawhide Creek within a two-mile stretch by crossing both waterways simultaneously. This was clearly difficult, and shortly after the territory opened in the mid-1850s, settlers in the area sought a more favorable spot for crossing the Elkhorn River. The site was chosen by Grenville Dodge and his extended family members, each of whom claimed land that bordered the site. There they established a ferry.[22] The new site was about one-and-a-half miles north of the old Mormon crossing. Rerouting the original trail to the better crossing spot created a new segment of the old road, now called the "Road to California" to differentiate it geographically from the old Mormon Route. The crossing-place was at least a day's journey out of Omaha, and during the heaviest travel periods, many travelers camped near the ford for several days as they waited for their opportunity to cross the river. Near the crossing spot, a small community known as Elk Horn City grew (see figs. 5 and 6).

Grenville M. Dodge had arrived in Nebraska Territory in 1854. Born into the colonial Massachusetts family of Sylvanus Dodge in April 1831, G. M. Dodge attended Massachusetts schools, graduating from Norwich University in Vermont as a civil engineer. Enticed by potential frontier speculative ventures, in 1852 Dodge headed west to Illinois hoping to participate in the rail construction boom then sweeping the settled region east of the Mississippi River. Working first for the Rock Island Railroad, Dodge impressed Rock Island's engineer Peter A. Dey. When Dey became chief engineer of the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad (the M & M), he asked young Grenville Dodge to join the M & M as his assistant. The M & M Railroad was then surveying and building the rails across Iowa. Construction stagnated near Iowa City in 1853, and several months passed before Dodge was directed to continue the survey work westward toward Council Bluffs. Late in the year, M & M leadership instructed Dodge to continue his survey into the unopened territory west of the Missouri River, and in November 1853, the railroad surveyor crossed the Missouri to assess the landscape. Using existing trails, on the second day of his survey mission Dodge reached the Elkhorn River where he camped for the night. Although he was startled away by an Indian, the young engineer returned to Iowa, convinced that the central route across the

continent would be best for the railroad. He also began mapping what he believed would be the optimum routes for westward travel, showing the spots at which travelers could most readily ford streams, locate food and water, rest, and muster the strength to continue westward. Convinced of Nebraska Territory's positive prospects, in early 1854 Dodge encouraged his aging father Sylvanus, as well as old school chum Samuel N. Fifield, to come West in order to personally evaluate the area's prospects. In February 1854, the elder Dodge and Fifield crossed the Missouri River, again traveling west to the Elkhorn Valley where they staked claims; the pair then returned to Grenville Dodge's Iowa City home. Soon after, Sylvanus Dodge returned to Massachusetts where he finalized his move to Nebraska Territory.[23]

Sometime prior to his return to the East, Grenville Dodge had encouraged his younger brother Nathan to come West with their father Sylvanus when he returned to the territory from Massachusetts. In that same period, Grenville also married, and in September 1854, he and his bride, along with friend Samuel Fifield and the latter's young wife, headed into Nebraska Territory from Iowa City to settle permanently. When they arrived in November, they found squatters on their claims, so they established new holdings for all four adult males in the party—Grenville Dodge, Samuel Fifield, Sylvanus Dodge, and Nathan Dodge. The lands they claimed adjoined the aforementioned spot at which settlers along the Road to California crossed the Elkhorn River.[24] After the federal survey was completed and registered in 1857, the four men received patents to all or parts of sections 3 , 4, and 10, township 16 N, range 10 East—the sections just north of the best river crossing (see fig. 5).[25]

Multiple travelers' accounts testify to the existence of the Dodge family homestead as the nucleus of settlement for Elk Horn City. Soon after settling on the land along the Elkhorn, Grenville Dodge and Samuel Fifield constructed a ferry landing, and subsequently built a raft to facilitate crossing the river with wagons. They also constructed large log homes, and in that era, the Dodge and Fifield cabins were the last homesteads passed by travelers headed to Fort Kearny and points west (see fig. 6).[26] Emigrant trains always stopped near the cabins, circling their wagons to form a corral between the cabins and the river inside of which they grazed their stock to protect it from thieves and the Pawnee Indians whose village lay some twelve miles to the south and west.[27] Often Dodge and his wife walked

out to the encampment to visit with travelers.[28] Additional verification of the land's importance to the emigrant trail was demonstrated by media coverage of an unfortunate incident involving lodgers using the Dodge cabin. Early in 1856, R. P. Snow murdered Jesse B. Winn in a feud over a land claim in Omaha.[29] Negative publicity surrounding the incident led an anonymous resident of Elk Horn City (probably a member of the Dodge extended family) to defend the family's land claims near the river, noting that army troops deliberately camped there for the vegetables and melon in the Dodge gardens.[30] Generally speaking, other views of the crossing spot were positive. In June 1856, a traveler reported a "refreshing bath in the clear waters" of the river after stopping to visit with "Capt. Fifield."[31] Another commented that the area was settling rapidly and "the people were all very busy in plowing and improving their claims."[32]

The Military Designation

Rapid settlement of the region by whites in the mid-nineteenth century increased the restlessness of Native Americans on the frontier, creating concerns for the welfare of isolated settlers living distant from either a military post or a city. While territorial land had been legally taken from Native Americans by treaty, the dispossessed Indians were not at all content with the status quo. The rapidity of native land cessions after the mid-nineteenth century meant many tribes had given up lands traditionally used for sustenance, trade, and long-range hunting. The natives' attempts to maintain their traditional culture and subsistence patterns oftentimes frightened settlers who did not understand Indian lifeways. From the eighteenth century onward, native resistance to policies they did not comprehend—after they had unwittingly (or unwillingly) acquiesced to the white demands—led to sporadic incidents between Indians and whites west of the Mississippi River that, when retold by emigrants using the trails, frightened the pioneers, who understandably believed they had a legal right to federal protection.[33] America did have a standing army, and as protectors of the land and population, strategic roads were required to transport troops and supplies to necessary "hot" spots—especially in the West. But the demand for roads extended beyond satisfying the country's military needs. Federal wagon roads ensured delivery of the mails and increased rapidity of communication within the country. Since good roads facilitated all facets

of the federal government's management of its residents, roadways were demanded by multiple facets of the economy.[34]

Shortly after Nebraska Territory was created in 1854, Army Lieutenant. G. K. Warren explored the region to determine not only the territory's resources, but also the best travel routes both through it and into the West. Lt. Warren wrote generally un-complimentary descriptions of the territory as a whole, although he did find the area along the Missouri River to have "fertile soil, not surpassed by any portion of the prairies of the Mississippi Valley." On another positive note, he saw the valleys of the Elkhorn and Platte rivers as good for farming with "building stone . . . furnished by the carboniferous rocks." The Platte Valley was, in his estimation, "the best route for any kind of road, westward; and the best point of starting is the vicinity of Omaha City."[35] Congressional discussion of military road construction proposals began in the summer of 1854.[36] By the time the data for the first maps of Douglas County was gathered in fall 1855, Congress had appropriated $50,000 for the survey and construction of a route into the West, but no work had yet been undertaken.[37] While improvement of the overland road to Ft. Kearny was naturally important to Omaha residents for both security and economic reasons, citizens were also aware that connecting Omaha directly to the Platte Valley trail increased the city's chances of becoming the eastern terminus of a transcontinental railroad.[38]

The responsibility for road construction in the trans-Mississippi West fell to the United States Army within the War Department. Once Congress had approved a road's construction, and had appropriated the funds necessary to do the work, Army Topographical Engineers surveyed a probable route. Construction supervision was handled by a regular officer working from the nearest military establishment; construction was undertaken by soldiers. Once completed, road maintenance or improvement also fell to crews of soldiers, but general supervision over a road became the responsibility of the Quartermaster Corps, since that branch of the military handled distribution of supplies. Multipurpose roads were often referred to with the adjective "territorial" or "agency"; "military" roads were those considered invaluable to the U.S. Army.[39] The road through Omaha appears to have received the descriptor "military" when the legislation was written and passed by Congress, although part of the adjective "military" undoubtedly was due to the fact that

funds for its construction took the road only as far as Fort Kearny.[40]

Nearly fifteen months passed between Congressional approval for the road project in February 1855, and any visible local construction action, and by April 1856, Omahans were growing increasingly concerned about the lack of efforts to construct their road. In the middle of the month, one of Omaha's leading citizens, Enos Lowe,

cover a number of substantial building costs. Those expenses included the survey of a route all the way to Fort Kearny, the creation of a smooth surface, the construction of bridges over major stream crossings, and the excavation of culverts under roads where it was necessary to facilitate drainage. It was therefore cost effective and logical to use the existing and well established "Winter Quarters' Trail" forged by the Mormons a decade earlier.[43]

Fig. 6. Sketch by George Simons, showing Elk Horn City ferry, 1854-55. Council Bluffs Public Library, Council Bluffs, Iowa

contacted the territory's Congressional Delegate, Hon. Bird B. Chapman, about the delay and shortly afterwards received a letter of clarification.[41] Chapman explained that the delays had been due to illness and work on another military road from Fort Riley, Kansas Territory, to the Arkansas River.[42] In early July 1856, First Lieutenant Jonathon H. Dickerson arrived in the territory to begin work on the road with his crew of men from the Topographical Engineers. A series of dilemmas confronted the road builders. First, the $50,000 appropriated for the Omaha road was likely to be inadequate, considering that the funds had to

A second problem was the clearly inadequate supply of available timber needed to construct the necessary bridges. It appeared to the lieutenant that all the timbered lands had been claimed by pre-emption, and he wondered if the settlers claimed only the land, or if "the Government . . . [may] take timber or any other materials that may be found on these lands."[44] United States Attorney General Caleb Cushing responded that, while pre-emptors have the right to "occupy and cultivate" the land, since no deeds had yet been issued, "actual fee simple is in the United States." He added "Lieut. Dickerson may lawfully proceed

in the work of the proposed road taking timber and stone as well as land." In other words, settlers could not "debar the Government of such use of its own rights in the premises, as may be demanded by the interest of . . . the Government," i.e. use of the timber and stone for road-building purposes.[45]

Third, Lt. Dickerson found the route to Fort Kearny, more crooked—and therefore longer— than he believed it needed to be. He attributed the trail's twists and turns to the route's earliest users who had selected stream crossing sites in Douglas County that minimized the frequency— and difficulty—of fording creeks. However, curving the road to get to the favorable stream crossings in Douglas County, coupled with the need to do the same in order to cross the Loup River to the

Fig. 7. Headquarters of the U.S. Army's Department of the Platte, southwest of 15th and Harney streets, Omaha. HN RG2341-2-p36

west, had created a winding route that actually lengthened the trip to Fort Kearny. Lt. Dickerson believed that construction of good bridges on the existing road, along with improved access to them, would straighten the road and reduce the distance to Fort Kearny.[46] But he also knew that undertaking such changes made the $50,000

appropriation entirely inadequate, so in January 1857, Lt. Dickerson asked for, and received from the Secretary of War, an additional $25,000 to complete the road's construction with properly built bridges.[47]

Construction on the road continued from the summer of 1856 through 1858. By the time Lieutenant Warren's report was published in 1859, the federal government had completed six bridges on the overland route into the Platte Valley—all of them beyond the city's western edge—then about Twenty-fourth Street. The six bridges carried travelers over the Omaha Creek, the Big and Little Papillion creeks, Rawhide and Shell creeks, and the Elkhorn River.[48] Fearing that annual prairie fires would destroy the structures, all except the Elkhorn River bridge were of "corduroy" construction, a method that used wood logs anchored into the beds of the creeks. The bridge over the Elkhorn River was significantly longer due to the 200-foot width of the river at that point. The west end of that bridge required construction of a three-quarter mile long approach.[49]

In the legislation to establish it, Military Road was defined as a highway "from a point opposite Council Bluffs, Iowa." However, it was only as the trail passed through Fremont, Nebraska, that the federal cartographers called it "Military Road."[50] The township in which Fremont lay was not surveyed until August 1857, well over a year after most of the townships to the east. By the time the maps for Township 17 North, Range 8 East (those that include Fremont) were drawn in early 1858, the cartographers were certain that, because of the limited funds available to construct a road, the old Mormon Road was, in fact, synonymous with Military Road. In contrast, on maps drawn in the summer of 1856, such as those of Township 16 North, Range 10 East and Township 16 North, Range 11 East, the Mormon Trail is called "The Old Mormon Road to Utah" and "Old Mormon Road."[51]

In the mid-1850s, it is safe to say that all trails into and out of Omaha connected to the Military Road because of its importance as a streamlined transportation route. Those connecting routes were called by names that explained their purpose, such as "Road from Omaha to Elk Horn City," and "Road from Omaha." Over time, some of them were incorporated into the network of transportation routes called Military Road. One of the roads eventually incorporated into the network of streets collectively called Military Road was the unnamed cutoff between an original trail south of the capital building that took users south and

west of the city and the Elk Horn and Omaha Road that moved travelers northwest to the Mormon Road. That cutoff passed about one-half mile west of the original corporate western border of the city in Township 15 North, Range 13 East. Near present day Thirty-second and Seward streets, the aforementioned cutoff road intersected with the "Elk Horn and Omaha Road." Travelers turning west onto the "Elk Horn and Omaha Road" encountered another intersection near present-day Forty-ninth and Miami streets, where they could continue in a more westerly direction on the "Road from Omaha to Elk Horn City." However, at about present-day Sixty-sixth and Bedford Avenue, the trail turned sharply southwest to avoid Cole Creek (hereafter referred to as Cold Creek, its name in the 1850s) and the swampy river bottoms of the Little Papio River system.[52] That road continued south and west along the east side of the Little Papillion Creek until it crossed that waterway at a point just north of present-day Seventy-eighth and Dodge streets (see fig. 11).[53] Some six miles directly west of that bridge, "The Road from Omaha to Elk Horn City" turned north for several miles before connecting to the "Old Mormon Road" (becoming Military Road in Fremont) into the Platte Valley.

The Military Road and its network of feeder routes increased the road's economic and societal value to Omaha and the region during the Civil War years. While the war did not stop the great tide of emigration into the West—in fact, settlements proliferated across the Plains during the early 1860s, the increased presence of whites exacerbated tensions among settlers and Native Americans, sometimes resulting in armed confrontations. The numbers of federal army troops in the West were relatively small even before the war. The posts at which they were stationed were small and sparsely scattered across the frontier, leaving white settlements vulnerable to the aggressions of restless Indians. On the Southern Plains, these tensions were aggravated by the friction between Union and Confederate soldiers. Along the border between Kansas and Missouri, tensions among Confederate and Union soldiers, exacerbated by restless Indians, culminated in the March 1862, Battle of Pea Ridge in northwest Arkansas, a rout for Union forces.[54] In the aftermath, natives on the Great Plains grew even more restless, leading to fears that the Confederacy was encouraging Indians on the Plains to organize an uprising.[55] To defend settlements on the Plains, in 1862 Nebraskans sought—and received— permission from the War Department to organize

a unit of volunteers for local defense. Led by Colonel Robert W. Furnas, this became the Second Nebraska Cavalry which was stationed along the Missouri River, although the units generally served in regions south of Omaha and the Military Road. The Second Cavalry mustered out of service in November 1862.[56]

In mid-1863, Iowa volunteers came through Omaha on the Military Road, headed for Fort Kearny to bolster army forces on the Plains. The earliest Iowa volunteers had fought in Missouri, but late in the summer of 1863, twelve companies of the Iowa Seventh passed through Omaha; among them was Captain Eugene Ware. His journal describes Omaha as a "straggling town" with muddy streets and constant wind. He added: "The saloons were many in number, and miserable in quality. It is probable no town ever sold, per capita, more mean and destructive whiskey. Fights were constantly in progress, and somebody was being killed every day."[57]

His memoir also recorded the earliest description of the Military Road. He described the landscape between Omaha and the Elkhorn River, which was a twenty-three-mile march from the city:


"The condition of the country between Omaha and the Elkhorn River was that of a wild Western country. The road was a well-beaten track, four or five hundred feet wide, on which an enormous traffic for years had been operating. The country was rough and timberless; there were no settlements of any note, . . . The wind had blown almost all the time since we had been in Omaha, and as we went over this upland the road was hard and smooth as a floor, for the dust and sand and gravel had been blown off from it by the violence of the wind."

After describing the area near Fremont, he added that "The Elkhorn River did not have much timber on it, but in its valley new farms were being opened."[58]

The increased troop numbers on the Great Plains necessitated the reorganization of the Army's regional administration, and by late 1863, a subordinate military command of the Department of Kansas was headquartered in Omaha at the Herndon House, and staffed with "a very jolly set of officers."[59] Called the Military District of
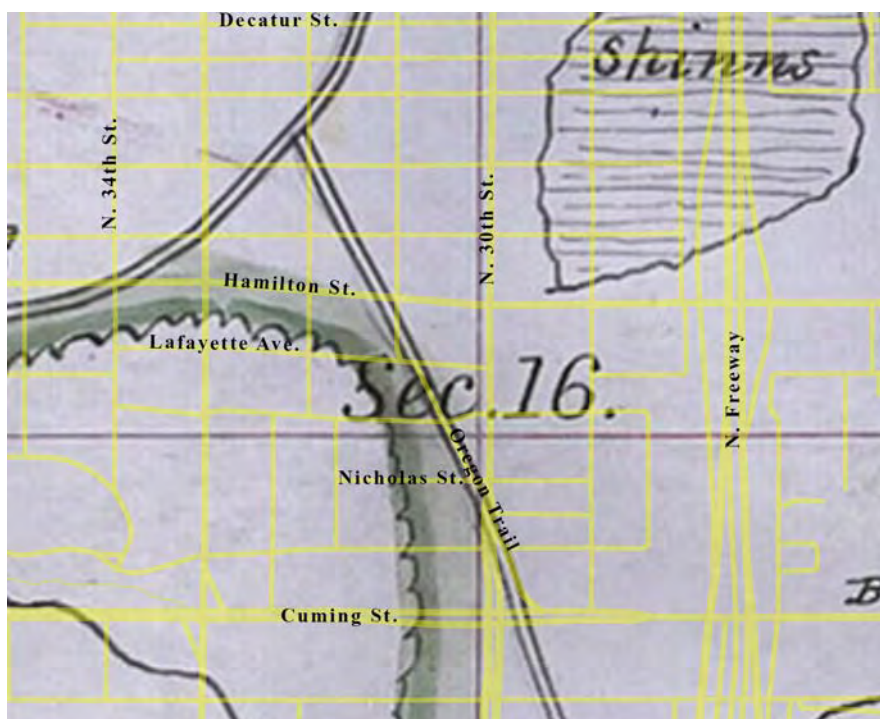
Fig. 8. "Oregon Trail," a road that remains in today's Omaha, follows part of the old Elk Horn and Omaha Road. Digitally highlighted detail of 1857 survey map, with present-day streets shown in yellow.

Nebraska, its responsibility was to protect the trails from Omaha to Fort Laramie, and west to the South Pass of the Rocky Mountains. In May 1866, the Army reorganized its command structure, creating a Department of the Platte with headquarters in Omaha.[60] The military district was responsible for activity along the Platte River routes.[61] The government immediately established an office for their new Quartermaster Depot on the second floor of the First National Bank building. Shortly thereafter two new structures were under construction for use by the military.[62] The first was a headquarters building at Fifteenth and Harney streets (see fig. 7). The second was the Quartermaster Depot where government supplies, horses, and mules were housed. It was located at Thirteenth and Webster streets on five acres of ground leased by the government from the Union Pacific Railroad at a cost of one dollar per year. Around the perimeter of the leased land, large supply warehouses were constructed. The center of the depot was left open to allow room to assemble the government supply trains. Stables at the site housed 500 horses and mules at all times. The horses served as cavalry transportation on the Plains; the mules pulled supply wagons. During the day, the animals grazed on the open prairie north of the supply depot. At night they were returned to their stables for safety from troublesome Indians.[63]

In the post-Civil War era, the use of the depot by military units brought significant excitement to Omahans and further stimulated the city's economy through the purchase of the supplies needed by soldiers stationed west of Omaha on the Great Plains. For example, General George Armstrong Custer's Seventh Cavalry units were outfitted at the depot before their expedition into Montana in 1876. The fateful battle at Little Big Horn resulted in tremendous excitement locally. Another huge local purchase was for pharmaceuticals to be used by soldiers at multiple army posts on the Plains; the order authorized the purchase of $29,000 in medical supplies. Other supplies that came through Omaha en route to posts in the West included beans, bacon, and sugar.[64] The Quartermaster depot utilized the Thirteenth and Webster facility for over a decade.[65] By the mid-1870s, Omaha's stature as a regional metropolis was well established. The Military Road continued to service all the posts along the Great Platte River Road into the West, but it was the newly completed Union Pacific Railroad that carried many immigrants and their goods to new lives on the Great Plains. While the activity during the Civil War years and the era of the railroad's construction were positives for the city, the heavy war-era use damaged the fragile bridge infrastructure and led to multiple changes and shortcuts on the paths of Omaha's original roads. Extensive use also led to the survey and construction of many new routes in the immediate post-war period.

Early Land Claims and the Federal Survey Influence on Trails' Routes

Early settlers had claimed farmsteads at geographically advantageous places along existing wagon routes. After the survey was completed in 1857, claimants received patents to squared off parcels that approximated their original claims.[66] The land claimed by Moses Shinn provides an excellent example of how land claims appeared on the geographical record of Douglas County in 1855, and again in 1857 after the survey was completed. Moses Shinn may have crossed the river to define his land claim even before the territory opened in mid-1854. He was a Methodist preacher in Omaha, and later claimed land along the Platte River west of Omaha near present day Columbus where he operated a rope ferry that was used to cross the shallow but dangerous river.[67] The 1857 survey map clearly indicated that Shinn
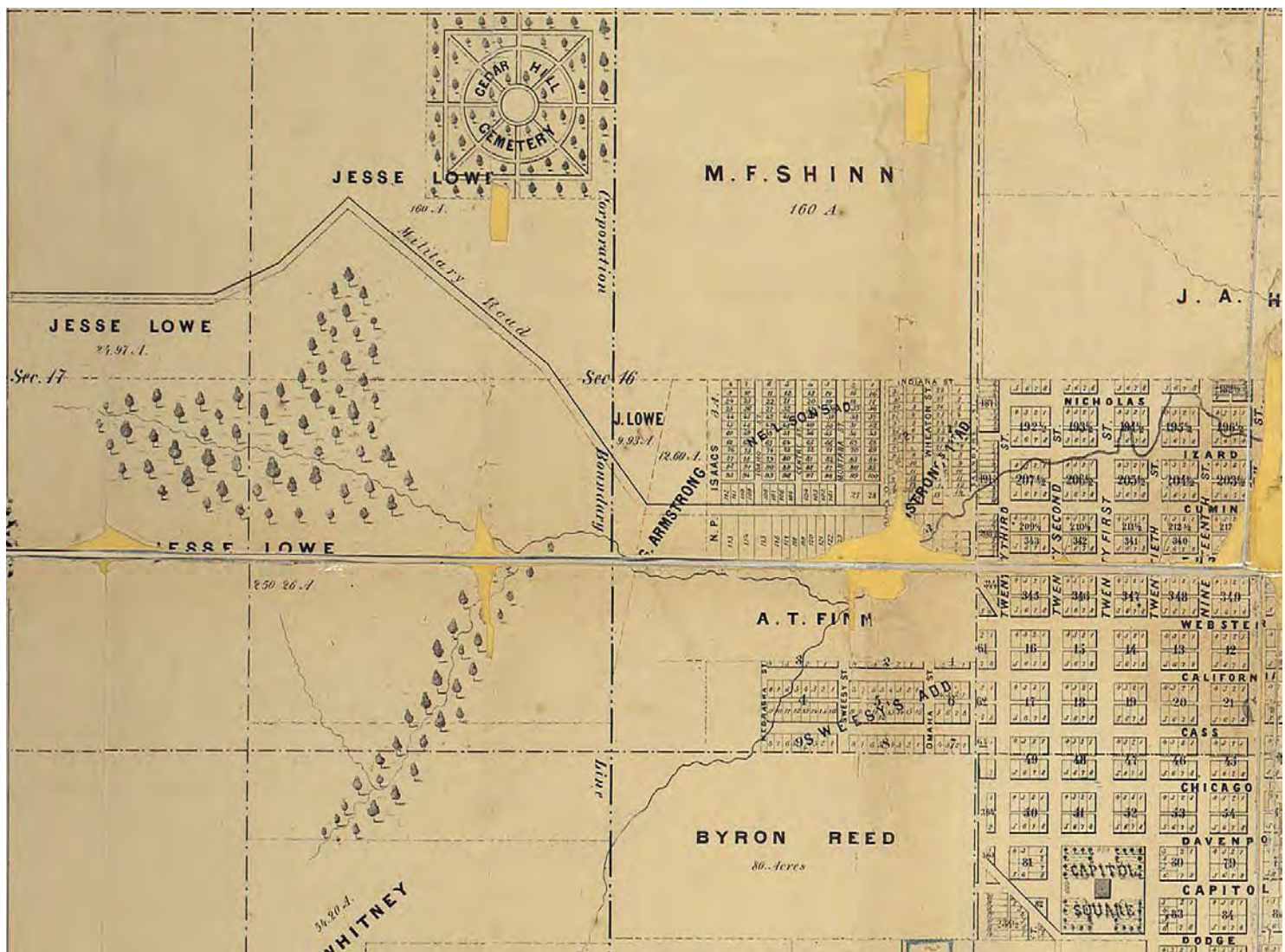
had chosen his Omaha land claims because of their obvious commercial viability. His land was nestled among three important trails; immediately to his farmstead's east was the "North Western and Omaha Road" that continued in a northwesterly direction, eventually connecting to the "Elk Horn and Omaha Road," the most direct route to the Platte Valley. In fact, it appears that the western margin of the original town site of Omaha City was moved several hundred feet east to accommodate Shinn's claim. West of his claim was the previously discussed cutoff between routes to the southwest and those to the northwest; the "Elk Horn and Omaha Road" lay to the north of Shinn's claim. The outline of the fence surrounding Shinn's claim was clearly visible on the surveyor's June 1856 map (see fig. 4). The 1866 "Map of Omaha City," drawn by Douglas County Surveyor, Oscar Davis, illustrated

how the land patents for original claims appear on the later landscape. The 1866 map shows that, by then, Shinn's land was legally described as the northeast quarter of section 16, township 15 N range 13 E (see fig. 9). Today that quarter-section of land (160 acres) lies between Twenty-fourth Street (east) and Thirtieth Street (west), Blondo Street (north) and Nicholas Street (south).[68] Today's North Freeway—a contemporary north/south transportation artery—runs through the land claimed by Moses Shinn. He first claimed his land for its proximity to the transportation routes, and a century later his claim remained so central to regional transportation that the highway was constructed through it (see fig. 8).

But as the city expanded to the west, land owners with holdings adjacent to the boundaries of Omaha began requesting that Douglas County

Fig. 9. Detail of *Map of Omaha City, Nebraska*, published by Oscar F. Davis, 1866. This detail shows Military Road jogging northwest from Cuming Street, past city limits through land owned by Jesse Lowe, Omaha's first mayor, and near land owned by Moses Shinn (See Fig. 8 and highlighted in Fig. 4). At lower right is Capitol Square, site of the territorial capitol and present-day site of Central High School.

Fig. 10. More than a decade after the 1866 map shown in Fig. 9, northwest Omaha was still only partly developed. This view is to the northwest from Omaha High School, which was built in 1872 atop Capitol Hill on the present site of Central High. The large building in the upper left is Creighton College (founded 1878) at 24th and California. The vicinity of Military Road lies between Creighton and the upper left horizon. HN RG2341-2-p.45

officials move the courses of existing roads to the margins of their properties; they did not want trails to cut across their primarily agrarian fields. An example of such shifts were the proposed and surveyed changes to the path of the "Road from Omaha to Florence" that passed through sections 10 and 3 heading north from Omaha's original northern border. Clearly visible on the 1857 survey map (Township 15 North, Range 13 East), the afore-named road passes to the west of a small farm whose plowed field straddles the boundary between sections 10 and 3 (see fig. 4, east of present-day North Freeway). On September 6, 1861, Augustus Kountze received the patent to the northwest quarter of section 10, the location of the aforementioned farm.[69] In August 1862, surveyor George Smith submitted field notes to Douglas County Commissioner John A. Smiley which would move the "Road from Omaha to Florence"—which at that time crossed through the middle of farmer Kountze's fields—to the middle of section 10, placing its new path along the eastern margin of the farm. The rerouted trail would lay along the one-half and/or quarter section lines. As drawn by surveyor Smith, the road would continue directly north

through section 3, bypassing a slough and turning west along the west to east line in the middle of section 3 (another section dividing line).[70]

Surveyed changes to existing routes were not always undertaken. Such was the case with this desired alteration. However, because the requested road change would in fact be Eighteenth Street today, the example demonstrates that roads in twenty-first century Omaha—those beyond the margins of the original city—follow the margins of surveyed land parcels. The thoroughfares of Twenty-fourth, Thirtieth, Thirty-sixth, Forty-second, Forty-eighth, Sixtieth, and Seventy-second streets, etc. were section and quarter-section lines between land claims. Similarly, the east-west streets of Blondo, Pacific, and Center were section, half-section, and quarter-section lines.[71]

While most of the city's original road paths have long-since been altered, in a very few places, the original trails exist as streets on Omaha's network of roads. One such path on today's landscape is that of Oregon Trail Road that originates just east of Thirtieth and Cuming streets (see fig. 8). On the first maps drawn in 1857, the cut-off trail laying west of Moses Shinn's land (running southeast to northwest) intersected the "Elk Horn and Omaha Road" at roughly present-day Thirty-third and Seward streets. On the original city plat of Omaha, Webster was the northernmost east-to-west street. The 1866 map of an enlarged Omaha indicated that a new east/west route, named Cuming Street, had been laid out two blocks north of Webster Street. It crossed Omaha Creek on the original military bridge. Cuming Street extended westward nearly to the city's new western border, then at present-day Thirtieth Street. At approximately Twenty-eighth Street on today's maps, Cuming intersected the original cut-off route that had passed southwest of Shinn's land. On the 1866 map, that original trail achieved permanence through section 16 as "Military Road." There in 1866, "Military Road" lay on the landscape precisely on its original path. It veered northwest from Cuming Street, angling back to the southwest along its

frontier path (to avoid the inclines of Walnut Hill). However also by 1866, "Military Road" intersected with what was then called Hamilton Street at about Thirty-sixth Street. Today's Oregon Trail Road angles north and west of Cuming for some four blocks until it arrives at Lafayette Street. It follows the same path it took on both the 1857 and 1866 maps.

Post Civil War Changes in the Path and Infrastructure of Military Road

Heavy traffic and deferred maintenance during the Civil War years took a toll on all regional highways and their bridges. Local transportation networks were already deteriorating when construction of the transcontinental railroad from Omaha into the West began in earnest immediately after the war, dramatically increasing the use of the all area roads. But the railway's construction west from Omaha also initiated an economic boom for the city that brought single men, corporate leaders, and entrepreneurs into Omaha, all seeking to take advantage of the expanding business climate.[72] In fact, by October 1865, the city was "overflowing," with some "families compelled to locate elsewhere."[73] In February, the *Weekly Herald* reported that "Omaha is to witness, in the next ninety days, the greatest influx of people that have ever crowded into these streets."[74] Beyond the city's western edge, trail traffic also intensified leading the media to note that, "There is yet no let up in the stream of emigration."[75]

The Military Road was a critical route for travel and commerce as the city expanded, and area journalists contributed to the media conversation about its deteriorating bridges. In December 1865, the *Weekly Herald* reported that "the Elk Horn bridge is said to be in possible danger of going overboard into the river, and renders crossing even now precarious." The editor went on to note that "Unless it can be repaired, another must be built. . . . Delays at this time mean loss of dollars, of trade, to this city, in the Spring."[76] In June 1866, when improvements to the "Bridge across the 'Horn'" had not yet been made, one reader suggested a good detour.[77] The *Herald* agitated almost weekly for repair of existing bridges and construction of new river crossings.[78] Regional leaders contributed to the discourse in Omaha newspapers. A Dodge County official taunted Douglas County leadership, saying Dodge County infrastructure was in better shape than that of Douglas County, even though Dodge County tax revenue was one-fourth that of Douglas. "Why? . . . Dodge County Commissioners

have no selfish one idea interest at stake. They care but little if the road does run past a neighbors door . . . . They work for the whole county."[79] Fearing that Washington County consumers who could not get into Omaha would instead travel to railroad towns to the east to make their purchases, a Decatur resident added his opinion. "The bridges through Washington county have been a disgrace to any civilized community for the last three years," wrote Charles Dakin of Decatur in early 1866. In fact, he added, ". . . in two or three instances persons have been obliged to stop and build temporary bridges across the streams. . . ."[80] "Bridges" wrote anonymously in January 1866 that there was a remedy; cut off the western part of Douglas County and attach it to Dodge County, because Dodge County Commissioners "have the will . . to do the work."[81] Realizing that the needed bridges would require more funds than were available, *Herald* editors encouraged the territorial legislature to consider passing a measure to produce revenue for such projects.[82]

Whether it was the taunts or common sense, the Territorial Legislature in April 1866 passed a law authorizing Douglas County Commissioners to collect a tax of 7 mills for improving road infrastructure. Although the *Herald* calculated that the mill levy would produce $30,000 in revenue, it could not be collected quickly enough to be spent on the roads' immediate needs. While the commissioners were also authorized to borrow the funds until the tax was collected, that could not be facilitated because the legislature permitted payment of no more than ten percent interest—and interest rates were above that figure. The *Herald*'s editor suggested that local citizens loan their personal funds to the county at the ten percent rate. "Already leading capitalists have made liberal subscriptions" and if the local population would "add their mite in this sure, safe, and profitable investment," the bridges could be built.[83] The private funding facilitated improvements. In western Douglas County, "The County Commissioners have gone vigorously at work putting the present bridges across the Elkhorn and Rawhide in good repair." A new bridge across the Elkhorn was also under construction at a new place on the river that would shorten the route.[84] In Omaha, "authorities" were building a bridge across a creek at about Eleventh and Jones streets.[85] None of this post-Civil War infrastructure work was undertaken with federal moneys or labor. All manpower and funds came from local government and private sources.[86]

Fig. 11. Digitally highlighted detail of 1857 survey map, centered on future site of Benson. When the "Bridge at Martin's Ranche" first spanned Cold Creek in the 1860s, this new link became part of the Military Road.
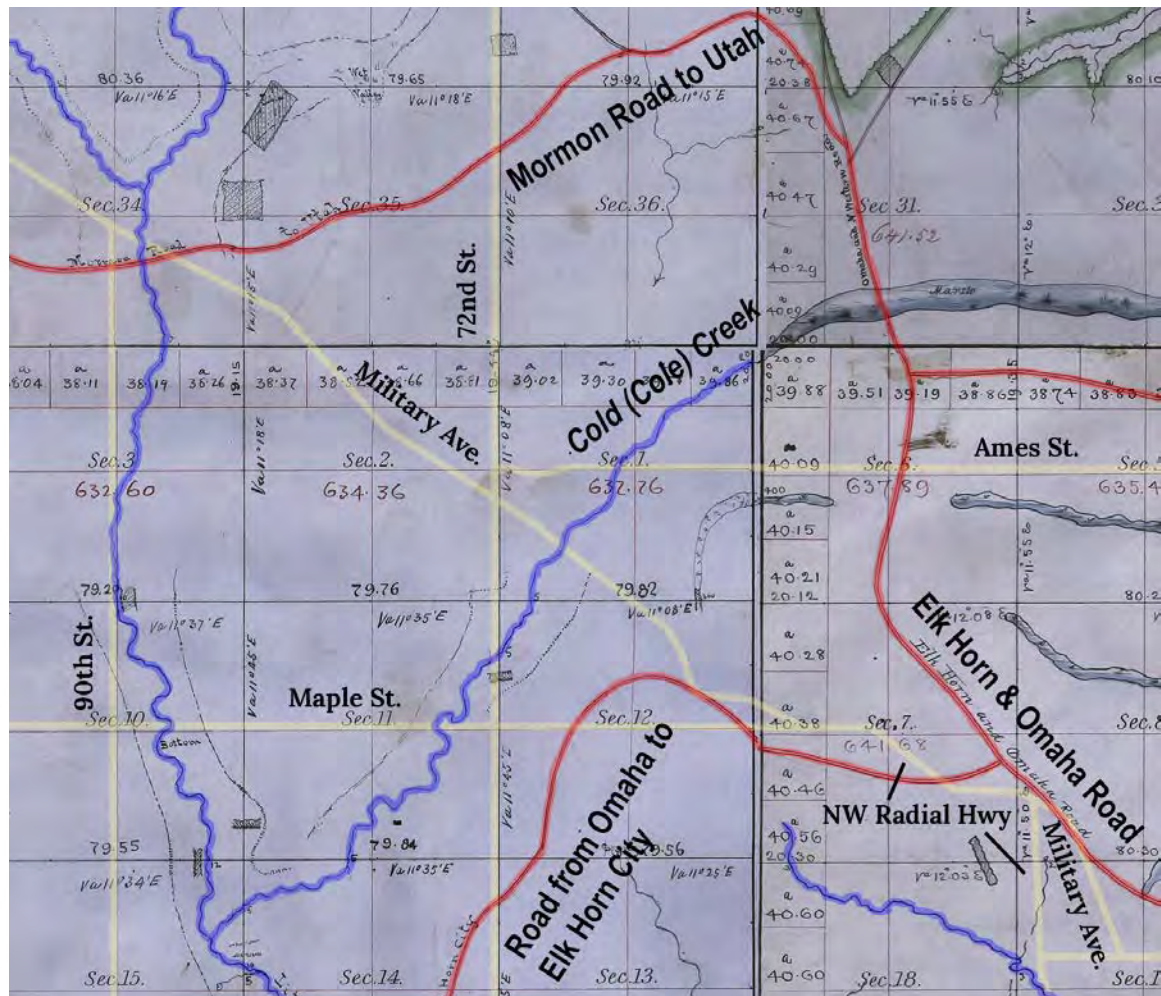
Increased use of the trail had also encouraged innovative travelers to create "short cuts" within the road system to streamline travel in places along the road where circumventing geographic features, especially rivers and creeks, had originally lengthened the road significantly. One such geographic feature that presented a real hurdle for travelers was Cold Creek, the previously discussed tributary of the Papio River system. The lack of a bridge there required travelers to wend their way either far to the west or far to the north to access the Military Road toward Fremont, creating a lengthy, circuitous path. The Papio Creek was originally bridged only near present-day Seventy-eighth and Dodge streets, and further west near 112th and Dodge streets (see fig. 3). It appears that an historically significant alteration in the original road pattern was made sometime before mid-summer 1862 when users constructed a bridge over Cold Creek near present-day Benson Park, thereby significantly reducing the distance from central Omaha up to the North Platte River Trail. While no records exist for the bridge's construction in the offices of the Douglas County Engineer, its presence was first noted in a July 1862 report by Douglas County Surveyor A. R. Gilmore following his study of the proposed route for a new county road.[87]

The land along Cold Creek near the site of the bridge has its own history. Evidently, innovative speculators had long hypothesized about where a bridge across the creek could be built. Between 1859 and 1862, twenty original land patents were issued to individuals for small chunks of land along the creek in sections 1, 2 and 12 of Township 15 North, Range 12 East along Cold Creek—which was not named on the surveyors' original maps (see fig. 11). In January 1862, Henry Ahlep received the original patent to land where the first bridge over Cold Creek was apparently built, although it is unknown if it was Ahlep who constructed the bridge.[88] In October 1866, George S. Martin purchased twenty acres of land on the southeast

bank of Cold Creek, near the present day southern margin of Benson Park. It was part of the parcel originally patented to Ahlep.[89] Thereafter, that bridge over Cold Creek was referred to as the "Bridge at Martin's Ranche," indicating that the location was a way station where trail goods and services could be obtained.[90] This new link became part of the Military Road, and was the portion of the road along which the community of Benson eventually grew.[91]

Sometime in this period, two other "roadside resorts" appeared along the road; one was called Robbers' Roost, the other was the First and Last Chance Saloon.[92] Although neither the exact locations nor proprietors of either is known, several well-known early Omahans acquired land along the original road which had carried travelers south and then west, to reach the Platte Valley. These pioneer land owners included John Nelson Hayes Patrick, Andrew Poppleton, and Edward Creighton.[93] But by the 1870s, the new cut-off route appeared especially enticing to commercial visionaries who began to acquire land in the parts of sections 12, 1, and 2 of Township 15 North, Range 12 East through which the cut-off road passed (see fig. 11). Edward Creighton purchased the land on which Martin's Ranche had operated in April 1872. That portion of the quarter-section of land passed into the control of Edward's brother John Creighton in April 1876, two years after the elder Creighton's death in 1874. The land on the northwest end of the bridge over Cold Creek was purchased by John Creighton in March 1881.[94] The new cut-off continued north and west through section 2 of the same township. John Creighton purchased that entire section of land in November 1883.[95] The new road veered away from the old route in the northwest quarter of section 12 at the place where the original trail had turned sharply south. John Creighton purchased that quarter-section of land in April 1876.[96] By the late 1880s, the farms owned by John Creighton along both the original and new portions of Military Road along the Papio River system totaled some 900 acres.[97]

The visionary who most decisively capitalized on the farmland along the Military Road cut-off was Erastus A. Benson. An Iowan by birth, education, and residency, in late 1886, Benson began to associate himself with Clifton E. Mayne, a flashy real estate agent who first appears in Omaha records in 1885.[98] In January 1887, Mayne reported that he had finally found "some one of means to join [him] in a scheme . . . to buy a large tract of land . . . , easy of access from the city, to lay it out in different sized lots" with graded streets, landscaping, a park, and accessibility to the city by a street car line, making a community that would be "the finest suburb in Omaha."[99] By the time Mayne announced his "scheme," Erastus Benson had established a trust into which lands from sections 1, 2, and 12 of Township 15 North Range 12 East were placed after he purchased them. In December 1886, John Creighton sold to the Erastus Benson Trust all land that he had acquired around the cut off in sections 1, 2, and 12.[100] Mayne called the land purchase, "the finest 866 acres of land within a radius of many miles of Omaha." He added that "Our contract with Mr. Benson fully guarantees . . . a car line. . . . [He] has contracted for 10,000 evergreen trees . . . None to be less than 6 feet high." The lots, added Mayne, "will bring $200 to $500 each as soon as the street car line is in operation."[101] On March 9, 1887, the Erastus Benson Trust deeded the recently purchased lands to the public.[102] The Village of Benson was subsequently platted on the trust lands, and on August 15, 1888, Erastus Benson "vacated the Plat, as proprietor and trustee."[103] Shortly thereafter, the first lots north and west of Mayne and Emanuel streets (now Maple and Seventy-second streets) were put up for sale (see fig. 12). Land sales were initially very brisk, and the price of lots rose rapidly from $200 to $700.[104] Unfortunately for Erastus Benson, a combination of factors undermined the success of the fledgling Omaha bedroom community.

The first problem about which residents of the area complained was the horrid noise produced by the steam engine purchased by Benson and his co-owners to pull the cars of their Mayne & Benson Street Railway system along the Military Road.[105] The street cars operated from Thirty-sixth and Cuming streets out to the new village, and not only did the racket offend local residents, it frightened horses that were exceedingly important to life in the rural community. Douglas County Commissioners quickly labeled the system a "nuisance," shutting it down until Benson acquired enough horses to pull the cars. Within a few years, however, the streetcar system was incorporated into the electric cable lines used by the Omaha and Council Bluffs Railway and, under new leadership, was called the Benson and Halcyon Heights Railway Company.[106]

The second misfortune with which Benson grappled was the severe national recession that occurred after 1890. It began with a drought on the western Plains which caused both famine and a drop in farm prices that produced

overwhelming farm debt. On average in Nebraska, corn prices dropped from forty-eight cents per bushel in 1890 to twenty-six cents a bushel in 1891. Rainfall dropped so precipitously in 1893 that all crops were virtually destroyed by aridity and hot winds.[107] Because Omaha's economy was so heavily affected by out-state commerce, local stores and jobbing houses closed. Omaha newspapers reported that "trade is dull," and "business . . . slacked down . . . to a dead stop."[108] The Omaha smelter prepared to close, "bonds, like everything else nowadays, go begging," banks failed, and the specie available to make purchases was scarce.[109] Churches in Omaha gathered relief workers to distribute what contributions they managed to collect.[110] Although population figures have long been questioned, historians and economists agree that, in the 1890s, the city lost about one-half of the residents that it added in the 1880s.[111] Statewide population figures showed a gain of only 8,000 residents during the entire decade of the 1890s, and virtually no population gain in the city of Omaha.[112] A farmer in central Nebraska's Sherman County, one of many who left the state in that decade, put a sign on his homestead before he left. It read, "Good-bye, old homestead, I bid you fair adieu; Some day I may go to hell, but I'll never return to you."[113] Homes stood empty all across the state, and needless to say, land sales in Benson fizzled. By the early 1890s, the village had only about ten houses, a small schoolhouse, a saloon, a blacksmith, and a store with very little merchandise available for purchase.[114]

In 1891, a group of Chicagoans acquired the land in Section 12 south of Benson's plat (see fig. 12, "Halcyon Heights"). Ever the entrepreneurs, even in the face of tremendous financial adversity, the Benson developers and the new Chicago group re-incorporated the Benson street car system into an electric cable-car system called the Benson and Halcyon Heights Railway. To promote sales of lots in both developments, the land developers knew they needed an attraction. Simultaneously, a down-on-his-luck buffalo herder named Charles J. "Buffalo" Jones needed to move a small herd of forty American buffalo off a ranch he managed near McCook where the animals had been grazing.[115] Local businessman William H. Crary, an investor in Halcyon Heights, sought to purchase the herd from owners American Land and Buffalo Company, and on Saturday, May 14, 1892, Jones herded his animals into cattle cars near McCook. On Sunday, May 15, he unloaded them into a pasture with other cattle at

Irvington, north of Omaha.[116] Almost immediately, a New Hampshire bank attached a lien to Jones' herd, valued at $25,000, for unpaid mortgages on $46,000 worth of property in Garden City, Kansas, where Jones had settled in 1866.[117]

The controversy was soon settled, however, and a week later the herd was moved onto the unsold lots of Halcyon Heights—near Benson's equally vacant lots. The animals were an instant hit. During the last weekend in May 1892, over 2,700 residents of the metropolitan area piled into the sixteen-foot long electric cars for a trip out to see the prairie animals. Among those most sought for viewing were "Devilish Dick," a huge bull that had reportedly killed one man and three horses in McCook, and another large bull named "Jumbo."[118]

Whether it was the buffalo herd (which remained for eighteen months), the electric street car system, or the gradual stabilization of the economy at the end of the western drought, Benson began to grow. Erastus Benson built a new town hall, donated land for a new, larger schoolhouse, and offered an acreage to St. James' Orphanage to encourage them to move to the country from Twenty-fourth Street and St. Mary's Avenue. By 1897, the village had 200 residents and was granted legislative permission to incorporate.[119]

Military Road in 1900: A Conclusion

It is difficult to calculate the cultural and economic impact of the Military Road on Omaha's history. The root of that trail remains the fluke of fortunes—both good and bad—that brought the unprepared-for-travel Mormons to the Missouri River in 1846. Having only a vague destination in mind, the Great Basin, the much maligned religious group sought as much isolation as they could tolerate. Historically that meant that the Saints camped in unopened "Indian Territory" west of the Missouri River for nearly two years. Although they traveled a known geographical path, the Platte Valley, the Mormons used the Platte's shallow, quicksand bottom as a natural barrier against the Missourians, disliked by the Saints after conflicts in 1838 forced the Mormons to leave Independence, Missouri.[120] But the traditionally used south Platte Trail only connected with the Platte Valley far to the west near Ft. Kearny, so that to use the Platte River as a travel route, the Mormons had to forge their own trails on the north side.[121] This meant going overland and circumventing creeks, swales, and rivers to get to the Platte Valley from their camps along
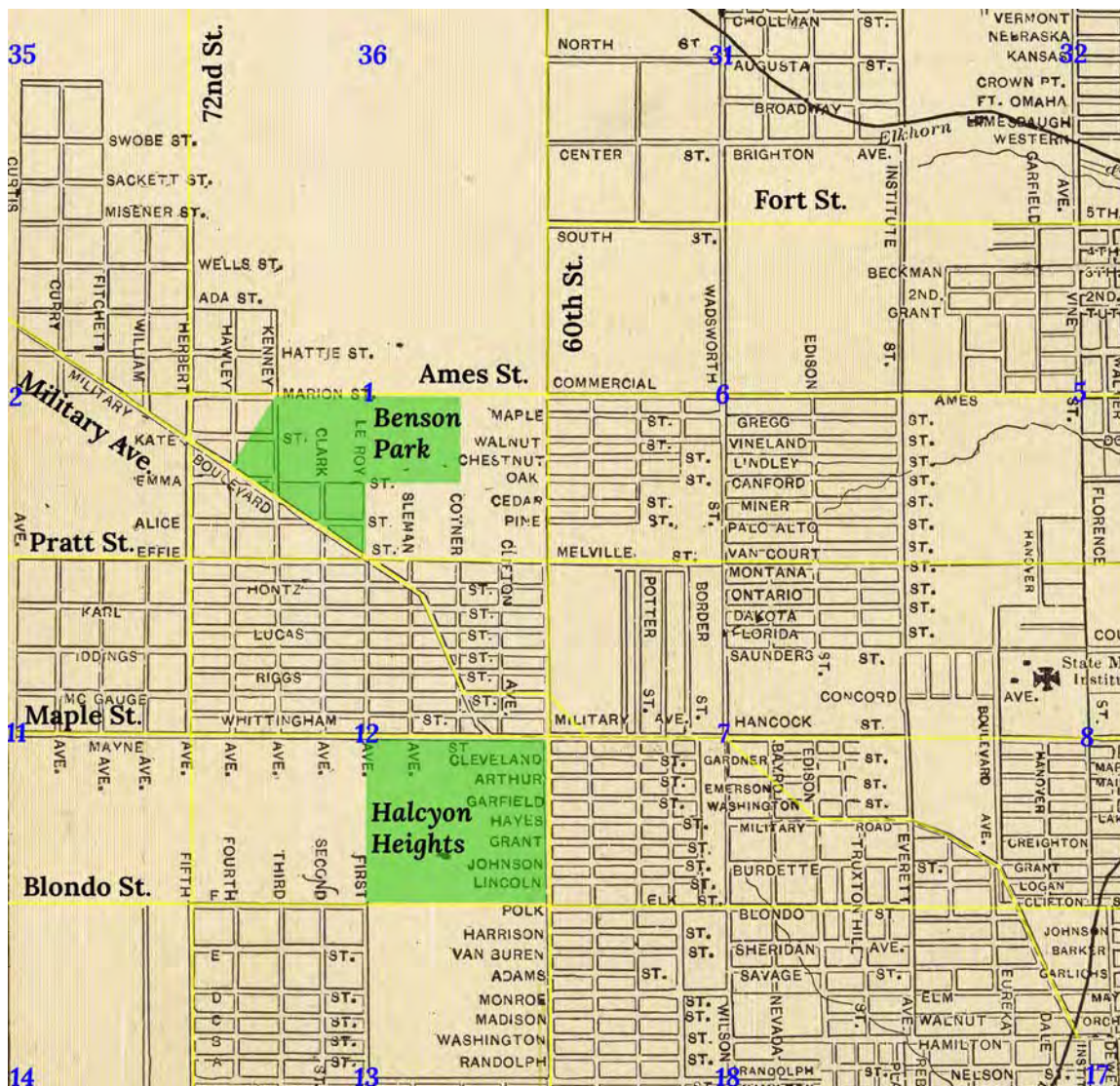
Fig. 12. Digitally highlighted detail of "Omaha" (1887). Added highlights (with new labels in bold type) indicate: the later addition of Halcyon Heights and present-day Benson Park (both in green); selected present-day streets (yellow); and section numbers (blue) corresponding to those in Fig. 11. History Nebraska map 1150

the Missouri River at Winter Quarters. Their paths were so well chosen that the routes became the foundational roads for travel into the West after gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill in California in early 1848. By the time Kansas-Nebraska Act passed in 1854, a dozen wagon roads crisscrossed the area that became Omaha, all of them initially terminating at the Platte River.

The first evidence of community growth along the road came in western Douglas County. As the mid-nineteenth century traveler approached the Platte River, he had to cross the Elkhorn River with wagons, horses, and all his worldly possessions. There near the ferry and bridge, as previously discussed, grew the small community of Elk Horn City, one of the earliest villages in Douglas County beyond Omaha and Bellevue. But by 1872, when the more readily traversed route of

the Union Pacific Railroad passed to the town's south, Elk Horn City had faded, and it was the rail construction camp that appeared on the maps of Douglas County as Elkhorn Station.[122] By 1900, Elkhorn was the viable community and Elk Horn City was little more than a "wide spot in the road," and by then referred to as Elk City.[123] Today, all that remains of Elk Horn City is its cemetery.[124] Another small village appeared along Military Road in the late nineteenth century. Irvington, situated in Union Precinct (township) the name by which was the village had been first referred, was "not a town of great commercial importance." But it was regarded as a lovely spot, "in the beautiful and fertile valley of the Little Papio."[125] It remains as part of the Omaha metropolitan area as an unincorporated village on the city's northern border.[126]

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A short-cut from central Omaha north to the Military Road encouraged the development of another town northwest of metropolitan Omaha—Benson. The town continued to grow in the early twentieth century after the economy recovered. Although the community had only 510 residents in 1900, by the end of the century's first decade, the town had a population of 3,170. With that growth came new businesses and churches. But Benson remained a town of smaller lot sizes and bungalows attractive to Omahans of modest means. And of course they appreciated entertainment. German immigrant Charles Tietz built a beer garden and dance hall that housed a German band. He also opened an amusement park at Fifty-second and Military; when Tietz died, investor Fred Krug took over the entertainment facility. And in 1901, Omaha Country Club was organized in the area, setting up its own golf course in a square of blocks bounded by Fifty-second, Blondo, Fifty-sixth, and Military. On the west edge of the golf course, a few wealthy Omahans built summer homes; most became permanent homes that remain architecturally impressive even today. In 1917, Omaha quietly annexed Benson; the backdrop of World War I kept opposition to a minimum.[127] Benson and Irvington remain on the Omaha landscape as evidence that, as a commercial corridor, Military Road encouraged the growth of communities along it.

And what of Military Road itself? The road remained a critical commuter route throughout the twentieth century. Its path on the landscape has been altered, its road bed widened and smoothed. Today Military Road begins at roughly Forty-second and Hamilton streets, at nearly the same spot the original path circumvented the base of Walnut Hill almost 170 years ago. It moves mostly north and west, as it always has done. From approximately Ninetieth Street northwest to Highway 31, modern Military Road more-or-less traces its original path (see fig. 3).[128] But to get from there to Fremont today, a traveler must go north to Highway 36, then take Highway 275 to Fremont. Having fulfilled its original economic and cultural mission to connect Omaha to the West many times over, if the road could talk, perhaps it would note that the most phenomenal change has not been in the course, but in the speed of the travelers using it. In 1855, Elk Horn City and the ferry across the river there were a full day's journey out of Omaha; getting across the river on the ferry might take several days more when wagon traffic was heavy. Between central Omaha and the Platte River were hills and vales, creeks and sloughs, all of which

presented their own dangers—and an even greater expense of time. But time costs more in today's world, and the twenty-first century traveler pays a heavy price for that time, trading the scenery, slow pace of the journey, and camaraderie of companions for the stress of life in the commuter fast lane of a much updated Military Road.

NOTES

1   Richard E. Bennett, *We'll Find the Place: The Mormon Exodus, 1846-1848* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1997.) rpt. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), 73-73, 88, 118, 218. The Pioneer Band left Winter Quarters over several days, reconnoitering at the Elkhorn River before starting west in mid-April. See also, Wallace Stegner, *The Gathering of Zion: The Story of the Mormon Trail* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964); and "The Mormon Trail," at "Digging In: The Historic Trails of Nebraska," accessed at http://cdrh.unl.edu/diggingin/trailsummaries/di.sum.0006.html on Dec. 4, 2014.

2   Stegner, 11.

3   Arthur Jerome Dickson, *Covered Wagon Days* (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1929), 52. Dickson, who traveled through Omaha in the 1860s, mentioned purchasing a guide book for thirty-five cents that contained "the accurate location of all landmarks, river crossings, posts, etc., but . . . [also] desirable camping places." From the docks to the stores and warehouses in the business sector, trails that carried the "bales of dry-goods, hundred-pound sacks of sugar and 'State' flour, bags of cured meats, coffee and dried fruits, cases of lard and molasses, casks of butter and salt-fish" developed. These trails too became part of the transportation network.

4   Randall H. Hewitt, *Across the Plains and Over the Divide* (New York: Broadway Publishing Co., 1906), 69-70.

5   Public Law 31, 17 February 1855, *Congressional Globe Appendix*, 31, 33rd Cong., 2nd sess., 380. See also W. Turrentine Jackson, "The Army Engineers as Road Surveyors and Builders in Kansas and Nebraska, 1854-1858," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 17 (February 1949): 39.

6   G. K. Warren, "Geography and Resources of Nebraska," *Journal of the American Geographical Society* 1 (November 1859): 266-67; and "Leavenworth versus Omaha," *Omaha Weekly Herald*, June 1, 1866, 4.

7   "Historic Omaha Corral to Go," *Omaha World-Herald*, Sept. 11, 1932, 6.

8   This definition of natives' right of occupancy came from the "Report of Henry Knox, Secretary of War, to the President of the United States," *American State Papers*, Indian Affairs, 13 (July 15, 1789).

9   *Fletcher v. Peck*, 6 Cranch 143 (1810). In 1823 Chief Justice John Marshall wrote that the United States had inherited "rights of discovery" from its European predecessors, and that because absolute title "cannot exist, at the same time, in different persons, or in different governments. . . ," the United States government owned the land and Native Americans had only the right of occupancy. Further, the federal government had the absolute right to extinguish native rights of occupancy. See *Johnson v. McIntosh*, 8 Wheaton 572, 588 (1823).

10 Kansas-Nebraska Act, 1854. The first government for the territory was appointed by federal officials in Washington, D.C. For stories about the Claim Club, where land claims were recorded prior to the first survey and subsequent issuing of land patents, see "The Claim Club – The Purpose of Its Organization – Some Facts Regarding Early Land Titles," in James W. Savage and John T. Bell, *History of the City of Omaha, Nebraska, and South Omaha* (New York: Munsell and Company, 1894), 98.

11 James C. Olson, *History of Nebraska* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1955), 87.

12 See entries in *Congressional Record* dated May 30, 1854, p. 1341; Jan. 11, 1855, p. 244; and Jan. 28, 1855, p. 452.

13 Arthur King Peters, *Seven Trails West* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1996), 55-56, 85-86, 117-18.

14 Ray Allen Billington, *Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier* 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan Company, 1967), 526. Established to offer comfort and protection for emigrants using the overland trails along the Platte River, Fort Kearny was moved to its location near the head of the Grand Island in the Platte River from its original site on the Missouri River near present-day Nebraska City in 1848. The previous site on the Missouri River had been selected because emigrants heading for Oregon Territory crossed the river there, but the location quickly proved to be too far off the trails. See William E. Lass, *From the* Miss*ouri to the Great Salt Lake: An Account of Overland Freighting* (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1972), 41-42.

15 Billington, 517-19, 526-27. The relative ease of crossing the continental divide at the South Pass popularized the Oregon Trail after 1843. In 1842, explorer John Charles Fremont had headed west along existing trails toward Oregon Country; his goal was to demonstrate the feasibility of going to Oregon Country through the South Pass. Fremont's report of the trip, eloquently recounted by his wife Jessie Benton Fremont (daughter of expansionist Senator Thomas Hart Benton), was written into the Congressional records as a Senate Document entitled *Report on an Exploration of the Country Lying Between the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountains, on the Line of the Kansas and Great Platte Rivers*. Use of the trail by both private wagon trains and commercial shippers expanded rapidly after contemporary writers extracted parts of Jessie Benton's narrative from the government document, placing her articulate verbiage into several trail guides. See Michael L. Tate, "Introduction," in Lieutenant J. C. Fremont, *A Report on an Exploration of the Country Lying Between the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountains on the Line of the Kansas and Great Platte Rivers* (Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1996).

16 Lass, pp. 62-63, 132-33.

17 Rev. Samuel Parker, A.M., *Journal of an Exploring Tour Beyond the Rocky Mountains, Under the Direction of the A.B.C.F.M. [The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions] Performed in the Years 1835, '36, and '37* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Ross and Haines, 1967), 41-49. Parker also described the South Pass (although he does not call the pass by that name), meeting local fur trader Lucien Fontenelle at the rendezvous, and observations of the Flathead, Shoshone, Nez Perce, and "Utaws" native peoples. Parker traveled northward, ending his trip at Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River in Oregon. An explanation of the origin of the name "Bellevue," can be found in Richard E. Jensen, "Bellevue: The First Twenty Years, 1822-1842"; a brief history of the mission established by Allis and Dunbar can both be found in Linda Mankowski, "Allis and Dunbar"; both articles are found in Jerold Simmons, ed., *"La Belle Vue": Studies in the History of Bellevue Nebraska* (Marceline, Missouri: Walsworth Publishing Company, 1976).

18 Stegner, 32; Bennett, 84.

19 For an estimate of total trail traffic, see Stegner, 9-10. Stegner also noted that travel on the north side of the Platte River had been undertaken by both natives and traders for many decades, and had been recorded in the latters' trail journals.

20 The survey of Nebraska Territory was undertaken according to directives set forth in the Land Ordinance of 1785, passed under the Articles of Confederation. Prior to the 1785 law, survey lines were irregular and linked to natural features in the landscape. The Land Ordinance began the new system where Ohio, Pennsylvania, and (West) Virginia came together on the banks of the Ohio River. It surveyed all land, marking out townships of `six miles square, each containing thirty-six sections of land; each section was one-mile square. The townships were aligned in "ranges" numbered from south to north, and designated as east or west of a "prime meridian." In this manner, all land in the United States could be given definitive legal parameters, thereby facilitating owner registration of, owner payment for, and government tax assessments for described lands. See Ray Allen Billington, *Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier*, (New York: Macmillan Company, 1967), 207-8.

21 At ca. 1,200 feet above sea level, Walnut Hill remains one of Omaha's highest points. Since 1880 it has been home to Omaha's fresh drinking water facility, and is currently owned by the Metropolitan Utilities District. See Lawrence H. Larsen, Barbara J. Cottrell, Harl A. Dalstrom, and Kay Calame Dalstrom, *Upstream Metropolis: An Urban Biography of Omaha and Council Bluffs* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 147.

22 Stanley P. Hirshson, *Grenville M. Dodge: Soldier, Politician*, Railroad Pioneer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), 6-15. The Mormons apparently had tried to construct a bridge at the site, but were unsuccessful, and the bridge abutments may have become docks for a ferry. See Stegner, 84.

[23] Hirshson, 6-15.

[24] Ibid., 17-18.

[25] Douglas County, Nebraska, Registrar of Deeds, "Numerical Index to Deeds," vol. 1, T15 R10 to T16 R 10. Section 3, Section 4, and Section 10, Township 16 North, Range 10 East.

[26] Hirshson, 18.

[27] See George Simons drawing of the Dodge claims along the Elkhorn River at https://c1.staticflickr.com/6/5123/52 58027426_5296b2bf62_z.jpg and https://c1.staticflickr.co m/6/5245/5258027466_5dff818485_z.jpg, accessed May 4, 2017. For the Pawnee Indian camps, see especially Section 20, Township 16 North, Range 9 East at http://www.sso. nebraska.gov/pdf/gloc/317.pdf accessed April 4, 2013.

[28] J. R. Perkins, *Trails, Rails and War: The Life of General G.M. Dodge* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1929), 34-36.

[29] "The Recent Murder," *The Nebraskian* (Omaha), Feb. 27, 1856, 2.

[30] "Justice to Elk Horn City," *The Nebraskian*, Feb. 27, 1856, 2. See also "Camp near Elkhorn City, July the 4th, 1856," *The Nebraskian*, Oct. 8, 1856, 2.

[31] "Our Campaign," *The Nebraskian*, June 25, 1856, 2.

[32] "Correspondence of *The Nebraskian*," *The Nebraskian*, July 2, 1856, 3.

[33] See for example, Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* abridged ed. (Lincoln; University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 108-21; and Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1982), 88-92. Reports of Indian depredations can be found in "Dakota," Yancton [sic], Elk Point, etc–Rev. M. Hoyt," *Spirit of Missions* 28 (March 1863): 58, for example.

[34] W. Turrentine Jackson, *Wagon Roads West: A Study of Federal Road Surveys and Construction in the Trans-Mississippi West, 1846-1869* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), 1-4.

[35] Warren, 260.

[36] "Congressional," *New York Times*, July 8, 1854, 4.

[37] The legislation passed on February 17, 1855. *See Statutes at Large*, X (1855), 608; and "Road from Omaha City to New Fort Kearny," *The Nebraskian*, April 30, 1856, 3.

[38] Larsen, et.al., 49-50.

[39] Jackson, *Wagon Roads West*,11-12.

[40] *10 Stat*. 608. (1855)

[41] Because Omaha was not incorporated as a city until the 1857 Territorial Legislature approved it, the city had no mayor. After incorporation, Jesse Lowe was the first mayor. Larsen, *et al*., 89.

[42] "Road from Omaha City to New Fort Kearny."

[43] John David Unruh, *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 18-19.

[44] Pre-emption meant that citizens and properly documented immigrants could claim public land before it had been surveyed by the federal government. After the land had been surveyed in any given region, thereby making it identifiable according to a precise legal description as stipulated in the Northwest Ordinance of 1785, it could be purchased from the federal government. Originally, the land was auctioned to the highest bidder. In the 1841 Distribution-Pre-emption Bill, 160 acres of land could be claimed before the survey, then purchased after survey at $1.25 per acre. Proceeds from the sale were divided between the state in which the land was located and the federal government. See Billington, 379-80.

[45] Letters to the "Editor *Nebraskian*, September 23rd, 1856," *The Nebraskian*, Oct. 8, 1856, 2.

[46] Jackson, *Wagon Roads West*, 132-33. In fact, the changes he initiated at the Loup Fork reduced the length by nearly twenty-six miles. See Jackson, 133.

[47] U.S. Congress, House, *Military Road in Nebraska* 34th Cong., 3rd Sess., H.R. 180, Serial 914. The road's eastern most bridge was constructed at present day 24th and Cuming streets, then the west edge of Omaha. On some maps it was identified as the "military bridge."

[48] W. Turrentine Jackson, "The Army Engineers as Road Surveyors and Builders in Kansas and Nebraska, 1854-1858," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 17 (February 1949), 55. Frank Burkley, who arrived in Omaha in May 1856 with his parents, described the prairie to the northwest of their house at Thirteenth and Harney streets, noting that, from their house, one could see the "military bridge on Twenty-fourth and Cuming and see the Indians coming toward town." That would have been the bridge over the Omaha Creek referred to by Jackson. See Frank J. Burkley, *The Faded Frontier* (Omaha: Burkley Envelope and Printing, 1935), 81-82.

[49] Jackson, 52-57.

[50] Map 280, 1857 Survey Maps, Township 17 N, Range 8 E. Accessed May 29, 2013, at http://www.sso.nebraska.gov/pdf/ gloc/280.pdf. Interestingly, two maps of townships through which portions of the road system passed did not indicate any trails' path – those of Township 17 N, Range 9 E (# 319), and 17 N, Range 10 E (#357); both were surveyed early and by Lorin Miller. On both maps, only points of entry for roads into the townships were indicated on the maps, seeming to indicate that those segments of road were peripheral to the main transportation route. See Map 319, 1857 *Survey Maps*, Township 17 N, Range 9 E. Accessed May 29, 2013, at http:// www.sso.nebraska.gov/pdf/gloc/319.pdf, and Map 357, 1857 Survey Maps, Township 17 N, Range109 E. Accessed Sept. 23, 2016, at http://www.sso.nebraska.gov/pdf/gloc/357.pdf.

[51] Map 356, *Survey Maps*, Township 16 N, Range 10 E. Accessed May 29, 2013, at http://www.sso.nebraska.gov/ pdf/gloc/356.pdf; and Map 386, Survey Maps, Township 16 N, Range 11 E. Accessed Sept. 23, 2016, at http://www.sso. nebraska.gov/pdf/gloc/386.pdf.

[52] Without the benefit of bridges, the road system had to go around the two branches of the Papillion River and its tributaries. The "Elkhorn and Omaha Road," which intersected with the latter in section 7, moved travelers north to routes connecting to the Mormon/Military Road. It passed west of the original western corporate margins of the city in Township 15 North, Range 13 E.
    The name "Cold Creek" only appears on maps in the Road Record Books in which Douglas County surveyors made notes and small maps of the projects on which they were working. See, for example, "County Road from

Hurford's Mill to Cold Creek Bridge at Martin's Ranche," in Douglas County, Nebraska, Engineer. Road Record Book 2, p. 109. Dated Oct. 2, 1869. The surveyors' maps refer to the same creek as Cole Creek after the mid-1870s. See for example, "Commission to View Road," petition by Peter Hiler to alter Military Road west of Cole Creek. in Douglas County, Nebraska, Engineer. Road Book 117B, p. 1. Dated Oct. 21, 1876.

[53] In 2015, that bridge over the Little Papio would have been behind the present-day businesses in Tower Plaza, north of 78th and Dodge streets in Omaha.

[54] Alvin M. Josephy, Jr. *The Civil War in the American West* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 34-38. 332-47.

[55] Captain Eugene F. Ware, *The Indian War of 1864* Introduction by Clyde C. Walton (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1960), 2-6. See also Olson, 141.

[56] Olson, 141.

[57] Ware, 7. For information regarding Iowa's Civil War participation, see e.g. "Iowa in the Civil War," accessed Nov. 7, 2016, at http://www.iowasuvcw.org/home/iowainthecivilwar/

[58] Ibid., 12-13.

[59] Ibid., 7.

[60] "Notice to Government Contractors," *Omaha Daily Republican*, May 15, 1866, 3.

[61] Robert G. Athearn, *William Tecumseh Sherman and the Settlement of the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), 55.

[62] "Notice to Government Contractors."

[63] "Historic Omaha Corral to Go." The 1870 *Omaha City Directory* indicated that the army barracks was north of the city limits. See 1870 *Omaha City Directory*, J. M. Wolfe, compiler, 293. For a more descriptive narrative of Omaha residents' encounters *with Native Americans in the 1860s, see Frank J. Burkley, The Faded Frontier* (Omaha, Nebraska: Burkley Envelope and Printing Company, 1935), 135-37.

[64] "Historic Omaha Corral to Go."

[65] In 1879, the Quartermaster Depot was relocated to near Twentieth Street and Woolworth Avenue. Those buildings were placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986. See H. J. Cummins, "Quartermaster Depot," *Omaha World-Herald Metro Extra*, June 25, 1986, 3.

[66] An overview of the original patents issued in Douglas County, Nebraska Territory, by the General Land Office is interesting from another vantage point as well. With the exception of part of one section of land in Township 15 N, Range 13 E, most of the land warrants originally issued were "Military Warrants." That is, the land warrants represented land bounties in the amount of 160 acres provided to soldiers as an inducement to enlist in all American wars, from the American Revolution to the Mexican War. The ex-soldiers received land as a bonus for their services, but in 1855, the land warrants were made "assignable," and could be sold to land speculators for—in some cases—less than half the value of the acreage. Few patents were taken by the "pre-emption" method. See Benjamin Horace Hibbard, *History of the Public Land Policies* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1924), 116-29; and http://www.glorecords.blm.gov/search/default.aspx#searchTabIndex=1

For example see Patent number 41,968 issued for the S ½ of NE¼ , and NE ¼ of SW ¼, section 3, Township 16 N, Range 10 E to "Nancy Williamson, widow of John Williamson . . . New York Militia, War of 1812," and "assigned . . . to Grenville M. Dodge, in whose favor said tract has been located." See http://www.glorecords.blm.gov/details/patent/default.aspx?accession=0378140&docClass=MW&sid=v2edatcf.bwr#patentDetailsTabIndex=1. Accessed on June 3, 2013.

[67] "Loup River Ferries Important to Pioneers," *Columbus Telegram*, June 17, 1976, n.p; and "Moses Shinn" in Douglas County in Andreas' *History of the State of Nebraska*.

[68] Oscar F. Davis, "Map of Omaha City," 1866 at https://smediacacheak0.pinimg.com/originals/d0/6b/da/d06bda0f19b7f32137d902c28b6e1710.jpg

After the survey was complete, Shinn's land claim turned out to be in section 16 of township 15N, range 13. In the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act, sections 16 and 32 were to be set aside for educational purposes. Therefore, it took an act of Congress for Moses Shinn to receive a patent to his claim. See Douglas County, *Nebraska, Registrar of Deeds*, *Original Entries and Patents* T 15, R 13, Section 16, p. 35. The legislation was recorded as 15 Stat. 442 (1869).

[69] U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office Records, for the NW ¼, of Section 10, Township 15 N, Range 13 E. Document Number 1466, to Augustus Kountze. Accessed September 23, 2016, at http://www.glorecords.blm.gov/details/patent/default.aspx?accession=NE1710__.182&docClass=STA&sid=gcjiazab.eh0#patentDetailsTabIndex=1

[70] Douglas County, Nebraska, Engineer, "To John A. Smiley, Road Commissioner," from George Smith, Surveyor, dated August 8, 1862, Road Record Book 2, p. 49.

[71] Twenty-fourth Street, a north/south dividing line between sections of land (such as sections 15 and 16, and sections 9 and 10) was designated as a County Road in August 1859. See "Field Notes to the Hon. L. Dodge, H. Johnson, and J.H. McCandless," dated 6 August 1859, and recorded in Douglas County Road Record Book 2, pp. 16-17. Located in the office of the Douglas County Engineer, Omaha, Nebraska.

Additional interesting evidence on Omaha's twenty-first century landscape is Dodge Street. Dodge became an important thoroughfare because of its location on the south side of the territorial capital, but as the city boundaries moved west, Dodge Street shifted northward near present day 84th Street to incorporate a section line. See *2008 Sheriff Locater Map of Douglas County*, Thomas D. Doyle, Douglas County Engineer. This highly useful map of Douglas County townships, sections, rivers, and main roads and highways is available in the Douglas County Registrar of Deeds office.

[72] Examples abound, but in October 1865, the *Daily Republican* reported that, "Business never seemed more flourishing in Omaha than at present." See "The City," Nebraska Daily Republican, Oct. 13, 1865, 3.

[73] "Our city is at present . . . ," *Nebraska Daily Republican*, Oct. 20, 1865, 3. Even early the next year, the editor noted that, "The great stream of emigration has commenced to pour in upon us. . . . Ways and means must be found [sic] instanter to accommodate this great rush. . . . They come to stay—we want them to stay." See "A Demand That Must be Supplied," *Nebraska Daily Republican*, March 16, 1866, 3.

[74] "The Coming Influx," *Weekly Herald*, Feb. 16, 1866, 1.

[75] "Large numbers of pilgrim wagons . . . ," *Nebraska Daily Republican*, June 28, 1866, 3.

[76] "Our Roads and Bridges," *Weekly Herald*, Dec. 22, 1865, 4.

[77] "The Elk Horn Bridge," *Weekly Herald*, June 29, 1866, 1.

[78] See for example, "Our Roads and Bridges," *Weekly Herald*, Jan. 19, 1866, 3; and "Roads and Bridges," *Weekly Herald*, Jan. 26, 1866, 3.

[79] "Roads and Bridges," *Weekly Herald*, Jan. 26, 1866, 3.

[80] "Roads and Bridges," *Nebraska Daily Republican*, Feb. 14, 1866, 3.

[81] "Roads and Bridges," *Weekly Herald*, Jan. 26, 1866, 3.

[82] See "Our Roads and Bridges," *Weekly Herald*, Dec., 22, 1865, 4; and "Our Roads and Bridges," *Weekly Herald*, Jan. 19, 1966, 3.

[83] "Our Bridge Interest," *Weekly Herald*, April 6, 1866, 1.

[84] "Bridges," *Nebraska Daily Republican*, Feb. 21, 1866, 3.

[85] "The authorities are constructing a bridge . . . ," *Nebraska Daily Republican*, June 21, 1866, 3.

[86] In the middle of the Civil War, several of Omaha's deepest pockets had established the Omaha and Platte Valley Bridge Company, quickly raising $22,750. Construction projects undertaken by the firm remain unclear. See "Omaha and Platte Valley Bridge Company," *Nebraska Daily Republican*, March 30, 1863, 2.

[87] Douglas County, Nebraska, Engineer, Report to the Douglas County Commissioners, Road Record Book 2, p. 77; dated July 1, 1862. The report—although worded vaguely—speaks about creating a county road from west Omaha that would intersect an existing road that moved traffic from the military bridge on the west edge of Omaha toward "Chicago" (a village in western Douglas County) "at or near the bridge on Cold Creek." This is the first reference to the shortcut on Military Road that included a bridge over Cold Creek.

[88] See U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office Records, https://glorecords.blm.gov/results/default.aspx?searchCriteria=type=patent|st=NE|cty=|twp_nr=15|twp_dir=N|rng_nr=12|rng_dir=E|sec=1|sp=true|sw=true|sadv=false. Accessed April 12, 2017.

[89] Douglas County, Nebraska, Registrar of Deeds, "Warranty Deed from James L. Peek to George S. Martin," One-half of one-half of SE ¼, of SW ¼, Section 1, Township 15 North, Range 12 East. Dated Oct. 19, 1866. The purchase price was $650.

[90] See for example Douglas County, Nebraska, Engineer, "Military Road," in Road Record Book 40 B, p. 40; dated December 14, 1868.

[91] This segment of present day Military Road has naturally been altered to some extent over the century. It would appear that the original bridge and cutoff were slightly north of their present location. See "Omaha to Elkhorn River," in Douglas County, Nebraska, Engineer. Road Record Book 2, p. 105, dated Oct. 2, 1869. Note the identification of "Martin's" Ranche.

[92] Federal Writers Project, and Linda Miller, ed. *Omaha: A Guide to the City and Environs*, (Omaha: Omaha Public Library, 1981), 159.

[93] See Douglas County, *Nebraska, Registrar of Deeds, Numerical Index to Deeds, Book 5 & 6* Section 12, Section 13, Section 22, and Section 24, Township 15 North, Range 12 East.

[94] Douglas County, Nebraska, Registrar of Deeds. "Deed Book 3-4, Township 14, 15, 16, Range 12," Section 1, 49.

[95] Douglas County, Nebraska, Registrar of Deeds. "Deed Book 3-4, Township 14, 15, 16, Range 12, Section 2, 51.

[96] Douglas County, Nebraska, Registrar of Deeds. "Deed Book 3-4, Township 14, 15, 16, Range 12, Section 12, 37.

[97] For more information about the Creighton Brothers and the death of Edward Creighton, see for example, Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission, "A Comprehensive Program for Historic Preservation in Omaha," (Omaha: n.p., 1980), 19.

[98] Rosemary Parenteau, Maxine Albright, and Stuart Pospisil, eds., *Benson, Nebraska: From Buffalo Pasture to City* (Marceline, Missouri: Walsworth Publishing Company, 1988), 9; "Real Estate Transfers," *Omaha Daily Bee*, Oct. 6, 1885, 8. Mayne and his family can also be found on the 1885 Nebraska Census.

[99] "At Last," *Omaha Daily Bee*, Jan. 23, 1887, 8.

[100] Douglas County, Nebraska, Registrar of Deeds. "Deed Book 3-4, Township 14, 15, 16, Range 12, sections 1, and 2, 12, 49, 51, 35.

[101] "At last."

[102] Douglas County, Nebraska, Registrar of Deeds. "Deed Book 3-4, Township 14, 15, 16, Range 12, sections 1, 2, and 15.

[103] Douglas County, Nebraska, Registrar of Deeds. "Erastus A. Benson, Trustee to Whom it may concern," Deed Book 116, 178. Recorded Oct. 1, 1888.

[104] *Map of Benson*, Erastus Benson, owner, dated Mar. 9, 1887. *Plat Book of Douglas and Sarpy Counties*, 55; Rosemary Parenteau, *et al.*, 13. Mayne Street became Maple Street, and Emanuel Street, became Sixtieth Street.

[105] Richard Orr, *O & CB: Streetcars of Omaha and Council Bluffs* (Omaha, Nebraska: Richard Orr, 1996), 50-51.

[106] Ibid., 104; and Savage and Bell, 414.

[107] James C. Olson, *History of Nebraska* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1955), 242-43.

[108] "Sub-Rosa," *Omaha Excelsior*, Oct. 31, 1891, 4; and "Sub-Rosa," Omaha Excelsior, June 10, 1893, 1.

[109] "The Street," *Omaha Excelsior*, July 1, 1893, 6; "The Street," Omaha Excelsior, July 8, 1893, 7; and Lawrence H. Larsen and Barbara J. Cottrell, *The Gate City: A History of Omaha* (n.p.: Pruett Publishing Company, 1982), 83.

[110] Rt. Rev. Paul Matthews, "Reminiscences of the Associate Mission in Omaha," *The Living Church*, May 27, 1945.

[111] Larsen and Cottrell, *Gate City*, 82-83. In 1890, "boomers" calculated the population of the city at 140,452, up from 30,518 in 1880. However, twentieth century research placed the 1890 figure at 102,430 and the 1890 figure at 102,555. See Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission, 39.

[112] Olson, 161.

[113] Quoted in Larsen and Cottrell, *Gate City,* 83.

[114] Rosemary Parenteau, *et al.*, 13.

[115] "Pity the Poor Buffaloes," *Omaha World-Herald*, May 19, 1892, 8.

[116] Ibid., and "Omaha's Herd of Buffalo," *Omaha Excelsior*, June 4, 1892, 1.

[117] "Pity the Poor Buffaloes."

[118] Also high on the favorites list was a domestic cow who was nursing two buffalo calves that were only two weeks old! Buffalo Jones was also an attraction. During his years of residence on the Kansas prairie, Jones had grown increasingly alarmed as he watched the bison herds dramatically decrease in size, although he was a hunter as well. In 1876, Jones began to publicize the hunters' kills by sending messages via carrier pigeon to regional newspapers, such as the *Chicago Times*. He also established a small herd on his ranch near Garden City. By the time he arrived in Omaha, Jones had a national reputation for being capable of handling a buffalo herd, and it appeared that he could make raising buffalo a commercial success. A year earlier, Jones had taken sixteen buffalo to England, and he was experimenting with weaving wool fabric from buffalo hair. See "A Rush to See the Buffalo," *Omaha World-Herald*, May 31, 1892, 8; and "Omaha's Herd of Buffalo."

[119] Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission, 46. The buffalo herd as entertainment must have fallen from favor, as none of the local historians mention the animals or the herd after the summer of 1892.

[120] Stegner, 19-24. For a brief summary of the Mormons' background, search for Zion, and their stay at Winter Quarters near present-day Omaha, see Peters, 118-32. See also William G. Hartley, "Mormons and Early Iowa History (1838-1858): Eight Distinct Connections *Annals of Iowa* 59 (Summer 2000), 220.

[121] For a brief summary of the geography and history of the Oregon-California Trail, see Peters, 85-115.

[122] Douglas County, Nebraska, Engineer. Douglas County Map, dated 1872. The map is faded and very difficult to read.

[123] Douglas County, Nebraska, Engineer. Compare maps T 16-R 10 and T 15-R 11, n.d, in *Road Record Book #1*, 6, 11.

[124] 2008 Sheriff Locater Map, Douglas County, Nebraska.

[125] "Irvington," Omaha Bee, Jan. 3, 1889, 5.

[126] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irvington,_Nebraska.

[127] Rosemary Parenteau, et al., 87.

[128] *Omaha and Council Bluffs Street Guide* 4th ed., (Rand McNally, 2004), 12-13.