

NEWTON TO ALEXANDERWOHL IMMIGRANT HOUSE TRAIL ----SELF GUIDED TOUR by Brian Stucky

It is known that some of the Alexanderwohl group continued on the Santa Fe Railroad and got off at Newton, and traveled up the Chisholm (Abilene) Trail which passed right by the Alexanderwohl Immigrant houses. Oral tradition and some diaries record that story. The best way to follow this tour is for someone to drive, and a passenger to read directions and stories. It will be helpful to have an odometer, and I will give measurements to the 1/100 of a mile.

STOP #1 Begin at the Newton Train Station at 5th and Main. Park on the north side of the station. A large brick edifice, it still houses the depot and ticket window for passenger trains, but more freight passes through. The original depot was on the south side of the train tracks. That is where your ancestors stepped off the train.

But you must understand one fact. The whole reason why the city of Newton exists at all was that it was at the intersection of the Chisholm Trail and the Santa Fe Railroad. Before the railroad was built through in 1871, cattle were herded up to Abilene. After the



railroad came through, there was no need to go to Abilene, so Newton became the wildest Cowtown in the west.

However, the next year, 1872, the rail line extended to Wichita, and that became the Cowtown. That's when Newton began to calm down, and by 1874, the Mennonites arrived.

LOOK AT: To walk in your ancestor's footsteps, you may go around the south side of the building and look up and down the tracks, which are in the same place they were in 1874. Across the south side of the tracks was the original depot. Imagine your ancestors stepping off, and wondering what new world they have gotten themselves into. Go on to the next step.

STOP #2 HISTORICAL MONUMENT, 4th AND PLUM.

DIRECTIONS: Go from the front of the train station, east on 5th street, as it angles a bit, and turns north on Oak St. Go north on Oak St. to 6th St. Turn left (west). Go 3 blocks west to 6th and Plum St. Turn left (south) and go 2 blocks south to 4th and Plum.

LOOK AT: At 4th and Plum is a Historical Monument on the back side of the Newton Recreation Center. You will probably see a skateboard park nearby, but at the corner is the monument. Bronze plaques emphasize the Chisholm Trail. Note the ornate stone base. That came from the demolition of the old Harvey County Court house in 1966. This monument is a twin to the one on north K-15, 6 ½ miles north of Newton. To the south of here is the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railyard, which has been here since the beginning. You are on Plum St., right on the path of the Chisholm Trail. Note the very old brick street.

DIRECTIONS: Turn around and go north 6 blocks to 9th and Plum.

STOP #3. 9th AND PLUM.

LOOK AT: This is a beautiful location for imagining trail travelers. At this point, the Chisholm Trail crossed the Sand Creek. Many trails crossed here, including Indian trails, because there was a shale bottom, but mud bottom above and below here where wagons got stuck. In fact, the Chisholm Trail came up both sides of the Sand Creek from Sedgwick. There are many strands of the trail through Newton. Plum Street is one. Both sides of the Sand Creek are others. Another wide band of several tracks goes through the west side of Newton, as far west as Meridian Road.

DIRECTIONS: Turn right (east) and go to Main St. Turn left (north) towards 24th St.

STOP #4 MAIN ST. BRIDGE

LOOK AT: Along the north side of Main St. bridge over the Sand Creek, there are Indian trails, one branch of the Chisholm Trail that will go north through the Bethel College campus, and other unrelated wagon trails.

DIRECTIONS: Go on to 24th St.; turn right (east)

STOP #5 24th STREET

LOOK AT: Know that along 24th Street, there are 8 strands of the Chisholm Trail from Meridian Road to just east of Main St.

DIRECTIONS: Go 1 block east to Minnesota St., turn left (north) Through the park next to you is the east branch of the trail. Go up to the Fine Arts Center parking lot, and park in the NE corner if possible, nearest the center of the campus.

STOP #6 BETHEL CAMPUS CHISHOLM TRAIL MARKER

LOOK AT: Get out, take a little walk to the front of the Fine Arts Center. Just to the east is a Chisholm Trail marker and read the plaque. Now look at the Fine Arts Center entrance, as the trail goes right through the front entrance. It heads across the Green, and passes through the west 2/3 of the historic Administration Building, and on north. Your ancestors walked on this land long before there was a college here.

DIRECTIONS: Get back into your vehicle. Exit the parking lot to the north. Turn left (west) onto 27th St. Go across Main St., and park in the Kauffman Museum parking lot, to the west end by the sidewalk.

STOP #7. NORTH NEWTON PARK

LOOK AT: Walk up to the Kauffman Museum building, but turn on the sidewalk going north. Continue following this sidewalk, as it curves and meanders through the woods. Go across the Kidron Creek, and come out to open grass area. As the sidewalk again runs north, notice to your left (west) a pronounced dip in the land that is not the creek. This is a Chisholm Trail swale that is verified by aerial photographs. It was cut into the sod by steel rimmed wagon wheels, but because of the soft sandy soil, it was eroded when the Kidron Creek flooded. Continue on to the tall historic pylon, and read about it.

DIRECTIONS: When done, return to your car. Go back to Main St., turn left (north), and take the first drive to the east (right), at 29th St. This is between the football stadium and its parking lot.

STOP #8 29th ST.

LOOK AT: Drive slowly past Goering Hall, the one-time boys' dormitory turned into the Athletic offices. The Chisholm Trail east branch that went through the Fine Arts Center and Administration Building passed through the NW corner of the Tennis courts, and just east of the remaining part of Goering Hall.

DIRECTIONS: Turn around, go back to 29th and Main. Turn right (north). Drive past the MCC Central States offices to your right. The Chisholm Trail passed east of the building.

LOOK AT: On your way to the I-135 exchange, several strands of the Chisholm Trail converge and pass through the entrance/exit ramps east of Main St.

DIRECTIONS: Go on to 36th St. Turn right (east) and park.

STOP #9. 36th ST.

DIRECTIONS: From 36th and K-15, go east

TRAIL: At .09 to .14 mi. are 32 wagon tracks SSW-NNE. The Chisholm Trail passed through the camper park to your south, and the RV storage shed to the north.

DIRECTIONS: Turn around, go from 36th St. north about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile.



STOP #10 COWBOY GRAVE LEGEND.

LOOK AT: At ¾ mile north of 36th St., there is a row of trees going east into the field on the quarter mile line. See a fallen tree about 30 yards east. That tree was an odd, orange colored trunk of a pine tree. Just east of that tree, there was a legend that there was a cowboy who died on the Chisholm Trail and was buried there. The pine tree might have been planted as a head marker on the west end. There is no existing documentary proof of this story, but my dowsing shows a grave there, and one 6 ft. to the south. It will have to remain a legend.

DIRECTIONS: Continue on north. The next corner is 48th St. Set odometer and go another ¾ mile north. Along the whole rest of the way to the Immigrant house near Goessel, look at all the hedges, and see if you can find any dips in the top of the hedge tree line. That would be indication of the Chisholm Trail.

STOP #11 TREE DIP IN FARMYARD

LOOK AT: At ¾ mile north on K-15, you see the former Dudte farm on the east side. What is stunning is the severe, “V” dip in the tree lines on both the north and south sides of this yard. Chisholm Trail went right through that farm.

DIRECTIONS: Go on to K-15 and 60th.

LOOK AT: Look east at .06 to .09 of a mile, that is, between the 2nd and 3rd electrical pole. No marker, but that’s where the trail would have gone. Look on the north side of the Dudte farm, and see the hedge tree dips caused by the trail.

STOP #12 72ND ST.

DIRECTIONS: From K-15, go east, on 72nd St.

TRAIL: At .07 to .11 miles east are wagon tracks N-S of the main Chisholm trail, 72 yards wide. You may see some slight hedge tree dips.

DIRECTIONS: Turn around, go back to K-15. Turn right (north). Go on north to Dutch Avenue. Turn right (east)

STOP #13 DUTCH AVENUE

DIRECTIONS: From K-15 and Dutch Avenue, go east

TRAIL: At .13 to .18 mi. are 28 tracks of the Chisholm Trail.

LOOK AT: On the north side, at most any time of year, you can see low spots in the wheat field, especially if it has rained. The late long-time landowner and Chisholm Trail fan Randolph A. Schmidt always claimed that he knew exactly where the trail was, because when working the field with farm equipment, he always had to downshift because the tractor pulled harder on those spots. I asked if he thought it was from millions of cattle pounding and packing the earth; he said no, he felt the wagon traffic cut into the sod, eroding with N-S winds, and removed some of the topsoil, thus getting closer to the stiff and gummy sub-soil, as well as creating lower spots where water would collect. You may even see it when there is tall wheat, which is shorter in the trail. Look also for weeds or other signs, but you can see the trail often—even sometimes from the highway at a parallel angle.

NOTE: At .20 miles was the Chisholm Trail marker. It has since been removed. Note: there are other branches of the trail on this mile, but they are smaller.

DIRECTIONS: Go back to K-15. Turn right (north). Go on north 1 mile to 96th. Turn right (east).

STOP #14 96th ST

DIRECTIONS: From 96th and Kansas, go east

TRAIL: At .31 miles is a CHISHOLM TRAIL MARKER, within the group of tracks, toward the west side. This is the first such cement, embossed marker you will see. This was a project by the late Bob Klemme of Enid, Oklahoma. It was his dream to mark the Chisholm Trail from the Red River, south border of Oklahoma, all the way up to Abilene. A construction company made the posts, and he got local groups and boys scout groups to place them. Because the only sources he had were maps from the Kansas State Historical Society with tiny square miles and fat sharpie lines, they aren't very accurate. Some are right on the trail, but some are a quarter to a half mile off. In this case, the marker is right within the span of trail tracks.

TRAIL: At .30 to .39 miles are 49 pairs of wagon tracks N-S on the Chisholm Trail, spanning an area 486 ft. wide.

LOOK AT: Look a half mile north to the hedge to see hedge dips. The farmer is very aware of the trails, and has found evidence of a very early residence, well, and graves next to the Chisholm Trail.

DIRECTIONS: Turn around, go back to K-15. Turn right (north). Go .6 mile north to the historical marker roadside park.

STOP #15. K-15 ROADSIDE MONUMENT. This marker placed by the Harvey County Historical Society mentions some of the many trails in the area: Chisholm Trail, the Black Beaver/Col. Emory Trail, Cherokee Trail (Ft. Smith, Arkansas to California, both old and new branches), and the Valley of the Cottonwood to Pike's Peak Trail, crossing right here. Not mentioned is a pre-existing Kaw Indian trail, going from Council Grove, to the Cottonwood valley, west of Peabody, to here, to the Santa Fe Trail SE of McPherson. The Valley of the Cottonwood to Pike's Peak wagon trail paralleled it. The Kaw trail passes E-W here. Note the ornate stone base, which came from the old Harvey County Courthouse, torn down in the late 1960s. Another marker with a base like this is in Newton, at 4th and Plum Street, on the west side of the Recreation Center block. Plum Street is a main path of the Chisholm Trail there.



DIRECTIONS: Continue on north to the next corner. Turn right (east). This is the Harvey/Marion County Line. The highway curve smooths out a correction jog we will show you.

HARVEY-MARION COUNTY LINE

STOP #16.

DIRECTIONS: From Highway 15 and the County Line, 108th (Harvey County) or 70th (Marion County) go east

TRAIL: At .16 to .19 mi. is a Kaw Indian Trail N-S. It runs just west of trees. This trail goes through the Alexanderwohl campus.

DIRECTIONS: Go on to the T-corner of 70th (Marion County) or, 108th (Harvey County) to Kansas Ave. From 70th/108th and Kansas Ave, go east.

TRAIL: At .05 miles is the CHISHOLM TRAIL MARKER in the trees to the north.

TRAIL: At .08 to .09 miles. are 8 wagon tracks crossing SSW-NNE, beginning at the end of the tree line, and into the open field.

THE SURVEY OF WEST BRANCH TOWNSHIP.

One thing you must know, is the dirty little secret of the Abilene (Chisholm) Trail north of Wichita: There are no ancient maps of it. If the surveys around here were done about 1860, and the trail didn't even start until 1867, of course it's not going to be on it. So, how does the State of Kansas know where it went? By dowsers. A. J. Frey, and Brian Stucky. Some earlier farmers know where there are ruts, but the whole path is needed.

No ancient maps. Oh, except one place. Here. West Branch Township. Why? That's because in 1860, the survey of West Branch was done so badly that it had to be thrown out and re-surveyed in the spring of 1874. This was called the "Thrasher Survey." This map DOES show the "Abilene Cattle Trail" about a half mile east of K-15. So, let's check that against the cement markers.

DIRECTIONS: Go back to K-15. Turn right (north). Go 1 mile north to 80th St. Turn right (east).

STOP #17.

DIRECTIONS: From K-15 and 80th, go east.

NOTE: There are splits in this trail. So, yes, The "Chisholm Trail" goes east, west, and through Goessel.

SURVEY SAYS: At .41 miles is Thrasher's Re-survey of 1874.

TRAIL: At .43 to .48 miles. are 23 wagon tracks N-S that are dowsed, of the main branch of the Chisholm Trail.

TRAIL: At .47 miles. is the CHISHOLM TRAIL MARKER, within the trail group. This one they got right.

DIRECTIONS: Turn around, go back to K-15. Turn right (north). Go 1 mile north to K-15 and 90th. This is the Moundridge-Tabor Church road. Turn right (east).

STOP #18

DIRECTIONS: From 90th and K-15, go east.

NOTE: SURVEY SAYS: At .46 mi. is Thrasher's Re-survey of 1874.

TRAIL: At .48 to .51 miles. are 14 wagon tracks N-S of the main branch of the Chisholm Trail.

LOOK AT: At .50 miles is the CHISHOLM TRAIL MARKER, right at the half mile. The marker is in the middle of the trail group.

DIRECTIONS: Turn around, go back to K-15. Turn right (north). Go 1 mile north to K-15 and 100th. Turn right (east)

STOP #19

DIRECTIONS: From K-15 and 100th, go east.

TRAIL: At .45 to .49 miles is a set of 10 wagon tracks N-S of one split of the Chisholm Trail.

MARKER: At .50 miles is the CHISHOLM TRAIL MARKER.

LOOK AT: Note the driveway at the half mile line going south with oil tanks.

Look south down the drive to see a pasture with shallow but visible Chisholm Trail ruts, one of the few remaining in the Goessel area. If the grass is short and you come at sunset, you might see some shadows.

NOTE: SURVEY SAYS: At .52 miles is Thrasher's Re-survey of 1874 of the Abilene Trail.

TRAIL: At .55 to .57 miles are 10 wagon tracks of the Cherokee Trail main branch N-S.

DIRECTIONS: Turn around, go back to K-15. Turn right (north). Go 1 mile north to 110th. Turn right (east).

STOP #20

DIRECTIONS: From K-15 and 110th, go east. **MUD WARNING!!** Pure dirt road.

LOOK AT: As you clear the south hedge look south to the half mile hedge running E-W. You may see the Greenfeld Cemetery. This 1876 neighborhood cemetery once had wooden grave markers, three of which are now housed in the Mennonite Heritage and Agricultural Museum. At this spot, you are in the path of the 1990 tornado, a historic tornado which ripped through Hesston and built up to a World Record F-5 speed here. LOOK AT: Notice that there are no hedges where you stand; they were bulldozed out after being pulled over.

TRAIL: At .46 to .49 miles are 15 wagon tracks N-S.

MARKER: At .50 miles is the CHISHOLM TRAIL MARKER.

SURVEY SAYS: At .50 miles is Thrasher's Re-survey of 1874.

What a mile! Turn around, go back to K-15. Turn right (north). Go 1 mile north to 120th, the paved road going east out of Goessel. Turn right (east).

STOP #21.

DIRECTIONS: From K-15 and 120th, go east. This is a phenomenal mile.

NOTE: SURVEY SAYS: At .48 miles is Thrashers' Re-survey of 1874 of the Abilene Trail.

TRAIL: At .48 to .51 miles is 10 wagon tracks N-S. This strip, just east of the gray house, was once in native pasture. It was the most visible trail tracks, and most publicly accessible, being right by a paved road. It was plowed up in recent years. It was a huge loss of history, and tragic loss for trail historians. They don't make any more trail ruts.

MARKER: At .51 miles is the CHISHOLM TRAIL MARKER.

There are other smaller sets of tracks along here. Go on, past the yard.

LOOK AT: Into the field south see one of the best examples of physical evidence of trails in a cultivated field. Depending on the time of year, if it has rained or snowed, you may see a series of low spots going south. Even with tall wheat, you may see differences in height of the wheat. Trail travel and wind erosion removed topsoil, so growth was less in spots.

DIRECTIONS: Turn around, go back to K-15. Turn right (north). Go 1 mile north to 130th.

LOOK AT: On the way, notice a pasture. From the Goessel corner, .50 to .75 miles north there is a native pasture on the east side, with trail ruts about 350 yards east of the highway.

DIRECTIONS: Go on to 130th. This is the Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church corner. Turn right (east).

STOP #22.

DIRECTIONS: From K-15 and 130th, go east.

LOOK AT: You may want to stop and read the Kansas Historical Marker about the Alexanderwohl Mennonites in the KDOT roadside turn-out.

TRAIL: At .04 to .06 miles are 12 wagon tracks N-S. They pass through the east side of the church, the brick education wing.

TRAIL: At .07 to .09 miles is the Kaw Indian trail N-S. This connects with another Kaw Trail 2.3 miles north of here. This trail passes through the playground and then the double row of twelve oak trees west of the Youth House, where outdoor church services were held during the peak of COVID. To know this church worshipped right on top of a Kaw trail is an amazing thought.

TRAIL: At .30 to .36 miles are 24 wagon tracks N-S for the main branch of the Chisholm Trail. This path crossed over to the east side of the N-S half mile hedge, and ran right past the Immigrant Houses.

MARKER: At .45 miles is the CHISHOLM TRAIL MARKER. It is not within any dowsed trail group on this mile.

TRAIL: At .52 to .53 miles are 5 wagon tracks SSE-NNW.

LOOK AT: Come to the clear field past the trees on the N-S half mile line. Look north to the Alexanderwohl Immigrant House site, which is from the center of the section 300 ft. east and 300 ft. You may see a group of trees which is at the south end of a N-S hedge. The Immigrant House marker is at the north end of that hedge.

---STOP HERE. You are at the end of this journey. Access to the Immigrant House marker is restricted private property. There may be a special day when a large group will walk or ride out to the Immigrant House site. Then you can stand on the ground where your ancestors first worshipped at home in America. Stay tuned for more information.



Mennonitischer Gottesdienst auf der Prairie.