

COMMITTEE REPORT BUTTERFIELD OVERLAND MAIL

*To the President and Board of Directors
Oklahoma Historical Society*

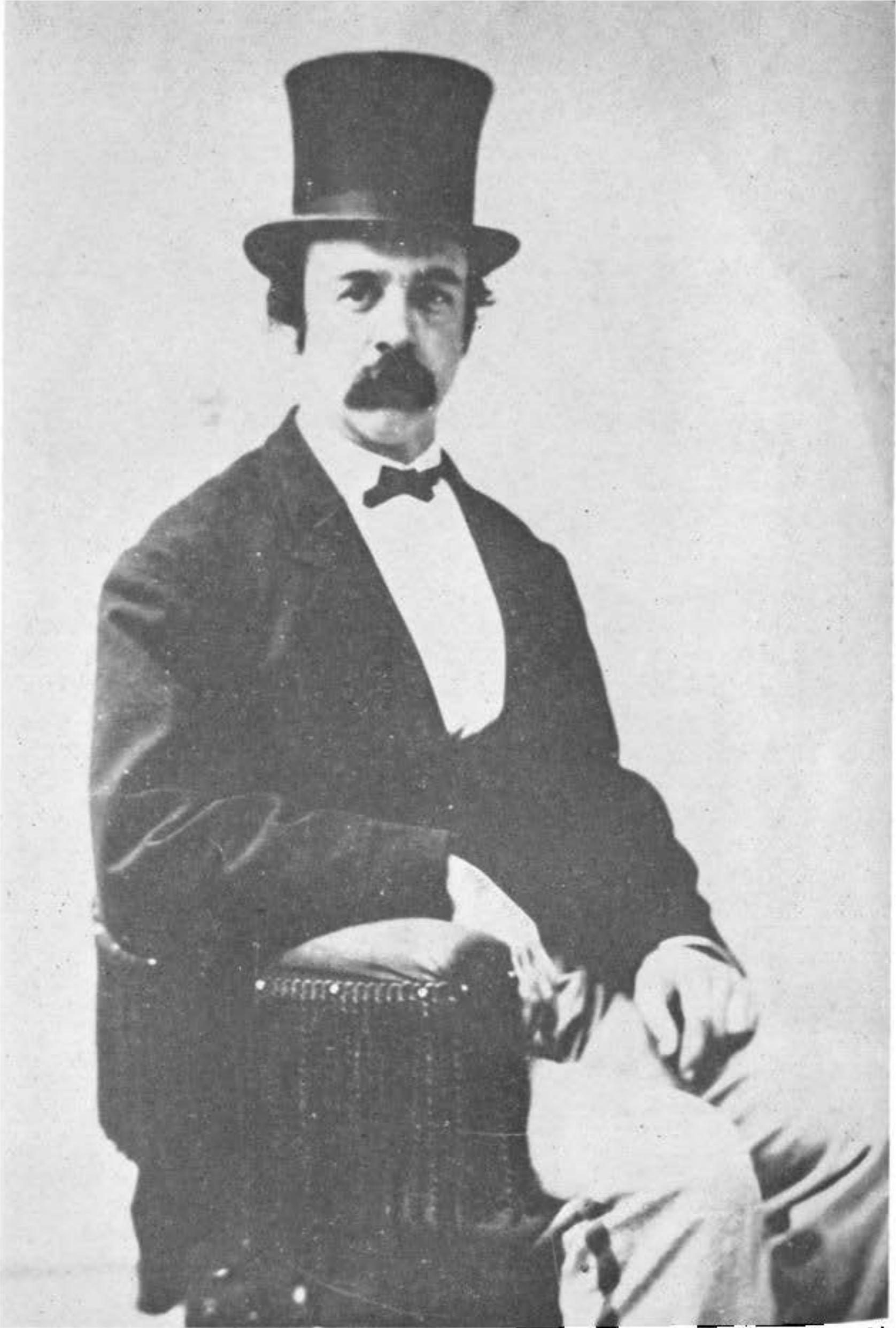
Pursuant to the instructions of the President of the Oklahoma Historical Society, this Committee has completed its work in retracing across the state of Oklahoma the route of the Butterfield Overland Mail, and in selecting the sites for the location of the permanent markers to be placed by the Society at the site of each of the twelve stage stands or stations located within Oklahoma.¹ All of the markers have now been installed and the locations of the stations, mute and faded symbols of one of the most important contributions of their age to the growth and progress of America, are permanently marked and recorded for posterity.

The verdure, profuse along the Overland Mail route across Southeastern Oklahoma, ranged in color from the deep green of the soft pine to the yellowish green of the ash. The two tone leaves of the dogweed, elm and oak were revealed in the light May breeze. The planted trees and shrubs at certain of the old station sites were in bloom. In the warm sunshine the sweet blossom of the privet, locust, bois d'arc and catalpa gave a heavy fragrance to the air. The wild honeysuckle and blackberries were starting to bloom which added a sweet spicy odor. The valleys were covered with a lush growth of blue grass, made even more fragrant by the tall sweet clover. The springs and streams were flowing full as a result of the recent spring rains.

The Committee assembled the morning of Saturday, May 17, 1958, at the Goldman Hotel, Fort Smith, Arkansas. We reached Walker's station somewhat later than Ormsby on the first west bound Overland Mail, as described by him in 1858:

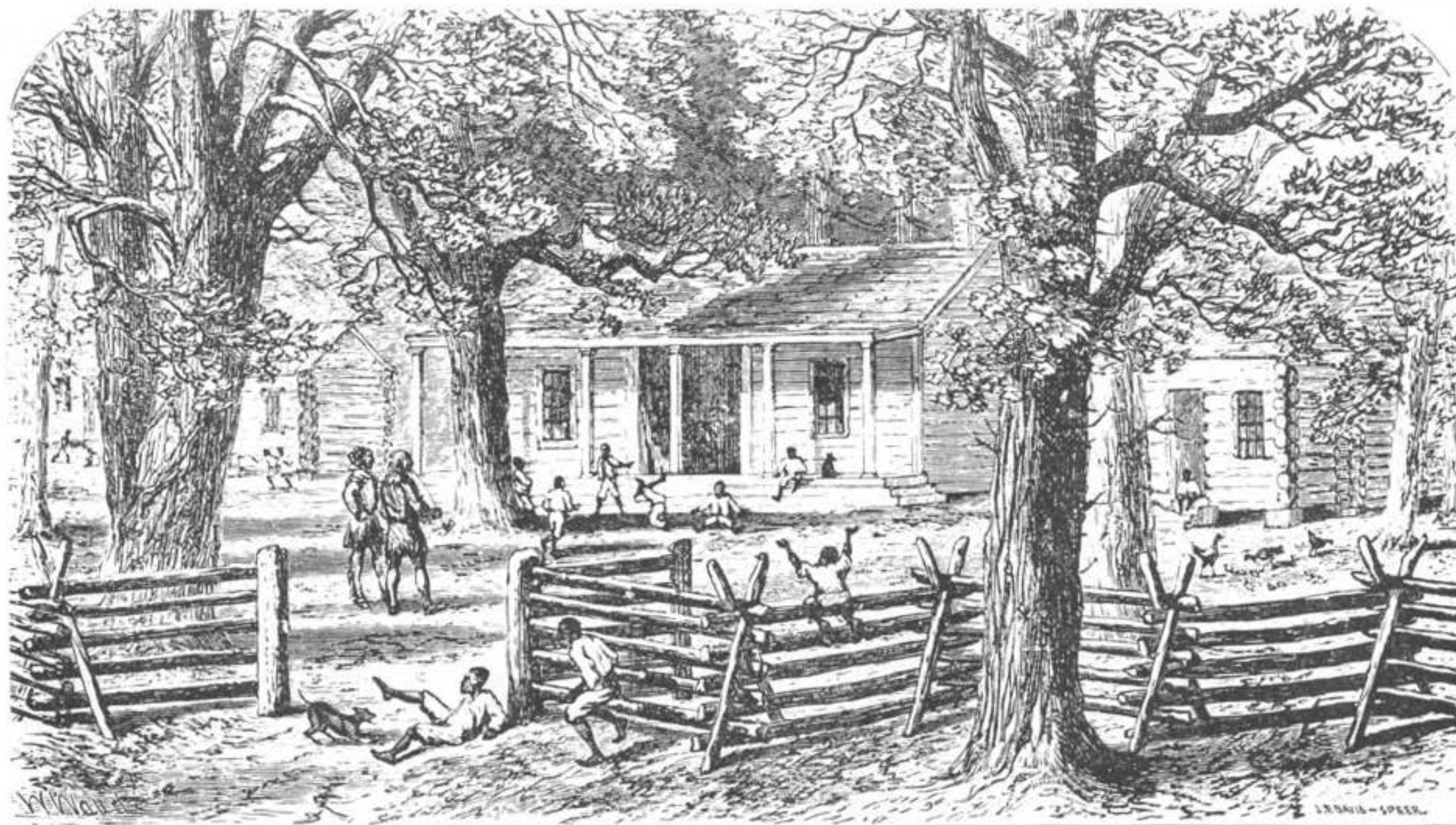
¹ The Committee used as reference:

- a. State Highway Commission, county maps, scale 1/2 inch—1 mile.
- b. USGS, Topographic maps, various quadrangles.
- c. Photostats of original township surveys, from field notes, General Land Office (now Bureau of Land Management) Washington 25, D. C.
- d. Ormsby, Waterman L., *The Butterfield Overland Mail*, edited (The Huntington Library, 1942).
- e. Pumpelly, Raphael, *A Journey by Stagecoach to Arizona, 1860*.
- f. Conkling, Roscoe P. and Margaret B., *The Butterfield Overland Mail, 1857-1869*. (The Arthur H. Clark Co., Glendale, 1947.)
- g. Special notes kept by Mildred Frizzell, on the tour of the Trail in May, 1958.



(From original photograph)

Waterman L. Grimsby, Correspondent, *New York Herald Tribune*, only through passenger on first Overland Mail Stage St. Louis to San Francisco, 1858.



(From old Print of sketch by William Waud, Davis & Speer, Engravers, 1879)

Earliest known scene of Walker's Station, Overland Mail Route, the residence of Gov. Tandy Walker, Choctaw Nation, visited in 1859 by Albert D. Richards, a journalist, and described by him in his book, *Beyond the Mississippi* (New York, 1867.)

We forded the Arkansas at Fort Smith, and for the first time since our departure from St. Louis, I had an opportunity to sleep in the wagon, wrapped up in blankets and stretched on the seats. It took some time to get accustomed to the jolting over the rough road, the rocks, and log bridges; but three days' steady riding without sleep helped me in getting used to it, and I was quite oblivious from the time of crossing the Arkansas to the first stopping place in the Indian Territory about sixteen miles from the river, which we reached about daylight.

Our caravan left Fort Smith, Arkansas, going south on Towson Street. We crossed the Poteau River eleven miles south on Oklahoma State Highway 9. Four miles west of the Poteau River bridge, we turned north on a gravel road that soon joined the old (former U. S. 271) black top road to Skullyville. At Skullyville we turned right on the gravel road past Oak Lodge School House and the former Walker home site and on down the hill to the station spring on the left side of the road.

U. S. Highway 271 has been rebuilt farther south than its former location, and the old route, leading northeast from Spiro and passing just south of old (original) Skullyville cemetery, is now disused and is hard to recognize as a former major route.

We parked the motor cars near the spring, and drank at the same spot so much enjoyed by the countless passengers riding across the Choctaw Nation via Overland Mail stages a century ago. The site of the Walker's Station is in the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 18-9N-26E and on property once occupied by Governor Tandy Walker. The old house (formerly the Choctaw Agency, 1832) later known as the Ainsworth place, burned on September 12, 1947. The local citizens still carry water from this spring. For their convenience, the water has been piped out of the old spring house nearby to the side of the road. Both the spring and springhouse are almost entirely concealed from view by the dense growth of underbrush and wild honeysuckle which was in bloom and very fragrant.

Nothing remains of the old Walker Station but scattered foundation and chimney stones. The site of this station is easily located by climbing a barbed wire fence and walking about two hundred feet up the hill from the spring.

From the position of the foundation stones it is easy to visualize the exact position of the log home. Much landscaping remains, which has grown rank and dense from lack of care. Many iris and other bulbs were in bloom, marking the location of paths, walks, borders and gardens. The dense growth of spirea indicates the front of the house. Close to the old foundation are the remains of a cellar and cistern, built perhaps at a later date.

About 150 feet east of the site appears the deep cut trace of the old road. It lies northeast-southwest, which corresponds to the direction across Section 18 of the "Texas and Fort Smith Road" shown on the General Land Office survey, dated November 2, 1898, and traverses the present county road at a point east of the Walker home site.

The setting of the Walker Station is one of the most beautiful of all the Butterfield sites in Oklahoma. The ground is covered with a lush growth of blue grass. The tall and stately hickory, walnut, oak and elm trees give it an aura of dignity and importance. The huge trees in the yards of the surrounding home sites indicates that this was once a thriving and important community.

The Committee selected as the location for the marker, a site due east of the Walker location, on the west side of the county road, and in the center of the slight depression created by the trace of the old road. As installed, the marker is situated directly in the center of the Butterfield Trail.

Governor Walker is buried in the original Skullyville cemetery, southwest of his home. The grave is marked with an ornate white marble tombstone. The cemetery, except for a few small areas that have been cleared for recent graves, is almost completely grown rank with dense blackberry bushes, wild honyesuckle and weeds. The marble tombstone of Gov. Walker bears the square and compass of the Masonic Lodge, with these words below:

*Gov. Tandy
Walker*

Born

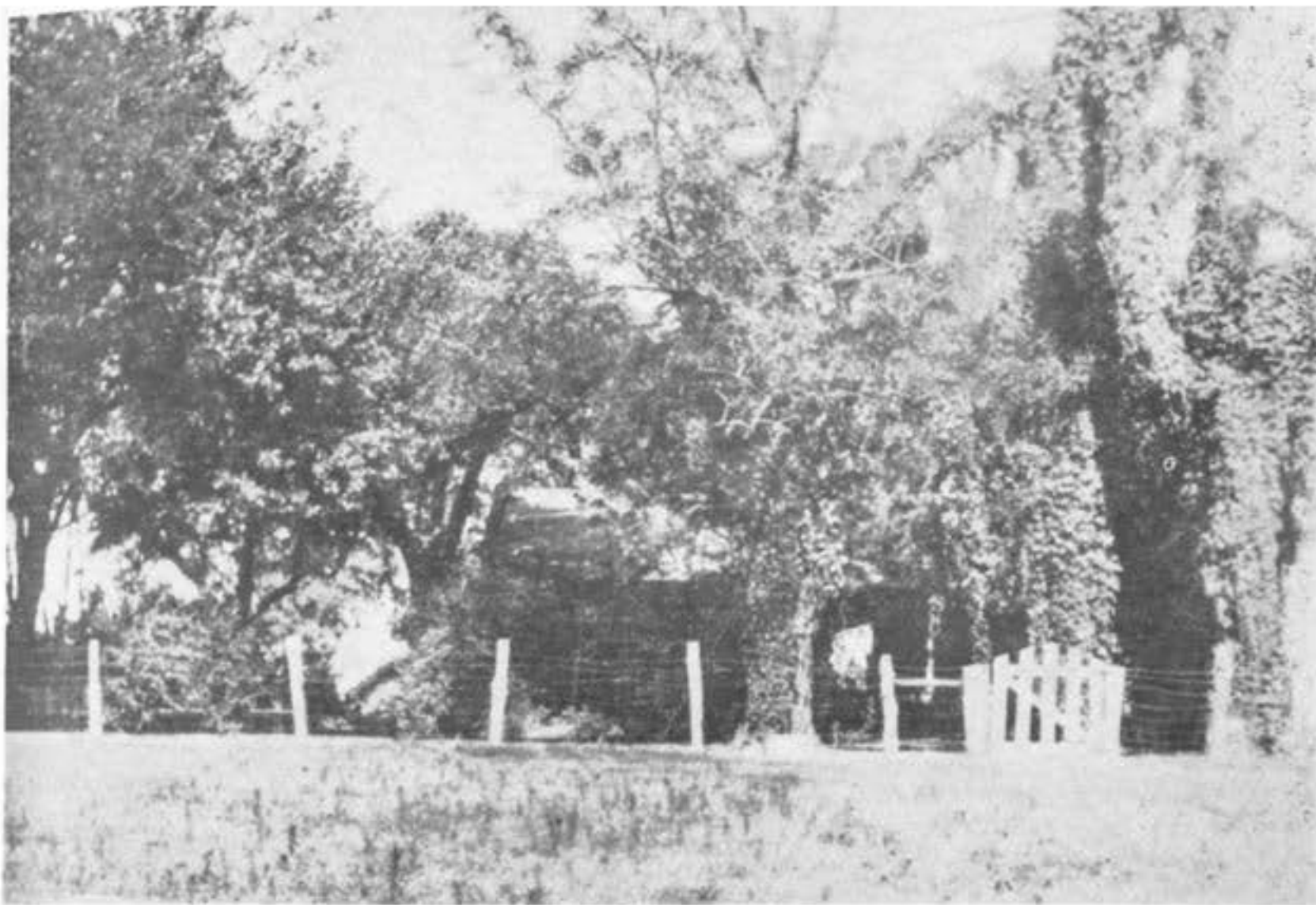
Oct. 14, 1814

Died

Feb. 21, 1877

Behold and see as you pass by,
As you are now, so once was I,
As I am now you too will be,
Prepare for death and follow me.

The county road upon which the marker was located is the one running to the north towards the site of Fort Coffee and the empty grave plot of Choctaw Agent Francis Armstrong, but the Committee did not visit those historic locations. The Oklahoma Historical Society historic markers for Fort Coffee and for Choctaw Agency (Nos. 20 and 15 of the *Historical Marker* brochure) have been moved by the State Highway Commission to a commanding spot on the north side of new U. S. 271, due south of Skullyville.



Walker's Station as it appeared in 1932. This was the Old Choctaw Agency erected 1832.



Entrance to Walker's Station site in 1958; only shrubbery remaining on the grounds, the house having accidentally burned in 1947.

From the cemetery, the Committee returned to U. S. 271, and proceeded west, through Spiro, to the junction with U. S. Highway 59, and there turned south. The Butterfield route passed through Spiro and proceeded southwesterly, north of the present Kansas City Southern tracks, and crossed U. S. 271 about at the intersection with State Highway 31. Mr. and Mrs. Conkling state:

From Walker's to Trahern's, the next station seventeen miles southwest, at present-day Lathan, LeFlore County, the mail road passed south of what is now the town of Spiro and followed a general southwest course toward the crossing on Coal Creek. Highway 271 is established close to the line of the old road over a portion of this distance. Two miles southwest of Walker's two early established roads branched west from the mail road. One led to Edward's Trading Post, and the other was the road followed by Marcy to the Sansbols River. Near Coal Creek crossing, the mail road curved sharply west and then southwest again and passed over a low divide to Buck Creek, ten miles from Walker's. There was a station known as "Buck Creek" at this point on a later established mail route. From Buck Creek crossing, the road continued on southwest to the crossing on Brazil Creek, a tributary of the Poteau, and then on to the crossing on Nigger Creek, near its confluence with Brazil Creek.

The remains of the stone jail for Skullyville County Courthouse, Choctaw Nation, stand in the extreme southeast corner of Section 12-8N-24E, and the Trail crossed just a few hundred feet south of this location. From the Courthouse, the Trail appears to have proceeded due east for about two miles in the flat between Coal Creek and Buck Creek, before resuming its course to the northeast. Between Spiro and the Courthouse site few, if any, definite traces of the Trail may be found today.

The route of the Trail across Township 8 North 24 East is known with exactness, and is shown as the "Old Ft. Smith and Stringtown Road" on the township survey of the General Land Office, November 15, 1898.

The Committee proceeded south on US 271 to Shady Point, and there turned west on the section line road. At the end of the sixth mile, Nigger Creek was crossed on the county road bridge. Less than a half mile farther, we turned north on the section line road and proceeded as far as the Brazil Creek bridge. This present bridge is located .7 miles southwest from the old Trail crossing on Brazil Creek. Returning south .4 mile from the Brazil Creek bridge is a lane leading to the east. This is the road leading to the Brazil school, now abandoned, and the site of the D. R. Welch place and cemetery. At the end of the lane, after it has completed a turn to the north, and marked with a hedge of huge bois d'arc trees is the site of the once busy settlement of Brazil. A few hundred feet west of the lane is the grave plot of D. R. Welch. Several hundred yards northeast of the cemetery plot is the Nigger

Creek crossing, and on beyond is the ford across Brazil Creek. The postoffice at Brazil was established April 11, 1879, with Mrs. Phebe Welch as postmistress. Until 1895, the office was officially known as Brazil Station.

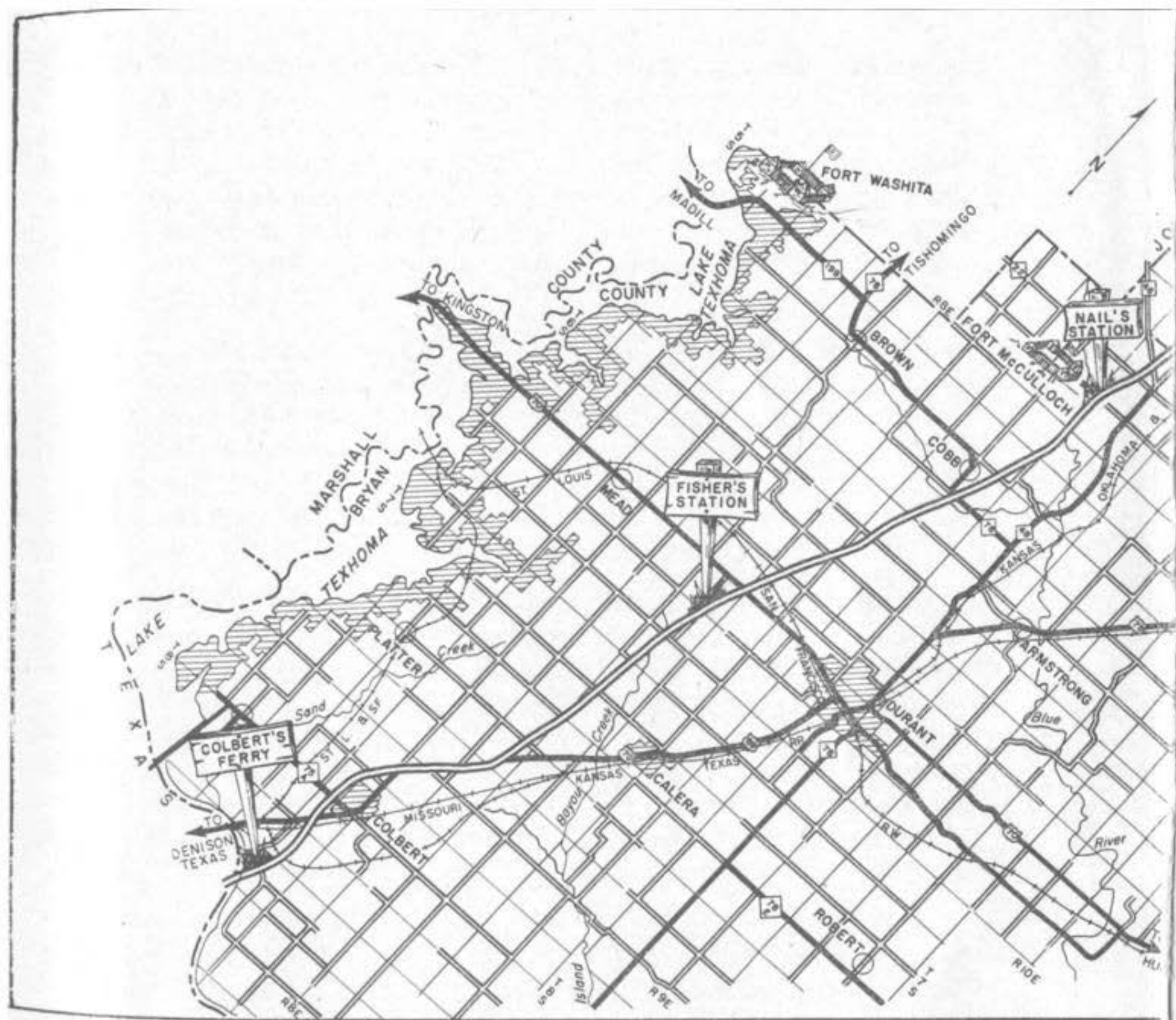
Brazil Station was on several important roads, and while not an official station on the Butterfield Trail, was important from the early beginnings. The site of the stables and corral is near the present well, still in use. We were told of two elderly men living in Poteau who remember as boys in 1903 climbing to the attic of the old Welch house where they saw mail bags and old mail or dead letter files. Mr. and Mrs. Conkling write:

Approximately a quarter of a mile southwest from Nigger Creek crossing is the site of Brazil station, established by Washington McDaniel and Charles M. James, to whom the right had been granted by the General Council of the Choctaw Nation, in October, 1858, to operate and maintain a tollbridge on Brazil Creek. This project was, no doubt, planned in anticipation of increased traffic over the road. Ruins of Brazil station may be seen a short distance north of the old house and store of D. R. Welch, built in 1868, at the present settlement of Brazil. This was a station stop on the local mail lines which operated over this route before and after the Civil War, but it is not reported on the Butterfield Mail itinerary. From Brazil the old road maintained a southwesterly course for three and a half miles to Trahern's, at Latham.

From the section corner south of Brazil, the county road proceeds two miles west and south, and passes westerly through the site of Latham. At Latham is the location of Trahern's Station, or "Council House." The present county road is the approximate Butterfield route from Brazil Station to Trahern's. The Latham community is located in SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 32-8N-24E. On the north of the present road is an abandoned store building, and the farm home of Everett Bledsoe. On the south is the modern farm home of Leon Watson. Most of the surrounding countryside has been cleared for small scattered farms.

The Butterfield Station appears to have been in the field a few hundred feet east of the Watson home. Mr. and Mrs. Conkling state:

From all that can be learned it appears certain that the station was at the original Trahern home located about three hundred feet south of the old Council House. This old executive building is recalled as a large well-built log structure which occupied a site approximately two hundred feet northeast of the present Latham store. The tract that the original Trahern home and station occupied is now a cultivated field. The evidence in favor of the location is the significant fact that the Trahern family burying ground is located in a copse of small trees on the eastern margin of this tract. The location is further confirmed by a later mail route itinerary which gives "Council House" as a station at this point on the route instead of Trahern's, and the distance from Walker's is given as seventeen miles, the same as the distance given between Walker's and Trahern's on the Butterfield Mail itinerary.



The Trahern grave is in the grove of large trees in the east portion of this field. It reads:

James N. Trahern

Died

Mar. 29, 1883

Aged

65 Years

The cemetery continues for some distance east into the adjoining pasture. The Committee interviewed Mr. Everett Bledsoe, who came to the Latham community in 1908.² He stated that a former owner had removed the grave stones of the cemetery and placed them in a large pile near the Trahern grave, in order to cultivate the field; and that the entire area between the Watson home and the Trahern grave had once been a cemetery.

At the northeast corner of the field, and just inside the fence, is the site claimed to be the grave of Chief Musholatubbee. It is nineteen feet south of the right of way, and is a large mound marked by a row of stones. The large size is attributed to the belief that the horse of the Chief is likewise interred. Nothing remains of the horizontal stone slab or other grave structure, just the large mound of earth and loose stones.

About 500 feet north is Council House Spring. It is in a large grove of trees, and is flowing copiously. Its stone walls are covered with ferns. The spring is often mentioned in contemporary writing, and is a certain aid in double checking the site. About 100 feet away is the site of the old Council House, marked by a few scattered foundation and chimney stones. Mr. Bledsoe related that as a boy, the older settlers would align their sight upon the grave of Musholatubbee by sighting a certain way through the windows and doors of the Council House.

The Committee selected a site for the marker, on the south side of the county road, due north of the Trahern grave site and just north of the fence from the Musholatubbee grave.

The route from Trahern's to the next station is described by Mr. and Mrs. Conkling:

The nineteen-mile stage between Trahern's and Holloway's, the next station, pursued an almost direct course southwest. Wild Horse and Dog creeks were forded much the same as now. One mile and a half southwest of the present settlement of Walls, the road crossed the boundary line of LeFlore and Latimer Counties, and a mile southwest of present Fowlerville, it crossed the 35th degree parallel,

² Committee members were grieved to learn of the death of Mr. Everett Bledsoe on May 22, 1958, a week after this interview at Latham.

and approximately two and a quarter miles from this point, it crossed the 95th degree meridian, and then on three and three quarters miles to Holloway's.

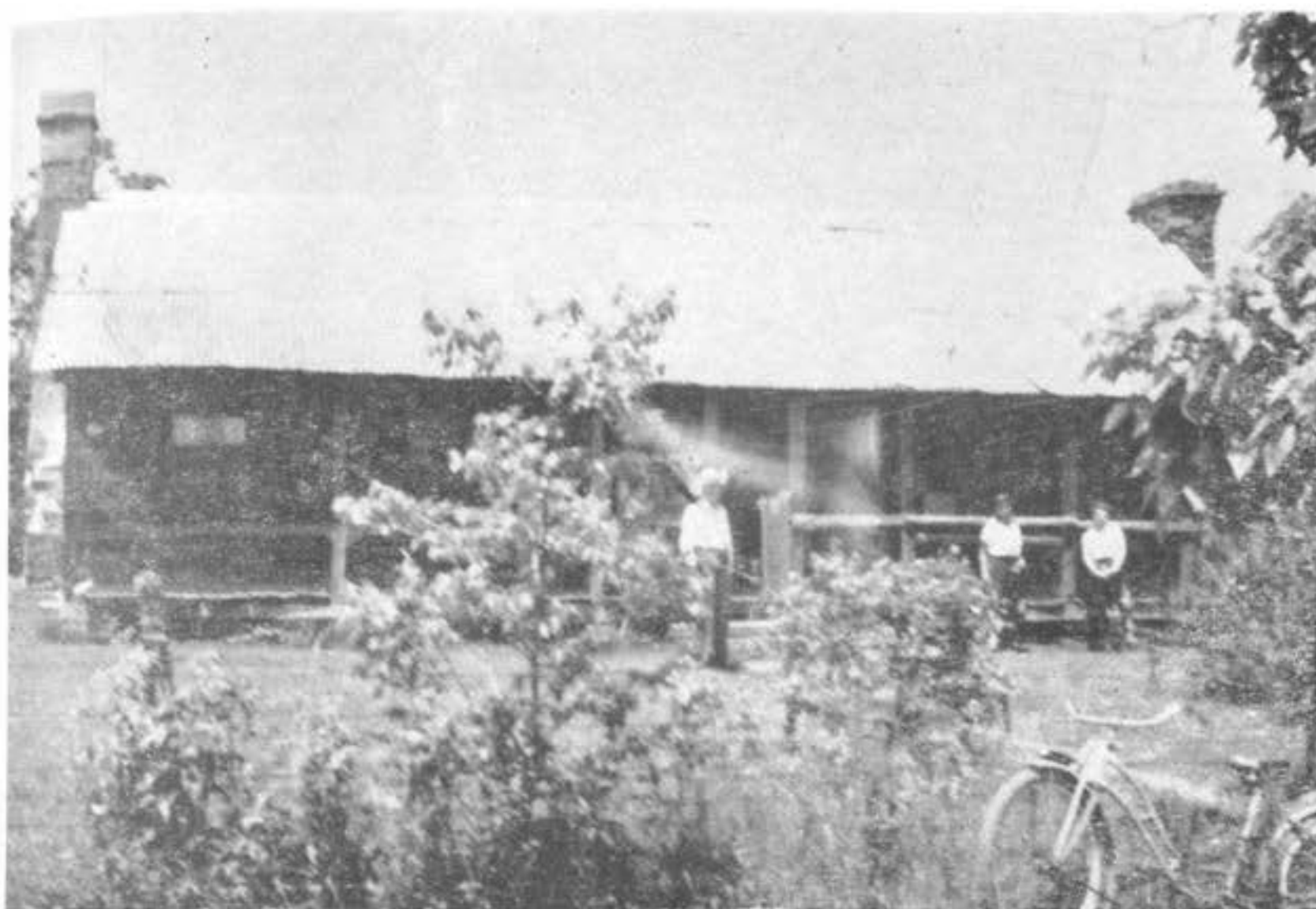
The Committee proceeded west from Latham .2 mile and then turned south to the section corner, and after a turn again west, we followed the county road south and west as it proceeds to Walls community, following generally on the south the course of Brazil Creek. Dog Creek Settlement (Sec. 11-7N-23E), a Negro community of descendants of Negro freedmen, is reached about three miles from Latham, and about five miles farther the Walls community is reached just before the county road crosses into Latimer County. We continued west along the south valley of Brazil Creek. The gradient of the creek at this point is only 3 feet to the mile, so small one is hardly conscious of climbing. This is also a good reason for locating the Overland Mail Road here because of the easy grade to the southwest.

From here the road climbs slowly from 400 feet at Latham to 600 feet at Edwards' Store, located (NW $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 15-6N-22E) at the north entrance to The Narrows (elevation over 650 feet). Edwards' Store, in the community of original Red Oak, is located in a beautiful spot. As Edwards' place is approached, one is conscious for the first time of climbing, as the road swings southwest and south around the northwest limb of the Savanna sandstone hills.

Approaching from the east, the old original log home of Thomas Edwards is clearly visible on the rise to the north of the present county road. This is the only original building located along the Overland Mail in Oklahoma that is standing today. It is located on a limb of the hill that is approximately 30 feet above the present county road. We parked along the road, and walked up the hill some 200 feet to the house, as there would not have been room for all three cars to turn around in front of the house.

As we walked up the hill, the old hitching post of bois d'arc was noted. It was probably near this old hitching post that the Overland Mail coaches would stop, while the passengers would walk up to the Edwards' home where they were served good food. This would also give the horses a chance to blow for the pull up over The Narrows, as from here on the gradient is much steeper. Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Hardaway occupy the old place. Mr. Hardaway's father was a nephew of Mr. Thomas Edwards.

It is hoped that this old house with its century of historic associations may be preserved. It is long and low. Two sections are connected by an open breezeway. A long low porch across the full length of the front of the house. The porch is



Edwards' Store in 1958.



The old chimney built without mortar, Edwards' store.



Carefully notched and fitted logs of the original house, Edwards' Store.

floored with wide boards, well rotted along the outer ends. A crude log railing, waist high, and log posts, outlines and helps to support the structure. The low sloping roof is covered with corrugated tin recently added. A wire fence defines a clean, bare and neat lawn.

As the visitor enters the gate and approaches the house, it is realized this is no farmer's ordinary shack. The minute one steps on the well packed yard from long years of use, and the steps leading to the porch (which are giant cut slabs of sandstone), it is sensed that this is a very old and important building. Upon seeing the great, hand hewn logs of the original home on the Butterfield Mail, at once one knows this is the real thing. Perhaps the most convincing features of all are the great stone chimneys at either end of the home. The stones are so perfectly fitted on the earliest chimney that they laid without mortar.

The original appearance of the home will have to be imagined because of the later additions, but the vista from the house, of the wooded Brazil Creek valley and hills beyond, to the north is one of majesty. It has not been appreciably altered. It is an everlasting joy to the visitor of Edwards' store, and looked to us much as it looked to Ornsby, assuming he wasn't too tired to look!

The beautiful flowering shrubs and early roses were in full bloom, which added to the beauty of this historic and scenic spot.

From Edwards, the Committee continued west and south on the county road for five miles until we reached the western entrance of The Narrows. Here was located Holloway's Station. From Edwards' to Holloway's, the present county road follows exactly the Butterfield route, and in many places, the depression and trace of the old Trail may be seen lacing back and across the present roadway. The original route is shown as "Red Oak and Peach Orchard Road" on the survey of Township 6N-22E, General Land Office, November 15, 1898. The mouth of The Narrows is in SW $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 24-6N-22E, and the location of Holloway's was somewhere in the Quarter Section.

Of Holloway's Station, Mr. and Mrs. Conkling write:

William Holloway is believed to have been the original proprietor of this station. Unfortunately, nothing definite has been learned concerning his identity or antecedents, further than that in October, 1858, "One William Holloway was granted the privilege to establish a toll-gate near his home in The Narrows." The toll-gate was probably located a short distance above the station at the foot of a spur of the mountain up over which the mail road made a steep ascent and descent. A well preserved section of the old road at this point may still be seen. It was probably at this same location that Jack McCurtain established his toll-gate, eight years later in 1866.

The present county road climbs slowly from the west into the saddle forming The Narrows. Portions of the Butterfield road may be seen plainly where it crossed and laboriously climbed the grade. The great effort that went into building the stage road is evident when the enormous slabs of sandstone that were used to support the road are examined. The grade of the present road is much less than the Butterfield, and in order to reduce grades, present engineering has made deep cuts and fills obliterating sections of the Trail. Portions of the stage road appear to rise as much as one foot in twenty.

The site of Holloway's is believed to be indicated by the remains of an early cemetery, of which only a few markers remain. The graves are high above the county road, on its south; and it appears that modern highway construction has cut away part of the grave plots. The principal remaining stone reads:

Dolphus C.

Son of

H. S. & J. S. Jackson

Born

Sept. 23, 1874

Died

Oct. 18, 1875

The Committee thinks that the site of the Station was probably within two hundred feet west of the grave plots. This is partially determined by the fact that a site farther west would be in terrain which would render impractical the operation of a toll-gate facility.

Remarkably, while the Committee was gathered at the cemetery site, a deafening roar from the air disclosed the passage of a flight of B52 jet bombers. The aircraft were very near the ground and by an odd circumstance passed directly and immediately overhead. Each member of the Committee remained in awe of this incredible contrast in man's progress in transportation within the short span of one century.

As the location for the Holloway Station marker, the Committee designated a favorable site on the north side of the county road, across from the cemetery plot, and on a flat caused by removal of road building materials.

We then followed the county road southwest to present Red Oak, where we resumed travel due west on U. S. Highway 270. The Butterfield Trail directly crosses Red Oak, and then swings sharply west, following the direction of U. S. 270. On

the route of the Trail from Holloway's to the next station, Mr. and Mrs. Conkling write:

From Holloway's to Riddle's, the next station sixteen miles southwest, the mail road pursued a winding course southward through The Narrows and on through what was later known as the Jack McCurtain place. The improved highway leading through The Narrows to present-day Red Oak, branches from the mail road a short distance from Holloway's Station site and follows a course farther west. . . . One of the best preserved abandoned sections of the old mail road on this portion of the route was observed here traversing a dense oak wood on the McCurtain place. In spite of the undergrowth it still appeared like a straight narrow aisle through the forest, where the bark on the trunks of some of the larger trees displayed old scars, long healed, that were scored by the hubs of many passing vehicles. The old road could be distinctly traced following up the hill past the McCurtain station site, and on still farther up towards The Narrows. This was on November 3, 1930. It was announced that on the following day work would commence on this very spot, felling the fine trees and clearing the land preparatory to planting, thus effectually effacing this relic of the old thoroughfare that has been a trail followed by man as long as he has inhabited the region.

About one mile east of the present town of Red Oak, Highway 270 and the tracks of the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad cross the abandoned mail road where it curved west after traversing the old McCurtain place. From this point the road continued on a course almost due west, south of the present main lines of traffic, to Riddle's keeping along the edge of the southern foothills, that border the narrow valley now traversed by the railroad and highway. Both Little and Big Fourche Maline creeks were crossed. Portions of the old road may still be traveled over this section. The present country road as it approached the Big Fourche Maline, which is established almost on the old road, becomes a good graded highway. An iron bridge now spans the stream near the old crossing which may be seen about seventy-five feet north of the bridge.

The west course of the Overland Mail, south of Red Oak, (likewise true of other places) was no accident. It was determined by the geology of the country. From a point three miles south of Red Oak to a point south of Wilburton, there is a line of east-west hills, rising to a height of over 850 feet, that would have been real "horse-killers" to cross. The Overland Mail in choosing this route took advantage of the fine engineering work of nature and crossed these hills at a point where Fourche Maline Creek had laboriously cut through the hills, as it flows northeast to the Potomac River. At this point, "In October, 1858, John Riddle was among the number to whom a toll-bridge concession was granted by the Choctaw Council. His charter specified a toll-bridge on Fourche Maline Creek near his home," according to Conkling.

We proceeded west on U. S. 270 to Lutie. From Lutie to Wilburton, the highway has been rebuilt recently, and it is easy for the traveler unwittingly to pass Lutie, as the new route is several hundred feet north of the former U. S. 270.

A short distance east of Lutie, on former U. S. 270, a county road continues due east and crosses the tracks of the Rock Island Railroad. This county road must be followed to reach the site of Riddle's Station. Immediately after crossing the tracks, driving east, the Lutie Cemetery is seen on the north of the road. A short distance farther east is the county road crossing of Fourche Maline. The location of Riddle's toll bridge was about 100 feet north of the present bridge. Between Fourche Maline and the Lutie cemetery is the Riddle family cemetery and the site of Riddle's Station (Center Sec. 12-5N-19E). Some 500 feet north of the county road may be seen the scattered stones of chimneys and other debris of the Riddle place. The well, partially filled, is a dense brush thicket. "The original Riddle home was probably a large log house with stone chimneys, typical of the time," writes Conkling.

On the hillside west of the site is the family cemetery. One stone reads "Isabella Riddle, died Jan. 25, 1875, age 34 years" and another, "Elsie Riddle, died Feb. 1, 1875, age 29 years." The grave of John Riddle is not indicated.

This station was located in a beautiful and bountiful valley, almost knee deep in blue grass, with unlimited water from the Fourche Maline, and with coal seams exposed a short distance south of the station.

The location for the Riddle's Station marker was designated by the Committee on the north side of the county road, south of the Riddle cemetery, and adjoining the present gate into the field containing the location of the Riddle home.

From Lutie to Wilburton, the tracks of the Rock Island are superimposed on the trace of the Trail, and the road laces back and across, often only a few feet away from the tracks. The concrete highway is only a few yards farther to the north. Mr. and Mrs. Conkling write regarding the Trail from Riddle's:

From Riddle's to Pusley's, the next station, sixteen miles southwest, the mail road followed a westerly course, south of the present town of Lutie, and the city of Wilburton and south of the line of the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad, for a distance of three miles and then curved in a more southwesterly direction toward the present little settlement of Higgins in Latimer County. From Lutie to a point about one mile northeast of Limestone, a distance of about six miles, Highway 270 and the railroad parallel the course of the old road. From this point, the country road leading in the direction of Higgins, which branches from Highway 270, is close to the line of the old road, and where, farther on, it makes the ascent of a rough and somewhat steep hill, it appears to be established in the track of the old road. On the summit of the hill, which is one of a low range of hills over which the mail road led, was a little settlement known as "Mountain Station" post-office, twelve miles southwest from Riddle's, that probably owed its existence to the establishment of the Butterfield Mail.

West of Wilburton, at a corner just west of Eastern Oklahoma A. & M. College, we turned south into a county road. A short distance, this road turns to the southwest and parallels on the north the Rock Island. After a mile, the road turns again to the south, crosses the tracks, and resumes its course to the west for 1.6 miles. We then turned again south, and proceeded on the county road to Higgins. This road rises sharply over a divide, and at the crest, elevation 920 feet, is the site of Mountain Station. For several miles on either side of Mountain Station, the present road is closely contiguous to the Trail, and in many places the ruts and depression of the old road may be seen within a few feet along the roadway.

Mountain Station cemetery (NW $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 9-4N-18E) is still in use, and is in excellent condition. The graves of Melvina Pusley and the sons of J. J. Oatman, as well as many others, were noted. Iris were in full bloom and the cemetery is an inspiration of rustic beauty. The view south from Mountain Station is one of grandure; and across the valley of Gaines Creek are timbered hills rising to a height equal to the "pass" containing Mountain Station.

Upon reaching Higgins we were fortunate to locate Mr. James W. Green (Star Route, Wilburton), the gentleman who was residing in the Pusley place when it was visited by Mr. and Mrs. Conkling. He had been of great help to them, and notwithstanding the passage of the intervening years, he was of equal value to the Committee. He accompanied us to the site of Pusley's Station, the most difficult at present to find unaided.

The road has been rebuilt west from Higgins to Harts-horne, with a new modern bridge over Gaines Creek. The Trail crossed this highway about one mile west of Higgins School. At the west approach to the Gaines Creek bridge is a county road leading to the south. On this road we proceeded south 1.4 miles to the dim almost impassable section line road (between Sections 24 and 25) leading east. This is the present route to the Pusley site. This trail fords Buffalo Creek and terminates at the entrance to the old Pusley place. The trace of the Trail crosses north-south at the road end, and may be seen plainly as it proceeds across the pasture comprising the northeast corner of Section 25-4N-17E.

Pusley Station (NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 25-4N-17E) is described by Conkling:

Pusley's Station was at the home of Silas Pusley, the location being in Latimer County, in Sec. 24-25, T4N, R17E. Part of the old Pusley farm occupied a large triangular tract of comparatively level land lying between Gaines Creek on the north and Pusley Creek on the west, which was traversed by the mail road in a general northeast-southwest direction from the crossings on the above-named

creeks. The original Silas Pusley home and station was a large double log house of which nothing remains but two crumbled heaps of stone chimney foundations. The ruins may be seen slightly over a quarter of a mile southwest of the Gaines Creek crossing, and about one hundred feet west of an old log house now standing on the east side of the old road, the former home of Eastman Pusley, and now occupied by Mr. J. W. Green. The Pusley property is now owned by Mr. J. T. Stalling of Hartshorne, Oklahoma.

The place is now vacant. Mr. J. W. Green, mentioned by Conkling as residing in the house, stated he now made his home with his children. He also advised that the present owner is John Watts.

We spent considerable time at the former home of Eastman Pusley. It is an excellent example of the station type home. Being unoccupied it was readily inspected. The stage station site is about two hundred yards west of the present house which was built about the time of the Civil War or soon afterward. The care with which this home had been constructed indicated that this community of Pusley's was built by discerning and intelligent people. This log house, now vacant and exposed to the ravages of weather and stock, is built in the typical station style of two sections connected by an open hall or breeze-way. The beautiful hand hewn logs are visible where the cheap recent clapboards have fallen off. The door and window frames are about twelve inches thick. Porches which are rotting away run the full length of the east and west sides of the house. The south section of the house is divided into two rooms by a light partition, apparently added much later. The fireplace in the front room facing the trace of the Overland Mail is in a good state of repair. The north room was filled with hay. Since this is an excellent example of the Butterfield Station home (even though it was built after the War Between the States), the Committee urges that it be preserved as an historic home. The open hallway had been closed with a partition waist high, and screened in for a summer room. The beautiful old tree to the north of the house and the adjoining well were other indications of a once important house. The well was built waist high out of carefully cut and fitted slabs of sandstone and adjoined the house at the south corner of the west or front porch. The wire fence that outlined the yard was covered with early spring roses and fragrant honeysuckle in full bloom.

We recalled the young Indian boy who aided Ormsby at Pusley's home one hundred years ago. Mr. Ormsby wrote:

At Pussey (a station for changing horses, where an Indian of that name lives), about sixty-six miles from the river, I met an old Indian who owns seven hundred head of cattle and a pretty daughter, and is willing to give the half of the one to the white man who will marry the other. Here I gave an Indian boy a paper of tabacco to



Traces of the old turnpike road at The Narrows, located north-east of Red Oak. Photo, 1932.



(Photo, 1958)

This old log house built soon after the Civil War stands near the original site of *Pusley's Station*, and is the same type house as the Stage Station of 1858.

give me water enough to wash my face, put on a blue flannel shirt, and considered myself pretty well on my way out West.

This rich and productive black soil, that pastured Mr. Pusley's stock one hundred years ago, is now feeding abundantly Mr. Watts' cattle.

The Pusley burial plot is about two hundred feet southwest of the location of the old Silas Pusley home. Among others in this cemetery are the graves of the Pusleys and the Kings. There is also an old Indian type grave covered by a small house now falling in decay.

The Committee designated a spot on the south side of the primitive section line road along the north of Section 25, in the center of the depression made by the old road, as the location for the Pusley marker.

We returned to the ford on Buffalo Creek, and after regaining the north-south county road, turned left, to the south, and almost at once again crossed Buffalo Creek. From this point we proceeded southwest across Townships 3 North, Ranges 16 and 17 East, on a private road traversing the ranch of Moses Watts. This road follows very closely the trace of the Trail.

The next seventeen miles to Blackburn's is through some of the most interesting and difficult geology in the state of Oklahoma. This northeast-southwest valley through the Ouachita Mountains was made possible by the great Ti Valley fault. This fault swings in a great semi-circle across southeastern Oklahoma from Arkansas on the east to Bryan County on the southwest where it disappears under younger cretaceous rocks. Isolated as this valley is, by nature of its geologic structure and lack of subsequent culture, gives the feeling of riding over the actual old stage road. In fact, at a number of places it is possible to drive over portions of the original mail road. Since this area is for the most part one large ranch, there is only a private ranch road or trail throughout most of the distance. There are no cars, no houses, no telephone lines, no electric lines nor signboards for the longest distance of any place along the Overland Route in Oklahoma. The trail winds up along Buffalo Creek (draining to the northeast) slowly rising to a divide near the middle of the valley of Elm Creek (draining southwest). Beautiful wild flowers and a lush growth of grass carpet the floor of this valley.

It is urged that the visitor proceed from Pusley's to the next station site via Hartshorne; and that the route through Ti Valley not be utilized without prior permission from the ranch owners. The gates on the ranch road are locked, and by returning to the Gaines Creek bridge west of Higgins, thence to Hartshorne, and south to Ti, time will be saved and convenience assured.

The ranch road passes the site of Buffalo Station, located in SE $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 7-3N-17E, and established in 1867. Conkling writes:

About two and a quarter miles slightly southwest from the Watts place is the ruin of the old Pulcher log house, which stood directly on the old road. The Pulchers were among the early settlers in this region. About a mile southwest from the Pulcher place is the site of Buffalo Creek station, a station that was established on a later mail route.

Nothing remains today of Buffalo Station, although the exact site is known. The Committee recommends that a marker similar to the Butterfield markers be placed at the exact site as soon as possible.

The ranch road comes into the Hartsborne-Ti county road three miles west of Buffalo Station, and there we turned left, south, to Ti. Somewhere near Ti, on Sunday, September 19, 1858, Mr. Ormsby had the experience he relates:

On Sunday night, when within a few miles of Blackburn's Station, I thought all hopes of a quick trip for the first overland mail were at an end. We had taken a splendid team of horses at the last station, had been spinning over the rolling prairies at a rapid rate: our route for some hours had been over these hills with their gradual elevations, and our driver had urged his team pretty well. We now came to a patch of woods through which the road was tortuous and stony. But our driver's ambition to make good time overcame his caution, and away we went, bounding over the stones at a fearful rate.

The moon shone brightly, but its light was obstructed by the trees, and the driver had to rely much on his knowledge of the road for a guide. To see the heavy mail wagon whizzing and whirling over the jagged rocks, through such labyrinth, in comparative darkness, and to feel oneself bouncing—now on the hard seat, now against the roof, and now against the side of the wagon—was no joke, I assure you, though I can truthfully say that I rather liked the excitement of the thing. But it was too dangerous to be continued without accident, and soon two heavy thumps and a bound of the wagon that unseated us all, and a crashing sound, denoted that something had broken. We stopped and examined, but found no damage except a broken seat, and proceeded to the station. Here a further examination, to our utter astonishment, disclosed the fact that the pole, or tongue, of the wagon was badly split. It was a mystery to me how we ever reached the station without completing its destruction. It took more time to mend it than the ambitious driver saved. Moral—"Make haste slowly." After repairing damages we got started again and traveled the next 18 miles in two hours and a quarter.

From Ti we proceeded west on the Pittsburg-Ti county road for five miles to the junction with the section line road leading south to Pine Top School. For several miles west from Ti, the present road follows closely the trace of the Trail. The Trail entered Township 2 North 15 East in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 3, and crossed Brushy Creek at a ford in the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 5. Regarding the locality, Conkling states:

As early as October, 1858, a small settlement known as "Brushey", evidently named for the near-by flowing creek, existed in the vicinity that may have included Blackburn's within its borders. In a thick wood southwest of the station site are a number of old graves. This is said to be old Brushey Cemetery. In 1858, one J. G. Blackburn kept a store at Brushey, and judging from the numerous consignments of merchandise to him at that place, waybills of which were found among the records of the old commission house of O. C. Wood and Company of Fort Smith, he carried on an extensive trade for that day.

The Committee was able to locate the all but obliterated remains of the Brushey Cemetery (SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 5), with the trace of the Trail clearly discernable just north. One grave stone, legible in part, reads:

Mora Bell

Wife of (?) Bell

DIED

April 12, 1888

GOOD BYE

The section line road (between Sections 4 and 5) leading south from Pine Top School crosses a well defined trace of the Trail a few hundred yards north of the south line of these two sections. Conkling gives this description of Blackburn's Station:

Blackburn's Station was at the home of Casper B. Blackburn, in old Jack's Fork county, now Pittsburg County, the location being in Sec. 4-5, T2N, R15E. A heap of chimney stones still to be seen in a small clearing on the north side of the abandoned old road is all that remains of the old Blackburn home and station.

The Committee was unable to locate with certainty the heap of chimney stones in question, but without doubt the station was located a short distance west of the east line of Section 5. A location on the west side of the section line road leading south from Pine Top School, where the road intersects the trace of the Trail, was designated as the site for the Blackburn's Station marker.

From the marker, the visitor should proceed west along the section line road on the south some seven miles, towards Wesley. After seven miles, the county road turns south, and the total distance by motor car from Blackburn's to Wesley of thirteen miles is readily passable. The Butterfield Trail entered Township 2 North, 14 East, in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 12, crossed Brushy Creek in the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 17, and crossed the west line of the township in NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 30. The present road, up the valley of Brushy Creek, with the imposing crest of Pine Mountain (El. 1253 ft.) is picturesque and full of delight. Blue spiderwort and pink

mallow added charm and color to the grass covered hills. The Butterfield route is described by Conkling:

From Blackburn's to Waddell's, the next station sixteen miles southwest, the road followed a course almost due west for about one mile to the crossing on Brushy Creek. Though this short section has long been abandoned, it is still traveled by local folk on horseback or on foot, and provides a convenient short-cut from a point east of the old crossing to the intersection of the mail road with the improved country road from Brushy Creek to Blanco.

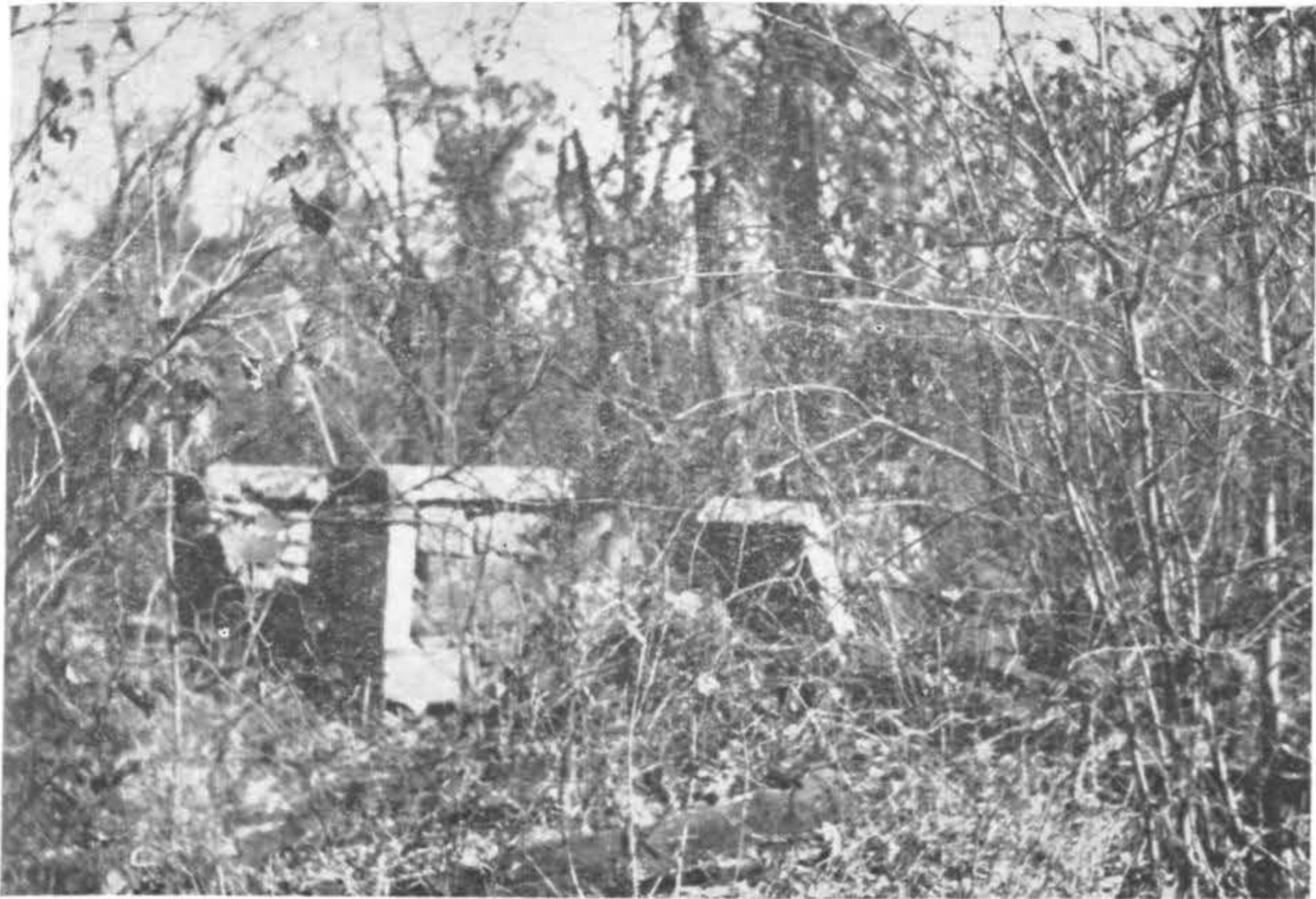
On the west side of Brushy Creek, about one-half mile from the old fording place, is the site of J. Colbert's (Brushy Jim's) stage station, another of the post-Civil War stations on this route. The site is located on the south side of the present country road, a short distance east of a dilapidated frame house, where in a grass and weed-grown patch, the remains of a flagstone floor may be seen. These slabs may have formed part of the floor of an old blacksmithy dating back to the early occupation of the region by the Choctaws, or they may have been laid by "Brushy Jim" himself, for it is known that he operated a smithy in connection with his station. The spring which once supplied the station still spouts a small stream almost in the middle of the improved country road which runs by the site a little north of the line of the abandoned road.

For a distance of about five miles west of J. Colbert's station site the old road is difficult to trace through the fenced land. Although the improved country road follows the same general direction as the old road, it is established around fenced sections over this distance and farther north than the original road which followed along the north back of Brushy Creek, through a little valley between Pine Mountain and a low lying range of hills to the south. It kept close to the foothill of this southern range and then curving southwest toward present-day Wesley, maintaining a course close to the foothills bordering the valley on the east. This valley through which the old road followed over this distance is so narrow that it is probable that when the road was heavy on one side, the mail drivers would seek the higher and drier ground on the other side, a practice which was followed on many other sections of the route.

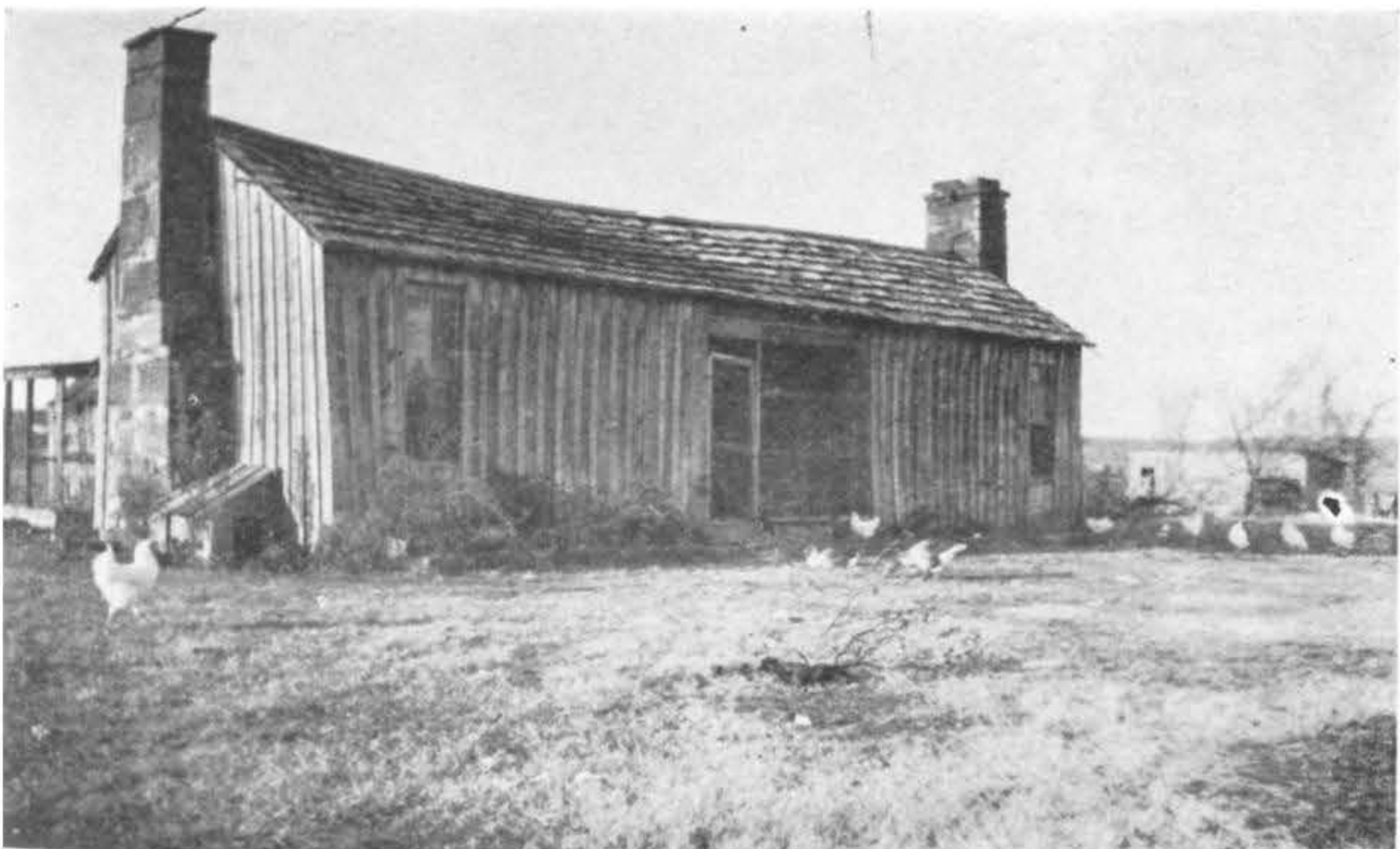
The improved country road between Wesley, Klowa, and Pittsburg, which intersects the country road leading to Brushy Creek and Blanco, about five miles north of Wesley, is established from a mile to a mile and a half west of the mail road over this distance.

Standing on the abandoned mail road, about three quarters of a mile northeast of Wesley, is the ruin of old Schmallfield log house, the home of Frederick Schmallfield, a native of Germany, who settled and married in the Choctaw Nation after the Civil War and was later appointed postmaster at Brushy. It is said that this was a station on a later mail route. At the northern entrance of the present little settlement of Wesley, the old road crossed Nolletubbe Creek, a branch of McGee Creek. The old fording place may still be seen. From Nolletubbe Creek, the country road which passes through Wesley and continues on for a distance of about three miles to the old Beale place, believed to be the location of Waddell's station, is the approximate route of the mail road.

About three miles west of Wesley is the site of Waddell's Station (SW $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 10-1N-13E). Known as the old Beale place, it is the present farm home of Glen Elliott (Rt. 2, Box 69, Pittsburg). The well northeast of the present house is the



**Old graves in "Brushey Cemetery," near Blackburn's Station.
Photo, 1932.**



(Photo, 1932)

***Waddell's Station.* Original building, of logs covered with boards in picture above, has been torn down and another house built on the site. The well in front of the house, not shown in this view, can be seen today.**

original, and all indications are that the Blackburn building was located about 40 feet north of Elliott's home. A well defined trace of the Trail leads northeasterly from the barnyard. The old house was extant when visited by the Conklings:

The Beale log house stands on the north side of the mail road, which at this point is an improved country road. Very little has been learned of the Beale family who once occupied the place. Numerous authorities claim that the house is the original Waddell's station building, having been built several years before the Civil War. The house is certainly a very old one and its location on the road corresponds to the distance of sixteen miles from Blackburn's. If the old Beale house is not the original station home, it certainly stands on or very near the original site.

The house is a well preserved example of the pre-war type of log house to which period it appears to belong. It is a one-story, double log house with an open hall. The dimensions of the two main rooms are approximately twelve by thirteen feet, and the hall is nine feet wide. The two outside chimneys are constructed of partly dressed slabs of limestone. The exterior of the house has been weatherboarded, and an addition has been attached to the rear. The present stable buildings, nearly opposite the house, stand on the site of older structures.

About 100 yards east of the Elliott place, and just south of the present roadway is a rank, overgrown and deserted cemetery plot. It contains about fifteen well defined graves, each with the usual stone border. None is marked with an inscription of any type. Local legend tells that seven outlaws were hanged at Waddell's shortly after the War Between the States and the seven plots in a row are the graves of these individuals. The Committee doubts if such care would have been taken to provide individual graves, each bordered with selected stone, for such characters!

The Committee selected as the location for the Waddell's marker a site on the north of the roadway, east of the Elliott homelace, and under a large bois d'arc tree.

For the first three miles after proceeding west from Waddell's, the county road closely follows the Trail. The modern road then goes directly west to join U. S. Highway 69 at the Sub-Penitentiary whereas the Trail continued in a more southwesterly course entering Township 1 South 12 East in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 2. The road winds west through hills of Arbuckle limestone, Ordovician in age. This outcrop of Limestone, a prominent formation of the Arbuckle Mountains to the west, was brought to the surface in this area by a series of complicated faults. It is surrounded by Pennsylvanian sandstones and shales, normal to this region.

A short distance south of Stringtown a new road has been constructed leading west from U. S. 69 to the site of the Atoka Reservoir, now under construction by the City of Oklahoma City as a future water supply. The Trail crossed North Boggy

Creek at the center of Section 19-1S-12E. This entire area has been cleared in connection with the construction program, and will be inundated by the reservoir.

Mr. Ormsby records that it required three hours to traverse the thirteen miles from Waddell's to Geary's Station. It is evident why Waddell's and Geary's were closer together than were the other stations. The road was required to cross the hills of Arbuckle Limestone, or to go miles out of the way around to the north. At least an hour would be required for a four-in-hand to pull a celerity wagon over this one limestone hill.

Geary's Station was at the home of A. W. Geary. (Center Sec. 19-1S-12E) Geary had been operating a toll-bridge on North Boggy at this point, and his home was a well-known stopping place for travelers. Of the crossing, Conkling writes:

The old crossing on the North Boggy at Geary's was maintained at that point throughout the life of the Butterfield Overland on the Southern route, and was never removed to a crossing erroneously designated as the Butterfield road crossing, located a mile and a half south of Stringtown, and a short distance east of the railroad bridge spanning the North Boggy at that point. The road, and the crossing erroneously reported, probably did not come into use until about 1871-1872, or about the time of the coming of the railroad.

The site of Geary's was the only one not visited by the Committee. Several overlooks have been built along the road leading to the dam site, and the entire bottom ground where once Geary had one hundred acres in corn has now been altered by construction operations; and as the site will be inundated, no purpose would be served by locating it with exactness.

The Committee agreed that the Geary's Station marker should be located on a high point or vista, overlooking the future lake body, with the added words on the tablet "site inundated." In this way the marker location could be suitably incorporated into future beautification programs for the lake shore. Arrangements have been completed with Morrison Cunningham, Esq., Director of Public Works, Oklahoma City, to install the marker at an agreed location after heavy construction is completed. The City of Oklahoma City has agreed to assume the costs of erection, and the Committee expresses appreciation to Mr. Cunningham and the other municipal officials for their interest in this project.

From Stringtown, the Committee proceeded through Atoka on U. S. 69, and then went west on State Highway 7 to the crossing on Clear Boggy Creek. The route of the Trail from the North Boggy crossing to the next station, Boggy Depot, is all but obliterated and is now obscure in every detail.

Today's traveler should turn south on the county road entering State Highway 7 at the west approach to the Clear

Boggy bridge. At that point is the Historical Society Marker (No. 31 of the marker series) for historic Boggy Depot.³

Boggy Depot was the largest and most important settlement on the Butterfield route between Fort Smith, Arkansas, and Sherman, Texas, in 1858. It is located sixteen miles southwest of Geary's Station on Clear Boggy Creek, in Section 1-3S-9E, and two miles north of present New Boggy Depot.

The Overland Mail road traveled around the northwest edge of the Ouachita Mountains, from a point south of Wilburton, where it crossed south over the Choctaw Fault (the northwest boundary of the Ouachita Mountains) to an area approximately three miles west of Stringtown, where it again crosses the fault to the west. The Choctaw and associated faults disappeared beneath the cretaceous plains a few miles south of Atoka. The fossiliferous clays and shales of Cretaceous age were deposited up over the southern edge of the Ouachita Mountains.

Again the Overland stage road takes advantage of nature and swings south through the narrow opening made during cretaceous time between the Arbuckle Mountains on the west and the Ouachita's on the east. This opening was formed by the encroachment and deposition of the Cretaceous sea covering the southeast end of the Arbuckles and the southwest and south sides of the Ouachitas. Early northeast-southwest trails crossed through this opening between the two distinct mountain barriers.

After turning south from State Highway 7, a drive of three miles brought us to Boggy Depot State Park at the site of the old town. Much work has been done in clearing this important location and marking the sites of the various buildings and stores. It is to be much regretted that the fine home of Rev. Allen Wright (destroyed by fire March 28, 1952) is not yet extant, thus adding much to the quiet dignity of this memorial State Park.

A postoffice had been established at Boggy Depot November 5, 1849, with William R. Guy, the proprietor of the Boggy Depot hotel, as postmaster. Other than Walker's, this was the only Butterfield stage station in Oklahoma where the location coincided with a postoffice. This office was the mail connection for Fort Washita and provided postal service for many miles of surrounding region. During the period of the Butterfield operation Boggy Depot was the Capital of the Choctaw Nation, and the National Council met here.

³ See ref. "Mark of Heritage," brochure published by the Oklahoma Historical Society, 1958.

The Trail entered Boggy Depot from the east, and well defined outlines may be seen between the State park and the crossing on Clear Boggy. The Committee designated a spot in the center of this trace, at the extreme eastern limit of the park, as the location for the Overland Mail marker.

From Boggy Depot State Park we proceeded south along the section line road across Sandy Creek, passed by present Boggy Depot, and drove south five miles. We then went east on a section line road to U. S. Highway 69-75. From Boggy Depot, the Trail went west a short distance and then curved sharply south. It entered Township 4 South 9 East in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 4 and crossed the south line of the Township in the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 32.

We continued south on U. S. 69-75 to Caddo, and there used the improved county road to Kenefic. The Historical Society marker for Fort McCulloch (No. 67 of the marker series) is at the junction with Kenefic-Durant road. For those desiring to travel more closely to the trace of the Trail, section line roads may be used without difficulty between Boggy Depot and Kenefic by turning west five miles south of New Boggy Depot; proceeding west two miles; and then south to Kenefic. This will insure the visitor a close proximity to the Trail for the entire distance between Boggy Depot and the next stage station at Nail's Crossing on Blue River.

Nail's Station was the home of Joel H. Nail, and was located in the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 7-5S-9E. Large piles of brick and stone mark the location, which is in a field on the high ground east of Blue River. It is described by Mr. and Mrs. Conkling:

Originally it appears to have been a one-story-and-a-half double log house with an open hall. The dimensions are: forty-two feet long by twenty-six feet wide. The exterior has been clapboarded, the open hall closed to form additional room, and modern window and door frames have been added. The tall outside chimneys constructed of red brick with the exception of some recent reinforcing of the foundations are the original chimneys. It is said that the bricks used in their construction were the product of Charles Sparrow, an English brick mason who molded and burned red brick at Old Boggy Depot. A shelter porch evidently extended along the front of the house, judging from the foundation stones still in place. The interior of the house has been modernized and otherwise altered to such an extent that the homely charm which the old rooms must have possessed is gone. Modern frame barns and out-buildings occupy the same locations as the old log structures of mail coach days. In front of the house near the abandoned road are the foundation ruins of a store house which stood there in the early days. It was a log building forty feet wide by fifty feet long. The house and out-buildings were at one time inclosed by a fine wooden fence with tall oak posts some of which had ornamental tops of original design. Entrance to the front yard from the mail road was over a high stone stile. Altogether the old Nail home in the hey-day of its existence must have presented an air of distinction and comfort.

From this description it is not surprising then when Ormsby reports:

Fourteen miles from Boggy Depot we came to Blue River station where a very heavy bridge is building for the company. Here I saw a copy of the *Weekly Herald*—a distance of six hundred miles from St. Louis, and nearly seventeen hundred from New York, overland, and twenty-five miles from any Post Office. I thought the *Herald* was appreciated there.

From the Nail house site, we walked down to the river where the traces of the ford across the fossiliferous limestone bed of the stream were clearly visible. That must have been the scene of great excitement for the driver of the Overland Mail stages as well as the passengers. With four fresh horses, eager to go, and a fairly steep river bank to descend, the driver must really have had to ride the brake and pull leather to avoid a catastrophe.

East of the site of the Nail place is the Nail family burial plot (SW $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 8-5S-9E). This small but impressive cemetery had been allowed to return to a jungle of trees, wild vines, climbing roses and iris, all in bloom. Apparently it had not been cared for in years. The graves marked with large (ten feet tall) marble head stones were enclosed by an iron fence. The shaft of Joel Nail is inscribed:

J. H. Nail

Born

Mar. 21, 1825

Died

May 9, 1867

The Committee selected a site amid the stones and bricks comprising the ruins of the Nail home as the place for the marker. The location being on private property, written permission has been obtained from the owner, Mrs. Vivian Locke. The Committee expresses appreciation for this courtesy. It is hoped that the tract upon which is located the Nail burial plot may be acquired by the Society and maintained as a memorial to the contribution of this pioneer citizen, J. H. Nail.

From the grave plot, the Committee returned to State Highway 48 and proceeded south to Durant. From Durant we drove west on U. S. Highway 70. On this highway, 2.6 miles west of the Frisco Railroad underpass, is the boundary line between the Chickasaw and the Choctaw Nations. It may be readily identified by today's visitor by the electric transformer station on the south side of the pavement. At this point, a county road leads to the south. This road is directly upon the old boundary line. One mile to the south is the site

of the next Butterfield stage stand, Fisher's Station. Of Fisher's, Mr. and Mrs. Conkling says:

The name of Fisher is another name added to the list of Butterfield station-keepers of whom neither their names nor identities can be recalled by the oldest inhabitants interviewed. Although the name of one Osborne Fisher was found among those identified with the region, and where it is certain that some one named Fisher was living in this stopping-place on the route in 1858, there was no evidence to prove Osborne Fisher the occupant. Because the station ceased to be known as Fisher's after the Company abandoned the route in 1861, and the old name of Carriage Point restored, it has been suggested that Fisher may have been in the Company employ and temporarily installed there.

The location is immediately behind and in a portion of the barnyard of the farm home of A. O. Cross (Star Route, Durant, Okla.); and is in the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 34-6S-8E. By circumstance, this spot was only a few yards east of the National boundary, and slightly more than a mile north of the Initial Monument (NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 10-7S-8E) placed on Island Bayou to mark to the point where the boundary left that stream and proceeded due north. Island Bayou does not in fact reach Fisher's Station, as mentioned by Conkling. Rather, the site is on Mineral Bayou, which flows easterly from Fisher's, through Durant, and then northeasterly to drain into Blue River. Thus, the divide between the Island Bayou and Blue River watersheds is on the high ground just south of the station site.

Mr. Jess Robinson, of Durant, a descendant of Dixon D. Durant, met with the Committee at Fisher's, and identified with exactness the various landmarks and locations. The site is generally known as Carriage Point, and the name Fisher's was never in local use after the Civil War. A postoffice was established at the site March 23, 1869, and was in operation for less than two years.

Prominent and well defined mounds of sod cover the fallen chimneys and the remains of other structures. Immediately east of the Cross barn are many scattered stones and other rubble, giving ample evidence of the one time location of several buildings. Two large wells, each lined with stone, appear in good condition. Immediately north of the site, are a few scattered grave stones indicating the location of a small cemetery. The largest remaining stone, approximately four feet in height, reads:

Thomas L. Rider

Died

Aug. 17, 1863

Aged

19 ys. 4 m. 14 ds.

A larger cemetery, known as the Carriage Point burial ground, is located about one half mile southeast of the Fisher's Station site.

The Committee selected a favorable location in the front lawn of the Cross place as the marker location. Mr. and Mrs. Cross expressed interest, and offered to mow around the marker and keep it tidy.

From Fisher's the Trail progressed south to the crossing on Red River. It entered Township 7 South Range 8 East in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 3, and crossed the south line of the township in the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 33.

We returned north to U. S. 70, doubled back through Durant, and south on U. S. 69-75 to Colbert. On this highway, Island Bayou is crossed one mile south of Calera, and Colbert's was the only Station located in the Chickasaw Nation. The Trail entered Township 8 South 8 East at almost the identical spot where Highway 69-75 is now located, and for the next mile and one-half the two roads are almost superimposed. The pavement then turns due south on the section line between Sections 7 and 8, whereas the Trail swung several hundred yards farther west in its gentle curve to the River, thus passing along the west limits of present Colbert.

Approximately one mile south of Colbert we turned east on the county road, the road to the old Red River toll bridge and to Kemp. This road crosses Sandy Creek a few yards west of the Trail, as the latter was located east of the small creek running north from Sandy Creek, and thus the mouth of this small tributary is between the present roadway and the Trail.

Mr. and Mrs. Conkling describe Colbert's:

From a description furnished by Holmes Colbert, a son of B. F. Colbert, the original home built in 1848, and which became a Butterfield station ten years later, was a single-story, double log house. The dimensions of the two main rooms were approximately sixteen by eighteen feet and the open hall between, twelve feet wide. There was a sleeping room attached to the rear of one room and a dining room attached to the other. The kitchen was a separate log building with a large fireplace, connected to the dining room by a shelter roof. The chimneys on each end of the main building were built of red brick and stone. The house was constructed of the best material obtainable and the workmanship represented the best of that day.

The location is south of the premises (tenant occupancy) owned by Dan S. Owens. Substantial ruins remain, and the old storm cellar is in good preservation. North of the cellar, the clear outlines of the rectangular foundations are readily discernable. The General Land Office Township survey, dated October 31, 1871, shows Colbert had several hundred acres fenced and almost the entire southwest quarter of Section 31

is marked "Colbert's Field". On this survey, the Colbert home is shown in the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 31.

Ormsby describes in detail life at Colbert's Ferry:

Sometime in 1848, the Colbert family established themselves on the Red River in the Chickasaw Nation, and by the year 1853, B. F. Colbert had become a wealthy and influential citizen. He established his ferry in that year and five years later in 1858 it was the point of crossing on the Red River selected by the Butterfield organization.

A ride of three hours brought us to Colbert's Ferry on the Red River, the boundary between Texas and the Indian Territory.

We arrived here on Monday, the 20th at ten minutes to ten—being altogether thirty-four hours ahead of time to this point. But here was a difficulty. There was no team to carry on the mail. Arrangements had been made to put it through in quick time on the regular day, but it was not expected a day and a half in advance. Indeed, there was nothing left to do but to put up with it. We had, by several mere accidents, been enabled to obtain our relays so far in advance, and now we could afford a little loss of time. We had a good dinner and I took advantage of the opportunity to write you—the first chance off the wagon since Thursday, the 16th.

Mr. Colbert, the owner of the station and of the ferry, is a half-breed Indian of great sagacity and business tact. He is a young man—not quite thirty, I should judge—has a white wife—his third. He has owned and run this ferry five years and has had excellent patronage from its central location, being about midway between Preston and the one below.

Mr. Colbert evinces some enterprise in carrying the stage of the company across his ferry free of charge in consideration of the increased travel which it will bring his way. He also stipulates to keep the neighboring roads in excellent order and has already done much towards it. He had a large gang of slaves at work on the banks of the river cutting away the sand so as to make the ascent easy. His boat is simply a sort of raft pushed across the shallow stream by the aid of poles in the hands of sturdy slaves. The fare for a four-horse team is a dollar and a quarter and the net revenue of the ferry about \$1,000.00 per annum. He thinks of either buying a horse boat (he must be referring to the Van Buren ferry propelled by a horse on a treadmill) or having a stout cable drawn across the river so that one man could manage the boat. I suggested to him to buy a piece of the Atlantic cable, but he was of the opinion that it would be too costly. He owns about twenty-five slaves and says he considers them about the best stock there is as his increase is about four per year. He has a fine farm and raises considerable corn—how much I do not know. At his table I saw sugar, butter and pastry—the first two of which have been exceedingly rare articles since I left Fort Smith and the last of which I have not seen anywhere else since I left Fort Smith. He is nearly white, very jovial and pleasant and altogether a very good specimen of the half-breed Indian.

We had determined after giving our horses a brief rest to proceed with them until we met the other team coming back from Sherman, but just as we were about starting with them the expected team rode up and all haste was made for our departure over Colbert's Ferry into Texas. We crossed the wide, shallow and muddy Red

river on one of Mr. Colbert's boats and saw quite a large number of his slaves busily engaged in lowering the present steep grade up the bank.

A few feet east of the site of the Colbert home is the family burial plot. The stone of Benjamin F. Colbert is substantial and impressive. It reads:

B. F. Colbert

Born Dec. 18, 1826

Died March 11, 1893

Amiable and Beloved Husband Farewell
Not on this Perishing Stone
But in the Book of Life
And in the Hearts of thy Afflicted Friends
Is Thy Worth Recorded

The Committee designated a favorable location in an attractive, level and advantageous tract on the south side of the county road, at Mr. Owens' place, as the site for the marker.

A few hundred yards north of the marker site, the county road forks and leads to the abandoned toll bridge across Red River. This bridge had been constructed by the Red River Bridge Company, as assignee of the license originally granted to Colbert. In 1931, a free bridge (present highway span) was completed, and the "bridge war" that ensued, with the use of the Oklahoma National Guard and the Texas Rangers, was an exciting incident of local history. The new bridge was opened Labor Day, 1931. Since that date the old span, gradually deteriorating and now with rotted timbers, has been used only by an occasional citizen not wishing to walk or drive the extra mile to the present highway, and will soon fade into the limbo of history side by side with the ferry that it, in its turn, had superseded.

Walking onto the disused bridge, from this vantage point we looked down Red River to the site of Colbert's Ferry. It is quiet and peaceful now; and time and erosion have lowered the gradient of the north bank. The spot is now deeply shaded by tall and solemn cottonwood and elm trees. Impressed with the tranquility of the site, the Committee tried to recreate in our minds the shouting, confusion and excitement that must have prevailed as the whip for the Overland Mail brought his celerity wagon, pulled by a four-in-hand, down that steep bank to the waiting ferry to be pulled across the Red River, by Negro slaves, into Texas and towards the unknown West.

The Committee reports that all of the markers, except Geary's for the reason indicated, have been installed and are

now in service at the sites designated by the Committee. Each marker, except for the special wording for Geary's, has an identical text. On a bronze tablet are the words:

Butterfield Overland Mail

Site Of

(Name of Station)

Here was located a stage stand of the Butterfield Overland Mail Route, under Act of Congress, March 3, 1857. First mail stage arrived here in September 1858 enroute to San Francisco. Service continued until the outbreak of the War Between The States

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The plaque has been cast onto a solid concrete pedestal, which in turn has been set with reinforcing bars into a large sunken concrete base. The Committee employed Bill J. Hall, of Oklahoma City, to install the eleven markers. He accompanied the Committee when the sites were selected and knew of its wishes with regard to installation details. He has performed his task with care and dispatch; and the Committee expresses appreciation to him for the interest he took in this project.

The Committee reports that its assigned mission has been accomplished, and it respectfully asks approval of its work and that it be discharged.⁴

Respectfully submitted

(signed)

Vernon H. Brown
John D. Frizzell
Mildred Frizzell
James D. Morrison
Lucyl A. Shirk
George H. Shirk
Muriel H. Wright

September 1, 1958

⁴ Accompanying the Report published here is an additional volume comprising all of the maps used by the Committee. The maps have been bound into a permanent folder and have been placed with the map-collection in the Library of the Society. In addition, the Committee has adopted as a supplement to the above report the Special Edition of the *Press Argus*, Van Buren, Arkansas. This special edition contains as feature articles all of the important reference material on the Butterfield Mail service.—Ed.