

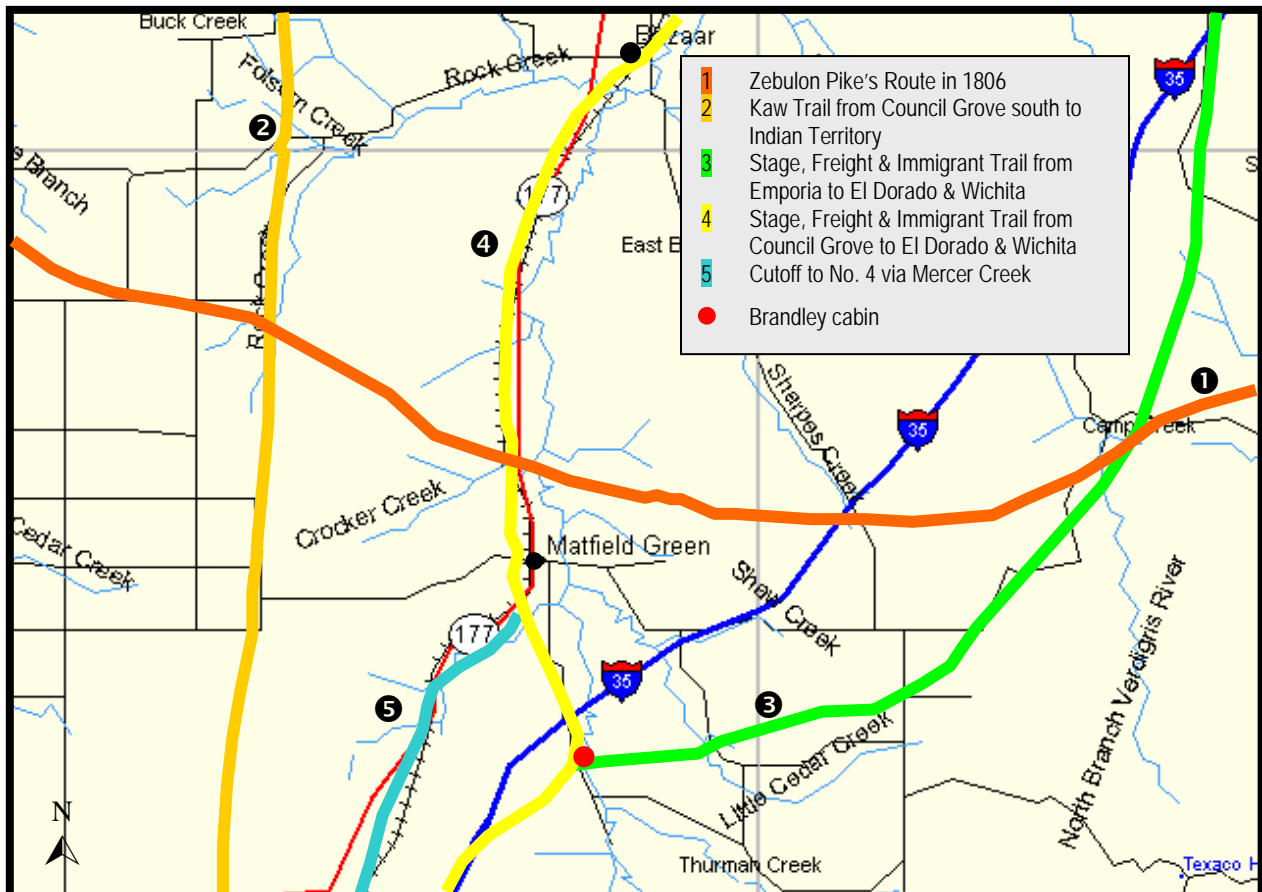
## Brandley Stage Stop

When Lizzie Romigh married Henry Brandley in 1870, their six-room log cabin near the South Fork of the Cottonwood River served as a dining stop for Parker & Tisdale's Southern Kansas Stage Company. Daily stagecoaches carried mail and passengers through the Flint Hills back and forth between Emporia or Council Grove and the stage stations in El Dorado, Wichita and Arkansas City.

Speed and readiness were of the essence in this enterprise. At whatever time the irregular stage pulled into the yard from either direction, and in all weather, Henry or his hired hands hurried to unharness the frothing horses and re hitch a fresh four-horse team, while Lizzie efficiently served up sustenance to an unpredictable number of dusty, jostled travelers (more than one diarist described travel by Concord coach as "cruel and unusual punishment"). The sturdy coaches held nine passengers in sardine fashion on the interior



Stagecoach pulling into the Central Hotel in Winfield. Photo courtesy of Cowley County Historical Museum.



Old Trails Across Chase County...Rivers and Streams of Chase County, by C.W. Hawkins and G.W. Starkey, map drawn by C.W. Hawkins (*Chase County Historical Sketches*, Vol. I, 1940) provides the basis for locating these trails on a current map of the area.

and as many as a dozen more perched precipitously on top. Daily meal planning and preparation must have been both a burden and a gamble.

The stage was but one of many uncertainties and responsibilities for Lizzie Brandley during her first year of marriage in 1870. There were hired hands and the new teacher who had taken Lizzie's place at the District No. 12 school to feed at other intervals as well. Robert Madden, one of the Captain's Civil War comrades, was also living and working with the Brandleys at the time. The absence of any hotel nearer than Cottonwood Falls made the Brandley home, as Clara Brandley later noted, "the stopping place for all transients," so unexpected guests in need of a meal or a bed for the night also placed random demands upon the Brandley's hospitality.

Had Henry Brandley been of a town-building frame of mind, there seems a high likelihood that we might now be discussing the history of Brandley, Kansas rather than Matfield Green, since their cabin and stage stop at the confluence of two important overland trails suggests a natural location for a town. Instead, the Brandleys decided not to renew their contract with Parker & Tisdale, and the stage business passed in 1871 to David Mercer, who is credited with establishing the first post office on Mercer Creek and giving Matfield Green its name.

Despite the reduction in daily commerce for the Brandley family, their cabin remained at a busy nucleus of immigrant trail activity. As Clara noted 70 years later, "many interesting people were entertained at [the Brandley's] hospitable hearth."

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#### **HINTS FOR PLAINS TRAVELERS** (From the *Omaha Herald*, 1877)

The best seat inside a stagecoach is the one next to the driver..you will get less than half the bumps and jars than on any other seat. When any old "sly Eph," who traveled thousands of miles on coaches, offers through sympathy to exchange his back or middle seat with you, don't do it.

Never ride in cold weather with tight boots or shoes, nor close-fitting gloves. Bathe your feet before starting in cold water, and wear loose overshoes and gloves two or three sizes too large.

When the driver asks you to get off and walk, do it without grumbling. He will not request it unless absolutely necessary. If a team runs away, sit still and take your chances; if you jump, nine times out of ten you will be hurt.

In very cold weather, abstain entirely from liquor while on the road; a man will freeze twice as quick while under its influence.

Don't growl at food stations; stage companies generally provide the best they can get. Don't keep the stage waiting; many a virtuous man has lost his character by so doing.

Don't smoke a strong pipe inside especially early in the morning. Spit on the leeward side of the coach. If you have anything to take in a bottle, pass it around; a man who drinks by himself in such a case is lost to all human feeling. Provide stimulants before starting; ranch whisky is not always nectar.

Don't swear, nor lop over on your neighbor when sleeping. Don't ask how far it is to the next station until you get there.

Never attempt to fire a gun or pistol while on the road, it may frighten the team; and the careless handling and cocking of the weapon makes nervous people nervous. Don't discuss politics or religion, nor point out places on the road where horrible murders have been committed.

Don't linger too long at the pewter wash basin at the station. Don't grease you hair before starting or dust will stick there in sufficient quantities to make a respectable 'tater' patch. Tie a silk handkerchief around your neck to keep out dust and prevent sunburns. A little glycerin is good in case of chapped hands.

Don't imagine for a moment you are going on a picnic; expect annoyance, discomfort and some hardships. If you are disappointed, thank heaven.