Winter Meeting
January 19, 2014

The Chapter will meet in Kinsley, Kansas on January 19, 2014. Following lunch at Strate's Cafe on U.S. Highway 50 at 1:00 p.m., the meeting will reconvene at the Kinsley Municipal Building with Vice President Rosetta Graft as host. Highlights of the meeting will be the election of officers for 2014 and the presentation of the Faye Anderson Award. The program will be presented by Fort Larned Ranger Ellen Jones, the latest Traveling Trunk, *Letters From Sarah*.

Don't miss the lunch, fried chicken, the cafe's specialty. The cost is $8.00. A gentle nudge, if you make a reservation, you are responsible for the bill whether you attend or not. Your editor will contact you by phone for reservations. For additional information, Call 620-285-3295.

End of the Trail

We are sad to announce the death of long time chapter member, Ed Haramza. Our condolences to the family.

Membership Dues

Membership chair Alice Clapsaddle reminds us that the 2014 dues are now being accepted. The dues of $10.00 per family unit and may be submitted at the January meeting or sent to her at 215 Mann, Larned, Kansas 67550. Your dues help defray expenses of the chapter and issues of our News Letter *Traces*.

Melgares Monument

Plans are yet in the development stage for the Melgares Monument. At this date, tentative plans call for the aluminum sign to be hung between two large limestone posts. The project will be discussed at the January meeting. Plans are to dedicate the monument at the September 2014 Rendezvous in Larned, Kansas.

Below is the text and image that will be used on the Melgares Marker.

Facundo Melgares, born into an aristocratic family at Villa Caravaca Spain, 1775, received an education and entered the Royal Army as lieutenant. He came to New Spain in 1803 to serve in the frontier army at the Presidio de Carrizal south of El Paso. There he led successful expeditions against the Apaches. In 1806 Lieutenant Melgares was sent to Santa Fe, New Mexico, to lead an expedition onto the Great Plains to meet with Plains Indians and turn back explorers from the United States. He left Santa Fe June 15, 1806, with 105 presidio soldiers, 400
new Mexican militia, 100 Indian allies, and 2,000 horses and mules. They followed the Red River, meeting with Comanches, and headed north to meet with the Pawnees. One mile southeast of this marker, Melgares left 240 of his men and more than 1,000 horses and mules encamped while he took the rest of his command to meet Pawnees in present Nebraska. Two weeks later the entire army headed back to Santa Fe, arriving there October 1. Zebulon Montgomery Pike visited the same Pawnee village a few weeks later and followed the tracks of Melgares's army into present Colorado. Pike and 13 soldiers were later arrested by Spanish troops and taken to Santa Fe and Chihuahua. During the two months Pike was detained he was accompanied by Lieutenant Melgares. The men became close friends, and Melgares provided Pike with invaluable information about New Spain, which Pike reported in his published journals. This information stimulated attempts by U.S. citizens to open trade with New Mexico, which were not successful until Mexico won independence from Spain in 1821. When William Becknell, the "father of the Santa Fe Trail," reached New Mexico in November 1821, he was welcomed in Santa Fe by New Mexico Governor Facundo Melgares, who deserves to be known as the "grandfather of the Santa Fe Trail." Pike described Melgares, whom he called "our friend," as "a man of immense fortune, and generous in its disposal, almost to profusion, possessed a liberal education, high sense of honor, and disposition formed for military enterprise." Unfortunately, no records have been located about Melgares after his term as governor, 1818-1822.

A Hunting We Will Go

I vividly remember an occasion when I accompanied a large group of people to view some trail ruts in Edwards County, Kansas. One lady had situated herself in a lawn chair "smack dab" in the middle of a rut! "Ruts," she said, "ruts, I don't see any ruts!!" This dear soul was making the mistake often made when people confuse tracks with ruts.

Tracks, two narrow bands made in the terrain by wagon wheels, soon disappeared when other wagons, following the same course, hollowed out the space between the tracks leaving a depression in the soil which resembles a trough. Sometimes, ruts have been called swales.

It was not unusual for ruts adjacent to each other to be so well traveled that they, aided by erosion, became a single swale. This writer observed such phenomenon in
Rush County, Kansas on the Fort Hays-Fort Dodge Road. It measured in excess of 100 feet.

One must have some basic bits of knowledge to identify ruts. One such piece of information relates to compaction. The passage of loaded freight wagons drawn by heavy draft animals caused the soil to be compacted. So compacted was the soil that even today, farmers report that while plowing their tractors bog down when crossing a field where ruts were once in evidence.

Such compaction produced a different type of plant growth in the ruts than that of vegetation which grows in adjacent areas. This writer recalls a pasture in Ford County, Kansas where prairie corn flowers populated the ruts appeared to be long strands of blossoms bordered by short grasses of the area, buffalo and grama.

Often ruts can be discerned in the early spring when the grass begins to turn green in the ruts while grass in the adjacent remains brown. Such is caused by the ruts collecting water run off from nearby areas. Such is the case to the southeast corner of the Larned, Kansas Cemetery.

Another way to detect ruts is to observe snow collecting in ruts. Thus the ruts look like white ribbons across the landscape. This writer has observed such at the Bentrup Ruts in Kearney County, Kansas.

High plant growth often hides ruts. In such cases, one needs to look not longitudinally, but rather horizontally across the terrain. When one walks in horizontal fashion across the terrain, the ruts become quite evident by the uneven nature of the area. Even more pronounced are the ruts if one drives a vehicle across the area.

Hunting ruts is rather like hunting mushrooms. To search in an area with no hint of ruts being present is as futile as hunting for mushrooms in a random fashion. There are several trail guides to put one in the general area of ruts. Put on your hiking boots or walking shoes and pick out a trail guide. Better yet find a friend with first hand knowledge of the Trail. Happy hunting.

A proviso, ask permission from land owners before you begin your hunt.

**Dues are always Due or should we say**

**Old & New Members Always Welcome**

*Chapter dues for 2014* in the amount of $10.00 per family, are due at the Winter meeting or may be mailed to Alice Clapsaddle, 215 Mann, Larned, Kansas, 67550 any time. Checks should be made out to the Wet/Dry Routes Chapter. Dues and email addresses are welcome.