

Frank M. Stahl

(1841 - 1937)

Born in Darke County, Ohio, on May 23, 1841, Frank M. Stahl left home at age 15 for the West. From Ohio, he went by railroad to Jefferson City, Missouri, and by steamboat up the Missouri to Westport Landing. Leaving Westport, he started west on foot. In March, 1857, he arrived without a cent to his name near Auburn, KS on Six-Mile Creek. He found employment as a farm laborer working for Robert Simmerwell, a missionary among the Pottawatomie Indians. Stahl later worked for two years at one of the first mills in Auburn, Kansas.



In 1859, Stahl joined a hunting party of nine persons that successfully hunted wolves around the Walnut Creek in central and western Kansas. In June of 1860, Stahl crossed the plains on foot heading to Denver and mined for gold around Central City and Blackhawk before going on to Arizona. During the winter of 1861-62 Stahl walked back across the plains to his Kansas home. Stahl had every intention of enlisting in the military, however, instead he took a commission to drive six yokes of oxen over the Santa Fe Trail to New Mexico carrying a load of 6,500 pounds of revolvers and ammunition. Returning to Kansas, Stahl enlisted in August 1862 as a private in Company I of the 2nd Kansas Cavalry. He was in 27 engagements and received two severe wounds, one through the body and the other through the left arm and hand. Two chief battles he was engaged in included Cane Hill and Prairie Grove, Arkansas. In 1865 he received his honorable discharge at Fort Gibson in Indian Territory and returned to Kansas and found employment building stone fences for the next two years.

The following diary entry of Frank Stahl's dated Friday, August 4, 1865 provides details of his next adventure which included another trip down most of the Santa Fe Trail. In his diary he stated, "Left Leavenworth City today en route for Fort Union in the employ of James M. Kerr of Leavenworth. My business is to take charge of a herd of cattle." Stahl's task was to deliver 1,123 head of cattle to the government authorities at Fort Union, NM. Following this trip, he returned to Kansas and resumed the building of stone fences.

In July 1867, he became a member of the 18th Kansas Cavalry, Company B, commissioned as a second lieutenant the regiment was sent to assist in suppressing Indian outbreaks. He spent about six months on this campaign with fights at Prairie Dog and Beaver Creeks, known more generally as the Spillman Creek fight.

In 1869 Mr. Stahl married Jennie T. Dickson, and then became a farmer/stock raiser on 160 acres of land he purchased in Auburn Township. Stahl increase his holdings to 640 acres, half of it in Shawnee County, and the rest adjoining in Osage County.

In 1892 Mr. Stahl was one of the fourteen republicans elected to the State Legislature that year, and in 1894 he was elected treasurer of Shawnee County, and by re-election filled the office for four years. With his election as treasurer in 1894 he moved his home from his farm to Topeka, and in 1900 Mr. Stahl was appointed chief of police of Topeka and served in that position for five years. He was a Royal Arch Mason, a member of the Grand Army of the Republic and is affiliated with the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. For twenty-five years he was master of his masonic lodge and was one of the pioneers in the

temperance movement of Kansas and was always a staunch advocate of prohibition. Both Mr. and Mrs. Stahl were members of the Congregational Church.

(Information for this biography taken from, *A Standard History of Kansas and Kansans*, written and compiled by William E. Connelley, Secretary of the Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka. Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, copyright 1918; transcribed by students from USD 508, Baxter Springs Middle School, Baxter Springs, Kansas, November, 1997.

To read Frank's account of his second trip over the Santa Fe Trail, Stahl's diary can be found at: https://www.frankstahlbio.net/trail_diary_web.html
