

### **Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop and Farmstead:** Serving the Needs of People on the Move

In these activities using primary and secondary sources, students will investigate the role of the Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop and Farmstead in the development of Olathe and Kansas through the lenses of geography, government, history, and economics.

#### **National History Standards:**

United States Era 4: Expansion and Reform (1801-1861)

- Standard 2: How the industrial revolution, increasing immigration, the rapid expansion of slavery, and the westward movement changed the lives of Americans and led toward regional tensions.
  - Standard 2A: The student understands how the factory system and the transportation and market revolutions shaped regional patterns of economic development. Putting
    - Explain how the major technological developments that revolutionized land and water transportation arose and analyze how they transformed the economy, created international markets, and affected the environment.
    - Compare how patterns of economic growth and recession affected territorial expansion and community life in the North, South, and West.
  - Standard 2E: The student understands the settlement of the West.
    - Explore the lure of the West and the reality of life on the frontier.
    - Analyze cultural interactions among diverse groups in the trans-Mississippi region.
    - Assess the degree to which political democracy was a characteristic of the West and evaluate the factors influencing political and social conditions on the frontier.
- Standard 4: The sources and character of cultural, religious, and social reform movements in the antebellum period.
  - Standard 4A: The student understands the abolitionist movement.
    - Analyze changing ideas about race and assess the reception of proslavery and antislavery ideologies in the North and South.
  - Standard 4C: The student understands changing gender roles and the ideas and activities of women reformers.
    - Compare the North, South, and West in terms of men's and women's occupations, legal rights, and social status.

#### **C3 Framework for Social Studies Standards**

- Civics
  - D2.Civ.10.6-8. Explain the relevance of personal interests and perspectives, civic virtues, and democratic principles when people address issues and problems in government and civil society.
  - D2.Civ.14.6-8. Compare historical and contemporary means of changing societies, and promoting the common good.

- Economics
  - D2.Eco.1.6-8. Explain how economic decisions affect the well-being of individuals, businesses, and society.
  - D2.Eco.7.6-8 Analyze the role of innovation and entrepreneurship in a market economy.
- Geography
  - D2.Geo.2.6-8. Use maps, satellite images, photographs, and other representations to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions, and changes in their environmental characteristics.
  - D2.Geo.5.6-8. Analyze the combinations of cultural and environmental characteristics that make places both similar to and different from other places.
  - D2.Geo.7.6-8. Explain how changes in transportation and communication technology influence the spatial connections among human settlements and affect the diffusion of ideas and cultural practices.
- History
  - D2.His.2.6-8. Classify series of historical events and developments as examples of change and/or continuity.
  - D2.His.4.6-8. Analyze multiple factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.
  - D2.His.12.6-8. Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to identify further areas of inquiry and additional sources.
  - D2.His.16.6-8. Organize applicable evidence into a coherent argument about the past.

### Objectives

- To analyze the relationship between geography, history, economics, and government at the Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop and Farm.
- To describe the role of the Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop and Farm in the development of Olathe and Kansas.
- To examine the Mahaffies and their farmstead in terms of change and continuity over time.
- To compare and contrast the roles of men, women, and children on the Mahaffie farmstead.

**Setting the Stage** (*information from the Mahaffie website at <http://www.mahaffie.org/about-us> )*

Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop and Farm offers a unique hands on experience for visitors of all ages focusing on 1860s farming, frontier life and stagecoach travel while preserving the nationally significant Mahaffie Story. Mahaffie is the last remaining stagecoach stop open to the public on the Santa Fe Trail.

The stone farmhouse built by James B. and Lucinda Mahaffie in 1865 is one of the few stagecoach stops left on the Santa Fe Trail, and the only one preserved as a public historic site. Along with the farmhouse, the stone ice house (also built in 1865) and the original timber-frame barn (probably the oldest building on the site and built around 1860) are all listed on the on the National and Kansas Registers of Historic Places. The site is also designated as an official component of the Santa Fe National Historic Trail by the National Park Service.

About twenty acres remain of the original 360 acre farm once owned by James Beatty and Lucinda. The farm is located on the "Westport Route," which actually carried traffic of all the trails leading out of Westport, Missouri: the Santa Fe, Oregon, and California Trails. Arriving in Olathe in 1857 from Indiana, the Mahaffies purchased this farm site in 1858 and used oxen to move a portion of the wood frame home from their downtown lot to their new holdings - at that time, about a mile outside of town. The family lived in that home until the new, stone house was finished in 1865. The family owned another 200 acres in land around the community.

The Barlow and Sanderson Stagecoach Line contracted with the Mahaffie family to provide one of the stops needed for their coaches, running between Fort Scott and Fort Leavenworth, and carrying passengers and the U.S. Mail from Independence, Missouri all the way to Santa Fe. By 1865 and until 1869, hungry passengers took their meals in the basement of the stone farmhouse, built to serve as a kitchen and dining hall. In 1867, Lucinda, her daughters, and hired helpers might have served as many as 50 to 100 meals a day. While the passengers ate, the incoming teams of horses were switched for fresh animals.

The scope of the Mahaffies' inn-keeping business for other travelers (in the first, smaller home and then out of the 1865 stone house) is not entirely clear, and is the subject of ongoing research. James Beatty Mahaffie was first, and foremost, a farmer and is listed in census records as such. The family did not suffer when the railroad arrived in Olathe in 1869 and ended local stagecoach operations. J.B. helped to incorporate, and then served on the board of directors, of one of the early railroad companies.

The Mahaffie home and adjoining property was purchased by the City of Olathe in 1979 to insure its preservation and to operate as a historic site. In 1997, the city purchased the properties to the east and south to further protect the site from encroaching development, and to provide park facilities and a location for a support facility in the future.

Today, the site is administered by the Parks and Recreation Department of the City of Olathe. The Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop and Farm Foundation supports fundraising efforts for the preservation of the site and public programming.

### **Locating the Site**

**Essential Questions:** How can a map reflect continuity and change in a place over time? How does a map reflect the dynamic relationships between people, places, and the environment?

- Sectional map of Johnson County from the 1874 Atlas of Johnson County - <http://www.jcohistory.org/cdm/ref/collection/atlas/id/90>, p. 8. This map shows townships, cities, ranges, churches, schools, school district numbers, projected railroads, existing railroads, wagon roads, landscape features, and bodies of water and includes inset maps and charts with additional data.
- Map of Olathe Township from the 1874 Atlas of Johnson County - <http://www.jcohistory.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/atlas/id/90/rec/2>, p. 34. This

map shows towns, townships, sections, ranges, property ownership, railroads, private and public roads, churches, schools, school district numbers and borders, residences, orchards, groves, forest, vineyards, nurseries, stone quarries, cemeteries, elevations, and bodies of water.

Use the National Archives map analysis worksheet online at [http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/map\\_analysis\\_worksheet.pdf](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/map_analysis_worksheet.pdf) to analyze the maps. Discussion question: How do these maps reflect the history, economics, government, and geography of their time?

### Readings

- [Excerpt from \*Taverns & Travelers; Inns of the Early Midwest\*](#) by Paton Yoder – 1969; Indiana University Press. Yoder was Dean and Professor of History at Heston College. He never heard of Beatty Mahaffie, and did not include him in this book, but this description of an eastern innkeeper compares well with Mahaffie’s role as an innkeeper.
- [The Mahaffies and their stagecoach stop/inn/tavern](#) by Tim Talbott, 2014. This article synthesizes a selection of primary sources to paint a picture of the Mahaffie family and their lifestyle.
- [Living History](#) –by Elizabeth Hobson, 2016. This article describes what living history is and how historical interpretation is done.
- [Excerpt](#) from the National Register Nomination for the J.B. Mahaffie House, 1977.

### Primary Source Evidence

- The Mahaffie Farmstead by Miss Ella Mahaffie - – This four page article is an interview of Ella Mahaffie as told to Jessie Benton. Ella Mahaffie died June 23, 1958, so this may have been written for the Olathe Centennial celebrated in September 1957. The recollections are of the period of time when the farmstead served as a stagecoach stop.
- Carrie Stearns’ account of stagecoach travel from *Pioneer Women: Voices from the Kansas Frontier* by Joanna L. Stratton (1981). (We have no traveler’s specific account of stopping at Mahaffie, but this woman almost certainly did, given the date, the route, and the coach line – Sanderson.)
- A portion of page 101 from the 1874 Atlas of Johnson County depicting the farm of J.B. Mahaffie. The complete image can be viewed online at <http://www.jocohistory.org/cdm/ref/collection/atlas/id/90> through the Johnson County Museum.
- *Olathe Mirror*, Thursday, October 11 1866, page 3, column 3. Article about a stagecoach accident at the Mahaffie stop.
- A portion of page 71 from the 1874 Atlas of Johnson County providing a short biography of J.B. Mahaffie. The complete image can be viewed online at <http://www.jocohistory.org/cdm/ref/collection/atlas/id/90> through the Johnson County Museum.
- Photographs of the Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop and Farm taken in 2016. Compare and contrast details of the building in this photograph with the description of the house in the National

Register application. Discuss what types of evidence preservationists might have to allow them to return a place to its original appearance.

The National Archives document analysis worksheet can be found online at [http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/written\\_document\\_analysis\\_worksheet.pdf](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/written_document_analysis_worksheet.pdf).

### Putting it All Together

**Activity 1:** The year is 1866, Olathe, KS is a growing town reliant upon agriculture. A local farmer, J.B. Mahaffie, recently completed his new farmhouse located right on the Santa Fe Trail. With 570 acres of land, the Mahaffie farm produces about 300 bushels of wheat, 2000 bushels of corn, and 50 tons of hay. J.B., with his wife Lucinda and their 7 children, also run a stagecoach stop out of the basement of their farmhouse.

The Mahaffie family is well respected in the community. According to the National Register nomination for the Mahaffie Farmhouse, Mahaffie was one of the leading farmers of the area and was active in local political and social affairs." JB's memberships include: the Johnson County supervisors, lodges, the Olathe Grange, and the Board of Directors of the Missouri River, Fort Scott and Gulf Railroad. The family even hold celebrations for the community on their farm, "Do not forget the social party to be given this evening at J.B. Mahaffie's. A good time is expected by all, and we have not the slightest doubt but the anticipations will be fully realized." (Olathe Mirror- February 22, 1866).

Visitors traveling through the area stop at the Mahaffie farm to eat and rest. The cooking from Lucinda and her daughters is said to be more enjoyable than standard stagecoach stops. Travelers don't spend too long on the farm, just enough to switch out the horses and grab something to eat.

This farm and stagecoach stop is not a small business; it takes many hands to get the work done! According to the 1865 census, the following people live on the Mahaffie property:

JB Mahaffie (male, 47 years old, Farmer)  
Lucinda Mahaffie (female, 40 years old)  
William Mahaffie (male, 17 years old- Farm Laborer)  
Effie Mahaffie (female, 15 years old)  
John Mahaffie (male, 12 years old)  
George Mahaffie (male, 10 years old)  
Frank Mahaffie (male, 5 years old)  
John Wright (male, 38 years old- Stonemason)  
Jack Watson (male, 40 years old- Domestic)  
R Nickard (male, 41 years old- Blacksmith)

Using the information provided in this lesson plan, have students create a script for a reader's theater presentation or short skit that you may see taking place at Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop & Farm Historic Site in Olathe, KS. You can use the Shared Stories of the Civil War Reader's Theater scripts as examples (<http://freedomfrontier.org/pages/SharedStoriesofthecivilWar>). Have students select a role based on the historical characters mentioned (first person interpretation). Are they a member of the Mahaffie family, or maybe a visitor passing through?

If the student would rather not “be” the historical character, have them write a script as if they were a third-person interpreter at the Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop & Farm Historic Site in Olathe, KS. Visit their website to get more of a sense of what type of programming they may offer. ([www.mahaffie.org](http://www.mahaffie.org)) What is important about the structure and the Mahaffie story to share with their visitors/audience?

In both options, make sure students take notice if they are being true and authentic to the Mahaffie story and who their intended audience is.

**Activity 2:** Have students draw a sketch that resembles the sketch in the 1874 Atlas of a landmark in their local community they think should be nominated to the National Register. Include elements that depict what happens there on a daily basis and that reflect the history, geography, economics and government that impact that place. Details should include information about what makes the site significant.

**Activity 3:** Have students create a promotional brochure to convince a stagecoach line to stop at their 19<sup>th</sup> century farmstead. The brochures should include a map, illustrations of the tavern, inn, or home that will be used for the stop, and a description of the economic benefits of making their farmstead a stop.

**Activity 4:** Have students compare what they have found out about the Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop and Farm to the King of Prussia Inn in TwHP Lesson Plan: At a Crossroads: The King of Prussia Inn <https://www.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/119king/>. Have students conduct research to determine how the Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop has been preserved over time. Using examples from their local community or region, have students evaluate whether or not the original location of an historic building is significant to preserving its history.

## *Taverns & Travelers; Inns of the Early Midwest*

Paton Yoder – 1969; Indiana University Press

Yoder was Dean and Professor of History at Heston College. He never heard of Beatty Mahaffie, and did not include him in this book.

“A successful taverner in a prosperous village or town was almost certain to be one of the leading citizens of his community. Often he had started the village and in such cases he commonly remained a dominant figure in the community throughout his active life. Other innkeepers not credited with the founding of new communities nevertheless were active in promoting town growth and in speculating in local real estate. In frontier areas where good roads and bridges might determine the route of interstate traffic and affect vitally the future of a village and its hotels, the innkeeper was invariably active in promoting such improvements. As a kind of unofficial village center, his inn was an emblem of civic pride and a center for its expression. In such cases, even when he was not himself a heavy investor in local business ventures, he found that promoting the interests of the town fathers drew them to his inn as local patrons.

Many innkeepers were leaders in their communities, in part by virtue of considerations other than their role as taverners, such as wealth, land ownership, and public office holding. These men were former judges, former sheriffs, retired captains, and even former governors. As such, their prestige tended to bring local and even transient patronage to their establishment. On the other hand, many proprietors used their position as innkeeper as a springboard for gaining a leadership role not yet realized. Taverners were in a position to get inside information of all kinds and they had ample opportunity to make the right friends and influence the right people. Furthermore being a successful taverner was in itself a qualification for greater responsibility. In the words of one contemporary, "A man who can keep a hotel can do anything. No other qualification is needed for the highest office or the most important trust."

Particularly obvious is the advantage which the landlord had in playing a significant role in party politics. He knew everyone and he knew the power structure of the town, if he was not actually a part of it. His house was the informal center for the informal dissemination of informal news and gossip; if he did not know what was happening in town it was because he did not have his ears and eyes open. Finally, his house was the natural meeting place for political groups. Under such circumstances it is not surprising that the taverner became a local political figure. Often this leadership led in turn to elective or appointive office. Landlords became justices of the peace, county commissioners, sheriffs, judges, surveyors, United States marshals and members of state legislatures.

Until compulsory training in the local militia was dropped in the period following the War of 1812 the office most frequently held by the innkeeper was that of captain of the local militia.

The political role of innkeepers in pioneer Indiana has been described by the historian, Logan Esarey, thus:

**All through this period, from 1804 to 1811, there was outspoken hostility toward the control of elections. The sheriff, who had immediate control, was appointed by the governor. The common pleas justices really controlled the sheriff, but, as the sheriff did the actual work, he got all the blame. The justices in turn were controlled largely by the tavern keepers whom they created. The influential politicians then were the sheriffs, justices and tavern keepers.**

For a variety of reasons innkeepers were often drawn into many activities other than politics. Particularly on the frontier the successful innkeeper could be expected to diversify considerably. Unless the area was unsuited to agriculture he was certain to farm and to raise his own supplies. The reference by a traveler to "those mongrel establishments, half inn, half farm house" probably characterizes correctly most rural inns, whether they were on the frontier or not,

- 1.) Support with evidence from the Mahaffie National Register nomination form, Ella Mahaffie's recollections, and the information from the 1874 Johnson County atlas whether Beatty Mahaffie and his stagecoach operation does or does not fit the model of an eastern inn and innkeeper.



## The Mahaffies and their stagecoach stop/inn/tavern

Businessmen, sightseers and foreign visitors, soldiers and their families, clergy, men and women visiting distant families, teenagers going to and from colleges, academies, or seminaries – there was quite a mixture of society who needed, or wanted, to travel. “Public houses” – inns, taverns, hotels, wayside rests, stagecoach stops – any of these offered similar services but ranged greatly in quality and scope. Newly settled frontier regions were always in need of public houses.

### Tavern, inn, or hotel?

“Inn” and “tavern” were interchangeable terms in early America. Many writers used “hotel” in much the same way. A tavern or inn provided alcohol, food, and lodging. Some had separate rooms for sleeping, dining, and drinking and some did not. The only accommodations for sleeping in many country inns and taverns was simply a bed tick (mattress), or the travelers’ own bed rolls, spread on the floor. Whether at a country inn or private home, it was common practice to share a room and even sleep in the same bed with traveling companions or total strangers of the same sex. This practice gave rise to the expression, “Politicians make strange bedfellows.”

*[while I play with her baby, Mrs. Cook] finds time to fix up the beds in the adjoining room...I have the best bed offered me and my man, our hosts occupy the other bed and the frontier man turns in on the floor...having divested myself of overcoat, hat, and shoes, and placing my undercoat on the pillow, so as to have the pistol pocket at hand, I retire to rest in my other clothes, having wrapped my handkerchief around my head, to keep off the excessive ventilation with which the chamber is favoured, and after sweeping away two or three large spiders near my face...I sink into a profound slumber, as sweet as could be obtained in a Palace!*

***The Kansas Prairie Or, Eight Days on the Plains: Issac Moffat, 1859 KS State Hist. Soc.***

The only direct reference in Olathe newspapers of the 1860s to the Mahaffie home as a country inn uses the phrase “Mahaffie’s tavern.” This term is fitting. Beatty’s operation on the Santa Fe Trail a mile outside of Olathe had much more in common with the eastern model of a tavern or country inn that it did with either a city hotel or the remote stagecoach outposts found further west.

*A very serious accident occurred on last Saturday night at Mahaffie’s tavern, as the stage was starting out. ...The driver in attempting to stop [the coach horses] was suddenly thrown against the gate post, the stage, running over him... injuring him to such an extent that he has since died.*

**Olathe Mirror – October 11, 1866**

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## **Bottoms Up!**

Alcohol flowed freely in early America. The Temperance (anti-alcohol) movement was active across the country in the nineteenth century but it never seriously slowed the consumption of alcohol. In 1860 a Temperance Ball (dance) was held in Olathe. No one who had tasted "spirituous liquors" within 24 hours prior to the dance was admitted. As the story is told in Blair's 1915 History of Johnson County, the temperance ball was the "first and last of its kind ever held in Olathe."

Did Beatty serve alcohol at his tavern? A dram license (liquor license) should be on record in the county supervisors' records but none has surfaced. However, Beatty's signature appears on petitions collected by other businessmen applying for their licenses. He was clearly not a "temperance man." It would be surprising if Beatty did not serve alcohol in the dining room of his tavern. The Mahaffie home was not large enough for a separate pub room or saloon.

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Did Beatty choose his farm location on the Santa Fe Trail with an eye to running a wayside inn? Or did he get the idea when those first travelers asked to use his house and farm yard? Beatty seemed to do very little by chance. It is reasonable to assume that he expected to benefit in some way from all the travelers using the Santa Fe Trail directly in front of his new home. Frontier regions were usually short of public houses and Beatty did not miss many opportunities.

*[Beatty Mahaffie] located on the farm one mile northeast of Olathe, on the old Santa Fe road, ...for a great many years the Mahaffie hotel and station was known by all travelers from Westport, Missouri to Santa Fe.*

## **Obituary of James Beatty Mahaffie, Oct 13, 1907**

### **No Wonder Beatty Mahaffie Was Always Successful...**

According to family tradition, the Mahaffies found themselves in the business of serving travelers the first night they arrived on their new farm in 1858. They also sold supplies to passing wagon trains.

*No sooner had Mr. Mahaffie bought his farm than...the night [he] arrived there he took in \$5.00 for lodgers who were glad to pay for the privilege of even sleeping on the floor for the great tide of emigrants going out over the Santa Fe Trail had set in strong.*

*Already he was shucking out the corn he had bought over at Little Blue and was retailing it at home at \$1.25 a bushel. Women along the road watched for the coming and going of Mr. Mahaffie to sell him their eggs for 5 cents a dozen and butter for 15 cents a pound which travelers gladly bought... for 35 cents a dozen for eggs and 40 cents a pound for butter. No wonder Beatty Mahaffie was always successful.*

**From a story by Frank Henderson in the Olathe Democrat, July 24, 1930**

The Mahaffies served meals to all kinds of travelers, not just stagecoach passengers. Stories about Beatty and the Mahaffie house collected in later years infer that some travelers did stay overnight. They may have slept on the floor or possibly outdoors so they still had easy access to purchase meals and supplies.

Sometime around 1863, Beatty entered into an agreement with Jared Sanderson to supply passengers with meals and provide a place to change out teams of horses for the Kansas City and Fort Scott stagecoach line. Coaches running all the way to Santa Fe also used the Mahaffie farm as a stop. The state census collected in 1865 lists a "R. Nickard", blacksmith, residing at the Mahaffie farm. Sanderson probably employed Nickard to care for his horses and coaches at the Mahaffie station.

By 1866, the railroad carried travelers bound for Santa Fe to the depot at Junction City, Kansas. Jared Sanderson had new partners, but the Barlow, Sanderson and Company stage line still ran coaches north and south through Olathe. The coaches carried passengers between Fort Leavenworth, Kansas City, and Fort Scott until about 1870, when railroads finally ended the stagecoach era in eastern Kansas.

**Community Center**

City hotel or rural tavern – most establishments were social centers and places of entertainment. Local patrons swapped tall tales, argued politics, discussed business, and exchanged the latest news and gossip with each other and with travelers. Fourth of July celebrations, shooting matches, political rallies, gambling and gaming, horses races, militia drills and recruiting days – all sorts of public activities might take place at the simplest country inn or tavern. Some had a store attached to them or included a post office, and quite a few were stops for stagecoaches. In the days before "welcome centers," the local inn or tavern served just that purpose for newcomers.

*...when the first circus came to Johnson County, the Yankee Robinson Circus, July 7, '66, headquarters was made at [the Mahaffie] farm.*

**Olathe Mirror – Feb 1, 1923**

Isabel Julien [Mahaffie] obituary. The circus actually exhibited in Olathe in August of 1867.



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**Consolidated**  
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Positively the  
**LARGEST OUTFIT**  
of the kind in America.

**210**  
Horses, Ponies,  
and Mules,

**140**  
Men, Women and  
Children.

Will exhibit in  
**OLATHE,**  
**AUGUST 12th, 1867.**  
—AT—  
At 1 and 7 o'clock, P. M.  
Price of admission 75 cents; children under 9 years of age 50 cents.

## **Beatty Mahaffie, Taverner**

*Do not forget the social party to be given this evening at J.B. Mahaffie's. A good time is expected by all, and we have not the slightest doubt but the anticipations will be fully realized.*

**Olathe Mirror – February 22, 1866**

*[at the Mahaffie hotel and stage station] many a weary traveler found comfortable lodging and a generous supply of food. The hospitality of landlord Mahaffie became known far and wide...*

**Olathe Mirror, October 24, 1907 – obituary of J.B. Mahaffie by J.W. Richardson**

Beatty's primary occupation was always farming. Like many frontier businessmen, he supplemented his income by inn-keeping. The extra money was a benefit, but equally or more so were the connections and friendships he made from the social activity centered around his home.

When historian Paton Yoder wrote *Taverns and Travelers: Inns of the Early Midwest* in 1969, he did not know anything about Beatty Mahaffie. And yet, his description of the successful men who typically owned and operated taverns fits Beatty like a glove:

*A successful taverner...was almost certain to be one of the leading citizens of his community... active in promoting town growth and in speculating in local real estate... As a kind of unofficial village center, his inn was an emblem of civic pride and a center for its expression...Many innkeepers were leaders in their communities [and enjoyed] wealth, land ownership, and public office holding... Taverners...had ample opportunity to make the right friends and influence the right people... his house was the natural meeting place for political groups...it is not surprising that[ they] became... justices of the peace, county commissioners, sheriffs, judges...innkeepers were often drawn into many activities other than politics. Particularly on the frontier the successful innkeeper could be expected to diversify... Unless the area was unsuited to agriculture he was certain to farm and to raise his own supplies.*

## **Lucinda Mahaffie, Taverner's Wife**

Taverners' wives and daughters often played a key role in the operation of country inns. There is no question this was very true at the Mahaffie home. If Lucinda wasn't already busy enough caring for her family and seeing to her duties on the farm, she also had travelers to feed.

[Beatty would count on] ...the never failing resources of his equally hospitable wife to supply the deficiencies caused by his temporary lapse of memory on such occasions [bringing home friends for

dinner without warning]... Mr. Mahaffie's table was always a welcome place for any who might come that way...

Olathe Mirror, October 24, 1907 – obituary of J.B. Mahaffie by J.W. Richardson

Family tradition has it that Lucinda was famous for the good food she served, regarded as the best on the stagecoach line. Beatty and Lucinda's oldest son, William, did recount later in his life how Jared Sanderson once told him "he never hated to give up any two stations as bad in his life as he did Mahaffies, and Spragues at Spring Hill" when he sold out his stagecoach business. Daughters Isabella (Bell) and Effie no doubt helped with the tavern operation just as the Mahaffie sons all helped their father on the farm. Bell met her future husband, William Julien, when he came to work for her father as a farm hand. Julien also drove a stagecoach.

In his 1872 book, *Roughing It*, Mark Twain described his meal at a western stagecoach stop. According to Twain, the station keeper "upend[ed] a disk of last week's bread" and "slice[ed] off a piece of bacon for each man." Twain went on to comment "it was condemned Army bacon which the United States would not feed to its soldiers in the forts." Stations like the Mahaffie home were exceptions. Perhaps not as grand as hotels in Kansas City, Denver, Salt Lake City, or San Francisco, they still featured good food prepared from fresh supplies by farmwomen who knew how to cook."

### **Travel in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century**

Not all travelers went west in a wagon train. Nineteenth century Americans used steamboats, trains, farm wagons, "prairie schooners" or covered wagons, carts, ferry boats, carriages, canal boats, canoes, rafts, oxen, horses, mules, and – last but not least – their own two feet, to get themselves and their baggage where they were going.

*We hired a teamster in Kansas C. to bring us and our baggage down to the Mound [Sugar Mound, Kansas.] We expected to stop, on the way, at public houses, as the road is an old military road leading to Fort Scott, consequently we made no preparations much for camping out; but in this we were disappointed, for the driver would stop every night on the open prairie, so his mules could feed close to the wagon and our only chance for eating was to lay in a heavy dinner where ever we came to a cabin where we could get some- there being no regular places for accomodating travellers on the route and go to bed on the ground–without any supper...*

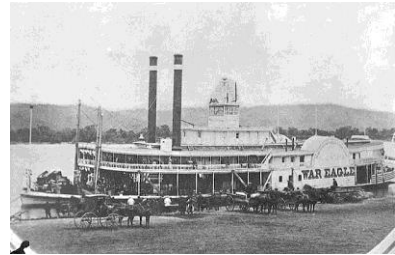
**Joseph Trego to his wife, Alice – October 16th, 1857 Kansas State Historical Society**

*...soon after supper, when fairly abed and about to fall asleep, the sounds of fiddles in the dining-room told that a country dance was beginning. All the sleeping rooms seemed to open out of the dining-room... Though very tired, the fiddles, the stamping of stoutly shod feet on the rough floor, and perhaps the excitement attendant on new experiences, kept me awake until 3 A.M., and it seemed I had only caught the merest wink of sleep after dancing ceased, when loud knocking at our door and 'stage leaving!' aroused me.*

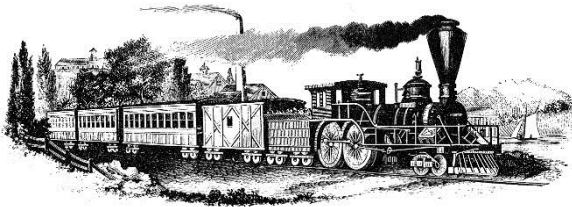
**Carrie Stearns Smith –**

**traveling by stagecoach from Kansas City, Missouri, to her new home south of Fort Scott.in 1867**

**Steamboats** appeared on American rivers before the War of 1812. Travel on a paddle-wheeled steamboat was the most comfortable way to travel – particularly for those who could afford private and semi-private cabins. Steamboats could operate in very shallow water and were perfect for the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. Unfortunately, they had a bad habit of blowing up when their steam boilers burst, or of running into floating logs and sinking.



**Railroads** crossed the Midwestern states by the 1850s, reaching St Joseph, Missouri in 1859.



Construction across the Missouri River and into the western states was delayed by the Civil War but in 1869 the first transcontinental railroad link was finished. Travel by train or “taking the cars” was the fastest and most direct if the railroad went where you needed to go, but the early passenger cars used by the public were not very comfortable.

**Stagecoach** passengers were divided in their opinion on travel conditions. A few commented that they were lulled to sleep by the rocking of the coach, or overcome by the scenery and the excitement of seeing the wild frontier. This romantic view was hardly shared by all travelers. While offering some of the best views of the countryside, stagecoaches were also dusty, muddy, cold, hot, and typically the most crowded and all-around uncomfortable mode of transportation. However, coaches went everywhere that trains and steamboats did



not or could not. Except at true hotels in larger cities, accommodations and meals for western stagecoach passengers were usually less than elegant.

*A Kansas country tavern is a great institution; do not think we shall ever forget our night at Paola... It makes me shudder to think of it. Not only bed bugs, but rats were our room mates that night. Such a hornpipe as these rats danced on the floor, around our heads, everywhere, long tedious night. We thought morning would never come.... Oct. 19th Left Paola before daybreak, rode six miles and stopped for breakfast. Asked one of the passengers [if the food was good and] he told us we would get the best meal here of any place in Kansas... found we had been rightly informed, everything was clean and palatable, enjoyed our breakfast.*

**Diary of Emma Morley – traveling by stagecoach to Fort Scott, Kansas in the autumn of 1864.**

*We reached Paola [Kansas] just at dusk. The hotel was a rude rambling one-story affair...All the sleeping rooms seemed to open out of the dining-room. I occupied one with a lady on her way east to Pleasant Hill.*

**Carrie Stearns Smith, traveling by stagecoach from Kansas City, Missouri, to her new home south of Fort Scott, Kansas in 1867**

**Friendly Shelter**

In rural areas and frontier regions, the owner of any home conveniently located near the road might get requests from travelers for food and lodging – for themselves and their horses. Sometimes, a family cheerfully obliged just for the company, while others were willing to provide services for a fee. Homeowners often found themselves in business as innkeepers almost in self-defense against the wave of travelers filling the roads. They expected to be accommodated in some manner but were willing to pay something for the service. Others wanted nothing to do with outsiders and turned them away.



*As it is now getting late I make up my mind to give up further travelling for this day... we gladly avail ourselves of the humble shelter and fare of this lonely cabin before us... the horses are put up for the night, and a hasty meal ordered of our active hostess. ...this prairie Home, it is not a regular house of entertainment, but being situated at cross roads, and being also the only house for miles, it is always sought by those who need refreshment or rest...the skillet is on the stove, and the cook (Mrs. Cook) is about slicing up some cold boiled-beef which is destined for the skillet, to reappear in the shape of beef steaks, she has also made from the flour and fat, some biscuits as they are called, which are deposited in the oven...The house now begins to wear the appearance of a genuine Hotel; ...we are soon favoured with two more arrivals from Leavenworth, who with the usual plea of wearyness and hunger, wish to be allowed to remain over night, so that our party now numbers five who have availed themselves of the friendly shelter...*

**The Kansas Prairie Or, Eight Days on the Plains: Issac Moffat, 1859 KS State Hist. Soc.**

### **Interpretive Significance**

Understanding travel in our era, how “public houses” were utilized by travelers, and the status or “inside track” that tavern and inn keepers benefitted from is one of the most important chapters in the Mahaffie story. The excerpt from Patton Yoder about the typical taverner couldn’t be a better description of Beatty Mahaffie.

Travel and transportation are also logical areas for helping our visitors draw comparisons with their world and the Mahaffies’ world. Everyone travels in some manner; manner of our visitors are in the midst of some journey when they come to visit us. They had to travel just to get here even if they came from across town.



## Living History Reading

Historical interpretation refers to what museums, historic sites, and other cultural institutions provide their visitors through exhibits and programs. Interpretation provides the visitor with context and understanding of the site's unique stories, and connects them to the significance of the story. This means the interpreter, or docents as they are sometimes referred to as, must discover this connection and relevance through research.

Another important part of historical interpretation is creating relevance- why does history matter to us today? What can we learn from the past? When creating interpretation for a historic site or museum, it's important to evaluate a few important aspects: audience, resources, the site, and the story. Analyzing these aspects of the historic site or museum can better determine what type of interpretation will be most successful.

There are many different ways that historical sites and museums can interpret history to their visitors. One of them is referred to as Living History, a unique and engaging way of experiencing history. Living History offers visitors the ability to interact with history, and provides the public with an opportunity to. Docents, or historical interpreters, portray life as it was in the time period their site represents. Using clothing patterns based on historical patterns, farming and cooking techniques found in period magazines and cookbooks, as well as leisure activities, sites can portray an accurate depiction of another time period of history. The degree of authenticity can vary by historic site and budget. Although most of the items used in a living history demonstration are reproduction items (meaning not original to the time period, but developed in the same way), they are still expensive.

According to ALHFAM (The Association for Living History, Farm and Agricultural Museums) living history dates back to at least 1891 Sweden. The social history movement of the 1960s and 1970s, coupled with the nationwide excitement for preservation in part due to the bicentennial of the United States encouraged this type of program at museums in the US. Popular living history sites in the United States include Greenfield Village in Michigan, Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia, Plimoth Plantation, Old Sturbridge Village, Conner Prairie in Indiana, and Living History Farms in Iowa. Living history is commonly used at historic sites and museums that are open to the public. Historic reenactors, commonly found at battle reenactments, use living history, but may not develop their reenactments or their portrayals for visitors. Many individuals who reenact do so as a hobby, to help preserve history. They may engage with public visitors, but not to the extent that historic sites and museums do.

There are several different ways to use living history at a historic site. One way is *first-person interpretation*. In this setting, interpreters will speak and dress as if though they are a historical character, living in the time period they are interpreting. They interact with visitors as though the visitor has traveled through time back to their time period; they may not be familiar with cell phones or cameras, or the style of clothing modern-day visitors may wear. *Third-person interpretation* also involves dressing in “period” clothing, but the interpreter does not portray a character; rather, they are just demonstrating what it may have been like to live in the time period they are representing. *Museum Theater* is another method of interpretation; in this scenario interpreters present a theatrically based performance with a script that interprets life and the time period the site represents.

Living history offers visitors a choice in how they engage in the story; they can travel back in time and converse with interpreters, help with period demonstrations, or simply observe as they would in other museum settings.

*Questions:*

- 1.) *How can living history help people understand what has happened in the past?*
- 2.) *Why is it important for those doing living history to corroborate the information they have?*
- 3.) *What sources and resources does a living historian have to build their interpretations?*

**Excerpt from National Register of Historic Places Inventory...Nomination Form for the J.B. Mahaffie House, 1977.**

The J.B. Mahaffie house in Olathe sits approximately 500 to 600 feet north of the old Kansas City road, the former route of the Santa Fe Trail. It is situated on a 13-acre tract at the east edge of the city and is a small working farmstead.

Additional tracts to the north and east are part of the same farm operation. Originally the house was one mile from Olathe but eastward expansion has brought it within the city limits. Development is now occurring in the vicinity of the Mahaffie house.

The Mahaffie house was originally a one and one-half story five-room frame structure. It was built in 1857 at an unknown site in Olathe and moved to Mahaffie's claim in 1858. A two story native stone addition in the vernacular style was built to the south in 1865. It was connected to the frame structure which was then (or perhaps later) raised to two stories. The house measures 40 feet across the south facade; the stone addition extends back to the north 20 feet while the east and west facades of the frame house measure 24 feet, giving an overall length of 44 feet on the east and west sides. The north facade of the wood house measures 32 feet.

The main facade, which is part of the 1865 stone addition, faces the Kansas City road. This part of the house is two stories high with a basement. The stone has been laid in a squared rubble, and the roof which is surfaced with asphalt shingles is pitched. The house has a simple boxed cornice with a plain frieze.

The chimneys break the roofline at the peak, a brick one on the east side and a stone chimney on the west. The doorway has been centrally placed. Entrance is through double wood doors and screen doors which have been set in a simple wood frame. The one story porch supported on Tuscan columns which originally extended the length of this facade has been shortened although the raised foundations still remain.

A balustrade encloses the flat roof of this porch, and access can be gained to this area through a centrally placed second story doorway. This door has been recessed and has sidelights. Originally there were two aligned windows on each story to either side of the central bay, but the space between windows on the first story has been infilled with another window. The window lights have an interesting configuration. The upper pane has been divided into two rows with four lights each and a wider row of three lights. The lower panes have not been divided into lights.

The west facade of the stone addition has been simply treated. It has one window on the first story and two on the second. The windows have plain stone lintels. An outside entrance to the cellar is located below the first story window. The original wood house sits back eight feet from the stone addition and has a simple one story raised wood veranda. There is a door to the south end of the wing while windows of various shapes are asymmetrically arranged on the facade. The wood house has a hipped roof which is surfaced with asphalt shingles. A thin brick chimney rises from the roof on the north side just below the ridge line.

The frame house and the stone addition connect flush on the east facade. The stone facade has again been simply treated with one rectangular window on the first story and two on the second with a small square window set off-center in the gable. Two small windows near ground level light the basement. There is an oriel window at the south end of the frame house. Other windows of various sizes are asymmetrically arranged on the remainder of the facade.