



COLE FAMILY NEWSLETTER

The Stephen and William Temple Cole Families



91st Cole Family Reunion -August 9-10, 2025

Another successful Family reunion!!! We were at the Cooper County Fairgrounds again this year. Between the heat and looming thunderstorms, everyone appreciated being indoors.

Those in town for the weekend took advantage of tours of the Stretz House/Cole Fort Site and Briscoe Cemetery on Saturday. A large contingent of family and friends met back at the fairground Saturday evening for a catered meal and fellowship. The annual potluck dinner and Cole Family meeting were on Sunday. A total of 64 attended this year's events. Family historical memorabilia and scrapbooks were on display, while genealogist Ray Owens helped several people piece together their ancestral heritage.

Velma Cole headed the silent auction of donated items, which generated \$285 toward Cole Association projects. Special thank you to everyone who brought items to be auctioned. Also, thanks to all who donated to The General Fund (\$60), The Cemetery Fund (\$345), and the Scholarship Fund (\$140). These funds support communication, such as our newsletters and Ancestry.com, maintenance/restoration at the Briscoe Cemetery, and a \$500 annual scholarship.

First-time Reunion Attendees



James and Annette Cole from Clarksville, TN. Special thanks for donating the themed 'Tennessee Baskets' for the auction.



Ted Lowe from Tucson, AZ



Gary and Kelly Anderson, Edna Allen, and Ken Marley, from Melissa, Van Alstyne, and Lubbock, TX.

The Youngest Attendee - Zeke Stevens, son of Shannon and Popi Stevens

The Oldest Attendee - Carloyn Eichelberger

Travelled The Furthest - Ted Lowe - Tucson, Arizona; Sharlys Burnett - Great Falls, Montana

Married the Longest - Charles and Judy Cole, 64 years

Largest Family Group - The Jon Painter family - 10 immediate family members attending: Rebecca Braden, Cole & Laura Painter, Jacob Braden, Matthew, Hannah, James and Henry Braden, Emily Braden, and Abigail Braden

Bylaws and Officer Elections:

Current Officers:

President, Bob Painter (KC)

Vice President, Jon Painter,

Secretary Treasurer, Kim Dickerson,

Directors, Charles Cole, Carolyn Eichelberger, Marianne Cole Fues (Past President)

Bob Painter (PG) will fill Bob Painter (KC)'s open seat.

Genealogist, Ray Owens, and Webmaster, John Sage

The Board met this year and approved formal Bylaws for the Association. The Bylaws designate officers to serve 2-year terms. Therefore, the next officer election will be in 2026. The 2025-26 officers will remain the same:

The Bylaws added 2 additional Board members, so the Board will be looking to fill these positions. **If interested, please let an officer or Board member know.**

You Can Help: An effort is underway to identify potential Board members, committee members, and people willing to help the Association grow. Please speak up if you have skills or wish to support.

The Briscoe Cemetery Restoration News

The Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) service, Jack Wick Metal Detecting, reports they have completed the scans but will be reworking certain areas. We are expecting a complete report with maps soon. This is a detailed and painstaking task. They did locate a grave near Hannah's stone, and we are hopeful we will learn more about grave locations in the cemetery. We are grateful to Mark Jenkins, who, with pride, mows the Cemetery of his ancestors. He keeps it looking very nice.

Fundraising

We do not spend large amounts of money. However, donations are greatly appreciated as we continue to repair stones found by radar at Briscoe Cemetery, mow the cemetery, manage an Ancestry.com site for the Cole Family, publish biannual newsletters, and cover the costs associated with the reunion meal.

Brick Campaign: An initiative launched in 2023 to sell bricks and use the funds for the Briscoe Cemetery Restoration Project. The previously ordered bricks have arrived and will be placed at the Briscoe Cemetery, providing a walkway and making it accessible for people to view their brick(s). The cost of a brick is \$90. This is a great way to honor or memorialize a family member or loved one, a birthday or Christmas gift, or to simply leave your name in support.



Order bricks at www.fundraisingbrick.com/colefamily/

Committee Reports:

Scholarship – Chairman Judy Cole announced that the committee awarded this year's scholarship to Wyatt Weber of Pilot Grove. Wyatt was unable to attend the reunion, but he will attend State Tech in Linn, Missouri, this fall.

Genealogy – Ray Owens is now leading our genealogy efforts. Reach Ray by email at genealogy@coleassociation.com with family updates. Ray is a professional Genealogist and is working toward a Forensic Genealogy Degree.

Family News:



Sarah Lacy is the new Executive Director of **The Friends of Historic Boonville**. Sarah was born and raised in Boonville. As the 5th great-granddaughter of Hannah Cole, she grew up with a strong appreciation for Boonville's rich history and a lifelong interest in preservation.



Justin "Liberty" Newgaard, received one of 9 prestigious awards for his work with food service in a hospital setting from the International Fresh Produce Association. He is a Chef and Nutritionist and is the regional VP of operations over the Morrison Healthcare System, covering the Pacific Northwest and Alaska.



Brothers and 5th Great Grandsons of Stephen and Pheobe Cole become fathers to baby girls within 11 days of each other! Proud parents Kyle and Justine Utley of Great Falls, MT, welcomed baby Wrenna Gayle Utley into the world on September 16, 2025.



And Kyle's big brother, Dustin, and his wife, Lynsey Utley, of Bozeman, MT, welcomed baby Olivia Grace Utley into the world on September 27, 2025.



Dick's Mill Restoration Project: Voted by *Missouri Life Magazine* as the **Best Preservation Project**. The public has entirely funded the Dick's Mill Project. There is still a lot of work to do, which will require more funding. Send donations to Dick's Mill/MRVSEA c/o Bob Painter 12226 Hwy 5, Boonville, MO 65233. MRVSEA is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit, and contributions are tax-deductible.

Cole Family History by Will Kastner



Bennett C. Clark, "Diary of a Journey from Missouri to California in 1849"

" Finally on the morning of the 3rd day of May 1849, our friends having arrived and every thing being in readiness we broke up our camp and started on our long and toilsome journey...."

So began the Boonville Forty-Niners on their adventure. Some of the party had been late in arriving at the meeting place, the weather was rainy, and the roads were slippery, but at last they were on their way, starting from the general area of Westport, MO, the usual jumping-off point for western trails in 1849. Scholars and enthusiasts have been investigating and documenting the Oregon and California trails for more than a century, and thanks to their work and to Clark's diary we can follow the travelers' route fairly precisely. 'We drove slowly & reached, the first night Indian Creek where we encamped for the night,' indicating that the group took Wornall Road, one of the many alternate routes and shortcuts they would face over the next 2,000 miles.

Within a week the Boonville boys were feeling more at home on the trail and acting like experienced overland travelers. They geared up early in the mornings to get ahead of some of the many other outfits on the trail, they forded creeks and small rivers, and they corralled their wagons at night—nine wagons now, with the late arrivals added. By May 8th they had reached "the lower Kansas Ferry" (near the present Kansas town of Lecompton), where the boats took two wagons at a time and the stock was forded. (The price was probably about \$1/wagon—equivalent to about \$40 today. As the distance from civilization increased, so did the price.) There followed several days of relatively smooth and level traveling, the chief changes being the frequent additions to and subtractions from the Boonville train—an Ohio group and another Missouri group joined the Boonville train on the 9th, more joined on the 11th; still more on the 12th. And just as haphazardly some wagons and travelers left the train. ("The desertion spoken of was not in the least regretted by the Company.") The dates are not entirely clear from Clark's diary, but the Company passed through Kansas and reached the Platte River and Fort Kearney, Nebraska having experienced only routine storms, equipment breakdowns, and illnesses. They still had about 80% of their journey ahead of them.

Now began the segment of their travel that we are all most familiar with from motion pictures—the long train of wagons moving steadily across the open prairie. The Boonville Company seems to have largely stayed south of the Platte River as it moved slowly westward toward Ft. Laramie, Wyoming, 300 miles away, " . . . trains dotting the road as far as the eye could reach, presenting a cheerful picture in this wild and barren country." (Saturday, May 26.) They ran into friends from Howard County, they saw prairie dogs, they suffered fierce springtime storms, and they were visited by Pawnee Indians. By June 2nd they had reached Ash Hollow and what is now called Windlass Hill—"The road was steeper than any we have ever yet encountered"—and where wagon wheel ruts are still visible from wagons sliding with locked wheels about 100 yards down a 25-degree slope. Court House rock on June 5th. Chimney Rock on June 6th. Scotts Bluff on June 8th.

But by now the Oregon-California Trail was making itself felt. The Company was having trouble finding adequate grass and other forage for the mules, who were being heavily overworked. Wagons were beginning to break down. Consequently, loads were lightened and some heavy goods discarded. The company pressed on, and by June 9th they had arrived at Ft. Laramie, Wyoming. They did not linger.

Started early & travelled some 15 miles to noon. Here the grass was awfully short The road now became very bad, hill after hill rising in continual succession before us with little or no vegetation to encourage us. About 7 PM we got to Heber Spring our stock very tired &

ourselves wet from the rain that had been falling for an hour. We found little or no grass here. Despondency rules the hour.

Bad roads, no grass, and still the Rocky Mountains and then the Sierra Nevada Mountains ahead of them. The grass situation was so bad, in fact, that the Boonville Company formally broke up into smaller independent segments so that smaller groups of mules could make do with smaller patches of grass rather than having to find a large meadow for all the teams and wagons. (Because they camped at Heber Springs, we know the company took the Plateau Route variation of the main Oregon-California Trail.)

On June 16th Clark's segment of the original company—which surely included W.T. Cole, though no definitive personnel list is given—reached “the lower platte Ferry” (not exactly located but somewhere within the modern city of Casper, Wyoming. The ferry was established by Brigham Young in 1847.), where they found “some 2 or 300 wagons awaiting their turns to ferry.” The reduced Boonville Company discovered a “new ferry,” however, and was able to cross the Platte the next day. Now began long driving days, always in hopes of good grass and good water, often disappointing. Independence Rock on June 20th. On June 24th South Pass, Wyoming, the Continental Divide. And finally, after days and days of hardship, “grass and water very abundant.” The Boonville Company was now a little over half way to the California gold fields.

Having crossed South Pass, they “shortly afterwards found the forks of the Oregon & California roads. After some parly we concluded that the right [hand] road was Sublets cut off, & concluded to take it.” They were mistaken in thinking that they had come to the Parting of the Ways—Oregon vs. California Trails (and this mistake in Clark's diary pretty strongly suggest that the travelers were following Joseph Ware's *Emigrant's Guide to California*, printed in 1849, where this misidentification was originally made). The 50-mile Greenwood-Sublette cutoff they took was indeed about 50 miles shorter than the established trail, but the savings came at the cost of having to cross 50 terrible miles of waterless desert. And it was along this these terrible miles that the Boonville Company suffered its only fatality: Alfred Corum died along the Sublette Cutoff on July 3rd, 1849.

Exact numbers are impossible to find, but of the 30,000-40,000 trail immigrants to California in 1849, it is estimated that 6-10% of them died along the way, most commonly of illness and disease, accidents, accidental gunshots, drowning, and weather. (Indians, especially in the early years, were generally friendly to the immigrants.) The party reached “Smith's fork of Bear River,” and “here on account of the increased illness of Alfred Corum who had been sick a week or 10 days we laid by a day.” Early on the afternoon of the 3rd, “he died without a struggle & in full possession of all his faculties to the last. It was truly melancholly to reflect that whilst our friends at home were doubtless enjoying this great anniversary of natural Independence in the usual way we were performing the last sad offices to one of our dead companions.”

Interestingly, of the thousands of travelers who died on the Oregon and California Trails from 1840-1860, very, very few grave sites are known, but Alfred Corum's burial site has been preserved for 175 years. An original wooden marker was replaced by this stone a few years later and can still be visited.

Will Kastner (I-1, II-1, III-1, IV-1, V-1, VI-3, VII-4, VIII-4, IX-1, X-6, XI-2, XII-2, XIII-1)



For a fuller account of Alfred Corum and his grave marker, see <https://www.wyohistory.org/encyclopedia/grave-alfred-corum-forty-niner>.

Our Family!





Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/colefamilyassociation/>

Websites: <https://coleassociation.com/> (thank you, John Sage)

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Please forward this Newsletter to others and ask them to send us their contact information.

The 2026 Reunion is on Sunday, August 10th, at the Cooper County Fairgrounds.