

THE BUTTERFIELD OVERLAND MAIL 1857-1869

Its organization and operation over the Southern
Route to 1861; subsequently over the Central
Route to 1866; and under Wells, Fargo
and Company in 1869

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Volume I



THE ARTHUR H. CLARK COMPANY
Glendale 4, California, U.S.A.
1947

rock corral, and then on for five miles ~~over more~~ gentle and sloping country to Chimney creek, where Smith's, the next station twenty-six miles southwest from Clear Fork, was located.

Smith's station, Shackelford county,¹⁹⁸ was located on the east bank of Chimney creek in section 10, of the G. R. and L. G. Davis block, one mile southwest from the present stone ranch house on the Davis property known as the old Conrad ranch house. The station and corral were constructed of stone, judging from the ruins that remain today. This was another Company-built station as there was not a settler living on the route between Clear Fork and Phantom hill at the time.

The station building was probably not completed until October, 1858, for prior to that time travelers reported that only the corral had been built and that the Smiths were living in tents, and that Mrs. Smith cooked the meals over an outside fireplace.

From all that can be learned, Smith, the station-keeper, was employed by the Company, and it is probable that he and his wife were natives of the county. It is a coincidence that Mr. G. L. Smith, who has done a considerable amount of investigation along the old route, is the present manager of the Davis ranch property and occupies the headquarters house a short distance from the old station site.

The name Chimney creek was not given to the stream until later in the sixties, and was no doubt suggested by the white stone chimney of the station and also by those of a number of other houses that were built by settlers along the creek above the station which eventually became landmarks along the road. Near these is a large

¹⁹⁸ Shackelford county was created February 1, 1858, and named in honor of Doctor (Captain) John Shackelford, a survivor of Fannin's Massacre.—*Texas Almanac*, 1859, p. 189.

rock corral, or "rock pen" as they are called, many of which are still standing along the abandoned mail road.

The twelve-mile stage between Smith's and Fort Phantom Hill is all abandoned. The track of it, however, is plainly visible from the crossing on the Chimney creek near the station site, and on for a mile or more up and over the ridge west of the creek. Efforts were made here by the early road builders to lower the grade by quarrying large blocks of limestone out of the bed of the road. From the summit of the ridge the road made a gradual descent to the crossing on Willow or Deadman creek, as the stream became known. Here at some later time in the history of the road, the body of an unidentified man was found in the road near the crossing, where it was buried and where the grave may still be seen. On the west side of the crossing in a cultivated field, is the site of the almost forgotten settlement of Rising Sun that existed here with its post-office, store, school, and blacksmith shop, as late as 1889. This settlement was on the abandoned county road between Abeline and Albany. One half mile west of Deadman creek the road crossed the boundary line of Shackelford and Jones counties. Farther on, signs of it almost disappear through the cultivated fields, but a well-defined section is visible again in the northeast corner of Joseph Scott's pasture in section 12, block 14, of the Texas and Pacific railroad. Still farther on in the adjoining pasture of Mrs. J. V. Wright, another well-marked section appears. From this point it followed a slightly winding course down into the valley of Elm creek, which is more of an acclivity than it appears from a distance. The road forded Elm creek about three quarters of a mile east of the ruined fort, and then followed a course west across the reservation to the station.