

Big Turkey Creek Camp

Marion County, Kansas



Big Turkey Creek Ranch was established by Charles O. Fuller in 1855. A native of New York state, born in 1828, Fuller came to Missouri as a young man where he obtained employment as driver for the Waldo Hall Company, the first mail contractor on the Santa Fe Trail. At some unknown date, Fuller left the ranch, moving to Marion Centre, Kansas where he was elected to the Marion County Board of Commissioners. In Marion Centre, he built the first hotel and in 1872, he joined Ira Moore of the Cottonwood Creek Ranch in the establishment of the grist mill west of Marion Centre. In the same year, Fuller traded his interest in the mill for a farm near Florence, Kansas. Here he lived to his death in 1879.



Fuller's successors at the ranch were Harvey Bickford and **L. Hubble**. Bickford was appointed postmaster at the post office established at the ranche in 1860. Both Bickford and **Hubble** figured in the creation of Peketon County. In the November 6, 1860 election, conducted at the Cow Creek Ranche, Bickford, was elected to serve as county commissioner; **Hubble was elected to the office of county commissioner.**



The ranch became a favorite stop on the Santa Fe Trail because of the fine table set by two sisters employed at the ranch, Clare and Norma Nomi. Norma married a Mr. Smith, a butcher at Fort Dodge, Kansas. Clare married Henry Schonfeldt. The identity of Schonfeldt is murky. In 1866, a Henry Shonfield paid a dram shop license fee. Conjecture has it that Schonfeldt and Shonfield were one and the same person. If so, then in all likelihood, this person, whatever the spelling of his name, was the last proprietor of the Turkey Creek Ranch.

Turkey Creek campground also known as Fullers Ranch was in 1855, the first settlement in what is now McPherson County. In 1864 Mr. & Mrs. Ely P. Waterman were operating the Running Turkey Ranch and also a mail station at that location. The Waterman's were the parents of Mr. A. A. Moore {Lank Moore}, and Mrs. Moore was ill and wished to have her mother come visit. The Moores were living about 1/2 mile north of Main Street in Marion Centre, and on July 20, 1864 Mr. Moore sent Ed Miller to the Running Turkey Ranch to notify Mrs. Waterman of her daughter's illness. Ed Miller was a boy about 17 years of age, the son of Nelson Miller who lived near the Mineral Wells on the North side of Main Street in Marion. Ed, riding a fast horse, stopped at French Franks Ranch where he was to exchange horses for Frank's fast horse. However, Frank had gone to Council Grove, taking his fast horse along with him. Being unable to make the exchange, he proceeded on his way with Moore's horse for about 16 miles southwest of the Frenchman's Ranch. Upon reaching the brow of the hill descending down to the ranch at Turkey Creek where Mr. Waterman lived, he was confronted by a band of Indian warriors who opened fire upon him. When this happened Ed turned back and fled. The people at the ranch heard the report of Indian guns and got a glimpse of a lone horseman turning and fleeing before them. From the roof of the ranch they could see a cloud of dust upon the Santa Fe Road for some distance, but the boy and the Indians soon vanished out of sight. The race continued up the Santa Fe Road to the northeast for about 12 miles to a point about a quarter mile west of the old Cottonwood Holes, about four miles west of the Frenchman's Ranch.

At this point the Indians killed and scalped young Ed Miller. On the fourth day, when Ed failed to return, a search party went out to look for him. The four men in the search party were, Jack Griffith, Henry Roberts, Evan Hoops and R. C. Coble. They went from Marion to French Frank's Ranch where they learned that the Indians had raided his ranch on the day that Ed passed there. They continued Southwest along the Trail, and upon ascending the rise a short distance west of the Cottonwood Holes detected something unusual in the air. They made a search of the area and found the body of Ed lying about three rods south of the Santa Fe Road with one or two handfuls of weeds broken off and thrown upon him. Henry Roberts went back to French Franks, brought out a shovel and pick, the men dug a grave and buried Ed Miller on the top of a hill several yards North of the Santa Fe Road. His grave site became Jones Cemetery just East of the Marion County line in McPherson County.

At Beach Valley, temporary seat of short-lived Peketon county, an election was held on November 6, 1860. Abijah I. Beach, William Mathewson, and Robert Odell were election judges. William I. Mason served as clerk. Twelve men -- all frontiersmen -- voted for one legislator, and 10 county officials. The names of 11 are shown on the election return (Mathewson, and the 10 county officials chosen).

		<i>Votes</i>
Legislature*	S. N. Wood	12
	(H. Bickford	12
County comm'rs	(A. I. Beach	12
	(Geo. M. Gordon	11
County assessor	Hubble	12
Probate judge	W. D. Wheeler	12
County clerk	Robert Odell	12
Sheriff	Wm. I. Mason	11
Treasurer	Wm. N. Edwards	12
Justice of the peace	Chauncey Jones	12
Constable	Charles Rath	12

*The counties of Madison, Chase, Peketon, and Morris constituted the 23d election district. For the legislature, in this election, S. N. Wood, of Council Grove, Morris county (with 177 votes) won over candidates T. S. Huffaker (99), and N. B. Moulton (102). Wood, of course, voted at Council Grove.

Beach, Mathewson, and Edwards all have been identified as related to Cow Creek Crossing. Robert Odell also seems to have been at Beach Valley in 1860. He was there in 1863. H. Bickford was Harvey L. Bickford, rancher and postmaster at Big Turkey (Creek Crossing). His partner **Hubble(s) may have been related to J. W. Hubbles, who, in 1869**, was one of the first settlers on the Cowskin, in what became Salem township, Sedgwick county. William D. Wheeler had been at Little Arkansas Crossing since 1858. Charles Rath, probably just before election, had taken over the ranch at Walnut Creek Crossing. George M. Gordon's address in August, 1860, was Pawnee Fork. No information has been found on Mason or Jones. [31]

31. Peketon county election returns, November 6, 1860 (in KHi archives division). In Baughman, Kansas Post Offices, p. 202, Big Turkey's first postmaster should be

listed as Harvey (not Harry) L. Bickford. "**Hubbell**" is mentioned in the *Council Grove Press* of June 1, 1861, as follows: "Mr. Wm. Wheeler, Dr. A. I. Beach, and Hubbell and Bickford, have Ranches [all the way out to Little Arkansas and Cow creek] ..." Frank Stahl recollected the Big Turkey ranch was run by "Harvey Bickford and Lester Buttles (i.e., Hubble[s]?). See Horace Jones, *Up From the Sod* (Lyons, c1968), p. 41. For Rath, see *KHQ*, v. 37, p. 140. "G. M. Gordon, with 3 men, Pawnee Fork," was "Registered at S. M. Hays & Co.," *Council Grove*, for the week ending August 23, 1860. -- See *Council Grove Press*, August 25, 1860