

# *Gardner Historical Museum, Inc.*

*Listed in the State and National Register of Historic Places*



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<http://www.gardnerhistoricalmuseum.com>

Junction Park, Gardner, Kansas; Where the Oregon and California Trails split from the Santa Fe Trail. Adventure started in Gardner with the decision of whether to continue to the southwest and travel to Santa Fe, New Mexico and trade goods, or turn to go northwest on the combined Oregon and California Trails - to become a landowner in Oregon, or split off on the combined trail and head to California, where you could strike it rich.

In the fall of 1821 Mexico was able to remove Spanish rule by a successful revolt and become a free country. Missouri on the other hand was in a depressed condition in the community of Franklin. In this environment, William Becknell, a man of just 31 years, found himself overwhelmed with the threat of debtors' prison. With five other men, William left Franklin for a journey that would make his name in history. For about two and a half months he traveled through cold and uncertainty to reach New Mexico and establish a trade route. More traders came over the trail the following years to trade items like cloth of different kinds; ie., calico, chambray, flannels, gingham, linens, muslins, and silks. Additional goods to trade included needles, thread, buttons, shawls, handkerchiefs, knives, files, axes, tools, and green spectacles. Once in Santa Fe, everything was sold, which included the wagons, oxen and mules. Beautiful brides were often brought back from New Mexico to Missouri, as well as silver coins.

The Oregon and California Trails started out together on the Santa Fe Trail, but a decision was inevitable once you reached Gardner. Whether you planned to emigrate and settle in Oregon or whether you wanted to seek your fortune in the gold fields of California or Colorado, the trip was difficult. The 1820s and 1830's saw more ship travel to California than wagon, but May of 1841 began the shift to mostly wagon travelers with an increase in the number of emigrants. Boosted by the inexpensive land and the desire for a better life, fortune seekers by the thousands traveled to Oregon in 1846. Britain acknowledged this push and relinquished Oregon that same year. Travel by emigrants with 'Gold Fever' exploded further when gold was discovered in California in 1848.

A few years later, the Jacob Victor family relocated to Gardner to establish the first homestead. 1857 would be designated in history as the date of the founding of Gardner, Kansas. More detailed information on Gardner can be found at the Gardner Historical Museum.

All good things must come to an end, and the three trails' use did too. With the coming of the transcontinental railroad which was completed in 1869, travelers had a safer and quicker way to access the west. The railroad was expanded to the Gardner area and beyond by 1870, which gradually put the 3 Trails to rest, that is until the ignition of automobile travel.

Starting in September, the Gardner Historical Museum will feature a new exhibit to commemorate the 200th Anniversary of the Santa Fe Trail.

To experience more of your 3 Trails and other local history, visit the Museum at 204 W. Main Street, our website, or Facebook.



Photo courtesy of Isabella Rankin: August 3, 2021, American Solar Car Challenge 2021 on the 200th Anniversary of the Santa Fe Trail, on the Santa Fe Trail, Gardner, Kansas.



Photo courtesy of Isabella Rankin: August 3, 2021, American Solar Car Challenge 2021 on the 200th Anniversary of the Santa Fe Trail, on the Trail, at the Gardner Historical Museum, Gardner, Kansas.

### Resources:

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<https://www.nps.gov/cali/learn/historyculture/index.htm>

<https://www.nps.gov/oreg/learn/historyculture/index.htm>

<https://www.santafetrail.org/index.html>

*A History of the Santa Fe Trail by Harry C. Myers – 2010, (Edited by Joanne VanCoevern)*

***Courtesy of the Gardner Historical Museum, Gardner, KS***