

I Shall Not Pass This Way Again

*. . . And let no chance by me be lost
To kindness show at any cost;
I shall not pass this way again.
Then let me now relieve some pain,
Remove some barrier from the road;
A helping hand to this one lend,
Then turn some other to be friend.*

*. . . Then, O, one day
May someone say —
Remembering a lessened pain —
"Would she could pass this way again."*

Eva Rose York



CHAPTER 1

The Home Farm

"The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born of earnest struggle . . . If there is not struggle, there is no progress."

— Frederick Douglass

The land that has become Santa Fe Place was once an upland meadow, set off by stands of hickory, oak and walnut trees, high above the fertile green delta at the confluence of the Kaw and Missouri rivers. From the beginning, the place was prized. Until Europeans established a community here, the only permanent settlements were villages of mound dwellers hundreds of years ago, but Native Americans — among them the Kansa and Osage — camped and hunted here.

A few years after the expedition party of Lewis and Clark passed through the area in 1804, Francois Chouteau, the son of a St. Louis merchant family, moved his family to the base of the Missouri River bluffs near what is now the

Northeast industrial area of Kansas City. In 1821, he and other French-speaking fur trappers established a fur-trading post. Except for periodic flooding, Chouteau's little village on the river was an ideal location, because two river-highways brought commerce from the West and the North.

Other settlers were drawn to the area when word of its fertile soil and fine forests spread in the East and South. The town of Independence, Missouri, was platted in 1827 and the town of West Port in 1834. The Santa Fe Trail led from one to the other and then West.

Travelling by flatboat or by wagons, thousands of pioneers trekked to the area, drawn by the promise of new land to farm or the get-rich-quick rumors of Western gold and silver rushes. The

Oregon Trail led Northwest, but the more famous route was the Santa Fe Trail, a heavily traveled road that stretched from Independence to Santa Fe, Mexico and cut diagonally, Northeast to Southwest, across what would become Santa Fe Place.

Recognizing its commercial value, John Thornton filed the first claim on the area. The year was 1827 and Thornton intended to set up a business to serve new settlers as well as those just passing through. Thornton built a mill and a distillery, a lucrative combination. In 1831, a single caravan setting out through what is now Santa Fe Place comprised 100 wagons loaded with goods to trade in Mexico, and 200 people. The merchandise most in demand from outfitters was flour, cotton fabric, notions, and whiskey. The trip was successful far beyond its organizers' dreams, with some goods selling for 1,000 times more than their original price. Soon a steady flow of wagons rumbled west to the trading posts in Santa Fe.

Commerce and expansion — these two great forces opened the American West. They were also the forces which made Kansas City prosperous. The location and ultimate development of Santa Fe Place would become tangible evidence of that prosperity.

One of the immigrants to the area was a Kentuckian named Jones Lockridge. In 1836, he purchased 520 acres, including Thornton's claim and the 120 acres that is now Santa Fe Place. Lockridge settled with his wife, Rachel, his five children, and his slaves. He tore down the mill and distillery and built a log cabin.

A farmer, Lockridge wanted flat, well-drained land. But he wanted it high, a safe distance from the unpredictable and dangerous Missouri River. Perhaps no piece of land in the area was better suited for farming than those 120 acres. Exceptional in the area, that parcel had an unbroken expanse of level ground, with a natural runoff from the gentle slopes which surrounded it.

In September, 1836, shortly after getting settled, Lockridge died. Most of what is known about Santa Fe Place, from the time of Lockridge's death to the 1850s, relates to a series of real estate transactions between Rachel and her grown children. Until her death, Rachel lived on land referred to by her family as the "Home Farm," the 120 acres which would become today's Santa Fe Place.

In 1851, Rachel sold the Home Farm to her youngest son, Thomas J. Lockridge. Thomas soon established himself as a real estate speculator and lumberman. For the next ten years, Thomas bought out other holdings from his mother and brothers. Ultimately, he controlled much of his father's original purchase. Thomas then expanded the farm's boundaries to the north and west to what are now 17th Street and Brooklyn Avenue.

Thomas replaced his parents' original log cabin with a brick and timber home. No trace, not even a recorded description, survives of either the cabin or Thomas' replacement. Timber for the house evidently came from Thomas' lumber business. Some sources from this period indicate that Lockridge was the sole supplier of the

area's walnut lumber, which he sold to customers in Westport and the City of Kansas, as the rugged riverfront town was called from 1853 to 1880.

Only in his twenties and already one of the region's prominent citizens, Lockridge built Kansas City's first public hall at 5th and Main. Lockridge Hall, as it was named, boasted kerosene lights — the first building in Kansas City to replace candlelight with the newfangled liquid kerosene. To demonstrate his further commitment to the growing town, Lockridge donated the building materials used to construct the First Christian Church at 12th and Main.

The name "Kansas City" is a misnomer. In the 1850s, it was a hustling boom town, literally blasted and dug out of the cliffs along the river banks. "Its streets were either mud bogs or ankle-deep in dust," one historian recounts. When Lockridge built the First Christian Church, Kansas City had about 2,000 residents. They lived and worked in makeshift buildings with no amenities, not even running water. Even so, there was no shortage of other liquids. The tiny town had dozens of saloons and a resulting reputation so rough that even some outlaws shunned the settlement as too dangerous.

In this environment, Thomas Lockridge was a wealthy and successful man. His star was on the rise. By 1860, Lockridge owned real estate (principally his farm, referred to by the locals as Santa Fe) valued at \$27,240.11. He was married with one child, and he owned eight slaves. Lockridge's

business was growing along with Kansas City, where the population increased from 500 in 1850 to 4,000 in 1859.

In 1861, everything changed dramatically as the War Between the States became official. In 1854, when the Kansas Territory had opened for settlement, the "free state" or "slave state" controversy had begun to undermine the future of the fledgling city. Settled both by southerners and New Englanders, the City of Kansas was from the beginning split by a chasm of belief deeper than the ravines in the river bluffs. For 11 years, this fundamental division fueled a conflict that ravaged the area and left lingering scars.

The Civil War brought a reversal of fortune for both Kansas City and Lockridge. When war broke out, pro-Confederate counties (Platte, Clay and Cass) surrounded the city. Nevertheless, Union loyalists, and finally the Union Army itself, quickly took control of the city. Lockridge was a Confederate sympathizer. He and his family soon found themselves political and social outcasts. Union leaders wasted no time passing proscriptive tax measures (Order No. 7) aimed at creating financial burdens for Rebel-sympathizers like Lockridge. To pay those taxes, Lockridge was forced to sell off portions of his father's original holdings.

Aside from the financial hardships, the War brought personal tragedy to the Lockridge family. Rachel, Thomas' mother, died during the early years of the war. Lockridge lost his oldest brother, John, and a nephew to the fighting. By the time the

conflict ended at Appomattox, only Thomas and his brother, Dudley, were living. And Dudley had returned to Kentucky long before the war began.

Family tragedy continued. In the winter of 1868, Thomas died at the age of 39. Four months later, his wife died after giving birth to their second child. Though the Home Farm — Santa Fe Place — still remained in the Lockridge family, Thomas' death precipitated the final dismantling of Lockridge's vast estate.

Thomas Lockridge left the estate to his chil-



Charles Lockridge built an impressive residence on the "home farm" where Santa Fe Place is now located.

dren, Charles and Nannie, and their heirs. His will stipulated that his inheritors could sell any part of the Lockridge property, including buildings, but they could not sell the Home Farm. Even during the war, when property taxes had caused him to sell off much of the farm — even a small portion of the Home Farm, the strip of land that is now between 30th and 31st Streets — Lockridge had doggedly held onto the heart of the Home Farm. Lockridge died believing that the Home Farm would remain forever in the control of his family.

Charles and Nannie Lockridge never really knew their father. They were raised by their maternal grandparents. When the two reached the legal age to control their inherited property, they contested their father's will.

Court battles persisted as Charles and Nannie claimed at one point that Thomas was of "unsound mind" when he wrote his will, and at another point that the will was forged. Finally, Charles and Nannie won, and the Court revoked Thomas' will. This revocation opened the way for Charles and Nannie to pursue their own ambitions. They had grand schemes for the old farm.

Charles Lockridge had already begun construction of a three-story brick mansion on the Home Farm. His Queen Anne Style house was built on the northeast corner of what is now Prospect and 30th Street.

But that was only the start. With the legal battles finally behind them, Charles and Nannie had

plans for an entire development of houses, all in the high style of Charles' mansion and all on the old Home Farm. They adopted a name used as early as 1887 for the land surrounding the old pioneer trail: Santa Fe Place.

Charles and Nannie were not alone in their endeavors. Several of Kansas City's most influential business and civic leaders were involved in the development of Santa Fe Place. These were men of money, land and influence. Principal among them was the wealthy industrialist August R. Meyer, for whom Meyer Boulevard was later named. A civic and social visionary who had toured European cities for inspiration, Meyer built a home in the fashionable Northeast section of the city and committed much of his time and attention to a city-wide development of parks and boulevards.

Victor B. Bell, Nannie's husband, is sometimes given credit for coming up with the idea of a Santa Fe Place development. Bell's business was real estate. In fact, once the Court revoked

Thomas Lockridge's will, Bell quickly used his influence in the city. In 1895, with Bell's support, the city's newly formed Board of Park Commissioners issued Ordinance Number 6734 which effectively designated certain lands for use as boulevards. Benton Boulevard was one of these. It established the western-most boundary of a sweeping boulevard and park system first proposed in 1893 and almost completely in place by 1910.

In 1897, the Home Farm was officially platted, with streets laid out in a rectangular grid of city blocks. The deeply rutted Santa Fe Trail soon vanished under new streets, avenues and boulevards. Officially called Santa Fe Place Addition, the new area was — and remains — unique among the city's early residential neighborhoods. It was quite self-contained. Santa Fe contains two streets, Victor and Lockridge, which do not extend beyond its limits or appear anywhere else in the city.