



Society of  
Stukely Westcott  
Descendants of America

*Know Your Kindred Better*

THE WESTCOTT FAMILY QUARTERLY  
OCTOBER, 2014

Greetings cousins! Fall, my favorite season, is in the air. The crisp mornings and mild days are always welcome after the hot humid summers we have in the Deep South.

**A NOTE FROM OUR HISTORIAN, BETTY ACKER**

One way we can repay the Warwick Historical Society for their wonderful support would be for our members to support their work in Rhode Island. What every organization today needs is more members – and we really do owe them for their help with the Stuckely Westcott Cemetery and the display of our family items. Please see the membership application at the end of this newsletter, or join using the donation link on their website at <http://www.warwickhistoricalsociety.org/join/>.

More information is available at the Warwick Historical Society's website: <http://www.warwickhistoricalsociety.org/>

**NEW MEMBERS:**

Please welcome these cousins into our Society:

Darnall Westcott of Spokane, Washington  
Judith McNew of Melbourne, Florida  
Elizabeth Mamer of Caldwell, Indiana  
Carolyn Lunsford Mears of Littleton, Colorado  
Nancy Quillen of Roseville, California

**DEATHS**

**Lew Westcott:** Paul Westcott, of New Orleans, Louisiana, informs me that his brother Lew Westcott, of Kansas City, passed away recently. Many cousins will remember Lew as he used to attend the biennial reunions quite regularly.

## ACROSS THE PLAINS IN 1853

Captain Riley Wescoatt, an early settler in central Nebraska, relates his experience in crossing the plains in 1853.

In the spring of 1853, Riley and Jonas Wescoatt, of Albia, Iowa, arranged to take a herd of 400 young cows across the plains to California. Jonas had made the trip to California and back the previous year with the present trip in view. Their cows cost them about \$4,000, and in addition the expense of the necessary outfit, comprising saddle horses, wagons and twenty yoke of oxen, provisions, bedding, ammunition and other necessities for so extended a journey along the route of which nothing could be purchased.

The Wescoatt brothers were both married and their wives and three children accompanied them. Their wagons were covered and their wagon boxes extended over the wheels so as to provide comfortable sleeping quarters and as they carried feather beds and plenty of bedding so they were able to make the journey with comparative comfort. The saddle horses were for use in driving the cattle, the Wescoatt brothers furnishing board and transportation for thirty-five men who wished to go to California and who assisted in driving and caring for the cattle and each doing his share of guard duty as compensation or board and transportation. The Wescoatt family had moved from the Tippecanoe battle ground in Indiana to Monroe County, Iowa in 1831, and the thirty-five men who accompanied them on this journey were well acquainted, as it was a somewhat hazardous undertaking and only men of character and courage were wanted.

They crossed the Missouri River on April 28<sup>th</sup> at Bellevue, then a trading point, and Riley states that they saw no house or habitation after leaving the Missouri River until their arrival in California, except the ranch later known as Boyd's Ranch on the Wood River, about ten miles northeast of Fort Kearney, the location of this ranch being about a mile west of the present village of Gibbon in Buffalo County, Nebraska.

It was an unusually early spring and even at that early date the emigrant travel was so great that six steamboats had come up the Missouri River from below and were used for ferrying purposes at the Bellevue crossing. At the crossing of the Missouri the Wescoatt brothers met a party of 100 well equipped men enroute for California under command of Capt. John Fuller. Capt. Fuller had made the journey to California the previous year and had arranged to furnish board and transportation for these 100 men and they were to pay them \$100; \$10,000 in all and each man would do his full share of guard duty. The Wescoatt brothers and Capt. Fuller arranged to make the journey together not camping more than a mile apart during the entire journey.

The party traveled the trail north of the Platte River and because of the heavy emigration over the trail found the pasture very short so they were compelled to range their cattle, at times some distance from the regular trail and so the first month of their rate of travel was very slow.

On May 28<sup>th</sup>, about one hour before sundown, when the party was about four miles south of the present village of Wood River in Hall County Nebraska, and was preparing to camp for the night, it was noticed that there was a commotion on the south side of the Platte River and the firing of guns was heard. By means of field glasses which both commands carried, it was seen that a large party of Indians had attacked an emigrant camp on the south bank of the Platte and were scalping women in the camp. The fight appeared to last but a short time, ten minutes, Mr. Wescoatt says and while there was some talk of crossing the river it was finally decided not to do so. In explanation of this decision Mr. Wescoatt said that the Platte was very high and also our own commands were in danger of attack, as there appeared to be a large party of the Indians and it was thought best not to divide our own forces.

The Wescoatt and Fuller commands camped at this point for the night. About 2 o'clock the next morning the camp guard brought a small boy to Riley Wescoatt. The boy's clothing consisting of a shirt and trousers, was wet and the child, while greatly excited seemed able to control his feelings. He had hidden in the brush on the bank of the river and when it became dark he saw a camp fire on the other side of the river and knowing how to swim had crossed over. He said his name was John Hodges and that there were five in his family.

At daylight a party of 185 men and John Hodges, armed and mounted and crossed the Platte to find fifteen men, nine women and four children, all killed except the boy. Capt. Fuller was in command and his party took the trail of the Indians and it was soon learned that the Indians had broken camp and there was a running battle lasting over two hours. They counted thirty-seven Indians dead. It was a party of Sioux, all warriors, a war party as they were in Pawnee territory and the Sioux and Pawnees were traditional enemies. The Fuller command returned to the place of the massacre and planned for the burials.

Their next camp was near the place latter known as "Boyd's Ranch." and word was sent to Fort Kearney regarding the massacre but the garrison made no response and Mr. Wescoatt spoke of the officers at that date in terms not at all that complimentary.

The buildings at the ranch mentioned were of sod with dirt roofs and the owner had a large corral at the bend of the river west of the house. He trafficked in oxen and horses, trading for such animals as had become lame on the trail.

The ranch men kept liquor for sale, freighting alcohol from the Missouri River and making out of one barrel of alcohol twenty barrels of whiskey, selling his whiskey for \$20.00 a gallon. Both the Wescoatt and Fuller commands bought each twenty gallons of whiskey, paying \$800 in all. The wives of the Wescoatt brothers carried the money and the men had quite a time to convince their wives that it was advisable to purchase the liquor, but the men in their employ insisted that the liquor was needed on so long a journey and as it could not be secured elsewhere it was purchased.

The boy, John Hodges, was made one of the family by Mr. and Mrs. Riley Wescoatt, Mrs. Wescoatt coming to love and care for him as one of her own family, and he accompanied them to California, where the command arrived on August 17, 1853.

The boy made his home with the Wescoatts for more than two years, when one day he accompanied, as usual, Mr. Wescoatt to Sacramento, some five miles distant from their ranch. While in Sacramento John saw and recognized an uncle who had gone to California some years before and had not learned of the massacre of his relatives. This uncle was a rich ranch man and accompanied Mr. Wescoatt home and remained several days, finally inducing his nephew to make his home with him.

The Wescoatt brothers realized a profit of more than sixteen thousand dollars for their cattle. Jonas Wescoatt and his wife soon returned to Iowa where Mr. Wescoatt served for many years as judge in that state. After the death of his wife he returned to California, living in a hotel in San Francisco, where he lost his life in the destruction of that city by an earthquake.

Riley Wescoatt and his wife returned to their Iowa home about 1856 via Panama, crossing the isthmus soon after the completion of the railroad at that place. Mr. Riley Wescoatt was a soldier in the Mexican War, serving under General Taylor. He was wounded soon after reaching Mexican soil and returned home. On the breaking out of the Civil War he was raised in his own county, Company H, First Iowa Cavalry, being commissioned captain of that company and promising the members of the company that he would remain with them during their term of service. He was mustered out with his regiment April 16, 1864. In 1865 Mr. and Mrs. Wescoatt came to Nebraska, taking a homestead on Elm Island, in Hall County, less than two miles distance from where the massacre of the emigrants occurred in 1853 and repeatedly revisited the place where they were buried. Mrs. Riley Wescoatt died July 15, 1905. The death of Mr. Wescoatt occurred on March 6, 1909. He was buried beside his brave and courageous wife in Riverside Cemetery near Gibbon.



**CAPTAIN RILEY WESCOATT**

A soldier of the Mexican and Civil wars and a pioneer settler in Central Nebraska.



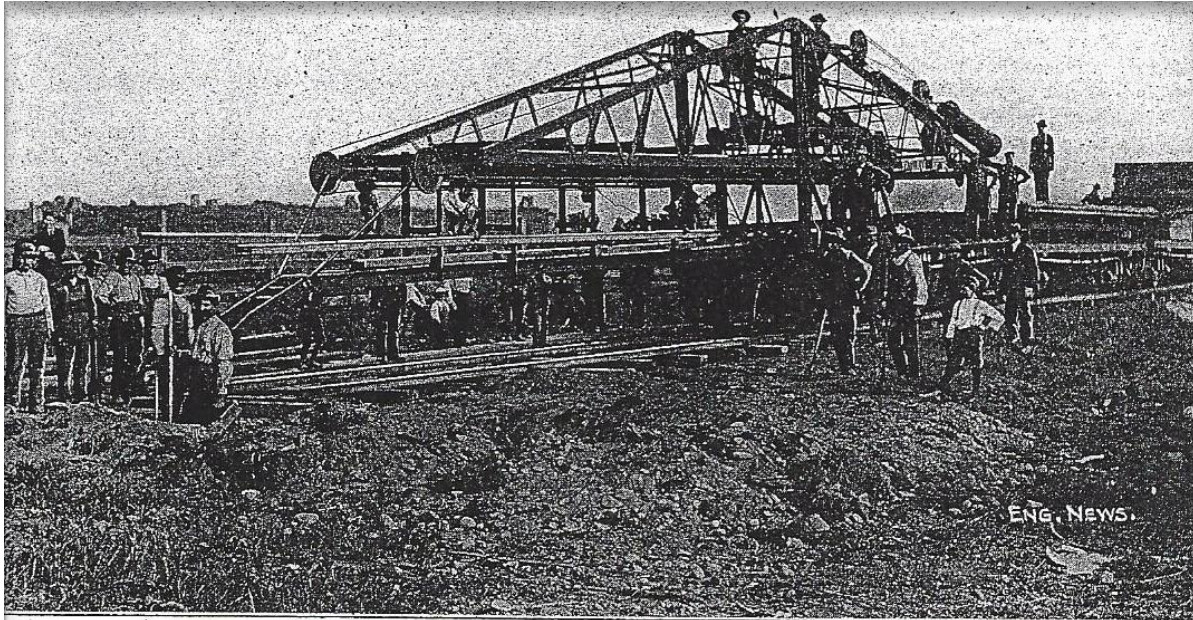
**JUDGE JONAS WESCOATT**

In company with his brother, Capt. Riley Wescoatt, he took a herd of cattle across the plains in 1853.

Taken from the "History of Buffalo County" -- **Buffalo County, Nebraska, and Its People: A Record of Settlement ..., Volume 1** -- By Samuel Clay Bassett

**Editor's note:** I have been unable to find Riley or Jonas Wescoatt in the family tree. I have tried various spellings of the Wescoatt name but to no avail. If anyone knows of a connection to the family I will be glad to make note of it.

## THE WESTCOTT TRACKLAYING MACHINE WITH RAIL CARRIERS



THE WESTCOTT TRACKLAYING MACHINE ON THE INTERURBAN LINE OF THE PACIFIC TRACTION CO.

In the ordinary style of tracklaying machines the rails and ties are delivered at the head of the front car and then are taken and put in place by gangs of men. In some recent modifications of these machines the rails are run out ahead of the front of the car by trolley carriers thus reducing the amount of manual labor and expediting the work. The accompanying cut represents a new design of tracklaying machine specially designed for setting the rails in place upon the ties so as to eliminate the large gang of men required to handle heavy rails. The ties also are delivered beyond the car.

The machine consists essentially of a flat car having a steel bent at each end to support a pair of riveted steel trusses, the forward ends of which project as cantilevers about twenty feet beyond the end of the car. On the bottom chord of each truss run two hoisting trolleys having cables attached to the rail tongs. On each truss are two air cylinders with cables led to the trolleys; one serves to run them forward and the other to pull them back. In the middle of the car, and projecting about fifteen feet in front of it, is a trough fitted with a conveyor for delivering the ties at the head of the machine. Behind the tracklayer car are cars with rails sufficient for about 1,000 feet of track and having in the middle a conveyor (above the floor) which extends along the tracklayer car. Behind this again are the cars with ties, which are fitted with a conveyor extending under the rail conveyor and beyond it in front of the machine. Behind the tie cars and next to the locomotive is a car containing miscellaneous supplies and having a steam engine which operates the conveyors. The movements of the trolleys and conveyors are controlled by a man stationed on the bridge carried by the tracklayer car.

Two rails are run out and lowered into position upon the ties. They are then bolted at the heel peddler. The machine was designed by Mr. C.O. Wescott and is owned by the Wescott Tracklayer & Manufacturing Company of Puyallup, Wash. The use of tracklaying machines has been adopted in several cases on electric interurban lines, but is not practicable where 60-foot rails are used as is the case on several lines.

## THE WESTCOTT FAMILY QUARTERLY

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[www.sswda.org](http://www.sswda.org)

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