



the **Prairie Tales** podcast

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SOURCE ARTICLES

1871-05 – THE END OF THE TRACK

THREE MEN BUTCHERED

Hoping to create a shortcut to Newton, a new cattle trail has been surveyed, running west of Wichita and passing through Park City. Only a few herds, however, have as yet passed over the new trail. The first, as we are informed, arrived at Park City last Sunday, and as near as we can learn, both joy and bad whisky was unconfined, and all joined in the jubilee. At this state of the game, matters assumed a different phase.

The cattle left almost unguarded, roamed at will, and their will led them into a cornfield, and a boy was sent to drive them off, and while in the act of driving them away, one of the herders came up and threatened to kill the boy. His threat was heard by another herder who had just come up, and by a single shot brought him to the ground. This act was witnessed by a third party, who soon dispatched this second man to the spirit world. Another man coming up in time to witness the effects of the last shot, done likewise, and another saddle was emptied. The whole matter ended in two men being killed and one mortally wounded. This was more shooting than human flesh could endure. The trail was immediately returned to Wichita again, and it is quite probable that this is the last attempt that will be made to remove it. *The Wichita Tribune, Wichita, Kansas. June 1, 1871.*

THE FIRST SHIPMENT FROM NEWTON

SUNDAY, JULY 23, 1871

The first rail shipment on the Santa Fe outbound from Newton was inaugurated Sunday, July 23, 1871. This was a big day for everyone involved.

Looking back on this time, Judge Muse wrote, "The scenes which followed the completion of the railroad beggar description. The festive cowboy, gamblers, saloon men, and roughs of every

description began to flock in, and soon after, three or four dance houses were erected on block 52, each with ample room for dancing and dispensing the inseparable concomitant whiskey. The houses had for their lodgers and boarders, prostitutes of the lowest type, and the rivalry among them was kept up with vigor and animation.

All night the halls were filled with cowboys, gamblers and roughs, who in company with the "soiled doves" "treaded the mazes of the giddy waltz" until daylight came, or weary nature failed to furnish strength. In harmony with their surroundings and character, cowboys, gamblers, and pick pockets all went heavily armed, their pockets loaded down with derringers or bulldogs, and dirk knives, while around their waist, or in their bootlegs were suspended huge navy revolvers, and other instruments of death, making each one appear like a "travelling arsenal". (1882 *Harvey County Atlas Introduction by Judge R.W.P. Muse*).

UNKNOWN MAN

JULY 25, 1871 - CASE # 1871-HM05

NEWTON –One of our townsmen thought he would "take a whirl" down the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe, and interview the town of Newton, one of those mushroom cities always found at the "end of the track," which, like Jonah's gourd, generally spring up in a night and wither in a day. No sooner had he reached the platform in front of the depot, than he was halted by a man, a pair of spurs, and a pistol. This warlike Ishmaelite of the plains approached the stranger with the remark: "Come on, now." "Come on where?" said the astonished traveler. "Why, there's a man shot over here, and I want you to sit on the coroner's jury." "Wait until I put my baggage at a hotel and find out the name of this town, can't you?"

Seeing another man coming along without any carpet bag, he probably thought it would be more expeditious to make a juror of him, so walking beneath the shade of his sombrero he presented arms, with the command "Halt! Halt! You halt;" which was promptly done. "Come along and sit on this coroner's jury." "Who is dead?" said the man under the hat. "Don't know what his name is, but somebody's got to be on the jury, you're my honeysuckle, so come or drop." The man with the hat served on the jury. *The Weekly Union, Junction City, Kansas. Saturday, July 29, 1871. Page 3.*

M. L. SARGENT

SEPTEMBER 19, 1871

NEWTON - "Mr. M. L. Sargent, Freight Agent of the AT&SF, left the Gold Room and "hearing the reports of several pistols, Mr. Sargent thought it unsafe to stop over night at any of the public houses in the city. He sought refuge in the depot, where he built a barricade of kegs and boxes, behind which he passed the night. Imagine his surprise and horror, upon finding in the morning that the kegs, which he had brought in close proximity to the stove, contained gunpowder." *The Arkansas Valley Democrat, Newton, Kansas. Friday, June 1, 1883. Page 3.*

A TOUGH TOWN

REFLECTING ON OLD NEWTON

NEWTON - "The toughest, cussedest wild West town I ever knew," said Buffalo Bill once, "was Newton, Kansas, as it was in the early seventies. Dodge City and Mason Junction used to figure in newspapers as typical tough towns on the border, but Newton could give cards and spades on wholesale depravity and recklessness." *The Newton Journal, Newton, Kansas. Friday, February 14, 1896. Page 2.*

In the summer of 1871, Newton cowboys and merchants quickly formed an "anti-dude" club to keep "effeminate men" out of town. Its members set fines for various infractions: \$5 for carrying a cane, \$10 for wearing kid gloves and a plug hat, and \$20 for parting one's hair down the middle. Worse infractions would be dealt with by hanging or by bullet.