



EMIGRANT TRAILS HALL OF FAME

OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION

John G. Ellenbecker

Born in 1867 in Michigan, Ellenbecker was 18 months old when his family moved to Marshall County, Kansas where he lived the rest of his life and became one of its most prominent citizens.

A graduate of Kansas Normal College in Fort Scott, Ellenbecker established the Modern Normal College in 1892 which he operated for eleven years. He was also a farmer and was one of the founders of the Marshall County Farmers Co-operative Business Association and the Marshall County Co-operative Oil and Gas Association. He also served as Superintendent of Instruction in Marshall County for one term.

The old California and Oregon Trail crossed a farm where Ellenbecker grew up and he frequently saw wagon trains making their way West. This inspired his later interest in writing about trail history and becoming an advocate for trail preservation. In the early 1900s he became interested in seeing the trail marked through Kansas and was later instrumental in such projects until his death. He traveled the entire length of the Oregon Trail several times.

Ellenbecker was a Regional Director of the Oregon Trail Memorial Association (OTMA) and its successor, American Pioneer Trails Association (APTA) through which he pursued his goal to see the marking of the Oregon Trail and enlisted the support of other historical societies and state and local commissions. He also participated in OTMA's project to mark the Pony Express Trail in the late 1930s. One of Ellenbecker's other major interests was to see the site of Alcove Spring become a national park or monument.

He was the author of *Jayhawkers of Death Valley*; *The Pony Express*; *Tragedy at the Little Blue*; *The Indian Raid on the Upper Little Blue in Southern Nebraska during the Sixties*; *Oak Grove Massacre, Oak Nebraska: Indian Raids on the Blue River in 1864*, and numerous articles and other publications on the history of Kansas and pioneer life in the region. Ellenbecker was known for meticulous research.

Biography

- Born: 1867, Hancock, Michigan
- Died: 1945, Marysville, Kansas
- Married: Lillie Katherine Koppes, 1898
- Historian, author, trail preservation leader, educator, community leader

Achievements

- Instrumental in the marking of the Oregon and Pony Express trails in Kansas
- Board member, Kansas Historical Society
- Regional Director, OTMA/APTA