

Kansas River

Papin's (Pappan's) Ferry Route is named for Joseph and Louis Papin (Pappan). The Papins were probably the first white settlers in 1842 in what is now Topeka. They operated the Papin's Ferry on the Oregon-California Trail until 1857 when a bridge was constructed.

Pioneers often crossed where it was 230 yards wide, making it to the other side safely. Rains made the current swift.

"A Report of an Exploration of the Country Lying between the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountains on the Line of the Kansas and Great Platte Rivers," by John Charles Frémont, March 1, 1843, recounted the party's fording of the Kansas River near present-day Topeka on June 14, 1842, four days after setting out just west of the Missouri border. After riding and driving the animals across, the party used their inflatable rubber boat to ferry their provisions.

On the seventh and last trip, Frémont describes how the boat capsized spilling carts, boxes, and barrels into the water. Most were recovered; but almost the entire provision of coffee was lost—a loss that would be often and mournfully remembered.

