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Signs Unveiled Commemorating Bourbonnais Creek Bridge on U.S. 24

New highway signs were unveiled today commemorating the correct historical spelling for the Bourbonnais Creek Bridge on U.S. 24 in Shawnee County at a 2 p.m. ceremony at the Rossville Community Center, 806 Nishnabe Trail in Rossville.

The new signs will designate the U.S. 24 Bridge over Bourbonnais Creek, two miles east of St. Marys, in Shawnee County with the correct historical spelling of Bourbonnais.

Guest speakers at today's ceremony included: Jim Coder, a Bourbonnais descendant and Jon Boursaw, Citizen Potawatomi Nation, District 4 Legislative Representative.

Historically there has been a bridge over the creek with signs identifying it as Bourbonais Creek, spelled with just one 'n.' In 2012 that bridge was demolished and

replaced by the Kansas Department of Transportation, during that project the signs were removed. As the new bridge was completed Rep. Jon Boursaw noticed the signs were not replaced.

Boursaw spoke with members of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation in fall 2013 and the topic of highway signs came up, the group asked Boursaw what it would take to get the signs replaced.

Boursaw contacted KDOT regarding the signs, but due to current guidelines the bridge did not meet the signing criteria. In order for the bridge to have a sign, it must be 250-feet long and the Bourbonnais Creek bridge is just 147 feet long.

The creek is named after a principal member of the Potawatomi tribe, Peter Bourbonnais, who was living on the land before Kansas became a state. The bridge is located near where a crossing was located on the Oregon Trail and where Peter Bourbonnais operated a saw mill. The crossing also served the Military Road between Forts Leavenworth and Riley.

KDOT looked into the original naming of the creek finding out that there is a formal process that needs to be completed to officially change the name. All records showed the creek name as Bourbonais Creek and could not be changed without a ruling from the U.S. Board of Geographic Names.

Boursaw completed the necessary paperwork to correct the spelling of the Bourbonnais Creek with the U.S. Board of Geographic Names, who ruled in favor of the spelling change.

The signs, with the correct spelling of Bourbonnais Creek, will be installed later today two miles east of St Marys on U.S. 24.

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