



JACKSON COUNTY, MISSOURI

BLUE SPRINGS CAMPGROUND

Dr. Rowland Willard

1825 May 16, from diary

“May 16th. Morning fine. Encamped last night under tent for 1st time in my life. Took leave of the company and proceeded 10 miles to the blue [as written] Springs the place of rendezvous. Some rain. Elected a Captain & Lieutenant R.W. Morris the former & J. Fultcher the latter. Found a plenty of venison at this place killed by some of the company.”

Dr. Rowland Willard

May 1825, from autobiography

“We accordingly took our leave & proceeded to the Blue Springs some ten miles distant, and then halted to organize our company by choosing R.M. Morris for our Captain & J. Fultcher, as Lieutenant also Sargeants [sic] of the guards. Being now organized we set forth taking our course, by the compass, ranging as we found it necessary to avoid untenable grounds & difficult streams. I have now before me a daily entry of that tour but I shall only notice the most interesting incidents....

At the Blue Springs we found in waiting 4 men whose names were Stone, [Hugh] Glass, March, & Andrews, who desired to accompany us for the purpose of hunting & trapping on the head water of the Rio [Bravo] del Norte.

When we came up to them, they presented us with plenty of venison which they had killed, while laying there awaiting our arrival. It appeared that they had started with each a mule & an outfit of traps but in crossing a bad stream, lost three of their mules & many of their traps. And having but one mule left [,] their remaining traps & baggage proved a load for it, & they obliged to walk. These men had been several trips among the mountains for Beaver. But it mattered little whether they got much or little, for when arriving to the settlement, would debauch until all was spent, & then off again, at least such I was told was the case with Stone, & Glass, the former a middle aged man, but Glass was quite advanced in life probably 75. He...seemed rather inclined to fraternize with Mr. Rennisons mess, & the one I belonged to & hence [sic] his game, which he killed almost daily was mostly brought to our messes he being considered our hunter....

In this place it may be well to record briefly, a portion of the old man's history as related to me by himself....the above four had singled themselves from the main company, & were trapping on their own...he was on camp duty one morning...he was busy in cooking about the fire, then suddenly came upon him a large white Bear who unceremoniously laid hold of him and threw him down, & immediately commenced his work of destruction. In this disastrous condition, the old man lay with the monster mounted upon him when Mr. Stone chanced to



return from his traps with rifle in hand, & seeing the awful predicament of his comrad [sic], leveled his piece & to his great satisfaction the monster fell dead upon his victim.

[At the Blue Springs Campground] I examined the old man who stripped off his clothes & showed me the large chasms upon right arm & shoulder blade the crest of which was wanting, also the upper portions of the right thigh. The history he gave of the matter was well attested, both by Stone & by ocular proof.”

*****The Blue Springs Campground was on one of the two earliest routes of the Santa Fe Trail in Jackson Count, Missouri. Blue Springs often was a rendezvous place for early traders coming from Franklin, Lexington, and other Missouri towns to the east. “R.W. Morris” is printed as the captain in the diary entry in the published book. “R.M. Morris” is given as the name for the captain in the autobiography of the same book. Obviously both are the same individual. Rowland, a physician, describes that he personally saw the permanent results of a bear attack on Hugh Glass. This is the grizzly attack portrayed in the 2015 movie “The Revenant”. **Source:** Willard, Rowland. *Over the Santa Fe Trail to Mexico: The Travel Diaries and Autobiography of Dr. Rowland Willard*. Edited by Joy Poole. Norman, OK: Arthur Clark, 2015, excerpt from diary on pp. 41-42, excerpt from autobiography on 146-149.

Col. Augustus Storrs

1827 May 15 through 18

“Santa Fe Trace, 120 miles west of Franklin, May 18, 1827.

DEAR SIR[editor of *Fayette Missouri Intelligencer*—Agreeably to previous arrangement, the Santa Fe company generally arrived at the Blue Springs, the place of rendezvous, on the 15th inst. We have in company about ONE HUNDRED FIVE MEN, and FIFTY-THREE WAGGONS and PLEASURE CARRIAGES. Our line of march is at least ONE MILE in length, ..., and certainly must appear formidable in the estimation of Indians. The company is the largest which has traversed this route, ... and do not entertain a doubt of going through in perfect safety. We have adopted our form of government, and elected officers to carry it into effect and operation. The following is the list of the officers which have been appointed. We have elected the Rev. John Pearson, Chaplin ... CAPTAIN—Ezekiel Williams. AIDS—Presley Samuel, Jas Glenn. CLERK—James L. Collins. MARSHALL—Richard Gentry. PILOT—Joseph Reynolds. COURT—Joshua Fletcher, John Dade, and James Ramsay. COMMANDERS OF THE GUARDS—E. Williams, P. Samuel, J. Glenn, S. Turley, J. Rennison, R. Stowers, L. Morrison, A. Barnes, and D. Workman.

Although a pretty general apprehension seems to have prevailed that the present company will be in danger, yet our numbers and discipline will ensure our safety. Our government is almost as complete and perfect as though we composed a full republican government....”



*****The Storrs letter to a newspaper editor may seem to have contradictory statements. In the first paragraph, Storrs writes that the company does “...not entertain a doubt of going through in perfect safety”. Yet in the second paragraph, Storrs says “...a pretty general apprehension seems to have prevailed that the present company will be in danger...” Likely the organization of a government and the large numbers calmed those fears. The party aimed to continue west. **Source:** “Santa Fe Adventures”, *Wagon Tracks*, 3(1): (November 1988), 14, news article of 1827 on p. 14.

George Sibley
1827 July 27

“...Camped at Blue Spring. The Spring is a pretty good one, tho’ nothing extraordinary.”

*****Trail historian Ross Marshall says several springs were in the vicinity of the modern Blue Springs Old Mill Park. Before Independence was developed in 1827, this spring area was a convenient rendezvous point for early Santa Fe wagons. **Source:** Marshall, Ross, unsigned. “Review of June 6 Bus Tour”, *Trails Head Tidings*, 7(3): (July 2009), 2-4, quote on p. 3.