



JOHNSON COUNTY, KANSAS

ELM GROVE CAMPGROUND

Thomas J. Farnham

1839 May 30 through June 3

“Having traveled about 25 miles over the beautiful prairie, we halted on the banks of a small stream as [“as” is original, not “at”] a place called Elm Grove.---Here we pitched our tent, tied our horses to stakes carried for that purpose, and after considerable difficulty having obtained fuel for a fire, cooked and ate for the first time in the Indian Territory.

At this encampment final arrangements were made for our journey over the Prairies. To this end provisions, arms, ammunition, packs and pack-saddles were overhauled, and an account taken of our common stock of goods for trade with the Indians. The result of this examination was, that we determined to remain here a while and send back to the Kauzaus Indian mill for 200 pounds of flour. We were induced to take this step by assurances received from certain traders whom we met coming from the mountains, that the buffalo had not advanced so far north as to furnish us with their fine hump-ribs as early by a week or fortnight as we had expected. Officers were also chosen and their powers defined; and whatever leisure we found from these duties, during a tarry of two days was spent in regaling ourselves with strawberries and gooseberries, which grew in great abundance near our camp.

Our friends having returned from the mill with for which they had been despatched [variant spelling], we left Elm Grove on the 3d of June, traveled along the Santa Fe trail....”

*****Elm Grove was on Cedar Creek on the Westport Route while Lone Elm, also on Cedar Creek, was located on the Independence Route. Lone Elm Campground was about two and a half miles southeast of the Elm Grove camp. A DAR monument and an OCTA marker commemorate the Elm Grove Campground. Those two markers are beside old Highway 56 at 151st Street and Lakeshore Road, about a mile west of the Elm Grove Campground site. **Source:** Farnham, Thomas J. *An 1839 Wagon Train Journal Travels in the Great Western Prairies The Anahuac and Rocky Mountains and in the Oregon Territory*. Seattle, Wash.: Northwest Interpretive Assn., 1983 [reprint of 1843 edition], quote on p. 6.

Richard L. Wilson

1841 June 2

“Giving the slip to a couple of days, just at sunset on the second, we descended a precipitous declivity to a place of which nothing remained but the name of Elm Grove, and one solitary logan of a stricken tree ‘To mark where an Elm grove had been.’ A beautiful rivulet bubbled

forth from the base of the hill, and as we wound our way down, we spied a single campfire...of an old Mexican hunter.”

*****Trail historian Craig Crease found that over time many seem to have forgotten about Elm Grove Campground since trail travelers at two camps, Lone Elm and Elm Grove, often spoke of a lone elm. Crease proposed that historians came to view both sites as one due to this commonality. Crease realized that various nineteenth-century writers were describing two different sites with lone elms as some described a flattish plain while others described descending a hill into a valley. Wilson does describe descending to the Elm Grove campsite. Both campgrounds were on Cedar Creek, but Elm Grove was on the Westport Route and Lone Elm was on the Independence Route. **Source:** Crease, Craig. “Lone Elm and Elm Grove: A Case of Mistaken Identity?”, *Wagon Tracks*, 5(4): (August 1991), 10-13, quote on p. 10.