



JOHNSON COUNTY, KANSAS

SAPLING GROVE CAMPGROUND

William Marshall Anderson

1834 May 5

“May 5, 1834. Today we left the settlements. After a twenty mile horse-walk we have reached and made our camp in Sapling Grove. ...”

*****Anderson was a young lawyer who had yellow fever. He hoped to rejuvenate his health with a trip through the West. He had joined a William Sublette caravan that consisted of 37 men and 195 horses. Leaving from Independence, this assemblage first camped at Sapling Grove. **Source:** Eide, Ingvard Henry. *Oregon Trail*. Foreword by Ernest S. Good. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1972, quote on p. 46.

William H. Gray

1838 April 23

“... We left Independence on the 21st of April & proceeded as far as West Port where we remained until Monday 23rd. The Fur Co. started on Sabbath 22nd. We arranged our baggage, etc., putting the whole, except a few dishes which we put into a one horse wagon, upon our mules, and started about 12 O’Clock M [as printed in original]. We proceeded about three miles and came into an open prairie. Proceeding about 5 miles, we stopped at the first place of encampment called the Sapling Grove, 8 miles from West Port. This encampment receiving its name from a few scattered trees lining the water courses running N. West into the Big Blue [see below for correction]. The Prairies high and undulating and rich alluvial soil. Timber on the water courses in small quantities, since rock deep beneath the surface.”

*****Sapling Grove is on a Westport branch of the historic trails in the Kansas City area. In the article “Rendezvous on the Trail—Sapling Grove”, Craig Crease (p. 26) says that Gray was incorrect regarding the Big Blue. Crease says the stream running northwest by Sapling Grove is a branch of Turkey Creek that runs into the Kansas River, not into the Big Blue. This Crease article appears in *We Remember...Beyond the Wide Missouri*, published by Oregon-California Trails Association in 2000. **Source of Gray’s quote:** Gray, William H. “Gray’s Journal of 1838”, pp. 240-243+, in Drury, Clifford Merrill and Bonnie Sue Lewis. *The Mountains We Have Crossed: Diaries and Letters of the Oregon Mission, 1838*. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1999. Accessed online at Google Books on March 24, 2020 [clicked on preview as no ebook available].



Dr. Frederick A. Wislizenus

1839 May 4

“...[Sapling Grove]...in a little hickory wood, with fresh spring water....[The company] marched over the broad Santa Fe road, beaten out by the caravans.”

*****On a Westport branch of the historic trail, the Sapling Grove site now can be found at a park located about 82nd Terrace and Grant in Overland Park, Kansas. Years ago the city park named “Comanche Park” was renamed “Sapling Grove Park”. The Crease article gives just the year of the quote. In *Platte River Road Narratives*, Merrill Mattes (p.37) also gives the date.

Source: Crease, Craig. “Rendezvous on the Trail—Sapling Grove”, 26, quote on p. 26, in *We Remember...Beyond the Wide Missouri*. Edited by Pat Traffas and Craig Crease. Independence, MO: Oregon-California Trails Assn., 2000.

Bidwell-Bartleson Party

1841 spring

“Further, Resolved, That as this company wishes to co-operate with all others that may design to emigrate to California the ensuing spring, it is recommended that all companies and individuals intending to so emigrate, rendezvous at the Sapling Grove on the old Santa Fe route, about nine miles west of the Missouri State line, against the 10th of May next....”

*****This is a notice for those wishing to accompany the party to rendezvous at Sapling Grove. The 1841 Bidwell-Bartleson party of more than 60 travelers was probably the most famous party to rendezvous at Sapling Grove. Most trail historians consider this to have been the first organized overland party of emigrants to travel together to the Pacific coast. The wagon train split at Soda Springs, with some going to Oregon and 30-plus heading to California. **Source:** “California and Oregon”, *Colonial Magazine and Commercial Maritime Journal*, 5: (May-August 1841), 229-236, quote p. 229. Accessed online at Hathi Trust Digital Library at onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu on March 24, 2020.