

SPEECH 7/95 WITH WALTER COOK AT 3 TRAILS

1. Walter and I - Pleased to be invited
2. My research began in 1962 with search for Raytown History
Only documented source seemed to be Dean Woods
Joined with Walter four years ago
His experience as a private legal investigator and surveyor with the United States Department of Agriculture
We are not funded by any private or public organizations
Using our own resources

3. 5 reasons for our research:

(1) Locate the historical alignment of the three trails, Santa Fe, Oregon and California, from Independence, Mo., through Raytown, Mo., to Russell's Encampment, north of 93rd street

(2) To locate documentation that will support our research:

Maps, local, federal, aerial
Abstract, surveys of Wm. Miller & Martin O. Jones
County court records for road changes
Census records to locate owners of the land
Probate records for changes in ownership
Oregon Donation Land Claims
Book by Louise Barry, Kansas Historical Society,
BEGINNING OF THE WEST
Archives of the National Frontier Trails Center in Independence

*Most important -- Diaries, first hand accounts of emigrants adventures while in Jackson County, Mo.

3. Diaries that support our claim that the trails did not fan out over the prairie....that the trails did not hug the top of the Blue Ridge but ..emigrants mentioned the steep hills and getting stuck in the sloughs. Campers were seeking a site with grass, water and wood.

4. That the campsite, at the Rice farm, was an important stop by the emigrants, 1843 - 1849, especially during 1849

5. That the trails came by the Russell's or Bryant Encampment, north of 93rd street, and were often used for long periods of time for camping

CAMPSITES

1. Matt Fields , in 1839, reported: "From the town of Independence the road runs for about four miles through a dense forest, very thinly scattered with farm houses, until it opens upon the broad, ocean-like, far famed western prairies....the whole road from town, four miles, to where the prairie was at the time in bad order, and at one place a wagon tipped over in a gully...

Even to 1849, there were the same complaints of bad roads, bad bridges.....even local residents requests from the county court to move or improve the road

2. Monday, May 12, 1845, Jacob Snyder:....Left Independence in high spirits... three wagons...tent not finished...obliged to get into wagons for shelter from the rain

3. May 1, 1847, Chester Ingersoll: 8 miles from Independence to let animals rest, grass enough for two days. The land around Independence was uneven and timbered but there were crops of corn, hemp and wheat. Coming out 5 miles scarcity of water and wood.

4. March 17 - April 28, 1849, Wm. Johnston: Had sought the advice of the local citizens, who said the bad winter weather had prevented the prairie grass from growing. Immediately sought the Rice farm and stayed 41 days.

March 17...8 miles, on the plantation of a Mr. Rice, to edge of a scrub oak forest

April 1: While taking a walk, over the prairie, visited the camp of William Henry Russell, composed of a large company

(April 12-May 2 McCoy & John Johnson)

April 16: An Illinois company, which has been encamped in our neighborhood, took up its line of March today

(Apr. 16 - Wm. Kelly)

April 17: the tide of emigrant westward increases, almost hourly, as wagon after wagon, some drawn by oxen and others by mules, roll past

(Apr 18-May 1, Charles Gray) moved to 2nd camp, 8 miles out)

April 19, We entertained members of Col. Russell's company

April 20 ..passing of emigrant trains westward bound, no longer a novelty...40 wagons, mostly drawn by oxen, went by within a few hours

April 22: Large company of Mexican traders from Santa Fe went by. Some of their wagons were drawn by as many as 10 mules

**Another source reported traders were driving through nearly a 1,000 mules, who were in such poor condition it looked as though their bones were sticking through their hides

April 24: A large company from Cincinnati, wearing uniformswe are completely surrounded by camps of emigrants ...tonight a large party from Steubenville has been added

(Apr 25-27 Josselyn went back to blacksmith shop)
(Capt. McCaddon, of Zanesville Co., died)

April 26 Edwin Bryant's company with 150 pack mules went past

April 27: Spent several hours shelling corn in Mr. Rice's barn....harnessed our mules, legs flying everywhere

(Apr 27- Hugh Morgan Price moved to Rice farm)

April 28" started ..mules bothered us greatly

5. April 16, 1849 Wm. Kelly...purchased mules from Col. Ralston (who had several hundred), selected 45 mules,...led animals to a railed yard, hired persons to get animals into harness....camped near Col. Russell, who was taking a large group West

6. April 12-16: John Johnson, April 12, moved on the Santa Fe Road, where water, wood, corn and wild grass was abundant. Have opportunity to learn to cook....made a mattress filled with corn husks

7. Apr. 25-27 Amos Josselyn went to blacksmith shop to cut a tyre, bought corn for 5-6 days

8. Apr 25 - May 3, Henry Shombre - 8 miles south to fine country. Found intelligent people in Independence. Homesick....despondent ...yet found time to clean up and speak to a literary group

Travelled 8 miles to a fine country. a lay camp already there. Pitched tents in a grove there...Country well improved, good farms, beautiful on the prairie, good timber scarce. Mr. Bryant passed by.

9. Apr 27 Hugh Morgan Price moved to Mr. Rice's farm

10. May...Charles Gray moved to 2nd campsite, 8 miles out

11. May 2-8 John Evans Brown... drove to Rice's where corn was bought. It was a most beautiful and fertile country. For miles around a waving mass of green, dotted with ploughed fields and cottages

12. May 8-9 Bernard J. Reid, with Turner, Allen Pioneer train... Our camp a scene of bustle and activity in preparation for weighing anchor and setting sail with our "prairie schooner."

13. Lell Hawley Wolley ... joined Turner, Allen & Co. Pioneer Train of 40 wagons, 150 mules, 150 passengers Wild mules, took a week or two to sober them down

14. May 16 - Wm. Swain, Wolverine Rangers - - 18 wagons, painted with owners names and slogans

First four miles out of Independence, the roads were hilly, bad roads, bad bridges, then came the opening of the prairie

Walter Cook is continuing to find diaries and other accounts

Archibald Rice died October 14, 1849, two daughters inherited property. now Floral Hills cemetery