

The Migration of the Wyandots to Kansas

Transcribed by Darren English

This account of the migration of the Wyandot to Kansas and the founding of Wyandot City (now Kansas City, Kansas) was written by abolitionist and suffragist Lucy B. Armstrong, a Wyandot by virtue of marriage to Wyandot attorney John Armstrong, and transcribed from her journal in 1922.

Lucy B. Armstrong

"The settlement of Wyandot City was not at first like new settlements are usually -- one or two individuals making improvements which serve for a nucleus for a future town, but a nation of about seven hundred people, the Wyandots, came from the Sandusky river in Ohio, and not finding the lands promised to them by the United States Government in lieu of the lands they ceded to it in October, 1843, they purchased thirty-six sections of land of the Delawares, lying between the Kansas and Missouri rivers and the Delawares presented them with the three sections next the confluence of these rivers. These people were civilized and had written laws and elected their chiefs. Their improvements on the lands they had left were appraised at \$120,000. They had received \$20,000 of the amount and left their homes in Ohio and come with a promise from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, that the remaining \$100,000 should be paid to them soon after their settlement. And they pitched their tents and put up camps of bark, poles, and boards, and built log cabins with the expectation that they would be only temporary.

The first cabin occupied on the site of Wyandot City was by John M. Armstrong and family between Wawas and Jersey Streets, and not far E. of Fifth street of the present city. This was the 10th day of December, 1843, One week from that Mrs. Catherine Long and her family moved into their cabin on the North side of Jersey creek. John W. Greyeyes was at this time building a hewed log house on the west side of what is now Third Street, which afterward became part of the residence of Joel Walker. Doctor Greyeyes built a cabin on the opposite side of the street or road. Robert Robitaille built and resided on the same side of the road near the corner of Nebraska Avenue and Third Street. The United States Blacksmith to the Wyandots -- Graham came on that winter and selected a place for the shop and his residence near the Northwest corner of the same streets. A company store in which most of the leading Wyandots had shares was located between Kansas and Minnesota Avenues west of Third St. It was in a long log building in two apartments--the store-room and a back room used in part for a council house.

Joel Walker who had the management of the store was clerk to the council. Francis A. Hicks was Head Chief. Major Phillips was United States Agent to the Wyandots and John M. Armstrong United States Interpreter. On the hill on Kansas Avenue opposite Dunning's present Hall, Henry Jaques - a chief built his residence, which he afterward sold to the Nation for a Jailor's house and by which a jail was put up, and Jaques built his second house where Dunning's Hall now stands. This house was afterward occupied from May

1845, to the Spring of 1849 as a United States Agency - Dr. Richard M. Hewitt being United States Agent. Silas Armstrong built two cabins near the present location of Gov. M'Grew's slaughter-house and resided there until 1846, when he removed them to a location west of Fifth Street near Kansas Avenue, and in 1848 he built and moved into the brick house, known afterward as the Eldridge House and burned in 1864. Francis and Matilda Driver "his wife" afterward Mrs. Francis A. Hicks built on the Kansas River bluffs near the ferry, and Sarrahas a chief, father to John Sarrahas and Tall Charles and Charles Splitlog settled in the same neighborhood. Mathias Splitlog was with Jaques, and in 1845 married his great niece Eliza Barnett. Wm. Walker built a double hewed log house entering one end of it May 1844 on the North side of Jersey creek and a young man from the State of N.Y. did the work, he and Mr. W. camping there all the winter of 1843 and 1844, and Mr. W. then named the creek. The house was weatherboarded and plastered in 1847 and 1848 and now belongs to Mr. Wyeth

A Methodist Episcopal Parsonage was built and occupied by the Missionary to the Wyandots in July 1844 just west of Mr. Walker's house. It was afterwards owned by Mr. Walker. The Missionary was the Rev. James Wheeler who was with the Wyandots seven years in all four years in Ohio and returned there May 1845. In the spring of 1844 John M. Armstrong was authorized by the council to contract for the building of a school-house. He employed a carpenter from Liberty, Mo. who built it on the E. side of Fourth Street between Kansas and Nebraska Avenues. Mr. Armstrong commenced teaching in it early in July 1844, and when not interrupted by the sickness of himself and scholars taught more than a year. He was sent to Washington, Nov. 1845 as a delegate to recover the improvement fund which should have been paid to the Wyandots in 1843, and Rev. Mr. Kramer and Robert Robitaille taught the school, afterwards Rev. R. Parrott. Both Messrs Kramer and Parrott were from Indiana. Then Mrs. Lucy B. Armstrong taught four months and in the fall and winter of 1851 and 1852 John M. Armstrong taught in the schoolhouse again his wife completing the school. He was a lawyer, educated at the Wyandot Mission Upper Sandusky and at Norwalk Seminary O., and in law, at the office of Judge Stewart, the father-in-law of Gen. Sherman, Mansfield, O. and was admitted to the bar in Cincinnati O. April-- and left his school, to litigate claims in Washington City, but died on his journey at Mansfield O. The school was then transferred to the home of his widow and taught by her four years the latter three in the basement of a brick church, built by the M.E. church on the hill west of the city where Mr. Grindeved now lives. This church with another M.E. church two miles farther west near the present Quindaro Cemetery was burned in Border Ruffian Time. April 8, 1856. But we go back to the first winter 1843 and 44. This and the succeeding winter were remarkable for the mildness of the weather, and it was well, for many of the Wyandots were compelled to remain in camps for want of means to build houses. The camps were large and they held religious services in them. Their church organization had been kept up, they had two local preachers the Rev. Esq. Greyeyes and the Rev. George I. Clark, five Exhorters and nine class leaders and as their missionary had returned to Ohio after his family, they arranged their meetings themselves, having two public services and five class meetings on the Sabbath, with an occasional sermon from a white missionary from one of the other

missions, and again public services Wed. and Fri. evenings. They had two hundred church members when they left Ohio. And the Sabbath was hallowed in Wyandot City and county, as it is not now. One day after service Esq. Greyeyes proposed to the brethren that they build a church by cutting down trees and hewing them for the walls, making puncheons for the floor and seats, clapboards for roof and ceiling, and contributing enough of the little money they had, to get boards for window frames and door, nails, sash and glass. One replied to the old man who was living in a camp himself "Why! You have no house yourself". He answered "I want a house for my soul first." This was in Feb. 1844. In April, that church was occupied. The floor was not all laid, only one tier of puncheons. The preacher Rev. Mr. Carter, a local preacher who built the parsonage stood on that and the people sat on the sleepers, their feet resting on the ground, and the house was full. It was about 35 feet long and 25 feet wide. In May it was completed and used as a place of worship until the brick church mentioned above was ready for worship - Nov 1847