

Lucy B. Armstrong's Account of Travel from St. Louis to Kansas on the Missouri Riverboat Nodaway

Transcribed by Darren English

Lucy B. Armstrong

The majority of the Wyandots traveled on the larger boat, the Nodaway, which arrived on July 31, 1843, two days after Mr. Wheeler had landed. Caty and the other passengers on this boat had their own stories, interesting stories, but unlike Rev. Wheeler's, theirs told of unnecessary ill treatment by the boat's white crew.

"It had been agreed between the captain that the first payments of fare should be paid at Louisville Falls, the second at St. Louis, and the third at Lexington, Missouri. All went smoothly until the boat passed Louisville, and the first payment had been made. The boat was nicely furnished, and the voyagers were well treated up to that point. The captain then seemed to become possessed with the apprehension that the Wyandots would ruin his furnishings. He, therefore, ripped up the carpets and packed them away, put his patrons on short allowance, and otherwise imposed upon them, and made them uncomfortable. The worst of it, however, was yet to come.

When the Nodaway finally arrived at the intersection of the west line of the State of Missouri with the Missouri River, the sun was down and a heavy dew was on the grass. There was only one small house which could be occupied, and the captain was re-quested to allow his passengers to remain on the boat over night. He replied that he must go to St. Joe that night, and the Wyandots were turned out like sheep by a heartless shepherd. There was only a small spot which was treeless, and here the men, women, and children huddled together over night, Mr. Garrett and his family, Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Armstrong, and a few others occupying the house. Early in the morning the boat was still at the landing, the 'hands' having spent much of the night in putting down the carpets again, and 'putting things to rights.' It is little wonder that when the tired and faint and sick band of travelers perceived this additional harsh treatment, the Captain and his boat were pri-vately and publicly anathematized.

It so happened, as fate would have it, that the Nodaway was wrecked during the very next year, and it may be that a little gleam of this feeling shot up in the breasts of some of the nation 'outraged justice satisfied.'

Their camping ground from the last of July until October 1843 consisted of the land then owned by the United States, and reserved for a fort, between the west line of the State of Missouri and the Kansas River, the Missouri River being on the north, and the Shawnee Reserve on the south. For their religious meetings, which they faithfully upheld, they selected the first elevation south of the Missouri River. A few of the Wyandots who could afford them, and were fortunate enough to obtain them, such as the Walkers, the Clarks, and the Armstrongs, rented houses in the town or neighborhood of Westport."