

Wyandots in Kansas Territory 1843

Transcribed by Darren English

A letter from Rev. James Wheeler giving a detailed description of the hardships encountered by the Wyandots having relocated from Upper Sandusky Ohio to Kansas Territory

Kansas Territory September 30, 1843

The Wyandots, since their arrival in the Indian territory, west of the state of Missouri, have been and still are encamped on the Kansas River, about two miles above its junction with the Missouri. They are endeavoring to make a permanent location; and a delegation has been out in the Indian country seeking for lands unoccupied by other nations of Indians, that they may select, and have secured to them by the Government of the United States, the amount of territory agreed upon in their late treaty. As yet, they have found none on which they think they could live contentedly, surrounded by rude and uncultivated nations, with whom they would have to mingle.

It excites in the minds of the Wyandots as much curiosity to see a wild Indian, with no clothing save a blanket, and that perhaps under his arm, as it does for those who have never seen an Indian, to see a Wyandot, and with such they manifest but little disposition to associate. Their design is to secure the land promised to them by the Government wherever they find that which they shall be best suited; but they have just made a treaty with the Delaware, in which they have purchased a small territory of land at two dollars per acre, lying between the Kansas and Missouri Rivers, and at their junction. It is a delightful tract of land; and there is on it one of the most beautiful sites for a town, it is said, that can be found on the Missouri River. They will immediately move on to the land and commence making preparations for living.

Having been encamped so long, many of them were getting home-sick and began to wish that they had never left Sandusky. To add to their discouragements, they have suffered much since their arrival from sickness and the death of nearly all the younger part of their children. While at Cincinnati, some imprudent person, excited by curiosity, came on to the boat where we were embarking, just breaking out with the measles. Some of the children took them, and since our arrival here they have spread, among those who had not previously had them, through the whole encampment. In addition to this, a distressing diarrhea has prevailed among them, and not being in a situation in their camps to take proper care of themselves or children, they have suffered severely, but they have suffered patiently, and manifested a good degree of resignation to the will of Providence. Previous to our removal we entertained fears that through anxiety and difficulties on the way, many of the members of the Church would become lukewarm -that some might fall into temptation and finally backslide, but the Lord has been better to us than all our fears. It is true that temptations were plentifully thrown around us, to which too many of the intemperate yielded, but the members of the Church have continued to pursue their Christian course with much steadfastness. About three weeks after our arrival, a camp

meeting was held at the Shawnee camp ground, in which the missionaries to the Shawnee, Delawares, Kickapoos, Peorias, Potawatamies, Kansas, and Wyandots, and the superintendent of the Manual Labor School united; it continued for nine days. It is thought to have been one of the most interesting meetings ever held in this Indian country. A goodly number were converted - among whom were most of the young men and women at the School; fifty-four from the different nations presented their applications for membership; but the greatest good resulting from it, was its quickening influence on the Church. It closed on Saturday; and on Sabbath afternoon the Wyandot class met near to each other in their camps for class meeting, after which they immediately assembled for prayer meeting, which lasted until nearly midnight, when others came forward, professing a 'desire to flee the wrath to come, and be saved from their sins.'

I feel considerably encouraged to hope that their removal to this country may prove a benefit to them both temporally and spiritually. It is thought by those that I suppose have a right to know, that it would be no more than discharging the requirements of duty to continue in the Indian work; and if it is, so let it be, for in whatever direction the way of duty leads, I will endeavor to travel, and desire no other path. My present calculations are to go to Ohio for my family, and return in the spring, as I cannot get back sooner. In so doing I shall expect your prayers and the prayers of the Church for myself and family, and the blessings of Heaven to rest upon our labors.

I remain yours in the cause of missions and the cause of God.

September 30, 1843

James Wheeler

Dec 10, 1843...

Mr. John M. Armstrong built his cabin near Jersey Creek, about a half mile from the Missouri River and moved into it December 10, 1843. This was the first house occupied on the site of Wyandotte, and the Armstrongs were the first to entertain guests. Mr. Armstrong had been appointed United States interpreter the preceding fall, and each alternate Thursday night he served as the United States agent to the Wyandots.

Dec 23, 1843...

"On December 23, 1843, the Wyandots purchased thirty-six sections of land from the Delaware Indians for \$46,080.00. They were given three additional sections in the deal, to bring the total to "thirty-nine sections of land off the east end of their [Delaware] reservation within the present Wyandotte County, Kansas."

[The size of a section is an amount of land one mile long by one mile wide.]