

Gilliespie Letter

Rewritten by Forrest E. Woods

In the spring of 1850 Grandfather disposed of all his property that he did not want to take with him to Kansas (he had slaves, but did not seal them, but gave them their freedom) and fitted his family out with all he would need on a Kansas farm, work oxen, cows, chickens, wagons, work horses, harnesses. There must have been 12 or 14 wagons all told with the younger ones on horseback driving the stock, quite a carnival! John Woods and a man by the name of Ballard, both son-in-laws, and Uncle Wills wife, one daughter-in-law. Making 16 all together, bound for Kansas or bust, and a home, but they knew that they could not get into Kansas until the Slavery question was settled, so they headed for St. Joseph, Mo., it being on the main highway to California, having a good teams and a jolly crowd, but they wanted to be close when the question was settled, they moved right along, never traveled on Sunday but rested themselves, and did things they could not do while traveling, so they made good time and got through to St. Joe in the fall of 1850,

So they were not there very long until they were running a boarding house and Grandfather and Uncle John had them a Blacksmith shop, so Altogether they made money. By next spring Ballard, Aunt Mary's husband, took the California gold fever, left his wife and baby, and that was last they ever saw of him. The baby died, Aunt Mary got a divorce and then worked in the Boarding-house the rest of the time while in St. Joe until coming to Kansas with the rest of them in 1855.

My father and Uncle Will, in the spring of 1851, rented a farm there in Boom County, and farmed, and in the fall, November 30, 1851 Klisa was born. They still could not get in Kansas, so they rented the same place for another year, and so I was born there February 25, 1853, so that year ran out and he stayed there all of 1844.

All the summer of 1854 the emigrants from the east came in and filed on the claims that they picked out and built a foundation of 4 logs square, that would hold it until the true settlers could vote, which was March 30, 1855, so in 1854, I think two of the boys, (I don't know which ones) went over on horses and located the claims and put up the foundations and swore to it as bonifide settlers. They went to St. Joe to wait until the election on March 1855. Walter was born January 8th 1855 before the election in march. By this time everyone was satisfied that the true settlers would win the election, so they prepared to move as soon as the election was over. Walter was not three months old when they pulled out for Kansas. They started from St. Joeseph with their wagons, giving themselves plenty of time to go by Weston, Mo. Where there was a ferry boat. They crossed the Missouri River into Kansas that night of March 30th, just west of Fort Levenworth Reservation and camped on a creek where there was lots of grass. Grandfather, Uncle Will, Uncle Jim and my father stayed in St. Joe, each with a good saddle horse and settled up things, then they crossed the Missouri River there at St. Joe and went down through Nebraska into Kansas.

The people elected a man by the name of Robinson, for Govenor (I think that was his name). The whole state was divided up into districts and each voting precinct guarded

by state men to see that every man that voted was qualified, a home-steader, and swore in his vote, so they got to the Oake Grove precinct about 11:00 am March 30th. They had a right to vote at any precinct in the district (the district from the Missouri River run straight south to the north-east corner of Pottawatomie Reservation, then west to the north-west corner, then south to the Kansas River, west to the mouth of Wild Cat Creek, some place near Riley Center, then due north to the Nebraska line (but I am not too sure of this) It might of went straighten the east line of the Pottawatomie Reservation to the river, then up the river. The government had built a road Ft. Levenworth to Ft. Riley, so they followed that and struck the Kaw Valley just west of Topeka, followed up the river to St. George, getting there on on April 7th, 1855. They must have landed heavy, for they had a Tread Saw Mill, with all the carpenter tools, blacksmith tools, with so many other heavy tools, household things, chickens and hogs. It didn't take them long to set up their Saw-mill and get in a lot of logs and slabs, then build a house and put in a crop. They sawed up enough lumber to fence 40 acres, hog tight for a pasture for their hogs to live on and raise their young then to fatten 20 or 30 kill cure, was sure a job for such a mob of them. So while they were doing that, my father, and a man that came with him from St Joe named Louis House built a house on my father's place down in the timber in an open spot near the river. They sank a barrel in the sand by the river for water. Then cleared about 7 acres and planted it in what he needed for his family until he could grow a crop. That fall he dug a well up on the prairie and moved the house out of the timber, up there, but that did not suit him, The well gave out and we had to haul water from a way up in the hills, so he tore it down and moved it up on the north-west corner of the place there to stay. That was in 1857, the first thing I can remember in living down there in the timber was there Pottawattomie Indians roaming around there. Just Ma and us three kids My father was up at the saw-mill most of the time. George Woods was born in the last house that we built in 1857. Louin was born there too in 1858, Mittie was born there also in 1860. The Civil War was about to begin, and my father knew he would have to go and began to fix for it. He put out his stock to different ones until he got back. He moved his family up to St. George near Ma's folks. That summer there was a whole company of 100 men around who enlisted, mustered in and left for Ft. Levenworth about Oct. 1st 1862. Laura was born after he left on October 14th My father died at Little Rock Arkansas on January 10th 1863. Grandfather built Ma a house and gave her 4 lots where we all lived until 1870 then built a house and moved across the river which is the same house that is there now. Uncle Will took a claim just west of the Hull place and built a house and farmed. He had a family of three children all of whom took the Groop and died. I believe this was around 1857. Then there was Harvey, Johnny, Mildia and Tommie.

This is the accounts of the Gillespie leaving Kentucky and moving to Kansas.
Rewritten by Forrest E. Woods on Jan 1st 2006.