

The Tour Continues

Pawnee County

October 15-19, 1832

Today's Names for Yesterday's Places

A Tour on the Prairies by Washington Irving

Washington Irving on the Prairie by Henry Leavitt Ellsworth

The Rambler in Oklahoma by Charles Joseph Latrobe

On the Western Tour with Washington Irving by Albert Alexandre de Pourtalès



Pawnee County October 15, 1832

Crossing the Arkansas to the north of the Cimarron

Keystone Lake was formed from the waters of the Arkansas and the Cimarron which was called the Red Fork by the tourists of 1832.

Beatte and Tonish procured a Dry buffalo skin. Cords were passed through a number of Small eyelet holes with which it was bordered, and it was drawn up, until it formed a deep trough. Sticks were then placed athwart to keep it in shape. The singular bark was carried down the bank and set afloat.

Pawnee County, October 15, 1832

The night of October 15, 1832, Washington Irving of Sleepy Hollow camped in a rocky nook among tall trees at the confluence of the Arkansas and the Cimarron. Today it is covered by the waters of Lake Keystone in Pawnee and Creek Counties.

During much of the Tourists' time in Pawnee County they remained near the border with Creek County. Irving was camping with a party of rangers and with three friends and was on his way to see and perhaps hunt buffalo, to experience the West of his imagination. Irving created the Headless Horseman and was the superstar of his time. Henry Leavitt Ellsworth was in Oklahoma as a Commissioner to the Indians. Albert-Alexandre de Pourtalès was a Swiss Count. Charles Joseph Latrobe was Pourtalès' teacher and companion. Guides hired by the four friends in particular Tonish and Beatte, were excellent and frontier to the bone. All the friends had followed Auguste Pierre Chouteau, great trader from a famous family, from Saint Louis to the Three Forks.

Irving traveled under the guidance and protection of the rangers who were mounted soldiers, early cavalry who supplied their own clothing, horses, and guns for the work at hand. Irving traveled and tented with a small group of seven called a mess, who gathered around a fire each night to eat the catch of the day.

Our trio with the Commissioner and our several attendants, formed a separate mess, having but little connection with the others, but such as friendly courtesy and our association as fellow- adventurers dictated. From the moment the signal for encampment was given, to the bugle-call that gave token of our morning departure, we were in fact as much chez nous, as though we had inhabited separate houses. We were dependant upon our own arrangements for comfort, and for our supplies of provisions, beyond those few necessaries, or luxuries . . . The Captain and his officers, formed also a mess and ordinarily pitched their camp-fire a dozen yards or so from our own. The men were divided according to friendship or fancy, into ten or a dozen parties.

Since Irving crossed the Grand and the Verdigris, he and his friends had been anticipating the crossing of the Arkansas. That was not to occur until they reached the Cimarron. Early today, Irving climbed a hill and looked west.

At a distance to the west we beheld the Red Fork rolling its ruddy current to the Arkansas. . . . We reached the sandy shores of the Arkansas, whose waters look exactly like crayfish soup. . . . Some of the rangers set to work vigorously with their axes, felling trees on the edge of the river, where with to form rafts for the transportation of their baggage and other equipage. Beatte and Tonish procured a Dry buffalo skin. Cords were passed through a number of Small eyelet holes with which it was bordered, and it was drawn up, until it formed a deep trough. Sticks were then placed athwart to keep it in shape. The singular bark was carried down the bank and set afloat. A cord was attached which Beatte took between his teeth towing the bark after him; while Tonish followed behind, to keep it steady and to propel it. The whole way, they whooped and yelled in the Indian style.

Commissioner Ellsworth listed what they carried.

I have an exact inventory of the luggage that was put in before I was placed upon the top of it – 3 full saddle bags – 4 guns – Holsters & pistols; powder horns & shot pouches – ½ a bushell of corn, besides all the fresh provisions of our mess – 8 blanketts – 3 buck skin dresses . . . axe, frying pan tin kettle coffee pot & eating bowls ropes & 1 bridle 2 great coats – On the top of these with several other small articles I was placed, with my double barrellled gun in my hands loaded for a salute if circumstances should be favorable.

Irving trusted himself to the round boat.

We determined to trust ourselves in the buffalo hide. I stepped in without hesitation, though as cautiously as possible, and sat down, the margin of the hide sinking to within a hand's breadth of the water's edge. The broad, sandy shore where we had landed, was intersected by innumerable tracks of elk, deer, bears, raccoons, turkeys, and water-fowl. The river scenery was beautifully diversified, presenting long, shining reaches, bordered by willows and cotton-wood trees; rich bottoms, with lofty forests; among which towered enormous plane trees, and the distance was closed in by high embowered promontories.

When all the travelers and their gear crossed the river, a camp site was found. It was absolutely perfect.

We . . . entered a wild, rocky dell, bordered by two lofty ridges of limestone, which narrowed as we advanced, until they met and united; making almost an angle. Here a fine spring of water rose among the rocks, and fed a silver rill that ran the whole length of the dell, freshening the grass with which it was carpeted.

Each Tourist called this lovely place by a different name; Latrobe, Bear's Glen; Ellsworth, Bears Den; Irving, The Camp of the Glen.

Bear's Glen Cabins

Advertising Bear's Glen, 21st Century



Today the Glen is under the waters of Keystone Lake. Today Washington Irving Cove is on Keystone Lake as is the camping area called Bear's Glen.

The party was now far enough west to begin to be very careful. Captain Bean anticipated the perils of the west, the dangers of the Cross Timbers. All feared the Pawnee.

I have a wild crew of young fellows. It will be difficult to teach them caution. We are now in the land of a silent, watchful, crafty people, who, when we least suspect it, may be around us ready to pounce upon all stragglers.

Irving surveyed the campsite before he slept on his bearskin.

There was nothing so pretty as our camp site with its fourteen fires which lit up the forest. The animated groups around the fires cast long, moving shadows against the tree trunks.

Irving awoke before daybreak at the Bear's Glen.

The moon was shining feebly down into the glen, from among light drifting clouds; the camp fires were nearly burnt out, and the men lying about them. I sat on a rock that overhung the spring at the upper part of the dell, and amused myself by watching the changing scene before me. The bugle sounded the signal to mount and march. The clamor of voices and the notes of the bugle at length died away, and the glen relapsed into quiet and silence.

The travelers headed out for another day. They came into red dirt country.

After crossing a stretch of sparsely-wooded rocks which annoyed us and tired our horses, we came upon some charming country; a slightly rocky, rolling prairie watered by numerous streams and colored blood red by sumacs.

The Tourists would experience more red dirt and learn that sumacs had nothing to do with it. They would hunt buffalo on grass growing on that Oklahoma red dirt. They would leave the red dirt behind and return to Fort Gibson and thus to home.

Pawnee County, October 16, 17, 18, 1832

Rest Camp by House Creek

On October 16, 1832, Washington Irving of Sleepy Hollow camped on a beautiful peninsula north of the Cimarron

River, perhaps on House Creek near Terlton. He also rested there the night of October 17, 1832. Irving was camping with a party of rangers, early cavalry, from Fort Gibson and with three friends who had traveled with him since New York. The three included an excitable, teenaged Swiss nobleman named Pourtalès, a brilliant scholar named Latrobe, and a nearly perfect Commissioner to the Indians named Ellsworth. Latrobe described the camp those nights.

They found us encamped in a little secluded peninsula, formed by a creek in the vicinity of the Red Fork. The stream, as it strayed from one deep clear pool, over broken rock and tangled grass, to another within high banks, formed a kind of natural entrenchment for us.

Early in the morning on the sixteenth, it was discovered that some of the horses were gone. Beatte, guide and excellent woodsman went out to find the horses. He brought them back, but lost his helper, the young and less than excellent guide Antoine. Many others were away from camp so they were sure he would be found, and finally he was. Early became advanced before the bugled sounded the signal to mount and march. The travelers left the beautiful Bears' Glen to nature.

. . . the rustling of the yellow leaves, which the lightest breath of air brought down in wavering showers, a sign of the departing glories of the year.

Irving and his companions headed west, traveling north of the Cimarron River. They spied four deer.

They apparently had not perceived our approach, and continued to graze in perfect tranquility. There was the sharp report of a rifle; a fine buck made a convulsive bound and fell to the earth.

He would be added to dinner that night.

Irving spent time at the remains of an old Indian encampment. There was much discussion as to the Indians who had lived here; Pawnees? Delawares? The Doctor . . .

after considering the shape and disposition of the lodges, pronounced it the camp of some bold Delawares, who had probably made a brief dashing excursion into these dangerous hunting grounds.

It was a glorious day.

Our march this day was animating and delightful. We were in a region of adventure; breaking our way through a country hitherto untrodden by white men, except perchance by some solitary trapper. The weather was in its perfection, temperate, genial and enlivening; a deep blue sky with a few light feathery clouds, an atmosphere of perfect transparency, an air pure and bland, and a glorious country spreading our far and wide in the golden sunshine of an autumnal day; but all silent, lifeless, without a human habitation.

Farms and settlements were no more. Only the Pawnees were ahead. Always they were ahead and they were feared. The general name for fear on the whole tour was Pawnee which it is assumed meant all the fierce nations of the prairies; the Comanche or Kiowa or Cheyenne or Apache.

They stopped for the night. The horses were tired and the travelers were tired and sick. Captain Bean said this spot would serve two more nights. It would be a sort of rest and hospital camp. And the peninsula was very pleasing.

After a march of about fifteen miles west we encamped in a beautiful peninsula, made by the windings and doublings of a deep, clear, and almost motionless brook, and covered by an open grove of lofty and magnificent trees.

Food the night before had been lacking. Tonight would be better. Irving was worried for a while since it looked like meat from the lone deer would not make it within reach of his knife. One young hunter shot a deer, cut it up like an artist, and supplied it to the party. Then the guide Beatte came in with a fat doe lying across his horse. Captain Bean, an excellent hunter, did not actually bring in his elk, but there was already more than enough. As Irving rested, anticipating his meal, he enjoyed his rural repose. He called to his mind the rhythms of his Tour, those he had experienced and those he hoped to experience.

I can scarcely conceive a kind of life more calculated to put both mind and body in a healthful tone. A morning's ride of several hours diversified by hunting incidents; an encampment in the afternoon under some noble grove on the borders of a stream; an evening banquet of venison, fresh killed, roasted or broiled, on the coals; turkeys just from the tickets and wild honey from the trees; And all relished with an appetite unknown to the gourmets of the cities. And at night—such sweet sleeping in the open air, or waking and gazing at the moon and stars, shining between the trees!

It was well that this encampment was in such a beautiful place. They stayed an extra day. By the end of this encampment, the travelers had slept well, rested well, and washed up very well. The Commissioner wrote about the cleaning process. We had a leisure moment & examined our wardrobes.

--M Irving & myself went to the Creek and washed our linnen & woolens—it was a new employment to both . It was extremely difficult, to get out the dirt, especially from my wollens—I plied soap liberally and made my clothes tolerable decent & that is all. They also ate well. At the end of the rest camp Irving reported about food. The game killed at this camp consisted of six deer, one elk, two bears, six or eight turkeys. Messes No. 1 and No. 2 were plenteously supplied during the day of rest, and the whole camp appeared like a kitchen. Man has been defined as a 'cooking animal,' and in particular, clearly distinct from any other on the face of the earth . . . continual trussing and spiting, drying and smoking, carving and cooking, was the order of the day of repose. We found that we all belonged to the hunter tribe, and that there was to be no medium between a feast and a fast.

At rest camp young Count Pourtalès was pouting. It all had to do with a pair of outrageously impressive antlers. The Captain refused to let the young Count go with him to hunt deer. It had been reported that a herd was in the vicinity and that the sultan of that herd had a magnificent pair of antlers.

Wichita Wapiti

Sculptor Jocelyn Lillpop Russell

Dedicated to L. Beauchamp Selman by NatureWorks

The young count had harsh words and words of gratitude when the captain returned from his hunt sans antlers.



He used his authority as captain to declare off limits to the entire company the area in which the superb herd was to be found. . . . I would tell the captain to go to the devil for having reserved for himself alone the right to hunt for horns. . . . Huntantlers, he returned exhausted, sweating, and swearing, without antlers, without moose, without turkeys, without deer. Our bear, cut up and passed around, was gratefully received. The captain had no antlers! That made me extremely happy. Oh, man!



Pawnee County, October 18, 1832

Prairie Wolves

NatureWorks bronze by Jocelyn Lillipop Russell

Dedicated to the Indian Nations Council Boys Scouts of America

They made a grand burst after what they supposed to be a gang of bears, but soon pulled up on discovering them to be black wolves, prowling in company.

Washington Irving of Sleepy Hollow camped beside a deep ravine. It just might have been Lagoon Creek somewhere near Jennings. He had been traveling with rangers and guides since October 10. Until now the Tour had gone well. Then food got scarce and measles cropped up. Captain Bean prescribed rest and they had it, two nights on a beautiful peninsula with rest and washing and good hunting. Now they headed west again leaving the beautiful spot behind.

We prepared to march at the usual hour, but three of the rangers who had been attacked with the measles, were unable to proceed, and another one was missing. The last was an old frontiersman, by the name of Sawyer, who had gained years without experience.

A guard of ten men was left to take care of the sick, and wait for the stragglers. As long as the flour held out, the Tourists made their bread every which way. Ellsworth as his custom, described this work of this cooking animal in detail.

I was . . . amused to witness . . . making bread or rather baking it, for it is all made up alike with water, without yeast . . . most, preferred to bake the bread, in the ashes, which was done, by making a hole in the hot embers, and throwing in the dough . . . nothing but the . . . stomach of a hunter, whose gastric powers were in their highest perfection would digest it.

By this time the Osage bowls bought on October 12, were well used. They were preserved and additions were made for the comfort of the eaters.

Many & many are the times, when M Irving, & myself, curled up our legs, (like tailors on their boards) and bent over, to sip out of the bowl our joint allowance – M Latrobe, inc(r) eased our table comforts very much, by presenting each of us with two clam shells, which he found in a creek near by, while hunting game – the large one served as a plate, and would hold a pancake or small piece of meat, and the small one, served as a salt cellar. Our bowls, were made with a small handle, perforated with two holes, by which they were fastened to the pack- saddle, and our little shells, were carefully packed up, after every meal in our pockets, or saddle bags, as objects of great value.

Many creeks ran south toward the river and the party needed to ford each one. Irving was having a delightful and invigorating time with his stalwart pony. He was becoming as heedless as the youngest of the rangers. He thought his horse was wonderful.

. . . surpassed in action most horses of the troop, and was of great mettle and a generous spirit. In crossing the deep ravines, he would scramble up the steep banks like a cat; and was always for leaping the narrow runs of water. In leaping him across a small brook, I felt him immediately falter beneath me. The horse was consigned to (two young men) as he limped off. It seemed as if, with him, all strength and buoyancy had departed from me. . . . I was made conscious how unwise it is, on expeditions of the kind, where a man's life may depend upon the strength, and speed, and freshness of his horse, to task the generous animal by any unnecessary exertion of his powers.

The march continued until the Captain found a likely campsite. To be perfect it must have level ground with water and good grazing.

After a march of about twelve miles we encamped, a little after mid-day, on the borders of a brook which loitered through a deep ravine.

Beatte the silent and Tonish the noisy played the day true to their natures.

Our men, Beatte and Tonish, both sallied forth, early in the afternoon, to hunt. Towards evening the former returned, with a fine buck across his horse. He laid it down, as usual, in silence, and proceeded to unsaddle and turn his horse loose. Tonish came back without any game, but with much more glory; having made several capital shots, though . . . the wounded deer had all escaped him.

They ate well on October 18.

There was an abundant supply of meat in the camp: for besides other game, three elk had been killed. The wary and veteran woodmen were all busy jerking meat, against a time of scarcity; the less experienced reveled in present abundance, leaving the morrow to provide for itself." The grasshopper and the ant story was told all over again. Everyone would be very sorry that they did not carefully prepare for the future on the hungry days ahead. On the tour, there were two preserved foods, salted pork which they brought with them, and jerked meat which they salted and smoked on the trail.

Commission Ellsworth was the best in his detailed descriptions of life on the tour.

The soldiers had long poles over their fires covered with small pieces of venison, which had been salted — After the meat has been smoked a few hours, it is called jerked, and can be transported a great distance without damage—indeed, it is excellent to eat without any farther cooking — In our long tedious rides, I often relieved my appetite by chewing a small slice of jerked venison.

Irving slept that night sans horse. He and the entire camp had eaten well. There had been no contact with hostile Indians. Every meeting with the Osages or the Creeks had been pleasant. The weather had been pristine, near perfect. The weather was about to change.

Pawnee County, October 19, 1832

The Tourists left the campsite in the morning and continued west. The weather was bad and it got worse, a lot worse. The night of October 19 was all fire and water. On the night of October 22 everyone was kept up nearly all night by alarms, alarms about Pawnees. Later they would become hungry. By the beginning of November, they were continually hungry, very hungry. Nothing though would really get in the way between this happy night and the completion of their tour toward and in buffalo country.

Irving returned to New York to *write A Tour on the Prairies* from his notes. It was published in 1835 and has been in print continuously since then. To find out the reason that Irving came to Oklahoma; to find out more about the time he came; to learn more about the people who were here and the people who came with him; read *A Tour on the Prairies* by Washington Irving.