

REVIEW OF LONE ELM ACTIVITIES

by Mary Conrad

Lone Elm Campground was a busy campground on the Independence route of the Santa Fe-Oregon-California trails from about 1821 to 1870. It is located southeast of what is now 167th Street and Lone Elm Road in Olathe. This camp area with many trees first was known as Round Grove. By the mid-1840s, the grove of trees had been reduced to a single tree. Hence, the name became "Lone Elm."

For years most of the campground was thought to be contained within one farm, though some of the campground may have been on the property to the east where a nursery has created a lake. In January 2001, the city council of Olathe agreed to purchase the 150-plus acre farm for \$1.85 million. The city wanted the property for mixed parkland uses, including for various athletic fields; but the city stated the campground area nearest the creek would be reserved for hiking trails.

In June of 2001, a contract firm completed a pedestrian survey which included some metal detecting. Very few artifacts were located amongst the growing vegetation.

In March of 2002, a round of metal detecting occurred before Bert Wetherill was called for assistance. In April of that year Wetherill supervised a few days of metal detecting. Some volunteers agreed to help with record keeping. Wetherill added the element of using GPS to record the locations of the metal detected finds.

A year later in April 2003, Wetherill supervised a couple weekends of metal detecting. Again some KCASers volunteered to assist. The variety of objects found included wire, barbed wire, square nails, wire nails, horseshoes, oxen shoes, lead balls, a shield nickel, glass panes within leaded strips, a door latch, harness pieces, bolts, nuts, and fragments of metal pipes. A few of the metal objects were composed of forged metal.

During a spring walkover, Wetherill had noted the presence of a long narrow foundation. To accommodate field work for a Johnson County Community College (JCCC) anthropology class, Wetherill organized testing of this foundation area and also Lone Elm lab work in a nearby Olathe maintenance building. The JCCC instructor Sandra Moran included five mornings at Lone Elm the week of July 7th as part of the class.

Wetherill, Moran, JCCC students, KCAS volunteers, Boy Scouts, and some friends tested around the foundation on Monday, Tuesday, and Friday of that July week. Probing and digging seemed to indicate a solid foundation on the north, but on the south side there seemed to be a number of openings. [See map elsewhere in the newsletter.] Bert began to suspect a loafing shed where farm animals could find shelter from the weather.

On Wednesday and Thursday of the same week, the students and other volunteers dry brushed many of the metal detected objects recovered in April of this year. The JCCC students also wet washed some Oxford school artifacts to gain some experience with that type of cleaning too. In addition, Wetherill set up some equipment to show what measurements archaeologists may need for analysis, such as how to figure specific gravity. He also brought exhibits of the Oxford site to explain the processes followed in investigating that site.

Toward the end of August, Wetherill hoped to do some more Lone Elm lab work and more test excavating around the stone foundation, but the 100-plus temperatures squashed such ideas.

INVITATION TO MEETING REGARDING LINE CREEK

The Line Creek Park in the Northland first was added to the Kansas City, Missouri park system as an archaeological preserve. J. Mett Shippee was instrumental in establishing this park to preserve a prehistoric site. In the 1970s, the KU Anthropology Department conducted a field school at the site. Soon thereafter a museum was established with the assistance of the Kansas City Museum. At the time, the promoters of the facility said the building would be a temporary structure.

In 1999 some park employees encouraged some KCAS members to form a friends group to support the museum. Such meetings toward that end began in July 1999. After working on bylaws for a time, the developing friends were told the museum might be closed due to its severely deteriorated condition.