

## Jotham Meeker to Rev. Lucius Bolles

In this letter Jotham Meeker, a Baptist missionary to the Shawnee in Indian Territory, discussed the Ottawa Indians who were residing on Shawnee lands. Meeker spoke to several Ottawa chiefs about spreading the Christian gospel, and he hoped that he could work among them as a missionary. Also, Meeker discussed how the Ottawa may be forced to move once other tribes take possession of land in Indian Territory. He also mentioned the Methodist mission established among the Potawatomi. Reverend Lucius Bolles, the recipient of this letter, was Meeker's contact at the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions.

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Shawnee Mission, Nov. 29. 1833.

Rev. & Dear Sir

you have doubtless expected to hear from me before this time. The only reason I can give for not writing, is, the great uncertainty under which I have labored relative to the place, mode &c. of my labors here. Previous to our arrival entering the Missouri river I had supposed that there were several hundred Ottawas here, but was much surprised to learn from a passenger that there were only between 70 & 80 including women and children west of the Mississippi river. I find since my arrival their exact number to be 71. Of that number six call themselves chiefs. After making some ineffectual attempts to find them all at home, or in a fit situation to meet in Council, I related to one of the Chiefs my wishes in full relative to laboring among them as a missionary; to which he replied, that our religion, the bible &c. were given to the Whites that we had better attend to, and keep them ourselves—that the Inds. had a religion of their own, and they wished to keep peaceable possession of it. The U.S. Interpreter Mr. Shane (who is a half Ottawa, and is quite anxious that we get a school among them) then remarked that he would endeavor soon to see all of them together, and speak to them fully of the importance of having a school among them—he wished me to say nothing more to them on the subject until after he should have seen them—he thinks the other Chiefs are not so much opposed—since which time the Interpreter has been sick, but is now recovering. The Ottawas live on the <sup>about 15 miles west of us</sup> Shawnee's land, but expect to remove on to their own land before spring. The Board I suppose, are aware that in order to get a footing among here, the consent of the Inds. ~~is~~ first to be obtained, the Certificate of the Agent is then to be transmitted to the Sec. of War, and an answer to be received through the Agent; so that after the Inds. give their consent, it will be some two or three months before the buildings could be commenced.

On my arrival at Cleveland from Boston, I found Mrs. M. and Miss Brown enjoying tolerable health, but received the heart rending intelligence that our infant son had been buried about 18 hours previous. After staying two or three days at Cleveland, we set out on our journey—were detained some in waiting for boats, tarried in Cincinnati eight days, came all the way very slow, owing to low water and arrived at our landing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> ultimo. We were

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heartily welcomed by all of our missionary brethren. We ~~hadged among~~ did not commence house keeping until Mr. Merrill & family started up to the Oto country, at which time we removed into the room he had occupied in the Mission house, where we shall probably remain until Spring.

My present intentions are, first to ascertain whether or not the Ottawas will consent to our <sup>among</sup> laboring ~~them~~ as a mission, then so soon as <sup>their exact location</sup> ~~it~~ shall be decided, to put up a small rough-log cabin to dwell in, and perhaps another for a school house, and labor among those few until a door shall open for more extensive usefulness, unless the Board shall direct otherwise; or some other unforeseen occurrence shall prevent. I learn from a late paper <sup>that</sup> the Chippewas, Ottawas, and Putawatemies have just concluded a treaty at Chicago that they have ceded to the U. S. all their lands in Michigan, Indiana and Illinois; for which they are to receive, in part pay millions of acres on the S. E. side of the Missouri river. Said Inds. are all to remove to this country within three years from the date of the treaty. The little band of Ottawas that are now here own a tract of land six or seven miles square about 50 miles South of the Missouri river, and probably 15 or 20 west of the state. They will I think doubtless remove north of the river before or soon after the others shall arrive. It would I think, therefore be best to put as little expense as possible on the buildings now.

There are a few Putawatemies also in this country, but they are all united with the Nickapoo Prophet's band. I made an ineffectual attempt to secure a place among them for either myself or Mr. French, who has a considerable knowledge of their language but was too late. The Methodists are about opening a school among them. I very much regret that we are compelled to sit down here without being able to do any thing among the Inds. while so many are destitute of a knowledge of the Saviour. I have the Press, types, Ink & paper with me, but shall not probably open them this winter. Mr. Limerwell & family arrived on the 16<sup>th</sup> inst. They were detained by sickness. They have rented a house about two miles east of the state line—five miles from us. He is now just recovering from an attack of the billious fever. Mr. Blandhard has just returned from Mr. Merrells. They all arrived at the Oto Agency without any loss of property, health, or other accident. As ever I am dear brethren your obedient servant,

Jotham Meeker

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A list of Expenditures from the time of my leaving Boston City  
until ~~the time of~~ our arrival at the Shawnee Mission;  
or, from August 1, till October 1, inclusive

Aug 20. To my travelling expenses from Boston to Cleveland	\$20.50
22. " board of self wife & Miss Brown at Cleveland	12.00
" " Physicians bill and medicines	18.57
" " Funeral expenses of our babe	5.68
Sept 10. Printing apparatus, including transportation	468.15
Oct. 1. " travelling expenses from Cleveland to Shawnee for 3 persons	192.95
" Cash paid to Miss Brown for Clothing, Medicines, &c. &c.	50.65
Cash remaining in my hands, subject to the disposition of	93.67
the Board	<u>800.00</u>

By travelling Cash received of H. Lincoln, Esq. Treasurer  
for travelling expenses to Shawnee of Miss  
Brown, my wife & self — 250.00  
" do for the purchasing of Printing apparatus &c. 550.00  
800.00

I - If the Board shall wish for a more minute <sup>account</sup> or, the insertion  
of the separate items of expenditure, I can at any future time  
give it. In the article of Printing apparatus I include 29  
dollars worth of Paper and 6 dollars worth of Ink. Among  
the materials I purchased only such as cannot be made  
by a common Carpenter. In order therefore to complete the  
<sup>necessary</sup> printing materials, it would require nearly or quite the amt.  
of money still remaining in my hands. The Board will  
please give orders concerning it.

- We came on Line boats through the whole Canal route. From  
Portsmouth, to Cincinnati we all took a Deck passage from  
Cincinnati to St. Louis Mrs. M and I took a Deck passage  
but from St. Louis up we all came in the Cabin. The trav-  
elling expenses <sup>of one person</sup> from Boston to Shawnee, supposing no ac-  
cident nor delay to occur <sup>taking the Ticket and Cabin passage</sup> would be about eighty dollars,





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I expect to devote my spare time this winter to the acquiring a better knowledge of the Ottawa language from the aid of what books I am in possession of. I shall also probably hire an Ottawa a part of the time as a teacher.

(Copy)  
Meeker to Bolles  
Nov. 1855.