

Fate: What is to be the fate of the Prairie Band?

This item was written in 1917 by Kansas State Historical Society Secretary William Elsey Connelley. Included is both the handwritten draft and typed draft of the work. In the item, the closing piece of his history of the Potawatomie Prairie Band Indians, then located on a reservation in Jackson County, Kansas, Connelley provides his assessment of the probable future of the Prairie Band. Having witnessed their attributes firsthand, Connelley argues that the Prairie Band convinced him that his "faith in the competency and efficiency of the Indian race was well founded." In order to reinforce this belief Connelley then points to events then happening in Europe, stating that "savages, you say. Savages? Look on the reeking battlefields of Europe. All the cruelties perpetrated by the Indians on their despoilers through ten generations could not equal those heaped on France and Belgium in four years by a civilized and enlightened nation." In the end, Connelley maintains that the closure of the frontier in the West will likely spell the end for the "proud possessors of the greatest continent."

Creator: Connelley, William Elsey, 1855-1930

Date: 1917

Callnumber: William Elsey Connelley Coll. 16, Box 21Folder: Potawatomie - mss Prairie Band

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Fate: What is to be the fate of the Prairie Band?

Fate.

56

What is to be the fate of the
Prairie Band?

The writer attended the Indian
fair ^{held} on the reservation of the
Band in October, 1917. It was
a creditable exhibition of the
products of the farms of the
reservation. No finer corn,
wheat, oats, potatoes, and vegetables
ever appeared at any fair.
There was shown by the farmers
of the Prairie Band. There
was no exhibit of live-stock, but
many of the Indians came
to the fair in carriages drawn
by their own horses; some came
on horseback; and these horses
were as good as can be found

Fate: What is to be the fate of the Prairie Band?

in any farming community ⁵⁷
in Kansas. Some of them were
of fine blood and very valuable.
Along the roads are ~~fine~~ substantial
dwellings, the homes of these Indians.
They are well-kept, neatly painted,
and have ornamental shrubbery
and flowers about them. The
farm enclosures are in good
repair and well made. The
fields were well tilled. Stacks
of alfalfa and other hay-crops
were everywhere to be seen. Cattle
and swine were on every farm.
No difference could be
distinguished between the
reservations and any other
Kansas farming community.
so far as thrift and efficiency
are concerned.

Fate: What is to be the fate of the Prairie Band?

57-a
And the Indians themselves—^{57-a} what
of them! Those they were passing to
and fro before me. The young men
~~forward~~ were fine specimens
of physical manhood. They were
stalwart fellows who plow and
sow and reap intelligently,
persistently. The old men were
of solemn mien, well clad,
and with every appearance of comfort
which good homes invariably
give. Mothers were surrounded
by their children whom they
led from exhibit to exhibit proud
as mothers always are of their
little ones. All were dressed
in comfort and in style superior
to some gatherings of white I have
seen recently on similar occasions.
There were young ladies elegantly

Fate: What is to be the fate of the Prairie Band?

157-65
gowned. They would have made
a good appearance in any
assembly or drawing-room.
All were modest, respectful,
well-behaved. The only disturbance
was made by a mean white
man and he was hustled
unceremoniously off the grounds
by the Indian police.

To more orderly crowd has
been my good fortune to see. The
program ^{promised} had some of the
old ceremonial dances, and these
I was ~~most~~ anxious to see. They were chaste,
simple, modest, and to me most
interesting. They should be preserved
for themselves and in the interest of
science.

The study I made there convinced
me that my faith in the competency and
efficiency of the Indian race was well founded.

Fate: What is to be the fate of the Prairie Band?

58

The Pattawatomies of the Prairie Band are experts in the manufacture of articles of bad work. The exhibit of such articles at the fair was one of the best it was the good fortune of the writer to see. Indian art is peculiar to the Indian and in no way influenced by that of the white man. Its loss would be a loss to the world. Under proper ~~in~~ encouragement it would develop to higher and higher perfection along its own lines. But this development must be made in it by the Indian alone. The white man will debase it by the introduction of ideas wholly

Fate: What is to be the fate of the Prairie Band?

59
of variance with Indian
conceptions. The result would
be the destruction of Indian art.

Indian art affords as
much opportunity for individual
design and execution as that of
any other people. And Indians
are of artistic temperament
and inclination. They are
closer to nature than any other
people. If given a show they
will, with their art, make the
best interpretation of the spirit
of American woods, mountains,
streams, plains, animals and
other objects to be produced by
art in all the future. They are
as much a part of the Indians
as ever the Indians were a part of
them. The subtle and

Fate: What is to be the fate of the Prairie Band?

mysterious powers of these are ⁶⁰
the soul of the Indian. Under
favorable conditions they
would find expression through
the Indian genius and Indian
aspirations. What a calamity
would befall the world in its
destruction! And it is said
that the Government discourages
the teaching of Indian art in
any way. Nothing is seen or
heard of it in Indian schools.
There if any artistic talent is
developed it must be practical
along lines wholly incomprehensible
to Indians so far as emotion
or soul-expression is concerned.
So, no high conceptions are possible.
If art is not an interpretation of
life and aspiration ~~that~~ it is worthless.

Fate: What is to be the fate of the Prairie Band?

It is not at all. Its seat ⁶¹
is in the soul, not in the
intellect. That is why it cannot
be taught. It is spontaneous.
The response of those who behold
it must be from the soul. It
affects the emotions, for it is
the child of the emotions. The
emotions can be active ~~on~~
upon through speech, through
singing, through painting. And
hence we have literature, music,
art. Teachers can only expound
conventional rules. They can not
create. All their wisdom ^{combined} could
not produce one of the Psalms,
a poem or song, a glowing morning
scene on canvas. Their office
ends in telling ^{those} ~~one~~ whose hearts
~~are~~ ^{are} ~~to~~ ^{are} ~~more~~, whose lips are touched,

Fate: What is to be the fate of the Prairie Band?

how others like them have expressed⁶²
themselves - have made the
outward manifestations of
what burned in their hearts.
And, so the destruction of Indian
art ^{would} deprive the world of one
of the ^{original} sources of exalted emotional
expression.

Under the law permitting
land in the reservation to be
sold to whites, the Prairie Band
must in the near future be
made homeless. Where ~~they~~ can
~~go~~ ^{they go} to secure a new
home? There is no more
land in the West to which they
may be pushed. The proud
possessors of the greatest continent
will be without a home - without
a place to lay their heads - without
a place where their feet may rest.



Fate: What is to be the fate of the Prairie Band?

And who cares? Who gives it a ⁶³
moment's thought? All of us are
guilty. Saragis, you say. Saragis?
Look on the smoking battlefields of
Europe. All the cruelties
perpetrated by the Indians
on their despoilers through ten
generations would not equal
those heaped on France and
Belgium in four years by a
civilized and enlightened nation.
And it is a melancholy fact
that the end of the Prairie
Band marks a local tragedy
in the tragedy of their race.

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What is to be the fate of the Prairie Band?

The writer attended the Indian fair held on the reservation of the Band in October, 1917. It was a creditable exhibition of the products of the farms of the reservation. No finer corn, wheat, oats, potatoes, and vegetables ever appeared at any fair than was shown by the farmers of the Prairie Band. There was no exhibit of live-stock, but many of the Indians came to the fair in carriages drawn by their own horses; ^{many in their own motor cars;} some came on horseback; and these horses were as good as can be found in any farming community in Kansas. Some of them were of fine blood and very valuable. Along ^{all} the road ^{through the reservation} are substantial dwellings, the homes of these Indians. They are well-kept, neatly painted and have ^{trees,} ornamental shrubbery and flowers about them. The farm enclosures are in good repair and well made. The fields ^{looked to be} well tilled. Stacks of alfalfa and other hay-crops were everywhere to be seen. ^{Horses, mules, and poultry} cattle, ~~and~~ swine were on every farm. No difference could be distinguished between the reservation and any other Kansas farming community so far as thrift and efficiency are concerned.

And the Indians themselves, what of them! There they were passing to and fro before me. The young men are fine specimens of physical manhood. They are stalwart fellows who plow and sow and reap intelligently, persistently. ^{They evidently bend to their labor with continuity.} The old men were of solemn mien, well clad, and with every appearance of ^{that} comfort which good homes invariably give. Mothers were surrounded by their children whom they led from exhibit to exhibit, proud as

Fate: What is to be the fate of the Prairie Band?

2

mothers always are of their little ones. All were ^{well} dressed in ^{and} ~~comfort and~~ style superior to ^{that of whites at} some gatherings ~~of whites~~ I have seen on similar occasions. There were young ladies elegantly gowned. They would have made a good appearance in ^{Many of them were educated at the Haskell Indian School at Lawrence} any assembly or drawing-room. All were modest, respectful, well-behaved. The only disturbance ^{at the fair} was made by a mean white man, and he was hustled unceremoniously off the grounds by the Indian police.

No more orderly crowd ^{have I seen anywhere.} ~~has it been my good fortune to see.~~ The program promised some of the old ceremonial dances, and these I was anxious to see. They were chaste, simple, modest, and to me most interesting. They should be preserved for themselves and in the interest of science.

The study I made there convinced me that my faith in the competency and efficiency of the Indian race was well founded.

The Pottawatomies of the Prairie Band are experts in the manufacture of articles of bead work. The exhibit of such articles at the fair was one of the best ^{it has been my} ~~it was the~~ good fortune ~~of the writer ever~~ to see. Indian art is peculiar to the Indian and in no way influenced by that of the white man. Its loss would be a loss to the world. Under proper encouragement it would develop to ~~higher and higher~~ perfection along its own lines. But this development must be made in it by the Indian alone. The white man will debase it by the introduction of ideas wholly at variance with Indian conceptions. The result would be the destruction of Indian art.

Indian art affords as much opportunity for individual design and execution as that of any other people. And Indians are of artistic temperament and inclination. They are closer

Fate: What is to be the fate of the Prairie Band?

to nature than any other people. If given a show they will, with their art, make the best interpretation of the spirit of American woods, mountains, streams, plains, animals and other objects, to be produced by art in all the future. They are as much a part of the Indians as ever the Indians were a part of them. The subtle and mysterious powers of these are the ^{fundamentals} ~~same~~ of ^{Indian life} ~~the Indians~~. Under favorable conditions they would find expression through the Indian genius and Indian aspiration. What a calamity would befall the world in its destruction! And it is said that the Government discourages the teaching of Indian art in every way. Nothing is seen or heard of it in Indian schools, ^{I am told.} There, if any artistic talent is developed, it must be ~~practical~~ along lines wholly incomprehensible to Indians, so far as emotion or soul-expression is concerned. So, no high conceptions are possible. If art is not an interpretation of life and aspiration it is worthless. It is not art at all. Its seat is in the soul, not in the intellect. That is why it cannot be taught. It is spontaneous. The response of those who behold it must be from the soul. It affects the emotions, for it is the child of the emotions. The emotions can be acted upon through speech, through singing, through painting. And hence we have literature, music, art. Teachers can only expound ^{the} ~~con-~~ ^{for performance, production.} ventional rules. They can not create. All their wisdom combined, could not produce one of the Psalms, a poem or song, a glowing morning scene on canvas. Their office ends in telling those whose hearts are moved, whose lips are touched, how others like them have expressed themselves---have made the outward manifestations of what burned in their hearts. And, so the destruction of Indian art would deprive the world of one of the sources of exalted emotional expression.

Fate: What is to be the fate of the Prairie Band?

Under the law permitting land in the reservation to be sold
 to the whites, the Prairie Band must in the near future be made
 homeless. ⁽²⁾ *And all other Indian Americans must suffer a similar fate.* Where can they go to secure a new home? There is
 no more land in the West to which they may be pushed. The proud
 possessors of the greatest continent will be without a home---
 without a place to lay their heads---without a place where their
 feet may rest. And who cares? Who gives it a moment's thought ?
 All of us are guilty. Savages, you say. Savages? Look on
 the reeking battlefields of Europe. All the cruelties perpetra-
 ted by the Indians on their despoilers through ten generations
 could not equal those heaped on France and Belgium in four years
 by a civilized and enlightened nation. And it is a melancholy
 fact that the end of the Prairie Band must be a local tragedy
 in the tragedy of the ^{Indian} race.

(2) It is Section 7, Chapter 888, Vol. 32, Part I, page
 275, U.S. Statutes at Large, 57th Congress - 1901-1903,
 Act of May 27, 1902.

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