

The Indian tribes of Kansas

This item was written by Charles Cecil Howes sometime after World War II in order to educate the public about the Native American tribes in Kansas. As Howes indicates, the "fourth Saturday of September of each year has been designated by the Kansas legislature as American Indian Day when the schools and the public are to make proper observance in honor of the Native Americans and their service to the country. Most patriotic organizations and many of the schools provide special programs for the day particularly honoring the thousands of Indians who served well and honorably in two World Wars."

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THE INDIAN TRIBES IN KANSAS

The fourth Saturday in September of each year has been designated by the Kansas legislature as American Indian Day when the schools and the public are to make proper observance in honor of the native Americans and their service to the country. Most patriotic organizations and many of the schools provide special programs for the day particularly honoring the thousands of Indians who served well and honorably in two World Wars.

American Indian day is not a holiday but is simply a day in which to do honor to the Indians. The schools are expected to produce their programs on Friday preceeding the American Indian Day and there will be numerous observances of the day throughtout the state.

It may be a bit surprising to most Kansans to know there are about two thousand Indian residents of Kansas at the present time, not counting the several hundred students at the Haskell Indian Institute at Lawrence. Only two tribes remain on reservations. The Pottawatomies live on their reservation in Jackson County, west of Mayetta. The Sacs and Foxes and the Iowas have all been given their allotments and live on their farms or in towns in Brown and Doniphan Counties and in southern Nebraska. The Kickapoos live on their reservation west of Horton, chiefly in Jackson County.

There are eleven hundred Pottawatomies; four hundred Kickapoos and about five hundred of the Iowa and Sac and Fox tribes resident within the area, most of them in Kansas. The four tribes have been in Kansas somewhat over a century but all were moved to this state from the east and south before Kansas

The Indian tribes of Kansas

2

became a territory and opened for settlement and when the vast plains area west and south of the Missouri River and west of the states of Missouri and Arkansas were designated as Indian country or territory.

When President Jefferson purchased the Louisiana Territory from France it was his idea that the Indians would all be moved out of the original colonial areas and also from areas west of the original colonies as the land was needed for an ever-increasing population to the territory which the United States had purchased. He proposed locating the Indian tribes west of the Mississippi River, which would be a natural barrier between them and the white settlements which he envisioned as developing the Great Lakes and the Ohio valley regions and also the areas east of the river and south of the Ohio River. But Jefferson never got the job done and it was not until some twenty-five to thirty years later that the actual movement of the eastern Indians became an actuality with the extinguishment of their titles to their lands in the eastern states through purchase and the granting of new reservation lands in the Indian Territory.

At the time of the formation of the republic the Osage Indians lived in what is now Missouri and eastern Kansas, generally south of the Missouri River and roaming as far west as the Neosho. The Kansa or Kaw Indians lived generally west of the Missouri, north of the Kaw River and one of their large villages was near the junction of the Blue and the Kaw at Manhattan.

West of these tribes lived the Pawnees and the Wichitas and farther west was free hunting grounds for the Cheyennes, Comanches, Kiowas and other plains Indians who roamed up and down across the prairies on hunting expeditions. Their areas were not defined by any natural landmarks although the Pawnees lived generally along the Republican River and the Wichitas lived along the

The Indian tribes of Kansas

3

Arkansas and Little Arkansas Rivers with an important village on the present site of Wichita.

When the government finally determined upon its policy of moving the Indians from the eastern states about 1830 it first moved the Osages out of Missouri and into what later became Kansas, requiring them to settle some thirty miles west of the Missouri border. The government proposed to set up a sort of buffer area or state between the Indian reservations and the white settlements. Later the government gave these lands to minor tribes except an area in the southeastern corner of what is now Kansas and known as the Cherokee Neutral Lands. The government also began buying from the Kaws large tracts of lands claimed by that tribe and allotted these lands to other tribes, finally removing the Kaws entirely from north of the river which bears their name to a reservation at Council Grove and later to Oklahoma. The Osages were also moved out of their Kansas habitat and into the Indian Territory, which later became Oklahoma.

The government also obtained title to the central and western Kansas lands from the Pawnees, Wichitas, Cheyennes, Kiowas, and Arapahoes and other tribes which claimed some title to the high plains area by reason of their camps and that they had hunted over the prairies for many years.

None of the tribes indigenous to Kansas still live in the state except possibly a few mixed bloods of the Kaws and Osages. The late Charles Curtis, member of congress, United States senator and vice-president of the United States, was a part-blood Kaw, and members of his family remain residents of Kansas.

The Indian tribes of Kansas

4

Miss Anna Heloise Abel, an English girl whose parents came to Kansas in the early seventies and settled near Salina, made what is generally considered the most painstaking and accurate study of the reservations of the various Indian tribes in the then Indian Territory beginning in 1825 when the first treaty with the Kaws was made and continuing until 1854 when Kansas was opened to settlement and the government began to extinguish the titles of the Indians to their lands in what was to become the state of Kansas.

Miss Abel remained in London when her parents first came to Kansas with two younger sisters. She attended the Salina public schools and was graduated in 1893. She taught several years in the country schools of Saline County and then began her studies at the University of Kansas. She was graduated in 1898 and taught in the Thomas County high school and then returned to the university as a manuscript reader. She did graduate work at Cornell and then became instructor in history and civics at the Lawrence High School.

The thesis which Miss Abel prepared on the Indian reservations in Kansas was recognized as of such merit that Yale University awarded her the Buckley fellowship in history and she obtained her doctor's degree at that institution.

Miss Abel found that the Delawares were the first of the tribes to be brought to Kansas. They were given an area of Kaw lands along the north bank of that stream from its mouth to a point east of Topeka and an outlet to the hunting grounds in central and western Kansas along the north side of the Kaw reserve. The Kaws, at that time, were living on a reservation some thirty miles square beginning just west of Topeka and extending along the river to near Wamego. Later this area was taken over by the Pottawatomies. The Kaw half-breed were given specific allotments of twenty-three sections of lands

The Indian tribes of Kansas

5

in the Kaw Valley extending from the east line of the main reservation west of Topeka to a point near what is now Williamstown. Later a small area of the Delaware lands at the mouth of the Kaw was purchased by the government and given to the Wyandotte tribe and the remnants of that tribe were moved to Kansas.

The Rev. Isaac McCoy, Baptist missionary to the Indians in the northwest territory, made several trips into what is now Kansas to study the lands to be given the tribes then living in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. On one of his trips into Kansas, he noted in his report to the government that the hard maple trees were not found in the new Indian Territory and he did not believe the tribes which had been accustomed to maple sugar in their native haunts would be able to survive in the prairie country without having maple sugar or other sweets made available to them. McCoy had much to do with persuading the Indians to give up their lands in the eastern states to the government and accept larger reservations in the new Indian country and he lived with some of the tribes when they first came to the new lands. The New York Indians were given allotments of land in Kansas but never accepted the reservations and refused to give up their lands in New York. Many Indians still live in New York, although some of the tribesmen moved to Wisconsin and into Canada.

The Shawnee Indians were the largest group to be moved into the new Indian country in the early days. They were given a reservation along the south side of the Kaw River extending from the Missouri line westward to a point southwest of where Topeka now stands. The Methodists, Quakers and the Baptists all sent their missionaries along with the Indians. Shawnee Mission, near Kansas City was established by the Methodists as an Indian manual labor

The Indian tribes of Kansas

6

school to teach the Indians how to farm and to be mechanics. It had government subsidies for many years. The Quaker and Baptist mission were in the Kaw bottoms west of the Methodists and it was at the Baptist mission that Jotham Meeker set up the first printing press to be brought to Kansas and began printing religious tracts and church songs in the Shawnee language for the use of the Indians.

The Otoe and Missouri were given lands in northern Kansas and southern Nebraska. Their reservation was only a few miles wide and twenty miles long in Kansas and most of the reservation was in Nebraska.

The Iowa Indians were moved to Kansas in 1837. The Sac and Fox tribe of Missouri were moved the same year to a reservation south and west of the Iowas. Both these tribes were moved out of Missouri as the result of what is known as the Platte Purchase, which also took the "bite" off the northeastern corner of Kansas. When Missouri became a state the western boundary ran straight north from the point where the Kaw flowed into the Missouri. The people of Missouri were afraid of the Indians living in the area and asked that they be removed as they felt the Indians were somewhat of a menace to their peace. Also, it was pointed out that the Missouri River was a natural boundary and there would be no question of reservation rights if the Indians were moved farther west. The Platte Purchase took this land from the Indians and gave them lands in what is now Kansas. Recently the Iowa and Sac and Fox Indians began litigation in the court of claims for payment for their lands in Missouri. They claim the government failed to pay them an adequate price for the lands.

The Indian tribes of Kansas

7

In 1843 the Sac and Fox tribe of Mississippi came to Kansas and settled on a reservation set up for them in what later became Osage, Wabaunsee and Lyon counties. The Chippewas were given a small reservation in the western part of what later became Franklin County.

The Ottawa tribe came in 1832; the Peorias and the Kaskaskias in 1833 and the Weas and Piankeshaws later the same year and each was given a small reservation in what is now Miami and the eastern portion of Franklin counties.

The original Pottawatomie reservation covered much of Linn, Anderson and Franklin counties, the tribe settling along the Marais des Cygnes River. The Indians did not get along well with white settlers and the Indians were given a larger reservation in what is now Jackson, Pottawatomie and Shawnee counties and later this reservation has been much restricted in area.

In several recent sessions of the legislature the Pottawatomies have presented claims to the legislature for many thousands of dollars which they assert was the difference in value of the lands of the new reservation as compared with the lands taken from them by the white men who moved onto their lands. The claim has never been allowed by the legislative committees and the claim is now pending before the Indian bureau in Washington.

The Miamias were given a reservation in what is now Bourbon county under the treat of 1841 and the New York tribes were given a large area in what is now Bourbon, Allen and Woodson counties. The New York Indians refused to move to Kansas and gave up their claims to the lands.

The Indian tribes of Kansas

8

The Cherokee Indians were originally from the south and the reservation allotted to them comprised most of Cherokee and Crawford Counties and became known as the Cherokee Neutral lands. The lands once belonged to the Osage tribe but a strip about thirty miles wide was set up along the western border of Missouri as a sort of buffer area between the Indians and the white settlements in Missouri. The Cherokees also were allowed a strip of land along the south side of the Osage reservation so that they could get to the prairie hunting grounds. The Quapaws were also given a little strip of land along the south side of the Cherokee Neutral lands so that these Indians could get to the plains hunting grounds from their reservation in Missouri and Arkansas without traveling over the lands of other tribes.