Abram Burnett, Potawatomi Chief. (Courtesy of The Kansas State Historical Society)

no "e" on the end. A few minor changes in paragraphing and punctuation have been made in the quotations for the sake of clarity. The sources for "The Potawatomies of Kansas" are listed on page 37.

The Potawatomies of Kansas

The first meeting of the Potawatomi Indians with the white man occurred in what is now Wisconsin in 1670, when the French found them living along the present Fox River. Like most of the other tribes of that region, the Potawatomies liked the French and became their allies, fighting for them and intermarrying with them. During the Revolutionary War, they fought on the side of the British, and not until the early nineteenth century did they much accept the American government.

In the 1820's, a young Baptist missionary named Isaac McCoy, who had been working with various Indians tribes in Indiana and Michigan, decided that greater progress could be made in "elevating" the Indians if they could be moved away from white settlements. He submitted his idea to the federal authorities, and in 1828 he was given appropriations to make an exploring trip into the region now called Kansas. In mid-summer, 1828, he reached this area with three representatives of the Potawatomi tribe and three of the Ottawa tribe. Their object was to look over the area and to choose homes for those tribes if possible. Rev. McCoy made several more trips after this one, and no doubt his explorations and reports had considerable influence on the subsequent dealings of the government with the Indians.

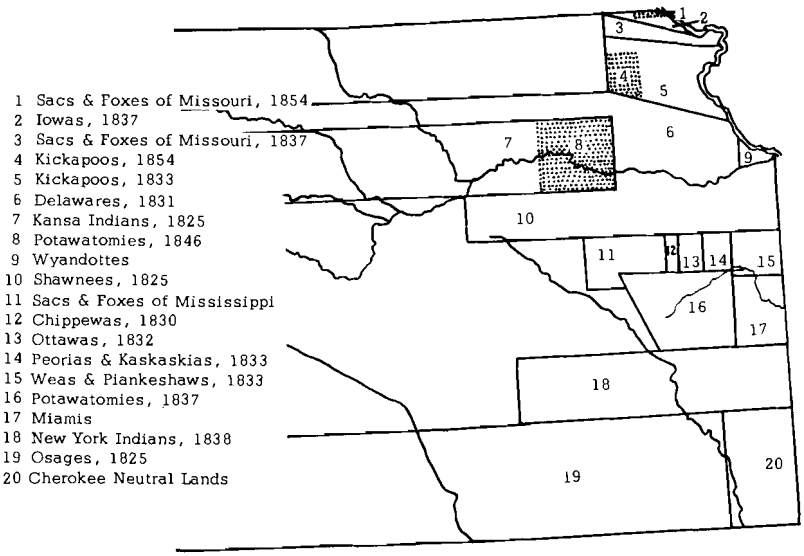
In 1833 at Chicago, the last great treaty between the federal government and the Indians east of the Mississippi was made. The Potawatomies, Chippewas, and Ottawas (all closely related tribes) were involved. They were compelled to give up their lands for a small consideration, and were moved to what was then considered less desirable land farther west.

In 1835 and 1836, many of the Potawatomies, especially of the Prairie Band, moved to the "Platte Purchase" located in what is now northwest Missouri. They had no sooner got settled, however, when they were forced to move again. The white settlers were pushing westward through Missouri, and they desired this Indian area for settlement. The Prairie Band removed to Iowa, in the vicinity of present Council Bluffs.

In the next year, the government treated with the tribe for a tract of land on the Marais des Cygnes (also called the Osage)

River. In that same year, the Potawatomies of the Woods and the so-called Mission Band settled there, in what is now Linn and Miami counties.

In 1846, representatives from the various divisions and bands of the Chippewa, Ottawa, and Potawatomi tribes (the same three tribes who had been involved in the 1833 Chicago treaty) met with federal commissioners near Council Bluffs, Iowa, for the purpose of acquiring a reserve large enough to accommodate all these related peoples. The government allowed them the east thirty miles of the old Kansa reservation, in the area of the present counties of Shawnee, Wabaunsee, Jackson, and Pottawatomie. Few of any of the other two peoples ever settled on this reserve, but by 1848, all the Potawatomies from the Marais des Cygnes location had moved there.



Kansas Indian lands before 1840, with the later reserves of the Sac and Fox, Kickapoos, and Potawatomies shaded in.

According to the report of the Indian subagent at the Osage (Marais des Cygnes) River agency, the Potawatomies there had not yet moved out by the first of September, 1847:

"The Pottawatomies have been more unsettled, and more unsteady in their habits this year than formerly. This must, in some measure, be attributed to their contemplated removal to the Kanzas river country. Some have planted and will raise a limited

quantity of corn and esculent fruits; others again have not applied themselves to farming at all this year. Those who have planted, speaking generally, will not raise a sufficiency to carry them through this coming winter, provided they remain; but they have pledged themselves, in council assembled, that they will remove this fall in the event of the payment being early enough for them to get off. I said the Pottawatomies have been more than usually unsteady. Drunkenness, and its dire companion, murder, have prevailed to a greater extent this year than for years previous. Even the hitherto examplary Indians on Sugar creek have not escaped the infection. I am, however, happy to state that a reaction is taking place. Some of the old and steady denizens of Sugar creek have taken the matter in hand. They have called councils, invited the attendance of their brethren on Pottawatomie creek, and mutually have pledged themselves to adopt rules, fines and penalties for the introduction of spirituous liquors within their limits."

By the next year, 1848, all the Potawatomies had moved to their new country on the Kansas River. The Prairie Band, which had been living near Council Bluffs, Iowa, were the last Indians left in that state. When they came to the Kansas River tract, Iowa had no more Indian population. The group from the Marais des Cygnes reserve moved up to the new area, and although the various bands had been antagonistic toward each other in the past, all met on friendly terms on the new reservation. According to the Fort Leavenworth agent, the population of the united bands numbered 3,235.

The superindendent of the Potawatomi Baptist Manual Labor School, Johnston Lykins, reported to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs on September 30, 1849:

> Sir—Allow me to report the following as the condition of the Pottawatomie Bap. M. L. School:
>
> 1. *Site.* Half a mile south of the Kansas, nine miles below Uniontown, the trading post of the nation, and one and a half miles west of the great California road from Kansas, Westport and Independence. The station has an excellent supply of good spring water, first-rate soil, and is within reach of the necessary amount of timber. The mechanic shops consist of blacksmith and wagonmaker's shops—are located one-fourth mile west of the M. L. School edifice and near the bank of the Kansas river.

The establishment was located under the joint supervision of Maj. R. W. Cummins, late Indian agent, and the undersigned, and is thought to be the most judicious that could have been made.

2. *Buildings.* One stone edifice, now in process of completion, for Manual Labor School, 85 feet long and 35 feet wide, with two cross-walls of stone, three stories high, divided into twelve rooms, having sixty doors and windows; walls of first story two feet thick, balance one and a half foot thick; and when finished, will cost, say $4,800. One hewed-log dwelling, 36 feet by 18, one story high, two good stone chimneys, comfortably finished, cost $35. One hewed-log house for mechanic, 18 feet by 16, one story high, good stone chimney, well finished; cost $130. One hewed-log kitchen and meat house, each 16 feet square, and one root house; cost $65. One hewed-log lodging room for hired men, 16 feet by 18 feet; cost, $35. One other kitchen, 16 feet square; cost, $25.

3. *Farm.* In process of completion; consists of sixty acres ploughed prairie, twenty-five acres of which is now in corn, one in potatoes, and two in beans and other garden vegetables. Thirteen thousand rails and stakes have been made and put up. The whole farm, when completed, will consist of sixty-five acres of ploughed and forty acres pasture land, and will cost $650. Twenty-five acres are sowed in wheat. Stock, etc., consists of—

One good wagon and three yoke of oxen, cost	$200.00
Seven head brood swine, cost	15.00
Five milch cows, $15 per head	75.00
Tools:	
One harrow, cost	5.00
Two good ploughs, cost	10.00
Three chains, at $3	9.00
One box carpenter's tools, cost	15.00

4. *School.* Rev. J. Ashburn, A.M., late of Georgetown College, Kentucky, principal teacher; Miss E. McCoy, principal of female department. Since September 30, 1848, the school has been conducted under the provisions of the contract entered into with the government.

We having been informed that all the pupils kept by us previous to the completion of our buildings, and subsequent to the signing of the contract, would receive the allowance specified.

Of the pupils, seventeen were entered previous to September 30, 1848, twelve previous to June 30, 1849, nine previous to August 15, 1849, and one since. The male pupils have been taught and exercised in the various departments of manual labor, and the females in labors appropriate to their sex. All have made encouraging progress in their studies.

It is a leading motive with us to Americanize the Indians, and attach them to our country and institutions; as, in our estimation, upon success in this depends much in regard to their future well-being. A foreign influence must ever engender prejudice and produce a want of confidence in our government and people.

Respectfully,

J. LYKINS

The superintendent of the Catholic Manual Labor School, J. B. Duerinck, reported in 1852 the progress of the Prairie band at St. Marys:

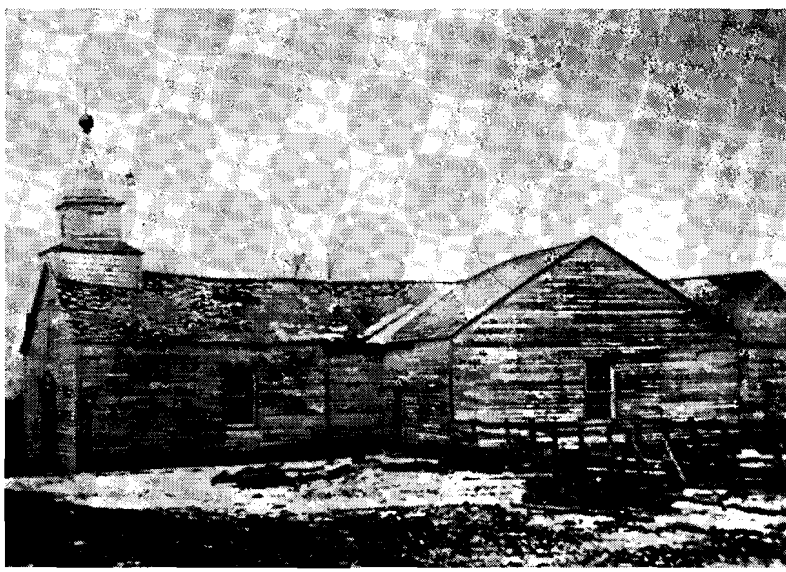
"The peace and harmony of this settlement is now seldom disturbed by war parties or alarming reports of invasion. The Pawnees have formerly been accused of stealing our horses, but no complaints have lately been heard on that score. Our Indians have this summer smoked peace with them whilst on a buffalo hunt in the upper country.

"The Pottawatomie Prairie Indians have not yet laid aside their wild and uncivilized mode of living; they are averse to work and live in wretched cabins and wigwams. They paint their faces and delight in all sorts of motley and fantastical dress and trappings. They are unfortunately addicted to liquor. Some unprincipled whites and half-breeds, too lazy to work, sell them whisky and cheat the intoxicated dupes out of their horses and ponies, and even out of their guns and blankets. But we look for a better state of things. Our agent, Major [Francis W.] Lea, who is very popular with them, has taken efficient measures to put a stop to this evil. His energies may be severely taxed, but we doubt not that he will succeed in suppressing this unholy traffic, and that

these Indians will soon become sober and industrious."

In 1853, the Potawatomi agent, John W. Whitfield, writing from Westport, Missouri, where the agency was located, reported a successful fight between the Potawatomi and another group:

"The Pottawatomies, principally the [Prairie] band, while out on their summer hunt came in contact with the mountain Indians, and after a hard-fought battle, lasting more than half a day, succeeded in putting them to flight, leaving some twenty or thirty of their dead on the battle field. At least the Pottawatomies brought in about that number of scalps, over which they have been dancing for the last month. I learn from various sources that the mountain Indians came down expressly for the purpose of having a fight with the frontier Indians. They first came in contact with the Pawnees, and but for the timely aid of the Pottawatomies (who happened to be but a few miles off) would have killed the last one, as they had them surrounded and had killed some ten or fifteen before the Pottawatomies reached the scene of action. All the parties give the Pottawatomies great credit for their gallant conduct on that occasion. They lost in killed and wounded some four or five. From the best information I can get, the frontier



Church at St. Marys Catholic Mission. (Courtesy of The Kansas State Historical Society)

Indians are not to blame, as they were fighting in self-defense. We anticipate a renewal of hostilities next summer if they should meet on the plains."

George W. Clarke was the agent for the Potawatomies in 1855. The Kansa Indians had been taken from this agency and given an agent of their own by this year. Agent Clarke made the following disparaging report of the Prairie band:

"A portion of these people [Potawatomies on the reserve] have for a long time had intercourse with the whites, and in a measure adopted the civilized mode of life, and they manifest a desire for the improvement of themselves and their people. This class . . . would be successful in reclaiming, to some extent, under the management of the government, their kinsmen, had they not in their midst the formidable obstacle of the 'Prairie band' . . . to oppose, thwart and defeat every measure of improvement among this unhappy people.

"The 'Prairie Band' adheres to the hunter life, nearly all of whom despise the arts and principles of civilization, who regard it as disgraceful for men to work, and they spare no language in denouncing those of the tribe who cultivate the soil or follow the peaceful arts. This band arrogantly claims ownership of all the land and declares that the other bands have no rights here, nor to the annuities, they being *permitted* to participate in them only on the *courtesy* of their condescending brothers. And on this tenure these unfortunate people are thus subjected to the intrusions and depredations of the 'Prairie Band,' who frequently kill their stock, burn their fences, turn their hunting ponies into the fields, devour their crops, and even threaten the lives of the orderly portion of the tribe. The 'Prairie Band' is a bold and reckless race, and although they form a minority of the tribe, they domineer over it, rule and misgovern the people in a most lawless manner.

"Thus two conflicting elements prevail to distract and stifle the usual efforts of government to improve these people; and I am of the unchangeable opinion that the government should not only *assume* the patriarchal, but *exercise* a dictatorial rule over this tribe. The weak who are subjected to the tyranny of brute force should enjoy the protection of a strong power. That portion who desire to lead a civilized life, to cultivate the soil, raise stock, cherish education, should have the protection of good government and efficient laws.

peaceable portion of the people into submission. Among these usurpers changes are constantly going on. A man more bold and artful rises and supersedes some individual who possesses less of these qualifications, and who in turn is 'set back.' It is the influence and determination of the 'Prairie Band' that keeps up this state of things, they being the master spirits in the councils.

"Last week, whilst I had the Indians assembled to receive their annuity, and after several days' councilling, I was informed by these bold usurpers that *they* had decided not to receive the money, whilst I was assured at the same time by individuals of various bands and neighborhoods of their willingness and great desire to receive their portion, who also assured me that they knew of many destitute families who needed and would gladly receive their annuity. I responded to this council that they were usurping the authority of the tribe; that I would not regard their decision; and that if any respectable number would come forward and be registered I would pay them their proportion. Upon which another council was held next day (on Sunday), and 'braves' were appointed to keep the people at home and to punish those who dared to receive their annuity. Such was the terror inspired among the people by this bold measure, that on Monday a number of leading men, who had hithereto held back from the council, met, united with others, and flatly refused to receive the annuity, and no one then had the firmness to come forward and offer to receive their proportion. Had a military command been present, so that the timid could have been assured of protection, the result would have been different."

In 1855, the reservation population was reported as 3,440. Other Potawatomies lived in Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, and among the Kickapoos and Sacs and Foxes. The Baptist Manual Labor School was not operating this year, but the Catholic school at St. Marys was prospering. Superintendent J. B. Duerinck made the following report:

"We beg leave to say a word on the Indian policy. The system of possessing lands in common, one hundred and twenty individuals claiming an acre as their own property, is replete with evil and bad consequences that will frustrate the best hopes that the friends of the Indians have conceived. I am bold to maintain that no Indian, no half-breed, no white man living amongst them will ever feel encouraged to make his premises a comfortable home as long as he labors under the fear that his improvements

are liable to be sold for the benefit of the nation at large. Give them a title to the land, and you will soon see them vie with each other in their improvements. Interest, emulation and a laudable degree of pride, which are innate in every one of us, will do more to carry them honorably through the world than all the penalties and coercions now in force amongst them.

"At the present time the industrious, frugal, good-natured Indian is to be pitied; he is the scapegoat in every tribe. When [the good man] has, during the summer, summoned his wife and family to share with him the toils and labors of the field; when he has secured his crops, and might expect to enjoy the fruits of his industry, then, day after day, week after week, you will see a gang of lazy neighbors, relatives and acquaintances, all indiscreet intruders, visit that family, eat and drink with them to their hearts' content, and eat the poor man out of house and home.

"We tell the Indians that the first step towards civilization is to give up their wandering life, to settle down, and to till the soil. When they go to work and raise good crops they say it does them no good, because their hungry, half-starved neighbors hang round them and eat them up. This miserable custom, this aversion to work, this eternal begging, disheartens the willing Indian, and he becomes at last so reckless that he feels disposed to abandon our advice, and he concludes that it is far better for him to live and to die as an Indian after having vainly endeavored to live like a white man.

"Now, if we pretend to teach the Indians agriculture and its kindred arts, we ought to be in earnest and honest in our purpose; we ought to put them in possession of the means of reaping the benefits, and enforce laws to that effect. We say everybody must support his own family. Nobody shall support a worthless Indian that actually lives in vice, idleness or drunkenness. If there should be any big, stout, fat, lazy fellows in the nation unwilling to work, and who seek to throw themselves upon the charity of others, let them be ordered away; yea, away with them. If they be too lazy to work, let them die; they must die once, at all events, and they might as well die just now as at any other time. Our plan makes exceptions for the orphan and the widow and for all sick, helpless creatures. Besides this, the great measure which the emergency of the times seems to require is the division of the land. . . ."

Duerinck's report for the following year, 1856, was still harping on the same subject:

"It would be worse than folly to work for a man who is too lazy to work and too poor to pay for it when it is done. We lay down the principle that labor is honorable, and that it is a shame for a man to let his family starve with hunger when moderate labor would keep them in easy circumstances. We frequently tell some of the poorer sort that it is with them as with the 'starved pig'—either root or die. Plant corn and pumpkins, raise potatoes and beans, cease to beg, cease to be idle, cease to be a burden to others, make a garden and eat the fruit thereof, etc. Suppose it makes you sweat—well, what of it? A poor devil ought not to be so nice; a little sweat would not kill you.

"Some of our gentry have a grudge against us for boldly telling them these things; but in spite of the members of this lazy club, our flag waves in the breeze, and we insist on their making a field and a garden, facilitating them in the way of obtaining a cow or other domestic animals—helping the poor of good will, stimulating the sluggish, rebuking the vicious, reproving the improvident, praising the meritorious, and encouraging the industrious amongst them. We care not for the opinion of those red rovers, and we mean to keep up the fire from the walls of our fort

Left, Louis Vieux, Potawatomi Chief. Right, Ne-Kon-We-Tak, a Potawatomi boy. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

as long as there is a man in arms against us. Their demonstrations and alarms give us but little trouble. We must have patience with them, watch our opportunities and try it again; we are all of us people of good humor, little accustomed to complain, and we believe ourselves the happiest mission in the country.

"It is a source of unfeigned gratification to us to see so many of our 'mission Indians' improve in their temporal condition, advance in civilization, and bid fair to become an agricultural people. Some of these had lived from time immemorial in poverty and destitution, but at the present day they live in ease and plenty, with moderate work. The march of the Pottawatomies, except the Prairie Band, is onward, and we will soon have the great results."

The Kansas historian, William E. Connelley, makes this comment on Duerinck's report: "Read particularly the closing sentence of the quotation, and note this fact—that in ten or twelve years, by the policy advocated by the superintendent, the Pottawatomies were practically homeless outcasts, *except* the Prairie Band."

This year, one chief (Sha-quah) became so disgusted with the conduct of his tribe's affairs that he led a band of about one hundred away to live with the Creeks and Cherokees.

A new agent, William E. Murphy, continued the agitation for allotment of lands:

"The Pottawatomies have held several councils within the last two months in regard to sectionizing their land, but it seems that, notwithstanding this once powerful and mighty tribe have dwindled down to the insignificant number of about three thousand, it is composed of such discordant elements that they cannot unite upon a plan to save themselves from that destruction which will inevitably befall them if they fail to have their land sectionized, and thereby rendered to them permanent homes. The industrious and intelligent portion of this tribe . . . see the importance of getting the government to adopt such measures as will protect them in the enjoyment of their homes, and save them from being driven before the tide of emigration which is rapidly flowing into Kansas. The 'Prairie Band' appear to despise the principles of civilization, look upon work as a disgrace, and when they hear those Indians who cultivate the soil speak of sectionizing, they immediately denounce them and charge them with endeavoring to swindle them out of their land. The 'Prairie Band'

constitutes about one-third of the Indians within this agency. When I see the industrious portion of this tribe show such uneasiness of mind in regard to holding their land, see them manifest a disposition to earn their bread in the sweat of their brow, and hear them express the wish to have permanent homesteads for themselves and their children, I am induced to appeal to the Indian Department in their behalf to sectionize their land, give each one a homestead of 160 acres, and let them sell the balance of their land, and with the proceeds build stone fences and make other permanent improvements.

"I feel satisfied it would be greatly to the interest of the whole tribe to be more compactly settled. The uneducated and indolent would more directly have the example of the enlightened and industrious, and might be induced to send their children to school, and their land would be less liable to encroachment from the white race."

St. Mary's Superintendent Duerinck compared the two main factions within the tribe in his 1857 report — but not without a great deal of prejudice:

"The 'Mission Indians,' the industrious and civilized class, want to sectionize the land of their reserve and to obtain a title in fee simple, for the following reasons:

"First. To have a permanent home for themselves and their children.

"Second. To break up communism — a worthless, lazy Indian throwing himself wantonly on a working Indian for support.

"Third. To gather around them the comforts of life, and to enjoy them without molestation.

"Fourth. To burst the bonds of tutelage, and to enjoy the manly privileges of freedom.

"Fifth. To make them look to their farms for support, giving up hunting, rambling, and marauding with war parties.

"Sixth. Because it plainly appears to them that it is the will of heaven, and the desire of government, that they should adopt the modes and laws of civilized life.

"Some certain Prairie Indians, medicine men, with painted faces, who are opposed to Christianity and civilization, and greatly in the minority as regards number, want to remain as they are, and they are said to allege the following seasons:

"1. Because they are Indians, and ought to remain Indians.

"2. Because they live like jolly fellows, without working, without laws, and without praying.

"3. Because the Great Spirit would be angry with us if we throw aside our bow and arrow.

"4. Because a little cabin, with a patch of corn and pumpkins, are all the earthly goods we desire.

"5. Because our braves must have two squaws for wives, and occasionally a jug of whisky; and if the land be divided we will be robbed of those glorious liberties.

"6. Because we do not dare break the customs of our forefathers and the solemn observances of our medicine bags."

By 1859, the tribe numbered 2,770 — 726 men, 752 women, and 1,292 children. The Baptist Manual Labor School was making a comeback after several bad years, and had an attendance of seventy boys and forty girls, most of whom came from the Prairie Band. The St. Marys school had an attendance, on the average, of seventy-five boys and seventy-three girls.

Agent William E. Murphy in 1859 was still urging the government to allot the land:

"I trust that the government will, at no distant day, yield to their [the "civilized" group's] request by sectionizing their land and giving them the title thereto, throwing around it, however, such barriers as will prevent the self-conceited, sharp and would-be knowing members of the tribe taking advantage of them. I deeply sympathize with the honest and industrious portion of these people upon this subject. They see and feel the importance of effecting an arrangement with the government that will protect them and their children in the enjoyment of their homes forever. They would make good citizens, and, from their commendable industry and ardent desire to have for themselves and their children permanent homesteads, have strong claims upon the consideration of the department, the prompt recognition of which, in my opinion, is demanded by humanity, justice and sound policy. Their preservation and permanency on their present reserve can only be effected by citizenizing them and granting them a title in fee simple to the land.

"I regret extremely to see the opposition with which this question of sectionizing is met on the part of the poor, ignorant and deluded 'Prairie Band' of Pottawatomies. They are not able to understanding the circumstances which surround them. It appears impossible to convince them of the fact that their ancestors

have, in years gone by, had to vanish and disappear beneath the tread and march of the white man; that there is soon to be here in Kansas another conflict of race; that the dignity, the interest and social relations of an extensive white population will force them to give place and remove, unless they adopt the customs of the whites, earn their living by the sweat of their brow, and, in short, make of themselves good and useful citizens. Talk to them on this subject and after this manner and you cannot more highly offend their dignity.

"At the commencement of my agency I was instructed to be a parental friend and provident monitor to the Indians placed under my charge. I am conscious of having come up to the requirement. I have at all times felt a deep interest in their welfare, individually and collectively. I have for the last two years been a close observer of the current of public sentiment against the various Indian tribes holding large reserves in Kansas, and it appears to me that the idea of the Pottawatomies being able to hold in common, as at present, their beautiful, rich and fertile reservation in the center of Kansas is preposterous; hence the interest which I have manifested upon the question of sectionizing. If I am right, the question then arises, Should the intelligent, industrious, and hard-working portion of the tribe, who wish to better their condition by securing for themselves and their children permanent homes, be curbed or kept back by that portion who are obstinately blind to the true interests of the whole tribe?"

In 1861 (the year of Kansas' admittance into the United States), the Commissioner of Indian Affairs visited the Potawatomies, and his account of the meeting reads:

"My council with the Pottawatomies lasted two full days, and was to me particularly interesting. I found them intelligent and apparently happy. They have a reservation thirty miles square, rich in soil, and beautifully located on the Kansas River, near Topeka, the present seat of government for the state. A large majority of the tribe, usually denominated the 'Mission Band,' are far advanced in civilization, and are anxious to abandon their tribal condition and have a suitable portion of their lands allotted to them in severalty, and the remainder sold to the government at a fair price, to create a fund to enable them to commence agricultural pursuits under favorable auspices.

"This policy is, however, strenuously opposed by the wild or 'Prairie Band' of the tribe, who look with jealousy upon any in-

novation upon their traditional customs. I assured the 'Mission Band' that their desire to adopt the principle of individual property, and to rely for support upon the cultivation of the soil, rather than the chase, was warmly approved by the government, and that in case proper efforts and a reasonable time for reflection should fail to induce the rest of the tribe to adopt this mode of life, measures would be adopted to relieve them from the incubus which now binds them to an uncivilized life. . . ."

On November 15, 1861, a treaty was made which gave both factions what they wanted: The Prairie Band got the present reservation in Jackson county, the land to be held in common; the Potawatomies of the Woods and the Christian Band received separate tracts. This latter group, who had agreed to adopt the customs of the white man, were allotted land in the following manner: each chief who signed the treaty received 640 acres; each headman, 320 acres; each head of a family got 160 acres; and each other person got 80 acres. It was not long before most of this group had sold their lands (and had lost money at it), and had to be moved by the government to a new reservation in Indian Territory.

The next few years were unsettled ones for the various groups of the Prairie Band, too. Many of the group on the Jackson county reserve went to Iowa and Wisconsin to spend the winter in 1864. The Civil War and the border troubles were a disturbing factor in Kansas. In Wisconsin, the whites complained about the Potawatomi destructiveness (apparently with no sound basis except prejudice). By 1868 the Prairie Band for the first time really began to assemble at the Jackson county reservation.

In 1869, the agent reported difficulty with the surrounding white population:

"The idea seems to prevail among the white settlers that that particular reserve, with its valuable timber, pure water, and rich prairie soil, containing over seventy-five thousand acres within an hour's ride from the dome of our State capitol, could never have been intended as a home for the Indian, the land to remain, to a great extent, uncultivated, and forever free from taxation. They enter upon these lands stealthily and take away timber, or make a contract with some worthless Indian for such timber as they want (the land being held in common they can buy of the same Indian in one part of the reserve as well as another), and under this contract they go on defiantly cutting and destroying. While the contract furnishes a sort of pretext, they very well know

it confers no right; but they at the same time know that the United States district court for the district of Kansas never did, and probably never will, convict a white man for depredating upon Indian lands.

"I know of no way of remedying the evil, except by prevailing upon white men to be honest and just toward the Indian, or seeing that the laws are rigidly enforced against them. One other means may be tried with perhaps a more certain prospect of success—to move the Indian to some country where he would be free from such annoyances. The state of things existing between the Indians on the reserve and the whites outside of it has often been reported to the department and made a subject of complaint on the part of the Indians.

"The question of treating away their reserve and going to the Indian Territory with a portion of the sectionizers has sometimes

Indian women dancing at the Potawatomi Reservation near Mayetta, 1917. (Courtesy of The Kansas State Historical Society)

been proposed to the Prairie Band of Pottawatomies, and a considerable number of them are reported to be in favor of such a movement; but that sentiment never finds expression in a council with an agent of the government, the chiefs and principal headmen being the only parties heard, and they are believed to be acting under outside influences which determine their course . . . ."

The 1870 agent's report gives a picture of the status of the Potawatomies:

"This much we have said in regard to that portion of the Pot-

tawatomies who have or are gradually passing from under the supervision of an agent, leaving only those who have heretofore been known as the 'Prairie Band,' comprising, according to the census recently taken, 419 souls, and now living in separate lodges as follows, to wit, one frame house, fourteen log cabins, and thirty-five bark lodges, as the only representatives in Kansas of the once powerful tribe of Pottawatomie Indians. They are located on a reservation in Jackson county, state of Kansas, fourteen miles north of Topeka, the capital of the state. Their reserve comprises an area of eleven miles square of beautiful rolling prairie, well watered by two beautiful streams known as Big and Little Soldier creeks, along which the Indians' houses and lodges are located. The rich bottoms of these streams afford an abundance of the very best farming lands, with a reasonable portion of rail and saw timber, and quantities of small undergrowth, that affords comfortable retreats in winter for themselves and stock, while the rolling prairie lands abound with excellent building stone and a reasonable supply of stone coal.

"This portion of the tribe adheres tenaciously to their ancient Indian customs, habits and superstitions, although much effort has been made to educate them to leave off their old habits of hunting, particularly now that the game has almost entirely disappeared, and idly passing away their time, to resort to the cultivating of their soil for a support. But they still continue to cling to their old flag [iris] and bark lodges, after the customs of their fathers. Their furniture consists principally of a few rusty kettles, dirty blankets, and the usual equipage necessary for a savage life. The women mostly tend their little patches of corn after the men break the ground and garden, cook the victuals, and get their own wood, often carrying it a considerable distance upon their backs, although there may be several horses running at large and a wagon standing in the yard, or wood rotting for the want of care, while the young lords of the manor are engaged in card playing or other similarly degrading sports. It is gratifying, however, to note that many of them have yielded to the oft-repeated wishes of the government and turned their attention more to agricultural pursuits than in former years, by raising horses, cattle, sheep, hogs and corn; in fact, most of the varieties of grain produced by experienced farmers, with the usual products of the garden."

In 1874 the agent made a census of the Prairie Band, and found a total of 678: 467 on the Jackson county reserve, 181 living

in Wisconsin, and thirty in Mexico. In 1876, the report indicated progress for the band. The Indians were raising a goodly number of horses, cows, mules, and hogs. The practice of cooking at an open fire was giving way to cook stoves, and more and more meals were being served at tables. Wooden bowls and ladles were being replaced by the porcelain dishes and the silverware of the white man.

In 1877, Agent M. H. Newlin reported that despite the good progress being made in white man's ways, many of the band opposed the changes. The priest and the medicine men wanted to hold to the old traditions and customs of the Potawatomies. This clinging to one's own ways is natural for any group, but agents and missionaries nearly always condemned such "defiance" of their new and "better" ways.

In 1878, the agent's report stressed even more progress among the Indians, especially in terms of education:

"Until April, 1873, not a scholar could be obtained from the Prairie Band to attend school. [The government started an Industrial Boarding School in 1873.] The average attendance during the last fiscal year was twenty-nine pupils, with an enrollment of forty-four. The school buildings are well supplied with facilities for boarding and lodging the pupils, and also for teaching the females, in addition to their studies, all kinds of household duties. Attached to the school is a farm of sixty-three acres, well stocked with horses, cattle, hogs and poultry. The male pupils are taught to participate in all the labor necessary in conducting this farm and in caring for stock. After carefully noting the effect of this course upon the boys, I am convinced that they are quite as industrious and useful as white boys, and that the great difference between the usual adult Indian and white men is that the latter in youth were taught to labor and the former was not. I think the industrial boarding-school system, if persevered in, will result in the complete civilization of the Indian youth in this agency, and will greatly assist the adult Indians in forming a correct estimate of the value of education, and of learning the absolute necessity of labor as a means of realizing personal independence.

"Since a boarding school was established for the Pottawatomie Indians, a number of them who before their children learned to read and write perhaps never examined a letter in the alphabet, have learned to correspond in their language with Indians residing at a distance. I have seen letters containing considerable

information written in the Indian language, with sixteen English letters understandingly read by Indians who had not the slightest knowledge of the use or sound of letters until a very recent period, and have not now except as applied to such letters; yet I think this will show that adult Indians who may even be prejudiced against education are susceptible to its influences, and may be made aware of its uses at least."

In 1881, the Prairie Band numbered 750: 430 lived on the reservation, 280 were living with the Winnebago Indians in Wisconsin, and forty resided in the Indian Territory. Most of the families on the reservation lived in "civilized" houses by this time, replacing most of the bark huts of a decade previous. The agent reported that "the Indians subsist on the same kinds of food as white people, and their women, who are generally good cooks, prepare it in the same manner as white cooks, and with the exception, perhaps, of cooking meat more thoroughly." Later his report made comment on their growing concern with "getting ahead in the world," just like the white man: "These Indians are developing a strong liking for money and property of all kinds, holding to it with astonishing tenacity, and have already learned to gauge the consideration due their neighbors by their ability to gather and retain it."

Actually, things went along pretty well for the Indians for the next ten years. There was an epidemic of measles and whooping cough in 1887. The Indian police were formed to keep order among the tribe and to pick up truants from school, but all in all, the tribe was getting along happily.

By 1889, however, complications appeared in the form of commissioners who appeared at the agency to discuss selling the reservation, or at least selling the surplus after allotting a certain amount to the individual Indians. On September 1, 1890, the President, Benjamin Harrison, ordered the Prairie Band to choose land for allotment; the government intended to do away with the reservation held in common. The Prairie Band had always wished to avoid allotments: they had, moreover, seen what had happened to their Potawatomi brothers after the treaty in 1861. They did not wish to be forced into a similar situation. However, the federal government could not be stopped.

In 1892, the making of allotments was well under way, but the forced allotments discouraged the ambition of the Indians to

continue their efforts at farming improvement. According to the reports of Agent J. A. Scott,

"The fact that satisfactory progress has not been made in allotting to the Prairie Band of Pottawatomie Indians is not due to the want of effort upon the part of the allotting agent or others, but to the persistent, constant and untiring action of a faction in the tribe who resist good example, wise counsel and every elevating influence that can be brought to bear upon them. They oppose education; would gladly destroy every improvement of the reservation, and drive advanced Indians from it, if they could; and have no other ambition than to live as their fathers did before civilization was known among them.

"Although the leader of this faction is entirely ignorant of the business of the tribe, and is known as a fanatic, he has convinced his followers, by the most absurdly false representations, that he will finally accomplish the cancellation of the allotments already made, and prevent any further development of civilized ideas on the reservation. This faction embraces the very old and poorest with some of the intensely superstitious Indians, none of whom pretend to work; hence their whole time can be and is given to abuse of allottees and the principle of allotments. The leader of the faction and two other Indians have visited Washington twice within the last year, and in this manner and by feeing lawyers have spent over $2,500 collected by contributions from individual Indians of their belief.

"Notwithstanding all this opposition, 287 allotments have been made to date, out of a tribal membership present of 532, and a few are being made weekly. Many of the peaceable and easy-going Indians are deterred from making their selections by the threats of the antiallotment faction, and the fear that they may be able to destroy allotments, as they allege they can."

Agent L. F. Pearson wrote in 1896,

"Were it not for a comparatively small but extremely obstinate and unprogressive element among them, the largest tribe within the agency, the advancement would be yet more marked and satisfactory, but said element exerts an unfavorable influence upon many members of the tribe that otherwise would identify themselves with the progressive element . . . . [It] will require years of time and patient care and the exercise of much tact and kindly consideration to bring them to a full realization of the error

Potawatomi Indian dancers at Topeka, 1925. (Courtesy of The Kansas State Historical Society)

of their ways and place them fairly on the way to a level with their advanced brethren.

"This same element still persistently refuses to recognize their allotments of land in severalty, or the right of the United States government to make such disposition of their lands contrary to their wishes, and they are the means of continuing a feeling of uncertainty among some of the more timid ones as to the permanency of the allotments, thereby hindering some of them from openly acquiescing in said action of the United States government in thus allotting to them, as individuals, their proportion of the land formerly held in common. . . ."

The report of the agent in the next year commented on the unsatisfactory aspects of leasing Indian land to white men, who too often were unprincipled in their dealings with the Indians. "The system also introduces among the Indians a large number of vicious but shrewd men, who not only manipulate the Indians, but attempt to accomplish their purposes at the agency through them. . . ."

Agent W. R. Honnell, too, criticized the leasing system in his report of 1899:

"So far as the Indian is concerned, this system is responsible

for much graver difficulties than [is evident on the surface], and among them is the total demoralization of a considerable portion of the Indians in the agency, and in which class a large majority of them will finally be embraced unless the system is modified. This condition is brought about by the fact that when the Indian leases his land he stops work, loses interest in his home, frequently sells his small holdings of stock, and consumes his time in visiting and in extravagant and riotous living. In some cases they have been known to surrender their houses to lessees and live in shanties and wigwams. The Indian who leases at all continually wants to lease more, and he never expects to cease leasing or to work himself, and as industry is the only principle upon which he can be practically elevated, and the necessity therefore disappears through his income from leases, annuities, etc., he will make no advance, or even hold his ground, but will retrograde."

There were 578 members of the Prairie Band living on the reservation in 1900, and there were 130 houses. The opposition to individual land allotments had almost been broken down, and allotments had been made to everyone except to the children born after 1895. Although restrictions on landleasing had been brought under better control, so that trouble from that source had been lessened, another complication arose in connection with Indian lands in the first decade of the twentieth century. Upon the death of an Indian, his land might be sold to a white person. This would eventually result in the complete loss of the reservation for the Indians. Not until 1934 was this trend stopped; the passage of the Indian Re-organization Act prevented the complete loss of lands to the Indians. Nonetheless, the greater part of the Potawatomi reservation land is in the ownership of white men, having been bought by them prior to the Re-organization Act.

The population of the reservation has fluctuated greatly in this century, due mainly the conditions of the national economy. During the First World War, many of the Indians went off the reservation to fight and to work, and most remained during the twenties. The depression of the 1930's forced hundreds back. During the Second World War, they went off again—to join in the country-wide war effort. Most of the younger ones since have remained in the cities, leaving only the nucleus of older, less "white-man-ized" group at the home base.

Such is the history of the Potawatomi Indians since their meeting with the white man, nearly three hundred years ago. It has

been a story of great troubles and of near destruction for the Potawatomi Indians and their proud culture.

Potawatomi Indian gathering in Kansas, probably in the 1930's. (Courtesy of The Kansas State Historical Society)

It seems to be very difficult for the white man to realize that people of other races or cultures are human beings, too. He can't seem to realize that other societies have beliefs, traditions, customs which are as dear to them as the white man's are to him. He can't see that all ways of life have merit; he thinks only his way of life is right. And it probably *is*— for *him*.

Funny white man! So smart in some ways—and so un-smart in others!

Look at his relationship with the American Indians, for example. When the white man invaded the Indians' country, he felt it his right to push the "dumb savages" around. He put them on reservations and treated them like witless animals; he stole their land from under them and pushed them onto other land which he thought he would not want; then he changed his mind and pushed them somewhere else. He told them to quit their hunting and warring; he told them to become farmers and to do everything he said, without complaining.

What's more, the white man expected the Indian to change overnight: change occupation, change beliefs, change everything. Without questioning, the Indian was to suddenly become a white man.

But the Indian couldn't become a white man overnight, even if he'd wanted to. And he didn't want to.

Could the white man have become an Indian so suddenly if the tables had been turned? Would he have wanted to? Would he have given up his religion to adopt the Indian beliefs? Would he have given up his farming livelihood for that of hunting? Or his wood house for a tepee or a wickiup?

Yet the white man expected the Indian to change his ways, the ways that had been successful for him for years. So when the Indian persisted in following his own way of life, the way that was familiar to him, the white man accused him of being ignorant, unprogressive, unreasonable.

It goes without saying that the Indian did act unreasonable sometimes—and so did the white man. Certainly, the Indian was sometimes cruel; but so was the white man. The Indian was stubborn on many occasions; but so was his antagonist. And the Indian was kind and helpful many times; so was the white man.

There is no judgment to be made. The white man was as he was. The Indian acted as he acted. Perhaps, however, some understanding could be reached about the problems—and the prejudices—on both sides. The two cultures had (and still have) more in common than they ever recognized: they were made up of human beings, not of red men and white men.

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