

The Kickapoos of Kansas

Of 3146 Indians listed in 1960 on the official Department of Interior rolls as being Indians of Kansas, only 1240 were reported as living on the present reservations in the state. The largest group are the Potawatomies (see *Heritage of Kansas*, May 1962), who also have the largest reservation, an eleven mile square in Jackson County.

The second largest group are the Kickapoos, with 426 names on the tribal rolls. There are around 200 Kickapoos living on the 980 acre reservation in southern Brown County. This reservation, second in size in the state, is five miles east-west by six miles north-south.

The next largest group are the Iowas, with 580 on the official tribal rolls, and between forty and fifty people living on the 715 acre reserve in the northeastern corner of Brown County. Of the Sac and Fox group, there is not one single reservation resident, although there are 140 on the rolls. The reservation itself consists of less than one acre.

THE KICKAPOOS

The word Kickapoo comes from *Kiwigapawa*, meaning "he stands about," or "he moves about, standing now here, now there," according to the Smithsonian Institution *Handbook of American Indians*. The Kickapoos, like the other present-day Kansas Indians, are not native to this area.

The tribe was first discovered by the white man in Wisconsin around 1670. These people were close relatives of the Sac (or Sauk) Indians and the Fox Indians, having similar customs and language. They moved south into Illinois gradually, and by the late 1800's were well established there. However, in 1809, they ceded to the United States their lands along the Wabash and Vermillion Rivers. Ten years later, they ceded all their Illinois claims. In return, they were promised lands on the Osage River in Missouri.

By 1820, most of the Kickapoos had moved to the new Missouri location, but not to stay for long. The area had long been the hunting grounds of the Osages, and they protested the intrusion, claiming that the Kickapoos would spread out over the Osage country and would kill the game. In St. Louis in July of 1820, the Kickapoos signed an amendment of the 1819 treaty granting them lands in Missouri, and accepted instead a reserve in Kansas.

However, not until 1832 did the action to remove the tribe get seriously under way. On October 24, at Castor Hill, St. Louis County, Missouri, the tribal leaders signed an agreement to leave Missouri for Kansas. Heading the list of signers were Pa-sha-cha-hah (Jumping Fish) and Kennekuk, the famous Kickapoo Prophet.

A delegation of four Indians was sent to examine the reserve (1200 square miles west of the Missouri River, occupying a great portion of the area now known as Brown, Atchison, and Jackson counties), and on November 26, 1832, they signed an additional article to the treaty, which defined the boundaries of their new reservation. For removing from the Missouri lands and from Illinois (there were some of the tribe who had never left that region), the Kickapoos were promised \$18,000 and an annual annuity of \$5000 for nineteen years. In addition, they were to receive \$1000 a year for a period of five years to support a blacksmith and helpers, \$3700 with which to build a mill and a church, \$500 a year for ten years for educational purposes, \$3000 for farm implements, \$4000 for labor and land improvements, and \$4000 in cattle, hogs, and other stock.

In May of the next year, 1833, 375 Kickapoos and 119 Potawatomes (who were attached to Kennekuk's band) arrived from southwest Missouri. They settled at a site about five miles above Fort Leavenworth. By June 30, the agent's log house and several store houses had been built in the settlement. A Methodist mission, under the direction of Rev. Jerome C. Berryman, was begun in the fall.

On November 8, 1833, an Indian peace council opened at Fort Leavenworth. Commissioner Henry Ellsworth had called together the tribes native to the region and the immigrant tribes for the purpose of signing an agreement of peace between them. Around 100 Pawnees, Otoes, and Omahas met with the immigrant delegations — Delawares, Shawnees, Potawatomes, Ottawas, Weas, Peorias and Kaskaskias, Kansa Indians, Iowas and Sacs,

and Kickapoos (represented, of course, by Jumping Fish and Kennekuk).

The agreement to cease all hostile acts and to take no private or personal revenge for any wrongs committed was signed on November 12 by the nations present. Sometime around midnight of the 12th, a great meteor "shower" began, and lasted for several hours. The next day, Ellsworth told the assembled Indians that the Great Spirit had caused the shower of stars to show His approval of the peace treaty. His statement apparently amused some of the more sophisticated delegates, but some of the signers took it very seriously.

The Methodist mission opened as soon as Rev. Berryman's first buildings, a schoolhouse and a dwelling, were completed — probably early in January of 1834. Three months later, on March 4, he started his day school for the Kickapoo children, which later became a boarding school.

By the end of 1834, there were approximately 550 Kickapoos reported as living on the reservation north and west of Fort Leavenworth, but this figure included the 110 Potawatomies who had accompanied the Prophet's band from Missouri. The Methodist Mission Church seemed to be flourishing: There were 230 Kickapoo and Potawatomi members, and two whites. A government school, costing \$300, was erected on the reservation, and John D. Swallows became the government teacher at \$480 a year.

In January, 1835, Rev. Berryman was also appointed government teacher, and thereafter, did his teaching in the government schoolhouse. The mission day school became a boarding school with as many as sixteen children living there at once. Berryman used his government salary in helping to support the pupils and for other mission work. The actual teaching was done by other missionaries attached to the mission.

Father Charles Felix Van Quickenborne, a Jesuit who had done quite a bit of Catholic missionary work with the Osages, visited the Kickapoos on July 4, 1835; eleven months later he returned with three lay brothers, \$1000 for the construction of a Catholic school, and a promise of \$500 for the school from the government. By 1837, he had completed a log schoolhouse sixteen by fifteen feet, and a two-story log house forty-nine feet by eighteen feet. This mission was discontinued one year later.

The Kickapoos seemed to become more and more reluctant to

send their children to school, and church attendance at the Methodist mission fell to 161 Indians and three whites in 1838. After 1839, no school was being conducted on the reservation at all. The children could be sent to the Shawnee Mission manual labor school, but in 1840, only three Kickapoo children were listed. The lack of "cooperation" among the tribe in becoming educated in the white man's schools was supposedly due to the strong leadership of Kennekuk, the Prophet.

Now Kennekuk (for whom the Kansas town is named) was born around 1770 in Illinois, became a chief sometime around 1829, and held great power over those who believed in him. His was apparently a sort of self-styled religion compiled from various sources; however, he professed to have received his directions directly from God. His followers strictly observed the Sabbath, did not drink, lie, steal, or swear. They often had services during the week, also, and were a very devout group in general.

Kennekuk had preached to his people for several years in Illinois, and had been given a license to preach by one of the Protestant Church officials. The government had agreed to build a church for Kennekuk and his congregation on the Kansas reservation. Supposedly, the power of his religion among the Kickapoos contributed to a greater or lesser degree to the failure of the white religions in the early years of the Kickapoos in the area of present Kansas. Kennekuk died of smallpox sometime between 1852 and 1857. He had promised his followers that he would rise again in three days, and many stayed near his body, waiting for his last prophecy to come true.

Sometime in the early half of the nineteenth century, a considerable number of the tribe left the main body to go to Texas territory. From there they migrated to Mexico.

In Washington, D. C., on May 18, 1854, the Kickapoos signed a treaty giving up the lands they had received in 1832, and received in exchange a smaller area (150,000 acres) at the head of the Grasshopper (Delaware) River, plus \$20,000 for moving southwest from their settlements near Fort Leavenworth. In the summer of 1862, they signed another treaty which further diminished their lands.

In 1864, about 100 Kickapoos, dissatisfied at their treatment by the government, started south under No-ko-aht (or No-ko-what) to join the so-called Mexican Kickapoos. This latter group had left the

main body of the tribe sometime in the first half of the nineteenth century, and had headed for Austin (which was then in Mexican owned territory). From there they had migrated further south into Old Mexico. After they arrived in Mexico in the '60's, about half of No-ko-aht's band decided they didn't like it, and started the trek back to the Kansas reservation. Only fourteen reached Kansas in May of 1867.

No-ko-aht told the story of the journey to the Kickapoo agent, Franklin G. Adams, in Kennekuk, Atchison County, on May 31, 1867. Mr. Adams took the story down in shorthand:

"When we left here we went and joined with two parties of Kickapoos, making then three parties. Two other parties were already gone. [This made a total of five groups — two that had gone earlier, and the two that No-ko-aht's band joined at the Kansas River.] We followed. That was the same fall [1864] that we left. There were about 700 of us in the three parties. I joined the two parties of Kickapoos just on the Kansas river line. We started to go south in the same fall. We traveled slowly along, hunting buffalo on the plains. In the winter we had a fight with the Texans. It was very cold.

"We joined the [first] two parties — not till after the fight. The [first] two parties had no trouble. Those two parties numbered about 1,000. We overtook the two parties just as we got [to] Mexico. There were about twenty persons living in Mexico. They had lived there for about twenty years. We arrived in Mexico in the spring of '65, early, about time to plant corn in that country.

"When the Kickapoos first went to Mexico, about twenty years ago, the president of Mexico offered them a sack of money, but they came away before they received the money. The president of Mexico had ordered them to go on an expedition against the Comanches. They had made one expedition and turned their spoils over to the Mexicans, but refused to go again and the president refused to give the sack of money unless the Kickapoos would do it, and then the Kickapoos came away. Then in 1864 the president sent a message to the Kickapoos to request them to come and get their sack of money. The Kickapoos went. When we got there the Mexicans wanted our young men to enlist. They wanted fifty young men to each party, [a total of] 200 men, and came down to twenty. The Kickapoos refused. The Mexicans became displeased and ordered us into the mountains. There nothing can be raised. They should live by hunting.

"We went where we were ordered. That was the same spring of 1865. There were some white families and some black. They had farms, and appeared to have been there for some time. They were planning on the Mexican government taking their produce and stock which they raised for rent or taxes. There were six families of whites and eight or ten families of blacks. The whites left and the blacks remained for a short time. They raised cattle, sheep, and horses a good deal, and corn, pumpkins, and sugar [cane] and made sugar and raised sweet potatoes.

"It was in a little valley at the foot of the mountain where the Sobrinas river comes out [in the state of Coahuila]. The white families left in the spring of 1866. They didn't say where they should go to. They would come to the Rio Grande and work till they should get some money and would then come to the North. They didn't belong to the South. They went into Mexico for the [Civil War], and all returned after it closed. The farms were pretty old and must have been bought of Mexicans. The Indians took the farms after the whites left. The white men offered to trade their farms for the Kickapoo lands in Kansas

"During the year that we remained in Mexico we subsisted by hunting. We sold beaver, deer and bear skins. We sold our ponies for \$10 apiece for subsistence. We raised a very little corn.

"About 40 started home last spring; 33 Kickapoos, the rest Delawares. Over one-half of all started once, and when we got out a short distance, our horses were so poor and we were out of ammunition, and most went back. After we had come on ten days, two young men overtook us and wished us to wait ten days till they could go back for their things. We waited, but they didn't come. Before we started two of the chiefs wanted us to go around through the Comanche country.

"In coming home we had no trouble except in one place. We came upon three parties of plains Indians, one of whom shook hands with us, but the others refused. In a few days twelve of our horses were stolen. The friendly chief advised us to go on, which we did. After that ten more were stolen. We went back to hunt our horses and Indians brought us twenty horses. These Indians had a good many cattle which they had stolen. There had been a fight near there recently.

"I think these Kickapoos will come back this year to the Indian country. Some of them may come here. Some will have to stay because they have no ponies. They may get into trouble by stealing.

They steal nearly everything in that country. The best man gets it. The chiefs can't control the young men. It's all war — the conversation down there. There were a good many traders from the French."

Thus ended No-ko-aht's story of the Kickapoo trip to Mexico and back. He then commented to Agent Adams on the relationship of his tribe with the white man:

"You asked me the other day how I felt. I told you I didn't feel well in my mind. There had been a great change here since I left. I want to know how all our arrangements with the government stand. [After the treaty of 1863] I thought I would go south and see the country. I saw that I couldn't live among the white people, for every year my stock was being stolen. I thought I had better leave. I tell you why I got scared. I insisted that the agent gave notice to all the white people around to steal our stock so that we would be obliged to go because we were poor. The agent told us that if we didn't make the treaty we would be taken prisoners and removed.

"That is why I left. The treaty was forced upon us. The agent told us the government owned the land, and the Indians only had a lease for a certain number of years.

"It is a fact that much complaint has been made about trouble between the Indians and the settlers. All this [was made] by the white people. In old times all Indians were called together when the treaty was made, and if all the old men and the young men were willing the treaty was made, and there was no trouble When you told me about the treaty lately made, I thought the tribe was all broken up. It was the understanding of the Kickapoo tribe in 1854 that the Kickapoos should remain here as long as the world stood. In twenty years we were to meet so we should obtain that \$100,000. Now you understand me how I feel towards treaties"

No-ko-aht didn't "feel well in his mind" about Indian-white relationships — and he had good reason! By the treaty of 1854, the Kickapoos had received a tract of land of 150,000 acres. Of this quantity, 130,863 acres had been absorbed by the whites within a few years ("through sales and otherwise," as the 1892 agent put it). The 1862 treaty gave the option to buy the lands to the Atchison and Pikes Peak Railroad Company, and this company purchased well over 120,000 acres at \$1.25 per acre, only to sell it again very shortly. Around 19,000 acres were set apart for the Indians themselves.

Then the government started the pressure for allotments. Take the community-owned land away from the tribe; dole out a small portion of it to each individual! The Indians had seen what had happened to some of their fellows who had taken allotments: they had lost their lands (by sale or otherwise), lost money on the deal, lost their means of livelihood, and had ended up with nothing and no place to go.

In September of 1890, the President granted authority for making allotments to the Prairie Band of the Potawatomies and to the Kickapoos. It was no more a case of *offering* the individuals land; it was now a case of *making* them take it. The report of the area agent in 1892, states, in part:

"Both of these tribes, as now existing, strenuously opposed allotments when made to the majority of their people in 1863, and their leading men have since continually taught that the principle was ruinous to the Indian, and must be combated with every means at their command. The misfortunes of both citizen Potawatomies and Kickapoos [who accepted allotments], and the residence on the reservation of a large number of absolute paupers and vagabonds of this class, who, idle and worthless, encouraged like vices in those belonging there, aided in intensifying and spreading their dislike of allotments. Indeed, this feeling became so strong that when the work of allotting actually commenced, the few who realized that their best interests would be subserved by making selections, and that it was the determination of the government and the best friends of the Indians that all reservations should be disposed of, were actually afraid to have it known that they had done so. Up to this date but ten heads of families of the Prairie Band and one of the Kickapoos have voluntarily asked for allotments, and an organized opposition has existed in both tribes, which has greatly retarded the success that should have been obtained from that constant argument and persuasion that has been exerted on every individual of mature age of both tribes.

"Notwithstanding all this opposition, as well as frequent threats of violence, the allotting agent has succeeded in allotting to 236 members of the Prairie Band and 65 members of the Kickapoos. Many of the allottees of both tribes have fenced their selections and are developing an unlooked-for aptitude for business in the care of their property. A large majority of the allottees of both tribes are full-bloods, and embraces some of the most influential

and intelligent members of the band"

H. E. Bruce, Superintendent of the Potawatomi Indian Agency in 1943, commented on the allotment plan:

". . . Under the allotment act of 1887, their [all Kansas Indians'] entire reservations were allotted in individual ownership to members of the tribe living at the time of allotments between 1892 and 1908.

"After these allotments were made, the Indian who needed money for support and could not farm his land was frequently permitted to sell through the government, the proceeds of the sale being used up in family living expenses or in some instances in livestock, farming implements and tools, etc., in an effort to encourage farming.

"Other Indians were considered competent to manage their own business affairs without government supervision and were given fee patents or deeds to their land allotments. This made such lands subject to local taxation, whereas lands remaining in trust are not taxable. It also enabled the owner to sell or mortgage his land as he saw fit.

"The result of these policies has been that of 115,960 acres originally allotted to Kansas Indians, all but 34,937 acres has passed into white ownership. Reservation areas are very much checker-boarded with Indian families usually surrounded by white neighbors.

"Contrary to public opinion, Indians are not pensioned or supported by the government. Years ago they had annuities or annual per capita payments guaranteed to them under treaties with the government. They had funds to their credit in the U. S. Treasury arising from treaty provisions, usually for giving up some area of land and moving westward. Now all these annuities and treaty funds are gone so far as Kansas Indians are concerned. They must either work or starve, except for the very needy Indian who can qualify for public assistance. For years they have lived in a highly developed general farming section and farming is the only vocation they know.

"Yet to farm, even with 34,937 acres of land available, is a difficult problem. Usually the man who owns land can't farm and the man who can farm has to rent land in order to do so. Most of the middle-aged, able-bodied, progressive Indian men born after allotments were made are wholly landless.

"Since the time of land allotments on these reservations, the

original allottees have been dying off from year to year. As they died their trust land was inherited by groups of heirs. Then these heirs died and other groups of heirs inherited their interests. In the past thirty to forty years, about 25,000 acres of the 34,937 acres of land which remains in trust for Indians here has become heirship land. Indians in Oklahoma, Wisconsin, Michigan and many other states inherit small fractional interests in these tracts. Usually there are so many heirs that an actual division or partition between them is impossible.

"There is nothing to do under such circumstances but to rent the land and divide the rent money proportionally among the heirs according to their fractional interests. In competing for leases, the Indian farmer who usually depends on horse power can not afford to pay as much rent as the white tractor farmer who operates on a larger scale.

"Nevertheless, more than ninety Indian farmers are now started successfully on rather large farming enterprises. Nearly all of these had to be helped with loans. Some loans were made in 1936 and 1937 by the Farm Security Administration. Later an Indian Service loan fund has become available to the farmers of the Kickapoo, Iowa and Sac and Fox tribes as a result of the fact that these tribes organized and incorporated under the Indian Reorganization Act of June 18, 1934, and the credit thus made available is helping to establish a growing number of capable Indian farmers

"As a class, the Indians of Kansas are an intelligent, law-abiding people. Except for several major crimes which are under jurisdiction of the Federal courts, the Indian people have subjected themselves voluntarily to all the laws of the state and community and look to county sheriffs and attorneys to preserve order and punish offenses on trust land and among Indians on the same basis as among whites. In 1940 an Act of Congress conferred what amounts to concurrent jurisdiction in all criminal matters involving Kansas Indians upon Kansas courts

"On March 1, 1943, there were 145 Indians from Kansas reservations serving with the armed forces of the United States, many on foreign fronts. Two-thirds of this number were volunteers From an aggregate of 410 Indian families, ninety Indian farmers are engaged in sizeable agricultural enterprises producing "food for freedom" in abundance. A majority of these have

been financed through government or tribal loans, the payments on which are being met splendidly.

"Kansas Indians of today are among America's most loyal, patriotic citizens. They are accepting uncomplainingly every obligation and responsibility imposed upon the people of America by the present war [World War II]; and in promoting the war effort so far they have contributed more than their share in man, in food, and in personal sacrifice."

What Mr. Bruce had to say twenty years ago about the Indians of Kansas in general certainly applies to the Kickapoos of today: They are an intelligent, law-abiding people, loyal to their ideals and to their country. At first they may seem shy or extremely reserved; later, one learns that they are a soft-spoken, good-humored, good-hearted people.

They do not speak the Kickapoo language anymore. There are one or two older folks who can speak it well, and very few more can understand it. Instead, because of the greater number of Potawatomes and the close association of the two tribes, if the Kickapoos know another language besides English, it is Potawatomi.

The Kickapoos, just like the rest of us, don't care to have outsiders come snooping around, seeking curiosities. Mostly, the ways of the modern Kickapoo are the ways of the white man. But he has managed through the years to keep his religious beliefs pretty well out of the hands of exploiters. If the subject of religion is brought up, the conversation dies at once. Dead! The white man has taken practically everything else and used it to his own advantage, or has destroyed it completely, but the Indian guards the inner secrets of his religion. It will no doubt die out someday, just as the language is fast going, and much of the culture has already gone. However, in the meantime, let the non-Indian respect this remnant of Indian affairs!