

The Sac and Fox: Indians of Osage County

Jean Timm | Osage County Historical Society

The Sacs (also spelled Sauks) and Foxes of the Mississippi arrived on their Kansas reservation during the winter of 1845-46 from Iowa. Their reservation at that time included the southern two-thirds of Osage County, and extended into Franklin and Lyon counties. The Indian Agency at that time was at Greenwood, in Franklin County.

When settlers began arriving in Osage County, there was great pressure to negotiate a new treaty with the Sac and Fox which would cut down the size of their reservation. In 1859, the new treaty was signed, where the Indians gave up nearly two-thirds of their reserve, keeping only an area 20 by 12 miles. It began two miles west of where Lyndon is now, and extended one-fourth mile into Franklin County. The treaty also provided that on the diminished reserve, each person would receive 80 acres of land, with the government building a house upon it for the Indian. The treaty was signed by all the chiefs except one minor chief, and ratified by Congress on June 27, 1860.

One of the chiefs, Shawpaw-kah-kah, made a speech about the treaty in the council which met to sign it. It was translated by John Goodell, the agency's interpreter, and taken down by George Logan. Part of it said: "We will eventually have to surrender this diminished reservation. We will have to give up the graves of our fathers and mothers...Of course, I will sign these papers, but I sign under protest, knowing in my own heart that there is no good in it for the Indian."



Ciek Mokohoko, of the Sac and Fox Indians, whose band remained in Osage County, near Melvern, after the tribe left.

The Sacs and Foxes were two tribes, but they were closely related and usually lived together. However, there were bad feelings between the two tribes and most of the Foxes left in a dispute over the treaty of 1859.

The Sac and Fox were divided into about six bands, each headed by a chief. The position of chief was not hereditary.

After the treaty of 1859, the agency was moved into Osage County, to where Quenemo now stands. The agency had a council house, an agent's residence, and a large store or trading post. Six houses were built for the chiefs.

Several white men were at the agency. There was always the Indian agent and his family. Five different people were agents during the years the agency was at Quenemo. In addition, there was John Goodell, who was interpreter; Henry Wiggans, a blacksmith; William Whistler, a trader; George Logan, a freighter; and Perry Full-

er, who had a store.

There were sometimes others.

Beginning in 1863, there was a Methodist mission and school for the Sac and Fox Indians. It was located on a hill about a mile southwest of the Quenemo agency. Decades later this mission was transformed into a barn and is located on the farm owned by Richard and Mary Jo Carswell.

Each Indian received an annuity from the government. For instance, in 1868, each man, woman and child received \$20; and \$20 extra was given for blindness, old age, or a death in the family. Whatever supplies the Indians needed were supplied by the agency store, where they had unlimited credit.

The treaty of 1859 stated that houses should be built for the Indians. At least 164 of these were built, each having two rooms. The Indians did not want the houses in the first place, and never lived in them after being built. They carried off the doors and windows, selling them to settlers or trading them for whiskey. They stabled their ponies in the houses and continued living in their wickiups.

Exposure, disease and old age gradually reduced the numbers of the Sac and Fox, from 2660 in 1851, to 975 in 1863.

Pressure was mounting for moving the Sacs and Foxes out of Kansas altogether, to Indian Territory (now Oklahoma), so their land could be settled on. In 1868, a new treaty was made by which the Sacs and Foxes agreed to move to Indian Territory. They were paid \$1 an acre, and the government agreed to pay the outstanding debts of the tribe, amounting to \$26,574.

Moses Keokuk and the

other chiefs were induced to sign the treaty when they were drunk, and even then they only signed because the contents of what they were signing was said to have been misrepresented to them. Keokuk was furious and went to Washington, D.C. to speak to the President. While the President listened to his complaints, he did nothing.

A final council was held, with many white settlers in attendance. One of them, Jabez Adams, later recalled Keokuk's speech at that council: "Now again we are to be driven from this lovely home we all love so well...my dear people, the last thing I say is the saddest of all: we must go; they will not let us stay."

The Sac and Fox were moved to Indian Territory

in 1869. No sooner had they been moved when one chief, Mo-ko-ho-ko, led a band of 100 Indians back to Osage County. They refused to leave. In 1875, they were again removed by government troops, but they promptly returned to Osage County. For 17 years after the rest of the Sac and Fox left, the Mokohoko band remained in Osage County.

Since they weren't living on the reservation, hoko's band did not receive annuities from the government. To support themselves, they often worked for farmers in the area. J.B. Grant said "they worked for the 'whitey' man, they did well, they were good workers." The band lived along the Marais des Cygnes River, mostly in the Melvern area.

Mokohoko died sometime before 1880. He was buried secretly by his braves somewhere near the Marais des Cygnes. He told his band never to reveal where he was buried so that no white man could ever take him from his land. The band stayed in Osage County until 1886, gradually declining in numbers. In 1886, a contingent of troops moved them down to Indian Territory again, and guarded them for a year.

Jabez Adams said, "They presented a sad scene when compelled to leave their old home for the last time. Their crying and weeping could be heard by many neighbors whose sympathy they had won. This time they left Osage County, never to return."



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