

Coming Together: A Study of the Geographically and Culturally-Diverse Region of Southeast Kansas, 1832-1867



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History 533: Lost Kansas Communities
The Chapman Center for Rural Studies

Dr. M.J Morgan 13 May 2011

When researching historical topics, sometimes maps, rather than words, provide a better interpretation of the study. Particularly when understanding the demographics of a certain area, maps will display information in a much clearer, precise manner. For instance, the map shown above illustrates the frontier mosaic of southeast Kansas during the 1850s. People from across the United States, and even Europe, congregated to the area, either because of forced government removal or because of the lush farmland the area offered. The map displays numerous note-worthy items; most notably the many Native American reservations packed together in such a small region. Also clearly noticeable are the many streams and rivers which flow through the area, the largest being the Osage River. Furthermore, on the Wea and Kaskaskia reservation lay the Wea Village and mission, two formative aspects of the region during the 1850s. Wea Village eventually became the present day site of Paola, the largest town in Miami County. Although Wea Village no longer stands, its history cannot be overlooked. For over two decades numerous tribes gathered at the mission for teachings on Christianity. The area is full of both Native American and settlement history, with scattered Indian artifacts and numerous histories from initial frontier pioneers. However, southeast Kansas was not limited to Native Americans, evident by the small towns in and around the reservations. By the 1850s numerous trade routes used by soldiers patrolling the frontier existed. Pioneers from back East and Europe traveled on the routes as well, hoping to find the ideal piece of land to begin their new life. As suggested by the small towns, travelers came upon the region and deemed the area suitable enough to settle. Many of the towns died out after the railroads replaced the overland trade routes in the 1860. Nevertheless, during the relatively short stretch of five years, the area of

southeast Kansas offered one of the most demographically diverse areas on the western borders of the United States.

It is also essential to have some idea of where these people buried their friends and relatives, because it gives us some glimpse as to who inhabited the area. On the map are two cemeteries, one located in the town of Paola, and the other located on the old Brown Farm near the present day town of Louisburg. It is known today as the Cashman Cemetery. The Brown Farm cemetery holds some of the most important families, most notably the Peoria and Dagnette families of Wea and Miami Indian heritage.¹ The Dagnettes and their descendants, a Wea/Miami family from Indiana, previously owned the farm during the early 1900s. As will be explained later in the paper, the Dagnettes, and particularly the Peoria, became two prominent families in the region during the mid-19th century. While the map perhaps provides a better visual understanding of the area, this paper will look much further into the lives of the inhabitants of southeast Kansas, beginning with a realistic interpretation of a typical 1850s day.

The year is 1850; a crisp spring morning greets residents of the Miami village on the Miami reservation in the eastern Kansas territories. Miami children hurriedly run off to the local mission school house, eager to listen to their Baptist instructors teach them the ways of Christianity. Adults busy themselves with daily chores, such as cleaning, hunting, trading, or even studying the Bible with other missionaries. Perhaps throughout the day, other tribes from other reservations would find their way into the Miami village, such as the Pottawatomie, Peoria, Wea, Piankeshaw, or Kaskaskia. Yet,

¹ "Cashman Cemetery, Louisburg, Miami County, Kansas." www.interment.net/data/us/ks/miami/cashman/index.htm. (Accessed: 6/23/2011)

trading was not limited to the Native Americans, for the trade routes running through the area often had incoming settlers, soldiers, and even adventurers stopping in on a frequent basis. On this morning, residents and passersby could also see the transport of gold and silver by government officials to the Miami mission. After Native Americans received their annuities, a large festival commenced, featuring games, gambling, and of course, alcohol.² But the dynamic life on the Miami reservation did not end in the village. Just outside the Miami community, rolling hills covered in blue stem prairie grass growing as high as twenty feet characterized the region. The infamous Pioneer Hill lay just to the east, while the lush streams and rivers knifed through the reservation. Ample game such as wild turkeys, rabbits, deer, and even a small number of buffalo still wandered through the reservation, always eerie of the hunting parties. Indeed, onlookers gazed in awe at the diversity of the region in 1850, for this was one of the most dynamic frontier mosaics ever to exist in the United States.

Without a doubt, Americans revere the settlement of the American West as one of the great moments in our history. Families from all across the United States and the world migrated to the western boundaries of America hoping to lay to their claim on a speck of land offered by the government for a relatively low price. The idea of Manifest Destiny caused perhaps some of the largest migrations of people in human history in less than a century.³ However, incessant land grabbing of America's western borders came at a mighty cost to the people who already claimed the land as their home. Many

² Miami County Historical Society. "Paola, Kansas: A 150 Year History." Miami County Historical Society: Paola, 2005. p. 26

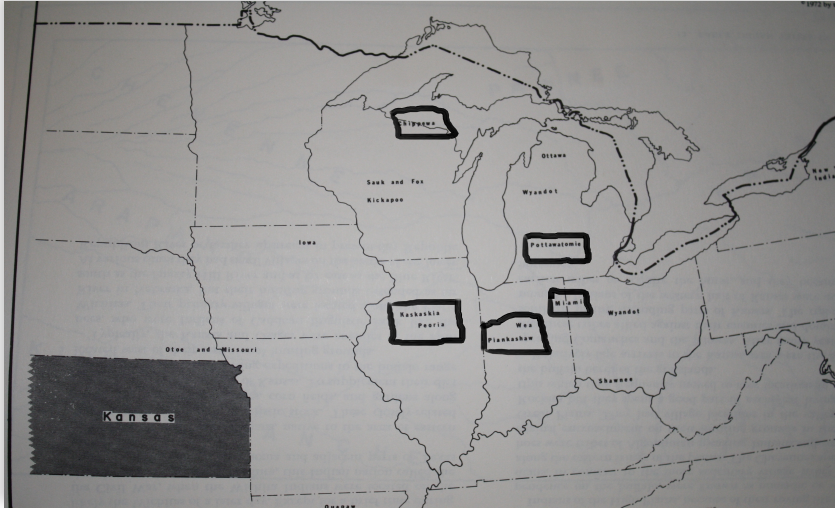
³ For another frontier mosaic, see Helen Hornbeck Tanner, "The Glaze in 1792: A Composite Indian Community." *Ethnohistory*. vol. 25, n.1. 1978, p. 15-39.

stories and histories of American settlement almost always include one key detail: settlement required the removal of many Native American. Removal occurred from the early 17th century up until the late 19th century; however, the U.S government did not create Indian policies until the early 19th century.⁴ Talks began in the early 1800s under the presidency of Thomas Jefferson to remove Native Americans from their lands. Prior to 1817, the U.S government bought land from Native Americans through treaties. However, the government adopted a new policy called “land exchange”, in which Native Americans relinquished their land to the government for an equal amount of land west of the Mississippi. Finally, in 1830, Andrew Jackson and Congress passed the Indian Removal Act.⁵ The act, largely supported by Euro-Americans, allowed for forceful removal of Native Americans off their lands. Tribes from all across the United States east of the Mississippi gave up their lands for land territories in the west, such as the Kansas territories. Perhaps no better example of forced westward migrations exists more than of the story of the Native Americans tribes forced onto reservations in southeast Kansas during the mid-19th century. Almost all of the tribes, which consisted of the Peoria, Kaskaskia, Wea, Piankashaw, Pottawatomie, Chippewa, and eventually the Miami, came from the Great Lake Region, seen in figure 1.

⁴ See Francis Paul Procha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years: The Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts, 1780-1834*. (Cambridge: Harvard, University Press, 1962).

⁵ Stewart, Mark. *The Indian Removal Act*. (Compass Point Books: Minneapolis, 2007). p. 48-55

Figure 1: Highlighted in black are the areas where the tribes mentioned above were located prior to their relocation to Kansas during the mid-19th century. Starting counter count clockwise from the top: Chippewa, Kaskaskia and Peoria, Wea and Piankehsaw, Miami, Pottawatomie.
SOURCE: Historical Atlas of Kansas



The Miami left the greatest legacy in the area, as they were the greatest in number and lived on a relatively large area of land in Kansas. Although the Miami found themselves displaced from their homes in Indiana, southeast Kansas suited many of their needs. The adequate farm land, pristine hunting grounds, and numerous streams and rivers on the Osage Plains of eastern Kansas provided Indians with the opportunity to live a sustainable life.⁶ Yet, perhaps more importantly, the forced removal to lands of eastern Kansas created a culturally-diverse area. With the numerous tribes, interaction among the Miami and other tribes occurred on a consistent basis. Furthermore, travelers, soldiers, missionaries, and settlers eventually found their way out to the area, thus adding to the dynamic of the frontier mosaic. However, interaction between Native

⁶ Home E. Socolofsky and Huber E. Self. *Historical Atlas of Kansas*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988). p. 3

Americans and settlers was not always friendly, as a many number of conflicts arose over land rights. The many missionaries in the region often squelched hostilities before they turned too violent. Added together, the period between the 1830s and 1860s saw an array of people from different backgrounds living and interacting with each other in a tiny portion of what would become the state of Kansas. It is important to study the dynamics of such an area, as it was relatively rare for so many diverse people to come together and interact with each other in such a small area of land. Because of this proximity, the daily lives, rituals and beliefs of each individual group of people were shared with the other groups, creating one of the more demographically diverse regions during the settlement days of America. While the majority of this essay will focus on the Miami Indians and their daily life and interactions with others, it is essential to understand the background of the other tribes, for it provides insight as to how and why different groups of Native Americans ended up in a tightly packed area of southeast Kansas. Tribes began emigrating to the Kansas territory as early as 1832, when the Peoria and Kaskaskia tribes made their treks out to the Indian Territory.⁷ Prior to their arrival Kansas, the Peoria and Kaskaskia tribes were part of the Illinois Confederation, which up until the 1780s controlled many parts of present day Illinois and areas all along the Mississippi River.⁸ However, war and disease ravaged the Illinois populations, and by the early 1800s the Peoria and Kaskaskia tribes consolidated.⁹ Finally, in 1832, the

⁷ Barry Pritzker. *A Native American Encyclopedia: History, Culture, and Peoples*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). p. 419

⁸ For a good study of the Illinois Indians in the eighteenth century, see M.J Morgan's *Land of Big Rivers: French and Indian Illinois, 1699-1778* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010).

⁹ Ibid

tribes agreed to cede all their lands east of Mississippi to the government and accept a relatively small reservation west of the Missouri River in present the Kansas territory.¹⁰

During the same year of 1832, the Wea and Piankashaw, both Algonquian speaking tribes closely related to the Miami, also moved out to areas west of the Mississippi River. The tribes resided in Indiana and Illinois prior to their removal; however, their lands were relatively small. Throughout their history, both tribes were relatively low in number, rarely exceeding over 1,000. When they consolidated in 1736, their numbers grew to about 1800, but the tribes continued to face the onslaught of disease and war. In 1820, the Wea and Piankeshaw sold the last of their lands in Illinois and moved out to the Missouri. Twelve years later, the tribes once again agreed to move westward, finally relocating to a reservation similarly sized to the neighboring Peoria and Kaskaskia reservation to the West.

After the initial four nations moved to the reservations in 1832, three other tribes, who according to their beliefs were all one people at one point, also emigrated to the area.¹¹ These Indians, the Chippewa, Ottawa, and Pottawatomie, all originated in the Great Lakes region. First to enter the region was the Chippewa tribe. Prior to European occupation, they occupied an area that extended from Lake Huron in the east to the mountains of North Dakota. Yet like many others, the Chippewa found themselves scattered throughout the mid-west as a result of European settlement. The

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ "Pottawatomie History", <http://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/tribes/pottawatomie/pottawatomiehist.htm>, accessed Nov. 18th, 2010

majority lived on Lake St. Clair in Michigan, near Swan-Creek and the Black River.¹² By 1836, the two bands, which became known as the Swan-Creek and Black Band, were ordered to leave their lands by order of the government. In turn, the Chippewa tribe would receive a reservation west of the Mississippi River. The reservation, only 8,320 acres, would be home to only a few families of the Chippewa, the rest choosing to stay in Michigan.¹³

The Ottawa tribe, perhaps the smallest of the three, came to the Kansas territory one year after the Chippewa. The bulk of the Ottawa lived in Michigan and Ohio prior to the Indian Removal Act of 1830. But once again, the government asked that the Ottawa give their lands to the government and accept a new home in the Kansas territory. Many of the bands made the trek westward, while some stayed behind. One band, the Roche du Bouef band from Ohio, agreed to accept to a small reservation (about ten by twelve miles), on the Marais de Cygnes river in the Kansas territory. During their initial stay on the reservation, it had been said the Ottawa were the most inferior of all the tribes because they did not properly prepare themselves to live in what was known as the “Great American Desert.”¹⁴ Yet, with the help of a few white families in the area, in time, the Ottawa became a self-sufficient and prosperous community.¹⁵ The last Native Americans to enter southeast Kansas were a band of the Pottawatomie of the Great

¹² William M. Warren. *History of the Ojibway People*. (St. Paul, Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2009). p. 280-285

¹³ Rita Napier. *Kansas and the West: New Perspectives*. (Lawrence, University of Kansas Press, 2003) p. 76-78

¹⁴ William E. Connelley, editor. *Collections of the Kansas State Historical Society: The Ottawa Indians of Kansas and Oklahoma*. (Topeka: Kansas State Printing Plant, 1913-1914). p. 370-373.

¹⁵ “The Ottawa Indians” <http://www.legendsofkansas.com/ottowaindians.html>, accessed Nov. 17th, 2010

Lakes region. Similar to the other removed Indians, the Pottawatomie held land in the upper Mississippi river until the 1820s, initially in Michigan but later predominantly in Illinois and Indiana. However, the creation of reservations slowly pushed bands of the Pottawatomie further and further west. By the 1830s, much of the tribe occupied areas west of the Mississippi. Sadly, their journey westward came at a terrible cost, as many perished during the “Pottawatomie Trail of Death”, a trek from their lands Indiana to present day Osawatomie, Kansas. Hundreds died during the 660 mile journey, including many children. Others, however, simply refused to finish the journey and returned to Illinois and Indiana.¹⁶ By 1838, one band, Pottawatomie of the Woods, accepted the Kansas territory as their new home. Yet, very few Pottawatomie members of the band actually completed the entire journey. In terms of size, the Pottawatomie reservation was by far the largest of the region. But given the small numbers who ventured to Kansas, few lived on the reservation.¹⁷ By 1838, almost all of the Native Americans of southeast Kansas lived on the reservations, indicated in figure 2. However, the Miami tribe arrived almost a decade later in 1846.

¹⁶ Otho Winger. *The Potawatomi Indians*. Elgin, IL: Elgin Press, 1939, p. 43–53.

¹⁷ Ibid

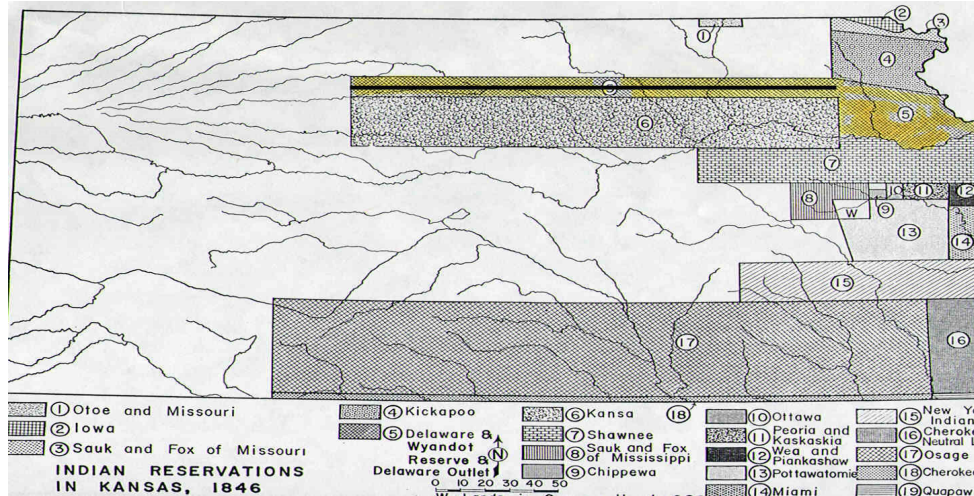


Figure 2: Numbered are the Native American reservations in the Kansas Territory in 1846. This paper will focus on 10-14. 10: Ottawa, 11: Peoria and Kasakaskia, 12: Wea and Piankashaw, 13: Pottawatomie, 14: Miami. Note: the Pottawatomie had the largest reservation, however, the Miami by far had the most people living on their reservation.

SOURCE: Historical Atlas of Kansas

By 1840, a Native American frontier mosaic had been created in the region, consisting of the Peoria, Kasakaskia, Wea, Piankashaw, Chippewa, Ottawa, and the Pottawatomie. None of the tribes ever had massive populations living on the reservations; therefore little interaction among tribes occurred. However, in 1846 when the Miami moved onto their reservation in the Kansas territory, other nearby Indians began mingling with the Miami. Meanwhile, settlers, soldiers, hunters, missionaries, and many others began encroaching on the Kansas territory as well. Without a doubt, people congregated to the Miami reservation more than any other reservation in the area, as evident in the stories and the earliest newspapers of Paola.¹⁸ Therefore, the interaction of the different groups of people created a complex society on the Miami reservation which lasted until the American Civil War.

¹⁸ Examples include Ely Moore's story of a buffalo hunt which will be explained later in the text, as well as Paola's newspapers stating the Miami reservation was the area where Indians received their payments.

When the Miami tribe completed their emigration to Indian Territory in 1846-1847, which included present day Kansas, they numbered roughly eleven hundred.¹⁹ The final location of their village would be along the Little Sugar Creek, known today as North Sugar Creek, in the northeastern portion of their reservation; the estimated size of their newly acquired reservation was 500,000 acres.²⁰ The village site would eventually change and later be located along the Marais des Cygne River. Many factors contributed adversely to their move, including alcohol, disease and the invasion of white settlers. Not all members of the Miami tribe were required to make the trek from Indiana to the new reservation in Indian Territory. Those Indians who possessed private property were permitted to stay in Indiana while the rest were forced to relocate to Kansas.²¹ Even though eleven hundred Miami made the journey to Indian Territory in 1847, it was estimated only one year later upwards of five hundred of these Miami emigrants returned to Indiana. It was later decided by Congress to concede and let them remain in Indiana.²² Many of the deserters left for good reasons. Life on their new reservation was difficult and they were constantly facing many problems, including alcohol abuse, disease or difficult interactions with white settlers or other Indians in the area. Not all was onerous among the Miami Indians, however; there were some bright

¹⁹ Kathy Weiser. "The Miami Indians." March 2010. <http://www.legendsofkansas.com/miamiindians.html> (accessed 11/14/2010).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Stewart Raffert. *The Miami Indians of Indiana: A Persistent People 1654-1994*. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1996) p. 76-99

²² Clarence E. Hayward. *The Lost Years: Miami Indians in Kansas*. (Kansas City, KS: Clarence E. Hayward, 2010) p. 20.

points, such as their hunting trips, a commitment to education and the resurgence of farming practices.

One of the most prevalent challenges the Miami Indians faced when arriving at their newly allotted lands was alcohol. The substance flowed freely in the neighboring state of Missouri, and due to their close proximity to Missouri, many incidents arose due to alcohol use. Even though the Miami Indians were supposed to receive annual annuity payments from the federal government for the sale of their lands in Indiana, these payments would be denied due to the abuse of alcohol, whiskey in particular, resulting in pauperism and starvation.²³ The alcohol so negatively impacted the Miami Indians that their Indian agent stated that, until the Missouri government adopted legislation to repress alcohol sales along the border, the hope for improvements among the Miami was pessimistic.²⁴ Alcohol was taking a great toll on the Miami, according to Major Hardy who reported to his superintendent “they are not only destroying themselves with liquor but are continually murdering one another.”²⁵ Another account of the strong grip that alcohol had on the Miami Indians comes from a young boy, George Edwin McFadin, who enjoyed watching and spotting the drunk Indians staggering through the town of Paola. McFadin would, “follow them and wait while they slept,” and after the Indian awakened and stumbled home he would, “hunt around where he was lying for coins that had dropped from the Indian’s clothing.”²⁶

²³ *The Lost Years: Miami Indians in Kansas*. p. 25.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 27.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 26.

²⁶ Maude A. McFadin. *The John Stephen McFadin Family*. (Newton, KS: Mennonite Press Inc, 1971). p. 63.

Alcohol was not the only challenge the Miami encountered in their village along the Little Sugar Creek. Disease decimated their population, supposedly wiping out half of its population. Small pox struck the Miami tribe during their emigration from St. Louis to Westport Landing in 1846.²⁷ Sadly, the small pox outbreak was just the first of many diseases to strike the already dwindling Miami. During the summer of 1849 a cholera epidemic broke out among many Indian tribes including the Miami whose village was one of the hardest hit by the disease.²⁸ For instance Christmas Dagnette, leader of the Wea tribe just north of the Miami, fell victim to the disease in 1849.²⁹

The entire reservation experience was not all alcohol abuse and rampant diseases; there were also many positives within the reservation. First, the region held claim to some of the most abundant game in Kansas. Animals which inhabited the area included a few remaining buffalo, large herds of deer and elk, along with smaller game like turkeys, prairie chickens, rabbits, squirrels and fish.³⁰ The yearly buffalo hunts of the Miami were always well prepared and always came soon after the received their annuity payments, which amounted to more than \$80,000 in silver.³¹ The purpose of these large-scale hunts was to provide meat and hides for the tribe, whereas the white hunters of the time saw the extermination of the buffalo as a way to dispel of the Indians. Ely Moore Junior, the son of the Miami Indian agent Ely Moore Senior, was invited to join the Miami on one of their six week long buffalo hunts, which he accepted

²⁷ *The Lost Years: Miami Indians in Kansas*. p. 21.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 22.

²⁹ William G. Cutler. *History of Kansas*. (Chicago: A.T Andreas, 1883). "Miami County"

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 24.

³¹ Moore, Ely. "A Buffalo Hunt with the Miami's in 1854." (1908), p. 403.

without hesitation. Luckily, he left an account of his experience. These annual hunts were large scale consisting of 400 men who would hunt the buffalo and 50 Indian women who were in charge of skinning and tanning the hides as well as jerking and preserving the meat.³² It took several days of traveling before the large group of hunters finally made it to their permanent camp. During that time Ely Moore volunteered to stand guard during the night, and he was informed by the Indians on the hunt that, "the wolf is the best picket-guard, for so long as they bark, snarl and howl all is safe from an outside enemy." Moore almost found this out the hard way.³³ While standing guard, he noticed that the wolves that had been howling and snarling earlier had abruptly ceased. He thought nothing of this, saying the disappointed beasts were denied a warm supper. Unexpectedly another night guard appeared before Moore and said, "down flat," and he shot his rifle at an object on the ground and then explained to Moore, "Pawnee, dead now." To Moore's astonishment there was an enemy Pawnee Indian lying dead on the ground who was attempting to steal horses from the hunting party. Eventually the large contingent of hunters arrived at their hunting grounds. Moore and his Indian companions were awestruck with the immense herd of shaggy beasts that awaited them. The Miami Indians insisted it was the single largest herd of buffalo they had ever seen. Almost immediately after arriving at the bountiful hunting ground, the hunting party began to kill several dozen of the buffaloes in order to protect the camp they would call home for the next six weeks. While the men were doing this, the women began scouring the plains, collecting buffalo chips, used to create fires to cook

³² Ibid, p. 404-406.

³³ Moore, Ely. "A Buffalo Hunt with the Miami's in 1854." (1908), p. 405.

meals. The hunting of large game such as buffalo was a dangerous sport but as Ely Moore puts it, “the risk is but added spice to the hunt.”³⁴ During their six week expedition the hunting group had only one man injured and one pony killed, but they had taken over 1,700 buffalo, which were tallied by removing the tongue from the beast and using the tongues as a tally-sheet; the tongue of the buffalo was also revered as a delicacy among the Indians.³⁵ Here lies an excellent example of the interaction that existed on the Miami Reservation. A group of hunters from entirely different backgrounds came together to engage in a buffalo hunt. Although the destruction of the buffalo eventually led to the decline of the Indian-American relations in the 1860s, in this particular instance it brought people together.

Hunting was not the only positive aspect of life for the Miami Indians, as they were also successful farmers. Many considered the Miami reservation to be some of the most fertile land in all of Indian Territory. Some of the crops they grew included corn, beans, squash and melons.³⁶ The reinvigoration in small-scale agriculture helped to move many Miami Indians away from the Missouri border, and thus away from alcohol, in order to cultivate their own allotted lands.

Another encouraging characteristic of the Miami Indians was their desire to become educated. The Miami greatly valued education, and even wanted to establish a mission and a school to educate their children. However, they did not wish to construct

³⁴ Ibid, p. 405.

³⁵ The entire story described here was taken from Ely Moore’s “A Buffalo Hunt with the Miami.” Copy at Kansas State Historical Society

³⁶ *The Lost Years: Miami Indians in Kansas* p.26.

a typical school. Rather, they wished to create a manual labor school. Soon a Catholic mission school was established with the help of many donors. The school consisted of two buildings, each two stories high with a 40-acre plot of fenced land adjacent to the school in which crops would be sown. Although there were a few good years of crop production, in 1849 especially, when 1,400 bushels of corn were produced, the school closed down after only a few years.³⁷ Its closure is attributed to the fact that the school had no programs or classes for female pupils. Given that females made up the majority of Miami Children, the school's failure was inevitable.³⁸ This was not the only school that was started, however. Dr. David Lykins, a Baptist missionary from Indiana, came to Indian Territory in 1844 and was the first white settler in what is today Miami County.³⁹ He created his own Indian school, The Harvey Institute, in 1848, located one mile east of Paola; this school operated until the commencement of the Civil War.⁴⁰ Lykins also took part in helping the Wea Mission, which will be discussed later in the paper.

Yet, by the 1850s, the Miami, and all tribes for that matter, also faced the onslaught of white settlers onto their reservation lands. The Miami nation began to feel the pressure when discussions about admitting Kansas and Nebraska into the union began with the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854. The Kansas-Nebraska Act opened up these new lands for settlement and stated settlers had the power of popular sovereignty, giving them the choice to accept slavery in their region or outlaw it.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 27-29

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Paola High School IHT Class, "History of Paola."2006. <http://www.paolachamber.org/history.htm> (accessed 11/29/2010).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ With the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, settlers from across the United States poured into the region. People from Missouri and the southern states stormed into Kansas with the hopes of adding another slave state to the union, whereas settlers from New England and other northern areas came to ensure Kansas would become a free state. For instance, George Wickline was one of the first men to stamp his name in southeast Kansas after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, occupying a very small portion of land somewhere either on the present day Wea or Middle Creek townships. Other settlers poured in soon after, staying close to Wickline's property, as many of the claims staked by these white settlers were fraudulent.⁴² All levels of government, federal, state and local, wanted to remove Indians from Kansas, even the reservations which the government promised would belong to the Indians forever. Therefore, in a very short time settlements and towns had sprung up in and around Native American reservations, seen in the image below.

⁴¹ *The Lost Years: Miami Indians in Kansas*. p.32.

⁴² *History of Kansas*. "Miami County"



Figure 3: Image of the Kansas-Missouri border during the five year period after the Kansas- Nebraska Act. Note the numerous settlements on Native American Reservations, particularly Paola on the Miami reservation.
SOURCE: www.griffingweb.com/Kansas_Border.jpg

The white settlers would destroy the Indians reservation lands by creating travel routes through their land and stripping the reservation of all its timber, and to no surprise to the Indians, the federal government did nothing to stop these squatters from stealing the Indians land.⁴³ On June 5, 1854, the Miami Nation gave in and sold a large portion of their reservation to the United States government for \$200,000, in which \$50,000 would be invested and the remaining \$150,000 would be paid in twenty \$7,500 annual installments.⁴⁴ This treaty reduced the size of the Miami reservation to 70,000 acres, and included an article which allowed the U.S. government to build any type of travel route through remaining tribal lands. As the number of white settlers in the area began

⁴³ *The Lost Years: Miami Indians in Kansas.* p.40.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.43.

to grow, the number of Miami Indians remaining in Kansas plummeted. White settlers entering the area felt Indians underutilized their land, therefore they decided to take control of the land and use it for farms and ranches. In addition, Soldiers coming to Kansas after the Civil War believed they should be compensated for their service and suffering during the war and claimed portions of Indian land as their own.

Many of the Indians also encountered military personnel traveling near and through the reservations lands because of the Fort Scott and Fort Leavenworth military road which stretched from north-to-south across eastern Kansas. This particular military road ran right along the Missouri-Kansas Territory border. The government ordered troops stationed along the military road between Ft. Leavenworth and Ft. Scott to patrol the borders and attempt to control the illegal sale of alcohol to Indians.⁴⁵ Since the Miami tribe's first village was located within a stone's throw of both the military road and the grog shops of Missouri on Little Sugar Creek, a large presence of military personnel more than likely occupied the area. The troops occasionally entered Indian villages in order to suppress threatening uprisings or to settle inter-tribal disputes.⁴⁶ The soldiers also held the responsibility of distributing gold and silver to the reservations in the area. Soldiers and government officials loaded up their wagons with gold and silver, travel to the Miami Mission and the capital of the territory, Lecompton, and deliver the annuities to Indians living on the reservation. B.J. Sheridan, settler on the Miami reservation, stated,

⁴⁵ Barry, Louise. "The Ft. Leavenworth-Ft. Gibson Military Road and the Founding of Ft. Scott." 1942. http://www.kancoll.org/khq/1942/42_2_barry.htm (accessed 12/2/2010).

⁴⁶ Ibid.

“Each Indian stepped forward when called, and with another or a white who counted the money and handed it back to the person called. This took an hour or more. Tents and sheeted wagons were all around the place, many peddlers were there with gewgaws, ribbons, silks, dresses, and shawls that reflected the colors of the rainbow, which they sold to the Indians.”⁴⁷

A celebration ensued after distribution was completed, in which Native Americans, settlers, and even soldiers engaged in horse races, dice games, card playing, and of course drinking.

Much of the good relations between Euro-Americans and Native Americans living on the reservation evolved mainly because of the efforts of Baptiste Peoria, the most important resident of the Miami nation during the time. He was believed to be part French as well as a mixture of Delaware, Kaskaskia, and Miami.⁴⁸ Baptiste Peoria was a very intelligent person even though he was lacking a formal education. He spoke six or seven Indian languages including Shawnee, Delaware and Pottawatomie as well as English and French and knew different forms of sign language as well.⁴⁹ However, he arrived in Kansas much earlier than most other Miami Indians, coming in 1829.⁵⁰ Because of his fluency in multiple languages, Baptiste Peoria acted as interpreter for the Miami tribe and even held the position of chief for some time.⁵¹ Sometime during the 1850s, he married the widow of Christmas Dagnette, Mary Ann, as well, adding his

⁴⁷ Miami County Historical Society. *Paola, A 150 Year History*. (Miami County Historical Society: Paola, 2005). p. 26

⁴⁸ Long, Harold. *Paola Kansas a 150 Year Timeline*. (Miami County Historical Society 2006).

⁴⁹ "History of Paola." <http://www.cityofpaola.com/index.aspx?NID=62> (accessed 11/30/2010)

⁵⁰ Kinsella, Thomas H. "The History of Our Cradle Land: The Peoria Village." 1998. <http://skyways.lib.ks.us/genweb/miami/kinsella/kinsel06.html#p23-1> (accessed 11/13/2010).

⁵¹ "Biography of Baptiste Peoria," *Collections of the Kansas State Historical Society, 1911-1912*. George W. Martin. Topeka, KS: State Printing Office, 1912, p. 876.

influence to the Wea tribe as well.⁵² If two prominent members of different tribes married during the 1850s, and this seemed to occur often, the result was increased interaction between the tribes. Despite Baptiste's fluency in many languages, he did not always show up to council meetings in the right state of mind, which caused much frustration among others attending the meetings. At a Miami Indian National Council meeting the then acting chief, Nopshigah expressed his aggravation with Baptiste Peoria who was then interpreter for the tribe. Chief Nopshigah reported that anytime Baptiste Peoria was needed for interpreting something, "he was usually drunk or could not be found."⁵³ Although Baptiste loved his alcohol, people still admired him because of his vital role in the founding of the town of Paola.

The Paola Town Company came about in the early to mid-1850s, and Baptiste Peoria was a member along with Isaac Jacobs, A.M. Coffey and David Lykins.⁵⁴ Their goal was to acquire title to any land which did not exceed over 600 acres, of which Baptiste Peoria donated five town lots for the purpose of building a church and five acres of land east of Paola for a town cemetery.⁵⁵ Baptiste would not be able to remain in the town he had helped to create for very long, however. In 1868 the Miami tribe were removed to Oklahoma Territory, but before they made their definitive journey to their new reservation, Baptiste Peoria was put in charge of selling all their lands, "which are the finest in the county."⁵⁶ The total number of Indians leaving the county and traveling

⁵² *History of Kansas*. "Miami County: Indian History."

⁵³ *The Lost Years: Miami Indians in Kansas*. p. 55-56.

⁵⁴ Harold Long, *Paola Kansas a 150-Year Timeline*, (Miami County Historical Society, 2006).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

south to Oklahoma Territory numbered 323, of which 117 were Miami Indians and the rest were members of the Confederated Tribes.⁵⁷ Baptiste Peoria died in Oklahoma Territory in 1874.⁵⁸ Baptiste certainly had the greatest influence on developing a working friendship between the tribes and white settlers. He believed that eventually the tribes would have to assimilate into white culture, because settlers moving into the area would only increase. However, Baptiste also knew that it could be done in a peaceful and calm manner. Without the key Indian leader, more than likely the relations between settlers and Native Americans prior to their removal would not have been as strong. As a sign of respect, the town of Paola honored Baptiste Peoria and Mary Ann Peoria with a plaque.

Baptiste also left a lasting legacy by sustaining the Wea Mission, a mission that greatly enhanced the congregation of tribes to one specific area. Throughout the mid-19th century, missionaries from various denominations traveled throughout areas of the west Mississippi, including Kansas. During a thirty-five year period from 1820 to 1856, the Presbyterian Church established nine missions in Kansas, including one near Wea Creek on the Wea reservation, seen in figure 5 below.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Kinsella, Thomas H. "The History of Our Cradle Land: The Peoria Village." 1998. <http://skyways.lib.ks.us/genweb/miami/kinsella/kinsel06.html#p23-1> (accessed 11/13/2010).

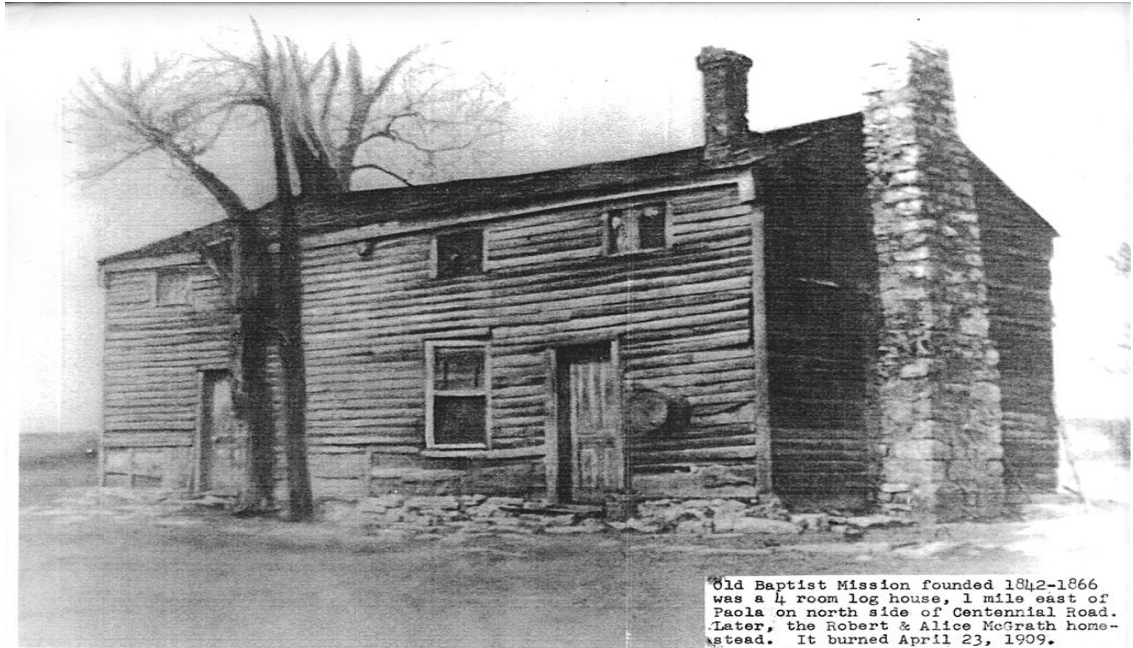


Figure 4: Caption states, "Old Baptist Mission founded 1842-1866 was a 4 room log house, 1 mile east of Paola on north side of Centennial Road. Later, the Robert & Alice McGrath homestead. It burned April 23, 1909." SOURCE: Miami County Historical Society

After approval from the Presbyterian Foreign Missionary Society, construction of the Wea mission began in 1834. The building, a log cabin standing one and a half stories tall, was completed in the summer of that year. By the winter of 1834, the missionaries established an area designated for Indian children as well as church services, a smoke house, corn crib, and a spring house. However, because of illness, disease, and lack of Indian children, the missionaries abandoned the mission. In 1838, the Osage River sub-agency of the Department of Indian affairs took over Wea mission and used it as a medical facility for small-pox vaccinations. Yet by 1843, the sub-agency was needed elsewhere, and soon after, the Indian Mission association of the Southern Baptist Convention took over.

In the spring of 1843, David Lykins along with his wife Abigail Ann Lykins and Miss Sara Ann Osgood established the Wea Baptist Mission. At its peak, the Baptist Mission enrolled forty-two Indian children from the Wea, Kaskaskia, Peoria and Piankeshaw. Because of the strong support from Baptiste Peoria and the local tribes, Wea Mission received superb financial support and survived well into the 1850s. Interestingly enough, there appears to be a blood-tie between the Baptist minister and the Peoria family, perhaps giving an explanation as to why Baptiste adamantly defended the mission. As revealed in an excerpt from an early history regarding an Indian Cemetery near the mission, the son of David Lykins was adopted by the Peoria family, given the name Me Shin Go Me Shia, and reportedly married the daughter of Baptiste, Elizabeth Peoria.⁵⁹

However, in 1854, the Wea, Kaskaskia, Peoria and Piankeshaw united to form a single confederated tribe with Baptiste Peoria, and chose David Lykins as their representative. When Lykins visited Washington, he brokered the terms of a treaty signed by James Buchanan, and was given 800 acres of land in Kansas, which included land on the Wea Mission Site. By 1855, the Wea Mission closed in order to make room for the Paola town site. Sadly, in 1901, a great fire destroyed its remnants. Yet, in 2001, the heirs of Henry H. Carrothers deeded the land of the Wea Mission to the city of Paola for preservation. Although the mission only fully operated for ten years, it had a lasting impact in the area, for during a thirty year period it brought together different groups of

⁵⁹ Swan River Museum. *Family Histories and stories of Miami County, KS: Volume 1*. (Paola: Miami County Historical Society, 1987). P. 20

Indians along with missionaries, epitomizing the idea of the frontier mosaic.⁶⁰ The advertised final relocation of the Miami lasted only a little over two decades before the government forced the Miami to relocate one final time. A multitude of factors eventually led to this forced relocation to their new tribal lands located in Oklahoma, the Quapaw Agency along the Neosho River. Westward expansion of white settlers accelerated greatly during the 1850s and 1860s with multitudes of people moving from the Midwest and east to places such as, Oregon, Washington and California. Many factors tempted the white settlers to gamble their lives on the dangerous journey across the nation in order to make a better living for themselves and their families. New jobs, the availability of cheap land to establish a farm or ranch upon, promises of better living conditions, climates that were beneficial to specific health tribulations, the discovery of gold and silver mines or the possibility of escaping debt or repayment of a loan at a previous location are just a few of the reasons why people headed west. These wandering white settlers did not perceive Native Americans as legitimate land owners.

Another issue that brought settlers rushing onto Miami tribal lands in Kansas was the outbreak of the Civil War in 1863. The Miami chose not to take sides during the American Civil War. Their reasoning was best put by their Chief, Nopshigah, who spoke on behalf of the tribe saying that, “we love the Great White Father and would wish to help him in his great trouble and time of need, but we are not able to do so as our numbers are so small.”⁶¹ Even though the Miami tribe chose to remain neutral during

⁶⁰ All information on the Wea Mission was gathered from the Miami County Historical Society’s website: <http://miami-county.com/history-wea-mission.html>. Accessed 3/28/11

⁶¹ *The Lost Years: Miami Indians in Kansas*. p.68.

the Civil War, they remained vigilant and cautious as border ruffians from Missouri such as William Quantrill were roaming throughout eastern Kansas. A woman was even reported as saying that residents, "would hide their money, lock their doors and seek shelter," anytime they caught word of Quantrill coming or being anywhere near their homes. There were also two battles that took place on the original Miami reservation, the Marias De Cynges Massacre and the Battle of Mine Creek.⁶² The Civil War only accelerated the rate at which white settlers were pilfering large tracts of Indian land and claiming it as their own. It is apparent that the Miami tribe had lost faith in the U.S. government and its broken promises, as John Roubideaux, Chief of the Miami Nation declared, "Our claims and rights are nothing, and the promised protection of the government is idle words."⁶³ As the white settlers continued to flood the area, the federal government finally deemed it necessary to relocate the Indians one last time.

With the passage of a treaty on February 23, 1867, any Indian who desired could become a legal citizen of the United States and remain on allotted plots of land in Kansas, or, the alternative choice was to relocate to northeastern Oklahoma, in present day Ottawa County, and retain tribal lands.⁶⁴ Those Indians who chose to become U.S. citizens received a cash settlement of \$3,761.14; thirty-two Miami chose to do so, whereas 67 Miami went with the alternative choice of retaining tribal lands and relocating to present day Oklahoma.⁶⁵ Due to their rapidly diminishing population, the

⁶² Ibid p. 67-69.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 70

⁶⁴ Kathy Weiser. "The Miami Indians." March 2010. <http://www.legendsofkansas.com/miamiindians.html> (accessed 11/14/2010).

⁶⁵ *The Lost Years: Miami Indians in Kansas*. p.71.

Miami joined with many other tribes including Peoria, Wea, Piankashaw, to form a single tribe known today as the United Peoria and Miami Tribe.⁶⁶ Once the Indians realized that relocation was imminent, they began selling their holdings of land and their private property to the white settlers who had invaded them. Surprisingly many of the notable white residents of the area were on the side of the Indians and wanted to be sure they were not cheated during this particular land sale as they had been on so many previous transactions. One of the dynamics of the frontier mosaic was developing close relationships with the different groups of people living in the area. Many of the settlers lived among the tribes for a substantial amount of time, often becoming very close friends. Seeing the U.S government exploit the tribes caused many white settlers to protest against the transaction. This land transaction would be no different than any other, however, as is best shown in a statement made by Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Enos Hoag. He said, "I shall not disguise my intentions to take every cent I can possibly get out of these lands for the Indians."⁶⁷ Finally, on March 3, 1873, the Miami Indians had sold what remained of their deteriorated reservation in Kansas and moved to their new reservation in northeast Oklahoma. The Indians were not treated any better on this particular journey than they had during any of their previous ones. One man was quoted as saying they, "shipped 'em like cattle," and that they, "sold the Indian land, some bought it for ten cents an acre, some got it for a package of tobacco or a quart of whiskey."⁶⁸

The

life of the Miami was a difficult one indeed. Their removal from their original tribal lands

⁶⁶ Kathy Weiser. "The Miami Indians."

⁶⁷ *The Lost Years: Miami Indians in Kansas*. p.72

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 75-76.

in Indiana to Kansas Territory in the 1840s was only the beginning of their problems. Once they arrived in Kansas Territory, they encountered challenges including, alcohol abuse, disease and the eventual invasion of white settlers who began to steal tracts of Indian reservation lands by squatting on them illegally. Alcohol and disease decimated the Miami population and the white settlers and American government continually broke promises and the spirits of the Miami Nation. Their final removal would be to northeastern Oklahoma where the Miami Nation remains today. Yet there has been resurgence. Today, they number over 3,300 people who are registered with their tribe and have accumulated over 2,000 acres of land, of which most is located in Ottawa County in northeast Oklahoma.⁶⁹

Although the government's forceful removal of Native Americans was truly a national tragedy, in some instances it helped create a complex society where, for a brief period of time, tribes shared their culture with other tribes and with white Americans. All told, seven tribes lived on reservations in the area, with the Miami eventually becoming dominant in the 1850s. Furthermore, the addition of missionaries, soldiers, hunters, adventurers, and settlers added to the dynamics of population mixture. Even though these people lived together nearly 150 years ago, numerous artifacts and landmarks exist. For instance, despite the fact that Indian cemeteries are enveloped by commercial development or are located on private land, they continue to give resident historians insight into the past. As a matter of fact, many residents of the area have blood-ties to the Indians who inhabited the area. One descendant of the Dagnette

⁶⁹ Miami Nation, "Frequently Asked Questions." <http://www.miamination.com/faq.html> (accessed 12/5/2010).

family, Charlene Bredemeie, points out that over 100 descendants of the Dagnette family live throughout Kansas today.⁷⁰ The lasting legacy of the this culturally diverse region is also evident in the name of its towns, villages, rivers, streams, landmarks and road-signs assigned during the 19th century. In the northern section of Miami County near Louisburg, a small creek named “Wea,” as well as the township and a small unincorporated town with the same name are yet marked on maps. Clearly, the stream and town received its name from the Wea tribe which occupied the area. Also, located in Miami County is the road “Cold Water Road” which more than likely ran through old reservations land that belonged to the Wea and Kaskaskia. Interestingly enough, the Wea Chief Christmas Dagnette died during the Cholera outbreak near a place named “Cold Water Grove” somewhere on the reservation.⁷¹ Indians probably camped near this area from time-to-time for hunting or traveling. Once the government built roads through the area, they likely named the road after the grove near it. “Cold Water” probably originally meant a spring. As evident by the artifacts and remains, the time period of the late 1840s-1850s has a lush history attached to it. Yet, relatively speaking, the frontier mosaic of the 1850s lasted a very short period of time. Nevertheless, the amalgamation of different cultures and people helped create one of the most unrecognized yet demographically and geographically diverse regions in American history, with traces of its existence still evident today.

⁷⁰ This bit of information was found on a forum on Ancestry.com. It can be found at this website: boards.ancestry.com/locaties.northam.usa.states.oklahoma.prestatehood.itgideon1901/4.1/mb.ashx

⁷¹ *History of Kansas*. “Miami County”

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