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Weston Nostalgia Conclusion Part II

# Indians in the Platte Country

The Indians of Platte Country is a brief history of Native Americans that were moved to the area. As verified by the numerous relics found, Native Americans occupied this region for centuries. Note, many excellent examples of these relics can be viewed in the Museum. It must be remembered that the Native American removal from the area included the original inhabitants and groups from the East (Potawatomi Nation) which were also being relocated to the Platte Purchase region. Within a matter of years all were expelled. The Native American transient occupation of the Platte region was indicative of the lack of organization that plagued this removal policy during the 1830s.

The following article was written noted Platte County historian Dr. R.J. Felling for “Discover North”

Some tribes had been sent across Iowa and settled in the area of Council Bluffs without too much difficulty. Many wandering tribes were funneled thru the Platte Country, perhaps because of the proximity of Ft. Leavenworth. Some went on to settle with the Kickapoos and some settled at the headwaters of Todd Creek in the Platte Country. Many had

been told this was their new home, although political machinery was already turning to make the Platte Country a part of Missouri. Paxton states that an Issue House had been built on the B. F. Whitely farm (just east of the Beverly Lumber Company at Beverly, MO) and contracts had been let to furnish the Indians with beef.

Tipton Papers pp 423,424. A letter from Isaac McCoy to Tipton. Westport July 27, 1837 (Gen. Gaines charges against Agent Davis.)

“Davis has been feeding about 1500 Potawatomis. The Department had instructed him to strike from the rolls all whose year had expired. In obedience he had stricken off upwards to 1000. He at length received orders to go to the Osage country and take his Indians with him and to be there in residence to receive emigrants. The whites had settled close about the Indians. They were in the habit of being near the Issue House on days of issuing, and when the Indian would receive his ration would pay him a trifle in cash...at that moment one of the vultures who had whiskey near would lay hold and take the Indian into the woods and obtain his money. You understand, hundreds and hundreds of families have rushed into Platte Country to secure preemptions and provisions are very scarce, and therefore they swarmed around the Issue House with their whiskey and nine pences almost as numerous as the green flies about the beef. The difficulties at length became insupportable, and Davis told Col. Kearney, who commanded the Garrison at Ft. Leavenworth, that he must either suspend the issue, or get guards to protect him from drunken Indians.”

Some wanted the Indians sent up the Missouri to Council Bluffs to join those located there. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs (C.I.A.) stated they should all be sent to the headwaters of the Osage in Kansas territory.

A.J. Davis to Tipton from “Issue House” Feb. 1837. “Sir: I have received your letter of the 24<sup>th</sup>... in which you say the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (C.I.A.) has promised you that he would order myself and

my Indians to the Osage River to locate permanently. That is what I have been wishing ever since I have been in the Platte Country. I believe that the most of the Indians that are termed the Wabash Indians would be willing to go to the Osage. They are violently opposed to going up the north side of the Missouri to Council Bluffs. A few of them may remain with the Kickapoos north of Ft. Leavenworth, but this Billy Caldwell with his party says he must go up the river to Council Bluffs, and I say his object is entirely different from those of the Indians. Living amongst them is the greatest curse that possibly could be entailed upon them. If the order is not out PRESS it before you leave the City. Qui-qui-tah will be there. Make use of him.”

The C.I.A. stated that in as much as the Indians were in a state of emigration that no appropriations could be made until a decision was reached that would please all the Indians.

Isaac McCoy to Tipton, May 29, 1837. Westport, Jackson Co. Missouri. “Sir: I have selected the site for the subagency of Major A.J. Davis. He is made subagent of the Weas, Piankeshas, Perories, Kaskaskias, Ottawas, and the Potawatamies of Indiana. Almost all of the Potawatamies that he has been feeding want to go to the Osage. However, a majority of the others do not. Only about 450 out of 2000. Still more unfortunate— Dr. James of Albany has been appointed subagent of the Chippawas, Ottawas, and the Potawatamies of Council Bluffs. The appointment is made there—for the exception that these bands will move up the Missouri and settle on lands assigned to them in the 1833’s. This unfortunate arrangement is calculated to divide the Potawatamies, at a time when just about all of them had decided to go to the Osage.”

Isaac McCoy to Tipton, Westport, July 21, 1837. “Dear Sir: Mr. Davis has just now left this place on his way from Ft. Leavenworth to his family on the Osage River. It was believed that most of the Potawatamies in this country would go to the Osage, but the arrival of Dr. James produced some change in the appearances. A few days since

Gen. Gaines arrived, and as believed, without any authority from the Secretary of War, undertook to remove all the Indians up the Missouri. He has chartered steamboats to carry invalid Indians and provisions etc., contracted for subsistances, employed a farmer for them, and with these dashing movements and fair speeches, has got the Indians anxious to go up the River, and they will leave in a few days.”

Davis apparently came back to Ft. Leavenworth.

In August of 1837 the emigrant bands of united Potawatomies, Chippawas and Ottawas residing across the river from Ft. Leavenworth since 1834 in the Platte Country were removed under the command of Maj. Gen. Edmund P. Gaines to the Council Bluffs reserve in southwest Iowa. This has been set aside for them by a treaty on Sept. 26, 1833.

Aboard the steamboat Kansas, Brig. Gen. Henry Atkinson, Col. S. W. Kearney, Dr. Edward James (the newly appointed subagent) and some 100 Potawatomies, women, children and invalids arrived at the new location in early August. A second group of Indians aboard the Howard reached Council Bluffs on August 8. Meanwhile the main body traveled overland, up the east bank of the Missouri, probably arriving at Council Bluffs by the end of August.

By November 1842 more Potawatomies had removed themselves from east of the Mississippi to this reserve. By the end of 1837 some 2500 Potawatomies were under the care of the Council Bluffs agency. By 1840 nearly 3,000 were there.

In 1847 they were all moved again to Kansas and finally to their reserve on the upper Osage or Marais des Cygnes. Their frequent moves, white man's diseases, and his “fire-water” had completely destroyed the culture and legends of these powerful Algonquin Nations. Although their stay in Platte County was only three or four years of starving confusion, we cannot shirk our responsibility in this “trail to oblivion.”