

A Brief History of the Wyandot Nation of Kansas

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and development of the Quindaro Townsite Ruins.

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During the 1600's, the Huron Wyandot Nation numbered 30-40,000 and belonged to the Tobacco League of Nations near the Canadian-U.S. border. We were visited by Jesuit Missionaries who unwittingly brought smallpox and yellow fever, which reduced our numbers to only a few thousand. The name we called ourselves was Yendot, meaning "People of the Island". Huron was a French word meaning "bristly haired" or "hair like a boar" and was regarded as an insult.

We lived a life of equality and liberty. One Huron-Wyandot explained to the French writer Lahontan, "We are born free and united brothers, each as much a great lord as the other, while you are all the slaves of one sole man. I am the master of my body. I dispose of myself, I do what I wish, I am the first and last of my Nation... subject only to the Great Spirit".

Our tribal structure is like that of a web. Each strand is only as strong as it's connection to the next, and each connection is only as strong as the web as a whole. A tribal structure is based on accountability to ourselves and to our tribe. Each clan, family and individual has a voice; and with that voice representation, freedom and responsibility. We had no need for written laws, no need for a monarchy. The founding fathers loosely modeled their version of democracy on the tribal principal of representation.

The Huron fought with the French during the French and Indian Wars. After the French and Indian Wars, our numbers were decimated to the point we no longer resembled the mighty Huron Nation, and adopted the traditional name of Yendot or Wyandot. The Wyandot were known as the premier warriors of the midwest and fought valiantly against the onslaught of European immigration. In 1795, Chief Tarhe, my Great-Great-Great-Great-Grandfather was the bearer of the camulet/Peace Pipe and acted as representative to the Indian Nations at the Treaty of Greenville, where we agreed to never fight against the United States of America.

The Shawnee Chief Tecumseh at that time was organizing the tribes against the United States and felt they should resist the advances of the settlers even if the last drop of Indian blood was drained into the Ohio soil. Tarhe saw advancement as inevitable and saw it better to live at peace than sacrifice the entire Indian race.

We were moved to a reservation in Ohio 12 miles square. The Indian law was that of temperance and did not allow liquor on the reservation. Bootleggers, however supplied our people with liquor. A black man named John Stewart, having had a profound conversion experience, became a Methodist Missionary and set out to minister to the Wyandots. The Wyandots respected Stewart for his speaking ability and that his words were not contradicted by his actions. He practiced what he preached. A mission was established in Upper Sandusky, Ohio. It is at the Mission that the Wyandot were taught the crafts of Western Civilization and taught to be self sufficient in a world not of their design.

In 1843, the Wyandots were forced to leave Ohio. Prior to moving to Kansas, the Wyandots sent out three scouting parties to appraise land in the Kansas-Missouri area. It was decided that the tribe would purchase land from the Shawnee. That land is today Westport and the Country Club Plaza. The Wyandots traveled to the Kansas City area from Cincinnati Ohio aboard 2 ferries, one piloted by "an abusive bigot". When they arrived in Kansas City, the sale of the land was held up by the Indian agent in the area. With no land on which to settle, the Wyandots were placed on government land which is today the old stockyards. On December 23, 1843, the Wyandots purchased thirty-six sections of land from the Delaware Indians for \$46,080. They were given additional three sections by the Delaware in appreciation for the land we gave to them in Ohio. The Spring of 1844 was warm and dry until May, when it began to rain. Rain continued for six weeks, falling every day. The result is that the Kaw River rose so high that what is now Kansas City, Kansas, and west Kansas City, Missouri was covered with fourteen feet of water. 100 out of 700 Wyandots died.

The town of Wyandott was established on what is today downtown Kansas City, Kansas. The names of prominent Wyandots still mark the streets: Armstrong, Tauramee, Splitlog, Clark. In 1855, when the Wyandots became citizens of the U.S., the Wyandot purchase was divided between the tribal members into 80 acre lots, However some received less.

Nancy Quindaro Brown, Chief Adam Brown's daughter, met Abelard Guthrie while the tribe lived in Ohio. Abelard was an ardent free state advocate. Chief Brown did not approve of Guthrie and when the tribe was forced form Ohio in 1843, he took Nancy to Kansas. Despite her father's objections Abelard followed Nancy, married her and was adopted into the tribe.

In 1856, 13 tribal members, including my Great-Great-Grandfather Ebenezer O. Zane, put together their 80 acre allotments to form a town which was to be the first free port on the Missouri river. Land was surveyed and it was established that the town would be named Quindaro in honor of Nancy Quindaro Guthrie. Quindaro is a Wyandot word which has been interpreted as "In Unity There Is Strength". On January 1, 1857 ground was broken. The partnership between the New England Immigrant Aid Company and the Wyandot Nation is the first time in history that New England Immigrants were aided by American Indian abolitionists. By the end of February the four story Quindaro House opened as the first hotel in the county. It was soon followed by Ebenezer O. Zane's hotel, the Wyandott House.

Quindaro was established as a free port and was popular with the ladies as a temperance town, meaning that no liquor was permitted. However, three saloons opened and were quickly closed by a group of "concerned citizens".

A steam saw mill opened that first year and was the first saw mill in Kansas with a daily capacity of 16,000 feet of lumber.

Captain Otis Webb operated a steam ferry between Parkville and Quindaro which ran hourly. The ferry was used in secret runs in service of the Underground Railroad but was sunk by outraged Missourians.

April 17th, 1857 the first issue of the Chin-Do-Wan, the Quindaro newspaper was published. Chin-Do-Wan means "Leader".

The Methodists and Congregationalists both built churches and the New England religious newspapers of the day wrote extensively about the holy cause of the Quindaro

to build a free temperance town.

A stage line ran between Lawrence and the Quindaro. The trip took 6 hours, cost \$3.00 and included lunch.

The Lightfoot of the Quindaro, a light draft steamer, was purchased in Cincinnati Ohio and operated as a parcel service between Lawrence and the Quindaro.

In June of 1858 the town boasted a total of 100 buildings and a population of 1200. April 3, 1858, the Chin-Do-Wan reports the sale of Shawnee lands which are today Johnson County and Wyandotte County for \$1.25 an acre. In comparison, land in the Quindaro sold for as much as \$1500 and acre.

Plans for a railroad were organized. Subscriptions for the Quindaro, Parkville and Burlington Railroad Company were sold to build a line to Cameron to connect with the Hannibal and St. Joseph.

1859 was a dry year in Kansas. Drought and nationwide financial depression forced many settlers back to their homes in the east. The population shrunk to 689. When Kansas was admitted to the Union as a free state, the Quindaro's purpose as a free port was unnecessary. Through its success the Quindaro sealed its own fate.

In 1861, the Civil War broke out. The men went to fight in the war and sent the women and children to Wyandott City to stay with family for protection. A few stayed behind, including Rev. Eben Blachly. On January 20, 1862 the 2nd Kansas Cavalry was stationed at the Quindaro to protect it from raiders. Instead, the troops quartered themselves and their animals in the Wyandott Quindaro homes and businesses. Houses were pulled down for firewood and squatters allowed to move into the supposedly protected buildings. Rev. Blachly and the citizens of Wyandott and Quindaro protested these actions which led to the removal of the troops only after the city's incorporation was repealed.

We gain insight to the life in Wyandott during the war through the remembrances of Mrs. Byron Judd who said, "We were kept in constant terror, there was no settled state. We just lived but we had good times. While the men were down town or out on guard duty watching the ferries and roads that led to the village, the women would get together in little groups to talk over the situation and indulge in speculations as to what was likely to happen...Every few days or nights there would be an alarm. The old Congregational bell would ring out clean and strong as a signal of danger, calling the people from their beds for the church, which was the appointed meeting place in time of danger, as it was also the hospital for wounded soldiers brought in from the fields of battle, where conquest raged fierce and bloody.

During the war, there was an exodus of freed slaves from Missouri. They came across the Missouri River on the ferry and were landed at the foot of Minnesota Avenue in Wyandott, which proved a haven of refuge during the stormy times.

Mrs. Judd said:

"It was a sight to make one weep, those poor, frightened half starved negroes, coming over the ferry and the people of the village down at the levee to receive them..Those negro refugees, men and women with little children clinging to them, and carrying all of their earthly possessions in little bags or bundles, sometimes in red bandanna handkerchiefs. I remember how they were housed and fed and made comfortable by the

good people and how they sang and crooned their old songs, forgetful of their misery and their wretchedness of a few hours before.

The pastor of the Congregational Church, Rev. R.D. Parker, one of the Andover band that came out to help make Kansas free, was a good man. He held religious services for the negro refugees and organized a Sunday School for them. I was one of the teachers. Only recently a negro woman stopped me in the street and remarked "Why Mis' Judd, I used to be in yo' class in Sunday School." Then it all came back to me, those days of the war times in Wyandott."

When the Civil war ended, the men of the Quindaro returned to Wyandott to collect their families and return to their homes in the Quindaro. When they arrived, they found a shell of the town they had built; many buildings decimated, and those that were not destroyed were occupied by recently freed slaves who had moved into the Wyandott's homes during the war. The freedom they had fought for in the war had cost them the land they loved and worked so hard to develop.

They returned to Wyandott disheartened and broken. To add insult to injury, their Quindaro land was illegally taxed at \$5 an acre. The Wyandotts owned 80 acre plots of land. The annual tax would have been \$400 which in 1860's would have been astronomical. The land they purchased only 20 years before had cost them \$2 an acre.

The state put the land up for sheriff's auction and the Wyandott land was sold. In Feb. 1867, the Kansas legislature relinquished all state's interest in taxes on the lots of the Quindaro town site to establish the Colored Normal School of the Quindaro to function as part of Freeman's University.

I will end with the words of Chief Tarhe as he addressed the assemblage at the treaty of Greenville:

"I now tell you that none in particular can justly claim this ground-it belongs in common to all. No earthly being has an exclusive right to it."

We (The Wyandott Nation of Kansas) feel the Quindaro is sacred Wyandott land and any developments or restoration must be executed in light of the land's sacred status. We look forward to working with all parties involved in this project.

