

HISTORY OF THE ABSENTEE SHAWNEES (Continued)

As we brought out last week, the Shawnee groups which eventually became known as the Absentee Shawnees were those groups which had been living in Texas and Indian Territory while the main groups of Shawnees were gradually becoming settled on their reservation in Kansas. During the Civil War, the Shawnees who had been living in Indian Territory moved north to live near their Kansas relatives. They did not want to become involved in the conflict between the North and the South. After the war they moved back to Indian Territory. By this time they were known as the Absentees by the United States government.

A treaty was made between the Absentees and the government by which the Absentees were supposed to settle in any unoccupied land they wanted in Indian Territory. Thus about 1868 the Absentee Shawnees moved back to Indian Territory and settled in what is now Pottawatomie County. They settled in several places. There was one group on the north bank of Little River near where the Santa Fe Railroad now crosses it. There was a dance ground there. Some other Shawnees settled down river toward the Seminoles. Others were located in the timber near what is now the southwest corner of Tecumseh. There was a dance ground there, also. Other Shawnees were scattered over the highlands of the North Canadian River valley. Some of these lands were later selected for allotments. The Shawnees were located in all of these areas in 1872-73.

In 1869 or 1870 the Citizen Potawatomes arrived in the same area. The treaty by which the Absentee Shawnees were entitled to settle these lands had never been ratified by the government, and there was thus no record of their settling here. Therefore in a treaty with the Citizen Potawatomes, the government had assigned them to the same area. When the Potawatomes arrived, they found the Shawnees already there. Because of this unratified treaty and the government's mistake in locating the Potawatomes here there was a lot of hard feeling between the two tribes. There was competition for game. Each tribe thought it was the rightful owner of these lands. It was years before this misunderstanding was cleared up and the Shawnees received clear title to their lands.

It seems that in these years the Absentee Shawnees were in two groups. Possibly the two groups go back into earlier times when one group of Shawnees was living in Indian Territory near the mouth of Little River and another group was living down on the Brazos Reservation in Texas. One of these groups seems to have been made up mostly of persons who belonged to the Hathawekila division of the Shawnees. This group later became known as the Progressives, and then as the White Turkey band. The other group was made up mostly of persons who belongs to the Pekuwe and Kishpogotha divisions of the Shawnees. Eventually they became known as the Non-Progressives or the Big Jim Band. At this time, however, the two groups seemed to work pretty closely together, and their chiefs may have met in common council.

In 1872 the principal chief, John White died. He had signed the unratified treaty of 1867. John Sparney became principal chief. Joe Ellis was second chief. Big Jim was the principal chief of the Pekuwe and Kishpogotha group, and Sam Warrior was the second chief of this group.