

About this time missionaries came in. The Friends Society (Quakers) established a Mission School. Two years later the government took over this school and it became the Shawnee Boarding School. The government was trying to civilize the Indians, and persuade them to live as white men. Most of the Shawnees were suspicious of these attempts to change their way of life. They did not want their children to go to school and learn new ways and neglect their old traditional ways. Also licensed Indian traders came establishing trading posts. One of the most important of these trading posts was called Shawnee Town, and later became the town of Shawnee.

In 1875 the Absentee Shawnees definitely split into two groups after growing friction among members of the tribe. The friction was partly due to the presence of the Potawatomies in the same locality and partly due to increasing government attempts to force allotment and make "white men" out of the Indians. An Act of Congress of May 23, 1872 had recognized the right of the Shawnees to land in the Potawatomie Reservation, but the Potawatomies were to have gotten twice the amount of land as the Shawnees. The government wanted both the Shawnees and the Potawatomies to accept individual allotments. Among the Shawnees the group that finally accepted the allotments under this Act were headed by Chief John Sparney and his second chief, Joe Ellis. The government officials called this group the "Progressives," because they cooperated, though reluctantly, with the government policy. The other group was called the "Non-Progressives" because they refused to accept their allotments. This was the group headed by Big Jim and Sam Warrior.

Big Jim's group, the Non-Progressives, moved to the Kickapoo Reservation north of Harrah in 1876. The Kickapoos had not yet been allotted in severalty, and Big Jim and his group had no intention of accepting allotments, either. Big Jim and his followers lived there for about ten years. They were finally moved off the Kickapoo Reservation by the army in 1886. Big Jim and his councilmen John Welch and Pecan submitted a memorial to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in which they gave their reasons for leaving and asked assistance for their losses caused by the moving. Later this claim was allowed.

The year 1879 was when Thomas Wildcat Alford and John King were sent to school at Hampton Institute, Hampton, Virginia. Alford was representing the Peltawa division and King represented the Hathawekila. The chiefs from both groups, Big Jim and Joe Ellis visited the young men before they left and gave them instructions. They reminded them that they were being educated in order to serve their people, and they warned them against giving up any of their old ways, especially their religion. Both of these young men later joined Christian churches, however. When they returned from school several years later, many of the Indians would have nothing to do with them.

Meanwhile the country was becoming more settled it seemed that it would eventually be opened to white settlement. In 1875 a post office was established at Shawneetown. Thomas Deer, a Shawnee who served as interpreter, was named post master. By 1880 there were many rumors that the Indian lands would be allotted and the country would be opened to whites.

Joe Ellis, the chief of the Progressive group, died in 1884. He was over ninety years old. The principal chief of the whole tribe and the main leader of this Progressive group, John Sparney, died a year later in 1885. White Turkey became the principal chief and leader of the Progressive. Big Jim and Sam warrior were still leaders of the Non-Progressives and resisting allotment.