

7-618  
July 20, 1970

Index side B, recording time 25 min.; interview time one hour.

Informant: Donna Elliott Vowel, 65-year-old Wyandotte,  
Seneca, Missouri

Subject: Wyandotte Indians

Mrs. Vowel is a descendant of one of the early Wyandotte families that were moved into Indian Territory. The Elliott family had their home near the head of Lost Creek, near the Missouri state line. It was there that Donna was born and has spent all of her life in the area.

The history of the Wyandotte Indians fits well into that of the great area of central North America, for it tells of a once great nation of some 20,000 people in the mid-seventeenth century whose numbers had been reduced to only 222 by 1872 then living in the Indian Territory. In the early history of the Wyandottes, they occupied all of what is now Ohio, a part of Indiana, and perhaps a part of the southern portion of Ontario, Canada. Demands by a growing white nation, a Government who opposed the existence of Indians in general, diseases introduced by foreigners, loss of lands and hunting grounds, and other factors through the years now, at this point in the twentieth century, show what has become of a minority group.

After the government took the Wyandotte lands in the north central United States these Indians were forcibly moved to an area that now includes Kansas City, Kansas. Perhaps the Wyandottes were more fortunate in their removal than some of the other Indian tribes, as they were transported on river flat boats. On arrival at their new designated land about 1840 the Indians spent the winter on the east side of the Missouri River. The following spring they moved across the river and settled in what became Wyandotte County, Kansas. These tribesmen were known as good agriculturalists and at once adapted themselves to a new and fertile land. Hardly had they become settled and established when the black cloud of white invasion again caught up with them. Demands of white settlers were heard by the government men in Washington, and again, what remained of the Wyandotte Nation, was uprooted and moved to Indian Territory around 1857. The Indians were convinced that "might was right" in their circumstance. For most Indian tribes across the country there was a piece of land set aside by the government when they were moved. But not in the case of the Wyandotte, they were simply moved to and 'dumped' across the Kansas line into Indian Territory. The Seneca Nation came to their assistance and gave them a tract of land across their own northern reservation.

A recent census is not available, but in 1940 the tribe numbered less than 1,000 members. By now it is doubtful that there is a full blood Wyandotte living, for at that time there were only three full bloods counted in the census, and nearly 700 had less than one-quarter Indian blood.

To-day there is no Wyandotte Reservation, and the only land the tribe owns is the Wyandotte Indian Cemetery near the Seneca Indian School and a cemetery in Kansas City, Kansas. In relieving the Wyandotte