

FOREMAN, GRANT.

MATHIAS SPLITLOG.

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Grant Foreman Director,
S-149,
April 23, 1938.

Mathias Splitlog,
The Cherokee Advocate,
August 24, 1887,
Page 1, Columns 4-5.

A Correspondent of the Missouri Republican at Neosho writes as follows: Occasionally the institution of a lawsuit, the construction of a railroad, or the transfer of real estate brings before the public men whose history would form an interesting romance; but few of this class have had a more varied and peculiar experience than that of Mathias Splitlog, the "millionaire Indian," whose recent sale of seventy acres of land for \$56,000.00 in Kansas, near Kansas City, caused so much comment in the local papers. Mr. Splitlog is a full blood Wyandotte Indian, and was born in an Indian village in Canada, and shortly afterward moved to Ohio. While a boy he was apprenticed to a carpenter and millwright, and, although his wages were only \$7.00 per month, young Splitlog thought he was getting rich. He imbibed a love for machinery and inventions, which has caused him to lend a helping hand to many a poor

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fellow who had a useful invention which only needed money to develop it and make it pay.

Splitlog's first venture was to build a steam-boat; which he did in company with his brother. They launched the boat upon the St. Clair River and started in the fishing trade. Uncle Sam soon became jealous of the boys, and confiscated the boat on a charge of smuggling.

In 1842 the Wyandottes, who were the last of the Indian tribes then in Ohio, by the treaty of the Upper Sandusky, ceded to the United States their lands in that state, and received in exchange land in what is now Wyandotte County, Kansas. In 1843 Splitlog came West with some of his tribe, and found, after his arrival at West Port Landing (now Kansas City), that he only had 50 cents in his pocket. He induced an old Indian to go his security for the price of an axe. With his axe he cut cordwood for the steamboats at the rate of 25 cents per cord, and after paying for the axe, which cost \$3.00, he soon saved enough to buy a pony, and shortly afterward we find him with a herd of horses. About 1850 Splitlog was married to the

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granddaughter of the old man who went his security for the price of the axe, and shortly afterward he began to build a mill. At this time he had no money to pay for labor, so that he did the work himself. He selected the timber, cut and hauled the logs, and then had a "raising" that is, had his neighbors to come and help him raise the building. He finished the mill himself, with everything but the burrs. These would cost at that time \$50.00, and Splitlog had no money; still he was determined not "to give up the idea of running a mill." When in this dilemma a steamboat which was unloading a pair of burrs at the "landing" accidentally let them fall overboard and they sank to the bottom of the Missouri River. Splitlog, learning of this, contracted with the owner to pay him \$25.00 for the burrs and take them up himself, which he eventually did after much trouble and hard work and having got the burrs out of the river it took but a short time to get ready to start the mill. The machinery was rigid for horse-power, and the day that Splitlog started he hitched in eight unbroken horses from his herd and earned 85 cents in cash, and in the evening he gave this money to his wife and told her to go to Northrups'

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(Splitlog's present bankers in Kansas City) and buy them something good to eat, as he now had that much money that he did not need.

Splitlog's mill was a success, and in 1855 we had him one of the leading men of his tribe. By the treaty of the Upper Sandusky the Wyandottes were not allowed to alienate their lands, but in the year 1855 a new treaty was made between the Wyandottes and the United States which severed the tribal relations of the Wyandottes and fixed their status as citizens of the United States. The first section reads as follows:

The Wyandotte Indians having become sufficiently advanced in civilization and desirous of becoming citizens, it is hereby agreed and stipulated that their organizations and their relations with the United States as an Indian tribe shall be dissolved and terminated on the ratification of this agreement, except in so far as the further continuance of the same may be necessary to the execution of the stipulations herein; and from and after the date of such ratification the said Wyandotte Indians and each and every

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one of them, except as hereinafter provided, shall be deemed and are hereby declared to be citizens of the United States for all intents and purposes, and shall be entitled to all the privileges and immunities of such citizens, and shall in all respects be subject to the laws of the United States and the territory of Kansas in the same manner as other citizens of said territory.

After the adoption of this treaty Splitlog began to speculate in real estate, and, although he can neither read nor write, he has been one of the most successful speculators in the neighborhood of Kansas City, and is today worth over a million dollars. About fourteen years ago Splitlog moved to the Indian Territory and located on Elk River near the Missouri line, and about four miles from Tiff City, and recently he became interested in a silver mine in McDonald County, Missouri. With his characteristic energy he began operations at once. He hired a mining expert named B. F. Requa, from Chicago, to superintend the operations at the mines, and, becoming

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convinced that to develop the mines and build up the town of Splitlog, a railroad was necessary, he, together with his partner in the mines, Moses W. Clay, commenced negotiating with the projectors of the New Orleans Natchez & Fort Scott Railroad Company, and soon that company was formed for the purpose of building a railroad between the terminal points named in their title and running by way of Neosho and Splitlog City. This company being too slow to meet the vigorous ideas of Splitlog and Clay, they severed their connections with the same, and Mathias Splitlog, Moses W. Clay, George

Hubbert and others organized the Kansas City, Fort Smith and Southern Railroad Company, with a capital of \$3,000,000.00

for the purpose of building a railroad from Kansas City to Fort Smith, passing through Splitlog and Neosho. This road is now graded for about thirty miles between Splitlog City and Joplin, and it is only a question of a few months when the cars will run southward from Joplin to Fort Smith, and Mathias Splitlog, the millionaire Indian, who is probably the richest man of his race will be known all over the country as the only Indian railroad man in the United States.

Mr. Splitlog has five children---four boys and one girl

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and now lives at Splitlog City, McDonald County, Missouri. He is like most men of his race, very taciturn in his habits, seldom speaking in more than monosyllables; still he is far from being disagreeable, because he can make himself clearly understood in very few words and is a good listener and quick to catch the point in the discussion of any question; and when he determines what course to pursue, he begins at once in the execution of his plans and never ceases until he has accomplished his ends.