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THE SHAWNEE INDIANS: THEIR CUSTOMS
THEIR TRADITIONS AND FOLK-LORE

From information gathered by the field worker, while living among them and from relatives of leaders now dead.

It is not my purpose to write a history of the Shawnee Tribe of Indians, but simply to place on record a few things concerning their habits and traditions which I have gathered while living among them, after their removal to the Indian Territory from their reservation in Kansas. The Shawnees made this move out of Kansas dating from 1868 to 1871. Some of the leaders, including three ex-chiefs of the Shawnee Tribe, together with a small band of others, came on down to the Territory as early as 1868, selected their land and went back for a time. These three chiefs, Charles Rogers, Johnson Blackfeather and Cyrus C. Cornatzer, settled in my immediate neighborhood before I was born and I grew up with them and attended the same school with their children.

The first school I ever attended was established by Sampson Rogers, brother of Chief Rogers. It was a national school established through the Cherokee National school board, it was called the Rogers school and was located on Cabin Creek, near

where the battle of Cabin Creek was fought.

For much of the information herein given I am indebted to the Reverend Scott Thompson, of Welch, now editor of the Welch Watchman, who came into possession of some Shawnee history through the son of Sallie Gore, daughter of the Reverend Charles Bluejacket, also an honored ex-chief of the Shawnee Tribe, who settled near the town of Bluejacket in 1871. Chief Bluejacket was the oldest of the Shawnee Indians to remove to the Indian Territory, and left more information concerning their customs and traditions than any of the other chiefs.

Charles Bluejacket the famous
Shawnee Chief.

Through the kindness of Mrs. Sallie Gore, daughter of Reverend Charles Bluejacket, of Bluejacket, the following sketch of the life of Chief Charles Bluejacket and his descendants was given to Reverend Jacob Spencer, of Slater, Missouri, a missionary to the Shawnee Tribe, about the year of 1907.

It seems to have dropped out of the memory of the present generation of men, if indeed it was ever generally known, that Chief Bluejacket was a white man. He was Virginian by birth,

one of a large family of brothers and sisters, many of whom settled in Ohio and Kentucky at an early day and many descendants of whom reside in this state. (Ohio) His name was Marmaduke Van Swerangen, I cannot now recall the given name of his father, or the place of his nativity, except it was in Western Virginia. He had brothers, John, Vance, Thomas, Joseph, Steel and Charles; one sister, Sarah and perhaps more. Marmaduke was captured by the Shawnee Indians when out with a younger brother on a hunting expedition, sometime during the Revolutionary War. He was about seventeen years of age when taken and a stout, healthy, well-developed and active youth and became a model of manly activity, strength and symmetry when of full age. He and a younger brother were together when captured and he agreed to go with his captors and become naturalized among them, provided they would allow his brother to return home in safety. This proposal was agreed to by his captors and carried out in good faith by both parties. When captured Marmaduke, or Duke, as he was familiarly called was dressed in a blue linsey blouse or hunting shirt from which garment he took his Indian name, Bluejacket.

During his boyhood he had formed a strong taste for the savage life as exemplified in the habits and customs of the wild

American Indian and frequently expressed his determination, that when he attained manhood, he would take up his abode with some Indian tribe. I am not able to fix the exact date of this transaction, except by approximating it by reference to other events. It is traditionally understood that Marmaduke was taken by the Indians about three years before the marriage of his sister, Sarah, and she was married in the year of 1781. Although we have no positive information of the fact, traditional or otherwise, yet it is believed that the band or tribe, with which Bluejacket took up his residence, lived at that time on the Scioto River, somewhere between Chilicothe and Circleville.

After arriving at his new adopted home, Marmaduke, or Bluejacket, entered with such alacrity and cheerfulness into all the habits, sports and labors of his associates and he soon became very popular among them, so much was this the case that before he was twenty-five years of age he was chosen chief of his tribe and as such took part in all the councils and campaigns of his time. He took a wife of the Shawnee Tribe and reared several children, but only one son

who was called Jim Bluejacket and was rather a dissipated wild and reckless fellow, who was quite well-known on the upper Miami River during and after the War of 1812. He left a family of seven children, four sons and three daughters who moved to the Kansas reservation, and later to the Indian Territory. They were Nancy, George, Betsy, Henry, John, Kate and Charles.

Bluejacket to Kansas in 1832

Charles Bluejacket, son of Jim Bluejacket was born in what is now the state of Michigan in 1816 and moved from Ohio to the Shawnee reservation, in Wyandotte, Kansas, in 1832, under the conduct of the National Government. He was well educated, having attended the Quaker Mission school, intelligent and highly intellectual and in all respects, feature, voice, contour and movement, except as to his darker color was an exact facsimile of the Van Swerangens. At an early date he was converted from heathenism to Christianity and united with the Methodist Mission. During his long life he was a faithful, consistent and courageous Christian; his brother, Henry was also a member and an official in the Methodist Church, but died early in life.

Charles Bluejacket moved from Kansas to the Indian Territory in 1871, and settled near the present town of Bluejacket and died there October 29, 1897, at the age of eighty-one years.

Charles Bluejacket was married three times, he had six sons and one daughter by his first marriage who lived to years of maturity. They are Sally, David, Price K., Willis G., Silas D., Henry C. and Richard M. By his second wife, he was the father of Mrs. Cora B. Haggerty, Mrs. Mary B. Sharp, Lucinda, Amanda and Lewis Bluejacket, all of Bluejacket.

Mrs. Sally Gore

Sally Gore, who furnished much of the information about her famous father was well-known to me. I grew up with her children and also most of her brothers and sisters. Sally was an intelligent, well-educated woman, the oldest child of the Reverend Charles Bluejacket and reared a fine family of children. Sally was born in Johnson County, Kansas, January 7, 1844, attended the Shawnee Mission school in Kansas for eight years and also attended the Independence, Missouri college.

On November 10, 1858, she was married to a prominent young attorney, Jonathan Gore, who came from Kentucky and they are the

parents of six children, a daughter who was born in 1860 and died in 1903, I did not know. The others are Hattie, H. Blake, Mamie, Daisy and Jonathan Jr. Mrs. Core's husband died at Bluejacket July 12, 1906, and Mrs. Core lived for several years after that date, the exact date of her death I do not know. Three of her children are still living. All of Mrs. Core's own brothe are dead, a half-brother, Lewis, and two half-sisters, Mrs. Cora B. Haggerty and Mrs. Mary B. Sharp, still live at Bluejacket.

Bluejacket's Ancestors War Chiefs

Charles Bluejacket's grandfather, whose Indian name was Leh-yah-pih-ehr- sehn-wah, meaning Bluejacket was a famous war chief and was in the battle in which General Harmas was defeated, in 1790. In the battle in which General Anthony Wayne defeated the Northwest Confederacy Indians, in 1794, Captain Bluejacket commanded the allied forces. Charles Bluejacket's ancestors were war chiefs, but never village or civil chiefs until after the removal of the tribe to the west. His father was probably the first civil chief of the family. Charles Bluejacket inherited all the noble traits of character of his grandfather, he was licensed to preach in 1859 and continued to preach until

the time of his death in 1897.

A favorite hymn of Bluejacket's and the one which was largely instrumental in his conversion was the familiar hymn of Isaac Watts:

Alas and did my Savior bleed,
And did my Sovereign die,
Would He devote that sacred head,
For such a worm as I.

The following is the verse in the Shawnee language.

Ma-ye che mi ce ta ha,
Che na mo si ta we
Ma ci ke na mis wá la ti
mi ti na ke pa ni.

Shawnee Tradition of their Origin.

I record here the Shawnees own tradition of their origin, as told to Reverend Jacob Spencer, Missionary in 1858-1860 by the Reverend Charles Bluejacket.

Our tradition of the creation and the antediluvian period agrees in all essential points with the Mosaic record. The

[illegible] tradition [illegible] canoe [illegible] of the [illegible] but in addition [illegible] woman [illegible] with [illegible] family [illegible] from the white men's wigwam. When the sense of [illegible] constitution came over her, she began to weep very bitterly. Then there appeared a heavenly messenger [illegible] she was so sorrowful; she told him that [illegible] left her white brother his family; but she was just a [illegible] woman alone and that there was to be an end of her people. Then the visitor said, 'Remember how the first man was made', and then left her. From this she knew that a new creation was meant, so she made small images of children from the earth as directed, as the Great Spirit had made the first man, but when she saw that they had no life she again wept. Again the messenger appeared and inquired the cause of her grief. She said she had made children from clay but they were only dirt.

Then said the visitor, 'Remember how the Great Spirit did, when the first man was made.' At once she understood and breathed into their nostrils, and they all became alive. This was the beginning of the red men. The Shawnees to this day venerate the memory of the one they call their grandmother, as the origin of their race.

According to Bluejacket's tradition, the Indians, in coming to this continent, crossed a narrow part of the ocean far to the north, being carried across the water on the back of a turtle. Another version of the tradition is, that a being whom they knew not asked them to get in a small boat he was in and that he would take them to a good and happy country but it was so small that all were afraid to get into it; finally one got in and the boat grew larger. Then others got in the boat growing larger as each individual embarked, finally when no more would get in the strange visitor brought the occupants to the other shore-America.

Coming of the White Man.

Bluejacket also related the following traditions, relative to the coming of the white men to their country.

"Our old men (meaning the elders and wise men in the far remote past) used to tell our people that a great serpent would come from the seas and destroy our people. When the first European vessel came in sight the Indians caught sight of the pennant, with its forked end darting and moving as the forked tongue of a serpent. 'There is the serpent our old men have been telling us of.' they said. When the old men first tasted rum, tears ran down their cheeks. 'This is what is to destroy our young men, they said.

The following legend illustrates the greed of the white man for land and his unfair methods in obtaining it. "The white man asked us for a small piece of land, a piece that a string cut from a buffalo hide would reach around. We told him, certainly, we would gladly make him so small a grant as that. Whereat the white man began to cut a very small strip from the edge of the hide, cutting around it. This he kept on doing, going round and round, until the hide was converted into a very long string, that surrounded a large piece of land.

Shawnee Arrogance

The Shawnees arrogated to themselves a superiority over the whites, as well as over other tribes of Indians. At the convention held in Fort Wayne, Indiana, in 1803, one of their principal men set forth their views in the following language:

"The Master of Life, who was himself an Indian, made the Shawnees, before any other of the human race and they sprang from his brain. He gave all a knowledge he himself possessed and placed them upon the great island and all the other red people are descended from the Shawnees. After he made the Shawnees he made the French and English out of his breast, the Dutch, out of his feet and the Long Knives (Americans) out of his hand. All of these inferior races of men he made white and placed them beyond the stinking lake (The Atlantic Ocean). The Shawnees for many ages continued to be masters of the continent, using the knowledge they had received from the Great Spirit in such a manner as to be pleasing to him, and to secure their own happiness. In a great length of time, however, they became corrupt, and the Master of Life told them that he would take away

from them the knowledge which they possessed and give it to the white people to be restored when, by return to good principles, they would deserve it.

Many ages after that the Indians saw something white approaching their shores. At first they took it for a great bird but they soon found it to be a monstrous canoe, filled with the very people who had gotten the knowledge which belonged to the Shawnees. After these white people had landed, they were not content with having the knowledge which belonged to the Shawnees, but they usurped their land also. They pretended to have purchased these lands, but the very goods they gave for them were more the property of the Indians than of the white people, because the knowledge which enabled them to manufacture these goods actually belonged to the Shawnees. But these things will soon have an end. The Master of Life is about to restore to the Shawnees their knowledge and their rights, and he will trample the Long Knives under his feet."

Reference has been made to the division of the Shawnees into clans or families. Such divisions are common to all Indian Nations, though the number and name is peculiar to each tribe.

[illegible]

[illegible]

Indian plans [illegible]

to the [illegible]

any war [illegible]

[illegible]

The [illegible]

authorities [illegible]

1. Pa-tu[illegible]

2. Pe-[illegible]

3. Se-ba [illegible]

4. Ka-[illegible]

5. Wha-wa [illegible]

6. [illegible] sake-[illegible]

7. Ne-la-wa [illegible]

8. Ma-na-[illegible]

9. [illegible] qua---------- [illegible]

10. Pe-se-wa----------[illegible]

11. Pe-la-tue----------[illegible]

12. Sem-yai-wa----------[illegible]

Some traditional Shawnee History.

The Shawnees belong to the Algonquian linguistic family

of North America [illegible] to the Delaware [illegible] have descended from [illegible] with kindred tribe [illegible] prehistoric times to the [illegible] Iroquois. The Shawnees [illegible] built the Cahokia [illegible] were living in [illegible] New western [illegible] country they were driven [illegible] to the southeast, [illegible] they were [illegible] fair Farms and the [illegible] the Iroquois and English and were given permission to return to their home land and [illegible] settle in the country of the Conestogas in [illegible], where [illegible] village at Paxtang, Pennsylvania. About the same time they made a settlement on the Delaware, near Durham, moving later still higher up the river. They also settled on the Potomac at an early date for in 1701 William Penn ratified relations of friendship with the chiefs of the Conestogas and the Shawnees in-

habiting the head of the Potomac River.

In 1728 some of the Shawnees moved west to avoid trouble with the six nations, because of their actions toward the Conestogas. They moved to the Ohio, perhaps with the permission of the Wyandottes in whose country they settled and put themselves under the protection of the French. The English sought the aid of the six nations, in an effort to induce them to return to the vicinity of Paxtang, west of the Susquehanna River. The treaties held with them between 1732 and 1739 secured the return of a portion of them, but in the latter year it was found that they were scattered from the great island to the Allegheny.

Before 1750 their principal seat was on the Ohio, about the mouth of the Scioto River. They were friends of the French and enemies of the English. In the Revolution they were enemies of the Americans, remaining so until subdued by General Wayne. They were the scourge of the back settlements for nearly a century; the frontiers of Virginia and Pennsylvania and even those of New York and the Carolinas were constantly raided by Shawnee warriors. The Shawnees were the most restless and turtulent of

the Algonquian tribes, and about the year 1763 they began to cross the Mississippi to what is now Missouri.

In 1798 Manuel Perez became commandant-general at St. Louis and he found the Osages troublesome to the settlements of upper Louisiana. He was unable to provide adequate protection and the presence of the few Shawnees and Delawares living in his realm suggested the idea of increasing their numbers as a check to the inroads of the Osages so he sent missionaries to the Shawnees and Delawares to invite them to remove to his country, offering them a sufficient body of land in the vicinity of Cape Girardeau. The offer was accepted and numbers of these Indians at once moved to the country, where they became the chief protection of the settlements from the Osages. It is said that Lorimer, afterward the commandant-general at St. Geneva, negotiated this removal of the Shawnees and Delawares and that he was allowed a grant of 30,000 acres of land for so doing.

When the settlements began to increase along the Mississippi, the Shawnees and Delawares became discontented in their settlements near Cape Girardeau, probably from the in-

solent and rough treatment at the hands of the pioneer settlers. The Delawares abandoned their villages there about the year 1815, and moved to the James Fork of the White River. In the course of a few years they were followed by most of the Shawnees. By treaty the latter tribe was given a tract of land on the south bank of the Kansas River, from its mouth to the junction of the Republican. This was in 1825, in which year members of the tribe began to arrive in the new reservation, settling in what is now Shawnee township, Wyandotte County, Kansas. By 1828 most of the Shawnees had moved to the new home west of Missouri, and later, 1831, the Fish band, including the families of Tecumseh and the Prophet, to which band they belonged, moved from Ohio and joined the western division, practically uniting the Shawnee people.

The Shawnees were called Chaouanons by the French. They called themselves Shawano. The tribe is separated into four divisions, the Mequachchake, the Chillicothe, the Kiskapocoke and the Piqua, the Piqua is said to be the division last formed or instituted.

Shawnees cling to old Customs.

The Shawnees cling to their old customs, seemingly more reluctant to abandon their ancient rights than any other civilized tribe. They regard their religious ceremonies of much importance and what is known of their primitive belief indicates that their religion was originally a form of sun worship. Of all the Indian languages the Shawnee is the most expressive, stately, eloquent and beautiful. They have a folk-lore of beauty and value. Perhaps no Indians were superior to the Shawnees in courage, the history of the Ohio valley abounds in instances of their daring. The greatest Shawnee was Tecumseh; the Prophet was a remarkable man, by many believed to have been the moving spirit behind the schemes of Tecumseh. He died in Shawnee Township, Wyandotte County, Kansas, and is buried there. While the Shawnees did not follow the warpath so persistently as did the Delawares after the removal of these tribes to the Kansas River country, they pushed their forays to a distance of more than a thousand miles.

In the summer of 1837 a small party of five or six Shawnees fell in with a large band of Yutas, near the eastern borders of the Rocky Mountains south of the Arkansas River. At first they

were received with every demonstration of friendship but the Utas, emboldened no doubt, by the small number of their visitors, very soon concluded to relieve them of whatever surplus property they might be possessed. The Shawnees, however, much to the astonishment of the marauders, instead of quietly surrendering their tools and chattels offered to defend them, upon which a skirmish ensued that actually cost the Utas several of their men, including a favorite chief, while the Shawnees made their escape unhurt toward their eastern homes.

As the Shawnees did not go to live in the Indian Territory until 1867 and later, the Santa Fe Trail lay for a distance of some sixty miles through their country. Members of the tribe were engaged on the Santa Fe Trail in various capacities, chiefly as herders for cattle and horses and as hunters, scouts and guards; they were faithful and trustworthy.

Tradition of Shawnee-Delaware War.

Many years ago a band of Shawnee Indians occupied the country now included in the state of Virginia and contiguous country and the Delawares occupied territory separated from them by a river, possibly the Potomac. The tribes lived in

friendly relation and often visited each other. One day some Shawnee women crossed the river to the Delaware side to gather some herbs and roots, allowing their children to remain to play with the Delaware children while they were engaged in their work. The boys, in their play, found a pretty grasshopper. This a Shawnee boy succeeded in capturing, but a Delaware boy claimed it because it was caught in his territory. A quarrel, followed by a fight, was the result and the Delaware boys being more numerous, the Shawnee lads were soon forced to flee to their mothers for protection. The Shawnee women took up the quarrel of their sons, but were soon forced by the Delaware women to recross the river to their own territory. As soon as the Shawnee men heard of the trouble a number of their warriors crossed to the Delaware side to avenge their women and boys, but the Delawares were too strong for them, and they like their women, had to flee for safety to their own side of the river. They were followed by a superior force of Delawares and a battle was fought in which the Shawnees were badly defeated. The Delawares followed up their victory with such energy and success, that the Shawnees were compelled to abandon their country.

They went westward, presumably to what is now the state of Ohio.

Shawnee Council House in Kansas

Reverend Jacob Spencer, a missionary among the Shawnees, says, "When I was making my home with Charles Bluejacket and family, in the fall of 1858, I noticed one day a large piece of squared timber lying in his barn lot, having a turtle in relief on each of the two opposites sides. They were the size of a large land turtle, or tortoise, the work had been well-done. I asked for an explanation and Bluejacket told me that it was a post from an old council house, of the Shawnees that had stood on his land where he was then living, in Johnson County, Kansas. Most of the tribes have each a council house, that of the Shawnees was a hewn log building, erected by themselves about thirty feet wide and eighty feet long and one story high. It contained one apartment only, without either upper or under floor. There was a door in each end, but no window except three small holes on each side, about as high as a man's head when seated, resembling the apertures for the use of small arms in a block house. Openings in the roof allowed the smoke of the fires

on the earth floor in the center to escape. The roof was a kind of very ordinary shingling, with boards. The only seat was a continuation of hewn logs, layed along the walls. The sides of the building were kept in place by cross beams, resting upon two rows of wooded pillows. On one side of one of the pillows, nearest one of the doors, was carved in relief, the figure of a rattlesnake about five feet long, on the other side the likeness of a snake without the rattle. On two opposite sides of one of the pillows, nearest the other door, were carved in relief uncouth resemblance of the human face, somewhat larger than life, partially painted, and with a twist of tobacco tied to the pillow crossing, immediately above each figure. On each of two opposite sides of a pillow, in the interior, were carved as above, the figure of a turtle, colored so as to increase the resemblance of the lving animal, metal was inserted for eyes.

The Calling of an Assembly of Confederated Tribes.

Often, if not generally or universally two or more tribes of Indians were united in a confederacy for mutual protection,

as for war or other purposes. Meeting of these confederate tribes, when exigencies arose were necessary for the gathering of war parties or the consideration of subjects of general warfare. Any tribe could call a meeting, when it appeared necessary. Sufficient messengers were selected and a string given to each one, containing a knot for each day intervening between the time of calling, and the time of meeting. The first day the messenger passed through the tribe, to whom he bore the message, showing the string with the knots, and giving the place of meeting. The next morning before starting on his way he would cut off one knot, and so on each day until his work of notification had been completed.

Feasting of Guests.

One of the ancient customs of the Shawnees, as well as the other Indian tribes was to always place food before a visitor on his arrival. At any hour, day or night, as soon as a friend entered the wigwam the women would immediately set about the preparation of a meal for the guest. This same guest may have just feasted with another friend, but this would form no excuse for refusing to eat again. Among some of the