

/THE PERMANENT INDIAN FRONTIER/ THE REASON FOR THE
CONSTRUCTION AND ABANDONMENT OF FORT SCOTT,
KANSAS DURING THE DRAGOON ERA

by

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Ina Mueller Scholarship

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Introduction

From 1830 to 1854, the Indian policy of the United States called for the establishment of a permanent Indian frontier west of the organized States and Territories. The Proclamation Line of 1763 set a precedent for this when King George III attempted to keep the American colonists east of the Appalachian Mountains. The United States Army occupied many forts along the frontier line, among them Fort Scott in present-day southeastern Kansas. Some of the posts, such as Fort Snelling in the north and Fort Leavenworth, were built prior to the establishment of the Indian frontier, but the army constructed Fort Scott solely to maintain the white-red boundary.

The Removal Act of 1830 embodied the concept of the permanent Indian frontier. It provided for an exchange of Indian lands east of the Mississippi River, where the white population was increasing rapidly, for land west of the Mississippi. The United States government did not expect these land exchanges to be accomplished in a short time. In 1830, the Rocky Mountains formed the western boundary of undisputed United States territory; it was into this trans-Mississippi West that the Indians were moved. In 1834 Congress passed the Intercourse Act which increased the penalties for those who would violate the integrity of the permanent Indian frontier or attempt to sell whiskey or hunt on Indian lands. The 1830s saw the policy of Indian removal progress toward a

true permanent Indian frontier, beyond which no white settlement could exist under the law. Despite legislation from Washington, D.C., however, the Indian country and frontier never achieved the permanence envisioned for them.

The goal of a permanent Indian frontier held its greatest popularity in the years immediately prior to the Mexican-American War. By about 1840, most of the tribes that had agreed to move had indeed done so, and the expansionists' dream of a nation stretching from coast to coast had not yet captured the imagination of officials. Even at that point, however, pioneers filtered into the Indian lands, forcing the government to negotiate new treaties with the tribes for more land cessions. White settlement in Missouri and then Arkansas and Iowa pushed the remaining Indians out of those areas.

Indian removal beyond the Mississippi stemmed from more than the white man's desire for more farmland. If land-hunger had been the only factor, there would have been no efforts to make the frontier permanent. Rather, the Indian frontier was an attempt by officials to preserve the Indians as a race working with the desires of the frontiersmen for cheap land. Initially, tribes moved west seeking game to support their traditional way of life which had been severely altered by the influx of settlers. As time progressed, however, concerned whites began to feel genuine fear for the survival of the Indians because of the loss of their ancestral lands and their weakness for alcohol. Indian numbers were decreasing and tribal members were not being absorbed by the white population. The only way for the Native Americans to survive was adaptation to the white man's ways--specifically, to change from predominantly hunting and gathering societies to societies based on

agriculture. This great change, they felt, could be accomplished only if the Indians were isolated from the negative influences of white culture, such as alcohol.

The projected transition for the Indians required time, space, and dedicated men. Missionaries and Indian agents working beyond the permanent Indian frontier were to accomplish the feat of civilizing the Indians. Men such as Jotham Meeker and Isaac McCoy struggled to bring Christianity to the Indians while training them for a new way of life. They firmly believed that once the Indians learned how to manage farms and desired to follow the paths of agriculture and Christianity to civilization, the government would be able to cease its paternal care of the tribes.

Agents and sub-agents of the Office of Indian Affairs also had great responsibilities and, as a rule, were sincere in their dealings with the various Indian bands. They negotiated treaties, mediated conflicts between tribes, and disbursed the annuities paid to the Indians. Their letters and reports from the period express extreme frustration over their inability to effectively curtail the whiskey trade.

Even as the government established the frontier and attempted to make the boundaries clear, changes occurred which drastically altered Indian policy. The concept of the permanent Indian frontier disappeared between 1848 and 1854, but the reasons for its demise appeared long before then.

Ever greater numbers of settlers moved west along the trails in what became Kansas and Nebraska during the 1830s and 1840s. The Santa Fe Trail, in use since 1821, carried traders between the western United States and Mexico regularly until the railroads spanned this distance.

These merchants steadily increased their commerce until the war with Mexico when the United States acquired what is today the states of California, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and Utah. As United States territory, the route picked up even more traffic which further increased with the California gold rush of 1849. The Oregon Trail also led many travelers west, both to Oregon and later California. Though the number of pioneers remained relatively small until the United States and Britain settled their dispute over the control of Oregon in 1846, traffic increased steadily throughout the early 1840s. As the number of emigrants increased, so did their cries for protection against marauding Indians. More troops moved west to protect the wagon trains, encouraging more pioneers to go to the Pacific coast and take advantage of the protection afforded them. This inertia soon contributed to plans to open a broad transportation corridor and thus clear the central section of the Indian country of Native Americans.

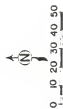
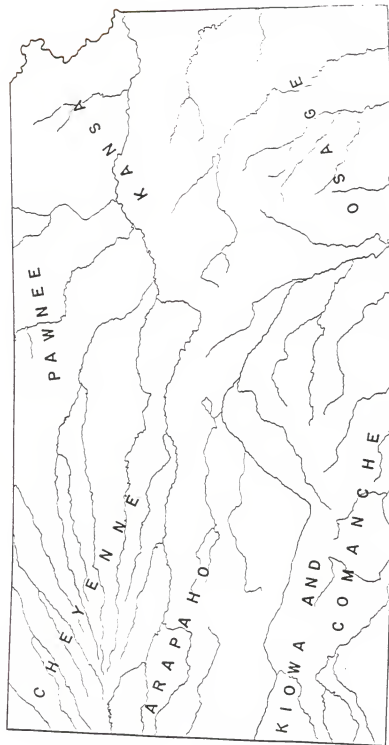
The revised Indian policy of the early 1850s—concentration in small reservations--paved the way for white settlement in the present states of Kansas and Nebraska. Though first mentioned by officials in the early 1840s, concentration of the Indians was not executed for about ten years. This policy crowded the Indians onto reservations much smaller than they had originally been given, into spaces that offered them no choice in their way of life. They could only support themselves by farming, which, it was argued, was in the Indians' best interests. This change in policy was embodied in the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 which gave territorial status to the central section of the Indian country.

Fort Scott in southeastern Kansas illustrated the actions and forces on the Indian frontier in the 1840s. The government authorized its

construction in 1842 just when the bulk of the tribes were supposed to be settled indefinitely. Though other posts guarded the Indian country, they were not necessarily built as permanent installations expressly to maintain the frontier. The army built Fort Scott between Forts Gibson and Leavenworth in order to fill the defensive gap and abandoned the post only when it became apparent that Kansas would be incorporated as a territory of the United States and the Indians of the area moved to new locations. The occupation of Fort Scott from 1842 to 1853 depended on the policy of maintaining the permanent Indian frontier.

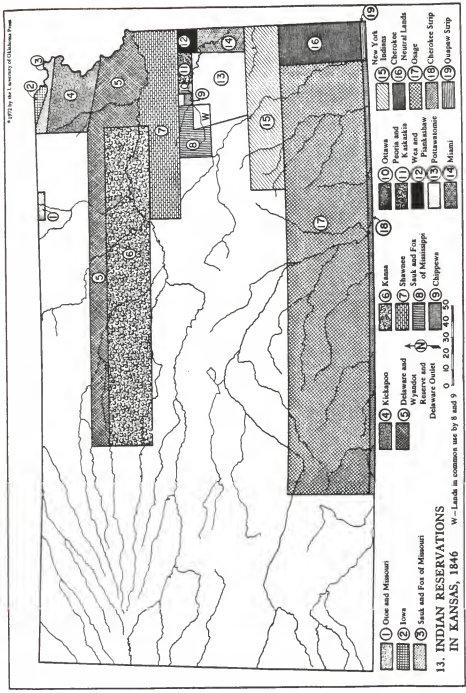
CHAPTER ONE

THE ORIGINS OF THE PERMANENT INDIAN FRONTIER



EARLY INDIAN TRIBES IN KANSAS

Homer Socolofsky and
Huber Self, Historical
Atlas of Kansas (Norman:
University of Oklahoma
Press, 1972).



Homer Socolofsky and
 Huber Self, Historical
 Atlas of Kansas (Norman:
 University of Oklahoma
 Press, 1972).

INDIAN RESERVATIONS IN KANSAS, 1846

Chapter One

The Origins of the Permanent Indian Frontier

The policy of Indian removal had its roots in the European theories of Indian land ownership and occupation developed during the early explorations of the New World. The European concept centered on the right of preemption, which gave the first white settlers the opportunity to acquire and occupy Indian lands. This understanding among the colonial powers developed over a long period and did not take into consideration the views of the Indian inhabitants. Originally, clear title to the land became official only after the natives "sold" it or after their conquest, but eventually mere claims of absolute sovereignty by the imperialist nations sufficed.¹ If Indians contested land ownership by force, they lost to the superior firepower of the colonists.

The original British-American colonies, and later the United States, inherited or assumed the rights of the mother country. The Indians owned the land, but if they should become extinct, voluntarily leave or sell the land, only the United States could claim ownership.² Land speculators and frontier settlers supported these theories because they resulted in the availability of more land at better prices.

The philosophy of land ownership had evolved by 1830 as the nation

grew in population and power. Not only could Indians voluntarily give up their land, but land could also be denied to them because the tribes claimed far more than those in control of the nation judged that they needed. The prevailing white bias favored agriculture over hunting, and so a tribe's hunting lands could be broken up into parcels of farm land. Indians would be paid for their land, including compensation for any improvements, and thus everyone was to be satisfied. The alternative to this involved taking the desired territory "by the sword."³ This change in the appropriation of tribal lands resulted from the compromise between the desire for justice and the land-hunger of the frontier settlers.

Attempts were made to erect a large-scale boundary between white settlement and Indian country, but all divisions remained temporary. The governor of Pennsylvania had concluded a treaty in 1758, which not only solidified a white-red border, but even returned lands that had been purchased from the Indians four years earlier. This had set a precedent for the Proclamation of 1763, when British king George III decreed that the region beyond the Appalachians belonged to and could only be occupied by Indians.⁴ Neither of these attempts at segregation had enjoyed much success.

Thomas Jefferson is generally credited with having developed the concept of Indian removal as distinct from an Indian country in situ. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 gave the United States more land than President Jefferson envisioned needing for many years, so he concluded that the new land would be an ideal place in which to place the Indians. Immediate removal and that which followed later resulted in an exchange of land east of the Mississippi River for generous tracts west of the Mississippi; it was not simply a matter of taking the land away from the Indians.

The policy of Indian removal progressed slowly at first, but accelerated under subsequent administrations. As early as 1793, some members of the Delaware and Shawnee tribes had moved into Spain's Louisiana territory. The Spaniards readily accepted them in an effort to create a buffer zone between Spanish settlements and the United States.⁵ Some Cherokees went west to hunt before the War of 1812, and by 1816 there were about 2,000 of the tribe living in what is now Arkansas. Not until 1817, though, did the United States negotiate a formal exchange of lands with the Cherokee Indians.⁶ The treaty did not dispose of all Cherokee lands in the southeastern United States where problems between the Cherokees and state governments continued.

In the mid-1820s, changing circumstances lent urgency to Indian removal. The plantation system spread through the Gulf plains during this period, creating a demand for the land on which the southern tribes resided. In addition, white settlers in the Old Northwest crowding the Indians prompted Secretary of War John C. Calhoun in January 1825 to urge the removal of virtually all Indians living east of the Mississippi. Calhoun recommended that two regions be set aside for the Indians. The northern tribes, a smaller group, were to be moved to the present state of Wisconsin, while the southern tribes were to be sent west of Missouri and Arkansas Territory.⁷ Many of those removed to the area of Wisconsin eventually went to the Kansas and Nebraska region under an extension of the removal policy.

In order to make room for the emigrating Indians in the West, the United States concluded treaties with the native Kansa and Osage tribes. General William Clark, Superintendent of Indian Affairs at St. Louis, negotiated these treaties, promising the protection of the United States

from their traditional enemies. The Plains tribes gave up claims to land in Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Kansas, but still retained large tracts in Kansas.⁸ The lands given up by the Kansas and Osages opened up a tremendous amount of territory onto which the eastern Indians would be placed.

The process of Indian removal continued at about the same pace until 1829 when Andrew Jackson took office as President. In recent years, the popular conception of Andrew Jackson as the Indian-hating president has been revised.⁹ Though Jackson had frequent contacts with Indians during his career as a military leader, not all of the contacts came on the battlefield. He gladly used Indians as allies and "personally liked and respected individual Indian chiefs."¹⁰ His main concern was for the security of the United States. In order to assure that security and the Indians' survival, he felt that the Native Americans had to adopt the ways of white civilization.¹¹

By the time of the Jackson administration, major difficulties had arisen between the Cherokee Nation and the State of Georgia. These differences predated Jackson's presidency, but it was Andrew Jackson who ultimately settled them. He believed that the Indian nations were not absolutely sovereign, even on the lands guaranteed them by treaty. Congressional or state actions applied to all residents of the United States, regardless of their racial origin. Earlier interaction, according to Jackson, had been based on the weakness of the United States and its desire to cease or prevent hostilities at any cost. That position of weakness no longer existed for the country by 1829.¹²

The Cherokee Nation had embraced "civilization" as much as any tribe in the United States. The Cherokees had developed an agricultural economy, as opposed to the hunting culture of most other tribes, and

their politicians had enacted laws based on those of white society. They clung to their ancestral lands, and though some Cherokees had emigrated westward, the great majority of the tribe preferred to remain in the southeast.¹³

Most Cherokees lived in the State of Georgia, and Georgia was anxious to be rid of them. An 1802 agreement between Georgia and the United States stipulated that the Federal government would peacefully remove the Cherokees as soon as possible. However, the Cherokees did not wish to move and white Georgians became impatient. The discovery of gold on Cherokee land added to the Georgians' anxiousness. In 1827, relations between the Cherokees and the whites grew worse after the tribe adopted a constitution asserting complete sovereignty within the Cherokee lands. In December 1828, the Georgia state legislature passed a bill which extended Georgia laws to cover all Indian residents of the state. Among these laws was one which prohibited Indians from testifying in any trial involving a white man, an indication of how the citizens of the state treated Indians. Into this struggle stepped Andrew Jackson. He would not aid the Cherokees, supporting the doctrine of states' rights, and presented as alternatives to the Indians the options of staying in Georgia and submitting to harsh state legislation or moving west where they would have to deal only with the Federal government.¹⁴ Jackson used fear, which he considered an excellent weapon against the Indians to get them to move.¹⁵ Though it would be years before the Cherokee removal was finished, they had lost their legal struggle to remain in their tribal homeland and eventually migrated west along the "Trail of Tears."

Removal advocates needed funds before they could carry out their plans. The Removal Act of 1830 provided the initial money and authority.

Despite widespread support for the bill, a hard-fought battle preceded its passage. Jeremiah Evarts, a talented lawyer and editor, guided this opposition to the Removal Bill.

Evarts actively promoted missionary work in the 1820s. He has great faith in America's ability to fulfill his dreams "of a world fully evangelized, [and] of universal conversion to Christ."¹⁶ Because of Evart's concern for the Indians and the respect that others had for him, Thomas L. McKenney, head of the Indian Office in Washington, D.C. solicited his support for Indian removal as early as March 1827. Evarts refused and soon came out against the concept.¹⁷

Evarts focused his opposition to Indian removal on the Cherokee Nation in Georgia, but he applied it to all of the eastern Indians. Using the pseudonym "William Penn," Evarts wrote a series of essays in which he presented both legal and moral arguments on behalf of the Indians. His primary question was, "Have the Indian tribes, . . . , a permanent title to the territory, which they inherited from their fathers, which they have neither forfeited nor sold, and which they now occupy? [sic]."¹⁸

Evarts believed there was no question regarding the Cherokees' legal right to their lands. Quoting from treaties made with the Indians, he called attention to the frequent use of the word "guaranty" in them. "The power and good faith of the United States" assured enforcement of the treaties, Evarts stated, so the government needed to honor the treaty provisions to maintain its dignity. Evarts also appealed to his countrymen's sense of national honor in stating his case for the Indians. He warned against succumbing to the "plenitude of our power, and . . . pride of our superiority."¹⁹ He implied that although the American people had

not yet been guilty of condoning any "systematic legislation," they would be held ultimately responsible for allowing the passage of removal legislation. Finally, Evarts appealed to the belief and faith in "The Great Arbiter of Nations." God would not tolerate any "injustice perpetrated against the weak by the strong."²⁰ Though Jeremiah Evarts was not alone in his views, he was the most outspoken of those who opposed the removal policy.

Many of those in favor of removal were also, like Evarts, genuinely concerned for the survival of the red man. Thomas McKenney, who had tried to gain Evarts' support in promoting removal, had long been considered a friend of the Indian. General William Clark, the former explorer and contemporary Superintendent of Indian Affairs at St. Louis, also supported removal, believing that the Indians were generally suffering from the adverse effects of white social habits and that their only way to survive was to get them away from the whites. Isaac McCoy, a frontier Baptist missionary who, for a time, had great influence in Washington, D.C., joined McKenney and Clark in their efforts to preserve the Natives.

Policymakers in the 1820s were confronted with several possible alternatives. Annihilation of the Indians as a race and as individuals comprised the first of these and there were probably many people who considered this a feasible option. The Indians also, theoretically, could have been absorbed by the overpowering white culture which surrounded them, but few Indians wanted to lose their tribal identity. The course of action, advocated by men like Evarts, would have allowed the Indians to remain in the east under the protection of the Army. The Army in the 1830s, however, lacked sufficient manpower for such action, and Congress

would not have authorized the increase necessary to guard the tribal reserves against white squatters. Removal beyond the line of white settlement seemed to those in power to be the best solution.²¹

Isaac McCoy, a Baptist missionary who had spent many years among the Indians, recognized only two options for the tribes: removal or extinction. He felt that in the struggle between whites and Indians, the Indians always lost their lands, thus McCoy's goal centered on the establishment of a permanent Indian country where the Indians would have the time and distance from white civilization necessary to adapt and conform to the changing world.²²

McCoy was not only a missionary, but a frontiersman. He spent most of his life on the fringe of settlement or in the Indian country itself founding missions and preaching to the Indians. Traveling frequently, McCoy led surveying expeditions into what was to be the Indians' permanent homeland and made several trips to Washington to consult with officials and to testify at hearings.²³ Despite his best intentions, he held an ethnocentric view, assuming, as others did, that the Indians really wanted to adopt the white man's culture.*

In May 1830, Congress finally passed the Removal Act by a slim margin. The measure allowed the president to declare certain lands west of the Mississippi permanent Indian lands and to exchange those areas for the Indians' holdings east of the Mississippi. Thus, it replaced the patch-work machinery used earlier with a single law that allowed the president to extinguish Indian land titles without the formal application

*This becomes apparent after reading several of the Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in the Congressional serials of the 1830s and 1840s.

or every settlement interested in doing so.²⁴ Though the Removal Act was presented as being in the best interests of the Indians, the Congressional action implied the use of force if necessary. Congress authorized funding to aid voluntary removal westward, but willingly or not, the Indians would have to move.²⁵ But while the 1830 bill was a sweeping measure and provided adequate money to begin implementing the policy, the formation of the permanent Indian frontier required more than a single act of Congress.

Several additional measures had to be enacted in order to make the permanent Indian frontier really operable. One goal, backed by such people as McCoy but never achieved, was the establishment of an organized Indian Territory with a representative in Congress. Proponents attempted to push this through Congress unsuccessfully in 1834, but they lacked even the support of the Indians themselves.²⁶

Two other measures affecting Indian affairs did, however, make it through Congress in 1834. A reorganization of the Indian Department under the Secretary of War increased the efficiency with which Indian matters were dealt. Indian Office agents gained greater security in their positions, and the accounting methods used in the disbursement of annuities were made more efficient, eliminating much "confusion and embarrassment."²⁷ Congress also passed the Intercourse Act of 1834 which actually did as much to establish the permanent Indian frontier as the Removal Act of 1830. This legislation improved upon similar laws dating back to 1790, which were designed to govern Indian-white relations and set up guidelines for all contact between the two cultures. The act also increased the penalties for infractions such as selling liquor to the Indians and hunting or trapping in Indian country. Finally, it

denied entry into the Indian lands to all white men except those traders and missionaries who possessed the proper licenses. Agents and subagents could appeal to the military to remove trespassers who violated the law and intruded in the area reserved for the Indians.²⁸

Together with the Removal Act of 1830, the Intercourse Act of 1834 laid the foundation for the permanent Indian frontier. It took several years of treaty negotiations with various Indian tribes before the concept even began to be implemented, but by 1834, the policy which governed Indian affairs for the next twenty years was formed and waiting to be implemented. Though the policy did not work as planned in civilizing the Indians behind an impressive long-term barrier, the concept of the permanent Indian frontier did represent an attempt to deal with the Indians in a way that was mutually beneficial to all concerned.

The garrison at Fort Scott enforced the Indian policy as well as it could in the years 1842-1853. Despite selecting the best site possible to influence the Indians and their white neighbors in Missouri, the Army could not prevent contacts between the two races. White influence intruded into the Indian territory throughout the period in which Fort Scott was to enforce segregation so the civilization of the Indians could not proceed unhampered as planned.

Chapter One Endnotes

1. Francis Paul Prucha, American Indian Policy in the Formative Years: The Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts, 1790-1834 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), 140.
2. *Ibid.*, 140-143.
3. House Committee on Indian Affairs, Removal of Indians, 21st Cong., 1st sess., H. Rep. 227, serial 200, 6-7.
4. Prucha, Formative Years, 13-20.
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7. Jeremiah Evarts, Cherokee Removal: The "William Penn" Essays and other Writings, ed. Francis Paul Prucha (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981), 3; and Francis Paul Prucha, "Indian Removal and the Great American Desert" in Indian Policy in the United States: Historical Essays (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), 100-101.
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9. Francis Paul Prucha, "Andrew Jackson's Indian Policy: A Reassessment," Journal of American History 56 (Dec. 1969): 527-539; and Ronald N. Satz, American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975).
10. *Ibid.*, 531.
11. *Ibid.*, 527, 533-534.
12. *Ibid.*, 531-532; and Prucha, Formative Years, 234.
13. Prucha, Formative Years, 227.
14. *Ibid.*, 227-232; and Evarts, Cherokee Removal, 5.
15. Prucha, "A Reassessment," 531.
16. Evarts, Cherokee Removal, 6.
17. *Ibid.*, 7.
18. *Ibid.*, 52.
19. *Ibid.*, 92, 49.

20. Ibid., 51.
21. Prucha, "A Reassessment," 534-536.
22. Schultz, Indian Canaan, 124-125.
23. For a thorough account of Isaac McCoy's life and career, see Schultz, Indian Canaan cited above. A much more personal account is contained in McCoy's journals located at the Kansas State Historical Society, Manuscript Division, Topeka.
24. Schultz, Indian Canaan, 134.
25. Prucha, Formative Years, 238-239.
26. Ibid., 270-273.
27. Ibid., 251.
28. Ibid., 263-264.

CHAPTER TWO

CIVILIZING THE INDIANS

Chapter Two

Civilizing the Indians

By the time that the Intercourse Act of 1834 became law, the policy of establishing a permanent Indian frontier had been accepted by officials as being both possible and desirable. The ultimate goals of this policy included much more than just moving the Indians out of the way of white expansion. Certainly many individuals cared only that good farmland be cleared of those who were not making efficient use of it, but many others felt that the Native Americans risked extinction from contact with white society and wished to assure their survival. The only way to do that, they felt, was to isolate the Indians until they could adapt to an agricultural lifestyle and become like white men.

As early as 1790, the intercourse acts established annual funds to be used in helping the Indians change their ways of life. The government made plows and looms available hoping that the Indians would realize the advantages in abandoning hunting as a means of survival. Some treaties between the United States and Indian tribes also provided for blacksmiths and carpenters to live near the Indians in order to help them make tools and build homes.¹

Thomas Jefferson saw the desirability of convincing the Indians to

change. He was convinced that raising crops and livestock meant an easier life and less land needed for them. With that in mind, he urged the establishment of government trading houses that would demonstrate to the Indians the quality and availability of manufactured goods.² Always present in this concern for the well-being of the tribes was his belief that once the Indians did accept an agricultural life, they would roam less, change their values, and require much less land to support their populations. That would obviously open substantial tracts of land to white farmers.

In adopting the values, dress, and vocations of white civilization, however, the Indians also acquired some of the whites' vices. Foremost among these evils was the abuse of alcohol, from which many of the Indians' other problems stemmed. Violence occurred quite often among drunken Indians and many traders used cheap whiskey as a means of getting better deals from those who came to barter. The Indians consistently lost in their struggles against unscrupulous whites. Because of this, Isaac McCoy and others who shared his views campaigned for the establishment of a permanent home for the Indians where they would be safe at least until they could learn to cope with those who would take advantage of them.³

By about 1830 it became apparent to many officials that the two cultures could not exist in close proximity. The only solution short of the destruction of the Indians seemed to be removal beyond the jurisdiction of the States and out of the way of settlers. President Jackson himself stated that moving the tribes to the far west did "not place them beyond the reach of philanthropic aid and Christian instruction."⁴ McCoy also wanted to work for the Indians' "Christianization and civilization,"

and felt it had to be done far from the corruption of white traders and pioneers.⁵ The Indians were not to be shipped out west and then forgotten.

The huge reservations mapped out for the emigrating Indians in the 1830s lay west of the Mississippi River as originally projected by Thomas Jefferson, but by the time removal became a general policy applicable to all of the eastern Indians, their new homes lay even farther west, in the region popularly known as the Great American Desert. One historian has recently pointed out, however, that although the concept of the Great American Desert was recognized at the time, officials did not intend to place the Indians on such inhospitable lands.⁶

Even in the late 1820s, the area which later became the State of Kansas was basically unmapped and unexplored. Thomas McKenney admitted his ignorance on the type of land in the west, but urged that the lands be examined for suitability before they were turned over to the Indians.⁷ The land west of Missouri and Arkansas could obviously support the roving bands who followed the buffalo herds, but the government sought agricultural land for the emigrant tribes. McKenney encouraged delegations of Indians to travel west and, within limits, choose the lands to which they would move.⁸ Indians accompanied surveying expeditions led by Isaac McCoy. The policy of allowing Indians to pick their own lands convinced some of the tribes to pack their belongings and make the journey west.

The encouragement of agriculture among the Indians involved more than just giving them land and tools. The majority of the emigrants had to be instructed in the use of the tools furnished, government officials

advocated the founding of schools to teach them. At the schools, the Indians learned the advantages of farming and other domestic industries over their former way of life. It was then possible, in theory, to absorb them into the mainstream of American society. Though these schools were founded as a rule by missionary groups, they did not thrive until after the government furnished financial support.⁹

Indian schools fell into two basic categories: academic, like those which white children attended; and manual labor schools, geared to the special needs of the Indians. The academic schools did not have the desired effects on the Indians. Once educated in areas like the basic sciences, the Indian youths seemed to lose touch with their Indian heritage and often exhibited little enthusiasm for returning to their tribes in order to teach others. Only a few Indian boys could attend high schools and colleges, and so, the benefits of such educations did not extend beyond those who actually attended the schools.¹⁰

Another problem with this type of Indian education was the expense involved. In 1830, the Shawnees had the chance to send several of their young men to a school in Kentucky for two hundred dollars each, but the tribe felt it could not afford that much. They were, however, very interested in establishing a school nearby, which had the advantages of less cost, less distance, and a greater number of available students.¹¹ Missionaries built most of their schools in close proximity to the tribal lands.

In meeting the government's goal of promoting agriculture among the Indians, manual labor schools enjoyed more success and support than those institutions which offered only the standard primary education. In a

manual labor school, the student received basic instruction in reading and writing English, but he also learned how to "make fences; plough and cultivate the fields; . . . manufacture the requisite utensils; repair his gun; and in short supply all his own wants, and exert a useful influence among his people."¹²

Missionaries often opened their own little schools quite near the tribes with whom they were working, but other concerned people preferred larger, centrally located schools. They saw advantages in running boarding schools where the students could not return home every day. Without a long-term influence, the student might forget his education after returning to his own, primitive, village life. At a larger school, more students could be taught by a single instructor, increasing time- and cost-effectiveness, and the students could be drawn from a greater number of tribes. English would become the standard language because it would be the only language all of the students had to learn.¹³

Missionary work began in the western Indian country in 1824 under the United Foreign Missionary Society with the founding of the Mission Neosho by the Reverend Benton Pixley.¹⁴ Several denominations built missions in eastern Kansas, quite often with schools as part of their operation. In addition to the Presbyterians, Methodists, Catholics, and Baptists also worked on Christianizing the heathens. Of these groups, Methodists and Baptists "dominated the religious life of the frontier." Methodists had the support of a well-organized and powerful central body. The Baptists, on the other hand, had no central authority. A man might get the call to preach to the Indians, like Isaac McCoy, and devote his life to it without ever enjoying major financial support.¹⁵

McCoy worked most of his life for the improvement of the Indians.

He spent a great deal of time traveling between his missions on the frontier and Washington, where he often met with political leaders. He never seemed to have enough money to support his missionary efforts or even his family. He summed up his efforts by stating:

My present business is one which has long been more desir[e]able [sic] notwithstanding it is so exceedingly labourious and is accompanied by so many privations. I have an opportunity of exerting influ[ence] on the main subject of giving to all of the tribes a suitable home, and on the measures necessary to be adopted for the improvement of their condition subsequently.¹⁶

Another Baptist missionary and an acquaintance of Isaac McCoy was Jotham Meeker. Meeker founded the Ottawa Baptist Mission in what is today east-central Kansas in 1837.¹⁷ Several years later Meeker was recognized by the Indian subagent in the area as being a "devoted missionary, whose unwearied zeal for the present and future welfare of the Ottawas has made them a truly industrious and moral people."¹⁸ Missionaries like these took it upon themselves to educate and civilize the Indians.

The Federal Government cooperated with the missionaries and supported their work, but it also had its own guidelines to aid the Indians in their new homes.* Briefly, the measures to be taken included the following:

1. Protection of the Indian lands by the maintenance of specific boundaries.
2. Prevention of the acquisition of Indian lands by anyone other than the federal government.
3. Enforcement of the Indian trade laws.

*For a more detailed account of these guidelines as related by Secretary of War Lewis Cass in 1831, see the appendix.

4. Interruption of the whiskey traffic into the Indian country.
5. Provisions for the apprehension and trial of the members of either race who commit crimes against the other.
6. Support for the programs and people dedicated to the education and civilization of the red man.¹⁹

To a large extent, the army became the instrument for carrying out these rules by functioning largely as a frontier police force. Part of the military's actions stemmed from its assisting the Indian agents in the area of any particular fort, but occasionally field commanders received explicit orders on Indian matters from their superiors. Removing squatters from the Indian country or Indians from white settlements were both standard duties of the soldiers, but quite often the troops embarked on major expeditions to impress the tribes and negotiate treaties. The history of the permanent Indian frontier is, in some respects, a study of Army-Indian relations.

Chapter Two Endnotes

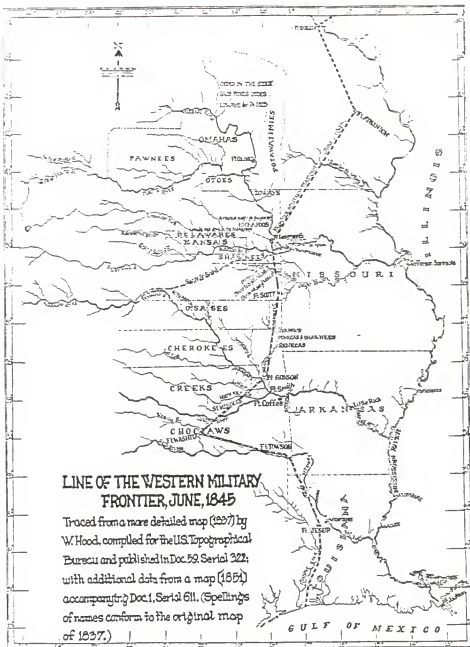
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CHAPTER THREE

ENFORCING THE FRONTIER



Louise Barry, "The Fort Leavenworth-Fort Gibson Military Road and the Founding of Fort Scott,"

Kansas Historical Quarterly 11 (May 1942) facing page 120.

Chapter Three

Enforcing the Frontier

Indian peacekeeping duties occupied the United States Army for most of its early years. Since the majority of the nation's soldiers garrisoned widespread outposts, their assignments included exploring and mapping new territories, and aiding Indian agents with such tasks as disbursing annuities, regulating trade, and quelling disturbances. All of these activities can be brought under the heading of safeguarding the frontier. To the Indians, the army symbolized the United States.¹

Western defense posed difficult problems in the decade leading up to the establishment of Fort Scott, Kansas in 1842. Because of the traditional opposition to a large standing army and a financial panic in the late 1830s, Congress opposed any increase in military spending. Internal and external events gave rise to the need for more appropriations, though, and so the question of frontier defense generated widespread political debate.

The removal of the various Indian tribes alone required a great deal of expenditures, but the posts built and maintained to guard the boundary also added to expenses. Arguments and documents projecting what was really needed for the defense of the nation abounded. Two wars which

stemmed from the Indians' resistance to removal, the Blackhawk War of 1832 and the Seminole War of the late 1830s and early 1840s, accented the cries of those who demanded that more be spent on defense against the savages. Given the reluctance of Congress, not everyone could be satisfied. The Seminole War, instead of causing a substantial military increase, forced a rearrangement of the forces then available. At a time when eastern Indians were swelling the native population just to the west of the organized states and territories, some frontier posts were abandoned, and many of the troops were withdrawn and sent to Florida.²

Not everyone in the government agreed on the proper attitude to take toward the Indians in the west. The native Plains Indians had to be regarded as at least potentially dangerous. Treaties had been signed only with the Kansa, Osage, and Pawnee tribes in the Kansas area, and with the Sioux farther north. That left such nomadic tribes as the Comanches and Cheyennes to do basically as they wished, which often meant preying on the displaced tribes who trespassed on their hunting grounds.³

Many of the removal treaties, especially those with the southern Indians, contained provisions which stated that the United States would protect the tribes from hostile whites and other Indians. In addition, the government furnished about 10,000 emigrant warriors with firearms to defend themselves.⁴ Yet some of these same Indians were suspected of having "smothered feelings of hostilities ranking in their bosoms," because they had been sent west against their wills.⁵ Settlers in Missouri and Arkansas demanded protection from the emigrants as well as the native tribes.⁶

The Indians, both those indigenous to the Plains and those placed

there, were not the only concern of those charged with defending the nation's western boundaries. The conflict between Mexico and Texas over the latter's independence remained a problem for the United States until finally settled in the Mexican-American War. The control of Oregon and incidents with Canada cast doubt on the continuance of peaceful relations with Great Britain. As a rule, however, when one discussed western defense during the 1830s and early 1840s, debates centered on the Indians.⁷

The late 1830s saw major activity in stabilizing the permanent Indian frontier. Several steps had to be taken. As Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny, a frontier veteran, stated in 1837, "the preliminary measures to protecting the frontier are to have the frontier definitely settled." The next step was to survey and construct a road to connect the posts already on the frontier, and the last necessary project involved the building of additional "strong and permanent military works, garrisoned by infantry or artillery."⁸

The frontier ran west of, and roughly parallel to, the Mississippi River. The northernmost post was Fort Snelling near what is today St. Paul, Minnesota. The frontier line ran south through Iowa, past Fort Leavenworth, and then south along the western boundaries of Missouri and Arkansas to Forts Gibson and Towson in present-day Oklahoma, with a southern terminus at Fort Jesup in Louisiana. Those forts, and other posts that were built and then abandoned, were constructed with an eye "to their geographical advantages, and to the moral effect they were calculated to have upon the Indians."⁹

In examining possible post sites, selecting officers considered defensible positions, available water, and transportation routes, rather

than the extension of a continuous string of forts which would mark a rough line between Indian and white territory. The army built forts and then abandoned them as the local situation seemed to dictate. This caused confusion among the Indians in the vicinity of the deserted posts. Some felt that they were being left unprotected by the government, while other, hostile tribes believed that they had forced the soldiers to leave through intimidation.¹⁰ By the late 1830s, the determining factors in the location of a frontier post had changed to reflect the concept of the permanent Indian frontier. The government decided additional military strength was needed to maintain peaceful relations with and between emigrants and the Plains tribes.

In his last message as president, Andrew Jackson recommended the construction of additional forts in and along the Indian country. More posts had become necessary because of the number of Indians being moved into the area. Several years earlier, in 1834, a total of 35,000 Indians had been placed there, which meant well over 8,000 potential warriors.* About a thousand soldiers guarded the border between Forts Leavenworth and Jesup at the time.¹¹

Military leaders argued that additional troops on the frontier would reduce the chance that they would have to be used in combat. An effective buildup meant deploying the forces in a way to impress those Indians which most needed to be shown the strength of the United States.¹² Thus, while any new posts were built with the larger picture of the entire Indian frontier in mind, they still had to be near enough any likely

*The formula used in determining the approximate number of warriors was one warrior for every four Indians in the tribe.

trouble-spot to deter aggression and render aid to other forts if needed. In the case of Fort Scott, it was built midway between Forts Gibson and Leavenworth to fill the perceived gap in the defenses of the frontier. Other determining factors in Fort Scott's location included the pleas from Missouri residents for protection against the Osage Indians, and the fact that the Fort Scott site had ample wood and water to supply such a post.

Once Congress decided that additional installations were needed, the debates on how many, how large, and where to place them began. Cost remained a major factor throughout this period; the army could not simply build all of the forts it desired. Colonel Zachary Taylor, later President of the United States, favored temporary posts that could be advanced as the Indians withdrew westward.¹³ This was somewhat prophetic in seeing the end of the permanent Indian frontier, but most officials in the late 1830s held to the concept and wanted permanent fortifications. One of the defense plans not adopted called for the establishment of two lines of forts, a forward line in the Indian country, and a second line well back for the refuge of settlers in the event of Indian attack. Central storage depots and reserves were to be held at Jefferson Barracks near St. Louis, Missouri and at Baton Rouge, Louisiana.¹⁴

Another difference of opinion centered on the size of the forts and garrisons needed to guard the permanent Indian frontier. General Winfield Scott and Quartermaster General Thomas Jesup supported Colonel Kearny's plan for the maintenance of a small number of relatively large posts. These would cost less to build than a greater number of smaller sites and improve the quality of training that the soldiers received. Kearny wanted

to drill the troops in larger units than the one or two companies that had been standard up until that time, training which he considered necessary for large expeditions onto the prairies. Campaigning time was limited to the spring and early summer because the dragoons needed sufficient forage for their mounts. Limiting the travel time needed to rendezvous increased the period that could be spent in the field.¹⁵

Secretary of War Jonathan Bell endorsed the plan for a greater number of small frontier posts. In August, 1841 he wrote,

Of all the causes of future disturbances and war between the Indians and the frontier inhabitants of the States, the one most to be feared is a careless and inefficient civil police. Small military posts, judiciously distributed upon the boundary between the States and the Indian tribes, will be of essential service in preventing causes of quarrel and bloodshed; especially when employed as auxiliary to the law and the civil magistrates.¹⁶

As usual in political debates, the net result for the frontier forts was a compromise. Forts such as Leavenworth and Gibson remained relatively large, and served as depots and regimental headquarters. Others, Fort Scott among them, were designed for only squadrons or companies of troops. Between 1833 and 1844, the army built fifteen forts and camps, most of them along the permanent Indian frontier. Only a small number of them lasted more than a few years before changes in Indian policy caused their abandonment.¹⁷

Generally, forts built on the frontier during this period were located on navigable rivers which made supply and communication lines easier to keep open. Compromises had to be made, though. Beyond the first tier of states west of the Mississippi there were few navigable streams, so not all of the forts could be built on large rivers and still meet the other guidelines for location. Some of the "navigable streams"

in the west could carry traffic only in the springtime floods. As a result, the building of military roads connecting the forts became necessary.¹⁸ The government authorized the construction of military roads beginning in the late eighteenth century. With the institution of the permanent Indian frontier, the north-south road which was eventually built served not only as a route connecting the forts, but also as a rough boundary line between the western states and the Indian country. For this reason, Secretaries of War Lewis Cass (1831-1836) and Joel Poinsett (1837-1841) both stressed that the road should be in the Indian territory and not within State boundaries.¹⁹ As long as the Indians remained on their side of the military road, there would be no disputes with State governments over jurisdiction of Indian conflicts.

Colonel Henry Dodge of the United States First Dragoons initially expressed his recommendations for a road running from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Gibson in January 1835. Over a year elapsed before Congress finally authorized a surveying party to map the route and examine possible sites for military posts.²⁰

Work on the survey and actual construction proceeded slowly. The officers given responsibility for the survey, Colonel Kearny, Major T. E. Smith, and Captain Nathan Boone, accomplished very little in 1837, but completed the survey in 1838.²¹ Work commenced on the road and it was completed in 1844. When finished, the military road linked the western forts from Snelling on the northern Mississippi River to Towson where the Red River connected Fort Towson to Fort Jesup in Louisiana.²²

Construction of the road came to be a major occupation for the frontier soldiers. The Engineer Corps of the army busied itself with the construction of coastal fortifications and the Corps of Topographical

Engineers did not have the resources to oversee the construction, so the duty often fell on the shoulders of the officers and enlisted men.²³ In the case of Fort Scott, however, the Army did use some craftsmen from Missouri. The lack of both skilled labor and strong financial backing determined the time at which the road could be completed. Trueman Cross, Acting Quartermaster General in 1838, stated that western garrisons lacked the men to gather their own firewood, let alone construct the road.²⁴ The situation remained basically unchanged until after the Mexican-American War when Congress allowed troop increases.

Defense of the western frontier depended not only on the north-south road and the posts established along the length of it, but also on the troops stationed at the posts. Colonel Kearny recommended garrisons be composed of artillery or infantry, but in addition to these troops, soldiers were needed to patrol the prairies to make their presence known to the Indians. The army needed a mounted branch of service to be effective against the Plains tribes. Congress had abolished mounted soldiers in 1821 in order to satisfy public protest against large military budgets.²⁵ Dragoon and cavalry units were expensive to field because of the cost of their equipment and mounts. By the time the United States reached the prairies in the late 1820s, there was no suitable alternative to a regular unit on horseback. In the view of General Winfield Scott, for whom Fort Scott was named, "a warrior on horseback looks upon foot-soldiers, beyond the limited range of muskets without any sense of danger."²⁶ Mounted volunteers could be used, but they were limited to reaction, and not organized for preventative measures against the Indians. That, in addition to the fact that their

short terms of service often ran out before the enemy could be engaged, made their use undesirable.

In 1832, Congress enacted a short-term measure designed to meet the problem of defense on the Plains. A regiment of mounted rangers were recruited for western service, but these troops did not work out as well as envisioned for several reasons. Their enlistment ran for only one year and they had to furnish their own mounts and equipment, for which they were compensated.²⁷ That resulted in a tremendous variety in dress and armament. A year later Congress authorized the regiment of United States Dragoons.

The dragoons performed a vital role in dealing with the Plains Indians. Besides being able to pursue marauding Indians if the need arose, they could patrol with greater ease and speed, making them more visible to more Indians. Another important element of the dragoons was their uniforms. Sometimes bedraggled after a long summer of crossing the Plains, dragoons could still stage quite a display at treaty-signing ceremonies and similar occasions when in dress uniforms.²⁸

The organization of the United States Dragoons in 1833, soon followed by the 2nd Dragoons, and the construction of the military road from Fort Snelling to Fort Towson, brought the enforcement of the permanent Indian frontier within reach. By 1838 when construction of the road began, it seemed as if the Indians would, indeed, have their permanent home where they could learn the ways of civilization. The frontier still contained many gaps which had to be filled in order to stop the whiskey trade and illegal trespassers from both sides of the line. Fort Scott was one of the forts constructed for this purpose.

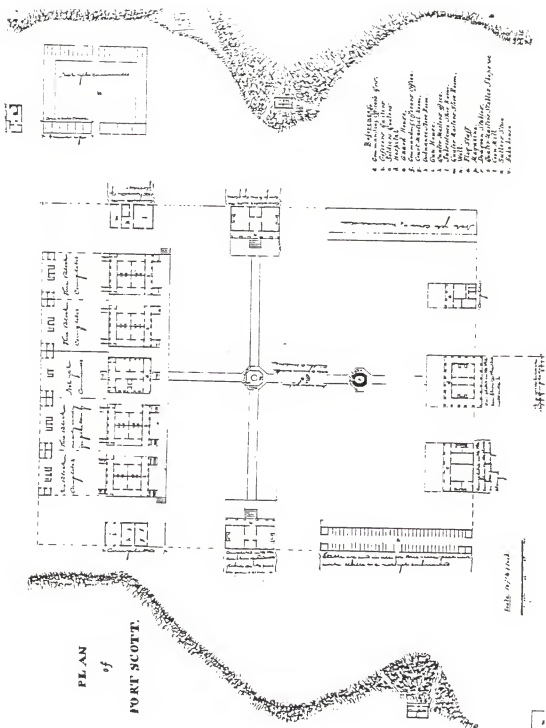
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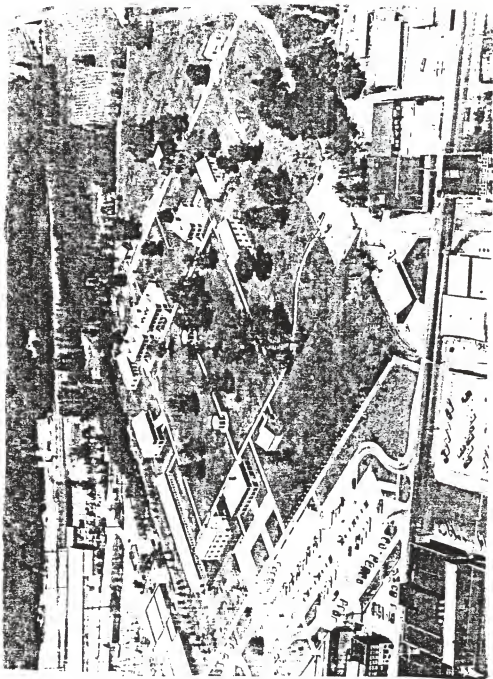
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CHAPTER FOUR

THE ROLE OF FORT SCOTT



Courtesy of Fort Scott
National Historic Site.



Fort Scott today as
restored and reconstructed.

Courtesy of Fort Scott
National Historic Site.

Chapter Four

The Role of Fort Scott

The first construction at the post that became Fort Scott began on April 9, 1842 and the site officially received its garrison at the end of May. The history of Fort Scott actually began years before. The first surveys for the military road mentioned the Marmaton River as a possible location for a fort. The location midway between Forts Leavenworth and Gibson meant troops on the Marmaton could fill the gap in the line of installations along the permanent Indian frontier and help to enforce the laws designed to protect both the farmers of Missouri and area Indians. Although Fort Scott was not built until years after the passage of the removal and intercourse legislation, construction began as soon as military plans and resources allowed. This early period of Fort Scott's history revolved around its functions as an outpost on the border of the Indian country.

The first garrison at Fort Scott came from Fort Wayne in the Cherokee Nation in present-day northeastern Oklahoma. In 1837, Colonel Zachary Taylor ordered the members of the commission surveying the route for the north-south military road to note possible sites for the establishment of a post to replace Fort Wayne, which the Cherokees

disliked having on their land.¹ The Marmaton site was considered even before Fort Wayne was built in 1839, but the army did not have the funds or manpower to place forts at both locations. Fort Scott, therefore, was not built until after Fort Wayne had been abandoned. Despite the desire for a garrison where Fort Scott was eventually built and the complaints from a delegation of Cherokees in 1841, the order to evacuate Wayne and occupy a new site was not issued until February 10, 1842 after Major Ethan Allen Hitchcock recommended construction of a new post.²

When officers surveyed the Indian frontier and reported on the need for posts, they made their recommendations based on their training and experience. Congress then decided what was needed for defense and the amount that could be spent. In the case of Fort Scott, two forts were earlier recommended for the area. Fort Scott was built as a compromise between the two sites suggested, one where the military road crossed the Marais des Cygne, and the other about eighty miles farther south on the Spring River.³

General Winfield Scott, for whom the fort was named, opposed the proliferation of forts along the Indian border. He felt some posts were obviously necessary. However, because he was the Major General of the Army--the highest-ranking officer--he probably felt more congressional pressure to be economical than the officers who advocated a greater number of small forts.⁴ Citizens of Missouri also requested that additional forts be built. In 1843 a memorial from the General Assembly of Missouri asked for the establishment of another post between Forts Scott and Leavenworth, but it was never built and probably never seriously considered by the Army.⁵

The construction of Fort Scott began in the spring of 1842 near

where the road crossed the Marmaton River. The site was a few miles west of the Missouri State line on land that had been reserved for various small tribes of New York Indians. Few of them ever emigrated to the area, so the Army did not have to concern itself with establishing its right to the grounds.

The completion of Fort Scott took several years. The lack of skilled laborers in the vicinity contributed to the slow pace, but the military duties of the garrison also hampered efforts to complete the fort.⁶ These actions consisted of aiding the Indian agents and subagents near the fort in carrying out the provisions of the Intercourse Act of 1834 and preventing inter-tribal conflicts.

Potential for warfare existed within the Indian lands. Many different tribes lived reasonably close together; among those were some that continued their traditional animosity toward their neighbors. The Sioux from the northern plains devoted much of their energies to fighting the Potawatomies and Pawnees. The Pawnees in turn regularly attacked the Osage and Kansa Indians.⁷

The hostilities among the native Plains tribes were a traditional part of that culture but a threat to peace on the frontier. Although the government disapproved and attempted to prevent such conflicts, struggles between the indigenous tribes and the emigrants were an even greater danger to the existence of the permanent Indian frontier by threatening to spread all along the border. As early as 1817 warfare between the Osages and emigrant Cherokees brought the United States Army into eastern Oklahoma. A treaty signed with the Cherokee Nation in 1817 obtained the right for the United States to build a fort in the area to help keep peace between the tribes.⁸

Many of the war-parties actually began as hunting-parties only to change their purpose after being disappointed in the pursuit of game. The emigrants, even those accustomed to raising their own crops and livestock, often preferred to hunt the buffalo and antelope of the Plains. With this additional pressure, the herds shrank rapidly and increasing numbers of hunters returned home unsuccessful. This problem also caused the Indians to seek new hunting grounds at the expense of other tribes' traditional lands, despite the creation of "neutral" grounds and outlets to the open prairie.⁹

Many of the emigrants adopted the trappings of civilization in dress, religion, and values, yet when confronted with the hostile tribes of the Plains, the emigrants had a tendency to revert to the old ways. When disappointed hunters preyed on the livestock of the newcomers, violent retaliation often resulted.¹⁰ The forts built by the United States Army kept the peace between all of the tribes more than they protected the emigrants against the native tribes because the emigrants generally stood up to attack better than their enemies. Not only were the emigrants better-armed as a rule, they had been in contact with the white man longer and had learned from that experience.¹¹

Fort Scott, like most frontier posts, did not see any major Indian battles during its existence.¹² The tribes located in that part of Kansas were not as fierce in the 1840s as they had once been. Only the Osages were native to the area, and by the time of Fort Scott's occupation, the tribe suffered from widespread abuse of alcohol. The mere presence of the fort probably helped to keep the Indians peaceful and the violence that did occur was not warfare, but isolated incidents.

The forts on the permanent Indian frontier did more than maintain

order among the tribes. The army also had to protect the states and people just to the east of the boundary. Appeals from Missouri contributed the most to the building of Fort Scott, because Congress had to listen to concerned voters in the frontier states, a crucial area of support in the sectional battles that loomed.

The annual reports of the Indian agents in the field make up many of the records from this period. They generally echoed each other, stating how well the Indians were doing in their progression to civilization, while at the same time lamenting the abuse of alcohol and the prevalence of old habits and customs. In 1845, the Osages were reported to be "as comfortable as their manner of life and indolent dispositions will allow. They have also been generally healthy, although many cases of consumption have taken place among them--" ¹³ Soon after assuming his duties as the Neosho subagent in 1845, James S. Raines wrote:

from a thorough examination of the former reports made in relation to these Indians, I find that the greatest improvements are spoken of every year--so much so that, if you could possibly believe that these Indians really have made such rapid strides on the road towards civilization, education, agriculture, and industry of every kind, as has been reported, you might correctly imagine them to be at least up side by side, if not ahead of the most civilized, wisest, moral, industrious, wealthy, and enterprising people on earth. ¹⁴

Some of the Indians did seem to make genuine progress, though. In 1846, the Peorias and Kaskaskias raised "exceedingly promising crops of corn," enough to get them through that winter safely. Two factors stood out that contributed to the successes they achieved: the two tribes adhered to the Roman Catholic Church, and no longer received government annuities. ¹⁵ The fact these tribes' annuities had expired forced them to raise their own food or suffer from hunger. Still, their adaptation

spoke well of their determination to survive at a time when many Indians perished.

The influence of churches in really helping the Indians is difficult to trace. Despite the apparent sincerity of many of the Indians, progress remained sporadic. Records from the Delaware Baptist Mission from 1841 detailed the case of one Indian, Jonas Konkaput. He was suspended from communion and other church activities for drunkenness, but after he repented, the church "unanimously agreed" to allow him back. Konkaput was again "overcome by intemperance" and barred from the church, to be readmitted only after the church was convinced that his repentance would last longer.¹⁶ Konkaput, like so many other Indians, simply could not resist the lure of easily-obtained alcohol.

Cultural habits and poor health added to the Indians' problems in their Kansas homes. Many of the tribesmen saw agriculture and other types of labor demeaning, fit only for women.¹⁷ The diets of both the emigrant and Plains Indians directly affected their health. Hunting became a matter of chance as more tribes crowded into the area, and few of the Indians had fully made the transition to agriculture, so the Indians often suffered from hunger. This, coupled with the lack of medical attention, caused a higher mortality rate than necessary.¹⁸

The greatest problems which faced the Indians stemmed from the abuse of alcohol. While the Intercourse Act of 1834 sought to keep all alcohol out of the Indian country, the trade continued unabated. Few of the Indians could resist the temptation, especially since whiskey was sold in so many places along the border. In 1841, the Osage subagent wrote that alcohol could be bought from "almost every other house" along the Missouri border.¹⁹

The disbursal system for the annuities also contributed to the alcohol problem among the Indians. Traders willingly extended generous lines of credit to the Indians during the year and sold them goods at prices which justified the risk of not being paid. When the annuities were paid, the traders made claims on much of the money for the accumulated debts. Whatever money remained quickly went to the whiskey dealers who set up shop near the disbursal area.²⁰ With their resources expended, the Indians were then forced to renew the cycle.

Robert Calloway, the subagent for the Osages in 1842, attempted to remedy some of the problems in the system. Instead of paying the annuities to the chiefs of the tribe, Calloway through great efforts, managed to pay the heads of families, increasing the odds that the money would be distributed fairly throughout the tribe. He also made sure he was present as the money changed hands to ensure that provisions and other needed goods were purchased rather than illegal whiskey.²¹ In his own words, Calloway was "infamous" for his efforts to stop the detrimental trade with the Indians.²²

Despite Calloway's efforts, the Osages continued to get the whiskey they desired. The tribe had received two hundred cows and calves and four hundred hogs as part of the government's program to encourage farming, but the Indians traded the stock for provisions and liquor prior to their annual hunt on the prairie. Those who stayed home from the hunt traded everything they could for whiskey, and were then forced to steal or beg in order to eat. Calloway complained that Fort Scott dragoons, who could have been patrolling the border and intercepting at least some of the alcohol, had been sent instead on a Plains expedition. He also stated the border needed many more dragoons to effectively curb the

liquor traffic because of the numbers and skill of the traders who engaged in the trade.²³

Intoxication resulted in violence. One agent reported in his region, "more than half the adults who die, perish by the hands of their fellow-Indians. Frequently members of the same family destroyed each other during their scenes of drunkenness and riot."²⁴

The soldiers of Fort Scott helped to keep the area peaceful by returning both Indians and whites to their respective sides of the Indian frontier line. In October 1842 and again in 1844, dragoon detachments rode into Missouri to force Indians to return to their Kansas homes. In September 1844, five infantrymen from the fort evicted John Mathews from a house he had built on the Osage reservation. Troops also accompanied some missionaries on their journeys, but as guides rather than as guards.²⁵

Detachments from Fort Scott's garrison participated in major expeditions on the prairies several times. During the summer of 1843, Fort Scott dragoons escorted Santa Fe traders west. At one point the soldiers encountered a band of about one hundred Indians from Texas and disarmed them, preventing the Indians from further raiding. The following summer a similar dragoon expedition marched and explored as far as Wyoming.²⁶ The exploits of the dragoons, in addition to the immediate results accomplished, helped in preventing Indian wars by impressing the tribes with the power and proximity of the United States Army.

Like other frontier posts, Fort Scott lent its troops to the task of peacekeeping. No major Indian battles took place in the vicinity of Fort Scott while the Army occupied the post, but it is difficult to say whether this was due to the deterrent effect of Fort Scott itself, to the

temperament of the Indians, or to the debilitating effects of widespread alcohol abuse. Far removed from the main emigrant routes and battlefields, Fort Scott nevertheless contributed to the defense of the permanent Indian frontier.

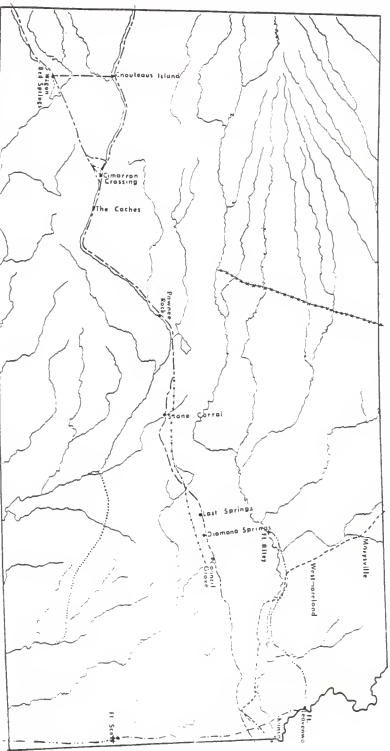
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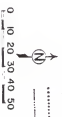
CHAPTER FIVE

THE END OF THE EXPERIMENT



----- OREGON TRAIL
 - - - - - SANTA FE TRAIL
 ----- FT. LEAVENWORTH - FT. SCOTT MILITARY ROAD
 ----- FT. LEAVENWORTH - FT. RILEY MILITARY ROAD

TRAILS THROUGH
 PRE-TERRITORIAL KANSAS



----- PRAIRIE TRAIL
 ----- KAW TRAIL
 ----- OSAGE TRAIL
 ----- FT. SCOTT - FT. GIBSON MILITARY ROAD

Homer Socolofsky and
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Chapter Five

The End of the Experiment

Following the close of the Mexican War in 1848, the policy of keeping the region of present-day Kansas and Nebraska as a permanent home for the eastern Indians quietly faded away. It did not happen quickly. It built upon ideas that had existed since at least the early 1840s, the time at which the permanent Indian frontier drawn west of the line of forts built to preserve it. By 1854, the permanent boundary line had officially disappeared.

The reasons behind the demise of the permanent Indian frontier can be placed into three broad categories:

1. American expansion into the far west in the 1840s and the trails and projected railroad routes needed to get there. This brought Manifest Destiny into play with American sovereignty over Oregon, Texas, California, and the Southwest.
2. Expansion of white settlement onto the plains west of Arkansas, Missouri and Iowa, closely linked to the question of slavery in any new states or territories formed.
3. Concern for the condition of the Indians themselves. It is convenient that concern for the Indians translated into more land for white farmers, but the widespread destitution of the tribes did make some sort of action on their behalf necessary.¹

The trails heading west caused the first conflicts with the concept

of the permanent Indian frontier. The earliest of these, the Santa Fe Trail, was used since 1821. A survey of this route was conducted and the right of transit obtained from the Indians following an Act of Congress in 1825.² The first traders on this route wielded influence with people such as Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri. With his aid, they helped to establish Fort Leavenworth at its present site on the Missouri River. Fort Leavenworth had the best location to begin the patrols for the protection of trade caravans during the initial stage of their journeys from Independence, Missouri.³ Within a few years of using the Santa Fe Trail, the traders gained needed experience in dealing with the Plains Indians safely, but because of the difficulties that developed between Texas and Mexico, dragoons began escorting the pack trains across the prairie.

The Oregon Trail developed somewhat later than the trade route to Santa Fe, but the ultimate impact it had on Indian policy was greater. The people who migrated to Oregon did so to settle the region, not trade like the majority of those who used the Santa Fe Trail. The first American pioneers went to the Pacific Northwest in 1834. Their numbers gradually increased but in 1843, the year of the "Great Migration," there were still only about 800 people who made the journey to the Oregon country.⁴

The Oregon question serves as an excellent representation of the entire "Manifest Destiny" phenomenon in United States history. The area known as Oregon included the present states of Oregon, Idaho, Washington as well as the province of British Columbia. The United States had shared a claim to the region with Great Britain, but by 1844, the concept of Manifest Destiny prompted many people to demand that the United States take sole possession of the area. In order to make a good case for

United States' sovereignty, the region needed to be settled by American citizens. With that in mind, expansionists encouraged the movement of settlers to Oregon.

Unpredictable Indians along the route remained the primary fear of those who contemplated moving to Oregon in the 1840s. Secretary of War John C. Spencer acknowledged this in his annual report for 1842. The United States needed an "exhibition of military power" in the area and on the route not only to keep the Indians subdued, but also, he said, to counteract "the unresisted influences of the traders and emissaries of foreign nations" among the Indians.⁵

In 1842, however, posts like Fort Scott were still being built to mark and enforce the permanent Indian frontier well outside the area influenced by migration to Oregon, and Congress was not forthcoming with additional funds to establish a line of forts on the western trails. Yet in late 1845, requests to Congress still urged the building of posts "to maintain our rights to Oregon." These forts would not only protect those already emigrating, but encourage many others to do so by protecting the travelers and focusing attention on the region.⁶

The Army soon established posts such as Fort Kearny and Fort Laramie on the western trails, but the Mexican War interrupted the building program. Another measure was the formation of the Regiment of Mounted Riflemen authorized in May 1846 expressly for duty on the Oregon Trail. Instead of heading for the Northwest, however, the soldiers went south to fight Mexico. Only in 1849, after the men's enlistments had run out and they were again recruited, did the regiment set out from Fort Leavenworth for their assignment along the Platte River.⁷

The Army expanded as a result of the war with Mexico, as had the

nation itself with the settlement of the Oregon dispute, the annexation of Texas, and the acquisition of the vast Mexican cession in the Southwest. Despite the increase of the army, there were too few soldiers to guard the new territories and continue the occupation of the forts along the permanent Indian frontier. As a result, the army reduced the garrisons at Fort Scott and similar posts, and sent the troops west. The emigrant Indians in Kansas, despite their drunken sprees and other problems, were not prone to open warfare as the tribes of the far west were in the 1850s. When it came to a choice of soldiers for one line of posts or the other, the forts on the permanent Indian frontier generally lost their garrisons.

Settlers and traders moving through Indian country definitely affected the change in policy in the 1850s, but the overflow of white farmers from the States just to the east of the Indian lands had as great an effect.

The history of Indian-white relations generally followed the same course. It started with the establishment of Indian lands guaranteed by treaty. These were usually maintained for several years before "squatters" would move on to a parcel of land and begin making improvements and planting crops. Officially, once these farmers were discovered living in Indian country, they were asked, and if necessary, forced to leave. The army lacked sufficient troops to patrol all Indian lands adequately, so many of the illegal settlers remained undiscovered. Even if the army did find and remove them, the squatters often returned as soon as the soldiers left the vicinity. Once enough of these people occupied a given area, they could petition the government to change the

boundaries of the Indian holdings and allow them to keep the farms that they had created illegally.

In 1841, because of the migration of whites, Isaac McCoy expressed his concern for the integrity of the permanent Indian frontier:

[I had] recently been deeply impressed with the consideration of the fact that the overwhelming [illegible] of immigration to the west for years past, has reached the western line of the States of Arkansas and Missouri. It is now turning on itself and thickening, and in the north of Missouri the wooded country . . . will be comparatively filled. If this should happen before the Indians within the Indian Territory be secured in their possessions, a disastrous rush will be made upon them [sic].⁸

The illegal appropriation of Indian lands by frontiersmen contributed to the removal policy in the first place, and by 1850, it appeared such actions would cause a further change in the course of United States-Indian relations.⁹

Following the Mexican War and the addition of the vast western territories, sectionalism gained force as an issue. The problem of squatters in the Indian country became more urgent to both sides of the slavery question. In his 1841 journal, Isaac McCoy commented on slavery's influence on the Indian frontier, but it remained a relatively minor issue until after the Mexican War when the Indians were surrounded by organized States and Territories.¹⁰

The permanent Indian frontier, it can be argued, ended in practice when the Army stopped removing squatters from Indian lands in the early 1850s, but the official end of the policy came with the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854.¹¹ The Army abandoned Fort Scott and sold the buildings in 1853, a time by which it appeared inevitable that Kansas would be opened to white settlement.

Although title to the Indian lands had not been extinguished, the

1854 Act provided territorial governments for Kansas and Nebraska. The opening of the new Territories hinged on two primary issues: slavery and transcontinental railroad routes.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act provided for the settlement of the slavery question by the people living in the new territories when they applied for statehood. Those who had been living in Indian territory were allowed to remain and many new settlers joined. Politicians from North and South tried to get those with views similar to their own to move to the new Territories, especially Kansas, in order to preserve the free state-slave state balance in the Senate. Many Northerners opposed the move, fearing an extension of slavery, but others, such as former Secretary of War and Democratic candidate for President in 1848 Lewis Cass, joined Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois in the belief that the future states would reject slavery.¹²

With the acquisition of the Pacific coast, the dreams of a transcontinental railroad moved closer to reality. From 1850 to 1854, the amount of railroad tracks in the United States increased from 8600 to 21,300 miles and routes for further expansion westward were sought.¹³ A southern route through Texas and New Mexico would have left the Indian territory undisturbed, but the Northern and Central states opposed it. Southerners blocked a northern route because it would have opened more land to free state settlers. The central route, which opened Kansas and Nebraska, left the new Territories open to settlement from both North and South and gave roughly equal access to the railroads to both sections of the country.

The additional territories acquired by the United States in the 1840s, the squatters on Indian lands, the railroad routes, and the

sectional differences tied in with all of them can be brought under the heading of land-hunger or greed on the part of the government or at least individuals within the government. As in the formation of the removal policy and the permanent Indian frontier, concern for the survival of the Indians also figured in the major changes in policy in the 1850s. By the late 1840s, the key to the preservation of the Indians (as individuals, not as distinct cultural groups) was no longer removal, but concentration. The problem of civilizing the Indians had lost much of its appeal by the end of the Mexican War. In the documents of that time more space was devoted to the reasons for and planning to get the tribes out of the way so more whites could move west than is spent on the issue of saving the Indians. Concentration of the Indians would accomplish this by grouping the tribes into two major areas: the present-day states of North and South Dakota, and Oklahoma. Between these two regions lay the routes west, along with a vast amount of land which could be opened to the citizens of the United States.

Instruction in agriculture and religion, it was argued, could be carried out with greater efficiency after concentration. Superintendent of Indian Affairs at St. Louis, Thomas H. Harvey, declared:

The more closely the different tribes are brought in proximity to each other, the more efficient may be made the superintendence of the government, and the more the expenses of such superintendence be diminished. . . . I have observed that those neighborhoods that are most thickly settled, (provided they be not in villages,) advance more rapidly in general improvements than scattered settlements.¹⁴

In addition to making the education of Indians easier and more efficient, concentration would also increase their safety from attack from hostile tribes or their white neighbors. Smaller tribes, decimated

or diminished by disease and through alcohol-related violence, held an amount of land greater than their relative numbers. This land was declared useless to them because game was scarce which made the land "a positive disadvantage to them." The annuities paid as compensation for earlier land cessions had expired for some of the tribes and their transition to the agrarian life was far from complete. With the depletion of game many of the Indians faced hunger and even starvation. With further land cessions, the annuities could be renewed and the instruction in farming continued under better conditions.¹⁵

Indian land cessions or exchanges had never really ceased, even after the Indians reached their "permanent" homes. The Missouri-Indian border was stable for awhile, but to the north and south of Missouri whites still pushed the Indians westward. In 1846, the Winnebagos, accepted a treaty in which they gave up the last of their Iowa lands, totaling several million acres. They were the last tribe in Iowa. Legal white settlement began on this land and not only was Iowa freed "from a fruitful source of annoyance," but also the Indians were removed "from the bad influences incident to their proximity to a white population."¹⁶

By this time, the American Indian Mission Association feared for the integrity of the Indian country. An effort to revise the removal policy gained more attention and officials spoke less of the permanent Indian frontier than they had in the 1830s. Those who considered themselves friends of the Indians felt "distrust and alarm" at the prospects of abrogating the treaties which guaranteed the Indians their permanent homes.¹⁷

The tide had turned against the Indian frontier concept. Between 1846 and 1854, the public debate on the subject centered not on the

question of whether or not the policy would be changed, but rather how it would be changed. Plans for organizing Nebraska and Kansas as Territories were formed before the Mexican War, but it was not until the 1854 Act that the sectional differences could be reconciled. As the day of white settlement of the region approached, negotiations with the Indians for yet more removals continued.

The government concluded more than fifty treaties with the Plains Indians between 1851 and 1856.¹⁸ The boundaries for the respective tribes changed in an effort to accommodate all of them into a much smaller area. The central Plains of Kansas and Nebraska were largely cleared of Indians, and the bulk of the tribes moved either north to the future States of the Dakotas or south to Oklahoma. The idea of permanency for the Indian country was no longer accepted. The tribes that remained in Kansas after it became an organized Territory held only a remnant of their former lands. The experiment of keeping the Indians outside of the organized States and territories until they could lead civilized lives had failed. Even in the first few years of Fort Scott's existence, policy changes were being discussed which would change not only the frontier line, but the entire concept of the frontier.

Chapter Five Endnotes

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CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

Chapter Six

Conclusions

The history of the permanent Indian frontier and its relationship to Fort Scott can be divided into two distinct areas of examination: theory and practice. Great differences between the two became apparent in the years 1830-1854.

According to the way in which the concept was laid out, the Indians would accept removal beyond the Mississippi because it gave them a great deal of good land in exchange for the lands that they held east of the Mississippi. Quite often the game on which the Indians depended had been killed or driven off their lands, and the Indians always had to contend with the nearby settlers in their original lands. Generally collisions between the white and red men were on an individual basis, but occasionally, as in the case of the Cherokee Nation and the State of Georgia, the differences extended far beyond individuals.

The United States government failed to take into consideration what the Indians themselves desired. Many of the tribes moved willingly, abandoning their already reduced homelands in favor of western lands and plentiful game. Others, like the Cherokees, had already adopted an agricultural way of life and had a deep affection for their ancestral

homes. They did not wish to be uprooted regardless of how favorable an exchange they could get. President Andrew Jackson and the majority in Congress arbitrarily determined that the Cherokees and virtually all of the eastern Indians would, indeed, move and accordingly forced them out. For the Cherokees, this resulted in their "Trail of Tears."

The standard assumption of those who supported removal for the good of the Indians was they should adopt the manners and vocations of western civilization. That meant giving up the hunt and learning to manage small farms. Behind the protection of the permanent Indian frontier, the Indians were to change their ways gradually by seeing the advantages of raising crops and livestock through demonstration. "Permanent" actually meant indefinite, but on a long-term basis. This might conceivably have worked if the frontier could have been maintained as long as originally planned. However, changes came quickly in national perceptions and goals, and officials who had been sympathetic to the difficulties facing the Indians were replaced by those who had more concern for the greatness of the nation and the frontiersmen who continued to press the Indians.

In 1830, when the permanent Indian frontier became the goal of the government, and in 1834, when the Intercourse Act spelled out rules for the segregation of the Indians, the Indian country was actually colonial territory from the Louisiana Purchase and outside the organized United States. Though the area undisputedly belonged to the nation, it had no government except the one in Washington, D.C. Despite the discussions of a future Indian state, the natives never gained territorial status for their lands, and the Indian frontier was considered the western frontier of the country.

The Oregon and Santa Fe Trails, cutting through the heart of Indian

land became sources of difficulties, but the conflicts which arose were by no means insurmountable. By the early 1840s, expansionists became more vocal and demanded the annexation of the Republic of Texas as well as sole control of the Oregon Country. These cries gained power as more and more Americans filled Texas and the Northwest. By 1848, the United States gained control not only of Texas and much of Oregon, but also of the Southwest. The Indians found themselves surrounded by lands open to white settlement the primary routes to which traversed the middle of the Indian land in Kansas and Nebraska.

With the dramatic increase in national power and prestige which resulted from this land acquisition, concern for the Indians receded. The nation devoted time, energy, and money to taming the new lands. That often meant fighting Indians rather than civilizing them. The limited resources of the Army went to Texas and the new West instead of the internal border on the edge of the Plains.

The early history of Fort Scott reflected these changes in policy of the 1840s and the 1850s. Built in 1842 expressly to guard the Missouri border against the intrusion of the Osages and other tribes and to stem the flow of liquor into the Indians' hands, Fort Scott actually existed past its most useful period. The order to abandon Fort Scott was carried out in 1853, a year before Kansas became a Territory, but even earlier than this there were few who doubted that the region would be opened to white settlement. The troops who occupied Fort Scott moved west to pacify other tribes and to patrol the migration routes.

As the Indians migrated out of Kansas and Nebraska, their former "permanent" homes, white settlers moved in. Relocation in the Dakotas or Oklahoma was no longer considered permanent for the tribes. It was

only a matter of time before the individual allotment of land to each Indian would result in smaller reservations, and the land taken away opened for whites.

The experiment in Indian relations failed, not because the government did not care about the Indians, but because of a rapidly growing population and frontiersmen who occupied whatever land they wanted, disregarding rightful ownership. Given the reluctance of Congress to authorize sufficient military budgets in the period 1830 to 1845, complete enforcement of the permanent Indian frontier became impossible. Too much land had to be patrolled by an inadequate number of troops.

After the Mexican War, the problem changed. The lack of money became secondary to the lack of will to enforce the laws dealing with Indian relations. The emphasis shifted to expansion and exploitation of the new regions rather than the care and education of the Indians. The goals which officials and other concerned citizens hoped to reach with the Indians in the 1830s could not stand up to the pocketbook issues of the expansionists in the 1840s.

Appendix

This is an excerpt from the Annual Report of the Secretary of War for 1831. These are the guidelines which Secretary Lewis Cass urged the government to follow in dealing with the Indians. It should be noted that before being appointed Secretary of War, Cass was governor of Michigan Territory. He was considered to be very knowledgeable about Indian affairs and a friend of the Indians.

The general details of a plan for the permanent establishment of the Indians west of the Mississippi, and for their proper security, would require much deliberation; but there are some fundamental principles, obviously arising out of the nature of the subject, which, when once adopted, would constitute the best foundation for our exertions, and the hopes of the Indians.

1. A solemn declaration, similar to that already inserted in some of the treaties, that the country assigned to the Indians shall be theirs as long as they or their descendants may occupy it, and a corresponding determination that our settlements shall not spread over it; and every effort should be used to satisfy the Indians of our superiority and of their security. Without this indispensable preliminary, and without full confidence on their part in our intentions, and in our abilities to give these effect, their change of position would bring no change of circumstances.

2. A determination to exclude all ardent spirits from their new country. This will no doubt be difficult; but a system of surveillance upon the borders, and of proper police and penalties, will do much towards the externalization of an evil, which, where it exists in any considerable extent, is equally destructive of their present comfort and future happiness.

3. The employment of an adequate force in their immediate vicinity, and a fixed determination to suppress, at all hazards, the slightest attempt at hostilities among themselves.

So long as a passion for war, fostered and encouraged, as it is, by their opinions and habits, is allowed free scope for exercise, it will prove the master spirit, controlling, if not absorbing, all other considerations. And if in checking this evil some examples should

become necessary, they would be sacrifices to humanity, and not to severity.

4. Encouragement to the severalty of property, and such provisions for its security, as their own regulations do not afford, and as may be necessary to its enjoyment.

5. Assistance to all who may require it in the opening of farms, and in procuring domestic animals and instruments of agriculture.

6. Leaving them in the enjoyment of their peculiar institutions, as far as may be compatible with their own safety and ours, and with the great objects of their prosperity and improvements.

7. The eventual employment of persons competent to instruct them, as far and as fast as their progress may require, and in such manner as may be most useful to them.*

*Annual Report of the Secretary of War, Dec. 6, 1831, 22nd Cong., 1st sess., H. Doc. 2, serial 216, 33-34.

A Note on Sources

The congressional serials, including the Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and Secretary of War have proven to be the most useful sources on the permanent Indian frontier in general. The serials contain many reports from committees, and memorials relating to Indian affairs from state legislatures and missionary groups. The Annual Reports, consistently divided into subsections, relate the changes which occurred from year to year. The main drawback to these sources is that there is little material dealing explicitly with Fort Scott.

The Kansas State Historical Society has been a much better source of Fort Scott information. In addition to the collections of men such as Isaac McCoy and Robert Simerwell, the Society holds Fort Scott and Bourbon County histories.

Francis Paul Prucha is the best secondary source of information. He has written extensively on Indian policy and his work, American Indian Policy in the Formative Years is the best book I have found on Indian affairs from American independence through the Intercourse Act of 1834. Prucha's A Bibliographical Guide to the History of Indian-White Relations in the United States has also been very helpful in finding additional sources.

The main problem in researching Fort Scott during this period is the lack of primary material dealing with the post. Government sources touch

upon the post briefly, but generally deal with the larger issues. Local histories, generally written from personal reminiscences, are often unreliable and are not, as a rule, well-documented. Though there are sources dealing with how the fort was built and how much it cost, there is little on the actions of the soldiers in the 1840s.

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