

MINORITIES RESOURCE AND RESEARCH CENTER NEWSLETTER

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UNIVERSITY

December 1977



The Kansa Indians

By Roy D. Bird
Riley County Historical Museum

The Kansa tribe of Native Americans settled in the vicinity of the Big Blue River and the Kansas River (1800) more than one-half century before the first white settlers arrived (1855). The Kansa, who have often been known as the Kaws, called the Big Blue River the "Blue Earth River." From this term came both the Anglicized name for the stream and the name of the Kansa village at its mouth, the "Blue Earth" village, according to William E. Unrau's book, *the Kansa Indians*.

The location of the village was two miles east of modern day Manhattan. It was the principal site of the Kansa tribe for about 31 years (1800 to 1831). The leader for the early years, White Plume, was also a leading chief of the entire Kansa tribe. The center of political power rested in the Blue Earth Village and later a military leader named Burning Hart assumed much of the guiding responsibilities.

One white visitor counted 128 lodges in the

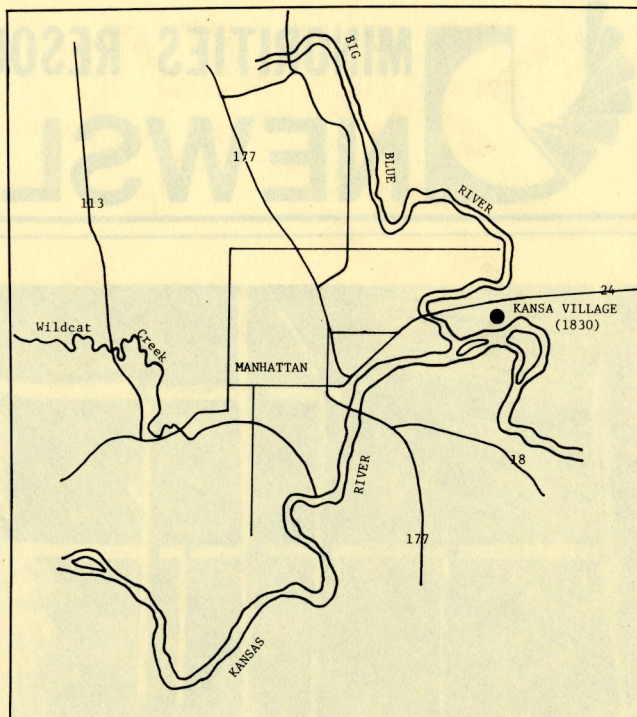
village around 1820. The lodges were made of logs and branches with sod walls and either sod or thatched domes. Some were round while others were rectangular in shape. The rectangular lodges were 60 feet long and 25 feet wide; large enough to house an entire family, its property, produce and livestock. Kansa horses and dogs also shared accommodations with their owners.

Another white visitor reported seeing over 100 acres of corn, beans and pumpkins growing in the Kansa field. Corn was a staple for the Kansa. They sometimes used corn for trading purposes. A hundred acres easily provided for Kansa food needs with surplus to store against famine.

The Blue Earth Village was first visited by George C. Sibley, a trader and government agent, in 1811. Shortly thereafter, the village was attacked by the Pawnee from the upper reaches of the Republican River Valley. Under the brilliant leadership of Burning Hart, the outnumbered Kansa defeated the Pawnee in a major battle. The Pawnee lost about 80 warriors and all their horses. This victory was the first twinkle of Burning Hart's ascending star within the tribe.

Thomas Say, twelve men, and a boy came to the site in 1819. He was sent up the Kansas River to explore the region and contact the Kansa. The group made friends with the Kansa, then headed north up the Blue River. On their way they were accosted by Pawnee who stole their horses and supplies. They returned to the Kansa village but the Kansa were experiencing famine and were too poor to help them. Say and his party were forced to walk the entire distance back to civilization.

During the early 1830s an Indian agency was established at Fort Leavenworth to serve different tribes in Northeastern Kansas. The Kansa began leaving the Blue Earth Village in order to be near the post. By 1831 the Kansa were split into three different bands located just west of present-day Topeka. The Blue Earth Village was soon deserted and fell into ruins. By the time the first white settlers arrived in the Manhattan area (1855) there was little remaining of the village except artifacts left by the Kansa—small reminders of the first inhabitants of Riley County.



John Johnson, Farrell Library

To be Frank

By Anthony J. Seals

This is a story about Frank, a student at K-State. Frank is a junior, majoring in history and pre-law. He makes it a point to attend all his classes, and he studies regularly in the library.

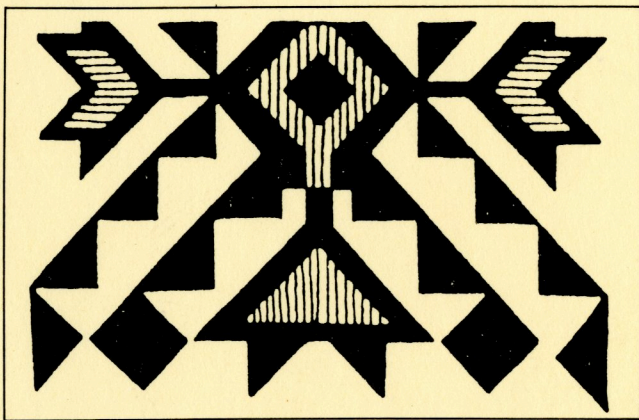
Frank stays in shape by jogging two or three times a week and walking to school every morning. His dress is conservative and neat. Seldom is his dark waveless hair out of place, and when he greets you it is always with a smile.

These qualities are some which we all possess as students. Common ground on which we all stand. But as with similarities there are differences. The differences are the reasons why I write about Frank.

His name is Frank Kekahbah, Native American Indian Student Body (NAISB) president. His heritage—a descendant of the Kansa Indians, the first known people in this area. This state bears their name; Kansas, land of the Southwind people.

He was born and raised in Oklahoma where most of the Kansa Indians now live. He recalls how difficult and ironic it was for him to gain classification as a resident for tuition at K-State.

"When I came to school here I thought I would qualify for resident fees. But they (admissions) said, 'no, you are a non-resident (a resident of Oklahoma) and must pay non-resident fees'."



Frank paid the non-resident tuition but went before the admissions board to have his status changed from non-resident to resident.

"I felt very uncomfortable before this board. The main reason was because the Kansa people had been in this area long before the first white pioneers or settlers (the French were the first in 1751). And here I was standing before these people asking them if I could be classified as a resident of this state and they were all Anglo's. This disturbed me."

Frank had to go before the admissions board a second time before finally receiving resident tuition.

In the early 1800s the Kansa tribe peaked in population to approximately 2,000 persons. Today, after disease, starvation and forced migrations took their toll that number has decreased considerably. There are only 17 full-blooded Kansa Indians remaining, one of whom is Frank's father. His mother is Potawatomie.

Members of his tribal council are in the process of preserving as much of the Kansa culture as possible.

"The council is trying to revive the Kansa culture before the old people pass on. It is they who maintain the culture and language which the younger ones do not know," he said.

Over one-hundred years ago Kansa culture flourished near the banks of the Kansas River. And not far from Manhattan, nestled near the confluence of the Kansas and Blue rivers, thrived a community of Kansa Indians, the great-grandfathers of Frank Kekahbah.

The Minorities Resource and Research Center Newsletter is a bi-monthly publication.

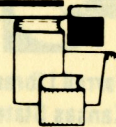
Antonia Quintana Pigno, Director, The Minorities Resource and Research Center, Farrell Library, Kansas State University.

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Dr. Robert D. Bontrager, Editorial Consultant

NEW ACQUISITIONS



Books

Introduction to Chicano Studies by Livie Isauro Duran and H. Russell Bernard. A focus on Chicano culture, self-determination and problems caused by Anglo society.

Blacks in Gold Rush California by Rudolph M. Lapp. Illustrates how Blacks expanded westward and struggled for riches and freedom during the California gold rush.

The Reservation by Ted C. Williams. A story of the Tuscarora Indian Reservation.

Quiz Book on Black America by Clarence N. Blake. A practical learning device of questions pertaining to the Black experience. Areas include civil rights, judicial decisions, inventions, education, labor movement, etc.

Martin Luther King Jr.: A Documentary ... Montgomery to Memphis by Flip Schulke. A pictorial essay and chronology based on the movie of the same title. Also includes well-known speeches and sermons by the late Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

A History of the Mexican-American People by Julian Samora and Patricia Vandel Simon. The authors provide a summary of the history of Mexican-Americans and have attempted to speculate on what the future may hold.

Journals and References

UMOJA. A scholarly journal of rigorous and systematic investigation of issues in every field of knowledge concerning African peoples around the world.

Indian Progress. A Friends of Indian publication which cites important legislation pertaining to Indian affairs.

Comexaz. A news monitoring service published by the Comité de Mexico y Aztlan. Comexaz contains the previous month's clippings of Mexican-American events and Mexico from seven major Southwestern United States newspapers.

Chicano Studies Center Documentary. A publication that identifies and explores original research on critical issues facing the Chicano community. Published by the Chicano Studies Center of UCLA.



Farrell Library
Kansas State University
Manhattan, Kansas 66506



New Course

English 515 Literature and Society: Black American Literature

A survey of Black American literature, beginning with slave narratives and concluding with Black voices of the 70s. Emphasis is on fiction, though poetry, drama, autobiography, and essays will also be examined. The readings will be approached chronologically so that the thematic threads which connect Black literary works, both early and late, may be noted. The chronological structure also enables the reader to mark the changes that occur in tone, audience, and purpose with each new generation of Black writers. The course, then, has a dual aim: to work with important individual works in a variety of genres, and to survey, as comprehensively as possible, the rich Black American literary tradition. Lucien Agosta, Instructor

CALENDAR

Photo Display

Beginning December 6, 1977, there will be an exhibit of photographs by Fernando Granado in the Minorities Resource/Research Center at Farrell Library. The collection entitled "Ensayo Fotografico" depicts Mexican Americans of North-eastern Kansas in their communities, schools and churches. This program is presented in part by the Kansas Arts Commission, a state agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. Mr. Granado is a native of Topeka, Kansas and is Photography Director at KTSB-TV in Topeka.