



Tah Po Ska

Newsletter of the Friends of Kaw Heritage, Inc.

January 2009

Kaw Mission Special Events 2009

Thursday, January 29, 11 am – 6 pm
Celebrate Kansas!

Annual Kansas Day open house features live music, historical reenactor & *Stars, Stars, Stars!* quilt show

Friday & Saturday June 19 & 20
Kaw inter-tribal Pow Wow 6:30 p.m.
& Washunga days 2009

Washunga Days Parade
Beaver Creek Carriages
Free Quilt Show
Hiebert's Dulcimers
Reception for Kaw

TerryLee Whetstone - Native American Flute

Sunday, August 16, 6:30 pm
Fourth Annual Band Concert and Ice Cream Social
Flint Hills Community Band led by Dennis Brooks.
Social benefits the *Voices of the Wind People*

Thursday, December 3, 6:30 pm
A Kaw Mission Christmas
Nostalgic Christmas Open House

The Kanza Reservation 150 Years Ago

Erecting a Building of Suitable Size and Comfort

Imagine that on Christmas Day, 1858, you were the 23-year-old Kanza Indian agent, John Montgomery. You're riding in a buggy with your wife, Mary Ellen, and baby daughter, Mary Ellen as well. You're headed southeast on the Council Grove-Americus Road through the Kanza Reservation, for which you have oversight as an official of the U.S. Office of Indian Affairs. You have left your old home and agency office in Council Grove, your course roughly following the now-abandoned Missouri Pacific Railroad, today's Flint Hills Nature Trail.

With considerable consternation you notice, as one observer from Emporia did in the summer of

1858, "...Where, one year ago there were but few settlers, and little or no improvement, there is now a large population, highly cultivated farms, and comfortable dwellings...Every timbered claim on the Reserve is occupied."¹

About 2½ miles from Council Grove you would pass near an abandoned Kanza Indian village of about 25 grass and bark-and-mat lodges on the east bank of Big John Creek. The Kanzas had left in early November for a bison hunt in central Kansas; in a few weeks they would return to reclaim their village home.

About 3½ miles from town, just after crossing over the Little John Creek ford, you would see about one hundred feet south of the road a pair of newly-constructed buildings closely spaced in a diagonal configuration. You now have arrived at your new home.

These buildings would stand out on the prairie, situated as they were on a rise above the flood plains of the nearby Little John and Big John creeks, about one-half mile east of where the latter stream joins the Neosho River. These were the first buildings at the site of what became a complex of structures and U.S. government functions known as the Kaw Agency.

For the next 15 years, until the Kanza (or Kaw) Indians were removed from their twenty-mile-square reservation in 1873, this newly-constructed "Agency House" with subsequent additions would serve as the home and office for six federal Indian agents.

Both structures rested on limestone foundations, their walls made of hewn logs chinked with lime mortar and covered with oak siding. The east one was a story-and-a-half, measured fifteen by seventeen feet, with a stairway of dressed walnut plank, three windows, two doors, and a fireplace.

The other was one-story, fourteen by sixteen feet, "...situated on one side of and eight feet from the main building with shed extending to main building..."

Two acres of the surrounding ground was enclosed with oak or walnut rails, forming a fence "...eight-rails high staked and ridered." A well was dug thirty-feet deep and walled with stone at a cost of \$1.50 per foot. The total cost of construction came to \$1,250.00, a sum agent Montgomery considered "...insufficient for the erection of a building of suitable size and comfort."

The contract specifying terms of construction was signed on April 25, 1858, by Montgomery and contractor Charles H. Withington. Five days later the Kanza agent wrote to his supervisor in St. Louis, Superintendent of Indian Affairs Alex M. Robinson, vouching for Withington's character: "C.H. Withington is a very good, reliable mechanic, and a gentleman in every other respect. I therefore feel perfectly confident that the job will be done in a good and workman like manner."

What Montgomery failed to disclose to Robinson was that Withington was the agent's father-in-law. John Montgomery and Mary Ellen Withington had married on December 17, 1856, about one month after Mary Ellen's 15th birthday.²

Charles Withington had benefited from this nepotistic arrangement, having been previously hired by his son-in-law to haul the Kanza annuities from Westport and on January 1, 1859, receiving payment of twenty dollars for "...cutting and hauling for the use of the Kansas Agency office, 10 cords of fire wood, at the rate of \$2.00 per cord."

By territorial Kansas standards, Montgomery had married well. Charles Withington had come to Kansas in 1846 as a gunsmith for the Sac and Fox, living on that tribe's reservation near present Lyndon. For a time in the early 1850s he lived in Council Grove, then in 1854 established residence on 142-Mile Creek near present Allen, where he operated a store on the Santa Fe Trail.

"Would-be settlers looking for claims, found in Mr. Withington's place of business so good a hotel as the times could afford, and in Mr. Withington himself as accommodating a landlord as his accommodations would allow," wrote A. T. Andreas in his *History of Kansas*.

When he was appointed agent to the Kansas on March 3, 1855, the three Kanza villages were located three, seven, and ten miles southeast of Montgomery's Council Grove office. This new agency placed the young agent near the Big John village, and closer to the other villages located near present Dunlap and at the mouth of Kahola Creek.

In the seven years prior to Montgomery's coming to Council Grove, none of the nine different agents in charge of Kanza affairs had lived closer than fifty miles to the Kanza villages.³ Superintendent Robinson, expressed the rationale for closer agent proximity to the Indians:

"It is deemed of much importance to the advancement of the Indians, that their agent should be located at or near their villages or settlements, in order that a daily intercourse may be kept up between them, and the agent be at all times ready to give such advice and encouragement as the necessities of his wards may require...the importance of at once erecting the necessary buildings for the accommodation of these functionaries must be admitted."⁴

Robinson did not mention another prominent reason for establishing the agent near his Indians—protecting them from illegal white squatters.

On November 6, 1858, the *Kanza News* of Emporia reported that Charles Withington "has nearly completed a large building to be used as the agency for the Kaws. It is situated at the mouth of Big John creek, on the road to Council Grove."

"We fear this indicates a determination on the part of the Administration to retain the Kaws in their present location, in disregard of the best interest of the Indians, as well as the vested rights of our citizens, who settled upon the lands..."

The editor of the *News* ended the article with this challenge: “Meantime, settlers are daily making claims upon their (so-called) Reserve, and settling down with their families, with a full determination to see the business through. If anybody expects them to leave on short notice, under any circumstances, they will probably be disappointed.”

These “settlers” had long been the bane of agent Montgomery’s existence. In September 1856 he wrote: “Those settlers...have been of great annoyance and trouble to this agency. Measures are soon to be taken for their removal; but judging from former experience in removing people from Indian lands, I fear that I will not be able to succeed.”

As the youthful Montgomery couple prepared to move into their new agency home in December 1858, they surely felt foreboding at being surrounded by hundreds of hostile whites then encroaching on the Kanza reservation.

“Where a certain class of people assume to themselves the right to judge of matters pertaining to the Indian country,” Montgomery lamented, “it is very difficult for an Indian agent to perform with promptness the duties of his office.”⁵

1. *Kansas News* (Emporia), July 24, 1858.
2. Don Schiesser of Allen, Kansas provided information about the Withingtons and John Montgomery.
3. William E. Unrau, *The Kansa Indians: A History of the Wind People 1673-1873* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), p. 167.
4. *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (1859) p. 482.
5. *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (1856) pp. 681-682.

By Ron Parks, December 26, 2008

Celebrate Kansas! Returns

Kansas Day will be celebrated at the Kaw Mission in grand style during the annual ***Celebrate Kansas!*** open house. The event, free and open to the public, will be held on Kansas Day, Thursday, January 29, 2009, 11 am - 6 pm.

Guests will be greeted and served refreshments by FKH members dressed in period clothing. Jeremiah Hershberger, accordion, and Charlie Laughridge, fiddle, will provide live music playing patriotic songs of a distinctive Kansas flavor with guests joining in group singing.

The day’s festivities will include a free quilt show, ***Stars, Stars, Stars!*** Hand-stitched quilts featuring Kansas related patterns containing stars will be on display in the Kaw Mission Education Center from 11am – 6pm. Helen Ericson will display quilts from her extensive collection. Ericson enjoys a long and illustrious history with the art of quilting. Listed in the Who’s Who in American Quilts, Ericson was also honored with the title of “Master Folk Artist” by the Kansas Historical Society through a program sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts.

“Visitors to ***Stars, Stars, Stars!*** will see designs made with squares, triangles, diamonds and various other configurations,” said Ericson. “Some quilts are made of old, old fabric - others are made of new fabric.” Guests are encouraged to bring stars and quilts to show Ericson.

Local historian Kenneth McClintock will give his first person interpretation of T. Dwight Thacher addressing a crowd in Topeka celebrating the 25th anniversary of Kansas statehood on Kansas Day 1886. Thacher was a delegate to one of the four constitutional conventions that argued in behalf of Kansas becoming a state. McClintock will deliver this speech several times during the day. Friends board member, Don Jenkins, will introduce McClintock portraying H. D. Preston, a well-known surveyor at that time. Preston lived in Shawnee, Kansas and was a delegate to the Wyandotte Constitutional Convention in 1850.

Annual FKH Meeting: Parks to Speak

Members are invited to attend the annual FKH meeting at the Kaw Mission at 7 p.m. Thursday, February 19, 2009. A brief business meeting will include reports by President Barbara Stanbrough and Treasurer Lynda Poston.

Following the meeting, Ron Parks will present ***The Kanza Reservation 150 Years Ago***. Parks

will enlighten members with results of recent research uncovering information new to the Kaws and to us. If you have been reading and enjoying Ron's articles in his on-going newsletter column, you will find it a must to join us for this opportunity to learn more. Please bring questions and/or information to share with Ron.



Early Agency Building Photo by J. R. Reiff, Provided by Scott Brockleman.

Please Note: We are currently seeking information about the contents of this photo. Please contact the Mission if you can help or have other related photos. kawmission@kshs.org

Kaw Mission Christmas

This year's Kaw Mission Christmas open house may have been the best decorated ever! Volunteers, guided by the competent and professional supervision of Jana Smith, owner of *Celebration Flowers!*, really outdid themselves!



Jana Smith and crew, Peg Jenkins, Ken Stiebbsen, Malcolm Strom and Jean Kraus, hard at work beautifying the Mission.

Walks were illuminated by the warm glow of twinkling luminaries. A large, native cedar tree, harvested by the Jenkins, was festooned with decorations carefully and strategically placed.



Christmas Angels, Jean Adams, Sally Newcomer and Helen Ericson, combined their talents to embellish the Mission tree.

Guests were greeted by sounds of joyful music in the air. Jeremiah Hershberger, accordion, and Charlie Laughridge, fiddle, played while visitors joined in singing holiday carols. The CG Singers, Council Grove Elementary School students directed by Lisa Bolieu, joined in the caroling.



Dancing With The Stars - Eat your hearts out! Contestants Loretta Keyser & Ron Parks compete for honors at the Kaw Mission Christmas. Do we have fun, or what????

FKH board members & volunteers served homemade cookies, coffee, & hot apple cider to complete the festive holiday celebration. Thanks to all for creating such a cozy evening!

Wayne Engle - The Best of Friends



Our dear friend Wayne Engle, born April 7, 1932 at Andalusia, PA, left us Wednesday, December 24, 2008. Wayne and Cynthia Hembrow were married in New York City July 1971.

Wayne Girard Engle 1932 - 2008

It has been our good fortune to enjoy time with Wayne and Cynthia as members of the FKH Board of Directors since their move to Council Grove in 1998.

In addition to his tireless and devoted service to FKH, Wayne was a member of the Council Grove United Methodist Church, member and past president of the Council Grove Kiwanis Club, the Bowers Community Center and served as President of the U.S.D 417 School Board. Wayne also served as a substitute teacher for area schools. Wayne will be remembered always for his cheerful demeanor and constant thoughtfulness by all whose lives he touched. Wayne will be deeply missed by his good Friends at FKH.

FKH President's Column

It deeply saddens me to have lost a friend and FKH Board member Wayne Engle. He made a difference in so many lives in our community and will be greatly missed. My condolences go out to Cynthia and family.

We are privileged to have so many excellent volunteers willing to help out with our many events at the Mission. There were ample people on hand to decorate for our Christmas Open House. Thanks to everyone that contributed to the festive atmosphere and the great meal following. We had a large crowd for the event, lots of good music and refreshments.

We decided to take full advantage of the beautiful decorations and host the December Chamber of Commerce After Hours. There was a nice crowd that enjoyed tours through the Mission, lots of visiting and refreshments.

I hope all of you will plan to attend our Kansas Day celebration on January 29th and with any luck at all we won't have to endure a blizzard this year. In February FKH will conduct our annual meeting, elections of board members and officers. Please don't miss out on this opportunity to get a recap of the year's activities and what will be going on in 2009.

January 2009 marks the start of this year's membership drive, please fill out and return your

membership application. Without the support of our many members, this outstanding organization could not go on. You will find an application in this issue of the newsletter, please note a new address to mail it to. Dee Gieswein and I are your new co-chairwomen of the membership drive and if we don't hear from you, you can be assured of hearing from us!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Thank you so much for your past support and we look forward to your continued support.

I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas and will enjoy a great New Year. See you down the road at one of our upcoming events.

Barb Stanbrough, FKH President

Site Administrator's Column

Looking back on 2008, this site administrator's Hit Parade includes countless fine memories spent with FKH members & volunteers – enjoying happy times and sharing our losses.

Looking forward to 2009 . . . You ain't seen nothin' yet!!!! Stay tuned for what excitement we have in store for you at the Mission in 2009!

We hope all of you continue to support FKH with your membership renewal & join us for fun, frolic and festivities in 2009. Happy New Year!

Mary Honeyman, Site Administrator

The Name of this newsletter, *Tah Po Ska*, is the Kanza word meaning **teacher**. The Kanza people called Kaw Mission teacher Thomas Sears Huffaker their *Tah Po Ska*. FKH hopes each issue of *Tah Po Ska* will be a good teacher for our members.

Tah Po Ska is the official publication of the Friends of Kaw Heritage, Inc., a non-profit organization incorporated under the laws of the state of Kansas. The purpose of the Friends of Kaw Heritage, Inc., is to promote and support the preservation and interpretation of the Kaw Mission State Historic Site and the history of the Kaw Indians in the Council Grove area by providing supplemental funding, volunteer services, advocacy, public relations assistance, community involvement and educational services.

FKH Board officers are, Barbara Stanbrough, president; Fay Laughridge, vice-president; Dee Gieswein, secretary; and Lynda Poston, treasurer. 2008 FKH Board members are Jane Dixon, Cynthia Engle, Helen Ericson, Jeremiah Hershberger, Don Jenkins, Peggy Jenkins, and Malcolm Strom. Site administrator Mary Honeyman is an *ex officio* member and editor of *Tah Po Ska*.

Kaw Mission Notes

- **Calling All Volunteers!** We still need help for the *Celebrate Kansas!* special event. If you are available and willing to come for a time between 11 am & 6 pm on Thursday, January 29th and help us out, we will return the favor with our promise for a great time of merriment and celebration here at the Mission, call the Mission and let us know!
- **You Are The Best, Oscar & Ida Nystrom & John E. Trembly Foundation Committee Members!** We can't thank you enough for your recent generous grant awards! When added to the City Award, you gave us the support we needed to make the 2009 Pow Wow a reality!
- **Attention Quilters!** Don't forget to bring along your quilts, stars and questions for Helen Ericson to the *Stars, Stars, Stars!* show in January's *Celebrate Kansas!* Helen will gladly ID quilt patterns, date fabrics and/or give you valuable quilting tips.
- **June 19 & 20, 2009! Update on Kaw Inter-tribal Pow Wow.** Note - the Kaw Nation Cultural Committee has changed the traditional schedule for the Pow Wows. In 2009 they will be on Fri. & Sat. evenings – no Sunday dances.
- **Don't Forget to Renew Your Membership!** The membership year runs from January 1 through December 31. If you haven't sent a renewal in for 2009 please fill out the enclosed form & send it today. You, our members, make this organization strong and all our activities possible. We appreciate your support!
- **Attention Birders!** FKH will sponsor monthly bird counts in 2009 – check it out & join us!
- **The Treasure Hunt for Agency Related Photos is On!** Scott Brockleman has peaked our interest by sharing his vintage photo. If you have photos or other information that might help Ron with his research, please let us know.
- **Winter Hours Are In Full Swing!** The Kansas Historical Society has set winter hours for the Kaw Mission State Historic Site. The Mission will be open from December 1, 2008 through March 31, 2009 on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays 9:30 am-5 pm. Tours may be scheduled during this time by calling the Mission for arrangements. Make a note of this & bring your winter visitors in to visit!

Visit our great website at www.kawmission.org.

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