The proposal to move Indians in the East to a permanent reservation west of the Mississippi originated with Thomas Jefferson in 1803, when the addition of the vast Louisiana Territory created conditions that would make removal feasible. Jefferson envisioned an Indian territory which would result in orderly Anglo settlement in the East and provide the Indians with time to develop civilized habits and customs. In 1828 James Monroe proposed a voluntary migration plan, but few Indians moved west under this plan and pressure on the government continued to build. During Andrew Jackson's administration in 1830 the Indian Removal act was passed. The President was authorized to grant lands in the unorganized part of the Louisiana Purchase in exchange for those relinquished in the East, to protect the Indians in their reservations, to pay expenses of removal and one year's subsistence, and compensate them for improvements on the relinquished land.
EMIGRANT INDIAN OBJECTIONS TO KANSAS RESIDENCE

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To put it boldly, we may start by stating that there may be little relationship between geographic perception and geographic reality. We may even argue that geographic perception is more subjective than objective, and that it is always conditioned by experience and inherited values.—Walter M. Kollmorgen, "The Woodsman’s Assault on the Domain of the Cattlemans."

CONCERNING Western land set aside for emigrant Indian groups, S. B. Louey, government surveyor, wrote: "The land is less desirable to ... Whites ... being a prairie ... while [sufficient] for an Indian population." Many Anglo-Americans shared the feeling that Native Americans would be comfortable in the West. This notion, however, had not been tested by analysis of Indian group contact with the Prairie-Plains. Evidence indicates that lands offered emigrant Indian groups in the Kansas territory were not perceived as sufficient by the Indians. Physically it was recognized as a different environment from that to which they were accustomed. Those Indian groups from east of the Mississippi river and north of the Ohio river who were to settle Kansas were concerned with the lack of timber, low agricultural potential, and an uncomfortable and unhealthy climate. As well, the Native Americans were not certain they would be able to live in harmony with the Anglo settlers and other emigrant Indian groups in the general area. To their minds social conditions would be no better in the West than they had been in the East. These Indian objections to removal indicate that their Eastern background inspired questions in the minds of Native Americans regarding their ability to survive on the Kansas prairies despite Anglo-American feelings to the contrary.

The approach taken in this article was to gather as many first-hand accounts of environmental attitudes as possible. The Native Americans considered were semisedentary groups from the Old Northwest and the northeastern United States. Although these groups differed considerably with regard to level of assimilation, social structure, and language background, they shared a heritage of woodland living and a history of social abuse at the hands of Anglo-Americans. These shared traits led to their voicing objections to the availability of suitable wood, agricultural opportunity, and climatic and social conditions in the prairies.

BACKGROUND TO REMOVAL

THE IDEA of a separate Indian territory did not spring full blown from the head of Andrew Jackson. The British had contemplated a trans-Appalachian Indian territory prior to the American Revolution. Their aim was to contain the colonial population coastward while protecting both the fur trade and the Indian lands from squatters. After the Revolution War, Thomas Jefferson envisioned an Indian territory on the west bank of the Mississippi river. To Jefferson, such a territory would result in orderly Anglo settlement in the East and provide the Indians with time to develop civilized habits and customs. Nothing was to come of these early plans, as colonial

2. "Correspondence, August 1, 1853," Microfilm Series (M Ser) T494, roll 8, Record Group (RG) 73, National Archives and Records Service (NARS), Washington, D.C.
3. Data for this article were provided by two main sources within the Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (RG 75). The principal source was "Letters Received," Office of Indian Affairs (M Ser M234). The other source was "Documents Relating to the Negotiations of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Indian Tribes," 1801-1869 (M Ser T494). Source documents used in support of federal records were the "William Clark Collection," "John C. Frat Collection," "Jotham Meeker Collection," and "James McCoy Collection," all in the manuscript department, Kansas State Historical Society.
4. "Journal of Alex Ramsey, October 2, 1863," M Ser T494, roll 6, RG 75, NARS.
problems and foreign affairs became the respective priorities of the time. Although Jefferson's plans for a definite Indian territory lay temporarily dormant, Anglo-Americans interested in preserving the Indians and Indian culture and those interested in exploiting Indian land and resources demanded that something be done to save the Indians and/or get them out from underfoot. In 1825 James Monroe proposed a voluntary migration plan. Few Indians moved west under this plan and pressure on the government continued to build, culminating in the passage of the Indian Removal bill in 1830. At this time, approximately 70,000 Indians resided east of the Mississippi river. Under the bill Native Americans were to surrender their lands in the East and be consolidated in a Western Indian territory according to tribal affiliation or regional origin.

The Indian Removal bill did not include a section outlining a specific area in which to locate Eastern Native Americans. However, the legal and illegal spread of Anglo settlement, combined with the already completed treaties, reduced the potential for an Eastern Indian territory and focused attention on the Western Prairie-Plains. Thus, as with other planned Indian territories, this one was also one step ahead of Anglo settlement.

It should be noted that government officials had no intention of simply claiming Eastern Indian lands. Rather, they would "legally" negotiate for Indian claims of residence. Documented conversations, letters, and council meetings with the emigrant groups indicated that Native Americans were active participants in the negotiation process. Aware of which Indians would get what land, and armed with environmental information gained from exploration of the proposed prairie lands, hunting experience, other Indians, missionaries, government officials, and traders, emigrant Indian groups made known their views to government commissioners.

7. Prucha, American Indian Policy in the Formative Years, p. 226.
11. "Correspondence, September 6, 1837," M Ser M334, roll 745. RG 75, NARS.

Isaac McCoy (1784-1846), Baptist preacher and teacher, believed the influence of white men upon the red would bring about the disintegration of the tribes, and the only solution was the establishment of an Indian state beyond the Mississippi. In the late 1820's he accompanied representatives of several eastern Indian tribes to examine the western country and select locations for their new homes. For more than 10 years he surveyed many of the new reservations and established missions and schools. He traveled through the valleys of the Kansas, Smoky Hill, and Solomon rivers and made maps and recorded information about those regions.
Gen. William Clark (1770-1838) was joint commander with Capt. Meriwether Lewis of the expedition to the Northwest in 1803. After winning fame and honors on the return of the Lewis and Clark expedition, he was appointed Indian agent at St. Louis in 1807, and in the same year, brigadier-general for Louisiana Territory. He is said to have had the respect and confidence of the Indians and during his long administration of Indian affairs, was instrumental in bringing about many important treaties. In 1825 he joined Michigan's territorial governor, Lewis Cass, in calling for and conducting negotiations at Prairie du Chien that attempted to settle permanently all Indian territorial disputes.

EMIGRANT INDIAN GROUPS OF THE NORTHEAST
AND OLD NORTHWEST AND THEIR RESPECTIVE
POPULATIONS

Tuscarora
Seneca
Onondaga
Oneida
Stockbridge
Brothertown
Cayuga
Miami
Wyandot
Sauk/Fox
Shawnee
Plankashaw, Wea, Peoria
Kickapoo
Winnebago
Pottawatomie
Chippewa
Ottawa

Source: Government Census, 1829

THE LACK OF WOOD

In the western Indian territory, prairie was the rule even though woodlands occurred along river courses and breaks in slope. It is estimated that at that time the prairie covered 97 percent of the area. This vegetation mix was not overlooked by the emigrant groups. As judged by the number of times wood was mentioned in government documents by emigrant tribes, it was by far the most objectionable aspect of the Western environment. The Shawnee, in a letter to William Clark, superintendent of Indian Affairs in St. Louis, noted with awe the vastness of the prairies awaiting the woodland Indians. They wrote:

Last spring we went to see the Kansas River and the lands of which you spoke . . . we travelled three days through prairies and thought we were in the land of the great spirit, for we could see nothing but what was above us and the earth we walked upon."

Native American groups, once over their initial environmental shock, reported concern over several aspects of the local timber. They were distressed over the lack of wood with which to "build," the scarcity of "sugar trees," and the absence of "fruit trees." Moreover, trees found in the area such as cottonwood, honey locust, buckeye, and white hickory were termed "useless." With tongue in cheek, the


14. "Correspondence, November 7, 1827," M Ser M234, roll 748, RG 75, NARS.
This early vegetation map of Kansas illustrates the prairie-woodland distribution in the Indian territory north of Oklahoma. In the western Indian territory, prairie was the rule even though woodland occurred along river courses and breaks in slope. It is estimated that at the time the prairie covered 97 percent of the area. These lands offered emigrant Indian groups in Kansas territory were not perceived as sufficient by the Indians. Those Indian groups from east of the Mississippi river and north of the Ohio river who were to settle Kansas were concerned with the lack of timber, low agricultural potential, and an uncomfortable and unhealthy climate. The Native Americans were also not sure that social conditions would be any better in the West than they had been in the East. Map by Browne, 1857, also reproduced in A. W. Kuchler, "The Oscillation of the Mixed Prairie in Kansas," Erdkunde, Born, Germany, v. 26, no. 2, 1972.

Sac and Fox, while enroute to southeastern Kansas, summed up Indian feelings toward the timber supply in the Indian territory when they stated:

The south side of the Missouri River was intended by the great spirit for the Red skins and for this reason he made so much prairie, that it would not suit the white man, and if this had not been the case the red man would in short time have been without a home.17

It should be noted that wood was not only important for building, sugar, and fruit yield, it also provided emigrant groups with a means of estimating agricultural potential.

Agriculture

While the Native Americans were an immediate problem to those who wanted their land and resources, they were also a problem to those not having direct contact with them. Despite Indian agricultural tradition, there existed general moral indignation at the failure of many of the Indian groups to embrace the concept of the private farm. Obviously, the “common field [was] the seat of barbarism, the separate farm the door to civilization.”18 To aid the emigrant Indians’ advancement toward civilization many of the treaties offered them the services of a farmer.19 This individual would teach the basics of plowing, planting, harvesting, and equipment care. Yet, to several of the groups, it was not a lack of agricultural knowledge nor the thought of giving up communal land tenure that led them to oppose taking up Western residence.

17. “Council, June 12, 1836,” M Ser M234, roll 751, RG 75, NARS.
In the region that became eastern Kansas, reservations for a score of Emigrant tribes from the East were laid out. The reservations in 1846 were: 1. Oto and Missouri. 2. Iowa, 1837. 3. Sac and Fox of Missouri, 1837. 4. Kickapoo Reserve, established under treaty of 1835. 5. Delaware Reserve and Outlet, established under treaty of 1831. 6. Kansa Reserve, established under treaty of 1825. 7. Shawnee Reserve, established by treaty of 1825. 8. Sac and Fox of Mississippi, 1843. 9. Chippewa Reserve, 1830. 10. Ottawa Reserve, 1832. 11. Peoria and Kaskaskia, 1833. 12. Wea and Plankeshaw, 1833. 13. Pottawatomie Reserve, established under treaty of 1837. 14. Miami Reserve, 1839 and 1841. 15. New York Indian Lands, conveyed under treaty of 1838. 16. Cherokee Neutral Lands, conveyed under treaty of 1835. 17. Osage Reserve, established by treaty of 1825. (The western boundary, originally the dotted line, was arbitrarily extended by the surveyors to the old Mexican line.) 18. Cherokee Strip, conveyed under treaty of 1835. 19. Quapaw Strip, 1834.

Rather, it was the idea that agriculture would be all but impossible in the prairies.

Among those Pottawatomie groups offered lands in southern Kansas was the united band of Pottawatomie, Ottawa, and Chippewa from the Chicago area. Initially refusing to move, they agreed in 1835 to send a delegation to explore lands along the Osage river. Within the delegation's report is a section stating their attitude toward the agricultural potential of the area. Their main concern was the lack of timber which they viewed as an apparent aspect of farm ecology. They stated:

Father, your agents told us that the country west was equally as good as the lands in Illinois and as well adapted to our situation ... we have been deceived ... our new country is mostly prairie. There is little encouragement ... to become farmers in a country where there is so little timber.  

The lack of timber was also an objection of the Wyandot of Ohio. In their report made in 1831 regarding an area which later became the Platte lands of Missouri, they said:

The timber is of that description generally that is of no great use to an agricultural community. The best and most useful timber is scarce and what there is of it, is deplorable defective. ... there is not good timber sufficient for the purposes of a people that wish to pursue agriculture.

The Wyandot did find the soil of the Platte region acceptable but expressed concern over the possibility of accelerated erosion. They stated: "The lands are steep and broken and barren with so many ravines and runs that the rich soil, when cultivated must necessarily wash away."

22. "Correspondence, December, 1845," M Ser M234, roll 416, RG 75, NARS.
In contrast to the Wyandot view of the soil was that expressed by the Miami who, by the close of the 17th century, were residing in the present southern Indiana area. Initially refusing lands offered at the confluence of the Osage and Little Osage rivers in Kansas, they finally explored the area in 1845. Described as relying “more on agriculture than on hunting” the exploring delegation of the Miami concluded, “The soil is very poor and unfriendly it [would] be impossible to raise corn on more than one tenth of the land, and only land on which we could raise corn would be the bottoms.” Agriculture, it should be noted, was just one part of woodland Indian subsistence strategy. The emigrant groups also supplemented their diets by hunting. After exploring the Western territory, emigrant groups expressed distress at the lack of and short supply of animals they were accustomed to such as turkey, deer, raccoon, muskrat, and bear.24

CLIMATE: COMFORT AND HEALTH

THE CLIMATE of Kansas is one of extremes: one freezes in winter and fries in summer. The wind is an omnipresent force, operating without vegetational check from the Arctic to the Southwest.

In the minds of the emigrant Indian groups, climate was closely linked with comfort and health. Those groups from the North found the Kansas Indian territory debilitating in summer, while others found the extreme winter season intolerable. The Winnebago from the Green Bay, Wis., area were provided an opportunity to explore Kansas lands in 1846. Knowledgeable of warmer temperatures, they replied:

We happen to be very well acquainted with the country to which our great father proposed to send us... there is a great difference between the climate there and where we now live. That climate does not suit people who have been raised in such a country as ours... Indians who live in a country like ours cannot live in the... prairies.25

The Saginaw, an Ottawa and Chippewa band from Michigan, agreed with the Winnebago statement and found the territory “too warm for their northern constitutions.”26 The Miami concurred and deemed the area “unhealthy.”27 Chief Billy Caldwell, spokesman for the united band of Pottawatomie, Ottawa, and Chippewa, also referred to the area between the Kansas and Arkansas rivers as “unhealthy.”28 The Tuscarora-Seneca and Onondago spokesman called it “a poor barren, unhealthy country where many families have lost all their children in a course of a few years.”29 Serena’s band of Kickapoo lived for a time in southwest Missouri on the edge of the sheltering Ozark Uplands. In 1833 government negotiator H. L. Ellsworth addressed a letter to Serena’s band reminding them of their treaty obligations and of the “fine land” set aside for them north of the Kansas river.30 Content with the warmer climate of southwest Missouri, the Kickapoo spokesman replied: “[W]e are opposed to it. [W]e are afraid our women and children will freeze in the winter.”31

SOCIAL CONDITIONS

IN SOME isolated instances, social conditions in the Indian territory promised to be an improvement over deteriorating relations in the East.32 More emigrant groups, however, indicated concern over a population meld that would bring them into proximity with the Anglo population of Missouri and other emigrant Indian groups.

To many of the Anglos along the western border of Missouri, the Native Americans were considered to be a source of economic exploitation and/or a natural enemy. The emigrant Indians were not blind to these feelings. The New York Indians labeled the white frontier population as the “most abject on the face of the earth.”33 The Wyandot spoke of them as

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23. “Correspondence, August 25, 1845,” M Ser M234, roll 418, RG 75, NARS.
24. “Correspondence, September 24, 1830,” M Ser M234, roll 215, RG 75, NARS.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. These groups viewed removal to the Indian territory as an opportunity to escape white harassment in their Eastern homes. In the early stages of removal the Shawnee of southwest Missouri, the Cayuga of New York state and two Pottawatomie bands from western Illinois volunteered to move west.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
being "with few honorable exceptions, the most abandoned, dissolute and wicked class of people we ever saw . . . more worthless and corrupt . . . than is to be found in . . . Ohio." 34 They went on to say, "moreover, the leading politicians of the state of Missouri . . . speak of the Indian as a 'nuisance' a 'curse' to the state, i.e. in short they evince an unfriendly and indeed hostile attitude." 35

It was assumed by the government that order, harmony and efficiency could best be served by consolidating various bands of the same tribal affiliations or bands from the same area on a single reservation. Native American groups perceived it differently. A band of Shawnee from the upper Louisiana territory did not want "to move to Kansas to join their relations." 36 The Kickapoo reported, "There has arisen many parties and we cannot agree." 37 While the united band of Pottawatomie, Ottawa, and Chippewa reported, "We cannot live with our neighbors . . . upon the tract of . . . prairie." 38

When considering the new land, the Oneida perceived a restricted reservation life. They would be accountable to an Indian agent, dependent on the government for money and supplies, and exposed to Indian societies with whom they had little in common. They stated: "We fear to remove we shall not find the tree of liberty under whose shade we have quietly reposed as a nation for centuries." 39

PERSPECTIVE

Native American objections to Kansas residence becomes clearer when viewed in terms of their physical and social conditioning in the East. Although familiar with prairie, these groups considered themselves to be woodland Indians. 40 They cleared forest for planting, hunted primarily woodland fauna, and were familiar with the climatic pattern and associated weather of the East. They were not prepared for the scale of the prairie environment they found in Kansas.

Among the results of Euro-American contact was the intensification of intertribal and intra-tribal conflict. Groups such as the Pottawatomie, Miami, and Wyandot, for example, at one time supporting the French, found themselves at odds with groups supporting the British, Americans, or Spanish. 41 Furthermore, the question of Euro-American alignment sometimes led to the rise of factionalism within the group as with the Kickapoo, Shawnee, Sac and Fox, and the Iroquois federation. 42 The result of this social upheaval was that these Indians could no longer be considered compatible simply because they belonged to the same nation or were from the same general area.

Having come to rely on Anglos for their basic needs, Native Americans often found themselves unjustly exploited. Traders allowed the Indians to buy on credit and enormous bills were run up, some totaling as much as $30,000. 43 The Indians' weakness for alcohol was also exploited in this vein. Indian sub-agent Edwin Jones wrote, "The settlers . . . prey hard upon them the guns, horses and other property they have in many cases bartered for whiskey." 44 In the process, Native Americans saw their women debauched and the breakdown of traditional social order

42. See Correspondence, October 27, 1829, M Ser M234, roll 302, RG 75, NARS.
43. See Correspondence, September 1837, M Ser M234, roll 71, RG 75, NARS.
within the group. The government backing of settler intrusion on Indian lands along with broken treaties added to Indian frustrations. Moreover, outright lies and fraudulent attempts by many government agents who attempted to speed removal served to heighten feelings of distrust toward politicians and political agents. Thus, Eastern social experiences also played a major role in emigrant Indian resistance to Western resettlement.

45. For examples see "Correspondence, October, 1833," M Ser M324, roll 410; "Correspondence, September 2, 1835," M Ser M324, roll 601; "Weekly Report, May 25, 1835," M Ser M324, roll 415; "Correspondence, October 2, 1837," M Ser M234, roll 745—RG 75, NAHS.

POSTSCRIPT

THE FEDERAL government's removal policy was not totally successful. The strong objections of the Northern emigrant Indians resulted in approximately 11 percent of the Indians never settling in the West. Some managed to negotiate for land in the East, while others simply scattered in their respective Eastern areas. Several groups migrated to Canada, while others who did move west eventually migrated back to their Eastern homes.