The Chippewa and Munsee Indians: 
Acculturation and Survival in Kansas, 
1850s-1870

by Joseph B. Herring

In 1853 and 1854 Commissioner of Indian Affairs George Manypenny negotiated a series of land cessions with the tribes of eastern Kansas. At first he encountered opposition from many Indians who reminded him that the government had guaranteed them their lands for "as long as grass grew or water ran." While Manypenny listened sympathetically to their arguments, he knew he had to act quickly or these Indians could lose all of their holdings. By promising the tribes a portion of their lands as a permanent home, he induced them to part with thirteen million acres. The commissioner sincerely believed that the diminished reserves would serve as their permanent residences.

While he engaged in treaty negotiations, Manypenny had good reason to worry about the Indians' future in Kansas. To defraud tribesmen of their lands, politicians and Fort Leavenworth military officers had allied with scheming speculators and Indians willing to betray their people for a bribe. Men like former Missouri Sen. Thomas Hart Benton saw opportunity for profit in Kansas, and they used the slavery issue, then a topic of heated debate in Congress, to champion territorial expansion. Manypenny's efforts to defend Indian rights incurred the wrath of those intent on evicting all natives from Kansas, and although the commissioner managed to delay Indian removal for a while, his opponents would quickly have their way. Within a few years white men would own the land and Indian Kansas would be but a memory.

In May 1854, shortly after Manypenny and other federal officials concluded treaty negotiations with the tribes, Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska bill. While legislators organized Kansas into a territory, speculators, claim makers, squatters, and other opportunists rushed into the area. Even before surveyors could carefully map out new Indian reserves, fights erupted among whites over conflicting claims. Amid this scramble for land, Indians were hard pressed to protect their remaining possessions.

The tiny Chippewa and Munsee tribes appeared to be the least likely of all to retain their lands in Kansas. Indeed, with approximately forty members in each band, these Indians must have seemed most vulnerable to those interested in taking their territory. But in the years after 1854, while the Delawares, the Iowas, the Citizen Band Pottawatomies, and other larger tribes succumbed to sales talks by wily speculators and railroad agents and moved from their homes, the Chippewas and Munseys successfully retained their holdings. Beginning in July 1859, when the two tribes agreed by treaty to become allies, through the early 1870s, they resisted all attempts to evict them from the state. Of the thousands of Indians living in the area when Kansas became a territory, the Chippewas and Munseys were among the few hundred remaining just twenty years later.

Holding on to their lands was not an easy task. By the time the Chippewas and Munsees were merged by treaty on July 16, 1839, settlers had flooded into Kansas and civil war loomed on the horizon. Meanwhile, they faced both mounting pressure from squatters and land speculators and internal dissension and turmoil among tribe members. Because they were two very disparate groups, disputes over tribal policy were frequent. Indian agents often complained that handling their affairs was difficult because "each tribe was jealous of the other and ready to oppose any measure because the other originated or favored it."

The forces underlying these intertribal tensions were many. Since the mid-eighteenth century, the Munsees had endeavored to pattern their lives after the maxims of the Moravian church. They worshiped the Christian God, observed the Sabbath, shunned liquor, and took but one wife. They denounced sin and refused to participate in native dances, religious ceremonies, and other "heathenish festivals." This tiny group of about forty souls had lost their lands in a questionable transaction in 1858, necessitating their resettlement on the Chippewa reservation near Ottawa, Kansas.

5. Henry W. Martin to Commissioner of Indian Affairs D. N. Gooley, June 26, 1866, Letters Received, Sac and Fox Agency, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (Microcopy 234, Roll 756). Hereinafter cited as Letters Received, Sac and Fox Agency, with microcopy and roll numbers.

The Munsees were headed by Henry Donohoe, a white man who had married into the band. As was typical of many tribes which had formerly resided in the East, Munsee leadership rested on a man with a thorough knowledge of both Indian and white world views. Able to understand the intricacies of racial interaction, so-called mixed-bloods like John Ross of the Cherokees and whites adopted into a tribe like Donohoe found many followers among Indians struggling to make a living in an ever-changing environment. Although Donohoe claimed that he would cease to act as an Indian as soon as the Moravians were established on the reservation, he enjoyed his role as chief and would not voluntarily relinquish that position. He would continue to work to assure that the Munsees remained true to the tenets of the Moravian religion.8

The Chippewas, in contrast, still observed the Algonquin religious practices which they had brought with them from Michigan in 1839. While they had modified their traditional Indian customs and had taken on many aspects of the white man's civilization, they continually resisted attempts by missionaries to convert them to Christianity. Their government agent in 1858 described them as a quiet, "industrious and domestic" people, who "have good farms and cultivate them well," but who insisted on following the religious precepts set forth by Chief Eshtonoquot, whom the agent called "a worthy good man and by nature very intelligent."9

Such accolades were rare after 1859 as Eshtonoquot, known to whites as Francis McCoonse, often found himself at odds with those endeavoring to transform his people into imitation white men. The Chippewa chief believed that missionaries, government officials, and other advocates of white civilization were interlopers, more interested in expanding personal wealth than in promoting native welfare. He knew that most whites agreed with the sentiment expressed by the Leavenworth Times that "honest settlers" should replace the "few worthless redskins [who] are permitted to hold the finest acres in Kansas."10 Trusting neither agents nor missionaries, Eshtonoquot warned fellow tribesmen against listening to these champions of Indian social change. He scorned white customs and religion, quipping that while it took the "white man seven years to learn theology; Indians learn [it]... in one hour." Indians should adhere to their traditional beliefs, he warned. Any tribesman who walked down the "creek" path "falls into deep gulf, water carries him away. Bad Indian lost."11

Eshtonoquot's leadership was severely challenged on August 19, 1862, when Moravian missionary Joseph Romig opened a school and mission on the reservation at the invitation of the Munsees. The mission included forty acres of prime, fenced land with a small grove of trees and ample water for livestock. A solidly built schoolhouse was furnished with modern supplies, desks, and a blackboard and could seat one hundred people for church services. Romig had come to Indian country to "Christianize and civilize," optimistically expecting Indians to cast off their ancient habits and customs because of his powers of persuasion. Although his church would not receive money from the federal civilization fund, Romig had reason to believe that Donohoe could eventually convince both hands to assist the Moravians financially. In the meantime, Romig advised church superiors to operate the school at their expense because it would facilitate his conversion efforts and would give the Moravians control of the lands surrounding the mission.12

Evangelists like Romig typically set up schools to educate Indian children, instruct women in the proper homemaking skills, and show men the benefits of adopting white farming techniques. Thus, Romig and his wife opened elementary and Sunday schools, taught sewing and singing, and "labored to advance Indians in their farming." The enthusiastic Moravian held high hopes for his new charges, for he was convinced that they appreciated his efforts. Deeply imbued with the ethnocentrism of the day, Romig

8. Henry Donohoe to Brother G. Oehler, February 27, 1862, Moravian Mission Records, Kansas Mission, Box 185, Folder 1, Item 2, Moravian Church Archives, Bethlehem, Pa. (Microfilm Roll 23). Hereinafter cited as Moravian Records, with folder and item numbers.
10. Leavenworth Times, August 27, 1859.
12. One reason federal officials permitted the Moravians to establish a mission among the tribes was because church elders agreed to finance the entire venture themselves. Even before Romig arrived on the reservation, however, Donohoe informed Moravian elders that the Indians might ask the government to give the Moravians permanent status on the reservation and allow the church to acquire tribal monies to support the school and mission. See Donohoe to Oehler, February 27, 1862, and Joseph Romig to Brother S. Wolle, March 24, 1862, Moravian Records, Folder 1, Items 2 and 3.
predicted to church superiors that much could be done to uplift these "half-civilized" peoples who were "not heathen" and who seemed eager to learn the ways of the white man. Somewhat blinded by his pious fervor, he was unable to foresee the immense obstacles to achieving his goals.13

Following Romig's arrival, Eshtonoquot advised his Chippewa followers to ignore those urging the tribe to accept American citizenship. Referring to neighboring Kansas tribes who had adopted at least some of the trappings of white civilization and were rapidly losing their lands, he added, "we see those that has gone on to be citizens, they are not able to take care of themselves." Resenting Romig's involvement in tribal affairs, he continually accused the Moravian of siding against the Chippewas in intertribal disputes, and he charged that the missionary's influence had enabled the Munsees to reap most of the financial benefits of the 1859 treaty.14

When Eshtonoquot attempted to exercise his control over both tribes by uniting them against the missionary and the civilization program, Romig and government agents conpired to undermine his authority. In late 1863, after agent Clinton C. Hutchinson ordered tribesmen to reject Eshtonoquot's leadership, he and Romig agreed to deal only with those Indians who accepted the view that they should "become citizens, pay taxes, and be subject to the laws of the country." While most Munsees already subscribed to these principles, many Chippewas were reluctant to reject the advice of their chief. By combining a strategy of threats, cajolery, offers of political favors, and bribery, however, the white men managed to persuade a number of Chippewas to betray their traditional leader. Romig attempted to justify these actions by reasoning that if the "silly complaints" of the chief could "precipitatepeople against me, he may destroy much of my usefulness here." Taking his cue from the Moravian, agent Henry W. Martin, alleging that Eshtonoquot was "old and childish, and totally unfit...and incapable of doing the business of the tribe," ordered the natives to restructure tribal government by forming a council of four men—two from each band—to administer tribal affairs.15

Romig wholeheartedly supported Martin's actions. The missionary had wearied of Eshtonoquot's interference in the religious affairs of the reserve. He complained that the chief had instigated constant turmoil among the Indians, "interfered with the school, and maligned myself, not withstanding my utmost efforts to please him." He lamented that "some of the Chippewa houses are holding dances and most of the young people are attending," and the "noisy music [is] sounding in my ears all night, for it is within hearing and seeing distance." Holding Eshtonoquot responsible for such activities, Romig denigrated the chief's character, called his reputation in body and mind, and argued that the Indians suffered under the rule of an old man who was "very illiterate or ignorant, and a bigotted[sic] Catholic." If Eshtonoquot continued to hold sway, Romig would lose "all hope of doing good or seeing the Indians prosper." He considered it fortunate that "agents have been led to discard him as chief in order to put an end to troubles."16

The new four-man council proved more to Romig's liking. In November 1865, headmen Henry Donohoe and Ignatius Caleb, representing the Munsees, and Louis Gokey and Edward McCoonse of the Chippewas decided that rejection of tribal ways and the acceptance of American citizenship constituted the prudent course to follow. McCoonse, who was the son of deposed chief Eshtonoquot, evidently valued his new leadership role over loyalty to his father. He may, however, have been convinced that following the white man's road was the only hope for his people's survival. He joined with the other councilmen in denouncing Eshtonoquot who was, they avowed, "against improvement and encourages degradation and ignorance." On November 30, Donohoe and McCoonse left for Washington to petition for their people's citizenship.17


14. Francis McCoonse (Eshtonoquot) and others to Commissioner of Indian Affairs William P. Dole, February 15, 1864, Letters Received, Ottawa Agency, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (Microcopy 234, Roll 656). Hereinafter cited as Letters Received, Ottawa Agency, with microcopy and roll numbers. Francis McCoonse and others to Dole, December 6, 1864, Francis McCoonse to the Commissioner, April 10, 1866, Letters Received, Sac and Fox Agency, M234, R735 and 736.

15. Romig to Jacobsen, March 9, 1863, Moravian Records, Folder 2, Item 1; Hutchinson to Dole, February 20, 1864, Letters Received, Ottawa Agency, M234, R565; Martin to Dole, January 2, 1865, Letters Received, Sac and Fox Agency, M234, R735.

16. Romig to Jacobsen, August 4, 1863, Moravian Records, Folder 2, Item 2; Romig to Dole, February 15, 1865, Letters Received, Sac and Fox Agency, M234, R735.

17. Hutchinson to Dole, December 1, 1863, Letters Received,
Such news delighted Romig, who now believed a majority of the reservation Indians desired to travel the road to civilized respectability. He felt secure that his word carried weight with the new leaders. "I had an interesting time with my councilmen," Romig wrote church elders. They "receive all I say with the simplicity of children and ask questions with familiarity. They are like Job, they wish to be Christians." Romig believed the tribesmen would easily part with profits from future land sales to help expand and improve mission buildings. Without Eshtonoquot's effective opposition the bands seemed amenable to selling their possessions, and Romig encouraged eastern Moravians to act quickly to buy Indian lands at a bargain. "If any of the brethren of the Moravian Church wish to emigrate to Kansas I could not recommend any better place," he wrote.18 It is not clear whether Romig intended from the outset to persuade the Indians to sell their lands or whether he decided to do so after his arrival. At any rate, he was determined to induce them to sell and move to the Indian Territory.

In late January 1864, Donohoe and McCoonse arrived in Washington to negotiate a treaty with government officials. Representing the Moravians, Donohoe sought an agreement that would solidify the church's influence on the reservation and permanently nullify Eshtonoquot's power. His plan included donating forty acres of tribal lands to the Moravian church. For the scheme to succeed Donohoe needed the support of McCoonse who was demanding $800 for his corroboration. So Donohoe wrote to the church elders at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, advising that they pay "some compensation" to the Chippewa delegate. The Moravians agreed to pay a bribe of $128, and although this was considerably less money than he had asked for, McCoonse agreed to the deal. In February, he and Donohoe signed a treaty that, pending Senate ratification, gave the two tribes citizenship and assigned land to the church provided the Moravians continued to educate the tribes' children.19

Despite being deposed as official leader, Eshtonoquot still commanded a considerable following among the Chippewas who, when they learned of the treaty, threatened violence and revenge. Opposed to the citizenship treaty, Eshtonoquot and his supporters accused the Washington emissaries of holding secret councils with the missionary and the agent and then sneaking off to the capital without informing either tribe. Insisting that he alone was chief, and denying the agent's right to intervene in tribal politics, Eshtonoquot called on authorities to permit an open council to discuss these matters.20

Eshtonoquot recognized Romig's role in disrupting tribal cohesiveness. Distrusting the missionary, who he thought was more interested in enhancing

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18 Romig to Wolle, April 4, 1866, Moravian Records, Folder 5, Item 2; Romig to Martin, August 6, 1866, Letters Received, Sac and Fox Agency, M234, R755; Report of Commissioner D. N. Cooley, October 31, 1865, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 39th Cong., 1st sess., 1865-66, H. Ex. Doc. 1, 212-13 (Serial 1249).
19 Donohoe to Jacobsen, January 29, 1864, Hutchinson to Wolle, January 30, 1864, Romig to Wolle, February 12, 1864, Donohoe to Jacobsen, April 15, 1864, Oehler to Jacobsen, May 5, 1864, Moravian Records, Folder 5, Items 2, 3, 4, 5, and 8.
20 Francis McCoonse and others to Dole, February 15, 1864, Letters Received, Ottawa Agency, M234, R656; Donohoe to Jacobsen, April 15, 1864, Romig to Wolle, April 27, 1864, Moravian Records, Folder 5, Items 6 and 7.
his own financial position than in helping Indians. Eshtonquoit told all who would listen that he intended to drive the Moravian off the reserve. Throughout 1864 and into 1865, the chief challenged "Romig's every move. Using his traditional religious powers to counteract missionary influence, he ordered the Chippewas to shun Moravian services and to keep their children from attending school. Advising them to reject white civilization and to return to traditional ways, he threatened to unleash his shamanistic powers against all who failed to heed his word. When many Chippewas obeyed, Donohoe and McCoone angrily complained to the agent. "This old man encourages dancing, evil, and ignorance," they declared. Parents were afraid to send children to school because they thought Eshtonquoit was "an old witch" and feared that he could bring death to those who disobeyed him. "He makes them believe that by drawing a picture of a man, woman, or child on a walk or any other place, and placing a heart in the left side and naming the individual to be witched—death or something terrible will follow," Donohoe and McCoone lamented. The council leaders asked the government to issue "a reproof and final condemnation" of Eshtonquoit's "meddlesome disposition [that] would have the effect of quieting and forever silencing this old troublesome Indian."21

By the middle of 1865, Eshtonquoit's opponents had gained the ascendancy. In defiance of the chief, and despite fear of retaliation, most children attended Romig's school at least part of the time.22 The tribal council, ignoring Eshtonquoit's wishes, asked for government approval to sell their "surplus" lands. Since Washington officials believed that breaking up the reservations and reducing Indian holdings to the forty to eighty acres needed by individuals were major factors in the civilization program, they agreed to the council's request, and in June of that year soldiers from Fort Leavenworth began a survey of the reservation. By late fall, after the soldiers had mapped out 1,428 acres to be made available at public auction, Romig's contention that Eshtonquoit had "no more influence in tribal business than the most ragged Indian on the reserve" seemed accurate. The Moravian, nevertheless, continued to worry that the chief would prove a future source of "ferment" and "difficulty." After all, Romig reminded his eastern superiors, this was Kansas, and anything was possible "on the borders of civilization and heathenism."23

While the army surveyed their reservation, the Chippewas and Munsees faced a difficult future in Kansas. Neighboring tribes such as the Delaware fell deeply in debt and, after selling their homes to meet their obligations, moved to Indian Territory. Yet except for Eshtonquoit and his followers, most Indians on the reserve seemed oblivious to the fact that other natives were being removed from the state. Eshtonquoit argued, meanwhile, that the government's civilization program and white men's land schemes were the major forces responsible for Indian dispersal, and he took every opportunity to denounce the citizenship treaty still pending in the U.S. Senate. Agent Martin reported, nevertheless, that most of the "respectable" tribesmen favored accepting citizenship and ending their tribal status. He regretted, however, that a small minority, "zealously opposed" to the treaty, could hold up Senate ratification.24

Events during the winter months of 1866-67 demonstrated the tribes' ability to withstand pressure and proved crucial to the defense of their homeland. The agent reported that "one of the severest winters we ever had" killed much of the livestock and caused suffering and "great privations" among the Chippewas and Munsees. Compounding the Indians' difficulties was an 1866 government agreement with the Kansas tribes which stipulated that they either must become citizens immediately or move from the state.25 Since the Senate had yet to ratify their pro-


24. Francis McCoone to the Secretary of Interior, June 29, 1866, Donohoe and others to Martin, June 24, 1866, Martin to Cooley, June 26, 1866, Letters Received, Sac and Fox Agency, M234, R135.

25. Albert Wiley to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, June 6, 1867, Letters Received, Sac and Fox Agency, M234, R137; Wiley to Central Superintendent of Indian Affairs Thomas Murphy, July 30, 1867, Annual Report on Indian Affairs by the
posed treaty, the two bands found themselves in a
dilemma. Although they were adopting white customs,
they were not technically citizens. Romig and the
agent, seeing an opportunity to acquire more land
for white interests, pressured the Indians to sell their
homes.

Faced with such momentous problems, the two
tribes might have engaged in their usual disputes
and factionalism, but in fact the Chippewas and
Munsees cooperated as never before. On January 11,
1867, the McCoone led council informed Romig
and Martin that the Indians would not sell their
remaining lands. Council members still desired
citizenship, but they were determined to retain
their homes in Kansas. Eight days later, Eshtonoquot
joined with the council to petition against removal.
Still opposed to citizenship but not wanting to
lose his home, Eshtonoquot rallied to the side of
his erstwhile detractors in this battle. He argued
that because his people were hardworking, quiet,
and peaceful neighbors to the whites, they should
not have to leave. The old Chippewa denounced
the removal advocates who “never had the good of
the tribe at heart.”

Fortunately, a favorable summer growing season
allowed the Indians to raise an
abundant crop, which alleviated suffering and
enabled them to face future challenges on a better
footing. As 1867 drew to a close, they appeared ready
to resist all efforts to expel them from the state.

On January 29, 1868, misfortune struck the
Indians and jeopardized their struggle to save their
homeland when Eshtonoquot, the most vocal
opponent of removal, died. The Moravian missionary
reported with some satisfaction that his adversary,
“who was so long a source of trouble to his people
and to the church here,” had passed away. “He
died as he lived,” wrote Romig, “an ignorant heathen
and a Catholic.” With Eshtonoquot gone, Romig
stepped up his campaign to force the tribes to move.
He was confident that most would be willing to
leave Kansas as soon as favorable terms with the
government could be arranged.

By late spring 1868, most of the neighboring
tribes had agreed to emigrate to Indian Territory.
Romig pointed out that the Delawares had deserted
their reservation, the Ottawas were moving “as fast
as they can sell out,” and the Sac and Foxes would go
as soon as Congress ratified their treaty. The mission-
ary wished that some settlement could be worked out
soon, before his Indians were left alone. His hopes
apparently were realized on June 1, when federal
officials signed a new agreement with the Chippewas
and Munsees. The treaty stipulated that individual
Indians would receive patents in fee simple, or
titles, to their own allotments of land. Each person
could sell his holding without consulting the tribe
and could move from Kansas whenever he wished.

Similar agreements had proven disastrous to other
tribes which gave up authority over individual
members. Those tribes were not able to prevent
individuals from selling their farms under pressure
from unscrupulous whites.

Certain that his charges would leave the state
soon, a delighted Romig informed Moravian officials
that some of the Munsees had made arrangements
to settle among the Cherokees in Indian Territory.
But while the Senate delayed consideration of their
latest treaty, the Indians found themselves in a
difficult position. After Eshtonoquot died, leadership
of the tribes rested in the hands of the less
capable council members. The positions on removal
taken by men like Edward McCoone wavered
between loyalty to their people and considerations
of personal financial gain. Believing they might
be forced to move soon, Indians saw little reason
to make repairs on their homes and farms. The
confusing state of affairs demoralized some and
angered many. A few resorted to alcohol, others to
violence. Romig noted with regret “the growing
ever of interdependence among our own and other
Indians, threatening to destroy their soul and body.”

When some young men persisted in disturbing the
peace and terrorizing law-abiding families, Romig
spoke out. He denounced the government annuity
system, arguing that “the sooner all the Indians are
removed and compelled by necessity to labor for their

26. Edward McCoone and others to Martin, January 11,
1867, “Petition opposing removal from Kansas,” signed by
Francis McCoone and members of the council, January 19, 1867.
Eshtonoquot (Francis McCoone) to the Commissioner of Indian
Affairs, February 8, 1867, Letters Received, Sac and Fox Agency,
M224, R737.

27. For crop reports see Wiley to Murphy, July 30, 1867, Romig
to Wiley, July 31, 1867, Annual Report on Indian Affairs by the
Acting Commissioner, 40th Cong., 2d sess., H. Ex. Doc. 1, pt. 2,
500, 502-3 (Serial 1526).

28. Romig to Wolfe, February 16, 1868, Romig to Wolfe,
March 10, 1868, Moravian Records, Folder 7, Items 3 and 4.
29. Romig to Wolfe, April 1, 1868, Romig to Wolfe, June 2,
1868, Moravian Records, Folder 7, Items 5 and 6; Murphy to the
Commissioner of Indian Affairs, June 1, 1868, Letters Received,
Sac and Fox Agency, M224, R737.
daily bread, the better it will be for them temporally and spiritually." Frustration evidently caused Romig to lose sight of the fact that both Indian bands had labored long and hard to make a living in Kansas. The annuity system had nothing to do with their current situation.

When the neighboring Sacs and Foxes emigrated south in November 1869, the tiny group of Chippewas and Munsees stood virtually alone amid a sea of white faces. With the exception of a few hundred Kickapoos and Pottawatomies to the north, some Kansa Indians to the west, and a scattering of other natives elsewhere, they were the only resident Indians left in eastern Kansas. Pressures on those remaining grew intense as citizens, politicians, and the press all clamored to have them expelled. But by late 1869, most Chippewas and Munsees had made individual commitments to hold on to their homes at all costs. While members of both bands now saw acceptance of citizenship as the key to success, a majority would no longer heed the advice of councilmen, missionaries, or agents, but would make decisions as individuals either to move or to stay in Kansas. Their feelings were stated best by Commissioner of Indian Affairs Ely Parker, himself an acculturated Seneca, when he

30. Romig to Wolle, August 25, 1868, Romig to Wolle, October 12, 1869, Moravian Records, Folder 7, Item 10 and Folder 8, Item 1.
reported that the tribes were "well advanced in civilization, cultivating small farms, dwelling in good houses, and interested in the education of their children. They have no desire to remove, and will, no doubt, soon become citizens."  

For the Chippewas and Munsees, however, their unstable situation extended into the 1870s. Although Romig continued to urge them to sell out and move, fewer and fewer Indians listened to his advice. Blaming the "unsettled state of minds relative to their anticipated removal" for the loss of adherents, Romig alleged that "certain enemies of the church" had created an atmosphere of "prejudice" against him. While many Chippewas had always resented Romig, many Munsees now sided against him as well. Realizing that his influence among the Indians had waned, Romig railed against laziness and alcohol for making a shambles of his mission efforts. "When we look for grapes behold sour grapes," Romig lamented, "some who promised fair and walked well are trapped by the monster intemperance."  

Indeed, the rapidly changing circumstances which demanded constant readjustment had demoralized some tribesmen over the years. A few had "yielded to evil influences and temptations thrown in their way," and missionary reports of the late 1860s mentioned more alcohol abuse than previously. Disease took a toll as well. In 1870, Romig noted that "fifty or more" had died since his arrival in the state. While that may have been an exaggeration, the combined membership of the two bands did drop from eighty-four in 1867 to sixty-three just three years later. Some may have moved to Indian Territory, but a physician examining health conditions among the natives in the area noted that the two bands were "diminishing in part from the remains of a syphilitic disease." The doctor warned that unless they were relocated closer to other tribes, they would soon die out. "Constant intermarriage in so narrow a circle," he reasoned, "tends to a constant physical deterioration."  

Against such odds, the Chippewas and Munsees remained in Kansas. After 1870 they cast off native habits, traveled the white man's road, and at the time of Romig's departure early in the decade, most had begun to profess Christianity. Frequent intermarriage with whites enlarged the genetic pool and reduced disease. Indians of both bands traded their native garments for trousers and shirts, dresses and petticoats. "The women are as neatly attired as the same number of white women collected in the country," noted one admiring visitor. Like their white neighbors, individuals owned and tended small farms. As individuals outside of tribal authority, they could sell their land if they pleased, but most steadfastly refused to part with their holdings. Of the thousands of Indians subjected to the government's 1850s treaties with Kansas Indians, they were among the few remaining in 1870. Among those who voluntarily surrendered their tribal status, they alone managed to stand their ground. At the beginning of the twentieth century these acculturated peoples assumed full responsibility for themselves as members of the community at large and severed all legal ties with the federal government. The little Chippewa and Munsee bands had merged into the mainstream of American society. The irony was not lost on those hardy individuals—they had retained their lands, but had lost themselves as Indians.  


35. Although the Indians did not receive patents in fee simple until 1900, individuals could sell their land before that time if declared competent by a court. During the 1850s and 1860s there was much fraud connected with this process and many individuals from other tribes lost their holdings. See Grant Foreman, The Last Trek of the Indians (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 228 n. 3.  