

Roadside Business: Frank W. McDonald and the Origins of the "Indian Village"

by Keith A. Sculle

Introduction

The balance sheet for the automobile's influence on America shows no consensus about whether it has been a credit or debit.¹ On the central questions of its aesthetic or educational effects, for example, opinion diverges widely. Many believe the auto encouraged a get-rich-quick mentality which blighted the landscape with tacky buildings utilizing stereotypes to maximize the sale of products and services. In sharp contrast are those who regard roadside buildings as imaginative designs by creative entrepreneurs who earn their profit from customers' crude but genuine efforts to understand their society's origins.²

Indian imagery has been one of America's roots most frequently tapped by roadside businesses. The "Indian Village," the nation's roadside business most fully wrapped in Indian associations, was concocted in

Kansas.³ Not only was it staffed by Indians in stylized native costume when it opened just north of Lawrence in 1930, at its height the Indian Village, a gas station with cabins and a dance room-restaurant in "teepee" architecture, claimed to offer auto travelers accurate information about Indian life. The Indian Village's origins in the mixed motives of commerce and education help explain the currently ambivalent view of roadside architecture.

McDonald and Haskell Indian Institute

The Indian Village was the brainchild of Frank W. McDonald, a lifelong promoter. Having natural aptitude as a promoter, "if I must say so myself," McDonald's immodest claim was in fact confirmed by the people of Lawrence, Kansas, whose press characterized him as "one of the Lawrence area's greatest all-time promoters and sports-business-political personalities."⁴

Born the son of a streetcar motorman on April 21, 1898, in Kansas City, Kansas, Frank aspired to more. He reflected an early Horatio Alger-like determination in his pursuit of education, walking three miles because he was too poor to pay for transportation to Rosedale High School. At Baker University in Baldwin, Kansas, McDonald majored in public speech because, as he recalled it, "I didn't want to buy any textbooks."⁵ Frank was aggressive and probably glib. Summers permitted work with the Chautauqua in which he rose rapidly. His first season was spent as a laborer who set up tents. By the end of the second season he was the platform manager who introduced the program's par-

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1. A fine summary of the mixed review of every aspect of the automobile's influence on America except the architectural influence can be found in James J. Flink, "The Car Culture Revisited: Some Comments on the Recent Historiography of Automobile History," in David L. Lewis and Laurence Goldstein, eds., *The Automobile and American Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983), 414-17.

2. A good theoretically leveled attack on roadside tourist attractions is Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Atheneum, 1987), 111, which singles out "Indian teepee" filling stations and 'museums' now lining highways in Kansas and Nebraska.

Praise and understanding are exemplified respectively in J. J. C. Andrews, *The Well-Built Elephant and Other Roadside Attractions* (New York: Congdon and Weed, 1984); and John A. Jakle, *The Tourist: Travel in Twentieth-Century North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 21-22.

3. Although shreds of evidence suggest the existence of possibly twenty-two roadside businesses which used "teepee" architecture in addition to the Indian Village, the author has determined more than location about eighteen, from the "Mohawk Teepee" in Massachusetts to the "Wigwam Village" Number 7 in California.

4. Frank W. McDonald, interview with author, July 8, 1984; Bill Mayer, "Haskell stadium marks its 50th anniversary," unidentified newspaper clipping, Haskell Indian Junior College Athletics and Sports vertical file, Elizabeth M. Watkins Community Museum, Lawrence, Kansas [hereafter cited as Watkins].

5. Rita Rousseau, "Frank McDonald Ends Terms of KTAS . . ." unidentified newspaper clipping, Frank McDonald vertical file, Watkins.

ticipants, arranged for their participation, and made contacts for the following year.⁶

Frank combined his flair for showmanship with athletics to establish his reputation as a promoter. His involvement with athletics began at Baker University where he starred in basketball, football, and track. Upon graduation in 1920, he was hired as the head track and basketball coach and assistant football coach at the Haskell Indian Institute in Lawrence, Kansas.⁷

McDonald's appointment may be credited to H. B. Peairs, who was Haskell's superintendent from 1898-1910, and was reappointed in 1917. Peairs was determined to alter the school's modest reputation which, since its inception in 1884, had been content to offer Indians vocational education through the tenth grade primarily in agriculture and the industrial arts.⁸ Recognizing that the Carlisle (Pennsylvania) Indian School had won national renown because of its football teams, coached by Glenn "Pop" Warner and starring Jim Thorpe, Peairs sought a coach schooled in Warner's system. Madison "Matty" Bell was recommended by a Warner assistant, and in 1920 Peairs hired Bell who in turn hired McDonald, one of his former Chautauqua employees.⁹ McDonald was employed at Haskell for fourteen years, during which time he helped Haskell achieve a national athletic reputation, especially for its football program.

Peairs' ambition for football glory drove Haskell's educational program. In 1921, eleventh and twelfth grades and a junior college were added and a normal school (discontinued in 1903) was reestablished, probably as educational afterthoughts for the older students recruited to play football.¹⁰

John Levi laid the basis for Haskell's initial claim to athletic fame. Levi was recruited in 1921 from the Chillicothe Business College in Chillicothe, Missouri, and Haskell prepared to promote its anticipated fame by retaining a part-time publicity agent in the athletic department the following year. After attending a Haskell football game on October 13, 1923, the legendary Indian athlete Jim Thorpe reportedly called Levi the greatest athlete he had ever seen.¹¹

The most successful advertising for Haskell's football season of 1923 developed for a game played

against the Quantico Marines in Yankee Stadium, November 17. Superintendent Peairs eagerly had accepted the invitation to play in the newly built baseball stadium, whose owner was trying to maximize profits with year-round scheduling, but the terms were financially risky. The Haskell team had to pay its travel expenses and, in return for designation as the home team, guarantee the Quantico Marines \$1,500. In addition, the owners of Yankee Stadium would claim twenty percent of the ticket sales. At least a week before the game, Peairs sent the resourceful McDonald ahead to New York to organize the publicity necessary to assure Haskell's financial success, but the coach/promoter was unable to gain the attention of New York's sportswriters with the usual portfolio of photographs and publicity materials. McDonald feared his school faced a substantial loss.

Not until the popular fascination with Indians in general and Levi's prowess in particular were combined was an effective advertising formula devised. Several individuals contributed to the final formula. The first was McDonald who appealed for help to Ed Barrow, the general manager of the New York Yankee baseball team, by showing him a photograph of John Levi. Barrow foresaw great profit for his athletic business in a city with a huge Jewish population by recruiting an Indian with a Jewish-sounding name. Perhaps Barrow hoped that a favor to Haskell would be rewarded by its star athlete's inclination to sign a baseball contract with the Yankees. Certainly, after McDonald heralded Levi's ability to hit a baseball a long distance, Barrow paid a *New York Sun* sportswriter to get the attention of other journalists for the upcoming Haskell-Quantico game. Barrow later told McDonald that he wanted to sign Levi for the Yankees. The *Sun's* writer approached his network of New York press colleagues and may have borrowed some promotional techniques for popular Indian events from his friends, the Miller brothers of Ponca City, Oklahoma, who had successfully advertised Wild West shows that included Indians.

As a result of the advocacy by the *New York Sun's* sportswriter, the pending game in Yankee Stadium won its first attention from the New York press. The *New York Times*, whose coverage McDonald counted most valuable, combined news of Haskell's skill with public curiosity about an entourage of exotic strangers: "The Indians, who will accompany their team . . . come chiefly from the Osage and Choctaw territory in Oklahoma and most of them are said to be millionaires, their incomes being derived from oil."¹² Additional publicity continued to evoke impressions of the Haskell team, but especially Levi, as talented

6. McDonald, interview with author, August 26, 1984.

7. Mayer, "Haskell stadium marks its 50th anniversary."

8. Charles A. O'Brien, "The Evolution of Haskell Indian Junior College, 1884-1974," (Master's thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1975), 38.

9. McDonald, interview with author, August 24, 1984; Frank W. McDonald, *John Levi of Haskell* (Lawrence, Kans.: The World Company, 1972), 9-10.

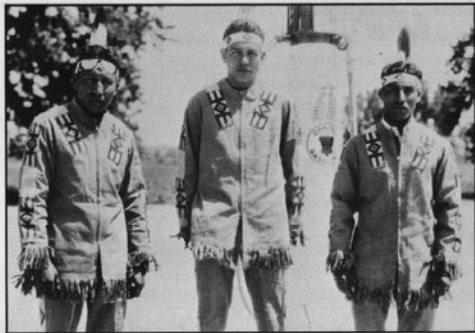
10. O'Brien, "The Evolution of Haskell Indian Junior College," 38; Loretta Mary Granzer, "Indian Education at Haskell Institute, 1884-1937," (Master's thesis, University of Nebraska, 1937), 171.

11. McDonald, *John Levi of Haskell*, 7, 10, 16.

12. *New York Times*, November 12, 1923, p. 20.



This southeastward view of the two-story "teepee" reveals barely perceptible figures in "Indian" uniforms beside the gasoline pumps; left to right are Wilson D. Charles, Pete W. Shepherd, Albert Cook, and Louis Weller. Their presence and the absence of the restaurant likely dates this view to early summer 1930.



This is the most detailed view of the "Indian" uniforms worn by Haskell's famous athletes for work in the summer of 1930 at the "Indian Village;" left to right are Shepherd, Charles, and Weller. This photo probably was taken for Weller's promotional article in the National Petroleum News.

tribesmen. Barrow arranged a New York City bus tour for the team two days before the game, and on game day the prestigious *Times* couched news of the contest in Wild West imagery with Levi as the star warrior:

There was a time when the cavalry was the country's surest branch of the service when it came to dealing with the Indians, but today the United States Marines will be called out to check the charge of the redmen from the Haskell Indian School. . . . The Indians have in John Levi a performer who is said to be the equal of the great Jim Thorpe, most famous of Indian athletes.¹³

McDonald increased his promoter capacities with lessons learned from the Haskell-Quantico football game. Haskell only managed a 14-14 tie and a meager audience of 10,000, but there was a considerable profit for Haskell in the ticket sales and the invitation to play well-recognized teams the following year.¹⁴ Thus, Haskell achieved its goal of recognition, and McDonald learned that good Indian athletes, combined with popular notions about Indians, could earn large profits. By 1920, with regard to his personal business affairs, McDonald had concluded that if the public wanted "Wild West stuff," he would give it to them.¹⁵

McDonald reinforced and refined this strategy and its tactics during his nine remaining years at Haskell. On subsequent eastern trips, he had the players dress in Indian costumes. "[T]he Eastern public," explained McDonald, "almost demanded seeing Indians as they knew them from pictures and publicity. Naturally our

boys didn't wear costumes as street dress but there were times when they would cooperate with photographers and pose for the sake of publicity which meant customers at the ticket windows."¹⁶ Before games McDonald also regularly paraded the team wearing Indian blankets through the local railroad station.¹⁷ With the colorful promotion of successful football teams McDonald's position advanced. In early 1924, he was replaced as football coach and assigned the task of raising funds for a new athletic stadium.

Following the final regular season football game of 1924, McDonald furnished the entire Haskell team to the oil-rich Osages of Hominy, Oklahoma. The Osages wished to "borrow" the team since they otherwise faced probable loss in heavy betting on a local team which was to face a team from Fairfax, Oklahoma. The Fairfax squad was, in fact, the professional Kansas City Cowboys hired for the game by Fairfax backers. Racial overtones provoked the stylized combat of football; the Osages regarded Fairfax as a town of white weaklings who came lately to the Indian Territory for selfish gain. Haskell's subsequent 13-12 victory moved the wealthy and grateful Osages and Quapaws to donate much of the substantial sum necessary to build Haskell's new athletic stadium. It was dedicated in October 1926, amidst a week of pageantry which included many visiting Indians, some of whom set up teepees, performed native dances, and barbecued buffalo. McDonald won the lasting respect of the Indians associated with Haskell for his successful fundraising for the stadium, and in a sincere gesture of friendship

13. *New York Times*, November 17, 1923, p. 9. See also: *Ibid.*, November 18, 1923, sec. 2, p. 2.

14. *New York Times*, November 18, 1923, sec. 2, p. 2; McDonald, *John Levi of Haskell*, 28.

15. McDonald interview, July 8, 1984.

16. Frank W. McDonald, "Unusual Background for Beer Distributor," (unpublished typescript, December 1976), 41, Watkins.

17. Mayer, "Haskell stadium marks its 50th anniversary."



This southeastward view shows the completed restaurant with "teepees" at each corner opened on August 30, 1930.

he later gladly assumed their ordinarily demeaning title of "paleface." In the year following the stadium dedication, McDonald was promoted to athletic director.¹⁸

Under his leadership Haskell's athletic contests were set increasingly in theatrical trappings. Before the 1929 football season, lights were installed at Haskell Stadium, and the season opener was the school's first night game. Festivities included fireworks and the "Comanche war cry" by a student in Indian dress atop the arch above the stadium's entrance. Nighttime track was introduced in the spring of 1930 and there was talk of holding outdoor, night boxing contests.¹⁹

The "Indian Village"

The 1920s were Haskell's golden years. Amidst the hype of the solid accomplishments of its football teams, on which a succession of individual athletes starred, Haskell's enrollments and appropriations peaked. McDonald contributed significantly to Haskell's triumph, and his success as a promoter directed his youthful ambition toward personal enterprise. "I had always intended to enter the Business

World and be my own Boss," McDonald stated. In 1928, the same year he rose to the position of Haskell's athletic director, he borrowed money from the Lawrence National Bank to buy a strategic ten-acre tract north of town at the intersection of the main road linking Kansas City and Topeka and the road leading north out of Lawrence. McDonald correctly foresaw that the intersection would be busy with interstate as well as local traffic if the east-west road was designated federal highway 40; and, at this intersection with U.S. 73W (later U.S. 59) and Kansas 10, he was ready to start Lawrence's first motel. Until then, the only overnight sleeping accommodations for automobile travelers had been campgrounds.²⁰

McDonald envisioned a roadside business on which he trained all the promotional talents and specific techniques he had perfected at Haskell. His niche in America's burgeoning roadside business industry was to be claimed by appealing to the popular notions of Indians that he had seen work for Haskell. He referred to his would-be business as an Indian village, and his plans were grandiose. In 1929, he interested the Sinclair Oil Company in a series of transcontinental

18. McDonald, *John Levi of Haskell*, 41-47; *Kansas City Star Magazine*, September 20, 1972; Mayer, "Haskell stadium marks its 50th anniversary"; Bill Mayer, "Lone Paleface Is Key to Arena Bid," unidentified newspaper clipping, Haskell Indian Junior College Athletics and Sports vertical file, Watkins; *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, April 21, 1986.

19. *The Haskell Annual* (n.p.: 1930), 101.

20. O'Brien, "The Evolution of Haskell Indian Junior College," 45; McDonald, "Unusual Background for Beer Distributor," 41; Paul O. Caviness, "The Automobile in Lawrence, Kansas: Its Arrival, Adoption and Accommodation, 1900-1950," (unpublished typescript, April 25, 1985), Watkins.

filling stations with Indian imagery, starting with his own at Lawrence. In return, McDonald was to earn a fraction of each penny of Sinclair's gasoline sold in the chain. McDonald was meanwhile in the process of obtaining a patent on the design of the filling station in anticipation of securing maximum profit from his conception. The patent was granted on June 24, 1930.²¹

At the start of 1930, while the intersections of highways 10, 40, and 73W were being paved, McDonald gave the local press a glimpse of his plans for utilizing visual imagery in his business. It was to be built in stylized Indian architecture. The center was to be a "teepee" forty feet high with a twenty-five foot base for a filling station. It was to have sixteen, eighteen-foot-high teepees around it for tourist cabins. A hogan was to be built for rest rooms and a bath house.

McDonald advertised that he would "employ his knowledge of the tribes gained through nine years' service at Haskell in carrying out the plans for the venture." A barbecue stand and gift shop offering "Indian blankets and other products, obtained from bona fide channels by Mr. McDonald thru his long association with the Indians," were to be added. McDonald planned for a summer staff comprised of Haskell students "garbed in tribal costume." The teepees were to be "ornamented with the real Indian designs, sign language and pictures." Floodlights "similar to those used at the Haskell night football games" would light the roadside business at night. Finally, barbecued buffalo would be served at the grand opening, a touch likely adopted from the festivities for the Haskell stadium dedication four years earlier. Construction was to begin as soon as weather permitted, and the opening was promised for early summer.²²

McDonald depended on close associates to provide the details for his general plan. John Levi designed the layout. Plans for at least the main teepee were drawn by a local contractor, Basil Green, who constructed it with lumber salvaged from a nearby buggy barn. Glynn Corby, who planned to play football for Haskell in the fall of 1930, was responsible for the main teepee's exterior and interior decoration.²³

McDonald's scheme grew by installments. Not until the day before its opening was the roadside business named the "Indian Village."²⁴ Its architecture was also improvised. As finally constructed, the main teepee included indoor rest rooms, a men's smoker,

and a second floor with bath, kitchen, and living room intended as living quarters for an on-site filling station operator. McDonald's earlier announced plan called for separate buildings for rest rooms and did not mention either a smoker or living quarters.

It was in the design and decoration of the main teepee that McDonald's promotion tactics were most prominent. Although the teepee was authentic in shape and one detail, the smoke-flap with pole, the details of its windows, doors, and rest rooms and materials, a cement finish on wooden boards nailed to a wooden frame, were unlike any teepee built by Indians. More subtle departures from ethnographically correct design included the designs on the teepee, as well as the building itself. Louis Weller, captain of the 1930 Haskell football team, explained the symbols on the north and south side of the teepee in an article written for a trade journal, the *National Petroleum News*. A thunderbird was depicted for good luck, and a buffalo staggering with an arrow from a bareback rider represented a successful hunt. Weller mentioned without explanation a Hopi sign and blue border at the top and bottom edge of the teepee.²⁵ Although each of these symbols was derived from Indian culture by Indians and has been documented, obviously a Hopi sign would not have been used on the teepee, a Plains Indian creation. Nor were Indian symbols painted on their teepees, as McDonald had done, in such a fashion as to create two sides from a conical shape.²⁶ McDonald wanted his customers to have the same view of the teepee from either direction on the highway, and thereby reflected the commercial essence of his business. In permitting Weller's advertising that all the architecture "is in true Indian style in the shape of Indian teepees,"²⁷ that the tourist cabin teepees would be arranged in a semi-circle, and that the main teepee would incorporate a buffalo hunter on each side, McDonald exploited and reinforced America's popular stereotypes which, since the mid-nineteenth century, had confused all aspects of Plains Indian culture with all things Indian.²⁸

25. Louis Weller, "Indian Village to Grow Around Station," *National Petroleum News* (June 25, 1930): 92, 94.

26. Reginald and Gladys Laubin, *The Indian Tipi: Its History, Construction, and Use* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), 260.

27. Weller, "Indian Village to Grow Around Station," 89.

28. Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 97; John C. Ewers, "The Emergence of the Plains Indian as the Symbol of the North American Indian," in Arlene B. Hirschfelder, ed., *American Indian Stereotypes in the World of Children: A Reader and Bibliography* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1982), 16-32; Laubin and Laubin, *The Indian Tipi*, 296; Robert B. Moore and Arlene B. Hirschfelder, "Feathers, Tomahawks and Tipis: A Study of Stereotyped 'Indian' Imagery in Children's Picture Books," in *American Indian Stereotypes in the World of Children*, 49.

21. McDonald, "Unusual Background for Beer Distributor," 43; McDonald's personal files, in which correspondence indicates "Hiram A. Sturges, Atty., Omaha National Bank Building, Omaha, Nebraska," filed for McDonald's patent and notified McDonald by mail postmarked November 30, 1930.

22. *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, January 14, 1930.

23. McDonald interview, July 8, 1984; unidentified newspaper clipping in McDonald's personal files.

24. *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, May 29, 1930.

Haskell associates also helped "authenticate" McDonald's business. Lone Star Dietz, Haskell's football coach, and Glynn Corby painted pictures that were hung inside the reception room of the main teepee. Hand-carved furniture and unspecified "curios" were made by Haskell people. They also prepared to don clothing popularly mistaken as authentic Indian apparel—"buckskin colored unionalls with a washable braid and feathers" made by McDonald's wife. The result convinced McDonald that the men who wore the clothing were made to look like "handsome 'Fullbloods'."²⁹

Thus, in characteristic fashion of the time, Indians contributed significantly to misconceptions of their cultures. Many had done so since the creation of the most profitable form of entertainment employing Indians, the Wild West shows, which began in the 1880s.³⁰ For McDonald's business it was Indians who had drawn the layout, conceived the main teepee's decoration, made some furnishings, and written a major promotional article.

McDonald's unfolding business scheme revealed a strong symbiosis between the people of Haskell and their athletic director. McDonald's venture should not be viewed cynically as a crass grab for profit at the expense of old friends. Perhaps the most dramatic proof of the Indian's capacity to willingly manipulate their own culture is in Louis Weller's unedited typescript of the article written for the *National Petroleum News*. Its opening passages illustrate his own considerable abilities as a promoter:

When you visit a strange community is it not natural for you to seek out the older inhabitants to get authentic information concerning the territory you are in and to learn from them points of interest, etc. . . . Why not, when you visit the United States, secure this information from the oldest inhabitants of the western continent, namely the American Indians?

Centuries ago the Indian served as a guide to his white brother. William Penn and other peaceful pioneers found that the red man could do more than wield his scalping knife. When Lewis and Clark started their expedition westward who but an Indian guide should lead them. United States army records boast of many Indian regulars who served their country in this manner.

29. Vincent H. Hunter, "Indian Braves Sell Gas and Oil at Modern Teepees," *The Union Pacific Magazine* 10 (January 1931): 10; Weller, "Indian Village to Grow Around Station," 89; McDonald, "Unusual Background for Beer Distributor," 42.

30. Don Russell, "Wild West Show," in Howard R. Lamar, ed., *The Reader's Encyclopedia of the American West* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1977), 1269-70; Henry Blackman Sell and Victor Weybright, *Buffalo Bill and the Wild West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 139, 142, 144, 147; Raymond William Stedman, *Shadows of the Indian: Stereotypes in American Culture* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982), 244.

Today with the modern developments of motor car travel, the Indian has deserted his pony but stands as a sentinel at the intersection of U.S. Highway 40 and 73W, at Lawrence, Kansas, to serve the American motorist in the capacity of an Indian guide, 1930 model.³¹

This clever adaptation of a historical Indian role to contemporary conditions was probably Weller's reciprocation for the good he believed McDonald had done for Haskell. "McDonald has a wide acquaintance among the Indian peoples," Weller testified, "... and is a strong believer in the ability of the red men no matter what the undertaking might be."³²

Weller's promotion alluded to McDonald's promise of mass, roadside education about Indians. The business at Lawrence was to be a trial for a series of Indian villages located a day's drive apart beginning in the East and leading into Indian country where customers could see programs featuring "old time customs, dances, and legend telling by the various tribes."³³ McDonald's sincere compassion about the disadvantages suffered by Indians was clearly sounded in a promotional brochure he issued for the Indian Village: "The pages of history have been none too fair with these people." He continued in the same brochure to express his desire to inform the public about Indians at his Indian villages:

Thousands of tourists travel annually through the Indian reservations. Doubtlessly thousands of others would do so, if they knew how to map out their itinerary. It is the purpose of the "Indian Village" to give them the most authentic information possible in planning their cross country trips.³⁴

The symbiosis between McDonald and the people of Haskell, and his naive effort at mass education about Indians from a roadside business, persisted in the ballyhoo for the Indian Village's grand opening, May 30, 1930. On the day before, the first page of the local newspaper notified readers that Indians had designed the main teepee and, on opening day, would be at work on the first two tourist cabin teepees, would staff the station, and would provide tourist information, especially about Indians and their reservations.³⁵

McDonald had given some thought to providing summer jobs to Haskell students, especially graduates of the auto mechanics department, in the creation of his business.³⁶ However, only four Haskell students are known to have worked at the Indian Village and only

31. Louis Weller, "A Unique Project," (unpublished typescript), 1, in McDonald's personal files.

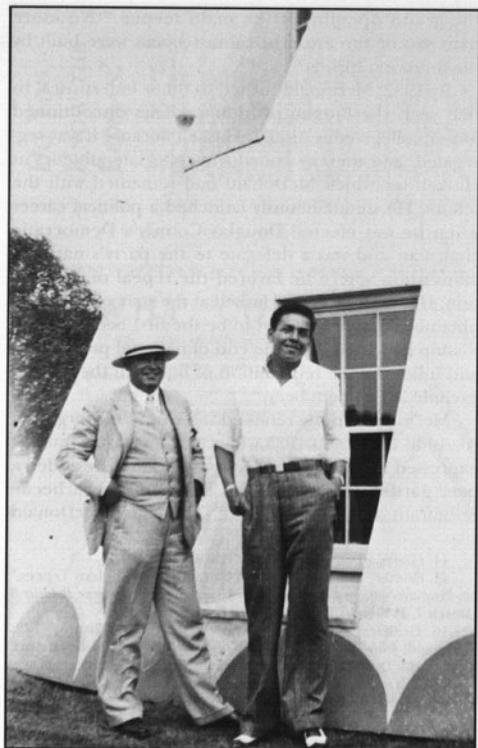
32. *Ibid.*, 3.

33. *Ibid.*, 4.

34. "Do You Know the Redman?" in McDonald's personal files.

35. *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, May 29, 1930.

36. Hunter, "Indian Braves Sell Gas and Oil at Modern Teepees," 10; McDonald, "Unusual Background for Beer Distributor," 43.



McDonald and Charles (left to right) in a relaxed mood beside the main "teepee."



Friends Shepherd, Lib Shawnee, and Charles (left to right) at the main "teepee."

for the first summer. These included Wilson "Buster" Charles, Pete "Buffalo Nickel Man" Shepherd, and Louis "Rabbit" Weller, whose exceptional athletic talents were underlined in Indian Village advertising.³⁷ None was a mechanic. Only the fourth, Albert Cook, referred to as an "office boy," was the more typical Indian student who would probably have found a job difficult to get in the economically depressed 1930s.³⁸ McDonald admitted that he hired Indians primarily "to attract tourists," and he valued Shepherd as an especially good talker with customers.³⁹

37. Hunter, "Indian Braves Sell Gas and Oil at Modern Teepees," 10; *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, May 29, 1930; unidentified newspaper clipping in McDonald's personal files; McDonald, "Unusual Background for Beer Distributor"; Weller, "Indian Village to Grow Around Station."

38. Turner Cochrane (Haskell student, 1926-1929, and McDonald friend), interview with author, December 27, 1988; unidentified newspaper clipping in McDonald's personal files.

39. McDonald interview, July 8 and August 26, 1984.

It was the people of Haskell who gave the final and exceptional touches to opening day. They fulfilled McDonald's advertised promise that a "genuine Indian curio will be given to each customer." Beadwork, feathers, and tom-toms made by Indian families of Haskell students and friends in Topeka supplemented the supply of premiums made at Haskell in anticipation of the big opening day demand. Enough miniature canoes were made so that one could be given to every child in every car.⁴⁰

The relative importance of the several reasons McDonald gave for starting the Indian Village was revealed in his assessments of its early business. On the one hand, his primary instincts as a promoter caused him to declare his business an unquestionable success because of the large number of customers—576 cars

40. *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, May 29, 1930; Pete W. Shepherd, interview with author, September 9, 1984.

on opening day and 10,000 customers in the first 10 days.⁴¹ On the other hand, his more contrived objective, to educate people about Indians, was declared achieved based on the oblique proof that opening day attendance had furthered his educational purposes. In truth, education was haphazard at the Indian Village, and McDonald was apparently satisfied with the conveyance of simplistic notions about Indians. Generally, the education that did take place resulted from questions customers asked, most often of the Indian attendants. "What tribe are you from?" "Where is that tribe?" "How many tribes are in Kansas?" "What state has the largest Indian population?" "Who are the wealthiest Indians?"⁴²

McDonald abandoned altogether his elaborate scheme for the Indian Village when he adjusted his entrepreneurial sights to the changed conditions of the early 1930s. With the dawn of the decade's depressed economy, the Sinclair Oil Company lost its interest in financing a chain of McDonald's businesses.⁴³ McDonald carried the teepee architecture of his original scheme through the design of a restaurant with a teepee at each corner, but it was officially opened on August 30, 1930, with much less fanfare than had been orchestrated a few months before for

the grand opening of the main teepee.⁴⁴ No more than two or three tourist cabin teepees were built by the following spring.⁴⁵

By 1932, McDonald turned to other enterprises. In that year, the Bureau of Indian Affairs discontinued junior college education at Haskell because it was segregated, and thereby ended the collegiate athletics at Haskell for which McDonald had remained with the school. He simultaneously launched a political career when he was elected Douglas County's Democratic chairman and was a delegate to the party's national convention where he favored the repeal of prohibition. He resigned from Haskell at the start of 1933 and obtained what he claimed to be the first beer distributorship in Kansas after the end of national prohibition and following the redefinition of liquor in the state to exclude 3.2 percent beer.⁴⁶

McDonald briefly renewed interest in his forgotten roadside venture in 1935 when, responding to interest expressed by University of Kansas students, he added a beer garden and dance hall between the barbecue restaurant and filling station.⁴⁷ Thereafter, McDonald

44. *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, August 30, 1930.

45. Hunter, "Indian Braves Sell Gas and Oil at Modern Tepees," 10; "Indian Village Gas Station Is Unique," *The Gasoline Retailer* 3 (March 7, 1931): 7.

46. Granzer, "Indian Education at Haskell Institute," 172; McDonald, *John Levi of Haskell*, 51; *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, April 21, 1986; McDonald interviews, July 8 and August 26, 1984.

47. McDonald interview, July 8, 1984; *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, January 10, 1988.

41. *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, May 31, 1930; Weller, "Indian Village to Grow Around Station," 89.

42. Wilson D. Charles, interview with author, September 16, 1984; Shepherd interview, September 9, 1984.

43. McDonald, "Unusual Background for Beer Distributor," 43.

The "Indian Village" displayed with night lights.



Do You KNOW THE REDMAN?

There were 14,575 Indians in the United States in 1926. While in 1906 there were 250,000, a decrease of over 4,000 in some years. Oklahoma has the greatest number of Indians with approximately 121,000.

Indians today are Indians in the Indian Territory. They have the same Indian population.

There are 161 separate reservations, located in twenty states.

There are approximately two hundred and thirty Indian tribes in the United States, more than thirty of which are found in the state of Oklahoma.

The largest Indian tribe in the United States is the Navajo, who live in the Southwest. They are found in both New Mexico and Arizona.

Some anthropologists claim there were more than 100 Indian tribes in the United States when Columbus first reached America.

WHY CONOCO?

Conoco Products are handled exclusively at the "Indian Village."

We found after an exhaustive study that the Continental Oil Company is doing more to aid the cross country traveler than any other major company in the petroleum industry today.

Linking the Conoco Travel Bureau and Passport Service, which includes a host of travel tips and personal favors, with the unlimited Indian information which the "Indian Village" will provide, we feel that we are going to be able to render the greatest service possible to the American tourist.

The Continental Oil Company not only offers the public the most in travel service, but likewise provides an unparalleled "Travelers' Restroom" located in the Indian Village. Here, the traveler is provided with a complete and comfortable place of rest and refreshment.

Like most Conoco Ethyl Gasoline, delivers maximum power, eliminates fuel knock, and converts carbon into a quantity of added power. Its constant use will improve the performance of any engine.

Conoco products are distributed in twenty-nine states of the Union. Take advantage of exceptional products, coupled with the greatest tourist service, by refueling at a Conoco station.

You will find the "Indian Village" AT THE SIGN OF THE RED TRIANGLE.

INDIAN VILLAGE
TOURIST CAMP
LAWRENCE, KANSAS

may have added several cabin teepees for a total of six to eight,⁴⁸ but he definitely concentrated on his beer distributorship, chairmanship of the Douglas County Democratic party, management of George and Robert Docking's gubernatorial campaigns, and, finally, chairmanship of the Kansas Turnpike Authority. Ironically, the turnpike so reduced business at the "Tee Pee," as the Indian Village was called by 1958, that McDonald no longer managed it after that year.⁴⁹

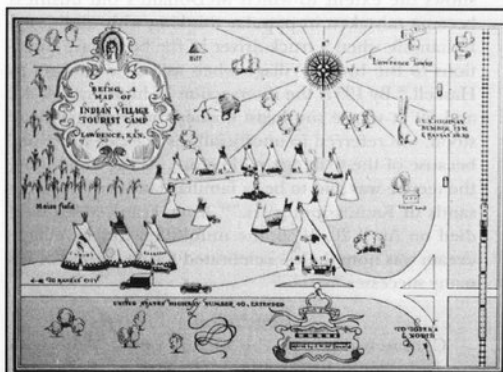
Despite its unfulfilled financial and educational objectives, the Indian Village slowly insinuated itself in the local consciousness. McDonald wanted his roadside stop to snare attention for Lawrence and its sites. He had his three athlete friends sell tomatoes, watermelons, and other produce from local gardens to build support in the farm community north of town.⁵⁰ Area farmers, however, rarely patronized the business for entertainment or gasoline, and the people of Lawrence came less often after World War II. Tourists and students from the University of Kansas apparently became the business' main customers.⁵¹ Although University of Kansas fraternities "raised hell," in McDonald's words,

48. John Hatfield ("Tee Pee" lessee, ca. 1968-1973), interview with author, July 23, 1986.

49. *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, April 21, 1986; Lawrence, Kansas, telephone book, 1958; McDonald interview, July 8, 1984; Rosseau, "Frank McDonald Ends Terms of KTAS..."

50. *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, January 14, 1930; Shepherd, letter to author, October 2, 1984.

51. *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, January 10, 1988.



The above illustration is an artist's conception of the "Indian Village" as it will appear when finished. It is located one mile north of Lawrence, Kansas.

The first unit or "Teepee Filling Station" was opened May 30th, 1930. The small Teepee Cabins are being constructed at the present time. Other units will be added later.

The "Indian Village" is operated by full blood Indians practically all of whom have attended Haskell Institute, the leading U. S. Government Indian School located at Lawrence, Kansas.

The underlying principle relative to the "Indian Village" is to furnish tourists with complete data about the various tribes, where located, what highways to take to reach them, points of interest in the Indian country, and information concerning Indians in general.

Our slogan is this, "YOU CAN SECURE MORE RELIABLE INFORMATION ABOUT THE AMERICAN INDIAN AT THE TEEPEE FILLING STATION, THAN ANY OTHER SERVICE STATION IN THE UNITED STATES."

GET ACQUAINTED WITH THE REDMAN

For the living in an age which might rightly be termed "The Passing of the Red Man." The changes of our country have a more pronounced feature of a changing characteristic than presented than the American Indian. I like all people, various tribes, had different habits. Some even what might be called local tribes, roving and wandering from place to place. Others were agricultural, as the first White man found the Indian tribes in the soil. Potatoes, pumpkins, squash and maize are among the products that the Indians contributed to the agricultural world.

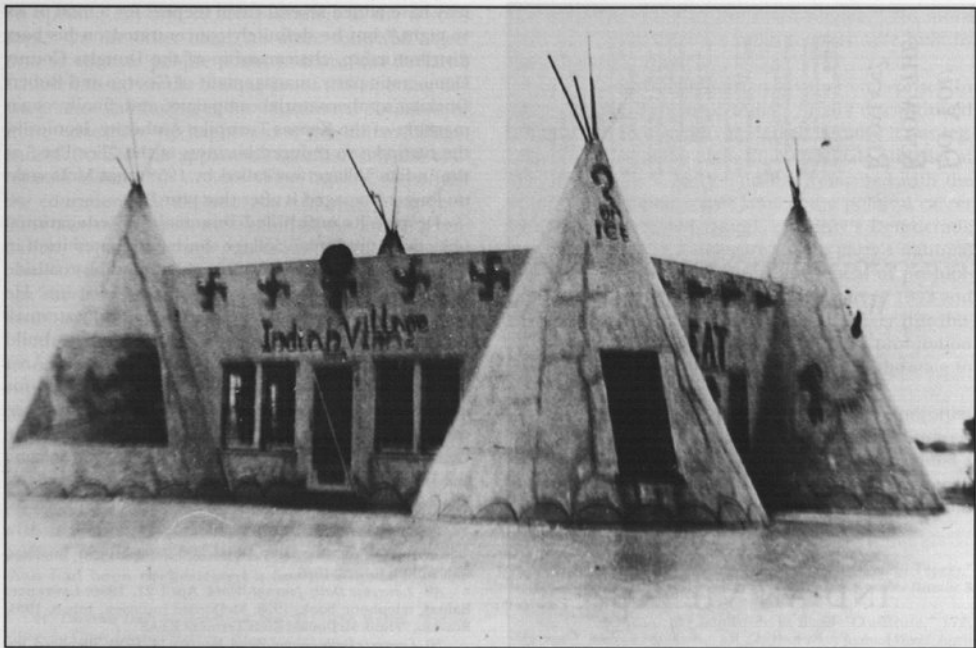
Regardless of all distinction, the American Indians had high ideals. Privacy was unknown to the Indian. They were social within the tribe, but an extreme rarity, possibly a very exception. Perhaps the greatest of all their virtues was the cheerful and respect shown by the Indian to their visitors. The American Indians have been greatly misunderstood. They fought against the encroachment of the white man on the land they could rightfully feel belonged to them. Commonly being driven westward, forced from their homes and surroundings, the Indians have not always been the aggressive. The great of history have been true too far with these people. When the Red Man was driven westward, it was always termed as a glorious battle. Yet, when the Indian was driven westward, the conflict was invariably termed as a massacre.

As stated previously we are living in the age of the "Passing of the Red Man." We do not mean to say that individuals of Indian blood are becoming extinct, because this is not true. In the last two decades there has been a gradual increase among the Indian people. Yet the old-time full blood Indian is rapidly passing away. Another one hundred years and the association between the Indian and the Whites will practically have been accomplished. Yet today we are in the position of the Indian living quite similar to that of his native state.

Thousands of tourists travel annually through the Indian reservations. Hundreds of thousands of others would do so, if they knew how to map out their itinerary. It is the purpose of the "Indian Village" to give them the most authentic information possible to planning their cross country trip. Located as we are on the half mile strip between U. S. 40 and U. S. 73 N. we are in a strategic position to serve thousands of tourists annually as both of these federal highways pass through Indian country.

If you are interested in Indians, if you plan to make a trip, come yourself to the "Indian Village" for full information concerning the American Red Man.

Both sides of McDonald's brochure (above and left) declared his educational purposes for the "Indian Village." Note that McDonald had shifted from Sinclair to Conoco petroleum products by the time his business opened.



This photograph of the restaurant, taken during the 1935 flood, shows one "teepee" corner (center) with the sign—"teepee"—by which travelers in clement weather were signaled that beer was for sale.

in the cabin teepees he rented to extract some profit from the unfinished motel, only one of nine people who lived within a two-mile radius remembered the Indian Village as a bad place.⁵² Neither did townspeople stigmatize the place as a dive.⁵³

During the fifty years following its inception, except for a period between 1940-1946, every business at the location willingly capitalized on McDonald's original associations by retaining the words "Indian Village," or "teepee," in its name or by referring to the "old teepee station" as its location.⁵⁴ Even the infamous Kansas River flood of 1951, which nearly inundated the main teepee, rendered it something of a landmark when flood depth was marked for future reference in paint near the top. The man who re-opened the business hired Haskell students to re-paint the main teepee's original markings as well as that of a dog on the east side which had been added by one of the early live-in managers.⁵⁵ The book *Joe Sunpool*

shows the extent to which McDonald's old business became mistaken in popular thinking with traditional Indian life when a truck driver in the book gave directions to the Indian Village when asked how to get to Haskell.⁵⁶ By 1957, the intersection of highways 24, 40, and 59 at whose southeast corner the Indian Village stood, was referred to unofficially as "Te-Pee Junction" because of the striking architecture. At the same time, the teepee was said to be "a familiar landmark to thousands of Kansas motorists."⁵⁷ After Frank McDonald died on April 20, 1986, the unfulfilled Indian Village dream was nonetheless celebrated locally as one of his many successes.⁵⁸

Conclusion

Commentators on the history of the American roadside could find evidence for either their complaints or praise in the history of the Indian Village.

52. McDonald interview, July 8, 1984; and author's interviews with area residents, April-July 1986.

53. *University Daily Kansan*, Lawrence, February 5, 1985.

54. *Ibid.*; Lawrence, Kansas, telephone books, 1930-1969.

55. Hatfield interview, July 23, 1986; *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, January 10, 1988.

56. Don Wilcox, *Joe Sunpool* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1956), 16, 18.

57. *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, May 9, July 24, 1957. "Te Pee Junction" became the colloquial name for the highway intersection at which the Indian Village stood.

58. *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, April 29, 1986, January 10, 1988.

Detractors could point to its numerous misrepresentations of Indian life and denounce it as merely one more case of pandering to popular ignorance in return for profit. Certainly, Frank McDonald's public life was marked by a succession of pragmatic shifts similar to those of other entrepreneurs.⁵⁹ Supporters have complimented the vernacular genius of the Indian Village's design⁶⁰ and could demonstrate that the business was a sincere, although simplistic, effort at popular education. The Indian Village is the most elaborate scheme for popular education about Indians known by this author to have been conceived for automobile tourism.

An examination of the Indian Village's origins based largely on the words of McDonald, his Indian collaborators, and people from Lawrence discloses neither ignorance nor deceit about Indian life by the business' creators; nor does it show that local consumers were particularly gullible in their acceptance

59. For examples, consider Carl Fisher, original promoter of the Lincoln Highway, mentioned in Drake Hokanson, *The Lincoln Highway: Main Street Across America* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1988), 20, and Cyrus Avery, an early promoter of Route 66, noted in Quinta Scott and Susan Kelly, *Route 66: The Highway and Its People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 5.

60. Andrews, *The Well-Built Elephant and Other Roadside Attractions*, 72.

of it. McDonald discovered the chance for great profit in popular perceptions of Indians while working for their national recognition at Haskell. The people of Haskell repaid his remarkable success on their behalf by designing, decorating, furnishing, stocking, staffing, and promoting his private business venture—a venture also aimed at their further benefit through increased popular understanding. Eventually, the people in and around Lawrence elevated the Indian Village to the informal level of a local landmark. Although tourists passing Lawrence were not interviewed for their perceptions of the Indian Village, there is no evidence that they were dissatisfied with its products or services.

Thus, the Indian Village's creators and local consumers shared a single, positive view as it became a kind of common possession. Their willing suspension of careful analysis in the process of adoption is an essence of the popular culture in which their Indian Village existed. Evaluations of American roadside development have been limited largely to its effect on tourists with less regard for its function within the local community. Analyses of American roadside development would be strengthened by consideration of the individual creators' rationales and the response of the local consumers. [KH]