

THE FIRST KAW INDIAN MISSION.

BY WM. W. CONE, TOPEKA.

To the Methodist Church belongs the credit of establishing the first Christian mission among the Kaw or Kansas Indians. On the 16th day of September 1830, the Methodist conference of Missouri, then in session at St. Louis, enlarged the limits of its jurisdiction, and formed four new missionary stations among the Indians in the Indian Territory; one among each of the following tribes, viz.: the Cherokees and Creeks in the southwest, and the Shawnees and Kaws in the northwest.

Two brothers, Thos. and Wm. Johnson, residing in Howard county, Missouri, were selected to take charge of the missions in the northwest—Rev. Thos. Johnson being assigned to labor among the Shawnees, west of the Missouri State line, and Rev. Wm. Johnson among the Kaws, on Kansas river.

Wm. Johnson was born in Nelson county, Virginia, February 2, 1805. He removed with his father to Missouri, in 1825. The next season he was licensed to preach, and in the fall of the same year was received into the conference on trial. In 1829 he was appointed to the New Madrid district, and the next year he was received into full connection, and appointed as above, "Missionary among the Kaw Indians."

From 1830 to 1832, Mr. Johnson resided among the Kaws, at their villages, about ten miles west of the present site of Topeka. But in September of the latter year, he was appointed, in connection with Thomas Markham, to take charge of the mission among the Delaware Indians, and his labors among the Kaws were for a time suspended. He remained among the Delawares until the next conference, when he was transferred to the Shawnee Mission, where he remained until the fall of 1835.

In May, 1834, he was married to Miss Mary Jane Chick, at her father's house, in Howard county, Missouri, by the Rev. Wm. Shores. After a few days' visit in Missouri, he returned with his wife to his labors at the Shawnee Mission. At that time this mission was located about six miles west of Westport, Mo., and within the present limits of Johnson county, Kansas. In 1839 the mission was removed to within two-and-one-half miles of Westport. It was discontinued in 1862.

In the spring of 1835, the United States Government, desiring to remove its farming operations for the Kaw Indians from its first location near the mouth of the Grasshopper river to a more convenient locality in close proximity to the Indian villages, instructed Major Robert W. Cummings, Indian Agent, to make the selections for two farms. Major Cummings selected about 300 acres of land in the Kaw valley, on the north side of the Kaw river, just east of the present site of Silver Lake, in Shawnee county, Kansas, and about 300 acres one mile south of the river, in the valley of Mission creek, in the same county. Mr. Frederick Chouteau, of Westport, Missouri, assisted Major Cummings in the selection of these farms. The land on the latter farm was plowed, under contract, by Major Daniel Boone, a grandson of the Kentucky pioneer.

It was here, on the north part of this farm, on the northwest corner of section 33, township 11, range 14, that the first mission buildings among the Kaws were established. They were erected in the summer of 1835—a hewn log cabin, two stories high, 18 feet wide by 36 feet long. It was divided into four rooms, two above and two below, and with a stone chimney at each end of the building on the outside, as was the custom in those days by people from the Southern States. This, together with a smoke-house, kitchen, and other out-buildings, was all that constituted the Mission improvements.

In September of the same year, Rev. Wm. Johnson and family removed to the Mission, and for over seven years resided here. He and his wife learned to speak the Indian language, and this knowledge became very useful to them in their missionary labors. It would be a pleasant task to record the events that happened in the every-day life at the Mission, but the materials for this are not at present available.

Early in March, 1842, Mr. Johnson and wife attended a quarterly meeting near Independence, Mo. While here he became very sick, and remained at the house of Rev. Thos. Ruble for about three weeks. He recovered sufficiently to return with his family to his home at the Kaw Mission.

On the 6th day of April following, he made a business trip to the Shawnee Mission. The fatigues and exposure incident to a trip of this distance, over sixty miles, brought back the disease (pneumonia) in a more serious form. He became rapidly worse, and died shortly afterwards. An Indian messenger was dispatched to the Kaw Mission, to inform Mrs. Johnson of the dangerous illness of her husband. In so high esteem was he held by the Indians, that about twenty of the most prominent members of the tribe accompanied Mrs. Johnson on her painful journey; but getting impatient at what seemed to them slow traveling, they pushed on ahead, and arrived at the Shawnee Mission a short time before the death of their beloved teacher. Mrs. Johnson did not arrive until an hour after his death.

Mr. Johnson is represented by those who knew him to have been above medium height, and well formed. He is said to have had more influence among the Kaw Indians than any other person, either before or since. Their

eneration for him was marvelous. It was through his influence that the Indians permitted their children to attend the Manual Labor School among the Shawnees, and after his death the children were taken from the school. Mr. Chouteau, however, states that soon after the children returned to their homes, many of them died. The Indians then refused to send any more children back to the school, because, as they termed it, "they got too much smell of big knife among the whites." Their sickness was probably owing to the great change from regular hours and strict habits of life, acquired at the Mission, to unrestrained liberty and irregularity in diet, etc.

Rev. Geo. W. Love was sent, soon after the death of Mr. Johnson, to the mission. He, however, remained here but a short time, and nothing is known, by the writer, of the Mission while under his charge.

In the year 1844, Mrs. Johnson was married to the Rev. J. T. Peery, and early in the following year Mr. Peery was sent to the mission for the purpose, as he writes me, of establishing a manual labor school among the Kaws. They kept a few Indian children at the Mission, and taught them through the first year. Mr. Peery was then (1846) appointed "Farmer for the Kaws," and cultivated about 115 acres of land in the Kaw and Mission creek valleys, adjoining the Mission. The school was discontinued that season. This year the Government made another treaty with the Kaws, they relinquishing their right to the lands on the Kaw river for another location around Council Grove. The treaty was perfected through the agency of Major Thos. H. Harvey, Superintendent of the Northwestern tribes, at the Kaw Mission—Mr. Peery attending every meeting.

Mr. Chouteau relates the following anecdote in connection with Mr. Peery's missionary life:

A Methodist General Conference was held at Baltimore in the year 18—, and Mr. Peery was elected a delegate to the Conference. He was accompanied on the trip by four or five prominent Indians. At the hotel in Baltimore the Indians were given feather beds to sleep upon. The weather being very warm and sultry, and this being their first experience, they very naturally felt the awkwardness and extreme unpleasantness of their position. Just about daylight Mr. and Mrs. Peery were awakened from their slumbers by hearing a loud noise in the street. Upon looking out of their window they saw the Indians walking up and down the street with nothing on but nature's covering, fanning themselves. Some early-risers, who had gathered around the Indians, were cheering them, and this was the noise that had awakened Mr. Peery.

A few months previous to the removal of the Indians to Council Grove, Mr. Peery was sent by the Conference to labor among the Cherokees; and Mr. Mitchell, the Government blacksmith for the Kaws, moved into the Mission buildings, and resided here until the spring of 1847. He then removed to Council Grove, and his wife is said to have been the first white woman at the "Grove." The blacksmith for the Pottawatomies, Isaac Mundy, then

occupied it until the spring of 1850. At this time, Joseph Bourassa, a half-breed Pottawatomie, moved into it, and remained there until 1853, when he tore the buildings down and removed the logs about one mile north, and then erected another residence.

I am indebted mainly for the materials for the above sketch to Hon. Wm. Chick, of Glenwood, Johnson county, Kansas; Mr. Frederick Chouteau, Westport, Missouri; Daniel Boone, (now deceased,) late of Westport; Rev. J. T. Peery, Miami, Saline county, Missouri; J. C. McCoy, of Johnson county; Thos. Stinson, Esq., of Tecumseh, Kansas; and largely to the Minutes of the Methodist Conference, and "Life and Times of Wm. Patton."