

INDIANS

(Satanta)

Haskell County, Kansas

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References:

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THE TRIBES

The greatest rovers among the early Indians were those who inhabited the Great Plains, between the Mississippi and the Rockies. The buffalo was the source of their food, clothing, and shelter, so their lives were prolonged hunts for this all-important animal.

The principal buffalo-hunting tribes were the Sioux or Dakotas, the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Comanche, Kiowa and the Apache of the plains. Others were the Pawnee, Wichita, Arikara, and Caddoan tribes. In addition, various Siouan tribes (Osage, Oto, Missouri, Omaha, Ponca, Quapaw, Mandan, and Hidatsa) were both buffalo-hunters and farmers.

Some of the counties of Kansas having Indian names are Cheyenne, Wichita, Pawnee, Kiowa, Comanche, Pottawatomie, Wabaunsee, Osage, Shawnee, Nemaha, Neosho, and Cherokee.

The Kanza and Osage Indians seldom committed worse deeds than petty thievery, and the more warlike Comanche's and Pawnee's did not often appear along the first two hundred miles of the trail. The place where all the wagons united to form a caravan was in Council Grove, a point about one hundred and fifty miles west of Independence. In those days, Council Grove consisted of a strip of fine timber along the Neosho Valley. There in 1825, the United States Commissioners met with the Osage Indians to get a right of way treaty for the Santa Fe Trail.

SATANTA - GOING BACK A CENTURY

Exactly a century has pasted since this story began. The same sun then gave the light of day to the Plains in Southwest Kansas. The same moon cast its mellow glow over the snow-capped peaks of the Saguache Mountains in Colorado. The same streams fed the great Arkansas River and the same pines shut out every hostile eye from the

Kiowa tepee where was born one who was to become a renowned warrior, a great orator, an unrivaled leader, and a spectacular figure, that the Kiowa's had ever produced.

The father, immensely pleased that his young squaw had presented him a male heir, stood in the tepee and grinned at his offspring, as the young chap beat the air with his tiny fists. The action stirred within his sire recollections of a bear he had once fought, stabbing it with a lance as it beat the air with its whirling paws.

Aloud he muttered: "Ugh! Heap papoose! Heap fight! Set'tain-te (*meaning White Bear*)!"

Set'tain-te, and his tribe, driven from their mountain home by the more powerful Cheyenne's, followed the Arkansas River. He was still young enough to be riding on his mothers' back. While very young, he learned to shoot a bow with deadly aim, and to feed on plants and animals he could kill.

SATANTA - A RESTLESS ENVIRONMENT

Set'tain-te, reared in an atmosphere of constant danger, his tribe was always searching for a better and safer place to live.

The Kiowa tribe was impelled by a desire to exist, and naturally became fierce fighters. The United States Bureau of Ethnology stated that they were the most predatory and blood thirsty of all the prairie tribes.

Set'tain-te, better known in later years as Satanta, the white man's corruption of his name, achieved fame among his people and the Comanche's, with whom they had made a treaty, made them allies for life. These tribes were permitted to live south of the Arkansas River.

No one was more forward than Satanta in his charge. No one was more implacable in war. No one was more fertile in stratagem. He was the one who led a persistent band of Comanche's to Durango Mexico, one summer. He lurked at the base of Pawnee Rock to swoop down on the stagecoaches, freight caravans and immigrant trains.

His name was known and feared by the whites who were just beginning to push westward in 1850.

SATANTA - TEN LIVE WHITES FOR ONE DEAD

In spite of Satanta's efforts and those of his warriors, the white man continued to come. The Kiowa's said that every time they killed a pale face ten more came.

Satanta was an Indian of unusual intelligence and soon learned to live on terms that

were amicable with his white enemy during periods of peace. Government reports say his manly boldness and directness, with his keen sense of humor, made him a favorite with army officers and commissioners in spite of his known hostility to the white man's laws and civilization.

He developed into a marvelous speaker and known as the "Orator of the Plains". Those who could not understand a word he said loved to listen to the rhythmic tone of his voice.

The story of the "Old Santa Fe Trail", written by Colonel Henry Inman, states that congress sent a commission to determine the cause of constant warfare with the Indians and wholesale slaughter of men, women, and children on the Kansas border along the Santa Fe Trail. Known as the leading spirit of the Kiowa Tribe, Congress sent for Satanta. When he entered the building at Fort Dodge, where they held daily sessions, the president told him to speak his mind, to relate truthfully, what his tribe had to complain about on the part of the whites.

SATANTA - *WAXES ELOQUENT*
(*He had a lot to say*)

Satanta grew very pathetic as he warmed up to his subject. He said he had no desire to kill the immigrants. Those who came to live ruthlessly slaughtered the buffalo and left their carcasses to rot on the prairie. They killed them merely for amusement while the Indians killed them only when necessity demanded. He also declared that the white hunters set fires that destroyed all available food for the buffalo and the tribe's mustangs, leaving them to starve.

He further charged that the pale faces cut down timber on the margins of the streams, making large fires of it while the Indians were satisfied to cook his food with a few dry and dead limbs.

There was so much truth in the charge and Satanta refused to reconcile himself to the white man's superiority. He could never abide by the thought of his people in bondage.

Satanta might have always been friendly to the whites had they been willing to provide him with plenty of whisky (his favorite beverage) and to tolerate his presence, but he had remained at Fort Dodge until he had quite worn out his welcome, and they put nauseating medicines in his way, knowing that he would drink them.

SATANTA - *HIS TEMPER UNLEASHED*

This gave the soldiers great pleasure, but Satanta felt that they were trying to poison him. For revenge, he gathered his warriors, burned all of the government contractor's

hay on the bank of the river opposite the post and went south to his village, slaying three woodchoppers enroute.

Because of the bloody battles that he commanded, they captured Satanta and imprisoned him for two years. Then, because of the good behavior of his tribe, they released him.

He agreed to remain on the reservation and was around Fort Sill all winter, seemingly at peace. However, it became evident that he was contemplating a greater revolt. In June of 1874, the tribes went on the warpath. Satanta disappeared from the reservation.

A terrific battle, known as the battle of Adobe Walls, ensued June 27. Seven hundred Indians met a determined repulse from twenty-six white men and one woman. Although no one saw Satanta, it was believed that he was there.

Other battles followed and Satanta was thought to have led all of them. However, he was recaptured and his trial was short. The military tribunal held that he had violated his parole by leaving the reservation and sent to the penitentiary at Huntsville, Texas for life.

SATANTA - HIS SPIRIT FREED

A year passed, two years, three... One day the stalwart figure of Satanta appeared at the prison dispensary. "My heart is bad", he said. He told the doctor that he wanted medicine. The physician placed him in a ward on the second story of the hospital.

Shortly afterward a weird sound was heard, the death song of the Kiowa Warrior. Plunging head long to the stony ground below, Satanta ended his resistance to the white man's domination.

It was for the noted warrior that our town received its name, and progress soon became apparent. The first business houses and a few of the dwellings were moved in mostly from old Santa Fe.

Mrs. Elda Purcell operated the first grocery. Mrs. Bessie Custer was the first post-mistress. L. O. Stanley was the first bank cashier. All are still residents of Satanta. A hotel was erected in 1912 under the supervision of O. H. Rowland, contractor.

The Indian spirit still prevailed when the Hutchinson brothers erected of tile the Big Chief garage and the Pocahontas theatre about 1915 or 1916. In 1917, the town had a new modern hotel of brick structure.

INDIAN NAMES FOR STREETS

Also erected was a Wigwam meat market and the streets were given Indian names.

The club organizations were Owaissa, Sequoyah and Santee. "The Chief", founded on March 7, 1918 by G. C. Colin was Satanta's first newspaper. Mr. Colin was the editor and publisher.

As the little town increased in size and thrived with prosperity, the spirit of the Indian continued to prevail in that the people were trying to live up to the better traits of the Big Chief, White Bear. Not quarrelsome, but conveyed the spirit of the Indian in co-operating, holding steadfast for their rights. Not seeking hardships, but facing them unmoved. Ready to defend one another and willing to help in times of need. Imposing on none, promoting square deals.

SUPERSTITIONS OF THE INDIANS

The Indian, more than any other man, seems to have a belief in the supernatural. He has always talked of the Great Spirit, and of the Happy Hunting Grounds beyond the present life. His surroundings, his education, the traditions of the past, all lead to the conviction that there are supernatural powers and wonders, and that these can be enlisted in his behalf. He sees the cloud fly, and believes there is a hand that moves it. He hears the dash of the great waters, and thinks that the sound is the voice of the Great Spirit. In his native wilds and in the deep valleys upon the mountain- summits, he is brought into close contact with nature. He has always believed that unseen powers were near and in active operation. It is not strange, therefore, that when his "medicine men" proclaim the coming of a Messiah, the resurrection of Indians, the restoration of their lands, and other great benefits to be conferred upon him, he should dance in wild, fantastic glee and welcome the dawn of the great day.