

Kansa Half Breed Tracts

An 1825 treaty with the Kaw Indians reserved land of one square mile (640 acres) for each of twenty-three Kaw mixed blood Metis. The tracts were located on the north bank of the Kansas River from present day Topeka to Williamstown. The purpose of granting the land to the Half Breeds was to gain their support for the treaty in which the Kaw ceded a large amount of land to the United States in exchange for annuities. Indian Superintendent William Clark said, “Reserves of this kind...have a good effect in promoting civilization...an idea of separate property is imparted without which it is vain to think of improving the minds and morals of the Indian.”

Several of the Kaw Half-Breed tracts were to become important sites in Kansas history. In 1827 the Kaw Agency was founded on Tract number 23, allotted to Joseph James Jr. This became the home of the Government Agent to the Kaw, the government farmer, Daniel M. Boone, son of the famous pioneer, Daniel Boone, a blacksmith, several Half Breed Kaw and French traders, and Chief White Plume, recognized by the U.S. government as the head chief of the Kaw.

Tract number three, located on the site of Topeka, was to become the site of the Pappan Ferry in the 1840s, a crossing of the Kansas River utilized by pioneers heading west on the Oregon Trail. Tract four was allotted to Julie Gonville, the maternal grandmother of Charles Curtis, who later became Vice President of the United States in the Hoover administration.

The present day Iliff Commons at Indian Woods was a portion of the Kaw Half-breed Reserve No. 7, deeded to Marie Gonville by a treaty in 1825. Marie was the daughter of Kaw Chief White Plume and the wife of Pierre Gonville, a French trader who settled in the area. The 23 Reserves, which stretched along the north bank of the Kaw River from Topeka to Lecompton, were made an “unalienable” gift to 23 mixed-blood descendants of White Plume by the U.S. government.

A similar treaty was also signed in 1825 between the Osage Indians and the United States. The Osage ceded lands in Missouri, Arkansas, and south of the Arkansas River in Oklahoma in exchange for a reservation in Kansas and Oklahoma. Forty-two tracts of one-square mile each were reserved for the mixed blood children of French traders and Osage women. Most of the tracts were scattered around eastern Kansas but a few were on the Neosho River in Oklahoma.



Compiled by Lawrence Barkwell
Coordinator of Metis Heritage and History Research
Louis Riel Institute

