

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE LAST YEARS, 1876-1973

When Isaiah Walker came to Indian Territory with his family in 1874, he christened his homestead on the Wyandot Reserve the Last Chance Farm. Perhaps this name would have been appropriate for the Wyandot Reserve. The Indians knew that the years ahead would be difficult, but by 1876 the foundation for a viable tribal life had been established, and soon there were visible signs of progress.<sup>1</sup>

#### Wyandot Indian School

The Wyandot Indian School, established by the Society of Friends, became more important to the Wyandots as enrollment grew, and as the curriculum improved. By 1893, the course offerings included orthography, reading, writing, arithmetic, natural philosophy, religion, history, Bible, general knowledge, geography, algebra, grammar, physiology, and botany. English was emphasized at the school, since many of the Indians spoke Wyandot at home because their parents did not understand English.<sup>2</sup>

Wyandots were not the only Indians enrolled at the school.

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Cecilia Wallace, January 28, 1973, Wyandotte, Oklahoma.

<sup>2</sup>Gibson, "Wyandotte Missions: The Early Years, 1871-1900," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXXVI, p. 141.

Senecas and Shawnees also attended, and the institution was known as the Seneca, Shawnee, and Wyandotte School. Initially, the teachers were Quaker missionaries from the eastern United States, and religion played a significant role in the education of the students during the formative years. The basic objectives of the school were to educate the head, heart, and hand of the students. These objectives were achieved through instruction in formal subjects, and also through a comprehensive program in vocational training, and extra-curricular activities.<sup>3</sup>

An industrial teacher instructed the boys in harness and shoe-making, woodworking, carpentry, and metal work. The school farmer taught them farm management, horticulture, and husbandry. They were assigned chores on the school farm, which were designed to give them practical experience in the care of dairy cows, horses, mules, pigs, and poultry. Both boys and girls maintained the school garden and they aided the school farmer during the harvest. A matron-seamstress instructed the girls in hygiene and cleanliness, sewing, home nursing, and household management. They were required to make beds, sweep, and assist the school cook and laundress.<sup>4</sup>

The Seneca, Shawnee, and Wyandotte School was a boarding institution, and the school term lasted from September to late June throughout the first decade of operation. A number of orphans were enrolled at the school over the years, so by 1880 there were enough of these pupils to necessitate remaining open during the summer. Thus, the school

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

also served as an orphanage for the Indians.<sup>5</sup>

Formal instruction began at 9:00 a.m. and lasted until 4:00 p.m., with an hour lunch break. When formal teaching was over, the students reported to their vocational teachers for instruction in the practical arts. Extra-curricular activities included religious organizations and a literary club, the Hallequah Society. Beginning in December, 1879, the Hallequah Society published a school newspaper, The Hallequah. A temperance society was organized by missionaries at the school in 1875, and many adult Indians, as well as children, attended the meetings.<sup>6</sup>

Commencement exercises held at the end of each school year and the annual Christmas program were the highlights of the school activities. Each year members of the Society of Friends, who lived in the East, sent presents to brighten the Christmas celebration at the school. In 1880, their gifts included candy, nuts, and over 400 presents.<sup>7</sup>

Supervision of the school was transferred in 1880 from the Friends to the federal government, and today it is still under the direction of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Quapaw Indians were enrolled at the school in 1900, and since that date, the facility has been known as the Seneca Indian School. The Wyandot Council named a committee to visit the school at intervals, and although generally it was not active, it occasionally recommended that improvements be undertaken to improve the educational facilities at the school. The

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 142-144.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

Wyandots have continued to maintain an interest in the Seneca Indian School at Wyandotte, Oklahoma. Leonard N. Cotter, the present chief of the Wyandottes, serves as president of the school board of the Seneca Indian School. Soon a \$4.5 million facility will replace many of the old buildings which have served the Indians for so many years.<sup>8</sup>

#### Wyandot Monetary Claims and Allotments

The Wyandots received some of the funds owed to the tribe by the government, but never in the amounts claimed by their attorneys. In 1881, Congress appropriated \$28,109.51 in claims for depredations by whites in Kansas, but this sum was not paid for many years, and then in small amounts. Congress made \$15,686.80 available in 1894 to be used to purchase land from the Choctaw and Chickasaw Indians for homes for absentee Wyandots (those Wyandots who had not settled on the Wyandot Reserve). These Indians informed the government that they did not have room for the Wyandots, so on June 7, 1897, Congress directed that the money appropriated for that purpose be used by the Secretary of the Interior to locate these Wyandots on any available lands elsewhere.<sup>9</sup>

Congress authorized the allotment of the Wyandot Reserve in

<sup>8</sup> Margaret L. Schiffbauer, "History of Seneca Indian School," 1954, unpublished manuscript in the Mrs. Charlotte Nesvold Collection, Wyandotte, Oklahoma; Muriel H. Wright, "History of Seneca Indian School," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXXIII, No. 2 (Summer, 1955), p. 246; Gibson, "Wyandotte Mission: The Early Years, 1871-1900," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXXVI, pp. 150-151; Interview with Leonard N. Cotter, January 23, 1973, Wyandotte, Oklahoma.

<sup>9</sup> Foreman, The Last Trek of the Indians, pp. 198-199; United States Congress, United States Statutes, 53rd Congress, 2nd Session, 1894, pp. 301, 908-909.

severalty, but the Indians opposed this action until 1888, because they would receive less than eighty acres apiece. Many Wyandots believed that farms of this size were not large enough to provide an adequate standard of living. In 1888, one hundred and fifty Wyandots received their allotments because there was no satisfactory alternative. Within a few years, the entire Wyandot Reserve was allotted in severalty.<sup>10</sup>

The Wyandots received their last funds from the federal government in 1937, when the Wyandot Council authorized the sale of the quarter section of land the tribe had donated to the Seneca School in 1872. The tribe was awarded \$10,000 for the land, and this sum was divided per capita. There are four claims pending against the government. These claims are for land in Michigan and Ohio surrendered to the government under the treaties of August 3, 1795, July 4, 1805, and September 29, 1817.<sup>11</sup>

#### Outstanding Individuals

Many of the Wyandot leaders died within a few years after reaching Indian Territory, but some of the influential men of the tribe assumed the role of guiding their comrades, and new generations of Wyandots took up the reigns of tribal leadership. Perhaps the most famous member of the Wyandot tribe, who lived to see the tribe firmly established in Indian Territory, was Mathias Splitlog. Mathias, a

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<sup>10</sup> Foreman, The Last Trek of the Indians, p. 199.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Cotter, January 23, 1973; Rodney J. Edwards to Cotter, December 4, 1972, Records of the Wyandotte Tribal Council, Wyandotte, Oklahoma.

Cayuga, was married to Eliza Barnett Splitlog, a Wyandot, and was a Wyandot by adoption. Already well known in Kansas for his mechanical ability, he arrived in Indian Territory in 1874. He selected a farm on the Wyandot Reserve near the Grand and Cowskin rivers. Splitlog built a sawmill and a gristmill, and he established a ferry and a general store. These enterprises were located in a town he christened Cayuga Springs, after his original tribe.<sup>12</sup>

Cayuga Springs also became the site of a blacksmith shop established by Splitlog, and soon he supervised the construction of a three-story buggy factory. In addition to buggies and two-seated hacks, the Splitlog factory produced coffins. Whenever a death occurred in the community, all other work was suspended at the factory and the workers built a walnut coffin for the deceased. A generous man, Splitlog often donated a coffin to those families who could not afford one, and supplied burial clothing.<sup>13</sup>

Split gained additional recognition as a railroad builder. His long experience as a steamboat operator on Lake Michigan and the Missouri River was a prelude to his grandest adventure in the promotion of new methods of transportation. His railroad, the three million dollar Splitlog Line, ran from Joplin to Neosho, Missouri, and extended south along the route of the present Kansas City Southern Railroad to Splitlog, Missouri. The railway was begun in 1887 and reached Splitlog

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<sup>12</sup>Velma Nieberding, "Chief Splitlog and the Cayuga Mission Church," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXXII, No. 1 (Spring, 1954), pp. 18-21.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

City in 1889.<sup>14</sup>

In 1890, Splitlog sold a tract of land along the Kaw River Valley in Kansas to eastern capitalists. He agreed to meet the prospective purchasers at 10:00 a.m. on the appointed day in Hiram Northrup's Bank in Kansas City, Missouri, in order to complete the transaction. Splitlog arrived early at his friend's bank (Northrup was also a member of the Wyandot tribe), and when the buyers did not appear at the appointed hour, he left the bank. The easterners met Splitlog on the street and asked him to return to the bank, but he refused. An appointment was scheduled for the next day, and this time everyone was present on time. When the prospective purchasers offered him the agreed price of \$140,000 for the land, Splitlog announced that the twenty-four hour delay had raised the price to \$160,000. Fearing that Splitlog would make additional demands if there were further delays, the buyers agreed to his terms.<sup>15</sup>

The Splitlogs were Roman Catholics, and in 1893 Mathias began the construction of a \$35,000 Roman Catholic Church near Cayuga Springs. The church, built as a memorial to his wife who had died of cancer in 1894, was dedicated to Saint Matthias the Apostle on November 25, 1896. The Splitlog church was sold to the Methodists by Bishop Francis C. Kelley in 1930 because there were no longer enough Catholics in the area to justify its operation. The bell in the Splitlog church was transferred to Saint Catherine's Church in Nowata,

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>15</sup> Kansas City Kansan, February 6, 1947, no page number, Miscellaneous Newspaper Clippings, Missouri Valley Collection, Kansas City, Missouri, Public Library.

Oklahoma, where it remains at present. In 1953, Dick Sellers of Drumright, Oklahoma, bought the old Splitlog church from the Methodists. He restored it, and today it stands as a monument to the philanthropy of Mathias Splitlog.<sup>16</sup>

Splitlog joined the Seneca tribe during the last decade of his life, and in 1890 he was elected chief. He became a leading spokesman for this tribe in their transactions with the government. He died in Washington on January 2, 1897, while conducting official business for the Senecas. His body was brought to Indian Territory, and a requiem mass was celebrated for Splitlog on January 14, 1897, in the Splitlog church. He is buried next to his wife in the old graveyard adjacent to the church.<sup>17</sup>

Another Wyandot of note was Bertrand N. O. Walker. He was born in Kansas on September 5, 1870, the son of Isaiah and Mary Walker, but he accompanied his parents to Indian Territory in 1874. They settled on the Wyandot Reserve on the Last Chance Farm about two miles southwest of Seneca, Missouri. Young Walker attended the Seneca, Shawnee, and Wyandotte School, and then a public school in Seneca, Missouri. He studied under the direction of a private tutor before entering the Indian Service as a teacher in 1890. He was employed by the Office of Indian Affairs as a teacher, and later as a clerk from 1890 to 1917 at various locations in Indian Territory, Oklahoma,

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<sup>16</sup> Nieberding, "Chief Splitlog and the Cayuga Mission Church," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXXII, pp. 18, 25-28.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 23, 27-28.

Kansas, California, and Arizona.<sup>18</sup>

He left the Indian Service in 1917 and devoted himself for six years to writing articles, poems, and books about Indian culture. His most important work was Tales of the Bark Lodges, published in 1919. His works appeared under the pen name Hen-Toh, and they exhibited a profound knowledge of Indian culture and legends. In 1924 he was appointed chief clerk at the Quapaw Agency in Miami, Oklahoma, and served in this capacity until his death on June 27, 1927.<sup>19</sup>

An attorney for the Wyandots, David A. Harvey, was a leader in the boomer movement in Oklahoma. An associate of David L. Payne, Harvey participated in several boomer expeditions into Oklahoma. He made the run on April 22, 1889, and settled in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Territory. Harvey was nominated for delegate to Congress by the Territorial Republican Committee at Guthrie, Oklahoma Territory, on October 18, 1890, and on November 4, 1890, he was elected to serve both the long and short terms in this office as provided in the Organic Act of May 2, 1890. He reached Washington in December, 1890, as the first delegate from Oklahoma Territory, and served in this capacity until March 3, 1893. Harvey left Washington and moved to Wyandotte, Indian Territory, and the Wyandots presented him with a farm on the Wyandot Reserve tract in appreciation for his services to the tribe. Harvey

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<sup>18</sup> Czarina C. Conlan and B. N. O. Walker, "Sketch of B. N. O. Walker," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. VI, No. 1 (March, 1928), pp. 89-93; Hen-Toh, "Mon-Dah-Min and the Redman's Old Uses of Corn as Food," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXXV, No. 2 (Summer, 1957), p. 194.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

died on May 24, 1916, and was buried in Seneca, Missouri.<sup>20</sup>

### Population

There were 247 Wyandots in 1875, but as the years passed the number of Indians on the tribal roll increased. Their number had grown to 325 by 1904, and in 1920 there were 481 members of the tribe living in Oklahoma. By 1940 there were 799 Wyandots, of whom 688 had less than one-quarter Indian blood. At present there are 1,050 Wyandots on the tribal roll, but many who could claim tribal membership have not done so. They live throughout the United States and Canada. The largest numbers live in Oklahoma, Kansas, Ohio, Michigan, and Canada. The Wyandot parent tribe, the Hurons, have, like the Wyandots, become assimilated into white civilization.<sup>21</sup>

### The Modern Wyandots

Their number has increased, but their sense of identity as Indians has decreased over the years. The Green Corn Feast, the most important

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<sup>20</sup> Kitty M. Harvey, "Memoirs of Oklahoma," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXXV, No. 1 (Spring, 1957), pp. 45-46.

<sup>21</sup> Smith to Chandler, November 1, 1875, United States Department of the Interior, Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1875, p. 101; Joseph J. Fensten, "Indian Removal," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XI, No. 4 (December, 1933), p. 1081; George Vaux, "Report on the Seneca, or Quapaw Indian Agency, Oklahoma," United States Department of the Interior, Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners to the Secretary of the Interior (2 vols., Washington: Government Printing Office, 1920), Vol. II, p. 130; Muriel H. Wright, A Guide to the Indian Tribes of Oklahoma (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951), p. 264; Interview with Cotter, January 23, 1973; Wilbur R. Jacobs, Dispossessing the American Indian: Indians and Whites on the Colonial Frontier (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), pp. 156-158.

Wyandot holiday, was celebrated on August 15 of each year throughout the last two decades of the nineteenth century. In 1882 the festivities included a picnic, speechmaking, and the naming of newborn children. A brass band, composed of Indians, provided music, and all those present joined in singing. Beef and corn were cooked in a "great iron kettle," and everyone was served this fare. The last Wyandot Green Corn Feast was held in 1909 in a field south of Wyandotte, Oklahoma. The feature attraction of the final celebration was a balloon ascension in which a hot-air balloon carrying a man in a gondola was released from its moorings. When the contraption reached an acceptable height, the passenger parachuted to the ground and the balloon drifted down.<sup>22</sup>

The organization of the Wyandot tribe remained virtually unchanged during the last three decades of the nineteenth century and the first three decades of the twentieth century. The tribe was reorganized on July 17, 1937, as the Wyandotte Tribe of Oklahoma, and this is the title it retains at present. The officers of the tribe are a chief, a second chief, a secretary-treasurer, and two councilmen. The chief, Leonard N. Cotter, is a member of the Intertribal Organization of nine tribes in Northeastern Oklahoma, the Claremore Oklahoma Indian Hospital Board, the State of Oklahoma Public Health Service Board, and serves on the Governor's Manpower Economic Commission.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Foreman, The Last Trek of the Indians, p. 198; Interview with Cotter, January 23, 1973; Interview with Wallace, January 28, 1973.

<sup>23</sup> George E. Fay, ed., "Charters, Constitutions and By-Laws of the Indian Tribes of North America," Occasional Publications in Anthropology, Ethnology Series, Colorado State College, No. 7 (May, 1968), Part 4, pp. 126-129; Interview with Cotter, January 23, 1973.

### Historical Monuments

Historical monuments dedicated to the memory of the Wyandots are conspicuous wherever they lived. The Wyandot Methodist Episcopal Mission at Upper Sandusky, Ohio, was restored in 1889, and in 1960 the Methodist General Conference designated it as the first American Methodist Mission. The Indian Mill State Memorial in Wyandot County, Ohio, serves as a memorial to the gristmill and sawmill built for the Wyandots in 1820 by the federal government. The present building, constructed in 1861, is the first educational museum of milling in an original mill structure in the United States.<sup>24</sup>

William Walker's grave in Oak Grove Cemetery, Kansas City, Kansas, was not marked until September 29, 1915. A marker furnished by the Kansas Chapter of the Daughters of the Founders and Patriots of America and the Society of American Indians was placed at the site amid a ceremony attended by dignitaries from throughout the area. A marker commemorating the settlement of the Wyandots in Indian Territory now stands in the Twin Bridges State Park in Ottawa County, Oklahoma.<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps the most famous Wyandot historic site is the Huron Cemetery in Kansas City, Kansas. Granted to the Wyandot tribe in perpetuity by the terms of the Treaty of 1855, the Huron Cemetery has

<sup>24</sup> "Wyandot Mission Methodist Shrine," Brochure of the Methodist General Conference, no place, no date; "Indian Mill State Memorial," Brochure of the Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio, no date.

<sup>25</sup> Kansas City Star, September 12, 1915, no page number, Miscellaneous Newspaper Clippings, Missouri Valley Collection, Kansas City, Missouri, Public Library; Nieberding, "The Wyandot Tribe Today," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXXIV, p. 491.

been an object of much controversy. Located in downtown Kansas City, Kansas, the land became more valuable, and there were individuals who tried to secure this site for commercial development. On January 21, 1906, a bill was passed by Congress which sanctioned the sale of the Huron Cemetery.<sup>26</sup>

Three sisters, Lydia, Helena, and Ida Conley, one-sixteenth Wyandot, but strong in their attachment to the heritage of their Indian ancestors, would not allow the Huron Cemetery to be sold. They marched to the cemetery and padlocked the gate, and Lydia climbed a tree and displayed a sign which read "You trespass at your own peril." The three young women erected a six by eight foot shanty on the cemetery grounds which they christened "Fort Conley," and they began to take turns maintaining armed guard over the graves of their ancestors. A law student, Lydia carried the battle to court. Once, while the sisters were occupied in court, a United States marshal and his deputies dismantled Fort Conley, but upon their return, the three sisters rebuilt the structure. Lydia carried her case to the United States Supreme Court where the justices ruled that although the Treaty of 1855 had stated that the Wyandots were to retain possession of the Huron Cemetery forever, this portion of the treaty was invalid.<sup>27</sup>

The battle was lost, but the war was not over because Senator (later Vice-President) Charles Curtis, himself part Kaw Indian, came to the rescue. He succeeded in obtaining repeal of the act of 1906,

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<sup>26</sup> Fort Myers News Press, September 10, 1972, p. 10-C.

<sup>27</sup> The Wichita Eagle, September 22, 1972, p. 14-A.

which permitted the sale of the Huron Cemetery. Still not satisfied, the Conley sisters maintained a lonely vigil over the cemetery for most of the remaining years of their lives. Lydia died in 1946, Ida two years later, and Helena lived on until 1958. There have been occasional burials in the Huron Cemetery since their deaths, the last in 1965.<sup>28</sup>

After Lydia's death in 1946, attempts were made by the Wyandot tribe to sell the cemetery. A preliminary land sale transaction was concluded by Chief Lawrence Zane, representing the Wyandots, and the National Bellas Hess Company of Kansas City, Missouri, in the middle 1950's. The preliminary agreement, which called for a purchase price of \$150,000, was sent to the regional office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Muskogee, Oklahoma, where despite repeated appeals by Chief Zane, no action was taken for three years. Finally, Edward Edmonson, who later became a United States Representative from Oklahoma, interceded on behalf of the Wyandots, and although the agreement was approved, by that time National Bellas Hess had purchased a site in North Kansas City, Missouri.<sup>29</sup>

The cemetery was appraised in 1959 at \$295,600, but when bids were taken on the land, the highest bid was \$126,000. This figure was barely enough to pay for the reinterments, so the Wyandots refused to sell the cemetery for less than \$3,000,000. In the 1960's, the Wyandots offered to sell the land to the United States Urban Renewal

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<sup>28</sup> The Joplin Globe, December 9, 1972, p. 8-B.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Wallace, January 28, 1973.

Agency in Kansas City, Kansas, but could not get the demanded \$3,000,000. In addition, the United States Public Health Service declared that since many of the Wyandots who were buried in the cemetery had died during a small pox epidemic and were buried in mass graves, any attempt to exhume their remains would constitute a potential threat to the health of the citizens of Kansas City, Kansas.<sup>30</sup>

In 1971 the Huron Cemetery was designated by the federal government as a national historical site, which means that the site can never be sold. Thus, the long battle waged by the Conley sisters, which lasted for half a century, finally ended in triumph. The Huron Cemetery is one of the focal points for the downtown urban renewal development in Kansas City, Kansas, and it will receive the care and recognition it deserves.<sup>31</sup>

#### Conclusions

The years since the Wyandots removed to Indian Territory have seen the tribe adjust to a new way of life. At first most of the Wyandots turned to agriculture as a means of making a living, and at present many Wyandots are engaged in agricultural pursuits. A few members of the tribe engaged in non-agricultural occupations, but these vocations required that they adopt the white man's methods and ultimately his civilization. With the establishment of a school and its acceptance by a majority of the Wyandots, the students soon began

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<sup>30</sup> The Wichita Eagle, September 22, 1972, p. 14-A; Interview with Cotter, January 23, 1973.

<sup>31</sup> The Wichita Eagle, September 22, 1972, p. 14-A.

to acquire enough education to be able to meet the challenges presented by white society.

Educational facilities, provided by the federal government, enabled the Wyandots to participate on almost equal terms with their white neighbors. Claims against the federal government were not very important to the welfare of the tribe once the Wyandots had removed to Indian Territory. Divided per capita, the claims did not provide much money for the Wyandots, and many were never paid any funds. Perhaps this was a blessing, because they learned self-reliance. The modern Wyandot does not seriously believe that any claims received from the federal government will be sufficient to make any significant alteration in his way of life.

White blood, which predominated in the tribe, made their acceptance of white society much easier than in tribes which had retained more of their Indian blood. With each generation, the Wyandots were to become more like their white brethren, until today, they have become an integral part of white society. Proud of their heritage, they retain their identity not so much to claim benefits from the government, but to preserve an important part of American history and culture.

When the Wyandots first observed the white members of Jacques Cartier's crew in 1534, little did they realize that their future would be so interrelated with the white man. Further contacts with the French in the seventeenth century upset the delicate balance of tribal life between the Wyandots, along with their allies of the Huron Confederacy and the powerful Iroquois to the south. Enraged by favors shown to the Wyandots by the French, the Iroquois began a century-long

policy of genocide which almost succeeded. Crushed by the Iroquois and scattered to the four winds, the Wyandots barely escaped extermination, and then only at a terrible cost. Just one step ahead of their relentless adversaries, the Wyandots were grateful to the French for protection and for permitting them to reside near Detroit. French appeals for assistance in their wars against the British were answered without question by the Wyandots, and soon they became known as reliable Indian allies.

Caught up in the grim struggle between their white patrons and their English adversaries, the Wyandots became mere pawns to be used by the French in the absence of the more expensive and inconvenient utilization of European troops. Warfare on the frontier in the eighteenth century was savage beyond description, and it engendered hatreds which could not be easily forgotten. The withdrawal of France from active participation in the Great Lakes region of North America, brought with it a sense of frustration and abandonment among the Wyandots. Forsaken by their French patrons, the tribal leaders were reluctant to commit themselves to an alliance with their former enemies, the British. Finally, persuaded by the beneficence of their new patrons, the Wyandots adapted to the new state of affairs, only to have the arrangement ripped from its moorings by the success of the American Revolution. By the 1780's, distrustful of the white man and his motives in currying the favor of Indians, the Wyandots were not receptive to the idea of an invasion of the Ohio Valley by an army of land-hungry American farmers.

The French Roman Catholic missionaries, no longer permitted to preach among the Wyandots, had been their last contact with that portion

of white civilization which promised them spiritual benefits. The half-hearted efforts by successive waves of Moravian, Quaker, and Presbyterian missionaries to spread Protestant christianity throughout the tribe were piecemeal and ineffective, but they did awaken the Indians to the knowledge that there were also white Americans who were interested in more than personal gain.

Weak leaders in the person of Harmar and St. Clair were not able to compel the Indians to accept the inevitable domination of Ohio by whites, but Wayne and Harrison were men of another stripe. The disaster of Fallen Timbers was enough to convince Chief Crane that further armed resistance to the march of the Americans was fruitless. He persuaded a majority of his fellow tribesmen not to oppose Harrison in 1811 and the defeat of Tecumseh's army left the Wyandots in far better shape than those tribes who had heeded the clarion call of the Shawnee chief. Despite incursions into Wyandot land which had been guaranteed to the tribe by the treaties of 1795 and 1805, once again a majority of the Wyandots remained loyal to the United States during the War of 1812.

During the period of readjustment in Ohio and Michigan after the war, the Wyandots ceded land to the United States unwillingly, but with the realization that they were powerless to halt the seemingly irresistible surge of the whites. By this time a number of whites had been adopted into the tribe and had married Wyandots. Accepted at face value, these individuals represented a group of men who were more familiar with the methods of the white man than the Indian members of the tribe, and they tempered any possible violent resistance to further white incursions.

Perhaps the Methodist missionary efforts among the Wyandots were the most important catalyst which enabled the Indians to accept white dominance. Fed a constant diet of the white man's religion and culture, the Wyandots could see that there were definite advantages in working with the whites. A number of the Wyandots owed their education to the white missionaries, and they adopted a posture of compromise while trying to gain as much advantage as possible for their fellow tribesmen. Tempered by the suspicions of their colleagues who did not have the benefit of an education, they delayed removal as long as possible by insisting on inspection of their proposed reserve in the West. Throwing caution aside, the tribe was able to outmaneuver the whites who had planned to settle the Indians on land far removed from any settled area. By choosing the strategic site of the Wyandot Reserve in Kansas, the Indians could hope that future development would give them one of the most valuable locations in the West.

Precedent aside, the Wyandots concluded a land purchase agreement with the Delawares, and then waited for confirmation by the federal government. The tribe toiled under the watchful eye of their subagents to build a home for themselves on the wilderness of the Wyandot Reserve in Kansas. The Methodists continued to supply preachers to the tribe, and combined with non-sectarian schools, the instruction provided by the ministers paved the way for the Indians to adapt to their new environment.

The conflicts between conservative and progressive elements within the tribe were usually won by the progressives, but always tribal identity was maintained. Few Wyandots could argue that without assistance by the federal government, their adjustment to life on the

frontier would have been more difficult, but the uncertainty of their status and the inequity of their treatment by federal officers reinforced a sense of self-reliance. As long as there were large funds due the tribe from land sales in Ohio and regular annuity funds, they could use this money and the promise of even greater sums to foster plans for tribal betterment. The influx of hard money into the tribe was welcome as it was in any community on the frontier, but it soon became apparent that a large portion of this money did not benefit the tribe. White traders received a large share of the annuity funds and, with cash in their hands, many Wyandots squandered their annuity funds on unnecessary commodities. Many Wyandots could not withstand the temptations of liquor, and it made them more dependent on their white suppliers.

The slavery issue permeated the tribe in the middle 1840's and, until the Civil War, it remained an open sore which the Wyandots were incapable of treating. Although few Wyandots were actually slave-owners, the mere existence of the institution in the tribe and the slave controversy which became the primary issue in the United States in the late 1840's and 1850's became an albatross from which they could not escape. The Methodist Episcopal Church, the core of their attachment to white society, became the center of the Wyandot slavery controversy. Eventually the harmony which the Methodist Episcopal Church once represented was destroyed.

In desperation, the Wyandots were willing to try a new method to gain equality with their white neighbors when they pushed for the Treaty of 1855, which would grant citizenship to those Indians deemed fit. However, rhetoric by tribal leaders did not take into considera-

tion the reluctance of the whites to accept Indians, no matter how well educated, as equals. Without equality, citizenship only brought additional burdens which could not be compensated by the realization by the Indians that they were active participants in the civic life of the United States. In addition, a large number of the tribe were not prepared to accept the responsibility of citizenship. Uneducated and gullible, they fell easy prey to the avarice of the whites and to the dishonest manipulation of funds set aside for orphans and incompetents by some of their own people. Regulations established by the federal government, which were designed to effect a smooth transition of the Indians to their new status, and to protect those Wyandots who could not protect themselves, were not effective because they were sabotaged by the very individuals who could have made them work.

The chaos which characterized Kansas during its territorial period was not the ideal environment in which a weak and dependent people could prosper. Neutrality was not the answer, because both pro-slave and free state factions disregarded the rights of the Wyandots and pilfered their property with impunity. Beset by a civil war in Kansas Territory which raged all around them, they found the pressure too much to bear, and in 1857 many of the conservative Wyandots fled to Indian Territory under the leadership of Matthew Mudeater, where they believed their civilization would have a better chance of survival.

No respite was given to the tribe because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. Confederate forces swept the southern Wyandots north, and the Indians were forced to flee to their old reserve in Kansas. Although they were compelled to remain in Kansas for the duration of the Civil War, the promise of a home in Indian Territory

served as a beacon of hope for the future.

Steadfastly refusing to be swayed by adversity, the Wyandots retained Chief Crane's commitment of loyalty to the United States and, to a man, each Wyandot who served in the Civil War, fought for the Union. While they were serving their country, they were laying the foundation for a post-Civil War plea for justice and a reserve. In contrast to the fate suffered by those tribes who supported the Confederacy, the Wyandots were able to gain land after the Civil War. Once the Wyandot Reserve in Indian Territory was secured from the Senecas, it was only a matter of time before this tract would become the center of tribal life. The gradual movement of the Wyandots to Indian Territory from Kansas did not take the total commitment of all members of the tribe as had the mass movement of the tribe to Kansas from Ohio. Many of the Wyandots who came to Indian Territory were hardened frontiersmen who had learned to survive in a hostile environment. This generation had become aware through long experience that they could not depend on the federal government for more than the bare necessities of life. Any significant improvement in their economic condition would have to come from their own initiative, and the tribal leaders eventually assumed the responsibility of assisting their less fortunate colleagues. A majority of the tribe seized every opportunity which promised them a better life and, as the years passed, they began to become a part of the society of Indian Territory.

Divided from 1857 to the early 1870's by controversy over which course would be best for the tribe, the Wyandot Council suffered a schism from which the tribe never fully recovered. When all factions of the tribe agreed to a single council in order to win acceptance, and

with it the meager assistance provided by the federal government, much of the prestige enjoyed by the early chiefs was destroyed. Recriminations hurled at those who represented an opposing faction could not be easily forgotten, and although on the surface they presented a united front to outsiders, there were still divisions within the tribe.

Perhaps perfect harmony should not be expected. Controversy, long a hallmark of white society in the United States, was one of the supposed virtues which carried over into Wyandot tribal society. Inequities, first engendered by the institution of slavery, exist in portions of white and black America to the present, while in the Wyandot community the problem of slavery existed for fifteen years, and then it faded into the past, only to be recalled by elderly Indians who fondly mention the ancestors of George Wright, the Negro interpreter who rendered valuable assistance to his fellow tribesmen when they were in dire need of assistance.

Today the Wyandots maintain a way of life similar to that of the majority of Americans, but they will never forget that their ancestors were forced to surmount considerable obstacles in order to reach a reasonable measure of equality with their white neighbors. To conclude that they have become fully assimilated into the mainstream of American life would be accurate, but always the Wyandots will hold a special place in the heritage of the United States.