

Chapter 1

EARLY BEGINNINGS

(Note: The transcriber of this thesis has added numerous URLs from the Internet in an attempt to provide you with additional sites for related research.)

Kansas has a rich Indian heritage. Long before the coming of the white man, Indians dwelled in the fertile river valleys. Other tribes roamed the plains in search of the buffalo. Unfortunately, most of the traces of these Indian cultures have vanished.

The word Kansas has such an origin. Early Spanish explorers may have derived the word from the Kansa Indian tribe. These Indians were of Siouan linguistic stock and lived in the eastern part of the state.¹

There are several theories as to the meaning of the name "Kansas". Andreas in his History of the State of Kansas, which was written in 1883, gave another meaning for the word. He said that it meant "smoky." Consequently, the southern form of the Kansas River is called the Smoky Hill River.

<http://www.kancoll.org/books/cutler/>

<http://www.kancoll.org/articles/raynesford/raynotes.htm>

Other historians, however, claim that the word Kansas has no particular meaning. They tend to disregard an old Osage Indian legend that said the "Kansas" Indians were a tribe of cowards because they refused to aid the Osage Indians during a war. Thus, by this interpretation, the word Kansas means tribe of cowards.²

Regardless of the exact meaning of the word, the fact remains that the name of the largest river and the name of the state derive their origins from the Kansa Indians. Unfortunately, the name Kansa has also been spelled many different ways. The name of the river for instance has been spelled as many as 125 different ways. Some of these were: Cans, Causa, Kances, Kanza and Quans.³ Even as late as 1882, Professor Hay's article on Kansas written in the ninth volume of the Kansas Historical Collections gave twenty-four spellings of the name.⁴

One of the earliest spellings of the river had it being called the Cansez River. This was on a map of the Louisiana Territory by a Frenchman by the name of Du Pratz. A Monsieur De Bourgmont, the Commandant of the French fort at New Orleans spelled the name of the tribe and the river by the name of "Cana." A 1715 map by still another Frenchman by the name of Charlevoix even called the river the Padouea River after the Padiouca Indians. This was a mysterious tribe of Indians which he claimed roamed the region between Kansas and the Gulf of Mexico.⁵

Needless to say, this name did not come into popular usage. By the 19th century, the most common names for the river were the Kansas or Kaw. The word Kaw seems to have been derived from a corruption of the word Kansa. The first "a" in Kansa became sounded "aw" to "awer." From this came the word Kawer and finally Kaw.⁶

To this day, the river has continued to be referred to as the Kansas or Kaw River. This has caused some confusion to mapmakers. In 1895, the United States Board of Geographic Names asked a Kansas City, Kansas newspaper to decide the issue. This newspaper took a poll among residents of the area. The results were inconclusive.⁷

Generally speaking, Kansas is the official name. This is even the name that the Kaw Valley Drainage Association uses on its official stationery. Kansas is also the name used on maps and official government documents such as those of the United States Army Corps of Engineers. However, the Kaw River seems to

¹ Kansas City Kansan, Aug 2, 1962, p. 1

² Ibid, p. 1

³ Ibid, p. 3A

⁴ John Hay, "Kaw and Kansas, A Monograph on the Name of the State, Kansas Historical Collections, IX *1905-06), 623-24

⁵ Kansas City Kansan, Aug 2, 1962, p. 3A

⁶ Ibid, p. 1

⁷ Ibid

be the most commonly spoken name by residents of the eastern part of the states and both names can be correctly used.⁸

The first record of any mention of the Indians to Kansas was found in the accounts of the explorer Juan de Ornato who met them in 1601. Coronado in his explorations in 1541 probably contacted Indians living in the eastern part of Kansas. Coronado in his accounts referred to a beautiful fertile valley which he names "Quivera." No one knows for sure what location he was referring to. It may have been in the Kaw or the Missouri River Valley. Wherever it was, it must have been the hunting grounds and habitat of the Kansas Indian Nation.⁹ These Indians were to live in this general area until January 14, 1846, when they ceded to the United States Government two million acres of land. The tribe was then moved to a reservation in the Neosho River Valley near what is now the town of Council Grove, Kansas.¹⁰

Another tribe which lived in the eastern part of the state was the Pawnee Indians. This was a powerful nation of Indians, until 1832 when a smallpox epidemic ravaged the tribe and reduced it one-half in number. In 1833, these Indians negotiated a treaty with the United States in which the tribe agreed to abandon all its land lying south of the Platte River in Nebraska.¹¹

This was about the time that our government was trying to remove the Indians living east of the Mississippi River and relocate them on reservations in the west. The Shawnee Indians were one of the first tribes to be moved. These Indians have been referred to as the "gypsies" or the "Bedouins of the American Wilderness." The tribe seemed to be constantly on the move. The word Shawnee means "Southern." Thus, this tribe may originally have been a part of the Algonquin Family of Indians that inhabited South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and other Eastern states.¹²

The two most famous Shawnee were their great Chief Tecumseh and his brothers who was called the Prophet. Tecumseh organized a confederation of Indian tribes to prevent the white man from taking their lands. A long and bloody war was waged with the whites. Tecumseh's power however was broken when the Shawnee were defeated by General William Henry Harrison at the Battle of Tippecanoe. Curing the war of 1812, Tecumseh fought for the British and was killed in battle.

His death brought an end to the confederation. The Shawnee gave up their warlike ways. They gave up their lands and settled in Missouri near Cape Girardeau. In 1825, an Indian agent by the name of William Clark negotiated a treaty with the Shawnee by which they surrendered their Missouri claims for a reservation in what is now southern Wyandotte and Johnson counties.¹³

The Delaware Indians were also moved into Kansas at about the same time. Both tribes now settled the lands formally occupied by the Kansas Indians. The Delaware settled in Wyandotte County west of the Missouri River and on the north side of the Kansas River.

Most of the Shawnee congregated around what is now the town of Turner, Kansas. Turner is about a mile and a half from the Argentine community. Soon an Indian village grew in the Turner vicinity.¹⁴

Shortly thereafter, efforts were made to establish Christian missions among the emigrant tribes. At a Methodist Episcopal Church conference held at St. Louis on September 16, 1830, it was decided that a mission should be built among the Shawnee. A Missionary Society was formed and the Reverend Thomas Johnson and his bride came to the Shawnee Village. Soon construction was begun on a two-story log building.¹⁵

On January 13, 1831, Richard W. Cummins, a Shawnee Indian agent, wrote, "Mr. Johnson is at this time making arrangements, and I think shortly after the winter breaks will have the school in operation."¹⁶ The school was quickly in operation. The lower floor of the two rooms. The west room was used as a school room

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Clint J. F. Hammer, "A History of Wyandotte County, Kansas" (unpublished Master of Arts Thesis, Colorado State College of Education, Greeley, Colorado, 1948), found in the preface.

¹⁰ Pearl W. Morgan, History of Wyandotte County Kansas, Vol I, (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1911), p. 27

¹¹ Robert Dean Allison, "The Early Development and Progress of Kansas City, Kansas," (unpublished Master of Science Thesis, Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia, 1960), pp. 8-9

¹² Ibid, p. 11

¹³ Ibid, p. 9

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 12

¹⁵ Grant Harrison, Historic Spots or Mile-Stones in the Progress of Wyandotte County, Kansas (Merriam, Kansas: The Mission Press, 1935), p. 47

¹⁶ Louise Barry, compiler, The Beginnings of the West, Annals of the Kansas Gateway to the American West, 1540-1854 (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society Press, 1973), p. 179

and chapel, while the east room was a reception area and living room. The second story was utilized as sleeping and living quarters.¹⁷

A small pox epidemic in the latter half of 1831 forced the suspension of operations of the school. The Shawnee living in the Turner and Argentine vicinity temporarily were forced to disperse. Except for this temporary suspension, the school was in use until 1838.¹⁸

Then, in that year, the Methodist Conference meeting at Booneville, Missouri decided to build a new mission a few miles to the south. The Turner mission was abandoned and the building disappeared. The place was soon forgotten. Fortunately E. F. Heister of the Kansas City Sun Newspaper rescued the site from oblivion. A granite marker five feet high and three feet wide was erected and dedicated at that spot on June 26, 1917. A bronze tablet, ten inches by eighteen inches, was placed on the monument and bore this inscription:

This monument marks the site of the first mission house erected for the benefit of the Shawnee Indians by Reverend Thomas Johnson of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1830. The mission was moved to the site southwest of Westport, Missouri in 1939. Methodism in Kansas began on this spot. Erected by the Kansas Methodist Historical Society in 1916.¹⁹

This monument stood about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile southwest of Turner. A more exact location would be about one block west and $\frac{1}{2}$ of a block north of the 5100 block of Edgehill Drive in Kansas City, Kansas. The land surrounding the monument became part of a peach orchard in later years. The granite marker was toppled over and lay in weeds for many years. The plaque was removed from the stone by a Methodist group. Presently, the Wyandotte County Historical Society is seeking to restore a monument to commemorate the old Indian mission and school.²⁰

After the closing of the mission at Turner, most of the Shawnee Indians drifted out of Wyandotte County and settled around the new mission in Johnson County. But in Argentine, the Shawnee were to leave a historical artifact of some note. The great Shawnee Ten-Squa-Ta-Wa or "the Prophet" spent his remaining years around Argentine. He and a few remaining followers lived in a small village approximately two miles south of Argentine. This village called Prophet's Town was located in a hilly, wooded area just south and east of what is now the Maple Hill cemetery and the Sacred Heart Grade School on 34th Street.²¹

The Prophet was the reputed two brother of the Shawnee Indian chief Tecumseh. Both he and his brother are among the most fascinating of American Indians. As Tecumseh's career grew in importance, so did the Prophet's role come into prominence. The Prophet became a famed and feared reformer and mystic among the Shawnee Indians.

The Prophet was born in Ohio sometime around 1768. His earliest given name seems to have been Laulewasikaw, which in Shawnee means "Loud Voice."²² His early years seemed to have been spent in obscurity. He apparently was somewhat lazy and a drunkard.

Then something, seemingly mysterious and miraculous, occurred. One day around 1805, he fell in a trance while smoking his pipe. The Shawnee believed he was dead, and began to prepare him for burial. Suddenly, he revived and informed his comrades that the Great Spirit had lifted him to heaven and shown him all about the past and the future. He claimed that within four years there would be two days of darkness during which the Great Spirit would call forth from the earth all of the dead animals and friends of the Shawnee. Included among friends were the English, Spanish and the French. However, the Americans were the dreaded enemy, for the Great Spirit had said:

The Americans are not my children, but the children of the evil spirit. They grew from the scum of the great water when it was troubled by an evil spirit and the

¹⁷ Harrington, Historic Spots or Mile-Stones, p. 47

¹⁸ Barry, The Beginnings of the West, p. 179

¹⁹ Harrington, Historic Spots or Mile-Stones, p. 48

²⁰ Denny M. Smith, interview in his home at 6130 Riverview, Kansas City, Kansas on March 31, 1974. Mr. Smith is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Wyandotte County Historical Society.

²¹ Ibid

²² Edward Eggleston and Lillie Eggleston Seeskye, Tecumseh and the Shawnee Prophet (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1878), p. 106

froth was driven into the woods by a strong east wind. They are numerous, but I hate them. They are unjust, they have taken away your lands which were not made for them.²³

Thereafter, Laulewasikaw called himself Ten-Squa-Ta-Wa, which meant the "Open Door." He became a prophet and developed a following. Another incident occurred which greatly enhanced his reputation among the Shawnee. Through some source, this crafty Indian learned that a solar eclipse of the sun was to occur in 1808. He boldly announced that a given time, he would darken the sun as proof of his great supernatural powers. The eclipse occurred just as he had predicted and he was heard to exclaim: "Did I not prophesy truly?"²⁴

Ten-Squa-Ta-Wah or the Prophet gradually became the second most influential of the Shawnees. Only his brother, Tecumseh, was to exercise more influence. Tecumseh may have been the most powerful and feared Indian of the early 1800's. Tecumseh's ambition was to unite the Indian tribes west of the Allegheny Mountains into a great confederation of tribes. This confederation would halt the advance of the hated white man. This in itself was not a new idea. More than 100 years earlier, an Indian chief by the name of King Phillip had tried to implement the same idea. More recently, the great chief Pontiac and his conspiracy had sent tipples of fear among the whites.

Thousands of Indians began to follow the leadership of Tecumseh and the mysticism of his brother. The British, in Canada, at odds with the United States, also lent support to their cause. A great Indian capital was built by Tecumseh and named Prophet's Town. The village was in the Indian Territory near the confluence of the Wabash and Tippecanoe Rivers.

As Tecumseh's followers grew in numbers, the American settlers and soldiers began to grow apprehensive. Finally, with a pro-war, anti-British feeling sweeping the country, General William Henry Harrison, the territorial governor of Indiana, decided to destroy Tecumseh's power.

In late September of 1811, Harrison led a force of 1,000 men against the Indian capital. For Harrison was built, and by November 6, Harrison's forces were encamped near the Indian village.²⁵ Tecumseh was not at the Indian capitol at that time. He was visiting Indian tribes to the southwest. He warned his followers not to engage in hostilities during his absence. Harrison's march changed Tecumseh's strategy. The Prophet, who was in command of the village, was seething with anger against the whites and whipped the Indians into a frenzy. Also, Harrison was seemingly eager for a fight. He wanted to fall upon those rebellious savages and administer a sound thrashing to them.

During the night before the battle, the Prophet mixed a mysterious broth at a meeting of the Indians and told them that ½ of the American army was composed of dead men and the other half was made up of crazy soldiers. He also promised the Shawnees immunity from the bullets of the whites. He claimed that the bullets of the soldiers would bounce off the bodies of the red men.²⁶

On the morning of November 7, the Shawnees attacked Harrison's camp. Not known for his courage, the Prophet took no part in the battle. While his followers were being slaughtered, he directed the Indians from a safe spot. In a loud and shrilling voice he cried out all through the battle: "Fight on, O my people, for it shall be as the Prophet has said. You will crush these white enemies."²⁷

The battle raged for many hours. Both sides suffered heavy losses. Without Tecumseh's leadership, however, the Indians were defeated and fled. Harrison entered the deserted Indian village and burnt it to the ground. Tecumseh was furious when he heard about the defeat. His dreams of a confederation of tribes was ended. Also, the Prophet's great influence was lost forever. Ten-Squa-Ta-Wah lived on in the shame of his cowardness and false prophesies. Henceforth, whenever he would walk through an Indian village, he became an object of contempt. Boys would taunt him and braves would shun him when they saw him coming.

²³ Albert Britt, Great Indian Chiefs, A Study of Indian Leaders in the Two Hundred Year Struggle to Stop the White Advance (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1938), p. 132

²⁴ Editorial, The Weekly Journal, Wyandotte County's Community Spirited Weekly, January 25, 1974, p. 3. This editorial was a reprint of research done by Pearl Morgan. He was a prominent Kansas historian. One of the best known works of local interest is a History of Wyandotte County, Kansas and Its People, published in 1911.

²⁵ Richard B. Morris, Editor, Encyclopedia of American History, Vol 1 (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1953), p 140.

²⁶ Charles H. L. Johnson, Famous Indian Chiefs (New York: L. C. Page Company, Inc., 1909), pp. 327-28.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 328

Tecumseh was still a power to be reckoned with. Now a hunted enemy of the Americans, he fought on the British side and through his leadership distinguished himself during several battles. He was killed in the Battle of the Thames River on October 5, 1813.

<http://www.jmu.edu/madison/tecumseh/>

Tecumseh's death marked the final demise of the Shawnee's power. The tribe sold its lands and moved to Missouri. Within a few years, they had been relocated in Kansas. The Prophet, by now aging and somewhat of a recluse, followed the tribe in its wandering to Cape Girardeau, Missouri. By 1830, he had settled in the hills outside of present day Argentine.²⁸ The village where he and his followers dwelled was also named Prophet's Town. However, this was a small village consisting of a handful of poor mud huts. During his last days, the Prophet, ill and enfeebled, decided to spend the remainder of his life in complete seclusion. He moved from the village and settled in a log cabin near the 3800 block of Argentine. (Note: A historical marker stands near the site in 2003.)

<http://www.kckplanning.org/shawnee.htm>

In November of 1836 he died. Before his death, the Prophet was visited by Dr. C. A. Chute of Westport, Missouri. He said of his visit:

In November last there died in the County of Shawnees, a few miles from this point, the Shawnee Prophet, Ten-Squa-Ta-Wah, generally reputed to be a twin brother of Tecumseh. He had been sick several weeks when he sent for a gentleman connected with the Baptist mission to visit and prescribe for him. At the same time with this gentleman, I also called to see him. I went accompanied by an interpreter, who conducted me by a winding path through the woods till we descended a hill at the bottom of which, secluded apparently from all the world, was the Prophet town or huts, built in the ordinary Indian style, constituted the entire settlement. The house of the Prophet was not distinguished at all from the others. A low portico covered with bark, which we were obligated to stoop to pass under, was erected before it, and a half starved dog greeted us with a growl as we entered. The interior of the house, which was lighted only by the half open door, showed at the first view the taste of one who hated civilization. Two or three platforms built against the wall served the purpose of bedsteads, covered with blankets and skins. A few ears of corn and a quantity of dried pumpkins (a favorite dish of the Indians) were hanging on poles overhead; a few implements of savaged domestic, as wooden floor, everything indicated poverty. One corner of the room, close to an apology for a fireplace, contained a platform of split elevated about a foot from the floor and covered with a blanket. This was the bed of the Prophet. Here was a fallen savage greatness. I involuntarily stopped for a moment to view in silence the spectacle of a man whose word was once law to numerous tribes, now lying on a miserable pallet, dying of poverty, neglected by all but his own family. He that exalted himself shall be abandoned. I approached him. He drew aside his blanket and disclosed a form emaciated in the extreme, but the broad proportions of which indicated that it had once been the seat of great strength. His countenance was sunken and haggard, but appeared – it might have been fancy – to exhibit the soul within. I thought I could discover in spite of the hypocrisy, something of the marks which pride, designing mind had stamped there. I inquired of his symptoms, which he related particularly and then proposed to do something for his relief. He replied that he was willing to submit to medical treatment, but was just then engaged in contemplation, or study, as the interpreter called it, and he feared that the operation of medicine might interrupt his train of reflection. He said his study would occupy three days longer, after which he should be glad to see me again.

²⁸ According to Harrison's book, Historic Spots or Mile-Stones, p. 89, the actual location was in Shawnee Township, Wyandotte County, on the N.E., ¼ of the S.W. ¼ of Section 32, Township 11, Range 25.

Accordingly, in three days I reappeared again to his cabin, but it was too late. He was speechless and evidently beyond the reach of human assistance. The same day he died.²⁹

The Prophet was buried only a few rods from his cabin near Whitefeather Spring in Argentine. This area was uninhabited and would remain so for more than fifty years. The grave was unmarked and forgotten.

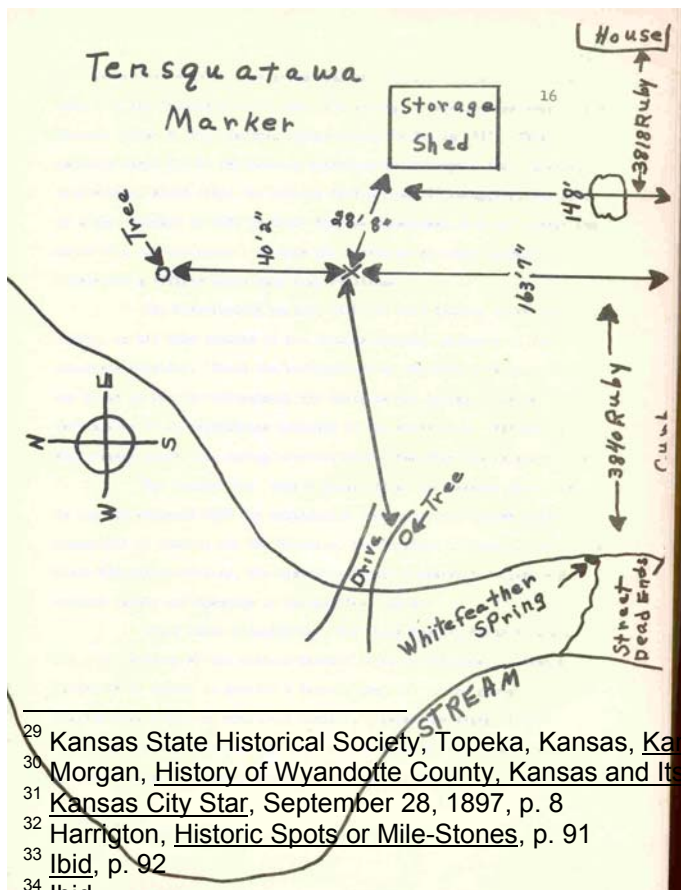
In 1897, E. F. Heister, an editor of the Kansas City Sun newspaper, decided to attempt to locate the grave. Charles Bluejacket, a Shawnee chief and Indian minister, who had attended the Prophet's funeral was brought back from the Oklahoma Indian reservation. Bluejacket had lived around Argentine and Shawnee Mission until about 1870. His life story is almost as interesting as the Prophet's. His father was a white man by the name of Marmaduke Van Swerangen. This man was captured at the age of seventeen by Shawnee Indians in West Virginia. Swerangen remained with them and became a chief by the age of twenty-five.³⁰

<http://www.cityofshawnee.org/Events/bluejacket.htm>

His grandson, Charles Bluejacket, was to be the last of the Shawnee chiefs. Bluejacket was married three times and the father of 23 children. He fathered his last son at the age of seventy-two.³¹

When Bluejacket arrived in Argentine, he was at the Fifth Avenue Hotel. On the morning of September 24, 1897, he met distinguished guests and conducted them on a tour of the site of the old Prophet's Town.³² The next day, he, Mr. Heister and possibly a few others went to Whitefeather Spring, the grave site of the Prophet. Some years later, Mr. Heister recollected what happened. He said:

When we had located the Whitefeather Spring, Bluejacket said this was the place. He went up onto the south bank a few rods from the ravine and said – "The house stood right here. We carried him out in this direction," said he, pointing to the northwest. Then he walked out towards the northwest, possible a distance of seventy-five or a hundred yards and stopping said – "We buried him right in here." Thus was the grave of the Prophet located within a radius of a few rods. Near enough for an Indian buried in blanket more than sixty years before.³³



A marker was placed over the grave. Chief Bluejacket returned to the Shawnee reservation and died within a week of pneumonia contacted as a result of the damp Kansas weather.³⁴ He was eighty-one.

Time destroyed the marker over the grave. Then in 1921, the grave site was relocated. A six foot pipe was cemented into the ground. Later this pipe broke off and thus the marker disappeared.

Recently the Whitefeather Spring was itself in danger of disappearing. For several years, property near the grave site has been used as a dumping ground. No malicious effort had been made by the dumpers to destroy the stream. However, after heavy rains, top soil and trash washed onto the property of Mr. Jack Beemont at 3818 Ruby Avenue in Argentine. On his property is the spring and the grave site. Mr. Beemont claims that the fill had raised the level of the creek bottom and the flood plain approximately six feet within the last seven or eight years. If this rate continued, the spring would be covered.

²⁹ Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas, Kansas Historical Collections, Vol IX, pp. 164-65

³⁰ Morgan, History of Wyandotte County, Kansas and Its People, p. 35

³¹ Kansas City Star, September 28, 1897, p. 8

³² Harrington, Historic Spots or Mile-Stones, p. 91

³³ Ibid, p. 92

³⁴ Ibid

The Spring is a great historical landmark and the utmost effort should be made to preserve it. The spring has been flowing continuously for at least several hundred years. The Whitefeather Spring is a marker for the Prophet's cabin, his grave site and perhaps the last Prophet's Town. In the Prophet's cabin above the spring, a painting was made of the Shawnee Indian by the American artist George Catlin in 1832. This painting hangs in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C.

<http://americanart.si.edu/collections/exhibits/catlin/index.html>

Lastly, this spring named after the Shawnee Indian Susan Whitefeather was used as a key landmark in 1897 by Chief Charles Bluejacket when he located the cabin site and the grave. Without the spring as an exact landmark, Bluejacket's efforts would have been fruitless.

The Whitefeather Spring, with its ever flowing sparkling blue waters, is all that remains of the Shawnee Indians' presence in the immediate vicinity. Since the authenticity of the Prophet's grave site may never be exactly determined, the Whitefeather Spring flows as a timeless marker of an approximate estimate of his grave site. Perhaps for this reason alone, the spring warrants protection from the ravages of man.

<http://www.ku.edu/~hersite/kcn-6/kscity/argentine/>

Mr. Beemont has made a great effort to preserve the spring. He has corresponded with the Smithsonian Institute, the United States Department of Justice and the Interior, the Governor of Kansas, the Kansas State Historical Society, the Wyandotte County Historical Society and various people and agencies in Kansas City, Kansas.

Chief James Greenfeather, Mrs. Lois Nowlin, Clyde Bluejacket and other Indians of the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma traveled to Kansas in an effort to provide a lasting memorial to the grave. Chief Charles Bluejacket, as mentioned earlier, located the grave site in 1897. As a 21 year old man, he had attended the Prophet's burial. Bluejacket was the great-great uncle of Greenfeather and Mrs. Nowlin.³⁵ The name Prophet is still prominent in the Shawnee tribes of Oklahoma and some believe others may have used his name as a family name.

Through the efforts of Mr. Beemont and others, the dumping above the grave site has been halted. In September of 1975, Richard Pankratz, of the Historic Sites Survey of the Kansas State Historical Society, wrote a letter to Mr. Beemont. In this letter Pankratz informed Beemont "...that Whitefeather Spring was entered on the National Register of Historic Places on Aug 27, 1975. It is the 196th Kansas place of archeological, architectural or historical significance to be listed on the National Register to date."³⁶

The author was fortunate to have been granted a three hour interview with Mr. Beemont. Beemont's research into the Prophet's life has made him somewhat of an expert on the great Shawnee Indian. The following is from an interview with Mr. Beemont:

My grandfather, William Henry Harrison Tanner, was born in Rutherford County, North Carolina, in 1841. He married Miss Allie Jane Cummings at Lonejack, Missouri. They came to Argentine, Kansas between 1890-1892 and built a house at 1612 Ruby Avenue. This is now known as 3818 Ruby Avenue in Kansas City, Kansas and the location of the spring and the grave site. The house (where I live) is about 175-190 feet east-southeast of the grave site.

My grandmother was present in 1897 when Bluejacket located the grave. (Note: Millie Burkett, a long-time resident of Argentine stated to the author that Beemont's grandmother was alive and living at the said address in 1897.) She was also there along with my brother, two sisters and others in 1921 when the Wyandotte County Historical Society erected a six foot pipe as a marker. But this was only an approximate marker for my grandmother used to say "that pipe out to be over closer to the hollow, that is where the old Indian (Chief Charles Bluejacket) showed them." In later years, my dad built a cow pen on top of the grave.

The Whitefeather Spring surfaces on my property and flows above ground for three blocks. Then it enters a storm sewer at 39th and Strong Avenue. Some have mistakenly called the Prophet – Chief Whitefeather or "old Jake Whitefeather." I don't

³⁵ [Kansas City Star](#), Jan 30, 1975, p. 2W

³⁶ Richard Pankratz, personal letter written by him from Topeka, Kansas, Sept 8, 1975, to Jack Beemont.

know how this originated but perhaps the local residents thought the spring was named after him. In reality, the spring derives its name from the Shawnee Indian Susan Whitefeather. The government granted her the land upon which the spring has its origins. Jake Whitefeather also appears on old abstracts and he may have been the brother of Susan Whitefeather.

In a newspaper article of the 1920's, Lincoln Phifer states that the Prophet built a hut half way up a hill near Whitefeather Spring. He was buried at the corner of this hut under two Honey Locust trees. One was a Black Locust and the other was a true Honey Locust with 145 rings in it when it was cut down in the late 1920's.

In 1966, while digging with a high-loader, I uncovered some old bones on the site where the Indian is supposed to have been buried. Forgetting the story of the Prophet's burial, I regrettably discarded these bones. Later, I remembered that we had a cow pen on the ground where I discovered the bones. I realized that we could not have buried anything in this area. Upon rehearsing the story of the Prophet's burial, I recognized the possibility, though probably remote, that I may have accidentally uncovered the old Indian's bones.

On March 30, 1974, I decided to uncover the remains of the old pipe marker that had been erected in 1921. With the help of Boy Scout Troup #32, this was accomplished. Also present were Charles Goslin of the Shawnee Kansas Historical Society; Denny Smith, the past President of the Wyandotte County Historical Society, and approximately 40 or 50 spectators. The next day, Tom Barr of the Kansas State Historical Society arrived to inspect the dig. Barr was skeptical that we had uncovered the actual grave. But he stated that a marker could be erected because "We know he's buried here by documentation."

From my research, I have learned that, though blind in one eye, the Prophet was a strong, heavy man. Probably exaggerating, some have claimed that he was nearly seven feet tall. He was a master of organization and a respected Indian Medicine Man. An article from the Kansas City Times (June 1, 1971, p. 36) says that the Prophet's plan was to combine all Indians from Mexico to the Great Lakes and he nearly succeeded. He met in council with the Wyandottes, Senecas and Ottawas and later was joined by representatives of the Delawares, Potawatomes, Chippewas and Kickapoos. While his brother was a great warrior, Tensquatawa was dubbed a great recruiter, and he added many recruits to British forces in the War of 1812. In 1829 the Prophet was awarded a pension from the British government.

The Shawnees came to Kansas in the middle to late 1820's. The Methodists, Baptists, Quakers, and Catholics quickly established missions within the limits of the Shawnee reservation. The Prophet, hating missionaries was not pleased and according to Lincoln Phifer's article quickly moved to Whitefeather Spring in Argentine. Thus, I believe that the Prophet spent little time living in the Prophet's Town village near the present Maple Hill Cemetery. He may have lived as long as six years near the spring in present day Argentine. Most historians, however, claim he lived there only a short time before his death.³⁷ (Note: the author realized Beemont's rationale. However, there is a lack of hard evidence to support his claim of the Prophet living five or six years by the Whitefeather Spring.)

Around the time of the Prophet's death, other religious groups founded missions in the area. A Baptist mission school was founded in the northeastern part of Johnson County on March 1, 1835. The first newspaper ever printed in Indian language was published there. It was also the first newspaper printed in the state of Kansas. The Baptist mission was discontinued in 1855.

The Quakers also located a mission on 320 acres near what is now the junction of US 50 and 69, near Merriam, Kansas. This mission closed permanently in 1870.³⁸

The Shawnees ceded their reservation to the United States in 1854.

³⁷ Jack Beemont, personal interview held in his home at 3818 Ruby Avenue, Kansas City, Kansas, September 20, 1975.

³⁸ Allison, "The Early Development and Progress of Kansas City, Kansas," p. 16

<http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/index.htm>

The United States returned 200,000 acres of land to be divided among themselves. Each member of the tribe was permitted to receive 200 acres.³⁹ By 1870, however, almost all of the Indians had sold their parcels of land. Most of the Shawnee then migrated to the Oklahoma reservation where they merged with the Cherokee Indians. The other Indian tribes such as the Munsee Indians, who settled about five miles west of Argentine near the present town of Muncie, Kansas, the Delaware and the Wyandotte Indians also sold their lands. The area was now ready for settlement.

The white man had already made many inroads into the region. Trading posts carried on a lucrative trade with the Indians as early as the middle of the eighteenth century. In the first part of the nineteenth century, the famous Chouteau family and the American Fur Company that they worked for aided greatly in the settlement of the Kansas City area. As early as 1820, Francis G. and Cyprian Chouteau were sent to Kansas and they built a post on the north bank of the Kaw River a few miles above its mouth.

<http://skyways.lib.ks.us/genweb/archives/wyandott/history/1911/volume1/9.html>

Here, near the present site of Bonner Springs, they built the earliest and what was probably the principle trading post in Wyandotte County. Known as the "Four Houses" trading post, it consisted of logs arranged on four sides of a square in order to perhaps provide some kind of protection in case of an Indian attack. This post was in use as late as 1826. By then, other trading posts were established near the Indian settlements, and the "Four Houses" was abandoned.⁴⁰

About a mile or so north of the present town of Turner, Kansas and only a couple of miles from Argentine, another post had been built. A lucrative trade was conducted with the Delaware Indians. The post continued in operation until the middle of the 1850's. It was near this settlement that the Reverend Johnson built his Methodist mission. This post also has another claim to fame. It was here that John C. Fremont completed preparations for his expedition into the Rocky Mountains in 1842.⁴¹

Another establishment of interest was the Grinter House, just west of Muncie, Kansas in Wyandotte County. Moses P. Grinter is considered the first permanent white settler in Wyandotte County, Kansas. In 1831, he began operation of the first ferry on the Kansas River. In 1833, he started a grist and saw mill. The year 1850 saw the establishment of the first post office in the territory not located on a military post. In 1857, he built a lodging house, which is the oldest house still standing in Wyandotte County. The Wyandotte County Historical Society has since turned it into a museum.⁴²

<http://www.kclibrary.org/sc/bio/grinters.htm>

From 1854 to 1857 other ferries were built along the Kaw River. Including the Grinter Ferry, there were at least eleven ferries between the mouth of the river and the western boundaries of Wyandotte County. These included the Wyandot National Ferry; the Silas Armstrong Ferry; the Willis Wills Ferry, near the river's mouth; the Santa Fe Road Ferry; the Eureka Ferry; the Muncie Ferry, near the present town of Muncie; the Tooley Ferry and Keeler Ferries, approximately two miles west of the Grinter Ferry; the Chouteau Ferry, near Edwardsville; and the Tiblow Ferry, near Bonner Springs.⁴³ All of these ferries were vital in the growth of Kansas City, Kansas and the surrounding areas.

<http://www.kckpl.lib.ks.us/kscoll/lochist/thenow/TN62.htm>

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Harrington, Historic Spots or Mile-Stones, p. 11

⁴¹ Harry E. Hanson, compiler, A Historical Outline of the Grinter Place from 1825-1878, p. 4. This work was published by the Hanson family, date unknown.

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Harrington, Historic Spots or Mile-Stones, pp. 162-74