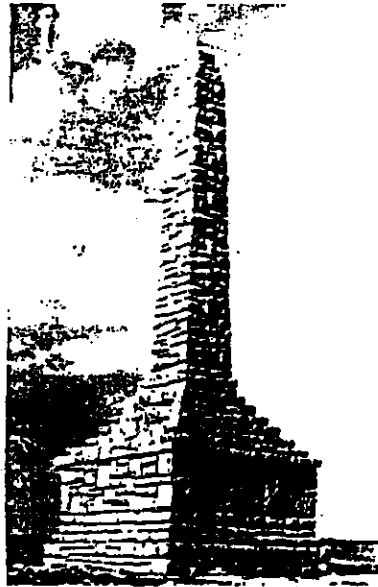


The Unknown Indian Monument
by Timothy S. Fry



*The Unknown Indian Monument.
Courtesy of Mrs. Frank Hauke.*

About four miles southeast of Council Grove, atop a hill overlooking the Neosho River Valley, an eye-catching limestone obelisk rises from a rectangular limestone base. Unlike an Egyptian obelisk, this Flint Hills obelisk has no writing on it, and there are no markers or signs on nearby roads to indicate why it is there or what the rectangular base might contain. This lack of advertisement might be in part a conscious omission, for inside lie the remains of an unknown Native American Kansa (Kaw) Indian reinterred in a public ceremony in 1925. The base also contains a time capsule placed there by the citizens of Council

Grove during the same ceremony. This monument to the Unknown Indian is a memorial to the Kansa Indians that lived and died in this area and gave Kansas its placename. The story behind the monument—of exhuming this Native American, of erecting an impressive spired tomb, of holding two public ceremonies unveiling and later dedicating the monument—reflects a desire of people to honor the Kansa and also, possibly, to clear a collective feeling of guilt at a terrible injustice done to these people, culminating in their removal from the state that took their name.¹

The monument stands on land that was the Kansa Reservation from 1846 to 1874. Prior to 1846, the Kansa had lived in the Kansas River valley to the north. They were forced to give up this Kaw valley land after the U.S. government began a policy of settling tribes from east of the Mississippi into what would become the state of Kansas. A treaty in 1846 moved the Kaw out of the Kansas River Valley and into a 20 X 20 square mile section of the Neosho River Valley. Government officials began to wonder if they had made a good choice in moving the Kaw when some of the first arrivals to the Neosho Valley were attacked by a group of traders on the Santa Fe Trail near Council Grove. One of the Kaw was seriously injured and the traders were ordered to pay for the attack.²

During the next twenty-five years that the Kaw lived in the Neosho Valley, they were repeatedly exploited and subjected to injustice. When Kansas was officially opened for settlement under the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, squatters illegally began to overrun the Kansa reserve. In June 1859 two of the Kaw, including the son of the chief, were hung by an angry mob in Council Grove for stealing two horses from Mexican traders on the trail. They were left to hang until the next day, when a wife and daughter of the pair cut them down and took their bodies away for burial.³

In October of 1859 a new treaty was signed with the Kansa which reduced the size of their reservation to an area of nine by fourteen miles. Houses were to be constructed for each family. A lawyer and contractor in the area named Robert Stevens was ready to take advantage of the house-building contracts. He and others seemed to use the guise of Indian policy to promote their self interests. The stone houses built by Stevens were reported to be of poor quality, and it was also reported that Stevens had greatly overcharged for their construction. Most of the Indians lived in the houses for only a short while and eventually used them mainly for their livestock. Remnants of the stone houses built by Stevens can still be seen along Little John Creek just a few hundred yards west of the Unknown Indian Monument.⁴

In 1872 Secretary of the Interior Columbus Delano arrived at the Kansa agency, and the chiefs and head men of the tribe were called into council to meet with him. A.W. Stubbs, who had lived and worked with the Kaw for years, interpreted the secretary's glowing picture of going to a new country that was close to their kinsmen-the Osage-and where game was abundant. The Secretary also assured them that after selling their Kansas lands they could buy lands equally as good in the

Indian Territory and still have money left over to improve their lot. After the Secretary had finished, Chief Al-le-ga-wa-hu rose and according to Stubbs, began a slow and eloquent reply that covered past dealings between Native Americans and whites. He then looked the Secretary in the eye and said

. . . . you treat my people like a flock of turkeys. You come into our dwelling places and scare us out. We fly over and alight on another stream, but no sooner do we get settled then again you come along and drive us further and further. Ere long we shall find ourselves across the great Bah-do-Tunga (mountains) landing in the 'Ne-sah-tunga' (ocean).

After several other Kansa men had their say, the Secretary spoke again in an uncompromising way declaring,

It is the policy of the President, to give to the Red man a country to themselves, where you can meet and mingle together free from interruption of the whites and it is my duty to say to you that you must sell your lands here and select a new reservation in the Indian Territory.

When the Kansa tribe learned of their impending removal there reportedly was such crying and wailing that it could be heard for some distance. Many Kansa were buried in the area, and after being there for twenty-five years many young adults had spent their entire lives in the Neosho Valley.⁵

Even after it was decided to remove the Kansa, the exploitation continued. Robert Stevens, who had earlier taken

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advantage of the Kansa, even tried to secure a government contract to remove them. The tribe had to hire forty men with wagons to help the poorer families move. After saying goodbye to their friends the tribe left Council Grove on June 3, 1873, and were seventeen days on the way to Indian Territory. Settlers were immediately allowed to take possession of the lands vacated by the Kansa. Many settlers appealed the price at which their lands were appraised, and through the influence of politicians, the Kansa eventually got about half the money they had been promised. In effect, the Kansa received a reserve in Indian Territory that was only half as large as their Neosho Reserve.⁶

Among the Kansa of the Neosho Valley, and thus the most distinguished person to be honored by the erecting of the Unknown Indian monument, was future Vice-President Charles Curtis. Curtis was born in Topeka, but his mother was of Kansa descent. When Curtis was three, his mother died with a fever while his father was away fighting in the Civil War. Curtis was sent to live with his maternal grandparents on the Kansa reservation. When Curtis was eight, the Kaw were attacked by some plains tribes that had long been enemies of the Kaw. Young Charles Curtis was chosen to make a trip to Topeka to alert authorities because he knew the way to Topeka and could speak English. He slipped through the enemy lines at dark and ran sixty miles to Topeka, arriving there the next day. Curtis's paternal grandparents did not let him return to the reservation after the attack. Some of Curtis's relatives visited him in Topeka when he was fourteen. When they left, Curtis decided to go with them back to Indian Territory. On the way, Curtis's Kaw grandmother asked why he wanted to go with them back to Indian territory. He told her he had heard stories of riding ponies and doing little work. She told him he

would be a man with no future that he should return to Topeka and go to school. Curtis did go to school and passed the bar exam at age twenty-one. He was elected to Congress in 1892, serving in both the House and Senate from Kansas. In 1925, when the Unknown Indian monument was unveiled, Senator Curtis was to be the main speaker, but his duties in Washington prevented him at the last minute from making the trip. In 1928 Charles Curtis would be elected Vice President of the United States on the Republican ticket with Herbert Hoover.⁷

The driving force behind erecting the Unknown Indian monument was Frank Haucke. Frank's father August Haucke had arrived in the Neosho Valley in 1872 to go to work on the Katy railroad. The Haucke family used some of the stone Indian houses along Little John Creek near the Unknown Indian Monument. August soon found himself occupied with reburying the Kansa Indians as white men would come into his land and dig up graves looking for treasure. They never found any treasure, but would leave the graves open. Frank Haucke took over the farm from his father and helped perpetuate the history of their family farm with its treasured landmarks.⁸

After studying agriculture at Kansas State College and Cornell University, Frank Haucke served overseas for one year as a sergeant in World War I. After the war, Frank returned home to farm. He also became state commander of the American Legion and helped with the Boy Scouts. On a Legion-sponsored campout of Boy Scouts held on the Haucke farm in August of 1924, some washed-out remains of a Kansa Indian were discovered by some of the scouts near Little John Creek. Vinson Pullins, the last of the Boy Scouts living who was at the campout, recalled Frank Haucke calling everyone together that evening, "brainwashing" them on how important it was not to take anything away

from the burial site, and informing the scouts that they were going to help dig up this Indian in the morning. Pullins recalled being not too sure that he wanted to help dig up somebody, but the next morning the scouts were lined up and marched single file to an area that Frank Haucke called a "cemetery" near the creek. Pullins said that as they dug to a depth of about eighteen inches, the bones of a skeleton were carefully uncovered. Pullins also recalled that they uncovered a "saddle that had iron stirrups, a 22 caliber revolver, a tan medicine bottle that still had liquid in it, and orange colored war paint that was loose--cloth bag had probably rotted--and some beads." Pullins said that over the years many people have asked him where the location of the cemetery is, but that he has never divulged the information.⁹

The remains of this Kansa man were exhumed and, with the help of an undertaker, were stored at the mortuary in Council Grove. Some effort was made to identify this Native American, but none of the Kansa remembered and no records were available as to who had been buried in that spot. It was Kaw custom to bury chiefs with many of their possessions, and since this man had been buried in that manner, it was assumed by some that this was an important member of the tribe or possibly a chief.¹⁰

Sometime during the next year, Frank Haucke must have pondered on the proper burial of this person, planned a ceremony, and helped design the stone marker. Rock for the monument was hauled from nearby hills by the American Legion and the Boy Scouts. The stone-cutting and erection of the monument was done by local stone masons and paid for by the Haucke family.¹¹

On August 12, 1925, at 4:00 p.m., about 2000 people were assembled near the newly erected stone monument. The large crowd was partly due to this event

being the climax of a week-long celebration Council Grove was having to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the Santa Fe Trail. The thousands of assembled country folk stood in silent



Kansas Indians, Frank Haucke (center) and Vice President Curtis.

Courtesy of Mrs. Frank Haucke

reverence, however as a smaller group that had assembled around a copper casket at the foot of the hill formed a procession. Led by a military band playing a dirge, the procession began to wind its way up the hill. Behind came a military caisson carrying the coffin, draped in a United States Flag and guarded by a squad of soldiers. Behind the coffin a Kaw Indian led a riderless horse that had been daubed with red paint--an old Kansa custom for a slain warrior. Twenty-five mounted Kansa Indians followed the riderless horse, and they were followed by a troop of the Second U.S. Cavalry from Fort Riley. A group of Boy Scouts and members of the American Legion brought up the rear. The procession circled the monument and then halted before the cement-lined tomb. The mounted Indians handed the reins of their horses to waiting Boy Scouts and took the casket from the caisson. Taps were sounded as six braves edged the casket into the tomb. Seventeen shots were fired from a one-pound artillery gun on a nearby hillside. The riderless horse was given by its Indian charge to a Boy Scout--another

custom of the Kansa.¹²

On a speakers' platform that had been erected nearby, Frank Haucke acted as master of ceremonies. One of the speakers was Roy Taylor, a Kansa Indian, whose grandfather had been chief of the tribe when they had lived here. Taylor spoke in his native language while another Kaw interpreted his speech. "I am glad again to be back in the land of my fathers," he said. "And I feel grateful to the white man for the great tribute he paid one of my people." Frank Haucke was made an honorary chief of the Kansa tribe and given the name Ga-he-gah-skeh, meaning "White Chief." He was also presented with a Kaw headdress, blankets, and other Kansa articles. Toward the end of the ceremony an airplane flew over to spread flowers. It was also supposed to drop a wreath of flowers over the spire of the monument, but it missed.¹³



Courtesy of Mrs. Frank Haucke

In 1930 Frank "Chief" Haucke won the Republican nomination for governor, and in October of 1930 Vice President Curtis came home to lend support for Haucke. Since Curtis had been unable to attend the unveiling of the Unknown Indian monument, another ceremony was held as a dedication. A smaller crowd gathered at the monument to watch as

Frank Haucke approached Vice President Curtis with a flowered wreath and said "Mr. Vice President, I present you this wreath to lay on the tomb of the Unknown Indian." The Vice President then spoke of his boyhood time on the reservation and concluded with this tribute: "I place this wreath on the monument to the Indian whose name none know here below, but whose name is registered above in indelible ink."¹⁴

Today the land around the monument is owned by Frank Haucke's niece, Helen Haucke Huston, and her husband Willis Huston. The monument was damaged by lightning once and so a lightning rod has been added. During the annual Wah-shung-gah Days, put on during the summer by the people of Council Grove, a memorial service is sometimes conducted near the monument, and people are allowed to walk up the hill to where the monument is located.¹⁵

In creating the Unknown Indian Monument, Frank Haucke was accomplishing several things. From a practical standpoint, he hoped the monument would keep treasure seekers from desecrating more graves on his land. The subsequent ceremonies certainly didn't hurt Frank Haucke's political image, as he almost became governor of Kansas in 1930. The monument also could have helped heal a collective feeling of guilt; people of the 1920s could say it was the previous generation that had heaped injustice on these people now we are honoring them. The monument also serves as a reminder of a sad chapter in history that hopefully teaches a lesson in tolerance of different cultures. Most importantly, the monument serves as a shrine to honor a group of Native Americans known as the Kansa.

ENDNOTES

1. *Council Grove Republican*, 13 August 1925.
2. William E. Unrau, *The Kansa Indians, a History of the Wind People, 1673-1873*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971, 157-186; T.S. Fry, "Stone Houses for the Kansa Indians," *Kanhistique* Vol. 13, No. 6 (Oct, 1986): 2-3.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Fry, "Stone Houses," Unrau, *The Kansa Indians*; H. Craig Miner and William Unrau, *The End of Indian Kansas, A Study of Cultural Revolution, 1854-1871*, Lawrence, KS: Regents Press of Kansas, 1978, 76-78.
5. *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, Frank Haucke Address of the President. "The Kaw or Kansa Indians," Vol. XX (1) February 1952: 36-60.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Topeka Capital Journal*, 20 July 1984; William E. Unrau, *Mixed-Bloods and Tribal Dissolution: Charles Curtis and the Quest for Indian Identity*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1989.
8. Notes from interview with Margaret Haucke, 16 November 1985.
9. Personal interview with Margaret Haucke, 11 August 1989; Personal interview with Vinson Pullins, 25 July 1989.
10. *Wichita Eagle Magazine*, 7 August 1955, by Margaret Haucke, 23; 11 August 1989 interview with Margaret Haucke.
11. Notes from interview with Margaret Haucke, 11 August 1989.
12. *Council Grove Republican*, 13 August 1925, "Red Skin Chief is Buried," unidentified newspaper clipping from Kansa Indian Collection at Council Grove Public Library.
13. *Council Grove Republican*, 12 August 1925. Personal interview with Vincent Pullins, 25 July 1989.
14. *Council Grove Republican*, 25 October 1930.
15. Personal interview with Helen and Willis Huston, June 1989; *Ibid* #9. Haucke interview.