



HELP WANTED:

Progressive state-of-the-art Museum seeks inquisitive individual for position of Historian. Successful candidate will be able to read differing accounts of stories, determine similarities and differences, and come to conclusions regarding actual events. **Apply Yourself Here.**

YOU BE THE HISTORIAN

Battle of Indian Rock

In the 1800s, many different Indian groups lived in the region now known as Kansas. Indians from the Ohio Valley and the Great Lakes region were moved to **reservations** in Eastern Kansas. The Great Plains Indians were **nomadic**, and claimed central Kansas as their hunting ground. These tribes often waged war to protect their food sources, lands, and **lifestyle**. The Smoky Hills region was a crossroads that provided food and water sources for **migrating** animals, like bison. Indian hunting parties from the East caused conflicts when they crossed into territory claimed by the Great Plains Indians. In 1857, the **Battle** of Indian Rock took place right here in Salina between the Great Plains Indians and the Eastern Kansas Indians.

While many different tribes lived in what would become Kansas, these are the tribes that participated in the Battle of Indian Rock.

Eastern Kansas Indians:

Kaw
Pottawatomie
Delaware

Great Plains Indians:

Cheyenne
Arapahoe
Sioux

VOCABULARY

Reservation: (rez-ur-vay-shuhn) *noun* An area of land set aside by the government for a special purpose.

Migrate: (mye-grate) *verb* When animals move to different areas at the change of seasons.

Lifestyle: (life-stile) *noun* A way of living.

Nomadic: (noh-mad-ik) *noun* People who wander from place to place.

Battle: (bat-uhl) *noun* 1. A fight between two armies; 2. A struggle with someone.

YOU ARE HIRED

As a historian, your job is to sort through many different types of historical information. Read the two stories below. Make notes of key points and compare the two stories. Look for evidence that doesn't match, and decide what is the same or different.

Christina Campbell, one of the first settlers in Salina, recalls the story as told to her by the Delaware Indians:

The Delawares and Pottawatomies were on a big hunt some 200 miles west of Salina, and were surprised and attacked by a powerful force of Cheyennes, Sioux, and Arapahoes. They were driven back in a running fight to Dry Creek, just west of Salina. Here they sent runners for the Kaws, who had two large hunting parties nearby.

The wild Indians finally drove the civilized tribes out of cover of the "Dry" creek, with great loss. They fell back across the river to the hill east of Salina, where they were reinforced by the two bands of Kaws with some rifles they had secured at their reservation at Council Grove.

OVER →



Photograph courtesy of Kansas State Historical Society

Here the Cheyennes attacked riding in circles, while others, hidden in the grass, were shooting arrows at the civilized Indians, who sought the shelter of the rocks. Behind the great rock itself, the Kaws, who had rifles, were doing good work at short range.

The Cheyenne chief finally drew back, and with a large number of warriors, charged the rock cavalry style, even though the Cheyenne were outnumbered. He made five successive charges, each at a great loss. Upon the final charge, he was killed, leaving a fearful toll of dead and wounded in his own ranks, without inflicting great damage to his foes.

At length, badly beaten, the wild tribes withdrew, leaving the ground covered by their dead.

William A. Phillips, one of Salina's town founders, told this story in the Junction City Union newspaper on May 7, 1857:

As the buffalos were scarce east of the line of the Saline and Solomon, they crossed the threatened "dead line" and were camped on the spot where the old graveyard stood, and between the mounds of the upper mill. The Cheyennes who were then camped near Cow Creek, learned of the intrusion, and as they at that time maintained a little army of soldiers, some three hundred picked men, most of this force was sent against this band of Pottawatomie hunters. The Cheyenne warriors came in on the ridge that skirts the bend of the Smoky to the southeast, coming down over the upper hill, and attacked just as the day was breaking. It was a surprise and a massacre rather than a fight. A few of the Pottawatomie warriors seized their rifles and tried to hold their enemies in check, while the others fled north across the Smoky Hill River. In the attack one woman and two children were killed, besides a number of men. The precise loss of the Pottawatomies has been variously stated, but fourteen in all were buried on the hill near the spot where they were encamped.

QUESTIONS

1. Compare the two stories. Are they eyewitness accounts of the event or told at a later date?
2. Discuss the attitudes toward each group in the way the story is recorded. Does one story seem more favorable to one Indian group than another?
3. If you were a historian, which account would you find more accurate? Why?

BEYOND THE MUSEUM

The site where the Battle of Indian Rock was fought is now a city park. Directions from the Smoky Hill Museum: take Iron Street (in front of the museum) east to Ohio Street. Turn right on Ohio Street and go south to Gypsum Street. Turn left on Gypsum Street, and go east to Indiana Street. When you reach Indiana Street, turn right and follow the roads on either side to the top of the hill. One fun activity might be to park in the parking lot and hike to the top just like the Indians did during the Battle of Indian Rock.



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A division of the Salina Arts & Humanities, a department of the City of Salina.