



This photo shows two large bus loads of students from the Public Schools in Wichita, Kansas. Three such tours have been made from Wichita alone. Such scenes as this are nothing unusual on weekends or holidays.

### 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

### Indian Burial Pit

The Indian Burial Pit has been part of the Saline County landscape for hundreds of years. The burial site is from a small farming community belonging to what archeologists call the Smoky Hill Phase of the Central Plains Village Farmers that existed from about 700-900 years ago. Guy, Mabel, and JayDee Whiteford discovered the Indian Burial Pit in 1936 while **excavating** an Indian lodge. The Whitefords uncovered the **remains** of over 145 people. They preserved the skeletons in place and put them on display as a tourist attraction. In the 1970s, Native Americans began pushing to close the Indian Burial Pit because it was a **sacred** cemetery. When these Native Americans presented their concerns about the display of their **ancestors'** remains, the Kansas State Historical Society began working to close the pit and rebury the remains. The State of Kansas bought the quarter-acre burial site in 1990. The Arikara, Wichita and Pawnee tribes participated in a reburial **ceremony**. The remains were covered with blankets and shawls, and workers covered the site with earth.

#### VOCABULARY

**Excavate:** (ek-skuh-vate) *verb* To dig in the earth, either to put up a building or to search for ancient remains.

**Remains:** (ri-maynz) *noun, plural* Parts of something that was once alive; a dead body.

**Sacred:** (say-krid) *adjective* Holy, or to do with religion; very important and deserving great respect.

**Ancestor** (an-sess-tur) *noun* Members of your family who lived a long time ago.

**Ceremony:** (ser-uh-moh-nee) *noun* A formal act or series of acts performed in honor of an event, special occasion, or ritual.

## YOU ARE HIRED

Historians use their knowledge to understand, preserve, protect, and interpret important historical resources. The Indian Burial Pit was an archeological find in the 1930s, but social attitudes about the site changed in the 1970s. Read the following excerpts from newspaper articles in 1936 and 1973, and then answer the questions on the back.

### Burial Site of Old Indian Tribe Found The Salina Journal, October 1936

*Today in a space about 15 by 18 feet in dimension, there is an odd panorama of skeletons. A tent has been erected over the site, to protect it from weather and to preserve the find, and a fence put up to keep people from trodding under any of the bones so far uncovered... Thirty-seven skulls exposed to view. There are some complete bodies, notably the one in the northeast corner of the area thus far exposed. There, lying on its side and curled into a jack-knife position, is the skeleton of an Indian who was about seven feet tall. He was probably a chief, since at his head was found a stone, placed monument-wise, the only evidence found of signal honor.*

*Obviously the pit now exposed was the scene of a communal burial, where bodies were placed in the earth, covered, and others placed above. Tier on tier they now emerge to view. There are tiny skulls and ribs, showing the resting place of infants. The communal burial now being reconstructed from the stories past, was probably the result of some catastrophe, perhaps a smallpox epidemic, the policeman-archaeologist believes.*

OVER →



*People will be allowed to visit the site, it was announced today at the Kohr farm. At first it was closely guarded. The Kohrs did not see how they could manage such crowds as flocked to the Indian house site last summer. Then it was decided to let the public see the burial ground, which is of valuable import to the archaeological and historical minded, and fascinating even to the uninitiated. For the first time a small charge will be made to visitors, it was stated today.*

### Indian Bones Draw Tourists and Protests The Salina Journal, March 30, 1973

*Hog farmers Howard and John Price operate a cemetery to augment their income. For 50 cents they let outsiders take a tour of their graveyard. They have on display the skeletal remains of 146 men, women and children. "Our burial pit is the fifth most popular tourist spot in the state of Kansas," said John Price, 75, with obvious pride.*

*John Price and his brother Howard, 73, have operated the graveyard as a public attraction since 1936, when the first of the graves on their hog ranch five miles east of Salina was discovered. Exhibited are the remains of a race of giant Indians believed to have lived in Kansas about 800 years ago.*

*"People enjoy coming here. It's a novelty—something different," said Price as he brushed a mixture of alcohol and shellac on the remains of a child to preserve the tiny skeleton. "I can recall only two or three people in the last 37 years who didn't think it was worth the 50 cents." The hog farmer admitted however, that he has had complaints from Indians in recent months.*

*Posted on a wall in the souvenir shop leading to the enclosed burial pit is a letter published in a local paper from an elderly Indian named Elmer Creekpau. It reads in part: "Digging up a whole Indian cemetery and placing it on display for a few paltry dollars is going a little too far. I have never witnessed anything as pagan as this in my life. Since my boyhood in the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma I never heard of or know of Indians molesting the final resting place of anyone. Dead people deserve eternal respect."*

*The recent Indian objection to the exhibit did have one effect. A Lutheran Church group cancelled its annual convention in Salina. Lutheran leaders said they would boycott the city and not hold another convention there until the Indian cemetery on the hog ranch was closed to public visitation.*

## QUESTIONS

1. Why did the archeologists uncover the human remains?
2. Why do you think people changed their opinions about the site over time?
3. Do you think the Indian Burial Pit should have been closed to tourists?

## BEYOND THE MUSEUM

To learn more about the Indians from this region, visit the Pawnee Indian Village Museum located near Republic, Kansas. The Indian Burial Pit is no longer open to tourists, but you can visit Salina's oldest cemetery instead. Directions to the Gypsum Hill Cemetery from the Smoky Hill Museum: take Iron Street (in front of the museum) east to Marymount Road. The cemetery is on the south side of the road. Imagine how you would feel if all the bodies in the cemetery were uncovered for tourists to view.



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