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Director in Ethnology and Archaeology

Oklahoma Historical Society

(Trustee of The State)

OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA

February 3, 1930.

Dear Mr. Roberts:-

I have been at work on that brief. It is more of an undertaking than I had expected it to be. Briefly stated, I find that the Pawnee people were paid about one and one-third cents per acre for their lands south of the Platte River, which they ceded to the Government, in 1833. Also, that through the course of seventy-four years, they have received approximately twenty-five cents an acre for their lands which they sold to the Government, in 1857. However, a deal is a deal and, so far as I am aware, the Government has kept its part of each agreement or bargain. Plainly, it drove sharp bargains, both times, so there is no way of backing up on either of these cessions and getting a bigger price. The obvious thing is to file a claim to lands which rightfully belonged to the Pawnee people but for which the Government never has paid them.

Enclosed find a hastily traced map of the adjacent portions of the states of Kansas and Nebraska. On it, the Pawnee lands, as ceded to the Government, in 1833 and 1857 are marked with a boundary, thus: |||||. Bounding the Pawnee country on the south is the Kansas or Kaw Indian country, with a double line boundary, thus: =====. The Kaws ceded their lands to the Government, in June, 1825, including not only all that they owned but all that they claimed--a nice big slice of southeastern Nebraska, a part of which I am sure that the Kaws did not own and did not even range over it. I would at least assign to the Pawnee people half of the area claimed by the Kansa or Kaw, north of the Nebraska line, marked thus: -----, from A to B to C. Now, if your people can prove that their folks ranged as far east as the valley of the Big Blue River, from D to E to F, they should have a valid claim. They will need positive proof, however, and I should have it before completing this brief that you want from me. I have marked the valley of the Big Blue and a connecting boundary with the one previously illustrated above, thus: |||||. It might be well for you to secure a big geography or an atlas, so that your people will thoroughly understand. I would suggest that you write to Superintendent A. E. Sheldon, of the Nebraska Historical Society, at Lincoln, Nebraska, and ask him if the Pawnee Indians ranged as far east as the Big Blue River, in the southern part of Nebraska and, if so, to cite one or more authorities in proof of such fact. A similar letter, addressed to Mr. George E. Hyde, 4229 Douglas Street, Omaha, Nebraska, might bring some additional proof to light. You need not mention me to either of them, though both are good friends of mine. Tell them you are a Pawnee and are interested in knowing more about your own people. Both are well posted. Enclose a stamped, self addressed envelope with each inquiry and I am sure that you will hear from each, as they may be wanting to ask something of you, later on.

I am sorry that I could not get at this sooner but it has been impossible. It is a mighty interesting subject and one which may prove to be well worth while before we are through.

Sincerely yours,

Mr. George H. Roberts,
Pawnee, Oklahoma.

Joseph B. Thoburn